



Sunfish Lake Quarterly

Summer 2026 Volume 26 Issue 3

Greetings, Neighbors,

It has been a surprisingly chilly and rainy start to summer, but I hope you are looking forward to enjoying the season with family, friends, and all that makes our community special.

Appreciation for Councilmember Steve Bulach

As many of you know, Councilmember Steve Bulach has decided to make Florida his permanent State of residence and has therefore resigned from the Sunfish Lake City Council.

I would like to sincerely thank Steve for his many years of dedicated service to our community. Throughout his tenure, he has been a thoughtful, steady, and constructive voice on the Council. Steve approached every issue with care, integrity, and a genuine commitment to serving all residents. Even when opinions differed, he consistently demonstrated the respectful dialogue and professionalism that help communities thrive.

Public service is not always easy, and it often goes unrecognized. Steve helped guide Sunfish Lake through important decisions and challenges, leaving a lasting impact on our city and setting an example for others through his leadership.

On behalf of the Council and our residents, thank you, Steve, for your years of service. You will be missed, and we wish you all the best in this next chapter.

Welcome to Councilmember Claire Noble

At our May Council meeting, the Council unanimously appointed Claire Noble to fill the vacancy created by Steve's resignation. Claire was officially sworn in during the June Council meeting.

Claire previously served on the Sunfish Lake Planning Commission and brings extensive public policy and legal experience to the Council. She holds a law degree and has advised Minnesota state agencies and the Governor's Office on policy initiatives, in addition to serving in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

We are fortunate to have Claire's expertise and commitment to public service. Please join me in congratulating her and welcoming her to the Council.

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City Council Dan O’Leary, Mayor Tom Hendrickson Mike Hovey Shannon Nelson Claire Noble	Planning Commission Ginny Beckett Jeannine Naves John Oakman Kevin Wu	City Clerk/Administrator Christy Wilcox cwilcoxclerk@gmail.com	In this Issue Message from the Mayor 2026 Voting and Candidate Filing Information Absentee Ballots & Early Voting Walk Facing Traffic When You See Something, Please Let Us Know As Soon As Possible Putting Food Scraps Back to Work Musser Park Restoration Project
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 18281 West St. Paul, MN 55118	Free Residential Paper Shredding Saturday September 12, 10 am – 1 pm Wakota Federal Credit Union (1151 Southview Blvd, South St. Paul) 2 grocery bag or banker box limit		

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Arbor Day Success

A heartfelt thank you to our City Forester, Jim Naves, for organizing a tremendously successful Arbor Day planting event on May 2 at the 60th Street Shoreline Restoration area.

I would also like to recognize the many residents who volunteered their time and energy. Together, they:

- Cleaned up the shoreline area following the Inver Grove Heights clear-cutting project.
- Planted 220 trees and shrubs along the south shore of Horseshoe Lake.
- Mulched the entire restoration area.

Most remarkably, all of this work was completed before noon. It was an extraordinary community effort and a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when neighbors come together.

Harmon Park Update

Thank you to the many residents who attended the June Council meeting and shared their views regarding the future of Harmon Park.

The overwhelming sentiment expressed was that Harmon Park should remain a park and recreational area rather than be sold for residential development, consistent with Reuel Harmon's original vision when he deeded the property to the City in 1972.

After considering public input, the Council unanimously voted not to sell the park.

The Council also voted to maintain Harmon Park as a walking-trail park and directed our Forester to obtain bids for clearing fallen trees and damaged branches from the trail. Our Forester estimated the cost would be in the range of \$3,500-\$4,000. The Council approved funding at a cost not to exceed \$5,000 to complete this work in the near term.

In addition, annual trail maintenance will be included in future City budgets to help ensure the park remains accessible and enjoyable for residents. Several residents generously volunteered to assist with trail upkeep, and that support is greatly appreciated.

Looking Ahead: Musser Park

We have an exciting opportunity to partner with the Minnesota Land Trust to restore Musser Park by removing invasive buckthorn and Amur maple and returning portions of the park to a beautiful oak savanna.

For more details, please see the article from our City Forester in this newsletter. It includes photos showing the current condition of storm-damaged and overgrown areas, and Minnesota Land Trust's vision for a more open landscape with native flowers and improved habitat. This project would enhance the park's natural beauty, support local wildlife, preserve its ecological character, and create an even more enjoyable place for residents to walk, explore, and connect with nature.

Enjoy Your Summer

Thank you for helping make Sunfish Lake such a wonderful place to live. I wish you and your families a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable summer.

Warmest regards,
Mayor Dan

2026 VOTING AND CANDIDATE FILING INFORMATION

Primary Election: Tuesday, August 11th

General Election: Tuesday, November 3rd

Residents of Sunfish Lake vote at First Calvary Baptist Church at 5495 South Robert Trail, Inver Grove Heights. The polls are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 p.m.

City of Sunfish Lake Candidate Filings: The filing period begins on July 14, 2026, and closes on July 28, 2026. Offices to be elected:

- MAYOR - (Two-year term)
- CITY COUNCIL – TWO (2) SEATS (Four-year term)

NOTICE OF FILING DATE FOR CANDIDATES SPECIAL ELECTION (11-3-2026)

The filing period begins on July 14, 2026, and closes on July 28, 2026

- CITY COUNCIL – ONE (1) SEAT – To fill the vacancy in term expiring December 31, 2028

If you are interested in filing for any of these offices, please contact Christy Wilcox at cwilcoxclerk@gmail.com or 612-718-4282 to complete the Affidavit of Candidacy during the filing period. The filing fee of \$5.00 may be paid by cash or check.



ABSENTEE BALLOTS & EARLY VOTING

Residents can vote early or absentee by requesting a ballot, completing it according to the enclosed instructions, and returning it in the provided envelopes. Absentee ballots must be returned by Election Day to be counted.

Absentee voting options include receiving a ballot by mail, voting in person, or using agent delivery for eligible voters. Residents who are overseas or active-duty military can also vote absentee.

In person absentee voting locations for Aug. 11 Primary Election

Dakota County voters may cast absentee ballots in person at the following locations from June 26–Aug. 10.

Administration Center, 1590 Highway 55, Hastings

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 8, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 10, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Western Service Center, 14955 Galaxie Ave., Apple Valley

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 8, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 10, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Northern Service Center, 1 Mendota Road W., West St. Paul

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 8, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 10, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.



If you have any questions, please contact Dakota County Elections at 651-438-4391 or City Clerk Christy Wilcox at 612-718-4282.

You may also visit the City's website at www.sunfishlake.org and the Minnesota Secretary of State website at mnvotes.org website for additional election information.

WALK FACING TRAFFIC: A SIMPLE HABIT THAT KEEPS YOU SAFE

With no sidewalks along our roads, walkers share the roadway with vehicles every day — and Minnesota law tells us exactly how to do it safely. Under Minnesota Statute 169.21, Subd. 5, pedestrians walking along a road without a sidewalk must, when practicable, walk on the left side of the road or shoulder, facing oncoming traffic.

Why the left side? Visibility works both ways. When you face traffic, you can see approaching vehicles and step aside if a driver drifts toward the edge of the road. With traffic at your back, you depend entirely on drivers to see you — and at dusk, around curves, or in winter glare, they may not.

A few extra tips for walking our roads:

- Wear bright or reflective clothing, especially at dawn, dusk, and after dark
- Carry a flashlight or wear a light in low-light hours
- Walk single file when vehicles approach
- Keep dogs leashed and on your side away from traffic



It's a small habit with a big payoff. Face the traffic, stay visible, enjoy the walk and most importantly come home safely!

WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING, PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

The Police Department encourages residents to call when they observe suspicious activity, unusual circumstances, or traffic-related concerns. Whether it is a vehicle that seems out of place, suspicious behavior in the neighborhood, speeding, or other traffic violations, timely reporting allows officers to respond, investigate, and take appropriate action.

Recently, many concerns have been shared days or even weeks after an incident occurred. While we appreciate residents bringing these matters to our attention, delayed reports often limit our ability to identify those involved or address the problem effectively.

If something doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and call. You are never bothering us. We'd much rather investigate a situation that turns out to be nothing than miss an opportunity to prevent a crime or address a safety concern. Even if you are unsure whether something warrants police attention, please contact us. Information received in real time helps us keep Sunfish Lake safe and maintain the high quality of life our residents value. Your call may make all the difference.

In an emergency call 911.

Non-emergency number is 651-322-2323. Online reporting: <https://dakota911mn.gov/>



PUTTING FOOD SCRAPS BACK TO WORK

An easy and free way to reduce your trash is by joining Dakota County's food scraps drop-off program. Just by dropping off food scraps like spoiled produce, vegetable cuttings, coffee grounds or bones, a typical household can divert almost one-third of its trash. Plus, the food scraps that are dropped off serve a greater purpose—they are used to make compost. Compost is a soil-like material that is packed with nutrients that can help plants grow healthy and strong.

There are 11 organics drop-off sites located throughout the county — in Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount (two) and West St. Paul. Each site has free BPI-certified compostable bags.

Sign up and get started today by visiting www.dakotacounty.us (search *food scraps*),

email foodscraps@co.dakota.mn.us or call 952-891-7557. After you sign up, you'll receive more information and free BPI- certified compostable bags in the mail.



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

MUSSER PARK RESTORATION PROJECT

Sunfish Lake has an exciting opportunity to partner with the Minnesota Land Trust to improve Musser Park by removing invasive Amur maple and buckthorn and restoring the area to beautiful native prairie and oak savanna. The Minnesota Land Trust has told us that they have access to more than \$100,000 in grant funding for just such a project as ours, and that their part would include writing the restoration plan, hiring and paying appropriate contractors for the major restoration work, and then educating and advising our volunteers and City Staff on how to make this a dramatically successful project.

The process of restoring Musser Park began over five years ago with an idea for a "Friends of Musser Park Committee". About two years ago the City Forester brought the Musser Park Restoration idea to a Minnesota Land Trust representative during their annual visit to the park. They were interested and they said that it takes 18 to 24 months from talking to having a project ready to go. Since then, there have been several meetings related to this potential restoration project with City Staff, Minnesota Land Trust, Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, and at least one possible project contractor.

The next step in the project process falls to residents of Sunfish Lake to step up to volunteer or at least support the Musser Park Restoration Project so that we can begin to make the park vision a reality this coming winter. It is my hope that we all will support the Friends of Musser Park Committee as they communicate the vision, scope and beauty of a Musser Park restored to the beautiful native prairie and oak savanna that was here before being aggressively invaded by foreign plants brought here by people. To be clear, the initial 2-3 years of park clearing will be completed by Minnesota Land Trust contractors; our volunteers will coordinate City involvement, resident communication and education, and feedback to the Land Trust; and then help in future maintenance.



Clearing of Musser Park



Potential restoration of Musser Park (3-5 years)

Please look at the photos of the current Musser Park conditions and what is envisioned for the future. For additional information or to volunteer your support please contact the City Forester at 612-803-9033 or jim_nayes@mac.com.