Woodbury names new public safety command team

Changes are coming to Woodbury Public Safety’s leadership team.

Patrol Commander Jason Posel was appointed as Woodbury’s next public safety director at the April 27 City Council meeting. In addition, Woodbury Sgt. Omar Makkad will be promoted as the city’s next police chief/assistant public safety director.

Woodbury is also advancing four veteran personnel to revised roles in the public safety command team:

- Police Commander John Altman moved into the investigations commander role.
- Sgt. Tom Ehrenberg was promoted into a patrol commander role.
- Sgt. Garrett Kissner was promoted into a patrol commander role.
- Public Safety Supervisor Chris Zacharias was elevated to public safety manager.

The changes are needed to fill planned vacancies. Public Safety Director/Police Chief Lee Vague will retire Aug. 20 and Assistant Public Safety Director/Assistant Police Chief Kris Menert will retire June 17. Former Investigations Commander Steve Wills retired in March.

“We have worked hard to prepare for this change of leadership through years of succession planning,” City Administrator Clint Gridley said. “We expect this to be a seamless transition and our residents will see no changes in the high quality public safety services they expect and rightfully deserve.”

Posel and Makkad are scheduled to take over their new leadership roles Aug. 20.

“Our approach to delivering integrated police, emergency preparedness, fire and emergency medical services under a unified Public Safety Department makes these leadership positions unique,” explained Gridley. “Promoting from an excellent internal pool of strong leaders is the best way to ensure our positive culture, which consistently garners high approval ratings from the community, continues to grow stronger.”

Members of the community such as the Multicultural Advisory Committee, Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce, Washington County Sheriff’s Office, Woodbury Community Foundation, South Washington County Schools and others were involved in the director and police chief interview process. These community members are familiar with the Woodbury Public Safety Department and brought their diverse backgrounds and perspectives to the process.

Posel

A 25-year veteran of the department, Posel began his career with the Woodbury Police Department in 1996 as a community service officer before...
Impacts of increases in Woodbury property valuations

Woodbury homeowners received a property valuation notice in the mail from Washington County in March. Many of you likely noticed the spike in your property’s value – the median 2022 residential property value in Woodbury increased by 19.3%. While this might seem substantial, it is actually in line with residential property value increases across the metro.

Increasing property values is a good thing for all property owners – it adds to our personal wealth. From a community perspective, growth in the tax base also has a positive impact from a property tax rate and a business return-on-investment perspective. However, there may be some misunderstanding over how these increases may affect property taxes. I want to share more about the property valuation process and the impact of value increases.

First, property values are independently determined by Washington County annually. The City of Woodbury has no role in this assessment process.

Secondly, each taxing entity sets only their property tax levy, which is the amount of money each entity needs from property taxes for the upcoming fiscal year. There are three major property taxing jurisdictions levying property taxes. In any given year, the City of Woodbury’s and Washington County’s portions of a residential property tax bill each typically represents about 25% of the total property tax bill (about 50% total), with your school district and other taxing districts receiving the remaining amounts, depending on where you live in Woodbury (these numbers are based on a property in School District 833).

Third, the degree of change in the city’s portion of property taxes will be impacted by the level of increase or decrease in property value compared to the median property value change. Woodbury properties experienced a $2 billion increase in assessed value from 2021 to 2022. While the tax base has significantly increased, the property tax burden at the property level does not automatically go up or down correspondingly with property value. For example, the property value of the median value residential property in Woodbury increased by 19.3% for 2022. That means if your property value increased by more than 19.3%, your chances of experiencing a property tax increase in 2023 is higher. However, if your property value increased by less than 19.3%, the change in property taxes that you pay will be less than the average homeowner. So, in sum, a significant increase in property value does not result in a corresponding increase in property taxes.

Calculating property value

The property value function is governed by Minnesota State statutes, which establish specific requirements for the assessment of property. The law requires that all real property be valued at market value, which is defined as the usual or most likely selling price as of the Jan. 2 assessment date.

The estimated market values are established through the 2022 Washington County assessment based upon actual real estate market trends of Washington County properties from Oct. 1, 2020, through Sept. 30, 2021. Individual property values are determined from these trends. Assessors look at the sale price of similar properties, the neighborhood, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, size and quality of the building, recent improvements to the property, and the condition of the property to make sure valuations are fair and that properties in Washington County are valued and classified uniformly and accurately.

While the deadline has passed to make changes for this year’s valuation, each spring property owners who have questions or concerns regarding the market value set for their property are encouraged to contact the property appraiser assigned to their area. The other option for appealing your value is to attend any of the four regional Open Book meetings scheduled by the county each spring.

Property owners who are not satisfied by speaking with the assessor’s office or with the action taken at the Open Book meeting may appeal before the County Board of Appeal, consisting of elected county commissioners, the county auditor, and/or appointed officials.

Also keep in mind that a Property Tax Refund and/or Homeowner’s Homestead Credit Refund are available through the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Learn more at revenue.state.mn.us/filing-property-tax-refund.

If you have any questions regarding the appraisal process or the 2022 market value, contact the Washington County Assessor’s Office at 651-430-6175 or visit the Washington County Assessor’s Office website at washington.minnesotaa assessors.com.

How property taxes are calculated

\[
\text{Property Tax Rate} = \frac{\text{Property Tax Levy}}{\text{Tax Base}}
\]

\[
\text{Property Taxes Owed} = \text{Property Tax Rate} \times \text{Taxable Value of the Property}
\]

Source: Washington County

Maklad

Maklad, a Woodbury native, was a Woodbury Police Explorer graduate as a teenager. He joined the Woodbury Police Department as a community service officer in 2002, and was later elevated to police officer and, eventually, to patrol sergeant. In these capacities, Maklad has been involved in overseeing SWAT teams, the Street Crimes Unit, firearms programs, the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Program, and facilitating meetings and discussions with the Multicultural Advisory Committee. He also is a founding member of the cross-trained police officer/firefighter program. Maklad holds an associate’s degree in criminal justice from Century College and a bachelor’s degree in law enforcement from Metropolitan State.

“We believe that a strong, compassionate leader is critical to public safety,” Gridley said. “We are confident they will continue our tradition of strong, compassionate leaders in Public Safety.”

Public safety... from page 1

Being promoted to police sergeant in 1998. He was later elevated to patrol sergeant and eventually to patrol commander. In these capacities, Posel has been involved in overseeing patrol divisions, SWAT teams, the K9 Unit and community engagement activities, including facilitating meetings and discussions with the Multicultural Advisory Committee and other community groups. He is a graduate of the National FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., and volunteers as vice chair of the local Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf Board. Posel also holds a master’s degree in criminal justice leadership from Concordia University-St. Paul.
2021 Drinking Water Report now available online

Woodbury’s drinking water is monitored regularly for contaminants, in accordance with federal and state laws.

To advance consumers’ understanding of drinking water and heighten awareness of the need to protect water resources, the monitoring results are published each spring in the city’s annual Drinking Water Report.

The 2021 water quality report, which includes information on the monitoring done on Woodbury drinking water between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2021, is now available on the city’s website at woodburymn.gov/WaterQualityReport.

We are proud to report that no contaminants monitored under the Safe Drinking Water Act requirements were detected at levels that violated state and federal drinking water standards.

Please review the report and, if you have questions, contact Assistant Public Works Director Jim Westerman at 651-714-3720.

If you don’t have internet access, you can obtain a paper copy by calling Public Works at 651-714-3720.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

In addition to the contaminants that are tracked and measured under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the city, along with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), also is monitoring levels of PFAS in the water system.

The 3M Company made PFAS at its Cottage Grove facility from the late 1940s until 2002. PFAS wastes were disposed of at multiple sites in Washington County. The source of the PFAS in Woodbury’s groundwater has been identified as these disposal sites.

The MDH has established health standards and guidance values for specific PFAS parameters and has issued health advisories on nine of Woodbury’s 19 wells since 2017.

The city removed all nine of these wells from service, and constructed a temporary water treatment facility near the intersection of Valley Creek Road and Tower Drive that brought four of these wells back into service in summer 2020. Today, work is underway to expand the temporary water treatment facility to bring two more wells back into service this summer. 3M and the State of Minnesota funded the construction and expansion of the temporary facility.

The city also is building two new water production wells and constructing a long-term water treatment facility to ensure it can meet water demand for generations to come.

The water delivered to customers continues to meet all state and federal water quality standards and guidelines for PFAS.

“Unlike other chemicals, PFAS monitoring is not currently required as part of the Safe Drinking Water Act,” Westerman explained. “However, MDH has been monitoring City of Woodbury municipal wells for PFAS since the early 2000s, and we’ve continued to update the public about changes in the testing results and actions taken by the city to respond to the PFAS impacts as part of this annual drinking water report.”

Details about the history of PFAS in Woodbury wells and testing results are available on the city’s website at woodburymn.gov/PFAS.

Residents who have questions about their private water supply should contact the MDH.

Water restrictions...from page 1

Lawn watering would continue to be prohibited between noon and 5 p.m. every day; this existing standard includes homeowners associations. The specific restrictions will be communicated if/when implemented, and the elevated restrictions would remain in effect until the water system can be confidently and reliably managed to meet demand.

If the elevated restrictions are needed, temporary signage will be placed around the community. You can also register to receive updates from the city’s CodeRED emergency calling and texting system via the city’s website at woodburymn.gov/CodeRED or text “WashingtonMN” to 99411.

Information also will be shared on the city’s website, social media accounts, YouTube channel and InTouch email notification system (sign up at woodburymn.gov/InTouch).

How you can help

The public can help avoid elevated lawn-watering restrictions by practicing efficient water use. Remember, 1 inch of water per week, including rainfall, is all you need for a healthy lawn. Also, water wisely by installing a smart irrigation controller on your irrigation system. They are available from the city at a reduced rate at woodburymn.gov/SmartIrrigation.

The City Council will be hosting a virtual listening session about water quality on June 28 and June 30 (see adjacent article). For more information, including a list of frequently asked questions about the increased watering restrictions, visit woodburymn.gov/PFAS or contact Woodbury Public Works at publicworks@woodburymn.gov, or 651-714-3720.

Questions about PFAS and water? Participate in a virtual listening session in June

As the city continues to implement temporary and long-term water treatment solutions for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the Woodbury City Council wants to hear your thoughts about the city’s work in addressing PFAS.

The City Council will be hosting two virtual listening sessions in June:

- Tuesday, June 28, from noon to 1 p.m.
- Thursday, June 30, from 6 to 7 p.m.

The sessions will take place via Microsoft Teams, with a link posted at woodburymn.gov/VirtualMeetings as the meeting date approaches. There will be a short presentation by city staff at the beginning of the session before Mayor Anne Burt and members of the City Council open up the session for questions and comments from the public.

In addition to sharing their thoughts about this issue, the public will be asked to respond to a few discussion questions, including:

- What questions do you have around water quality in Woodbury?
- What additional information are you looking for on this issue?
- Where have you received information about water quality in the past?
- How would you prefer to receive information about water quality in the future?

Feedback also can be shared by sending an email to publicworks@woodburymn.gov or calling Public Works at 651-714-3720.
City seeking input on community engagement strategy

The City of Woodbury has committed to the development of a community engagement strategy that will help guide and support staff as they conduct equitable community engagement into the future.

The public is encouraged to share their insights and perspectives on the city’s engagement efforts and offer ideas for how the city can improve those efforts.

Use the adjacent QR code with your smartphone or visit woodburymn.gov/Engagement. Questions can be directed to Shelly Schafer, community engagement and equity coordinator, at shelly.schafer@woodburymn.gov or 651-714-3574.

Elevated water restrictions possible

Page 1

New public safety command team

Page 1

Drinking water report available

Page 3

Fireworks planned on Fourth of July

Long summer evenings, the smell of barbecue in the air and the sound of children playing mean only one thing – the Fourth of July Hometown Celebration at M Health Fairview Sports Center!

The festivities begin at 6 p.m. with bounce houses in the Kids Zone, open green space for family play, Madison’s Place playground, a chance to meet the mayor and City Council, and food trucks. The Southern Express Band, begins at 6 p.m. and Free Fallin, takes the stage around 8 p.m. The fireworks display launches at 10 p.m. Special thanks to A.J. Alberts Plumbing for sponsoring this year’s event.

Parking

M Health Fairview Sports Center is located south of Bailey Road and east of Radio Drive, adjacent to East Ridge High School. Motorists are encouraged to park in the sports center and East Ridge High School parking lots. Pedestrians should utilize all crosswalks. No parking will be allowed along Bailey Road and Radio Drive.

The traffic plan will be published on woodburymn.gov, announced via the InTouch email notification system, and posted on the city’s Facebook page and Twitter (@CityofWoodbury and @mhfvsportscntr) accounts.

For more information, contact reconline@woodburymn.gov or call 651-714-3583.

Elections judges and absentee voting

Election Day polling locations will be open for the 2022 primary (Aug. 9) and general (Nov. 8) elections. Election judges are needed to staff these polling locations. Election judges must be:

- A U.S. citizen eligible to vote in Minnesota
- At least 18 years old
- Able to read, write and speak English
- Able to complete a two-hour training
- Election judge trainees must be at least 16 years old and in good standing at school.

Applications are available at www.co.washington.mn.us (search “Election judge application”). Contact electionjudges@co.washington.mn.us or call 651-430-6790.

Absentee Voting

Absentee voting for the Aug. 8 primary election begins June 24. An absentee ballot application can be completed online at mnvotes.org. Once completed, a ballot will be mailed to the eligible voter to complete and return via mail. Learn more at www.co.washington.mn.us, or call 651-430-6790. Absentee in-person voting locations include:

- The lower level of Central Park
- The Washington County Government Center in Stillwater
- The Cottage Grove Service Center
- Oakdale City Hall
- The Headwaters Service Center in Forest Lake

Absentee voting hours at all locations will be:

- Tuesday, June 24, through Friday, Aug. 5; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Aug. 6; 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Monday, Aug. 8; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.