CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS – The City Council meeting of April 29, 2020 included authorization to prepay the General Obligation Hospital Refunding Bond, Series 2010A; award of bids for the 2020 Seal Coating, Crack Sealing and Asphalt Purchase projects; adoption of an updated position description for Library Supervisor; approval for execution of a renewal lease for Kid’s Corner at the Community Center for the years 2020-2024; and expansion of the COVID-19 Micro Loan Program to add birthing centers and medical offices as business categories eligible for the loan program.

Mayor Ziemer also proclaimed April, 2020 as “Arbor Month”.

The next regular City Council meeting will be Monday, May 11th beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will only be held electronically as authorized under Minnesota Statutes 13.021. For log-in information, please visit the City’s website. The log-in will be at the bottom of each meeting agenda page which will be available under the “meetings and minutes” section of the homepage the Friday before the Council meeting.

MAKES ME WONDER (BY CITY ADMINISTRATOR TODD PRAFKE) – What’s in a buzz?

So here we are at about week six or sevenish in the COVID 19 mess. I hope we have flattened the curve enough to make a difference in lives. I know that the effort, discipline, and hardship caused by working to flatten the curve has got to be worth it.

Councilmembers have done just a great job taking to the new format of “virtual” meetings and I bet it’s been easier for your usual St. Peter Herald Editor/reporter too, but like so many things in life, this model of meeting will not stay in place forever because State Statute doesn’t allow for that. Once the state-wide emergency is called off these types of virtual meetings will stop, yet I bet there will be a push to change the rules about how and when these types of virtual meetings work and when they can be used.

I do think a few more options will be okay but I’ve got to tell you, there is something about being together in person, being face to face and able to read body language and see more facial expressions when you look others in the eye that makes our decision making process better. Well maybe it’s not better, but I do believe that face to face makes things more clearly understood by all involved.

But for now, if you have never attended a virtual Council meeting, or even a “real” Council meeting, now is a great time to do so from the comfort of your own home, so give it a try. The information you need will be on the bottom of each City Council agenda.

Will you take a “virtual” look see? It makes me wonder…..

DO YOU USE THE COUNTY RECYCLING SITES? – Nicollet County has provided recycling collection sites at the City’s yard waste drop off site on North Swift Street and also at Nicollet County’s Public Works site on Sunrise Drive. Unfortunately some folks have taken advantage of this great service and what they are doing is illegal.

The recycling sites accept cardboard, glass, plastic….normal recyclable materials. However, some people have begun to use the sites as dumping sites for everything from tires, to appliances, to furniture.
If you have used the site as a dump in the past or were thinking of doing so in the future, be advised that both the County and the City will prosecute those who dump things illegally at either site. There are lots of legal means to get rid of things you no longer want so don’t take the risk of being prosecuted. Contact Tri-County Solid Waste office by phone at (507-381-9196) or by email at https://www.co.nicollet.mn.us/180/Tri-County-Solid-Waste for information on how to safely and legally dispose of unwanted materials.

If you’ve been keeping furniture and/or appliances waiting for the City’s curbside collection program, we are still planning on having one, but it will be later this year than in the past as we wait for the ability to do it safely. Watch City utility bills for that information.

Finally, City Hall receives a lot of calls each spring asking when people can put junk out on their curb and we come and pick it up. **THE CITY DOES NOT DO THAT!** Other area cities have junk collections, but in Saint Peter that is not a service we offer. If you have junk to get rid of and there are no organized collections of that material, please call one of the many licensed refuse haulers operating in Saint Peter and arrange for a pickup, but note you will have to pay the hauler directly for that service.

**CENSUS UPDATE** – Have you completed your Census questionnaire yet? Here’s the latest update from Jim Accurso, a Minnesota Partnership Specialist for the Chicago Region and the U.S. Census Bureau.

“The U.S. Census Bureau has begun to send reminder notice postcards yesterday to an estimated 69 million households that have not yet responded to the 2020 Census. About 53.4% of households across the country have already responded since invitations began arriving in mailboxes on March 12. Those households that have not yet responded to the census will receive an in person visit by a census taker to collect their information later this summer.

According to the Census Bureau’s online response map tracking the nation’s participation in the census, almost 79 million households have already responded online, by phone or by mail.

Leading all States with 64% is our own great state of Minnesota! Also, some of our counties with 250,000 or more population are up there as well including: Washington County with 73.6%, Anoka County, with 72.9% and Dakota County with 71.8%

The Census Bureau strongly encourages the public to respond online at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov). Households can respond online in English or 12 other languages or by phone. Households can also respond by mail using the paper questionnaire that was recently mailed to every non-responding address. Households that received a census invitation in the mail and have yet to respond will receive a paper questionnaire by April 30.

Households will receive another reminder postcard in the mail between April 27-May 9. The Census Bureau pushed back this mailing to allow the paper questionnaire package to arrive several days ahead of the postcard. The postcard is one reminder in a series of reminders that the Census Bureau has mailed nonresponding households since mid-March urging them to respond. Census takers will visit every address that does not respond on their own to collect responses in person. Responding now to the 2020 Census will minimize the need for a census taker to visit your home later this year. For more information, visit [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov).

As Jim mentioned, Minnesota is leading the nation in Census participation at 64% as of April 28th. Nationwide the return rate is 53.4%. And while we are doing great here in St. Peter (69.1%), we continue to lag behind North Mankato (74.1%), but with your help we can do better. If you haven’t yet filled out your census form, please do so now. If you have friends, family or neighbors who haven’t done so, please encourage them to participate today. It takes just minutes and is as easy as logging on to your computer or picking up the phone. Visit the 2020 Census website at [https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html](https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html) for more information on how you can respond.

**COVID-19 UPDATED INFORMATION** – Each week the Hot Sheet will include updated information pertaining to the City’s response to the COVID-19 emergency. With few exceptions, this will be limited to new information only. If there is something we have previously published in this column that you need to access, please go to the City’s website at [www.saintpetermn.gov](http://www.saintpetermn.gov) and check out the Hot Sheet archives. Here is the latest information as of April 29, 2020:
The peacetime emergency continues. By issuing Executive Order No. 20-40, Governor Walz has begun to lay the groundwork for a slow reopening of the state’s economy. The first category of businesses wishing to reopen have to meet several requirements before the specific businesses can reopen. For more information on this order, please visit the Governor’s website at https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp.

The Minnesota River Valley Transit Board has taken action to waive all regular Dial-a-ride fares through the end of August, 2020. This action is a direct result of the Federal CARES Act which provided funding to cover all operational costs for local transit systems. Fares for specialized services like those renting the bus for a wedding party or pre-school express will be reduced by 50% through August. The buses are sanitized at the end of every shift (3-4 times a day). To arrange for a Minnesota River Valley Transit ride, please call (888) 880-4696.

Are you a self-employed person or independent contractor negatively impacted by COVID-19? If so, you may also be eligible for unemployment insurance. Here’s information put out by the State of Minnesota…The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed by Congress on March 27th, provides new benefits for self-employed people and independent contractors. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program – provides weekly benefit payments for self-employed people, independent contractors and others who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits. Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) - $600/week additional payments for people receiving regular or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. If you have worked for a Minnesota employer in the past 18 months, you may qualify for regular unemployment benefits. If you qualify for regular unemployment benefits, you will not qualify for PUA. We have begun paying out PUA benefits to certain groups of self-employed people and 1099 workers. We were one of the first states in the nation to implement all three of the new CARES Act benefits programs. Under federal law, we have to verify your employment and income information before we can pay you PUA benefits. This means that different groups of people will get paid on different dates. For more information on these programs, including how to apply, please visit the State’s website at https://www.uimn.org/applicants/needtoknow/news-updates/covid19-pua.jsp.

The Governor’s “homemade mask drive” initiative is over and generous St. Peter donors dropped off 220 homemade masks at the St. Peter Fire Department last weekend. The masks were then distributed to St. Peter congregate care facilities by the Nicollet County Emergency Management Department. Way to go St. Peter!

Although we wish they didn’t have to, the City Council is getting pretty good at having virtual Council meetings. You can check out the meetings yourself on the City’s YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWK7-GhXlmDfaSTNs7ywqgw.

The following information was included in last week’s update, but it’s really important so it’s being included again…. River’s Edge Hospital, the Emergency Department, Urgent Care, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy and supporting departments are open and the healthcare providers in these departments are here to help you with any healthcare concern you have during this time. If you need medical attention it is OK and safe to do so. Do not ignore symptoms that are not COVID-19 symptoms. At River’s Edge the staff is taking every precaution to create an even safer environment for you to receive care. It is our goal to ensure that the St. Peter area community remains healthy. Some important things to know before coming to River’s Edge Hospital: There is a “no visitor” policy in place at this time. If you are bringing a child to Urgent Care or the Emergency Room, one parent/guardian will be allowed to be with the child. There are no visitors allowed for inpatients at River’s Edge. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis in end-of-life situations. When you arrive, you will see all River’s Edge staff wearing medical or cloth masks. River’s Edge staff is following guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control for masking. Patients coming for care at River’s Edge will also be given a mask to wear. If you do have COVID-19 symptoms – cough, shortness of breath, and fever – please call the hospital at 931-2200 to let the staff know you are coming. This will allow time for staff to prepare for your arrival.
As more people find themselves struggling to pay bills, here's another update that needs to be repeated for the week......Need help paying your electric bill? Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) has received additional funding to help. Here is what they have to say....

During this time of uncertainty, we recognize that more and more people may be facing economic hardship. If your household or someone you know is worried about paying for heat and electric bills, apply for Energy Assistance today. Energy Assistance is a program to help pay heating and electricity bills. Homeowners may also be eligible for a free heating system repair or replacement. Contact our office to have an application mailed to you or go to our website — www.mnvac.org—to download an application. Our offices are currently closed to the public, but if you have questions about how to apply, please call us! We are here to help! You can submit your application by email, fax, mail or you can drop it off in our Mankato office drop box. To reach MVAC... 706 N Victory Dr. Mankato, MN 56001 www.mnvac.org or by phone at 507-345-6822 or toll free 1-800-767-7139 FAX 507-345-2414 eap@mnvac.org.

City Offices remain closed to the public, but we are open for business. If you have something that just can’t be dealt with over the phone, by email or regular mail, please call the department directly. Office numbers are on the City’s website at https://www.saintpetermn.gov/Directory.aspx.

NOT EVERYTHING IS BAD NEWS – If you’re like a friends and neighbors you are tired of turning on your TV to see more and more bad news. Here’s some good news for a change!

Saint Peter Police Officers Keith Ruffing and Roman Hagen are the newest recipients of the Allina Medical Services “Stork Award”. Both of our Officers helped deliver babies (one in February and the other in April). Congratulations to the new families and way to go Keith and Roman!

DOG OWNER CAUTION – Recent editions of the Hot Sheet have included reminders of the regulations related to picking up pet waste both on private property and on the owner’s property. What we failed to mention and has now become a problem is people who are illegally walking their dogs in non-dog parks...specifically Minnesota Square Park and Community Spirit Park (by the High School).

As tempting as these green spaces may be, they are NOT dog parks and animals are not allowed in either one. Making matters worse is that many of these irresponsible pet owners are also letting their dogs poop and leaving it there for others to enjoy.

So, with everything else that is going on in the world today we really hate to do this, but dog owners beware….if you are walking/running your pet in a park that is not a designated dog park, you may be cited for that violation and if you fail to pick up after your pooch, that’s another violation.

Please be a responsible dog owner and only walk or exercise your pet in areas where it is allowed and clean up after them when they poop!

LIBRARY SERVICES FAQ – Are you new to the St. Peter community or perhaps haven’t yet discovered what the St. Peter Library has to offer? Here are some frequently asked questions about the Library that might help.

What services are available especially now with the COVID-19 emergency? The Library is here to provide important services to the community during these challenging times. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of the Library’s many different digital offerings or curbside pick-up program. For questions on what services are available or, for those in need of assistance, please contact the Library at 507-934-7420 or lib@saintpetermn.gov.

What are Digital Services? Saint Peter residents who haven’t taken advantage of the digital options available with a library card, should do so now. Digital services offer more to explore from the comfort of your own home 24 hours a day. E-books, audio books, and even movies and music are just a click away with more titles being added every day.

What if I don't know my card number? Contact the library through email (lib@saintpetermn.gov), or Facebook message for assistance looking up your library card number for any of the digital services (e-books, audio, or hoopla streaming services). Library staff are working limited hours, but are happy to help.
What if I don't have a library card? Misplaced yours? Never had a card? No problem. Call the Library (934-7420), weekdays between 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. for assistance.

Can I place holds on items I want? Yes, although during the COVID-19 emergency materials will not be delivered from other libraries. Using the online catalog, patrons may place holds on items currently on the Library shelves. When items are ready for you, no contact pickup is available through the special COVID-19 curbside pick-up program. There is a five (5) hold limit per library card. Unable to access the online catalog? Call the Library (934-7420) and a staff member will assist you.

What about due dates? During the COVID-19 emergency, due dates aren't a concern. Keep your items at home - don't make a special trip out to return them. Most items renew automatically. If you are concerned or would like your items renewed, please call the Library for assistance.

What else is going on at the library?
- Curbside pickup
- Free book cart outside the library (newspapers and books added daily!)
- Storywalk (the windows facing Gorman Park)
- Each Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. a story will be posted on the Library Facebook page.
- Book recommendations - call us, we love to help!
- Digital library including OverDrive/Libby; eLibrary MN; and hoopla

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**CITY MEETING CALENDAR**

- **PLEASE NOTE**...Until further notice, all City meetings are being conducted electronically as authorized under Minnesota Statutes 13D.021. Log-in information for each meeting is included at the bottom of the agenda page. Agendas are all posted on the City’s website at www.saintpetermn.gov.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Housing and Redevelopment Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>City Council Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Planning and Zoning Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>City Council Meeting</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>MN River Valley Transit Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Library Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>City Council Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>City Board of Appeal and Equalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Tourism and Visitors Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY</strong> – All City offices Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>May 26</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>City Council Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Hospital Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>May 28</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>Economic Development Authority</td>
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