



April 2017

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

Environmental Center Location:

4039 Cottage Grove Drive in Woodbury
(Near the intersection of Manning Avenue & Bailey Road)

Hours of Operation:

Tuesdays: noon-7:00pm;
Thursdays & Saturdays: 9:00am-2:00pm. *Closed on major holidays. Proof of Washington County residency is required.*

For more information about the *Free Product Room* or the *Washington County Environmental Center* go to: www.co.washington.mn.us/envirocenter

Here is the most recent update from CTL on the Internet build.

Question # 1) Will the entire system come up at the same time or will it be zone by zone.

CTL answer) There are 6 zones in the Afton project and the system will come up zone by zone – the exact order is TBD but will know soon. It looks like we are close to having one of the zones finished and 3 more are coming up around April 15th. The remaining two jobs will require us to cut over customers one by one. Those two zones, if we push and all goes well, could be completed by June 1st. I will keep you updated as each zone rolls to our system as qualified and ready for customers to order. Customers requiring the cut will be notified with door hangers and direct mail so that they can make appointments with our technicians to cut them over from copper to the new fiber system.

Question # 2) How and when will the residents get notified.

CTL answer) We will do a direct mail drop roughly within 30 days of the area going green – meaning the address shows available to order in our loop qualification system. Later in the summer, we also have door to door teams that will be out selling.

Question # 3) Per our agreement, everyone in Afton is guaranteed 10mbs download speeds to their house, I assume there will be several residents that will run speed tests once the project is done. How will those residents that are not seeing this minimum be handled and who should they call?

CTL answer) There are going to be a few things that could affect speed tests including the customer's internal wiring and/or customer's computer, etc. That said, if there are issues, please have customers call our DSL repair center at 877-348-9005 or they can visit the troubleshooting page at

<http://www.centurylink.com/home/help.html>

March 31st is the Deadline

Pet License LATE FEE is in effect 04-01-2017. The late fee is an additional \$5.00 per pet.

- With our long awaited
- Afton Downtown Village
- Improvement Project finally starting this spring,
- it is important to note
- that during the construction, Afton will still be
- open for business and
- the City encourages the
- continued support of our
- local shops.

SEASONAL LOAD LIMIT NOTIFICATION

Road Restriction maps indicating the locations of weight restricted routes and those state highways open to maximum ten-ton axle weights are listed on the MnDOT Seasonal Load Limits website at www.mndot.gov/loadlimits. Click on "Spring Load Restrictions." Also available is a text list of the restricted segments along with exceptions to the map.

Belwin Conservancy

April Events

Saturday, April 29

Invasive Species Workshop for Neighbors and Abutters: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meet at Belwin Conservancy office, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S. Space is limited, RSVP online. 651-436-5189,

www.belwin.org.

CITY MEETINGS

April 3, 2017

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

April 4, 2017

Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee
6:30

April 19, 2017

Heritage Preservation Commission
5:00 P.M.

April 18, 2017

City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

April 26, 2017

Parks Committee
(Will be cancelled if no agenda items.)
6:00 P.M.

All meetings are held at City Hall unless otherwise noted.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor: Richard Bend 436-7727

Ward 1: Bill Palmquist 308-0569

Ward 2: Joe Richter 436-1819

Ward 3: Stan Ross 436-1346

Ward 4: 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 Dept 439-9381

EMERGENCY 911

A Letter from the Mayor

Thank you to current and past city staff, council members, volunteer members of Afton's committees and commissions and former mayor Pat Snyder as well as state and county project partners who made it possible to start construction of our Old Village project. You have done great work!

Next, as promised last month, here is a cheat sheet on common invasive trees and shrubs, starting with additional guides to identification.

A very useful pocket sized spiral booklet with heavy stock pages that I have used for many years can be purchased from the DNR Bookstore by calling 651.297.3000 during regular business hours (8 am – 4 pm CT, Monday – Friday). The Bookstore's walk-in hours are 8am - 3 pm, Monday through Friday at 660 Olive Street, St. Paul, MN. Invasive forbs and grasses are well covered in the above two resources, so I am not going to discuss either, but rather will focus on a few often-overlooked trees and shrubs.

Both Chinese Elms and Black Locust have been widely planted in Afton, each for a different original purpose. Each is invasive, spreading rapidly and displacing native trees. Black Locust was planted in ravines and gullies to control erosion; Chinese Elms were planted in open areas to provide quick growing large trees requiring little care. If you have either on your property, they should be eradicated if you desire a native environment that is nonthreatening to native plants, shrubs and trees.

Everyone in Afton is aware of Buckthorn, so coverage isn't needed, but Amur Maple is less well known and once established, equally dangerous. It out-competes Buckthorn when both grow in the same area for long. It has been planted widely for its quick growing nature and colorful orange fall leaves. No native forbs or grasses will grow under either it or Buckthorn once either dominates an area.

Now let's consider the use and misuse of invasive control methods. Many effective invasive control methods, if misused, destroy native species at the same time they eliminate the targeted invasive species. The following are the counterproductive methods I have observed being used most widely in Afton:

1. Repeated mowing during the hot summer months kills native grasses, replacing them with non-native cool-season grasses such as bromes and turf grasses (bluegrasses, fescues, and rye-grasses). The best practice is to limit spring mowing to mid-April to late May and then mow again when native grasses and forbes have gone dormant in the fall if control of invasive Buckthorn and Amur Maple is needed.
2. In non-prairie areas, blanket area mowing to control Amur Maple and Buckthorn, when done in the spring or fall, destroys native forbs that come up before the trees leaf out. It also destroys native shrubs such as Grey Dogwood, Red Osier Dogwood and, in wet areas, low growing Willows. Instead, brush saws or spot mowing should be used to maintain native plants and shrubs which will then spread into areas where the mowing has controlled invasives.
3. Many areas in Afton have been and continue to be planted in non-native coniferous trees (especially Spruces and Pines). With the exception of small stands of White Pines and Northern Red Cedars, essentially all coniferous trees in Afton are non-native, as evidenced by the lack of any complementary undergrowth, resident small animal species with the exception of red squirrels, and an inability to self-seed.

The Minnesota DNR has two useful publications available online for those interested in maintaining natural prairies:

- <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/privatelandhabitat/est-prairie-grasses-wildflowers.pdf>; and,
- <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/prairierestoration/goingnative.pdf>

The maintenance section in the latter publication is particularly useful. Be aware that for a truly native ecosystem that replicates the pre-settlement Afton biome, you should not be creating a prairie devoid of all trees and shrubs. For a more complete description of Afton vegetative communities, see the following section of Afton's Natural Resource Inventory on Afton's website: http://www.ci.afton.mn.us/vertical/sites/%7B255148F5-88B9-45F6-9726-DD95D24AA11D%7D/uploads/III_The_Landscape_of_Afton.pdf

I should note that the lay observations and conclusions contained in this series of Mayor's notes are based on personal observations made during my life in Afton. I welcome corrections and comments to the editor from the true experts among you.

Valley Branch Watershed District partners with local homeowners to protect Kelles Creek

Last year, the Valley Branch Watershed District received a Minnesota Clean Water Fund grant to address *E. coli* bacteria contamination in Afton's Kelle's Creek. Three years ago, a study determined that failing septic systems (Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems – SSTS) are to blame for high levels of *E. coli* in the creek. Bacteria from household sewage is getting into shallow groundwater that feeds the stream; the stream then flows to the St. Croix River.

To identify failing septic systems, Valley Branch Watershed District is offering FREE septic system inspections (normally \$400–500) to homeowners within the Kelle's Creek sub-watershed. (Washington County requires compliance inspections before selling your home or adding a new bedroom and bathroom.) In addition, there are two sources of financial assistance to help homeowners upgrade or replace their systems if they are found to be noncompliant:

- Low-interest loans and low-income grants offered through Washington County
- A cost-share program offered by the Valley Branch Watershed District, covering 25% of upgrade/replacement costs for non-compliant systems, up to \$5,000

Last year, the watershed district worked with several homeowners in Afton to inspect, and when necessary, replace their septic systems. Funding for the grant will run out at the end of 2017. If you live within the Kelle's Creek sub-watershed and have not yet scheduled an inspection for your system, please contact Jennifer Koehler at 952-832-2750 or jkoehler@barr.com before Oct. 1 to participate.

Additional details can be found on the VBWD website at <http://www.vbwd.org/KellesCreek.html>.

March 6, 2017 Planning Commission Meeting

The Planning Commission elected the following officers for 2017

Secretary: Kris Kopitzke
Vice-Chair: Scott Patten
Chair: Barbara Ronningen

The Planning Commission met in a joint work session with the City Council, at which the Commission and Council agreed on three priority goals for 2017.

1. Completion of a draft of the Comprehensive Plan update by the end of 2017
2. Identify criteria for selecting uses to be permitted in the Industrial zones and specific uses to be prohibited
3. Facilitate improved communication between the City Council and the City's Commissions/Committees.

March 21, 2017 City Council Meeting

The Council held a public hearing regarding the abatement of property taxes to be redirected to the 2017 Street Improvements Project, and adopted a resolution approving the property tax abatements.

- The Council adopted a resolution providing for the competitive negotiated sale of \$3,500,000 General Obligation Tax Abatement Bonds Series 2017B to finance the 2017 Street Improvements Project
- The Council held a public hearing regarding an ordinance amendment to integrate Minimal Impact Design Standards for stormwater management into the Zoning Code and approved the ordinance amendment
- The Council approved a resolution in support of legislation providing funding for local road improvements, to be drafted based on a template provided by the League of Minnesota Cities
- The Council approved the price quote of \$24,908.00 from TriCounty to install the culvert extension at 30th Street
- The Council adopted the assessment roll for the Downtown Village Improvements Project and called for a public hearing regarding the assessments to be held on Wednesday, April 26, 2017 at Memorial Lutheran Church
- The Council adopted a resolution authorizing the City Engineer to sign the construction plans for the Washington County Afton-Lakeland Trail repaving project
- The Council authorized the City Administrator to propose best management practices for the management of a City credit card to be used by selected City staff
- The Council approved the low price quote from TrueNorth Steel to provide the 41 culverts needed for the 2017 Street Improvements Project, at a cost of \$36,275.42, and approved the cost of \$2,000 for erosion control blanket and seed for all culvert replacements
- The Council approved the low price quote of TriCounty, in the amount of \$98,400, for the removal of existing culverts and installation of new culverts for the 2017 Street Improvements Project
- The Council selected Peterson Management Company as the contracted operator for the wastewater treatment system at an annual cost of \$18,100
- The Council approved Change Order No.1 for the Wastewater Treatment System Project in the amount of \$152,324, or 8.3%, to reflect cost increases due to project delays and design revisions
- The Council approved the proposal from Blondo Consulting, for archeological monitoring during excavation near the Rattlesnake Mound Group, at an hourly rate of \$75.00
- The Council approved Mayor Bend's participation at a three-day emergency management training session at a cost not to exceed \$500.00
- The Council approved skim coat patching where needed on River Road at a cost not to exceed \$25,000, subject to review by the Public Works Committee

DID YOU KNOW?

The reasons for regulating lawn fertilizers

The City of Afton recognizes that:

- uncontrolled use of the waters and shorelands within the city affects the public health, safety and general welfare by contributing to pollution of public waters and degradation of environmental and aesthetic values;
- any degradation of environmental and aesthetic values impairs the local tax base;
- the inability of local land use controls on areas where there is sensitivity to pollution of the bedrock aquifers and water table aquifers can greatly lead to the degradation of ground water, which all residents of Afton rely on for drinking water.

Afton regulates lawn care practices within the city to:

- preserve and enhance water quality of the lakes, ponds, wetlands, creeks, and the St. Croix River;
- prevent erosion into these water bodies, fix nutrients, preserve shoreland aesthetics and historic values, prevent bank slumping, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and preserve the economic and natural environmental values of the surface and underground waters of the city to the best of its ability; and,
- provide public health, safety and general welfare through the wise development, use, and conservation of the land and waters within the city.

Continued on page 4 -



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 2017 EVENTS

THE LIBRARY IS CLOSED SUNDAY, APRIL 16, IN OBSERVANCE OF EASTER AND WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, FOR STAFF TRAINING

Featured Events

STEM Saturday:

Saturday, April 15, from 11 a.m. to Noon
Explore STEM through hands-on activities and creative projects! Each month the library will have an activity focused on science, technology, engineering, and/or math. Registration not required.

STEAM Storytime:

Monday, April 24, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Join us on the fourth Monday of each month for a special STEAM Storytime. In addition to stories, songs and rhymes, there will be special activities incorporating science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Each month will feature a different theme and the focus will be on having fun while learning!

Children's Events

Family Storytime
Mondays, April 3, 10, 17, from 10:30 to 11 a.m.
Join us for stories, songs, finger-plays, and more to encourage the development of early literacy skills. For all children and their families.

Dog Gone Reading

Tuesday, April 25, from 4 to 6 p.m.
Children in grades K-7 may practice reading aloud to a certified therapy dog and its owner/trainer. Reading sessions are 15 minutes in length. Sign up at Info Desk or call 651-436-5882.

Book Club

Valley Library Book Club
Thursday, April 27, from 5 to 5:55 p.m.
The group that gathers will discuss the book "Room" by Emma Donoghue. Visit Valley Library to pick up a copy of the book. Just read the book, come and discuss. Open to all.
Contact: Diane Estreen, Valley Library Manager, 651-436-5882,
diane.estreen@co.washington.mn.us or
Amy Stenftenagel, Digital and Media Services Librarian, 651-275-8521,
amy.stenftenagel@co.washington.mn.us

**Notary Public Services
at City Hall**

A Notary Public is available during City Hall office hours: **Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

This service is *FREE* to residents.

**PATRON
AFTON, MN 55001**

You may view this newsletter
IN COLOR
on the city website.



*Please recycle this
newsletter after use.*

The reasons for regulating lawn fertilizers. Cont. from page 3 -

Here are some helpful terms you need to know: (taken from the ordinance)

- **Buffer zone** means the two hundred (200) foot wide strip of land, measured at a right angle to the shoreline or the ordinary high water level, adjacent to every lake, pond, wetland, creek, river or standing water surface.
 - **Fertilizer** means a substance containing one or more recognized plant nutrients that is used for its plant nutrient content and designed for use or claimed to have value in promoting plant growth. Fertilizer does not include animal and vegetable manures that are not manipulated, marl, lime, limestone, and other exempted products.
 - **Quick-release nitrogen** means ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, creek or river within the city.
 - **Environment.** See Sec. 10-70 (c), (d), and (e) respectively.
 - **Slow-release nitrogen** means IBDU (isobutylidene diurea), sulfur-coated or resin-coated urea, ureaformaldehyde, bio-sludge from a WWTP, and natural organics such as milorganite, ringer, sustane, manure, grass clippings, phosphate rock, potash, and sewage sludge from the wastewater treatment plant.
- The following restrictions apply to all areas and properties in Afton:**
- Fertilizing is prohibited between November 15th and April 1st due to frozen soil conditions. Fertilizers used should have a half-life of seven days.
 - Soil testing should be done at least once every three years by a soil test laboratory to determine the proper amounts of nitrogen and potassium to be applied.
 - Fertilizer, yard waste and grass clippings must not be cast up or applied to an impervious surface such as a driveway, sidewalk, or street. If this material is inadvertently spilled on such a surface it must be swept and cleaned from the surface.
 - Fertilizer is prohibited for use in any buffer zone.
 - Compost sites are prohibited within any buffer zone.

Fertilizers containing phosphorus and nitrogen are specifically regulated, as are Pesticides, which includes insecticides, herbicides and fungicides.

- Residents should refer to the full text for this important information. Go to the city website, click the top, right tab: "Code of Ordinances;" scroll down to "Chapter 10 Environment."
- See Sec. 10-70 (c), (d), and (e) respectively.