



Sunfish Lake Quarterly

Fall 2025 Volume 25 Issue 4

Greetings Neighbors,

As autumn settles in, I hope you’re finding moments to enjoy the warmth and beauty of the season before winter arrives. It’s been a busy quarter in our community, and I’m pleased to share important updates and celebrate our shared accomplishments.

Honoring Community Stewardship

Please join me in congratulating residents Jim and Jeannine Naves, recipients of the 2025 Outstanding Conservationist Award from the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District. Their tireless efforts at conservation truly deserve this recognition and they are models of our collective commitment to a greener, healthier town.

Thanks for Community Spirit

A heartfelt thank you to Tom Hawley and Anne Novak for hosting the annual SFL Oktoberfest. On an unusually warm October evening, neighbors gathered, shared stories, and enjoyed each other’s company. Events like these are the heartbeat of our town, fostering friendships and a sense of belonging.

Your Voice Matters

We sincerely appreciate everyone who participated in the September Planning Commission Public Hearing, whether by attending or submitting written comments on the proposed ordinances. Your feedback led to important clarifications, and the updated summary memorandum, prepared by our City Attorney Kori Land, is now posted on the SFL website. Additional discussions took place at the October 16th Planning Commission meeting, and the edited ordinances will be available for review by late October, ahead of the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for November 19. Please also attend that meeting since the Commission plans to vote on the final revisions to be sent to the Council for adoption. Your continued involvement guides thoughtful decision-making for our future.

Keeping Finances Strong

I’m delighted to share good news about city finances. Last year’s diligent budget review allowed us to maintain service levels while significantly lowering most residents’ city taxes. This year, our Treasurer, Char Stark, was once again able to find areas of savings. Despite 2026 upcoming road capital improvements totaling \$34,000, our careful budgeting means we expect no increase, or only a minimal increase, in SFL property taxes for residents. Future budgets may be less flexible, but prudent management remains a priority. Please remember, future road improvements will affect property taxes proportionally. Thank you, Char, for your exemplary stewardship.

Addressing Harmon Park and City-Owned Land

The City Council was approached by a person inquiring about the purchase of one of the lots comprising Harmon Park, 2450 and 2500 Angell Road. Here is a summary:

Continued on next page >

City Council Dan O’Leary, Mayor Steven Bulach Tom Hendrickson Mike Hovey Shannon Nelson	Planning Commission Ginny Beckett Jeannine Naves Claire Noble John Oakman Kevin Wu	City Clerk/Administrator Christy Wilcox cwilcoxclerk@gmail.com	In this Issue Message from the Mayor Safety Committee Update! Follow Your Recycling Vines Breaking Down Trees Purple loosestrife infestations
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 18281 West St. Paul, MN 55118	Free Holiday Lights Recycling November 17-January 30 West St. Paul City Hall (1616 Humboldt Ave) Drop off available during regular city hall business hours		

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- In 1972, Reuel and Margaret Harmon donated these lots for park and recreation use only. In the 53 years since only a dense wood has developed.
- Minnesota Statute 500.20, Subdivision 2a. states that such deed restrictions expire after 30 years. As of 2002, this condition ceased to be legally binding.
- The city engineer confirmed both lots are buildable, with acreages of 3.26 and 2.69 respectively. Dakota County currently values each lot at \$357,300, though actual sales could exceed these appraisals.
- Our Preliminary 2026 taxable levy is \$671,308. Selling these properties could offset one or more years of SFL property taxes for all residents, or there are other options for how proceeds could be used.
- Concerns from adjacent homeowners about potential property value decreases are noted. However, some realtors believe new homes could enhance nearby property values.
- Development of these lots would also increase property tax revenue, further benefiting all residents.
- Harmon Park's accessibility has always been a challenge. Trails have grown over, and access is only through a private driveway. Many residents don't realize its location, and past signage was removed due to concerns about non-resident use.
- I encourage you to visit the site for yourself: Drive to the cul-de-sac at the end of Angell Road, where to your left, you'll see the lots to either side of the private driveway. Your feedback and perspectives will be invaluable as we make decisions together about our community's future
- The reality is that Harmon Park, dense with overgrown foliage and largely inaccessible, is not currently used by most residents. Musser Park, 22 acres, already offers extensive recreational space in town, and most of us enjoy substantial green space on our own properties. We'll need to carefully consider whether maintaining another park serves the greater good or whether new development could bring benefits like increased property values and permanent tax relief.

Key questions remain: Do we need another wooded park, especially one difficult to access and little used? Or is it time to reinvest in a truly recreational park, possibly with new amenities? Or should we consider alternative uses that benefit the entire community? Ultimately, any decision will focus on long-term value and honoring our shared vision for SFL's future.

Looking Ahead

As we enjoy an unseasonably warm fall, I encourage everyone to cherish time with family and friends in the coming holiday season. Let's continue working together, looking to the future with optimism, and making our town stronger with every step.

Happy holidays and best wishes,
Mayor Dan

SAFETY COMMITTEE UPDATE!



Thank You for Participating in the Community Survey

The Sunfish Lake City Council Safety Committee would like to extend our sincere thanks to all residents who took the time to complete the recent community survey. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us understand priorities, address concerns, and shape future initiatives that keep our city safe and welcoming.

Survey results highlighted key areas of focus for our community, including traffic safety, neighborhood security, and continued investment in practical infrastructure improvements. In response, the City Council is taking steps such as increasing signage, supporting a neighborhood watch program, repainting speed bumps for visibility, and purchasing an additional portable security camera. Continue to watch the SFL Newsletter for safety tips and reminders from the WSP Chief of Police. These actions are a direct reflection of the thoughtful input we received. By sharing your perspectives, you have helped guide decisions that will benefit the entire community.

We are grateful for your continued partnership and encourage you to stay engaged as we work together to maintain the quality of life that makes Sunfish Lake such a special place to call home. **If you have any concerns or suggestions, now or in the future, please reach out to Steve Bulach (Sbulach1@outlook.com) or Shannon Nelson (snelson@nelsonww.com).**

FOLLOW YOUR RECYCLING

If you follow your recycling in Dakota County, you won't have to go very far. The materials are sorted by people and machines at local recycling facilities and sent to different companies that turn them into new products. Many of these companies are based right here in Minnesota, turning recyclables into new cracker and cereal boxes, durable decking and fencing, food and beverage bottles and more. To keep this process running smoothly, it is important to put the right items in your home recycling.

Put these items loose in your home recycling (no plastic bags):

Paper

- Newspaper and inserts
- Magazines and catalogs
- Mail and office papers

Cardboard

- Corrugated cardboard
- Paperboard (e.g., cracker boxes)

Cartons

- Milk and juice cartons
- Soup, broth and wine cartons
- Juice boxes

Metal cans

- Aluminum, tin and steel cans

Glass bottles and jars

Plastic bottles, containers and jugs

- Containers numbered 1, 2 or 5
- Soda, juice and water bottles
- Milk and juice jugs
- Margarine, cottage cheese and other tubs and lids
- Laundry detergent bottles and jugs
- Clear berry and produce containers



Make sure bottles, jars and containers are empty and dry before recycling. They don't have to be perfect — just free of most residue like food and liquids. Leave caps on containers and flatten boxes. Leave out plastic bags, batteries, black plastic, food and things that can tangle around moving machines. If you're wondering about a specific item, use the online Recycling Guide at www.dakotacounty.us, search *recycling guide*.

Partially funded by Dakota County and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

VINES BREAKING DOWN TREES

By Jim Naves, City Forester

A concerned resident recently pointed out the beautiful fall color of vines in trees along our city streets and expressed her concern about potential damage excessive vines may cause. The beautiful reds, oranges and yellows of the grape and Virginia creeper vines hanging from tree branches is glorious but **can be severely damaging to deciduous trees, shrubbery and especially evergreens.**

Vines can damage trees primarily in two ways. When vines grow through and over shrubbery or trees the vine's leaves **block the light from reaching the growing tree's leaves.** This causes branch dieback and when a vine's leaves completely overgrow an evergreen the death of branches or even of an entire evergreen may occur. Shading by vines can cause tree disfigurement and possibly death. When vines overgrow and climb over trees in great abundance the very weight of the vines becomes the issue. **Major tree limbs can be bent, cracked, and broken off simply by the weight of excessive vine growth.** Trees are genetically programmed to grow branches that will support the weight of their limbs and leaves and fruit. Adding the weight of a massive vine climbing all over a tree can cause major branch breakage permanently disfiguring a tree for its remaining life.

Control of vines is quite simple. Gently pulling vines off trees and shrubbery is often enough to set the tree free but sometimes additional pruning is required. A hand pruner or lopper is usually all that is needed since vines cut quite easily. To prevent the vine from overgrowing a tree again next year, dig the root out (sometimes quite difficult with tree roots in the way) or paint brush killer at full strength on the lowest 2 feet of the remaining vine. Do not get the brush killer on the tree's branches or roots or the tree may be injured. Look around as you drive through the city and notice the huge quantity of beautifully colored vines draping our community forest.



PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE INFESTATIONS

By Jim Naves, City Forester

Purple loosestrife infestations have been seen in numerous locations along and near the shore of Sunfish Lake. Most likely, this new weed arrived with birds bringing seed from other locations. This non-native weed has high potential to crowd out desirable native wildflower and shoreline vegetation so control of early infestations is important. Control by pulling, digging, and herbicide treatments will all work though when pulling and digging the entire root must be removed. Preventing seed production is important as purple loosestrife is a prolific seed producer. Dispose of plants and seed off site. Additional information is available online (google "purple loosestrife MN").

The legal status of purple loosestrife is **Prohibited Control**. This means that efforts must be made to prevent seed maturation and dispersal of plants into new areas. Additionally, no transportation, propagation, or sale of these plants is allowed. Failure to comply may result in enforcement action by the county or local municipality. (Photo credit: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources)