

Early Bird 7 – 13 Jan 2012

## **LEADERS AND POLITICS**

**Didgeridoo Music and “Aussie” Burgers – the exceptional Stammtisch celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary (12 Jan, 2012)** When the Rathaus welcomed the Australian Ambassador in February, 2011 Lord Mayor Remele had a surprise for him. The members of the “Australia Stammtisch” played live didgeridoo music and the Australia enthusiasts from Schweinfurt demonstrated how much they liked the “land down under,” much to the delight of the Ambassador. Last Tuesday the “Australia Stammtisch” celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Normally Lord Mayor Remele does not attend every 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration but in this case he attended because of the engagement of the Schweinfurt “Australians.” One of the members played the “didgeridoo” and asked Remele if he wanted to try it, too – surprisingly to everyone around the Lord Mayor was able to coax sounds from the instrument. Jan. 26 is a national Australian holiday, celebrating the arrival of the British in 1788. On Jan. 29 the members of the “Australia Stammtisch” will celebrate “Australia Day” at “Interesandreisen” in Gochsheim, informing about Australia.

**Lord Mayor Remele is concerned: Schweinfurt (or at least their citizenship) is getting older and older. Balance, perspective and cooperation: New Year’s Reception of the city of Schweinfurt for more than 30 guests. (9 Jan, 2012)** In his second New Year’s speech Lord Mayor Remele focused on the energy turnaround, which has been addressed more intensified since the Fukushima disaster, as well as Schweinfurt and the demographic development of the citizens. He is concerned because in Schweinfurt all age groups are shrinking except the age group 65 and above, which is on the rise. And with the confirmed pull-out of nuclear energy a long term wish is becoming true for Schweinfurt’s citizens. Remele reminded the crowd about the battle against the nuclear power plant, only a few kilometers outside of Schweinfurt, which will finally shut down in 2015.

For the first time in the recent history a Lord Mayor of Schweinfurt welcomed two Mayors, Klaus Rehberger and Kathi Petersen. Subtly Lord Mayor Remele stated his opinion concerning various subjects while welcoming the guests.

While welcoming Lt. Col. Michael D. Runey, Commander, United States Army Garrison Schweinfurt he reminded everyone about the terrible losses of American and German Soldiers in Afghanistan.

The President of the technical college welcomed Remele’s news that Schweinfurt, proportional to the number of citizens, is the local community with the most students.

And at the end Remele welcomed retired Mayor Otto Wirth, thanked him publically and profusely for his loyalty and his fatherly advice in the 20 months they worked together as Mayors. In his 30 minute speech Remele gave much room to the energy turnaround.

As conclusion a new year’s wish for 2012 Lord Mayor Remele quoted Botho Strauss: “There will be no better time, it is always here, it only can be missed or undiscovered a life long.”

**No Signals for withdrawal of GIs. Cost cutting measures of U.S. military budget cause speculations about American garrisons (10 Jan, 2012)** After a large article in the “Stars & Stripes” last October caused speculations, a recent article in the American publication has reawakened interest about force reductions of the U.S. Army in Europe, specifically in Germany. As a not insignificant military garrison, Schweinfurt has presently 6,000 Soldiers and 6,000 family members, and could also be affected.

The speculation concerning a withdrawal of the U.S. Army was triggered by reports that the US will cut billions in the Army in the next defense budget, namely in ground forces, from which the troops stationed in Europe would be largely affected. It is nothing new that the Americans consider Asia as part of the world where they’ll have to be increasingly present for military strategic reasons, more so than in Europe more than 20 years after the end of the cold war. However; the budget of the Pentagon will be announced not before February. Before then no concrete statements can be expected.

Schweinfurt as an Army garrison has presently more Soldiers and family members than before, even though the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade, the largest unit has been relocated to Grafenwöhr a few years ago. The reason being: The relocation takes longer than the filling of vacancies with other units as replacement for the combat brigade.

#### **Local Half-Year in Review – from July – December 2011, 31 Dec 2011.**

- Many Schweinfurt citizens donated for the Third World Children’s Association to build an orphanage in Bukalo in northern Namibia. The orphanage will receive the name “House Schweinfurt”.
- The city council agrees on a new alignment of the market booths.
- The city takes over the Ice Dome from the Ice Skating and Roller Skating Club. Since the roof structure is damaged by wetness, more than expected the Ice Dome has to be closed when it snows.
- The “Zeughaus” (former home of the local news paper offices) is turned into a house for families.
- The renovated building in Rückert-Strasse 28 (owned by the Plast company) receives an appreciation award from the Hypo Culture Foundation in Munich.
- The ambitious FSG Schweinfurt (soccer club) disappears in August due to lack of players.
- Campus II of the Technical College for 720 students opens – investments made 10 Million Euros.
- For the first time a Schweinfurt team participates in the mini-Olympic games “International Children Games” in Motherwell, Scotland.

- The Director of the Humboldt Gymnasium, Monika Zeyer-Müller leaves Schweinfurt for Würzburg.
- The first inline skate run through the city is very successful.
- In September Corny Arndt takes over the financially weak riding club and brings much hoped-for momentum.
- The Athlete's club moves into its new domicile at Bergl.
- A team of archaeologists dig up remains of the "Lebküchner Haus" and discovered remains of the old Kilian church and skeletons in the underground of the "Zeughaus" square.
- A citizens' marathon for the charity activity "Schweinfurt helps" was a success with 211 participants, one of them a winner at the Olympic games for the 800 meter run, Nils Schumann".
- A memorial and a path reminds of the more than 10,000 forced laborers in Schweinfurt.
- With the "Mainfranken" Schweinfurt once more has a river passenger ship.
- Members of the Green party and the council of the disabled point out handicapped-access shortcomings at the Hauptbahnhof.
- An argument arose between the city and the travelling vendors of the Christmas market concerning the illumination of the Christmas market.
- Since November the city council has new chairs.
- At the Wildpark Elk cow Lin dies from meningitis.
- The city council decides to open a "Knowledge Shop" at the Rückert-Bau.
- At the end of the month Mayor Otto Wirth announced his retirement.
- In Decembr CSU and SPD parties decide to have two Mayors – in spite of protests by all other fractions in the city council. Elected were Klaus Rehberger (CSU) and Kathi Petersen (SPD).
- Finally open again are the Youth meeting points "Scheibe" and "Morrison" at the Bergl.
- The Panorama Hotel has also re-opened.

- New leaders for the charity organizations “Lebenshilfe” and “Arbeiterwohlfahrt” were appointed.
- The city utility department began replacing old bus stop booths with new ones.

## **ECONOMICS**

**Main-Rhön region is better than Munich (13 Jan, 2012) Thomas Stelzer, Director of the employment agency, summarized the balance of 2011 bold and simply:** The region Main-Rhön with an unemployment rate of 3.7 % is better than Munich (4.2%) and Augsburg (4.6%). Strong South and weak North – does not apply to Bavaria anymore and the region around Schweinfurt with the nearby Rhön and the Hassberge belong to the areas that are doing surprisingly well. This applies not only to the unemployment rate which, in comparison to 2010 considerably decreased from 4.5 to 3.7 %. Compared to 2006 with an unemployment rate of 7.4% this is a 50 percent decrease in spite of the financial and economic crisis which led to more unemployment in 2009. Since then the rate is decreasing considerably. 8,000 less unemployed people and 11,000 more people with full time jobs is not a bad result for a period of five years.

### **Road Construction Companies are busy in Lower Franconia – A3 has priority**

The federal government spent approximately one billion Euros for construction and maintenance of Autobahns and Federal roads in Bavaria last year, according to a statement made by Gerhard Eck, Bavarian Secretary of State, at a press conference in Würzburg last Tuesday. About the same amount has been budgeted for 2012. In addition to that approximately 215 million Euros will be spent for the state roads in Bavaria – 26 million of which in Lower Franconia.

The highest priority of the Autobahns in Lower Franconia is the expansion of the A3 to a six lane highway. Construction of the section between Kauppenbrücke and Rohrbrunn junction will begin this year. The cost for this 7.7 kilometer long section will be 84.5 million Euros and will be completed in 2015.

One of the largest road constructions of federal streets in Lower Franciona is reinforcement of the bridge near Eltmann as part of construction work on B 26.

## **SPORTS/ATHLETICS**

**Completely back to old strength? Mighty Dogs hold back name of the new center forward from Scandinavia (13 Jan, 2012)** Relief for the mighty dogs, almost all players will be back for the game against Königsbrunn on Friday, 8 p.m. at the ice dome. For Bryce Hollweg, the American player with the number 23, who had been banned the last couple of games, this will be his last play. For this reason many American spectators are expected. Also the media is interested in his last game, before deploying to Afghanistan. AFN TV and AFN radio will cover the game. While the American side focuses on Hollweg’s last game, the other fans are probably as anxious to find out who will be his successor. The Mighty Dogs have confirmed that a successor has been selected and that he comes from Scandinavia. According to coach Proskuryakov the fans can look forward to a racy game.