



January 2021

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

## City of Afton Dashboard: A summary of current happenings

- ◆ **Lake Edith Clear Cutting** – The criminal complaint has been charged and served. Now waiting for the court to clear its backlog due to Covid-19 so the case can proceed.
- ◆ **Afton Levee / FEMA** – In response to FEMA’s request for additional information and documentation necessary for its review of the City’s application for removal of properties from the floodplain that are now protected by the levee, all requested documents have been submitted to FEMA to finalize the floodplain map amendment.
- ◆ **Afton Marina Law Suit** – In this lawsuit, the Afton Marina and Yacht Club sued the City of Afton even though the City granted their application for a conditional use permit for a proposed restaurant with its public access on 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The City refused to allow access to 32<sup>nd</sup> for several reasons, including the protection of public safety. The Yacht Club, however, wanted to create a new driveway to 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, which is not even a public street. After extensive discovery and motions, the Court granted the City’s motion for summary judgment on two of the Yacht Club’s three legal claims. A jury trial has been scheduled for April 24, 2021, on the Yacht Club’s remaining claim. In that claim, the Yacht Club contends that its incomplete driveway application was approved because no action was taken on it within the 60-day limit under state law. Recently, however, the City filed a new motion for summary judgment on this claim on the basis that the Yacht Club amended its driveway application within the 60-day limit, which extends the time for the City’s response. A hearing on the motion is being scheduled for January or February 2021. If the Courts the motion, there will no longer be a need for a jury trial, and the City can avoid the expense for preparation and participation in the trial.
- ◆ **Afton House Law Suit** - On December 4, 2020, the District Court held a hearing in this on-going condemnation matter. The City filed a Motion to Vacate the Commissioners’ Award and the Jury Verdict because of errors in the evidence submitted to them. If granted, the case would be heard by commissioners with a correct statement of facts and law and a new award will be provided. This will hopefully allow the parties to resolve this matter. Also, on December 4, 2020, Afton House brought a motion for an order to the City to condemn additional land that was not included in the original court filing. The City has agreed that some additional property needs to be acquired and is seeking to achieve that through negotiation with the owner.
- ◆ **Zoning Violation Enforcement** – The city council has given preliminary support to hire an outside resource tasked with enforcing zoning violations.
- ◆ **Valley Creek Conservation effort** - a proposed joint conservation effort between Washington County, the City of Afton and the Afton Historical Museum, designed to protect, preserve and document the historical record of property located on Valley Creek, at 14020 Valley Creek Trail, is being considered. A Neighborhood Meeting via Zoom has been scheduled for January 7 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the proposed concept plan and obtain feedback from the residents of the neighborhood. All neighborhood residents will receive a mailed notice of the meeting with a link to join the Zoom meeting. A community meeting to obtain feedback from the broader community will also be held via Zoom on Monday, January 11 at 6:30 p.m. The link to the Zoom meeting can be found at the City Calendar tab on the City’s homepage.
- ◆ **Commercial Subdivision** – a public hearing will be held on Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM via Zoom for a proposed commercial subdivision located at the southeast quadrant of Manning Avenue and Hudson Road. A link to the meeting can be found on the city’s web site.

- SAR

### The City Office is Closed

Friday, January 1  
Monday, January 18

*In observance of New Years Day & Martin Luther King Jr. Day*

### CITY MEETINGS

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

**January 4, 2021**

Planning Commission Meeting  
7:00 P.M.

**(To be held remotely)**

**January 19, 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

<u>Mayor:</u>	Bill Palmquist	651-308-0569
<u>Ward 1:</u>	Annie Perkins	651-592-3007
<u>Ward 2:</u>	Lucia Wroblewski	651-436-3982
<u>Ward 3:</u>	Stan Ross	612-720-6478
<u>Ward 4:</u>	Randy Nelson	651-436-2479

### CITY HALL

651-436-5090

### CITY WEBSITE

[www.ci.afton.mn.us](http://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

Happy New Year! I hope you had a healthy and enjoyable, albeit different, holiday season.

As we start the new year, the city will once again begin to make committee assignments and hold goal-setting meetings to guide us through the year. We will have the final numbers from the 2020 budget year by February. As I write this, it appears we will have a favorable variance. Building permits were up, we had a good early winter in terms of snow plowing, and some staff expenses were lower. So that is great news. When this happens, we typically put any budget surplus into our road and infrastructure fund. This year the council will have to make that determination when the numbers are finalized. Unfortunately, we are still dealing with lawsuits, and the high costs associated with those remains a serious issue.

I wanted to take a minute to share something good that I was reminded of last month and to pass along thanks to everyone who helped to make it happen. I was contacted by a resident who was having trouble getting the internet service our city program required of the provider. This issue was resolved, and with that resolution came the realization that our community's planning and investments of a few years ago, begun under Mayor Bend and spearheaded by Council Member Ross and the Technology Committee members, have proven to be vital during this pandemic.

It was only a few years ago that we were all on our own trying to find a way to get the necessary high-speed internet access to our homes. And we were not getting anywhere. So we came together as a community and worked to solve the issue collectively. The committee was formed and worked to craft a public-private solution that worked. These days it seems our national politics have gotten to the point where there is more finger pointing and blame than pulling together to solve challenging issues. I was reminded last month that what local government really is all about is doing the things we can't do on our own. That is what everyone involved in this project did.

We are incredibly lucky to have met that challenge before this pandemic hit. Overnight our children were distance-learning, and those of us who could were working from home. Had we not come together to solve that problem, this last year would have looked very different and been much more of a challenge for all of us. So I wanted to start the new year out with a profound thanks to everyone who helped make that happen. Your hard work truly benefited all of us.

I hope that in 2021 as we eventually get back to business as usual, you will consider getting involved and joining one of our committees. You never know, the work you do might just be the next saving grace for all of us.

On that note I want to thank Rick Pung who is stepping away from the Park Committee after many years of service. Thank you for your great service, Rick!

-Bill

## Want to get involved in CITY DECISIONS?

The two commissions below are in need of an additional member each. Please consider lending your time, interests, knowledge, expertise and voice to the following:

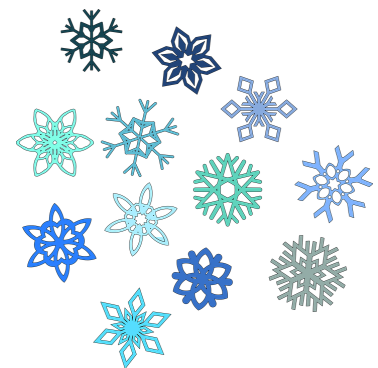
### Heritage Preservation / Design Review Commission

Do you have an interest in architecture, historic buildings and preserving Afton's heritage? The DR/HPC is looking for members with an architectural background. The Commission meets to review projects to ensure they meet the City's Design Standards for the Old Village. Monthly meetings when needed.

### Parks Committee

Identifies and reviews issues relating to parks and open spaces in the city. Makes recommendations for upgrading and maintaining city parks. Monthly meetings or as needed .

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



## Meeting Highlights

### December 7, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting

#### **The Commission:**

- Held a public hearing for the John and Kim Ziton Variance Application at 4102 River Road.
- Discussed a draft Ordinance Amendment regarding screening requirements for accessory buildings on lakefront and streamfront lots.
- Discussed a draft Ordinance Amendment regarding an open space preservation subdivision concept with shared driveways.

### December 15, 2020 City Council Meeting

#### **The Council:**

- Extended the declaration of local emergency.
- Approved the Levee Agreement with Washington County.
- Approved the Levee System Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- Discussed the concept plan for Open Space Preservation subdivision with shared driveways.
- Discussed the preservation/acquisition of property at 14020 Valley Creek Rd.
- Discussed a draft ordinance amendment regarding screening of accessory buildings on lakefront and streamfront lots.
- Approved a service contract with Get Connected for maintenance of the security system at the wastewater treatment site.
- Discussed short term rental violations at 12631 15th St.
- Approved liquor license renewal for 2021 for Afton House.

MEETING PACKETS, VIDEOS AND APPROVED MEETING MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE AT:  
[www.ci.afton.mn.us](http://www.ci.afton.mn.us)

### Public Feedback Regarding Preservation of the Property at 14020 Valley Creek Trail

The City is considering an opportunity to protect and preserve a 19-acre property at 14020 Valley Creek Trail that includes an estimated 1,500 feet of Valley Creek. An essential step in this consideration is obtaining feedback regarding this opportunity, first from residents in the area of the property, particularly those adjacent to Valley Creek and Valley Creek Trail between Neal Avenue and Stagecoach Trail.

A Neighborhood Meeting, via Zoom, has been scheduled for Thursday January 7 at 6:30 p.m. to obtain feedback from the neighborhood residents. The neighborhood residents will receive a mailed notice of the Neighborhood Meeting, along with a link to the Zoom meeting, in advance of the meeting.

Secondly, a community meeting via Zoom will be held to obtain feedback from the broader community. This community meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on January 11. A link to the Zoom meeting can be obtained on the City's Homepage at the City Calendar tab.

### 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.



## Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

### “BELWIN AT 50” ON DISPLAY JANUARY 15 – FEBRUARY 21, 2021

*In-person and virtual tours available for  
“Belwin at 50: A Love Affair with Nature”  
at The Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson,  
Wis.*

2021 marks Belwin Conservancy's 50th anniversary. Join us as we kick off the year with our anniversary show, *Belwin at 50: A Love Affair with Nature*, at The Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson, Wis.

Learn Belwin's history, experience the present, and imagine our future in the St. Croix Valley. Guests are invited to visit the exhibit in person from January 15 through February 21, 2021. The Phipps has incorporated enhanced health and safety measures like requiring masks to be worn and attendees to social distance, as well as maintaining entry logs of all guests.

A supplemental video walk-through of the exhibit will also be available at [thephipps.org](http://thephipps.org) on or near January 29 for those who cannot or do not wish to attend in person.

Exhibit attendees will take a walk through Belwin's first 50 years as interpreted by artists' paintings, music, and installations, as well as through historic documents, photos, and maps of the region's land.

The exhibit also celebrates Belwin's many partnerships through photos and video, including Belwin's community work with the Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields; the bison program; our arts, culture and ecology initiative; and environmental education.

#### EVENT DETAILS

*Belwin at 50: A Love Affair with Nature*  
**January 15, 2021 – February 21, 2021**  
 The Phipps Center for the Arts  
 109 Locust Street  
 Hudson, WI 54016  
[thephipps.org](http://thephipps.org)

#### **Regular Gallery Hours**

Monday – Wednesday: 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
 Thursday & Friday: 9:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
 Saturday: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

#### **Extended Saturday Hours**

January 16, February 6, 13 and 20: 12:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

#### **Extended Sunday Hours**

February 7, 14 and 21: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Belwin Conservancy**  
**1553 Stagecoach Trail South**  
**Afton MN 55001**  
**651-436-5189**  
[www.belwin.org](http://www.belwin.org)



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



PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
AFTON MN 55001  
PERMIT NO. 15

### **Valley Library January 2021**

**The Library will be Closed  
January 1 & January 18, 2021**

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.** Visitors can come to pick up holds, browse materials, and use computers without an appointment. Our meeting rooms will remain closed.

When visiting Valley Library, please help protect everyone in the library by:

- Wearing a mask in the building.
- Practicing social distancing from other visitors and staff.
- Keeping your library visit to one hour or less.

#### **Valley Branch Library**

384 St Croix Trail S  
Lakeland, MN 55043  
651-436-5882

[www.washcolib.org](http://www.washcolib.org)

Open with limited capacity. Current hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday: 12 to 7 p.m.

**PATRON  
AFTON, MN 55001**

You may view this newsletter

**IN COLOR**  
on the city website.



*Please recycle this  
newsletter after use.*

### **Lower St Croix Valley Fire Department December Food Drive Update**

What an incredible community we live in and serve! The LSCVFD delivered over 1,100 lbs of food to Valley Outreach today after a successful weekend with Santa Food Drive on December 12th. This was 2-1/2 to 3 times our previous best delivery. According to Valley Outreach, it takes approximately 1-1/2 lbs of packaged food for an individual meal. This means we just donated around 930 meals! Great job to our Valley community and to the members of the fire department and Santa himself for the awesome work. Happy New Year to all!



### **Washington County Christmas Tree Drop-off Sites**

When the holiday season is over, recycle trees by dropping them off at one of the available locations in Washington County. Facilities have varied hours of operation, fees, and restrictions for each site. Tree stands, plastic bags, tinsel, wire, lights, and all other decorations must be removed before drop-off. Private waste haulers, cities, or townships may also accept holiday trees. Residents should contact them directly for more information.

Sites accepting trees from all county residents include:

- Cottage Grove: Rumpca Companies, Inc., 9600 Glendenning Road - open to all residents, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 2 and Jan. 9. Cost is \$3 per tree, which will be waived if a canned good is brought in for donation to the local food shelf. For more information, call Rumpca Companies at 651-459-1556.
- Washington County: Northern Yard Waste Site, 5527 170<sup>th</sup> St. N. in Hugo – open to all residents, Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. No charge. For more information, call Washington County at 651-430-6655 or see [www.co.washington.mn.us/yardwaste](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/yardwaste).