



JANUARY 2019

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

A Message from Incoming Mayor Bill Palmquist

Happy New Year! As we begin 2019 it is a great time to reflect on the last year and look forward to new opportunities in the coming year.

Before our December meeting we had a chance to thank Mayor Richard Bend and Council Member Joe Richter for their years of service to the city. We were joined by County Commissioner Gary Kriesel, State Senator Karla Bigham, and many residents. It was a nice opportunity to spend time together before the holidays and express our thanks for all the time they have invested in serving our community. State Representative Tony Jurgens authored house resolutions in honor of both for their service which were read by Senator Bigham at our meeting. Having gotten to know Richard and Joe over the years, I know they always did what they thought best for our city, tackled some tough issues, and represented Afton well. I thank them for their years of service and dedication.

With the new year comes new opportunities for all of us to become more connected with our community. Successful cities have one thing in common: active citizen participation. We want to create the best government we can, with sound long-term planning, and be prepared for any unexpected challenges. That starts with all of us.

We have several committees and commissions where your talents and passion can help us accomplish that goal in 2019. There are openings on our Parks Committee, the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee, and the Planning Commission. These groups meet once a month and are a great place to work on issues that are important to all of us. It is also a nice way to connect with your neighbors. Participation is rewarding, but better yet, it can also be fun. I urge you to consider getting involved.

We might be spread out geographically, but our community is made up of neighbors looking after neighbors. Those connections are what make our city the best it can be. I wish you all a wonderful 2019.

-Bill

The City Office is Closed

Tuesday, January 1

Monday, January 14

*In observance of the New Year's Day
& Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Holidays*

CITY MEETINGS

January 2, 2019

Natural Resources and Groundwater
Committee 4:00 P.M.

January 7, 2019

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

January 15, 2019

City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

January 16, 2019

Heritage Preservation Commission
5:00 P.M.

January 23, 2019

Parks Committee
6:00 P.M.

*All meetings are held at City Hall
unless otherwise noted.*

CITY COUNCIL

<u>Mayor:</u>	Bill Palmquist	436-2238
<u>Ward 1:</u>	Vacant	
<u>Ward 2:</u>	Lucia Wroblewski	436-3982
<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
Mally's Sunshine Kennel	715-246-2467
LSCV Fire Dept	436-7033
Sheriff's Dept	439-9381

EMERGENCY 911

Valley Branch Watershed District Awarded the 2018 Program of the Year from the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts



Much of Afton is covered by the Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD). We are fortunate to be served by this well-run, forward-looking organization that protects our most important asset — water. Afton has a great working relationship with VBWD and it is good to see their efforts recognized.

Congratulations to Afton residents Jill Lucas, Board President, and Jeff Brower, District Inspector, as well as all the staff and managers for receiving the 2018 Program of the Year Award.

Valley Creek is believed to be in the world's top 10% of streams for trout production. In response to resident water-quality concerns, the Valley Branch Watershed District collaborated with stakeholders, including staff from the Department of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Washington Conservation District, Metropolitan Council, Science Museum, and the cities of Afton and Woodbury, and citizens and landowner representatives to develop protection strategies. One of the strategies was to reduce siltation in the creek and protect critical trout habitat.

Valley Branch Watershed District then completed an inventory and prioritized actively eroding areas on Valley Creek and adjacent ravines. So far, the District has successfully partnered with private landowners and agencies to implement six projects by leveraging a variety of funding sources.

The District's monitoring indicates that the projects have increased the number and variety of fish and macroinvertebrate populations as well as improved water quality trends.

Outgoing Mayor's Note

In this, my outgoing Mayor's note, I treat two subjects: first, municipal strategies necessary to perpetuate Afton's rural character, and second, environmental strategies to protect Afton's natural landscape.

Municipal Strategies to Perpetuate Afton's Rural Character:

The cities surrounding Afton have different organizational goals than Afton. The populous cities to the west of us are intent on economic growth to create housing, jobs, availability of goods, increased tax base derived from development and urban entertainment.

Most Afton residents want something different: low density, circumscribed retail and industry, and a tax base originating from high value large lots. These objectives conflict with commonly accepted principles of modern urbanism: connectivity, mixed use, mixed housing, increased density and green transportation. To be successful, Afton's low-density strategies must avoid creating conflict and instead be accepted and supported by powerful allies while taking into account the surrounding social, demographic and political environment.

Isolationism will not work. Unilateralism will not work. Alone Afton is small, impotent. We need powerful allies. Wherever Afton can garner the support and influence of powerful local governments, agencies and organizations, it must do so. Recent infrastructure and conservation developments during my administration have been successful because of support from all the following: the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Land Trust, the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, the Washington Conservation District, all three of the Watershed agencies serving Afton, particularly the Valley Branch Watershed District, and the St. Croix River Association.

Enlisting allies requires compromise. As recent Afton experience demonstrates, allies are willing to loudly, publicly and powerfully support open-space conservation in Afton when that conservation aligns with their institutional goals. The valuable, powerful and explicit support of the Old Village project and recent conservation easement projects are prime examples.

Environmental Strategies to Protect Afton's Natural Landscape:

An original vegetation map for Washington County can be found at: <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/maps/washington.pdf>. As you can see from the map, most of Afton was Oak openings and barrens with interspersed brush and thickets. Invasive species threaten original plant populations; modern post-agricultural land stewardship goes beyond threatening and actively destroys brush and other thicket species. Particularly in the eastern-most part of Afton, remnant brush and thicket vegetation is being wiped out by clear-cutting brush while eliminating amur maple and Buckthorn. Mowing then destroys the sub-story of native forbs and warm season grasses. The end result can be more damaging to the environment and native animals than ignoring the invasives. The once undisputed notion that invasives pose the greatest threat to bio-diversity is now in question by ecologists. This is certainly the case when methods used to destroy invasives pose a greater threat to biodiversity than the invasives themselves: throughout Afton there are numerous locations where all undergrowth has been destroyed, non-native pines have been planted among remaining oaks, eventually overshadowing and crowding them out. The result: pines and their acidic soil followed by mowing have in places destroyed all native vegetation and, in the process, reduced diversity to two or three species.

Eliminating buckthorn and amur maple, if taken to an extreme, causes more environmental damage than good. While invasive species threaten native plant populations, modern efforts to eliminate invasives often wipe out whole categories of native species that were to be protected.

I recommend reviewing many of the articles written by Professor Mark Davis, available at <https://www.macalester.edu/~davis/pubs.html>. His book, *Invasion Biology*, is available from Oxford University Press.

Finally, at the request of a restoration specialist, I mention the following: in utilizing the Washington Conservation District annual tree sale, it is wise to select species that are true natives. To purchase see <http://www.mnwcd.org/land/trees/>. Many of the trees and shrubs on the order form are non-native or, as in the case of maples, non-native cultivars. They should be avoided. Preference should be given to the species identified on side-bar to the vegetation map referenced above. It is usually possible to re-establish native trees in Afton simply by not mowing areas where they are desired if there are remnant trees in the area.

~Richard

December Meeting Highlights

December 3, 2018 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Viewed a presentation by the City Of Woodbury on their Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- Viewed a presentation by the City of Woodbury regarding Preserve at City Place Comprehensive Plan Amendment.
- Reviewed the Afton Creek Preserve Final Plat and forwarded several items and additions to the City Council.

December 18, 2018 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Received an ENCITE Transportation Project of the Year Award for the Downtown Improvement Project.
- Held a public hearing on the Final 2019 Budget and Tax Levies.
- Adopted the Final 2019 Budget and the 2019 Tax Levies.
- Approved the Final Plat and the Development Agreement for the Afton Creek Preserve PLCD.
- Reviewed and provided comments to the City of Woodbury regarding Preserve at City Place Comprehensive Plan Amendment.
- Approved liquor licenses for the Lumberyard Pub and Boat House Grill.
- Council Member Palmquist requested a list of potential candidates from the other council members to fill the vacant council seat. Discussion will be held at the December 9 Special City Council meeting.

MEETING PACKETS, VIDEOS AND APPROVED MEETING MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE AT:

www.ci.afton.mn.us

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 subdivision applications; 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 or call City Hall to obtain the form

Licensing protects pets!

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.

Should an animal be **lost** or **found**, residents should **call City Hall first** to attempt reuniting pets with owners, saving Animal Control and impound charges.

Two year licenses for "altered" pets is \$5; unaltered is \$10. Current license period is January 1, 2019 — December 31, 2020. **(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.

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Friday, January 18, 2019

Owl Prowl

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

This popular event returns in 2019! Join us as we hike through the winter woods listening for owls and other nocturnal creatures. Come dressed to be outside.

Ages 12 and up (under 18 must be accompanied by an adult). Space is limited to 20 participants.

Information:

Free for members, \$10 for non-members.

RSVP by January 18 to events@belwin.org

Saturday, January 19, 2019

Open Third Saturday

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Participate in programs, meet Belwin staff, explore the trails, and connect with nature.

One-Hour Guided Experiences at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. departing from the Education Center. **January topic: Life Under the Ice with Jim Rue.** Discover what's going on under the ice in the middle of winter.

Information:

Free and open to everyone; Guided Experiences \$10 for non-members.

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Join us as we hike through the winter woods listening for owls and other nocturnal creatures. Come dressed to be outside.

Ages 12 and up (under 18 must be accompanied by an adult). Space is limited to 20 participants.

Information:

Free for members, \$10 for non-members.

RSVP by January 19 to events@belwin.org

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Winter Fun at the Creative Center

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Explore Belwin's Creative Center this winter by hiking, sledding, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing our ungrooved trails. Guided hike at 2:30 p.m. Hot chocolate will be provided.

Information:

Free and open to everyone.

Belwin Conservancy Creative Center, 795 Indian Trail S., Afton.

For Information & To RSVP for events:

Belwin Conservancy
1553 Stagecoach Trail S., Afton
651-436-5189

www.belwin.org





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



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AFTON MN 55001
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Valley Library Featured Events for January 2019

Library Closed:

**Tuesday, January 1 and Monday, January 21
in observance of New Years Day and Mar-
tin Luther King Jr Day.**

Spotlight On...Creativity

The start of a new year is the perfect time to get those creative juices flowing! Washington County Library has the tools, materials, programs, and resources that can help you tap into your creative right brain. Whether it's trying your hand (literally!) at some of our yarn craft groups, making a DIY masterpiece at a "Let's Make Stuff" program, dabbling in a little creative writing, or using your artistic talents to fill in a coloring book page or two from our digital collection, we've got you covered. Visit WashCoLib.org for more information.

Featured Events

A Minnesota Bestiary

Thursday, Jan. 24 from 6 to 7 p.m.

Round out your local history knowledge with liver-eating forest monsters, Babe the Blue Ox and other beasts of Paul Bunyan's lumber camp! And did you know that William Thomas Cox, Minnesota's first state forester, wrote a book called "Fearsome Creatures of the Lumberwoods," all about the outlandish animals that pioneers would make up to amuse themselves? Discover the North Country's rich and diverse imaginary fauna in this program at Valley Library. This program will be part science, part comedy, and all local monsters. No registration required.

Full Calendar of Events:

**www.washcolib.org
Valley Branch Library
380 St. Croix Trail South
Lakeland, MN 55043
651-436-5882**



The location of the outside mail box at the Post Office has moved to the edge of the parking lot (off 31st Street)

which allows for drive up access.

**PATRON
AFTON, MN 55001**

You may view this newsletter

IN COLOR
on the city website.



*Please recycle this
newsletter after use.*

Snow Removal

The City of Afton contracts with a snow removal provider, Tri-County Services, Inc., to provide snow removal services on local streets and roadways. The City's snow removal policy requires the removal of snow from all local public streets, roads, cartways, and cul-de-sacs.

The Contractor will plow primary routes by 6:30 a.m. and make plow passes on secondary routes by 9:00 a.m., following an overnight snow event (after 10:00 p.m.). Several of these roads are also mainline routes, which will be plowed after any snow event (e.g. including snow accumulations less than 2 inches).

Please contact City Hall at 651-436-5090 if you have any questions, concerns or comments regarding our snow plowing service. or they may submit comments and/or service requests on-line at www.ci.afton.mn.us.

A snow plow route map is located on the city's website at www.ci.afton.mn.us
You will find the map on the tab:

- Roads & Bridges
- Snow Removal
- Map of Snow Plow Routes.

