



**January 2023**

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

**City of Afton Dashboard  
A Summary of Current Happenings**

- ◆ Earlier this year, state legislation was passed to allow the sale of THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) edibles, which are food products infused with cannabis extract. The City of Afton and other local authorities had little to no notice of the legislation prior to the effective date of the new provisions, which do not contain any regulations governing production, sale, or legal compliance, leaving all such matters to local authorities. In response to questions and concerns regarding whether there is a need to put some local regulations in place, a number of cities have put a 12-month moratorium in place regarding the sale of THC edibles to enable them to determine what, if any, local regulations should be put in place. At its December 20 meeting the Afton City Council adopted a similar ordinance for a similar purpose.
- ◆ The Council approved an ordinance amendment regarding solar arrays that are fully screened from public roads and neighboring properties. The new ordinance allows for solar energy system capacity at 120% of the demonstrated residential electric use rather than focusing on the size of these fully screened systems. No changes were made regarding the size for any systems that are not fully screened.
- ◆ The Council approved a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment that would allow two residential dwelling units in a commercial building in the Village Historic District commercial zone (VHS-C). Currently, one residential dwelling unit in a commercial building is allowed. Of the nine existing commercial buildings in the VHS-C zone, four have at least one residential dwelling unit on the second floor. The proposed amendment would allow the commercial buildings to have two residential dwelling units if the property meets the requirements of the ordinance and conditional use permit that will be created after the review process for this Comprehensive Plan amendment.

**Sand/Salt Available for Residents**

The City provides a sand/salt mixture for Afton residents to use to control ice on driveways. Please fill buckets only - no skid loaders - **This service is not for commercial use.**

The mixture is at the city garage located at 1675 Stagecoach Trail. The mixture is located inside of the yellow storage container on the right side of the building as marked.



**The City Office is Closed**

**Monday, January 2**

**Monday, January 16**

*In observance of New Years Day & Martin Luther King Jr. Day*

**CITY MEETINGS**

**January 9, 2023**

Planning Commission Meeting  
7:00 PM (In-Person)

**January 17, 2023**

City Council Meeting  
7:00 PM (In-Person)

**January 25, 2023**

Parks Committee Meeting  
6:00 PM (In-Person)

Public Participation Via Zoom Will Continue to be Available for City Council and Planning Commission Meetings.

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

We had two long-time members of our volunteer committees step away at the end of this year. Roger Bowman served on our Planning Commission for many years. His well-researched and common-sense approach to the work and discussions of that commission will be missed. Mark Have served on our Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee (NRGC) for many years as well and was instrumental in getting our private well testing program up and running and ensuring the data it provided was accessible and well documented. Coincidentally, Roger recently initiated discussions on the Planning Commission regarding groundwater protection efforts, which have been expanded to very productive joint work sessions with the NRGC regarding the protection of groundwater. At the most recent joint work session, Mark provided excellent educational information for private well owners regarding the care and maintenance of their wells, which not only is valuable for the protection of the private wells but also for the protection of the groundwater to which those wells are connected. Thank you, Roger and Mark, for all your hard work and commitment to the city. You both leave big shoes to fill!

Thanks to the Afton Area Business Association and all of the volunteers who helped put on the Afton Village Holiday events in the Old Village, including the tree lighting ceremony. Thanks also to the Holz Realty Group for sponsoring the tree. The Afton Village Holiday weekend was a great success. I received many comments about how much those who participated in the weekend events enjoyed their experience.

The skating rink in Town Square Park is complete; the ice is in and it is ready for skaters. Many thanks to Bob Dickie who did incredible work planning and coordinating the project. I also want to thank the crew of volunteers who put in many hours of work to get everything done -- Jerome Koslowski, Thorn Butler, Brian Dickie, Ty Forsell, Valerie Stohr, Kevin Dickie, and Nicholas and Jill Livingston. Lastly, a big thank you to Fire Chief Jim Stanley and the Lower St. Croix Valley Volunteer Fire Department for flooding the rink and getting the ice in great shape. Our city staff was able to get the warming house back down to the park just before the snow really set in which was great. I hope we have a good winter where the community is able to enjoy the return of the rink.

In December, the city council appointed Cody Kaye to the Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee. Thank you, Cody, for volunteering to serve!

Looking ahead to 2023, the city is well-positioned to meet its obligations and any unexpected challenges or issues we may face. Our annual budget process once again went smoothly this fall as we focused on our core responsibilities. The 2023 budget was passed in December. Our long-term infrastructure improvement plan continues to perform as expected. After many years of turnover when I first started in 2009, we are definitely now reaping the benefits of having an experienced city staff who has worked together for many years. Our Planning Commission and other committees have equally experienced and committed members. As a city, we continue the work of understanding how to protect open space and agriculture and see exciting investment in our historic Old Village moving forward in the spring. Overall, I believe the state of the city is very good right now. That is thanks to all of the people I just mentioned, as well as the council members who continue to bring their knowledge, experience, energy and commitment to the community to the vigorous, but respectful debates on the issues and policies we confront. I am excited to see what 2023 holds in store. I hope you have a happy New Year!

-Bill

## 2022 Water Sampling Program

In July 2022 (on short notice) Afton residents were given the opportunity to have their drinking water tested for nitrates and coliform bacteria. Over 115 requests for sample kits were received, but only 115 sample kits were available at City Hall. Eighty-four sample kits were returned. The EPA drinking water standard for nitrate is 10 mg/L (milligrams per liter) reported as nitrate-nitrogen. Coliform testing is reported as absent or present.

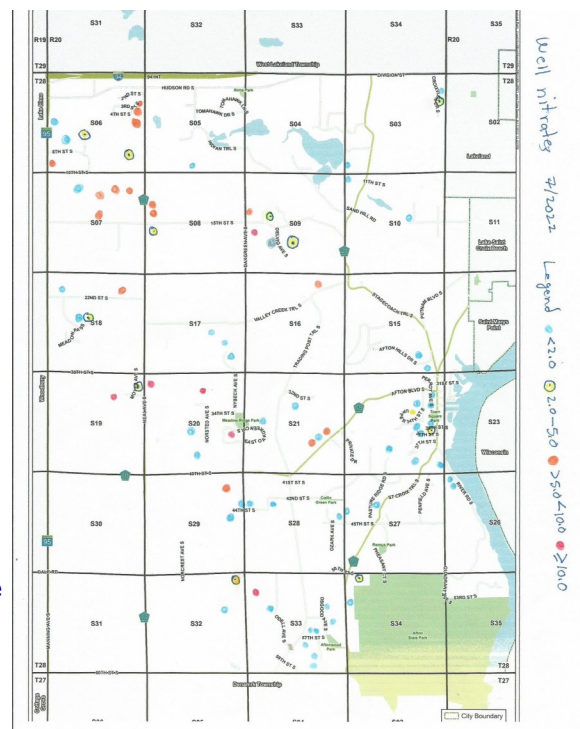
Nitrate results ranged from <0.05 to 15.4. Higher levels were generally noted in the western parts of Afton (more open, frequently agricultural areas), and lower levels in the east and south (more trees, limited agriculture).

Sixteen samples were positive for coliform bacteria, and two of the sixteen had E Coli (the type of coliform bacteria which could indicate sewage contamination). It is recommended to use a bleach solution to disinfect a well that shows the presence of any coliforms. There was not a good correlation between nitrate levels and the presence of coliform except when the nitrate levels were >10 (where 3 of the 6 samples with nitrates >10 also had coliform bacteria present).

Ongoing testing of well water for nitrates and coliform bacteria is the best way for well owners to monitor the suitability of their drinking water. When many participate in a city-sponsored testing opportunity, more data are provided to help understand the health of our shared valuable water resource, our drinking water.

In the future we hope to continue to provide sampling opportunities, and encourage you to participate in this project. The members of the NRGC would like to thank the City Council for the ongoing support for this program. We also thank all of those residents who participated.

Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee



## Meeting Highlights

### December 5, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting

#### **The Commission:**

- Held a public hearing for an application for a Draft Comprehensive Plan amendment to allow two dwelling units in commercial buildings in the VHS-C zone.
- Held a public hearing for an amendment to the solar energy system ordinance regarding the maximum size of a ground mounted residential solar array.

### December 20, 2022 City Council Meeting

#### **The Council:**

- Approved the 2023 Budget & Tax Levies.
- Appointed Cody Kaye to serve on the Natural Resources & Groundwater committee.
- Approved a Draft Comprehensive Plan amendment to allow two dwelling units in commercial buildings in the VHS-C zone.
- Approved an ordinance amendment to the solar energy system ordinance regarding the maximum size of a ground mounted residential solar array.
- Designated Majestic Pines Trail as a Restricted Road.
- Approved an interim ordinance placing a one-year moratorium on the sale, testing, manufacturing and distribution within the City of products containing THC.

MEETING PACKETS, VIDEOS AND APPROVED MEETING MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE AT:  
[www.ci.afton.mn.us](http://www.ci.afton.mn.us)

## Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

### Twilight Hike

**Saturday, January 14**

4:30 pm—6:30 pm

Please join us for a winter walk into the magical hours of twilight. This is the time when day is ending and night is just beginning. We will begin inside for a short introduction and then head out on the trail to witness the wonder of this special time. We will end our time around a campfire with hot beverages.

Come dressed in layers for any weather. Open to all ages 12 and above. Led by Jim Rue & Lynette Anderson. RSVP required. To RSVP, visit [belwin.org/events](http://belwin.org/events).  
 Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S, Afton, MN 55001  
 Cost: \$10 per family

### Midwinter Family Fun

**Saturday, February 4**

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom and Joseph J. Casby Observatory, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S, Afton, MN 55001  
 Cost: Free

This night of outdoor family activities features hikes through the snow guided by Belwin naturalists, stargazing with volunteers from the Minnesota Astronomical Society, and s'mores around several campfires. Don't miss this opportunity to observe the stars and moon with one of the biggest refractive telescopes in the state! Warm drinks will be available for visitors indoors.

Event is free. No RSVP required.

### Be a Better Birder – Winter Birds!

**Saturday, February 11**

9:30 am - 11:30 am

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S, Afton, MN 55001

Cost: \$10 per family

Hone your bird identification skills and enjoy a winter hike! We will begin indoors looking at bird mounts and study skins and then head out to listen and look for our hardy winter birds! We will end our time around a campfire with hot beverages. Come dressed in layers for any weather. Led by Lynette Anderson. RSVP required. To RSVP, visit [belwin.org/events](http://belwin.org/events)

**For details and to register for events contact:**

**Belwin Conservancy**  
**1553 Stagecoach Trail South**  
**Afton MN 55001**  
**651-436-5189**  
[www.belwin.org](http://www.belwin.org)



## Planning Commission

**The City is seeking residents with an interest in land use planning to fill a vacant position on the City Planning Commission.**

The Planning Commission studies and makes recommendations to the City Council concerning the Comprehensive Plan for land use in the city; applications for conditional use permits, rezoning, variances and subdivisions; holds public hearings as required by state statute. Members serve 3-year terms. Each ward is represented by at least two commission members. Meets the first Monday of each month, at 7:00 pm.

**To apply please fill out the application form found at:**  
[www.afton.ci.mn.us](http://www.afton.ci.mn.us) or call City Hall to obtain the form

## Pet License Renewals Due

**ALL DOGS (& cats)** that venture out-of-doors in Afton are required to be licensed and have current rabies vaccinations. This is for the health & safety of residents, pets and wildlife.

Two year licenses for altered pets is \$5; unaltered is \$10. Current license period is January 1, 2023 — December 31, 2024. *(What a deal!)* **An additional \$5 late fee applies after March 31.**

For each pet, complete an Animal License Form, found on Afton's Home Page, attach a copy of the current rabies vaccination certificate and appropriate fee per animal. Mail or bring to City Hall.



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 Library Events & Important**

### **Dates**

**Closed:** Monday, January 2; New Year's Day (observed)  
Monday, January 16; Martin Luther King Jr. Day

### **For Adults:**

**The Valley Library Book Club** meets 5:00-6:00pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month. This book club meets in person in the Valley Library conference room but a Zoom link can be provided for those who wish to join virtually.

### **Saturday January 14th 10:30am-12:00pm**

**Let's Make Stuff** – Lotus Flower Lantern  
Let's Make Stuff is a creative class for adults. Class size is limited so registration is required. Register online, or call the Valley Library.

Washington County Libraries celebrates **January and February** with our Winter Reads program

### **All Ages:**

### **January-February Tiny Art Show – Take and Make (and Return)**

Display your Tiny Art in the Valley Library Tiny Art Show!

Each take and make kit contains a small wooden framed canvas and... that's it! Use anything you want to create your art—paint, photos, yarn, embroidery floss, whatever you have on hand.

### **For Kids:**

**Every Monday 10:30-11:00 am Family Story time**

### **Monday, January 23 10:30-11:30 Super Storytime**

Join us monthly for a special storytime and craft project. January's theme is Turtles!

### **Thursday, January 19 3:00-6:00 Family Art Cart**

### **Saturday, January 28 STEM Saturday Take & Make**

### **Ongoing:**

### **Scavenger Hunt**

Every month has a theme. Find 10 images throughout the library and win a sticker.

### **Valley Branch Library**

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

[www.washcolib.org](http://www.washcolib.org)

**PATRON  
AFTON, MN 55001**

**Online payments** are now available for city permits & fees including Building Permits and Sewer Payments,  
[www.ci.afton.mn.us](http://www.ci.afton.mn.us)



*Please recycle this newsletter after use.*

## **REDUCE HOLIDAY WASTE**

Americans generate 23% more waste in December than any other month of the year. That's 36 extra pounds of waste per person! Reduce the amount of holiday waste going into the trash by knowing where to throw it.

### **Reuse it**

- Gift boxes & bags
- Tissue paper
- Bows & ribbons

### **Recycle it**

- Cardboard boxes (flatten)
- Paper cards & envelopes
- Bottles & cans
- Catalogs & magazines
- Popcorn & cookie tins

### **Bring it to the Environmental Center**

- Holiday lights & cords
- Plastic bags, bubble wrap, & plastic air pillows
- Electronics & batteries

### **Trash it**

- Tissue paper
- Wrapping paper with glitter or foil
- Styrofoam
- Bows & ribbons

### **Washington County Environmental Center**

4039 Cottage Grove Drive  
Woodbury, MN 55129  
651-275-7475