

Woodbury City Update

February 2007 • Volume 8, No. 2

Low levels of PFBA found in Woodbury wells; public open house scheduled Feb. 13

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has found trace levels of perfluorobutanoic acid in water samples taken from Woodbury's municipal wells. The substance, known as PFBA, is one of a family of chemicals known as perfluorochemicals or PFCs.

The sampling and analysis by MDH confirmed the presence of PFBA at all 16 of the city's wells. MDH has been using the measure of 1 part per billion (ppb) as a well advisory guideline for PFBA. Woodbury's levels are less than half of that advisory, with PFBA ranging from 0.10 ppb to 0.47 ppb in the water samples.

"The Department of Health has stated that these low levels of the chemical do not pose an immediate health risk for our residents and businesses," said Engineering and Public Works Director David Jessup. "However, the finding does mean that we need to proceed cautiously, continue our monitoring, and work closely with public health officials in informing residents."

Public meeting set

The city will host a public informational meeting and open house on Tuesday, Feb. 13, to provide an opportunity for citizens to obtain more information about PFBA and bring their specific questions to public health and pollution control experts. The meeting will begin with an open house from 5 to 7 p.m., where

citizens can speak individually with staff from the Department of Health, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment, and the city. A formal presentation is scheduled at 7 p.m.

The meeting will take place at Woodbury Lutheran Church, on the south side of Valley Creek Road at Queens Drive (across from Woodbury Village). Access is from Afton Road.

Jessup said that city staff also will be meeting with MDH in the coming weeks to learn more about the findings and their implications for Woodbury and neighboring communities where PFBA also was detected. In addition to Woodbury, the affected cities are Cottage Grove, Newport, St. Paul Park, South St. Paul and Hastings.

About perfluorochemicals

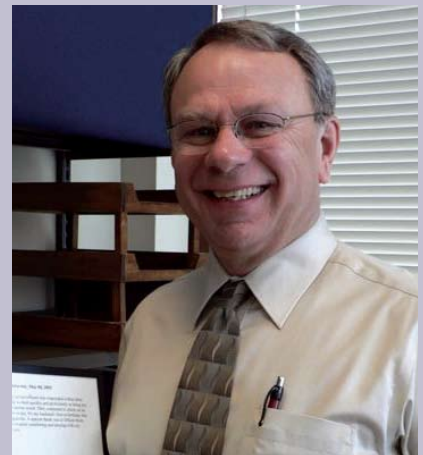
PFCs were made and used by several companies around the world in household and industrial products such as stain repellents, lubricants, fire retardant and suppressants, and more. The 3M Company made PFCs at its Cottage Grove facility from the late 1940s until 2002.

Woodbury's wells have been tested for PFCs since 2004, when low levels of two different PFCs, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) were detected

in private wells in western Lake Elmo. In 2005, the two chemicals also were detected in several city wells in Oakdale. Neither of these substances has been detected in Woodbury wells to date; only PFBA has been detected in recent tests.

continued page 2

Chief retiring



Public Safety Director William Hering will retire on March 30 after serving nearly 32 years with the city. Hering displays a framed copy of two "thank you" letters staff received as a reminder of the department's impact on the community. *See full story on page 3.*

Inside this Issue



Council considers high school plan

Council members review a report on the planning for the new high school in Woodbury. *Mayor's column, page 2.*



Landscaping grants available

Apply for financial help through the city's second annual Alternative Landscaping Grant Program. *Page 4.*



Tips to keep teens safe on the Web

Workshop answers questions, provides tips to help keep your kids safe when they're online. *Page 4.*

Council Perspective

by Mayor Bill Hargis

Council focusing on water concerns, new high school

In January, the City Council learned that trace levels of a chemical known as PFBA were found in water samples taken from Woodbury's municipal wells. This substance belongs to a family of chemicals called PFCs, which were made for many years by the 3M Company.

As we reported to citizens in our annual drinking water reports of 2005 and 2006, Woodbury has been testing for PFCs since 2004, after low levels of the chemicals were detected in private wells in Lake Elmo. These tests are among more than 2,200 individual tests performed annually to ensure that water quality remains at the highest possible level.

The city takes its responsibility to provide safe drinking water for our residents and businesses very seriously. We are already engaged in follow-up meetings with experts from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the Pollution Control Agency, Washington County, 3M, and our neighboring communities regarding the implications of these new findings. At this point, scientific understanding of the relative toxicity of PFBA is evolving. We have been assured by the MDH that more extensive studies are under way to provide more conclusive results.

At this juncture, we have been told that finding the chemical at these low levels does not constitute an immediate health risk for residents. But we know that citizens have many questions – just as Council members do.

As a result, we have arranged for a public informational open house and presentation on Tuesday, Feb. 13 (see meeting details on pages 1 and 3). If you have questions or concerns about PFBA, I hope you will make time to attend the open house, the presentation, or both. Moving forward, I want to assure you that the city will proceed carefully, continue to investigate, and, if necessary, take steps to reduce people's exposure for the long-term.

Planning for a new high school

While the water findings have been a cause for concern, another recent report to the City Council has sparked considerable excitement. At our January workshop meeting, members of the South Washington County School Board joined Council members for a report on the joint planning that has begun for the new high school in Woodbury.

In November, the school district selected an 80-acre site south of Bailey Road as the location for a third high school. The proposed site is east of Radio Drive and situated between two city-owned properties. Bielenberg Sports Center is to the west and the Danner gravel pit, which will be restored and converted to a regional storm water pond, is on the east. South of the sports center, the city also owns 80 acres, which are earmarked for expansion of the city's recreational facilities using \$3 million in funds approved by voters in the 2005 parks/open space referendum.

Altogether, the city and school district properties total 320 acres of public lands, providing a unique opportunity for cooperative planning to allow for site design and construction efficiencies. In December, the city retained DSU/Bonestroo to facilitate joint site planning; three design workshops have been held for city staff, school district staff, and design/engineering consultants.

A draft concept plan has emerged from those workshops. The new high school is proposed to be 365,000 square feet, accommodating up to 1,800 students and 200 staff. The building takes advantage of the existing slope for a walk-out design. Facilities include a gym with seating for 2,000; a 900-seat performing arts theatre with future expansion space for a black box theatre; classrooms and satellite buildings.

Three parking areas separate bus traffic, a student drop-off area, and student parking. A proposed stadium also takes advantage of existing land grades, with spectators entering at the top. The concept plan includes numerous other athletic fields and courts. The design will promote joint community use of these facilities.

Great care is being given to traffic circulation and safety issues. In addition, the city is encouraging sustainable development with sensitivity to the site and overall environment. One neighborhood meeting has been held and others will be scheduled this spring for public input in the planning and design.

We know we must follow an ambitious schedule to achieve a fall 2009 opening for the new high school. The initial work is very promising.

PFBA...from page 1

According to the MDH, scientific understanding of the relative toxicity of PFBA, along with the other PFCs, is evolving.

"Looking at new studies and some under way, we anticipate that PFBA should be less toxic to people than PFOA based on its chemical characteristics and on preliminary data from animal studies," said John Linc Stine, director of the environmental health division for MDH.

While there is no immediate concern for drinking water, residents who have PFBA in their water and wish to reduce their exposure can take some simple steps. They can use bottled water for part or all of their drinking or cooking needs. According to the MDH, filters containing granular activated carbon also remove PFCs, including PFBA.

For more information, residents may contact the Minnesota Department of Health Environmental Health Division at (651) 201-4897, or visit the MDH Web site at www.health.state.mn.us.

Woodbury residents can direct questions about city water to the Public Works Department at (651) 714-3593. The city has posted information about PFBA, including links to the MDH Web site, on the Woodbury Web site at www.ci.woodbury.mn.us. Information will be updated as new details become available.

Free performances at the park

Come in out of the cold and enjoy a free concert at Central Park in February. Dates and performers are:

- Stillwater Area High School Jazz Band
– Sunday, Feb. 11, 2 p.m.
- Carol McCormick, storyteller
– Thursday, Feb. 15, 7 p.m.
- Bill Isles, folk singer/songwriter
– Sunday, Feb. 18, 2 p.m.
- Ms. Catherine, children's show
– Wednesday, Feb. 21, 11 a.m.

All performances are held in the amphitheater at Central Park, 8595 Central Park Place (adjacent to the Southeast Area YMCA). The programs are sponsored by the Pioneer Press/Twin Cities.com and Anchor Bank.

While you're visiting the park, check out the "Central Park Loves To Read" events taking place during February.

PFBA meeting at a glance

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 13

Place: Woodbury Lutheran Church

7380 Afton Road (south of Valley Creek Road at Queens Drive)

Time: 5-7 p.m. open house
7-8 p.m. program

Details:

Citizens can speak individually with staff from the Department of Health, the Pollution Control Agency, Washington County, and the city during the open house hours. A formal presentation is scheduled at 7 p.m.

Questions about the meeting can be directed to Woodbury Public Works at (651) 714-3593.

What are PFCs?

Perfluorochemicals (PFCs) are a family of manmade chemicals that have been used for decades to make products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. Common uses include non-stick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and fabrics, as components of fire-fighting foam, and other industrial applications.

Minnesota is one of the few states in the United States where these chemicals were made and used. The 3M Company made PFCs at its Cottage Grove facility from the late 1940s until 2002.

What is PFBA?

PFBA stands for perfluorobutanoic acid. The substance belongs to the PFC family of chemicals. PFBA was made by the 3M Company, reportedly for use in film coatings. PFBA may also be a breakdown product of other PFCs. PFBA is the only PFC detected in Woodbury water since sampling began in 2004.

PFBA seems to move very freely in the groundwater. It does not break down or degrade. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and 3M are currently doing more studies on PFBA. Once the studies are completed and reviewed, the Minnesota Department of Health will determine if current well advisory guidelines should be revised.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health

For more information, visit www.health.state.mn.us or call (651) 201-4897.

Police chief retiring March 30

When William Hering joined the City of Woodbury as a police officer in 1975, Woodbury was primarily a rural community of about 7,500. The city had one fire station, and employed just six police officers and 25 volunteer firefighters.

On March 30, Hering will retire as the city's Public Safety Director after approximately 32 years of service. During his tenure, Hering witnessed the city's population balloon to more than 57,000; the city now has four fire stations, and employs 62 police officers, 12 full-time firefighters, 75 paid-on-call firefighters/EMTs, and 16 support staff in the Public Safety Department.

Hering recently reflected on his long career.

"I am the most proud of the level of service that our employees deliver every day," Hering said. "I call them everyday heroes. Despite staffing levels that are equal to or lower than similar cities, they deliver an enhanced level of service to the community."

Hering came to Woodbury in 1975 from the Oakdale Police Department. He was promoted to sergeant in 1977 and to lieutenant in 1989. He was elevated to deputy director of the Public Safety Department in 1996 before being named Public Safety Director in 2002.

As Public Safety Director, Hering works closely with the Fire Services Division. Prior to joining the Oakdale Police Department, he worked as a firefighter in Coon Rapids. The experience served him well in acting as liaison between the police and fire departments.

Hering was responsible for several recent Public Safety building projects, including two new fire stations, which opened in January 2002, the major addition to the Public Safety Building on Radio Drive, also completed in 2002, and the reconstruction of the Thames Road Fire Station, which is currently under way.

Public Safety integration

In 2006, he began implementing a plan to further integrate police, fire and emergency medical services. Woodbury is already one of three cities in Minnesota that has some of its police officers cross-trained as paramedics. Due to the success of the police-paramedic program over the last 10 years, Hering said the city is expanding the program to cross-train police officers as firefighters as well.

The transition doesn't come without challenges. Adequate staff levels are needed so that police/paramedic presence in the community is not compromised when police officer/firefighters are responding to a fire



call. In addition, staff training will be time consuming.

Hering expects Public Safety employees will thrive during and after the transition.

"Our employees have made it clear that they want to ensure that we continue to offer compassionate care to the public," Hering said. "It's very exciting that our employees value that aspect because if you lose that relationship with the public, it's very hard to get it back."

Hering earned his bachelor's degree from Concordia University (St. Paul) in 2001. He is a member of the Extra Alarm Association, a group of Fire Department history buffs. The group has written books about the history of the St. Paul and Minneapolis fire departments, and is also involved with the fire museum in Minneapolis. In addition, Hering himself wrote a history of Woodbury's Public Safety Department (up to 1993).

Hering and his wife Carol have been Woodbury residents since 1976. They have three adult children and two granddaughters.

Hering will be honored for his service to the city at a retirement party on March 29. Following retirement from the city, he will begin part-time work serving as the Director of Public Safety Studies at Century College, where he will be in charge of programming.

"In my time with Woodbury, I have found Bill to be genuine and creative – an out-of-the-box thinker who cares tremendously for the staff and mission of the Public Safety Department," said Clint Gridley, city administrator. "Utilizing his excellent interpersonal skills and great sense of humor to educate and encourage, he has been a strong advocate for the department. I can certainly say Bill will be leaving the department a better place because of his talents and service."

Apply for landscaping grants by March 19



Spring is just a few weeks away. As you start dreaming of landscaping and garden projects for this year, consider a project that will not only beautify your yard but also benefit the environment. Once you decide on your project, you can apply for financial help through the city's second annual Alternative Landscaping Grant Program.

Woodbury residents and organizations are eligible for grants to help pay for the costs of landscaping that helps improve water quality

in city lakes. Examples of acceptable projects include:

- Replacement of turf grass with native plants
- Reduction of impervious surfaces (concrete, rock, asphalt) and replacing with native plants
- Creation of buffer areas around ponds and wetlands using native vegetation
- Creation of rain gardens

Grants up to \$500 will be available to reimburse homeowners for the cost of native plants. Property owners, community associations, businesses, schools and educational institutions, non-profits, and other community organizations are also eligible to apply. In 2006, six projects were funded through the first round of grants.

Applications must be submitted by Monday, March 19. They are available by contacting Sharon Doucette, environmental resources coordinator, at (651) 714-3533; applications also can be picked up at the Community Development Department at City Hall.

Review of applications will be completed by members of the Environmental Advisory Commission and city staff. Announcement of grant approvals will occur approximately two weeks after the application deadline. Grant recipients will be required to attend a two-hour workshop given by a landscape restoration specialist with expertise in rain gardens and native vegetation.



Learn about teen safety on the Internet

Instant messaging, text messaging, "MySpace," "YouTube," and podcasting. Teenagers these days are electronically connected to their friends – and also to people they don't know – more than ever.

Did you ever wonder what your teens are doing on the computer all those hours? Do you want to know how they can connect with friends, but in a safe way?

Join Woodbury police investigator Arnie Baker, who is a member of the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and a panel of teens at Central Park on Monday, March 5, to get answers to your questions and learn more about Internet communications. Using current case studies and helpful, step-by-step information, Baker will provide tips to help keep your kids safe when they're online.

This special program, which starts at 6:30 p.m., is sponsored by the Woodbury Public Safety Department, Woodbury Parks and Recreation, the South Washington County School District Community Education, and the Woodbury Public Safety Board. Refreshments will be provided.

There is no charge, but space is limited. Call (651) 714-3583 to reserve your place today.

February 2007 • Volume 8, No. 2



ECRWSS
PRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1573
St. Paul, MN

The Woodbury Newsletter is published 10 times per year by the City of Woodbury and mailed to all residents and businesses. Comments are welcomed. Send to: Woodbury City Hall, 8301 Valley Creek Road, Woodbury, MN 55125-3330. Phone: (651) 714-3500. email: jllehr@ci.woodbury.mn.us

Mayor: William Hargis. Council Members: Julie Ohs, Paul Rebolz, Amy Scoggins, Mary Giuliani Stephens. City Administrator: Clinton Gridley. Communications Coordinator: Julie Lehr.

The City of Woodbury is subject to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance with the act, the Woodbury newsletter is available in other formats. Call Julie Lehr, 714-3500; TDD: 714-3568.

Postal Patron
Woodbury, MN