



December 2021

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

City of Afton Dashboard

A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ Trash and Recycling Service – The City requested proposals from haulers for our trash and recycling collection and two companies, Highland Sanitation and Republic Services responded. A review committee recommended Highland Sanitation based on lowest overall cost and the quality of customer service . The council approved the committee’s recommendation and selected Highland for a five year contract.
- ◆ Driveway Trash Pickup – Did you know that Highland Sanitation will pick up your trash container at your garage? This service is available only for regular trash pickup and not for recycling. An additional charge applies. Contact Highland if you are interested.
- ◆ Critter Crossing – In a joint project with Washington County phase I of the safe critter crossing under Co. Rd. 18 along the south bank of Valley Creek has been completed. This project is an effort to reduce the high level of road kill in this area. This project involved many regulatory agencies and was designed by and substantially funded by Washington County Public Works. According to the DNR’s biologist the deer immediately started using the pathway. Many thanks go to Commissioner Gary Kriesel and Wayne Sandberg from Washington County for their support of Afton and this project. Future phases of the project will include a pathway on the north bank of the creek and fencing along Co. Rd. 18.
- ◆ Street Lights – The council is considering installing a dimming system for the street lights in the Old Village at an estimated cost of \$11,500. Public Works has worked with a manufacturer of a wireless dimming system and has determined the system to be technically feasible. This system would allow for scheduled dimming of the lights which would result in energy savings, less light pollution and reduced impact on wild life. Contact your council representative if you have questions or comments.
- ◆ Valley Creek Trail bridge replacement – a few months ago the council approved replacement of a bridge and culvert on Valley Creek Trail. Due to materials lead time and permitting requirements, the project has been delayed until early next year.
- ◆ Afton-Lakeland School Playground Equipment – The council approved the contribution of \$5,000 to the fund raising effort of the Afton-Lakeland PTA for replacement and upgrade of playground equipment which will enable the installation of a much safer playground surface.

SAR

Ice Skating Rink Closed This Winter

This fall, improvements were done to the Town Square Park ball field to create a safer and more pervious surface. The infield dirt was replaced, improved drainage was installed, and the grass re-seeded. In order to protect the new surface, the city will not be installing an ice skating rink this winter.

The City Office is Closed
Thursday, December 23
Friday, December 24
Friday, December 31
In observance of the Holidays

CITY MEETINGS
December 1, 2021
Parks Committee Meeting
6:00 P.M. (In-Person)

December 6, 2021
Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 PM (In-Person)

December 21, 2021
City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M. (In-Person)
Public Participation Via Zoom Will Continue to be Available for City Council 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 our November meeting, the council decided to forgo the annual holiday open house at city hall which we normally do before the December council meeting. This was due to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases. Hopefully this latest wave will have ebbed by then, but given the conditions we elected to hold off again. It is disappointing we will miss another year.

As was mentioned on the dashboard, a wildlife crossing was installed under the Valley Creek Bridge on St. Croix Trail. This is a location where we have had many animals struck by cars and is an area where the endangered Blandings Turtles are found. These types of crossings are standard now but were not when this bridge was built. For both vehicle safety and wildlife protection we hope this will be a big benefit. Several days after installation there was already evidence of it being used by deer. Thank you to our partners at Washington County, as well as Council Member Ross and Public Works Director Ken Johnson for all their work to get this difficult project done. If you would like to see what a “wildlife crossing” is, there is a link to photos of the project on the city website under Community—Current Events.

It was recently reported that the MPCA has determined the St. Croix River is impaired for PFAS. This is unfortunate news, though not completely unexpected. In addition, PFAS concentrations in several private wells just south of Hudson Road have recently increased. Although I remain confident in the experts’ opinion that the plume will not move any further south, we will continue to monitor any changes in well concentrations beyond what should have been expected with groundwater modeling. A stormwater control project (Project 1007) that was constructed many years ago near the original contamination site, was meant to address lake flooding but it appears this project has also accelerated the movement of PFAS, although it does not appear to have affected the direction of PFAS movement. The MPCA is undertaking an intensive investigation of the Project 1007 corridor to find the highest concentrations of PFAS in surface water along the corridor, and is also investigating new methods of removing the PFAS from these locations. Staff from the Minnesota Department of Health, which is working closely with the MPCA, have offered to come to Afton to provide updated information regarding PFAS to Afton residents and officials. A presentation could be scheduled next spring.

In some good news, I heard that the person who had the medical emergency on our city levee last month and who was helped by the staff of Windmill Marina and our local volunteer fire department recovered and is doing well. That seems like a great way to end this note and wish all of you a happy holiday season with family and friends.

-Bill

December 1, 2021

Parks Committee Meeting

6:00 P.M. (In-Person)

The Parks Committee is currently working on projects related to pollinator gardens, habitat restoration, and bike trail mapping.

Want to get involved in CITY DECISIONS?

Do you have an interest in architecture, historic buildings and preserving Afton’s heritage? **The Heritage Preservation / Design Review Commission** is looking for members with an architectural background.

The HPC/DR meets to review projects to ensure they meet the City’s Design Standards for the Old Village. Meetings are monthly or as needed.

Applications are available on the city website, or by calling City Hall at 651-436-5090.

Budget and Tax Hearing

*All are Invited to Attend Afton’s 2022 Budget and
Tax Hearing*

7:00 pm, Tuesday, December 21, 2021

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

**The 2022 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

November 1, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting

The November Planning Commission meeting was not held due to the fact there were no land use applications to review.

November 16, 2021 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Approved an extension request of the Five Oaks Family Farm Variance and Subdivision application.
- Approved the solid Waste and Recycling services RFP and contract with Highland Sanitation.
- Approved the Afton House liquor license for 2022.
- Approved \$5,000 toward the Afton-Lakeland school playground replacement.

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

We want to hear from you! Dimmers for the Village Street Lights

Our new downtown lights nicely highlight our Village and provide good lighting for people walking on the sidewalk. However, the intensity to provide that appropriate level for pedestrians means they also light up the night when most of us are sleeping. That's why we're considering purchasing dimmers so we can adjust the brightness during the very late hours of the night.

The reason the council is considering this is twofold – lighting up the town all night long takes energy during hours when it is not needed. We will save money and lower our energy consumption with the use of dimmers. Also, bright lights left on all night can be disruptive for people and animals.

Please visit the city website for links to articles regarding this issue and let your Ward member know what you think. Thank you for your input!



Holiday Waste & Recycling

Americans generate 23% more tons of waste in December than other months of the year. That's 36 extra pounds of waste per person!

Recycle Holiday Lights

Don't toss your broken or unwanted light strings and cords. Holiday string lights and extension cords are made aluminum and copper which are recyclable but cannot go in your regular recycling cart because they can get tangled at recycling processing facilities and should never be placed in your curbside recycling cart. Instead, bring them to the Washington County Environmental Center for proper disposal.

Toys/Electronics

Getting new electronics this holiday? Dispose of your used batteries at the Washington County Environmental Center. Remember: Anything that makes sounds, lights up, or turns on without being plugged in contains a battery. All battery types and electronics with batteries are accepted at the Environmental Center for proper disposal.

Reduce Holiday Gift Waste

To reduce waste this holiday season, try giving gifts that don't require a box or wrapping, such as gifting an outdoor winter activity like snowshoeing or cross country skiing, donating to a favorite charity, taking a virtual class, or making a new meal recipe with your family.

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 4

Hiking into the Night

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Belwin's Education Center, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

Join us for an exploration into the other half of day, when darkness envelops our world. We will begin inside with a brief overview of winter night life at Belwin and then head out to witness the beauty of the dark. We will end our evening with light refreshments around a fire. Come dressed in layers for any weather. RSVP required. \$20 per family. Open to ages 12 and older (youth must be accompanied by an adult).

belwin.org/event/hiking-into-the-night/

Friday, December 17 and Saturday, December 18

Women Walking

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Belwin's Education Center, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

Join us to celebrate the seasonal changes in the natural world. Vernal Equinox, Summer Solstice, Autumnal Equinox, Winter Solstice — each brings us to a new season, a new place in our annual trip around the sun. We will gather indoors for a welcome and some easy centering exercises. We will then move out to the woods and prairies for walking meditations and experiences in the natural world. We will end our time together with light refreshments around the fire. Wear comfortable layers and be prepared for any weather. RSVP required. \$20 per person. Open to all women ages 16 and older (permission from a guardian is required for those under 18 years of age). belwin.org/event/women-walking

Monday, December 20

Winter Solstice Bonfire

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Belwin's Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields, 15601 Hudson Road N.

Join us at a new location for this year's Solstice Bonfire! We'll have a warming tent, hot cider and cookies, night hikes, and more. Plus, Ikid-owin Youth Theater storytellers will perform at 7:00 p.m.

\$10 per car. belwin.org/event/winter-solstice-bonfire/

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

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AFTON MN 55001
PERMIT NO. 15

Valley Library

Rediscover Valley Library

Valley Library is open! 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.

Library Hours

Visit the library on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Masks are currently required for all visitors over the age of two, regardless of vaccination status.

Upcoming Events

Family Storytimes are available every Monday at 10:30 a.m. Develop early literacy skills with stories, songs, fingerplays, and more! For children of all ages and their families.

Valley Book Club meets in person on the fourth Thursday of each month from 5-6 p.m. to discuss a selected title. This book club is free and open to all.

A variety of Take and Make Activities are available for free each month. Visit the library to pick up all the supplies you need to complete a fun craft at home.

Learn more about all Valley Library programs at WashCoLib.org/Events.

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

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



*Please recycle this
newsletter after use.*

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.