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Photo by L. Berning



Otsego VIEW

WINTER/SPRING
PARKS & RECREATION
PROGRAMS/EVENTS

WINTER ENTERTAINMENT
pages 15 and 16

CREATING A SAFER, MORE CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Recent projects within the City of Otsego aim to provide safer trails and better traffic flow in key areas.

Residents may have already noticed major improvements to two local trails, both of which were supported by grants through MnDOT and demonstrate the city's commitment to the safety and interests of its community members.

As a Safe Routes to School initiative, the 80th Street Trail Project introduced a new, shared-use trail on the north side of 80th Street NE. This 10-foot-wide path provides a safer and more comfortable route for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly for students traveling to and from school. This new path also includes:

- ADA-compliant ramps
- High-visibility crosswalks
- A 7-foot buffer space from traffic

The CSAH 42 Trail Project was part of an Active Transportation Program to create one continuous, multi-use trail by closing the gap between 96th Street and 91st Street along this busy highway.

continued on page 8





CITY HALL

Address: 13400 90th Street NE

Phone: 763.441.4414

Website: www.otsegomn.gov

Email: cityhall@otsegomn.gov

Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
& Friday 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

PRAIRIE CENTER

(Community Center and Council Chambers)
8899 Nashua Avenue NE

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Department of Building Safety: 763.441.2593

Utility Billing: 763.441.2310

After Hours Emergency Service: 1.877.274.6492

Parks and Recreation: 763.235.3148

Wright County Sheriff's Non-emergency: 763.682.1162

CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR

Jessica Stockamp: jstockamp@otsegomn.gov

COUNCILMEMBERS

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Tina Goede: tgoede@otsegomn.gov

Michelle Lund: mlund@otsegomn.gov

Corey Tanner: ctanner@otsegomn.gov

CITY STAFF

City Administrator/Finance Director: **Adam Flaherty**

City Clerk: **Audra Etzel**

Human Resources/Assistant City Administrator: **Sabrina Hille**

City Planner: **Daniel Licht**

City Engineer: **Ron Wagner**

Parks and Recreation Director: **Nick Jacobs**

Communications Specialist: **Heidi Carey**

Street Operations Manager: **Kevin Lamson**

Utility Manager: **Kurt Neidermeier**

Interim Fire Chief: **Mike Scott**

Building Official: **Mike Rosenau**

MEETING SCHEDULE

City Council: 2nd and 4th Monday of the month

Planning Commission: 1st and 3rd Monday of the month

Parks & Recreation Commission: 3rd Tuesday of the month

Heritage Preservation Commission: 2nd Tuesday of the month

Public Safety Commission: 2nd Tuesday of the month

**Meeting dates are subject to change;*

call City Hall to confirm dates and times.



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UPCOMING HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

City Hall Closed:

Christmas Eve	December 24
Christmas Day	December 25
New Year's Eve	December 31 (closing at noon)
New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	January 19
Presidents Day	February 16



CHRISTMAS TREE DISPOSAL

Please note: The Albertville Compost Site will not be available for Christmas tree disposal. The City of Otsego will provide a drop-off location for live Christmas trees from Dec. 26 to Jan. 11 near the Archery Range (just west of the ballfields in Prairie Park, 13355 90th Street NE, Otsego). Trees must be unbagged and free of lights. No wreaths. Visit the City website for more information.

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GREETINGS NEIGHBORS!

As we look back on the warmer months, I'm excited to share the success of our new Paddle Port kayak rentals, which launched this summer. The program allowed residents to start their paddle at Norin Landing and finish at Carricks Landing, enjoying the natural beauty of Otsego from the Mississippi River. Reservations officially opened in July, and

by the end of September, more than 130 rentals had been booked. We anticipate even greater participation next year as more residents and visitors take advantage of this unique opportunity to experience Otsego from the water.

Looking ahead to winter fun, snowmobiling continues to be a favorite activity in our community—made possible thanks to the hard work of the Otsego River Riders (ORR). This volunteer club partners with the City and local landowners to address concerns and answer questions related to snowmobiling. The City Council is grateful for their efforts and encourages snowmobilers to support the club to help keep our trails open. You can learn more about the Otsego River Riders at otsegoriverriders.com or on Facebook. They meet at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Otsego on the first Thursday of each month, October through March. Social hour and dinner begin at 6:00 p.m., followed by the club meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Otsego trails are part of the 300 miles maintained by the Wright County Snowmobile Association (WCSA), with about 26 miles running through our community. Trails open on or after December 1, depending on weather conditions, and are groomed once there's at least 10 inches of snow on the ground. Maintenance continues until March 31—or as long as snow conditions allow. Trail maps are available through the Polaris Ride App, on paper at local gas stations and restaurants, on the WCSA website (wcsatrails.com), or directly from the ORR Club.

People are reminded that while riding in the City of Otsego:

- Snowmobiles may only be operated in the City between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and between 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.
- Persons under 14 years of age may ride on City streets only when accompanied by an adult. Teenagers 14-17 years of age may ride on City streets with a valid snowmobile certificate in their possession.



- On City streets with curb, snowmobiles must be ridden on the street, single file in the direction of traffic as close as practical to the curb; where no curb exists, snowmobiles may ride off the paved surface but not more than 6 feet from the edge of the pavement.
- The City has designated residential areas available on the City website where snowmobiling upon City streets is prohibited except to go to/from your property to a designated trail. Snowmobiles may not exceed 10 MPH within these designated residential areas.
- Use of any motorized vehicle on City trails and sidewalks is prohibited except for a person operating an electric personal assistive mobility device.

If you have any concerns about snowmobiling in Otsego, please do not hesitate to contact City Hall or Otsego River Riders at otsegoriverriders@gmail.com.

Jessica Stockamp MAYOR OF OTSEGO

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FRANCHISE FEE REBATE PROGRAM

The City is offering a rebate program for certain eligible Wright-Hennepin Electric Utility customers who were charged multiple franchise fees on a single property. This program will be offered until December 31, 2025. To check eligibility and access the rebate form, visit the City website. Rebate forms are also available at City Hall. otsegomn.gov/172/Franchise-Fees

Truth in Taxation 2025 Budgets & Property Tax Levy Presentation

Tuesday, December 2, 2025 – 7 p.m.
At Prairie Center, 8899 Nashua Avenue, NE

Residents are invited to learn about and discuss the proposed 2025 budgets and property tax levies. The presentation will cover estimated market values, homestead exclusion, taxable market value, class rates, net tax capacity, and other key financial details that shape next year's tax impact.

To learn more - visit the City website otsegomn.gov or scan the QR code



2025 PHOTO CONTEST – WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

Winning photographers of the 9th Annual Otsego Photo Contest were recognized at the October City Council meeting. Their entries are now featured at City Hall, on the City's social media platforms, the website, and in the winter newsletter.

This year, nine participants submitted a total of 16 photos. Voting took place both online and in person at Prairie Festival, with 273 votes cast online and 336 on-site. Each winner received a \$100 prize.

The online Viewers' Choice award went to **Loren Green** for *Frosted Horizon*, while the Prairie Festival Viewers' Choice winner was **Ashley Melges-Quinn** for *Farm Friends*.

The City extends a heartfelt thank you to all who participated and helped showcase Otsego through their photographs.

Photo Contest Winners:



Online Winner
"Frosted Horizon"
Loren Green



Prairie Festival Winner
"Farm Friends"
Ashley Melges-Quinn



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GOVWELL PERMIT PORTAL COMING JANUARY 2026

The new GovWell Permit Portal makes it easier than ever for residents to apply for and track permits online.

What all can you do via the Permit Portal?

- Apply for certain Permits, Licenses, and Zoning Approvals
- Report code violations pertaining to the City Ordinances (to come at a later date)
- Submit plan drawings and other documents for review
- Pay permit fees
- Request a permit inspection
- Look up pending applications, issued permits, and inspection results
- Access building permits, trade and business licensing, and code enforcement

Watch for more details on the new GovWell Permit Portal coming soon!



GovWell



ADVISORY COMMISSION OPENINGS

The City of Otsego is currently accepting applications from residents interested in volunteering to serve on various commissions. These groups play a vital role in advising the City Council on key issues such as public safety, historic preservation, parks and recreation, and community development.

Please note: Regular attendance at meetings is essential to ensure each commission can effectively carry out its responsibilities. Your active participation helps maintain continuity and supports informed decision-making that benefits the entire community.

The City of Otsego has four commissions:

- **Parks and Recreation Commission** (meets every third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.)
- **Planning Commission** (meets the first and third Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.)
- **Public Safety Commission** (meets the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m.)
- **Heritage Preservation Commission** (meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m.)

Applications will be open in December on the City website.

The deadline to apply is January 20, 2026 by 5 p.m..

The City Council appreciates the dedication of community members who choose to serve on advisory commissions. We welcome you to apply for appointment or reappointment.

If you have any questions about the application process or appointment details, please contact the City Council or the staff liaison for your advisory commission.



For more information, contact City Clerk at aetzel@otsego.mn.gov or call City Hall at 763.441.4414.

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SHIP GRANT TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY SPACES IN OTSEGO

Wright County Health and Human Services recently reached out to City staff with an opportunity to utilize grant funds available from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for 2025. The funding is designed to support projects that align with the mission of promoting health, accessibility, and community well-being. In Otsego, these funds will be used to provide a new private lactation space and install additional ADA-compliant picnic tables throughout the City's park system—all at no cost to residents.

City staff explored several options for creating a dedicated lactation area at the Prairie Center but found that converting an entire room wasn't feasible due to space limitations. Wright County proposed an innovative solution: a Mamava lactation pod, a self-contained unit that offers mothers a private, safe, and comfortable space for breastfeeding, pumping, or caring for their child. The pod is fully wheelchair accessible and ADA compliant, helping advance the City's accessibility goals. The new pod will be placed in the southwest room of the Prairie Center.

The Mamava app on your phone helps you locate and use lactation pods quickly and easily. After opening the app, you can search for nearby pods based on your current location or a specific area. Each pod listing provides details like availability, amenities, and accessibility features. Once you find a



pod, the app can guide you there with a map, and in some locations, it allows you to reserve or unlock the pod directly from your phone, making it convenient for busy parents who need a private, comfortable space to nurse or pump.

In addition, the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) Grant will fund the purchase of 14 new ADA-compliant picnic tables. These will be distributed across Otsego's park system, ensuring that more residents and visitors can enjoy inclusive and accessible outdoor spaces.

Through this partnership with Wright County Health and Human Services, Otsego continues to make meaningful progress toward a more welcoming and accessible community for all.

ADA-compliant picnic table





NOW ENROLLING!
Enrollment Lottery is from Dec. 1 - Jan. 31, names will be drawn for all grades on Feb. 2!

OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS:
Nov. 10: 5:30pm | Dec. 8: 5:30pm
Jan. 6: 5:30pm

Registration for Open House can be completed on our website:

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A WALK THROUGH OTSEGO'S PAST: FIRST-EVER CEMETERY TOUR A SUCCESS

Otsego's first-ever Cemetery Tour took place on Thursday, October 30 and drew a great turnout, with about 30 participants eager to learn more about the city's early history. Attendees divided into two groups—one led by Kelly Kiffmeyer and the other by Tami Stinski of the Otsego Heritage Preservation Commission—and visited several notable graves of the community's earliest settlers.

Along the way, participants heard fascinating stories drawn from the *Otsego Cemetery* and *Holt Diary* books, along with additional reference materials including *Family Farm Years* and *In The Beginning 1852-1880*. The tour explored themes of family life, child mortality, and the remarkable resilience of those who helped shape Otsego's beginnings. Highlights included a visit to the city's oldest known grave, belonging to Charlie Pipen (Pepin), dating back to 1854.



The tour concluded with a somber stop at the gravesite connected to one of Otsego's most tragic historical events—the 1906 murder-suicide involving Willard and Mary Brandt and Justin Adams.



The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback, and plans are already underway to bring the Otsego Cemetery Tour back next year.

Note: the Heritage Preservation Commission is taking a winter break and will not be meeting December-February. Meetings will resume in March of 2026.

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Thank You!



continued from cover

Old pavement was removed, making way for a brand-new, 10-foot-wide path along the east side of CSAH 42.

With ADA-accessible ramps as well as enhanced crosswalks with more visible signs, this trail provides pedestrians and cyclists with safe and easy access to local neighborhoods, businesses, and parks, including the Mississippi River Trail Bikeway and broader Great River Road National Trail System.

The city's bigger, ongoing project involves improvements along CR 137. Originally set for reconstruction under Wright County's

Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2019, it then became a Local Option Sales Tax project and in 2021 was added to the County's five-year plan. The goal is to improve safety by:

- Reducing vehicle speeds
- Improving access to local businesses
- Building multi-use pathways
- Developing a pedestrian crossing over I-94

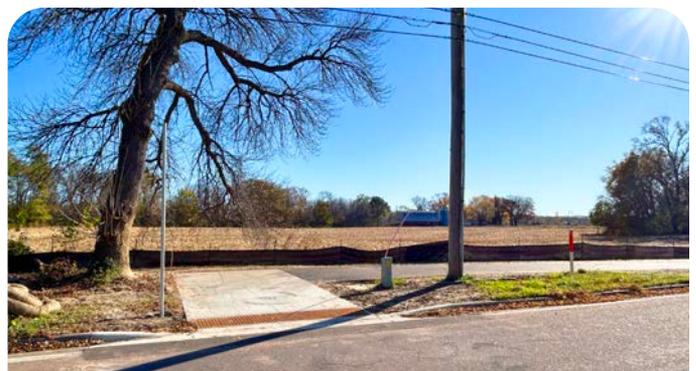
This project also includes the installation of roundabouts at Maciver Avenue, Lymon Avenue, and the I-94 ramp terminals to improve safety, traffic flow, and efficiency at these intersections.

County Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann, P.E., said the initial design for the CR 137 project included traffic studies and control evaluations along the corridor to determine the safest and most practical solutions for future business access. During that time, Wright County became aware of some of the businesses going in along that corridor, including the new Costco. That development allowed staff to collaborate with traffic engineers from Costco to better define and design some intersections, turn lanes, and other accommodations for the impending roadway installation.



Wright County received funding from two MN State grants for this project. The first, awarded in 2023, was for reconstructing the I-94 ramp terminals for increased traffic, pedestrian, and cyclist safety. The County also applied for a Local Road Improvement Program grant. The CR 137 project was selected for this grant based on its safety benefits, regional significance, and economic development.

Shafer Contracting has started construction on the Maciver roundabout, which should be finished mid-to-late November. Construction will start again in spring 2026 and continue through summer, with completion of the entire corridor slated for fall 2026.



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WHAT WOULD OUR CITIES LOOK LIKE IF KIDS WERE IN CHARGE?

The Mayor for a Day Essay Contest is back to find out!

This essay contest is open to students in grades 4-6 this school year. Entries for the 2025 Mayor for a Day Essay Contest can be emailed, submitted online, or postmarked by **Dec. 12, 2025**. Three winners will be chosen to receive \$100 prizes and will have their essays published in the League's Minnesota Cities magazine. Winners only will be notified in early January.

Last year, Avery Herrala, a fourth-grade student from Otsego Elementary School was selected as one of the winners!

This year's essay question is:

Cities provide a variety of services and programs that make our lives better, including parks & rec, street maintenance, water and sewer, libraries, police, fire, and more!

If you were mayor for a day, what would you do to make one of the services that your city provides even better?

How to submit your students' essays – three easy options:

- **Submit online** – students can enter their essays into this online form and submit them directly. Mayor for a Day Entry Form - League of Minnesota Cities: lmc.org/about/mayor-for-a-day-essay-contest/mayor-for-a-day-entry-form
- **Print and Mail** – you can print this document for students to handwrite their essays and then mail them in to 145 University Ave. W, Saint Paul, MN 55103.
- **Email as an attachment** – students can type their essays into the fillable PDF, save the document, and then email the finalized PDF to mayorforaday@lmc.org.

The submission form and a primer on what Minnesota Mayors do are available at lmc.org/mayorforaday.

Avery Herrala, 2024 Mayor for a Day Essay Contest winner.



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CHIEF'S CORNER

by Mike Scott



Hello Otsego!

I began serving as your Interim Fire Chief in September and wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I started my fire service career as a paid-on-call firefighter for the City of Eagan in 1983. While serving as

a paid-on-call firefighter, I worked as a law enforcement officer for 20 years before becoming Eagan's first full-time FireChief in 2006.



After retiring from Eagan in 2021, I have had the privilege of serving as Interim Fire Chief for both the cities of Shakopee and St. Louis Park.

Ironically, Eagan in 1983 had a population of 20,700 over 33 square miles – comparable to Otsego today with approximately 23,875 residents over 30.5 square miles. In 1983, Eagan was served by three fire stations and eventually grew to six stations under a paid-on-call model. Today, with a fully career-staffed department, Eagan operates three stations because staffing reduces response time when firefighters are already at the station.

In Minnesota, there are four types of fire departments:

- **Volunteer** – Members are not paid for their service
- **Paid-on-call / Part-time** – Firefighters are paged when needed and are paid if they respond
- **Combination** – At least one full-time staff member with additional paid-on-call/part-time staff
- **Career** – All staff are full-time employees

According to the Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education (MBFTE), in 2025 there are:

- 295 Volunteer fire departments
- 365 Paid-on-call or part-time departments
- 92 Combination departments (fastest-growing category in Minnesota)
- 17 Career departments

The model being proposed for Otsego is a combination department using both full-time career and part-time staff. All three departments currently serving Otsego operate under

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 <p>Centrally located within Otsego's 30+ square mile City to serve Future GROWTH!</p>	<p>CITY OF OTSEGO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population: 23,000+ • LARGEST City in Wright County • 46th LARGEST City in MN* • Top 10 FASTEST Growing Cities in MN** • Only City of its size without a fire station 	 <p>Modern training classroom for ALL City staff and nonprofits</p>
 <p>Modern office space for the Wright County Sheriff Deputies serving Otsego</p>	 <p>Otsego's rich history featured and built into the public Fire Station lobby</p>	 <p>Helps provide coverage to the core areas of Otsego—Minnesota's 46th LARGEST CITY and the only one WITHOUT a FIRE STATION</p>

this model. A combination department provides a more reliable, predictable, and sustainable staffing approach as more cities struggle to maintain a paid-on-call model.

The primary benefit of having staff at the fire station is dramatically improved response time. Most full-time firefighters are EMTs or paramedics. While structure fires are less frequent, rapid response for medical emergencies — such as heart-related events where seconds matter — can significantly improve outcomes. Otsego is currently served by three different ambulance providers, none of which house ambulances within the city. Having trained firefighter-EMTs in our community allows us to deliver care before the ambulance arrives. With approval from our medical director, EMTs can perform additional procedures not allowed under standard first-responder protocols, further improving care.

What do full-time firefighters do when not responding to emergencies?

- **Maintain equipment and apparatus** to ensure constant readiness
- **Train continuously** in EMS, fire suppression, Haz-Mat, and daily drills

CITY NAME	POPULATION	# FIRE STATIONS	FULL-TIME STAFF	PART-TIME STAFF	STAFFING MODEL
Elk River	27,606	3	4	60	Combo
Chanhasen	25,746	1	9	27	Combo
Faribault	24,983	1	10	24	Combo
OTSEGO	23,875	1	10	20	Combo
Columbia Heights	22,358	1	10	30	Combo
St. Michael	21,681	2	0	30	*Paid-On-Call
Golden Valley	21,263	1	8	50	Combo
Rogers	14,493	2	6	45	Combo
Albertville	8,555	1	1	33	Combo

*St Michael will move to a Combo Staffing Model in 2026

- **Conduct community outreach** including education, demonstrations, and events
- **Perform safety inspections** of high-risk facilities (senior housing, apartments, commercial buildings) — a service not currently taking place in Otsego

It is a privilege to serve Otsego during this period of planning and transition. My goal is to support informed decision-making and help the community prepare for the future of fire and emergency services. I look forward to continuing this work and welcome the opportunity to stay engaged with residents as the process moves ahead.

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WINTER REMINDERS: SNOWPLOW SAFETY TIPS

As winter approaches, Minnesotans will be gearing up with snow tires, shovels, and cozy layers. The City of Otsego Streets Department will be ready too! The plow routes will be updated, plows will be attached to the trucks, and salt and sand will have been ordered. This season, 13 plow drivers will be out on the roads, clearing 326 lane miles and 165 cul-de-sacs to help you get around safely.

Plowing begins when snowfall reaches 2 inches or when road conditions require it. Equipment dispatch depends on timing, intensity, forecast, personnel, and street priority. Our top priorities are trails, sidewalks along major streets, and school walking zones, which we aim to clear within 24 hours.

Here's how residents can help make snow removal safer and more effective:

MAILBOX WINTER PREP TIPS:

- Ensure the post is strong and stable
- Use durable materials like steel or heavy-duty plastic
- Add reflective markers for visibility
- Keep driveways clear of snow

DRIVEWAYS & PRIVATE PROPERTY

Snow from driveways, sidewalks, or parking lots must not be pushed onto public streets or walkways. Doing so is illegal, slows plowing, and creates hazards.



FIRE HYDRANTS

Clear a three-foot radius around fire hydrants. Every second counts in an emergency.

PARKING

Do not park on streets during snow events. Vehicles can block plows and slow clearing. Reminder: No street parking from November 1–March 31 between 2 a.m.–6 a.m. Violations may result in citations or towing.

WINTER DRIVING

Maintain a safe distance from plows. Never pass on the right. Drive cautiously on curves, hills, bridges, and intersections.

SALT USE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Salt and deicing chemicals can pollute water systems. The City limits salt use by plowing curb-to-curb, using liquid additives, and applying less granular salt.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation as our crews work to keep City streets and trails safe. Depending on storm severity, clearing may take hours or even days. Stay safe while driving and clearing snow this winter!



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