

Woodbury City Update

September 2002 • Volume 3, No. 9



Zachary Ruppel with firefighter John Byrne at a previous open house.

During Fire Prevention Week...

Woodbury fire stations holding open houses Oct. 10

Come try on the firefighters' gear, see if you can handle the heavy hoses that are used to put out fires, and check out the life-saving equipment that every ambulance carries. You can climb on the fire trucks, and meet local firefighters too, on Thursday, Oct. 10, when Woodbury fire stations host open houses from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The open houses, held each year in conjunction with Fire Prevention Week, generally attract good crowds, according to Katie Cafferty, who heads the Fire Department's educational efforts.

"Kids and adults alike have a great time getting an up-close look at the fire trucks and talking with firefighters about their training and the job they do," she said.

Again this year, Cities 97 (KTCZ-FM) radio station will make an appearance at the Radio Drive station,

with special prize giveaways during the first hour of the open house. All four fire stations will be open, and residents will have the opportunity to tour the new Upper Afton and Fox Run stations that were put into service earlier this year.

The Fox Run Station is at 1275 Woodbury Drive, on the southeast corner of Woodbury Drive (County Road 19) and Fox Run Road. The other fire stations are at 2100 Radio Drive, 6975 Thames Road (off Woodlane Drive), and 6301 Upper Afton Road.

About Fire Prevention Week

Fire Prevention Week is observed Oct. 6-12 nationally. This year's theme is "Team Up for Fire

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Dinner, raffle benefit Public Safety Department

Woodbury residents are invited to help improve police and fire operations in the city by eating a plate of spaghetti at the Prom Center on Thursday, Oct. 3. That's the date for the Second Annual Benefit Dinner sponsored by the Woodbury Crime Prevention and Public Safety Board.

Come and meet Shadow, Woodbury's newest police K9, who will demonstrate the many ways the K9 unit helps police officers protect the

community. At the dinner, Rainbow Foods and Milkbone will be presenting a \$10,000 donation to the Police Department for Shadow's initial training costs and to help fund additional training in the future.

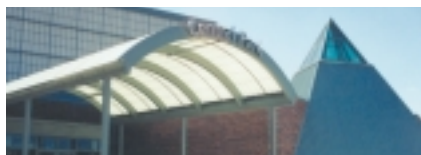
Other funds raised from the Oct. 3 dinner – through a raffle, live auction and silent auction – will go toward the purchase of a firearms training simulation computer for the

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Officer Jason Posel with K9 Shadow.

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Roses will be replaced

Roses in the Bailey Memorial Rose Garden are infested with cane borers and will be replaced or treated. Page 4

Council Perspective *by Mayor Bill Hargis*

Council works hard to hold tax rate down

The City Council recently approved a proposed 2003 budget and property tax levy in preparation for the annual public hearing on the budget to be held Dec. 11. With the budget we are proposing, the city's property tax rate for next year is declining slightly.

Because property values continue to increase in the hot real estate market, however, homeowners can expect to see a slight increase in their city taxes for 2003. The average single-family home valued at \$236,390 would see an increase of about \$55 (6.9 percent) in city taxes, if the home experiences a 10 percent increase in market value.

The Council's work on the annual city budget is just one component in our financial management of the city. We also use performance measurement standards, 10-year projections, and a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as tools in an overall strategy designed to keep the city's tax rate stable.

Tax comparison

So how do Woodbury's city taxes stack up, compared to other metro area cities? Data compiled by the Citizens League for 2001, the most recent year available, showed that Woodbury ranked 63rd out of 109 communities in city taxes paid on a personal residence (with number one being the highest). We are below the median tax and also the average tax for the metro area.

This is encouraging, but other statistics compiled by the Minnesota Department of Revenue demonstrate that we still have work to do when it comes to diversifying our tax base. The Revenue Department reports that, in 2001, the average commercial/industrial tax base was 20.08 percent statewide; Woodbury's commercial/industrial property was 13.88 percent of the tax base.

It's easy to see that our residents are shouldering a larger share of the tax burden than residents of most Minnesota communities. Our Economic Development Commission is well aware of the need to increase the commercial/industrial tax base in Woodbury. As we open the Tamarack Road interchange at I-494 this fall, the commission is working on a plan to aggressively market the adjacent parcels for high quality commercial and industrial development. The goal is not only to

expand our tax base, but also to provide good jobs in our community.

Scrutinizing costs

In the meantime, the City Council will do as much as possible to hold the line on city spending. We have already made cuts in the 2003 budget after our initial review at the budget workshop in August.

In the weeks following the workshop, the city learned from Washington County that Woodbury's tax base is lower than the estimates used at the workshop. The city also must contribute more to the regional tax-sharing program, which causes our taxes to increase. As a result, the Council reviewed the budget again in September and cut several items to reduce the impact of these changes.

While we are proposing to add some new staff positions in 2003, Woodbury has generally been conservative with staffing, compared to other Twin Cities communities. There are 25 metro area cities in our population group. Woodbury ranks 20th in terms of the number of employees per thousand population. In 2002, the city had 3.67 employees per thousand residents. The highest-ranking city employed 6.22 per thousand; the average for cities our size is 4.49 employees per thousand.

In areas we are adding staff and equipment, they are needed to maintain service levels. For example, the 2003 proposed budget includes \$214,718 in funding for an additional public service worker and plow truck in the Streets Division. These are required to meet our performance standard of having the city plowed within eight hours of the typical snowstorm. The budget for 2003 also includes slightly more than \$1 million to replace a ladder truck and pumper truck for the Fire Department. Overall, operating expenses are going up about 4.4 percent next year.

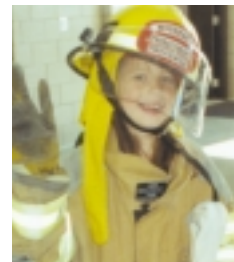
Crafting the budget each year is like a careful tightrope walk. The City Council is very conscious of the need to hold down taxes as much as possible; at the same time, we need to make sure we fund the personnel and equipment to deliver the level of services that our residents have come to expect. We will redouble our efforts, particularly in light of the general economy and the state government's financial issues, as we update our financial plan.

Volunteer at the park

Volunteers are needed to work at the front information desk at the new Central Park, which will open the week of Sept. 23. Enjoy a beautiful, landscaped atmosphere year-round at the indoor park located in the City Center area, adjacent to the YMCA.

Volunteers would greet the public and answer questions about the Central Park complex. Hours would vary and times are available Sunday through Saturday. For more information, contact Ann Ringgold in the Parks and Recreation Department, (651) 714-3586.

Open Houses...from page 1



Katelyn Heiser

Safety." According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), sponsor of Fire Prevention Week since 1922, the campaign encourages fire departments to

team up with community partners to spread the message that fire safety saves lives.

This year's campaign focuses on three safety lessons that can be learned by almost everyone: Installing and testing smoke alarms, practicing home escape plans, and hunting for home hazards.

"We always encourage homeowners to regularly test their smoke alarms to be certain they are operating properly," said Rob Miller, assistant fire chief. "Smoke alarms are the most effective early warning device available. Having a working smoke alarm in your home cuts your chance of dying in a fire nearly in half."

Miller and other members of the Fire Department will be on hand to talk with residents about fire prevention and fire safety at the upcoming open houses. There will be drawings for door prizes and treats served at each fire station.

Fire stations also will be open for trick-or-treaters on Halloween, Oct. 31, from 5 to 8 p.m. Questions about the open houses can be directed to the Woodbury Fire Department at (651) 714-3700.

Are You Registered to vote?



If you've never voted before, moved or changed your name since you last voted, or haven't voted in the last four years, you'll need to register in order to vote in the general election on Nov. 5.

"Minnesota law permits voters to register at the polls on election day," said Sonja Ritchie, who coordinates elections in the City of Woodbury. "However, voters sometimes experience long lines and lengthy delays due to the large number of people who wait to register at the polls."

You can pre-register by completing a voter registration card and mailing it to Washington County by Oct. 15. Voter registration cards can be found on the city's web site, www.ci.woodbury.mn.us. Under "shortcuts," select "elections and voting;" then click on the link titled "registration procedure." You may also call the city at (651) 714-3500 to request that a card be sent to your home.

Voters who do not register prior to Oct. 15 can register when they vote absentee or at the polls on election day, provided they can provide proof of residence.

Acceptable proofs include:

- Minnesota driver's license or driver's license receipt showing address in precinct
- Utility bill with your current address, along with a Minnesota photo I.D. card (may be driver's license or permit with a former address)
- U.S. passport with a current utility bill
- U.S. military I.D. card with a current utility bill
- Minnesota I.D. card showing address in precinct
- Registered voter from the same precinct who can vouch for your residency
- Prior registration in the same precinct
- Notice of ineffective registration from the election office, or
- Student I.D. or fee statement showing address in precinct.

New residents who need to register at the polls are encouraged to obtain a driver's license showing their correct address prior to election day. The Washington County License Bureau at City Hall can assist you.

Questions about voter registration should be directed to City Hall, (651) 714-3500.

Fire Prevention Week Fast Facts

- A home fire is reported to a fire department in the United States roughly every 1½ minutes.
- Someone in the United States dies in a home fire roughly every 2½ hours.
- Three out of 10 reported home fires start in the kitchen. Cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States and Canada.
- Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the number one cause of home fire deaths in the United States and Canada. Nearly a thousand people are killed each year in the two countries.
- Heating equipment fires are the second leading cause of home fires and of fire-related deaths. In Canada, despite the colder temperatures, heating equipment ranks much lower.
- Candle fires are on the rise in the United States.
- Having working smoke alarms in your home cuts your chance of dying in a fire nearly in half. One-half of fire deaths occur in the six percent of homes with no smoke alarms.

Dinner...from page 1

Woodbury Police Department and thermal imaging equipment for the Woodbury Fire Department.

"Law enforcement officers often come under scrutiny when they are required to make instinctive decisions regarding the use of deadly force with firearms," said Public Safety Director Bill Hering. "The laser shot firearms training simulator generates realistic video scenarios to test marksmanship, and 'shoot-don't shoot' judgment."

The system, which has the ability to repeat a scenario to emphasize a lesson, helps officers make proper instinctive decisions regarding the use of firearms and evaluates shooting accuracy against moving targets. Because lasers are used, there are no ongoing ammunition costs. The compact size of the simulator provides officers with the convenience of practicing inside the Public Safety Building.

Seeing through smoke

Firefighters use a thermal imager to see through smoke and darkness. The equipment enables them to pinpoint the positions of victims and to identify hotspots. As a result, thermal imagers are becoming indispensable tools for fire and rescue incidents.

In addition, police and search and rescue personnel can use thermal imaging for night searches. Lost children and adults, crime suspects, and recently discarded or lost belongings can be located by detecting heat given off by the subject. Footprints and items that have recently been touched can quickly lead public safety personnel to the subject.

Many activities are planned for the benefit dinner including demonstrations of the safe escape house and thermal imager by the Fire Department. The public also will get a close-up look at the fire and rescue equipment.

The Police Department will feature demonstrations of new K9 Shadow, the firearms training simulator, the taser (shock weapon) and the bike patrol. Volunteers also will be present to provide information.

Silent auction and raffle

Many local businesses have donated services and items for a silent auction and raffle. Raffle tickets, which cost \$5, are available while supplies last and may sell out before the dinner. The top three prizes include a Jacuzzi weekend for two at Grand Casino Mille Lacs, a two-night stay at the Country Inn & Suites, and a bowling party at Park Tavern in St. Louis Park. The raffle drawing will take place at 8:30 p.m.; you do not need to be present to win.

The rest of the donations will be displayed in the silent auction, which starts at 6 p.m. and ends at 8:15 when the top bidders will receive their prizes. Door prizes will also be given throughout the event.

Dinner tickets must be purchased by Sept. 30 and cost \$7.50 per person; children age three and under are free. The Prom Center in Oakdale has graciously offered to host this fund-raising event and a terrific spaghetti dinner buffet will be served to all who attend. More than 400 people raised more than \$10,000 at last year's event.

The Public Safety Board, sponsor of the benefit dinner, is a non-profit organization, which incorporated in March of 2000. Thus far, the board has purchased thermal imaging cameras for two fire stations; it will take approximately \$30,000 to equip the remaining two fire stations, however.

If you are interested in purchasing dinner or raffle tickets please contact: Don McGorman, Public Safety Board, at (651) 739-6329; Officer Mary Meyer, Police Department, (651) 714-3640; or Fire Administration, Fire Department, at (651) 714-3700.

Some rose beds in garden will be removed



Because the roses in the Bailey Memorial Rose Garden east of City Hall are infested with "cane borers," three rose beds will be removed this fall. The remaining rose beds in the garden will be treated with insecticides during September.

According to Laurie Robinson of Bailey Nurseries, cane borers are beetle-like insects at an early (larva) stage of development. The insects focus on weakened plants and trees under pressure to survive. Pruning roses often causes a wound in the stem, she said, weakening the plant and attracting the cane borers.

The insects feast off the flower's tissue and eventually kill the plants. It is very difficult to

treat plants and trees infested by cane borers because the larva returns to lay eggs.

The Parks Department will work with Bailey Nurseries, who originally donated the roses to the city, to restore the garden. New roses – although different varieties – will be planted in 2003. The new rose beds will be moved and mounded to help prevent another problem with the cane borers.

"The new beds will look very similar," Robinson said. "Only they will be much healthier and look nicer."

Major renovations to the area surrounding the rose garden – including the construction of a clock tower, upgraded walking paths and more seating – are expected in 2003, said Bob Klatt, parks and recreation director.

Show us the monster in you!

The City of Woodbury is looking for a few good monsters. Adults and teens who still enjoy "dressing up" for Halloween are needed to add some thrills and chills to the Haunted Trail this fall.

Impersonate Dracula, Frankenstein, Freddy Krueger or the Wicked Witch of the West and help frighten those who journey down the wooded path at Carver Lake Park on Saturday, Oct. 19. Fearless folks of all ages can hike the Haunted Trail from 6:30 to 9:30 that evening. The cost is \$3 with a food shelf donation, \$4 without a donation. Children under age eight must be accompanied by an adult.

Carver Lake Park is located at 3175 Century Avenue South. The Haunted Trail is an annual event, sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Woodbury Jaycees. Volunteers must be age 15 or older. For more information or to volunteer, call (651) 714-3583.



Campaign signs: Know the rules

Each fall, political campaign signs become part of our urban landscape. And every election year, the signs become the source of complaints. While candidates have the right to post signs, they must observe state and local laws regarding the use of signs.

"The city is prohibited by state law from regulating the size or number of signs on private property," said Ron Glubka, chief building official. "However, signs placed in the road right-of-way may be removed. In addition, campaign signs may not be placed on any property without permission from the property owner."

Minnesota statutes and city ordinance allow political signs to be posted 100 days before an election and to remain up until 10 days after the election. Along city streets, signs must be at least five feet back from the curb or road shoulder. On county roads such as Radio Drive and Valley Creek Road, signs may not be posted within the right-of-way. (Utility poles are generally located on the edge of the right-of-way.)

"Property owners should be aware that they have the right to remove any sign that is posted on their property without their permission," Glubka said.

City staff will remove campaign signs that violate local ordinance. Candidates can retrieve their signs at City Hall. Questions about campaign sign regulations should be directed to the code enforcement officer at (651) 714-3543.

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