

Winter 2014-15

THE CITY OF
LAKE ELMO

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THE SOURCE

Your source for City news and information

Fliflet, Lundgren Win Seats to the Lake Elmo City Council

After a long and arduous campaign that featured a spirited debate about the pace of growth for Lake Elmo, two challengers with Planning Commission experience won seats on the Lake Elmo City Council. Julie Fliflet and Jill Lundgren defeated incumbents Wally Nelson and Mike Reeves and will begin their four year terms in January 2015.

Fliflet, a Chief Financial Officer/CPA for a non-profit, is an eight year veteran of the Planning Commission and led the Village Area Planning Work group. She is currently a member of the Finance Committee and helped lobby for the \$3.5 million water grant that the City of Lake Elmo received from the State Legislature. She is an advocate for preserving the open space and rural character of Lake Elmo. Careful planning for the Old Village is also important to her as she joins as a new Council Member. She lives in the Tana Ridge Development with her husband and 8 year old daughter – whom she coaches in softball.

“Julie’s Planning Commission experience will be invaluable as we enter the next stage of growth. She is passionate about maintaining our open space character and creating a sense of place for our community to gather in the Old Village. Add to that her financial background, and the City is gaining some great experience,” said City Administrator Dean Zuleger.

“I sincerely care about our city, our residents, and our quality of life and I am dedicated to working hard to keep Lake Elmo a special city. I am so excited to get to work on the Council, and am so thankful to the voters who supported me in this election,” said Fliflet.

Lundgren, a Registered Nurse Clinician, first got involved in Lake Elmo politics in 2012 during the debate over lake use. From there she became interested in the development of the community and became a member of the Planning Commission where she has become a staunch advocate for thoughtful, sustainable develop-



City Clerk Adam Bell swears in councilmembers-elect Julie Fliflet and Jill Lundgren.

ment. She is consociate with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She is a member of both the Tri-Lakes Association and the Lake DeMontreville/Olson Association. She lives in the Tri-Lakes with her husband and enjoys pottery and lapidary.

“Jill wants to make sure that we do things right and preserve the unique nature of Lake Elmo. She has been very passionate about lakeshore erosion and water quality, which is important if we are to sustain the four recreational lakes that reside in Lake Elmo,” said Zuleger.

“I just want to thank everyone who helped me through this election process. Thank you for all your kind words of encouragement. I will truly, respectfully listen to your voice. Let’s all prepare to grow together as a strong community,” said Lundgren.

The final tally for the 2014 election resulted in Julie Fliflet as the leading vote getter with 1834 votes, Jill Lundgren followed closely with 1751 votes, and Wally Nelson garnered 1583 votes and Mike Reeves with 1320 votes.

The Mayor's Corner



Hello again Lake Elmo,

First, congratulations are in order to Council Members elect Julie Fliflet and Jill Lundgren on their successful campaigns for Lake Elmo City Council. I am certain the residents will be well served by them both.

Each year at this time we reflect on what we have accomplished over the past twelve months and report how we used your tax dollars. We call this "Accountability" and you will find it as an insert to this newsletter. It is an important document to examine as we transform into a government that measures our performance and budgets in the same manner. It is also a good reminder of what we do each day to keep Lake Elmo an orderly running community. With that, I think the following topics are relevant in terms of what council and staff have accomplished and my accountability to you as Mayor.

For example, with significant infrastructure installed and receiving subsequent development proposals, the city council was able to eliminate the Met Council MOU and the fines associated with it. Further, earlier this month we received assurances from Met Council staff that they will give due consideration of Lake Elmo's request to drop our population estimate for 2040 to 18,500 rather than 20,500 when they develop their official forecast in 2015. The council and staff was able to secure \$3.5 million in state bonding for a new water line to the I-94 corridor with help from our local legislators and will not have to borrow the money to provide clean, potable water. We were able to get a commitment from developers to pick up the entire costs of building the new 5th street, a \$13 million investment, and won't have to borrow or tax for this infrastructure. We have made advances in the development of our Fire Department operations, specifically, inspections

and "pre-plans." We upsized our hydraulics in the old village and saved the cost of a \$2.2 million water tower. Our Park Commission made great strides with improvements in Pebble Park, trail planning, new signage, and a plan to upgrade our tired park system to make it more user-friendly. And our employees managed their health benefits to a point that for the second consecutive year we will see no increase in our insurance premiums.

This could not have happened without the dedication of a lot of "behind the scenes" residents who have gone above and beyond in serving Lake Elmo. Like Dave Moore, who, when not serving on our Equipment Committee and Public Safety Committee, offers his bulldozer operator skills pro bono to our public works crew. Or Jennifer Turnquist and Dana Bloyer who provide valuable insight into our Human Resource Committee. Or Terry Forrest, a driving force on our Finance Committee in helping to keep our tax rate flat. Or all of the sharp minds on the Economic Development Authority who will help make sure we grow fiscally smart. These folks and others made the first active year of our citizen committees a big success.

Now for some "not so behind the scenes" individuals, Chairman Todd Williams (Planning), Chairman Shane Weis (Parks) and their fellow commission members who have been tireless in their efforts to keep Lake Elmo special.

Finally, for two true gentlemen who have been in the "up front and center scene" for two years – Council Member Wally Nelson and Council Member Mike Reeves. As a resident and Mayor, I thank you both for your service and leadership. You both signed up a bit hesitantly, but you served with distinction and dedication. I thank you for a job well done.

Here's hoping that all of you have a prosperous 2015!

Mayor Mike Pearson

City Adopts 2015 Budget/Levy

The City of Lake Elmo adopted (5-0 unanimous vote) a tax levy of \$3,137,000 or approximately \$25,600 less than last year. Lake Elmo was one of only a handful of full-service cities to drop its levy in the Twin Cities metroplex with the average tax increase noted as 3.68%.

"With the school district referendum passing and other jurisdictional bodies increasing taxes, the Council thought it prudent to reduce the levy if possi-

ble. This was done through the transfer of costs to the development community for planning, engineering, and legal services associated with growth. In addition, the library budget was adjusted downward by \$25,600 to represent their current maintenance of effort," said outgoing Finance Chairman Wally Nelson.

The City was also able to hold cost flat in the area of insurances, police protection, and administrative services –

especially in staffing.

"Most communities allocate 60% of their expense in personnel. In Lake Elmo, personnel represents closer to 40% of the general operating budget. We are lightly staffed with many employees wearing three or four hats," said Dean Zuleger, City Administrator.

An unabridged copy of the 2015 Lake Elmo budget will be available for online viewing on the city website, www.lakeelmo.org after December 31, 2014.

Planning & Development Update

City Hopes to Reduce 2040 Population Forecast by 2,000

Since the release of the Lake Elmo preliminary 2040 population forecast by the Metropolitan Council, City staff has continued to track current development activity and approvals against the forecasted population figures. The Metropolitan Council has forecasted a 2040 population for Lake Elmo of 20,500. Based upon land use planning, spatial analysis and local knowledge of properties in Lake Elmo, City officials believe 18,500 to be a more realistic population forecast for 2040. While it is important to note that the City is no longer contractually obligated to fulfill growth targets from the now defunct Memorandum of Understanding, the City believes that a slightly reduced forecast is appropriate based upon the analysis completed. In order to communicate the City's findings and desire for a lower forecast, City staff met with Met Council staff in December to start the conversation of finalizing a population forecast as part of the 2015 System Statement. The Met Council noted that further refinement of the population forecast is part of the standard process of finalizing the 2040 population target. As the Met Council completes system statements for communities within the 7-County metropolitan area in

2015, the City will continue to be engaged to communicate the desire for a lower population forecast.

To inform the City's recommended population forecast, City staff has continued to track residential development that has received either preliminary or final approval thus far. The vast majority of residential development proposed in Lake Elmo thus far has been located in the Stage 1 Area of the I-94 Corridor (south of 10th Street in between Inwood Ave. and Keats Ave.) and the Village Area. In addition, the majority of the development that has received approval thus far has been on the low end of the density ranges specified under the City's Comprehensive Plan. As these development proposals have become more concrete, they have provided very useful information in determining a realistic 2040 population forecast. The City will continue to share this information with the Metropolitan Council to inform their future population forecast for Lake Elmo. Looking forward, once the Metropolitan Council releases the 2015 system statement, the City of Lake Elmo will have until 2018 to complete a full update to its Comprehensive Plan.

Factors that may influence future land use decisions include, but are not limited to, the Gateway Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Project, a desire to have a larger business park in the southeast quadrant, and potential redevelopment of the downtown area.

For additional information about development projects approved by the City, contact the Community Development Department at City Hall.

Serve Your Community on the Planning Commission

Are you interested in planning and development?

The City of Lake Elmo is currently seeking to fill two vacant seats on the Planning Commission.

The planning commission advises the City Council regarding matters relevant to city planning and zoning practices, initiatives, applications and city code. Planning commissioners serve three-year terms.

For more information or to apply contact City Hall at 651-747-3900.

City to Consider Going Bee Friendly

The City of Lake Elmo hopes to become a more bee-friendly community in 2015. Over the past 20 years, the number of bees in the United States has decreased rapidly. The Lake Elmo Park Commission has been evaluating current ground maintenance practices and open space areas in regard to bee health, and they hope to present and pass an ordinance through the City Council in early 2015. The ordinance outlines the reasons why bees are necessary to agriculture and are in danger, and aims to pose Lake Elmo as a leader in Bee-Safe practices. It also pledges that Lake



Elmo will not use systemic insecticides and harmful pesticides and will aim to provide pollinator friendly habitat on City land.

"As a community that values its rich open space character, we feel that it is our duty to take measures to protect the local bee population," said Park Commissioner David Steele.

If passed, Lake Elmo will be one of the first Minnesota communities to become a "bee-safe" city. Shorewood was the first city in the Metro to pass the ordinance earlier this summer, followed by Minneapolis and Duluth.

City Looks to Adopt 2015 Plan of Work

The 2015 City of Lake Elmo Plan of Work has been developed to reflect the governing principles established by the 2014 Lake Elmo City Council, which are:

1. Efficient, low cost taxpayer serviced-based government;
 2. Disciplined and balanced market driven growth;
 3. Well-ordered, low regulatory burdened quality of life
- From an operational standpoint five core ideas of local government have been applied to reflect public trust and

accountability. First, our work must be proactive and taxpayer-centered. Second, the program must add value to the community in all aspects. Third, our operations must be efficient, stable and consistently fair. Fourth, program must be cross-functional and team based. And Fifth, staff members must be allowed to demonstrate expertise in their individual fields thus building trust with the elected officials.

TAXPAYER SERVICE

1. Continue to develop a multi-platform information strategy that includes a relevant website, daily, weekly and quarterly news updates, and pertinent mailings on key issues; More consistent posting of Council, Commission and Committee Minutes on the website
2. Create standard operating guidelines and taxpayer interaction reports to insure a 24 hour turnaround response on all taxpayer issues including an established FAQ section of the website; Continue a consistent and transparent method for taxpayer input that includes Website polling, citizen surveys, focus groups and neighborhood meetings
3. Improve utilization of cable access capabilities and web streaming to maximize technology and inform the community via production of public affairs programming
4. Continue implementation of the Speak Your Peace civil dialogue project in cooperation with Lake Elmo Elementary, Jaycees, Rotary, and other community groups
5. Continue development of Next Gen Leaders group for community building and leadership development.
6. Hold January through August Monthly Update Resident Meetings on downtown street/redevelopment plan

LAND USE PLANNING

1. Adopt the City Zoning Code
2. Complete functional master plan for the downtown based on economic metrics, infrastructure needs and practical, taxpayer-driven input
3. Streamline and improve policies/procedures for the handling of routine land matters including but not limited to variances, site plan review, setbacks et al
4. Reduce the population expectations to

- 18,000 by 2040 by careful negotiations with the Met Council prior to the adoption of the 2015 System Statements, including the possibility of reducing density expectations in sewer served areas and re-designating high density areas in the SE to commercial
5. Efficiently process / approve final plats, Gonyea, Chase, Pratt, Inwood and Engstrom for future housing developments as prescribed by the Comprehensive Plan if directed by the City Council
6. Resolve zoning conflicts with the Metropolitan Airports Commission / MNDOT. Finalize crossing strategy with railroad
7. Develop a transit oriented development plan for Hudson Blvd to accommodate the Gateway Corridor Bus Rapid Transit system
8. Successfully manage development infrastructure construction to City specifications

MUNICIPAL CODE & RECORDKEEPING

1. Convert paper files from years 2000-2012 to Laserfiche record retention
2. Prioritize 12 municipal code updates (1 per Month) to bring Lake Elmo Code into 21st century
3. Establish public document destruction plan consistent with MN State Statutes
4. Conduct, in the Spring of 2015, an Open Meeting, Data Practices and Ethics Seminar for all elected and appointed officials

FINANCE

1. Execute against performance based budgeting for the 2015 budget. Provide quarterly snapshot to City Council in April, July, October and year end
2. Complete City's comprehensive annual financial review prior to 2015 borrowing
3. Complete audit by May 15th; Maintain

Moodys Aa2 Bond Rating, and Standards & Poors AA+ Rating

4. Implement ACH – credit card electronic payment system for fees, utility bills, etc.
5. Timely reporting of all assessments to Washington County and collection of fees for service, including escrow offsets of developer related operational expenses in 2015
6. Perform a global review of the existing sewer billing system to include examining fee structure for consistency and equity and making sure water usage is used as the gauge for sewer invoicing
7. In concert with Community Development department, maintain master development summaries for WAC and SAC connections
8. Complete and maintain water and sanitary sewer cash flow models
9. Create and maintain a global cash flow model that incorporates our future revenues and costs
10. Complete Capital Improvement Plan by July 1, budget draft by August 14, and publish budget books by October 1

PUBLIC SAFETY / QUALITY OF LIFE / BUILDING SAFETY

1. Effectively deploy the new 78' aerial / engine and liquidate the old aerial for a fair price
2. Identify land, staffing, and equipment needs for a single centralized fire station
3. Finish the first round of business fire inspections by the end of FY 2015
4. Develop a 10-year staffing and budget strategy with the Washington County Sheriffs Office to manage growth
5. Reduce the number of chronic nuisance properties to less than 10 by the end of 2015
6. Improve permit review time to five working days or less

7. Implement hearing appeal process for code enforcement and animal control issues
8. Develop and implement a strict "completeness" acceptance policy on accepted development and building plans

9. Based on available budget implement remote inspection/correction entry into initial phase

STREETS & UTILITIES

1. Construct water main line on Inwood to I-94 corridor including planning for Water Tower #4

2. Complete Phase I of Downtown / Lake Elmo Ave. reconstruction partnership w/ Washington County

3. Prepare Phase II of the Downtown / Lake Elmo Avenue reconstruction partnership w/ Washington County

4. Acquire land for Old Village Storm water management plan

5. Supervise to city specification the developer constructed 5th Street from Inwood to Keats

6. Complete 201 system analysis and make recommendations for future use

7. Reconstruct Eagle Point Blvd (on request) and assess 100% to business community

8. Complete PASR Rating of All Streets / Update Beehive street inventory and mapping

9. Update street CIP and adopt 2016-2020 street CIP & 2016 feasibility reports

10. Prepare Phase II Olson Lake Trail sewer extension for 2016 construction

11. Develop and standardize regular maintenance plans for water valves, lift stations, reducing valves and other utility mechanicals

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

1. Adopt Redevelopment and Economic District for the Old Village (overlaid on the VMX area) via EDA

2. Develop policies on the use of economic development incentives including TIF, tax abatement, business improvement district

3. To develop (EDA & Planning Commission) a business park in the SE quadrant at the corner of Manning and Hudson Blvd. to optimize use and broaden the tax base

TRANSPORTATION

1. Complete / approve Hwy. 36 corridor plan

2. Actively participate in the design process for Phase II of reconstruction of Lake Elmo Avenue in 2015 including the development of a downtown streetscape improvement plan

3. Train DPW Staff in the use of PASER road rating system, rate the roads, and develop the 2016-2020 CIP program for street maintenance, reconstruction and reclamation

4. Develop a "hybrid" urban-rural street design that handles drainage, but maintains open space feel

5. Develop formal shouldering program for rural road cross sections

6. Construct 5th Street

PARK & RECREATION

1. Conduct feasibility study, be included in the Washington County Parks Master Plan and obtain grant funding for the construction of the Lake Elmo Regional Trail

2. Complete 2015 Park Commission Strategic Plan of Work

3. Complete Sunfish Lake Park Utilization Plan

GROUNDWATER / STORM WATER / ENVIRONMENTAL

1. Continue to pursue economic remedies of 3M contamination

2. Actively participate in the Washington County Groundwater Coalition to protect our water resources and monitor policy being developed by the Met Council on groundwater allocation

3. Develop and implement a storm water pond and facilities maintenance plan consistent with the MS4 permit

4. Participate in the five-lake coalition with the Valley Branch Watershed District to control Eurasian Milfoil

PROCESS / PROCEDURE

1. Complete 37 standard operating procedure protocols in the DPW to standardize operations and qualify expectations

2. Design a functional decision making tree that allows council and staff to prioritize day to day functions of departments to improve workflow and efficiency

COUNCIL / COMMISSIONS / COMMITTEES

1. Complete 24 policy-focused meetings and 10 technically-based workshops

2. Complete a full departmental orientation for councilmembers-elect Fliflet and Lundgren to seamless transition to new council

3. Continue the creation of a citizen based committee structure utilizing the expertise of the community

4. Complete an error free, sound record-keeping and technically sound broadcast of all affected Planning Commission and City Council meetings

HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Streamline and contemporize the City of Lake Elmo Employee Handbook

2. Develop new annual review process for technical and management staff

3. Conduct 6 (1 every 2 month) team building and morale enhancing functions with all staff

4. Continue to work on wellness and proper utilization of health / dental insurances to keep the premiums affordable for taxpayers

LIBRARY

1. Finalize Joint Powers Agreement between Library and Washington County so Lake Elmo residents are spared the inconvenience of out of pocket expenses for Washington County Library access

2. Work towards normalizing relations between the Lake Elmo Public Library and other libraries throughout Minnesota, particularly Washington County, with the intention of inter-library loan

3. Establish more consistent and expanded evening and weekend hours

4. Have paid staff person at the library during virtually all of the Library's open hours

The City of Lake Elmo City Council will adopt its 2015 Plan of Work when the new Council is seated at the first scheduled Council Meeting in January. If you should have any questions, additions, corrections or suggestions please contact City Administrator Dean Zuleger at 651-747-3905 or by email at dzuleger@lakeelmo.org.

Valley Friendship Club Connects Kids with Disabilities

Lake Elmo resident Susan Kane recognized a need in the community when her daughter with special needs was struggling with maintaining a social life outside of school. In 2010 Kane joined with two other parents of children living with disabilities - Tara King of Stillwater, and Sara Hayden of Oak Park Heights - to form the Valley Friendship Club (VFC), which was made possible with start-up funds provided by the CCP Foundation. The organization currently relies on donations, grants and small fundraisers for funding.

Valley Friendship Club offers a variety of social and educational events that replicate activities that typical/non-disabled peers would participate in. They typically host 3 to 4 events each month, with more occurring in summer months. Events that VFC has held in the past include dances, art projects, games and movie nights. Last summer the group even put on a theater production.

"Seeing the members and friendship blossom is the most rewarding part of the Valley Friendship Club," said co-founder Susan Kane. "The moments that most people would consider ordinary or unexceptional



Making friends, having fun at the annual Valley Friendship Club Dance held at Oak-land Jr. High in Lake Elmo.

like hanging out with friends, joking, or belonging to a group, are rites of passage that kids with disabilities miss out on. Valley Friendship Club aims to create a space where members can just be and belong."

Valley Friendship Club has experienced incredible growth since its inception. Kane's initial goal was to host 20-30 events per year with 100 in attendance. Now, after four years, VFC is averaging 50-60 events with 600-700 in attendance over the

year. "The growth has been fast, but it indicates a great need," said Kane.

As an organization that is completely volunteer-run, VFC's most consistent need is for passionate, kind, and dedicated volunteers. For more information about how to get involved visit www.valleyfriendshipclub.org or call 651-491-6486.

What's Next? Valley Friendship Club will be hosting a fundraiser at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center in Spring. Stay tuned for details.

Two High Profile Authors to Visit Lake Elmo Public Library

The Lake Elmo Public Library is thrilled to announce that Chuck Logan and Shawn Otto will be coming to the library in January and February respectively.

On Thursday, January 15 at 6 pm bestselling author Chuck Logan will be reading from his latest book *Fallen Angel* and answering questions from readers. Those new to Logan's work are encouraged to attend a book discussion of *Fallen Angel* at the Lake Elmo Public Library on Tuesday, January 6 at 6 pm. Chuck Logan is also the author Phil Broker books including *Homefront* which was made into a major motion picture starring Jason Statham, James Franco and Winona Ryder. Those wanting more information on Chuck Logan and his work can find it at www.chucklogan.org.

On Thursday, February 19 at 6 pm the Library welcomes Shawn Otto. Shawn Otto is an author, screenwriter and producer whose new book *Sins of our Fathers* came out in November and was a starred book from Publishers Weekly. Otto, whose wife Rebecca Otto is the Minnesota State Auditor, wrote the screenplay for the Oscar nominated film *House of Sand and Fog*. Mr. Otto's website is shawnotto.com. In conjunction with Otto's visit to the library there will be a discussion of *Sins of Our Fathers* on Tuesday, February 3 at 6 pm and a screening *House of Sand and Fog* on Thursday, February 12 at 6 pm at the Lake Elmo Public Library.

The library is at 3537 Lake Elmo Ave. N. For more information: www.lakeelmopubliclibrary.org or 651-773-4926.

Conserve Water and Save Money

A silent leak in your toilet can waste several thousand gallons of high quality water each year and place unnecessary demands on your sewer system or septic tank.

To discover if your toilet leaks lift off the lid from your toilet seat and place three or four drops of ordinary food coloring into the toilet tank (do not use dye - it could stain). Do not flush or otherwise disturb the toilet for one or two hours or longer. At the end of the waiting period, observe the toilet bowl. If the color you placed into the tank shows up in the bowl, you have a leak.

Most frequently, leaks in toilets are caused by a defective flush valve. A flush valve is a flap or ball plunger device that is supposed to act as a stopper in the bottom of your toilet tank. After several years and many flushings, the stopper can be knocked out of shape or simply worn out. To fix the leak and save water, see your hardware dealer or plumber.

For more information visit the Minnesota Rural Water Association at www.mrwa.com.



Fixing a leaky toilet not only saves money, but ultimately protects our water supply.

Annual and Seasonal Reminders

2015 Dog Licenses

All dogs over the age of four months are required to be licensed in the City of Lake Elmo (City Code Chapter 95.07).

Licensing protects the community by ensuring dogs are properly vaccinated, for the safety of residents and other pets. A dog license may also help police or animal control officers locate and identify your dog to return it home safely.

2014 Dog Licenses expired on December 31, 2014. Renew your dog license at City Hall between the hours of 8 am and 4:30 pm.

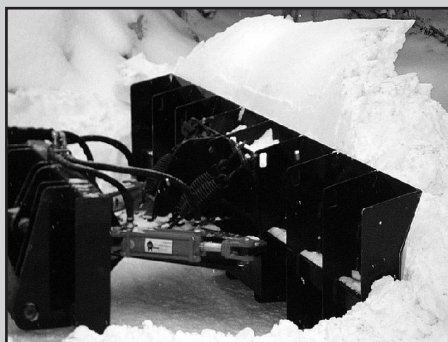
There is a \$20 fee for spayed/neutered dogs and a \$25 fee for unaltered dogs. Proof of current rabies vaccination must be provided at time of license renewal.

Winter Parking Regulations

Following a 3" snowfall, no parking is allowed on City streets until after

they have been plowed. Citations may be issued, or vehicles towed.

Snow Plowing Policy



Lake Elmo residents are reminded that the City has a snow plowing policy which must be followed so plowing can be done as efficiently and safely as possible. Snow must not be cleared from driveways or sidewalks onto City streets. Please keep your snow on your property. Violators will be cited.

Trash containers must be placed in driveways, not onto City streets.

Trash and recycling containers placed on streets create traffic hazards and increase plowing time.

It is the policy of the City to maintain the streets in good winter driving condition by sufficient plowing and sanding. To that end, the Public Works crews strive to open all streets within 10 hours of starting the plowing. On the following day, streets will be widened to the maximum width. The crews strive to keep all streets passable at all times, even in severe weather conditions.

Clear Fire Hydrants

Please help us ensure a timely response by clearing the snow from around fire hydrants. While city staff tries to get out and clear them ASAP, this is a very time consuming operation. Your help would be greatly appreciated.



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Lighting Up Lake Elmo



The City hosted the second annual Light Up Lake Elmo event on Saturday, Dec. 6 in downtown Lake Elmo. Pictured above, a display of more than 40 trees sponsored and decorated by local residents and businesses. At right, Santa visits with two youngsters at establish salon.



Annual Tree and Rain Barrel Sale - Pre-Order Early 2015

This spring the Washington Conservation District (WCD) is teaming up with the Recycle Association of Minnesota (RAM) to host a rain barrel and compost bin sale in conjunction with our annual tree sale. Rain barrels collect rainwater from your roof downspouts, which can later be used to water your lawn or garden during dry weeks. Most have a screen on the top to keep mosquitoes from breeding, an overflow valve, and a spigot at the bottom to attach to your garden hose.

You can pre-purchase rain barrels and compost bins from the Recycle Association of Minnesota this spring at very discounted rates. Online pre-ordering will begin early 2015 and stay open until sold out. There are also additional various pick-up dates this spring throughout the metro area in addition to the Washington County Fairgrounds which you can view on the RAM website.

The Washington Conservation District is currently taking orders for the annual tree sale. Trees can be ordered in bundles of 25 for only \$35, and the selection includes conifers, hardwoods and shrubs. In addition we are offering a special bird pack of trees – 30 bird friendly trees for \$50 that include Bur Oak, White Oak, Black Cherry, White Pine, Chokecherry, and Wild plum. Conservation District staff can also help you to plan your planting project and have tree bars available for rental. To order trees, check for sold out trees, or to learn more about the program, visit the WCD website or call Wendy at 651-275-1136 x24.

For more information on rain barrels and compost bins visit www.recycleminnesota.org.

For more tree sale information or to obtain a tree sale order form visit www.mnwcd.org.

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