

Fridley City Council tosses garbage proposal back in city manager's lap

Staff crestfallen after being ordered to renegotiate better prices from haulers

by Bryan Olson — Special to the *Anoka County Record*

The Fridley City Council agreed at its December 8th meeting to continue the public hearing on the Organized Garbage issue at its next meeting, Dec. 22.

City staff held two dozen closed door meetings over the better part of this year with the five haulers that pick up trash at Fridley residences. The result was a proposed contract that was put on the table at the Dec. 8 council meeting.

City staff argued that garbage trucks are a major contributor to the wear and tear of city streets and limiting their travel would make the streets last longer. City staff also say they want to save homeowners money. During a slide presentation, staff also suggested that having refuse hauling under a government contract will aid in cleaning up city code violations that are occurring with trash collection. How they plan to do that is to force haulers to tattle to city hall when they see their customers breaking city codes.

State statutes allow a municipality to impose "organized trash collection" under two options: a single hauler is allowed to operate in the city and no others; or, a "consortium" of haulers that are currently operating in the city can be put in a room with city staff, pool together and negotiate as one. Prior to changes in the statutes made by the state legislature in 2013, there was ample opportunity and long time frames that allowed for public notification that trash hauling changes were being considered by the municipality.

In Dec. 2013, after 2 years of study, involving haulers, government, and volunteer citizens, the Environmental Quality and Energy Commission recommended that Council initiate the process for considering organized collection of residential solid waste.

A new statute (115A.94) allowed for a way to structure O.C. into districts using licensed haulers which protects their existing business.

Now, Residents may have five different refuse trucks, plus up to 5 different yard waste trucks and additional special bulky waste trucks, on their street in one day.

Fridley city staff slide presentation given at Dec. 8 council meeting

Changes to the laws now allow the municipality to bring garbage haulers to the bargaining table at any time it wishes, and once that happens, both the haulers and the government are legally required to bargain "in good faith." The negotiations can be done by city staff, and thus be kept out of the public eye since elected officials are not involved. The statute does not require a closed-door process but in Fridley's case, this is the approach that was chosen.

Fridley resident John Krack complained about this specifically when speaking to the council.

Krack thought it was odd not to entertain public input until a contract is ready for signature: "the cement is hardening and now you're asking for public input?" City attorney Darcy Erickson admitted the statute seems "backward."

City manager Wally Wysopal started the discussion with a slide presentation that described the city staff's case. Wysopal said the consortium contract would divide the city into five hauling zones, one for each hauler: Ace Solid Waste, Walter's, Republic, LePage and Sons and Waste Management.

Wysopal handed off portions of the presentation to other staff. The information was given with a pallid delivery, which didn't rally any enthusiasm from the audience. Difficulty with microphones and being able to hear well in the council chambers also contributed to the indifference.

Seven people however spoke strongly in favor of the city taking legal intervention in garbage collection. Some of the comments were very brief, "I'm in favor", or "this is a no-brainer." There were also seven speakers who appeared to be in the "against" column.

The highlight of the public comment period came with the words of resident Eric Larson, who stunned everyone in the room when he pulled his garbage bill from his pocket.

Larson announced that the rates in the proposed contract were nearly double what he is paying now. "Your plan is \$300 and I am paying \$162 a year." Larson is also paying approximately twenty additional dollars per year for a fuel surcharge on his bill. That made it \$182 a year versus \$300 a year with the city contract.

Mayor Scott Lund was visibly shocked to hear that Larson was getting yard waste service for \$36 a year, which is included in his \$182 total.

Others in the audience had similar examples to share. Many were getting rates that were far better than the proposed contract rates, or special services not addressed in the contract.

► Noise Impacts: most complaints about garbage industry noise, followed by road impacts, improper disposal

► Win: win on fuel consumption during collection activities. In cities with open collection systems fuel use is typically much higher than that of cities with organized systems

► Fewer vehicle miles traveled also result in less air pollutant emissions from heavy duty waste/recycling collection vehicles. Public concern has increased regarding human health impacts from emissions

A resident commented it was obvious that people can keep their costs down by doing their own negotiating with vendors. Some complained that garbage rates should be uniform across the board for all, while a few others mentioned the often-made objections to government

Open Meeting Law Violations Continue

County Board Violates Law at December Meeting

On January 7th, 2014, after Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah was elected county board chair, she gave an acceptance speech where she proclaimed her commitment to open government. It was the only point in her speech that was mentioned twice.

Within minutes though, she committed her first violation of Minnesota's Open Meeting Law for the year. It would not be her last. At the January meeting, she called for a vote on a packet of documents which was provided to fellow commissioners, but was not provided to the public in accordance with the law.

Minnesota's Open Meeting Law dates to the 1970's. One of several requirements of the law is that a County Board is required to provide the public the opportunity to review most documents that are before County Commissioners while they are discussing an issue, regardless of whether a vote is called or not. There are few exceptions to this law.

Minn. Stat. § 13D.01, subd. 6 states, "... at least one copy of any printed materials relating to the agenda items of the meeting prepared or distributed by or at the direction of the governing body or its employees and: (1) distributed at the meeting to all members of the governing body; (2) distributed before the meeting to all members; or (3) available in the meeting room to all members; shall be available in the meeting room for inspection by the public while the governing body considers their subject matter.

December 16, 2014 — Open Meeting Law Violation #1

At the County Board's Management Committee meeting of December 16, 2014, the Open Meeting Law was violated in a similar manner as occurred eleven months earlier. Even though the County Board's Management Committee is not made up of all seven commissioners, it is required to follow the open meeting law. The County Board's Management Committee is made up of four commissioners, Sivarajah, Braastad, Kordiak, and West, but at this December meeting, they were joined by commissioners Look and Schulte. In total, six of the seven commissioners were in attendance. Joining them was County Administrator Jerry Soma and County Attorney Tony Palumbo.

Committees are required to comply with the open meeting law as stated in Minn. Stat. § 13D.01, subd. 1(b)(3) and (c)(1), and Minn. Stat. § 13D.01, subd. 6. In addition, since the committee is made up of a quorum of commissioners, the exception to the law provided for in *Sovereign v. Dunn*, 498 N.W.2d 62 (Minn. App. 1993) does not apply.

The County Board violated the open meeting law at this meeting in several ways. First, a handout on the 2015 newspaper bids, presented by Associate County Administrator Dee Guthman, was distributed to commissioners but no copy was provided for public review. Second, commissioners were provided a packet prior to the start of the meeting on an agenda item concerning an appeal of a hearing officer decision. No copy of that packet was provided to the public either. Third, the agenda noted that other

Publisher's Column



John Kysylyczyn



FRIDLEY CITY COUNCIL SENDS BACK GARBAGE CONTRACT

continued from page 1

inserting itself into a free enterprise system to create a monopolistic one.

The organized collection contract would be enforced only upon single-family residences, duplexes and triplexes. The contract rates given at the meeting were as follows:

30 gallon cart: \$14.32; 60 gallon cart: \$17.45; and 90 gallon cart: \$19.13. Yard waste: \$80.00 per season. There would also be additional charges for garbage bags.

Fewer large trucks can help reduce potential for garbage trucks conflicts with autos, bicycles and pedestrians especially kids trying to get safely to school and the elderly.

Some residents and city councilor Ann Bolkcom were also concerned with the contract's length of seven years, suggesting perhaps three years. (Three years is the minimum length allowed by state law).

Although councilor Bob Barnette motioned to close the public hearing after slightly more than two hours of discussion, Bolkcom asked him if he would withdraw his motion. She then suggested continuing the hearing to a meeting in January, however city manager Wally Wysopal said he would prefer to keep the trash issue "moving along," which led to it being returned to the Dec. 22 council agenda. Also during that meeting, the council will approve its 2015 tax levy — expected to be \$11,734,607, a 1.94% increase compared to 2014.

In the meantime, it is anticipated that city staff will go into further negotiations with the haulers as to the contract's length and hauling rates, and then present a modified contract to the city council.

As the audience prepared to file out of the chambers, Mayor Lund told them that there may not be a vote taken on the issue Dec. 22 either, but that he felt the trash discussion "is a worthwhile venture."

(Previous *Anoka County Record* coverage of the Fridley garbage issue was in the Dec. 19, 2013 edition).

"Resilient Communities" Project

During the off-camera meeting often held before the televised council meeting, the Fridley City Council gave city manager Wally Wysopal the go-ahead to pursue a University of Minnesota program that is offered annually to municipalities, called "Resilient Communities".

The university chooses one city each year which will get the assistance of 150 to 200 students and ten faculty members to make policy analyses, do studies and make proposals with sustainability measures in mind.

Wysopal acknowledged to the council that this type of program "often receives 'push back' from the public" as has the environmental "Green Steps" program which many city governments have agreed to implement in recent years.

Wysopal's previous stint as a city manager was in North Saint Paul, which was a recent participant in the "Resilient Communities" program. That city's web site said, "the City is thrilled about this exciting opportunity to move forward a variety of projects, an effort that would otherwise take years of staff time."

18 projects were identified, including revitalizing downtown North Saint Paul, development of living/work housing, evaluating green energy alternatives, creating "living streets" (resoundingly opposed by residents once they found out about the city council's proposals to narrow streets), planning community gardens, public art plans and other means to foster civic engagement, and to brew economic development strategies.

Presenting most of the information to the Fridley council at the Dec. 8 meeting was Kay Qualley, the city's environmental planner. She reported that

Rosemount was another city that had recently used the U of M program. Studies were made of the city's Comprehensive Plan, recreational programming, community gathering spaces, turf management of the parks, LED lighting for city streets, etc.

Wysopal said the city's new part-time "marketing" staff, Raquel Strand, City Communications Specialist, can use the extra help from the college students. A few projects that "Resilient

Communities" could explore might be: how to retain volunteer firefighters; analyze business clusters; an EDA website; engaging new immigrants; parks usage; "how to combat negative information" about the city seen in blogs such as City-Data.com; school district boundary issues; watershed and conservation projects; "attract desired businesses"; road projects; air pollution, carbon; making "destinations" within the city, and the proposed rapid transit bus route.

City councilor Ann Bolkcom asked how much staff time is expected to be needed. Qualley said, "the university recommends seven hours per week." Wysopal said the cities' applications are due in mid-February and the university will choose one city to award their services to. He said if Fridley is chosen, the city is expected to contribute \$10,000 to \$50,000 to the program. Wysopal thought, "the timing of this seems right," to which staff was given the green light to apply for the assistance.

2015 Tax Levy to be approved by City Council Dec. 22

The Fridley City Council at its Aug. 25 meeting passed a preliminary maximum tax levy of \$11,734,607, an overall increase of 1.94%, for tax year 2015. The final figure will be approved at its Dec. 22 meeting. That number can be lowered at final approval, but by law it cannot be raised after the preliminary levy has been set.

The budget and proposed tax levy were presented again at the council's televised meeting of Dec. 8, where a public hearing was required. There were no comments from the public.

The general fund levy increase will be \$337,571 to bring the proposed 2015 levy total to \$10,391,563, representing a 3.36% increase. The levy increase for Springbrook Nature Center will be an additional \$6,582 bringing the 2015 total to \$345,882 (a 1.94% increase). The levy for 2014 was \$339,300.

The Capital Equipment Fund which had a levy amount of \$175,000 in 2014 will not be levied at all in 2015.

Bonded Indebtedness will have a slight increase of .44% from \$942,996 levied in 2014 to \$947,162 proposed to be levied in 2015.

Levy increases to taxpayers have occurred in all but one of the last ten years.

Total expenditures for the year 2015 have been preliminarily budgeted at \$40.4 million, of which \$15.178 million will be the 2015 general fund expenditure.

The 2015 budget provides for 142.4 full-time equivalent employees, a figure that does not include paid on-call firefighters, election judges, elected officials or the HRA Assistant Executive Director position, which is funded through the HRA levy.

The municipal liquor operations showed a \$1,574 profit in actual numbers for 2012, and a loss of \$12,086 in 2013. So far in 2014 a loss was being shown in budget figures in the Dec. 8 council meeting packet. Actual revenues in 2012 and 2013 were \$4,706,483 and \$4,386,363, respectively. Revenues for 2014 are expected to top \$5 million.

items had attachments but none were provided to the public as required by law.

The only document provided to the public during the entire meeting was a yellow double sided sheet with an agenda printed on both sides. This was placed in the back of the room for public review as required by law. All of the other documents that were in front of the commissioners, while they considered the subject matters before them, were nowhere to be found.

The commissioners considered seven items at this meeting and none of the supporting materials before them, with the exception of the meeting agenda, were provided to the public. The state has previously defined these actions as violations of the open meeting law.

December 16, 2014 — Open Meeting Law Violation #2

During the board's management committee meeting and the regular board meeting that followed, commissioners heard an appeal of a county hearing officer decision, and discussed and voted whether to affirm the decision. The hearing involved the hearing officer's decision to revoke a solid waste transfer station license. The license holder was represented by well-known and controversial free speech attorney Randall Tighe.

The public was simply given notice that a hearing officer decision would be before the board. The board did not inform the public as to who the hearing was about, what the subject was about, where in the community the issue was located, when the issue occurred, or why it was before the board.

The management committee agenda simply stated, "Presentation on county board action regarding hearing officer decision."

On the board's regular meeting agenda, it simply stated, "Consider affirming decision of hearing officer." Every item on both meeting agendas provided enough information to inform the public as to what was going to be discussed, with the single exception of this issue.

The purpose of the open meeting law is to provide the public information on the actions that are being taken by governments such as a County Board. A democracy requires citizens be given proper notice of the topics being discussed at a meeting in order for the public to provide input in some fashion. The Minnesota Supreme Court stated in *Prior Lake American v. Mader*, 642 N.W.2d 729 (Minn. 2002) that:

The Open Meeting Law serves several purposes:

- (1) "to prohibit actions being taken at a secret meeting where it is impossible for the interested public to become fully informed concerning [public bodies'] decisions or to detect improper influences";
- (2) "to assure the public's right to be informed"; and
- (3) "to afford the public an opportunity to present its views to the [public body]." *St. Cloud Newspapers, Inc. v. Dist. 742 Cmty. Schs.*, 332 N.W.2d 1, 4 (Minn. 1983)(citations omitted). *These purposes are deeply rooted in the fundamental proposition that a well-informed populace is essential to the vitality of our democratic form of government. (footnote omitted)*

Because the Open Meeting Law was enacted for the public benefit, we construe it in favor of public access. State by Archabal v. County of Hennepin, 505 N.W.2d 294, 297 (Minn. 1993); *see St. Cloud Newspapers*, 332 N.W.2d at 6 (stating that the Open Meeting Law "will be liberally construed in order to protect the public's right to full access to the decisionmaking process of public bodies").

The Board failed to inform the public of this hearing issue in the manner called for by the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Response

County board chair Rhonda Sivarajah was e-mailed and asked to comment on this issue. As of the date of this publication, she has not responded.



Anoka County Watchdog

Always on the lookout for governmental waste, fraud, and abuse in Anoka County

GOVERNMENT OVERREACH YOU WON'T BELIEVE

These days, it isn't hard to find sickening examples of our government reaching well beyond the limits imposed by the federal and state Constitutions. Government is on a runaway train to tyranny and the train is speeding up, not slowing down.

And while we are all familiar with the anti-liberty posture of the federal and state governments, tyranny is alive and well at the local level, too.

Even sleepy suburbs like Mounds View are capable of the kind of lawmaking that our Founding Fathers would roundly condemn.

Check out the latest revision to the city's ordinance regarding garbage hauling, which seems to be a favorite whipping boy for Big Government these days.

Trash hauling is a private business, where owners take all the typical risks that a business owner takes in the market place.

Yet, you would think that hauling is some sort of utility where government thinks it can do whatever it pleases in the name of environmental extremism.

For better or worse, a hauler must have a license from a city to haul waste in the city.

Cities like Mounds View are abusing the licensing process to impose radical and heavy-handed terms and conditions in order to simply engage in free-market commerce in a city.

Consider the text of the Mounds View ordinance:

Schedule of rates. When the application is submitted, the applicant shall file with the city administrator a schedule of maximum rates to be charged during the license period. Every licensee shall provide thirty (30) days' prior written notification to the city and the licensees' customers of any increase in rates to be implemented during the license period. **Failure to provide such notice shall void the rate increase.** Verified evidence that the licensee is charging more than the maximum rate on file with the city administrator shall be cause for license revocation.

Before you re-read that, consider the situation in Mounds View.

Trash is collected by private sector haulers who have no ties to government and are private, for-profit entities.

They collect trash pursuant to private, arms-length contracts with each citizen. Government has nothing to say about the transaction other than a mandate that everyone have trash service, in the name of public health.

So where in the world does the city get off in grabbing so much power from these private haulers in exchange for a license to do business in the city?

Imagine if this language was applied to other services?

"When the application is submitted, the applicant shall file with the city administrator a schedule of maximum rates to be charged during the license period."

Suppose that a dentist had to tell the city the maximum price the dentist would charge for a routine exam in the next two years?

First, why does government have any need to know of the price of a good or service provided via private contracts within normal commerce?

Second, how can a business know of its costs years into the future? For example, what if government in the near future slapped a huge tax on dental services that wasn't foreseen?

Since when do private actors have to divulge the

cost of the good or service they provide in order to obtain a license?

"Every licensee shall provide thirty (30) days' prior written notification to the city and the licensees' customers of any increase in rates to be implemented during the license period."

Wow. Since when does a private business have to inform government (in advance, no less) of a rate increase? And to every customer? Suppose dry cleaners had to suffer this mandate. What costs are imposed here that will be passed along to customers?

"Failure to provide such notice shall void the rate increase."

This one takes the cake and makes this law a candidate for Communist Law of the Year.

The Anoka County Watchdog would love to know where the city supposes that it has the power to set price controls on trash collection or any other private contract or otherwise void a price that both parties have agreed to pay.

Moreover, the state Constitution, in the Bill of Rights, specifically forbids laws that impair the obligation of contracts:

Sec. 11. Attainders, ex post facto laws and laws impairing contracts prohibited.

No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or any law impairing the obligation of contracts shall be passed, and no conviction shall work corruption of blood or forfeiture of estate.

Perhaps the Mounds View City Attorney ought to get acquainted with the Constitution.

"Verified evidence that the licensee is charging more than the maximum rate on file with the city administrator shall be cause for license revocation."

More significant overreach. License revocation means that a hauler will lose all business in the city, simply for charging more than what they told government they thought they would need to charge.

North Korea or America?

Whether you live in Mounds View or not, contact the mayor and council members and tell them they ought to be ashamed of themselves for passing such a heavy-handed and unconstitutional ordinance.

Talk about . . .

GANGSTER GOVERNMENT

Speaking of Gangster Government, would it surprise you to know that Mark Dayton has filled his administration with political hacks and cronies who occupy their positions because those folks helped Dayton politically?

Of course not.

In addition, would it surprise you to learn that Dayton's administration was showering taxpayer dollars on the non-profits of political cronies, who in turn were using the funds to underwrite lavish lifestyles instead of engage in the non-profit's mission?

Of course not.

So it shouldn't surprise you to learn that a Dayton political crony, now appointed to state government, has been funneling taxpayer money to a non-profit run by a Dayton crony, even though bureaucrats were raising alarm bells the entire time regarding the way the non-profit was using the money!

By now, you are surely aware of the Community Action of Minneapolis scandal, under which a Dayton crony's non-profit diverted taxpayer dollars

to personal expenses like cruises and trips to a day spa.

What taxpayers didn't know until recently was that Commerce Department employees were raising red flags for years regarding the program's spending habits.

What taxpayers also didn't know was that Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman, a Dayton political crony, was aware of the misspending and nonetheless did nothing to stop it, admitting that he did so for "political considerations."

So, here we have a Dayton crony dispensing taxpayer dollars to another Dayton crony.

Regulators raise red flags galore about the spending and the warnings are ignored in order to apparently fulfill some sort of political payoff.

What's so shocking is how brazen Commissioner Rothman was in admitting the political relationship.

We guess if Obama can engage in Gangster Government and Crony Capitalism at a breathtaking level, Dayton and friends can do it on a smaller scale, if only because doesn't have as much money to steal as the federal treasury possesses.

THE DRAZ MAN COMETH

Incoming House Speaker Kurt Daudt is a friend of the taxpayer.

As such, he has had the foresight and wisdom to hand the gavel in the House Property Tax and Local Government Finance Committee Rep. Steve "Draz" Drazkowski.

It is quite proper and fitting that a staunch and principled conservative like Draz.

Local government taxing and spending in Minnesota is a hot bed of unaccountability and profligate spending.

We know Draz will honor the taxpayer and put forth common sense ideas to put some guard rails on the big spenders down at the local level.

One of the first things his committee should take on is the bad public policy called local government aid (LGA).

LGA is massive transfer payment scheme whereby the state taxes money and then transfers it to cities and counties to spend.

Separating the taxing accountability function from the spending function is always a bad idea.

When a level of government can spend the money without having to tax for it, it encourages irresponsible spending.

The basic premise behind LGA is that property tax poor cities and counties need some money to plow the streets and respond to 911 calls.

Of course, LGA goes for way more than that, funding shrubbery at city hall and new dugouts at the local ball field.

Moreover, LGA insulates local government from making tough and needed decisions about consolidation and annexation.

If a city doesn't have the property tax base to deliver core services, the answer isn't a subsidy from Saint Paul.

The answer is to unincorporate and become a township.

Minnesota has 87 counties. If some counties can't

ANOKA COUNTY WATCHDOG *continued on page 4*

Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence:

Why Local Aids Are Never a Magic Bullet for Controlling Property Taxes

Levies are rising once again, and pressure to increase local aids to stem this tide is likely coming in 2015. State aids may be very important to local governments and community welfare, but they are not and never will be a cure for rising property tax levies.

The Department of Revenue recently reported that preliminary property taxes for 2015 are 4.2% higher than the payable 2014 levels. Local governments will establish their final levies at the end of December and they often adjust them slightly downward. Nevertheless, a 4% increase or more on a statewide basis is likely.

No one should be particularly surprised by this. The cost of government generally goes up over time. Population growth creates more demands on services. Infrastructure wears out. And government is certainly not immune from inflationary pressures. The good news is that the expanded accessibility and generosity of the state's income-tested refund program will protect even more taxpayers from feeling the full effects of any increases.

Any surprise taxpayers feel is likely rooted in the belief that 1) the local aid increases the state provided in 2013 should have had more "staying power"; and 2) even more local aid would have done a much better job of keeping levies in check this year. The problem is that the relationship between property taxes, aids, and local spending is a lot more complicated than this. To put it simply, a dollar of aid provided does not turn into a dollar of property tax not levied.

Here's an excellent example of this point, which demonstrates why taxpayers should remain eternally skeptical about what state aids and other property tax buydowns can actually accomplish regarding levy restraint. This particular example — which deals with city finances — comes from another buydown effort: Governor Ventura's "Big Plan." Among other things, the "Big Plan" wiped out the mandatory \$1.3 billion general education levy, which lowered property tax bills across the state. The table below shows city property tax levies and the amount cities received from two aid programs (LGA and HACA) for the years leading up to the adoption of the "Big Plan" and the year immediately afterward.

So what happened? The first thing to notice is the relationship between LGA and city levies in the years leading up to the Big Plan. Despite reasonable annual growth in LGA (ranging from 2.5% to 4.3% from 1996-2001), levy increases during these economic boom years still increased at a very healthy average annual clip of 5.8%. This alone should cast some doubt on the notion that local aids restrain levy growth and indirectly provide property tax relief. In the language of public finance scholars, it's strong circumstantial evidence of the "flypaper effect" — money sticks where it lands.

Even more telling are cities' levy decisions following the adoption of the Big Plan. As part of the reform, the state eliminated a big pool of local aid (HACA). The state partially offset the \$200 million cities lost in HACA aid with a \$157 million increase in LGA (explaining the 38.4% jump in 2002). The net result was that cities needed to backfill a net loss of \$43 million in state aid,

Payable Year	Certified City Levies	Annual Change	LGA	Annual Change	City HACA	Annual Change	Annual Change in Aid Plus Levy
1995	\$651,518,401	NA	\$336,108,543	NA	\$197,070,502	NA	NA
1996	\$685,536,122	5.2%	\$345,889,967	2.9%	\$189,897,211	(3.6%)	3.1%
1997	\$734,189,979	7.1%	\$356,832,779	3.2%	\$195,710,902	3.1%	5.4%
1998	\$769,189,979	4.8%	\$365,814,605	2.5%	\$195,829,633	0.1%	3.4%
1999	\$807,671,828	5.0%	\$378,061,347	3.3%	\$195,709,227	(0.1%)	3.8%
2000	\$851,162,554	5.4%	\$391,429,593	3.5%	\$199,911,348	2.1%	4.4%
2001	\$912,030,602	7.2%	\$408,086,711	4.3%	\$199,739,369	(0.1%)	5.4%
2002	\$1,070,975,531	17.4%	\$564,990,952	38.4%	\$0	(100.0%)	7.6%

Source: MN Department of Revenue

which undoubtedly influenced city levy decisions for 2002.

Was the big 17.4 % increase in city levies in 2002 justified by the aid cuts alone? Nope. As the right-most column in the table shows, the change in levy-plus-aid between 2001 and 2002 — a measure of the change in city revenue base — was 7.6%. That's 78% higher than the average of the six previous years.

Was inflation running amok requiring bigger levies to keep up? Hardly. Cities' levy-plus-aid growth during this period far exceeded inflation (measured by either the Consumer Price Index or the specialized government inflation measure called the IPD). From 1995-2001 cumulative levy-plus-aid grew 39% faster than the IPD and 75% faster than the CPI.

So what explains this big jump in city levies? Evidence strongly suggests that — even after several years of strong levy growth in a modest inflation environment — cities simply took advantage of the new "spare capacity" on business and homeowner property tax bills created by the elimination of the general education levy to support higher spending.

The moral of the tale is this: state aids are very important to local governments and community health, but they are not and never will be a magic bullet for restraining levies. It may put a temporary dent in a longstanding trend but local governments still spend that money. The result: higher levels of spending and higher government cost structures for which the property tax will always remain the "go to" source of support in the future. And once government programs and cost structures are in place, they can be extremely difficult to unwind.

What options are available for controlling levy growth? There are two. The first is what many other states have resorted to: impose some form of permanent property tax limitation. These clumsy, heavy-handed efforts undercut the basic idea of local control, incentivize highly "creative" financing of government programs and services that damages accountability and transparency, and are often so riddled with exemptions they can be more ornamental than functional.

The alternative is quaint and old fashioned — but reflects the basic responsibilities of a self-governing society: citizen vigilance, participation, and engagement in the levy setting process. This starts at the ground floor with understanding why your own property tax bill looks like it does and knowing why it is changing. With respect to controlling levy growth, this alternative may lack the political drama of efforts to pump millions more into property tax aids every legislative session, but over the long run it will be a lot more effective. — *Editor's note: the website for the Minnesota Center of Fiscal Excellence can be found at www.fiscalexcellence.org. The non-partisan tax research organization was formerly known as the Minnesota Taxpayers Association.*

ANOKA COUNTY WATCHDOG *continued from page 3*

provide services, they should merge with other counties. There is nothing sacrosanct about the number 87. It could just as easily be 77. Or 67.

The same goes for school districts. We don't district with a couple hundred students. That's inefficient.

It is high time for Draz to lead the charge and ask these cities and counties why they loll around and rely on LGA, which is really welfare for government, instead of doing something more concrete and permanent like merging or unincorporating.

And the same goes for Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Some readers may not realize that the two richest cities in the state also take LGA welfare.

If they can't run their cities on the ample property tax base they enjoy, that ought to be too bad for them. Get a new city council, not another LGA appropriation.

Go get em', Draz!

The Anoka County Watchdog is a place where concerned taxpayers can find fact-supported information and other resources about governmental waste and abuse in Anoka County. My intent is to provide you, the taxpayer, with the information you need to hold your local politicians accountable.

Visit my website and sign up for free weekly e-mail updates at www.AnokaCountyWatchdog.com or contact me personally at harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

Sincerely,

Harold E. Hamilton, owner.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

ANOKA COUNTY APPROVES 2015 LEVIES

Editor's note: below is a table showing the 2015 levies and 2015 salaries that are set by the County Board.

Some previous figures are included for comparison purposes.

County Certified Tax Levy

2012	\$119,833,198
2013	\$118,392,892
2014	\$118,359,397
2015	\$119,408,022

HRA Tax Levy

2013	\$1,348,315
2014	\$1,357,442
2015	\$1,336,624

Regional Rail Authority Tax Levy

2012	\$2,247,751
2013	\$2,022,976
2014	\$2,332,510
2015	\$2,831,910

Salaries

County Commissioners

2008	\$58,770
2009	\$59,945
2013	\$59,945
2014	\$61,144
2015	\$62,367

County Attorney

2008	\$148,871
2009	\$154,825
2013	\$141,000
2014	\$143,820
2015	\$155,000

County Sheriff

2008	\$128,885
2009	\$134,040
2013	\$132,355
2014	\$137,355
2015	\$140,102

ANOKA COUNTY SHERIFF CRIME REPORT

ANDOVER

Burglaries

Dec. 3 — 26xx Bunker Lake Blvd NW; attempted break in; damage to the front door

Thefts & Damage to Property

Nov. 28 — 140xx Heather St NW; unsecure garage; wallet, purse

Nov. 29 — 154xx Eagle St NW; damage to mailbox

Nov. 30 — 2xx Constance Blvd NW; fish house stolen from the driveway

Nov. 30 — 14xx Ward Lake Dr NW; damage to mailbox

Dec. 2 — 134xx Narcissus St NW — license plate stolen off a vehicle

Dec. 9 — 177xx Ward Lake Dr NW; truck stolen; keys were in it

Arrests

Dec. 2 — 133xx Killdeer St NW; 5th Degree Domestic Assault, Damage to Property; deputies responded to a sister/brother domestic. The male had left prior to the deputies' arrival. A pick up and hold was put out for the male.

Dec. 3 — 133xx Killdeer St NW; PC Pick up Domestic Assault; deputies responded to the location in an attempt to locate a male wanted for domestic assault. The male was at the location and was arrested without incident.

COLUMBUS

Thefts & Damage to Property

Dec. 6 — 84xx Broadway Ave NE; mail stolen from the mailbox

Arrests

Dec. 10 — Lake Dr NE/Hornsby St NE; Warrants, Violation of a DANCO Order, DAR; a deputy stopped a vehicle for an equipment violation. The driver had two confirmed felony warrants, was violating a domestic abuse no contact order and was driving without a valid driver's license. The male was arrested.

EAST BETHEL

Thefts & Damage to Property

Dec. 6 — 183xx Hwy 65 NE; tires stolen

Arrests/Incidents

Nov. 28 — 18xx 209 Ave NE; 5th Degree Domestic Assault; deputies responded to a girlfriend/boyfriend domestic. The male was arrested.

Nov. 29 — 226xx East Bethel Blvd NE; House Fire; deputies responded to a garage/house fire at the location. East Bethel Fire Department extinguished the fire. No one was injured.

Nov. 29 — 181xx Hwy 65; 5th Degree Possession of a Controlled Substance; deputies responded to the location to retrieve a vehicle that was involved in a domestic. During the search of the vehicle narcotics were located. The female was arrested.

Dec. 3 — 243xx Hwy 65 NE; Violation of a No Contact Order; deputies responded to a report of a no contact order violation. It was determined that the order was violated. The male was arrested.

HAM LAKE

Thefts & Damage to Property

Nov. 29 — 17xx 141 Ln NE; damage to mailbox

Nov. 30 — 26xx 159 Ave NE; catalytic converter cut off a vehicle

Nov. 30 — 143xx London St NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 1 — 173xx Van Buren St NE; license plate stolen off a vehicle

Dec. 3 — 159xx Austin St NE; vacant home under construction; tools

Dec. 6 — 17xx 148 Ln NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 6 — 140xx Taconite St NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 6 — 4xx Andover Blvd NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 7 — 30xx 135 Ave NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 8 — 142xx Coral Sea St NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 9 — 20xx South Ham Lake Dr NE; unsecure vehicle; hand gun

Dec. 9 — 18xx 149 Ave NE; damage to mailbox

Dec. 9 — 22xx 149 Ave NE; damage to mailbox

Arrests/Incidents

Dec. 3 — Xylite St NE/Constance Blvd NE; deputies responded to a vehicle chase that started in Blaine and ended in Ham Lake. The male and female occupants were taken to the hospital. The male will be charged with fleeing.

Dec. 5 — 14xx Lombardy Dr NE; 3rd Degree Assault; deputies responded to a report of a male assaulted at the location. The male was transported to the hospital and unsure who hurt him. The ACSO Criminal Investigation Division was contacted and will continue the investigation.

Dec. 5 — Hwy 65 NE/153 Ave NE; 5th Degree Possession of a Controlled Substance; a deputy stopped a driver for having a cracked windshield. The driver had a confirmed warrant for his arrest. During the search of the male narcotics

were located. The female passenger also had narcotics in her purse. Both the male and female were arrested.

Dec. 6 — Lexington Ave NE/Bunker Lake Blvd NE; 3rd Degree DWI Refusal; deputies responded to a single vehicle property damage crash at the location. The driver appeared intoxicated field sobriety tests were conducted and failed. The female was arrested.

Dec. 7 — Bunker Lake Blvd NE/Radisson Rd NE; 5th Degree Domestic Assault; deputies responded to a girlfriend/boyfriend domestic. The male was arrested.

Dec. 7 — Hwy 65 NE/Constance Blvd NE; 4th Degree DWI; a deputy stopped a driver for poor driving conduct. The driver appeared intoxicated. Field sobriety tests were conducted and failed. The male was arrested. (.14)

Burglaries

Dec. 2 — 154xx Fillmore St NE; unsecure detached garage; car parts

Dec. 8 — 27xx Constance Blvd NE; new construction home; tools

Dec. 9 — 47xx 177 Ln NE; new construction home; tools

LINWOOD TOWNSHIP

Arrests

Dec. 11 — 69xx 225 Ln NE; Violation of a DANCO Order; deputies responded to a report of a domestic abuse no contact order violation. It was determined that the order had been violated. The male was arrested.

NOWTHEN

Arrests/Incidents

Nov. 28 — 224xx St Francis Blvd NW — 5th Degree Assault; deputies responded to a client/employee assault. The male client was arrested.

Dec. 4 — 224xx St Francis Blvd NW; 5th Degree Assault; deputies responded to a client/employee assault. The male client was arrested.

Burglaries

Dec. 4 — 94xx Viking Blvd NW — unsecure fish house; fish spear, heater

Dec. 5 — 55xx Viking Blvd NW; front door kicked in; tools, snowmobile

OAK GROVE

Thefts & Damage to Property

Dec. 1 — 199xx Nightingale St NW; bobcat door stolen

Dec. 4 — 219xx Woodbine St NW; trailer stolen from the driveway

Dec. 5 — 30xx 203 Ln NW; several strand of Christmas lights cut

Burglaries

Dec. 1 — 181xx Eidelweiss St NW; forced entry through basement window; cash, collector coins

Arrests

Dec. 11 — 222xx Zion Parkway NW; Domestic Assault; deputies responded to a domestic assault between two males. One of the males was arrested.

Investigator Insight: You may have seen in the news that other cities are experiencing problems with packages being stolen off of front porches. We are happy to say that we haven't taken any reports yet this season!

Next week will be the largest UPS and Fed Ex delivery week prior to Christmas — so if you are expecting packages, plan to send them to a home where a person is present or ship them to your place of employment. If you see suspicious activity — such as a person following a delivery truck or removing packages from a front porch — please call 911 and report it immediately.

Investigator Insight: A woman looking to make a few extra dollars this holiday season made contact with a company she believed was a legitimate "secret shopper" company. The female was speaking with a company representative via email and he explained that he would be sending her a check and she needed to deposit the check and then return the value of the check to him in the form of Greendot money orders. The female received the check and deposited it into her bank and retded the money to the company. Later she learned from her bank that the check was bad. The female lost \$1998.01.

The officer that took the report used the instruction sheet the female was given by the "company" and found that the company's internet site was in a foreign language and the phone number for the company came back to a male named "Allen Cross". With minimal research, many references to Mr. Cross being involved in a variety of scams were found. Be careful about who you get in to business with. Make sure to check them and their company out prior to any exchange of money. Even a simple "google" search can save you a lot of headache.



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OCTOBER 1, 2013 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

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PUBLICATION DESCRIPTION

The Anoka County Record is a bi-weekly free publication of government news from Anoka County, Minnesota. It covers the county board, twenty cities, nine school districts, one township, one conservation district, and surrounding areas. It also covers actions of the Minnesota Legislature that may affect the Anoka County area. Also included in each issue is a listing of government and quasi-government meetings being held in the county. The Anoka County Record is available by paid subscription via first-class U.S. Mail, and complete editions are posted on the website, www.AnokaCountyRecord.com.

AVERAGE FREQUENCY: BI-WEEKLY CIRCULATION: OCTOBER 1, 2013 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

QUALIFIED CIRCULATION	Non-Paid	Paid	Total
Individual Subscription	312	-	312
Association/Group/Directory Lists	-	-	-
Rotated	-	-	-
Bulk Distribution	114	-	114
Single Copy Sales	-	-	-
TOTAL QUALIFIED CIRCULATION	426	-	426
TOTAL NON-QUALIFIED CIRCULATION			4
TOTAL PRINTED			430

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Chaotic meetings lead agency to post videos

By Tom Steward | Watchdog.org | Minnesota Bureau

MINNETONKA, Minn. — Meetings of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District won't give "Parks and Recreation" a run in the ratings, but a few viewers would be nice.

"Just so we don't finish last," said MCWD interim administrator Jeff Spartz. "The other watershed district (Rice Creek) that has videotapes of its meetings available typically gets under a dozen hits a month."

The obscure agency's meetings premiere on YouTube in December.

"Our Council came to the unanimous conclusion that televising MCWD board meetings would be an enormous benefit to our residents, City Council and city staff, not to mention a significant benefit to all the other communities in the Watershed," Deephaven Mayor Paul Skrede said in a letter to the agency.

Nine cities asked it to start televising their proceedings after MCWD board meetings took a dramatic turn earlier this year.

"In this day and age, we feel government agencies, like the MCWD that have a significant impact on residential and economic activities, should take every opportunity to be as transparent in their operations as practically possible," wrote Independence Mayor Marvin Johnson.

Minnesota's 45 watershed districts serve as special-purpose, local units of government with taxing authority to deal with water related issues. Headquartered in suburban Minnetonka, MCWD was named 2013 Watershed District of the Year by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. A state audit found MCWD to be a "highly functioning, high achieving, and proactive organization" in spending nearly \$13 million of local taxpayer funding.

But "highly embarrassing" may be more apt for this year's report. The top administrator's surprise firing, a walkout and boycott by some board members, a shouting match between a board member and taxpayer and public document requests all led to hiring a third-party facilitator to get MCWD back on track.

A resolution of "no confidence in the current board to conduct the business of the district based on the principles of good governance and fiduciary responsibility to the citizens living within the district" came from the Citizens Advisory Committee.

"I keep telling the staff this is something you're going to tell your grandchildren about. This is not a normal way of life for an organization," said Spartz, a veteran government manager. "In my 47 years, this is the first time I've encountered something like this."

The decision to televise board meetings came at the request of City Councils and residents in the name of increased transparency.

"We just feel some people have asked for it, and that's enough reason to go ahead and do it," said Bill Bushnell, chair of MCWD's Citizens Advisory Committee. "Let's be transparent, let's be open. Let's make those tapes available."

The transition should be seamless; a camera is already mounted in the ceiling of the agency's recently remodeled board room.

"I would imagine it would be fairly low in the beginning. Who knows, maybe word will get out and there will be viewing parties, watershed district viewing parties," said Telly Mamayek, MCWD communications director.

The only other watershed district to televise its meetings typically draws a handful of views online. The most recent November board meeting has logged one view to date.

"I myself haven't had much feedback on it, except from time to time folks seem to have knowledge that would seem to indicate they heard something there or read our minutes," said Phil Belfiori, Rice Creek Watershed District administrator.

The MCWD meeting videos will be posted on the agency's YouTube channel, alongside other listings on macro invertebrate sampling, zebra mussels and storm water. The biggest blockbuster so far? "Installing a Permeable Paver Driveway," with 48,800 views over three years.

Ramsey City Council Future Topics

(subject to change)

City Council "Work Session" – Jan. 13, 2015 – 5:30 p.m.

City Council – Jan. 13, 2015 - 7:00 p.m.

- Swearing in of Councilmember At Large Kristine Williams and Councilmember Ward 3 Melody Shryock – performed by City Attorney Joe Langel
- 2015-2020 Capital Improvements Program
- Introduce Massage Therapy Ordinance
- Cost Share Agreements for Improvement Project #12-22; Riverdale Drive Reconstruction/Extension – Armstrong Boulevard to Traprock Street
- Consider Approval of Joint Powers Agreement for Extending Sewer and Water to City of Anoka
- Consider Payment of Building Permit Charges for Single-Family Home; Case of Homes for Our Troops
- Consider Site Plan Approval of Fire Station No. 2 Replacement
- Introduce Discussion to Develop Work Plan and Outline for 2040 comprehensive Plan Update
- Consider Work Plan for Highway 10 — South Small Area Plan

City Council – Jan. 26, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.

- Swearing in of Jeff Katers as Police Chief
- Swearing in of Brad Bluml as Police Captain
- Swearing in or Rich Webb as Police Sergeant

January/February 2015

Work Session – 5-Year Staffing Plan

CC – Presentation by Executive Director of Youth First

No date assigned

(CCWS = work session/CC = regular meeting/PW = Public Works)

- CCWS/Commercial Signage Standards
- CCWS/Home Occupation Ordinance
- CCWS/Rental Licensing
- CCWS/Trail Policy
- CCWS/Update from CBRE
- CCWS/Facility Rental Policy
- CCWS/Public Facilities Naming Policy
- PW/Consider Policy Change regarding Sidewalk Plowing in Town Home Developments
- CCWS/Transient Merchant Permits
- CCWS/Helicopter Spraying
- CCWS/Topsoil Study Findings and EPB Recommendations
- CCWS/Policy for City-owned Land Sales
- PW/Armstrong Interchange Construction Staging Update
- CCWS/Draft Housing Assistance Policy
- CCWS/Policy on Community Sign Tenant Panels

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS CALENDAR

HAM LAKE

Ham Lake City Hall
15544 Central Ave NE
Ham Lake, MN 55304
Ph: 763-434-9555
www.ci.ham-lake.mn.us
Hours: M-Th 7 AM - 4:30 PM
Fri: 7 AM-12 NOON

Mon. Dec. 22
Planning Comm., 6 pm

Mon. Jan. 5
City Council, 6 pm

Mon. Jan. 12
Planning Comm, 6 pm

Tues. Jan. 20
City Council, 6 pm

OAK GROVE

Oak Grove City Hall
19900 Nightingale St. NW
Oak Grove, MN 55011
Ph: 763-404-7000
www.ci.oak-grove.mn.us

Mon. Jan. 12
City Council, 7 pm

Wed. Jan. 21
Park Comm., 6:30 pm

Thur. Jan. 22
Planning Comm., 7 pm

ANOKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1318 McKay Dr NE #300
Ham Lake, MN 55304
Ph.: (763) 434-2030
anokaswcd.org

Mon. Jan. 20
Bd of Supervisors, 5 pm

QCTV Cable Commission

763-427-1411

Ramsey, Andover, Champlin, Anoka
Thurs. Dec. 18
Cable Comm., 11 am,
Anoka City Hall

RAMSEY

Ramsey Municipal Center
7550 Sunwood Dr. NW
Ramsey, MN 55303
Ph: 763-427-1410
www.ci.ramsey.mn.us

Mon. Jan. 5
EPB — Rum River
Rm, 6:30 pm

Thurs. Jan. 8
Planning Comm.
Public Open House

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1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted:

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2. Principal Place of Business:

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3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address:

Stephanie Boet,

3962 88th Ave NE, Circle Pines, MN 55014

4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

FILED: October 22, 2014, # 78960820002, /s/ Stephanie Boet, Owner

(Published Dec. 18, 2014 & Jan. 2, 2015 Anoka County Record)

regarding new fire station and old municipal center property, 5:30 pm; Planning Comm. meeting at 7 pm
Parks Comm. — 6:30 pm location to be announced

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