



March 2023

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

City of Afton Dashboard
A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ The City Council approved an amendment to the short-term home rental ordinance to strengthen the City's ability to enforce violations of the ordinance. The ordinance amendment requires all short term home rentals to be licensed and prohibits advertising for short term rentals without a license.
- ◆ The Council reviewed an ordinance amendment that adds and clarifies regulations for dwelling units in commercial buildings in the downtown Old Village area and referred the ordinance amendment to the Planning Commission for a public hearing.
- ◆ The Minnesota Land Trust and Washington County through its Land and Water Legacy Program are working with the owner of a 40 acre property overlooking the St. Croix River to place a conservation easement on the property, which would protect and preserve the natural features of the property in perpetuity. The Council approved a resolution in support of the conservation easement.
- ◆ The Natural Resources and Ground Water Committee will again provide free water testing this summer. Details will follow in future newsletters.
- ◆ Sand/Salt mix is available free to Afton residents at the city garage located at 1675 Stagecoach Trail South. To-date the city has provided five tandem truck loads (60 cubic yards) of sand/salt mix to residents. There is a shovel in the sand/salt bin to fill buckets. No loading with power equipment is allowed.
- ◆ The Council approved posting speed limits on 30th street and 50th Street at 45 mph except the section of 50th Street immediately west of Co. Rd. 21, which was approved at 35 mph due to sharp curves. The Public Works committee continues to review all roads in Afton for consistency in speed limits and will make additional recommendations to the Council as needed.
- ◆ The Council has directed staff to apply for a state grant to cover the majority of the cost of installing two Level 2, dual port Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations. The charging stations are planned to be located in the Steamboat Park parking lot. Users would pay for charging by credit card.

SAR

CITY MEETINGS

March 6, 2023

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

March 7, 2023

Natural Resources & Groundwater
Committee
5:00 PM

March 21, 2023

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

March 22, 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

Afton Historical Museum Speaker Series

The Afton Historical Museum is pleased to announce a new Speaker Series for 2023. This year we will host 4 events: a mix of area artists, writers, and presenters on relevant educational and historical topics will be featured. We are reviving an old tradition. Some of you may know that during its long, multi-use history, the museum building once served as a community center, offering plays and other wonderful events on the 1920s stage. Please stay tuned for details about our first presentation in late April! Event info will be shared in the April Afton newsletter, the Museum newsletter and on the Museum Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063997269695>

For questions or to inquire about presentation opportunities, please contact Afton Museum Vice President, Leslie Thomas at info@aftonhistoricalmuseum.com

Notes from the Mayor

At our February meeting, the council appointed Jacob Edwards to the Planning Commission. Jacob currently also serves on the Historic Preservation Committee. With his appointment, the Planning Commission has its full complement of members and each ward is represented. Thank you, Jacob! We also reappointed Sally Doherty and Chair Kris Kopitzke to another three-year term. Both are incredible resources to our Planning Commission and I was happy they both volunteered to serve again.

The Council made several changes to the short-term rental ordinance at that meeting as well. Those changes were meant to clarify some parts of the original ordinance and hopefully allow the city to more easily address any issues that may arise. There are several properties in Afton that do some form of short-term rental and the vast majority are doing it in a professional manner where there are no issues at all. I am sure that will continue and the few issues we have had are being resolved. Please call City Hall if you plan to do any short-term rental as the ordinance does require a license for even limited rentals.

In last month's newsletter it was mentioned that the lawsuit brought by the Afton Marina and Yacht Club had been dismissed. The first two charges were dismissed by the judge earlier and the last one by the plaintiff. This is good news, and I am happy to put this case behind us. The Marina and the City have historically worked well together. The Afton Marina case was about an application for a conditional use permit. They had a difference of opinion on several actions taken by the City and were within their rights to challenge those decisions in court. One thing was left out of the newsletter however and that relates to the costs incurred by the City. The Council felt this needed to be shared since expenditures of this kind can impact future budgets. I completely agree, and want to be sure we have transparency and an understanding of how we budget and pay for these types of expenses. The City has insurance that pays the vast majority of the legal expenses required when these types of cases are brought, but in some situations like this one, where the legal work extended for years with multiple motions and hearings, the copays on that insurance rise. In this case, the city had to pay \$119,800 of the over \$455,000 in legal fees. While the City has budgeted for and created a fund to cover legal costs, this expense depleted that fund. We will need to address this in the coming budget years.

Thankfully, cases like this have been rare. But it is important the City has these resources when needed. As I look to the future and the legal work the City will most likely need to do, it will not be for these types of protracted legal fights, it will be more for the day-in-and-day-out work to ensure our ordinances related to the environment and land use are adhered to as Afton's managed growth continues. Without that, we risk losing some of the things our community values. In a small city like ours, local government is an extension of our community. And our ordinances are an extension of our community's values. No one from outside Afton has created our rules. Most were enacted long before any of us were on the Council and they are what created and preserved the Afton we know today. Our community also provides the resources needed to defend those rules. I strongly believe we must defend our rules when necessary and have the resources in place to do so. So we will work to ensure we replenish those resources over the next few years.

-Bill

Getting Ready for Spring: Rinta Community Garden

Spring will be here soon; time for gardeners to get their hands dirty. The Rinta Community Garden has 22 plots available to residents of the Lower St. Croix Valley.

There is no charge for using a plot. Gardeners are asked not to use pesticides and to use organic fertilizers. There is no well water at the site, but 2 rain barrels collecting runoff from a small shed will hold 250 gallons of water for irrigation when necessary. The installation of a high fence has thwarted hungry deer.

If you are interested in a garden plot at Rinta, contact Afton City Hall or go to the Afton website for an application (Located under "Parks, Park Reservations & Special Events"). Complete and return it to Afton City Hall, 3033 St. Croix Trail, P.O. Box 219, Afton, MN 55001.

If you have additional questions, contact Barbara Ronningen at bjronningen@yahoo.com.



Yellow Ribbon Alliance Lower St. Croix Valley

The Yellow Ribbon Alliance of the Lower St. Croix Valley is looking for volunteers to represent the City of Afton. After being proclaimed a Yellow Ribbon network on August 23, 2011, the Yellow Ribbon Alliance Lower St. Croix Valley continues its mission of supporting communities, service members, veterans and military families. It is a network that prides itself in trust, follow through and commitment. The Yellow Ribbon Alliance Lower St. Croix Valley is comprised of five communities bordering the St. Croix River in Washington County, MN. The communities are Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lake St. Croix Beach, St. Mary's Point and Afton.

For more information or to volunteer please visit: <https://5cityyellowribbon.com>

Meeting Highlights

February 6, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for an Ordinance Amendment to Revise Ordinance Section 12-232 Short Term Home Rental.
- Reviewed draft zoning standards for two dwelling units in a commercial building in the VHS-C zone.

February 21, 2023 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Appointed Jacob Edwards to serve on the Planning Commission.
- Reviewed draft zoning standards for two dwelling units in a commercial building in the VHS-C zone.
- Approved an amendment to the Short Term Home Rental ordinance.
- Supported the placement of a conservation easement on a 40 acre parcel on the east end of 45th St.
- Designated revised speed limits on 30th St and 50th St.

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

Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy

Have you ever wondered where your trash goes after setting it on the curb or dropping it down your trash chute? Ramsey and Washington counties work together to manage waste through an organization called Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E). R&E operates the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Center (R&E Center), which processes all trash from the two counties to recover materials and divert waste from landfills.

The R&E Center, located in Newport, processes over 400,000 tons of trash each year – enough to fill Allianz Field 19 times!

Equipment at the R&E Center sorts through the trash to recover materials, like metals, for recycling. The trash that is left over is turned into fuel and used to make electricity. On average, the R&E Center produces enough fuel to power 12,500 homes per year. R&E continues to explore new technologies to recover even more value from the trash, including a process that will take our residential food scrap waste and turn it into a renewable natural gas.

The R&E Center accepts special items, such as appliances, tires, mattresses and electronics, at a special rate. Visit recyclingandenergy.org/residents-self-haulers for more information and pricing.

Additionally, R&E offers programs to help residents and businesses reduce waste and recycle better. These include BizRecycling and deconstruction grants and a new joint Ramsey and Washington County food scraps pickup service starting rollout in 2023.

Though R&E is working hard to recover as much value from waste as possible, the best place to start responsible waste management is in your own home! Here are some simple tips to get started:

- **Reduce single-use items:** Avoid using disposable items such as paper plates, plastic bags, bottles and utensils and straws. Use reusable items instead!
- **Reuse and repair:** Save resources by repairing, donating or selling items and buying second hand. Washing County offers many resources online to connect residents to reuse opportunities.
- **Recycle correctly:** Make sure to only recycle items that are accepted in your community. Visit the city's recycling page for hauler information and what is accepted. For other, hard to recycle items, visit the Washington County disposal directory.

Interested in learning more about waste management in Washington County? Join us for a tour of the R&E Center! Tours are free and run between 1-1.5 hours.

-Sam Ferguson, Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy
<https://recyclingandenergy.org/>

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Women Walking

Saturday, March 18

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

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

Cost: \$20 per person

Come celebrate the seasonal changes in the natural world! Wear comfortable layers and be prepared for any weather. Ages 16 and up. Led by Lynette Anderson. RSVP required.

Frog Walk at Oxbow Trails

Tuesday, April 25

7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Oxbow Trails, 2398 St. Croix Trail S, Afton MN 55001

Cost: \$10 per family

Enjoy an evening stroll at our newest hiking area while listening for the spring calls of our native frogs! This is a rain or shine event. Led by Lynette Anderson. RSVP required.

Celebrating Your Wild Voice!

Saturday, April 29, 2023

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

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

Cost: Sliding Scale of \$35, \$50, or \$70

Join Belwin Conservancy's naturalist Lynette Anderson and vocal coach/song leader extraordinaire Barbara McAfee for a day in the woods and prairies to explore your unique and wild voice. No singing experience or talent required at all. Must be 16 and older.

For details and to register for events contact:

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

Don't forget Daylight

Savings!

"Spring forward" one hour
on March 12th





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

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

Valley Library Events & Important Dates

Did you know the Valley library has some Federal Tax Forms and Instructions available on a first come, first go basis? The 1040, 1040SR, 1099-INV, 1099-DIV and 1099-MISC can be found on the center table. Library staff can print out other US Federal and MN state tax forms for patrons upon request.

For Adults:

The Valley Library Book Club meets 5:00-6:00pm on the 4th 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.

Monday, March 27, 6:30-7:45 Mary Kay Andrews at the R.H. Stafford Library (Woodbury)
Find more information at <https://washcolib.libcal.com/event/10092551>

For Kids:

Every Monday 10:30-11:00 am Family Story time
Super Storytime on **March 20** 10:30-11:30 – storytime plus a fun craft activity. The theme for March is Birds.

Wednesday, March 22 2:00 pm Snake Discovery: Lounging with Lizards
Do you love lizards? In this hands-on program at Valley Library you'll meet many exotic lizards up close! Audience members will feel the difference between various lizards' scales, learn what makes them so unique, and even hold them! You will also learn many fun facts about their diet, habitat, defense mechanisms and much more!

Thursday, March 23 3:00-6:00 Family Art Cart
Drop by Valley Library between 3 and 6 p.m. for a family craft activity. Crafts are designed for children ages 4 and up and their grownups. The crafts are self-guided and designed to allow children room for expanding upon their own design through creativity and imagination.

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



**PATRON
AFTON, MN 55001**

Online payments are now available for city permits & fees including Building Permits and Sewer Payments,
www.ci.afton.mn.us



Please recycle this newsletter after use.

2023 Shredding Events at the Environmental Center

Washington County offers free paper shredding events for confidential papers at the Environment Center. Documents will be shredded on-site and recycled. CDs, floppy disks, and other media will be accepted for off-site destruction. These events are free and open to residents and businesses.

Wednesdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

April 19th

May 24th

June 21st

August 2nd

September 27th

November 8th

Washington County Environmental Center
4039 Cottage Grove Drive
Woodbury, MN 55129
651-275-7475

www.co.washington.mn.us/3031/Shredding-Events