



SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

MAYOR JOHNSON'S LETTER

Spring has been long! What appeared to maybe be an early summer ended up being a long spring. I remember many years when all the grain and corn fields were planted by May 1st. Farmers who had cattle usually wait till Mother's Day before putting cattle in the pastures to graze. Every year is different!

Since our last newsletter, the Lake Minnetonka Cable Commission asked me to record a "State of the City" address. That address is available to view anytime by going to the LMCC website. <https://youtu.be/JjhH9sLqRWw>



Marvin D. Johnson
Mayor

[JjhH9sLqRWw](https://youtu.be/JjhH9sLqRWw)

Our City Board of Appeals meeting on April 2nd was attended by very few residents. The Hennepin County Assessors that work with our City have done a good job in establishing valuations according to sales and trends. The council recommended only a couple of changes. Ag Landowners and Lake Shore homeowners had the biggest increases in values. We continue to see Minneapolis Commercial Property Values decrease consequently increasing the share of Hennepin County Tax burden with the rest of the county.

April 30th was a bittersweet day for the City when Sergeant Rick Denneson retired from our West Hennepin Public Safety Department after having served us well since October 17, 1988. We wish him "the best" in his retirement. Rick has been selected by the City of Maple Plain to be its next Fire Department Chief, so he will continue to work in public safety in our Cities.

May 27th was Memorial Day. On that morning the Paul Stinson Post American Legion Firing Squad presented arms at the three cemeteries in Independence and at Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery, Loretto. They concluded by hosting a program at Lewis Cemetery, just south of City Hall at 10:30 a. m. This year the keynote speaker was our County Sheriff Witt. Please join the community annually for future ceremonies as we honor deceased veterans.

The 2023 audit report is being finalized for the City. We hope to meet

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MEETINGS

City Council

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

Planning Commission

3rd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

* None in June

Workshops are

posted as scheduled.

www.ci.independence.mn.us

with the auditors within the month.

Our gravel roads will soon be treated for dust control. We are hoping that they will all be covered at the same time this year. Some of our gravel roads will have culvert replacements and tiling projects done on them.

We have been informed by Representative Robbins that a Minnesota Highway Bill presently includes two million dollars to have an 'environmental study' done on Highway 55 between Hamel and County Road 19, north of Loretto. That is good news because it brings us a step closer to making Highway 55 two lanes each direction going east from Loretto.

As we enter Summer, think about hosting a Night to Unite picnic in your neighborhood. It is a good way to meet your neighbors! (See page 10 for more details.)

All departments of the City are beginning to prepare their budget for the year 2025. It seems early, but the Council has to make an initial decision, a maximum amount, by mid-September. The final levy is approved in December. It can be the same or lowered from the initial September figure.

This Fall is a big election year from the President of the United States all the way down to our City Council and School Boards. Make it a point to know which positions are up for election.

Congratulations to all our High School and College graduates! You have some exciting days ahead and some major decisions to make.

To All – Have a wonderful Summer!

Marvin D. Johnson, Your Mayor

City Clean-Up Day Success!

Rain or shine, our Saturday, May 4th Spring Clean-Up Day was again successful for our residents.

EMERGE took mattresses to disassemble and recycle, Deb and Tom Fortner of 'Free Bikes 4 Kids' took many gently used bikes to repair and give to kids in need, Joni & Friends International took a wheelchair, and some residents found some new treasures, too. We appreciated your patience during the rain and hope residents will volunteer to help next year. Thank you to JP Story and Don Johnson for helping City employees to make this possible!



Pioneer Park Improvements—Park Master Plan Concept C-2

The City recently completed an update to the Pioneer Community Park Master Plan following an iterative design and refinement process. The updated plan utilized the original 2007 Vision and Master Plan as the base for making updates and revisions. The City worked with many of the local youth sports organizations to prepare an updated plan that more closely aligns with local needs. In addition, the City integrated new components into the plan such as pickle ball courts and outdoor ice hockey rink. Following completion of the master plan, the City worked to prepare an estimate of costs associated with the development of the park. The City looked at an overall development cost and then also individual amenity costs that were further broken down. The overall cost of the park improvements is approximately \$7,000,000.

The City would like to leverage available park funds to begin construction of park improvements noting that the overall cost is not obtainable at this time. The City has targeted the Hennepin County Youth Sport Facility Grant program as one potential funding mechanism that could leverage a portion the City's funds to realize an initial (Phase I) development project. The City believes that it could obtain matching funding to construct the multi-purpose fields, pickle ball courts and associated site grading and parking lots. The City has also discussed potential partnerships with local sports organizations that are interested in providing funding to support the park development (Orono Youth Baseball, Orono Youth Softball and Orono Westonka Soccer Club). Stay tuned for more information relating to the community park development.





TIME FOR A CHANGE?



Unlock Your Potential

Transition to a rewarding career in law enforcement with no prior experience.

- Paid Schooling
- Salary while you learn
- Full Benefits
- The only requirement is a 2 or 4 yr degree

Learn More

+763-479-0500

westhennepin@westhennepin.com

www.westhennepin.com/employment

1918 County Road 90 Maple Plain, MN 55359

If you have ever wanted to work as a police officer in Minnesota, the time is now! You will be paid to attend school, medical benefits provided, and your college tuition is covered for you. Now is the time to change careers and join our team of dedicated police officers at West Hennepin Public Safety Department.

The Intensive Comprehensive Peace Officer Education and Training (ICPOET) Program is an opportunity to become a West Hennepin Public Safety Police Officer and join our team of dedicated police officers. West Hennepin Public Safety Department is a police department serving the small communities of Maple Plain and Independence. Our communities and elected officials have strong support for their police officers and the honorable work police officers perform every day. Even though our agency is a smaller police department in Hennepin County, we have many opportunities for success and career development such as:

Assignments as an Investigator

SWAT Operators on the Lake Minnetonka SWAT Team

Operators on the West Command Mobile Field Force

Agents on the West Metro Drug Task Force

Use of Force Instructor

Crime Prevention Specialist

The Intensive Comprehensive Peace Officer Education and Training (ICPOET) Program requires no prior law enforcement experience. The program is designed to recruit candidates looking to transition into the field of law enforcement. Now is the time to change careers and become a licensed police officer for West Hennepin Public Safety Department. You earn a salary while going to school, are provided medical benefits, and school costs are paid for you to join our team.

- ◆ Earn pay and benefits while attending an approved full-time professional peace officer education program in Alexandria, MN or Brooklyn Park, MN.
- ◆ Must have a two - or four-year [regionally accredited](#) college degree in any field of study. No prior law enforcement training or experience is required.
- ◆ Must be a U.S. Citizen or eligible to work in the United States under federal requirements.
- ◆ No felony convictions and meet all minimum selection standards per [State of Minnesota Administrative Rules](#).
- ◆ Upon completion of the education program

(approximately 22 weeks), trainees must attain [POST licensure](#) before promoting to a full time sworn police officer position for West Hennepin Public Safety Department.

How the Program Works

Successful candidate will be hired as a probationary police trainee. This is a full-time position with a starting wage of \$25.00 per hour and includes eligibility for medical insurance. As a police trainee, individuals will be paid to attend 40 hours a week of college coursework and training for approximately 22 weeks and then take the licensing exam for police officers. Schooling will be completed at Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park, MN or Alexandria Technical and Community College in Alexandria, MN. In addition to earning a wage, all course fees and equipment are provided and paid for by West Hennepin Public Safety Department. Upon graduation and successful completion of the licensing exam, trainees will be promoted to probationary sworn police officers and begin their career in law enforcement just like any other new officer.

Selection Process

After interviews, background checks, and various pre-employment evaluations, successful selected candidates will be given a job offer and will enroll in the ICPOET Program.

Anticipated Timeline:

June 2024: Interviews

July 2024: Background investigations for top candidates

August 2024: Physical, drug screen, and psychological exams

September/October 2024: Candidates hired (end of September) and classes begin at Alexandria Tech (10/1/24) or Hennepin Tech (10/14/24)

Submit your application at WHPS' Employment:
<https://westhennepin.com/employment>

Questions regarding this position can be directed to Chief Gary Kroells at gkroells@westhennepin.com or by calling (763) 479-0500.

Applications will be accepted until **3:00 p.m. on Friday, June 14, 2024.**

Sergeant Rick Denneson's Retirement



Photography by Maddy Stensven Photography

On April 30th, 2024, Sergeant Rick Denneson bid farewell to his role at West Hennepin Public Safety after decades of selfless commitment. We gathered to honor Sergeant Rick Denneson's 35 years of service and dedication to the cities of Independence and Maple Plain. Friends, colleagues, and community members came together to express their gratitude and share stories of Sergeant Denneson's impact on both cities. His tireless efforts, unwavering devotion, and genuine care for the community have left an incredible mark. From patrolling the

streets to ensuring the safety of our neighborhoods, Sergeant Denneson has been a beacon of our mission statement and core values.

To Sergeant Denneson, your legacy will continue to inspire us. Your dedication, compassion, and commitment to public safety has made our communities safer and stronger. As you embark on this new chapter, we extend our heartfelt thanks and wish you a joyful retirement.

To the public, thank you for joining us in celebrating Sergeant Denneson's well-deserved retirement. Your presence and support made the party truly special.

Join the Maple Plain Fire Department First Responder Family!

For over 90 years, Maple Plain Fire Department has been serving the residents of Maple Plain, Independence, and Medina. The department continues to grow alongside the needs of the community so that we may respond when tragedy strikes.

Becoming a firefighter with MPFD is a great way to serve your community, learn valuable skills, and become part of a first responder family.

If you're interested in joining our team or would like additional information, please visit www.mapleplainfire.com.



West Hennepin Public Safety's 2024 Citizens Police Academy Graduation



Front Row: Maggie Grosshuesch, Susan Fink, Ellen Finn, Ann Reese, Jennifer Wuollet, Stacy Collins, Kaiden Collins; Back Row: Jim Grosshuesch, Stephanie Franzen, Nikole Strand, Margo Block, Bobbi Johnson, Mary Johnson, Greg Litfin, Kam Ardakani, Sgt. Rick Denneson

The 2024 Citizens Police Academy concluded their last night of classes with a graduation ceremony at the West Hennepin Public Safety Department on April 4th.

This class concluded the 8-week course that was attended by 15 participants. With the graduation of this year's class, this program has had over 220 participants since its inception in 1999!

The participants learned about traffic enforcement, use of force, narcotics and investigations, court proceedings and prosecution, and several other topics.

The Citizens Police Academy is held annually in February and runs every Thursday night for 8 weeks. If you would like more information, contact our office at 763-479-0500 or email Sgt. Jon Howes at jhowes@westhennepin.com. The West Hennepin Public Safety Department would like to thank the 2024 graduating class for their participation in the program.

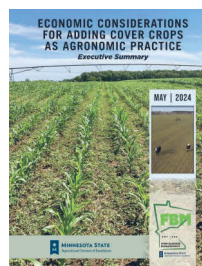
Next year's class will be held on Thursday evenings 6:00 pm-9:00 pm February 13 through April 3rd, 2025. You can register for the class by contacting West Hennepin Public Safety Department at (763) 479-0500.

Soil Health Discussion

On April 11th, Hennepin County hosted an open house for farmers about cover crops at Independence City Hall. About 20 farmers attended along with county and Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff. Keith Olander the executive director of Ag Centric and Central Lakes College Ag and Energy Center, presented on the economic data his organization has collected on farm profitability. The study is called “Farm Business Management (FBM) data.” FBM data summarizes numbers collected from 2,317 farmers across the state across 83 of 87 counties. Farmers that enrolled in the program underwent review of all farm costs – seed, fertilizer, fuel, insurance, labor, etc. and analyzed their results and profitability to see where they landed compared to the rest of farmers that participated.



In a similar but smaller-scale study with 129 farms, FBM data compared financials from farms that grew cover crops versus farms that did not grow cover crops. Data is divided into southern and northern MN regions. The return on investment for cover crops varied depending on what cash crop was grown and generally revealed that cover crops result in slight to moderate decreases in profitability due to the need for up-front management changes (e.g., equipment, fertilizer, labor). To view the study, you can go to this link to search for the **2023 Cover Crop Report** data: <https://www.agcentric.org/farm-business-management/annual-fbm-reports/>



It should be noted that soil takes a long time to build, and the data only shows the short-term impacts of adopting cover crops as a soil health practice. More information would be needed to understand long term financial impacts of cover crops.

In short, adding cover crops is a highly personal choice for each farmer and there are many economic considerations to take into account. However, Hennepin County has a cost share program available for farmers that are new to trying out cover crops to help offset some of the costs to start up. Payments are on a per-acre basis and are as follows:

- Single species, one-year contract: \$35 per acre
- Multiple species, one-year contract: \$50 per acre
- Single species, three-year contract: \$45 per acre
- Multiple species, three-year contract: \$60 per acre

If you would like to learn more about the soil health cost share available from Hennepin County, please reach out to Roz Davis, Conservation Specialist, at 952-262-0397 or rozalyn.davis@hennepin.us.

Reduce wasted food.
Take the Stop Food Waste Challenge.

Coming this August

stopfoodwaste.ecochallenge.org

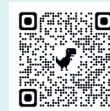
stop
food waste
challenge

CREATE MEALS, NOT WASTE:

We love food, which leaves us wondering: why do we let so much of it go to waste? About 40% of food in the U.S. is wasted somewhere along the supply chain, and much of that food waste happens at home.

Most food we throw in the trash is leftovers or unspoiled food that could have been eaten, according to a recent Minneapolis waste study. All that wasted food adds up to wasted money.

The average family of four spends \$2,500+ on food that goes to waste every year.



Taking the [Stop Food Waste Challenge](#) might help your family learn tips and strategies for buying food you'll eat and eating the food you buy thus reducing landfill.

ABOUT THE STOP FOOD WASTE CHALLENGE

The Stop Food Waste Challenge is a month-long effort starting August 1 to help you notice when you are wasting food, commit to actions that will have the greatest impact in your household, connect you with helpful resources, and provide support and motivation along the way. Businesses, organizations, and community groups can also join the challenge as [Stop Food Waste Challenge partners](#).

The challenge runs during the month of August 2024. [Sign up opens on July 1. Sign up to be notified when registration opens.](#)

COMPOSTING YOURSELF OR USING ORGANICS DROP-OFF AT CITY HALL

Since about one-third of trash is organic materials which could be composted, consider your options to reduce trash and put it to better use:

Compost:

- ◆ Yard waste, including grass clippings, plant trimmings and leaves
- ◆ Kitchen waste, including fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, and egg shells
- ◆ Small amounts of sawdust wood chips, wood ash, and small sticks
- ◆ Non-recyclable papers: paper towels, napkins, egg cartons

For information on setting up your own backyard composting, view video and get more details from County experts, or to find other organics recycling drop-off locations:



City Organics Drop-Off:

To begin using the City Hall drop-off location, stop by to register and pick up your organics bags.

When dropping them off, call 763-479-0527, pull up to the gate, and we will open it for you. Your bag of organics must be carefully placed in the green Organics-Only bin so that it doesn't break.



988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

There is hope.



If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text **988** or chat 988lifeline.org

"SEPTIC SAFE"



"If you would not put it in a compost pile, do not put it down your toilet,"

Shawn Bode, Public Works Director explains.



It might not seem newsworthy, but with new residents moving to a more rural area, some need to be educated that putting shirts, undies, socks, toys, and even "flushable" wipes down the drain creates clogs that are not disintegrating and break the City's lift stations causing residents extra costs in repairs. Those residents could be assessed accordingly.

The myth of flushable wipes

How long does it take for wipes to break down and not damage the sewer system and lift stations?

- A: 182 minutes
B: 192 hours / 8 days
C: NEVER!



Watch Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's one minute video:

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/dont-flush-your-disposable-wipes>

Did you know that flushing them is like flushing a handkerchief or other item made of cloth? It really is! Flushed wipes cause expensive problems for Public Works staff, who have to clean them out of screens and pumps to remove wipes-based clogs. They also can get caught in your pipes which is expensive for you to fix.

Will you do your part and discuss with neighbors if you're on City Sewer?

If you must use wipes, only put wipes in the trash!

Never put anything other than toilet paper down your toilets.

Is Your Dog Licensed Yet?
The City ordinance requires it.



Apply Today for Your \$20 Lifetime Dog License at City Hall or Complete the Application & Pay Online!

Then come pick-up your dog's tag!





West Hennepin Public Safety Department
NIGHT TO UNITE!
TUESDAY, AUGUST 6TH, 2024
6:00 PM TO 9:00 PM



Join neighbors across Maple Plain and Independence on Tuesday, August 6th, 2024, for the 15th Annual Night to Unite in Minnesota. Sponsored by the Minnesota Crime Prevention Association, AAA of Minnesota/Iowa, and local law enforcement agencies, Night to Unite will celebrate and strengthen neighborhood and community partnerships.



Night to Unite is designed to (1) get to know one another in your neighborhood, (2) build Neighborhood involvement by bringing police and communities together, and (3) bring awareness to crime prevention and local law enforcement efforts! **If you want to set up a party in your neighborhood, please register by Tuesday, July 30th, 2024 with West Hennepin Public Safety Department:**
www.westhennepin.com/night-to-unite

Chief Kroells said, "Our community safety is the top priority for our department and one of the best crime prevention tools is neighbors looking out for each other. If people know their neighbors, they can better identify suspicious activity and call 911 to report it. Night to Unite events give opportunities for neighborhoods and communities to join, enjoy a summer evening, and get to know who belongs in their neighborhoods."

West Hennepin Public Safety would like to encourage neighborhoods to get together between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on August 6th, 2024, to fight crime and take back our neighborhoods. The best crime prevention tool for our communities is "the eyes and the ears of citizens looking out for each other," says Director Gary Kroells.

If you or your neighbors host a neighborhood Night to Unite event, West Hennepin Police Department and the local fire department will visit your event and share crime fighting tips, recent fraud trends, and fire safety tips for your group. Now more than ever we are asking residents to take the initiative and organize your neighborhood event. Get involved and take this opportunity to meet your neighbors!

For more information pertaining to Night to Unite or how to get involved, contact West Hennepin Public Safety Department at (763) 479-0500 and speak with Night to Unite Coordinator Officer Ben Raskin or email him at braskin@westhennepin.com. You can also visit the West Hennepin Public Safety Department website at www.westhennepin.com or visit our Facebook page for more information on Night to Unite.

"Proudly Serving Maple Plain and Independence"



good works COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY
SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 9:30 A.M.

Interested in volunteering?
Let's make a difference together
Volunteer opportunities include:

Litter pickup | Weeding | Painting | Making sandwiches to help fight hunger

For more information and to register, visit catchourspirit.org
Free continental breakfast for volunteers hosted by First Presbyterian Church of Maple Plain





WeCAN
Western Communities Action Network, Inc.
Because together, WeCAN

Shoe Drive
Accepting all sizes of kids and adult footwear in good condition
– June 17- July 11th, 2024.

Ready-to-Learn School Supply Collection and Distribution
School supplies will be collected throughout the community in July and early August for distribution to children in need on Tuesday, August 20th at the WeCAN Office. Registration is required to receive school supplies.

July Food Shelf Challenge
Each July, WeCAN participates in the Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless Food Shelf Challenge. All financial donations collected during the month will be proportionally matched for the WeCAN food shelf program.



Orono Community Education
Summer 2024

Summer 2024 CAMPS & CLASSES
Over 300 camps & classes to choose from for all ages!
Science & Nature - Technology & Engineering
Art, Dance & Theater - Sports & Aquatics
Mind Motivators - Field Trips - Preschool
Adult Classes - and more!

REGISTER NOW FOR SUMMER!
oronocommunityed.com
952-449-8350

Take a look inside the brochure!




Orono Community Education
Orono Public Schools

Save the Date
West Suburban Fire Open House
September 14th 4-8 pm
At Station 2 - 92 Hamel Road, Hamel, MN 55340
Free will donation pork dinner.

Activities: Fire truck rides, bounce houses, face painting, spray house, CPR training, and fire prevention handouts.

Orono Rotary's
PARTY IN THE PARK
LIVE MUSIC BY
Red Dot Garage
June 1
Music • Food • Fun
5 pm • 11 pm
Veterans Memorial Park
Under the Water Tower

Now Hiring!

AmeriCorps
Promise Fellow position

2024 - 2025 School Year
September 1, 2024 - May 31, 2025
35 Hour or part time positions available
Age 18+ with a High School diploma or equivalent

Support Orono students in grades 6 - 12
Guide and assist students in school through relationship building, informal mentoring and homework assistance.

Gain hands-on experience

Earn an Education Award toward student loans and a living stipend.

Interested?
Contact Genna Torney at 952-449-8360 or genna.torney@orono.k12.mn.us

Orono Schools
Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

Orono Community Education
Orono Public Schools

Education Awards can be transferred by Promise Fellows who are 55 years of age or older to specified family.

Primary Election Day
August 13th, 2024
7am–8pm
Vote at City Hall



**CITY OF
INDEPENDENCE**

1920 County Road 90

Independence, MN 55359

Ph: 763-479-0527

Fax: 763-479-0528

ljohnson@ci.independence.mn.us

asimon@ci.independence.mn.us

HOURS:

Monday-Thursday: 8-4:30, Friday: 8-noon

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City Officials

Mayor

Marvin Johnson

City Council

Brad Spencer

Lynn Betts

Ray McCoy

Steve Grotting

Planning Commissioners

Robert Gardner, Chair

Anita Volkenant

Leith Dumas

Hal Tearse

Steve Thompson

Jon-Paul Story, Alternate

Timothy Usset, Alternate

City Staff

Administrator/City Planner

Mark Kaltsas

Public Works Supervisor

Shawn Bode

Building Official

Bruce Satek

Admin. Services Dir.

Amber Simon

Administrative Asst.

Linda Johnson

Carrie Solien



2024 ELECTIONS

PRIMARY Election: Tuesday, August 13th 7 am–8 pm

Pre-Register and Absentee vote at www.mnvotes.org



Absentee voting – June 28–August 12

Vote absentee either in-person at Independence City Hall or vote by mail.

City Hall Absentee Voting – Mondays–Thursdays, 8 am–4:30 pm and Fridays 8 am - noon.

Direct balloting – Beginning Friday, July 26, voters can place their ballot directly into the tabulator.

Extended hours – Saturday, August 10, (9 am–3 pm) and Monday, August 12 (8 am–5 pm)

August 13, 2024 Election Day - Voting

Hours 7am- 8 pm. Being in line at 8 pm allows you to vote.

Locally, the mayor and (2) council 4-yr term positions are open. Filing dates are July 30, 2024 through August 13, 2024 at 5pm. A \$2 filing fee is due at the time of filing; the withdrawal period ends 5pm, August 15, 2024.

As a new Independence resident or one who did not vote in the last election, you can pre-register to vote until Tues., July 23 at 5pm or online by 11:59pm!

If you are not yet 18 but will be 18 years old on Election Day, you may also pre-register to vote. Being preregistered speeds up Election Day by having your name on the roster of registered voters when you go to vote. Pre-register on-line at <https://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/VoterRegistration/VoterRegistrationMain.aspx> or stop in at City Hall to pre-register.

If you have questions or want to be an Election Judge for a full day or half day, talk to Amber.

