

Rockville News

2014 COUNCIL

Mayor

Jeff Hagen 320-266-0377

Councilors:

Susan Palmer 320-267-2966

Don Simon 320-250-9674

Randy Volkmuth 320-260-6095

Duane Willenbring 320-293-8732

NOVEMBER

4th Election Day 7:00 a.m.-
Polls are Open from 8:00 p.m.

6th Rocori Trails 9:00 a.m.
Park & Rec 7:00 p.m.

10th Planning Commission 6:00 p.m.

11th City Hall Closed

12th Finance Committee 5:45 p.m.
City Council 6:00 p.m.

25th Sewer & Water Bill Due

27th & 28th City Hall Closed

DECEMBER

4th Rocori Trails 9:00 a.m.
Park & Rec 6:00 p.m.

9th Planning Commission 6:00 p.m.

17th Finance Committee 5:45 p.m.
City Council 6:00 p.m.

25th City Hall Closed

From your Mayor:

In approximately 2 weeks the country will be holding what many call the “mid-term” election where there is no president/vice president election on the national level, and many local elections that do not involve the election of a mayor. Turn-outs at these elections are typically much less than other elections as many voters view them as being less important.

I want to encourage all of you to take this upcoming election as important as any election and please come out and exercise this very important privilege to vote.

Unfortunately campaigning for some candidates has to be negative and I have recently received a number of calls and visits questioning some of what is being campaigned upon regarding recent city management. These people have asked me to respond in a public manner for the benefit of them and their fellow residents. I will try to be brief and to the point.

Regarding the city’s Public Works Director: In the past few years we have gone through several employment changes in the Public Works Department. We hired a new Public Works Director in September 2013, that though a very good worker, the council had some serious concerns with his ability to control expenses and take direction from management, among other problems. Despite several efforts and warnings by management and the council to improve in several areas, no progress was made by this person. At the same that time, a city councilor was employed as the assistant to this position and both threatened to quit unless, what we felt were un-reasonable, demands were met. The Public Works Director resigned. This occurred during the winter of 2014, probably one of our worst for snow removal and water line freeze-ups for many years. This threat was real. We were only in February 2014 with winter still here. With only one new maintenance worker that started in January 2014. It created an emergency situation for the city and we needed to take immediate action to minimize the potential impact it could have on our residents. We needed to hire someone right away. With the full support of all 4 other councilors and city attorney, an even more qualified replacement was hired. This replacement did exemplary work for the city and now has left so the city had to open that position up again in which we now hired Nick Waldbillig, who comes to us from St. Paul Park. In the meantime, Nick is staying in the area during the week and whenever necessary to meet the needs of our city. Please welcome Nick as you see him around the City. ***Cont.***

Rockville City Hall PO Box 93, 229 Broadway Street East, Rockville MN 56369
320-251-5836 phone, 320-240-9620 fax, website www.rockvillecity.org
Public Works: 320-250-2601

Cont. From your Mayor:

Regarding an increase in employee wages: Since taking the mayor's position 6 years ago, it has taken some time to find the right balance with the number of employees and placing the right employees in the right positions, along with bigger economic reasons and wage management. This has resulted in us falling behind prevailing wages for comparable quality people and as a result, just bringing staff up to the minimum/lowest end of the range has resulted in what appears to be a high percentage. As you know, when you have a small denominator, a modest increase in the numerator results in what appears to be a large percentage increase. Please trust me that your council continues to manage every tax dollar as efficiently as possible and that there is a very high cost to turn-over.

Regarding a recent Stearns County Attorney's case against a Rockville resident charged with impersonating a city councilor: Earlier this year, a resident contacted our accounting software company, representing himself as a Rockville Councilor; which he was not. We contacted our legal counsel which advised us to turn it over to the Stearns County Attorney's office to see if any charges were warranted. Our software provider forwarded to us a copy of an internal memo advising all of its employees to not perform any work for this resident if he contacts them again. Stearns County apparently felt there was probable cause that a law(s) was broken and proceeded with legal action; this decision was theirs and theirs alone. This matter proceeded over several months and culminated with the witness changing her mind about testifying at trial. When we asked Stearns County if they knew why the witness decided not to testify, we were told that they did not know why; other than the defendant had hired an attorney that hired a private investigator that made personal contact with this employee at her place of employment. There is no longer an active case against this resident but that doesn't mean the impersonation did not happen. As a result, at our last city council meeting we want to create a policy to prevent any unauthorized personal from contacting third party vendors. This would include the Mayor, Council or Residents. This will eliminate unauthorized and unnecessary expenses to our residents.

It is much easier to motivate oneself to be critical of staff and the council when your goal is to be self-serving for financial or other gain; it is much harder to be a councilor that has the right motives of civil service, donating your time, being objective and managing for the benefit of the majority. I feel every councilor has the fiduciary and moral responsibility to put their own interests aside and make decisions that are objective, fair and are for the benefit of the majority of residents.

Please take the extra time necessary to get to know your candidates well and please come out and vote to put the people on your council that will be there for the benefit of the majority and not for the benefit of the very few.

Thank you for your time.

Jeff Hagen

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATES:

TAX LEVY - Good news – with the building of 7 new homes in 2013 (some of which were previously cabins) the tax rate for the City is going down in 2015. The council at their September 10, 2014 meeting voted to submit the 2015 preliminary city tax levy the same as 2014 which resulted in a 1.837% decrease or total tax capacity rate of 43.841%. Now remember this is for the city portion only and does not include the County or School District. Fun fact: Back in 2000 the city of Rockville tax rate was 40.961%. Since then we have added a city hall, fire hall, and other street improvement projects.

CONSERVATION WATER RATE – All cities in the State of MN have to adopt a conservation water rate by January 1, 2015. Simply put the State of MN DNR wants people to conserve water. To do this we will be including educational pieces in the newsletter. The easy way to do this is to add one more tier to the rate schedule to make two. Currently we have one rate (tier) which is \$3.55/thousand gallons.

Council/Staff has listened to the concerns of residents over the years and are suggesting that if we truly want to conserve we need to come up with incentives. The Finance Committee has those options and is reviewing them now. The State of MN DNR will ultimately have to approve the rate schedule. Remember the water and sewer funds are enterprise funds and must be paid for by those who use it – not the general fund. This is a business and as a result the city needs to make sure that it is self-sufficient.

CONSERVATION TIPS:

Saving water can be as easy as check, twist, replace.

- * Check toilets for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within 15 minutes. (Make sure to flush when the test is done, since food coloring can stain the tank.) The fix may be as easy as replacing a flapper.
- * Twist on a faucet aerator. Installing a WaterSense labeled aerator is one of the most cost-effective ways to save water. You'll use 30 percent less water without a noticeable difference in flow.
- * Replace an old showerhead with a WaterSense labeled model. This can save 2,300 gallons of water in a year and enough electricity to power your home for 10 days. You can also save \$50 every year on utility bills.

Simple changes made at home can add up to big savings. For more tips and information, visit www.epa.gov/watersense. *(information provided by CMWEA resources)*

SAVE WATER TODAY, MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOMORROW

Small changes made at home can make a big difference when it comes to conserving our natural resources and protecting our planet for future generations.

- * A leak the size of a pinhole in a home water system can waste more than 4,000 gallons of water per month.
- * The amount of water leaked from U.S. homes could exceed more than 1 trillion gallons per year, according to the USEPA. That's equivalent to the annual water use of Los Angeles, Chicago and Miami combined.

If every American home installed water-efficient fixtures and appliances, each year we could save about 2 billion gallons of water and \$5 billion worth of energy. *(information provided by <http://www.savewatertoday.org> a CMWEA resource).*

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Water Use Habits:

Typical Usage

Good, Water-Saving Habits

	Typical Usage	Good, Water-Saving Habits
Showering	20 – 40 gallons (5 gallons per minute)	5 gallons (wet down, soap up, rinse off)
Tub Bathing	36 gallons (full)	10-15 gallons (low-level)
Toilet Flushing	6 gallons	1.6 gallon with new standard toilet
Teeth Brushing	2 gallons (tap running)	1 pint (wet, brush, rinse briefly)
Hand Washing	2 gallons (tap running)	1 gallon (fill basin, rinse briefly)
Shaving	3-5 gallons (tap running)	1 gallon (fill basin, rinse briefly)
Dish Washing	20 gallons (tap running)	5 gallons (wash, rinse, in pan or sink)
Automatic Dishwasher	15 gallons (full cycle)	Do only full loads
Clothes Washer	36 – 60 gallons (full cycle)	Do only full loads
Outdoor Watering	5-10 gallons per minute	Be sensible

Information provided by MRWA.

PARK & REC

In May I had the privilege of working with Kent Johannas from the Rockville Lions Club on a Girl Scout Brownies Troop 706 project from John Clark School of Rockville and Cold Spring District Schools. We put up 12 Bluebird Boxes in the Rain Gardens and Wild Prairie sites at Lions Park. It was a real pleasure working with them as the girls were very interested in what they were committing to in ownership. Along with Adult Scout Leaders and Parents we had the opportunity to teach and learn something about Bluebirds and the reasons just why they are so important to our environment. There were around 16 people attending. Thanks to all! There was no cost to the City. Since we had given them "ownership" it will now be more educational when we clean them out for winter. The old nests are taken out (sometimes nests are stacked by several different species of birds using the same box during the summer season) the boxes are then left open for winter so field mice don't invade all winter. They are a deterrent for the spring returning birds as they create a winter mess and stink that the birds don't like to return to.

Also in May we planted the Basswood shade tree in front of the Granite picnic table at Eagles Park. The 15 foot tree came from Huls Nursery in St. Wendel who gave us a very nice discount for the parks project! Thanks to City Maintenance and Don Simon for assisting in the project. The same day Don and I replaced three 5 foot Oak trees, again from Huls Nursery that were a Winter loss. They gave these trees to us at no cost to the City! Again, for a parks project.

In June I had the pleasure of working with an MCC (Minnesota Conservation Corp) young adult crew. We weeded out the Rain Gardens (2) at Lions Park. These College graduates and students were very knowledgeable and interested in just what they were doing! We shared a lot of information together and I would very much welcome again the fine opportunity of working along side them again! All this at no cost to the City, thanks to Wayne Cymbaluk from Stearns County Soil and Water District.

Presently we are working on the Demonstration Rain Garden at City Hall with Volunteers from the Minnesota Extension Service, locally. I was a Master Gardener for 13 years myself so I was easily recognized as a partner in this from the Master Gardeners Program. Arrangements were made through the Sauk River Watershed District. No cost to the City again.

Respectfully submitted; *Paul B. Wirth, Rockville Park and Rec. Board Member*

Park and Rec Board is looking for 3 new members! It is a fun way to serve your city.

We continue to report that folks from around the globe are visiting Eagle Park. Also, the Native Prairies are blooming well through the fall.



**Recycle the Gophers!
Linda Peck, permitted
wildlife rehabilitator,**



can always use trapped (not poisoned) gophers, chipmunks, and mice to feed to her educational/orphaned/injured hawks and owls.

Contact Linda at 685-3365.

Volunteers needed: To help flood the Hockey Rink this fall at Community Park, around Thanksgiving time or a good hard freeze. The water will be layered to make good ice skating conditions.



Santa Day

*Sunday, December 7th, 2014 at
1:00 pm*

At the Rockville Fire Hall

Free pictures with Santa!

Games, snacks and treats for all!

Please bring a non-perishable food donation.

Please Email me My Newsletter:

If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please email your email address to mlais@rockvillecity.org

ADVERTISING IN THE NEWSLETTER

If you are interested in advertising your Rockville business in the Rockville City Newsletter and/or having your business information listed on the Rockville City website, please call Mandy Lais at 320-251-5836 for more information or send an email to mlais@rockvillecity.org.

Visit The Book Nook At Rockville City Hall

Thank you to all of you who have donated books to make our Book Nook a success.
Happy Reading!



POSTING NOTICES:

It is the City of Rockville's position that it is very important to keep our resident's well informed. We strive to post our notices in four locations. On 7/16/14 Council approved that Rockville City Hall is our primary location. This issue to identify a primary location was brought before the City Council because there was some confusion as to our primary location when it came to posting notices since we have been posting notices in four locations (City Hall, post office, bank, and website). All cities are required to post their notices in their (1) primary location 3 days prior to a meeting according to state law. We want to be clear, we have and will continue to post notices in the four locations, even though we have designated Rockville City Hall as our primary location. We hope this clears up any misunderstanding or misinformation you were given. Please call if you have any questions (320)251-5836.

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PUBLIC WORKS

The next scheduled water meter reading is on November 7, 2014.

KEEP WATER METERS, GAS METERS, ELECTRICAL METER & GRINDER STATIONS CLEAR FROM SNOW:

The City, Stearns Electric, Xcel Energy and Center Point Energy have meter readers; they would appreciate if they would be able to get to the meter in order to get an accurate reading. The lakes areas have a grinder station, please don't pile the snow over the grinder station, as the grinder station needs to breathe. In the winter weather, please be courteous and keep a path cleared to make it easier to read your water meter and to work on your grinder station if the alarm is going off.

CURB MARKING POSTS HELP SNOW PLOWS

To help out the City snow plow crews this winter, when the first covering of snow leaves no indication of where the end of streets are located, the City is recommending that property owners mark the end of their property with curb marker posts. This will help snow plow drivers plow to the end of your property this season. You can purchase the markers at Menards, The Home Depot, or any local hardware store. Although it is the City's recommendation that property owners install these markers, it is ultimately up to each property owner. Residents are reminded that the City is not responsible for damage that may be done from snowplows including damage to sprinkler heads.



Please Clear Away The Snow!

We are asking for your help, when you are shoveling your driveway spend a few extra minutes and shovel out the fire hydrant nearest your home. Please make it a point to uncover your fire hydrant after each and every snowfall. Clear a path approximately 3 feet around the hydrant. This gives the fire department room to work with this hydrant should the need arise.

Please consider helping a neighbor with a medical condition or who is elderly, by shoveling out a hydrant in front of their home. This act of kindness will benefit the entire neighborhood.

Thank you from your Rockville Fire Department

WINTER CARE FOR GRINDER STATIONS: Long Term/Winter Lay-up This information is for residents who have grinder stations that are connected to the city sewer system:

Long term or winter lay-up does not adversely affect your grinder station. However, there are a few routine steps that you should take to prevent maintenance problems upon your return. The following is a simple list of steps to take before seasonal or other long term absences:

- ◆ Make sure nothing is blocking the airflow around the bottom of the cover.
- ◆ Before closing your home for an extended period of time (one week or longer), run clean water out of a faucet into your grinder station for approximately 30 minutes. The reason we are asking you to do this is to thoroughly flush the line from your grinder station to the main line. Failure to flush the line has resulted in build up in the line, that hardens and blocks the line, causing the line to need to be dug up, cut open, and cleaned out at a considerable expense that may be turned over to the resident to pay.
- ◆ DO NOT turn off the power to the grinder station at the panel. If you normally turn off the main power to shut everything down, turn off all of the other individual circuits EXCEPT the grinder station.
- ◆ Let Someone Know! If possible, let a trusted neighbor know you are leaving so that they will be aware to listen and look for alarms. If you have any winterizing questions or concerns, please call the city maintenance department at 320-251-5836.

COMPOST

If you have grass, leaves or other vegetation to get rid of, please call one of two sites to set up an appointment to get rid of your compost. These farmers are willing to take in compost, free of charge. Please follow any rules they have set up. These sites is for the residents of the City of Rockville only. Please call 255-9394 or 685-5953



THE WINTER PARKING ORDINANCE NO. 2012-75

AN ORDINANCE REGULATING PARKING DURING SNOW EMERGENCIES AND ALL CITY STREETS DURING WINTER MONTHS

The Rockville City Council ordains:

SECTION 1. Section 71.04 of the City Code is hereby amended in its entirety as follows:

71.04 (A) On the occasions of heavy snowfalls, the Public Works Supervisor shall determine when to commence and/or suspend snow plowing operations.

71.04 (B) When snow has accumulated to a depth greater than 1 ½” inches, a “NO PARKING BAN” will be in effect over the entire city. It shall be the responsibility of the duty police officer (Sheriff) to cite and/or tow all violators. After the streets are plowed, parking will be permitted.

71.04 (C) Violators of this ordinance will be subject to a \$25.00 penalty and in the event that it is necessary that a vehicle be towed away, the cost of the towing, the penalty, and any other related charges will be at the expense of the vehicle owner and will be collected in full before any vehicle is released.

71.04 (D) This ordinance repeals and supersedes all previous snow removal ordinances relating to the removal of snow on public streets in the City of Rockville.

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TRI-COUNTY ACTION PROGRAM, INC

In this economy more and more people and families are having difficulties making ends meet. If you are having difficulty paying your heating and/or electric bill we encourage you to contact your local Energy Assistance provider.

How can Energy Assistance help you?

Energy Assistance programs can provide:

- › Assistance towards a household's home energy bill.
- › Emergency assistance if a household's home energy service is shut off.
- › Emergency assistance if a household is unable to get fuel delivered.
- › Advocating with energy-related services such as weatherization improvements, furnace equipment repair and replacement, and budget counseling.

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(320) 251-1612 or 1-888-765-5597

WWW.TRICAP.ORG

This program is funded by the Minnesota Department of Commerce and U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

5 Tips to Get Your Septic Tank Ready for Winter From the MN Pollution Control Agency

Here are five tips that can help you prevent costly problems later this winter.

1. Prevent freezing in the first place: Insulation is key to preventing pipes and drain fields from freezing. Allowing grass to grow an extra six inches over the entire system (septic tank, connecting pipes and drain field/mound) in the fall can protect them from frost. Another good insulator is a layer of mulch (straw, leaves, hay, etc.) spread 8 to 12 inches deep over the system.

There are some things you should never do to try to fix a frozen system:

- › Do not add antifreeze, salt, or a septic system additive into the system.
- › Do not pump sewage onto the ground.
- › Do not start a fire over the system to attempt to thaw it out.
- › Do not run water continually to try to unfreeze system. This can overload the system.

2. Don't let it drip and keep it hot: Dripping faucets trickle water into the system which can cause ice to build up and eventually freeze a pipe closed, often right where the septic pipe leaves the home. Fix all leaks and keep the system "energized" with regular doses of warm water during the winter — the warmer the better. Spread out your laundry schedule so you run one warm/hot load a day. Use the dishwasher and take hot baths. However, do not leave water running all the time, as this will overload the septic system.

3. Keep off the grass (and snow): Keep all vehicle, animal and human traffic off the system. This is a good rule to follow all year long as compacted snow and soils cause frost to go down deeper and faster. Pay special attention to the area between the house and the septic tank. Stay off these areas even during the winter as compacted snow provides much less insulation than undisturbed snow.

4. Keep new systems under cover: A new septic system covered with bare soil can have problems with freezing the first year. Cover a new tank, mound/drain field with an insulating layer of mulch or similar loose material.

5. It's frozen. Now what? If your septic system freezes, call a septic system professional. The MPCA website includes a search tool for finding certified professionals in your area. The pros have devices called steamers and high-pressure jetters for thawing pipes.

For information on keeping your system healthy all year, visit the University of Minnesota's Onsite Sewage Treatment Program website at <http://septic.umn.edu>