



Sunfish Lake Quarterly

Fall 2024 Volume 24 Issue 4

Greetings Neighbors,

I hope you all had a fun-filled summer, despite record rain, and are now enjoying the beautiful colors and crisp weather of the Fall season.

I'm pleased to share some good news: with your help, we successfully lobbied the FAA to keep our current flight dispersal patterns, avoiding the concentrated flights over Sunfish Lake that were initially planned with the new RNAV Navigation procedures for 2025. A huge thank you to everyone who reached out to our legislators and lent their support—your efforts truly made a difference!

I also want to thank you for your involvement in opposing the Middle Housing bill, which would have required multiple housing types in all cities. While the bill didn't pass, the Metropolitan Council's Imagine 2050 Comprehensive Plan still mandates that all cities, regardless of size, allow more than one type of housing in residential areas. They intend to vote on that by 2025. As a designated Rural Residential Community, Sunfish Lake faces unique challenges, including our reliance on septic systems and wells. I testified at the Met Council's Public Hearing on September 25th to advocate for our exemption, reminding them of their 2015 statement that, "The Council has determined that Sunfish Lake does not have a share of the region's need for low- and moderate-income housing."

Now for some good financial news: with Char Stark as our new City Treasurer, we've done a thorough review of the budget and identified areas where we could make significant reductions without changing service. As a result, you'll notice a significant decrease in the city tax portion of your property taxes this year. As related previously, while taxes will increase in years when major street projects are required, we don't anticipate any for next year.

Additionally, we've received some welcome financial support from the state. Thanks to a new bill, the Small Cities Assistance program is now providing formula-based road aid to smaller cities like SFL. Minn. Stat. § 162.145. Previously, only cities 5,000 and above received major funds from the State to assist with road projects. We've already received \$13,153.50 in funding this year, which has been added to our "Road Capital Project Fund" and will allow us to reduce future taxes related to road projects.

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City Council

Dan O'Leary, Mayor
Mike Hovey
Steven Bulach
Ginny Beckett
Shannon Nelson

Planning Commission

Tom Hendrickson, Chair
Dominick Driano
Jeannine Naves
Claire Noble
Kevin Wu

City Clerk/Administrator

Christy Wilcox
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In this Issue

Message from the Mayor
Recycle Right
Prevent Stormwater Pollution by Reporting
Illicit Discharges
Pick Up the Poop!
2024 Election Information
Tree Pruning and Removals Near City
Streets

Upcoming Recycling Events:

Free Pumpkin Collection for Composting

November 2-3

Mendakota Park (2111 Mendakota Drive, Mendota Heights)
WSP Sports Complex (1650 Oakdale Ave, West St. Paul)
Wakota Federal Credit Union (1151 Southview Blvd, So. St. Paul)

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Another area where we need your help: SFL saw a significant rise in fire calls this year, which increased our fire protection costs. Fire protection is one of our largest expenses, and since our costs are shared with Mendota and Lilydale on a pro rata basis, the increase in calls—up 42.5% from last year—raised our 2025 fire protection budget by 22.22%, from \$90,000 to a 2025 budgeted amount of \$110,000. It was a challenge absorbing that large an increase while still reducing overall taxes on an annual budget of \$814,799. Please be mindful of fire risks around your homes that if left unattended may trigger a fire call as this will help us manage costs moving forward.

As we wrap up the year, I want to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season. I hope you have time to relax and enjoy time with family and friends. Let's look forward to the new year with optimism and continue working together to make our community even stronger. "Happy holidays!"

Warm regards,
Dan O'Leary

RECYCLE RIGHT

Recycling saves energy and protects natural resources. Recycling also supports important businesses across the country, and some that operate right here in Minnesota.

Help support the recycling industry by recycling right. Put these recyclables loose in your home recycling cart or use a paper bag. Do not use plastic bags. 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.

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



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.

PREVENT STORMWATER POLLUTION BY REPORTING ILLICIT DISCHARGES

Lakes, rivers, and streams are an important part of our ecosystem, and we all have a part to play in keeping them clean. One way to fulfill this role is to report illicit discharges. What exactly are illicit discharges? And what do they have to do with keeping our waters clean? The answer to these questions starts with storm drains.

Everyone has seen the storm drains along the side of the roads and probably wondered where they go. What most people don't know is that, unlike the wastewater from your home that is sent to water treatment facilities, the water that flows through these storm systems is drained directly into lakes, rivers, and streams. The water does not undergo any filtration or treatment to clean it before reaching surface waters. This is why it is so important to avoid and report illicit discharges.



Illicit discharge refers to any discharge to the stormwater drainage system, (commonly through drains in streets, gutters, ditches, and ponds) lakes, rivers, and streams other than stormwater. Substances that could be harmful include paint, trash, car fluids (like oil and gas), and cleaning materials. These are just a few examples of what an illicit discharge could look like, so it's important to remember that the only thing that should be entering the storm system is stormwater.

Reporting an illicit discharge can be a crucial act in stopping water pollution and keeping our waters clean, so please, if you witness an illicit discharge, report it to your city immediately. For spills of potentially hazardous substances, call 9-1-1 right away.

PICK UP THE POOP!

With all the joys of having a pet, one of the not-so-glamorous parts would be cleaning up after them. Pet waste left uncollected is not only unsightly but unsanitary with detrimental effects to human health and the environment.

When pet waste is washed away into our waterways, via our storm sewer systems, it depletes oxygen levels, releases ammonia and excess nutrients, all of which contribute to unsightly weeds and algal blooms while harming fish and other aquatic organism populations. It also contains pathogenic bacteria and other parasites leading to health issues such as increased levels of *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) making lakes and rivers unsafe for swimming and recreational activities.

Please remember to take time at home to properly dispose of your pet's waste and be sure to bring along equipment like doggy bags to clean-up when you're on the go. It's up to us to keep our local waters clean!



2024 ELECTION INFORMATION



General Election – Tuesday, November 5th: Candidates for the City of Sunfish Lake Mayor and two (2) Councilmember positions will be listed on the General Election Ballot.

Polling Location: Voting will be held at First Calvary Baptist Church, 5495 So. Robert Trail and voting hours are 7:00 am to 8:00 p.m.

Absentee Ballots: Residents may vote by absentee ballot. Absentee ballots may be obtained at the Dakota County Northern Service Center, 1 Mendota Road W, West St. Paul. For questions regarding absentee voting, please contact Dakota County at 651-438-4305. All absentee ballots must arrive by election day.

Voter Registration: If you are not a registered voter, have recently moved to Sunfish Lake or have changed your name, you may register at the polls on Election Day.

- ✓ Please visit the City's website at www.sunfishlake.org or www.mnvotes.org for additional election information.

TREE PRUNING AND REMOVALS NEAR CITY STREETS

Jim Naves, City Forester

Trees along City streets within the right of way (ROW) are sometimes removed or pruned by City Staff or by other tree care providers under contract to the City. Sometimes is a key word here since trees along City streets are owned by the property owner adjacent to that street. The City generally gets involved when a storm causes a tree or branch to fall or if a tree is observed and determined likely to fall or drop major branches onto a public street or walkway. Safety is the primary concern.

The City does not make it a practice to pull vines out of trees unless the vine is determined to create the likelihood of the tree falling onto a street or walkway. On the other hand, any property owner may, at their discretion pull vines out of their trees along any street even if they just do not like the way vines look in their trees. Vines occasionally cause tree damage and if a vine is deemed to be a safety risk to residents, the City would have authority to remove that vine.

City tree work is limited to the street ROW's which is typically about 10'-15' from the edge of the street hard surface. If a tree is further away than the street ROW and is damaged, diseased or dead and is likely to fall toward a street, the property owner may be contacted with a request to remove that tree by a specified future date.