



March 2021

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

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

- ◆ Road Renovation—The City Council approved the following 2021 road renovations :
 - 42nd Street, from Pasture Ridge Road, east to the [cul-de-sac](#).
 - 8th Court, from 8th Street to cul-de-sac.
 - 8th Street, from Manning Ave. to 8th Court.
 - 8th Street, 8th Court to 10th Street.
 - Division Street, Stagecoach Trail to Croixview Ave.
 - Paradox Avenue, 42nd Street to cul-de-sac.
 - Pasture Ridge Road, 42nd Street, north to cul-de-sac.
 Roads to be added after competitive quoting is complete:
 - 30th street from the new box culvert to Neal Ave.
 - 32nd street from Trading Post to cul-de-sac.
 - Pateley Bridge Ave. from 45th Street to cul-de-sac.
 The cost of this work is roughly \$1 million. Work is scheduled to start in May.
 - ◆ 11th Street will be posted to prohibit overflow parking from the Belwin parking area as soon as the ground thaws.
 - ◆ Afton Levee / FEMA – The FEMA process of removing the area behind the levee from the flood plain maps is scheduled to be completed in late March.
 - ◆ Neal and Co. Rd. 18 - Residents should be very cautious at this intersection, where there have been a number of accidents. The City is carefully monitoring conditions and has directed the Sheriff's Department and City Attorney to very aggressively enforce speed and safety laws in this area.
 - ◆ Ordinance Violation Enforcement – The City Council has extended an offer to an outside resource tasked with enforcing ordinance violations. This person, when directed, will interface with our City Attorney and the Sheriff to enforce ordinance violations.
 - ◆ The City is very aggressively enforcing its new ordinance regulating short term rentals (for Airbnb and “event”, i.e. party, rentals). Please inform us if you are experiencing negative impacts from behaviors that suggest this kind of activity in your neighborhood.
 - ◆ Commercial Subdivision – The City Council has approved a preliminary plan to develop a business park on 60 acres located at the intersection of Hudson Road and Manning Ave.
 - ◆ Afton Yacht Club Driveway Lawsuit - The Court has rescheduled the trial to November.
- SAR

CITY MEETINGS

The regular meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council are being held remotely. Other Volunteer Commissions and Committees are canceled unless otherwise noted. Remote meetings of those committees may be held if timely action is needed and if properly noticed.

March 1, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

(To be held remotely)

March 16, 2021

City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

(To be held remotely)

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

Don't forget Daylight Savings!
"Spring forward" one hour on March 14th



Notes from the Mayor

In February, the city entered into a contract with an inspector to provide assistance with ordinance compliance issues. In Afton, the vast majority of residents and property owners adhere to the rules and know that these ordinances and zoning rules have served to protect and preserve the environment and quality of life that makes Afton the beautiful place that it is. However, we have had some situations where that is not the case. In a small city with a small staff, at times it has been a challenge to deal with those situations. We want to ensure we have the type of follow up and follow through that our council, staff, and residents want and deserve. Initially, we have budgeted for a limited number of hours to start. Depending on the impact this position could have, I imagine we will revisit that decision during the next budget cycle. I feel very fortunate we were able to find a solution to what has at times been a frustrating issue to residents dealing with issues that have impacted their lives.

As is noted on the dashboard on the first page, we are set to have a productive season of street work this spring and summer. Pricing was good, and we hope to add the additional roads noted in that article after the quoting process is complete. I want to thank everyone who lives on the roads we were set to do last year for their patience in waiting until this summer. This council is as committed as any I have served with to maintain our infrastructure, but also to be diligent in getting the best value for those infrastructure dollars that we can. Last year's quotes were just untenable. Our Public Works Committee recommended waiting. That was a good decision, and with this set of roads getting done this year we are back on track to ensure we are meeting our long-term goals. We are also firmly in-line with reaching the pay-as-you go funding plan. In a few years, the street paving bonds the city has used in the past will be paid off, and we will be fully paying for our infrastructure needs through a long term funding plan that does not require bonding.

In February, the council appointed Jacob Edwards to the Design Review/Heritage Preservation Committee. Welcome, Jacob! Thank you for volunteering to serve.

The renovations at city hall to mitigate the spread of the virus and help the city return to in-person work are nearing completion. The new equipment and furnishings will provide a safer environment for everyone, and they also look great. Hopefully as the vaccine gets rolled out and we are all in a better place to get back to normal, you will have the opportunity to come and see the improvements that have been made thanks to the grants we received through CARES funding to retrofit city hall.

In one last piece of good news, an application for a \$50,000 habitat restoration grant through the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Program, which is managed by the DNR, was approved for use on the City's property at 2318 St. Croix Trail and the adjacent property to the south at 2398 St. Croix Trail. These parcels, combined with additional Belwin land, will be part of the new preservation and hiking area near Valley Creek set to open spring of 2022. The grant funding will be used for planned restoration activities, including clearing buckthorn and other undesirable species.

-Bill

Getting Ready for Spring: Rinta Community Garden

Spring will be here soon; time for gardeners to get their hands dirty. The Rinta Community Garden has 20 plots available to residents of the Lower St. Croix Valley.

There is no charge for using a plot. Gardeners are asked not to use pesticides and to use organic fertilizers. There is no well water at the site, but 2 rain barrels collecting runoff from a small shed will hold 250 gallons of water for irrigation when necessary. The installation of a high fence has thwarted hungry deer.

If you are interested in a garden plot at Rinta, contact Afton City Hall or go to the Afton website for an application (Located under "Parks, Park Reservations & Special Events"). Complete and return it to Afton City Hall, 3033 St. Croix Trail, P.O. Box 219, Afton, MN 55001.

If you have additional questions, contact Barbara Ronningen at bjronningen@yahoo.com.

Theft from Autos

In late January, two businesses along Hudson Road were the targets of thieves breaking into and stealing from parked cars in their lots. In one instance the car was unlocked and in the other the car was broken into – both occurred during the day.

These thefts - along with accounts of cars stolen in neighboring communities during the recent cold snap, as folks left their cars running and unlocked - serve as reminders that we in Afton are not completely insulated from crime. Precautions like locking your car, not leaving valuables in your car, and not leaving your unlocked car running can help you avoid having your day ruined by an opportunistic crime.

Meeting Highlights

February 1, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for a Preliminary Plat application for a 6-lot residential subdivision at 680 Neal Ave.
- Held a public hearing for a Variance application for property located west of 2760 Nybeck Ave.
- Held a public hearing for an ordinance amendment regarding screening of accessory buildings on lakefront and streamfront lots.
- Reviewed and recommended approval of the John & Kim Ziton Variance application at 4102 River Road.

February 16, 2021 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Extended the declaration of local emergency.
- Approved the 2021 Pavement Improvement Project.
- Approved a contract for zoning enforcement assistance.
- Tabled review of a Preliminary Plat application for a 6-lot residential subdivision at 680 Neal Ave.
- Approved a Variance application for property located west of 2760 Nybeck Ave.
- Approved the John & Kim Ziton Variance application at 4102 River Road.
- Approved Ordinance Amendment 01-2021 regarding screening of accessory buildings on lakefront and streamfront lots.
- Appointed Jacob Edwards to the Heritage Preservation Commission.

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

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Education Center Third Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Free and open to everyone! Explore the Belwin Education Center and its miles of rolling, wooded trails. Trails are not groomed in the winter. The Education Center building will be open for check in, directions, and restrooms. Face masks are required to enter the building.

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



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, 2021 — December 31, 2022. *(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.



Proposed Ordinance Amendment to Preserve Open Space by Allowing the Use of Shared Driveways to Serve New Lots of 20 Acres or More

The City Council and Planning Commission will be considering a proposed ordinance amendment that allows the use of shared driveways to serve new lots of 20 acres or more and requires a conservation easement that prohibits further subdivision of the lots.

The purpose of the ordinance is to encourage the preservation of open space and rural vistas; to preserve natural resources and wildlife habitat and corridors; and to provide long term low density.

The Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing on the ordinance amendment at its March 1 meeting. The City Council will be considering the ordinance amendment at its March 16 meeting. A copy of the ordinance amendment will be available on the City website as part of the agenda packets of both meetings. Public feedback regarding the ordinance can be provided at the public hearing, at the Council meeting and by emailing your feedback with the subject "Shared Driveways" to the following email address: office-asst@ci.afton.mn.us



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



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Valley Library

Washington County Library is currently offering a variety of online programs for residents to enjoy at home! Registration is required so that participants receive the link to join virtually. In addition to featured events, book clubs have transitioned to virtual meetings and storytimes premiere on our Facebook page every Tuesday and Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

Valley Library is open with limited capacity and modified hours.

Contact the library for current hours.

Valley Branch Library
384 St Croix Trail S
Lakeland, MN 55043
651-436-5882
www.washcolib.org

**PATRON
AFTON, MN 55001**

The City's website has a new look. Check it out at www.ci.afton.mn.us

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



Please recycle this newsletter after use.

Volunteer with Pesky Plant Trackers

Peskyplants.umn.edu

What is Pesky Plant Trackers?

Pesky Plant Trackers is a citizen science project focused on wild parsnip and Japanese knotweed, two non-native plants that cause harm in Minnesota and North America. The project brings together volunteer observers, university of Minnesota researchers, and others to "track" seasonal changes in these plants.

Who can volunteer?

Volunteering works best when you have wild parsnip or Japanese knotweed growing nearby. For example, if one of these plants grows where you live, work, play, shop, or visit on a regular basis, volunteering will be easy.

What does a volunteer do?

A volunteer locates one, two, or three "pesky plants" in a convenient place and marks them with a stake or flag. Volunteers observe their marked plants every week and use Natures Notebook (a mobile app) to record changes, such as flowers opening and fruits ripening. Volunteers do *not* remove marked plants.



Why track pesky plants?

When land managers remove invasive plants, they time their work in order to achieve results. By researching links between plant observations and local growing conditions, Pesky Plants researchers will build tools to improve the timing and outcomes of invasive plant management.

Begin here

For more information and to learn how to volunteer visit: <https://peskyplants.umn.edu>