

THE LAKER

Volume LXXII issue no.1

January 2026

MESSAGE FROM OUR MAYOR

CHRIS HEIM, MAYOR

HELLO NEIGHBORS!

Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays and is off to a great start in 2026!

This year, our budget includes funding for long-term financial strategies that set aside money for future expenses — costs that, if not planned for, could otherwise create major spending spikes and tax increases in the years ahead. With this proactive approach, we can continue keeping annual tax increases low while being prepared for known future projects and protected from unplanned cost situations.

Here is a summary of what we have implemented:

- **Fire Truck Reserve:** Plan to replace one of our used fire trucks every 10–12 years (~\$100K). We are depositing \$9K per year and have \$47K saved, positioning the City to replace a truck in about six years.
- **Sewer Jetting Reserve:** Sewer jet-washing (~\$20K) is needed every 4–5 years. We are depositing \$5K per year and have \$15K saved, preparing for jet-washing in 2027.
- **City & Fire Hall Reserve:** Plan for upkeep and remodeling updates (~\$250K) every 12–15 years. We are depositing \$20K per year and have \$107K saved, preparing for a building improvement project in 7–8 years.
- **Parks Reserve:** Plan for park enhancements (in ~\$50K increments) every 3–4 years. We are depositing \$15K per year, for park improvements in 4–5 years.
- **Legacy “Borrow-Only” Reserve:** We have set aside one full year of the City’s budget as an emergency backstop. If the City ever faces an extraordinary expense, it may borrow from this reserve under a Council-approved five-year repayment plan. This creates an evergreen financial safety net for our community.

With these planned reserves in place, we are ensuring long-term financial stability for Medicine Lake for decades to come.



IN THIS ISSUE...

Catch the latest news from our fire department including recent MLFD events and cold weather safety tips. Read more in this month's "Hot Flashes" on page 2.

Election Judges are needed for this year's elections. Read more on page 3.

Looking for this month's "City Council Votes" or monthly Meeting Dates? See page 4.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 2

City Council Meeting, 6p

February 8

Holes 4 Heroes, 11:30a

February 10

Laker Submissions Deadline

February 19

Planning Commission, 6p

...continued on page 3

Hot Flashes FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

EVENTS

Proceeds from the annual pizza delivery fundraiser and our open house (~\$1500) were formally accepted and dispositioned by city council in January--thank you so much for all your support! These funds are being used to refurbish B11, our rescue boat, to address some electrical demons, repair some battle wounds, and improve capability with some new equipment. Thank you all for your support!

Also, thank you to everyone who came out on New Year's Day to participate in the Cold Plunge! In addition to being good for you, it's a great way to learn how to manage your breathing and emotions when your body gets hit with a shocking dose of stress! We've been co-hosting this informal event with Minnetonka Fire since 2020, but we've been getting increasing interest from neighbors--many who join in with their entire families!

January 31st and February 1st is earmarked for our Medicine Lake Winter Festival. Activities and event locations need to be a bit flexible until we know what weather will be like, so there will be updates announced via the city Facebook page and the Community Club group email. Potential events include: adult and kids hockey games, ice carousel, lake golf, chili/soup gathering at Jevne, group XC ski, and kid's ice fishing party.

HYDRANTS

We now have 25 hydrants in our city providing ample water supply for use in fire suppression--take note of the hydrants nearest your home that might be needed in an emergency! To keep hydrants accessible throughout the winter, please consider "adopting a hydrant" by keeping snow cleared from around it. MLFD needs to be able to find and work around hydrants to connect hoses and manipulate caps/valves. If you have the time, we would appreciate if you help remove significant snow and ice in a 3-foot radius around the fire hydrant within 24 hours of a snow event.

Adopting a Hydrant can be as informal as grabbing a shovel when it snows, but you can also sign up for hydrant responsibility via [this web tool](#)—check it out!

PUBLIC SAFETY

We are in the coldest part of the year and would like to help you all stay safe amidst the chill. From treacherous roads to the risks of heating equipment and extreme cold, taking precautions can prevent accidents and ensure a safer season. Key areas of concern include winter travel, house heating fires, and cold exposure.

Winter travel demands heightened awareness. Drive "winter ready" by keeping your gas tank full and packing an emergency kit including extra clothing (hats, boots, gloves and jackets). While driving, increase your following distance to ensure you have plenty of time to stop on icy roads. For pedestrians, wear high-traction footwear and brightly colored clothing to avoid slips and improve visibility.

At home, heating systems and alternative heat sources can pose fire hazards if not handled properly. Space heaters should always be kept at least three feet away from flammable materials and never left unattended. Regularly inspect and clean chimneys, vents, and heating appliances to reduce fire risks. Additionally, installing and maintaining smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors can be lifesaving.

Lastly, prolonged exposure to cold can lead to frostbite or hypothermia. Dress in layers and cover exposed skin when outside!

For more winter safety tips check out <https://www.ready.gov/winter-ready>



MAYOR'S MESSAGE CONT.

ELECTION JUDGES NEEDED

This fall we will need several election judges to help run our local election. Judges must represent both major political parties, so we need a strong group of volunteers. If you are willing to serve, please contact Nina Zelazny (nzelazny@cityofmedicinelake.com).

A special thank you to Nina for serving as both Election Clerk and Councilmember this year.

MAYOR & COUNCIL SEATS UP FOR ELECTION

The Mayor's seat and two City Council seats will be on the ballot this November. Serving your city is a meaningful way to shape Medicine Lake's future. If you've ever considered getting involved, this year will be an opportune time to get involved — attend a few meetings, talk with current Council members, and learn more about our city's governance.

Thank you for your continued involvement in our community. 2026 will be a great year!

Warm Regards,

Chris Heim, Mayor

WEST METRO WATER ALLIANCE NEWS (WMWA): BEAVERS

Beavers are one of nature's busiest engineers. They are a keystone species, which means that they have a significant impact on the ecosystem relative to their population. Their work offers a cascade of positive benefits for water quality and the environment.

Beavers create and maintain wetlands, which help to filter water and recharge aquifers, restore eroded streambanks, and boost biodiversity. Their dams improve water quality by trapping and filtering out sediment and pollutants like phosphorous and nitrogen. Additionally, beavers expand water storage by slowing down water and increasing infiltration of that water into soil. This can restore the natural hydrology to areas that have lost it.

Scientists understand that these furry allies can support climate resilience efforts and are using beavers' environment-altering powers to help restore ecosystems, reduce the strains of drought, and even create firebreaks in regions affected by wildfire.

Beavers build critical wetland habitat that supports a host of fish, amphibian, mammal, and insect species. Despite wetlands only accounting for six to nine percent of land cover, they sequester more carbon than forests and support half of North America's threatened or endangered species. Wetlands are essential components to environmental, animal, and human health.

Read more: <https://www.westmetrowateralliance.org/leave-it-to-beavers.html>



1. ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL DUNLAP. SUPPLIED BY WMWA.

COUNCIL VOTES

January 5, 2026

The following motions were approved with Mayor Heim, Councilmembers McNaughton, Tomczik, Hovey, Zelazny in favor.



- Agenda
- December 1, 2025 City Council Meeting minutes with additions
- Summary spending, receipts and cash balances through December 31, 2025
- Ordinance 149 a Subdivision Ordinance and Resolution 26-01 to publish by title and summary
- Ordinance 150 Rates and Fees for 2026 with condition to obtain Exhibit A from Plymouth and Resolution 26-02 to publish by title and summary
- Approval of 2026 cash balance designations, amounts, and financial planning for fire truck reserve, sewer jetting reserve, city/fire hall reserve, park reserve, legacy fund reserve
- Resolution 26-03 accepting monetary gift of \$1,496.05 from fire department open house and pizza fundraiser to benefit the fire department operations budget
- Approve Veit pay application number 14
- Approve 2026 City Designations
- Adjourn

GOT NEWS?

We hope you're enjoying the all-digital edition of The Medicine Laker! We (the editors) appreciate your patience as we convert to this new format and add new features. We'll still be publishing monthly. Submit your articles by the **10th of each month to be included in that month's issue**. (If you're including images, please submit as separate files and indicate the order they are to appear.)

Watch for the latest edition on or about the 20th of each month.

Send your news to:

news@cityofmedicinelake.com

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, February 2 at 6p

MLFD

Tuesday, February 3 at 7p

Tuesday, February 17 at 7p

PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, February 19 at 6p