



November 2022

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

City of Afton Dashboard
A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ The City Council received a presentation by Community Thread, a charitable non-profit organization located in the valley for the last 55 years. Community Thread provides services to assist older adults live independently as they age by matching volunteers to those in need. Last year, volunteers contributed nearly 1,000 hours in home maintenance services to help older adults in the valley, and fulfilled hundreds of transportation needs. Community Thread’s Volunteer Center creates volunteer opportunities for people of all ages. Families, individuals, employees, and students participate in a broad range of service initiatives. The City Council approved a contribution of \$500 to Community Thread, based on the services they provide to Afton residents. To donate or volunteer, please visit <https://communitythreadmn.org/>.
- ◆ Variances to allow new houses on two properties on River Road were approved by the Council. The first property is just south of 3786 River Road and the second is at 4500 River Road.
- ◆ The road construction on I-94 will end for the winter on Saturday, November 5th. The project will then continue for two more years. <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/i94oakdale-stcroix/>
- ◆ The Neal Avenue and 40th Street intersection continues to have the highest accident rate in Afton, with increasing severity and frequency. A meeting with Washington County was held to discuss ideas to make this intersection safer. County staff are studying the traffic and accident data at the intersection. When the study is completed, the city and county will meet to discuss solutions aimed at reducing the number and severity of accidents.
- ◆ “Holiday In The Village”, organized by the Afton Area Business Association, returns after a two year hiatus. This family event is being held on December 2 and 3, starting Friday evening December 2 from 5:00 until 9:00 with the tree lighting in Town Square Park at 6:00. The businesses will all be open and carolers will be roaming the streets in the Old Village. On Saturday, December 3 the event runs from 11:00 till 3:00. For the most up to date information visit the “Afton Area” Facebook page.

2022 General Election Voting

There are many ways to vote in the Nov. 8 General Election – via mail, in-person absentee, and on Election Day. Learn more on the Washington County website www.co.washington.mn.us by searching “voting.”

In-person absentee voting runs through Nov. 7 at five Vote Centers:

- Cottage Grove Service Center, 13000 Ravine Parkway, Cottage Grove
- Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Ave. N., Oakdale
- Headwaters Service Center, 19955 Forest Road N., Forest Lake
- Washington County Government Center, 14949 62nd St. N., Stillwater
- Woodbury Central Park/R.H. Stafford Library, Lower Level, 8595 Central Park Place, Woodbury.

Hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Additional in-person absentee voting hours will be 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 5, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Nov. 7.

The polling location for Afton residents on November 8, 2022 is Shepherd of the Valley, 14107 Hudson Rd S. Polling hours are 7 am to 8 pm.

CITY OFFICE CLOSED

Thursday, November 10

Thursday, November 24

Friday, November 25

CITY MEETINGS

November 1, 2022

Natural Resources & Groundwater Committee 5:00 PM (Via Zoom)

November 7, 2022

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

November 15, 2022

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

November 23, 2022

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

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

At its October meeting, the council voted to increase the pension benefit for our volunteer fire department relief association. This benefit is paid to a firefighter once they are vested and retire. It is a one-time payment based on the number of years served. The pension benefits are funded by the state through a fee on property insurance premiums, and through investment earnings in the pension fund, so this does not generally require any city contribution. However, cities are required to make payments if the pension fund is ever underfunded. Because of this, the city and the relief association created a framework for increasing pension benefits several years ago to avoid required city payments. Benefit increases are only brought to the city when the pension fund is funded at 115% of its liabilities. Even with the recent downturns in the market, the pension fund met this benchmark, so the increase was approved. Thank you to all our first responders for the work they do to protect the health and safety of our community. I know none of them do this work for this small pension benefit, but I am proud that their volunteer work is recognized by this program.

Also in October, the National Park Service, the DNRs from Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the Wild River Conservancy held an event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Lower St. Croix River being designated as a Wild and Scenic River, which is our nation's strongest form of protection for free-flowing rivers and streams. The protections that came along with its designation all those years ago have given us the remarkable scenic river we enjoy today. It was a great night of stories of the diverse groups that came together to make that happen: conservationists, landowners, boaters, supporters of fishing and hunting. Together, they preserved this great river in its natural state. Sadly, many of those people are no longer with us, and pressure on the river is only increasing, so it will be up to a new generation to carry on those forward-looking efforts. I hope those of you who love the river as much as I do will take up where they left off, and work in whatever way you can to continue the preservation of this fantastic resource for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Lastly, I read in the newspaper last month that Lake St. Croix Beach changed their city ordinance to allow ATVs owned by residents to drive on city streets with a permit. According to the article, discussions regarding ATV use on city streets first began after an ATV struck and killed an Afton resident's dog on an Afton street near the border of the two cities. That unfortunate incident is still under investigation. Due to the increasing number of off-road vehicles on city streets in that area, and the negative impact it was having, Afton Public Works put up signs advising people that ATVs were not allowed on city streets. This was not a change. The prohibition on ATVs on local roads has been the law since long before any of us currently serving on the council have been around. The signage was simply to educate people about the rules and hopefully prevent a similar incident.

-Bill



Budget and Tax Hearing

*All are Invited to Attend Afton's 2023 Budget and
Tax Hearing*

7:00 pm, Tuesday, December 20, 2022

The hearing is an opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide feedback regarding the proposed budget.

**The 2023 Proposed Budget is available at
City Hall or on the City's website at:**

www.ci.afton.mn.us

(Click the top tab: "Government—City Finance Information")

Meeting Highlights

October 3, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for an application for a Variance at 4500 River Road S to replace the existing house with a new house.
- Held a public hearing for an application for a Variance at 4102 River Road S to replace an existing retaining wall.
- Held a public hearing for an Ordinance Amendment to establish a definition of “nature center”.
- Reviewed draft language for a Comprehensive Plan amendment regarding dwelling units in commercial buildings in the VHS-C zone.

October 18, 2022 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Approved an application for a Variance for a new house on River Road directly south of 3786 River Rd.
- Approved an application for a Variance at 4500 River Road S to replace the existing house with a new house.
- Reviewed draft language for a Comprehensive Plan amendment regarding dwelling units in commercial buildings in the VHS-C zone.
- Approved acquisition of a tax forfeit parcel with PID 22.028.20.21.0010

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

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Winter Solstice Bonfire Tuesday, December 20, 2022 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

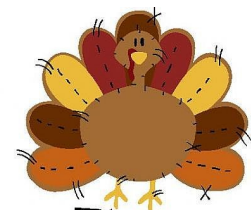
An annual tradition at Belwin, the Winter Solstice Bonfire is a celebration of the year’s longest night featuring a massive bonfire, traditional Irish tunes and stories by local duo The Mac and Cheese Band, and night hikes guided by Belwin’s naturalists. Join us at Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields (15601 Hudson Road N., Lakeland, MN 55082) for cookies, hot cider, and some great company.

For details on all events contact:

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

Lower St. Croix Valley Fire Department Fire Extinguisher Recharging Event

- What:** Commercial and Residential Annual Fire extinguisher Recharging
- Where:** Lower St Croix Valley Fire Department
 1560 St. Croix Tr. S.
 Lakeland, Minnesota 55043
 (651) 436-7033
- When:** Monday, November 21, 2022 from 9:00 am to Noon
- By:** Bill Becker Fire & Safety
- Cost:** Varies and is paid directly to Vendor



Happy Thanksgiving



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

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AFTON MN 55001
PERMIT NO. 15

Valley Library

If you haven't been to the library in a while, now is a great time to stop by Lakeland Village (384 St Croix Trail S, Lakeland) to browse new materials, use a computer or meeting room, and participate in free library programs for all ages.

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

**PATRON
AFTON, MN 55001**

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

You may view this newsletter
IN COLOR
on the city website.



Please recycle this newsletter after use.

Veterans Recognition Dinner



**Thursday, November 10, 2022
5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

Curbside Pickup

**At The Church of St. Francis of Assisi
Lake Saint Croix Beach**

FREE Dinner for Lower St. Croix Valley Veterans, Service Members and their Families

Thank you for your service



**Beyond the
Yellow Ribbon**

Yellow Ribbon Alliance
Lower St. Croix Valley

**Pet License Renewals
Due**

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.

Two year licenses for altered pets is \$5; unaltered is \$10. Current license period is January 1, 2023 — December 31, 2024. *(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.