



2025 FALL NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is posted on the City of Watkins' web page at www.cityofwatkins.com as well as other informational items and the events calendar.

This newsletter is mailed as a service to all residents to let you know what is going on in the city. Please read it in its entirety so you are aware of some basic information, rules, and regulations. Thank you.

City Hall Hours: 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, and 8:00 a.m.-noon on Wed.
City Hall phone: (320) 764-6400; Fax number: (320) 764-6401; Email: info@watkinsmn.city

Upcoming City Hall Holiday Closures:

Monday, October 13, Indigenous Peoples Day
Tuesday, November 11, Veterans Day
Thursday, November 27 & Friday, November 28, Thanksgiving holiday
Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve Day- closing at noon
Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day
Thursday, January 1, New Year's Day

ATTENTION! Business Owners and Homeowners in Watkins. The City of Watkins has been awarded funds for residential owner-occupied home repairs from the MN Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED) to rehabilitate 20 houses. Income guidelines do apply for the residential owner-occupied home repair funds. This program encourages the improvement of the general appearance and value of the housing stock while making a visible and substantial improvement in the quality of life and appearance of the community. Funds are also available to offer financial assistance to 8 commercial and/or rental property owners. This program can provide upgrades to properties, helping them to meet code requirements and design standards. Funds will be administered by United Community Action Partnership, Inc. Please contact City Hall or visit <https://www.unitedcapmn.org/programs/housing/home-repairs/> for more information. **It's not too late to apply!**

Please pull your garbage cans back from the sidewalk and street right-of-way once they are emptied as a courtesy to everyone using the sidewalks, and so they do not obstruct snow plowing/removal.

Address Numbers. All residents/property owners/businesses are asked to post the address number outside so delivery drivers, emergency vehicles, etc. can find your property.

Water/Sewer Utility Policy. The city bills monthly for water/sewer usage. Bills are always due on or before the 25th of each month, regardless of whether the 25th falls on a holiday, Saturday, or Sunday. Please be sure to include the payment stub with your payment so your account will be properly credited. If the bill is not paid by the 25th of the month, a late fee is added to the bill, so please pay on time. **Any delinquent water/sewer bill is subject to disconnection if not paid by the due date. A \$200.00 reconnection fee must be paid before water can be turned on again.** If reconnected after hours, an additional \$75.00 will be charged. The city does accept credit, debit, and prepaid cards for payment of water bills. There is a fee charged by the service provider for the use of a credit, debit, or prepaid card. There is a link on the city's home page for the credit card site, or you can call or stop in at City Hall and staff can assist.

Land use permits are required in the city. All new construction requires an approved land use permit. This includes all permanent and non-permanent accessory structures. Permits are also required for decks, pools, fences, additions, moving in a structure of any kind, etc. **If you are unsure if a permit is needed, please call City Hall at 764-6400 before starting a project.** Please plan ahead for any projects, as the city has up to 60 days to issue a permit.

Penalty Fee. The penalty fee in all zoning districts for starting work before an approved land use permit is obtained shall be four (4) times the permit fee. This fee would be in addition to the Land Use Permit Fee.

If you plan to reside, reroof, install new windows, or replace doors in your home, you do not need a permit for that. The city does allow metal roofing on residential properties; however, be aware that only standing seam metal roofing systems are allowed. **If you install anything other than a standing seam metal roofing system, you will have to remove it.**

Any curb cuts must have council approval prior to starting work.

Recycling and Brush Site. A & A Recycling has provided a recycling container free of charge for residents of the city to dispose of their recyclable products i.e., household appliances, air conditioners, water heaters, and other items. **Televisions, computer monitors, mattresses, furniture, etc. are NOT accepted.** Please contact City Hall at 764-6400 for availability to drop off your recyclables or if you have questions as to what is accepted.

Anyone bringing leaves or brush to the brush site MUST take all bags and/or containers back with them. MPCA regulations do not allow bags and/or containers to be left at the brush site. If bags or containers are found at the brush site, the city will either discontinue this service or a fee will be added to the water bills to cover additional expenses incurred by the Maintenance Department to dispose of these bags or containers.

Fire Prevention. The burning of leaves will only be permitted from September 15 through November 15. No burning shall take place until a burning permit is issued from designated members of the Watkins Fire Department. Permits shall be for a period of no longer than two weeks. Burning of rubbish, trash, or other material is prohibited. Violation of the above ordinance shall be a misdemeanor which will be assessed a penalty.

PERMITS ARE REQUIRED TO OPERATE A MOTORIZED GOLF CART WITHIN THE CITY OF WATKINS. A permit application may be obtained at City Hall. The permit fee is \$10.00 and expires 3 years from date of issuance. Any person in violation of Section 70.03 of the Municipal Code of the City of Watkins, MN (Motorized Golf Carts) shall be penalized according to Section 70.99 of the same code.

Reminder of Code Red Public Notification Sign Up Form. If you have not signed up for the Code Red Public Notification system and would like to, please contact City Hall for a signup form.

ANNUAL NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS. Bills can pile up just like snow. However, the Minnesota Cold Weather rule is designed to protect people who may have difficulty paying their utility bills in the winter. The Minnesota Cold Weather rule applies from October 1 to April 30. The rule, established by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, states that your utility cannot disconnect your utility service affecting your home's primary source of heat during the winter if the customer meets the following requirements:

1. Utility disconnect would affect the customer's primary heat source;
2. The customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility (Note: Customers receiving "any form of public assistance," including energy assistance are deemed to have qualified for inability to pay status);
3. The household income of the customer is less than 50 % of the state median income level, as documented by the customer to the utility; and
4. The customer enters into and makes reasonable timely payments under agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

If you have difficulty paying your utility bill, local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. The state Department of Human Services recommends you call the county in which you live. If you know you are going to have difficulty paying your utility bills, please contact the utility company ahead of time to try to work out a payment schedule.

PETS. Owners are responsible for their pets. As the owner or keeper of an animal, you are responsible to keep the animal under your control **at all times**. Invisible fencing is not a fool-proof system to keep your dog in your yard. The animal must still be on a leash and unable to reach people using the sidewalks/street in front of your property. **ALL** animals are required to be current on all vaccinations. Please don't allow your dog to become a nuisance to your neighbors by running at large, pooping/urinating on neighbor's property, or constantly barking. When walking your dog, you are responsible for picking up any droppings they leave. A fine of \$10.00 will be enforced if you are caught not picking up after your pet. Please keep your own property clean of pet litter as well.

Tree trimming. Public Works will be trimming trees that are blocking the view of traffic at intersections and those too close to the surface of a sidewalk or street. If you would rather trim yourself, please contact City Hall by October 16.

Safe Drinking Water Fee. The 2025 MN State Legislature passed a bill increasing the safe drinking water fee to help all public water systems get the support they need to provide safe drinking water everywhere in Minnesota. The fee is now set at \$15.22 per water service connection per year.

The fee funds Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) regulatory and technical assistance services for public drinking water systems. The fee increase accounts for the significant inflation that has occurred since the last increase in 2019, projected and potential deep reductions in federal funding, increased lab costs for drinking water testing, the need for drinking water data updates and improvements, and the numerous changes in SDWA, including new rules and enforcement requirements that have occurred and are being planned in the next few years.

The fee increase will go into effect Jan. 1, 2026, and residents will see this extra charge on their **June** water bill.

The City Council has amended the Parking Ordinance. Please read the following excerpts so you are aware of the new regulations regarding snow removal and parking:

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 72 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF
WATKINS PERTAINING TO PARKING REGULATIONS**

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WATKINS, MEEKER COUNTY, MINNESOTA, ORDAINS:

Section 72.02 (Snow Removal and Parking; Fines) of the Municipal Code of the City of Watkins, Minnesota is hereby amended to read as follows:

- (A) For the purpose of this section, the following definitions shall apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning.

STREET. Any street, avenue, alley, or other public way in the city.

VEHICLE. Any self-propelled motor vehicle or other vehicle on wheels which would ordinarily travel on public streets.

- (B) WINTER PARKING.

1. No person shall park a vehicle in the Central Business District on Central Avenue between the hours of 2:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., from November 1 to April 1. Vehicles found parked or abandoned in the Central Business District on Central Avenue in violation of this provision shall be cited by the Meeker County Sheriff's Department. The first offense shall be a \$25 fine; the second offense shall be a \$50 fine; recurring offenses shall be a \$100 fine. Owners of vehicles so cited shall pay the fine to the State of Minnesota. If the fines are not paid within ten days of the date of the citation, the violation may be prosecuted as a petty misdemeanor.

- (C) DECLARATION OF A SNOW EMERGENCY; PARKING PROHIBITED.

1. The City may declare a snow emergency to exist in the City whenever snow falls to a depth of two (2) inches or more. The emergency shall continue in effect for a period of twenty-four (24) hours or until terminated sooner by the City if conditions permit.
2. The City of Watkins web site, City of Watkins Facebook page, Code Red, and City of Watkins Digital Community Sign may be used as a means to notify residents that a snow emergency is declared; however, the notification shall be a service aid only and not a duty on the part of city officials.
3. Parking Prohibited. During a snow emergency it shall be unlawful to park on either side of a city street.
4. Vehicles in Violation. Any motor vehicle found in violation of this section shall constitute a public hazard and an obstruction of traffic and may be immediately removed and impounded by any police officer or person/entity designated by the City Council.
5. Following an impoundment, the vehicle shall be surrendered only to the duly identified owner, or the owner's agent upon payment of the cost of towing and storage. Any damage occasioned to any towed vehicles by the towing operations shall be the responsibility of the owner or operator of the vehicle. No liability for damages shall be imposed against, nor shall any damage be assumed by the City. In addition to impoundment any person violating the provision may be charged with a petty misdemeanor

Section 72.04 (Prohibited Parking on All City Streets) of the Municipal Code of the City of Watkins, Minnesota is hereby amended to read as follows:

§ 72.04 PROHIBITED PARKING ON ALL CITY STREETS.

- (A) No recreational vehicle, camper, travel trailer, slip-in camper top, boat, boat trailer or motor home shall be stored or parked for more than 48 hours on any city street, city property, or city parking lot.
- (B) No automobile shall be parked for more than 48 hours on any city street, city property, or city parking lot.
- (C) No recreational vehicle, camper, trailer, slip-in camper top, camp car, motor vehicle, tent, or other temporary structure may be parked or placed upon any public street or on any public or private premises in the city and used as a shelter or enclosure of persons and their effects for the purpose of living therein.
- (D) All recreational vehicles parked or stored shall be owned or leased by an occupant of the premises where parked or stored. Guests of the occupant of the premises may park on a driveway on the premises for a period not exceeding seven days in any 30 consecutive day period.