

Wahkon Wire

Volume 1, Issue 2

July 2010

Wahkon Days Reorganizes

Volunteers needed

The annual event known as Wahkon Days held in late August takes on a new look for 2010 with a reorganization of committee members.

Long sponsored by the Wahkon Civic Association, the celebration this year will be run by a new committee of local citizens with sponsorship by the city.

In recent meetings, city officials thanked the Wahkon Civic Association for their many years of tireless efforts and dedication to this event. "We will need volunteers in order to continue this tradition. Hopefully the weekend will be fun for everyone," said Clerk Karrie Roeschlein.

Most events will remain, such as Classic Car Cruise/Parade on Friday night Aug 20th at 7 pm. Saturday Aug 21st we will start at 1 pm with the Mille Lacs Hospice Butterfly release at the Ellen Ruth Park. Thereafter a coin hunt, minnow races, music, food and fun; with the parade at 7 pm followed by the street dance with the band *King's Ransom*.

On Sunday Aug 22nd, Wahkon Area Vision Effusion (WAVE) will host a picnic at the City Park with free food and a fishing contest for kids.

Folks with an interest in helping spark the popular events are asked to contact the Clerk at City Hall.

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Wahkon Cleanup

Rain sprinkles failed to dampen the spirits of folks from all around the village who attempted to tidy up their houses, cabins, yards and back lots during Wahkon Clean Up Day, Sat., May 22.

The effort, sponsored by the City Of Wahkon during the past three years, is spearheaded by employees and volunteers to curb blight conditions that detract from the town's overall appearance.

Numbers of participants poured in to the city center all day and the piles of scrap metals, old tires, appliances, and general debris impressed the volunteers and city employees taking part.

On hand to assist residents with their detritus heaped on trailers and in cars and pickups were City Clerk Karrie Roeschlein, Maintenance Supervisor Chris Weinreich and volunteer Jim Maciazka.



Jim's Mille Lacs Disposal, who has participated for three years, loaded tons of waste materials and filled a trailer with old appliances. Area scrap dealers also lent a helping hand loading and sorting materials and metals which could be recycled for future use.

Overall costs for the city cleanup included \$2,548 to Jim's for disposal and hauling to the landfill. Helping to offset expenses were donations from residents which this year totaled \$295. In 2009

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Docks OK on City Access Sites

In a move to settle a long-simmering issue of businesses operating docks and ramps on city property, the council voted in March to approve docks for Walleye Dundee's and Island View Resort. Dundee's also scored a nod from the city for its ramp operation.

Final approval of the five-year lease agreements came this spring when the resorts presented their drafts to the council prior to the fishing opener. Cost to the businesses ranged from \$500 for Dundee's dock and ramp to \$400 for Island View's dock. Provisions for insurance and limits of use were also assigned as part of the lease agreements.

During rounds of talks, it was revealed that resorts have utilized this property off Main St. since around the 1930's. There was a lease between one resort and the City in 1944 wherein the payment was \$5 per year.

To reach a point where a new lease could be drafted, the City Council called a special workshop meeting in October, 2009, at which members of the public and the council mulled over conflicting views on the issue of lake access. Throughout the process which occupied more meeting time throughout the winter, the council also solicited information from the public, other communities and City Attorney Bob Ruppe in formulating its dock permitting process.

The city also allows a permit for a private dock at the Maple Lane access site off Lake Shore Blvd. There a resident annually rents space from the city, for \$350, for one dock. The dock lessee also provides proof of liability insurance as well as signage at that site.

Wahkon has street accesses to the lake at the following locations: Duluth; 4th; 5th; 6th; 7th; Schubert; Maple Lane; and Reserve A and B running along the lake shore. The city park features a lake access and public fishing pier open to all.

During the talks, attorney Ruppe reiterated the recommendation that there should be two different contracts, one for commercial docks on the reserve and one for public street rights of way. These contracts should state the city has authority to have the dock removed for utility, road work and other necessities.

In meetings through November and December the council heard more views on private docks on public access sites. They also compared and contrasted the rules for docks for residents and for resorts. A motion to repeal the ordinance providing for residents' docks on city access sites failed.

Views on uses at private and business docks

continued through the winter, with the final leases hammered out for a March 22, 2010 special session of the council.

At that meeting it was revealed that Brad and Sandy Reichel, owners of Walleye Dundee's, had reviewed the contract for Walleye Dundee's lease and agreed to its terms. Reichel, in her capacity as Mayor, abstained from the vote to approve.

The lease is with Dundee's and would not apply to a new owner and does not run with the land. Similar terms applied to Island View.

For a full view of the dock lease contracts, and the debates which led up to the council's decisions throughout the winter, log on to the city's website. City ordinances are available for public viewing at City Hall, as well.



Water service fails

Economics cited

Citing a downturn in the economy and other considerations, the Wahkon City Council, in December 2009, effectively waved off a move to introduce water service to city residents at this time.

The move to table water studies came after an initiative from WAVE-sponsored community get-togethers showed that a number of local folks are interested in exploring municipal water supplies to households and businesses. Following the council tabling the water supply question, the WAVE Committee also dropped its involvement in the water issue. Currently, Wahkon residents rely on their own wells for drinking water.

Wahkon operates its own municipal sanitary sewer system. It also processes the sewer from Mille Lacs Island Resort. The city also recently fielded a request from a prospective buyer of Izatys Resort to have the system accept sewage from a proposed campground to be built there. The council showed interest but no action has been taken on the request, pending the Izatys purchase.

costs for the project were \$2,430, less \$262 in donations; while 2008 cost \$3,550 offset with \$246 in donations from grateful residents.

Also featured for Wahkon Clean Up Day was a pickup service assisted by Weinreich and Maciazka. The two spent hours driving through the city to pick up items from those who couldn't bring them in.



WAVE adopts a highway

Coming up is the WAVE Committee first annual highway cleanup. The group recently voted to participate in the Minnesota Adopt a Highway Program.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WAHKON DAYS

Place: Downtown Wahkon

Date: Aug 20-22nd

CAR CRUISE, BUTTERFLY RELEASE, COIN HUNT, MINNOW RACES, PARADE, MUSIC, FOOD AND FUN, KIDS FISHING CONTEST, PICNIC IN THE PARK

RECYCLING

Place: Mille Lacs County Highway Maintenance Shops

Date/Time: The 1st and 3rd Saturdays in Onamia and the 2nd and 4th Saturdays in Isle From 9am -1pm

SENIOR DINING

Place: Wahkon Community Hall - 151 2nd Street E

Date/Time: every Monday and Thursday - Lunch is served around 11:45 p.m

Enjoy a healthy meal at an economic price with the local seniors (60 years or older). Afterwards they have fun playing bingo until approximately 1:30 p.m. Meals can also be delivered to those unable to attend.

Writers Wanted...

Do you have a flair for writing and an ear for news? The *Wahkon Wire* seeks story ideas and volunteer writers to submit articles for our new periodical newsletter. If interested, email Pete Olson at pbo47edit@yahoo.com for details.

Prior to the council's decision to table the water issue, it was noted, "WAVE cannot reiterate enough that they are not for or against city water." The group functions as an area visioning committee, collecting items of interest from area residents. At the last community visioning meeting eleven voted for water and nine against.

WAVE acted to facilitate the discussion of a municipal water supply, but did not serve as an advocate for the project.

Ballot question?

Before the council acted, the city clerk learned that asking the public if the city should have city water or if the city should spend money to investigate city water are not allowable ballot questions. Suggestions ranged from sending out questionnaires to holding hearings on the water supply idea.

The WAVE Committee offered to split costs of testing 50 wells at \$50 each for a total of \$2500. Well safety and quality was also subject to council discussion.

During the council's deliberations of the water supply, Greg Kimmen of the S.E.H. engineering firm explained that the Rural Development (RD) has two new programs that could be used for a preliminary engineering report (PER). First is an up to \$15,000 grant with 25 percent match and second is up to \$30,000 with no match. The second program had not yet been officially allocated but S.E.H. expected it would be.

A PER lays out alternatives for city water to be presented to Rural Development for their review process for grants and or loans. Thereafter an engineer design with specifications would be necessary to build the system.

Following questions from the meeting, Kimmen noted that Rural Development would prefer to get water from an established source such as Isle.

After the council tabled the issue of water testing and city water, S.E.H. engineers offered to keep the proposal on file in the event grants become available. S.E.H. placed Wahkon on the Priority Project List (PPL), with council approval, wherein community projects are listed as a prerequisite to state and federal funding. This status does not require any action, but serves as a means to be ready should city water become a priority.

Unrelated to the council decision, Mille Lacs County, on June 3, provided a free water testing clinic at its hazardous waste collection event at the Wahkon area Public Works Building.

2010 Census

Raises issues in Wahkon

A number of Wahkon area residents, including city officials, questioned why the 2010 US Census was not mailed to their residences. City Council members and Mayor Sandy Reichel also raised the issue of Mille Lacs Tribal reservation boundaries and how these impacted the official census count process.

Wahkon and Isle are update/enumerate areas where census workers came to our doors between March 22 and May 29 to fill out the form. The initial official census tally may have also missed residents who returned to town later in the spring or early summer. These residents' statistics were addressed with follow-up efforts.

Census Bureau authorities noted various reasons why Wahkon was given the personal touch this year. Census clean-up operations could continue late into the summer.

Wahkon City Clerk Karrie Roeschlein was informed by Census officials, "We use the update/enumerate method on both tribal and non-tribal lands throughout Minnesota. Only 48% of the Wahkon households voluntarily returned their census forms in 2000 so the process of delivering the forms for residents to fill out and return was not very successful.

"In comparison, the response rate was 66% in Mille Lacs County, 75% in the State of MN, and 67% nationally."

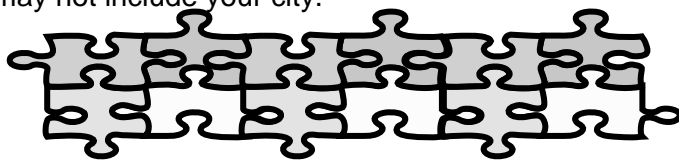
The official 2010 Census line did not address the seasonal nature of Wahkon's population, due largely to snowbirds returning from their southern roosts after the census was conducted.

Mayor Sandy Reichel questioned if 48% response reflected the high seasonal properties in town. The Mayor observed that Isle's return response was only a few percentages lower than the national average and yet they are an update/enumerate area.

The Wahkon City Council also learned that Census realizes residents and city officials disagree with the reservation boundary depicted by them. During a city council session, the Mayor observed that the cost of door-to-door census is high and that expensive 2010 census advertising appeared to be aimed at the area's Native American population.

An email received from census authorities noted, "For people living in houses, apartments, trailers, etc in the update/ enumerate areas, census takers will visit their residences beginning on March 22, 2010 and continuing through May 29, 2010.

"Census takers will visit the areas, update our list of addresses, and talk with a resident of each house to complete the census form. The forms are completed at the time of these visits. There are a few clean up operations scheduled to continue into late August/September 2010. This clean-up work may or may not include your city."



QUESTION AND ANSWER

Moving in a shed? Check for setbacks

Question: A Wahkon resident asks: "I want to build or move in an outbuilding on my lot in Wahkon. Also thinking of adding a deck or putting up one of those vinyl sheds in the yard. What do I need to know before I get started?"

Answer: Summertime brings out the best in shed, garage or deck builders. Others are content to purchase one from the numerous suppliers in the area to move onto a lot. Also popular are the vinyl material car and machinery tents. All of these are subject to Wahkon's setback rules or zoning regulations. Check for permitting at City Hall.

According to Wahkon's zoning ordinance, "No

structure, permanent or temporary, whether building permits are required or not, shall be erected, moved or altered less than 5 feet from the surveyed alley line; less than 7.5 feet from the interior lot lines; less than 10 feet from the surveyed city and/or county street/lot lines; less than 10 feet from a state highway right of way; less than 50 feet from the surveyed high water mark in a sewered area; and less than 75 feet from the surveyed high water mark in an unsewered area.

Structure is defined as "any addition, boat house, building, guest cottage, commercial building, cottage, deck, fence, fish house, garage, gazebo, greenhouse, industrial building, manufactured home, pole barn, porch, pump house, residential building, signs and storage shed."

