



April 2016

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

Afton High Speed Internet Agreement Approved

With a unanimous vote at its March 15 meeting, the City Council approved an Internet expansion agreement with CenturyLink, clearing the way for Afton's internet connectivity upgrades. CenturyLink will add 15 more DSLAMs (fiber to wire junction boxes) in Afton which means everyone in Afton will have a minimum of 10 megabits per second (mbs) download and 1 mbs upload speed. Depending on your distance from a DSLAM many of you will see speeds much faster - approaching 100mbs download. CenturyLink has also agreed to move many of our aging copper voice lines over to fiber which will improve voice and data reliability.

A substantial portion of the project cost will be funded through the federal Connect America Fund (CAF) program. The remaining project cost, which will be shared between CenturyLink and Afton, is \$269,100 of which Afton's "not to exceed" contribution is \$125,000. CenturyLink has agreed to pay any cost overruns.

CenturyLink will start construction in June and plans on having Afton's new Internet connectivity system up and running by September. CenturyLink will send notices to Afton homes indicating the new system is active. CenturyLink has also agreed to make provisions for future fiber to the home as part of this project.

I would like to thank the volunteer members that I worked with on the High Speed Internet Committee for all of their hard work and dedication to making this project come to life. I encourage Afton residents to become more involved with our local government and volunteer for committees – *it does make a difference!*

Stan Ross, Ward 3, Afton City Council Member

City seeks Cable TV subscriber input on Local Access Cable TV Programming

Cable TV subscribers are being asked to weigh in on local access cable TV programming. The Lower St. Croix Cable Commission, of which Afton is a member, is considering whether to continue its agreement with the Central Valley Cable Commission, which provides local programming on four channels (Channels 14, 15, 16 and 18), including both local government and School District programming such as Afton/Lakeland School programs and Stillwater High School sports. Eliminating the local programming would enable the five cities to collectively avoid a cost increase of \$4,800, and would actually enable a total cost savings of \$21,600. Afton's share of those costs is approximately 20%.

The current costs related to the local access programming are funded with Cable TV franchise fee revenue. A new funding source being considered for the additional \$4,800 of funding necessary to continue the local access programming is to institute a Public Education Government (PEG) fee, which would cost cable TV subscribers approximately \$1.50 per month as part of their monthly cable TV bill.

IF YOU SUBSCRIBE TO CABLE – we'd like your responses to these two questions. Please email your responses to administrator@ci.afton.mn.us or call Ron Moore at 651-436-8957 by **Friday, April 15**.

1. Is it important to you to continue to have access to the local programming described above?
2. Do you support a \$1.50 per month PEG fee for all Cable TV subscribers to fund the additional costs of continuing local access programming?

Thank you in advance for your feedback.

CITY CLEAN UP WEEK

Leave your "road finds" on the nearest street corner on your regular trash pick up day:
Tuesday, April 19 or
Thursday, April 21

CITY MEETINGS

April 4, 2016

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

April 19, 2016

City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

April 20, 2016

Heritage Preservation Commission
5:00 P.M.

April 20, 2016

Natural Resources & Groundwater
6:30 P.M.

All meetings are held at City Hall unless otherwise noted.

CITY COUNCIL

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------|
| <u>Mayor:</u> | Richard Bend | 436-7684 |
| <u>Ward 1:</u> | Bill Palmquist | 308-0569 |
| <u>Ward 2:</u> | Joe Richter | 436-1819 |
| <u>Ward 3:</u> | Stan Ross | 436-1346 |
| <u>Ward 4:</u> | Randy Nelson | 436-2479 |

CITY HALL

Monday — Friday
9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.
651 - 436 - 5090

CITY WEBSITE

www.ci.afton.mn.us

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Animal Control | 715-386-7789 |
| Building Inspector | 436-6469 |
| Burning Permits | 248-5103 |
| Environmental Center | 430-6655 |
| Highland Sanitation | 458-0043 |
| Hillcrest Animal Hosp | 484-7211 |
| LSCV Fire Dept | 436-7033 |
| Sheriff's Office | 439-9381 |

EMERGENCY 911

A Letter from the Mayor

Municipal accounting is for the average resident an invisible science; for those of us on the city council understanding it and making policy decisions based on that understanding is a large part of our workload. Accounting reports make up a large percentage of the 100 to 200 page monthly packets we digest each month.

One Afton resident and volunteer, Jim Bougie, saw in Afton's financial data an opportunity for a simplified report that could inform the council in a way no existing accrual report did. He approached the city and offered to compile a monthly cash flow graph that on one page could inform the council of the city's cash position as it fluctuates over time. That graph has for years complemented the city's voluminous accrual reports. Its simple blue line has repeatedly shown by its position above the red line that all is well in Afton and occasionally shown by a change in direction that policy changes should be considered.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Jim for recognizing how he on the finance committee could make a contribution to the city's smooth and transparent functioning. With the growth in Afton's financial management function, Jim's graph will now be morphed into an added column in the monthly financial reports generated by Tom Niedzwieki, Afton's city accountant.

We in Afton are lucky to have so many residents like Jim who with their ideas and hard work have contributed to Afton's efficient, transparent and equitable financial operation. Your ideas make our jobs on the council much easier. Thanks to Jim and to those hidden among you who, perhaps without realizing it yet, are about to make the next great contributions to our city.

Best Regards, Richard Bend

Looking for a fresh start in your yard?

The East Metro Water Resource Education Program in partnership with Master Gardeners in Washington County invites you to attend a spring landscaping workshop. Please register at: <http://tinyurl.com/2016LandscapeWorkshops>.

Urban Landscape Workshops – FREE

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Thursday, April 7 | 6 p.m.-8 p.m. | Lake Elmo Public Library | 3537 Lake Elmo Ave N. | Lake Elmo |
| Tuesday, April 26 | 6 p.m.-8 p.m. | All Saints Lutheran Church | 8100 Belden Blvd. | Cottage Grove |
| Wednesday, May 4 | 6 p.m.-8 p.m. | Vanelli's by the Lake | 55 Lake St. S. | Forest Lake |

Rural Landscape Workshops – FREE

| | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Wednesday, April 27 | 6p.m.-8p.m. | Scandia Community Center | 14727 209th St. N. | Scandia |
| Tuesday, May 10 | 6p.m.-8p.m. | Carpenter Nature Center | 12805 St. Croix Trail S. | Hastings |



2016 CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The new St. Croix Crossing connecting Minnesota with Wisconsin is in its fourth year of construction. The new river crossing will open in Fall 2017.

River bridge construction update

All river piers and towers are built to full height and the crossbeams are complete. After ice-out, construction crews will resume installing pre-cast bridge segments and the stay cables located above the bridge deck which help support the weight on the bridge.

River channel navigation

The bridge construction zone on the St. Croix River between Stillwater and Bayport will be incredibly congested in 2016 with barges, boats and equipment. The river navigation channel will con-

tinuously change to allow crews to construct the bridge deck at all five pier locations.

Boaters should be aware that the project is transporting pre-cast river bridge segments via barge from its Grey Cloud Island casting yard near Cottage Grove to the bridge construction site north of Bayport. Barge activity will be much more frequent compared to 2015, with shipments potentially occurring daily.

Boaters are asked to stay between the red and green buoys that designate the channel and to respect the one mile "slow / no wake" worker safety zones.

Please safely share the waterway with project barges.



Public boat tours continue

View the amazing work the crews are doing from a guided public boat tour of the bridge construction via the St. Croix Boat & Packet paddle boat!

Tours are scheduled for the following dates, rain or shine: Wednesday and Saturdays: May 11 & 21; June 15 & 25; July 16 & 27; August 13 & 24; September 10 & 14; and, October 8. Go to: www.stillwaterriverboats.com for more details and to reserve seats. Tickets for adults are \$10; and \$6 for ages 4 to 12.

Planning Commission, March 7

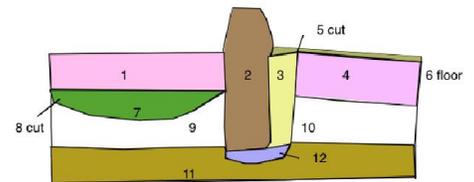
- **Heard** a presentation by Ryan Garcia, Sector Rep from the Metropolitan Council about the next Comprehensive Plan update, due by December 31, 2018, and an overview of the resources available. The city must hold at least one Public Hearing for input and comments from residents. Neighboring communities, watershed districts and school districts are given a six-month review period prior to submitting the Plan to the Met Council for review and approval. Met Council review will look for: 1) conformance to the Regional System Plans and Statements; 2) consistency with policy plans; and, 3) compatibility with plans of affected and adjacent jurisdictions. Two new areas the Met Council is asking cities to address in this update are: Resilience-key principles of sustainability and the environment; and, Economic Competitiveness-a regional, national or international level niche that is filled which benefits residents.
- **Held a Public Hearing** for Nature's Trees/SavATree Conditional Use Permit application for a headquarters facility on a 5.9 acre parcel in the northeast corner of the property on Hudson Road with PID#06.028.20.24.0002. The facility will have an office area and a garage area. Truck fueling will take place on site, requiring bulk fuel storage in outdoor tanks. There will be no chipping/processing of wood debris on site. The subdivision approval for the creation of the SavATree parcel included the dedication of a public road right-of-way adjacent to the northwest corner of the parcel. The City required an agreement for a driveway to be constructed on the public right-of-way lane adjacent to the SavATree parcel and provides that the City shall have no responsibility for the construction or maintenance of the driveway, or the future construction of a public road.
- **Recommended** approval to the City Council for the Nature's Trees CUP.
- **Discussed** terminology in the Comp Plan and city ordinances which may need to be modified, possibly updating definitions such as "commercial" to match what may be a new understanding of the use.
- **Recommended** denial to the City Council for an amendment to the zoning code to allow a commercial wedding venue as an accessory use with a Conditional Use Permit in the Rural Residential zoning district on lots 20 acres or greater.

City Council Meeting, March 15

- **Denied** the proposed ordinance amendment to the zoning code to allow a commercial wedding venue as an accessory use to a principal dwelling, on lots 20 acres or greater, located on a state or county road in the Rural Residential zoning district with a Conditional Use Permit.
- **Approved** Nature's Trees/SavATree Conditional Use Permit for a headquarters facility on the 5.9 acre parcel in the northeast corner of PID#06.028.20.24.0002.
- **Appointed** Lucy McAllister, Jeff Brower and Scott Patten to the Afton Branding Committee.
- **Approved** salary increases of 2% for the Office Assistant and Public Works staff.
- **Restructured** the Deputy Clerk position, adding zoning-related duties, re-titling the position as City Clerk and approving a 7% increase pay rate to \$25,400.
- **Approved** a Step 2, 4-1/2% increase for the City Administrator to \$92,150.
- **Voted** to enter into an agreement with CenturyLink for the expansion of high speed internet access throughout the City, setting the expansion requirements and cost parameters, which are not to exceed \$125,000 for the City's match.
- **Considered** an agreement with the Afton Historical Museum for cemetery maintenance and restoration of the City's Mount Hope Cemetery. The Museum will be present a maintenance budget to the City at the April 19 Council meeting.
- **Directed** the City Attorney to draft an ordinance establishing regulations related to the maintenance and operation of City-owned cemeteries.
- **Authorized** removing 15 cedar trees on Quadrant Avenue not to exceed \$2,500.
- **Authorized** the Parks Committee to send out plans and specs to get firm cost quotes to construct the Town Square Park restroom building.

Downtown Improvement Projects Update

- A site visit and consultation meeting with representatives of a number of tribal governments and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was held on February 19 regarding how the City's downtown improvement projects relate to an effigy mound in the Old Village area.
- It was decided that a Phase II Investigation on the mound site would obtain more information about the integrity of the mound and whether there may be artifacts or burials in or near the mound. This information will further enable avoidance of impacts to the mound site. The Phase II investigation will be completed in April.



- The additional investigation and follow-up consultation with the tribal governments and SHPO will cause a delay in construction, which was originally planned to begin in April. As the investigation is completed and the consultation moves forward, the projected timing of construction will become clearer and will be provided in the May newsletter.

Planning Commission seeks applicants to fill open seat

The Planning Commission studies and makes recommendations to the City Council concerning land use in the city. They review applications for conditional use permits, rezoning, variances and subdivisions, and hold public hearings as required by state statute. Members serve 3-year terms. Meetings are the first Monday of each month.

If interested (**and we hope you are**), please complete an Application for Commission or Committee, available on the City Website or City Office.



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



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
AFTON MN 55001
PERMIT NO. 15

Valley Branch Library — April Events

Preschool Storytime

Mondays, April 4 & 11, 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Pre-K & caregivers. Stories, songs and finger-plays help develop early literacy skills.



Featured Events

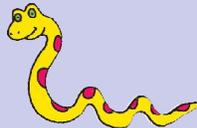
Sing, Play, Learn: Colors, Feelings, Music

Monday, April 18, from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.
MacPhail Center for Music's specialists host the magic of music and play. Hands-on musical play activities for children to age 5. This program is funded by Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Register at the library or call 651-436-5882.



Snake Discovery

Thursday, April 21, from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m.
Experience the fascinating world of amazing snakes and get an up-close look at some of nature's most misunderstood creatures with exotic animal expert, Emily Roberts.



"Every Penny Counts" Preschool Storytime

Monday, April 25, from 10:30 to 11 a.m.
Money-Smart Week has a money-themed story-time; Preschool to K and their caregivers.



Dog Gone Reading IS BACK! — with Legacy

Monday, April 26, from 4 to 6 p.m.
K-7th graders "bone up on reading" again!! New certified therapy dog, Legacy, and its owner are ready for YOU! Sign up for 15-minute reading sessions at the library or call 651-436-5882.



Valley Library Book Club

Thursday, April 28, from 5 to 6 p.m.
The book this month is "The Invention of Wings" by Sue Monk Kidd. Read the book, come, and discuss. Open to all.



Celebrate Washington County Library's 50TH ANNIVERSARY!



Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Join Valley Branch Library's 50th Anniversary celebration with face painting & balloon animals.



Meet Legacy, the new "Dog Gone Reading" dog and her owner! (Fetch a good read with her!)

Cookies and punch will be served!

PATRON AFTON, MN 55001

View this newsletter
IN COLOR
on the city website.



Please recycle this
newsletter after use.

Crime Prevention

According to Washington County Deputy Nick Sullivan, phone & email scams are being run in the name of the IRS. Phone calls can either be live or automated; they indicate there is a problem with your tax return and/or there will be a warrant for your arrest if you don't pay them money.



PREVENT SCAMS: DON'T SEND ANYONE \$\$!

THE FACT IS: The IRS only sends information through the U.S. Mail.

Afton honors Earth Day by having residents pick up debris from ditches, roadsides and park areas. Coordinate with neighbors along streets or just pick up the trash along your own property frontage. Roadside "finds" and trash should be placed at the nearest street intersection for pickup by Highland Sanitation trucks on your regular trash day: **Tuesday, April 19 or Thursday, April 21.**

You can use your own plastic trash bags or get heavy duty ones from City Hall to bag your roadside finds. Wear sturdy gloves, long sleeves and tuck pants into socks or waterproof boots to avoid wet feet, getting scratches and attracting ticks. Rakes or long-handled "grabbers" minimize stooping over or having to crawl under bushes.