



Sunfish Lake Quarterly

Winter 2026 Volume 26 Issue 1

Greetings, Neighbors,

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are enjoying the beauty of this snowy winter.

Gratitude for Our Exceptional Staff

As we reflect on the past year, I want to extend heartfelt thanks to our outstanding staff, whose dedication and professionalism continue to move our city forward. Together we advanced key initiatives, including the ongoing digitization of city records, the completion of our two-year ordinance rewrite, and continued work to ensure a responsible, efficient city budget.

Please join me in recognizing the exceptional individuals who serve our community every day:

- **Christy Wilcox**, City Administrator
- **Char Stark**, City Treasurer
- **Kori Land**, City Attorney
- **Chief Brian Sturgeon**, West St. Paul Police
- **Chief Dan Johnson**, Mendota Heights Fire Department
- **Dennis Schilling**, Building Inspector
- **Lori Johnson**, City Planner
- **Justin Messner**, City Engineer
- **Jim Naves**, City Forester

It is truly a privilege to work alongside such a skilled and dedicated team.

City Property Taxes Remain Low

Many of you have now received your 2025 property tax statements. I’m pleased to share that, once again, we were able to keep the **City’s portion of your property taxes low**, even as both Dakota County and the School District required increases for 2026. Maintaining strong financial management continues to be a priority for our city.

Harmon Park: Honoring the Original Intent

We’ve heard from many residents regarding the possible sale of the two lots at Harmon Park. The majority who contacted the City expressed a desire to preserve the lots and honor the original donation from our first Mayor, Ruell Harmon. Some residents have mistakenly believed these lots were designated simply as “green space.” In fact, the deed clearly states they are to be used **“for park and recreation purposes only.”** If the community chooses not to sell the lots, then honoring this gift means ensuring the land is actively used for those intended purposes.

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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 Sign Up For City News Stay Safe with the Recycling Zone Burglaries and Thefts Salt and Stormwater Snowplowing Our City’s Park Lands 2026 Election Information 2026 Final Budget Summary
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 18281 West St. Paul, MN 55118	Free Residential Paper Shredding Saturday April 11, 9 am - noon West St. Paul Sports Complex (1650 Oakdale Ave) 8 grocery bag or bankers box limit		

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Several residents have suggested that part of the area, particularly the portion accessible from Angell Road, could serve as a small children's play area. Harmon Park is the only location in Sunfish Lake where such a recreational use is possible; Musser Park, for example, is protected by a Land Trust that prohibits these activities.

The Council will not take up this matter until late 2026. We are awaiting completion of the digitized records project so we can thoroughly review the historical documents related to this donation. In the meantime, community perspectives will continue to guide this important conversation.

A Message About the Future: Not Seeking Re-Election

For every season, there is a time for change. As I shared at our December Council meeting, this is a natural moment for transition. After serving on the Planning Commission, the City Council, and for the past seven years as your mayor, I have decided **not to seek re-election in 2026**.

It has been my honor to serve this remarkable community. Together, with residents, council members, and our dedicated staff we have achieved a tremendous amount, including:

- Bringing Sunfish Lake into the 21st century with a modernized city website and a streamlined digital presence
- Growing our email notification system from 7 to 239 subscribers, ensuring timely communication
- Reducing costs and improving service through more efficient budgeting
- Completing a comprehensive rewrite of our ordinances based on community input
- Partnering with West St. Paul to manage building permits and inspections, lowering fees by nearly 50% for major projects
- Digitizing city records for better accessibility and long-term preservation
- Completing our first professional financial audit and strengthening financial transparency
- Improving Charlton Road; making it safer and reducing winter accidents, while avoiding increased traffic burdens many residents feared.
- Supporting open dialogue on public safety, parks, and city-owned properties
- And fostering a culture of neighborliness and direct, respectful communication.

Sunfish Lake is stronger today because of the collective efforts of so many.

I encourage anyone with a passion for public service to consider getting involved, whether on committees, the Planning Commission, or future Council roles. Fresh perspectives and new energy will continue to strengthen our city.

Thank you for your trust, engagement, and support over the years. I look forward to cheering on Sunfish Lake as it continues to thrive. Wishing you and your families a healthy, happy, and successful 2026.

Warm regards,

Mayor Dan



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE CITY FOR INFORMATION YOU WANT OR NEED

Sign up to automatically receive email updates that interest you on the City's website at www.sunfishlake.org. Give us your email and we'll send updates periodically for the items you've selected. You can unsubscribe or add more options at any time.

Your information will be retained by the City of Sunfish Lake, but WILL NOT be shared, sold or used for other purposes.

STAY SAFE WITH THE RECYCLING ZONE

Instead of leaving unwanted household items like yard and garden chemicals, cleaners, auto products, electronics around your house or garage, take them to the Recycling Zone in Eagan instead.

The Recycling Zone makes sure the stuff that doesn't belong in the trash or recycling is disposed of the right way to keep our environment safe.

Dropping off is easy. You stay in your car while staff unload materials from the trunk or backseat. Put smaller items in a box that you can leave behind.

Accepted items – free drop-off unless noted

- Auto products like motor oil, antifreeze and gas
- Batteries
- Bug killers/repellants
- Cardboard (no larger than 36" x 36")
- Cleaners
- Electronics (fee for TVs and computer monitors)
- Lightbulbs – all types
- Needles and sharps (in a closed rigid container, keep in front seat)
- Paints and stains
- Personal care products like nail polish and hair dye
- Propane tanks and aerosol sprays
- Scrap metal
- Tires (fee)
- Small household electronics like toasters and vacuums
- String lights and cords
- Vaping devices
- Weed killer
- Most products that say caution, warning, danger or poison



If you have an unknown or unique household chemical, email recyclingzone@co.dakota.mn.us prior to dropping off to work with Recycling Zone staff about safe handling.

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

BURGLARIES AND THEFTS CAN OCCUR IN ANY COMMUNITY, but there are several simple steps residents can take to help deter these crimes in Sunfish Lake:

- 1. Lock it up.** Always ensure your vehicles and homes are locked and secure.
- 2. Reduce temptation.** Remove valuables from your vehicle whenever possible or place them out of sight in the trunk.
- 3. Use security systems.** Operational security systems in both vehicles and homes are highly effective deterrents.
- 4. Light the area.** Outdoor motion-activated lighting can discourage suspicious activity around your property.
- 5. Tell someone when you travel.** If you are going out of town, notify a trusted neighbor so they can keep an eye on your home. You may also inform the police department so we can keep an extra eye on your residence by calling **651-322-2323**, online at <https://spark.backingfire.com/dakota911mn>, or at <https://wspmn.gov/formcenter/vacation-5/vacation-home-card-46>.
- 6. Protect your mail.** Installing a USPS-approved locking curbside mailbox can help prevent mail theft.
- 7. Look out for one another.** Be aware of activity in your neighborhood. If you see something suspicious, call **911** or the non-emergency number at **651-322-2323**.

Working together as a community helps keep Sunfish Lake safe and secure.

SALT AND STORMWATER

For those of us living in colder climates like Minnesota, winter brings its share of challenges. Snowstorms, icy sidewalks, and deep freezes can turn everyday routines into hazards. To stay safe, many of us reach for salt to keep driveways and walkways clear.

While salt helps reduce slips and falls, it's important to remember that it doesn't disappear when the snow melts. Instead, it washes into lakes and streams, seeps into groundwater, and causes long-term environmental damage. Excess salt can harm aquatic life, degrade soil, and even impact drinking water quality.



The good news? You can help prevent salt pollution without sacrificing safety. Here's how:

- **Cut back, less is more.** A little salt goes a long way. Avoid over-applying on driveways, sidewalks, or parking lots.
- **Check the forecast.** Never salt hard surfaces if rain is expected or if temperatures are too low for salt to work effectively.
- **Shovel first.** The more snow and ice you remove by hand, the less salt you'll need.
- **Know salt's limits.** Most salts stop working at 15°F.
- **Apply evenly.** Use a hand spreader for consistent coverage and avoid dumping piles of salt.
- **Sweep up extra.** Reuse leftover salt instead of letting it wash away.
- **Consider pretreatment.** Mix 1 cup of salt with 2 cups of water to create brine and apply it before storms.
- **Store properly.** Keep salt in covered areas on hard surfaces to prevent runoff.
- **Follow local rules.** Check city ordinances for residential salt use guidelines.

A little planning and moderation can keep you safe while protecting Minnesota's waters. Every grain of salt matters, because once it's in the environment, it's there for good.



The City of Sunfish Lake does not have public works staff to perform maintenance and snow clearing of the city's streets. Instead, the city contracts those services out. The contractor is Executive Contractor's Inc., and the service is managed by City Engineer Justin Messner. An email address has been set up by the contractor for residents to use if they note areas within the city that they consider needing additional sand/ salt/ or clearing. The email address is sunfishlakesnow@gmail.com. Please copy Justin Messner at jmessner@wsbeng.com on all inquiries. The email goes straight to the contractor and will be followed up on by the city engineer as well. The contractor has proven to be very responsive to residents' concerns. The contractor also will apply a pretreatment to our road in advance of any snow event to help clear the roadways.

Please keep in mind that residents are responsible for snow removal at their own properties. Snow cannot be pushed in to the street or the street Right-of-Way, and must be stored on your private property. It can make the city snow clearing effort much more difficult if snow is pushed in to the City street Right-of-Way, and often results in a bigger wake of snow around mailboxes. The US Postal Service requires that residents clear snow from below their mailboxes to allow access to mail carriers. The snow plow contractor can not properly clear the streets without plowing snow in the vicinity of mailboxes. Thus, it is the residents responsibility to clear the snow around your mailboxes. Your cooperation is very much appreciated!

You can find the snow plowing policy on the City's website at sunfishlake.org

OUR CITY'S PARK LANDS

by Jim Naves

The City has a significant public green space available to our residents. Not only do we have Musser and Harmon Parks; but also the Wahl Wetland, a MNDOT pond and wetland near the NE corner of the City, and MNDOT managed land along Robert Street and Highway 494. Some of these spaces adjacent to highways were associated with 494's construction. This means that while public park space in the City is somewhat lower than the national average, when it is combined with highway adjacent public lands and our large individual home sites our total public/private green space is huge. We truly live in a nearly rural setting within a large metropolitan area.

All the public parks and green spaces are accessible from public streets or highways, and none have off-street parking. Access Musser Park by parking on the south side of Salem Church Road (no parking on the north side) adjacent to the park. Harmon Park is located on the west side of Angell Road at the far end near the dead-end circle turn around. Wahl Wetland is only accessible across public land directly from Highway 62 on the north edge of the City. In all cases all other points of entry into these public green spaces would require crossing private property. The MNDOT properties are accessible only from adjacent highways or from the eastern section of Salem Church Road.

Musser Park was given to the City by the Musser Family and is a city park that is managed by Sunfish Lake with supervision by the Minnesota Land Trust. Musser Park is about 20 acres in size. A walking trail makes a long loop through the park from the west side of the north meadow through the woodland areas and back out near the east side of the same meadow. A secondary walking trail crosses the interior meadow from the main trail on the west to the main trail on the east. There are four benches adjacent to these trails for resting or contemplating this lovely natural area. A past Boy Scout project installed bluebird houses in the meadow areas and bluebirds have been seen using them over the years. Arbor Day tree plantings and a Tree Trust planting event significantly increased the tree species diversity along the north woodland edge. No additional tree planting is planned within 100 feet of Salem Church Road to prevent winter roadway ice problems.

Harmon Park was given to the City by the Harmon Family and is a minimally managed eight-acre woodland. The dead end at the end of Angell Road marks approximately the center of the east side of the park. From the dead end, a private driveway bisects the middle of the park from the east side to a residence on the west side of the park. There is a walking trail that has fallen into disrepair due to heavy snows, storm damage and dead trees that occasionally fall over. If you would like to see where this trail circles through the park, please contact the City Forester and he will happily show you the old "trail route".

The story I have heard about the **Wahl Wetland** is that this parcel of land was given to the City as a location to eventually build a city hall. That is not likely to happen due to the substantial expense of maintaining such a facility along with the fact that most of the property is a wetland. I've also been told that the wetland itself was once farmed to grow celery. Horses were used then and the horses had something like snowshoes covering their feet so they could walk through the marsh safely. Fascinating ... there are no trails in the Wahl Wetland other than those created by our abundant wildlife. There are no maintained trails on the various MNDOT owned lands though they can be accessed for walking, birding, or hiking related activities.

2026 ELECTION INFORMATION

- Primary Election – August 11, 2026
- General Election – November 3, 2026

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

Interested in becoming an election judge: Election judges are temporary, paid employees of local election officials trained to handle all aspects of voting at the polling place. Serving as an election judge is a chance to learn about elections and is a great service to the community. You will be required to participate in a training session that will be roughly two hours. Contact Christy Wilcox at cwilcoxclerk@gmail.com

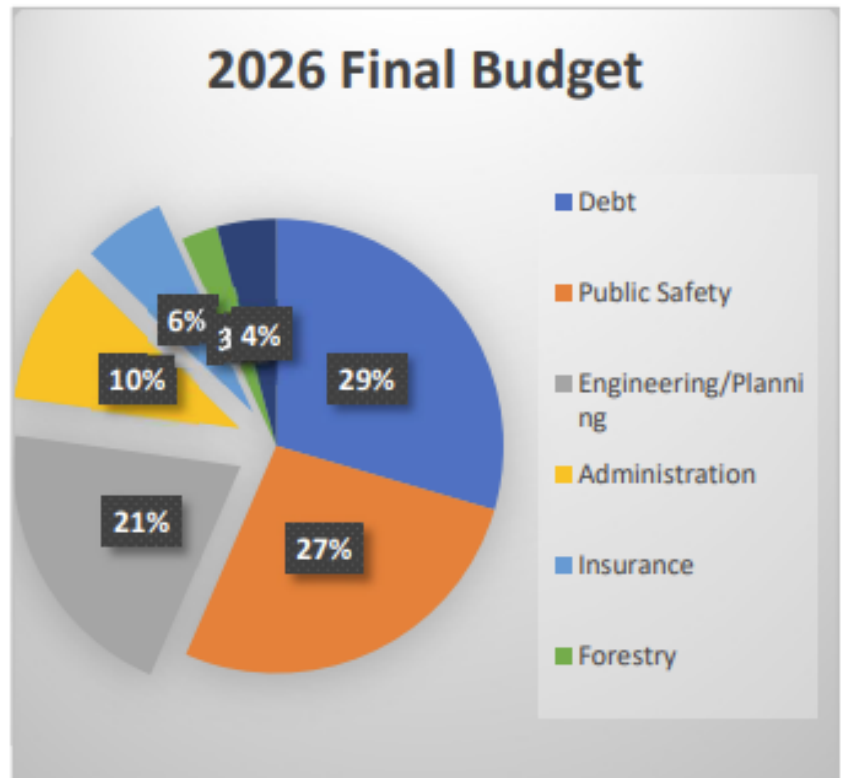
More information on the 2026 election will be posted on the City's website and upcoming newsletters.

2026 Final Budget Summary

At the December 10th Council meeting the Final Budget was adopted.
Below is a summary of the 2026 budget. If you have questions contact
the treasurer at char.stark@sunfishlake.org

2026 Budget by Program

Debt	\$237,601.00
Public Safety	216,969.00
Engineering/Planning	166,000.00
Administration	82,345.50
Insurance	47,000.00
Forestry	20,625.00
Road Projects(Capital)	34,000.00
TOTAL FINAL BUDGET	\$804,540.50



Budget Revenues

Levy	664,416.58	82.56%
Aid	15,636.00	1.94%
Permits	4,000.00	0.50%
Charges for Services	3,000.00	0.37%
Fines	3,000.00	0.37%
Interest	6,000.00	0.75%
Special Assessments	106,727.95	13.26%
Miscellaneous	1,000.00	0.12%
Franchise fees	1,000.00	0.12%
Total	804,780.53	100.00%

Budget Highlights

Staffing :

City staffing has not changed.
2 positions-City Administrator
City Treasurer

Programs:

Capital program for 2026
(Asphalt rejuvenator on Grieve Glen Rd,
Zender rd, Angell Rd (East), Sunny Side Ln

Debt:

Principal reduction of: \$35,980