

EARLY BIRD 1 – 7 December 2012

SAFETY /SECURITY

Highway snow removal teams are prepared for winter (Dec. 7)

The highway snow removal teams in Lower Franconia are prepared. In Kist, near Würzburg, the storage building is stocked with 1,600 tons of salt. Seven trucks and two “Unimogs” (universal motor equipment) are ready for throwing salt and removing snow on the highways. Harald Krones of the highway directorate of North Bavaria stated, “Our goal is to have the salt on the highways even before they get slippery.” The 420 kilometers of highway in Lower Franconia are maintained by the highway department in Würzburg. Thanks to additional storage capacity there should not be a shortage of salt this year. On days with continuing snow fall up to 200 tons of salt is used and on average winter days approximately 100 tons of salt are used daily.

Semi-trailer on fire: A-7 partially blocked (Dec. 6)

On Monday night the A-7 was closed from exit Gramschatz and Biebelrieder Kreuz direction Ulm because a semi-trailer had caught on fire. A police officer who was travelling off duty noticed smoke coming from the truck and directed the driver onto the emergency lane. There the 62-year old driver from Baden-Württemberg noticed that one of the wheel bearings was emitting sparks which caught the tarp on fire. He uncoupled the trailer and moved the rig to a safe location.

USAG SCHWEINFURT

Departure of the U.S. Army – by next summer half of the Soldiers will be gone (Dec. 4)

Hans Schnabel, person responsible for the conversion for the city of Schweinfurt, stated during the “ideas workshop” at the conference center: “In September 2014 the last American will turn the lights off.” This does not mean that the departure of U.S. Soldiers and family members in Schweinfurt will begin in two years. Since this is a long process, it will start soon. About half of the Soldiers will be departing Schweinfurt between March and June 2013, according to Schnabel. Next year the city would like to define a timeline with the Federal Agency for Real Estate (BImA) for the conversion. “Our wishful thinking is that we can begin with the conversion by spring/summer of 2015.” The conversion consultants have provided a list of how many apartments will be vacant in the city and county of Schweinfurt as a result of the drawdown of the U.S. Army. In the city, 120 apartments will be vacant, 555 leased apartments emptied in the city and about 700 apartments in Askren Manor. Already in the first analysis, consultant company BulwienGesa determined what the city and county of Schweinfurt do not need office space and hotels. The city’s demands are met with the new project in Hadergasse which includes office space and a new two-star hotel and for the county of Schweinfurt the consultant did not see a demand.

Residential areas, trade/industry, education, recreation – “Ideas Workshop” held at the conference center confirm online recommendations in regard to conversion of the U.S. Army real estate (Dec. 3)

Ledward Barracks could be housing the technical university and other educational institutions and/or accommodations for senior citizens. Conn Barracks, being close to the highway, would

make it ideal for space consuming industries, such as logistics or trucking companies, but could also be used for recreation facilities or a Center-Park – nobody recommended using it as an airfield. The residential areas Askren Manor and Yorktown Village should remain residential areas. The military training area “Brönnhof” should be left mainly as a nature area. The ideas workshop held last Friday at the conference center did not provide any additional recommendations, which had not been made in the online panel open for three weeks.

Approximately 120 people were interested in the subject. After listening to an hour-long report by representatives of companies Bulwien-Gesa and Zivilarena, 60 participants were separated into four working groups to provide detailed recommendations for use of Ledward Barracks, Conn Barracks, two housing areas and the military training area “Brönnhof.” Ironically, most of the participants were interested in the military training area “Brönnhof,” which is the least problem for the conversion experts of the city, county and communities. The majority of the 2,500 hectares should become a nature area, a habitat for flora and fauna for which high protection standards apply. Recommended recreation activities ranged from a “Mountain Trail Park” to a “Soft Air Field” [sic]. Furthermore, the area could be used for renewable energy production. Only 15 persons were interested in offering ideas for Ledward and Conn Barracks. The working group for Askren Manor and York Town Village with 6 participants was the smallest and therefore the number of ideas was limited. However, even prior to the online brainstorming, the tendency showed that both military housing areas remain residential areas also after the drawdown of the U.S. Army. So far, there was no surprise. However, the BulwienGesa expert had significant news. He informed everyone that on Monday and Tuesday last week they were allowed access to Ledward and Conn Barracks and Askren Manor. Heiko Schultz, assessment expert of company BulwienGesa reported the strengths and weaknesses of the individual installations. He stated that Ledward—an urban location within walking distance of the Technical University—would be ideal for apartments for students and for educational institutions. The buildings are solid. Conn Barracks, with its many streets and a railhead, would be suitable for space consuming industry (mono structure). However, the west part of the 200 hectare area houses the largest colony of rooks (i.e. birds) in North Bavaria. Askren Manors is free of contamination and all buildings are in good condition. The residential area is located close to two large streets with a lot of traffic—John-F.-Kennedy-Ring and B 303. Kessler Field is in a quiet urban area and offers many sport and recreational facilities. It has to be determined if the duplex houses in York Town Village can be used immediately after they have been inspected. The designated experts for conversion of the city, Hans Schnabel and the county, Konrad Bonengel will continue working together and will not act as competitors.

Light in the dark – the Christmas tree of the U.S. Army Garrison has been lit. (Dec. 3)

With a short, merry and atmospheric ceremony, the U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt lit its Christmas tree in front of the headquarters building along Niederwerrner Strasse. Even though the drawdown of the U.S. Army will not be completed until September 2014, some of the units will celebrate their last Christmas in Schweinfurt. An excellent brass quintet, coming from Heidelberg, played jazzy Christmas classics such as “Suzy Snowflake” and a small high school choir sang Christmas carols. In his prayer Garrison Chaplain Albert Downing pointed out the meaning of the Christmas tree: “Light in the middle of darkness, hope for peace on Earth and good will to all men.” Garrison Commander, LTC Michael Runey, first thanked the German partners and counterparts and then acknowledged all Soldiers who are serving in harm’s way all over the world and their families who cannot celebrate Christmas together. After the tree was lit

everyone sang “Oh Christmas Tree.” And last, but not least, Santa Claus arrived in a fire truck— not on a reindeer sled—and listened to the children’s Christmas wishes.

Clever ideas for military areas after the U.S. Army leaves: Online suggestions for conversion of U.S. Army properties (Nov. 30)

For three weeks ideas for the use of military areas in and around Schweinfurt were collected on the website www.zivilarena.de. 125 persons have actively participated and came up with 199 ideas. 285 people have passively observed the discussions, according to the company Zivilarena, which is responsible for the discussion platform. The array of the ideas is broad and ranges from the following fields: education, recreation, children, generations, nature, social/welfare, traffic, economy and living. The idea to use the installations for recreational activities—which represented 50 percent of the suggestions—is very popular for the Schweinfurt citizens, followed by suggestions to use the areas as industrial parks and to expand the infrastructure for educational institutions. Twenty-nine ideas suggested to use the space as residential areas. Some of the ideas were especially different. For example, several discussion participants see good preconditions for Conn Barracks to become a handpicked, sustainably managed industrial park. Others imagine Conn Barracks as a place for industry and innovative research, or as the location for a multifunction sport and event hall. For Ledward Barracks almost all suggestions would like it to become a new, active neighborhood with restaurant, recreational facilities and cultural institutions. Many of the discussion participants also would like public use of the existing sport facilities and more room for hobby and club activities. Many people see the American residential areas at Yorktown Village and Askren Manor that already exist as potential affordable apartments, especially for students, young families and people with low income. For the military training area “Brönnhof,” different ideas were presented: Nature protection areas but also parts for agricultural use, and even an amusement park. Some participants see possibilities to increase the recreational value without invading nature too much, such as a golf course, an “air soft” field, expansion of the hiking path net or making trails for mountain bikers and quad drivers. The idea of opening the tank road for public traffic attracted much interest. According to Zivilarena, the discussion was engaged, constructive and friendly and proved that the citizens of the Schweinfurt region are able to remain courteous in a discussion and achieve results. On Friday, Nov. 30, a workshop for ideas takes place at the conference center, Maininsel Schweinfurt as a live discussion following the online panel. In different work groups everyone will have the chance to relate the brainstorming to the concrete locations and real estates.

LEADERS/POLITICS

Friedrich Fischer college in Schweinfurt in need of renovation (Dec. 5)

Before the meeting with the administration union for the Friedrich Fischer College of Further Education even started, County Commissioner Harald Leitherer and Lord Mayor Remele were presented three petitions. The petition of the parents’ council demanded to stop the terrible conditions in the school buildings. About one thousand students signed a petition with an urgent demand to close the annex. The last petition presented by the faculty also requested improvements on the building, especially the sanitary installations. During the meeting County Commissioner Leitherer recommended to have the entire school building inspected since

improvements of the infrastructure are necessary for installation of an updated computer network and a thorough inspection of all sanitary installations including the sewer system. Furthermore, all toilet seats will be replaced immediately. The inspection which will be performed by the city subsidiary housing company will cost €9,000. However, tearing down the old school building and building a new one was not a subject – since after the drawdown of the U.S. Army several school buildings will be vacated and could offer alternatives according to Remele and Leitherer.

The Pope is registered with twitter (Dec. 4)

As of Dec. 12, messages from the Pope Benedikt XVI will be available on Twitter. Next to the account for English speakers twitter.com/pontifex there are seven more accounts in different languages, one of the in German twitter.com/pontifex.de. The validity of the accounts was confirmed by Twitter and the Vatican on Monday. By Tuesday at noon 500,862 followers had registered on the Pontifex channel.

ECONOMY

140 million chocolate Santa Klaus are waiting for consumers (Dec. 6)

The German chocolate industry produces 140 million chocolate Santa Clauses every year. The market is stable even though the price of chocolate went up due to increased cost for sugar and cocoa. Germans like chocolate more than most any nation. Each German consumes an average of 9.6 kilograms chocolate per year. Only the Swiss eat a little more. The branch had to take a significant kick-back because of an announcement by a German consumer protection agency, stating that some chocolate contained in advent calendars were contaminated. In 2011, 62 million advent calendars were produced, which should be about the same number for this year's production. As a precaution the majority of the affected calendars have been removed from the shelves. The consumers are bewildered even though the federal institute for risk assessment had given the all-clear signal. Christmas and Easter are still the most important seasons for the chocolate industry. Half of their yearly sales of €5 billion are made during those seasons.

HEALTH/WELLNESS

World Aids Day – HIV infections cannot be exterminated (Dec. 1)

The Würzburg Counseling Center counts on prevention and advises young people. There are more than 700 people infected with HIV in Lower Franconia. The number of people with HIV keeps increasing because the number of newly infected patients is higher than the number of deaths. In 2011, seven people in the region died. The numbers released on the occasion of World Aids Day on Dec. 1 were provided by the charity organization "Caritas" in Würzburg, which is responsible for all of Lower Franconia. The counseling center opened 25 years ago. Michael Koch, Manager of the Aids counseling center stated, "Since then, a lot has changed in the context of HIV and Aids – also positive developments." Thanks to modern therapy the human-immune deficiency illness has become a chronicle infection for many patients, still incurable but controllable with medication. Koch states that "We have noticed a kind of care freeness – the awareness that one has to protect oneself from Aids is decreasing." This trend is noticeable in all of Germany. In 2012, 31 new people have contacted the counseling center for advice. This is a significant increase to last year according to Michael Koch. During the past five years between

18 and 34 people contacted the counseling center for advice. In spite of good prevention campaigns still 10 people a day get infected with HIV in Germany.

SPORT

Hockey (Dec. 3)

The Mighty Dogs lost against the Freiburg Wolfs 0:3 last Sunday in Regensburg. Mighty Dogs coach Victor Proskuryakov stated the reasons: "Mikhail Nemirovsky who had not played for a while because of injuries and a new player, Lukas Rindos have not been quite ready physically and mentally." He does not want to blame them and states: "This is normal. Both had to start from 0 and go up to 100 and they showed good results. But it has to be clear that everybody can have set backs which is normal."