

minnetonka memo

*A Newsletter from the City of Minnetonka
March 2011*

State of the City highlights long-term financial stability

ON FEBRUARY 9, MINNETONKA Mayor Terry Schneider presented his 2011 State of the City address at the Minnetonka Community Center. The address is available via videostream at www.eminnetonka.com or on cable channel 16. Below is a summary of Mayor Schneider's comments.

FOREMOST ON EVERYONE'S MINDS THIS year are the fiscal issues facing government. I am pleased to report that the city of Minnetonka is in a sound financial position for 2011 and well into the future, for a couple of reasons. First, we at the city have an ongoing commitment to taking a long-term approach to fiscal planning with a focus on providing quality service—services that provide our businesses and residents with a significant value for their tax dollars. Second, City Manager John Gunyou understands the long-term implications of the current economy and has the management skills to recognize and implement the best long-term solution.

Resetting the base

In 2009, John recognized that the city's spending and the rate of past years' tax increases were not sustainable for the long term. That year, with the city council's support, John and the city's senior leadership implemented a significant restructuring of city departments to streamline services and reduce costs. Since approximately 75% of the city's general fund expenses are related to employee salaries, the solution included a 6% reduction of city staff—similar to the reductions experienced in the private sector. Half of the staff reductions were achieved by attrition, and the other half through layoffs—many of which were management positions. This restructuring effectively "reset the base" for city expenditures, and will keep the city on solid financial footing well into the future.

Shared services

The current stress on all levels of government has triggered a renewed interest in shared services among government units.

Our city is proud to be on the forefront of using cooperative agreements and shared services to reduce costs without reducing services by partnering with neighboring cities, area school districts, Hennepin County, and other governmental agencies.

One recent example is a cooperative agreement with the city of St. Louis Park to share building inspection services. The two cities coordinate the skill set of the inspectors they have on staff and assign the most appropriate inspector to the project, regardless of city boundaries. This results not only in cost savings for both communities, but also provides a higher quality of service to the customer. The effort has been so successful that discussions about expanding these shared services are currently taking place with other neighboring cities.

Another example comes from the Minnetonka Fire Department, which after the success of an initial joint purchasing agreement for airpicks, has now worked out joint purchasing agreements for other firefighting equipment with neighboring cities. This not only saves money, it provides uniform equipment standards among neighboring cities, thus enhancing each city's ability to effectively provide mutual aid to its neighbors.

Even though we believe the city has been responsible in resetting the base for the future, and although the city of Minnetonka receives very little financial assistance from the state, we remain vigilant about how cuts at the state level may negatively affect our ability to provide quality services at a reasonable price.

While we continue to hear from most of our residents that they are very pleased with the level of services we provide and the value received, we are very aware that residents in general feel the government needs to be more efficient and reduce the burden placed on the taxpayer. We are committed to maintaining an open dialogue and making a serious effort to inform residents about cost-cutting choices and the results of those choices.

Development picks up

In 2008 and 2009, development activity in the city was at an all-time low. We are



Minnetonka Mayor Terry Schneider

encouraged that in 2010, activity picked up considerably. Some of the more notable projects initiated last year included the 350,000-square-foot second phase of the UnitedHealth Group headquarters; the 150-unit St. Therese senior housing project in Glen Lake; the Whole Foods move to the vacant Circuit City space on Plymouth Road; the opening of Panera Bread in Ridgeway Square South and the anticipated move of Noodles & Co. into Ridgeway Square North; and the relocation of MGM Liquor and Walgreens near Highway 7 and County Road 101.

A couple of public projects of note also moved forward in 2010, including the reconstruction of the Highway 169 and Bren Road interchange (slated to begin in April 2011) and the renovation of the Williston Fitness Center.

Variance legislation

The city's normal home addition and remodeling activity has been negatively affected by both the recession and the State Supreme Court decision voiding a 20-year standard for granting variances that has been used by all cities in the state. While the recession's grip has loosened and returned us to a more normal level of remodeling activity, the inability to grant

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News for Neighbors

From the Minnetonka Police Department

NEWSPR FOR NEIGHBORS APPEARS quarterly in the *Minnetonka Memo* with news for you about happenings in the Minnetonka Police Department. If you have questions about these items, contact Nicole Nelson, crime prevention analyst, at (952) 939-8546.

About the Police Department

The Minnetonka Police Department began in 1955, when Minnetonka was still a township and two police constables were hired to serve the township's 15,600 residents. Four years later, in 1959, the Minnetonka Police Department was officially formed, and by 1965 it included 13 sworn officers. Today, the Minnetonka Police Department employs 56 sworn officers and 19 civilian employees, offering a variety of services to Minnetonka residents, businesses and visitors.

The Minnetonka Police Department is organized into two divisions:

Patrol Services

The patrol division provides proactive patrol, incident response and first response to medical emergencies in the city of Minnetonka.

Investigative/Support Services

The investigative/support services division includes three units:

- **Records** (responsible for entry and maintenance of all case files)
- 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (dispatch center)
- **Investigations**, including retail crime investigations

2010 police department statistics

The police department's annual crime statistics for 2010 are now available online at www.eminnetonka.com — click on Police, then Crime Prevention, then Crime Statistics.

Officer Trevor Johnson named "Traffic Safety Officer of the Year"

Minnetonka Police Officer Trevor Johnson has been selected as the "Traffic Safety Officer of the Year" by the Hennepin County Traffic Advisory Committee. The purpose of the award is to recognize and reward outstanding efforts in the areas of traffic code enforcement, traffic safety activity and overall dedication to traffic

enforcement. Officer Johnson was one of 13 nominations submitted from Hennepin County law enforcement agencies, and he will be formally recognized at the Hennepin County Chiefs of Police meeting in March.

SWAT conducts joint training exercise

On February 2, the Minnetonka Police Department's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, along with departments from Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins and St. Louis Park, conducted training exercises so SWAT team members could use all applicable skills, techniques and equipment in a series of full-scale simulated SWAT events. The training scenarios took place at two city-owned homes near Big Willow Park on Minnetonka Boulevard, which were purchased by the city in order to expand park land near the Minnehaha Creek corridor. The homes were demolished shortly after the SWAT training took place.

Minnetonka police help expose \$13 million mortgage fraud

In January, a Savage man pleaded guilty in federal court in Minneapolis to participating in a \$13 million mortgage fraud scheme that involved 25 properties in Minnetonka, Prior Lake, Savage and other Minnesota communities. He was indicted, along with two co-defendants, in June 2010. The cases are the result of investigations by the Minnetonka Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigations. ☺

Facts about the MPD

- Minnetonka dispatch receives an average of 132 calls for service every day.
- Minnetonka Police Explorers volunteer an average of 2,500 hours a year.
- Minnetonka Police Reserves volunteer nearly 5,000 hours a year in service to the community.
- Minnetonka is a member of the Southwest Metro Drug Task Force which includes officers from Minnetonka, Edina, Eden Prairie and the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office.
- The Minnetonka Police Department's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team includes 12 officers and two supervisors who are highly trained in the latest tactics and equipment in order to respond to situations beyond the scope of the patrol and investigative divisions. The Minnetonka Police Department is part of a tactical consortium with the Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins and St. Louis Park police departments. ☺

Start spring cleaning at your furnace

IT'S BEEN A LONG, COLD WINTER BUT A taste of spring is in the air and it won't be long before spring cleaning starts.

The What if? public education program recommends cleaning around water heaters, furnaces and any other areas that can easily start a fire. Water heaters, dryers and furnaces should be kept clear of combustibles year round. Three feet is the recommended distance between your storage and these appliances. This is one simple way to help protect your home from a fire.

Next month: Are you worried about spring flooding? See the What If? column in the April *Minnetonka Memo* for tips to prepare for the spring thaw.

For more fire safety tips visit www.eminnetonka.com. ☺



Spring break escape is March 30 – April 1

CHILDREN AGES 6 TO 12 ARE INVITED to participate in Spring Break Escape Wednesday through Friday, March 30–31 and April 1. Participate in one, two or three days of games, crafts, swimming, treats and more! Come experience the Williston Fitness Center's new water play area and indoor playground. Participants should bring a bag lunch, swimsuit, towel and gym shoes. Drop off is from 8–9 a.m. and pickup is from 4–5 p.m. \$35 per day. A description of each day's events is below. Call Recreation Services at (952) 939-8203 to register.



Wednesday, March 30— Golf Zone Mini Golf

After arriving at the Williston Fitness Center, jump on a bus and take a trip to the Golf Zone in Chaska for 18 holes of indoor mini-golf. Return to the Williston Fitness Center for an afternoon of swimming and games. (Course #20483)

Thursday, March 31—Grand Slam

Take a trip to Grand Slam in Burnsville to play mini-golf, arcade games, bumper cars and more. Kids will receive a hot dog and a pop at Grand Slam. Return to the Williston Fitness Center for an afternoon of swimming and games. (Course #20484)

Friday, April 1—Pump It Up

Travel to Pump It Up, "The Inflatable Party Zone" in Eden Prairie. Enjoy climbing, bouncing, sliding, and tumbling in the indoor inflatable arena, then return to the Williston Fitness Center for a day of games, movies and swimming. (Course #20485) ♪

2011 official newspaper selected

THE *Lakeshore Weekly News* HAS BEEN selected as Minnetonka's official newspaper for 2011. It will publish the city's legal notices, ordinances and other official information, plus general news about the city. The newspaper is distributed each Tuesday and is available free of charge at many locations, including Minnetonka City Hall and major grocery and retail outlets throughout Minnetonka. Call (952) 473-0890 for the pickup location nearest you. ♪



Farmers' Market returns July 5

THE MINNETONKA FARMERS' MARKET returns for its third year, starting July 5 and continuing every Tuesday through September 27, from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Minnetonka Civic Center Campus, 14600 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka. Enjoy the products of more than 40 local vendors selling a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, flowers, canned goods, syrup, honey, bread, baked goods and crafts. See the July *Minnetonka Memo* or visit www.eminnetonka.com.

eminnetonka.com for a complete list of vendors and activities. See you at the market! ♪



Eggstravaganza is Saturday, April 23

CHILDREN 10 AND UNDER ARE INVITED to celebrate spring at the Spring Eggstravaganza Saturday, April 23, from 10–11:30 a.m. at the Minnetonka Community Center, 14600 Minnetonka Boulevard.

Enjoy face painting, spin art, musical entertainment, a jelly bean counting contest, games and a scavenger-style egg hunt that takes place indoors and out.

The spring bunny will be on hand as well, so bring your cameras! Children must be accompanied by an adult. Don't forget your basket for collecting eggs! Advance registration is required—no same-day registrations will be accepted. Registration deadline is April 19. To register call Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services at (952) 939-8203. Space is limited to 150 attendees, so don't delay in registering! ♪



State of the City, continued from page 1

variances will continue to negatively affect home additions until the state Legislature modifies the current statute to allow more flexibility. Although nothing at the Legislature can be taken for granted, there currently appears to be broad support for this new legislation.

Southest Light Rail Transit

Finally, many residents may be interested in the status of the Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. Major strides were made in moving the transit line forward in 2010, but it will face challenges in 2011 due to a variety of reasons: the state budget shortfall, the shift in House and Senate majority at both the state and federal level, and the loss

of Congressman Jim Oberstar as chair of the House Transportation Committee. The Southwest LRT enjoys broad support from both the business community and from our residents, and we will continue to do what we can to support the transit line. However, how much progress is made generally lies in the control of others.

In closing

While we continue to face challenges in the future, we are very blessed to have a great city that has abundant natural resources, engaged residents and a quality city government. Your interest and participation illustrate that residents care a great deal about our community and its future. ♪

Music Association spring benefit concert is March 5

THE MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF Minnetonka (MAM) provides enriching musical experiences for people of all ages and abilities. Visit www.musicassociation.org or call (952) 401-5954 for more information.

Spring Benefit Concert

March 5, 7:30 p.m.

Arts Center on 7, 18285 Hwy. 7, Mtka Minnetonka Youth Choirs with special guest Cantus, a male vocal chamber ensemble named MPR's 2010–11 Artists in Residence. Reserved tickets available through www.musicassociation.org—Adults: \$20; Students: \$15. Tickets purchased at the door are \$25. Call (952) 401-5954 for information or visit www.musicassociation.org.

Plan now for Music in the Park

SUMMER MAY STILL SEEM LIKE A FAR-OFF dream, but June will be here before you know it! Mark your calendars now for the 2011 Music in the Park concert series, set for Tuesdays, 7–8:30 p.m. starting June 7. Concerts are at the outdoor amphitheater at the Minnetonka Civic Center Campus, 14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka. Also, June 14–16, enjoy Theater in the Park, presented by the Minnetonka Community Theatre.

- **June 7**—Jeff Carver, Carol Zimmerman (*smooth jazz/pop*)
- **June 14–16**—Minnetonka Community Theater presents “Rugrats: A Live Adventure” (*11 a.m. performances June 14, 15 and 16; additional 7 p.m. performance June 14*)
- **June 21**—Brio Brass (*30-piece, brassy jazz*)
- **June 28**—Lehto and Wright (*Celtic, folk rock*)
- **July 5**—Don King Blues Band and Friends (*blues*)
- **July 12**—Eden Prairie Community Band (*45-piece band*)
- **July 19**—Tom Hunter Quartet (*blues, jazz*)
- **July 26**—Jumpin’ Jehosafats (*Dixieland, gospel and all that jazz*)
- **Aug 2**—Blue Feelin’ (*acoustic blues*)

Join these exciting March adult programs

DO YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN engaging and lively activities that provide mental and/or physical exercise, and provide social interaction? Below is just a sample of the exciting activities offered each month for adults, all of which are advertised in a weekly email as well as a free monthly publication, the *Minnetonka Script*. Subscribe to one or both of these publications by visiting www.eminnetonka.com, or contact Nicole Gorman at ngorman@eminnetonka.com or (952) 939-8369.

Special Presentations

Relaxation Techniques & Stress Management

March 9, 10:30 a.m.

Learn simple and economical ideas for stress prevention through different techniques for both physical and mental relaxation. Cost is \$5, due March 7.

Garden Club

March 14, 1 p.m.

This month's topic is Garlic Mustard 101, presented by Cheryl Culbreth of Landscape Restorations, Inc., followed by a presentation on perennial flowers of Minnesota. New members welcome.

Community Connections

March 16, 10:15 a.m.

Join Community Connections for an informal chat with Desyl Peterson, Minnetonka city attorney. Coffee will be provided. RSVP by March 14.

St. Patrick's Day Party

March 17, 11 a.m.

Enjoy corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, soda bread and dessert. Entertainment provided. Cost is \$7, due March 14.



Lunch and a Movie

March 18, 12 p.m.

Enjoy a buffet and dessert, along with the movie “Secretariat,” about the 1973 Triple Crown Winner. Cost is \$5, due by March 16.



Retiring To...and From

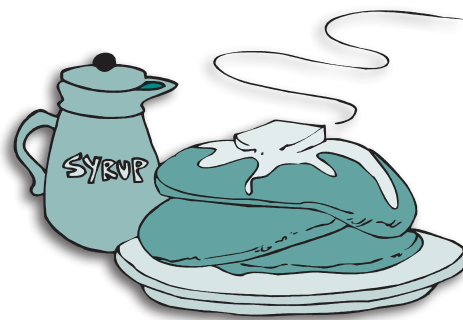
Wednesdays, March 23–April 6, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Have you made the leap into retirement or are you considering doing it in the next few years? Do you know what the transition will look like? Come explore a model that will help you manage this change, regardless of your presentation situation. Instructor: Karen Greer. Cost: \$25

Applebee's Breakfast

March 26, 8–10 a.m.

Enjoy pancakes, syrup, bacon, coffee and orange juice at the Applebee's at Ridgedale Mall. Cost is \$6, due March 22.



Minnesota: Flour Capital of the World

March 29, 10:30 a.m.

Mill City Museum history player David Berg portrays William de la Barre (1849–1936), who was chief water engineer for the city of Minneapolis during the heyday of flour milling. Learn how Minneapolis became world famous for its flour, how industry changed St. Anthony Falls and the Mississippi River, and Barre's experience as chief water engineer. Cost is \$2, due by March 22.

Defensive Driving Classes

Call the Minnesota Safety Center at 1-888-234-1294 to register. AAA members receive \$3 off class registration by providing member number and expiration date.

Four-Hour Day Courses

March 8, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

March 24, 6–10 p.m.

Refreshments provided (no meal). Cost: \$20.

Eight-Hour Evening Course

March 1 & 2, 6–10 p.m.

Refreshments provided (no meal). Cost: \$24.

Who to call about those winter potholes

WINTER IS FAR FROM OVER, BUT potholes have already appeared on many roads in Minnetonka.

Patching of potholes on Minnetonka city streets started in late January. Patching in the winter and spring months is done with a material called “cold mix” which is more workable at cold winter temperatures. Regular city pothole patching with “hot mix” asphalt will not begin until May when asphalt plants re-open for the season. Hot mix asphalt is more durable than cold mix asphalt and provides a more permanent repair of potholes.



Various roads running through Minnetonka are owned by the city, county or the state, and it’s important to contact the appropriate maintenance agency if you have a concern about potholes or other road conditions. If you are unsure of which office to call, or you are calling about a city-owned street, contact Minnetonka Public

Works at (952) 988-8400 or Minnetonka Mike at www.eminnetonka.com.

MnDOT (651) 582-1550

Online: www.dot.state.mn.us (Select “Report a pothole” under “How do I?”) I-394, I-494, State Hwy. 7 and State Hwy. 169

Hennepin County (612) 596-0299

Online: <http://hennepin.us/> (keyword search: pothole)
Excelsior Boulevard (CR 3), Eden Prairie Road/Woodhill Road (CR 4), Minnetonka Boulevard (CR 5), Gleason Lake Road (CR 15), McGinty Road (CR 16), Baker Road (CR 60), Plymouth Road (CR 61), Crosstown (CR 62), Hopkins Crossroad (CR 73) and County Rd. 101.

Parking lots

If you have concerns about the conditions of parking lots at shopping centers or in other commercial areas, please contact a business owner near the parking lot to express your concern. These lots are privately owned and not maintained by the city. Any questions about parking lots at city-owned facilities may be directed to Minnetonka Public Works at (952) 988-8400. ☺

Street sweeping starts March 28

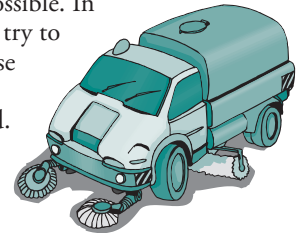
IN A SURE SIGN OF SPRING, STREET sweeping by Minnetonka Public Works will begin Monday, March 28, weather permitting — and if the weather does not cooperate, the start date will be moved to Monday, April 4.

For four weeks or until the city is complete, public works crews will sweep streets in two shifts, from 4:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The double shifts are necessary in order to finish sweeping in time to begin seasonal blacktop work on city streets.

Although crews try to stay out of residential areas in the early morning hours, it is not always possible. In these cases, crews try to minimize the noise and time spent in the neighborhood.

While the street sweeper does a good job cleaning streets, it can’t capture all the debris, so we need your help! As the snow melts, identify the catch basins in your neighborhood, then remove and dispose of the accumulated debris and litter. This will help the street sweeping process.

Once sweeping has concluded, flushing of water mains will take place starting in late April. Look for information in the April *Minnetonka Memo*. ☺



Apply now for the antique, art fairs

THE 2011 BURWELL ART AND CRAFTS Fair and the Antique Market are set for Saturday, June 25, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Charles H. Burwell House, 13209 E. McGinty Road, Minnetonka. Applications are due by the end of April. Guidelines and applications are available at www.eminnetonka.com or by contacting Jacque Larson, community relations manager, at jl Larson@eminnetonka.com or at (952) 939-8207. ☺



Minnetonka snow removal by the numbers

A NOVEMBER 13, 2010, ICE STORM was just the start of one of the snowiest winters Minnesota has seen in years, which by the end of January dumped just over 60 inches of snow on Minnetonka. The average annual total is 44.9 inches.

Since then, the streets and park maintenance crews at Minnetonka Public Works have been busy keeping city streets, trails and sidewalks clear of snow and safe for residents. As of January 31, crews had:

- Participated in 10 full-scale plowing operations — a normal season total, with the snowiest months still to come!
- Plowed a total of 13,340 miles of city roads — the equivalent of crossing the United States 10 times.
- Spread 1,600 tons of salt.

- Used giant snowblowers to move 360,000 cubic yards of snow from trails and sidewalks — which would cover nearly two football fields to a depth of 20 feet.
- Responded to more than 300 requests for service after the first storm of the season caused widespread tree damage.

The streets and maintenance crews appreciate your help keeping hydrants and mailboxes cleared and keeping garbage and recycling containers behind the curb and out of the street. One final note: Minnetonka doesn’t declare snow emergencies, but city ordinance prohibits vehicle parking on streets between 2 and 6 a.m. year-round.

Do you have a comment or question about snowplowing? Email Minnetonka Mike at comments@eminnetonka.com, or call Minnetonka Public Works at (952) 988-8400. ☺

2011 Property Taxes

Help is available for property taxpayers

Several state programs, described below, exist to assist eligible residents with the rising cost of property taxes. For additional information and links to the government agencies that run these programs, visit the city's Web site at www.eminnetonka.com or call the Minnesota Department of Revenue's tax helpline at (651) 296-3781.

Property tax refund program

The first program is the **property tax refund program**, or "circuit breaker." For taxes paid in 2011, homeowners with 2010 household incomes up to \$99,240 are eligible for a refund, and the maximum refund is \$2,370. Some renters with 2010 household incomes up to \$53,540 are also eligible for a refund. The maximum refund that may be available to a renter is \$1,520, and the amount provided also depends upon the total rent paid in 2010. There are additional eligibility allowances for renters/homeowners over age 65; those who are disabled; and for the number of dependents. Forms can be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue (DOR) and must be filed with the DOR by August 15, 2012.

Special property tax refund program

A second state program is the **special property tax refund program** for homeowners whose property taxes payable in 2011 have increased by more than 12 percent and are at least \$100 over their 2010 taxes. The increase must not be attributable to new improvements, and homeowners must have owned and resided in their home on both January 2, 2010, and January 2, 2011. There is no limit on household income to be eligible under this program. The special property tax refund form is also available from the Minnesota Department of Revenue (DOR) and also must be filed with the DOR by August 15, 2012.

Senior citizens property tax deferral program

The **senior citizens property tax deferral program** allows people 65 years of age or older, whose household incomes are \$60,000 or less, to defer a portion of their property taxes on their homes. The program limits the amount of property taxes to three percent of the total household income for eligible property owners, and the amount of taxes to be paid each year will not change for as long as the homeowner participates in the program.

However, this is **not a tax forgiveness program — it is a low interest loan from the state**. The deferred tax is paid by the state to the county, and a **lien will attach to your property**. Annually adjusted interest will be charged on the loan, but will never exceed five percent. Application forms are available from the Minnesota Department of Revenue, and must be filed with the Hennepin County Auditor's Office by July 1 the year before the deferral would begin.

Foreclosure prevention counseling

The city of Minnetonka provides foreclosure prevention counseling through Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin County. Call (952) 933-1993 for information.

Tax Notices

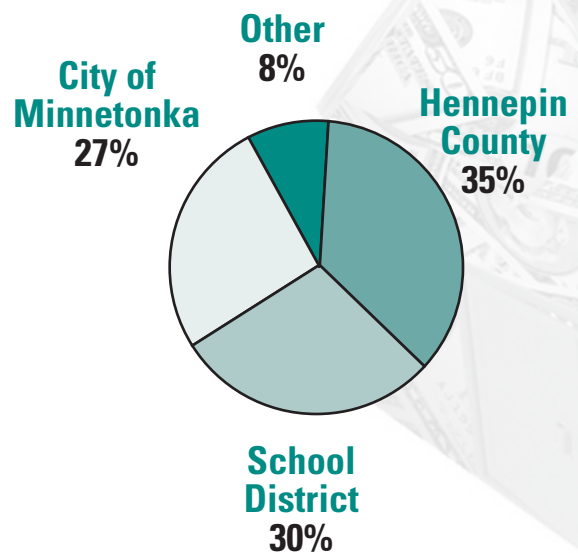
Residents will receive two notices this month related to property taxes. One is the **market value notice** from the city, which will affect property taxes to be paid in 2012 and is explained on the facing page. The other is the **property tax bill** for 2011, which is mailed by Hennepin County and must be paid this year.

City Tax Bill

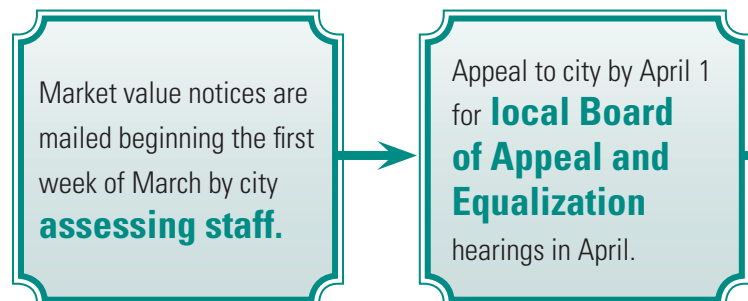
The city of Minnetonka continues to provide quality services at a reasonable price. The city provides a fuller range of municipal services than many other cities, and does not use special assessments to fund road and other improvements. More than seven of every ten dollars in city property taxes paid support streets and public safety, and most of the remainder is spent on parks and natural resources. Nevertheless, the city's tax rate remains among the lowest of comparable metro cities. Our residents continue to receive the high quality of services they have come to expect.

2011 homeowner's property taxes

The city of Minnetonka accounts for about one-fourth of a homeowner's total property tax bill. The remainder is comprised of taxes for your school district (30 percent), county (35 percent), and other jurisdictions (8 percent).



Market Value Appeals Process



2011 Market Value Notice

(Your market value notice applies to property taxes payable in 2012.)

Minnetonka's home value decline slows

As with most locations in the metro area and across the nation, Minnetonka's real estate has continued to experience a decline in market values which began in 2008, but now appears to have slowed and may be starting to stabilize. Following a decline of around 5–6% last year, Minnetonka single-family homes declined another 2.5% this year. Similarly, condos and townhomes have continued to experience more significant declines. Changes in commercial property values will be different than residential properties. It's important to remember that individual properties may vary greatly, and that adjustments vary by market, thus some properties may experience increases in value while others decrease.

Market values based on 2010 data

Property tax assessment in Minnesota is a complicated process strictly governed by state law. Although the city of Minnetonka administers the assessment, the city's work is overseen by Hennepin County and the State Department of Revenue. The state-mandated schedule requires that the values on your property, as reflected in the market value notice that you will receive in the mail this month, are based upon an analysis of real estate market trends during 2010. The values cannot reflect changes in market conditions since the end of last year. Changes this year will be reflected in the 2012 notices.

How is market value determined?

The Minnetonka Assessing Division maintains records for every property in the city. Adjustments are made to the market values of most properties, based on actual real estate sales from the past year for comparable properties. Approximately one-fifth of the properties are physically inspected each year, and adjustments to these are made based on the results of that inspection. Market value adjustments are also made for building additions, remodeling and other improvements.

What if I don't agree with my property's market value?

If you have questions or concerns about your property's market value notice or the assessment process, please call the Minnetonka assessing staff at (952) 939-8220. The staff can review property records and sales information with you.

Based on this discussion and review, the appraiser may or may not make a change to your market value. If not, you have the right to appeal.

How does the appeal process work?

The value subject to appeal is the taxable market value. Two avenues of appeal are available. Property owners may appeal directly to the State Tax Court. More common, however, is an appeal through the local Board of Appeal and Equalization, and if desired, then to the Hennepin County Board of Equalization.

The Minnetonka City Council convenes each year as the local Board of Appeal and Equalization and has local real estate professionals serve

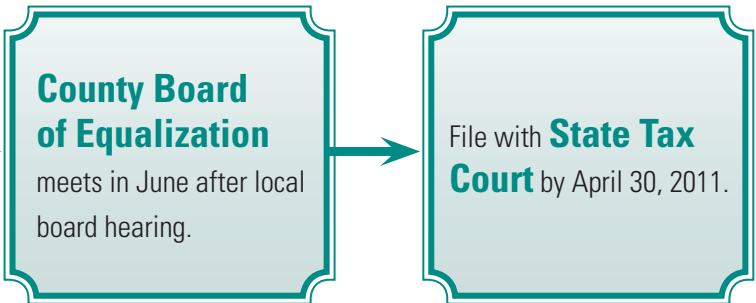
as its advisors. To make an appeal to the local board, you should first discuss your property's market value with the Minnetonka assessing staff. After that, you may make an appeal to the local Board of Appeal and Equalization by April 1 simply by asking that your property be listed for appeal. However, it is important to know that the local and county boards have the authority to raise or lower an appealed market value.

Remember, if you have questions or concerns about your property's market value or about the assessment process, please call the Minnetonka assessing staff at (952) 939-8220. ☎

What do these numbers mean?

In early March, Minnetonka property owners will receive their 2011 market value notices. Four value amounts will appear on the notices:

- Estimated Market Value**
The assessor's estimate of the total market value of the property, or what the property would likely sell for on the open market during the year ending September 2010.
- Veterans Exclusion**
Qualifying disabled veterans may be eligible for a valuation exclusion on their homestead property, which would reduce the amount subject to taxation.
- Qualifying Improvement Value**
This figure shows that portion of the value of improvements made to an older home under the former "This Old House" law. This program expired with the 2003 assessment. However, property may still be receiving the value exclusion under this program.
- Taxable Market Value**
This is the value that your property taxes are actually based on, after all reductions, exemptions and deferrals are taken out.



Prune now to keep your trees in tip-top shape

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE why, when, what, where and how of tree pruning? Read on to learn more about how to keep your tree shapely and in tip-top condition.

The Why

Q: Why is it important to prune the trees in your yard?

A: Here are three great reasons to prune your trees: it helps ensure the safety of people and property, promotes tree health and strong branch structure and improves the aesthetics of both the tree and the overall view.

Winter tree pruning drop-off opens March 5

DO YOU HAVE STORM DAMAGED OR hanging branches? The city forester reminds you that now is the time to remove them and make a proper pruning cut, before insects and diseases become active in April. In addition, the city forester recommends November through March as the ideal time to prune oaks, as they are least susceptible to oak wilt disease during these months. This is also a great time to prune other trees, since insects and diseases are not active.

To assist residents who conduct proper winter pruning, the drop-off site at the Minnetonka Public Works facility (11522 Minnetonka Blvd.) will be open Saturdays, March 5, 12, 19 and 26, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The site will not be open weekdays in March. The regular brush drop-off program starts Monday, April 11.

Branches up to 12" in diameter will be accepted. Christmas trees (without plastic bags, stands or decorations) will also be accepted. Proof of Minnetonka residency — driver's license or Minnetonka utility bill — is required to drop off brush.

Please note: trash, grass, leaves, dirt, sod, lumber, fencing, or wood scraps are **not** accepted.

No brush or trimmings will be accepted from commercial tree or lawn services. ♻️

Q: Trees in the woods do just fine with no pruning. Why interfere with nature?

A: Trees in a forest often self-prune branches that don't get enough sunlight. No, they don't take a saw to their limbs. Leaves are the trees' food factories, and if they don't get enough sunlight they can't create energy to support the branch. The branch then dies over time and falls off. While a falling branch in the woods may only affect the trees around it, unexpected falling branches in a yard are another story. Proper pruning reduces the risk of branches falling and hurting a person or a nearby structure.

The When

Q: What time of year should I prune?

A: Most trees can be pruned year-round, but it makes them more susceptible to disease and stress that can be avoided in the late winter. It's best to prune in February and March, just before spring growth starts. During this time diseases and insects are inactive, but it's nearly time for trees to start growing and sealing off wounds. The smaller the cut the better the chance the tree will close the wound completely. And remember: never prune oak trees between April and June, as this is the high-risk season for oak wilt disease transmission.

Q: But dead branches and tree issues are more noticeable in the summer — how bad is it really if I just take care of pruning then?

A: Trees capture and store energy in the summer. If you cut leaves off while they are busy capturing energy, you deprive the tree of the ability to store those nutrients for the winter. Summer is also stressful for most plants due to water loss, and you're taking a risk with insects and disease. Only prune if you have an immediate safety or property damage concern. Contact a certified arborist to determine if special precautions should be made to protect the health of the tree.

Q: Is there anything I can do during the growing season?

A: The growing season is ideal for lots of tree-related activities that don't include pruning! Here are just a few:

- Mulch and water your most important trees.



Before pruning



After pruning

- Take a walk through your yard during the summer months just to look at your trees. Do you notice any branches that could create a safety or property damage risk in the future? Note the location and issues on your November calendar — it will help jog your memory later when trees lose their leaves and you're ready to prune.
- In late fall, as trees lose their last leaves and you can see the tree structure more clearly, walk around your yard again and examine your trees for visible indicators that your trees need to be pruned, or even removed.
- Check if your newly planted trees have multiple branch leaders that are competing at the top of the tree. As the competing tree branches grow, they will not fuse together, but instead will rub and push against each other, creating a structural weakness in the tree.
- If you see large holes on the trunk of the tree, call a certified arborist who can determine the level of risk it has of failing. They will take into consideration the species of the tree, the extent of the decay and the tree's location in your yard.

The Who

Q: I'm sure I can handle pruning that tree with a ladder. Why hire an arborist?

A: If you can remove a branch with a hand pruner or handsaw from the ground or by using a small "orchard" ladder (a special three-legged ladder), then you can complete the pruning work yourself. However, if you have to get on a large ladder or use a chainsaw to prune a branch, then consider hiring a certified arborist. These two criteria can indicate a large tree, and you can do a lot of damage to the tree and yourself. Never prune trees near or under utility lines — instead, contact Xcel Energy for assistance.

Prune your trees now, *continued from page 8*

Q: How do I find a certified arborist?

A: Visit the city website at www.eminnetonka.com and type “tree contractor” in the search bar. Look for companies with an asterisk next to their name. Or, visit <http://msa-live.org>.

The How

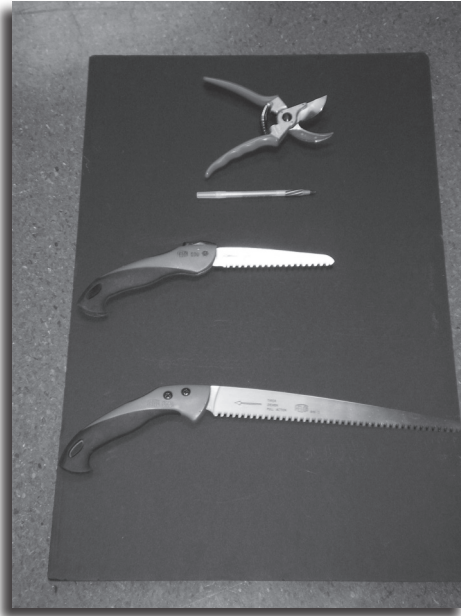
Q: What should I be watching for if I plan to prune my small tree?

A: Follow these tips when pruning your small tree.

- Pruning lower branches of a tree, or “raising the crown,” can create better clearance for vehicles and mowing. But don’t let this be the end of your pruning!
- Assess the overall structure of the tree. Does it have a strong central leader? Remove extra branches that are competing with the best branch leader.
- Remove any dead, decaying, cracked or diseased branches. Making a proper cut will encourage better wound closure.
- Remove branches that create sightline threats near the driveway or entryway to your house.
- Select the strongest branches and remove any crossing or rubbing branches.
- When cutting, favor branches with U-shaped unions and, when possible, remove those with V-shaped unions because they are not structurally sound. Poor branch unions can lead to decay, cracks and splitting later.
- In certain species like crabapple or fruit trees, thinning the crown of a tree can increase the air flow in the canopy, which can make it less susceptible to fungal diseases. However, thinning doesn’t mean removing all the inner branches and leaving a lion’s tail tuft at the tips of each branch; instead reduce the density of the branches in the canopy.



Pruning cut made outside branch bark ridge and branch collar



At top is a bypass pruner, middle is a folding hand saw, bottom is a hand saw

Q: What tools should I use?

A: Follow these rules of thumb to determine the correct pruning tools.

- Branch diameter 1 inch and under: bypass hand pruner.
- Branch diameter up to 2 inches: consider loppers. Loppers look like a hand pruner, with longer handles for better leverage and a slightly larger blade.
- Branches up to 4 inches: hand saw
- Branches/limbs greater than four inches: use a chainsaw with caution.
- A pole pruner is a tool that will allow you to reach and prune branches higher in the canopy of the tree, but only cut branches four inches and under with this device.

Q: Where should I make my pruning cut?

A: Cut branch tissues, not stem (trunk) tissue. To avoid cutting the stem, find the branch bark ridge and the branch collar, a slightly raised area visible on the underside of the branch where it meets the stem. This is the area where stem tissue and branch tissue merge, and it’s important to cut the branch just outside the branch bark ridge and branch collar.

Q: Why is a proper cut important?

A: The proper cut helps the pruning wound to seal efficiently. Do not make a cut flush to the tree stem. The pruning wound will

not seal correctly and will allow decay organisms to enter the tree. Avoid leaving a branch stub, it will take more energy for the tree to seal over the wound and keep decay from spreading into the tree.

Q: What is the three-cut method?

A: The three-cut method is useful for pruning living branches, because it prevents bark ripping that can occur when a branch is cut just once. The first cut is a shallow notch made on the underside of the branch, outside the branch collar. This prevents a falling branch from tearing the stem tissue as it pulls away from the tree. The second cut should be outside the first cut (toward the branch tip), all the way through the branch, leaving a short stub. The third cut removes the branch stub. Make a final cut just outside the branch bark ridge/branch collar.

Q: Do I need to spray the pruning cut?

A: The only time pruning wounds have to be covered is when you are cleaning up a storm damaged branch/limb on an oak tree during the high-risk season for oak wilt. In these instances, paint on a water-based paint (no tar or spray paint) within the first 15 minutes of making a clean cut. In all other instances, trees naturally seal over wounds and compartmentalize decay as long as they have a good pruning cut! Interested in learning more about pruning trees? Attend the small tree pruning workshop March 22, 2:30–4:30 p.m. at the Minnetonka Community Center. For registration information see page 11. ☺

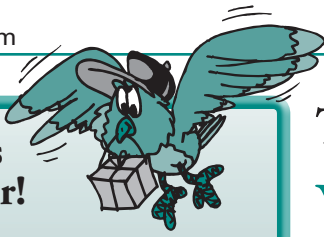
Further Reading:

- USDA Forest Service “How to Prune Trees” www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/prun001.htm
- University of MN Extension Service “Pruning trees & shrubs”: www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG0628.html



Fully sealed-over wound after pruning cut

Follow us on Twitter!



GET YOUR NEWS DELIVERED VIA "tweets!" You can receive news releases, project updates, meeting agendas and minutes, and much more, by following the city on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MinnetonkaMN>. ☺

Handmade gifts at The Landing Shop

IF YOU NEED A UNIQUE gift, The Landing Shop is for you! Browse and buy handmade toys, doll clothes and furniture, sweaters, quilts, towels, booties and more. The



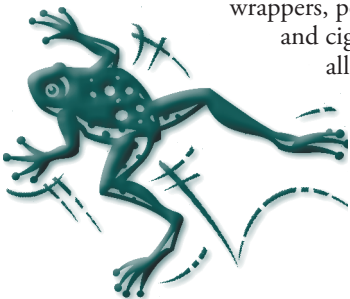
Landing Shop is open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and is located at 11280 Wayzata Boulevard, Minnetonka (in Westridge Market, at the northwest corner of I-394 and Hopkins Crossroad/County Road 73).

For more information call (763) 591-4868 or visit www.eminnetonka.com (search "the landing shop"). The Landing Shop is a recreational program offered by the city of Minnetonka for area seniors. ☺

Help safeguard winter water quality

WHEN YOU ARE OUT ON YOUR FAVORITE lake or pond this winter, remember that your actions can impact our water quality. Anything you leave on the ice when you are walking your dog, ice skating or ice fishing will be there next spring. Please pick up after your pet to prevent bacteria and pollution from contaminating the water.

And, remember that candy wrappers, pop bottles and cigarette butts all float and they will be waiting for us in the spring! ☺



Tips for winter buckthorn removal

WINTER MIGHT SEEM LIKE A STRANGE time for buckthorn removal, but there are plenty of reasons to tackle this invasive now rather than later: there's no heat, humidity or mosquitoes; the days are growing longer and warmer already; and dressing in winter layers reduces the risk of buckthorn scratches. The most compelling reason for removing buckthorn now? More time this summer for fun activities!

Let's start with a few words about stumps. If you tackle buckthorn removal in the late winter, consider cutting stumps high and applying herbicide later for two reasons: it's easier to do one step at a time, and below-freezing temperatures can make the use of water-based herbicides difficult. If you decided to apply herbicide later, follow these stump tips.

- A fresh cut is necessary for absorption of water-based herbicide, so for now, cut your stumps high — one foot tall or more — to allow for another cut later. Tall stumps are also a visual reminder that herbicide has not yet been applied.
- When snow melts, stumps can be re-cut to one or two inches from the ground and herbicide applied to fresh-cut stumps.

More buckthorn control tips

- Before you cut: identify and mark native plants.

- Prioritize removals, since some are more urgent than others. First, remove female buckthorn because it produces fruit with seeds. Then, clear buckthorn from around native plants and take steps to protect those plants from rabbits and deer. Finally, remove any non-native honeysuckle you find — it's the second most invasive woodland shrub.
- Don't scrape the woods clean. Recycle some of the wood by placing logs on slopes and chipping brush on site.
- Only the first growth rings of the stump need to be treated with herbicide, but the cut must be fresh.
- Glyphosate is a good water-based herbicide that is less harmful than other brush herbicides. It is the active ingredient in several popular herbicide brands. Apply it to stumps at 10-20% concentration.
- Wick (sponge) applicators are a great way to apply herbicide directly to the stump, reducing the risk of exposure to the applicator and the environment.

To learn more, attend the March 23 buckthorn workshop (see Eco Series article on page 11 for registration information) or visit the city's website at www.eminnetonka.com and search "buckthorn." ☺

Replace your thermostat, get a gift card

IF YOU WANT TO SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY, consider replacing your traditional thermostat with a programmable thermostat.

If you decide to switch thermostats, remember that traditional thermostats contain mercury and must be recycled. Keeping older thermostats out of the trash is important because they contain about 4.5 grams of mercury — 900 times more mercury than a compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb.

Hennepin County and Covanta Energy Corporation are encouraging residents to save energy by replacing traditional thermostats. As a thank you for recycling those old thermostats, Covanta Energy is offering a \$5 Menards gift card to residents to help reduce the cost of purchasing a programmable thermostat.

To participate in the program, county residents should bring a mercury-containing thermostat to a Hennepin County drop-off



facility for recycling. Residents will complete a contact information form and the gift card will then be mailed.

Hennepin County drop-off facilities are located at 1400 W. 96th Street in Bloomington and 8100 Jefferson Highway in Brooklyn Park. Facilities are open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Wednesdays, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.; and Saturdays, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Offer is available through March 31, 2011, while supplies last. Limit one gift card per household. For more information call (612) 348-3777, or visit www.hennepin.us/dropoffs. ☺

Take care: barking dogs, trash bins

BARKING DOGS AND TRASH OR RECYCLING containers left in public view — those are two of the most common complaints expressed by Minnetonka residents about their neighbors. While they may seem like minor issues to you, please be considerate of your neighbor's environment by complying with these city ordinances.

Barking dogs

Sometimes pet owners will put their dogs outside while they conduct household tasks or run errands. It's important to monitor your dog and be sure it isn't barking continuously while outside — even if you can't hear it, your neighbors probably can. City ordinance prohibits excessive barking, which is defined as repeated noise over at least a ten-minute period with one minute or less lapse of time between each animal noise during that ten-minute period. This ordinance is enforced 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year round. Call the police department at (952) 939-8500 to report a barking dog.

Trash and recycling bins

City ordinance requires that all trash and recycling bins be stored out of public view, either inside a garage or behind a screened enclosure, except for the evening before and the day of trash and/or recycling collection. While your bins may be out of sight for you, they may not be for your neighbors.

If you recognize yourself in either of these, but think your neighbor hasn't noticed or isn't bothered, you may want to reconsider — it's more likely your neighbor hasn't complained because they don't want to cause hard feelings. Please, take a few minutes to consider your behavior and to think about what kind of neighbor you'd like to be so that Minnetonka's neighborhoods can be pleasant for everyone. ♪

Sign up for *Hot Topics*

SUBSCRIBE TO HOT TOPICS, THE CITY'S electronic newsletter that is sent out each Friday. You'll learn about construction projects, special events, upcoming meeting, recreation services offerings and much more! It's easy to sign up — visit www.eminnetonka.com and click on "Sign up for our e-newsletter." For more information call (952) 939-8207 or email jl Larson@eminnetonka.com. ♪

Eco-Series of Walks and Talks continues

MINNETONKA'S NATURAL RESOURCES division continues to offer eco-topic workshops at selected times throughout the year, including the March workshops below. Woodland restoration continues to be a topic of interest, so several buckthorn and garlic mustard workshops and plant walks will be offered again this year. Watch the *Minnetonka Memo* and the city website throughout the year for dates and times of offered walks and talks. Listed below are the March workshops.

How to register

Registration is required for both classes. Call the Minnetonka Public Works Department at (952) 988-8400 or register online at www.eminnetonka.com.

Intro to Small Tree Pruning

Tuesday, March 22, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

**Minnetonka Community Center
14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka**

One of the best ways to ensure your tree will have a long life is to use proper pruning techniques while the tree is still young.

Find out why open-grown trees in a landscape require more pruning than a forest-grown tree, where to start pruning, how to make the proper cut, guidelines on how much to cut, best time of year, tools to use and the benefits of pruning

young trees. The first hour will include a presentation by Minnetonka City Forester Emily Ball, followed by an outdoor pruning demonstration on a couple different types of trees. This workshop is being held in the later afternoon to ensure daylight for the outdoor demonstration. Handouts will be provided. Class is limited to 35 and registration is required. Call (952) 988-8400 or register online at www.eminnetonka.com.


Managing Woodlands: Buckthorn and Beyond

Wednesday, March 23, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**Minnetonka Community Center
14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka**

Can you work on buckthorn in the snow? Can you treat the stumps in the winter?

Do you know that late March and early April can be a pleasant time to control invasive woody plants like buckthorn and non-native honeysuckle? Learn the tricks of stump treatment at this time of year. Come learn about the dos and don'ts of woodland restoration from Janet Van Sloun Larson at this first of three workshops this year — the same sessions will be offered again in September and October. Registration is required. Call (952) 988-8400 or register online at www.eminnetonka.com. ♪

Oopsy.

Poopsy.

Dog poop. It's a serious health problem. Why? Because it contains disease-carrying bacteria that can make people sick and pollute our waters. And because there are more than 50,000 people in Minnetonka, many of them dog owners. Do the math. Then do this. Pick up after your pooch. Remind your neighbors to pick up after theirs. Good manners, great health policy. Your dog can't help it. But you can. ♪

Ad text courtesy of the California State Water Resources Control Board.

minnetonka memo

March 2011



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8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday–Friday

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POLICE-FIRE: Emergency..... 9-1-1
Non-emergency..... (952) 939-8500 or 9-1-1

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Calendar

City of
Minnetonka

March
2011

Call (952) 939-8200
for meeting
locations.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Call (952) 939-8200 for meeting locations.
		1	2	3	4	5	1 Citizen Academy, 6:30–9 p.m.
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	17 Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.
							21 City Council study session, 6:30 p.m.
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	24 Economic Development Advisory Commission, 6:30 p.m.
							28 City Council study session, 6:30 p.m. ; Community Commission, 6:30 p.m.
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	3 Citizen Academy, 6:30–9 p.m.
							7 City Council, 6:30 p.m.
27	28	29	30	31			8 Senior Advisory Board, 10 a.m.; Citizen Academy, 6:30–9 p.m.

All meetings listed above are open to the public. Meeting dates and times are subject to change—please check www.eminnetonka.com for the latest information.

Minnetonka City Council and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on cable channel 16, and replays are available Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays at noon, or anytime via videostream at www.eminnetonka.com. Agendas for council meetings are available on the city’s website by the Friday afternoon prior to the meeting, and planning commission agendas are available by the Monday prior to the meeting.

Staying informed about city projects

THE CITY REGULARLY RECEIVES applications for projects that require planning commission and/or city council approval. Information on these, as well as many other city projects, is regularly updated on the city’s website. If you’d like to stay informed, visit “MyMinnetonka” at www.eminnetonka.com—click on “MyMinnetonka” under “Top Picks.” Through MyMinnetonka, you can learn about new projects in the city; provide online feedback on projects during their approval process, and receive email updates on projects. Planning commission meeting agendas are posted the Monday prior to the meeting. Visit www.eminnetonka.com for information.

Summer employment available

IF YOU’RE LOOKING FOR SUMMER employment opportunities visit www.eminnetonka.com. Departments hiring for the summer include recreation, public works and natural resources. Jobs range from part-time to full-time and many positions involve working evenings, weekends and/or holidays. Descriptions of positions available can be found on the website.

To apply, a completed city application form must be submitted. To apply online or download an application form, visit www.eminnetonka.com and click on Employment under “Most Requested” in the right-hand navigation bar.



The paper in this newsletter was manufactured with electricity in the form of renewable energy (wind, hydro, and biogas).

