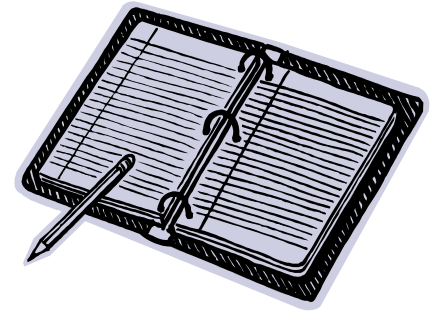


Spring 2009

Volume 12 · Number 1

A joint City and Township Newsletter

A note from the MAYOR



Submitted by City of Avon Mayor
- John Grutsch

Hi to everyone and welcome to all the new members of our community.

There were many home sales in the last year; so many neighborhoods have new faces. To those of you that have a chance please take a minute and welcome them to our community.

As many of you have heard by now, we took a cut in our LGA (local government aid) for 2008. The next two years look to be even worse. Fortunately we have a surplus in our general fund to offset these costs. City staff has come up with a budget cut plan to help lower the strain on our reserves. We feel we can do these changes and not sacrifice any job cuts or services to our taxpayers.

As if that alone is not enough, both of our new developments have gone in to default on their agreement with the city to pay back the assessments on their property. I have met with members from both Waters Edge and Avon Estates to come up with a plan to meet these needs. We will continue to work until a plan is in place. At this time it is still too early to give any more details but we are continually working at it.

Enough of the gloom, to the good news, we have our new council in place with Marge Evens and Jim Stang taking the two vacant spots and returning Kurt Marthaler. I am looking forward to working with all of them. There will be many new encounters as every level of Government scrambles to figure out how to offset the financial losses.

We have received a \$5,000.00 matching grant to hold a revisioning meeting later this summer. This is truly a community event. It is a time to let your concerns and ideas of what you think is good or bad for Avon to be heard and counted. When the date is picked we will let you all know. We will need to come up with \$5,000.00 to meet our half, so those of you with any money left please feel free to part with a little.

The first Monday of the month at 7 PM is our council meeting. I invite you to attend and give us your input. It is a good way to know firsthand what is happening.

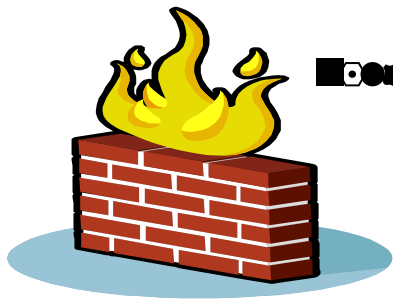
If you have any concerns or complaints please feel free to call me, council members or staff and let us know. At this time positive comments go a long way!

Thank you, John G

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What's inside.....

1. A note from the Mayor
2. Avon Fire and Rescue
2. Avon Police Department
3. Public Works Department
3. Dog Licenses
4. From the desk of the City Clerk/Administrator
5. Avon Area Arts
5. Avon Chamber
5. City Wide Garage Sales
6. Avon Township
8. City Wide Cleanup



By Chief Eric Linn

The Avon Fire Department has been awarded \$83,885 dollars from FEMA. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has notified us of the award from a grant we applied for in April. This money will be used for training, personal protective clothing, and 800 mghz radios. A major portion of the money will be going toward the radios.

The 800 mghz system was put into place several years ago by Stearns County. The whole State will eventually be using 800 mghz for communications. The Fire Department has presently been getting by with nine radios. This has been challenging to say the least. We are very thankful to be able to purchase these, which cost \$2,500 each.

Thank you to Jim Stang, one of our newest members, for writing the grant for us. Jim joined the department two years ago and was willing to write the grant when I asked for a volunteer. Several members helped collect data and did research along with some outside sources. Thanks everybody for your efforts. This is a huge gift for the department and our community!

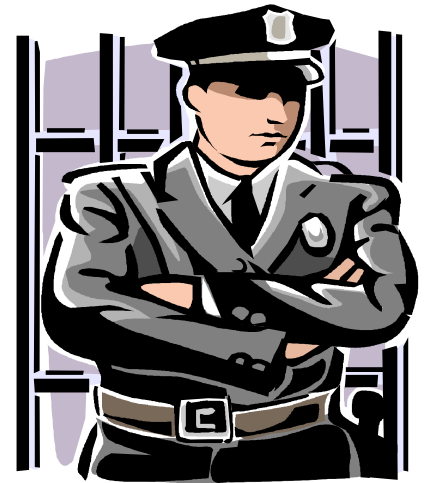
Officers for 2009 are as follows:

- Chief - Eric Linn; Assistant Chief - Chris Pflueger;
- Truck Captain - Eric Larson;
- Fire Training Captain - Adam Pogatschnik;
- Medical Training Captain - Joel Richter;
- Secretary - Russ Panek; Treasurer - Gary Schmitz

The Avon Fire Department closed out 2008 with a total of **1,555** hours spent responding to **127** calls. The breakdown of calls are as follows:

| Fire Calls | | Medical calls | |
|--------------|---|---------------|----|
| Structure | 6 | Car Accidents | 9 |
| Grass | 5 | Respiratory | 15 |
| Chimney | 0 | Heart | 7 |
| Auto | 6 | Seizure | 5 |
| Smoke Alarms | 2 | Falls | 3 |
| C-O2 | 3 | Other Trauma | 7 |
| Gas Leaks | 6 | Over Dose | 2 |
| False Alarms | 3 | False Alarms | 6 |
| Other | 4 | Stroke | 5 |
| | | Dizziness | 8 |
| | | Other | 25 |

AVON POLICE DEPT



By Chief
Corey Nellis

In **2008** the police department responded to **1410 calls for service**. As 2009 begins the police department continues to be busy and has handled 155 calls during the first six weeks of the year.

In the last newsletter I reported that the police department took several burglary reports on 10-08-2008. The police department has recovered some of the property taken during those burglaries. Most notably, one of the firearms taken in the burglaries was recovered. All of these burglaries are still under investigation. We are still waiting for some evidence to be processed that was sent to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The police department has identified several possible suspects. No charges have been pursued at this point, but we expect several individuals to be charged with possession of stolen property and possibly burglary.

Many of you may have heard that the city faces significant budget reductions. The police department was asked to cut \$22,500.00 from its 2009 budget. One of the items cut from the budget was a gun range that was possibly going to be built near the wastewater treatment plant.

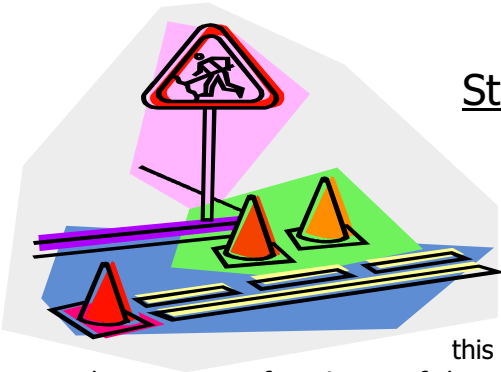


One of the other significant cuts was the beach patrol program. The police department is hoping to receive donations for this program so that we can keep it going. This program has made a huge difference at the beach. Last year only eight citations were written all summer long. The beach patrol program also led to a beach clean up that was done by several volunteer divers. The divers cleaned the bottom of the beach area of lots of dangerous debris. If anyone is interested in making a tax-deductible donation to the police department in support of the beach patrol program please contact the police department.

As always I encourage anyone with questions, concerns, or complaints to contact the Avon Police Department at 320-356-7575.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Submitted by:
Nate Brenner – Public Works Assistant



Streets:

The maintenance crew will be out repairing potholes and crack filling this spring as soon as the frost is out of the ground. **PLEASE SLOW DOWN** and give them the space when they are working on the streets. If you see any potholes we missed after we have gone out and done them call Ray at 248-4992.

We will be putting off street and sidewalk repairs this year due to budget cuts from the lack of state funding. We will still do our best to maintain what we have.

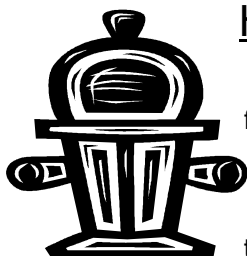
Maintenance Department:

The maintenance department has been busy doing many different things this winter. We have received a brine tank, donated by the City of Freeport. It was installed on the back of the plow truck to pre-wet the salt sand when it comes off the truck. This will activate the salt sand faster to make it more effective. Thanks to the City of Freeport for this donation.

You might also have seen a plow on the blue tractor this winter. We purchased that to plow alleys, cul-de-sacs and parking lots. It has really speeded up the snow removal time and does an excellent job.

We also have been busy doing maintenance to equipment and getting things ready for spring.

If anyone has questions on streets, parks and other maintenance issues contact Ray at 248-4992.



Hydrant Flushing:

The maintenance Department will be flushing fire hydrants at the end of April and beginning of May. Please be careful when they are out there working and allow them room to do their job. Thanks!

Compost Site:

The compost site will be open again this year. To get there you have to go down to the end of Angelfish Avenue, take a right and go through the gate straight off the next turn. You will see several different piles with signs; please put the items in the correct piles.

We had a problem last year with people bringing boards, cement pieces, metal, etc. If we see this as a recurring problem we will close the gates. This is a privilege and we hope it won't get abused.

We accept leaves, grass clippings, tree brush and logs. The compost site will be open daily this year from 8am to 6pm. Thanks for your cooperation!

Parks:

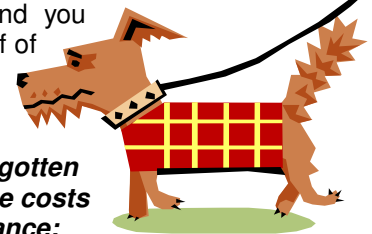
The maintenance crew along with some volunteers will be cleaning up the parks this spring. If you would like to help please contact Nate at 320-293-7328.



We will be putting in a new playground out in Waters Edge this year. This equipment has been funded with the developer's money that had been set aside for a park. ***Please refrain from using it until it is completely done to avoid accidents and disrupting the building process.***

DOG LICENSES

If you live in the Avon City Limits and own a dog, you MUST have it licensed at the City Hall. Cost of license is \$5.00 and you need to bring with proof of your pet's up to date rabies vaccinations.

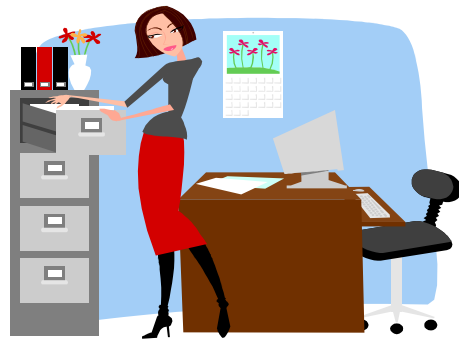


Has your pooch gotten loose? Below are the costs according to ordinance:

| <u>Pickup Fee:</u> | <u>Licensed</u> | <u>Unlicensed</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1st Offense | \$10 | \$20 + license fee |
| 2nd Offense | \$15 | \$25 + license fee |
| 3rd Offense | \$20 | \$30 + license fee |

Overnight Dog Kenneling
Licensed: \$20/night + pickup fee
Unlicensed: \$30/night + pickup fee

From the
desk of
the
city
clerk



administrator

**Jodi
Austing-Traut**

On the Horizon

Along with many areas of government being cut, it is no surprise that Local Government Aid (LGA) has also been targeted...but what does this mean to residents and business owners in Avon?

In December of 2008 – just days before the city was expecting to receive their LGA payment, the Governor announced that LGA was targeted to be slashed for both 2008 and 2009 (and beyond). With just a few days before the end of the year, panic set in for many local officials since this announcement came at a time when city budgets for 2008 had already been spent down in anticipation of receiving the 'promised' LGA monies. In addition, the state requires that cities certify their levies for the following year by mid-December. So just prior to the Governor's announcement, cities had already established their levies for 2009 and thus were unable to make up for this sudden loss of anticipated revenue.

It is understandable that during an economic crunch, everyone, including all levels of government, must cut back in any way possible. The fact that the cuts were made on short notice and when many cities had no backup plan to recover funds that had already been promised and spent, made the situation even more dire.

Avon was expecting to receive \$254,000 in Local Government Aid in 2008, however we received only \$214,000, an approximately \$40,000 cut in December of 2008. We are anticipating a cut of around \$47,000 for 2009 and possibly an additional cut of \$105,000 for 2010.

Some of the budget cuts we are looking at for 2009 include, but are not limited to: cuts to training, capital expenditures, police programs, uniforms, sidewalk repairs, tools and equipment, and weed removal. Beyond that, we do not know what the future holds for Local Government Aid.

We do know that the state task force, which reviews LGA financing, has concluded that the system is not working well. Since 1971, the idea has been that cities

have only limited taxing authority, so the state has distributed a portion of their collected sales and income taxes to cities based on each city's needs and its capacity to raise its own revenues. There have been many discussions about the formula for LGA and how the funds are distributed. There is going to be a commission established at the state level to examine and recommend LGA reforms to the 2010 legislature. The League of MN Cities is working with the legislature, on behalf of cities, to identify reform ideas.

More Economic Challenges

Rising insurance premiums, increasing delinquencies in utility payments, increasing foreclosures, and non-payment of property taxes are all issues that are causing additional financial strain for the city. There has been a virtual stop to new housing starts in Avon which presents a problem for the city in making bond payments that rely upon assessment income.

Our City Council, at their meeting on December 1st, 2008 lowered the levy that they had set preliminarily back in September from \$680,000 to \$670,000 in order to provide further relief to our tax payers during these difficult economic times. That said, with resources scarce and increasing demands for services, the council will have to choose wisely where limited dollars are spent. The goal of the city council is to keep taxes at a level similar to where they have been for the past few years and they will do their best to try to accomplish that. However, given the economic situation, our city leaders will be faced with some very difficult decisions in the near future. City council minutes and other information can be found on the city's website: www.cityofavonmn.com.



Avon Area Arts

Have you heard about Avon Area Arts? This organization sponsors a number of "core events" each year, including a Studio Tour, Celebration of the Arts and Garden Tour in the summer, and Raised in the Hills Teen Art Show and Back Roads Pottery Tour in the fall, among others. Throughout the year AAA hosts social get-togethers—"Night Out for the Arts"—as well as concerts at Aunt Annie's Quilt Shop. Join us for the Lost Hour Music Revue on Sat, March 7, from 6 pm to around Midnight, and Sun., March 8, from Noon to 7:00 pm, at Aunt Annie's Quilt Shop. Many talented musicians will be playing throughout the weekend. The admission price of \$8 for AAA members and \$10 for non-members will let you attend both days. Advance tickets are strongly recommended, and may be

purchased at the quilt shop, or purchased with paypal on our website (www.avonartsconnection.org).

If you are interested in finding out more about Avon Area Arts, or how to become a member, contact Joann Dirkes at 320-249-1550. If you have questions about specific events, contact J. D. Jorgenson at 320-309-1529. The website for AAA is www.avonartsconnection.org.



AVON CHAMBER NEWS

Submitted by:

The Avon Area Chamber of Commerce would like to welcome a **new member**. Twin Pines Catering has joined us. They are

able to cater anywhere and no gathering is too big or too small for them to meet your needs. Call Twin Pines Catering for your weddings, graduation parties, funerals, retirement parties, holiday parties or business luncheons. They can be reached at 845-2363. Their website is www.twinpinescater.com.

We would also like to welcome Center Point Energy and Joseph's Fine Dining and Reception Facility. It's good to have you back!

The **City Wide Garage Sale Day** has been changed! The Avon Area Chamber of Commerce City Wide Garage Sale dates will be May 8th and 9th. Registering your garage sale will put your sale on the city wide map that will be distributed the day of the sale. It also gives you the chance to highlight any "big ticket" items that you may want to sell and also gives the shoppers the opportunity to shop for special items at your sale. Registration fee is \$6.00.

Chamber Bucks are available at Avon State Bank. There are MANY uses for chamber bucks! You can redeem them at any chamber business. Visit our website www.avonmnchamber.com to see which Avon businesses will accept them.

Spunktacular Days is coming! "**Go Green**" is our theme and the dates are June 19th and 20th. We are still looking for volunteers for various events. If you would like to volunteer, contact the chamber at 356-4115. Come on down to the Lions Park and watch volleyball, check out the kids activities and shop at the craft fair. There will be fun for everyone. All forms are available on our website at www.avonmnchamber.com.

The Avon Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a **seminar** EVERYBODY WINS: HOW TO TURN CONFLICT INTO COLLABORATION on Thursday, March 26th. It will help you learn how to recognize three of the most common conflict situations in the workplace. It provides a clear, easy to use approach that will help you think things through to take the most appropriate choice of action to ensure a win-win resolution. This will help increase the productivity of your organization. It will also help you to look at conflict in a totally

different way. Dr. Rob Cavanna is a seasoned trainer in this topic as well as The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and Time Management. His dynamic and entertaining style will keep your interest plus challenge you to do better in your daily life and relationships. You'll come away with tips and techniques to deal with conflict on a daily basis both with colleagues at work and family members. This training is sure to benefit everyone in the workforce! There will be a discounted fee of \$30 per person (includes materials) for Chamber Members / \$45 for non Chamber Members. This event will take place at Avon City Hall from 9 a.m. to noon. To register contact the Chamber at 356-4115 by March 1st. Limited space is available.

Blattner Energy Inc will be sponsoring a **Business After Hours** for Chamber members on March 26th at 5:30 pm. This event will include a tour of the new facility and their L.E.E.D. certification process. Please RSVP for this event with the chamber at 356-4115 or email at avonmnchamber@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Chamber Events:

March 7: 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Community Expo at Avon Elementary School

March 26: 9:00 am - noon
Everybody Wins Seminar

March 26: 5:30 pm RSVP
Blattner Energy Inc ~ Business After Hours

June 19 and 20: *Spunktacular Days*

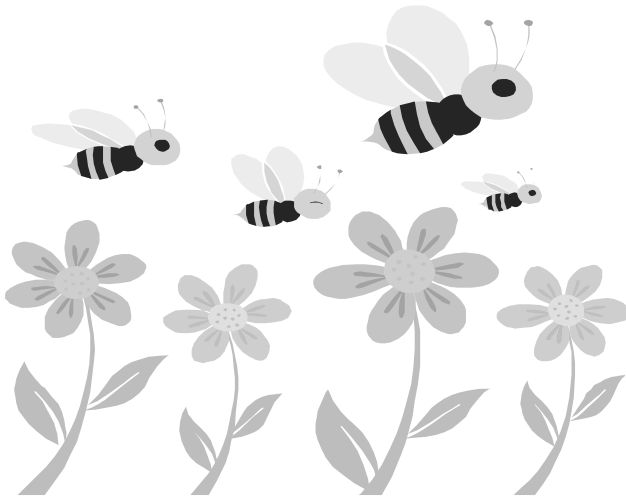


Friday, May 8
Saturday, May 9

Registration forms will be available in
April at local businesses.

Questions? Call
Cindy at the
Chamber Office at
320-356-4115.





Submitted by:
LeRoy Gondringer
Avon Township Board Chairman

The **Township Election and Annual Meeting** will be held March 10, 2009. The Election will be held at the St. Benedict's Parish Center from noon until 8:00 PM. (The same building as the location of the fall 2008 election).

Incumbent John Merdan is on the ballot running for Township Supervisor. Kelli Martini is also the incumbent running for Township Treasurer. Please be sure to VOTE. At 8:00 PM the Annual Township Meeting will convene in the basement of St. Benedict's Church.

The **Annual Meeting** is the Township residents' meeting. It is the only Township meeting during the year where the people can set the agenda and run the meeting. The most important item you vote on is the levy, which dictates the amount of tax dollars that will be collected to finance the township budget for the coming year. Also, if you have an issue you would like the Township board to address, this is your chance. As Township officials we really do appreciate your input, not only at this meeting but also throughout the year. We are always looking for ways to deliver services to the residents of the township as cost effectively as possible.

This winter we had quite a few snowfall events where we needed to send the snowplows out. The extremely cold weather we had this winter also made the salt/sand we applied to the icy roads relatively ineffective. As a result most township roads were in less than ideal driving condition for an extended period this winter. This will be one of the costliest snow plowing seasons Avon Township has experienced in a number of

years. The township is actively pursuing options to reduce the cost of not only plowing snow, but also all of the maintenance work that is contracted by the township. The township currently contracts with a private contractor to do the snowplowing and all other maintenance required by the township. One of the options the township board is giving serious consideration to is purchasing its own snow plowing equipment. Currently the township pays \$121 per hour to plow snow with a \$4,000 per month minimum charge for the five winter months. Each trip around the Township costs between \$1,500 and \$2,000 and most snowfalls require multiple trips. We will be discussing the issue of township maintenance at the annual meeting March 10.

Be sure to check out **Avon Township's website**. The website is updated on a regular basis and contains Township news and other pertinent information and links. The website address is www.avontownship.org.

The Township Board of Supervisor meetings are the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm. Contact Township Clerk Renee Smith at 356-7224 to be added to the agenda or for general information about the Township.

Sponsoring the event is the Avon Chamber Commerce, Albany Chamber of Commerce and Albany Area Community Education.



The platted vacant land deferment is a special tax program administered by the assessor for property that has been recently divided into unimproved, individual lots.

Does an owner of unimproved property who divides it into individual lots have to file an application with the assessor for the platted vacant land deferment? No, the plat law does not require a property owner to file an application with the assessor for this tax benefit. The value exclusion is automatically extended to each unimproved, individual lot once the subdivision has been recorded and the property records created.

When does the platted vacant land deferment expire? The platted vacant land deferment expires when all of the excluded value has been phased-in or if construction on the lot begins before the deferment ends.

If the market value of a platted vacant lot is either increased or decreased by the assessor based on market conditions, is the amount of the annual phase-in adjusted? No, if the market value is either increased or decreased by the assessor during the phase-in period, the phase-in amount cannot be adjusted. The phase-in amount that was established in the first year of platting continues at its current level.

For a full description of the platted vacant land deferment please contact: Stearns County Assessor's Office; Administration Center, Room 37; 705 Courthouse Square; St. Cloud, MN 56303; Telephone: 320-656-3680 or e-mail: jeff.johnson@co.stearns.mn.us