



## WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

### MAYOR JOHNSON'S LETTER

Fall is here and the scene changes. We admire the beauty of the colored leaves, cooler temperatures, final harvest of crops, hunting trips, and fall sporting events. It also means getting ready for Winter like boat storage, raking, and disposal of leaves, planting flower bulbs, getting all the summer toys collected etc. and maybe making plans for a Christmas with relatives or a Winter trip.

Most older adults remember when we had a major snowstorm two years in a row at Halloween.

Personally, I prefer when we get snow just before Christmas and then after mid-January get more sunshine and warmer days. Unfortunately, that is not our typical Winter.

This Fall the League of Minnesota Cities is sponsoring a "Mayor for a Day" essay contest for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The topic is "What would you do if you were Mayor for a Day." The winner would receive \$100.00 and would be recognized in the "Minnesota Cities Magazine." Entries must be submitted before December 12<sup>th</sup>. I hope if you have a 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grader in your home, you will encourage them to enter this contest.

<https://www.lmc.org/about/for-the-media/news-releases/news-release/>

The City Council approved a 2024 preliminary tax levy of \$3,840,544.00 at our September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. This is approximately \$210,000.00 above last year or about 5 ½% increase. Inflation over the past couple of years was about 10%. Again, we reduced our City tax rate from last year by 2% because valuations continued to increase. **The Truth in Taxation public hearing on the 2024 budget will be on December 5<sup>th</sup> at which time we will make our final levy determination.** The final levy can be no more than our initial levy but can be LESS. All are welcome to attend.

Unfortunately, even though our city rate is reduced, other entities have increased such as the core downtown Minneapolis structure values having decreased causing a shift in taxes. Since Westonka School District #277 election ballot questions passed, Independence residents living in that



Marvin D. Johnson  
Mayor

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### MEETINGS

#### City Council

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

\*Truth in Taxation at 6:00 p.m.

#### Planning Commission

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

**Workshops** are  
posted as scheduled.

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

school district will see a change in their final tax statement. [westonka.k12.mn.us/election2023](https://westonka.k12.mn.us/election2023)

Prior to our October 3<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting, our Council and Staff had a ribbon cutting on two new paved roads in the City. One at the Koch's Crossing development at County Road 90 and south of County Road 11 and the other at Bridgevine development off Perkinsville Road on Lake Independence's south shore.

Townline Road, south of U. S. Highway 12 and the railroad that intersects with County Road 6, has been rebuilt. This was a collaborative effort between the cities of Medina, Orono, and Independence.

Also, County Road 83 between County Road 6 and U. S. Highway 12 has been rebuilt by the County.

**Santa will be at City Hall on Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.** Please stop in from 3:30-4:15pm for cookies, cocoa, and picture or to give a food shelf donation or Toys for Tots gift. Enjoy the rest of Fall and stay safe!

*Marvin D. Johnson, Your Mayor*

## 2024 Preliminary Budget Information

**Truth in Taxation Meeting - Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 6 pm at the City Hall**

If you have questions about your property's valuation, begin by contacting

Hennepin County Assessor- Joby Rausch | #612-348-3046 | [joby.rausch@hennepin.us](mailto:joby.rausch@hennepin.us).

Every year cities in Minnesota are required to adopt a preliminary tax levy and budget by September 30<sup>th</sup> for the following year. Cities then have until December 31<sup>st</sup> to adopt a final tax levy and budget. The City of Independence City Council adopted the 2024 **Preliminary** General Fund Tax Levy and Budget at the September 19<sup>th</sup> Regular City Council Meeting. The City Council will consider adoption of the final budget at the December 5<sup>th</sup> Regular City Council meeting. There are several key elements of the preliminary budget that should be noted:

- City Council has adopted a preliminary budget that again reduces the applicable municipal tax rate from 33% to 31%. This reduction is the result of the Council's continued work to operate an efficient and value driven local government. This ~2% reduction in the City's tax rate will equate to a corresponding reduction in City taxes on residential and commercial properties year over year (assuming a flat valuation). Since 2015, Independence has not increased its applicable local tax rate and for the last two years has lowered the City's tax rate while continuing to provide a high level of services to its residents. The City's reduction in tax rate is significant given the pressures of inflation, higher insurance premiums, emer-

gency services cost increases, and other cost increases to general operating expenses.

- The City of Independence has worked with West Hennepin Public Safety to increase police department funding to ensure officer retention, competitive compensation and continued investment in capital needs.
- The City continues to increase its cash reserve balance to be at or slightly above auditor recommended levels.
- The City continues to maintain its debt service level while issuing debt to pay for key road, infrastructure and facility improvements.
- The City has established and continues to maintain long-range capital plans for equipment, roads, sewer and municipal facilities. This planning allows the City to budget and manage all capital needs.
- The City continues to fund capital equipment purchases with cash rather than through issuing additional debt. Long range capital planning allows the City to save cash for making capital purchases when necessary.
- The City has received an unmodified opinion for the state of the City's financials from its annual audit. This is the highest opinion that can be obtained.

# Being an Informed Resident

## Reminders from Public Works and Your Building Official



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.

Be kind to our winter crew during the long, snowy winters as they serve as their families' "snow-removal guy," too!

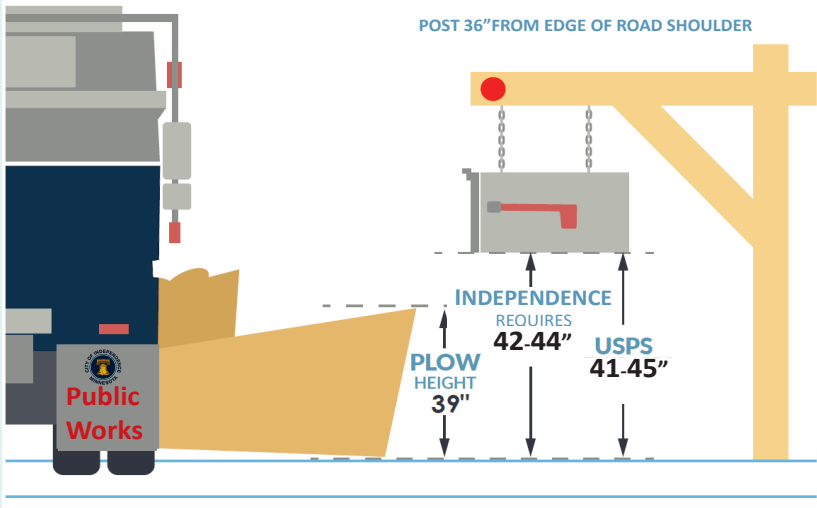
**AFTER A 3-INCH SNOW FALL**

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.

**SEASONAL PARKING RESTRICTIONS**

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.

[https://library.municode.com/mn/independence/ordinances/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeid=930901](https://library.municode.com/mn/independence/ordinances/code_of_ordinances?nodeid=930901)SEARCH ALL CITY ORDINANCES



**YOUR MAILBOX PLACEMENT IS IMPORTANT!** ENSURE YOUR MAILBOX POSTS ARE STURDY AND SET SOLIDLY IN THE GROUND. THE CITY IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR MAILBOXES DAMAGED BY SNOW BEING PUSHED OFF ROADS WHEN THEY ARE NOT PLACED WITHIN THE CITY'S MAILBOX REGULATIONS.

*Thank you for your cooperation!*

### WWBD - What Would Bruce Do?

Many residents have had the benefit of asking the City's Building Official a question or two over the years of living in Independence. He's truly one of the "good guys" in the world, and we honor him each Veteran's Day! Bruce reminds residents to be sure to clear away snow and ice from your gas meter and your vents this winter.

**Welcome, New Residents!** Please complete our [New Resident Form](#) or contact City Hall for help.

### Hennepin County Homestead Benefits & Application Deadline is December 31

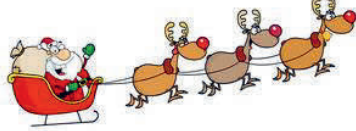
Before you get started, see the list of needed information at <https://Hennepin.us/homestead/>

Residential property that is occupied year-round by the owner or the owner's qualifying relative may qualify for homestead.

Having your property classified as Homestead may lower your property taxes and you could qualify for additional property tax refund from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS



THE WEST HENNEPIN PUBLIC SAFETY RESERVES ARE SPONSORING THE 43<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL "VIEW SANTA" PROGRAM. IT WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. THE RESERVES WILL ALSO COLLECT NONPERISHABLE FOOD DONATIONS FOR LOCAL FOOD SHELVES.

CHECK THE TIMES CAREFULLY AS THEY HAVE CHANGED, ESPECIALLY AT THE END OF THE ROUTE.

VISIT WITH SANTA, TAKE PHOTOS, AND ENJOY REFRESHMENTS AT THE INDEPENDENCE CITY HALL ATRIUM (1920 COUNTY ROAD 90) FROM 3:30 TO 4:15 P.M. OR AT VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK (1664 BUDD AVENUE, MAPLE PLAIN) FROM 4:45 TO 5:30 P.M., OR SEE SANTA ON HIS ROUTE THROUGH TOWN.

## SANTA'S ROUTE AND SCHEDULE ARE:

3:30-4:15 p.m. INDEPENDENCE CITY HALL	5:35 p.m. INDEPENDENCE ST. HOWARD AVE.	6:05 p.m. GATEWAY BLVD. HOWARD AVE. (via strip mall parking lot)	6:20 p.m. MAIN ST. EAST BUDD AVE. BRYANTWOOD AVE. JOYCE ST. BRYANT ST.	6:50 p.m. MAIN ST. WEST HALGREN RD. HAMILTON HILLS
4:25 p.m. PAGENKOPF RD. 4:30 at BECKER RD. 4:35 at INDEPENDENCE RD. 4:40 at NORTH BUDD AVE.	PARKVIEW RD. PERKINS LANE INDEPENDENCE ST. BAKER PARK RD.	HWY 12 FRONTAGE RD. BOUNDARY AVE.	6:40 p.m. PRAIRIELAND AVE. JOYCE ST. WYMAN AVE. PIONEER AVE.	7:30 p.m. HALGREN RD. PARKVIEW RD. RAINBOW AVE. MAIN ST. WEST PARKVIEW RD. THREE OAKS AVE.
4:45-5:30 p.m. VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK	5:50 p.m. HAVEN HOMES	6:15 P.M. OAK ST. HOWARD AVE.		

THESE TIMES ARE APPROXIMATE.



VIEW SANTA

## WINTER EVENTS FOR ALL AGES!

### DECEMBER

SAT 2<sup>nd</sup> - 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual "View Santa" Fundraiser for Local Food Shelves. [westhennepin.com/view-santa](https://westhennepin.com/view-santa) Come enjoy cookies, cocoa, and pictures with Santa inside at the Independence City Hall Atrium from 3:30-4:15pm, then travel to Veterans Memorial Park (1664 Budd Ave., Maple Plain) from 4:45 - 5:30 pm, or see Santa on his route through town! Thank you for joining West Hennepin Reserve Officers' endeavors to help get non-perishable food donations to the local food shelves again this year!

### SUN 3<sup>rd</sup> Snowmobile Safety Class

8am – 2pm Register at <https://mpsnomads.com/snowmobile-safety-course>



SNOWMOBILE SAFETY CLASS

### WED 13<sup>th</sup> 3-5pm 25<sup>th</sup> year of CP Holiday Train.

Stops in Loretto at 4:15pm Support our local food shelves financially and with food donations while enjoying cookies, cocoa & cider, kiddie train, music, and photo ops with roaming characters. See other Twin Cities Holiday Train stops: <https://www.cpr.ca/en/holiday-train/united-states>

### Adopt a Senior for Christmas at Haven Homes

Will you help ensure each resident receives a Christmas gift this holiday?  
Gifts must be turned in by Wednesday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> so please email Jordan, Therapeutic Activity Director/ Volunteer Coordinator, today at [Jordan.Schilling@cassialife.org](mailto:Jordan.Schilling@cassialife.org)!



It's not too late to bring joy to a senior adult! Please contact [Jordan.Schilling@cassialife.org](mailto:Jordan.Schilling@cassialife.org) to receive a Haven Homes resident's Christmas "Wish List" and bring gifts by Wednesday, Dec.6<sup>th</sup>.

See Maple Plain Library running list of Events here:



MP LIBRARY EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

TH 15<sup>th</sup> 6-9pm Citizens Police Academy kicks off ending with graduation on April 4<sup>th</sup>. See page 6 for full details and register now for 2024's 8-session course. You won't regret it!



There is hope.



Drop Site:  
**Independence City Hall**  
**Nov. 27 – Dec. 13**  
Mon-Thurs 8:00 – 4:30  
Friday 8:00 - Noon

Unwrapped, New Toys for Children of All Ages are Accepted!

**TOYS FOR TOTS**



## Tommy's Trees is a holiday giving collaboration between WeCan and the BeLikeTommy Project

What is a Tommy Tree? A Tommy Tree is a 4 foot artificial tree with colored lights. When purchased, we will deliver and install your Tommy Tree in your yard for all to see and enjoy this holiday season (homeowners provide power).

Here is the best part! When you purchase a Tommy Tree for \$40, the BeLikeTommy Project, in partnership with a handful of local families, will be making a \$50 donation to WeCan to support a family in need this holiday season.

Your Tommy Tree is a proud display of Tommy's bright light and joy, and the kindness you have offered to others in need this holiday season.



Scan here  
to order  
your tree!



Winter fire prevention is crucial during the colder months. Safeguarding your home and loved ones is key to a safe Holiday Season.

To maintain a safe environment, it's essential to follow a few key guidelines. First, exercise caution with heating sources, such as space heaters. Ensure they are placed at least three feet away from flammable materials and equipped with safety features like automatic shut-off.



Regularly maintain and inspect your heating system, which includes furnaces and fireplaces, to minimize fire risks. When using a fireplace, employ a sturdy screen to contain sparks and have your chimney professionally cleaned to remove creosote buildup.

Be cautious in the kitchen, stay vigilant while cooking and keep flammable items and children away from the stove.

Consider using flameless LED candles as a safer alternative to traditional candles. Never leave a lit candle unattended.



Have fire extinguishers available in your kitchen, garage and on each floor, and make sure everyone in your household knows how to use them.



Ensure your smoke alarms are functioning correctly, with monthly tests and annual battery replacements. Carbon monoxide alarms, strategically placed near bedrooms and on each level of your home, offer an added layer of safety.

Finally, develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family, complete with two exit routes from each room.

These comprehensive measures will help you create a safer and more secure environment during the winter season.

Happy Holidays from West Suburban Fire District!  
[WESTSUBURBANFIRE.ORG](http://WESTSUBURBANFIRE.ORG)

Supporting Local Food Shelves

**CP Holiday Train**  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
Loretto's Train Stop!

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

3-5pm Wed., Dec. 13, 2023  
Train Arrives at 4:15pm

Winter Spring  
Brochure  
Coming  
Soon!

## Winter & Spring

2024  
**CLASSES & PROGRAMS**  
Over 200 opportunities offered January - May!  
STEM - Art, Dance & Theater - Sports & Aquatics  
Special Interest & Academics - ECFE & Preschool  
Adult Enrichment & Recreation - and more!

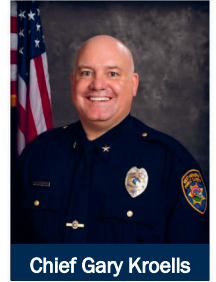
Pick up a copy  
at the Community Ed office in Long Lake  
or the Discovery Center in Maple Plain.

**REGISTRATION OPENS DECEMBER 14**  
[www.oronocommunityed.com](http://www.oronocommunityed.com)  
952-449-8350





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



### West Hennepin Public Safety announces the 2024 Citizens Police Academy

West Hennepin Public Safety's Citizens Police Academy will start February 15, 2024 and will end with graduation on April 4, 2024. The Academy runs for eight weeks, one day a week, Thursday nights, from 6:00 to 9:00 pm.

**WHAT IS IT?** The Citizens Police Academy is a **FREE** 24-hour block of instruction designed to give citizens knowledge about how your police department operates, our policies, procedures, programs, and challenges. In addition, you will be introduced to government officials and staff and learn about the responsibilities of their respective office. Participants in each session will commit to meeting 3 hours, one night a week for 8 weeks.



The Citizens Police Academy was designed to create a better understanding of law enforcement through education. The Citizens Police Academy participants are presented with realistic hands-on information, which will help each participant better understand the police department functions. The classroom and hands-on information covers: **DWI and Traffic Enforcement, home security, personal security, use of force, including deadly force which includes a demonstration of the Taser Gun and FATS training (firearms simulation), Hennepin County Dispatch Center, Court procedures including testifying before a Judge** and many other areas related to law enforcement. An informational video explaining citizens police academy can be found at <https://westhennepin.com/citizens-police-academy>.



This is a great opportunity to meet your police officers, fellow citizens, and other members of government to learn why we do what we do. At graduation you will receive a certificate and become a member of the Citizens Academy Network Alumni.

**WHY SHOULD I ATTEND?** We believe an informed citizenry will enhance public safety, make better decisions about how to protect themselves and their business, understand law enforcement strategies to problem-solving, and provide leadership to other areas of government.



This class is a must for those people who live or work in or near the West Hennepin Public Safety Department's jurisdiction. The West Hennepin Public Safety Department is currently establishing a list of participants who would be interested in the next class. The recommended attendee age is 18 years and older. Please contact the West Hennepin Public Safety Department at (763) 479-0500 between the hours 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., if you are interested in attending the Citizens Police Academy or email us at

[westhennepin@westhennepin.com](mailto:westhennepin@westhennepin.com).



2024

# Independence

## RECYCLING COLLECTION CALENDAR



Sustainability in Action

■ Holiday - Service is delayed one day
 ■ North of Highway 12 but west of County Road 90
 ■ South of Highway 12/north of Highway 12 and east of County Road 90

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY						
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MARCH						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL						
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28	29	30				

MAY						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE						
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30						

JULY						
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28	29	30	31			

AUGUST						
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SEPTEMBER						
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

OCTOBER						
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## We Recycle! (Do Not Bag Your Recyclables)



### Plastics Bottles & Jugs

Water, soda and juice bottles, dish soap bottles, shampoo bottles, soap and lotion bottles, and detergent jugs (empty and clean/rinse, and dry; caps on)



### Plastics Cups & Containers

Yogurt cups, pudding and fruit cups, clear disposable cups (no straws), margarine/whipped cream tubs, cottage cheese and similar containers, clear produce, deli and take-out containers (empty and rinse; lids on)



### Boxes (Flattened)

Cardboard, cereal, cracker, pasta and tissue boxes, shoe, gift and electronic boxes, toothpaste and other toiletry boxes



### Cartons

Milk cartons, juice cartons, juice boxes, soup, broth and wine cartons (empty and clean/rinse, and dry; caps on)



### Paper

Mail, office and school papers, magazines and catalogs, newspapers and inserts, phone books (clean; staples OK)



### Metal

Food and beverage cans (empty and rinse; labels OK)



### Glass

Brown, green and clear bottles and jars (empty and rinse; no lids)

Twin Cities Customer Service: 763.972.3335 | [RepublicServices.com](https://www.RepublicServices.com)

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## CITY OF INDEPENDENCE

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[ljohnson@ci.independence.mn.us](mailto:ljohnson@ci.independence.mn.us)

[asimon@ci.independence.mn.us](mailto:asimon@ci.independence.mn.us)

### 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 Inspector**

Bruce Satek

#### **Admin. Services Dir.**

Amber Simon

#### **Administrative Asst.**

Linda Johnson

Carrie Solien

### ***Tired of shoveling your driveway entrance a 2<sup>nd</sup> time after Public Works plows your street?***

If so, clear the area to the left of your driveway! **Note: It is against the law 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 do so.** Snow dumped on highways or street right-of-way can create a hazard not only for motorists but also for snowplows. Even our heavy snowplows have been ditched and damaged when hitting compacted and frozen snow, costing your tax dollars to repair! **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.** Scan QR code to see all right-of-way use violations of MN Statutes, Chapter 160.2715 which are misdemeanors.

