



Living

City Hall
3940 Grandview Avenue
St. Matthews, KY 40207
Phone (502) 895-9444

July 2010

St. Matthews

CSX whistles an unhappy tune



For many years, CSX Railroad has designated St. Matthews a “quiet zone,” meaning that its engineers must refrain from blowing whistles as their trains pass through the six crossings in the city.

The quiet is a valuable amenity for all, and may be a health-and-wellness issue for those who are nerve-jangled and/or sleep-deprived.

So city officials were upset in the spring of 2008, when CSX announced that it would soon begin blowing its whistles at crossings unless certain crossings could be upgraded to prevent cars from going around gates and risking accidents. CSX predicted that the cost of the necessary upgrades would be about \$400,000. State and Metro Louisville governments said immediately that they couldn't help pay for the improvements.

St. Matthews was left holding the bag.

One of the crossings CSX said would have to be improved was at Chenoweth Lane. CSX wanted the city to install a median; the city said it couldn't do that, because a

median would hurt nearby businesses by interfering with motorists' access. As an alternative, the St. Matthews council said it would be responsible for installing two new gates that would completely block north- and south-bound Chenoweth. St. Matthews agreed to pay CSX for installing the gates at a cost of about \$200,000.

CSX also wanted St. Matthews to install a median on Thierman Lane. The city decided to have its own construction crew take care of the installation.

CSX asked for \$10,000 upfront to cover the engineering phase of the Chenoweth project. The city's check was mailed on July 29, 2008.

St. Matthews was ready to proceed with the Thierman Lane work, but the project became embroiled in a dispute between CSX and the Louisville Water Co. The water company wants to install a main under the tracks, but CSX won't allow it. That has become the subject of a (still-unsettled) lawsuit. Meanwhile, St. Matthews officials do not want to do the work if it would then have to be undone for the installation of a water line.

Two months ago, CSX advised the city that the Chenoweth Lane project was moving ahead. It said the survey had been completed; design work would be contracted out soon; and the plan was being freshly reviewed “in-house.”

A few weeks later, CSX said it would begin blowing its whistles at the crossings as required by federal regulations (barring a “quiet zone” waiver, for which the city has applied).

St. Matthews can't install the gates. Only CSX or a CSX contractor can.

See ST. MATTHEWS, back page



CSX Photo

INSIDE:

St. Matthews gets emergency generator
Longtime city clerk Gretchen Kaiser dies
State clears up insurance-tax quandary

New city gear will be generating heat, light, buzz

A new emergency generator was installed on the west side of City Hall on May 7.

On that day the Louisville Gas & Electric Co. cut power to the building at 11:30 a.m. and didn't turn it back on until after 6 p.m.

The Eline Branch library stayed open without electricity. City Hall closed early, as always on Fridays, and police dispatch was not interrupted.

Police personnel conducted an experiment, switching the dispatch office to Metro Safe. Metro Safe provided a new 800 MH portable radio to every St. Matthews police officer to communicate with metro police and fire and the suburban fire districts, EMS and other emergency agencies.

Everything went smoothly. Now officials know that, in the event of a disaster, police can move operations to Metro Safe without missing a beat or compromising public safety.

Now that the \$80,000 generator is operational, there should never be another loss of power in the Grandview building.

After a powerful summer windstorm in 2008, City Hall was without power for eight days.

In that case, a portable natural-gas-powered generator was brought in to keep the emergency dispatch office running.

The Red Cross has named City Hall as a warming/cooling center and emergency shelter in the event of a disaster.



First and last chance to see the city's sleek new emergency generator: It's now hidden by an eight-foot fence.



The city has put up 44 new welcome banners around St. Matthews, at all the main entrances to the city and in other prominent spots. Two sets were bought -- one for spring and summer, the other for fall and winter, at a cost of about \$5,000.

Longtime city clerk Gretchen Kaiser dies Was mayor's 'right-hand man' for 35 years

Gretchen Kaiser, who worked as the St. Matthews city clerk for more than 34 years under former Mayor Bernard Bowling Sr., died on June 16 at her home in St. Matthews.

She was 72.

For a generation, Kaiser was the face and voice of day-to-day government in St. Matthews.

In most cases, a visit to City Hall began with a conversation with Kaiser. If one had a question about St. Matthews, and couldn't reach Bowling, she was the person to see.

She was noted for her allegiance to, the mayor during his long tenure.

In times of pressure or controversy, she defended Bowling's decisions to skeptical reporters while shielding the mayor from them -- always with a smile.

"The thing about Mayor Bowling," she once said, "was that he really loved St. Matthews. That was obvious even to the people who disagreed with him.

"He had a very specific vision of the city's future, and he made it happen. The St. Matthews we live in today is

largely the one he envisioned."

Kaiser was a regular participant in the restaurant jaunts city officials traditionally enjoyed after council meetings.

City Clerk and Treasurer Jim King noted that, because the mayor and council were only part-time, Kaiser became "the person everybody dealt with."



King said Kaiser was "a friendly person" whose devotion to Bowling got stronger with the passing years. "They were close," he said. "Because of their positions, they spent a lot of time together."

Kaiser was a member of Holy Spirit Catholic Church and of the American Legion Ladies' Auxiliary, Zachary Taylor Post. She also worked as a pari-mutuel clerk at Keeneland Race Course.



Thousands of people from St. Matthews and environs braved unseasonably hot weather on June 12 to enjoy the 11th annual Community Festival in Brown Park. The family-friendly event included a petting zoo, pony rides, face painting and live music.

General Assembly fixes insurance-tax quandary

A story in a previous newsletter said: *Make sure St. Matthews gets its share of your insurance taxes. The tax code "1616" is on all policies for which St. Matthews is supposed to get a portion of the state tax. ... Some people in some St. Matthews (Zip codes) may be paying Louisville (0031) or Lyndon (0252) in error. ... There's a catch: The code number doesn't appear on your copy of the policy; you'll have to call your agent to check.*

Now you needn't make that call. The Kentucky General Assembly passed House Bill 278, requiring "each broker to provide notification to the policy holder of the amount of the tax and the jurisdiction collecting the tax ... on newly issued policies and renewed policies." The bill becomes law on July 15. When you get the notification, be sure to see that St. Matthews is getting its rightful share.

Your government at a glance

- City Hall: 895-9444
- Police: 893-9000
- Emergency: 911
- Web: www.stmatthews.org
(Minutes of City Council meetings available online)

Call St. Matthews
24/7 Automated Information System:
638-4STM (638-4786)
News/Services/
Administration/Police

Council meeting times:
Open sessions, City Hall, second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, 7 p.m.

City Hall office hours:
M-Th, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.;
Fri, 7:30-11.30 a.m.



Crime Tip Line:
498-CLUE
(498-2583)
(Caller's name, number not recorded)

City budget: \$10 million

The city budget for the fiscal year that began on July 1 projects total revenues at \$10,195,400. The largest appropriation is for police, \$4,932,400; others are for public works, \$3,252,000; parks, \$501,000; and general government, \$1,510,000. The largest sources of revenue are occupational tax, \$5,800,000, and property taxes, \$2,125,400.



Easy being green

You may think industrial wastes account for most water pollution, but more than 60 percent is actually from sources closer to home -- like oil leaking from cars, fertilizers from lawns and gardens, and human waste from failing septic tanks. How can you fertilize your lawn, landscaping and garden without contributing to water pollution? Use fertilizers sparingly. Most plants don't need as much fertilizer as you might think. And most people use more than necessary, and more than the directions call for. You might want

to have your soil tested for nutrient status. Use a mulching mower. Don't feed your plants when meteorologists are predicting rain. Consider using organic fertilizers; they release nutrients more slowly. Use commercially available compost or make your own from garden waste. If you mix compost with your soil, your plants will need less chemical fertilizer. Be sure to store all fertilizers and pesticides in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.

St. Matthews Living
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St. Matthews hopes to be site of CSX whistlestop

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St. Matthews can't stop the noise on its own, either. The city, which has fielded a number of complaints from whistle-tormented residents, is appealing the CSX decision to lift the "quiet zone" designation.

Metro Louisville was able to preserve its "quiet zone" by closing two minor, residential crossings in Crescent Hill. In St. Matthews, none of the crossings can be closed without doing significant harm to residents and business owners.

In April, the federal Railroad Commission said St. Matthews had to give up its "quiet zone" status or it would be taken away, which would make it harder to get back. City officials are doing all they can to get the "quiet" designation back.

Make sure the lids on your garbage cans are in place and tightly shut. This keeps out foraging, mess-making dogs, raccoons and opossums.



When you cut your grass, please blow the clippings into your own yard, not into a neighbor's yard or into the street.

If you put out paving stones, stone pyramids or other obstructions to keep people from parking on the right-of-way along your property, keep in mind that you could be held liable for any damage or accidents they cause.

Remember: The leash law applies to all dogs and other pets, even the best-behaved. In St. Matthews, leashes may not be more than 10 feet long. Don't leave your car running, especial-

ly when you're not in it. The practice wastes gas and pollutes the air; it's illegal; and it can tempt an opportunistic car thief.

Don't set out cans or bags of garbage any earlier than the night before pickup. St. Matthews provides rear-door pickup of garbage only.

It's illegal to remove any item from a recycling container that has been set out for pickup. For details of this and all St. Matthews ordinances, visit the city's Web site: www.StMatthews.org.

Homeowners must keep the grass alleyways behind their homes mowed and clear of debris. This provides access to utility workers and prevents animal infestations.