

NEWSLETTER

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MAYOR JOHNSON'S LETTER

Dear Independence Residents:

As I prepare to write another newsletter article, I reviewed a few of the most recent newsletters and in particular the one a year ago. What a contrast in conditions-especially weather. As I'm writing this article, we are enjoying mild weather with most of the snow melted except for the piles. I'm hoping that at the time the newsletter arrives in your mailbox we haven't had a major return to winter weather.

The family that does maple syrup on our farm have had good weather conditions for the sap to run. They have about 1,000 taps so when there are warm sunny days and freezing nights, they have a good "run". With the earlier start the run could last a lot longer if we don't have an early heat wave. Last year because of the extremely wet weather and fast late snow melt, they were unable to prepare for gathering of the maple syrup.

Another comment I noticed I made a year ago in the newsletter was that we hoped very shortly to have the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan approved by Metropolitan Council. That still has not been accomplished and it is so frustrating to have that plan hanging in limbo. **Page 2**



Mayor

Marvin Johnson

MEETINGS

City Council

1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 6:30 pm

Planning Commission

3rd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

Workshops are posted

as scheduled

ci.independence.mn.us

POSTPONED

The City of Independence Clean-Up Day that was scheduled for May 2, 2020 has been postponed until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic and CDC recommendations. Randy's Environmental Services public drop site is also currently closed due to the stay-at-home order but will re-open after the order is lifted. Randy's contact number is 763-972-3335 for more information.

Stay tuned to the City's website and Facebook page for updates regarding COVID-19 and City news. Our phones are also open from 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday

www.ci.independence.mn.us

<https://www.facebook.com/independenceminnesota/>



Each City has its' own uniqueness and I wish the Metropolitan Council staff and Council would take that more into consideration.

Property Valuation questions? Contact the City Assessor, Dave Thomsen at 612-388-5426 before the Board of Appeal meeting.

I'm hoping this newsletter reaches the mailboxes before Monday, April 6th. The Council will hold a virtual Board of Appeal meeting on Tuesday night, April 7 at 6:00. That is the night our citizens can appeal to the City Council if they think their property valuation is incorrect. You have had your notices for some time now and I hope you have reviewed them. If not, do so immediately. If you have any questions call our Assessor, David Thomsen at 612.388.5426. See if he can help you. If not, let him know you would like to visit with the Council about the matter. He will have all your records available for the Council at the Board of Appeal meeting if you follow this process. There is nothing worse than people coming to the Council in December at the Truth in Taxation hearing when it is too late for the Council or the County to make changes.

Very shortly our audit firm will be auditing our City's financial records for 2019 and in our next newsletter we can share the results. Our Public Safety Department is audited by a different firm and that report will be ready within the next six weeks. We have had very complementary audits for years and expect the same this year. Because of our small city staff, we follow a detailed procedure for separation of duties and with the use of an outside accounting firm we feel we have up to date accurate financial accountability.

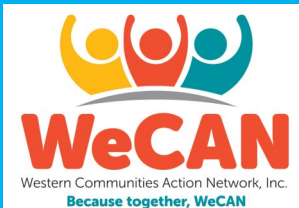
Besides the Presidential and Congressional District elections this fall, we will vote for our State Senator, State Representative and County Commissioner. Every position has opposition, so I urge you to pay special attention to the Senate, Representative and Commissioner races because you most likely won't be hearing about those races on the radio and TV. Commissioner Jeff Johnson announced early that he would not be running again, so that is an open seat. Because of the ten-year census count and the redrawing of District borders, I am not sure how long the Commissioner's term will be.

Soon there will be another "open house" for plans of the reconstruction of County Road 90 and U.S. Highway 12, and County Road 92 and U.S. Highway 12 both north and south. These are projects scheduled for next year. The Council has given municipal consent on the projects so that the final designs can be finished, right of way purchased, easements secured and the bidding process prepared. After a meeting our City Administrator, Police Chief and I had with Minnesota Commissioner of Transportation Margaret Anderson Kelliher, she dedicated another two million dollars towards the construction project and she has continued to emphasize that U.S. Highway 12 is her number one priority. All of us know that the next year or two translates into some major detours and traffic delays. Until the next newsletter and census time, enjoy spring!

Marvin D. Johnson, Mayor

WeCAN is committed to doing our part to help our neighbors during the current COVID-19 crisis. We are collaborating with the Westonka School District and our friends at the Westonka Food Shelf to ensure that kids don't go hungry during this time out of school. WeCAN typically provides our Kids' Food Bag Program during spring break and summer. While we were prepared for a one-week school break at this time due to the local spring break, we would like to continue to offer the kids' food bags as long as they are needed. Can you help? Financial donations can be used to purchase from food banks and other low-cost food source. Donate online at wecanmn.org – or consider donating non-perishable goods from our list of most needed items and call to arrange a drop-off at 952-472-0742 or email officemanager@wecanmn.org.

March Food Share Month has also been extended, so food and cash donations will count toward our proportional match. Thanks so much for your support of this emergency kids' food bag program!





**Chief Gary
Kroells**



Earlier this month the United States and the entire world have been dealt a heavy blow with planning and preparing for the COVID-19 virus. You can be confident the top priority of the United States, the State of Minnesota and your local government is your health and safety during this time. This is a confusing and troubling time, but we will defeat this pandemic.

To help ease some concerns I want to inform all our citizens that West Hennepin Public Safety Department will continue to provide public safety services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our emergency services with police, fire, and emergency medical services will not change regarding the safety of our citizens. Emergency responses will continue and non-emergency responses will be triaged to limit contact when reasonable. I would ask our residents to be patient and understanding during this time. We still are allowing walk-in services; however, we would ask our residents to handle all non-emergency matters by calling our office at (763) 479-0500 versus responding to our office. Burn permits and other minor permits will be issued online or by phone. Civil fingerprint details for any purpose have been suspended at this time.

Due to the numerous changes each day involving COVID-19 we are directing our citizens to follow the guidelines of the MN Department of Health and the CDC to protect themselves and loved ones from getting exposed to COVID-19. Please refer to these websites for additional information:

CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Minnesota Department of Health: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/>

As a result of COVID-19 we have seen an upward trend of criminals trying to take advantage of citizens. Primarily we are seeing scams via the phone and email. Please educate yourself and loved ones of these scams. Never provide any payment information over the phone or by email, bitcoin, gift cards or google play cards as they are clear examples of someone trying to steal your money. While you can't prevent all incidents of theft you can minimize your risk by managing your personal information wisely.

In the event you become a victim of theft we ask you immediately contact your local police department to report the incident. West Hennepin Public Safety treats theft as a serious offense and we will strive to make sure all suspects are prosecuted under the law.

Together we will work through this emergency as we have worked through others in the past. Stay strong, be patient, keep updated, and do your part to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Chief of Police

West Hennepin Public Safety Department

Gary S. Kroells



Haven Homes Building to Offer More Options for Residents

Cassia's Haven Homes has been serving Maple Plain and surrounding communities since the original building went up in 1966, with a remodel and add-on in 1999. Bryant House was originally built in 1990. It became clear in recent years that more services were needed, which is why we began a capital campaign to create a new building for Haven Homes.

Our new building will offer a dedicated rehabilitation unit, skilled nursing, assisted living, secure memory care assisted living, independent living, and an adult day center. Currently, construction is proceeding on the assisted living/independent living areas on the third floor. Once this work is complete, construction will begin on the skilled nursing area.

None of this would be possible without the financial support of generous donors in our communities. We are now at the final stage of a capital campaign to seek support for the chapel and outdoor spaces. The campaign goal is \$457,000 and we have raised \$345,000 toward that goal. More than 75% of these gifts have come individuals, faith communities, businesses and foundations. It is a testament to the community's strength and love for older adults that we have been able to make this happen.

We expect the building will be ready by December of 2020 and residents will be able to move in January of 2021. Plans are to work with a moving company to help current residents move within one day. Most rooms within skilled care and the rehabilitation unit are private with private bathrooms and showers. Adding independent living and memory care/assisted living, along with adult day services, will enhance our ability to address and anticipate the needs of all those we serve.

As we wait for the building to be completed, we'd also like to share information about our preparedness for the Coronavirus. Cassia's trained health care professionals at Haven Homes are taking Coronavirus (COVID 19) very seriously, as the safety and well-being of residents and staff is our highest priority. We are focused on minimizing risks by boosting preventive actions and utilizing infection control protocols.

Per guidelines from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), we are not allowing visitors into our facilities at this time. This action will help protect our residents against the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, visitation is suspended except in the case of compassionate care (end-of life).

In addition:

- We are in communication with residents, family and staff explaining our new procedures and asking for their cooperation.
- We have provided extra training for environmental services staff on proper cleaning practices and techniques.
- Sites are using checklists of best practices and protocols, supplies they should have on hand and notifications to be made if the virus is suspected.
- Cassia's clinical and operations support teams are assisting site leaders with implementing new protocols.

We remain in close contact with the CDC, state health departments and other state and federal partners to monitor the virus and communicate updated information and ongoing resources to our facilities. The situation is very fluid and our intent is to adapt to new information each day. **For the latest updates** and more information about our planning and preparation for COVID-19, please visit our website at

<http://augustanacare.org/coronavirus-information>.

URGENT: FLUSHING WIPES IS DAMAGING THE CITY SEWER SYSTEM!



The City has costly sewer damage repairs due to the use of “flushable” wipes. The latest breakdown resulted in \$4000.00 in damage to the pumps. We are urging residents to discontinue using these wipes and are trying to avoid having to pass on these incurred costs on to the user/s of the system.

Flushable “wet wipes” or “disposable wipes” do not break apart, and, as a result, are very damaging. The wipes cluster with congealed food fat to form large blockages known as fatbergs. After wipes are flushed they exit to the city sewer system but unlike toilet paper they fail to disintegrate. They clog the pumps, causing them to break down and redirect stagnant wastewater back into your homes. So-called flushable wipes are becoming a growing hazard to public health. Wipes are made from a very tough material called “air-laid paper”, and are often saturated with cleansing chemicals, disinfectants and cosmetic scents. Air-laid paper behaves very differently in sewers than toilet paper and does not readily disintegrate in water.

We would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping to maintain the city sewer system by discontinuing the use of these wipes. It is expensive to fix these issues and the City is working to maintain our sewer system as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

Shawn Bode– Public Works Supervisor

Vandalism at Pioneer Creek Park

Since the fall of 2019, the City of Independence and West Hennepin Public Safety Department have responded to Pioneer Creek Park due to excessive vandalism on three different occasions. This vandalism involves spray painting graffiti on the playground equipment and local street signs. These senseless acts of vandalism require significant time and tax dollars to keep our playground equipment in good working order. West Hennepin Public Safety Department is actively investigating these cases. If you have any information on these incidents please call (763) 479-0500.





ORONO COMMUNITY EDUCATION & ORONO EARLY LEARNING *Spring & Summer 2020*

2020-21 Preschool & Practice Preschool Registration

Now is the time to get registered for Preschool and Practice Preschool! The Orono Schools Early Learning program has a 4-Star Parent Aware Rating and NAEYC Accreditation – the highest possible rating. Visit www.oronoeearlylearning.com for more information and register online at www.oronocommunityed.com.

Early Learning Summer Programs

The Orono Discovery Center will host several Early Learning camps and classes for kids through Orono Community Education this summer. Summer registration opened March 13. Register online at www.oronocommunityed.com.

Register early - classes fill quickly!

Orono Community Education Summer Brochure!

The 2020 summer brochure is full of classes and programs for everyone, from birth to senior citizens! We are offering over 300 classes, camps and programs to look forward to this summer. View an electronic version of the summer brochure and register online at www.oronocommunityed.com.

Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.

- Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick.
- Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff.(e.g., increased handwashing, cancellation of events or activities)
 - Get children into a handwashing habit.
- Teach them to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.



Blood Donations Needed!

An important message from the American Red Cross

As the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to impact our communities, we need your help ensuring we have a sufficient blood supply to support hospital patients in Minnesota and across the country.

We have seen a staggering number of scheduled Red Cross blood drives cancelled as more workplaces, college campuses and other venues send people home and encourage social distancing. In Minnesota alone, about 117 blood drives have cancelled, representing approximately 3,800 fewer blood donations. We are expecting cancellations to continue to increase, which is causing heightened concern for blood collection organizations and hospitals. Disruptions to blood donations can lead to shortages and cause delays in essential medical care.

- Donating blood is a safe process and people should not be concerned about giving or receiving blood during this challenging time.
- More healthy donors are needed to give now to prevent a blood shortage.
- Keep scheduled blood drives, which will allow donors the opportunity to give blood.

As an emergency preparedness organization, the Red Cross has also taken additional steps to ensure the safety of staff and donors at each Red Cross blood drive.

- The Red Cross only collects blood from individuals who are healthy and feeling well at the time of donation – and who meet other eligibility requirements, available at [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org).
- We are now pre-screening all individuals by checking their temperature before they enter any Red Cross blood drive or donation center, including our own staff and volunteers.
- At each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees follow thorough safety protocols including wearing gloves, routinely wiping down donor-touched areas, using sterile collection sets for every donation, and preparing the arm for donation with an aseptic scrub.
- Additional spacing has been implemented within each blood drive set up to incorporate social distancing measures between donation beds and stations within the blood drive.

The average blood drives are only 20-30 people and are not large gatherings. These mitigation measures will help to keep blood recipients, staff and donors safe.

The Red Cross is also working to ensure we can continue to carry out other aspects of our lifesaving mission, including providing critical disaster relief services. We are working with public health officials to ensure the safety of local communities and our workforce, while still providing the help and hope they need should disaster strike.

We're asking the American people to give blood during this challenging time!

Those who are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give blood or platelets, are urged to make an appointment to donate as soon as possible by using the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#), visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

**CITY OF
INDEPENDENCE**

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City Officials

Mayor

Marvin Johnson

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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

Assistant City Administrator

Beth Horner

Administrative Assistant

Trish Gronstal



Consult the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/> for detailed information on this rapidly evolving situation. The CDC will provide updated information and guidance as it becomes available. There is detailed information on best practices for protecting yourself and when to seek help for symptoms. We need to work together to stop the spread.



WeCAN is committed to doing our part to help our neighbors during the current COVID-19 crisis. WeCAN is providing emergency food bags and personal care needs as long as supplies last via curbside pick-up. Can you help? Financial donations can be used to purchase from food banks and other low-cost sources. Donate [online](#) – or call 952-472-0742 or email officemanager@wecanmn.org for more information. Thanks so much for your support of these emergency programs!