



September 2023

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

City of Afton Dashboard
A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ Residential well water test program results: out of the 130 kits sent out, 109 were returned for analysis for nitrates and coliform bacteria. The EPA drinking water standard for safe water is 10mg/L (milligrams per liter) or less for nitrate-nitrogen. Coliform testing is reported as absent or present.
- ◆ In general, Nitrate levels were higher in the more western parts of Afton, with 9 samples exceeding the 10mg/L standard.
- ◆ Twenty-one samples tested positive for coliform bacteria, but none grew E. Coli (the type of coliform bacteria that indicates there could be disease causing organisms in the water). These wells were scattered throughout Afton.
- ◆ If you are concerned about coliform bacteria in your water, please contact either a local well drilling company or Washington County for instructions on the use of a bleach solution to disinfect a well.
- ◆ Ongoing testing of well water for both nitrates and coliform bacteria is the best way for well owners to monitor the suitability of their drinking water. Follow this link for a list of accredited well water test labs. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/labmap.pdf>.

SAR

Water Testing Opportunity

FREE well water screening clinic –Sept. 18 in Cottage Grove (1-6pm)

Groundwater provides 100% of the drinking water in Washington County and 70% of drinking water statewide. Over the past several years, a number of groundwater contamination issues have developed in the east metro area and numerous private wells in southern Washington County have been found to have elevated nitrate levels.

On Sept. 18, Washington County will provide free testing of nitrate and chloride in drinking water during a Well Water Screening Clinic at the Washington County South Service Center in Cottage Grove (1-6pm). 13000 Ravine Pkwy S, Cottage Grove, MN 55016. The clinic is free and open to everyone.

To participate, bring drinking water from your home (minimum of one cup - 8oz) in a clean, hard plastic or glass container and include the location and date that you collected the sample. You can wait for your results or request them via email. During the clinic, experts will also be on hand to discuss wellhead protection and groundwater concerns, including arsenic, bacteria, pesticides, and Perfluorinated Alkylated Substances (PFAS). Stop by anytime to pick up fact sheets and talk with clinic volunteers.

Co-sponsors for the Water Testing Clinic include Washington County, East Metro Water Education Program, Minnesota Groundwater Association, and the Minnesota Well Owners Organization.

CITY MEETINGS

September 4, 2023

City Office Closed
In observance of Labor Day

September 13, 2023

Heritage Preservation Committee Meeting

September 19, 2023

City Council Meeting 7:00 PM

September 27, 2023

Parks Committee Meeting
6:00 PM

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

Mayor: Bill Palmquist 651-308-0569

Ward 1: Annie Perkins 651-592-3007

Ward 2: Lucia Wroblewski 651-436-3982

Ward 3: Stan Ross 612-720-6478

Ward 4: 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

Over the last few months, the Council and Planning Commission have continued to work on several issues and related ordinances that are proving to be a challenge. These are issues not just found in our city but around the state. The first is our solar energy systems ordinance. At the August meeting the council adopted several amendments meant to clarify and improve the existing ordinance. We removed the square footage limitation language from fully screened ground mounted arrays and changed that language to a maximum generating capacity of 40kW. This is the commonly accepted cutoff point between residential and commercial solar production. Several years ago, the community went through a public input process related to solar energy systems. The consensus at that time was that residents wanted to ensure they could add solar to offset their own residential energy use while keeping large scale commercial solar installations in the industrial zone. Today, the industrial zone has one of these in place with several more getting ready to break ground. However, during this recent process we heard from residents who would like to see the current use expanded further. This included looking at allowing larger unscreened ground mounted systems subject to larger setbacks, considering allowing higher than 40kW output for agricultural operations, and allowing required vegetative screening to fully develop over several years. The Council and Planning Commission will continue to review the ordinance to see what might make sense for our community.

Another issue is short-term rentals. This is an issue many cities are trying to figure out, and we are no exception. Most residents who engage in this activity do so in a way that is in harmony with their neighbors and the larger community. Unfortunately, some property owners are not acting in that same manner. For property owners that repeatedly act outside of the ordinance parameters, or simply ignore the license requirement all together, it has proven to be a challenge to get the issue resolved in a timely manner. One of the tools other cities have adopted to help with enforcement is to include advertising by a property owner without a valid license as a violation subject to fine. This eliminates the need to document actual rental dates and other issues that make enforcement a challenge. Those changes are now in effect. Please note that if you want to use your property in this manner, it does require a license, and staff will be monitoring this issue for unlicensed advertising or use that is in violation of the ordinance.

Also at the August meeting, the Council heard from the new head of the Oak-Land Middle School PTO where many of our children attend school. Covid was especially hard for the PTO, so they are basically starting over. Afton resident Kari Kull-Heng is taking on this huge task and is currently the only member! She is working to get the PTO back to helping teachers with classroom supplies, funding after-school clubs, and helping with financial challenges some of our students face as they buy supplies for school and other activities. If you have a child at Oak-Land, or did, or just appreciate the work our teachers are doing, please consider reaching out to help in any way you can. You can contact Kari at oaklandmiddleschoolpto@gmail.com

-Bill

Coming Next Month: The City of Afton will be partnering with Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy and several cities to provide free curbside mattress and box spring collection in October 2023. Check our website later this month & the October Newsletter for full information on how to sign up!



Margaret Bonga Fahlstrom & Jacob Fahlstrom.

The Afton Museum invites you to a presentation on the life of Margaret Bonga Fahlstrom (1797-1880)

**Thursday, October 19, 2023
6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

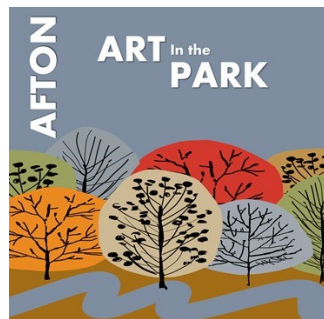
Margaret Bonga Fahlstrom – a woman of mixed African and Ojibwe ancestry, was from a remarkable & prominent fur trade family. She grew up in Ojibwe country in the early 1800s. In 1850 she moved to Afton with her husband, a fur trader who figures prominently in early state narratives as the first Swede to live in Minnesota.

Margaret Bonga Fahlstrom's life story provides meaningful insight into local and regional history & illustrates the shifting nature of identity in the region over time.

About the speaker: Dr. Mattie Harper DeCarlo is a direct descendant of Margaret's brother George Bonga. She has a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley in Ethnic Studies and is a citizen of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe.

RSVP by Oct 16: 651-436-3500 / info@aftonhistoricalmuseum.com

Beverages & light refreshments served. Museum donations appreciated. Afton Museum, 3165 St. Croix Trail S., Afton, MN 55001



Afton Art in the Park
September 23 & 24, 2023

Saturday 10am – 5pm
Sunday 10am - 4pm

<http://exploreafton.com/>

Meeting Highlights

August 7, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance Amendment.
- Discussed the draft shoreland ordinance amendment regarding tree protection and replacement.

August 15, 2023 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Approved the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance Amendment—Ordinance 04-2023
- Approved an Administrative Civil Citations Ordinance—Ordinance 05-2023
- Updated the Building Permit Fee Schedule..

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

Not Just Horsing Around

River Valley Riders (RVR) is a nonprofit organization that creates a supportive community where people with special needs connect with horses and experience life-changing benefits. RVR offers therapeutic horseback riding, therapeutic carriage driving, and hippotherapy. Riders include children and adults with special needs such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, spinal bifida and other disabilities.

What does a horse have to do with this? Glad you asked. Research shows that the rhythm of a horse's movement is a perfect tool for improving a rider's posture, balance, communication, and muscle control. A very important component of horseback riding and carriage driving is joy. The RVR arena is filled with smiles and laughter. Participants experience an independence and freedom lacking in their everyday activities. They hardly notice they are performing repetitive exercises that strengthen their bodies and minds. Their achievements improve their confidence and self-esteem. You are invited to learn more!

River Valley Riders Open House
2007 Neal Avenue South, Afton, MN
Sunday, September 10, 2023
1:00 to 3:00 pm

Event highlights include a tour of the new facility, demonstrations of therapeutic horseback riding, meet and greet with one of RVR's therapy horses, light refreshments, family-friendly games, face painting, and door prizes. The recently completed new buildings are designed specifically for expanding RVR's mission and located on 38 acres in the beautiful St. Croix River Valley.

For More Information:

www.rivervalleyriders.org

651-439-2558

info@rivervalleyriders.org

Community on Tap Combines Volunteering with Happy Hour

Community Thread is seeking volunteers for Community on Tap, sponsored by Afton Bayport Lakeland Lions, Artis Senior Living - Woodbury, and Lakeview Health Foundation. Volunteers may purchase a beverage from Charlie's Irish Pub or dinner from Charlie's Restaurant, while assembling flu fighter kits and mental health kits to support local non-profit organizations. This family-friendly event will be held on Thursday, September 21 from 4-6pm at Charlie's Irish Pub inside Water Street Inn in downtown Stillwater. No pre-registration is required.

In the spring of 2023, Community on Tap engaged 60 volunteers, who created 1,000 dental kits, which were distributed to eight area nonprofit organizations. This volunteer event creates an opportunity for volunteers to support other nonprofit organizations and local businesses in our community.

For 56 years, Community Thread has connected people, neighborhoods, and lives together to strengthen the community. The nonprofit's mission is to maximize resources and engage volunteers to improve the quality of life for adults and families in our community. To learn more, visit www.CommunityThreadMN.org, or call 651-439-7434.



Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Women Walking

Saturday, September 9th, 2023

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom 1553 Stagecoach Trail, Afton MN 55001

Cost: \$20 per person

Come and help us celebrate the seasonal changes in the natural world. We will gather together indoors to share easy, yogic centering exercises and a brief conversation about our theme. We will then move out to the woods and prairies for walking meditations and experiences in the natural world. We will end our time together with light refreshments around the fire.

Led by Lynette Anderson. Wear comfortable layers and be prepared for any weather.

Open to women over the age of 16. RSVP required.

Introduction to Mushrooms In The Wild

Saturday, September 23rd, 2023

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Tr. S., Afton MN 55001

Presented in partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools Community Education

Cost: \$25 per person

Learn how to find and identify wild mushrooms by walking in a forest or savannah with a member of The Minnesota Mycological Society. Wear lightweight, long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy walking shoes. Please keep in mind this is not a class in foraging and/or cooking with mushrooms. This will be led by Nancy Etwiler.

Registration will open on September 6th.

Outdoor Skills

Saturday, September 30th, 2023

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Tr. S., Afton MN 55001

Presented in partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools Community Education

Cost: \$25 per person

Learn essential outdoor skills including how to make a fire, build a shelter, use a compass, and identify key plants. Make sure to bring appropriate clothing for weather conditions - we will be outside. Prepare for hiking up to one mile. Water bottle, tick protection, and a bag lunch are recommended. We will have lunch around a campfire at the end of the session.

This hike will be led by Lynette Anderson and Jim Rue.

Registration will open on September 6th.

For details and to register for events contact:

Belwin Conservancy
1553 Stagecoach Trail South

Afton MN 55001

651-436-5189

www.belwin.org



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Valley Library Events & Important Dates

Did you know September is LIBRARY CARD SIGN UP MONTH? Stop by or go online to get a free Washington County Library card. WCL has several fun designs to choose from.

For Everyone:

Book Bingo on Tuesday, September 12th from 4:30-6:00

Join us at Valley Library for a fun, family-friendly event for all ages. No registration needed. All are welcome.

For Adults:

The World is Local: Japanese Folk-Art Traditions Saturday September 23

11:00am-12:30pm. Get ready for a travel adventure to Japan, led by artist Linda Hashimoto and Art Start! As you explore the customs and traditions of Japanese culture, you will learn how to make origami, create your own Japanese lantern, dress in a kimono or obi, and perform several Japanese dances. Registration required.

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.

For Kids:

Every Monday 10:30-11:00 am Storytime

Join us at 10:30 a.m. on Mondays for Storytime at Valley Library. This storytime is for children of all ages and their caregivers.

Super Storytime on September 18th

10:30-11:30 – Storytime plus a fun craft activity. The theme for September is: Now I Know My ABC's

**Thursday, September 21st 3:30-5:30
Brick Builder's Club**

Drop by to design, build and create with LEGO bricks. No registration required. This program is recommended for ages 5-12.

Ongoing:

Scavenger Hunt – September theme: Big Trucks Find 10 images throughout the library and win a prize.

For information and to register for programs contact:

Valley Library
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.

We Need Bees

More than seventy out of 100 major crops are pollinated by bees. But bees are in crisis. Forty-five percent of American colonies collapsed over the past several years!

We know why bees are dying . A torrent of pesticides called “neonics” ins a leading culprit in the devastating collapse of bee colonies. Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) has spend he last four years in court to restrict the use of bee-toxic pesticides. And they're taking the fight to Bayer, a leading maker of neonics. But the bees need your help. Act now to save our bees by contacting NRDC:
www.nrdc.org/savebees

Bees of all kinds are responsible for approximately one third of the food we eat. Most people are familiar with the European honeybee that lives in hives. But have you met the Mason Bee? Did you know that an individual mason bee is a better pollinator than a honeybee? They can pollinate when it's too cool or breezy for honeybees. Don't worry about being hurt by a mason bee. Mason bees don't sting unless abused, because they have no honey to defend. You can help by providing homes, bee boxes, for solitary bees like the mason bee. To learn how to build your own bee box contact Jack Kollmer at 612-501-1919 or jack.kollmer1@gmail.com. You can also buy a commercially built bee box at stores like Fleet Farm or garden shops.