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News & Views

December 27, 2023

The City of New Hope's Employee Newsletter

End of Year Message from City Manager Reece Bertholf

Team New Hope:

The changing of the calendar has always brought positive change to my life.

1. I was in Tokyo for the beginning of the millennium and while I can assure you, as Prince instructed, I partied like it was 1999, I also found the love of my life, Mikie.
2. I made the decision to not reenlist in the Marine Corps in January of 2001, which started my new career as a firefighter later that year.
3. I made a major career change in 2015-2016, deciding to leave shift work and assuming the role of fire chief for the City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal in January of 2016.
4. I signed the offer letter to become the deputy city manager of Beaufort in January of 2020.
5. We agreed that my daughter could apply and eventually attend the U of M in January of 2023.
6. I was again, in Tokyo, in December of 2022, when I decided to retire from Beaufort and start the job search that ultimately landed me here, on your team.

Change is constantly around us, we partake in it daily, and when managed well, can result in amazing periods of time in our lives.

Thank you for helping Chief Hoyt as he started off this year with change on his mind and being great teammates as our city prepared, managed and participated in the change process that formed our new team. Thank you for welcoming me onto our team. I am so looking forward to participating in all aspects of what we do for New Hope and pledge to you my support as we continue helping this city be an amazing place to live and work.

I look forward to 2024 because we are entering the phase of normalizing our new team dynamics and will quickly be performing at an even higher level than we can visualize currently. Getting to know all of you has been a highlight of my professional life. You have made this a positive experience for me and the only words that work in a situation like this, are "thank you."

We have a moment of our lives together in order to make a difference for this community and Prince got it right when he sang "I was dreamin' when I wrote this, So sue me if I go too fast, But life is just a party, And parties weren't meant to last." Let's make the most of the time we have together for the betterment of New Hope! Congratulations on a great 2023 and cheers to an amazing 2024 to come!



Mark Your Calendar:

Jan. 1 – New Years Day – City Offices Closed

Feb. 19 – Presidents' Day – City Offices Closed

Jan. 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – City Offices Closed

Feb. 22 – SAVE the DATE: Emp. Club Chili Cookoff



Employee Service Recognition Event



Community development staff hosted the employee service recognition event this year, held on Dec. 7. Forty-three employees, council members and guests attended. For the first time in recorded history, the event was held at WhirlyBall Twin Cities in Maple Grove. Employees selected a gift card from one of several retailers as they checked in. During the social hour, many of those in attendance participated in several fast-paced games of WhirlyBall while others cheered them on. Scrumptious pizza, breadsticks, salad and delicious cupcakes were served immediately following.



During the program that followed dinner, all employees reaching a five-year service milestone in 2023 were recognized by their department director and those in attendance were presented with a certificate of recognition and a gift card. City Manager Reece Bertholf also announced the employee of the year, **Andrea Phinney**, accounting technician and the other nominees. To conclude the program, community development staff announced many door prizes including gift baskets and additional gift cards. Everyone seemed to have a lively time – thank you to **Linda Bergemann**, admin. specialist, and **Carrie Reid**, office specialist, for planning a delightful evening!

Milestone Anniversaries



Congratulations to employees reaching five-year milestones in 2023. And thank you to the members of Council and the management team that were present to recognize each employee for their contributions.

35 years: Valerie Leone, city clerk/treasurer

30 years: Mark Severson, recreation facilities manager

25 years: Tom Mahan, animal control officer; **Matt Remore**, recreation facilities supervisor

15 years: Dave Fritzke, police officer; **Mike TenEyck**, patrol sergeant; **Jeff Winkel**, mechanic; **Jeana Allen-Hatcher**, police office supervisor

10 years: Shari Rains, accountant; **Eric Piper**, housing/code enforcement inspector

5 years: Brad Johnson, maintenance worker; **Beth Kramer**, communications coordinator; **Kelly Thompson**, maintenance worker; and **Johnny Vang**, housing/code enforcement inspector

Pictured clockwise starting bottom left: 1) **Kathi Hemken**, Mayor, and **Val Leone**; 2) **Linda Bergemann**; 3) **Susan Rader**, Parks and Recreation Director; **Jeff Sargent**, Community Development Director; **Tim Hoyt**, Police Chief; **Bernie Weber**, Public Works Director; **Rich Johnson**, HR/Admin Services Director; **Reece Bertholf**; Council Members Mike Isenberg, Jonathan London and John Elder; Kathi Hemken 4) **Brad Kallio**, Community Relations Officer; 5) **Jill Smisek**, Parks & Recreation Office Specialist



Employee of the Year

(adapted from the city manager's presentation)

Andrea Phinney, Accounting Technician

Andrea joined the city in January of 2020 as the accounting technician. She quickly mastered her expected duties and asked for additional responsibilities.

Early on, Andrea completed several FEMA courses to ensure the city had finance redundancy should the City's emergency operations center be activated. She took it upon herself to learn the Enterprise fleet operation and has become the "go-to" person regarding fleet vehicles. This summer when the utility billing clerk position was vacated unexpectedly, Andrea jumped in and learned the utility billing system and related operations so she could keep a very important revenue stream coming into the City. She also participated in the recruitment process for the new clerk and subsequently trained her. Over the next two years, Andrea will play a pivotal role in the transition to the city's new enterprise resource planning software. This software will have a significant impact on the city for years to come.

It is very clear that Andrea does a great job and helps to make New Hope a great place to work as she has been nominated for employee of the quarter four times and was selected as the employee of the quarter in July of 2022!

In addition to her duties here at the city, she is married to Geoff and incredibly proud of her two sons, Clay and Jack.

Congratulations, Andrea!



Melissa DeLeeuw, Evidence Technician in the Police Department

Melissa was nominated for the job she's done as the city's first evidence technician. She quickly and thoroughly transitioned from her initial role as a police clerk to her new role and went above and beyond. In her first six months, she reviewed thousands of pieces of evidence, set up a system to bring evidence into the system, and systematically store, purge or destroy items that were no longer needed. She has coordinated hazardous waste procedures for the disposal of 2,500 pounds of narcotics and destruction of over 200 firearms. Even with a full plate, she continues to assist in the front office occasionally. Thanks Melissa!

Josh Eernisse, Patrol Sergeant

Josh was nominated for the outstanding job he does day in and day out serving our community! Even when challenges are thrown his way, he always has a smile on his face and is willing to lend a hand to anyone he can help. He excels at mentoring his team of officers, is a leader on the SWAT team and the Mobile Field Force, and he assists others in the department with training, firearms and community engagement. Thanks, Josh for always displaying a positive attitude and courage!

Tony Portesan, Recreation Facilities Supervisor

Tony was nominated for the fabulous job he does at the New Hope Aquatic Park. Tony also takes great pride in his role at the ice arena in the off season, but the aquatic park is his pride and joy! Tony is responsible for every aspect of the facility, including maintenance, purchasing supplies, grant writing, customer service and most importantly, supervisor. Tony's skills as a supervisor are showcased by the fact that out of the 87 staff that were needed for the summer of 2023, 68 of them had worked for him in 2022 and chose to return to work with/for Tony again this summer! Thanks, Tony for everything you do to make the aquatic facility (and ice) a success!

Johnny Vang, Housing/Code Enforcement Inspector

Johnny was nominated for his hard work and dedication in his role with the city. When Johnny's co-worker went out on a leave of absence earlier this year, Johnny took on the responsibility of both roles and did so without complaint. He responded to every code enforcement complaint and continued to conduct multiple family rental inspections and point-of-sale inspections, keeping pace with the expected level of service to the community. When a consultant was brought in to assist with these inspections, Johnny graciously trained and shadowed him to ensure he understood the city's processes and expectations. Thank you, Johnny, for a job well done!

New Employee Spotlight

Josh Thomas, Maintenance Worker

Welcome to the city's newest maintenance worker as of Nov. 13. Josh comes to the city after many years of landscape work for which he was a foreman for the last several. Now living in Robbinsdale with his girlfriend, Erin, and son, Mason (*pictured here with Josh*), he's originally from the Maple Grove/Osseo area. Erin is from Fountain City, Wisconsin. His parents are both retired and enjoying the lake life, his dad on Lake of the Woods and his mom on Leech Lake. He also has a sister who lives in Hugo.

Josh has been a paid on-call firefighter for Brooklyn Center for almost four years. He started when Mason began school for something to keep him busy and he said he enjoys it as he's a bit of an adrenaline junkie. In recent years, he's also been an instructor at the fire academy and serves as a mentor for firefighter apprentices.

He and Erin have been together for eight years and enjoy cooking and grilling together. They both like fishing and having friends over for fish fries. They have season tickets to the Twins and often attend as a family. Josh is also a hunter. Getting back to the adrenaline junkie in him, Josh enjoys mountain biking, often times with Mason. Erin will join on the trips but she tends to stay on the paved roads. He enjoys hitting the trails at Theodore Worth and Cuyuna. Josh and some buddies have been making a yearly trek to Bentonville, Arkansas for a few years now and this year he's hoping to hit a new one in the Branson, Missouri area.

We're glad to have you here, Josh, maybe you can help us find a spot in New Hope for The Twin Cities' next mountain biking trail!



Maintenance Worker Stanchfield Retires

Bruce Stanchfield has left the building. Literally. By the time you read this, he will have been gone for over a month. And that is how Bruce wanted it. Humble to the end, he was asked no fewer than six times if the City could hold a celebration of his 24 ½ years of service and he refused each time, wanting to go out quietly. That's how Bruce was, but he was someone that could be depended on to do his best and to always have a smile while doing it.

Bruce started with the City in April of 1999. Previously, he had worked over 18 years for a chemical company and had planned on staying with them for the rest of his career. Unfortunately, they had a lay off and he lost his position. His brother who worked for District 281 knew that New Hope was hiring and told him about the position. Bruce didn't have much experience with heavy equipment, but they gave him a chance and it's paid off for both the City and Bruce. He's enjoyed working close to home and being outdoors suits him well.

He's looking forward to sleeping in and going up to his lake property north of Alexandria whenever he wants. The property and cabin were his dad's first, so he's spent a lot of time in that area. He said there's always something to do, even if it's putzing around the lake on his pontoon.

When asked if he had anything to share, he said that he encouraged coworkers to hang tight and stay loose. In the end, it's worth it!

You will be missed, Bruce. Your willingness to participate, lend a hand and share a smile have always been encouraging. Thank you and we wish you a fantastic next chapter in life.

Recruitment Updates

Police Clerk: The City is hiring for a day-shift police clerk and currently in an external posting period. Applications are due by 8 a.m. on Jan. 2.

Housing/Code Enforcement Inspector: The City is hiring for a housing/code enforcement inspector. The internal recruitment period closed today. Two qualified applications were not received, so it will be moved to external starting



New Hope City Council Approves 2024 Budget

(Dec. 14 media release by Communications Coordinator Beth Kramer)

At its Dec. 11 meeting, the New Hope City Council approved the City's 2024 budget and tax levy.

The 2024 general fund budget is \$18,578,101, a 7.8% increase over the 2023 budget. The total tax levy for 2024, including the general fund, street and park infrastructure funds, economic development and housing and redevelopment authorities, prior debt levies and bonds, is \$20,075,245, representing a 5.36% increase, or \$1,021,929, over the 2023 levy of \$19,053,316. The total levy includes three new levies of \$100,000 each to build reserves for future capital needs for City facilities, including the fire station, aquatic park and city hall/police facility as outlined in the City's long-term plan. Also included is a 5% increase in the street and park infrastructure levies to support the long-term funding of street and park infrastructure improvements.

Also included in the 2024 budget is a Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) tax levy of \$459,743 and an Economic Development Authority (EDA) levy of \$168,683 to help fund redevelopment activities within the City, including the Scattered Site Housing Program. These levies received required approvals from the New Hope City Council and the Economic Development Authority at the Dec. 11 meeting.

New Hope will receive \$1,306,156 in local government aid in 2024, an increase of \$458,326 from 2023. The City will utilize the revenue to offset central garage equipment and building replacement charges; it is not used for general operations.

While the overall tax rate may appear high compared to other cities, New Hope includes infrastructure improvements in the general property tax levy rather than assessing the benefiting property owner. Thus, New Hope does not assess taxable properties for street improvements.

According to the Hennepin County Assessor, the median home value for taxes payable in 2023 is \$326,050, a 0.32% increase from 2022. Per updated information recently received from the County, the estimated impact on residential homes based on the proposed 5.36% is 3%. For homes valued between \$175,000 and \$500,000, the tax increase amounts to a property tax increase of between \$29 and \$93 per household.

Happenings

Halloween – Oct. 31

Members of the parks and recreation team found the spirit of Halloween (LtoR: **Steve Ellingson**, athletic supervisor; **Susan Rader**; **Aaron Thelen**, recreation supervisor; and **Penny Spitzer**, admin. specialist)! (apologies for this omission in the November issue)



Coat Drive—Dec. 6

Brad Kallio and **Tim Hoyt** delivered 180 coats to the Justin Morneau Coat drive!

Happenings—continued on next page



Isenberg Toy Fest – Dec. 1-2

New Hope Residents Council Member Mike & Commissioner Allison Isenberg (pictured with Daizy) continued the tradition of their annual Toy Fest, held on Dec. 1 and 2. They had over 170 attendees in person and many, many more people send gifts, resulting in over 500 toys and \$3,000 in cash and gift cards. Many toys were collected at the police station and city hall as well. The donations went to support Blue Santa, PRISM and NEAR. Thank you, Mike and Allison, and the many others that made this generosity possible. *Pictured below: Mike with Officer Tony Loser and Sergeant Pete Stanley.*



Tri-City Santa Parade – Dec. 9

For the third year, personnel from the police departments of New Hope, Crystal and Robbinsdale as well as West Metro Fire-Rescue joined together to present a holiday parade that drove through many neighborhoods of all three communities. The route in New Hope passed by almost all city parks to give children a place to play as they waited. The several-mile route covered much of each city and the community reception was phenomenal with residents lined up throughout.



Santa for a Senior – Dec. 14

As has become an annual tradition, gifts collected by West Metro Fire personnel were delivered to North Ridge, St. Therese, Good Samaritan & Crystal Terrace Nursing Homes. When the Jolly Journalist asked coordinator Joel Nelson, WMFRD Assistant Chief of Operations, he said that every gift tag had been picked up and returned with the requested gifts. Plus, there were many gifts that were left without tags in hopes that the nursing homes would be able to find a recipient for them!



Teen Toy Drive and Potluck – Dec. 13

Organized by **Linda Bergemann**, **Brad Kallio** and **Aaron Thelen**, 16+ employees enjoyed an incredible potluck and came bearing many gifts and over \$300 in gift cards for the toy drive. Pictured LtoR: **Aaron Thelen**; **Tim Hoyt**; **Linda Bergemann**; **Brad Kallio**; **Walker MacBeath**, HR specialist/IT coordinator; **Jeff Alger**, community development specialist; **Rich Johnson**; **Vicki Thompson**, admin. specialist; **Reece Bertholf**; **Kathi Hemken**; **Krissy Barthel**, utility billing clerk; **Penny Spitzer**; **Jeff Sargent**; **Shari Rains**, accountant; **Susan Rader**; **Carrie Reid** and behind the camera, Communications Coordinator **Beth Kramer**.



Blue Santa – Dec. 20

Brad Kallio organized the third annual Blue Santa. Ten families came to city hall to receive gifts, play games, craft and enjoy refreshments with members of the New Hope police department. City hall again shone with decorations and lights. And of course, Santa was in attendance! AND another two families were provided with gifts (over 20 children total). Pictured: Below—Officer **Isaiah Gorman**, **Tim Hoyt**, **Brad Kallio**, Officer **Tom Lesnikowski**, Sergeants **Josh Eernisse** and **Chris Cazin**, **Mike Isenberg**, Officer **Corey Cracknell** and Captain **Dave Johnson**; Bottom Right—**Lorilee Stafford**, admin. specialist, and daughter **Breaelle**.



Holiday Food Drive / Conclusion of Food Drive and Wacky Wednesdays – Dec. 19

As 2023 wraps, organizer Susan Rader, made a final delivery to NEAR food shelf this week. The year-to-date donation totals were 1,386 pounds of food and \$1,005. The money was collected from employees for the monthly Wacky Wednesday events. Thank you to everyone who contributed over the year!



Celebrations

Congratulations to Tom Evans, general inspector, and his wife, Jhoanna, on the birth of their baby, Marisol, on Nov. 19.



Congratulations to K-9 Nyx who celebrated his third birthday on Dec. 13 (his first with the city)! He is pictured with his officer, Dan Fitzmaurice.



Wellness

Mental Health: Let's Talk about It – Nov. 15

The final wellness program for 2023 was attended by 12 employees who enjoyed a Nautical bowl during the program. In a discussion format, Linda Bergemann, Walker MacBeath and others shared stories from their mental health journey and techniques they've used for reducing stress and anxiety in their daily lives.

2023 Survey – available through Dec. 31

The wellness survey for 2023 has been emailed to staff. Please take a moment to participate as it greatly helps the committee in gathering and prioritizing topics.

Biometric Screening – Jan. 16-18

Be on the lookout for details coming out next week!

Thank you to the 2023 committee members for their time in planning and execution. **Sergeant Chris Swaja, Linda Bergemann, Matt Rowedder**, utilities maintenance supervisor, **Mic Rusk**, maintenance worker, and **Tony Portesan**, recreation facilities supervisor.



Wellness 2023