



October 2020

3033 St. Croix Trail South
P.O. Box 219
Afton, MN 55001

City of Afton Dashboard: A summary of current happenings

- ◆ 3M PFAS Settlement - City of Afton meets monthly with other affected cities and the DNR and MPCA to develop a Conceptual Drinking Water Supply Plan for the east metro area to provide safe drinking water over the long term. A set of three draft recommended options have been identified for public review and comment over the next month. More information can be found at <https://3msettlement.state.mn.us/DrinkingWaterSupply>.
- ◆ Afton Marina Lawsuit - The Court granted the City's motion for summary judgment and dismissed two of the three claims made by Afton Marina as unsupported by the applicable law. The Court will schedule trial on the third claim in the spring of 2021 to resolve disputed factual issues.
- ◆ Afton House Lawsuit - The City filed motion for a directed verdict in the City's favor on Afton House's trespass claim and a motion for a new trial on Afton House's condemnation claims because of incorrect jury instructions. The Court took the motions under advisement and a ruling is expected by October 31, 2020.
- ◆ Public Works - 30th Street box culvert replacement, street renovation, shoulder replacement and guard rail replacement has been completed and the road is open for traffic.
- ◆ Speed limit on east 50th Street has been reduced to 35mph. Please be courteous to your neighbors and don't speed.
- ◆ Speed Enforcement - Nearly 300 traffic stops for speeding and noise have occurred in Afton this summer as a result of the city's new agreement with the Washington County's Sheriff's department for additional patrols.



30th street box culvert replacement project

- SAR

Signs Signs, everywhere a sign....

Like the 70s song, it is that time when signs are popping up everywhere in Afton. So, here is a tutorial on placement rules and penalties;

All signs must be placed on private property with the permission of the land owner. "Advertisement Signs" (political, business or personal) are not allowed on any public property or public right-of-way whether it be state, county or local. Also, advertisement signs may not be attached to any traffic control signs, structures or utility poles.

The right-of-way along our roads includes the land immediately adjacent to all public roads and are best identified by the location of utility poles which are placed on or very near the boundary between public land and private property. On our local roads the right-of-way extends approximately eighteen (18) feet from the edge of the asphalt road.

This rule applies to all 50 miles of Afton's local roads, the three county roads Co. Rd. 18, Co. Rd. 21, Co. Rd. 71 and the one state road, MN Hwy 95 (Manning).

In the Ag zone, any sign over 2 sq. ft. in size shall be setback at least 10 feet from the public right-of-way or lot lines. In the Rural Residential zone, all signs shall be setback 10 feet from any lot line or right-of-way.

In the Old Village, all signs shall be setback at least 2 feet from any lot line or right-of-way. The county's right-of-way includes St. Croix Trail, the boulevards and the sidewalks.

The Washington County Public Works Dept. regularly collects all signs placed in their right of way.

Penalties for stealing or vandalizing signs depend on the value of the sign and can range from a gross misdemeanor to a felony.

If you have specific questions about the county's right-of-way location, or to report signs in the right of way please call Carol Hanson, Washington County Public Works at 651-430-4313.

* Minnesota Statute 160.2715(a)(9)

Except for the actions of the road authorities, their agents, employees, contractors, and utilities in carrying out their duties imposed by law or contract, and except as herein provided, it shall be unlawful to place or maintain any advertisement within the limits of any highway.

-SAR

CITY MEETINGS

The regular meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council are being held remotely. Other Volunteer Commissions and Committees are canceled for October unless otherwise noted below. Remote meetings of those committees may be held if timely action is needed and if properly noticed.

October 5, 2020

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.
(To be held remotely)

October 20, 2020

City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.
(To be held remotely)

Information on how to join the meetings will be posted on the City website along with the agenda and meeting packet.

CITY COUNCIL

<u>Mayor:</u>	Bill Palmquist	651-308-0569
<u>Ward 1:</u>	Annie Perkins	651-592-3007
<u>Ward 2:</u>	Lucia Wroblewski	651-436-3982
<u>Ward 3:</u>	Stan Ross	612-720-6478
<u>Ward 4:</u>	Randy Nelson	651-436-2479

CITY HALL

651-436-5090

CITY WEBSITE

www.ci.afton.mn.us

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Animal Control	715-220-1332
Building Inspector	651-436-6469
Burning Permits	651-248-5103
Environmental Center	651-275-7475
Highland Sanitation	651-458-0043
Otter Lake Animal Care	651-426-8871
Fire Dept	651-436-7033
Sheriff's Dept	651-439-9381

EMERGENCY 911

Notes from the Mayor

The council approved a preliminary 2021 budget at the September meeting. This budget can be reduced before final approval but not increased. The final budget will be voted on in December when we will also hold the Budget and Tax Hearing. Detailed information on the budget will be sent out with the newsletter before that hearing.

I want to take a moment to touch on a few of the challenges the council faced during the budget process. 2020 has been an incredibly difficult year for so many of us, on many levels, including financially. The council looked for ways to keep any increases as low as possible, while still meeting our long-term goals and commitments.

The main issue was that non-discretionary expenditure increases were high this year. These are expenses for things like the fire department, the sheriff's contract, and built-in bond costs, among other things. They represented a 2.39% levy increase on their own. The preliminary levy that was approved was 3.93%, so a little more than 1.5% over those fixed increases. A fairly large part of that relates to continued funding of the city's pay-as-you go long-term funding plan for roads. This plan has been in place for several years. When it was approved it laid out a series of annual increases necessary to avoid the need for incurring debt for roadwork. The council felt it was important to keep that plan funded at the agreed upon levels.

The council decided to forgo several long-term, fund-related line items that have been in the budget for years. Those funds are used to build balances over time to address larger cost items. They related to stormwater, park capital repair, the Comprehensive Plan, to name a few. I feel it is safe to do that as the funds have healthy balances if they are needed in the near future. We will reassess that next year. We also reviewed many other line items and worked with staff to find reductions throughout this budget.

There is one new expenditure line-item in the proposed budget intended to deal with the legal costs associated with three properties in the Old Village. The council reduced the initially proposed amount of this new item, but kept this item in the preliminary budget. The legal costs are quite high, and the final legal costs are as yet unknown. However, those expenses will need to be dealt with in future budget cycles and we want to at least begin to account for them in this budget in an effort to avoid large one-time budget increases. The legal costs relate to the value of the easements the city obtained during the downtown project. These easements were needed primarily for the levee certification project in order to get the Old Village out of the flood plain and protect it from flooding. The easement amounts in question were determined by an independent appraiser hired by the city before the project began. There will be more information provided in this newsletter on each of these legal issues once we have final resolutions.

Also, at the September meeting the council passed an amendment to the gun discharge ordinance. This change is intended to deal with the increasing problems we have experienced due to excessive shooting. Although I did not vote for the amendment as presented, the issue is very real, and I want to let you know that all of us on the council agreed something needed to be done. Our differences were about some of the specifics, and the appropriate first steps. I am hopeful this action will alleviate a growing problem and we can move forward from here. We have asked the Planning Commission to revisit the issue in one year to look at how it is working and if any changes are warranted.

-Bill

Meeting Highlights

August 31, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing on an ordinance amendment regarding the discharge of firearms and public nuisance noises and provided recommendations to the City Council.

September 15, 2020 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Extended the declaration of local emergency.
- Approved an ordinance amendment regarding the discharge of firearms and public nuisance noises.
- Approved payment for the River Road Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project.
- Received an update on the 30th Street Improvement Project.
- Received an update on Afton Creek Preserve construction.
- Received an update on the FEMA Flood Certification process.
- Approved the 2021 Preliminary Budget and Tax Levy.
- Approved continuation of extra speed enforcement patrols.

MEETING PACKETS, VIDEOS AND APPROVED MEETING MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE AT: www.ci.afton.mn.us



General Election November 3, 2020

VOTE Absentee Citizens are encouraged to vote ahead for the General elections via absentee ballot if they so choose. Absentee voting will reduce the number of voters at the polling place and limit health risks during the pandemic.

Absentee by Mail Statewide General absentee voting begins September 18 and ballots will be available in person or mailed beginning that day. To have a ballot mailed to you, contact Washington County Elections, 651-430-6175 or online at the Minnesota Secretary of State website www.mnvotes.org.

Ballot Drop Off:

You may drop off a total of three ballots for other voters. When dropping off other people's ballots, you must show a photo ID and sign a log.

- September 18 - November 2: Ballots can be dropped off at any of the five locations listed in "Absentee In-Person"
- On Election Day, November 3, voted absentee ballots can be dropped off at the Washington County Gov't Center before 3PM.
- Ballots left in any drop boxes located outside county offices will **not** be accepted.
- Absentee ballots cannot be dropped off at polling places on Election Day.

Absentee In-person In person absentee voting will begin September 18 and run through November 2 at the below locations:

Monday - Friday, 8AM - 4:30PM
Saturday, Oct 31, 8AM - 3PM
Monday, Nov 2, 8AM - 5PM

- Cottage Grove Service Center, 13000 Ravine Pkwy, Cottage Grove
- Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Ave N, Oakdale
- Headwaters Service Center, 19955 Forest Rd N, Forest Lake
- Washington County Gov't Center, 14949 62nd St N, Stillwater
- Woodbury Central Park/RH Stafford Library, Lower Level, 8595 Central Park Place, Woodbury, MN

Absentee Voting Reminders:

- Voters are encouraged to submit absentee ballot applications early.
- The earliest a ballot will be mailed to you is 46 days prior to Election Day.
- Allow enough time to complete the application, have your ballot mailed to you, vote your ballot, and return it to Washington County via mail so it is postmarked by Election Day and received no later than seven days after the election.
- You cannot drop off your voted ballot at your precinct on Election Day.

VOTE In Person November 3, 2020. Afton's polling place will be set up to comply with COVID-19 safety guidelines. Social distancing will be in force which may limit the number of voters indoors at a given time. Election judges will wear masks. Voters must wear a mask, and a supply will be available at the door, as well as hand sanitizer. Each voter will be provided a pen to use for marking their ballot and to then take with them. Polling pads will expedite the registration and sign-in process, and Plexiglas barriers will be in place.

The polling location for Afton residents is Shepherd of the Valley, 14107 Hudson Rd S. Polling hours are 7 am to 8 pm., November 3, 2020.

VOTER Registration To check your voter registration status or register to vote, visit the MN Secretary of State's Voter Information Portal at: www.sos.state.mn.us or contact Washington County Elections at 651-430-6175. Voters also may register on election day at the polling location.



Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

**Education Center Third Saturday
October 17, 2020 9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Explore the Belwin Education Center and its miles of rolling, wooded trails. The Education Center building will be open for check in, directions, and restrooms. Face masks are required to enter the building.

Belwin Conservancy is pleased to be able to open the Education Center trails to the public once a month. Thanks to our staff and volunteers for making this possible

**Belwin Conservancy
1553 Stagecoach Trail South
Afton MN 55001
651-436-5189
www.belwin.org**

Candidates for Afton City Office

City Council Ward 1 — 4 year term

Robert Q. Dickie
Annie Perkins

City Council Ward 4 — 4 year term

Randy P. Nelson

Mayor — 2 year term

Bill Palmquist

COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program

If you are a renter or homeowner that is falling behind on housing payments due to COVID-19 related issues, you may qualify for financial help through the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program administered by Minnesota Housing (State of Minnesota's housing finance agency).

ETCIC is partnering with MN Housing to provide renters/homeowners assistance with the application process and be a liaison through the process. This service is being provided to everyone irrespective of religious beliefs.

Please visit our website at <http://www.etcic.org/community-outreach> for further information or call ETCIC Social Services at 651-300-4262.



CITY OF AFTON
3033 ST CROIX TRAIL SO
P.O. BOX 219
AFTON, MN 55001



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AFTON MN 55001
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Valley Library October 2020

Valley Library is open with limited capacity and modified hours. Visitors can come to pick up holds, browse materials, and use computers without an appointment. Our meeting rooms will remain closed.

When visiting Valley Library, please help protect everyone in the library by:

- Wearing a mask in the building.
- Practicing social distancing from other visitors and staff.
- Keeping your library visit to one hour or less.

Valley Branch Library

384 St Croix Trail S
Lakeland, MN 55043
651-436-5882

www.washcolib.org

Open with limited capacity. Current hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday: 12 to 7 p.m.

Randy Kopesky Memorial Veterans Recognition Curbside Dinner

Thursday, November 12, 2020

**CURBSIDE PICKUP at
The Church of St. Francis of Assisi
Lake Saint Croix Beach**

FREE Chicken Dinner - for Lower St.
Croix Valley Veterans, Service Members,
and their Families

Reservations by NOVEMBER 7th

Email: ddmsjames@gmail.com or

Phone: [Mary 651-436-8696](tel:651-436-8696)

Curbside Pickup time 5:00 – 6:30 pm

Thank You for your service!

Tell us how you recycle for a chance to win a \$25 Amazon gift card!

Help Washington County provide the information you need to recycle better by completing an online survey at <https://bit.ly/3457FVVB>

Complete the survey by October 2, 2020 to be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. Seventy-five (75) gift cards are available. Odds of winning depend on number of completed surveys.

PATRON AFTON, MN 55001

You may view this newsletter

IN COLOR
on the city website.



*Please recycle this
newsletter after use.*

Lower St. Croix Valley Fire Department Halloween Event

On Halloween evening Saturday, October 31st from 5pm to 7pm, the Lower St Croix Valley Fire Department will be hosting a community trick or treat event at the station for those parents wishing to stop by with their little ghosts and goblins.

Candy will be distributed by driving into the front of the fire department parking lot (1560 St Croix Trail South in Lake St Croix Beach). Residents should remain in their vehicles and firefighters and EMT's will approach your vehicle to say hello and distribute candy maintaining proper social distancing.

This is a great opportunity for us to express our sincere THANK YOU and appreciation to all of you who have supported us over this past year with your kind thoughts, words and donations. Stay Safe!

Tree and Vegetation reminder

The Lower St Croix Valley Fire Department would like to alert property owners to problems we are experiencing with overgrown vegetation in and around roadways and driveways in the five-city area. We have had a great growing season this year unlike any other with all of the rain that we have experienced and things have greened up very nicely.

However, we are having issues at intersections in the neighborhoods in our main corridor obstructing lines of sight. This is very dangerous for all drivers including our members trying to safely get to the station in order to respond to your emergency and our response vehicles. This is also very dangerous for pedestrians and our children. Please follow the cities ordinances for line of sight clearance at intersection. We are also having clearance issues with both width and height on roadways and driveways in both suburban and rural for locations. As a reminder, we need 12' of clearance both directions for clear passage of our larger emergency vehicles to safely pass through without causing damage to vehicles.

In addition, it is also very imperative that mailboxes are cleared of vegetation as well as this is also an important tool with us to locate homes when medical or other emergencies occur.

Jim Stanley
Fire Chief, LSCVFD