

# NEWSLETTER

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## MAYOR JOHNSON'S LETTER

What a beautiful fall and what a contrast from last year. The couple of early snows that second week of November created some treacherous driving conditions for a few hours, but by afternoon driving conditions were back to normal.

On Veteran's Day I had a 10:00 a.m. meeting in Cold Springs, so I left home about an hour earlier than usual and arrived at my meeting in plenty of time, however, if I had been going east bound it would have been a different experience. Because of an accident in the St. Cloud area on the east bound Interstate 90, traffic was backed up for miles.

Thank you for again turning out in mass for early voting on Election Day. I believe we may have set the record for percentage of voter turnout. Thanks also to those who worked. I did not hear of anyone who got sick after working and everyone was respectful of social distancing.

I don't think any of us thought what happened in early March with the lockdown and cancellation of meetings would continue well into another year. We will not forget 2020. I used to attend meetings and events at least three or four

times a week in Minneapolis, St. Paul or other suburbs. Since early March I have been in Minneapolis three or four times and not all in St. Paul. I had one event at the Bloomington Double Tree Hotel and the other trips were freeway trips through the City. (continued p. 2)



**Marvin D. Johnson**

**Mayor**

**City of Independence**

## MEETING INFO

### City Council

1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 6:30 pm

### Planning Commission

3rd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

**Workshops are posted**

**as scheduled**

[www.ci.independence.mn.us](http://www.ci.independence.mn.us)

### City Office Hours/ Open During Construction

City Hall Offices will be temporarily housed in the Public Works building. Hours open for in-person assistance will be **Tuesday and Thursday's from 8:00-4:30 p.m.** Phones and office staff are in service five days per week. Please call 763-479-0527 with any questions. Thank you for your patience while we renovate the building. For renovation information visit the city website at:

[ci.independence.mn.us](http://ci.independence.mn.us)

That has meant hour upon hour sitting in front of my computer attending a Zoom meeting or attending a virtual conference via computer or sometimes telephone access only.

We were back in City Hall for Council meetings with Staff without the public from mid-summer until Election Day. Immediately after Election Day the remodeling of City Hall began, so we have been back to Zoom Council meetings and will be until the project is finished. It works, but it is not like meeting in person. If you need to have contact with the City staff, Public Works or the Public Safety personnel, be sure to call ahead or read signage of where to meet.

Early December, we were informed that former Council member Jim Smith and his wife, Mary Agnes, passed away from Covid19 on the same day at Haven Homes in Maple Plain. Jim served on our Council for twelve years prior to 2006. The Smiths grew up in the South. Jim worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, worked in several countries and moved here from Greenbelt, Maryland, which is just outside of Washington D.C. Jim was elected to the Council with others after we had four divisive years in city government and he served us well.

Two issues that especially stand out in my memory of Jim was issuing a Conditional Use Permit for a new horse facility and a request for a Bed and Breakfast. Jim and I took opposite sides on the horse facility to begin with, but for his own sake he did a lot of research on the issues. In the end, he admitted he had changed his mind, and as a result many of the conditions put in the CUP for horse facilities today are a result of his research. The family with the CUP did not disappoint us.

The Bed and Breakfast request needed an amendment to our Comprehensive Land Use Plan which needs more than a majority vote. I thought the request was very legitimate and would be a real asset in the City. His vote against the request doomed that project much to the disappointment of several people. However, we had some people in the immediate area that made some very serious threats to individual Council members and we also found out "how bad the people are who use Bed and Breakfast lodging."

Jim represented Independence on the Metro Cities Board and ultimately became it's Board Chair and served one year with me on the League of Minnesota Cities Board of Directors. We traveled to several league meetings and seminars together. He served the City of Independence proudly. A memorial service will be held for the Smith's next summer.

Within the last month, Staff and I met virtually with the County Assessor. For the first time in my memory the assessor showed us that our City homes were undervalued. There is a ratio on value of sales on properties versus the value that our assessors have placed on our properties and that number should be close to 95% of value. This year that number was 87% of value which means that most people when selling their homes have been getting their asking price or more. This year values went up 4.6% but really should have gone up another six or seven percent. Consequently, next year we will see some major increases unless sales of homes soon begin to tank drastically.

At our first meeting in December the Council had the Truth in Taxation Hearing virtually which is all about our City budget for 2021. There were no questions from the public after the presentation from Staff at this hearing. The Council did certify the budget, the levy and the Pioneer Sarah Creek Watershed Assessment at the Council meeting following the hearing. The dollar amount was approximately fifty thousand less than the original estimate in September.

Well the Christmas present for all this year is the good news that the vaccine for Covid19 is now being distributed. Hopefully this means that maybe soon in the New Year our lives can return to something close to our past routine, even though we know many things will have changed forever. Happy New Year!

***Marvin D. Johnson, Your Mayor***



## PUBLIC SAFETY NEWS CHIEF'S DESK WEST HENNEPIN PUBLIC SAFETY

Saturday December 19, 2020, the West Hennepin Public Safety (WHPS) Volunteer Reserve Officers hosted the popular event "View Santa" in Maple Plain and Independence. They have been hosting this event for 40 years.

COVID-19 could not stop Santa from driving through our communities, bringing joy to our families and gathering food donations for our local food shelves.

"Now more than ever we need to provide for others in need" stated Chief Gary Kroells. This year was an exceptional year with many people coming out to visit Santa and giving donations to the local food shelf. The Police Reserves collected over 1800 pounds of food and \$720.00 in cash donations" said Director Gary Kroells.



**Chief Gary  
Kroells**

For information on joining the Reserve Officer program contact Officer Ben Anderson at (763) 479-0500.

<https://westhennepin.com/>



## Snow Plowing and ROW Information



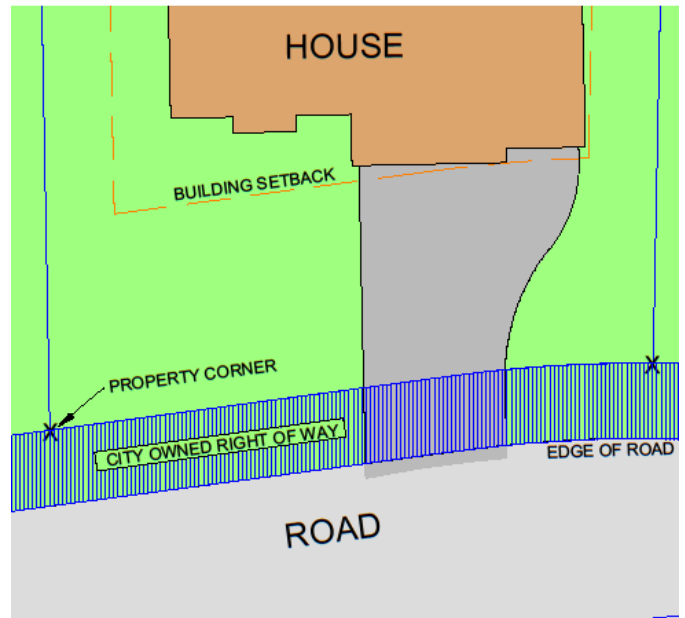
### Understanding the City's Right-of-Way as it pertains to your property.

The City of Independence is asking residents to understand the importance of the right of way and how it is used by the City. Right-of-way or "ROW" is a strip of land owned by the City usually for a public street, storm water conveyance, or other public use.

### How wide or big is the typical right-of-way?

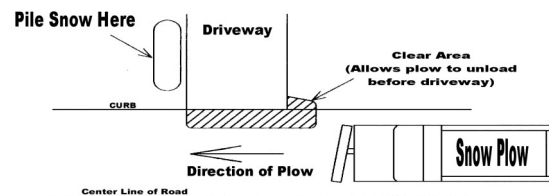
Typically a right-of-way is 66 feet wide. This will include the paved portion of the road, normally 33 feet wide, and about 16.5 feet on either side of the paved street. The space along the road side is reserved for ditches, culverts, utilities, storm sewers, road signs, and other public uses. For your property specific ROW location and information contact the City.

Please note that the City does not allow obstructions to be located within the City's right-of-way, including but not limited to boulders, rocks, and other materials/structures that may impede safety or drainage. Invisible dog fences and irrigation heads or lines are also not allowed in the right-of-way. The City is not responsible for these items if they are damaged during routine maintenance and repair operations such as snow plowing and road and ditch repairs. The City may have to remove obstructions located within the right-of-way.



RIGHT OF WAY DEPICTION

### Driveway Plowing Policies

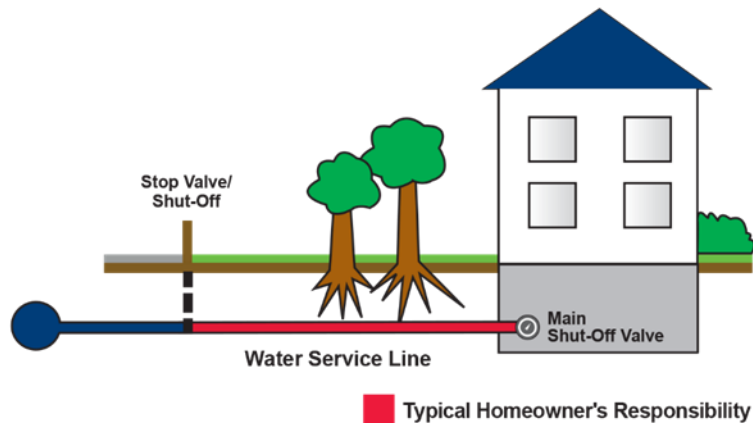


Please note it is unlawful to dump, plow or push snow from private driveways onto highway or city streets whether you are plowing your driveway or have hired someone to remove snow. Snow dumped on highways or street right-of-way can create a hazard not only for motorists, but also for snowplows. Even heavy snowplows have been ditched and damaged when hitting compacted and frozen snow. The person responsible for depositing snow on roadways may be liable in a civil lawsuit if damages or injuries occur as a result of this action. Under MN Statutes, Chapter 160.2715, RIGHT-OF-WAY USE, violation of the above statute is a misdemeanor, **City Ordinance 2018-04** states from November 1 through April 15 of each year and between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., it shall be unlawful to park or permit to be parked, or continue to park or permit to stand, any vehicle upon any city street. Also, following a snow fall of 3 inches or more in depth, it shall be unlawful to park or permit to be parked, or to continue to park or permit to stand, any vehicle upon any street until the snow has been plowed from the street or the same has been otherwise disposed of.



## Service Line Protection Available for City of Independence Homeowners

The City of Independence has partnered with Service Line Warranties of America (SLWA) to offer protection to city homeowners for the water and sewer service lines that connect their homes to the city's systems. The coverage is voluntary and available at affordable monthly prices. Founded in 2003, SLWA has partnered with over 500 leading cities and municipalities in the US to provide repair service plans that offer homeowners peace of mind and convenience.



“Many homeowners do not know that damage to the service lines on their property is their responsibility to repair,” said Trish Gronstal, Administrative Assistant. “In the event of a service line repair emergency, the homeowner is responsible for scheduling the repair and covering the associated cost. As the City of Independence homes age along with the infrastructure serving them, SLWA repair plans provide homeowners with an optional solution so they can be prepared for this type of unexpected repair.”

The SLWA Service Line Warranty Program protects against repairs needed to pipes on homeowners' property. Repairs to these pipes are not covered by basic homeowners insurance or by the City of Independence. If a customer's service line is in need of repair, a simple call to the SLWA 24-hour hotline will dispatch a local, licensed contractor familiar with local code. There are no service fees or deductibles. Many factors contribute to the life expectancy of a service line including the age, type of piping material, soil conditions and installation quality - all factors which are covered through the SLWA protection program. This program is voluntary for homeowners, provided at no cost to the City of Independence and no public funds are used to promote or administer the program.

“Our service plans not only cover the cost of the repair; they also provide homeowners with reputable, local contractors who will do the best possible job,” said John Kitzie, CEO of SLWA parent HomeServe USA.

SLWA has been recognized as the nation's largest and most trusted source of utility line plans endorsed by the National League of Cities. The company is committed to delivering an excellent customer service experience and maintaining an A+ accredited rating with the Better Business Bureau. For questions about this service, or to enroll, please contact [SLWA at 866-922-9006](tel:866-922-9006) or visit [www.slwofa.com](http://www.slwofa.com).



# Randy's 2021 Recycle Calendar

## Virtual Meetings!

City Council and Planning Commission meetings are being held virtually until further notice due to COVID-19. Residents can join the meetings virtually through a web browser or by phone. The city website will continue to be updated with current meeting content at [ci.independence.mn.us](http://ci.independence.mn.us)

**City Council:** 1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

**Planning Commission:** 3rd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.



## Haven Homes is now Open!

Jenna Zark – Director of Communications



When people ask Cassia's Haven Homes staff why we are opening a brand-new care community in the midst of a pandemic, the answer is clear. Older adults in Independence and surrounding areas need care and services that help them thrive. They cannot wait for it.

New residents will find private rooms, baths, and other features that the old

building did not have. During the entire building process, Coronavirus prevention has been a topmost priority with features like separate staff entrances; two-way remote communication devices for residents and staff to reduce physical contact, and easy access to showers for staff members. Haven Homes also uses special technology with a personalized ride service called Mobility4All. Mobility4All "care drivers" are specially trained in transferring riders in and out of their vehicles and can escort people from lobby to lobby as needed. Rides can be for appointments, shopping or just fun drives around the neighborhood. Another new technology feature is the Soundmind platform which was designed to help senior living communities promote resident connectedness and independence with "voice only" technology. Without the complexities of apps, tablets, laptops or smartphones, residents can access information and communicate seamlessly using Amazon Alexa devices preconfigured with their preferences and contacts. Residents are able to initiate calls and chats using their voices.

For more information on the new Haven Homes or to inquire about a virtual tour, please contact Director of Marketing Cassandra Nickell at [Cassandra.Nickell@cassialife.org](mailto:Cassandra.Nickell@cassialife.org) or call 763-292-2300.

**CITY OF  
INDEPENDENCE**

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**City Officials**

**Mayor**

Marvin Johnson

**City Council**

Brad Spencer

Lynn Betts

Ray McCoy

Steve Grotting

**City Officials**

**Planning Commission Chair**

Robert Gardner

**Planning Commissioners**

Anita Volkenant

Leith Dumas

Tom Palmquist

Steve Thompson

**City Staff**

**Administrator/City Planner**

Mark Kaltsas

**Public Works Supervisor**

Shawn Bode

**Building Inspector**

Bruce Satek

**Asst. City Admin.**

Beth Horner

**Administrative Asst.**

Trish Gronstal



A promotional poster for Winter 2021 Community Education. The background is dark blue with white snowflakes and light blue dots. At the top left is a white snowflake. In the center, the word "Winter" is written in a large, white, cursive font, with "2021" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. To the left of the text is a large, white, stylized snowflake graphic. Below this graphic is a circular photo of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a blue denim shirt, smiling and holding a colorful string of beads. To the right of the text is another circular photo of a young boy with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt, sitting at a table and working on a craft project. Below the boy's photo is a circular photo of a young boy with a green headband, wearing a grey t-shirt and red shorts, standing on a grassy field. In the bottom right corner, there is a light blue speech bubble containing the text "150+ classes & programs". At the bottom left, the word "Register" is written in a white, cursive font. In the center bottom, the website "www.oronocommunityed.com" and the phone number "952-449-8350" are written in a white, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the "ORONO Community Education" logo is displayed, with "ORONO" in a white, sans-serif font and "Community Education" in a white, cursive font, with "Orono Public Schools" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

**Winter**  
2021

**150+  
classes &  
programs**

**IN PERSON • VIRTUAL • AT HOME KITS**

**Register** [www.oronocommunityed.com](http://www.oronocommunityed.com)  
952-449-8350

**ORONO** Community Education  
Orono Public Schools