

minnetonka memo

*A Newsletter from the City of Minnetonka
February 2003*



A FREE HOME Remodeling Fair will be held Sunday, February 23 from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Eisenhower Community Center, 1001 Hwy. 7. Parking is available at the center or use the free shuttle bus from the Oak Ridge Country Club parking lot. Exhibitors include remodeling contractors, architects, landscapers; representatives from lending institutions and city inspectors/staff will also be available to answer questions.

Seminar topics include: kitchen and bathroom trends/remodeling; decks and porches; landscape design; window replacement; refinishing wood floors; finishing a lower level; and "healthy homes in cold climates." Architects and interior/landscape designers will provide free, no-obligation advice. Bring your photos and sketches. Food concessions will be available.

For details and seminar times, visit www.eminnetonka.com, then "Hot Topics – Upcoming Events." Sponsors are the cities of Golden Valley, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park, as well as community education departments of the Hopkins, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park school districts. □

Come for an afternoon of fun! HT

FEBRUARY HAS BEEN designated nationally as "We Love Our Kids" month. Community-wide celebrations have been planned to strengthen families and children by promoting friendly activities and community asset building. To help celebrate, Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services is planning "Kids Fest 2003" on Sunday afternoon, February 9.

Beginning at 1 p.m., a variety of activities and programs will be conducted at the Minnetonka Community Center, Minnetonka Ice Arena, and Williston Center: a reptile show, dog sled rides, arts and crafts, miniature golf, medallion hunt, face painting, strolling characters, magicians, bingo with prizes, ice skating, swimming, and live entertainment. A shuttle will provide transportation to and from all three



The Kids' Fest is a lot of fun — come join us!

facilities. There is no charge for any activity. Concessions will be sold with all proceeds going to the Richard Wilson Recreation Services Scholarship Fund. For more information, please visit www.eminnetonka.com or contact Recreation Services, (952) 939-8203. □

Introducing Brad Wiersum, Minnetonka's new Ward 3 Council Member

BRAD WIERSUM WAS recently selected by the Minnetonka City Council to serve the remaining term of Linda Koblick, who was elected to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners.

Brad is an eleven-year resident of Minnetonka, who lives at 16370 Eagle Ridge Drive with his wife, Karen, and four children. His career has been in the food industry; he's currently a self-employed management and marketing consultant.



Brad Wiersum

Brad plans regular office hours at city hall to allow residents of Ward 3 an initial opportunity to meet with him. He'll be available from 2 to 4 p.m. on the second Monday of the month and from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

To schedule an appointment, please e-mail Brad at bwiersum@eminnetonka.com or call him at either (952) 930-3681 (home) or (952) 939-8503 (VM). □

Inside...

Property Tax Information *pages 2, 7*
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You're invited!

MAYOR KAREN ANDERSON will deliver her State of the City message on Wednesday morning, February 12 in the Minnetonka Community Center. The event will run from 7:30 to 9 a.m. The public is invited; a light breakfast will be served. Reservations should be made by February 7. Please call Terri DesLaurier, (952) 939-8211 or e-mail tdeslaurier@eminnetonk.com. □

2003 Property Taxes

Property tax statements are to be mailed by Hennepin County in late February. Property taxes for 2003 are based on a property's 2002 estimated market value and tax levies adopted by school districts, Hennepin County, and the city late in 2002.

Factors determining the amount of your property tax

Many factors contribute to changes in property tax bills, especially after recent state property tax reform.

Budget growth

Spending increases by the City of Minnetonka, Hennepin County, and school districts contribute to a 3% growth in 2003 property taxes. Changes vary since the Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Wayzata school districts each adopt their own tax levies.

Bond referenda

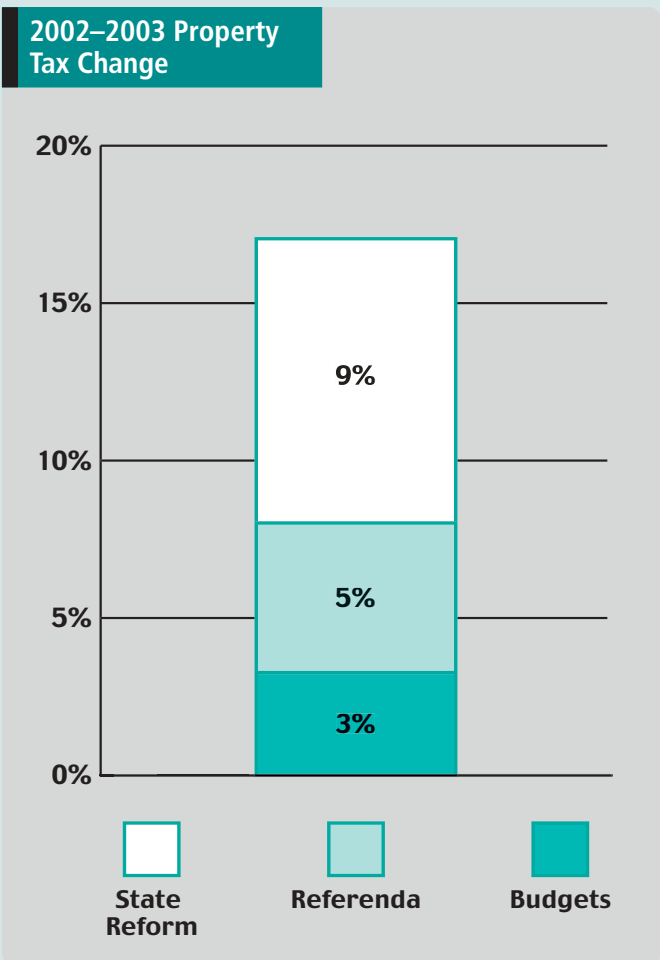
Voter-approved referenda add another 5% to

tax bills. Most of the increase is associated with school district referenda, and varies by district. The city parks and open space referendum is also included.

State tax reform

An additional 9% of the increase is attributable to state tax law changes, which shifted more tax burden onto homeowners when commercial rates were lowered. Faster growth in residential market value compounded this impact.

In total, average residential taxes increased 17% and average commercial



2003 Tax Rate Comparisons	
Brooklyn Center	59.208
Hopkins	56.961
Brooklyn Park	49.351
Golden Valley	47.562
Chanhassen	44.157
St. Louis Park	37.636
Maple Grove	36.599
Excelsior	36.481
Eden Prairie	36.016
Bloomington	35.974
Shorewood	32.378
MINNETONKA	32.059
Edina	28.231
Plymouth	25.222

taxes decreased 4%. Even if local spending was frozen, residential taxes would still go up, and commercial taxes would still go down.

Value appreciation

Finally, property taxes are affected by changes in the value of land and buildings. Over the past three years, the average

Minnetonka home value grew from \$212,000 to \$276,000, an increase of 30%. In contrast, market value increases for commercial and industrial property have stalled with the recession. Market value notices for 2003, which apply to property taxes payable in 2004, will be mailed in late February.

STATE OF THE CITY

State of the City

Minnetonka: Prepared for the challenges of the future

THE CHALLENGES OF this new century continued in 2002. Minnesota joined 47 other states with serious state budget shortfalls, resulting in likely revenue cuts to cities and towns throughout the nation. Add to this the list of new public safety challenges arising from the events of 9-11-01. Despite the new city responsibilities of homeland security and projected state cuts in aid to cities, I remain optimistic and confident about the future of the City of Minnetonka. Thanks to Minnetonka's early response to expected state revenue cuts, our city is prepared for new budget realities in 2003. We're prepared to continue providing basic city services and to meet ongoing infrastructure requirements. Our strong financial underpinnings, solid basic services and facilities, and diverse community of people who take public service seriously have prepared the City of Minnetonka for the challenges of the coming year and beyond.

A New Council for the New Year

A new council member for Ward 3, Brad Wiersum, was sworn in at the January 6 city council meeting, replacing Linda Koblick, newly elected Hennepin County Commissioner.



Mayor Karen Anderson

Council Member Wiersum joins six others on our city council with a continuity of leadership and a commitment to public service that is felt well beyond our borders.

Changes in leadership at the national, state, and regional levels affect Minnetonka city interests, so it is particularly important that we

benefit from our partnerships with other groups and make sure our residents' voices are heard. City council members and city employees devote their time and energy to a variety of organizations to promote our community interests. These include the National League of Cities, the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, the Metropolitan Council, TwinWest Regional Chamber of Commerce, the I-494 Corridor Task Force, Community Action for Suburban Hennepin, the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, the Southwest Suburban Cable Commission, the three watershed districts included in the city, the Suburban Rate Authority, and the Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Wayzata school districts.

I had the privilege of representing Minnetonka and our state during 2002 as the President of the National League

of Cities (NLC). As the oldest and largest organization representing local government, NLC represents the interests of over 18,000 cities before Congress, the Bush administration, and federal agencies. It was an awesome responsibility and a wonderful opportunity to learn more about effective city governance.

My visits to half the states and several other countries reinforced my belief that local government is the most valuable and the most valued, because it is the government closest to the people. City government has the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to the needs expressed by our citizens. I learned that the strongest communities are those with the best systems of grassroots local democracy, those that have the ability and mechanisms in place for people to make their voices heard, that provide ways for people to participate in community decisions.

Proactive Citizen Participation

We've worked hard in Minnetonka to expand opportunities for citizen participation and make them relevant to today's needs, and to improve citizen access with new technologies. We've made improvements in our citizen notification process to make it easier for citizens to find out about, and stay up-to-date on, projects of interest. The city's web site, eminnetonka.com, is well used and provides access to many city services, including on-line

registration for recreation programs. It also includes a Hot Topics and Projects section for quick access to current city issues. I encourage you to subscribe to the city's weekly e-mail newsletter through the web site, available through a link on the home page.

We've long used the city's cable access channel as a resource for information as well as for direct cablecasts of Minnetonka City Council and Planning Commission meetings. In 2002, we included live coverage of some park board meetings. Recently, the software for the cable bulletin board was updated to better serve as an information and reference point for residents.

For those who want to play a more active role in city decision-making, Minnetonka has a number of boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, whose members advise the city council on issues such as parks and recreation, planning, senior citizen programs, housing and redevelopment, the city charter, and historic preservation. About 140 Minnetonka citizens serve the community in this way. Neighborhood Watch Groups are another way for residents to stay informed about city activities, and the block captains for these groups have an opportunity to advise city leaders. Originally formed to inform people about public safety issues, these groups have grown to include 114 neighborhoods and are a way of soliciting feedback on a number of city issues.

I believe that grassroots democracy, those opportunities for people to participate in decisions and activities, is present, alive and well in Minnetonka, and that we must continue our commitment to make it flourish and grow. That's how we best



The Gray's Bay Marina on Lake Minnetonka will be operational this spring. There are 112 vehicle/trailer parking spots and a three-lane public launch area for trailered boats. Parking and launching will be free. The attendant's building contains restrooms/changing rooms, vending machines, and a small office area. Gas will be available for purchase, and there will also be boat pump-out services. Twenty-nine boat slips have been leased through 2003 through public lottery.

prepare to meet the challenges of the future.

The Responsible Fix

Thanks to the city's early response to state financial shortfalls, "the Responsible Fix," Minnetonka is prepared to face the expected state cuts to local governments. Three actions taken in 2002 set the stage for this responsible response. First, we slowed the projected growth of our operating budget, resulting in savings estimated at \$3.7 million over the next five years. Second, we extended our five-year capital improvement program (CIP) an additional six months to save 10%



The new Public Works Department building at 11522 Minnetonka Boulevard will house not only city personnel and equipment, but in a cooperative effort will also provide space for ten Hennepin County tandem plow trucks.

of project costs. Third, we explored new revenue sources, primarily user fees, to diversify our dependence on the property tax.

The budget for 2003, adopted by the city council in December, assumes a \$1 million cut in state funds, but holds the city share of property tax growth to 3.7%. We did this by reducing three employee positions, all by attrition, slowing the growth in spending, and by adding a storm water utility fee similar to that

already used by most other cities.

We're fortunate to have strong financial leadership on our city staff, beginning with the city manager and finance director, that results in these proactive strategies and innovative solutions that are well recognized in the financial world. Minnetonka has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) award for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the past 18 years. In addition, we recently received a certificate recognizing and congratulating our early implementation of GASB 34, a federal requirement for financial reporting to better inform citizens about the state of city finances.

Moving Forward

Careful monitoring of city financial resources and making budget cuts to better position the city does not mean we're standing still in responding to resident needs. Working in partnership with others allows us to more cost effectively provide needed services. 2002 provides us with several examples of such partnerships and initiatives.

- The Gray's Bay Marina, set to open this spring, marks the culmination of many months of discussion, cooperation, and work by the City of Minnetonka and several public and

private groups. Owned by the MN Department of Natural Resources and operated by the City of Minnetonka, the marina provides a public presence for the city on the lake whose name we're proud to share.

- Minnetonka's new Public Works building is a 73,000 sq. ft. facility at 11522 Minnetonka Blvd. The building also represents a cooperative success story with Hennepin County. The county board contributed \$1.5 million to reserve space for ten of the county's tandem plow trucks which should be in place by March.
- Major improvements in our water system are under way, including education, rate restructuring, and seasonal restrictions. New wells are in, and the newest water tower on Williston Road and Hwy. 7 will be on line by June. These improvements will encourage water conservation and add critical capacity to avoid shortages, like the two we experienced in recent years, that threaten public safety.
- Park renovation and open space preservation, made possible through the \$15 million bond referendum supported by Minnetonka citizens in 2001, is well under way. The Minnetonka Park Board is using extensive neighborhood involvement in the process of renovating our 43 parks over the next several years. The city council established priority ratings for acquisition of open space in the city, and the first of the parcels, environmentally sensitive properties adjacent to Minnehaha Creek, has been purchased.
- Environmental challenges, which have become more prevalent as the city becomes fully developed, are better addressed with the city's first

Environmental Resources Coordinator in place. In October, the council adopted a new wetland buffer ordinance. This extra attention to environmental, development, and landowner interests is paying off through increased conservation easements and better-protected wetlands.

- The growing scarcity of affordable housing throughout the entire metropolitan region has reinforced the need for Minnetonka's commitment to providing a range of housing choices for people at various life stages desiring a variety of styles and prices of housing. The non-profit West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust (WHAHLT) had a successful year in 2002, adding eight single-family homes to be offered for purchase at affordable prices.
- Public transit in Minnetonka received a boost last year through the cooperative efforts of the City of Minnetonka and Metro Transit.



Forty-three parks will be renewed in the next five years, as a result of a bond referendum approved by voters in 2001. Extensive neighborhood involvement is utilized in the park renovation process. Mini Tonka Park, above, is the first park to be revitalized.

Minnetonka's opt-out arrangement with Metro Transit creates a unique partnership that improves service while protecting our taxpayers from the financial downside risk of independent operation. A new Dial-A-Ride program began in July, and a new north-south route between the Plymouth Road Transit Center and the Shady Oak Park and Ride allows connections to Plymouth Metrolink and the Southwest Metro routes.

The West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust (WHAHLT) recently purchased this



Minnetonka home to provide affordable, permanent home ownership opportunities to low- and moderate-income households. Last year, eight homes were acquired in the city and made available for purchase at affordable prices.

- In other areas, numerous business practice improvements were adopted to streamline development regulation. In cooperation with the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce, Minnetonka has joined a newly-merged Minnetonka-Plymouth Business Council to increase our effectiveness and participation in Chamber activities and business matters.
- A new residential mill and overlay program was started to improve street maintenance throughout the city.
- Sign ordinance amendments were adopted, and an increased nuisance enforcement effort was launched.
- The new Community Action Recognition (CAR) Award, established to recognize residents, organizations, and businesses for their contributions to our community, has had strong initial interest.
- Senior citizen programs are made possible through the outstanding efforts of over 300 volunteers. In the past year, these volunteers served 4,615 meals, drove over 1,200 hours and provided 2,428 hours of home maintenance.

All of these initiatives and measures prepare Minnetonka well for the financial and other challenges sure to come in 2003.

New Public Safety Challenges

The events of September 11, 2001, had a lasting impact on Minnetonka, as they did on every city and town in the nation. National defense is now a local responsibility, and hometown security is an important priority added to the public safety agenda. I'm confident that every single community in the U.S. is more safe and secure than it was 18 months ago.

This is certainly true in Minnetonka. We have updated our Emergency Preparedness Plan; made city buildings, facilities, and infrastructure more secure; completed thousands of hours of training covering all aspects of emergency response; polished our unique Technical Rescue Program; and expanded our partnerships with other public safety agencies. An example of these partnerships was the joint exercise the Minnetonka Fire Department

carried out with Hennepin County Public Health, responding to a mock bio-terrorism event, using senior volunteers as pretend victims.

We've made significant improvements in our public safety communication system, working toward greater metro-wide interoperability. We have also equipped our first responders with personal protection clothing that will enable them to respond safely to critical incidents.

All of these activities enhance the public safety of our city and our nation, and they were all carried out entirely at our own expense. We will need to look carefully at our public safety priorities as the responsibilities for homeland/hometown security grow, as they certainly will.

We're fortunate in Minnetonka to have public safety personnel who are second to none in their skills and experience, dedication, and professionalism. Many of our firefighters and police officers hold positions of authority in agencies directing wider safety activities. Assistant Fire Chief Jim Flanders is the President of the Emergency Managers Association of Minnesota. Police Chief Joy Rikala is the sergeant at arms for the MN Chiefs of Police Association and is the Minnesota representative to the International Chiefs of Police SACOP Division (State Association of Chiefs of Police). Many members of the police and fire departments serve as representatives on critical committees and task forces at county, state, and national levels on such topics as communication systems, terrorism, policy creation, and terrorism funding.

Among those who have received special awards for outstanding effort

is Officer Sarah Grau, who received an award for heroism for rescuing a child from a pond. Officer Tim Wasmund was also honored as the Optimist Officer of the Year, and Officer Troy Denneson received a Hennepin County Chiefs of Police 2002 Traffic Officer of the Year Honorable Mention Award. These outstanding officers are not alone in their dedication to our community.

In Appreciation

All of these achievements and preparations for facing future challenges require the dedication of many people who contribute to city successes. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the city council for their dedication and hard work in carrying out not only regular city business, but also the extra activities that fill our schedules throughout the year.

I'd also like to thank our city manager, John Gunyou, and all the city employees for the very professional manner in which they provide city services and for their commitment to excellent community service. They exemplify the term "public servant."

Most importantly, I must thank our citizens — the residents, business and community leaders, retirees, and youth. Your commitment to Minnetonka continues to make this an excellent place to live, work, and enjoy our lives. Together, we have all demonstrated that a strong, quality community is built by working together, beyond self-interest, for the benefit of the community as a whole. That is why I'm so confident of our ability to face whatever challenges may come in the year ahead.

May you all have a healthy, happy and safe new year!

Karen J. Anderson



Last July a new "Dial-a-Ride" bus service started in Minnetonka. It operates weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (952) 401-1749 to schedule a ride or for fare information.



For up-to-the-minute city news and information, visit the city web site, www.eminnetonka.com.

2003 Market Value Notice

(Your Market Value Notice applies to property taxes payable in 2004)

How is market value determined?

The Minnetonka Assessing Division maintains records for every property in the city. Based on actual real estate sales from the past year for comparable properties, adjustments are made to the market values of most properties. Approximately one-fourth of the properties are physically inspected each year, and adjustments to these are made based on the results of that inspection. Market value adjustments are also made for building additions, remodeling and other improvements.

What if I don't agree with the market value set for my property?

If you have concerns or questions about your market value notice or the assessment process, please contact the Minnetonka Assessing staff, (952) 939-8200. The staff can review its property records and sales information with you.

Based on this discussion and review, the appraiser may or may not make a change to your market value. If not, you have the right to appeal.

In late February, Minnetonka property owners will receive their 2003 market value notices. Four value amounts appear on the notices.

Estimated Market Value

The assessor's estimate of the total market value of the property.

Limited Market Value

This "caps" the value on properties where the 2003 value increased significantly over 2002. Now state law provides for increases to be capped at 12% rather than using the previous cap of 10%. However, most homeowners will see increases capped at 12%. The value of new improvements is excluded from the cap.

Qualifying Improvement Value

Shows that portion of the value of improvements made to an older home during 2002 which is deferred from taxes. Homes must be at least 45 years old to qualify; a higher deferral applies to homes over 70 years old.

Market Value Subject to Taxation

The net taxable value of the property. For many homeowners, this amount will be the same as the limited market value, not the estimated market value.

State Tax Court. More common, however, is an appeal through the local Board of Review, and if desired, then to the Hennepin County Board of Equalization.

The Minnetonka City Council convenes each year as the local Board of Review and has local real estate professionals serve as its advisors. To make an appeal to the local board, you should first discuss your market value with the Assessing staff. After that discussion, you may make an appeal to the local Board of Review by March 28 simply by asking that your property be listed for appeal. However, it is important to know that the local and county boards have the authority to raise or lower an appealed market value.

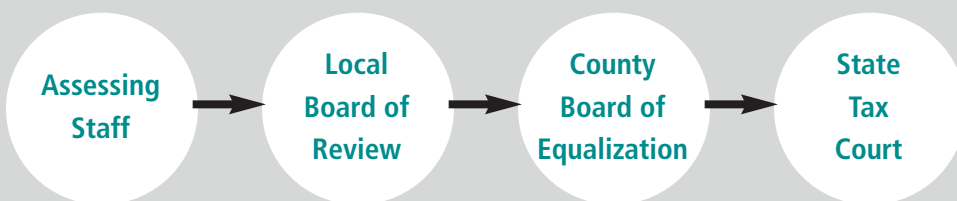
Remember, if you have concerns or questions about your market value or the assessment process, please contact the Minnetonka Assessing staff, (952) 939-8200.

How does the appeal process work?

The value subject to appeal is the estimated

market value, not the limited market value. There are two avenues of appeal available. Property owners may appeal directly to the

Market Value Appeals Process



Calendar

City of
Minnetonka

February
2003

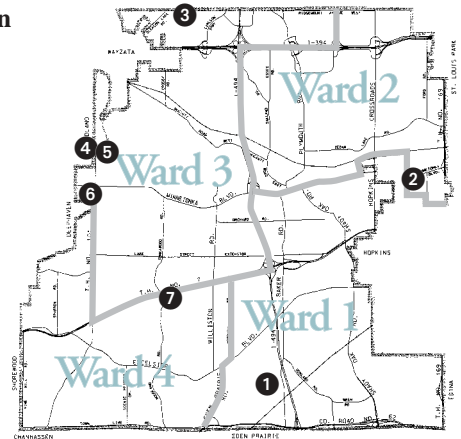
Call (952) 939-8200
for meeting
locations.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 3 Community Heritage Commission, 6:30 p.m.
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 5 Park Board, 7 p.m.
9	10	11	12	13	14	15 6 Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.
16	17	18	19	20	21	22 9 Kids' Fest, 1 – 5 p.m.
23	24	25	26	27	28	10 City Council, 6:30 p.m. 11 Senior Advisory Board, 10 a.m.; EDA, 6 p.m.
						12 State of the City, 7:30 – 9 a.m.; Joint Recreation Board, 7 p.m.
						17 Presidents' Day — city offices closed
						20 Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.
						24 City Council, 6:30 p.m.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The following items are tentatively scheduled to come before the Planning Commission in February. Please call (952) 939-8200 for updated information or visit the city web site: eminnetonka.com. Meeting agendas are posted on the site the Friday prior to each commission meeting.

- 1 Subdivision, variances for Gary and Shirley Smith at **13326 North St.** (94013.02a)
- 2 Preliminary plat, variances for Joseph W. Jurusik at **3021, 3113 Atwater St.** (02071.02a)
- 3 Rezoning, subdivision, variance for Gonyea Properties, Inc. at **26 Kingsview La.** (02073.02a)
- 4 Variances for an addition for Jack and Betsy Randall at **2819 McKenzie Point Rd.** (02062.02a)
- 5 Variances for Paul Pedersen at **17402 Gray's Bay Blvd.** (02007.02b)
- 6 Rezoning, preliminary plat for Halley's Custom Homes (The Sanctuary, Third Addition) at **3230, 3306 Groveland School Rd. and 3305 Co. Rd. 101** (02074.02a)
- 7 Site, building plan review, variances for an addition for Curt Fretham at **15400 Hwy. 7** (91005.02a)



HT Hot Topics HT

ITEMS IDENTIFIED WITH HT are listed as Hot Topics on the city web site, eminnetonka.com. Please refer to the site for additional information on these selected topics. For more information, call Minnetonka Mike, (952) 939-8586, leaving your name and address.

Sun Sailor selected as official city newspaper

AT ITS FIRST meeting in January, the Minnetonka City Council selected the *Sun Sailor* as the city's official newspaper to publish the city's legal notices, ordinances, and other official information, plus general information about the city. The *Sailor* is delivered to most residences free or by voluntary subscription.

If you would like the newspaper delivered to your home, call Sun Newspapers, (952) 392-6860.

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PRESORTED
STANDARD
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PAID
CITY OF MINNETONKA

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