



BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE NEWS



City of Birchwood Village, MN

Winter 2017

CITY OF BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE BUDGET

The purpose of this report is to provide summary 2018 budget information concerning the City of Birchwood Village to interested citizens. The budget is published in accordance with Minnesota Statute Section 471.6965. This budget is not complete; the complete budget may be examined at Birchwood City Hall, 207 Birchwood Avenue, Birchwood Village, Minnesota 55110 during normal business hours.

ICE RINK/WARMING HOUSE BITS:

Open 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday – Friday
And 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Saturday – Sunday.
WEATHER PERMITTING!

SNOWPLOW FEEDBACK?

Send us your thoughts - good or bad.
info@cityofbirchwood.com

Revenues:	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Property Taxes	326,299	354,500
Total Revenues	<u>326,299</u>	<u>354,500</u>

Expenditures:

Current:		
General Govt.	127,820	160,631
Public Safety	73,250	75,639
Pub. Wrks. (St. & Hwy.)	46,000	43,500
Sanitation	25,000	24,500
Culture and Rec.	15,200	15,570
Misc. & Conserv.	9,029	4,660
Trans to other funds	<u>30,000</u>	<u>30,000</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>326,299</u>	<u>354,500</u>

Excess (deficiency)	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
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Property Tax Levy to Fund This Budget	<u><u>326,299</u></u>	<u><u>354,500</u></u>
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Welcome New Residents: Patricia Lydon, 263 Cedar St...Mike Storebo, 312 Wildwood Ave...Lindsay Wynne, 289 Jay St

VILLAGE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Come celebrate the season with your neighbors and Santa. Santa Claus will make a special appearance at the annual Birchwood Holiday Party on **Wed., Dec. 20, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.** at the Village Hall. All Birchwood children are invited to stop by and decorate their own cookie and sip on hot chocolate, make an ornament and tell Santa their Christmas wishes. This is an opportunity for all Birchwood families – kids and adults alike – to enjoy a bit of holiday cheer with their neighbors! This event is free and snacks and beverages will be provided. Kids wearing jammies are welcome. If you have questions or would like to help at the party, call Amy Johnson, 612-308-7902, Angie Churchill, 651-271-6334 or Sara Nephew, 651-249-3800.

Our Condolences to:

Nick Hartzel on the passing of his brother Patrick.

Denise West on the passing of Mike Boerjan (aka Borj) who was a dedicated volunteer sanding/salting the Cedar hill.

Our Thanks to: John Manship, our plumbing inspector, who installed our three low-flow toilets at city hall at no charge. It is great to be green!

Residents who add a bright light to the community:

The Will family (9 Oakridge) and Trinkka family (125 Birchwood Av) have brightened the neighborhood with elaborate Christmas light displays. It brings joy to our neighborhood. Thank you!

2018 WATER AND SEWER RATES

The Birchwood Utility Committee meet this past month to review the sewer and water rates for 2018. A one-year water main break surcharge was instituted this past summer to recover costs from an unusually high number of breaks this past winter. The water fund is back in the black and so the surcharge will be removed as planned after the March 2018 billing.

Our last water rate increase was in 2015. The quarterly Water Utility base fee will again remain unchanged. The cost of water has gone up since 2015 and the committee decided to increase the Water usage rate by 7% to cover that cost. The City of White Bear Lake may adjust rates to cover their costs in the lake level lawsuit. We will keep the city council informed.

The sewer fund was also reviewed. The fund is fiscally sound and has been increasing of late, however, the city will be paying about \$60,000 for the final phase of the sewer lining project. (See “Sewer Project Ahead” article.) It was recommended the city maintain the rates at the current level with the belief the fund will recover those sums in the next couple of years. This approach would save the city from seeking a bond and the expenses generated from that process.

SEWER PROJECT AHEAD

The leftover sections of the sewer pipes that were not lined previously will get their cured-in-place sleeves installed this winter. The areas affected include portions of Oakridge Dr, Birchwood Cts, and White Pine Ln. The good news is residents’ assessments will be capped at \$628.30 per household as this is what our appraiser said the maximum benefit conferred is. No property can be assessed more than it is being benefitted (Fifth Amendment --US Constitution).

MEETING YOUR NEIGHBOR ONE NEWSLETTER AT A TIME:

Scott and Brenda Tofte used to live on South Shore Blvd and were looking for a home in Birchwood with the specific intention not to buy a split level house. Their three kids had friends in Birchwood and often remarked they “never met anyone from Birchwood that wasn’t nice.” They have lived here for 16 years now.

Scott and Brenda are originally from northern Minn.--Brenda from the Iron Range; Scott from Tofte.

Scott’s family name is familiar to most of us Minnesotans—the Tofte’s came over from Norway in the late 1800s. After spending a year on the North

Shore, they returned home and brought back 25 fellow Norwegians the following year and founded Tofte. The farms were hardscrabble and there were no roads until the 1930s. Fishing provided sustenance and provisions (food, sewing machines, pianos, and everything else) were brought by boat to their long dock near what is now Bluefin Bay. In winter, Native American John Beargrease brought the mail by dog sled.

Scott and Brenda moved to the cities to take care of their niece. Her mother had died when she was six and her father died when she was 13. Brenda and Scott thought they would stay through Christmas—they stayed until their niece was able to graduate from high school. The Toftes then moved to White Bear Lake because of the White Bear school district. Scott also had an aunt on Buffalo Street and loved spending time here with her.

Tofte’s kids, Noah, Luke and Emma, are now adults. Scott and Brenda live with their Husky Zeus on Jay St. in a split level house they thought they never wanted.

MAYOR’S NOTES:

The 2018 budget was approved by the city council this month. The 8% increase is the first increase since I helped reduce taxes 17% from the high-water mark of \$400,000 in 2008. Next year’s levy is still 11% below that high-water mark ten years ago, and certainly there have been many years of enjoying the efficiencies and cost savings we have been able to find. We remain committed to using your tax dollars wisely.

The primary increase next year is funding our office operations. We have used extra staff to address excess demands on time for things such as the legislative-mandated Comprehensive Plan, requests for data, and addressing many code issues (including impervious surface rules, right-of-way use, and policy changes). We are also fortunate to have the assistance of our very capable city administrator to help us navigate these challenges.

Since 2014, the city clerk position has been staffed by recent graduates for from a public administration masters program. This has worked well and provided the city with employees who had considerably more education than the position required. This synergy allowed the city to employ staff it would otherwise not be able to afford, and allowed the employee to gain experience applying his/her skills.

With the current situation, the city council and I believe it is in our best interests to maintain a longer relationship with staff with all these excess demands. In doing so, the city must compete with other larger communities to retain its employees and provide comparable compensation. We are increasing our legal budget as well to compensate our attorney who has spent too many hours already helping us deal with these excess demands. We hope you agree. I wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and New Year! - m