



The Connection

April 2022

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THURSDAY, APRIL 7

Knowing what to do when a tornado is approaching can save lives. The most important events during Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week, April 4 - 8, are the two annual statewide tornado drills.

- Afternoon Drill - 1:45 p.m.
- Evening Drill - 6:45 p.m.

During the afternoon and evening drills, local sirens and all NOAA Weather Radios in Minnesota will sound with a simulated tornado warning. These drills give everyone the opportunity to review their emergency plans and procedures and practice emergency drills at work or at home.

The City of Canton siren is controlled by the Fillmore County Sheriff's Office. It is tested monthly on the first Wednesday at around 1 p.m. Any other time the siren goes off, without advanced public notice of a maintenance issue or special community event, it should be taken as an emergency warning. In the case of severe weather, the siren only sounds when a tornado warning is issued – not a tornado watch. The siren will normally sound for about three minutes and then go silent. There is no such thing as an all-clear siren.

LEARN MORE

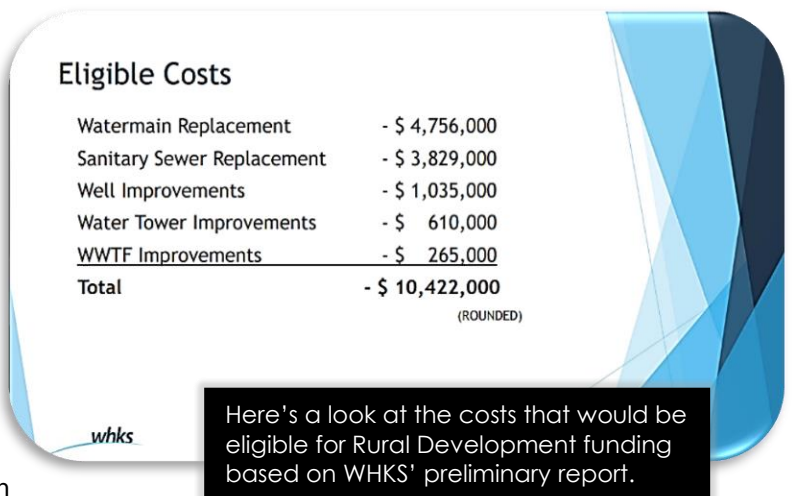
dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem

Engineering report presented to council

By now, you should be aware of a huge undertaking by the Canton City Council. In July 2021, the council hired WHKS Engineers to conduct a preliminary engineering report (PER) for water and wastewater system improvements. That report was presented to the council on March 9. It includes 509 pages of findings and supporting documentation. Yeah, it's a doozy! A condensed version was prepared for the council, which contains the nuts and bolts of the report. We've made the presentation available on cantonmn.com. (You can also stop by city hall, during regular business hours, to review the full PER.)

Bottom line: WHKS is proposing an \$11.3 million dollar project to replace and repair our aging water and wastewater systems. The council was briefed on options. Understanding the "Band-aid approach" is no longer feasible, the council initiated the next step in the process. City staff will work with WHKS to put together a funding application to USDA Rural Development. The goal is to secure \$10.4 million for the project. Of those federal dollars, 75% (\$7.8 million) would be in grant form. That's the selling point here. The remaining 25% would come from a low-interest, 40-year loan. Please hear this: The council's March action does not green light this project. We are moving forward with the application process to see if we qualify for the \$10.4 million. That answer will be provided later this year. At that point, the council will resume discussions.

As always, your feedback is valued. You can provide public comments, on the record, at a specified time during each regular city council meeting, held on the second Wednesday evening of the month at 6 p.m. Contact information for your elected officials is also included on the city government page of cantonmn.com. We ask you please take time to thoroughly review the PER presentation and take into account the age of the systems that provide your drinking water and remove your wastewater. This is a complex and costly issue. We fully acknowledge that. As we move forward, we want you to understand what's at stake and invite you to be part of the discussion.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Canton American Legion Pancake Breakfast is April 24!



Canton City Council Meeting Recap

Alternate-side parking ends for the season

Thank you to those of you voluntarily follow this ordinance, which is in effect every calendar year between November 1 and March 31. Your cooperation greatly improves snow removal operations by city crews.

Curbside compost pick-up set to start

Assuming the weather cooperates, city crews will resume weekly Monday morning compost collection on April 11. This complimentary collection is for routine yard waste and small branches. Think of it this way, if Mother Nature didn't make it, we won't take it. Leaves, grass and other compostable trimmings must be contained in disposable bags or boxes. Loose materials will not be collected. Branches must be cut into small sections and easily moved by hand. Acceptable items should be curbside by 8 a.m. on Monday mornings. City crews will not make special trips to pick up materials on another day.

Brush dump open to City residents only

Yard waste and branches can also be hauled to the brush dump, located near the wastewater sewer facility at 407 W Highway 52. That means no old lumber or other building materials, furniture, appliances, electronics, mattresses, etc.; compostable items only. Violators face a \$100 fine per occurrence.

The Canton City Council met in regular session on March 9. Councilmember Cindy Shanks was absent. There were seven visitors in attendance, with no public comments provided to the council. In addition to the WHKS PER presentation, the following matters were addressed.

- An update was provided on this week's sentencing of Lolly Melander, former city clerk. In particular, details of restitution were addressed. Current clerk Brock Bergey said information from the State Auditor, used to prosecute Melander, will assist in determining the use of restitution dollars. Bergey explained he will be working with the City's auditor, Hawkins Ash CPAs, to distribute the funds appropriately. According to the State Auditor's findings, as stated in the criminal complaint, Melander overpaid herself more than \$134,000 in wages between 2011 and 2019. Prior to her resignation, in March 2019, Melander wrote a check to the City in the amount of \$24,000. Her sentence includes additional restitution of nearly \$70,000. The City had a \$10,000 surety bond on Melander. With all of those considerations in play, Bergey stated that roughly 75% (\$104,000) of the misappropriated funds will be returned to the City, assuming Melander makes good on her payments. She has to make a minimum payment of \$2,000 every 90 days. If she fails to do so, she could face prison time. Bergey stressed the complexity of this financial matter since employee wages are paid from three different funds.
- The council received a presentation from Mark Goldberg, with David Drown Associates Human Resources. In December 2021, the council approved hiring the company to complete an employee classification and compensation study. The \$6,700 project was deemed necessary by the council to establish an employee pay grade schedule. The existing schedule hasn't been updated since the 1990s and does not reflect current employee earnings. Goldberg informed the council the study is designed to ensure jobs are classified appropriately and meet Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) guidelines. He reminded councilmembers of the 23 area communities they previously approved for salary comparatives. Based on a methodology referred to as JET (Job Evaluated Tool), seven different factors were used establish grades for City of Canton positions. It was stressed that JET focuses on the job and not the person. It takes into account job qualifications, decision making, problem solving, relationships, effort, hazards, and environment. Goldberg presented a salary structure with four grades, with nine steps within each grade. He called the range width of 24% as being "competitive in the market." As for the salary comparatives, the data shows the City of Canton has one employee above the salary range maximum, with three employees falling below it. In order to bring those three employees into the proposed structure, Goldberg noted a nearly 8% increase to total employee wages for 2022, or approximately \$9,500. The wages of the employee above the proposed structure would be "frozen." Goldberg said reducing an employee's current wages would be "toxic" and would never recommend such action. After hearing the presentation, the council discussed next steps and what to do with the information. Bergey reminded the council of their previous statements in support of a wage study, as it is a critical component to creating and implementing a pay grade schedule, which is a State requirement. He stressed there has been no request by current employees for a wage increase. The council decided to refrain from taking any action on the matter and also delayed discussion on the proposed employee job descriptions created by David Drown Associates Human Resources.
- Chris Hahn, with Community Economic Development Associates (CEDA), in his role with Fillmore County introduced himself to the council. He discussed potential options for the council to consider to help grow Canton's business community. Hahn noted the importance of having a current comprehensive plan to serve as the catalyst for future planning.

The next city council meeting is April 13 at 6 p.m. in the town hall. Agenda items are due one week prior.