

City Connection

A seasonal newsletter
for the City of Morris

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2008 levy expected to rise about 3 percent Truth in Taxation hearing December 11

Morris's 2008 property tax levy is expected to rise three percent to \$1.163 million. That's up \$34,000 from 2007.

The proposed tax increase will be presented at a Truth in Taxation hearing on Tuesday, Dec. 11 at 5:15 p.m. The final 2008 levy and budget will be adopted by the Morris City Council at the Dec. 20 meeting.

Local property taxes represent just 15 percent of the city's total revenues, which are expected to reach \$7.735 million in 2008, up about \$725,000 from 2007. Total spending is estimated at \$7.724 million, up about \$625,000 from 2007.

General Fund recap

In the General Fund, which accounts for most city services, 2008 revenues are expected to be \$3.34 million. Of that, 70 percent, or \$2.32 million, will come from intergovernmental aid, grants and reimbursements. Governmental aids will increase \$112,000 in 2008, says Morris City Manager Blaine Hill. Fees, fines and interest are expected to bring in another \$300,000, or 9 percent of General Fund revenue. Contributions from the city's business enterprises — garbage collection, water and sewer utilities, and the liquor store — will provide \$110,000, or about 3 percent of General Fund revenues.

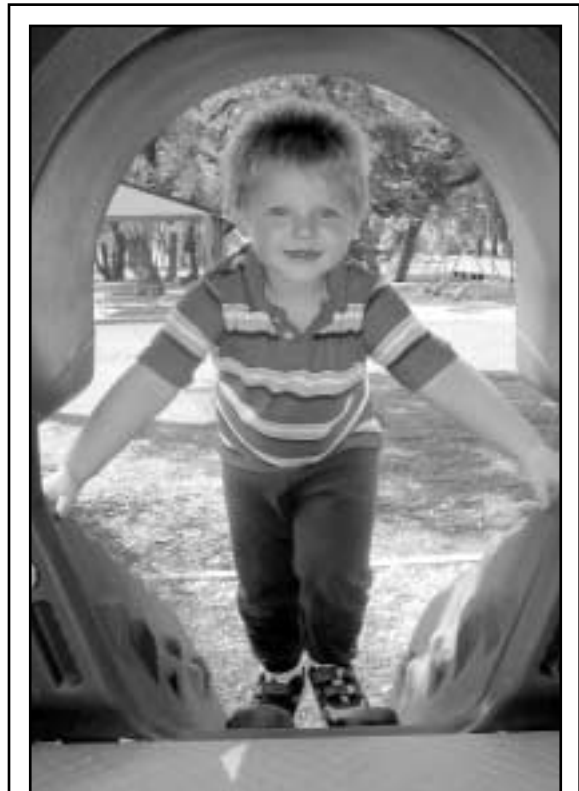
The General Fund pays for police and fire protection, street maintenance and snow removal, city administration, the library, parks, community education, transit and the airport. Public Safety accounts for one-third of General Fund outlays at just over \$1.15 million. Government administration and public works each represent about 18 percent of General Fund expenditures at roughly \$600,000 per department. Transportation expenses are about \$400,000, or 12 percent of the General Fund.

Because of changes in the way revenues and expenses will be classified in 2008, budget comparisons with 2007 are not very meaningful, Hill says. However, labor costs make up the largest General Fund expense category, Hill says. The city has negotiated three-year employee labor contracts that call for 3 percent annual wage increases.

A special tax on utility franchises will bring in about \$180,000 in 2008, according to budget projections — up about \$10,000 from 2007. That money is earmarked for major street projects.

Proposed capital outlays for buildings, vehicles and equipment are \$150,000. Planned acquisitions in 2008 include \$56,000 of firefighting equipment and \$29,000 in airport improvements.

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EQUIPPED FOR FUN: Justin Straight, 4, plays on the new pre-school playground equipment at Kjenstad Park on Lake Crystal. Justin is the son of John and Jodi Straight of Morris. The new playground was donated by the Morris Area Women of Today. The park has a new picnic shelter, too, provided by the Walter Tripp American Legion Post in Morris.

Meet the members of the Morris Tree Board

About the Tree Board

- Composed of five members, who serve two-year terms
- Appointed by the Morris City Council

Tree Board Purpose

- Develops and administers a plan for the planting, care, maintenance, and removal of trees on city parkland and boulevards
- Advises the City Council
- Recommends landscaping policies
- Encourages tree planting
- Promotes tree appreciation and education activities

Recent Activities

- Dutch elm disease control cost-sharing program
- Highway 28 tree planting
- Boulevard tree replacement program
- Tree care public awareness efforts
- Arbor Day recognition
- Proposed tree planting requirements for new housing developments



MORRIS TREE BOARD. Back, from left: Jay Fier, Susan Granger and City Public Works Director Jim Dittbenner. Front: Dennis Lindor, Dave Poppe and Sally Finzel.

Meet the Morris Tree Board

Jay Fier, chairman of the Morris Tree Board, is the city engineering inspector-surveyor.

He helps plan and administer infrastructure, street and other miscellaneous projects. You see him on the construction site as the city's project engineer, assuring quality control and customer satisfaction.

Fier grew up in New Ulm, graduated from UMM, and received additional civil engineering training at the University of Minnesota and MnDOT. After four years of

working on the road for private engineering companies, he joined the Morris engineering department in 1980.

Fier and his wife, Louise Trotter, a psychologist, enjoy traveling in the off season. In his spare time, Fier also likes to read, garden, and listen to music.

"We encourage the cultivation and maintenance of a diversity of trees in our urban landscape," he says. "We believe it is money well spent. We love standing in the shade!"

Susan Granger is an architectural historian and co-owner of Gemini Research in

Morris.

Gemini Research prepares National Register applications for the Minnesota Historical Society and does historical research and surveys for the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Granger is also a frequent speaker at conferences and workshops on historic preservation.

Granger grew up in Morris and was educated at UMM. She founded Gemini Research with her partner, Scott Kelly, in 1985.

Granger also serves on the Morris Planning Commission. In her spare time, she enjoys walking, reading, bike riding, and planting trees. She became passionate about trees after Gemini Research did a survey of historic buildings in St. Peter immediately after the devastating 1998 tornado. She was struck by how "people felt as bad about the loss of all the beautiful mature trees as they did about the loss of buildings. That made me appreciate the role trees play in the beauty and comfort of a community."

Dennis Lindor is the chief operating officer of Prairie Community Services, a division of St. Francis Health Services.

Prairie Community Services, based in Morris, serves more than 500 people throughout Minnesota who have various behavioral, developmental, and physical challenges. The not-for-profit company operates about 80 group residences and also provides a wide range of home-based support services.

Lindor grew up in rural Cyrus and was educated at UMM. He taught elementary school at Battle Lake for five years. Later, he farmed near Cyrus and was a special education aide at Morris Area Public Schools. He

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City Meeting Calendar

Dec. 2007

Dec. 11	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Dec. 12	Park Board	5:00 p.m.	City Hall
Dec. 17	Library Board	5:00 p.m.	Library
Dec. 18	Planning Commission	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Dec. 19	Human Rights Commission	Time, place varies;	call City Hall
Dec. 20	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers

Jan. 2008

Jan. 8	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Jan. 9	Park Board	5:00 p.m.	City Hall
Jan. 15	Planning Commission	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Jan. 16	Human Rights Commission	Time, place varies;	call City Hall
Jan. 22	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Jan. 28	Library Board	5:00 p.m.	Library

Feb. 2008

Feb. 12	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Feb. 13	Park Board	5:00 p.m.	City Hall
Feb. 19	Planning Commission	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers
Feb. 20	Human Rights Commission	Time, place varies;	call City Hall
Feb. 25	Library Board	5:00 p.m.	Library
Feb. 26	City Council	5:15 p.m.	Council Chambers

Open swim, gym at RFC

Membership or daily pass not required

Mon., Dec. 3 . . 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Fri., Jan. 18 . . 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Feb. 17 . 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Open skating at Lee Center

Sun., Dec. 2 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 5 . . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 9 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 12 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 16 . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 19 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 23 . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 26 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Thurs., Dec. 27 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Fri., Dec. 28 . . 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 30 . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Mon., Dec. 31 . 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 2 . . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Jan. 6 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 9 . . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Jan. 13 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 16 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Jan. 20 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Mon., Jan. 21 . 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 23 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Jan. 27 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 30 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 6 . . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Feb. 10 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 13 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Feb. 17 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Mon., Feb. 18 . 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 20 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun., Feb. 24 . . 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 27 . 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

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Tree board members

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joined Prairie Community Services in 1985.

Lindor and his wife, Dawn Bjorge, a registered nurse, enjoy travel, sporting events, and home improvement projects. He sees a healthy urban canopy of trees as one sign of a healthy community. "In Morris, we don't have lakes — except for Crystal Lake," he says, "but we've always had beautiful trees."

Dave Poppe owns and operates Morris Land Care Company.

He started the business in 2001, and now employs five. The company offers a complete range of lawn maintenance services, landscape design and construction, tree consulting and Dutch elm disease inoculation, and snow removal. Poppe is also a licensed pesticide applicator, a certified tree inspector, and a certified arborist.

Poppe grew up in Morris and earned a degree in social sciences at UMM. He worked as a gardener for the UMM Grounds Department for four years before starting his business.

In his spare time, Poppe enjoys reading about plants, trees, and horticulture. The Morris Tree Board is a natural fit with his interests. With diseases such as Dutch elm disease and emerald ash borer threatening Morris's urban forest, "We need long-term plans for tree replacement," he says.

Sally Finzel owns Morning Sky Greenery.

She founded the business in 1991. The nursery, located in the former "stone schoolhouse" on Highway 28 east of Morris, grows native flowers, grasses, trees and shrubs. Finzel ships her nursery plants all over the country. She also sells seeds and landscaping supplies and helps people plan lakeshore restoration projects, rain gardens, butterfly gardens and wildlife areas. Finzel has an online store, too, at: www.morningskygreenery.com.

Finzel studied plant science at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., with emphasis on herbaceous and woody plant identification, plant pathology and entomology. She and her husband, Bart, a UMM economics professor, have three children. Sally, who is also a dancer, has been active in local community theater, choreographing many musicals.

2008 levy expected to rise

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A number of unresolved issues could also affect 2008 expenditures, Hill says. These include:

- The city's share of county law enforcement dispatching expenses
- City attorney fees
- Fuel costs
- Health insurance premiums.

For more details on city finances, Morris residents are encouraged to attend the annual Truth in Taxation Hearing on Dec. 11.

2008 General Fund Revenues

Intergovernmental Aids	\$2,322,000	70%
Local Property Taxes	\$611,000	18%
Fees for Services	\$208,000	6%
City Enterprises	\$110,000	3%
Interest Earned	\$54,000	2%
Licenses, Permits	\$38,000	1%
Total General Fund	\$3,343,000	100%

2008 General Fund Expenditures

Public Safety	\$1,152,500	35%
Public Works	\$614,500	18%
General Government	\$590,500	18%
Transportation	\$414,000	12%
Library, Parks, Recreation	\$288,000	9%
Overhead, Misc.	\$243,500	7%
Economic Development	\$42,000	1%
Total	\$3,345,000	100%

Snow alert parking rules

When a snow alert is declared, there's no parking on any city streets until they are plowed. Snow alerts are announced by 5 p.m. on these area radio and television stations:

- Local Public Access TV
- KKOK Morris 95.7 FM
- KQIC Willmar 102.5 FM
- KMRS Morris 1230 AM
- KUMM Morris 89.7 FM
- KCLD St. Cloud 104.7 FM

You may also call Morris City Hall, 320-589-3141, or check the City website <http://www.ci.morris.mn.us/pd/snowalert.shtml>.

Snowmobile rules

- Snowmobiles may travel only on designated Morris streets, which are clearly marked with orange arrows.
- Snowmobiles must take the most direct route between home and a snowmobile route.
- Snowmobiles are not allowed on Morris sidewalks, boulevards, public parks, or playgrounds.
- You are not allowed to drive your snowmobile on private property without permission.
- If you are under 12 years of age, you may not operate a snowmobile on Morris streets.
- If you were born after Dec. 31, 1979, you must have a valid snowmobile safety certificate to operate a snowmobile.

Library Director Rita Mulcahy retires

Expanded children's collection a career highlight

Rita Mulcahy is retiring this month, after 34 years as the director of the Morris Public Library.

Under her watch, the library grew significantly. The book collection doubled, and the number of registered patrons tripled. Mulcahy started the library's collection of audio books and movies in the early 1980s, directed the shift to automated catalog and circulation systems in the early 1990s, and oversaw a \$400,000 building renovation in 1999.

But the most rewarding thing about being Morris's head librarian all these years has been "interacting with the public," she says, "especially with kids."

Mulcahy is the library's tenth director and the longest-serving.

The public library was organized in 1886, 14 years after Morris incorporated, and was housed in a room of the municipal power plant. It opened with 382 volumes. There was a \$3 annual fee to borrow books — "payable in advance," according to an account in the Morris newspaper. In 1905, Morris built the Carnegie Library on West Sixth Street, the library's home until 1970, when it moved to the current location.

Mulcahy, a Minneapolis native, took charge of the library in June, 1973, succeeding Sarah Bodine, who served just five months. The previous librarian, Margaret Grove, had been a fixture behind the circulation desk for 30 years, from 1943 to 1973. Before becoming a librarian, Mulcahy worked as a newspaper reporter and editor.



Rita Mulcahy

In 1973, the library had just 17,000 volumes. The annual budget was \$30,000, and there were around 2,000 registered borrowers. The catalog had to be typed on paper cards and the circulation system required endless stamping and filing.

Today, the library has some 50,000 books, plus several thousand audio-books, movies and CDs. In addition to the local collection, Morris is a member of the Viking Regional Library System, which gives patrons free access to books from any library in the country.

The library's annual budget has grown to \$300,000, and there are nearly 7,000 registered borrowers. Circulation runs 140,000 to 150,000 items per year, Mulcahy says. And the facility's four public Internet-access com-

puters, installed in 2000, are in continual use.

Trends

Mulcahy selects all the materials for the library, buying about 2,000 titles a year. Most of the collection, aside from classic volumes, has been acquired during her tenure. Among the trends she has seen is "a big increase in genre fiction — thrillers, legal thrillers, mysteries." Another trend: "Women's fiction and romance, which used to be available only in paperback, has become mainstream."

Meanwhile, the Internet has all but eliminated the need for non-circulating reference books, and audio-visual materials have become "a very large part of the collection, and account for about one-third of our circulation," Mulcahy says.

One of the accomplishments Mulcahy is most proud of is the expansion of the children's literature collection. Children's books are "much nicer" than in the past, "more colorful and more interesting than before," she says. "We have a larger kids' collection than many libraries our size," and children's books "account for 40 percent of our print circulation."

Mulcahy, 64, steps down Dec. 31. The Library Board expects to have her successor in place in January, says Evy Rodne-Cole, board president. Mulcahy has no definite retirement plans yet, but one thing's for sure, she says: She'll be doing lots of reading.