9/9/2020

**Makes Me Wonder (by City Administrator Todd Prafce)** – What does the end of summer mean for the City Council? Budgets, budgets and more budgets. Each year at about this time the Council dives into everything budgets including the General Fund - the fund that pays for streets, parks, police, building services, recreation and so much more. That budget in turn is used to determine the City’s preliminary levy (taxes) payable in 2021.

Many of area cities are struggling with their budgets for next year due to the impact of COVID-19 on revenues. We’re fortunate that won’t be the case in St. Peter as the City Council is reviewing preliminary budget numbers that would actually result in a slight decrease in the tax rate from 51.58 to an estimated 51.53. What this means is if a homeowner’s property valuation hasn’t changed from 2020, their City share of the tax bill on a $150,000 home would actually decrease $0.63 for the 2021 tax year. That’s good news for everyone in St. Peter.

How does the budget process work? We use the same philosophy each time. We look at the divisional budgets line by line and think about needs and priorities the City Council has set, make changes, and then look at how those changes influence the total. We bring budgets based on the programs and service standards we have had in place and which provides for the operation the Council wants. The budget is really a cost and revenue estimate intended to reflect the priorities of the Council. We believe the results from past budgets speak for themselves and our budgeting philosophy has shown very positive results both from a financial and a service perspective. The positive results are measured by the deviation from budget at the end of each year which has been very, very small. That indicates good planning and budget management.

Saint Peter remains heavily dependent upon Local Government Aid. Over 30% of the properties in St. Peter are not taxable and LGA is a tool that helps offset the property tax levy. However, the expected LGA increase of $52,973 does not cover what we believe to be inflationary increases from 2020 to 2021. It’s also important to remember the LGA increase could change with the stroke of a pen in at the Capital.

City staff and the City Council work hard to be good stewards of your money and having a good plan is part of that work. If you want to know more, check out the whole budget plan complete with narrative, reports, spreadsheets and graphs at [https://www.saintpetermn.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/08172020-471](https://www.saintpetermn.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/08172020-471) or take a look at prior year’s audits at [https://www.saintpetermn.gov/210/Annual-Financial-Reports](https://www.saintpetermn.gov/210/Annual-Financial-Reports). Each site contains lots of good stuff about how your money is getting used. Will you take a look? It makes me wonder.....

**Voting Information** – Later this week registered voters in Minnesota will receive a flyer from the Secretary of State’s Office about voting from home during the November 3rd general election. The flyer will include information on how to apply for an absentee ballot and encouraging eligible voters to vote from home on November 3rd.

But, there is a more local event that will help you know your voting options. Nicollet County Public Services Manager Jaci Kopet is hosting a virtual event providing information on options for voting in this year’s election. Topics will include voting in
person, voting by absentee ballot, and voting by mail.

The virtual event will be held via Zoom on September 14th at 7:00 p.m. Only 100 spots are available for this virtual meeting so if you are interested, register now at www.co.nicollet.mn.us and GET TO KNOW YOUR VOTING OPTIONS!

COVID-19 HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – Has COVID-19 impacted your ability to pay your rent or mortgage or make utility payments? If so, you may be eligible for the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program through the State of Minnesota. The program provides housing assistance payments to help prevent eviction, homelessness and maintain housing stability for eligible renters and homeowners.

To qualify for the program, Minnesota households must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have income at or below 300% of federal poverty guidelines, with a preference for those at or below 200% of the guidelines.
- Have an eligible expense that was incurred after March 1, 2020 that is past due. Housing assistance funds can only be used for eligible expenses incurred during the period March 1-December 30, 2020.
- Be unable to make one or more payments owed because of the public health emergency due to unemployment, illness, or another COVID-19 related issue.

The program funds can be used to cover past due housing expenses such as rent payments, mortgage payments, contract for deed payments, manufactured home park lot rents and payments, utility payments and homeowner’s association fees.

To apply call 211 or 1-800-543-7709; visit 211unitedway.org; or text “MNRENT” or “MNHOME” to 898-211.

The 211 helpline has multilingual staff available to answer questions about the program from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday through Friday.

TEMP ELECTION HELP NEEDED - Our friends and election co-workers at Nicollet County will be extra busy before the November election and they need help. The County will be hiring four temporary workers to assist with the upcoming General Election. (Note, these are NOT Election Judges working in local polling places.)

Candidates must be non-partisan and be able to provide excellent customer service, use technical and analytical skills, and perform a variety of clerical and administrative functions (preparing mailings, sorting and filing applications, processing incoming mail, assisting with accepting ballots, assisting with in-person absentee voting, etc.). Candidates must be at least 18 years of age, pass a background check, and preferably be available to work Monday thru Friday, 8am-4:30pm, from September 16, 2020 until November 3, 2020. If you are interested in these temporary positions, please contact Nicollet County’s Human Resources office by email at Human.Resources@co.nicollet.mn.us or by phone at (507)934-7894.

FALL HOURS BEGIN – Effective September 8th, hours at the Community Center and Library will revert to the non-summer schedule as follows:

Community Center
Monday-Friday – 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Saturdays – 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Sundays – Closed

Open Gym Hours –
Monday-Thursday - 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Fridays - 5:00-8:00 p.m.
Saturdays – 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Library Hours
Monday-Thursday – 10 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Fridays – 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturdays – 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Sundays – Closed

CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS – The City Council meeting of August 24, 2020 included award of bids for two improvement projects at the Broadway Electric Generation Plant; approval of all changes orders related to the River’s Edge Hospital Expansion Project; adoption of an order to remove the hazardous building at 1671 South Third Street; authorization for preparation of a feasibility study for a project to make drainage, stormwater, curb, gutter and roadway improvements along North Third Street
(north 1,000' from the St. Julien Street intersection), Center Street and McLeod Street; approval for a modification to vacation accumulation rates for City employees with over 35 years of service; and authorization for issuance of a tree worker license.

The next regular City Council meeting will be Monday, September 14th beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held electronically as authorized under Minnesota Statutes 13.021. For log-in information, please visit the City’s website. The log-in information will be at the bottom of the meeting agenda page which will be available under the "meetings and minutes" section of the homepage the Friday before the Council meeting.

**ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS** – Are you planning on voting by absentee for the November 3rd general election? Thousands of Nicollet County voters are expected to do so in order to avoid the expected long lines in the polling place and possible exposure to COVID-19. If you are one of those who will be voting by absentee, please submit your ballot application now. Ballots won’t be available for a couple of weeks, but submitting an application now provides extra time for the Nicollet County elections staff to process that application so your ballot can be sent out as soon as they are available.

Ballots are mailed out to voters who requested them and the envelope will come with an instruction sheet, a brown ballot envelope to seal your voted ballot in, a white envelope the brown envelope goes in and on which the voter will sign and return the identification number used to request the ballot, and a larger envelope already addressed for return of your voted ballot to Nicollet County. The ballot return envelope will also have return postage already affixed.

If you are an unregistered voter (including anyone who has moved since they last voted), the materials will also include a voter registration form that must be returned for the ballot to be counted. Not registered or not sure if you are? Visit the Secretary of State’s website to find out and get registered now at [https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote).

Absentee ballots must be postmarked by election day, but with hundreds of thousands of people expected to vote by absentee this November, the Postal service recommends voted ballots be mailed back as early as possible. If you’re not comfortable popping you’re voted ballot in the mail, you can also drop it off in person at the Nicollet County Government Center (501 South Minnesota Avenue). (Please note.....absentee ballots will not be accepted by Election Judges in the polling place.)

Absentee voting has been used in Minnesota for decades. It’s safe, easy, and a great way to participate in the most important part of our democracy.

**UPCOMING LIFE LEARNING IS FOREVER CLASSES** – Learning is a lifelong process and those interested in continuing their education might be interested in the following programs:

- **Grandparents and the Power of Play** - The Power of Play will highlight one of the most successful children's museums in Minnesota. Play is essential in all human lives. Unfortunately, today children's play is constrained by technology, structured activities, and "stranger danger," among other impacts.

This presentation will shed light on how the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota is positively impacting children and how the museum can also benefit grandparents and their own opportunity to play. Join Louise Dickmeyer, Chief Executive Officer of Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota for this program on Wednesday, September 9th at 11 a.m. in the Community Center Room 219. Registration fee is just $5 per registrant.

- **Understand the Issue: Black Lives Matter** - Recent news has brought the term Black Lives Matter into regular vernacular, and many Minnesotans are struggling to put this phrase, its meaning, and its goals into context. Understand current on-goings for racial justice and the history of Black Lives Matter, as well as how this present moment is tied to the larger narrative of
civil rights history. Gustavus visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Misti Harper, will help participants understand this timely issue. Class begins at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 16th in Room 219 at the Community Center. Cost is $5 per person.

Life Learning is Forever is a joint program of the City's Recreation and Leisure Services Department and School District #508’s Community Education Department. Registration for these programs is done through Community Education either in person (at the Community Center), by phone (934–3048) or online at www.stpetercommunityedonline.com.

HELP WANTED – The City is now accepting applications for the following positions:

- **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER** - The City of Saint Peter is currently accepting applications for the position of VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER in the Fire Department. Up to three (3) Firefighters will be hired. Minimum qualifications: High school diploma/GED; at least 18 years of age; reside within a six (6) minute response time from the Fire Station; possess a valid driver’s license; and ability to read and write the English language. Successful candidates must also pass pre-employment physical, drug and alcohol tests. An open house for interested candidates and their significant others will be held on September 23rd from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Fire Station (227 West Mulberry Street). This event provides an opportunity for prospective candidates and their family members to ask questions and learn more about what is involved in service as a Volunteer Firefighter. Successful candidates will begin service December 1, 2020 and will be required to successfully complete required Firefighter schooling within one year. Applicants are required to complete a City application form which is available in the City Administrator’s office at 227 South Front Street, or online at https://www.saintpetermn.gov/365/Employment. Completed applications must be received by the City Administrator’s office by 5:00 p.m. September 24, 2020. Faxed and/or late applications will not be accepted. **NOTE: The successful candidates for this position will be required to successfully complete and pass a pre-employment drug test. The position is also subject to post-accident, random, reasonable suspicion, return to duty, and follow-up drug and alcohol testing required by USDOT 49 CFR Part 655 (Federal Transit Administration) and USDOT 49 CFR Part 40. In addition, successful candidates for this position must have a vehicle driving record which is clear of revocations, suspensions and cancellations for the past three (3) years. Applications may be required to submit to a criminal background check and be clear of convictions for crimes or anticipatory crimes (as defined in M.S. 609.17 and 609.175) within the previous fifteen (15) years. AA/EEO

- **PART-TIME BUS DRIVERS** - The City of Saint Peter is currently accepting applications for the position of Part-time Bus Drivers for the Minnesota River Valley Transit system. This position will work varied shifts including day, nights and occasional weekends. Positions in Saint Peter. Successful candidates for this position must have, at a minimum, a High school diploma or equivalent and a valid State of Minnesota CDL minimum of Class C Driver’s License with passenger endorsement. Candidates will have thirty (30) days from the date of employment to obtain the required driver’s license and the City will help the new employee train for the license test. Candidates who possess the following desired experience or education will qualify for additional points towards an interview: previous experience working with the public; training in vehicle mechanics; experience operating a two-way radio/phone; and prior bus driving experience. Starting wage $16.72 per hour. Applicants are required to complete a City application form which is available in the City Administrator’s office at 227 South Front Street, by calling (507) 934-0663 or online at https://www.saintpetermn.gov/365/Employment. Completed applications must be received by the City Administrator’s office by 5:00 p.m. September 24, 2020. Faxed and/or late applications will not be accepted. **NOTE: The successful candidates for this position will be required to successfully complete and pass a pre-employment drug test. The position is also subject to post-accident, random, reasonable suspicion, return to duty, and follow-up drug and alcohol testing required by USDOT 49 CFR Part 655 (Federal Transit Administration) and USDOT 49 CFR Part 40. In addition, successful candidates for this position must have a vehicle driving record which is clear of revocations, suspensions and cancellations for the past three (3) years. Applicants may be required to submit to a criminal background check and be clear of convictions for crimes or anticipatory crimes (as defined in M.S. 609.17 and 609.175) within the previous fifteen (15) years. AA/EEO
CITY MEETING CALENDAR

PLEASE NOTE...Until further notice, City meetings may be conducted electronically as authorized under Minnesota Statutes 13D.021. Log-in information for meetings being held either virtually or as a hybrid virtual/in-person will be included at the bottom of the agenda page. Agendas are all posted on the City’s website at www.saintpetermn.gov.

Monday  September 14  3:30 p.m.  Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Monday  September 14  7:00 p.m.  City Council Meeting
Tuesday  September 15  5:30 p.m.  Library Board (rescheduled due to Council Workshop conflict)
Monday  September 21  5:30 p.m.  City Council Workshop
Wednesday  September 23  12:30 p.m.  Hospital Commission
Thursday  September 24  12:00 noon  Economic Development Authority
Friday  September 25  8:00 a.m.  Tourism and Visitors Bureau
Monday  September 28  7:00 p.m.  City Council Meeting
Tuesday  September 29  5:30 p.m.  Heritage Preservation Commission
Thursday  October 1  5:30 p.m.  Planning and Zoning Commission
Monday  October 5  3:30 p.m.  Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Monday  October 5  5:30 p.m.  City Council Workshop
Monday  October 12  7:00 p.m.  City Council Meeting
Monday  October 19  5:30 p.m.  City Council Workshop
Monday  October 19  7:00 p.m.  Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Thursday  October 22  12:00 noon  Economic Development Authority
Friday  October 23  8:00 a.m.  Tourism and Visitors Bureau
Monday  October 26  7:00 p.m.  City Council Meeting
Tuesday  October 27  5:30 p.m.  Heritage Preservation Commission
Wednesday  October 28  12:30 p.m.  Hospital Commission