



February 2026

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

City of Afton Dashboard

A Summary of Current Happenings

- ◆ The Council approved an office/warehouse building in the SE quadrant of Hudson Road and Manning Avenue that is planned for construction in 2026.
- ◆ The Council authorized planning to begin for the 2026 street maintenance and improvement projects, which will include cracksealing and microsurfacing to extend the life of the streets.
- ◆ The Council approved a recommendation from the Parks Committee that the Washington Conservation District develop a concept plan for a natural habitat park on the City's 40-acre Parcel at the East End of 45th Street
- ◆ The Lower St. Croix Valley Fire Department is initiating a program of annual fire inspections for commercial and industrial buildings and for residential rental buildings. The Council is supportive of a fire inspection program and is planning to meet in a work session with the Fire Chief to discuss the program.

Blood Drive

Memorial Lutheran Church of Afton is hosting a Blood Drive on Thursday, February 26th from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

Register at: redcrossblood.org
 Or call 1-800-733-2767



American Red Cross

Memorial Lutheran Church
 15730 S Afton Blvd
 Afton, MN 55001

What about Lawn Chemicals in Afton?

One big reason people move to Afton is to enjoy the beautiful nature including the St. Croix River, which has been protected since 1968 by the Wild and Scenic River Act, so that generations to come can enjoy its scenic beauty and clean and protected waters.

What impact can lawn chemicals have on our waterways including the streams that run to the St. Croix, as well as on insects, birds, and other creatures? Many wish to care for their environment, including their lawn. Lawn services promise lush green perfect grass, with images of happy children playing. These services are marketed under the idea of "care," that people who care for their lawn will use these chemicals. Many market themselves as "organic," when only the fertilizer is organic. Others advertise their herbicide as "natural," when it is still toxic.

Each year, approximately 80 million pounds of lawn chemicals are used on 40 million acres of lawn in the United States, ten times more per acre than used in agriculture. These chemicals destroy plants that pollinators and other insects need, but also kill in

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CITY OFFICE CLOSED

Monday, February 16

In observance of Presidents Day

CITY MEETINGS

February 2, 2026

Planning Commission Meeting
 7:00 PM

February 3, 2026

Natural Resources & Groundwater
 Committee
 5:00 PM

February 9, 2026

Parks Committee
 6:00 PM

February 11, 2026

Heritage Preservation Commission
 6:00 PM

February 17, 2026

City Council Meeting
 7:00 PM

Livestreaming is available for City Council and Planning Commission Meetings.

Information on how to view 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 651-436-7033
- 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 council has held discussions over the last few months related to special rules for the 2026 deer hunting season. The city is now prepared to move forward on two of the suggested changes. We will be working with the Department of Natural Resources in the next month to implement these special rules for hunting within the city limits. This conversation began when the state removed the shotgun-only zone that used to cover Afton. Under current state rules hunters are now allowed to use rifles. Due to the distance bullets travel from rifles, up to several miles, the council felt it was better to return the city to the rule that had been in place for decades where shotgun slugs were the only firearms allowed for hunting deer. A large number of hunters who come here are bow hunters, and there was some talk about creating zones throughout the city where hunting would be limited to bow only, or to consider rules related to parcel sizes in general for hunting with firearms. In the end, the council wanted to make sure we got this change related to firearms in to the DNR in time to make it effective for this year and to continue conversations regarding other rules over time.

The other rule change is something other cities with overly large deer herds have adopted called "Earn a Buck." What this rule requires is that hunters must take a doe before a buck. The rationale for this change is that our city has become known for its large bucks, and many hunters are coming here solely looking for those trophy deer. However, over these last few years the city has received more and more calls related to problems caused by the large deer population. The DNR already allows up to five deer tags per hunter in this area due to the high deer population. With the "Earn a Buck" rule, we hope these hunters will help maintain a healthier population and herd by not solely focusing on trophy bucks. If you have thoughts on these issues or proposed new rules please reach out to city staff or any council members to share your thoughts.

In the coming months, in preparation for the 2026 hunting season, the city will share more information on these rules, as well as how interested property owners can work with the city to have their property included in special limited bow hunts organized by Metro Bowhunters Resource Base (MBRB). Interested property owners are encouraged to contact the City by mid-March to let us know of your interest in being included in special limited bow hunts. The special bow hunt dates and locations will be determined by mid-April, so that bow hunters can sign up to participate in the hunts.

At its January meeting, the council designated the city attorney, the prosecuting attorney and the city engineer for 2026. I am happy to say we reappointed all three of the current firms holding those positions. Tom Radio of Felhaber Larson will continue as our city attorney and Eckberg Lammers will serve as the city's prosecutors. Tyler Hastings of CBS Squared will continue to serve as the city's engineer. We have received excellent service and expertise from these professionals over the last year and are fortunate to have them as a part of our city staff.

-Bill

(Lawn Chemicals continued from page 1)

sects directly. A study in 2017 reported a 75% decrease in insects over the past 30 years. Insects are important pollinators of course, but also decompose dead matter and are the basis of protein for birds and other animals.

Rainfall on the chemically-treated lawn can cause runoff into waterways. The chemicals insert themselves into the natural world as well as our drinking water; pets and wildlife walk on the lawns, absorb the toxins and ingest them while grooming. Children play on the lawns and swim in the river. Exposure to these chemicals can cause infertility, heart disease or cancer. Even when the chemicals are thought to be "safe," studies are retracted or new studies show harm. Just recently, the main study showing Roundup safe was retracted.

The City of Afton acknowledges the toxicity of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides and regulates them in the Afton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 91, including that the lot owner take steps to ascertain whether the chemicals are truly necessary, by consulting with Washington County's Conservation District or other competent professional, and by "considering toxicity, effectiveness, and availability."

But aren't there any more natural alternatives? Options for lawn care that avoid these chemicals? The following list is a variety of possible ideas:

- Choose an eco-friendly lawn service, but look at the fine print for pesticides and herbicides or call and ask what products are used; spot treat any pests or problem weed areas instead of treating the whole lawn.
- Plant your lawn or part of your lawn with a low ground cover that stays green and does not need mowing or replace with native species.
- Make your lawn smaller.
- Promote healthy soil with aeration and amend the soil with compost and leaf litter residue.
- Fertilize your lawn by leaving lawn clippings after mowing or use an organic fertilizer and do not use fertilizers where runoff can go into streams and rivers.
- Test your soil at the U of MN (about \$20) to see what is missing for health.
- Mow at a high setting (3" or more). This encourages deep root systems and healthier grass.
- Enjoy your natural lawn!

-Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee

Meeting Highlights

January 5, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

The Commission:

- Held a public hearing for a Conditional Use Permit, Lot Combination, Vacation of Street Right-of-Way, and Preliminary Plat at 300 and 377 Maple Court.

January 20, 2026 City Council Meeting

The Council:

- Approved the Conditional Use Permit, Lot Combination, Vacation of Street Right-of-Way, and Preliminary Plat at 300 and 377 Maple Court.
- Denied the Variance and Minor Subdivision application at 3787 St Croix Tr S.
- Approved proceeding with changing the city's internet/website domain name to .gov format.
- Completed annual designations of the City Engineer, City Attorney, official newspaper, annual appointments, and other designations and appointments.

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

Radon Tests Kits Available from Washington County

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that comes from the soil. Radon gas is common throughout Minnesota and can enter a home anywhere there is an opening between the home and the soil. Long term exposure to radon is the nation's second leading cause of lung cancer. The Minnesota Department of Health recommends every home be tested for radon.

Test for radon

A radon test is the only way to find out how much radon is in your home. Short term radon test kits are available to Washington County residents at no cost. Radon test kits can be picked up from the following locations during operating hours:

Cottage Grove Service Center - Department of Public Health & Environment
 13000 Ravine Parkway South
 Cottage Grove, MN 55016

Forest Lake Service Center - Department of Public Health & Environment
 19955 Forest Road North
 Forest Lake, MN 55025

North Environmental Center - Front desk or drive lane
 6065 Headwaters Parkway
 Forest Lake, MN 55025

South Environmental Center - Front desk or drive lane
 4039 Cottage Grove Drive
 Woodbury, MN 55129

Stillwater Government Center - Department of Public Health & Environment, Room 4600
 14949 62nd Street North
 Stillwater, MN 55082

Belwin Conservancy Upcoming Events

First Wednesday Walkabout

February 4, 2026

4:30pm - 6:30pm

Hilltop Classroom 1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

Midwinter Family Fun

February 7, 2026

5:00pm - 7:00pm Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

The evening includes guided night hikes, campfires with s'mores, stargazing with the Minnesota Astronomical Society, and access to the Joseph J. Casby Observatory, home to one of the largest refracting telescopes in the state.

Winter Wandering

February 8, 2026

10:00am - 12:00pm

1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

First Wednesday Walkabout

Mar 4 2026 04:30pm - 06:30pm

Hilltop Classroom, 1553 Stagecoach Trail S.

Nature Journaling: A Practice of Play (Adult + Child)

March 14 2026 10:00am - 12:00pm

Women Walking

March 21 2026 06:00pm - 09:00pm

For details and registration contact:

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

Valley Library Events & Important Dates

Library Closure Dates:

Monday, February 16, 2026 for Presidents Day

Please note: Extended Access users can access Valley Library on the closure dates

For Adults:

The Valley Library Book Club meets **5:00-6:00pm** on the 4th Thursday of each month. This book club meets in person in the Valley Library Conference Room. The title selection for the **Thursday February 26th** meeting is *The Celebrants* by Steven Rowley.

On **Saturday February 7 11:00-12:30**

Valley Library will present a hands-on fiber arts experience, Handspun Yarn Workshop, taught by an artist from The Textile Center.

Join us **Saturday February 21 11:00-1:00** for Let's Make Stuff: Polymer Clay Magnets

Do you need help with a technology issue? Register for 30 minutes of dedicated one on one help with a Valley Library staff member. Technology help is offered on the **third Thursday** of every month. Registration is required.

Register today to Learn to Spot and Avoid Today's Most Common Scams on Friday **February 20th 1:00-2:00** at the RH Stafford branch in Woodbury.

AARP Free Tax Assistance will be offered by **appointment only** through April 13th at the Washington County Service Center in Cottage Grove. Register by calling the Park Grove Library at 651-459-2040.

For Kids:

Mondays 10:30-11:00 am Storytime

Monday, February 9th 10:30-11:00 Music and Movement Storytime

Thursday, February 12th 6:00 pm Pajama Storytime

Thursday, February 12th 2:30-4:00
After School Activity: Card Making

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.

Plastic-Free Challenge



Kickstart your plastic-free journey with the Plastic-Free Challenge this February! Be part of the solution to reduce waste, protect water and wildlife, address climate change, and look after the health of ourselves and future generations.

Sign up at <https://tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.org>.