

Council Member Lisa Goodman, City of Minneapolis

WARD 7 E-NEWS

No property tax levy hikes in City's 2012 budget



The Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved the City's 2012 budget based on Mayor R.T. Rybak's proposal, which included no increase to the City's property-tax levy and investments in major street improvements.

The newly-adopted 2012 City budget makes a major new capital investment in street improvements and invests in the coordinated One Minneapolis initiative to reduce racial inequity in unemployment. The budget also maintains investments in public safety that have lowered violent crime citywide to historic lows, and eliminates no positions in the Fire Department.

The 2012 budget is 9 percent lower than it was 10 years ago, and will include 12 percent fewer fulltime positions. Since 2002, the City has paid down or avoided \$183 million in debt and at the same time successfully restored its AAA credit rating.

Earlier this year, the Mayor and City Council approved a successful negotiation to mergetwo closed City pension funds with the State's public-employee retirement system that averted a \$20 million tax increase that would have been forced on taxpayers in 2012.

The 2012 budget also invests \$150 million in street improvements over the next five years, 60 percent more than had been planned. The City will spend \$9 million more in street improvements in 2012 than previously planned, and \$23 million more in 2013.

For more information on the 2012 budget visit <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/city-budget>.

City's website gets extreme makeover

The City of Minneapolis website -- www.MinneapolisMN.gov -- has received a major facelift. Beginning Monday, Dec. 19, you'll see a website for the City that's more dynamic, easier to navigate and more accessible for people with disabilities. Behind the scenes, the website redesign will also help City staff work more efficiently because of a streamlined process to update content on the web.

The redesign process has been a significant undertaking for the City of Minneapolis and is the culmination of almost two years of work. Approximately 13,000 pages, 50,000 documents and 160,000 links have been converted to the new website format. There are many highlights to the redesign including:

You may notice that the redesign has changed the web addresses to many of the City's web pages. Web addresses to department homepages like www.minneapolismn.gov/311 and pages like www.minneapolismn.gov/snow remain the same, but many others will change. Users will want to visit the City's website, find the pages they're looking for, and update their bookmarks.

Lunch with Lisa

January 25

February 29

March 28

April 25

More coming....

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Digital billboards help make drivers aware of Snow Emergencies this season

The City of Minneapolis is adding another tool to help folks learn when a Snow Emergency is declared in Minneapolis. New this year, a dozen digital billboards around town will alert drivers to when a Snow Emergency is declared, thanks to a partnership between the City and Clear Channel Outdoor. The new alert system adds to the many existing ways the City already works to help folks learn when a Snow Emergency is in effect.

Throughout this winter, ads to encourage people to sign up for Snow Emergency alerts will appear on the dozen Clear Channel Outdoor digital billboards in Minneapolis. Once a Snow Emergency is declared, the ads will be replaced with ones that tell drivers that a Snow Emergency is in effect, and to call the Snow Emergency hotline to find out where to park.

The City currently has many tools people can use to find out when a Snow Emergency is declared. They include text and email alerts, automated phone calls, a Snow Emergency hotline, Facebook, Twitter and the City's website. This new tool will help reach drivers who may not have gotten the news.

When enough snow falls, a Snow Emergency would be declared and drivers will then need to follow Snow Emergency parking rules so plow drivers can do the best job possible. Failure to follow the Snow Emergency parking rules can result in a ticket and tow.

There are many ways to learn about a Snow Emergency

Towing and impounding vehicles is expensive, so it's in everyone's interest to help drivers follow the parking rules and avoid a ticket and tow.

Minneapolis offers residents, workers and visitors a number of tools to help people learn when Snow Emergencies are declared and what to do when they are. We're advising drivers to put several of these tools to use, not just one or two. The more ways they have to learn about a Snow Emergency, the less likely they'll be towed because they didn't know one was declared.

Call the hotline - By calling the automated 612-348-SNOW hotline, folks can find out if a Snow Emergency has been declared. The hotline will include information on parking restrictions that drivers need to follow to avoid tickets and tows. The hotline includes information in Spanish, Somali and Hmong.

Check out the City's website - Go to www.minneapolismn.gov/snow to find out whether a Snow Emergency has been declared and for a wealth of information on Snow Emergencies in many languages. Also, check out the street lookup, which lets you put in an address or a neighborhood to see where you can park during a Snow Emergency.

Mail - Every fall, a Snow Emergency informational brochure is mailed to every household in Minneapolis.

Phone alerts - Minneapolis uses a phone alert system to notify residents when Snow Emergencies are declared. It is an automated notification system that can place thousands of calls per hour. Go to www.minneapolismn.gov/snow/phone-alert.asp to add additional numbers beyond just your home number.

Email alerts - You can sign up to get Snow Emergency alerts automatically emailed to you. Go to www.minneapolismn.gov/snow/esubscribe.asp for more details.

The media - News releases are sent to the media so TV, radio stations and other news outlets can inform their viewers, listeners and readers that a Snow Emergency is in effect.

On cable - Tune in to cable channels 14 and 79. These channels will have information in several languages when a Snow Emergency is declared.

Facebook - "Like" Minneapolis Snow Emergency on Facebook. Go to www.facebook.com/MinneapolisSnowEmergency.

Twitter - twitter.com/minneapolisnow. If you have a Twitter account, just follow us. Both the Twitter and Facebook pages will tell fans and followers when a Snow Emergency is declared.

Non-English Snow Emergency information

Information on Snow Emergency is also available in other languages on the City's website. If you know anyone who primarily speaks Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Oromo, Vietnamese or Lao, you can direct them to www.minneapolismn.gov/languages for information in their language on Snow Emergency and much more.

Minneapolis reduces pet license fees

It will now cost less for you to license your cat or dog. The City of Minneapolis is reducing pet license fees in an effort to get more people to license their pets.

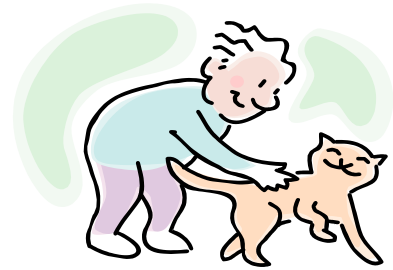
Beginning January 2012, the annual license fee for a spayed/neutered pet drops from \$30 to \$25. A \$15 discount was also created for those individuals with limited incomes or those receiving public assistance. This new license type mirrors the existing discount for seniors age 65 or older.

Pet licensing is a major component of Minneapolis Animal Care & Control's mission to create safe and healthy communities for people and pets, and it's also the law. City ordinance requires the licensing of all dogs, cats, rabbits and ferrets.

There are many benefits that come with licensing your pet. Licensed pets that stray away from home are three times more likely than unlicensed pets to be returned safely to their owners. If a licensed stray pet is picked up by Minneapolis Animal Care & Control or brought to the Animal Shelter, the animal gets a free ride home. Stray cats and dogs that come to the shelter without a visible license tag only have a 50 percent chance of going home.

Licensing your pet also helps other pets. Pet license fees pay for:

- Basic veterinary and emergency care for all stray animals
- Bite, animal cruelty and dangerous animal investigations and enforcement
- Efforts to find homes for stray and abandoned animals
- Enforcement of laws to ensure safe communities for people and pets



Licensing your pet is quick and easy. You can apply through the City by going online, calling 311, or visiting Minneapolis Animal Care & Control or the Minneapolis Development Review. Pet Licenses can also be purchased at two veterinary clinics – Westgate Pet Clinic and Minneapolis Veterinary Hospital – as well as with Chuck & Don's Pet Food Outlet.

For more information visit the Minneapolis Animal Care & Control website: www.minneapolismn.gov/animal-control.

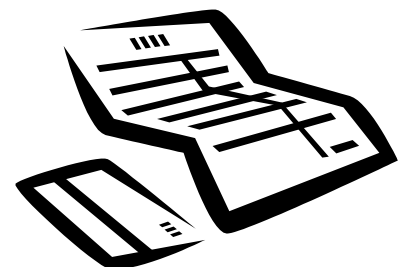
New year brings a change in utility bill calculation

Your monthly Minneapolis utility bill includes charges for your tap water, storm and sanitary sewer, and garbage and recycling pickups. Beginning in January, you will see a change in the billing for the costs of water and sewer services.

Typically at the start of the new year, people would see an increase in the volume rates charged for sewer and water services (a cost that's based on how much you use). However, this year there's a new fixed rate component added instead of an increase in the volume rate. Most homes will see a change that adds about \$5 in fixed rates per month, but no increase in the volume rate.

Until now, the amount customers paid for water and sewer service was based solely on the amount of water used during the month. However, there are more costs involved than just producing the water itself. The City must maintain the water distribution system and sewer lines that service all homes and businesses at all times, and a decrease in water usage does not decrease the costs to operate these systems. During times when citywide water use is low, there is less money available to maintain and operate these critical systems. This change reflects the fact that these services require fixed maintenance, and adding fixed rate fees will allow the City to manage these services more effectively.

Find your 2012 utility rates at www.minneapolismn.gov/utility-billing or call 311.



Keep your sidewalk shoveled this winter

Sidewalks are a critical part of our city's transportation system. That's why it's important for homeowners and businesses to keep the sidewalks shoveled throughout the winter.

Minneapolis ordinance requires that property owners clear sidewalks at homes and duplexes within 24 hours after a snowfall. Property owners of apartment and commercial buildings are responsible for clearing the sidewalks within four daytime hours of a snowfall. For your own benefit and to let your neighbors who are walking, pushing strollers and using wheelchairs get around, please do your part.

Snow shoveling rules in other languages

The City's snow shoveling rules are explained in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish as part of the "Did you know,," series of short videos. You can see them all at www.YouTube.com/cityofminneapolis and on City cable channels 14 and 79.



Minneapolis leads the nation in National Night Out participation

Once again, our city leads the nation when it comes to National Night Out activities to build community and keep our neighborhoods safe. For the fourth time in the past five years Minneapolis placed first in the nation for the number of National Night Out gatherings held in the city, among cities with populations greater than 300,000, according to the National Association of Town Watch which sponsors the annual awards.

More than 60,000 Minneapolis residents gathered on Aug. 2 at a record 1,173 events in all 83 neighborhoods of the city to celebrate National Night Out. An improved, easier to use online registration process, the quality customer service from 311, and the hard work of the City's Crime Prevention Specialists are among the things that helped encouraged folks like you to get involved. Minneapolis' effort, which was coordinated by the Minneapolis Police Department, resulted in activities ranging from small get-togethers in yards to elaborate events in parks and on blocked-off streets.

Since 1989, Minneapolis has placed first in the nation 10 times, and second place seven times among the largest cities in the country.

National Night Out is a crime prevention effort that aims to reduce crime by encouraging neighbors to get to know one another. When people know one another, they are more likely to watch out for one another and call police about suspicious activity. National Night Out activities help build and maintain Minneapolis' extensive network of neighborhood watch block clubs by giving people an opportunity to get together with neighbors, meet new people and discuss issues.

Major sponsors of Minneapolis' National Night Out were Target Corporation, Nickelodeon Universe at Mall of America, Castle Building and Remodeling, Mill City Museum and Cub Foods. In addition to the major sponsors, 144 local businesses supported block events.

For more information about Minneapolis' National Night Out, visit www.minneapolismn.gov/nno.