



**October 2021**

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 the 2022 preliminary budget and tax levy with a total tax levy increase of 2.82%. The Council will hold a budget and tax hearing at its December 21 meeting, prior to adopting a final budget and tax levy. Additional details regarding the 2022 budget and tax levy will be provided with the November City Newsletter, and will be posted on the City website under City Financial Information.
- ◆ The Council made final appointments to the Agriculture Preservation Committee, to bring the total number of committee members to 10. The committee's overall purpose is to support and preserve the continuation of sustainable agriculture in our community as an important element of Afton's rural character.
- ◆ With recent retirements from the Parks Committee, the City is seeking additional volunteers to serve on the committee. Applications are available on the City website, or by calling City Hall at 651-436-5090.
- ◆ The Council approved the Parks Committee recommendation regarding a proposal for an ecological restoration project at Meadow Ridge Park at Oakgreen Circle and Nybeck Avenue, subject to obtaining a grant through the DNR for substantial funding for the project. The restoration is designed to create a "native botanical garden," by removing the current brush and replacing it with a mix of prairie and a selection of native trees and shrubs.
- ◆ The Mn/DOT road improvement project on Hwy 95/Manning Avenue has moved into the last major stage, after completing the stage from Hudson Road to Valley Creek Road. Hwy 95 between Valley Creek Rd. and Bailey Rd. is currently open to traffic. Due to weather and scheduling issues this final stage of the project was delayed by two weeks and will resume beginning Sat, Oct. 2. The remaining paving work for the stage from Valley Creek Road to Bailey Road is planned to be complete by October 12, weather permitting. The paving work will be done under traffic with flagging. Crews will return to the project area later in October to install permanent pavement markings, guardrail and other clean up items.

**CITY MEETINGS**

**October 4, 2021**

Planning Commission Meeting  
7:00 P.M. (In-Person)

**October 19, 2021**

City Council Meeting  
7:00 P.M. (In-Person)

**October 27, 2021**

Parks Committee Meeting  
6:00 P.M. (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**

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](http://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

At our September meeting, the council approved a proposed budget for 2022. Full details on it will be published before the hearing in December when the final budget and levy will be voted on. In the end, this budget has a 2.82% tax levy increase. We had our expected increases in items like the sheriff's contract and the fire department, along with some other typical items impacted by inflation. We also increased a line item to deal with the legal settlements of the easement issues with the downtown project. But beyond that we did our best to keep other budget line items flat where we could.

This was a challenging year for the budget process largely due to some positive news that the state approved funding for the small city street funding assistance program during the last legislative session. In the past, cities under 5,000 were not included in this type of state assistance. But with this legislation, Afton received \$44,600 in 2021 and will do so again in 2022. The continuation of this funding for additional years is uncertain. The problem with one-time funding is that it cannot be built into the on-going street improvement levy, although it does provide substantial additional funding.

We are in the last few years of the planned larger levy increases for the street improvement funding plan that was put in place in 2016. The plan calls for a \$49,000 levy increase this year. What we tried to do in this budget is reduce the planned levy increase as we wait to see if the state takes action to make the small cities road funding permanent. To that end, we moved our road levy amount from the planned \$49,000 to just under \$20,000. The one-time state funds will be added to our road fund balance to get it where it needs to be for our long-term planning. Keeping some level of increase in the road levy this year allows us to more easily get back to where the levy needs to be if the state funding is indeed limited to these two years. Basically, we are trading the higher planned levy for this year for an opportunity to avoid the higher levy increase if the new state funding is renewed next year, which would provide a new long term revenue source for the street funding plan. However, we also recognize that we may need a higher levy increase next year if the state funding is not renewed. We will keep you updated as we see what the future of the state funding will be.

What I want to emphasize though is that this council remains committed to the 2016 street improvement funding plan. At our budget meetings, all members of the council stressed that they will ensure the plan is fully funded to enable it to accomplish its goal of making the city free of all of its road debts by 2028 and putting the funding in place to meet its future street improvement needs on a pay-as-you-go basis. The plan created by Council Member Ross, supported through the leadership of former Mayor Bend, and approved by the council back in 2016, is something other small cities only wish they had. I have been asked about it many times by other elected officials when I talk about it. Ensuring it is adhered to remains my most important priority.

Also at the September meeting the council approved five more members to serve on the Agriculture Preservation committee, bringing the number of members to 10. That is a great show of support. Thank you to everyone who applied. We hope this group will begin meeting in November and will help guide our efforts to preserve and support farming in Afton.

-Bill



### Washington County Parks invite everyone to Night Hike Oct. 1

Washington County Parks invite the public to a Fall Family Night Hikes 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1, at the Lake Elmo Park Reserve, starting at the Nordic Center. This is an enjoyable evening family hike along the lit trails of Lake Elmo Park Reserve. Breathe in the crisp autumn air, view the stars, observe the local wildlife, and soak in the serenity of the night.

The program is free with a vehicle permit, which is \$7 daily or \$30 annually.

Enjoy night hiking along 5.5 miles of lighted cross-country ski trails at Lake Elmo Park Reserve - Nordic Center Trailhead. Trail lights are on daily from dusk to 9:30 p.m. At 9:15 p.m., the outer perimeter loop shuts off with the inner loop closest to the Nordic Center on until 9:30 p.m. All hikers must be off the trails by 9:30 p.m. and out of the park by 10 p.m.

All cross-country ski trails will close to hiking, walking, etc., once snow grooming begins. Winter hiking will then be directed to the Big Bluestem trail, the designated multi-use trail at the Eagle Point Trailhead, a non-lighted trail across the park road from the Nordic Center.

Lake Elmo Park Reserve is at 1515 Keats Ave. N. in Lake Elmo.

For more information on these and other parks programs, see the Washington County website at [www.co.washington.mn.us/parks](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/parks).

## Meeting Highlights

### August 30, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting

#### The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for an after-the-fact Variance at 3988 River Road.
- Held a public hearing for a Variance application at 3561 St. Croix Trail.

### September 21, 2021 City Council Meeting

#### The Council:

- Approved an after-the-fact Variance at 3988 River Road.
- Approved the 2022 Proposed Budget and Tax Levy. A public hearing on the 2022 budget will be held on December 21.
- Reviewed a list of incomplete items and timelines for the Afton Creek Preserve development.
- Approved the Meadow Ridge ecological restoration project.
- Approved ditch and culvert repairs on Coulee Ridge Road.
- Approved stormwater and erosion repairs on Mt. Hope Road.
- Approved five additional applicants to serve on the Ag Preservation Committee, bringing the committee total to ten.

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



### 50th Celebration Open House Saturday, October 9

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

2:00 Celebratory Gathering

*Free and open to everyone.*

Celebrate Belwin's 50th anniversary. We are opening all of our trails to the public for a day of fun outdoor activities: pop-up music and dance performances, eco-arts activities for all ages, poetry readings, along with naturalist-led hikes, kid-friendly science-based activities, and a celebratory gathering!

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

## Public Safety Reminders

The Washington County Sheriff has reported an increase in vehicle break-ins in the Woodbury & Lake Elmo areas.

Theft from motor vehicle / vehicle break-in involves the theft of items from a motor vehicle. It often occurs in driveways, garages, or parking lots. Thieves will gain entry from an unlocked door or open window. They will also break windows and/or punch locks to take items in plain view or thought to be hidden by the owner.

Common items taken include, but are not limited to: garage door openers, purses, wallets, brief cases, cash, compact discs, iPods, cell phones, stereos, radar detectors, GPS systems, gym bag, sunglasses, and tools.

#### Preventing Theft from Auto

- take all of your valuables with you. If you must leave them, do not put them in plain view for thieves. Place them in the locked trunk before reaching your destination
- do not leave your keys inside your vehicle
- lock your vehicle
- park in a well lit area
- report suspicious activity
- keep your VIN (vehicle identification number) and serial numbers for electronics (iPod, GPS, etc.) in a safe place so you can give it to officers if items are stolen
- use anti-theft devices and/or set your vehicle alarm

The Washington County Sheriff has reported an increase in telephone scams and telemarketing fraud targeting seniors.

Residents are encouraged to check on their senior relatives and neighbors, and to contact the Washington County Sheriff if they believe they have been a victim of telephone scams.

Sheriff's Dept. Non-Emergency: 651-439-9381



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

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### Valley Library

#### **Find Events, Activities, and Storytimes at Valley Library**

Valley Library is offering a variety of indoor, outdoor, and virtual programs for all ages! Masks are currently required in county buildings for all vaccinated and unvaccinated visitors over the age of two. Find updates about the library's COVID-19 response at [WashCoLib.org/Covid19](http://WashCoLib.org/Covid19).

Check the library website for information on reading activities, library programs, and current hours.

#### **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**

You may view this newsletter

**IN COLOR**  
on the city website.



*Please recycle this newsletter after use.*

### **Brush & Yard Waste**

**Aggregate Industries has CLOSED the Brush Pit and cancelled the final Brush Day for 2021.**

The following options are available to residents who have brush or yard waste to dispose of.

- Gertens in Denmark Township accepts brush and yard waste for a small fee.  
Contact:  
<https://www.gertens.com/atgertens/yard-waste.htm>  
(651) 458-4412
- This local company will pick up brush from your residence:  
CroixCavating (651) 302-2219
- Washington County operates the Northern Yard Waste Site which is free for residents of Washington County:  
Northern Yard Waste Site  
5527 170th St. N.  
Hugo, MN 55038  
(651) 275-7475



### **BE A BATTERY HERO**

**Put batteries in their place.**

Batteries can start fires if placed in the curbside trash or recycling. Additionally, some batteries are hazardous because they contain mercury, lead, cadmium, or silver. These metals are toxic and hazardous to the environment. It is illegal to put vehicle batteries and rechargeable batteries in the trash.

Remember: Anything that makes sounds, lights up, or turns on without being plugged in contains a battery.

With so many different kinds of batteries, it can be confusing to know how to dispose of batteries correctly. Washington County Environmental Center accepts ALL batteries for free recycling, including rechargeable, button, and alkaline batteries.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY  
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER  
4039 Cottage Grove Drive  
Woodbury, MN 55129  
651-275-7475**