



Edition:Edina

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CITY GOALS:



Edina Fire's 'Unofficial Chief' Retires as Longest-Serving City Employee For 45 Years, Ruth Schmoll Has Kept Fire Department Running Smoothly

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

The longest-serving employee in the City of Edina's history retired at the end of October.

Administrative Assistant Ruth Schmoll is the woman behind the scenes who has kept the Edina Fire Department running smoothly for 45 years. For many residents, she's the only voice they've ever known when calling the station.

"Around the fire house, everyone knows that Ruth is really the glue that keeps everything together," said Assistant Chief of Operations Jeff Siems.

Schmoll was a University of Minnesota student studying to be a child psychologist when she read a newspaper classified ad for a part-time secretary/dispatcher.

"I never really intended to stay," Schmoll said. "What teenager thinks they're going to stay anywhere for 45 years?"

She raised her own family and the Edina Fire family, including five different chiefs and generations of firefighters who affectionately call her "Chief Schmoll."

It proved an instant fit. From growing up in Edina, Schmoll knew the streets so well that when she dispatched firefighters to emergencies, she handed them notes with directions to get them there quickly. She created or organized many of the administrative processes still in place at the Fire Department. Along the way, she raised her own family and the Edina



The Edina Fire Department named its rescue boat after Administrative Assistant Ruth Schmoll to honor her for her work, friendship and being the rock of the department for decades. Photo by Dan Carpenter

Fire family, including five different chiefs and generations of firefighters who affectionately call her "Chief Schmoll."

The real Fire Chief, Tom Schmitz, says that title and her standing in the department are well deserved.

"For me, as the Chief, she really helped me along the journey of what it was to be a chief," he said. "She has a lot of experience tutoring and mentoring fire chiefs."

Schmoll also organized major public service efforts, including holiday toy drives, which she counts as one of her proudest accomplishments in the job.

The Fire Department has honored her in its own way, dubbing its rescue boat the "Ruth Ann."

"While it may not be the biggest boat on the waters (it's actually just a small inflatable), it holds special meaning to us and is the only piece of emergency equipment we have that is a namesake of one of our folks," Siems said. "It shows just how much Ruth means to us."

Schmoll's retirement plans include more time at the family cabin, volunteer work and, possibly, after the pandemic subsides, resuming her part-time job at Jerry's Hardware where she's a familiar face to local residents. She also plans to drop by the fire stations from time to time.

"The mom in me is going to want to know everything is going OK," she said.

Learn more about the Edina Fire Department at EdinaMN.gov/Fire.



Sustainability Coordinator Sees Edina Leading in Climate Adaptation

Hancock: Healthy Environment Is Critical for a Community to Thrive



Grace Hancock, the City's new Sustainability Coordinator, will lead the development of a Climate Action Plan for Edina. Photo by Dan Reisig

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

Master's degree in environmental management from Duke University. National Merit semi-finalist and bachelor's degree of Business Administration at the University of Oklahoma. Finance & Officer Manager at the American Hiking Society. Director of Finance and Strategy at The Nature Conservancy. Positions at TreesDurham, DC Water and Keep Oklahoma Beautiful.

From the resume alone, Grace Hancock was an easy choice as the City's next Sustainability Coordinator.

"Grace was our top candidate because of her education and work experience,"

said Engineering Director Chad Millner. "She brings experiences in financial management and sustainability. She will bring innovative thinking, great communication skills, the ability to build relationships and a strong work ethic."

"After working at the national level for much of my career, I was looking for an opportunity to work locally on environmental policy issues, especially in an urban environment," said Hancock, who joined Edina in October. "I am excited about this position and the chance to make a tangible difference right where I and many folks live, to improve environmental sustainability and do our part to address the climate crisis."

The Sustainability Coordinator works on many levels, from helping connect residents with resources for alternative energy sources to working with businesses on "green" measures to ensuring the City is making strides to reduce its own carbon footprint.

"Our residents have told us in the last three Quality of Life surveys that care of the environment and the City being a leader in the role of caring for the environment is important to them," City Manager Scott Neal said. "That's where this position and the emphasis comes from."

It's a commitment that runs deep in Hancock.

"I grew up in a community that valued taking care of each other," she said. "My family taught me to use my voice to stand up for those who couldn't, and I've practiced these values by committing myself to environmental protection and community resilience. A healthy environment is critical for a community to thrive, and I'm glad to do my part toward this goal."


"I believe Edina can be a leader in climate adaptation, and intend to capitalize on the good work already accomplished and underway here to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reimagine what it means to be a resilient city through ambitious and inclusive sustainability practices."

While Hancock will have many projects on her plate in the coming months, one of her first priorities will be to lead the development of a Climate Action Plan for Edina, building from the recently finalized Comprehensive Plan Update that was driven and shaped by public input.

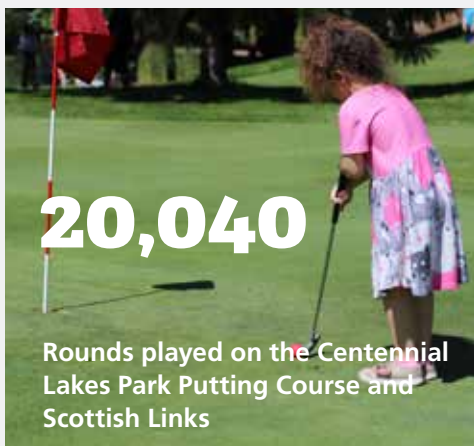
Reach Hancock at ghancock@EdinaMN.gov or 952-826-1621. 

BY THE NUMBERS

Summer in Edina During COVID-19

Despite health and safety challenges and the need to stay at a distance from each other, the City of Edina successfully modified its summer recreation programs and facilities to offer fun and safe at-home and in-person activities for the community. Learn more at EdinaParks.com. 

– COMPILED BY KAITLIN GAULT



Rounds played on the Centennial Lakes Park Putting Course and Scottish Links



REctivity Boxes sold and delivered to Edina homes

2,524 Hours rinks were rented at Braemar Arena

14,300 Attendees at the Edina Farmers Market at Rosland Park

45,680 Rounds played on the Braemar Championship 18 Golf Course

Pandemic Prompts Changes to Metro Transit Service in Edina

Adjustments Focus Service on Most Heavily Traveled Routes, High-Density Areas

BY DAN REISIG

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended nearly every aspect of daily life for residents of Edina, including how they get from point A to point B.

Metro Transit announced in September changes to its service offerings in and around the city. These came as a result of the downward shift in ridership resulting from business closures, remote work and learning, as well as other consequences from the pandemic.

“We are maintaining service for transit-reliant communities while making sure we can provide adequate capacity to do so under social distancing constraints,” said Adam Harrington, Metro Transit Director of Service Development. “Right now, we have prioritized service on those routes which serve people who are most reliant on transit, as well as the higher-ridership routes.”

By virtue of its location adjacent to Minneapolis and several of the metro’s largest suburbs, Edina plays an important role in transporting people daily to and from work, school and elsewhere. In particular, the bus service within the city is concentrated along the higher-density housing and commercial corridor east of Minnesota Highway 100. As one example, the Southdale Transit Center could see nearly 1,000 riders per day before the pandemic took hold.

“It works both ways,” said City Transportation Planner Andrew Scipioni. “Transit helps our residents get to their jobs in other cities and it helps residents of other cities get to Edina.”

Harrington noted that in order to accommodate distancing guidelines, Metro Transit has added larger buses or

increased frequency it might not have otherwise, given current ridership levels. For example, a standard 40-foot bus is currently capped at 10 riders to maintain proper distancing.

Across its service area in the Twin Cities and surroundings since March, Metro Transit reported a decline of more than 60 percent on local buses, 75 percent on light rail transit, and 90 percent of its express route users. The agency maintains close communication with employers as well as downtown leaders in Minneapolis and St. Paul on when they plan to bring workers back to the office.

As riders make their way back to Metro Transit’s trains and buses, they can be confident that the best safety measures available have been put in place.

“We do have signage on all our buses and at our stops reminding people that face coverings are required, and that there are capacity limitations to provide a safe ride, which we are monitoring loosely,” Harrington explained. “All of our equipment is cleaned daily; we have plexiglass barriers between operators and customers at the front door. Additionally, all our operations staff go through a health screening and temperature check every morning. We are being very diligent about making sure that the service we provide is as safe as possible.”

The agency adjusts its service offerings on a regular quarterly basis, and encourages residents to visit MetroTransit.org or call 612-373-3333 for more information and to provide feedback.

Despite changes resulting from the pandemic, Edina residents can be confident that transit will be a part of the transportation offerings in the city.

“There’s always going to be a need for people to get around through different modes: walking, biking, taking transit or driving,” Scipioni said. “It’s important for us to consider the needs of different modes as we manage and improve our transportation system.”

To learn more about the City’s transportation strategy, please visit bit.ly/EdinaTransportationPlanning.



Plan ahead by viewing the main service changes affecting Edina:

Full Weekday Service

- Route 6 (Bloomington – Edina – Downtown Minneapolis)
- Route 46 (Edina – South Minneapolis – St. Paul)
- Route 538 (Southdale – Bloomington – Mall of America)

Improved Service

- Route 540 (Bloomington – Edina – Richfield – Mall of America)

Reduced Service

- Route 515 (Southdale – Richfield – Mall of America – VA Medical Center)
- Express Route 578 (Edina – South Minneapolis – Downtown Minneapolis)

Suspended

- Route 146
- Route 537
- Route 579
- Route 587



Stay Healthy

Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds; cover your coughs and sneezes; wear a mask when in public; practice social distancing and stay home if you are sick.

Stay Informed

To get reliable and updated information about COVID-19, refer to the Minnesota Department of Health, CDC or your health provider.



The CITY of
EDINA

CITY OF EDINA
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THE STORIES WE SHARE

View real stories on race from the people who live and work in Edina. "The Stories We Share" is available now on Edina TV and BetterTogetherEdina.org.



ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON
CAR-RT-WS

M Health Fairview Southdale Hospital to Receive \$250,000 in CARES Act Funding from City

CARES Act Funding Also Used for Emergency Rental and Small Business Assistance

The City will give M Health Fairview Southdale Hospital \$250,000 in CARES Act local funding to help lessen the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City had planned to use \$250,000 of the federal money to offer a community COVID-19 testing event in partnership with the local hospital. When that event fell through due to other testing events in the area, the hospital asked for an appropriation to help cover additional hospital expenses due to the pandemic. The City Council approved the request at its Oct. 20 meeting.

The rest of the City's \$3,958,001 CARES Act allocation was used to provide emergency rental and small business assistance and cover the City's expenses related to responding to the pandemic.

In other business last month, the Council:

- Renamed Garden Park on Hansen Road as "Yancey Park" in honor of one of Edina's pioneer Black families.

- Approved a contract to remodel the reception area of Edina City Hall to improve the building's security and better serve the public. Under the plans, the reception desk will be enlarged and moved out into the lobby.
- Appointed David Kendall of the Campbell Knutson law firm as City Attorney. Kendall succeeds Roger Knutson, who retired from the firm Oct. 30. The City will examine its options for legal representation and issue a competitive Request for Proposal in early 2021.

The City Council will next meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4, and Tuesday, Nov. 17. The Council will hold a special meeting 3 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13, to canvass the 2020 municipal election. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.

– COMPILED BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

City of Edina Goals

Look for the budget goal icons throughout this publication to read stories about how the City is working to meet these goals.

Strong Foundation: Maintain physical assets and infrastructure.

Reliable Service: Maintain service levels that best meet the needs of the community.

Livable City: Plan for connected and sustainable development.

Better Together: Foster an inclusive and engaged community.