

Early Bird 26 – 30 March 2012

SAFETY & SECURITY

Renovations of ice skating rink will cost a fortune (March 30)

Renovations of the roof and the venting systems of the ice skating rink will cost the city of Schweinfurt €1 million. Since the city council so far only approved €550,000, other projects in the town hall will be postponed for one year. The estimate does not include renovation of the “Fun Dome” which in the opinion of some members of the city council is not worth renovating. Lord Mayor Remele wants to keep it open since it offers possibilities to play soccer also during the winter. Demolition of the Fun Dome would cost €150,000. The renovation, however, would cost €350,000. The decision has to be made by the finance committee and the city council in April.

Less Accidents – but more people get injured (March 30)

The review of the traffic accidents that occurred in Schweinfurt in 2011 was not quite as positive as in the previous years. Even though the number of accidents went down by 5 percent, the injuries sustained were more and more serious. The city of Schweinfurt’s accident statistics of 2011 are in the trend with the statistics of Lower Franconia and Bavaria. The alcohol related accident rate decreased to its lowest level since 1976.

Car crashes into motorcycle – Two persons severely injured (March 28)

The driver of a POV suffered a shock. According to a police report three people were injured, two of them seriously, in a traffic accident that occurred on B 19 in Niederwerrn on Sunday afternoon. A 48-year old driver travelling on the district road coming from Kützberg/Oberwerrn apparently overlooked a motorcycle travelling on B 19 from Schweinfurt. The 53-year old motorcycle driver and his 45-year old wife sustained serious injuries. The driver of the car suffered a shock and also had to be taken to a hospital.

LEADERS & POLITICS

2011 Welfare report: Child poverty high in Schweinfurt (March 28)

The city of Schweinfurt ranks among the highest percentages of child poverty in Bavaria, according to a study of the Bertelsmann Foundation. The definition of child poverty, which the study was based on, considers children poor if they are living in a family, who is living on welfare. In Schweinfurt this applies to more than 27 percent of the children under the age of 3 and 22 per cent of the children under the age of 15. There are several causes for the high child poverty rate in the Bavarian cities compared to the average rate in Bavaria. The city also has an above average number of long time unemployed citizens and families who live on welfare as well as a high number of single parents. The city this year it will start an initiative together with the employment agency to recruit in-home daycare providers and volunteers who will support the women in taking care of their younger children during the hours when public childcare is not

available. This service will be made available during school and kindergarten breaks and for women who work shifts, work on Saturday and in the evenings.

City council dismisses “dog snooping” campaign (March 27)

The city of Bad Neustadt hired a contractor to find dogs who were not registered and whose owners did not pay dog taxes. They found 55 dogs that were not registered. However, they did not fine the owners but gave them a grace period to register their dogs and pay the dog taxes. The result of the measure was 60 dog owners registering their dogs. Hearing this, a member of the Schweinfurt city council had the idea to take the same measures in Schweinfurt. The city contacted two contractors who came up with cost estimates between €37,000 – 45,000 for finding unregistered dogs. The present income from dog taxes is €60,000 per year. The Director of the city finance office thought that hiring a company would be an overblown reaction and he advised against it for several reasons. The approximately 1,300 dogs that are registered in Schweinfurt are about the number of dogs registered in other cities the size of Schweinfurt. Therefore the number of unregistered dogs is probably not that high. Furthermore, the neighbors are watchful – the information system in regard to unregistered dogs seems to work in Schweinfurt. In addition, the city employees who are investigating addresses would also report unregistered dogs. The park custodians were informed to watch out for dogs who do not wear a tag. The bottom line is that Schweinfurt will not initiate an individual campaign seeking unregistered dogs. Dog taxes are €50 for one dog and €125 for every additional dog per year. Based on the Status of Forces Agreement, U.S. Soldiers are exempt from the dog tax.

Gauck encourages more confidence (March 24)

The new President summoned his citizens to get engaged. With a blazing plea for an active democracy and against any type of extremism Joachim Gauck showed which subjects his work will focus on. In his first speech as the new President he appealed to the German citizens to show more confidence. “I ask all of you to be courageous and to start over and over again trusting in yourself” said Gauck, after taking his oath last Friday. Gauck is the eleventh President of the Federal Republic of Germany. The former protestant pastor and civil rights activist ended his oath with the words: “So help me God.”

Demonstration in support of Iranian asylum seekers (March 24)

They could be heard and seen - 300 demonstrators walked through the city of Würzburg, accompanied by loud Samba rhythms. They demonstrated for the 12 Iranian asylum seekers in the communal accommodation in Würzburg who have been on a one-week long hunger strike because they are not being acknowledged as political refugees. The Iranians were moved by the support they received. In a resolution to the Bavarian Social Affairs Minister, Christine Haderthauer, the demonstrators solidarized with the Iranians and demanded that Haderthauer visit Würzburg to see under what conditions the asylum seekers have to live.

ECONOMY

Schweinfurt: Another excursion boat with 300 seats (March 29)

The first time since the summer of 2009 Schweinfurt has an excursion boat once more - the "Mainfranken," which seats 300 people. The boat will offer regular trips to Schonungen on Sundays and weekends. It also can be booked for celebrations.

Future of drugstore chain Schlecker uncertain (March 29)

The prospect for an interim employment society for the insolvent drugstore chain Schlecker is getting worse. Schlecker urgently needs a €70 million worth of credit to pay for an interim employment society for its 11,000 employees in Germany—3,000 in Bavaria. However; bailment provided by three states (Baden Württemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Bavaria) was dismissed by the Bavarian government since it would have meant that the State of Bavaria would have to shoulder twice as much money as the other two states. If a bailment cannot be provided all employees of Schlecker will face immediate unemployment.

Expensive gasoline curbs buying desire (March 28)

The high price for gasoline and diesel has curbed the desire to buy gas in Germany. Consumers expect price increases for other products as well and worry about their financial leeway after the inflation rate reached 2.3 percent in February.

Bavarian electrical industry counts on foreign countries (March 28)

The Bavarian electrical/electronic industry expects a good year and counts mainly on business in foreign countries. There business will be considerably better than in Germany in the coming months, according to a statement made by Anton Kathrein, President of the German electrical and electronic manufacturers' association. A survey conducted in Bavaria showed that expectations for business in foreign countries are twice as high as for business in Germany.

First Sunday of the year stores open a big success (March 26)

Thousands of people went downtown to enjoy the beautiful spring weather and the "fish market" on the market square March 25. Next to the "fish market," ice-cream parlors, cafes and bakeries had the most customers. The city mall "Stadtgalerie" also had many shoppers.

PARTNERSHIP

German-American exchange program of the Humboldt High School (Gymnasium) and the Schweinfurt American High School (March 24)

Seldom has a student exchange program been so easy and so complicated at the same time. A Schweinfurt German High School sends three students to an American High School and three American girls attend the German High School. The exchange was well announced, including a media conference and a kick-off event with Schweinfurt's Lord Mayor Sebastian Remele. A big deal for a good thing, after all, the entire exchange with the American school is the pilot project for an inter-cultural exchange program. Still the whole affair looks a little bit overdone because the distance between the Alexander-von-Humboldt High School and the American High is barely a mile. In his welcome remarks Harald Hirsch, Vice Principal of the Alexander-von Humboldt High School said: "Never was it so easy and at the same time so difficult to overcome boundaries." For years the citizens of Schweinfurt and the U.S. Soldiers stationed in Schweinfurt

have been living more next to each other, rather than with each other. After the terror attacks of Sept. 11 the Americans drew back and stayed among themselves. The same applies to the youth. Even though there was practically only a street between the two schools, there was hardly any contact between German and American students. This shall change now. There will be an academically, athletically and culturally exchange. The first exchange students are 6 girls, who will attend the respective school “on the other side of the road” beginning 26 March. Jana Streit, Marie-Kristin Weber and Marina Klinger will visit the American High School for a week while Alyssa Isom, Brittany Mathews and Heather Smith will experience every day school life at the Humboldt High School. 16-year old Brittany Mathews said: “I’m excited but I don’t expect too many, overwhelming differences.” Jana Streit (16) sees the exchange as a great opportunity to improve her English language skills. This exchange program is the first step in the right direction. Vince Diaz, Principal of the American Schweinfurt High School agrees, he said: “It is difficult when you do not know where to begin. It took a while but now we have recognized that even a small step can be a start.” The project should not be affected by the withdrawal of the U.S. Army planned for 2013. Lord Mayor Remele stated: “We will not let the withdrawal plans affect this partnership, maybe friendships will develop that will last beyond the next few years.”