



December 2016

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

OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULED:

Afton Residents strongly encouraged to attend

Street Improvements Planning

Wednesday, December 14, 7:00 p.m.

**Memorial Lutheran Church
15730 Afton Boulevard South**

The Afton City Council is holding a **public open house** to present information and obtain feedback and suggestions regarding street maintenance, street improvements and funding plans for meeting those needs. The degree to which streets are either maintained or not maintained will significantly affect Afton residents. If adequately maintained, the means by which they are funded and or financed will impact the city's tax levy and to a lesser extent residents' real estate taxes. At the open house alternate street maintenance and improvement plans and alternative methods of paying for them will be presented. **Resident feedback and suggestions are strongly encouraged.**



Afton has 48.3 miles of paved roads. Road sections are in various stages of deterioration and in need of various levels of improvements. The cost of these improvements, if done all at once, is far beyond the ability of the City to fund with its current level of financial resources. The City has conducted a street improvement needs assessment. All streets were evaluated to determine their condition and to prioritize their maintenance needs based on safety, initial cost and

cost-effectiveness over time. The City then analyzed numerous funding and financing plans to identify those alternatives which best manage the impact on the tax levy and the related financial impact on property owners.

This process has generated three alternative funding plans that address the bulk of existing street improvement needs over a twelve-year period. Each alternative would put the City in a financial position to meet long-term street improvement needs without the need for large levy increases after the first few years. The benefits of the near-term levy increases include cost-effectively improved roads in the short term and sufficient resources for necessary street improvements over the long term. The Council would like to share the street improvement plans with Afton residents and obtain feedback regarding the plans.

All interested residents are encouraged to attend. Watch your mailbox for the city budget newsletter for additional information.

CITY MEETINGS

**The City Office is Closed
Friday, December 23 &
Monday, December 26**
In observance of the Holidays

December 5, 2016

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

December 6, 2016

Natural Resources & Groundwater
5:00 P.M.

December 20, 2016

City Council Meeting
Holiday Gathering 6:00 P.M.
2017 Tax & Levy Hearing 7:00 P.M.

December 28, 2016

Parks Committee
6:00 P.M.
Heritage Preservation Commission
Next Mtg: January 11, 2017
5:00 P.M.

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

CITY COUNCIL

<u>Mayor:</u>	Richard Bend	436-7684
<u>Ward 1:</u>	Bill Palmquist	308-0569
<u>Ward 2:</u>	Joe Richter	436-1819
<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
Hillcrest Animal Hosp	484-7211
LSCV Fire Dept	436-7033
Sheriff's Office	439-9381

EMERGENCY 911

Notes from the Mayor

by Richard Bend

From time to time it occurs to people that Afton's residential tax levies might be reduced if more land in Afton were made available for industrial and commercial land use. This month I thought it might be informative to provide some information regarding Afton's current industrial and commercial zones. The only significant commercial zone in Afton is in the Historic Village and the only industrial zones are along Hudson Road. There are currently vacant and unused properties in the Historic Village commercial zone and unsold properties in the industrial zones along Hudson Road. Hudson Road property has been on the market for years. Most of the properties which have sold in the industrial zone have sold for use as outdoor storage, one of the lowest tax base categories of industrial use.

In contrast, Afton's residential large lots continue to be in high demand and to increase in value, increasing Afton's per-capita tax base. From a tax capacity perspective, Afton's current focus on large lot, residential use is a good one. Afton's tax rate in 2016 was 29.37 compared to the average of all Minnesota cities which was 46.52%. We should all give thanks that despite our increasing levy, in comparison to other cities we in Afton pay a low percentage rate on our wonderful acreage.

High Speed Internet Update

Many of you are anxious to hear about the new Internet build-out in Afton. I just received the following email from CenturyLink revising the schedule:

"We (CenturyLink) have encountered some engineering delays and we believe that we've now solved the problems. We anticipate that 2/3rd of the Afton build-out will be completed by December 9 and the remainder will be completed by the 16th. Provisioning and site activation will occur post construction and usually takes a few weeks. Once completed Afton's residents will be able to order service.

Regarding the wires from the road to your homes: it is highly likely that the existing overhead or buried wires can be re-used to provide the new service. In the event that a wire will not support the service or if wires do not exist, new wires will be installed. If the ground is frozen and new buried wires are needed, then wires will be temporarily laid on the ground during the winter. Crews will return in the spring to bury a new permanent wire and remove the temporary wire. It should also be noted that the temporary wires are not hazardous."

So – patience everyone It is coming, I have recently seen many crews in Afton pulling fiber...

Council Member Stan Ross
High Speed Internet Coordinator

CenterPoint Energy Updates

Save BIG with natural gas energy efficiency equipment rebates!



Heating Systems: Get up to \$500 in rebates by replacing your furnace or boiler.



Air Sealing and Insulation: Improve comfort, lower utility bills and get a rebate up to \$500.



Water heaters: Replace your aging unit and you can get a rebate up to \$350.

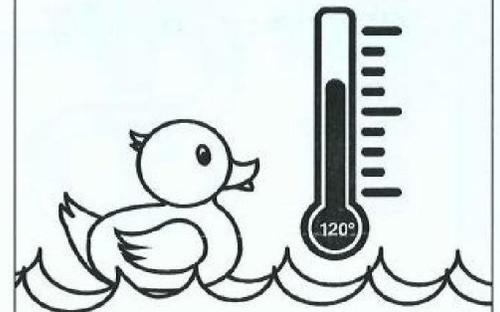


Fireplaces: Be cozy and get a \$75 rebate on qualifying inserts and stoves with electronic ignition.

CenterPointEnergy.com/SaveEnergy

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Did you know...



Hot tap water is a major cause of scald injuries – especially to children and the elderly.* Set your water heater temperature between 120 F to 125 F ("Low" or "L" on some dials) to avoid scald injuries. It's safer and you'll save money, too!

CenterPointEnergy.com/WaterHeaters

* The Consumer Product Safety Commission

Kids – Check this out!



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New, interactive website teaches kids, teens to be Safe and Smart about natural gas

Kids of all ages can play games, watch videos and download study materials to:

- Learn where natural gas comes from
- How it is used
- How to be safe and smart around it

Special sections for parents and teachers, too!

SafeAndSmart.org

Planning Commission, November 7

- **Closed** the Public Hearing for JoAnn Fox for a Private Kennel at 2855 Nybeck Avenue S. The city determined a private kennel was not needed; the application was withdrawn.
- **Conducted** a Public Hearing for Localized LLC for a Conditional Use Permit for a nature center of 60 acres at 2167 Oakgreen Avenue, zoned Agricultural, and two adjacent parcels with PID#s 16.028.20.23.0001 and 16.028.20.23.0002, which are zoned Rural Residential. The property is wooded and has steep topography and the southerly portion of the property is adjacent to Valley Creek. The applicant proposes activities including a community garden, hiking and biking trails, and is working with the County and the MN Land Trust for placing a conservation easement on the property. Major concerns by residents and commission members were controlling access and site security, especially uncontrolled access to Valley Creek. Several residents spoke to issues of erosion of slopes in excess of 18% with predominantly sandy soil and of protecting Valley Creek from public access, as it runs through several residents' parcels of land. It was noted that a community garden growing produce for a restaurant would not be a "not-for-profit" activity. The application appeared to be insufficient in details that should have been provided in order for the PC to make a recommendation. It was noted that the application had not been sent to Valley Branch Watershed District for review, as is required when involving a waterway such as Valley Creek.
- **Recommended** that City Council DENY the application by Localized LLC for a Conditional Use Permit for a nature center use at 2167 Oakgreen Avenue and two adjacent parcels, based on the findings: the biking and hiking trails are shown to be on sandy soil and steep slopes and would violate the city ordinances for protection of steep slopes from erosion, and the application does not have a definitive plan for public access.
- **Recommended** 2017 meeting schedule changes: moving the January PC meeting to Monday the 9th and the September meeting to the 11th, due to the holidays.
- **Completed** reviews of Comprehensive Plan sections Environmental, Housing and Transportation, noting areas that need updating and more definitive language.

Downtown Improvements Project Update

- A consultation meeting with tribal government representatives was held on November 7 to resolve their objections related to the Rattlesnake Mound. The consultation meeting provided clarification of the objections, which guided the City in pursuing possible design changes to resolve the objections.
- A follow-up consultation meeting to discuss design changes and determine a path forward to enable a spring construction start is being planned for December 16.

December 20th, City Hall:

Join staff, council members, commission and committee members and volunteers for **Holiday Cheer and Treats from 6 –7 p.m. The 2017 Tax Budget & Levy Hearing will follow at 7 p.m.**

City Council Meeting, November 15

- **Canvassed** election results from November 8, 2016. Congratulations to Bill Palmquist, Ward 1 and Randy Nelson, Ward 4 and Richard Bend, mayor, who were re-elected.
- **Passed** a resolution brought by residents for the city's support of efforts to reduce global warming by encouraging reuse, repair and recycling and by fostering an appreciation of rural landscapes and natural ecosystems that sequester carbon.
- **Tabled** a Conditional Use Permit application by Localized LLC for a Nature Center at 2167 Oakgreen Avenue and two adjacent parcels.
- **Authorized** staff to work with the Middle St Croix Water Management Organization to identify conflicts with the Minimum Impact Design Standards and to come back to the Planning Commission and City Council with a plan to integrate them into the City Code.
- **Approved** the Nelson Estates subdivision Development Agreement and Final Plat at 1093 Indian Trail Path.
- **Approved** vacating City Cartway #7 which has connected a property off of Paradox End and 42nd Street up a steep slope to Afton Boulevard South.
- **Approved** the plans for the Town Square Park restroom building to go out for bids.
- **Approved** a new contract for Solid Waste and Recycling Services to Highland Sanitation.
- **Authorized** staff to continue exploring "pay-as-you-go" options for funding road maintenance, rather than borrowing funds through bonding.
- **Authorized** appraisal fees for the condemnation hearing, not to exceed \$6,000 for updated appraisals, \$560 for hearing preparation and \$1,400 per day for hearing testimony.
- **Adopted** a consistent attendance policy for city commission and committee volunteer members.
- **Sent** "allowed uses in the Industrial Zones" to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation.
- **Directed** an ordinance amendment be prepared for review by the Planning Commission for regulations regarding "adjacent parcels under common ownership."
- **Authorized** the Personnel Committee and the City Administrator to act as the job evaluation committee to conduct the job match process for the changes and increased job duties to the two office staff positions using the State Job Match system.



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



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Valley Branch Library December Events

The Library is **CLOSED** Friday, Dec. 23 through
Monday, Dec. 26, for the Christmas Holiday



Valley Library Book Club

Thursday, Dec. 1, from 5 to 5:55 p.m.

"Night" by Elie Wiesel. Read the book, come and discuss. Open to all.



Preschool Storytime

Mondays, Dec. 5, 12 & 19, 10:30 to 11 a.m.

Stories, songs, rhymes develop early literacy skills.



STEM Saturday

Saturday, Dec. 17, 11 a.m. to noon

Explore STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) through hands-on activities and creative projects! This month: **LED Throwies**.

Dog Gone Reading

Tuesday, Dec. 27 from 4 to 6 p.m.

Children K-7 read aloud to certified therapy dog, Legacy. Sign up for 15 minute reading sessions at the library or call 436-5882.



PATRON AFTON, MN 55001

View this newsletter
IN COLOR
on the city website.



Please recycle this
newsletter after use.

Pancake Breakfast with Santa



All you can eat pancakes with sausage, juice, milk and coffee await you on

**Sunday, December 4, 2016
8:00 a.m. to noon**

**1560 St. Croix Trail South
Lake St. Croix Beach**

Santa will visit during breakfast for photo opportunities.

Free will offering. Please bring a bag of non-perishable food items to help stock the local food shelf.

See you there!

Applications Being Accepted!

Lower St Croix Valley Fire Department is still accepting applications. We provide quality training based on real world experience and always consider it an honor and privilege to work with the citizens we serve.

We provide a variety of training programs to meet the community's needs. Visit www.lscvfd.com to download an employment application packet today.

Work with dedicated people; get great retirement benefits. **Come join us!**

Belwin Conservancy

— December Events

Open 3rd Saturday

Saturday, December 17th, 2016

11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Anyone can become a member by donating any amount on that day!

All trails on 225 acres of forest and prairie at Belwin are open for members to come, hike and enjoy.

Parking is free at the Belwin Outdoor Science Education Center. Restrooms are open and warm drinks are available for your comfort.

Celebrate Winter Solstice!

Tuesday, December 20th, 2016

Bonfire 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Program at 7:45 p.m.

All are welcome to enjoy a bonfire, snacks and warm drinks, night hikes and more. You do not need to be a member for this special event.

Call to sign up:
651-439-7434



Or visit:
www.CommunityThreadMN.org

Community Thread's Holiday Hope connects people in need to those willing to provide support during the holidays. Low-income families, seniors, and adults with disabilities receive individually chosen gifts and a holiday meal. Holiday Hope serves more than 800 individuals from our local community each year – and we need your help this holiday season.

