

BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE NEWS



City of Birchwood Village, MN

Spring 2020

Welcome new residents: Andrew & Rebecca Place (25 Oakridge), and Elliot Rauscher & Katherine Weier (613 Wildwood), Jon and Joshua Rydel (4 Oakview Ct), and Erin Rafael (542 Wildwood)

Our condolences to:

The friends and family of Paul Carlson.

Jane Wernet and Michael Werner on the passing of Jane's mother Jean.

More talent in Birchwood: Gail Dietz's work was recently displayed at the White Bear Center for the Arts.

Our thanks to:

- Felicia Leammukda and Alicia Jackola for putting on another super Christmas party.
- All our neighbors who have cleared snow away from fire hydrants. THANK YOU!

KAYAK/CANOE RACK INFORMATION

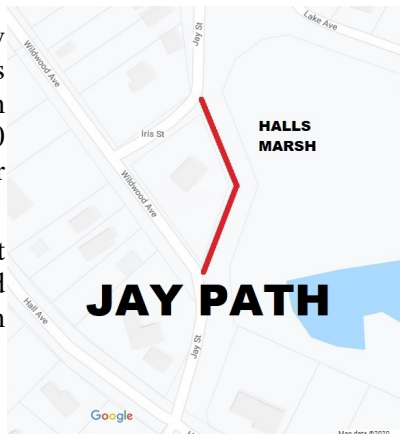
Registration is now open - you must register your boat and obtain a permit sticker before placement on a rack - or it will be impounded. Fee is \$30 per boat. The council has waived the fee for anyone whose household Adjusted Gross Income is less than \$35,000 (with proof via 1040; one waiver per address).

JAY PATH IS NOW OPEN

The City has opened a new walkway just west of Hall's Marsh. Walkers can gain access to it off the 600 block of Wildwood Ave or off Iris St on the west end.

This scenic route is a quiet respite that lets walkers avoid two sections of roadway with limited sight lines.

Enjoy!



SPRING LEAF PICK UP

The city will again provide for spring leaf pick up. Road signs will be put out at the entrances into town the week prior to the pick up weekend. Check www.CityofBirchwood.com/events for more info. Since the contractor makes many swings through town, **if you use the service multiple times, you will be billed for each pick up.**

DISEASE TREE REMOVAL REMINDER

If you have a diseased tree that must be removed pursuant to city code, please remember the last day to remove it is April 15.

NORDLING PARK NOW NAMED "POLLY'S PARK"

Last year the council requested input on renaming Nordling Park. Research of how the park was named showed it was simply named after a family who lived nearby. Some residents had mistakenly believed the land had been donated by the family.

With the Birchwood Centennial next year, the council thought it would be a good time to rename the park and give honor to someone or something of historical significance. A number of submissions were received with Polly Shank's name coming in on top.

Bridget Sperl has been working on our Centennial and she filed this bio of Polly's accomplishments:

Polly Shank (1919-2008) was a long time resident of Birchwood and a well known water color artist. She founded, with her husband, Jack, the Birchwood Fourth of July parade, which has been held annually for over fifty years. She was also a founding member of the White Bear Arts Council (now the White Bear Center for the Arts). She continued her involvement with the organization for over 40 years. Her passion for art was grounded in the belief that art is for everyone, and everyone needs art. She served on the board of directors for many years, and grew into a fierce advocate for the WBCA. In her 90th year, Polly continued to be actively involved as a working artist, painting, exhibiting, campaigning for the arts, taking classes, organizing volunteers, planning, negotiating, and serving as a guiding light and inspiration as Director Emeritus.

Polly was also active in Planned Parenthood, a board member of the St. Paul YMCA, and the former Washington County Chairwoman of the Republican Party. She was an expert sailor and sportswoman.

The programs she was instrumental in creating continue to inspire and bring together our community.

Clearly, Polly was a fixture in our city and our community and deserving of this honor. The new park will be dedicated in the next year. The council declared it will be named "Polly's Park."

HYDRANT FLUSHING REMINDER

Hydrant flushing will begin about mid-April. This may cause turbulence in the water mains and discoloration may result. If this occurs, run the water until it is clear - the water will still be safe.

SPRING PLANT EXCHANGE

Help "spruce" up the Village on Saturday June 6. Bring a plant to City Hall at 10 a.m. to exchange and leave with a plant! Don't miss out on this Birchwood tradition!

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“DISPOSABLES” DOWN THE TOILET?

With the problems at the Wildwood Lift Station, now is a good time to remind everyone that NOTHING but toilet paper should be tossed down the drain. Any wipes, paper towels, cat litter, floss, diapers, cotton balls or other “flushables” will indeed flush...They will also clog up our lift stations' pumps and require expensive repairs. This is not good and will result in higher sewer fees.

Please be mindful that we need everyone to help us keep our systems running in top form. Please place these items in the garbage where they will be happily removed by our hauler and properly disposed of. THANK YOU!

SENIOR HELP IS HERE!

For many years, Birchwood has actively supported Northeast Youth and Family Services. This is a non-profit organization that provides mental health services and serves youth and seniors. Youth services include counseling, day treatment, development and employment. In addition, it provides help to seniors. Here is a summary of those services:

Our goal is to help seniors live independently and happily in their homes for as long as possible. Any person that is 60 years old and lives within the areas that we serve [including Birchwood] is eligible for the Senior Chore Program.

The program pairs youth or adult workers with seniors that are in need of indoor or outdoor chore services. NYFS will pay the worker and will ask you to contribute a cost share amount according to your income. Payment is a donation and not a bill. The program also accepts special waiver insurance reimbursements.

Outdoor chores: Lawn mowing, gardening, garage cleaning, snow removal and seasonal chores.

Indoor chores: Routine cleaning, heavy cleaning, organizing and downsizing.

NYFS also sponsors one-time projects which are completed by local volunteers and are no cost to the senior.

To inquire about joining the program, contact Madelyn Murray at 651-757-4061, Work cell: 651-308-3490 or madelyn@nyfs.org.

This is an excellent opportunity for our seniors to gain the help they need to stay in their homes while maintaining their independence.

WILDWOOD LIFT STATION UPDATE

As most of you know, last month White Bear Township had a watermain break near our border. The spewing water worked its way down through the bed rock and flooded our main lift station. That caused significant damage including overwhelming our pumps, shorting them out, resulting in many homes being flooded. We are in the process of working with the Township to cover these claims. It has been a very expensive process for all.

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UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO

Please update your utility account contact info - so YOU can be contacted in cases of utility emergencies. Call St. Anthony Village at: 612-782-3317. Thank you!

MAYOR'S NOTES

There is going to be a lot of road construction around the area this season. We are in good shape in Birchwood and the only project we have pending is the Lake Avenue mill and overlay. This project was delayed last year to let the council review our payment options. Since we are starting a new round of such improvements and the city last overlaid all its roads in the late 1990s, we wanted to “pave” a consistent path going forward.

Fortunately, our contractor TS Tshifsky has held the contract bid for 2020-- other communities are finding costs have increased substantially this year.

Last month, the city council held an Open House to let everyone weigh in on special assessment vs. increasing our tax base. Overwhelmingly, residents preferred the latter, despite that many of those who weighed in would actually pay more. The Roads Committee had previously endorsed this option as well. Here are some of the reasons:

Special assessments can only be made to the level of increase to property value. Otherwise, the city must pay for construction through property taxes. Some raised concerns that any increase in value seems amorphous. Special assessment legal requirements add a lot of extra professional billable hours and costs...about 25%.

Then there are issues of fairness. Much of the town exits the city via Hall Ave and Cedar St creating more wear and tear costs for those abutting properties compared to other roads. And many properties are nuanced by multiple frontages and odd sizes, front footage vs. per lot unit, etc. Apportionment is problematic with so many variables.

Two residents summed up their support of a tax levy by stating we are a community where we all enjoy the benefits of our resources together--the greater good is served by sharing the costs for such. (Both of these residents took this position despite the fact that they personally would incur more taxes due to the location of their residences).

I was so proud of our residents who came together with different interests and perspectives and worked through the issue in a very thoughtful manner. It was the best of democracy in action. I and the council are very appreciative of the conversation. It allowed us to reach a consensus to pay for mill and overlay improvements via our tax levy. Next up: we will need to adjust our planning for funding road upkeep (mill and overlaying all city roads will exceed \$1 million). Most of them should last another ten years, so we have time to plan for our future needs.

Have a happy spring. m