



# ACCOUNTABILITY

## *A Report to Lake Elmo Taxpayer-Investors on 2012 Tax Dollar Use*

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### **Accountability**

*Dean Zuleger, City Administrator*

Welcome to the first edition of Accountability – the 2012 Annual Report for the City of Lake Elmo. In the following pages you will find an accounting of what exactly your government did with your tax dollars in the past year – from a raw data and narrative perspective.

### **Guiding Principles: How We Do It**

The City of Lake Elmo operates on three basic principles: Servanthood, Accountability, and Trust. Let me explain.

First, we are here to serve you because you're the boss. Our staff is committed to find a solution to your issue or an answer to your question to the best of our ability. Ideally, we would like to do this within 24 hours, that's our goal, but rest assured we will get you what you need. Second, we will do what we say and be accountable for our shortcomings. Every staff person knows that their yes needs to mean yes and sometimes their no needs to mean no. There will be no excuses, no finger pointing, no delay – we will take responsibility for our actions (and the actions of our elected officials). Third, if we are good at the service and accountability, it should create trust with our taxpayers. As the Administrator this is my one and only goal – that we would operate in a manner that would create trust and pride in our local government.

### **2012: Reaching Out To Our Residents**

Over the past eleven months, staff's goal has been to get out in the community to listen and learn. We have attended HOA meetings, held listening sessions with local businesses, began the process of using surveys to gain information and have come to you directly rather than holding up in City Hall. This strategy has allowed us to hear from a multitude this year as opposed to just a handful of the loudest residents.

This outreach confirmed the fact that a majority of you want to preserve the open space character of Lake Elmo, want to keep our tax rate low, and want the City to do what it can to preserve property values. On the last point, we have succeeded as Lake Elmo homes held their value better than any other community in Washington County in 2012.

We also increased our communication to taxpayers with a revamped quarterly printed newsletter, a new website, a Facebook page and weekly electronic newsletter called "Fresh" – that can be found on our website each Friday.

### **On the Policy Front: Clean Water, Sound Planning & Safe Roads**

From a broad policy perspective, we continue to tackle some big issues, namely clean water, planning for growth in the I-94 corridor, and re-developing the Old Village.

About 40% of our aquifer has been affected by the presence of PFCs due to landfill-related contamination. As a result, the City has scrambled to provide clean, potable water through a variety of means since 2004. In 2012, our engineering staff located a clean, high quality well field in the northeast quadrant of Lake Elmo that should handle our needs for a number of years without compromising supply. In addition, City Staff will continue to look for funding options to get clean water to those in contaminated areas.

The Planning Commission and the two affiliated work groups were very busy in 2012. A Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the I-94 corridor were approved and sent to the Metropolitan Council for review. Lennar Homes has presented a unique 317 home concept plan to kick off our development in this area with construction scheduled to commence in 2013. The Old Village Work Group continues to work out the details of what is sure to be a more dynamic downtown area.

In cooperation with MnDOT and Washington County, the City worked daily on creating a safer road system for our residents to travel. Targeted enforcement, Red Zone education, and a no tolerance to speeding policy helped to make our roads a little safer.

### **Thanks**

None of this work happens without the dedication of a City Council and my hard-working City Staff that comes to work each day ready to serve. As a new Administrator, I want to give particular thanks to outgoing Mayor Dean Johnston (served 10 years) and Council Member Brett Emmons (served 4 years), who have committed each day of service to making Lake Elmo a better place to live. I, as well as many, will miss their trust and counsel.

# Elections

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In addition to a smooth primary election, the Lake Elmo City Clerk, along with the election judges, conducted a smooth general election with a voter turnout of 4946 voters or 83.4 % at two voting locations. Precinct One had a voter turnout of 2080 voters or 79.3%. Precinct Two had a voter turnout of 2866 voters or 86.6%.

# Water, Sewer & Storm Sewer Utility Highlights

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The Lake Elmo water utility system consists of an 85,000 gallon elevated water storage facility along with a 500 gallon-per-minute well, a 5,000 gallon pressurized water storage tank with an 800 gallon-per-minute well and a 750,000 gallon elevated water storage

facility. In addition, the City has many individual private wells throughout the City. The sewer utility system consists of 12 private wastewater treatment facilities. There are also individual private septic systems. A few highlights of the year were:

## Water

- Checked and recorded daily flow at 2 City Well Houses
- Maintained and flushed 37.4 miles of supply pipe
- Inspected, serviced, and operated 280 fire hydrants
- 18 water meters serviced or replaced
- 21 responses to water related issues
- 12 water services turned on/off
- 1012 Gopher One Locate utility markings performed
- A new drinking water supply chlorination system was installed at Well House No. 2. [Well No. 2 Chlorination System]. This included the design and installation of a chlorine chemical feed system together with a new combination shower/eye wash station to meet safety operational requirements. Total cost for this system was \$34,400, which provides regulated chlorine injection to the water system.
- A property was acquired near 50th Street and Lake Elmo Avenue to be the site for a new water supply well and the construction of Test Well No. 4 was completed. The test well was constructed at a cost of \$35,800 to verify adequate water quality and capacity necessary for the future Production Well No. 4.

## Sewer

- Checked and recorded flows from 3 lift stations daily
- Pumped and cleaned grease accumulations from the 94 lift station semi-annually
- Jetted/cleaned manholes and sewer mains from Inwood

Ave. to lift station quarterly

- Inspected, mowed and maintained 9 city owned treatment sites semi-annually
- The engineering department is working on sanitary sewer studies to extend municipal sewer to the Village, and to extend municipal sewer along Olson Lake Trail in a joint project with Oakdale.

## Storm Sewer

- System includes 26 miles of pipe, 762 catch basins, and 505 outlets
- 43 EPA/PCA mandated inspections were performed. (25% annually)
- 10,000 square feet of out falls were excavated, graded to drain, and restored
- Debris and sediment removal was performed on approximately 100 catch basins
- 8 catch basins and associated pipe/outlets were completely cleaned
- In conjunction with the 2012 Street & Water Quality Improvement Project, the engineering department implemented the 2012 Rain Garden Project. This included the design and installation of 17 rain gardens to recharge groundwater and improve water quality in the Lake DeMontreville watershed. The project was completed at a cost of \$52,000 in partnership with the Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD) and the Washington County Conservation District. City engineering staff applied for and secured \$27,822 in grant funds from the VBWD for the project.

# Streets

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The Lake Elmo Public Works department is responsible for maintaining approximately 70 miles of streets with 77 cul-de-sacs, 17 dead ends and 7 parking lots. Major maintenance activities include snow plowing, deicing, crack filling, seal coating, sweeping, striping, shouldering and pothole repairs. Projects accomplished in 2012 include:

- 65 tons of asphalt was hand shoveled and roll/packed into potholes
- Approximately 80 miles of ROW mowed and maintained
- All signs and intersections inspected and maintained for site lines
- 17 signs/posts were replaced
- 2 end of road barricades replaced
- Assisted with MN DOT landscape partnership project in planting 844 trees/shrubs along Hwy. 5
- A new 2012 Pickup with plow was purchased

The Engineering department maintains a complete inventory and condition assessment of the city streets and parking lots to establish a priority maintenance/replacement program that maximizes the useful service life of the street system. Each year roughly 25% of the streets are

reevaluated to ensure the proper maintenance application. In 2012, the City seal coated 4.6 miles of streets at a cost of \$92,000. The City also completed 6.0 miles of crack filling at a cost of \$19,600 in preparation of a 2013 seal coat. The 2012 seal coating project covered the following areas:

- 50th Street from Lake Elmo Avenue to Trunk Highway 5, 47th Street from Keats Avenue to Kimbro Avenue, and the streets in the Carriage Station, Tana Ridge, Meyer's Pine Ridge, Lake Elmo Vista, and Prairie Hamlet neighborhoods.

In addition, the city completed the 2012 Street & Water Quality Improvement Project. The project consisted of reclaiming 1.85 miles of street in the DeMontreville Highlands Area together with the parking lot for DeMontreville Park. The project was completed for a cost of \$1,000,000 with 30% assessed to benefitting properties. A street reclaim is a low cost – high value street resurfacing improvement intended to renew the pavement surface and supporting road base for the next 20-25 years. The process includes a material recycling process that is completed at 25-33% of the costs of a complete street reconstruction. The project included a detailed Report, Public Improvement hearing, detailed design, and construction management services. In addition to the street resurfacing, the project included storm drainage system repairs consisting of cleaning and repairing 10 culvert ends, cleaning 500 feet of ditch, installing 8 new catch basins and repairing 7 others.

### Additional Improvement Projects

*Downtown Demonstration Streetscape Project* – Installation of 4 decorative light poles, concrete island, and associated sidewalk repairs to improve the aesthetics of the Downtown along Lake Elmo Avenue.

*Whistling Valley Developments* – Staff managed the corrective construction work to be completed for the development improvements in the Whistling Valley First, Second and Third Additions consisting of over \$430,000. The work was funded through a security Bond claimed from the development.

### Fire & EMS Calls Up 18%

The Lake Elmo Fire Department responded to a total of 349 calls (Fire - 115, Medical - 190 and Rescue - 44) through the end of November putting the service on pace for a 18% increase in 2012. Other department highlights include:

- 5 new recruits hired, Dominic Jara, Rick Gimpel, Chris Supan, Alex Hilpisch and Tom Hilpisch
- Members retired, Firefighter Mark Vandemmeltraadt-18 yrs/10 months service, Captain Barney Sachs-12 yrs/9

- months service
- Members resigned, Kristine Johnson with over 6 yrs. service
- Updated 19 sets of Firefighter Turnout gear to current standards to better protect your Firefighters. Replaced gear that was 10+ years old
- Formed Truck Committee to identify current and future vehicle replacement needs. Committee members were from City Council, MAC Committee and fire department
- 3 Chief Officers of dept. completed 80 hrs. additional training and are nationally certified as Local Hazard Zone Incident Commanders
- 3 members completed additional training as Live Burn Instructors allowing us to do training burns without the need to hire outside instructors
- Chief completed FEMA training in Type 3 All Hazard Incident Management to allow for response to and management of large scale regional and national incidents.
- Training house burn on 10th St. with Mutual Aid Depts. Live burn training
- Fire Station Tours for over 150 students and Scouts during Fire Prevention
- Conducted fire extinguisher training and demo for all Washington County employees
- Fire prevention activities conducted at Lake Elmo Days

## Washington County Sheriff's Department Partnership

The City of Lake Elmo partners with Washington County for its law enforcement needs. This partnership allows Lake Elmo to police its community for an average of \$60 per capita – one of the lowest costs in the Twin Cities. The Sheriff's Department uses a community policing strategy that has deputies specifically detailed to Lake Elmo for familiarity purposes.

In 2012, the Washington County Sheriff's Department concentrated on traffic enforcement targeting 12 specific areas over the course of the year. In October, an extra patrol was added that resulted in over 150 citations and warnings being issued to slow traffic.

In 2012, major crime was down 20% (see below).

Category	2011	2012	% Change
Arson	0	1	+100%
Assault	3	5	+67%
Auto Theft	8	6	-25%
Burglary	39	30	-23%
Domestic Assault	2	9	+350%
Larceny/Theft	111	81	-37%
Rape	2	1	-50%
Robbery	1	0	-100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>-20%</b>



# Community Development

The Community Development Department worked on a variety of activities in 2012, mostly aimed at preparing the community for sewered growth in the I-94 Corridor and Village Planning Areas. The most important projects undertaken remain the ongoing work of amending the Land Use Plans for the I-94 Corridor and Village. To support these efforts, Staff and the Planning Commission worked on several updates to the City's Zoning Code in order to incorporate best practices related to development. In addition, Staff has also worked on Design Standards and the Lake Elmo Theming Project, led by Damon Farber and Associates, to ensure quality development outcomes when growth does indeed come.

It is also noteworthy that the Community Development Department added a new Building Official, Rick Chase. Along with processing a slightly increased load of building activity from the previous year, the department has also focused energy into improving the building permitting processes to bolster efficiency and accuracy. These improvements will be valuable if the community experiences increased building activity. Over the course of the year, the Building Department processed 311 building permits, not including plumbing and mechanical permits, in 2012.

## 2012 City Growth Statistics

*Statistics provided from 1/01/12 - 12/20/12*

- Variances: 4
- Conditional Use Permits: 3
- Minor Subdivisions: 1
- Subdivision Reviews: 1
- Zoning Text Amendments: 8
- New Homes: 31
- Building Permits: 311

Permitted Development Value  
as of December 20, 2012

**\$22,354,178**

- 12 acres of turf received weed control
- Lions Park tennis court was re-leveled and painted
- 8 miles of trails had deadfall removal and mowing completed semi-annually
- Hockey and pleasure rinks were established and maintained at Lions Park

### Projects

In 2012, five Eagle Scout projects were completed with partial funding and assistance from the City:

- Bridge from Lake Elmo Elementary School to City Hall site.
- New play borders, benches, and equipment painting at DeMontreville Park
- New player benches, foul fences and infield improvements at DeMontreville Park
- Forestry project encompassing 10 new 2-3 inch B&B trees in Lions and Tanna Park along with an emerald ash borer literature and education campaign
- New sign and welcome board for rules and maps at Sunfish Lake Park

### Events

- A successful Huff-n-Puff tournament with the Lake Elmo Jaycees at various parks was completed
- The Lake Elmo Days community celebration took place at Lions Park



# Parks & Recreation

The City is home to the Lake Elmo Regional Park Reserve. Spanning 2,500 acres, the park is a year-round attraction offering horse trails, camping, biking, snowmobiling, and many other outdoor activities. The park reserve represents approximately 16% of the total land area of the City. The City also has 17 local parks comprising 460 acres. The City met annual requirements for an annual Tree City USA award. Other 2012 park highlights include:

### Maintenance

- 17 parks were inspected monthly
- 40 acres of turf mowed weekly during the growing season

# Library

When the Rosalie E. Wahl county library closed on December 31, 2011, the City withdrew from the County library system and appointed a library board to establish a new community-based library. The new Lake Elmo Public Library, which officially opened on September 7, 2012, was funded by a \$260,000 tax levy already in place.

- 446 Lake Elmo Public Library cards have been issued
- 597 Washington County Library cards have been reimbursed in 2012 through December 15, 2012
- 15,000 books have been collected, catalogued and shelved
- 70+ trained library volunteers