

Sunfish Lake Quarterly

October 2026 Volume 26 Issue 4

Greetings, Neighbors,

I hope you have been enjoying our unpredictable fall weather, 90 degrees one day and 56 just two days later! Fortunately, the fall colors have been beautiful.

A Time to Say Thank You

As I shared in my January message, I will not be seeking reelection. After eight years as Mayor, preceded by service on the City Council and Planning Commission, this is my final newsletter message to you. I leave office proud of what Sunfish Lake has accomplished and confident in the community's future.

Serving this community has been a privilege. Because our elected officials and Planning Commissioners serve without compensation, and our small city relies heavily on volunteers, I am especially grateful to everyone who gives their time, expertise, and energy to make Sunfish Lake a wonderful place to live.

To my colleagues on the City Council: Thank you for your collaboration and shared commitment to doing what is best for our residents. Meaningful progress depends on working together, and I have appreciated your partnership.

- Mike Hovey
- Shannon Nelson
- Tom Hendrickson
- Claire Noble

To our exceptional staff and professional partners: Your expertise and dedication have been essential to our work. Thank you for helping turn priorities into results and for supporting the City throughout my tenure.

- 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
- Lori Johnson, City Planner
- Justin Messner, City Engineer
- Jim Nayes, City Forester
- Dennis Schilling and the Building Inspection team
- Steve Kleist, Septic System Inspector
- Courtney Selstad, Recycling Coordinator

To our Planning Commissioners: In a predominantly residential community like ours, the Planning Commission plays a vital role in shaping the City's future and supporting the Council's work. Thank you for your thoughtful deliberation and dedicated service.

- Kevin Wu, Chairperson
- Ginny Beckett
- Jeannine Nayes
- John Oakman

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City Council
Dan O'Leary, Mayor
Tom Hendrickson
Mike Hovey
Shannon Nelson
Claire Noble

Planning Commission
Ginny Beckett
Jeannine Nayes
John Oakman
Kevin Wu

City Clerk/Administrator
Christy Wilcox
cwilcoxclerk@gmail.com

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Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 18281
West St. Paul, MN
55118

Free Yard Sign Recycling
November 4-13 during City Hall business hours (closed Nov 11)
West St. Paul City Hall (1616 Humboldt Ave)
Recycling of corrugated plastic yard signs (election, graduation, etc)
Please ask campaigns if they want signs returned before recycling

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To our volunteers: A small city like Sunfish Lake could not function as effectively without residents willing to contribute their time and knowledge. Thank you to:

- **Dr. Joel Arney**, Sunfish Lake's representative on the Executive Committee of the Northern Dakota County Cable Commission.
- **John Oakman, Scott Spaeth, and Jim Stowell**, our water-sampling volunteers who help keep our lakes healthy.
- **Dr. Dan Halvorsen**, our resident representative to the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization.
- **Liz Lee**, co-chair of the Musser Park Restoration Committee with our City Forester, Jim Nayes.
- **Gretchen and Erik Funk**, alternate representatives on the Airport Noise Oversight Committee.
- **Our election judges**, **Ginny Beckett, Patricia Penovich, Francie Sullivan, Renee Schmitt, Bob Anderson, Jeannine Nayes, Shelley Little, Barb Tani, and Jan Nielsen**, whose service helps ensure that our elections run smoothly and our democracy functions as it should.

A special thank-you to **Pastor Mike Verway and the congregation of First Calvary Baptist Church** for generously providing a home for City Hall at no cost to residents for the past six years. Their generosity extends well beyond the use of the building: they also set up tables and chairs for our meetings and make the church available for voting by Inver Grove Heights and Sunfish Lake residents. Mike believes in giving back to the community, and he and his congregation exemplify that spirit. I am deeply grateful.

I also want to thank **Mayor Dave Napier and City Manager Nate Burkett of West St. Paul** for their excellent partnership throughout my term, including the provision of essential police services and, more recently, building inspection services. It has been a pleasure working with them.

A Special Thank You to Mike Hovey
Mike, our longest-serving Council member, has been an invaluable source of institutional knowledge and perspective. With his father having also served as Sunfish Lake's Mayor, Mike brings a deep understanding of our history and the values on which our community was founded. His steady guidance and years of dedication have helped preserve what makes Sunfish Lake special.
On behalf of the Council and our residents, thank you, Mike, for your many years of service. You will be missed, and I wish you all the best in your next chapter.

Thank you, Residents
Finally, thank you to all the residents who have reached out to me over the years, with encouragement, questions, concerns, and constructive criticism. Your perspectives and suggestions have helped the City improve. Public service is most effective when residents engage, share their views, and hold their local government accountable. I have valued those conversations and the opportunity to serve you.

That community spirit was evident at the October 13 Council meeting, when residents gathered for the presentation of the **Musser Park Restoration Project**. This is an exciting opportunity to enhance our largest park through the generosity of the Minnesota Land Trust. The project will take years to complete, and the Land Trust's investment reflects the importance of having an engaged community committed to maintaining the improvements for the long term. Thank you to everyone who has shown interest and support.

Property Taxes: Providing Some Relief
As shared in our September 12 email to residents, Dakota County is increasing its property taxes by nearly 19% next year, and the school district is expected to increase its portion by a similar amount. To help offset these increases, the Council voted to use $300,000 in surplus funds to reduce the Sunfish Lake portion of residents' property taxes. We hope this decision will provide some relief from the overall increase in property tax bills.

Looking Ahead
Sunfish Lake will experience a significant leadership transition, with three Council seats changing hands in 2026. Steve Bulach left earlier this year, and Mike Hovey and I will conclude our terms on December 31.

After eight years as Mayor and my earlier service on the Planning Commission and City Council, I am grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to this community. I am confident Sunfish Lake is in good hands. The incoming Council will bring its own perspectives and priorities while continuing the work of preserving and improving our community for the benefit of all residents.

Thank you for your trust, your engagement, and the opportunity to serve. It has been an honor.

Warm regards,
Mayor Dan

2026 ELECTION INFORMATION

General Election – Tuesday, November 3rd: Candidates for the City of Sunfish Lake Mayor, two (2) Councilmember positions and a special election for (1) Councilmember to fill vacancy 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.

LEAVES & COMPOSTING

When left in streets or washing into storm drains, they carry nutrients into lakes and rivers, increasing algae growth and reducing oxygen levels for fish and wildlife. Composting yard waste at home or using community programs keep these nutrients in your garden rather than in our water.



Tips for Residents:

- ✓ Rake leaves and grass clippings that have accumulated along your curb, sidewalk, and driveway.
- ✓ Use your grass clippings and leaves as compost or mulch for your lawn or garden.
- ✓ Bag your yard waste for curb-side pick-up or dispose of your waste at a yard waste disposal facility.
- ✓ Properly dispose of raked leaves in yard waste bins/bags.
- ✓ Do not sweep or blow leaves into street.
- ✓ **Compost Yard Waste.** Turn leaves, grass clippings, and small branches into nutrient-rich compost instead of leaving them on streets or near storm drains.
- ✓ **Mulch Grass Clippings.** Leave clippings on your lawn so they return nutrients to the soil and reduce the need for fertilizer.



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 will 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 shred, sold or used for other purposes.

RECYCLING WORKS

Recycling is a team sport, and each player is important. Haulers collect recycling and bring it to a recycling facility. At the recycling facility, people pull contaminants out and keep the equipment running. Machines sort by materials to make sure items go to the right places. Businesses and manufacturers, many of which are local to Minnesota, turn those items into new products like boxes, bottles, cans and even lawn furniture.

This process starts at home. When you recycle right, you maximize the number of valuable materials that can be turned into new products. Recycle these items:

Paper
- Newspaper and inserts
- Magazines and catalogs
- Mail and office papers

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

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



How to recycle right:
- Empty and dry bottles, jars and containers (they don't need to be perfect—just free of most food and residue).
- Leave caps on containers.
- Flatten boxes.
- Put these items loose into your recycling bins.
- Do not put plastic bags, batteries, black plastic, food and things that can tangle around moving machines into your recycling at home

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.

OTHER UPCOMING FREE COLLECTIONS

Pumpkin Collection for Compost
November 7-8

Mendakota Park (2000-2198 Mendakota Dr, Mendota Heights)
WSP Sports Complex (1650 Oakdale Ave, West St. Paul)
Wakota Federal Credit Union (1151 Southview Blvd, South St. Paul)

Holiday Lights Collection for Recycling
November 16-January 29

Mendota Heights City Hall (1101 Victoria Curve)
West St. Paul City Hall (1616 Humboldt Ave)
South St. Paul City Hall (125 Third Ave N)