



# CITY NEWS

April 2017

## FROM MAYOR OLSON

**Hello, Citizens of Houston! First, a big thank-you for electing me as your City Mayor. Now, let's get to work!**

I am honored to serve as your Mayor, and want to thank you all for your support as well as for taking time to vote in November 2016.

I also want to thank the other candidates who came forward to serve this community. All worked hard to express their viewpoints during this election cycle, and deserve our gratitude.

I look forward to working with the individuals who sit on the Council and thank them for their willingness to serve our town. They spend many hours participating on Council and the numerous committees that are part of a City's operation.

We have much work ahead of us, and I look forward to getting started. I especially appreciate the willingness everyone has expressed to move forward together in the best interest of our community. We will have our differences as elected officials, but need to ensure that we work together to face our challenges. As we go on, we will proceed to address these following issues:

- Infrastructure problems as needs arise
- Wastewater treatment improvements
- Freshwater treatment now in the planning stages

I intend to follow through on the pressing issues noted during my campaign, and plan to address several areas that many of you have raised. I look forward to serving you in the future, and again, thank you all for this opportunity. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at **507-458-7841**; I will be willing to listen to any suggestions you may have.

Thank you; I am honored to represent the City of Houston as your Mayor.

*David Olson*

## UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS

### HOUSTON COMMUNITY CENTER

The existing Community Center is in serious disrepair and the City is considering demolition.

One option that is currently being explored is to create a Community Foundation to fundraise toward building a new Community Center.

*Please come to hear the update and provide your input.*

**Wednesday, April 26, 2017**

**7:00 P.M.**

**at the Community Center**

### OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAILS

The project planning and design phase may soon be off to a start after the City secures an access easement to the OHV land.

The City will be organizing a Community Advisory Committee and requests anyone who has an interest in the project to meet on:

**Tuesday, May 2, 2017**

**6:30 p.m.**

**at the Community Center**

**105 W. Maple Street**

*Applications for the Committee will be available at the meeting.*

## SCHEDULE OF CITY MEETINGS

The calendar of regular City meetings is available on the City's website (<http://www.houston.govoffice.com> under the Admin tab). The City Council meets the **second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m.**, and the public is encouraged to attend.

# CITY ADMINISTRATION

<b>CITY COUNCIL</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>Mayor David Olson</b>	<b>507-458-7841</b>
<b>Matt Schutte</b>	<b>507-429-3596</b>
<b>Emily Krage</b>	<b>507-429-2500</b>
<b>Cheryl Sanden</b>	<b>507-450-1701</b>
<b>Kevin Knutson</b>	<b>896-2582</b>

## WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

The City's official newspaper publication is the Houston Banner, where you will find legal notices, job ads, and Council minutes. Legal notices are also posted on the bulletin board inside City Hall.

Additional information can be found on the City of Houston's website and Facebook page, such as building permit information, the City Code, meeting calendar, Community Center calendar, and Council agendas/minutes.

For your information and convenience, listed below are a variety of other websites that offer information about events, local businesses and organizations:

### IMPORTANT WEBSITES:

City of Houston  
[www.houston.gov/office.com](http://www.houston.gov/office.com)

Houston Library  
<https://houston.lib.mn.us/>

Houston Nature Center  
<http://www.houstonnaturecenter.com>

Houston County  
<http://www.co.houston.mn.us>

Houston Area Chamber of Commerce  
<http://www.houstonmnchamber.com>

League of MN Cities Resource Library  
<https://www.lmc.org>

International Owl Center  
<http://internationalowlcenter.org>

Houston Area Resource Council  
<http://harcmn.webs.com>

Root River Trail Towns  
<http://www.rootrivertail.org>

Historic Bluff Country  
<http://bluffcountry.com/>

## STANDING CITY COMMITTEES:

The following committees meet regularly to conduct the business of the City. There are some openings available to serve on these groups. Please contact City Hall or email [houstonplanning@acegroup.cc](mailto:houstonplanning@acegroup.cc) if you are interested in serving on any of the following:

1. **Tree Board** (meets Thursdays, time flexible, quarterly or as needed)
2. **Park & Rec. Board** (includes Summer Rec and new Park Playground project; meets monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 6:00 pm)
3. **Planning Commission and/or Economic Development Authority** (meets first Monday of each month)
4. **Library Board** (meets second Tuesday of each month)

## CITY STAFF:

Houston has a group of very dedicated employees who work to make Houston a great place to live and do business. The City currently has 6 full-time employees and 7 regular part-time employees, plus ambulance and fire crews.

### Part-Time:

Amanda Langheinrich, Custodian  
Audrey Hegland, Deputy Clerk  
Bethany Peterson-Lee, Library Assistant  
Connie Verse, Nature Center Assistant  
Larry Jerviss, Finance Director  
Sarah Joy Wexler-Mann, Marketing/Chamber  
Susan Wiegrefe, Nature Center Manager  
Ambulance Crew  
Fire Crew

### Full-Time:

Brett Hurley, Assistant Police Chief  
Christina Peterson, City Administrator  
David Breault, Police Chief  
Ed Jacobs, Maintenance Assistant  
Liz Gibson-Gasset, Librarian  
Randy Thesing, Maintenance Superintendent

# ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY



2016 ACTUAL - GOVERNMENT FUNDS	
REVENUES	
Property Tax	\$438,725
Tax Increments	\$6,591
Special Assessments	\$13,524
Licenses and Permits	\$9,611
Federal Grants	\$2,541
State General Purpose Aid	\$356,596
Transportation/Trails	\$41,599
Police and Fire Aid	\$18,338
Other State Grants and Aids	\$22,500
County Grants	\$43,945
Charges for Services	\$3,320
Police and Fire Contracts	\$43,973
Public Safety (ambulance)	\$112,257
Sanitation charges	\$84,474
Library Charges	\$851
Parks and Recreation Charges	\$16,202
Fines and Forfeits	\$1,459
Investment Earnings	\$1,373
Utility Service Connections	\$24,500
Reimbursements	\$26,042
Donations	\$47,119
Misc	\$3,546
Loan payback	\$2,700
Borrowing	\$551,000
Transfers from other Funds	\$51,071
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,923,857</b>
EXPENSES	
Governing Board	\$8,285
Administration and Finance	\$144,903
Other (elections, legal, audit)	\$37,306
Police	\$189,562
Police Capital Outlay	\$5,419
Ambulance	\$119,972
Ambulance Capital Outlay	\$446
Fire	\$77,477
Fire Capital Outlay	\$3,485
Street Maintenance	\$112,795
Snow Removal	\$2,135
Street Lighting	\$17,308
Street Construction	\$418,481
Street - other	\$1,471
Sanitation	\$77,762
Library	\$81,703
Library Capital Outlay	\$5,473
Parks and Recreation	\$151,384
P&R Capital Outlay	\$4,359
Economic Development	\$27,291
Insurance - other	\$3,624
Bonds - Principal Payments	\$138,641
Bonds - Interest	\$34,588
Transfers to Government Funds	\$51,071
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,714,941</b>

The City has been fortunate to have had an outstanding long-term commitment from Larry Jerviss, who has worked for the City for **35** years as City Administrator and Financial Director. Larry has been transitioning into retirement for the last few years, but he plans to completely retire at the end of this year.

Hopefully it will work out to hire someone new by September in order to provide adequate time for training on the accounting duties. The position will be part-time. Please email [houstonplanning@acegroup.cc](mailto:houstonplanning@acegroup.cc) if you would like to receive a notification when the job announcement is made.

In the meantime, on behalf of the City Council and staff...  
**Thank you Larry, for all the good years.**  
**We will miss you!**

2016 ACTUAL- DEBT ALL FUNDS				
	Beginning of year	Issued during year	Paid during year	End of year
Bond - General Obligation	\$679,000	\$551,000	\$134,000	\$1,096,000
Bond - G.O. Revenue	\$429,000	\$179,000	\$20,000	\$588,000
Installment Contracts	\$181,086		\$29,091	\$151,995
Net Pension Liability	\$395,473			\$798,707
Compensated Absences				\$5,975

2016 ACTUAL- ENTERPRISE FUNDS		
	SEWER	WATER
Operating Revenues	\$204,818	\$153,453
Operating Expenses	\$167,642	\$98,791
Operating Income	\$37,176	\$54,662
Non-operating Revenues		\$8,400
Non-operating Expenses	\$9,812	\$3,880
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$27,364</b>	<b>\$59,182</b>
Federal Grants		\$8,400
Capital Outlay During Year		\$50,180
Borrowing - Bonds Issued		\$179,000
Interest	\$9,812	\$3,880
Debt Paid = Bonds	\$26,650	\$18,800
Outstanding Bonded Debt	\$482,697	\$59,800
Outstanding Other Debt	\$457,047	\$220,000
Depreciation	\$27,171	\$13,595

# DEPARTMENT NEWS

## CITY HALL

**CHRIS PETERSON**  
City Administrator  
**LARRY JERVISS**  
Financial Director  
**AUDREY HEGLAND**  
Deputy Clerk

## POLICE

**DAVID BREault**  
Police Chief  
**BRETT HURLEY**  
Assistant Chief  
**ISAIAH BUNKE**  
Part-time Officer



## NATURE CENTER

**SUE WIEGREFE, Manager**  
**CONNIE VERSE, Assistant**

### A NOTE FROM CHRIS...

It's hard to believe I have been with the City for over four years now. I have enjoyed working for you and thank you for trusting me as your City Administrator. City Council and staff have many responsibilities, and we are working hard to balance needs of the City with resources available. Public input is always welcome, so please feel free to stop in at City Hall or contact your Council members with any questions or ideas you may have.

Please check the [City web site](#) or [Facebook page](#) for ongoing updates to City news.

## PUBLIC WORKS

**RANDY THESING**  
Maintenance  
Superintendent  
**ED JACOBS**  
Maintenance  
**AMANDA LANGHEINRICH**  
Custodian

**Water Quality:** See the Annual Consumer Confidence Report each spring that shows the results of monitoring done on the City's drinking water for the prior year. A copy is available on the City website under the Public Works tab or at City Hall.

### Contact Information:

For non-emergencies, call City Hall. For emergencies or any matter that needs immediate response, Houston Police are dispatched through Houston County, **dial 911 or Non-Emergency 507-725-3379.**

### ATTENTION PET OWNERS:

**License your cat or dog:** By obtaining the required license for your animal, should it become lost or missing, having the required license allows Police to identify the owner and return the pet to their proper homes. Licenses available at City Hall for \$5.33 with proof of vaccinations.

City Code states:

***“Running at large prohibited.*** *It shall be unlawful for the dog or cat of any person who owns, harbors, or keeps a dog or cat, to run at large.”*

***“Barking/Crying/Whining Dogs:*** *It shall be unlawful for any person to keep or harbor a dog which habitually barks or cries. Habitual barking is defined as barking for repeated intervals of at least five minutes with less than one minute of interruption.”*

***“Cleaning up Litter:*** *The owner or custodian of any animal is responsible for cleaning up and disposal of any feces in a sanitary manner whether on their own property, on the property of others, or on public property.”*

The Mission of the Houston Nature Center is threefold: 1) *Steward of Trailhead Park and HNC buildings and facilities,* 2) *The Face of Houston to visitors by bike trail and highway,* and 3) *Champion of nature appreciation and study by all ages.*

- Data from 4/1/16 to 3/31/17:
- Information packets mailed: 186
  - Visitors (interior): 3644
  - Number of programs:40 offered
  - Attendees at Programs: 460
  - Gift shop Receipts: \$7536 (including \$2250 in donations, \$712 camping, and \$762 program fees
  - Mtg Rm Reservations: averaged over 6.5 meetings per month

Volunteer involvement is numerous! The HNC was re-stained in 2016, new observation decks and board walks installed, an observation honeybee hive was installed and maintained, and many hours of weeding and trimming to maintain the grounds.

Also featured is HARC's month-long art display and numerous programs. The NC is the site for Wednesday evening music at the bandshell, and Taste of the Trail and Ride the Ridges events have brought many visitors to our City and Trailhead park.

Exciting new things happening soon are: Added features to the Natural Playground, (tree house) and planting trees and shrubs to enhance Bobwhite Quail and other bird habitat. Watch our website and Facebook page for coming events and opportunities to volunteer. Donations of time, funds and other resources are essential to supplement City funding to keep things maintained and enable new things to happen!

**Sue Wiegrefe, Manager**

**LIBRARY**

**LIZ GIBSON-GASSET,**  
Librarian

**BETH PETERSON-LEE,**  
Assistant

The Houston Public Library turned 15 this winter and "celebrated" this milestone with a much-needed exterior renovation project to prevent internal water damage. Inside the library, with spring finally here and summer on its way, staff and volunteers are busy planning our upcoming 2017 Summer Reading Program, entitled "Build A Better World." Get ready for three months' worth of special programming for kids to keep them reading over the summer and prevent what educators call the "summer slide." In addition, thanks to a partnership with the four other Houston County public libraries and a grant from the Minnesota Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund, we'll be installing five Little Free Libraries throughout the city of Houston this summer, with 20 others going up around Houston County.

For the record, the Houston Public Library offers a variety of free services everyday throughout the year that we hope that you are taking advantage of: two week check-out of books and audiobooks, one week check-out of DVDs, Wi-Fi 24/7, public computers with internet access, copying/faxing/printing at cost, interlibrary loan from the collections of 80 other SELCO member libraries, storytimes, book clubs, author events, Summer Reading Program, Bookhounds Reading Therapy program, and much much more.

Please feel free to call us at 896-READ or stop by during our regular hours of operation if you have any questions.

Please feel free to contact us at 507-896-7323 or [hpublib@gmail.com](mailto:hpublib@gmail.com).

*Liz*

**PARK AND REC**

**MATT SCHUTTE, Chair**

**Summer's Around the Corner!!**

Spring is always the busiest time for Houston Park and Rec. All the planning and registering of kids for their Summer Rec activities takes place while the community makes their park plans for graduations and birthday parties. The adult softball leagues are putting teams and schedules together and the City is busy getting the fields and parks cleaned up for the summer rush!

The Park & Rec Committee is working closely with the High School's Class of '66 to replace the City Park playground in with an all-inclusive playground designed to meet the needs of all children and adults! Please let the City know if you are interested in helping in the organization, fund raising, or implementation of this exciting and much-needed project.

Check out the owl sculpture in the park carved by Molly Wiste of Wiste Woodworks that was done during the International Festival of Owls from an ash tree that had to come down. There are two more trees that could use some creativity!

Trailhead Park has some new changes...great lookout decks and walkways built by Roger Meyer!

Also, don't forget Houston's new public Archery Range located up in beautiful South Park. No fee, but donations are appreciated for ongoing maintenance and new targets.

We are always striving to make Houston a great place to live, so get out and enjoy what Houston has to offer in its parks this summer!

**SUMMER REC REGISTRATION  
Wednesday, April 19, 4:00-7:00  
Nature Center**

Information also available on City web site, at City Hall, or sent home from school with the children.

*Matt*

**AMBULANCE**

**CHRIS COX, Director**

**AMBULANCE/ EMS CREW**

- Christine Cox, Director
- Brad White
- Darin Wendel
- Tom Hill
- Becci Rediske
- Dave Runnigen
- Tim Jergenson
- Lisa Schultz
- Chris Kildahl
- Mary Burt
- Nathan Nelson
- Dana Kildahl
- Anna Frauenkron
- Tony Schultz
- Renee Kinster
- Rachel Boldt

**FIRE**

**JOE KRAGE, Fire Chief**

**ASSISTANT CHIEFS:**

- Chad Rosendahl**
- Steve Skifton**
- Jay Wheaton**

**FIREFIIGHTERS**

- Joe Krage, Chief
- Brent Carrier
- Craig Conley
- Allen Frauenkron
- Byron Frauenkron
- Rick Geiwitz
- Ryan Geiwitz
- Thomas Hill
- Tim Jergenson
- Kathy Jumbeck
- Kevin Jumbeck
- Kevin Knutson
- Brandon Olson
- Mark Olson
- Chad Rosendahl
- Matt Schutte
- Steve Skifton
- Brent Stampka
- Randy Thesing
- Chris Tuvenson
- Matt VanGundy
- Darin Wendel
- Ken Witt
- Jay Wheaton

# PROJECT UPDATES

## WATER TREATMENT PLANT

The plans for a new Treatment Plant are complete and are currently being reviewed by the MN Department of Health. The project will likely be put out for public bidding later this year. Construction may begin as soon as this fall or in the Spring of 2018, depending on the legislature and state funding availability.

The treatment plant is in response to a Notice of Violation from the MN Department of Health reporting radium levels in the city water supply exceeded the maximum contaminant level (MCL). The City was required to find a solution to reduce the radium levels, and proposed a filtration treatment plant. Radium occurs naturally underground in soil and rock and can enter ground water. The water supply is also high in iron, and the treatment plant will also filter iron. The latest Water Quality Report is available on the City Website, Departments/Public Works Tab: <http://www.houston.govoffice.com/> For more information on radium in drinking water, see: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/factsheet/com/radium.pdf>.

After reviewing an estimated financing plan with the City's Financial Planner, it is likely another water rate increase will be necessary in 2018. The exact amount will not be known until the MN Public Finance Authority determines what amount of the water project will be covered with grant funds. Houston's current water rate is about average amongst surrounding cities. For an example, 5,000 gallon/month user in Houston pays \$32.88 for water and the average of 15 surrounding cities is \$32.94 (year 2015).

## WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The wastewater treatment facility was built 40 years ago and has far exceeded its useful life. Proper maintenance, improvements, and equipment replacement has kept the facility operating sufficiently, but some components are now due for an overhaul. A 2014 report by Davy Engineering itemized the needs as follows:

- **Main Lift Station** - Replace valves
- **Preliminary Treatment** - Minor concrete repairs
- **Aeration Basins** – replace aeration diffusers
- **Final Clarifier** – replacing drive mechanism, torque tube, scarpers, sludge manifold and bearing assembly
- **Bridge deck and railing** – replace with safer working surfaces
- **Aerobic Digesters** – replace the aeration diffusers
- **Standby Generator** - Purchase generator sufficient to run entire plant

The items could be completed as one project at an estimated \$450,000, or be completed individually based on priority. Upgrades are scheduled in the City's financial plan to be completed in the next couple of years. The complete report can be seen on the City website.

## STREET REPAIR & RECONSTRUCTION

Many city streets need maintenance or replacement. The goal is to sealcoat roads in fair condition to prolong their life. Streets in poor condition, and especially those with known problems with the underground utilities, should be fully reconstructed. To meet the City's obligation agreed upon in a 2007 Developer's Agreement, Elm Street will be paved this year from Kilborn Street east to the cul-de-sac.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a special City Council meeting was held to discuss the financial capital improvement plan for the City. Our financial advisor Mike Bubany went over the possible funding scenario for several proposed infrastructure projects. Although many streets and utility lines need repair, it is not financially feasible to repair them all within the near future without significant tax increases. The City must also pursue new initiatives to grow the tax base. A larger tax base will help keep the property tax rate at a reasonable level. Proposed Schedule (projects must receive City Council authorization prior to start):

2017 Elm Street  
 2017 Stoddard Street – partial  
 2017 Sealcoat  
 2018 Water Treatment Plant  
 2018 Lincoln Street  
 2018 Sewer Plant  
 2019 Sealcoat  
 2021 Sealcoat  
 2022 Street Reconstruction Project

## TREE BOARD

Emily Krage, Chair

The Houston Tree Board is made up of five people who are responsible to:

Recommend policies relating to trees; Encourage landscaping, installation and maintenance on private property; Recommend policies and procedures to identify, mark, publicize and preserve historic and landmark trees on both public or private property; Promote appreciation of trees and the urban forest through annual Arbor Day events; Encourage care of the urban forest through planning, policy development, and in all instances, serve as an advocate of the City's urban forest.

The Board recently set goals for the next couple of years including:

1. **Cedar Street/Hwy 16** - apply to MnDOT for the Landscape Partnership Program to update the plantings along the state highway.
2. **Residential Areas**-seek grant programs to develop a replacement plan for boulevard trees removed due to ash borer.
3. Re-apply for the **Tree City Designation** and hold an **Arbor Day event**.

### TREE PLANTING AND REMOVAL:

If you would like to remove or plant a tree in the boulevard, contact City Hall. The Tree Board will provide a list of recommended trees and review the proposed removal or location.

Ash borer is present in the City of Houston. The City has removed the boulevard ash trees, but If you have an ash tree in your yard, it most likely is infested with the ash borer. *Please take precautions before the tree becomes a hazard.* More information is available at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/eab>.

## COMMUNITY CENTER

At their March City Council meeting, the Council chose not to invest in replacing the siding and roof of the Community Center, but instead asked staff to explore the costs of demolition. One exception is that recent wind storms blew off some of the shingles on the south side of the roof, and that portion may be repaired per insurance.

The good news is that planning for a new community center has gained some momentum, and a community meeting is scheduled for **April 26<sup>th</sup>** to give an update and discuss goals.

A representative from Southern MN Initiative Foundation will be at the meeting to explain how the organization can assist with administration of a Community Foundation. Creating a Houston Community Foundation may be a good option to pursue fundraising and construction of a new community center. *Please attend the meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>.*

## OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Trails

A partnership between the MN DNR, user clubs and the City of Houston has obtained grants to purchase land for a proposed Off-Highway Vehicle Project. The next step for Houston's OHV Project is to set up an advisory committee. This group would develop a list of project goals and find answers to questions that may arise.

The successful utilization of existing lodging and local businesses by OHV users/visitors is one of the most important topics to discuss. The potential for new businesses and growth also warrants proper planning and guidance. The advisory committee will advise the City on options for administration, inspection, maintenance, and oversight of the Trail system.

If you are interested in serving on the Community Advisory Committee, please attend the meeting scheduled for **May 2, 6:30 pm at the Houston Community Center.**

The project would follow the guidelines of the DNR Grants-in Aid Program. The

government sponsor, as the grant recipient, and clubs must comply with the program requirements as outlined in MN statutes 84.927, 84.803, 84.794 and the manual that can be viewed at: [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/grants/recreation/ohv/program\\_manual.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/grants/recreation/ohv/program_manual.pdf).

### 7 STEPS FOR GIA TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

- STEP 0.** Preliminary project discussions and early coordination w/Parks and Trails
- STEP 1.** DNR Parks and Trails review of draft project proposal
- STEP 2.** DNR Area Interdisciplinary Team Review
- STEP 3.** DNR Regional Review
- STEP 4.** Public Input opportunity
- STEP 4a.** Public Notification (2 months) or
- STEP 4b.** Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) preparation (2 to 8 months) or
- STEP 4c.** Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) preparation (12 to 18 months)
- STEP 5.** Grant. OHV GIA Grant Funding Application applied for and Grant Agreement executed between State and Sponsor.
- STEP 6. Project Permitting and Construction.** As needed during development and annual maintenance or enhancement projects.
- STEP 7. Maintenance, Inspection and Enforcement Guidelines.** As needed during development and annual maintenance or enhancement projects.

# DID YOU KNOW...

## PROPERTY TAXES

There are several factors in the calculation of property taxes including values, classifications, and levies. Each spring, you will receive a Notice of Valuation and Classification in the mail. If you have a question regarding the valuation or classification of your property, the first step is to contact the Houston County Assessor's Office. If your concern is not resolved at that level, you may attend the annual Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting held at City Hall each Spring. **This year's meeting is scheduled on MONDAY, 5:30 p.m, MAY 8<sup>th</sup> at CITY HALL.**

Another key factor in determining property taxes is the City, School, and County Levies. The City Levy is set in December of each year and is based on the proposed budget for the following year. A public hearing will be scheduled prior to approval of the City Levy in order to give taxpayers an opportunity to voice their concerns over the proposed budget and corresponding impact on property taxes. The City of Houston's Property Tax Levy to be collected in 2017 was set at \$454,161. This amount is spread among all taxable properties according to their net tax capacity.

The Minnesota Revenue Department publishes a series of three fact sheets which explain the basic concepts of property taxes. If you are interested in learning more you may obtain copies at City Hall or at the website links below:

[http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet\\_12a.pdf](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet_12a.pdf)

[http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet\\_12b.pdf](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet_12b.pdf)

[http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet\\_12c.pdf](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/propertytax/factsheets/factsheet_12c.pdf)

## PERMITS

**BUILDING PERMITS:** An owner who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace any gas, mechanical, electrical, plumbing system, or other equipment, the installation of which is regulated by the code; or cause any such work to be done, shall first make application for permit. The City of Houston will review all permit applications for compliance with zoning. The City contracts with CMS Inspections to review and inspect projects for compliance with the building code. Permits for electrical must be arranged through the MN State Electrical Inspector.

Please stop at City Hall or go to the Building/Zoning tab on the City website for more information.

**FENCE PERMITS:** All fences over 30" need a permit (no fee unless the fence is over 6' in height). A few of the residential rules are listed below. Please find the full fence permit form and rules at City Hall or on the website:

- No fence or wall shall be constructed of any electrically charged element or barbed wire. Chained link fence is prohibited in residential front yards.
- No fence or wall located in a side or a rear yard shall be of height exceeding six feet.
- No fence or wall located in a front yard shall be of height exceeding 42 inches.
- No fence may be located less than 18 inches from a property line unless the adjacent property owner agrees to a lesser setback.
- No fence, wall, hedge or other screening device shall be permitted to encroach on any public right-of-way.

**GOLF CART PERMITS:** Permits for golf carts must be obtained every two calendar years for any golf cart driven on City streets. Permits are \$50 and are available at City Hall. Temporary two or three-day permits are available for a reduced price. A full list of regulations will be provided at time of registration.

## RECREATION AND EVENTS

**RECREATION:** Houston is the perfect area for outdoor recreation. Get out outside and enjoy the fresh air! Some great recreation ideas are:

Nature Center—Shop new items at gift shop; view exhibits; attend special programming, modern bathrooms and showers

Trailhead Park—Bandshell, Natural Playground, Camping, Pond overlooks; Treehouse coming soon!

Bluffview Community Park—Two Ballfields, Concession Stand; League and Summer Rec games

International Owl Center—Live owls, Educational programming, gift shop

Root River Trail—Bike, Walk, Rollerblade, or Run

South Park—Hiking, Birding, Hunting, Public Archery Range

City Park—Playground, Veterans Memorial, WWII Sherman Tank, unique wood carving, two picnic shelters, bathrooms

Root River Canoeing—Fishing, Tubing; Landing available

DNR - Oak Ridge/ Wet Bark—Trails, hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, nature walks

Valley High Golf—18-hole Golf

Ferndale Golf—18-hole Golf

Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area—Educational learning opportunities, exploring, hiking

Onsgard Memorial Sports Court—Tennis, Basketball

You can learn about many events and activities on the City web site: <http://www.houston.gov/office.com/>, Nature Center Website: <http://www.houstonnaturecenter.com/> or the DNR website: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html>

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The warm weather is finally upon us signaling the start of Houston's 2017 event season. Local events will kick off with the spring citywide garage sale on Saturday, April 29th. Contact Evonne Snow at 896-3897 to have your address listed. Registration is also now open for the 19th annual Root River Triathlon, which will be taking place on Saturday, May 20th. The summer events calendar will feature the Lawn Chair Concert Series, Taste of the Trail, Hoedown, Business Trick-or-Treat and more! Visit our Chamber's online calendar for a full listing of 2017 events.

Our Chamber newsletter, website calendar, and Facebook page are also available, promoting regional news, events, and business development opportunities. The Chamber Board meets monthly and holds quarterly member meetings. All meetings are open to the public. We love seeing new faces and hearing new ideas.

Make sure to check out the Chamber website to see a list of local businesses. Houston is fortunate to have so many products and services available right here in the community. Please show your support and shop local! The Chamber is pleased to be partnering with The Houston Banner to present a "Business of the Month" column, a special feature to celebrate the dedication and civic pride of our local business community.

### Let's Stay Connected!

Visit our website: [www.houstonmnchamber.com](http://www.houstonmnchamber.com)

Follow us Facebook: Houston Area Chamber of Commerce

Email: [houstonmnchamber@gmail.com](mailto:houstonmnchamber@gmail.com)

*Sarah Wexler-Mann*

**HOUSTON CITY HALL  
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for City Newsletter!***

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**507-896-7323**

**HOURS**

Monday 2-8  
Tuesday 2-8  
Wednesday 9-1  
Thursday 10-8  
Friday Closed  
Saturday 10-4  
Sunday Closed

**CITY HALL**

**507-896-4033**

**HOURS**

Monday 9-4  
Tuesday 9-4  
Wednesday 9-6 \*  
Thursday 9-4  
Friday 9-4

\* Open later on Wednesdays.

**NATURE CTR**

**507-896-4668**

**HOURS**

Monday 9:30-4  
Tuesday Closed \*  
Wednesday Closed \*  
Thursday 12-4  
Friday 9:30-4  
Saturday 9:30-4  
Sunday 12-4

\*Except for special programs