



April 2024

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

City of Afton Dashboard
A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ The City Council has approved the City partnering with the Washington Conservation District (WCD) to apply for a grant through the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) Pollinator Path Grant Program to obtain funding that can be used to provide grants for installing pollinator-friendly native plantings in residential yards and for community projects to create habitat corridors and showcase best practices pollinator planting projects. The WCD would provide technical assistance to property owners to plan pollinator planting projects and to connect them with other sources of grant funds. The area proposed to be eligible for grants is the Downtown Old Village area and the River Road area, but the area could be expanded.
- ◆ The City Council approved the City partnering with Belwin to work with Urban Ecosystems on a park/trail planning process to develop a conceptual plan for trails and other park spaces and amenities for the Oxbow Trails area that includes both Belwin land and City land. Afton's share of the planning process cost is \$3,000.

Native Planting Video Presentation

The Afton Parks Committee is hosting a showing of *What's the Rush*, a 1-hour video presentation about planting native to support more LIFE! The event will be hosted by Memorial Lutheran Church at 6:30pm on Thursday, April 18th. Handouts with action steps and keystone plant suggestions will be provided. (15730 S. Afton Blvd. Afton, MN 55001)

METAL & TIRE RECYCLING DAY

Metal and Tire Recycling Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 18, 2024 at the City Garage, 1675 Stagecoach Trail. 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Residents must unload their own vehicles— come prepared to unload.

- SCRAP METAL includes swing sets, bicycles, metal toys, etc. (NO appliances are allowed.) All fabric, rubber, wood, fluids, and anything else that is *not* metal must be removed.
- TIRES must be off the rims (metal rims can be recycled). Tire size is limited to your ability to lift them. NO large tires such as tractor tires. This is for personal disposal only. No commercial supplies of tires.

PLEASE BE AWARE: A MAXIMUM OF 4 TIRES PER HOUSEHOLD WILL BE ACCEPTED.
EXCEPTIONS TO THIS MAY BE CONSIDERED BUT RESIDENTS MUST CONTACT CITY HALL PRIOR TO THE EVENT IF THEY ARE REQUESTING TO BRING MORE THAN 4 TIRES.

Please be patient and cooperate with staff by following their direction in lining up and unloading your metal items and tires.

CITY MEETINGS

Canceled—April 2024

Planning Commission Meeting

April 2, 2024

Natural Resources & Groundwater
Committee Meeting
5:00 PM

April 2024 TBD

Heritage Preservation Commission

April 16, 2024

City Council Meeting
7:00 PM

April 24, 2024

Parks Committee
6:00 PM

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

The five cities that make up our lower St. Croix Valley community meet every few months to share information and discuss issues related to our area. At the last meeting, the staff at MnDOT in charge of the Interstate 94 project attended and gave us an update on the work planned for this summer. This is the last summer of work on I94, and most of the work will be west of here, but it will impact travel this summer. The area that will have the most direct impact to us will be the closure of St. Croix Trail under the 94 bridge. This will begin around April 8th and will last up to 30 days. North-bound traffic will be able to get on I94 heading east and southbound traffic will be able to head west. But you will not be able to use St. Croix Trail during this time to head north toward Bayport and Stillwater from Afton.

Hudson Road will also be reconstructed this summer, although the timing is not yet set. The last few years, the city has lobbied for an off-road bike lane to be part of the project. We did this looking forward to the new Middle St. Croix Regional Trail being planned and because of the need for an east-west connection to other trails. Although there will not be an off-road trail, MnDOT did agree to expanding the existing roadway to enable 5-foot paved shoulders to be added on both sides for use by bicycles.

The state legislative session is happening, and the city has been closely monitoring several bills that are moving through the committee process that limit local zoning and land use controls. While the aim of these bills is to address the lack of affordable and low-income housing around the state, a goal I know we all support, as written these bills will essentially preempt local zoning controls in cities and towns across the state, including Afton. We are working with our legislators, the League of Minnesota Cities, and the Association of Small Cities to find solutions to the problems the bills try to address without the negative consequences that would result from stripping cities and townships of this long-standing authority. It is in many ways a city's most fundamental responsibility. As a former head of the League once said, "If you have seen one city, you have seen one city." Each is unique, with its own challenges and goals. A one-size-fits-all set of minimum lot sizes, densities, and building types fails to take into account such basic things as existing infrastructure, access to public transit, jobs, and PFAS pollution in the groundwater. Let alone communities like ours on the edge of the metropolitan area who have worked for decades to preserve agriculture and market farming, and protect surface and groundwater, steep slopes and wildlife corridors. We will provide updates as needed on our social media pages during this next month but I would urge you to pay attention to this issue as the legislative session continues.

In other news, I want to thank Jack Kollmer for his many years of service on the Natural Resources and Ground Water Committee (NRGC). Jack recently stepped down after spending the last several years as the chair. Jack brought a great deal of knowledge, experience, and energy to the committee which benefited all of us. Thank you, Jack!

At the March meeting, the Council appointed Sven Risom to the NRGC. Sven brings extensive experience working in his former community on issues similar to those the committee is working on. The committee is now only one member away from its full complement of members. Thank you, Sven!
-Bill

2024 Shredding Events at the Environmental Center

Washington County offers free paper shredding events for confidential papers at the Environment Center. Documents will be shredded on-site and recycled. CDs, floppy disks, and other media will be accepted for off-site destruction. These events are free and open to residents and businesses.

Wednesdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

- April 17
- May 22
- June 26
- August 14
- September 25
- November 13

Washington County Environmental Center
4039 Cottage Grove Drive
Woodbury, MN 55129
651-275-7475

www.co.washington.mn.us/3031/Shredding-Events

Afton Historical Museum Receives Grants

The Afton Historical Museum is excited to announce we have been awarded two additional MN Legacy Grants from the Minnesota Historical Society for 2024.

1. Interpretive Plan – the museum has been awarded a large grant to create a comprehensive plan for future historic interpretation projects. This foundational document will serve as a roadmap for projects and exhibits into the next decade. Critically, it will involve input from our community to identify priorities and approaches. A consultant will hold four focus group meetings with community residents. Input from these meetings will play a major role in determining future exhibits. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2024, at which time we will seek grant funding for exhibit equipment and an exhibit planner.
2. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Assessment – the museum has been awarded a \$10,000 grant to hire a company to review the museum's building non-compliance with current ADA standards. The company will issue a report which will act as a guide to seek funding for corrective action.

This latest work is part of the Museum's 2010 Strategic Plan, which includes obtaining grants focused on preserving and restoring our collection of artifacts and the museum building. To date, the Afton Historical Museum has been awarded nearly \$600,000 in grant funding for various projects to preserve our artifact collection and the museum building.

Meeting Highlights

The March 4, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting was canceled due to lack of agenda items.

March 19, 2024 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Approved a memorandum of understanding with Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust to preserve the Herreid property at the east end of 45th St., and approved an application for a DNR grant for funding to assist in the preservation of the Herreid property.
- Approved pursuing a Lawns to Legumes Pollinator Pathways Grant in collaboration with the Washington Conservation District. See the Dashboard for more information about this grant program.
- Approved replacement of the phone system at City Hall.
- Approved the street patching project for 2024.
- Appointed Sven Risom to serve on the Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee.

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

NRGC Upcoming Events

- The Natural Resource Groundwater Committee (NRGC) would like to invite the public to tour Afton's Wastewater Facility. It will be on Monday, May 6th at 5pm. The facility is located at 2318 St. Croix Trail South, Afton, MN 55001. If individuals would like to carpool, please meet at the Afton City Hall, 3033 St. Croix Trail South at 4:45pm. Afton's Wastewater Treatment Facility is state of the art and other cities have toured it to learn more about the process and what is needed to efficiently remove the waste and keep our ecosystem healthy.
- The Natural Resources & Groundwater Committee will be offering well water testing for Afton residents this June. Details will be provided in upcoming newsletters.

Denmark Township Historical Society

The Denmark Township Historical Society is hosting a free community event to share memories of Basswood Grove from 6:30-8:00 on April 11, 2024 at the new Whistling Well Apple Barn at 14850 90th St. South. Light snacks will be served.

Are you passionate about local history? DTHS invites you to join our dedicated team of volunteers. If you have a knack for research, love organizing events or simply want to contribute time, Denmark Township Historical Society welcomes you to help ensure stories of the past continue to inspire and educate our community. Contact Brenda Natala at brendanatala@gmail.com or 612-616-2519.

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

Frog Walk at Oxbow Trails Monday, April 22nd, 2024

7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Oxbow Trails

2638 St. Croix Trail, Afton 55001

Cost (sliding scale): \$10, \$18, or \$25 per family

Dress for the weather. This is a rain or shine event.

Celebrating Your Wild Voice!

Saturday, April 27th, 2024

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Belwin Conservancy Hilltop Classroom 1553

Stagecoach Trail S., Afton, MN 55001

Cost (sliding scale): \$35, \$50, or \$70

No singing experience or talent required at all. Must be 16 and older.

Led by Barbara McAfee and Lynette Anderson.

Bring your own lunch; Light snacks, tea and hot chocolate provided.

Belwin Frog Walk

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Belwin Education Site, Main Office

1553 Stagecoach Trail S., Afton, MN 55001

Sliding scale cost: \$35, \$45, or \$50/per adult & child pair

Presented in partnership with Saint Paul Community Education. Join us for an evening of spring choral delights as we saunter around Belwin's Bulrush Slough. It is at this time of year that the amphibians of our ponds are singing loudly to attract their mates. We will gather for a brief introduction at the office and then head out to a paved trail to listen and look for signs of spring. Total length of the walk is about 1 mile. We will be walking at a moderate pace with several stops along the way.

Belwin Bison Festival

Saturday, May 18, 2024

9:00 am: 5k "Run with the Bison" Fun Run

10:00 am - 2:00 pm: Festival

Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields

15601 Hudson Rd N, Afton, MN 55001

Cost: \$10 per car (cash or check). Separate entrance fee for Fun Run.

This beloved annual event features the release of the 2024 Northstar Bison herd onto Belwin's Bison Prairie. In addition to the release, visitors can also enjoy fun activities for all ages, such as live music, eco-arts, and food trucks. Prior to the release, we'll also host a 5k "Run with the Bison" Fun Run so visitors can run through the Prairie before the bison arrive.

For details and registration contact:

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



Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water

There is a growing (pun intended?) movement across Minnesota as more and more people begin to think of their yards, not just as a place to relax and recreate, but also as a living landscape that can help to support wildlife and keep water clean.

The Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water website (www.BlueThumb.org) is designed to be a one-stop-shop for anyone interested in native landscaping. It includes step-by-step instructions on how to plant pollinator gardens, bee lawns, and natural shorelines, as well as sample garden designs, online learning modules, and garden maintenance advice. In addition, the website also has links to upcoming workshops, community grant programs, and native plant retailers. Of particular interest is the Plant Finder tool, which can be used to identify suitable native plants for any yard's conditions. Best of all, any Minnesota resident can apply for a \$400 native plant grant, with a quick visit to BlueThumb.org.



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

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Valley Library Events & Important Dates

The library will be closed on **Wednesday April 17th** for Staff Training

For Adults:

The Valley Library Book Club meets 5:00-6:00pm on the 4th Thursday of every month. The title selection for the **Thursday April 25th** meeting is "How Angel Peterson Got His Name Back" by Gary Paulsen.

Saturday April 13th 11:00am-1:00pm Anishinaabe Beadwork with Art Start Create your own Anishinaabe bead work! Taught by Julie Boada of the Fond du Lac nation who will introduce participants to the art of beading. You will learn how patterns and colors can reflect tribal and family affiliations, as you create your own beaded work of art. Registration is required <https://washcolib.libcal.com/event/11464353>

For Kids:

Every Monday 10:30-11:00 AM Family Story time

Monday, April 15 10:30-11:00AM Super Storytime

Thursday, April 11 3:30-5:30 Brick Builder's Club

The Valley Library Art Cart is available whenever the library is open. We provide the supplies and you provide the creativity!

For complete information and to register for programs contact:
Valley Library
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



Please recycle this newsletter after use.



Save some for the birds and bees, please!



Wait until the daytime temps are consistently above 50°F to cut down stems and rake leaves out of garden beds.

Happy Arbor Day!

Trees are amazing! They pull carbon from the air, clean our water, provide habitat and forage, and help to cool the earth when temperatures are high. As temperatures trend upwards and precipitation trends downwards; planting trees that are predicted to adapt well to these changes will ensure the trees will thrive not just for a few years, but 50 to 100 years from now.

The University of MN Extension has developed tree species lists for creating climate ready woodlands. These lists include species that are;

- Native to Minnesota or nearby in the Eastern Deciduous Forest.
- Low risk of mortality from pests and disease.
- Beneficial to wildlife, specifically charismatic microfauna such as butterflies, bees, fireflies, birds and bats.
- Climate-ready, with response data indicating they are well-suited for the area's projected climate.

More information and recommended tree lists can be found on the University of Minnesota Extension website: <https://extension.umn.edu/managing-woodlands/climate-ready-woodlands>

Grant funding of up to \$500, for native plantings, may also be available to you; please sign up for a site visit with the Washington Conservation District for a free site visit and to learn more about funding opportunities: <https://www.mnwcd.org/site-visit-signup-form>