

THE BRIDGE



Welcome to the Employee Newsletter!

Leadership Minute

Artificial Intelligence Part 1

By Dan Wietecha

Earlier this year, I mentioned that I was taking a 6-week class on Artificial Intelligence (AI). I'm now halfway into the class and it would be good to share an update. In addition to the class, I've brought some of the discussion to our Management Team meeting each week to gain perspective from all our departments as well as some IT technical expertise.

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Staff Updates

Officers Freeze for a Good Cause

From Chief Wilske - I would like to thank and congratulate Officer Paul Young, Officer Matt Green, Investigator Chad Schlichte, and Community Service Officer Mitch Giles for jumping into the freezing

waters of Crystal Lake on Saturday, February 22 to raise funds for Special Olympics. This is an annual event, which we often refer to as 'Freezin for a



Reason', and make no mistake, it takes your breath away, but these officers stepped up and made a difference in an Olympian's life. I would also like to thank Reserve Officers Thierry Auge and Ron Riemenschneider for volunteering to assist those willing to take the plunge. Great team and great effort.



Happy Retirement Joe Birk!

The City of Hastings recognizes Joe Birk for his outstanding 29 years of service to the community, as he retires on Feb. 28. Joe's leadership and expertise, particularly in Public Works and street operations, have played a crucial role in shaping the department's success. His work in building the in-house paving program, leading snow plowing and

street maintenance efforts, and his ability to find solutions in emergencies have set the standard for quality in the city. Joe's dedication and commitment to Hastings will be greatly missed by all. Congratulations, Joe, and thank you for your service to the Hastings community!

[Watch Joe be recognized by the City Council at the February 18 meeting \(0:46 minute mark\)](#)

Show Your Hastings Pride

If you are interested in ordering City of Hastings branded clothing, please visit the online storefronts from Nine Eagles and United Promotions. Use your personal credit card to order, and orders will be delivered to Hastings City Hall and placed in your mailbox for personal pickup.

If you'd like something that is not included, please contact Dawn Skelly, so we can add more items to the stores.

Nine Eagles: <https://cityofhastingsemployeestore.itemorder.com/shop/home/>

United Promotions: <https://www.orderteamgear.com/government-organizations/city-of-hastings/>

February Workiversaries

[See who's celebrating a workiversary in February](#)



Management Team Notes

- Five of PD's finest participated in the Polar Plunge last weekend.
- Downtown snowflake lights will be removed March 1.
- Rivertown News should be in homes this week.
- Environmental work continues at 1292 Frontage Road, future site of the Central Water Treatment Plant. Will close on the property no later than May 31.
- Dan and Ryan testified at the House Capital Investment Committee this morning in support of HF1192 (state bonding for PFAS/nitrates removal).
- Renderings for the Central Water Treatment Plant will be out soon for review.
- Staff will be meeting with Met Council next week to discuss the future of wastewater management in Hastings.
- Lake Rebecca project bids are due March 6; pre-bid meeting was held Wednesday for prospective bidders.
- The Hockey Day Committee is generating a list of requests of the City for Hockey Day MN January 2026.
- The Civic Arena will be getting some new and updated lighting.
- The Tennis/Pickleball courts will also get some updated lighting.
- The Parks & Rec Commission heard from the County about a possible installation of the blue bridge remnant as a gateway to Hastings in Jaycee Park.
- Ice houses must be off area lakes by March 3 (southern 2/3 of the state).
- Land use application expected in spring or summer from developer of the Walden development.
- Engineering, Community Development and Communications are at varying stages of hiring interns.
- Planning Commission will review the Hwy 55 plan at the March 10 meeting. May move on to Council on March 17.
- Request for Proposals (RFPs) for design work for Hwy 61 are due to MnDOT March 14. Public engagement in the design and development will continue throughout the planning for the project.
- Seeking vendors for Music and Market (formerly Makers Market) this summer down at Levee Park.
- The Fire Department has installed a memorial honoring Adam Finseth (a former Hastings Firefighter/Paramedic) whose life was taken in the line of duty for the Burnsville Fire Department last February.

City Council Updates

February 18, 2025 Meeting

- Accepted a \$100 donation from Gail Weinstein to the Fire Department.
- Accepted a \$500 donation from Dakota Electric Association to the Parks and Recreation Department for the Summer Kick-Off celebration.
- Accepted SMEAD Manufacturing Sponsorship of \$1,000 for Summer Programming at Levee Park in 2025.
- Appointed Molly Kapping to the Arts and Culture Commission.
- Approved the 2025 Traffic Marking Program and 2025 Crack Seal Program.
- Approved an amendment to the purchase agreement for the acquisition of 1292 North Frontage Road for the Central Water Treatment Plant.
- Held a First Reading of the amendments to Hastings City Code regarding Sidewalk Cafés and Parklets.

[View the Council Packet for Details](#)

Wellness Spotlight

Employee Assistance Program

[Counselor or Coach? Understanding Your Needs for Support](#)

[Better Help Resource](#)

[March/April Flourishing Calendar](#)

Let's Dish

[Garlic Butter Steak Bites with Potatoes](#)

[Asian Cucumber Salad](#)

[Lemon Ice Box Pie](#)

Dates to Know

February/March

- February 28 - National Pancake Day
- March 3 - What if Cats and Dogs Had Opposable Thumbs Day
- March 7 - Employee Appreciation Day
- March 9 - Spring Forward - Daylight Savings Day
- March 10 - National Hug Your Dog Day

City Event Calendar

City of Hastings | Hastings City Hall 101 4th Street East | Hastings, MN, MN 55033 US

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