

# Florence Township

www.florencetwp.org • florencetwp1@yahoo.com

Goodhue County, MN • 2016 Annual Newsletter • March 2016

PO Box 97 • Frontenac, MN 55026

## Your Township Government:

Florence Township is governed by five elected officials

### Your Current Board is:

Mike Blair, *Chair*  
mjblair3@embarqmail.com

Joe Ellingson, *Supervisor*  
jellingson31@kmwb.com

Jim McIlrath, *Supervisor*  
jimcilrath@embarqmail.com

Sue Eisenmenger, *Clerk*  
smeisen@pressenter.com

Tom Gnotke, *Treasurer*  
gnotke@embarqmail.com

## AGENDA

*The annual meeting is at 8:00P, Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at Township Hall.*

1. Call the meeting to Order
  - a. Declare the election closed
2. Elect a Moderator to conduct the Annual Meeting
3. Pledge to the Flag
4. Read the minutes of the 2015 Annual Meeting
5. Committee Reports:
  - Friends of Town Hall
  - Planning Commission
  - Parks Commission
  - Heritage Preservation
6. Present the Audit report for 2015
7. Present the proposed budget for 2017
8. Public comments and discussion
9. Announce the election results
10. Establish the time and date of the 2017 Annual Meeting
11. Adjourn meeting



This newsletter is being distributed to the residents of Florence Township in order to inform and prepare them for the Annual Meeting to be held Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 8:00P at the Florence Township Hall. At the Annual Meeting you have the opportunity to express your views and help determine your taxes for the next year.

*The election will be held*

*Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at the Florence Township Hall.*

*The polls will be open from 4:00P until 8:00P.*

*The Annual Meeting will follow.*

Two Positions are up for election this year:

- Supervisor for a three year term
- Clerk for a two year term

Candidates that have filed:

- Supervisor: Jim McIlrath
- Clerk: Sue Eisenmenger

All Candidates are residents of Florence.

## Florence Township Board of Supervisors Year in Review

Florence Township achieved many great accomplishments in 2015. The Territorial Bridge project was completed, an updated Park plan was established and implemented in Valhalla Park, an updated sign ordinance was voted into place, planning for the Hill Ave. bridge replacement project began, and many roadways have been updated to Township standards.

The Frontenac Sportsman's Club donated to the Township again in 2015. The funds were used to purchase two new lawnmowers. Without their help in the last few years many projects would simply not have gotten done.

In the recent years we have been able to defend our legal rights, provide normal maintenance of our infrastructure, and even upgrade a few of our roads with only a small budget increase. In fact, we have built a small reserve of funds so that if an emergency arises, we should be able to shoulder the costs without going over our budget for the year. In the coming years, there are large projects that are going to have to be tackled in order to continue updating our assets. If you would like to be part of the decision making process please get involved with your local government which meets at 6pm every third Monday of the month at the town hall. There are also many opportunities to volunteer on our committees and public projects. If you are interested in volunteering, have any suggestions, or have any questions please contact one of the supervisors or view our updated Township website for more information.

The Township Board of Supervisors would also like to extend a thank you to all of our residents who volunteer countless hours of service to their community.

Joe Ellingson, *Florence Township Board of Supervisors*

**Goodhue District 4 County  
Commissioner Report**

By Jason Majerus  
*Goodhue County Commissioner*

For those of you in the Frontenac area, you may have noticed the new Blacktop on County Road 2 through Old Frontenac. Like most of County 2, the section in the Frontenac area was in pretty tough shape. Even though it's a road seldom traveled (just kidding,) the county wanted to remind the Frontenac residents that we have not forgotten about them. Another portion of County 2 will be repaved this year along with the section of County Road 5 from County 2 to Lake City. Each year the county finds itself approximately 7 million dollars short in what would be needed to repair and replace roads, in the hopes of not letting the surface get to the condition of what County 2 is and was. One of the options being discussed is a 1/2 cent sales tax that would add about 1.3 million to the county budget and could be used specifically for road and bridge projects. All of the counties around us have currently put the 1/2 cent option

in place. I personally am not in favor of raising taxes. Unless the state can find a dedicated funding source to make up some of the shortfall, adding the sales tax may be a reasonable option to help the much needed roads.

The county levy went up a modest amount of 3%. To the average taxpayer, if your assessed value did not change at all, you would have noticed a decrease in the amount levied by the county. I did not support the levy increase. We can do better, and until I am fully convinced that every tax dollar is being spent wisely and in the best interest of the Goodhue County residents, I cannot see myself supporting an increase in the levy. If individual taxpayers feel they should, or would like to pay more in taxes they certainly can. You can donate directly to any level of government that you feel is underfunded. I feel the taxpayer is best able to spend their own money on their own behalf, and therefore will always fight to allow you to keep as much of your own money as possible.

The Citizens Building which houses the Health and Human

Services Department, is done with its renovation and ready for staff to start moving in. It was a very large and exciting project within the county. The renovations will finally put the entire department under one roof. The HHS department has always provided a high level of service to their clients throughout the county, having everyone in one location will allow that level of service to increase for both the clients and the staff. The renovations will also allow the Citizens Building to serve the County and Community for many years to come.

If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact me.



**Florence Township  
Community Center**

*For Information and to  
Schedule an Event  
contact*

*Robin Mesenburg  
651-388-6666*



**Building Permit Procedures**

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A building permit is required for all new construction and most remodeling. To determine if you need a permit, call the County Zoning and Land Use Management Office at 651-385-3104. All building permits need to be approved by the Florence Township Planning Commission. They meet on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7PM. If you live in Old Frontenac you must also receive approval from the Heritage Commission. They meet on the 2nd Tuesday at 6PM. The final approval is received by calling Sue Eisenmenger at 651-388-0097 to get on the town board agenda for their approval. The town board meets on the 3rd Monday at 6PM.

## Villa Maria Retreat Center to close end of June

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FRONTENAC—The leadership of the Ursuline Sisters, sponsors of Villa Maria Retreat and Conference Center in Frontenac, MN., today announced that the center will close June 30, 2016. Villa Maria is owned by the Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province and governed by a board composed of local residents and Ursulines.

“Like many retreat centers in the U.S., Villa Maria has been struggling financially, despite valiant efforts by the staff and board,” says Sister Rita Ann Bregenhorn, Ursuline provincial leader. “The Ursuline leadership has come to the difficult decision that we must close Villa Maria in order to remain good stewards of our resources.”

The 124-acre property originally was home to Villa Maria Academy, a boarding school established by the Ursulines in 1891. The sisters arrived in Lake City, Minn., in 1877 and three years later established Our Lady of the Lake, a girls' school in Lake City. By 1883, enrollment exceeded capacity, and the Ursulines built the larger Villa Maria Academy in Frontenac. In 1969 a lightning strike started a fire that destroyed the four-story structure and forced the academy to close.

In 1970 the Ursulines established an ecumenical retreat center on the property. For 45 years Villa Maria



has remained an interfaith retreat and conference center sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters to help people, organizations and groups in their spiritual and personal growth.

“Villa Maria has always been known as a place where God is center and the world is welcome,” Sister Rita Ann says. “We cherish our many years in this community and look forward to maintaining our relationship with the many wonderful people we’ve come to know as students, coworkers and volunteers serving alongside us, and all who have supported our ministry here in ways too numerous to describe.”

Plans are being made to put the property up for sale.

## Frontenac State Park Update

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In 2015 Frontenac had 131,715 visitors in the park, 21,996 of which were overnight guests. This is up about 15% over 2014. All campsites in the park are now reservable, and have brought some new users into the park. Eagle and bird watching continues to be a major draw to the park from March-June. We also have made an effort to have a monthly special event from May-Oct, which has been successful with the help of the Frontenac Parks Association.

For resource management in 2015, we successfully burned 605 acres and will be looking to burn another 600-700 acres in 2016. We make every attempt to coordinate our burns with winds that will take smoke away from homes, but we are occasionally at the mercy of Mother Nature shifting wind directions. Every prescribed fire follows a predeveloped burn plan which is approved by the Forestry office.

We continue to remove invasive European Buckthorn and honeysuckle in the park. Last year we cut and treated 42 acres and are working east to west with the intention of eventually removing all seed bearing buckthorn

and honeysuckle, and killing young sprouts with ongoing prescribed fires. Several areas of the park towards the southeast are significantly more savanna-like than in years past thanks to cutting, treating and prescribed fire activity.

The 3 day special whitetail deer hunt at the end of November netted 46 deer harvested from the park, which is the same number harvested as 2013 and 2014. According to the wildlife division, the park continues to maintain a healthy population of whitetail deer with the deer hunt results. We are starting to see some increased oak regeneration with the current deer population. Deer target oak seedlings in winter months making oak regeneration extremely difficult if the area is overpopulated.

Volunteers continue to play a critical role in visitor services and resource management. Here are a few areas where volunteers are helpful: Campground hosting, prairie seed collection, garbage cleanup along sand point, invasive species removal and volunteer nature hikes

The DNR is involved with the

proposed Bluffland Trail segment connecting Red Wing to Lake City. The legislative language states that the trail is to go through a portion of Frontenac State Park. The potential routes have yet to be established through input from the public and the trail planning advisory committee which is composed of residents from Lake City, Frontenac, Wacouta and Red Wing. The trail at this point is an “authorized” state trail, meaning a master trail plan is to be developed by the DNR to find a potential route or routes and identify potential user groups of the trail, but no moneys have been distributed for land acquisition or development yet.

Feel free to stop in the park office or call us at 651-345-3401 if you have any questions, concerns or would like to volunteer! Our next special event is a screening of the “Minnesota Stories in a Changing Climate” documentary with guest hosts from Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy, on Thursday, March 31, 6:30-8pm in the Picnic Shelter.

Caleb Jensen, *Park Manager*  
Nadine Meyer, *Assistant Park Manager*

## Friends of the Florence Town Hall

The Friends of the Florence Town Hall would like to thank the Township residents for their support in the past year. With your help we had two very successful history fairs and donations of items of family history given to the History Center which may interest the community as a whole. We wish to thank the local merchants who supported us with door prizes.

The Spring History Fair is scheduled for April 23rd from 1-4PM. The Goodhue County Historical Society will be bringing a presentation of Central Point which is considered a Ghost Town of Florence Township. James Clinton will be the speaker.

At the last history fair the Berlin Family shared their history and Mike Murphy told us some previously obscure history of Pleasant Valley. We need more people to share their history. Bring questions about what you would like to know more about such as farms, businesses, mills, race track, airport, the brewery. There is so much to be curious about in Florence Township.

We would like to thank the Town Board and the heritage preservation Committee for their hard work and serious consideration on the preservation of the Town Hall.

Virginia Oliver, *Friends of the Florence Town Hall*

## Florence Township Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a board created by and appointed by the Florence Township Board of Supervisors to encourage restoration, preservation and conservation of historic properties in the township.

The Florence Town Hall and the Old Frontenac Historic District are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a program administered by the National Park Service. The HPC takes part in maintaining the Town Hall and some public property within the Historic District. The HPC also has the authority to make recommendations to the Florence Town Board regarding the issuance of building permits for properties within the Old Frontenac Historic District.

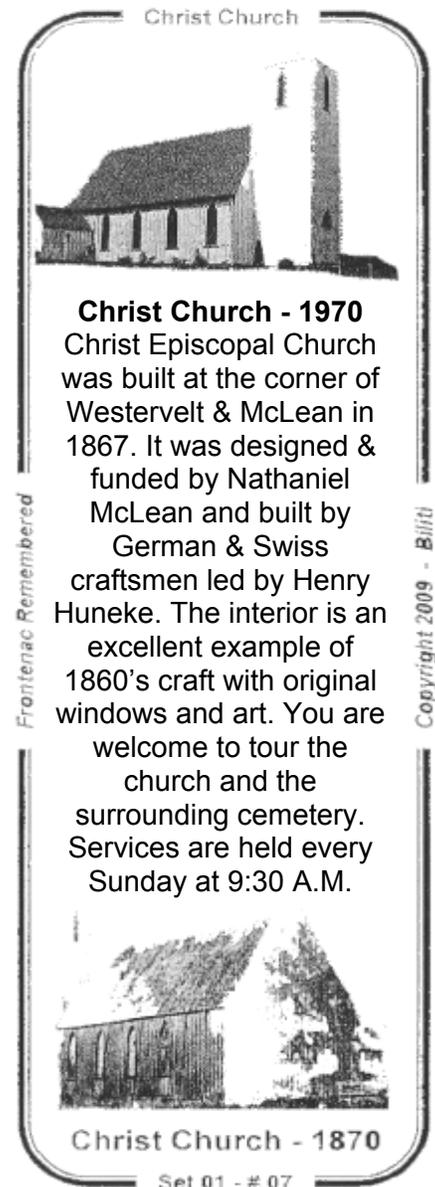
The main focus of the HPC since the last annual report has been the restoration of the exterior of the Florence Town Hall. Bids have been solicited and received from several contractors for painting the exterior, or as an alternative, covering the existing wood siding with steel siding. The township budget will be affected by this project, so residents are encouraged to attend the upcoming annual meeting and express their views regarding maintenance of the Florence Town Hall. It should be noted that the Florence Town Hall is the oldest continuously used Town Hall in the state.

The HPC meets the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM at the Florence Town Hall.

Commission members are Bill Bruce, Clay Ruggles, Cathy Kouchich and the Town Board representative, Mike Blair.



Erected 1875



Christ Church

**Christ Church - 1970**  
Christ Episcopal Church was built at the corner of Westervelt & McLean in 1867. It was designed & funded by Nathaniel McLean and built by German & Swiss craftsmen led by Henry Huneke. The interior is an excellent example of 1860's craft with original windows and art. You are welcome to tour the church and the surrounding cemetery. Services are held every Sunday at 9:30 A.M.

Frontenac Remembered

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Christ Church - 1870

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# Florence Township Budget History

	Actual Figures				Budgetary Figures			
	2013	2014	2015	Proposed	2016	2015	2014	2013
				2017				
<b>General Fund</b>								
Salaries & Education	\$15,742	\$15,291	\$14,943	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000
Town Hall	2,423	10,147	2,640	3,450	3,050	3,000	3,000	4,000
Town Hall Improvements	0	14,430	0	15,000	15,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
Parks	7,961	8,584	6,795	7,615	8,700	12,000	10,000	8,000
Park Improvements	0	0	8,220	5,000	5,000	13,000	5,000	0
Community Center (Net)	712	2,756	125	1,100	1,800	1,500	2,000	2,000
Planning	5,085	10	0	0	1,000	2,500	2,500	2,500
Heritage	375	0	0	0	500	500	1,000	0
General Government	14,106	30,690	51,927	31,525	34,035	17,000	18,000	13,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>46,404</i>	<i>81,908</i>	<i>84,650</i>	<i>79,690</i>	<i>85,085</i>	<i>73,500</i>	<i>65,500</i>	<i>53,500</i>
<b>Road &amp; Bridge Fund</b>								
Road Grading & Repair	36,919	30,217	42,066	40,000	40,000	45,000	50,000	55,000
Snowplowing	91,315	66,321	28,242	60,000	65,000	50,000	48,000	48,000
Rock/Gravel	37,755	22,493	31,540	35,000	30,000	35,000	23,000	22,500
Blacktop	52,745	54,000	0	75,000	75,000	50,000	30,000	30,000
Chloride	5,492	5,084	7,350	5,000	5,000	8,000	5,000	5,000
Brushing	17,308	2,634	14,516	8,000	5,000	5,000	3,000	2,000
Special Proejcts & Reserve	13,555	53,653	16,273	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Federal Sign Reflectivity Pr	0	1,439	738	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	0
Road Ditch Mowing	2,940	2,940	2,940	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	4,000
Street Lighting	798	691	576	700	800	800	750	800
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>258,827</i>	<i>239,472</i>	<i>144,241</i>	<i>258,700</i>	<i>255,800</i>	<i>228,800</i>	<i>194,750</i>	<i>197,300</i>
Gas & Gravel Tax Revenue	(28,892)	(33,651)	(40,463)	(35,000)	(30,000)	(28,000)	(28,000)	(28,000)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>229,935</i>	<i>205,821</i>	<i>103,778</i>	<i>223,700</i>	<i>225,800</i>	<i>200,800</i>	<i>166,750</i>	<i>169,300</i>
<b>Emergency Services Fund</b>								
Fire contract	24,073	23,370	25,493	31,500	31,500	25,000	22,000	27,000
Ambulance Contract	11,577	6,384	9,460	10,000	9,000	13,000	13,000	17,500
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>35,650</i>	<i>29,754</i>	<i>34,953</i>	<i>41,500</i>	<i>40,500</i>	<i>38,000</i>	<i>35,000</i>	<i>44,500</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$311,989</b>	<b>\$317,483</b>	<b>\$223,381</b>	<b>\$344,890</b>	<b>\$351,385</b>	<b>\$312,300</b>	<b>\$267,250</b>	<b>\$267,300</b>



Florence Township  
 PO Box 97  
 Frontenac, MN 55026

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### **Park Commission**

2015 was a successful year as a beginning for our restoration of Valhalla Park. We are very grateful for all the generous donations that are making this effort possible.

Ron Knudsen, *FTPC member*

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### **Goodhue County, MN Historic Sites**

Visit Goodhue County  
 Historical Sites at <http://goodhuecountyhistory.org/>  
 or Historic-Places-Facts at  
<http://www.co.goodhue.mn.us/523/Historic-Places-Facts>

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### **Frontenac Cemetery Association**

Annual meeting of the  
 Frontenac Cemetery  
 Association will be March 17th  
 at 10:00A at Wee Three and  
 Me Bakery, 220 E Chestnut St.,  
 Lake City. For Information  
 contact Clay Ruggles 651-345-  
 4265 or Dan Staker 651-345-  
 2541

### **Florence Township has many volunteer opportunities:**

- Planning Commission Meets second Monday at 7 PM
- Heritage Commission Meets second Tuesday at 6 PM
- Parks Commission Meets first Tuesday at 6 PM
- Friends of the Town Hall Meets second Saturday at 10 AM
- Election Judges 2 hour training (1) 6 hour shift
- Garden weeders as needed during the growing season

*Thank you to all the  
 volunteers who make our  
 township work so efficiently.  
 We couldn't do it without  
 YOU!*

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This year Florence Township lost three valued volunteers, Doris Berlin, Bill Webster and Evelyn Kiester. All were dedicated to the preservation of the history of Florence Township.

They were instrumental in maintaining the town hall as the seat of government in Florence Township, retaining the Frontenac Post Office and documenting the history of the township.