

City of Hastings RIVERTOWN NEWS

101 Fourth Street East, Hastings, MN 55033-1955

Volume XV, Issue 3

www.ci.hastings.mn.us

Winter 2011-2012

COMMUNICATION
We Are Committed to Communication: We value and promote participation and interactions with citizens and staff. We will seek to assure timely and open communication while providing background and context for the decisions that are made.

Help Us Plow This Winter

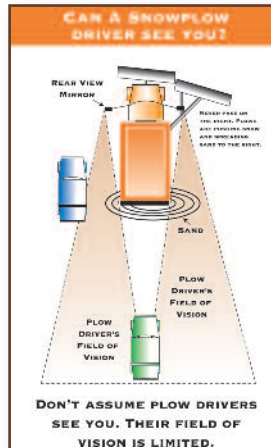
The Public Works Department needs to clear 103 miles of streets after each snowfall. Your help is needed to make the snow removal work as quickly, safely, and efficiently as possible.

Parking – please do not park on the streets until they have been cleared to their full width. The large trucks with their plows and wings have to be very careful plowing around parked vehicles, and at times, cannot fit between cars parked on both sides of a narrow street. Parking restrictions automatically go into effect when 2 or more inches of snow falls in Hastings, with on-street parking prohibited until the streets are plowed to their full width. Vehicles parked on streets during a snow emergency will be ticketed and may be towed.

Garbage Containers – snow rolling off the edge of a plow can easily knock down garbage containers. Because of this, plow drivers will typically stay 5 feet or more away from garbage containers. If the garbage container is placed at the end of the driveway and not in the street, the plows will leave less snow behind in the street when avoiding the garbage container. A garbage truck's lifting arm can reach 6 to 8 feet. The day after a snowfall, plow trucks are busy hauling snow from the Downtown area, so it may take two or three days before a plow truck is freed up to widen streets.

Safety – please be careful when driving near plow trucks. Snow plow drivers' visibility is limited. There is a large blind spot directly behind the trucks. When following a snow plow, please stay well back. The plows occasionally have to stop and back up and the drivers cannot see vehicles directly behind the trucks.

A full list of winter regulations can be found on the City's [Website](#).



2012 Preliminary Budget - Cuts Affect Everyone

The City Council with guidance from the Finance Committee members; Tony Nelson, Mike Slavik and Chair Danna Elling Schultz, worked with staff to provide a budget that continues the quality services citizens expect, while at the same time reduced the City's overall budget.

The preliminary budget for 2012 was set on September 6, 2011. This was the first time in many years the City had to make a significant reduction in staff. In recent years the reduction in staff has come as employees left their position with the City. The City simply did not fill these vacant positions and was able to save money. 2008 was the highest staffing level, with 121 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees; in 2010, there was 106 FTE's, which is the same number as in 2005.

The 2012 reduction in staff includes the elimination of the two full-time employees and one part-time employee. These reductions are being made in departments where the economic situation has changed or operational efficiencies have been achieved, impacting the City's staffing needs. From 2005-2008 the City grew significantly. Creating the 2012 Budget was a difficult balancing act of reducing the budget, while still being able to deliver services.

There have been no significant changes in the staffing levels of the City's Public Safety Departments (Fire and Police) as a percentage of overall City staffing. In 2002, Public Safety employees made up close to 42% of the total FTE's the City employed. Public Safety continues to be a top priority provided by the City. Even though there is one FTE position being eliminated from the non-sworn Police Staff, and a reduction in hours among the administrative staff for the Fire Department, the overall number of total Public Safety employees in 2011 is nearly the same percentage of overall City employees as ten years ago.

Parks and Recreation, are all also down to almost the same staffing levels as they were a decade ago. While the total number of staff has decreased over the last Other departments throughout the City, including Public Works, Administration and decade,

Outdoor Ice Skating & Hockey Rinks

Warming House Hotline: 480-2392

Parks & Recreation: 480-6175

The Parks & Recreation Department will operate three warming houses for the three outdoor recreational skating rinks and the three outdoor hockey rinks.

The rinks are free for the general public to use during posted hours. Warming houses will be open Dec 12, 2011 – Feb 20, 2012 **WEATHER PERMITTING**.

Please visit www.ci.hastings.mn.us/parks under Recreation – Outdoor Ice Skating for warming house schedules and locations. Also, check out information for renting the shelter for your birthday party!

Too Cold to Skate Outside?

Skate inside at the Hastings Civic Arena! Check out the Arena's Calendar of Events at on the City's [website](#) by clicking on "Hastings Civic Arena" under the Parks, Trails & Facilities tab or call 480-6195 to find out when Public Skating and Public Hockey opportunities are available.

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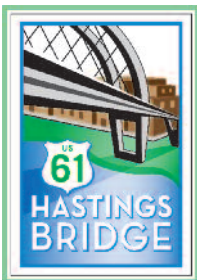
Bridge Construction Hits Milestone

Crews hit a significant construction milestone when they completed utility work in downtown Hastings during the 2011 construction season. This work began near the south bank of the Mississippi River earlier this year and the core activities were completed on Highway 61 before year's end. This was possible because of a coordinated effort from the City of Hastings, Mn/DOT and the Lunda/Ames Joint Venture.

The forms and supports for the southbound roadway of the new southbound approach and north side ground improvement work were also completed. This paves the way for roadway work to resume next year. Work will continue throughout the winter months – with a focus on completing the river piers and placing beams for the roadway leading up to the main span.

As you prepare for travel during the holidays and winter, you should know:

- ♦ Two lanes of traffic will remain open across the river during the entire project.
- ♦ Access between Highway 61/ Vermillion St. and downtown has returned to the east ramp, as well as at 3rd and 4th Streets.
 - The traffic signal and full left- and right-turn access will return to 4th Street before the end of the year.
- ♦ All downtown businesses remain fully accessible.
- ♦ Additional downtown parking on Sibley Street and the east ramp added at the beginning of the project remains.



To sign up for automatic weekly construction updates, see photos from the site and view the construction webcam, visit the our [website](#).

If you have any questions, please call the Project Hotline at 775-5244 or send an email to hastingsbridge.dot@state.mn.us.

CITY'S 2012 BUDGET-THE EFFECTS ON THE TAX RATE AND PROPERTY TAXES

For the majority of the past ten years, the City was able to keep the tax rate steady. The range during that time was just barely above or below 50%. In 2011, due to the decline in the tax capacity of the City, the tax rate increased event though the City Council decreased the tax levy by over \$300,000 in 2011.

For 2012 the City's Tax levy will be increased. There are two factors involved this year that impact the tax rate for the City. One of those factors is that the City is proposing to increase the tax levy by \$557,000.

The second factor that will increase the tax rate is the State's legislative decision to redesign the Market Value Homestead Credit Program (MVHC). The State eliminated the existing MVHC, despite the fact that this would have a major impact on residential property owners. The State's answer to lessen the impact to home owners was to create a market value (MV) exclusion program. The MV exclusion program allows for a credit for residential properties in the \$76,000-\$324,000 market value range. This new program will cause an additional increase to the City's tax rate. (For examples of various scenario please visit the City's Finance [website](#).)

Residents aren't the only ones feeling this pinch, the overall Commercial & Industrial (C&I) average market value has been decreased by 1.95% as well due to the market conditions. C & I property taxes are divided into two categories. The tax capacity of a property is split between fiscal disparity portion and city levy. The split is based on a formula set by the State. This results in part of the C&I value being taxed at the city rate and part of the value is taxed at the metro area FD tax rate.

This taxing situation is not unique to Hastings, cities across Minnesota are struggling with this change and the economic conditions. While dealing with these changes, the demands on the City for services remain high. The Council made decisions to control the growth of the City's budget but is also aware of the needs to keep up with the continued demands for services.

The 2012 budget is balanced to meet the needs of the citizens as well as keep control of the tax rate. The City held a public hearing on December 5th at the regular Council meeting. The final budget will be adopted on December 19th during the last regular Council meeting of the year.

PUBLIC WORKS CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

There may be snow on the ground, but Public Works is busy preparing plans and putting together information about 2012's neighborhood street reconstruction project.

The 2012 reconstruction project is proposed to include most streets between Highway 61 and Pine Street, between 15th and 18th Street. A feasibility study and cost estimates should be completed by February of 2012, after which neighborhood informational meetings and public hearings on the projects will be held. Maps of the proposed projects can be found on the City's [website](#).

Other possible projects for 2012 include a trail connection along County Road 47, a Downtown commuter parking lot near the train depot, and reconstruction of 18th Street/Highway 291 from Vermillion Street to 10th Street.

Winter Responsibilities

With winter coming, the city would like to offer a friendly reminder that you are responsible (*and required*) to shovel your sidewalks!

Unshoveled walks make for treacherous traveling for residents and children who continue to use the sidewalks throughout the winter months. Shoveling the sidewalks is intended to help maintain pedestrian safety. By City Ordinance, all sidewalks must be cleared of ice and snow within 48 hours after the snow has stopped falling.

Each winter sidewalks become icy obstacle courses, and bank repossessed homes do not help. If you see a neglected vacant property, please contact Code Enforcement at 480-2376.

Hastings Police Department Establishes 2012 Priorities

Based on feedback received through the Second Annual Community Input Survey, and a review of crime and call for service data, the Hastings Police Department has established the focus priorities for 2012. The list of suggested focus areas was quite comprehensive. The top community concerns included: drug and alcohol crimes, theft, domestic and family violence, drunk driving, vandalism, and juvenile problems. Upon review of department data and call for service requests, the following priorities and preliminary strategies were established:

Drug & Alcohol Crimes Strategies:

- Increased drug intelligence gathering, investigation, and interdiction.
- Increased use of Hastings Police K-9 (Ozzy) for drug detection
- Implementation of an anonymous reporting Drug Tip system ("Drop a Dime")
- Offer text message based tip system for providing drug, weapon, and general crime tips.

Youth Crime & Delinquency Strategies:

- Develop and implement system for tracking and intervening in school truancy in collaboration with both the schools and parents.
- Increased focus on curfew violations and exploration of possible role of Hastings Police Reserves in curfew enforcement.
- Follow-up interviews with juvenile run-aways upon their return home.
- Increased patrol attention on youth congregating points that relate to reports of thefts from autos, disorderly person calls, curfew violations, and vandalism.

Traffic Safety Strategies:

- Increased on-duty targeted traffic enforcement around high crash areas.
- Enhancement of stop sign and stop light violation enforcement efforts
- Periodic publicized efforts to address distracted driving
- Increased speed enforcement and use of the department speed radar trailer



Please know that your police department is committed to effective problem solving and encourages residents to report any and all suspicious activity. If you have an idea or suggestion to make part of our 2012 strategies, please email us at HPD@ci.hastings.mn.us.



Domestic & Family Violence Strategies:

- Continued zero tolerance enforcement.
- Implementation of a domestic homicide lethality assessment.
- Proactive "Order for Protection" and "Domestic Abuse No Contact Order" (restraining orders) compliance checks.
- Strengthened partnership and collaboration with local domestic violence advocacy services.

Budget Cuts Affect Everyone From Page 1

there has also been reorganization of staff responsibilities and duties during this time to maintain the high level of service the City aims to provide.

More work on this reorganization plan is needed and will continue into the new year. The City Council directed staff to seek out different ideas on how to best deliver services. Exploration of collaboration will continue to be a part of the discussion for the 2013 budget process and beyond. The goal is to provide the services the citizens of Hastings require and desire for a healthy, safe place to live, work and play.

STAYING SAFE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

With winter and the holidays upon us, the City would like to encourage everyone to take extra care in keeping their families and homes safe. Cooking fires continue to be one of the largest causes of fires in our state as well as here in town. Please take care when cooking, never leave the stove or oven unattended while cooking, keep combustibles away from cooking surfaces, and never store anything in your oven.

While preventing fires from happening is the best option, make sure you are prepared in the event that you have a fire in your home. Check and maintain your smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Make sure you have a planned meeting place for children, **and practice the plan.**

While you plan, practice, and take steps to prevent a fire in your home, there is one more important step in preparing. Take the time to clear snow, ice, and debris from the two nearest fire hydrants to your home.

Fire hydrants should have three feet of clearance around them, and are easily visible from the street. Clearing snow from hydrants can and will speed the response of the fire department to your home fire.

Have a Safe and Fun Winter!

Rental Property Licenses

The City of Hastings has an increase in rental properties as a result of foreclosed homes and the current economic conditions.

Please remember the City of Hastings has a rental licensing program in place that requires all Rental Properties be licensed.

Rental Licensing information can be found [online](#) or by calling 480-2376.

It is the responsibility of owners and occupants to maintain all structures and premises to ensure public health, safety, and welfare.

KEEP THE WREATH WHITE

The Hastings Fire Department is once again in the midst of the annual Keep the Wreath White campaign. This campaign is to promote fire safety and awareness during the busy holiday season.

Hastings firefighters have placed a large wreath on the Vermillion Street side of the fire station. This wreath is decorated with all white lights. From Thanksgiving until January first, for every preventable structure fire within the Hastings Fire response area, a white light bulb is replaced with a red light bulb; our goal is to have all white lights remaining on our wreath.

So have a great holiday season, and please help Keep the Wreath White!

City of Hastings

101 Fourth Street East
Hastings, MN 55033

City Hall:

Hours: 8am - 4:30pm

Phone: 651-480-2350

Fax: 651-437-7082

www.ci.hastings.mn.us

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[@CityofHastingsMN](https://twitter.com/CityofHastingsMN)

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Ward 2 Joe Balsanek 438-5998

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Ward 3 Tony Nelson 437-4194

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Ward 4 Danna Elling Schultz 438-3878

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General City Council E-mail
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City Administrator:

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dosberg@ci.hastings.mn.us

City Departments:

Building Safety: 480-2342

Civic Arena: 480-6195

Code Enforcement: 480-2376

Community Development: 480-2350

Community Relations: 480-2344

Engineering: 480-2334

Fire Business Office: 480-6150

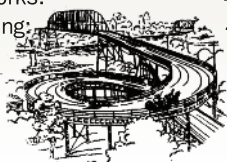
Hastings Aquatic Center: 480-2385

Parks & Recreation: 480-6175

Police Business Office: 480-2300

Public Works: 480-6185

Utility Billing: 480-2350



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Parks & Recreation Activities

Hastings Parks & Recreation has many great opportunities to get outside or stay warm inside while maintaining healthy, active living. We have winter activities for the whole family including "Burgers with the Big Guy", Snowman Snapshot, and the Frosty Frolic. We also offer a wide range of athletics including Adult Dodgeball, Adult Kickball, Adult Softball, Open Basketball, Youth Football and Lacrosse Camps, and much more. Visit our [website](http://www.ci.hastings.mn.us) and look under the Recreation tab for more information. You may also call us directly at 480-6175 or email us at parksinfo@ci.hastings.mn.us.

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO REDUCE, REUSE, OR RECYCLE?

The Dakota County RECYCLING & DISPOSAL GUIDE lists ways to help residents recycle, reuse, or dispose of items such as electronics, appliances, batteries, recyclables, yard & tree waste, or household hazardous waste.

To view the Recycling Guide online, visit the Dakota County website at www.dakotacounty.us and search "Recycling Guide". For more information, call the Dakota County Environmental Management Department at 952-891-7020.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Spring registration for all Hastings Parks & Recreation camps & classes Opens Monday, April 2, 2012.

Register [online](#) for swim lessons at the Hastings Family Aquatic Center, Safety Camp, MLB Pitch, Hit, & Run, and more!

Spots fill early, so don't delay! Please call 480-6175 with any questions.

Congratulations Youth Green Teams!

The City and Waste Management would like to express appreciation to the Hastings Softball Booster Club, Hastings Town & Country 4-H Club, and Boy Scout Troop #534 for all their hard work in recycling. Each group received over \$600 for their participation in the Youth Green Team Recycling Program!

How Can Our Group Participate?

If your youth group is interested in this program, contact Sandy Spring at 480-0307, ext. 0109, complete the application form, and submit to Waste Management, 2800 Millard Avenue, Hastings, MN 55033. Groups selected to participate will be notified well in advance of their three month term.

FROSTY FROLIC

Don't miss this evening of frosty family fun! There will be outdoor ice skating, outdoor games, a bonfire, hot chocolate, popcorn, winter crafts, and more. Contact Darbie at 480-6179 or djohnson@ci.hastings.mn.us with any questions.

January 26, 2012
Pioneer Park
(16th & Pine Street)
5:00-7:00 PM
FREE!

Grab your ice skates & come to this year's Frosty Frolic!



We are committed to protect and promote the unique characteristics of our community, including its history and scenic beauty. We will seek to infuse enthusiasm and enjoyment into our daily interactions with citizens, visitors and other employees.

