



January 2024

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

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

- ◆ Thank you to all whose participation in the Afton Village Holiday event made it a great success.
- ◆ The Council adopted the final 2024 budget and tax levy. The total 2024 tax levy is \$2,738,555, which is an increase of \$102,420 or 3.89% over the total 2023 tax levy. The total 2024 budget is \$2,990,205, which is an increase of \$83,921 or 2.89% over the 2023 budget.
- ◆ The 2024 budget reflects an on-going effort to provide sufficient staff resources to meet increasing service demands, to provide funding to meet capital improvement needs and to absorb increased costs for contracted services including police and fire services.
- ◆ The Council approved minor repairs to the flood levee and an upgrade to the flood pumps to ensure readiness in case of flooding in the spring.
- ◆ The Council approved the renewal of the police services contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Department.
- ◆ The Council approved an ordinance prohibiting the use of cannabis in public places and spaces.



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 1

Monday, January 15

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

CITY MEETINGS

January 2, 2024

Natural Resources & Groundwater
Committee Meeting
5:00 PM

January 8, 2024

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 PM

January 10, 2024

Heritage Preservation Commission
6:00 PM

January 16, 2024

City Council Meeting
7:00 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

<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

If you have driven down St. Croix Trail near Valley Creek recently you may have noticed hundreds of white tubes south of the creek. If you are anything like me you wondered what they were. I reached out to Katie Bloome, the executive director at Belwin, and asked her about it. Each of those white tubes is protecting a new tree or shrub planted as part of the long-term restoration plan for this area across the creek from the new Oxbow Trail area. Belwin is restoring this area in collaboration with the Anishinabe Academy. Belwin staff shared with me that the tree tubes help protect new seedlings from deer and rodent browse as well as wind damage. They create a microclimate within the tube to keep a warm air buffer around the tree similar to the way a greenhouse works. They also serve as an easy marker to visually find the newly planted trees as other restoration work in the area continues. A certain number of new transplants won't make it through the first year, so in the beginning the process includes over-planting the restoration area. This also has the added benefit of competing with buckthorn regrowth.

To date, Belwin has planted 1,250 shrubs and trees this fall and will plant another 1,000 in the spring of 2024. In about 2-3 years the tubes will be removed to let the trees continue to grow. Species planted include Red Osier and Silky Dogwood, Chokecherry, Hackberry, Highbush Cranberry, Sandbar Willow, Ninebark, Red Maple, and Cottonwood.

This is an exciting project, and we will all be able to see the progress over the next decade as we drive by or walk the new trail system.

At the December City Council meeting the 2024 budget and tax levy were approved. We received many questions at the hearing related to the valuation of property by the county assessor. The process to appeal those property values at the Board of Appeal and Equalization has passed, but that process will start again next spring. I encourage you to look at the valuation notice you will receive early next year and if you believe the value to be incorrect, review the information on how to make those appeals. Also, be sure to review the requirements for the Property Tax Refund Program and the Special Property Tax Refund Program to see if you may qualify for either. The latter is designed for a situation where your property tax has increased 12% or more year over year and unlike the regular Property Tax Refund has no income limitations. Information on both can be found at the Minnesota Department of Revenue webpage by searching for Property Tax Refund. The state also has a Senior Citizen Property Tax Deferral program. The program is not for everyone as it does create a lien on the property, but can be a great tool to help seniors in need. Information on how that works is also located on the Department of Revenue website.

-Bill

Winter Snow Reminders

- ◆ The City's snow plow contractor hits the streets on a one-inch snowfall; however, if icy or slippery conditions exist, they may be sent out to also sand/salt hills and intersections.
- ◆ Keep garbage containers off the street until the plow has come through.
- ◆ Plowing snow onto or across a city street is illegal; violations are a misdemeanor and civil penalties may apply.
- ◆ Please slow down and drive for the conditions of the road, especially on Afton's curvy roads and hills.
- ◆ Be patient. We try to get around to all "Primary" routes within 24 hours; "Secondary" roads within 48 hours.
- ◆ The City will clean the main sidewalk in town along St. Croix Trail. The other sidewalks are to be cleared by the property or business owner.
- ◆ If your road has not been plowed or dangerous conditions exist, please call us at City Hall 651-436-5090 so we can get it the attention it deserves.

Meeting Highlights

December 4, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting

The December meeting was cancelled due to lack of a quorum.

December 19, 2023 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Held a public hearing for the 2024 Budget and Tax Levy.
- Approved the 2024 Budget and Tax Levy.
- Held a public hearing and extended the moratorium regarding sales, testing, manufacturing and distribution of products containing THC.
- Approved the renewal of the police services contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Department.
- Approved an ordinance prohibiting the use of cannabis in public places and spaces.
- Approved an ordinance prohibiting the hauling and disposal of snow onto land in Afton.

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



Get information on being licensed child care provider in Washington County Jan. 10

Washington County residents interested in becoming a licensed family child care provider in the county may take the first step and view an orientation meeting via Teams 12:30 to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10.

Registration is required by Jan. 2. Registration is possible on the Washington County website by seeing www.co.washington.mn.us and searching "child care licensing," or calling 651-430-8307, or emailing ComSysCCLicensing@co.washington.mn.us. Participants must register so that a link may be sent to access the training. Also, call if attending an electronic meeting will be difficult for you.

Basic information regarding the family child care program and requirements for licensing will be discussed. Attendance is required at one of these meetings before a license can be issued. There is no fee for the informational meetings.

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Winter Twilight Hike

Saturday, January 13th, 2024

4:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom
1553 Stagecoach Trail, Afton MN 55001

Cost: \$10 per family

Take a winter walk in the magical hours of twilight when day is ending and night is just beginning. Begin inside for a short introduction and then head out on the trail to witness the wonder of this special time. End around a campfire with hot beverages.

Led by Jim Rue and Lynette Anderson. Come dressed in layers for any weather, wear comfortable hiking footwear for the season, bring water. Flashlight or headlight with a red light option is optional. RSVP required.

Midwinter Family Fun

Saturday, February 3rd, 2024

5:00 - 7:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy will host Midwinter Family Fun. This night of outdoor activities features hikes through the snow guided by Belwin naturalists, stargazing with Minnesota Astronomical Society, and s'mores around the campfire.

Children's education will be front and center this year, with a guided hike by Jenny Hanlon of Stillwater Early Childhood Family Education at 5:45 pm, and representatives from the University of Minnesota's "Bugs Below Zero" team present throughout the evening. The event is free and will take place at the Hilltop Classroom at Belwin's Education Site (1553 Stagecoach Trail South, Afton, MN, 55001). Warm drinks will be available for visitors indoors

Winter Wandering

Sunday, February 4th, 2024

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom
1553 Stagecoach Trail, Afton MN 55001

Presented in partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools Community Education

Cost: (sliding scale) \$20, \$25, or \$29

Join us for a morning of exploring the world of winter! We will look for signs of life and figure out how animals survive the cold. Dress in layers and come prepared to spend most of the time outside on the trail.

RSVP required. To RSVP, go to belwin.org/events.

For details and registration contact:

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



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

Closed January 1 & January 15 for New Years Day & Martin Luther King Jr Day

The Valley Library community is swapping recipes! Help us build the recipe swap by providing recipes in person or online <https://bit.ly/40VZyXj> through February 15th. Blank recipe forms are available in the library to fill out and return. All submitted recipes will be available to copy or photograph **January 2nd through February 29th**. No registration necessary. All ages are welcome to participate. There is no limit to the number of recipes that can be submitted.

It's time for the annual Washington County Library **Write in Our Midst** author Series **Saturday January 20th** at 2:00 at the Hardwood Creek Library meet Patrice Johnson author of Land of 10,000 Plates.

For Adults:

The Valley Library Book Club meets 5:00-6:00pm on the 4th Thursday of every month. The title selection for the **Thursday January 25th** meeting is "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nahisi Coates.

For Kids:

Every Monday 10:30-11:00 AM Family Story time

Monday, January 22 10:30-11:00AM Super Storytime

Thursday, January 11 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 –theme: Woods in Winter
Find 10 images throughout the library and win a prize.

The Valley Library Art Cart is available whenever the library is open. We provide the supplies and you provide the creativity!

For complete 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.

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 (651) 275-7475