

# In the Know in St. Joe

**From Mayor Adam Scepaniak:** I hope everyone navigated a joyful, blessed, and well-rested holiday season. My aim for most every holiday is to partake in good food and rest, and it was mission accomplished in my household. A new year is upon us and that can always make for excitement. The turning of the calendar to a new year, motivational aspirations behind New Year's resolutions, and the hope that this year will be better than the last. For anyone setting goals, I hope you achieve all of them.

With mixed weather constantly occurring for us Minnesotans, a couple of housekeeping items I'd want to mention are our driveways, mailboxes, and fire hydrants. Our city's snowplow team works tirelessly through the day and night to keep our city navigable in the worst of weather. So, please give them grace and patience as they maintain our roads and the safety of our city. Additionally, don't forget about your nearest fire hydrant and mailbox. I pray no one experiences a fire, but if you shovel and clear the area around your neighborhood's fire hydrant, precious seconds can be saved from firefighters looking to save lives and property when a fire does occur. Lastly, one of the unsung heroes of our community are our postal workers. Delivering letters and packages through the holidays where "neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night" will stop their delivery. So, if you can shovel and clear near your mailbox, it makes their job that much easier.

As always, continue to be safe, wave at your neighbor, share a smile, and patronize our many amazing restaurants St. Joseph is blessed with! Your Mayor, Adam Scepaniak.

## **Utility Billing: Winter Average for Residential Sewer**

The City of St. Joseph uses a winter averaging system to determine your sewer "cap" for residential sewer. The water usage on your Nov/Dec billing determines your "cap" or maximum rate you will be charged for sewer during the upcoming year. Sewer usage charges on your 2026 bills will not exceed those on the Nov/Dec 2025 utility bill. If water usage is under the Nov/Dec winter average, sewer use charges will be the same as the current period water usage. This minimizes the charges to residents in the summer months when sprinkling lawns and gardens. For new residents or those that are away for the winter, the city average water usage of 13,500 gallons is used as the maximum for sewer use charges. *Note: This does not include multi-family dwelling units.*

## **Frozen Service Line Prevention**

Check your water temperature. When temperatures are near or fall below freezing, running your water at a pencil-sized stream 24/7 can help prevent freezing lines. Faucets near outside walls are particularly vulnerable. This is a cheaper alternative to having your water service thawed in the event of a frozen line.

**Winter Parking Regulations:** No parking is allowed on any city street from Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> - April 1<sup>st</sup> during the hours of 2AM - 7AM. Any vehicle parked in violation of this ordinance is subject to a fine and immediate towing at the owner's expense.

**Sidewalk Snow Removal:** Property owners are required to clear sidewalks of snow and ice within 24 hours after a snowfall event. If the owner fails to do so, the city may remove the snow or ice, and the owner will be charged for the service. It is unlawful to blow snow into a street or alleyway.

**Adopt a Fire Hydrant:** When clearing your driveway of snow, please take the time to clear the snow around any fire hydrant on your property or in your neighborhood. We ask that you clear a path from the hydrant to the street and a 3ft wide perimeter around the fire hydrant to allow access for emergency personnel in the event of a fire.

**Act to Protect and Conserve our Drinking Water - Smart Salting** Salt is toxic to Minnesota's aquatic life. Over salting does not mean more melting, rather it can damage property and pollute our water supply. To avoid over-salting:

1. Shovel early and often.
2. Scatter salt. Distribute thinly, aiming for 2-3 inches between salt granules.
3. Select the right tool. Salt only works when the pavement is above 15°.
4. Sweep up and reuse. Clean up leftover salt, sand, and deicer to save and reuse as needed.

**2026 City Budget**

The City Council adopted the 2026 levy, budget, capital spending plans and fee schedule in December which went into effect January 1, 2026. Property tax statements will be mailed by Stearns County in March.

The 2026 budget and levy assume continued levels of service. The City of St. Joseph’s 2026 budget includes the following enhancements:

- Staffing levels: adding a full-time police officer, continue with a planning intern
- 2026 construction projects:
  - 2026 street overlay improvements
  - Hill Street/Morningside Acres watermain replacements
  - Baker Street sidewalk extensions
  - Downtown safety additions such as lighting and sidewalk extensions
- Other projects: Klinefelter Park ADA accessible playground equipment, softball field fencing, fire hall and public works shop #2 roof replacements, seal coating and crack filling, trail repairs
- Capital equipment purchases include squad 709 addition, fire gear and radio replacements, computer replacements
- Operations on average increased 3% to cover inflationary increases, bargaining units negotiating new contracts, and implementation of MN Paid Family and Medical Leave

The overall 2026 tax rate is projected to increase 0.64%. Property taxes, state aids and fees for services cover most of the city budget of \$16.2 million. Residents’ property taxes include several other jurisdictions: Stearns County; St. Cloud School District 742; Sauk River Watershed District; St. Cloud HRA and Rail Authority.

When applying the tax rate to the estimated 9.46% market value increase, residents may see a 1% increase in 2026 property taxes. The estimated impact of the City of St. Joseph’s levy on a home, apartment, and business is listed in table below.

(NTC = Net Tax Capacity)

| NTC \$7,106,015            | Adopted 2025 Levy |        | Estimated 2026 Levy |         |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------|---------------------|---------|
| <b>General Levy</b>        | \$2,450,540       | 37.75% | \$2,645,835         | 37.23%  |
| <b>Debt Levy</b>           | \$1,619,150       | 24.94% | \$1,854,052         | 26.09%  |
| <b>Total</b>               | \$4,069,690       | 62.69% | \$4,499,887         | 63.33%  |
| <b>300,000 Home</b>        | \$1,758           |        | \$1,776             | \$18 ↑  |
| <b>350,000 Home</b>        | \$2,100           |        | \$2,121             | \$21 ↑  |
| <b>1,000,000 Apartment</b> | \$7,836           |        | \$7,916             | \$80 ↑  |
| <b>1,000,000 Business</b>  | \$12,067          |        | \$12,190            | \$123 ↑ |



**Arbor Task Force - Meet the Emerald Ash Borer:** Years ago, cities were graced by large canopies of elm trees shading streets and homes. Then, Dutch elm disease caused most of the majestic elms to be taken down. In their place, ash trees were planted because of how suitable and fast growing they were for our area. Now, the Emerald Ash Borer, an iridescent green beetle, is putting ash trees at similar risk. The beetle eats the cambium, the live part of the tree just below the bark, the part that carries nutrients and water from the roots to the crown, eventually killing the tree. Dealing with this plight is the first major priority for the city’s citizen-led Arbor Task Force. Do you have ash trees on your property? Do you know how to identify them? To tell if they are diseased? Watch for more information on an upcoming public seminar on how you can respond to the ash borer on your property, including a range of recommended trees to plant in it’s place.

**Recycling Holiday Lights:**

City Offices Closed on:

Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> & Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>

Recycle holiday lights at the following locations:

- DocuShred Document Shredding - Monday through Friday from 10AM-5PM - Located at 321 Sundial Dr. Waite Park.
- ThriftWorks! Thrift Store - Monday through Friday from 10AM-6:30 PM and Saturdays from 10AM-4PM - Located at 310 Sundial Drive, Waite Park.
- Stearns Co. Household Hazardous Waste Facility - Monday through Saturday from 7AM-5:15 PM - Located at 3601 5th St S, Waite Park.

**City Facility Reservations:**

We are taking reservations for dates through January 31, 2027. Reservations can be made online or in person at the Government Center.

**Prescription Drug Drop-Off:** The St. Joseph Government Center has a prescription drop-off located on the west side of the building. It is accessible 24/7. No syringes, needles or other hazardous materials are accepted.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATES** - The below table highlights permit activity in 2024 and 2025.

| PERMIT TYPE                                  | 2024    | 2025                                 |
|--|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Single Family Homes                          | 12      | 17                                   |
| Multi-Family Apartment                       | 0       | 2 apartment complexes (27 & 42 unit) |
| Commercial/Industrial New Build or Expansion | 9       | 4                                    |
| *Total Permit Valuation                      | \$26.8M | \$17.9M                              |

*\* Total permit valuation is an estimate based on all permits processed and approved including roofing, new homes, commercial projects, interior remodels, etc.*

**2025 Highlights:** Expansion projects at Precise Heating & CMS Autobody. Growth in infill housing construction.

**2026 Focus Areas:** Infill housing opportunities, support of single-family home growth, pursue expansion of Industrial Park through a state bonding request, and invest in downtown and commercial redevelopment to expand amenities and support a vibrant community.

**PARKS & RECREATION ACTIVITIES & EVENTS** - For the most up-to-date event listings, go to [www.cityofstjoseph.com](http://www.cityofstjoseph.com) under the Recreation Department or the City of St. Joseph Facebook page.

**Senior Citizens:**

Thursday, February 12, 1:30-3:30, play cards (500) and enjoy treats, coffee/cocoa. Fire Hall. **Free**

Wednesday, March 11, Game Show Experience at the Eden Prairie Mall. Includes shopping and lunch on your own. Group will leave at about 9:30AM and return around 3:00PM. \$60/person.

Thursday, March 12, 1:30-3:30, play cards (500) and enjoy treats, coffee/cocoa. Fire Hall. **Free**

**Community Pilates:** Mondays, 10AM, St. Joseph Government Center. Gentle, energizing Pilates-based movement to build strength, improve posture, and increase flexibility. \$10/session. No reservation needed. Just show up and pay on site.

**Puzzle Mania Competition:** Sunday, February 22, 11-1:30PM. Participate in a friendly competition of puzzle making at Sal's Bar & Grill. Your team of up to four people will enjoy a gift certificate to Sal's and some fun competition making a 500-piece puzzle. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> teams to complete the puzzle will be awarded prizes. \$50/team. Call Rhonda if you have questions 320-250-0967. Teams will have identical puzzles and there will be a two-hour time limit. Hands only. No sorting containers, puzzle scoops, cutting devices, flashlights, etc. First team

to finish the puzzle and have it approved by the judge (Rhonda) will be the winner. If no one finishes after two hours, we will count remaining pieces. Register at <https://secure.rec1.com/MN/st-joseph-mn/catalog>.

**Movie Night!** We are showing, *How to Train Your Dragon*, on Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 7PM at the St. Joseph Government Center. Bring your own chair or blanket or use one of our chairs. Concessions will be available.

**BINGO:** Wednesday nights January 7th through March 25th, 6:00PM, St. Joseph Government Center. Join us for a night full of fun, laughs, and prizes. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a first timer, everyone has a chance to win. Bring your lucky charm and your game face – it's going to be a great time! Prize donations are always welcomed and needed. **Free.**

**Youth Rock Climbing:** Tuesdays, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> at Saint John's University – Warner Palestra Rock Wall. Ages 9-14. \$25 for 4 sessions. The program will be an introduction to the sport of rock-climbing and includes gear, technique, movement, and team building. Participants must wear comfortable, flexible clothing and clean, lightweight sneakers/shoes for climbing. Register at <https://secure.rec1.com/MN/st-joseph-mn/catalog>.

**Flag Football:** Tuesday and Thursdays, March 12, 19, 24, 31. 6:30-7:30PM at Kennedy Community School. \$25. Learn the basics of the game, focus on **non-contact** play, replacing tackles with flag pulls, prohibiting blocking, and emphasizing safety with rules like no stiff-arming or flag guarding. Register at <https://secure.rec1.com/MN/st-joseph-mn/catalog>.

**Summer Recreation Registration will occur March 1<sup>st</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>!**

**Adult Flashlight Dash:** Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8:30PM at Milk and Honey Ciders. Registration will open Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Senior Yoga:** Wednesdays, 1:00-2:00, Heritage Hall. Call [\(320\) 255-7245](tel:3202557245) to register. Increase your flexibility, balance, and range of motion as you move your entire body through a series of seated and standing yoga poses. Restorative breathing exercises and relaxation promote stress reduction and mental clarity. Optional chair support provides added stability when needed.

**Enhance Fitness:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:00, Heritage Hall. Call [\(320\) 255-7245](tel:3202557245) to register. An evidence-based program designed to improve the overall functional fitness and well-being of older adults. The exercises focus on four key areas important to health and fitness: stretching and flexibility; low impact aerobics; strength training; and balance.

**Monthly Walk and Talk:** Exercise and converse with your neighbors. Saturdays – Jan 31, Feb 28, Mar 14. Meet at the St. Joseph Government Center by 9:30AM for a group walk through town exploring a city park or two. Expect a brisk, ~3-mile walk with your fellow town fold. Dress for the weather and conditions. Following the walk, we'll grab a beverage at a local establishment. No cost or registration is needed for the group walk. Bring money if you would like to purchase a beverage after the walk.

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**2026 St. Joseph Fire Department Cadillac Dinner:** Please join us Saturday, March 21, 2026, at the Park Event Center in Waite Park for an evening of support of the St. Joseph Fire Department. The evening will consist of a social hour, a served meal, silent auctions, raffles and cash prizes. The social hour begins at 5PM with dinner at 6PM and prizes to follow. Meal choices this year will be chicken breast, slow roasted beef, port tenderloin and eggplant rollatini. The cost of a ticket is \$65 which makes you eligible for dozens of cash prizes including the \$1,000 grand prize provided by the St. Joseph Fire Department. Scan the QR code for more information and to buy tickets. You can also call the St. Cloud Convention and Visitor's Bureau at 320-251-4170 or email the fire department at [cadillacdinner@gmail.com](mailto:cadillacdinner@gmail.com) to request additional information and/or buy tickets. Thank you for your continued support!

