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Thursday, March 5, 2026 $2

South Lake mayors forum: ICE, property taxes, federal funding and more

League of Women Voters annual event gathers officials from Excelsior, Tonka Bay and more

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(SUN PHOTO BY NATALIE CIERZAN)

Excelsior City Council Member Jennifer Caron chats with Peg DuBord from the League of Women Voters Lake Minnetonka Plymouth Area and Deephaven City Administrator Dan Madsen after the South Lake Minnetonka Mayors Forum Feb. 26 in Shorewood.

Mayors, city officials, and city staff from Excelsior, Deephaven, Greenwood, Tonka Bay, and Shorewood gathered for the annual forum Feb. 26, hosted by the League of Women Voters Lake Minnetonka Plymouth Area.

A wide variety of topics were discussed, beginning with city responses to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and moving into issues such as the impacts of federal funding cuts, property taxes, and controversy over the South Lake Minnetonka Police Department's use of license plate readers.

ICE RESPONSE

Peg DuBord, the forum moderator, asked the panel whether they had issued any sort of response to recent ICE activity in the area

Shorewood was the only city to release a statement and draft a resolution reflecting the same statement. The four other cities did not issue statements.

According to Mayor Jennifer Labadie, residents repeatedly attended council meetings and spoke during the "matters from the floor" section, detailing concerns about ICE presence. She said one resident reported seeing ICE on a city street eight times in one day.

"We had individuals reaching out to the council members both through email and through phone calls, concerns because we have Minnewashta Elementary in the borders of Shorewood. That is the largest of the six elementaries in the Minnetonka School District and it's also a Spanish immersion school so parents had called and there were concerns," she said.

After all of that, Shorewood released the statement on its city website, writing "we recognize that seeing federal agencies in nearby communities or in our neighborhoods can create uncertainty," and clarified the role of SLMPD during federal enforcement activity.

"SLMPD has not been informed in advance of federal operations and does not direct, coordinate, or participate in those activities. If officers are present during federal actions, their role is limited to general public safety duties—such as maintaining order and supporting de-escalation—not immigration enforcement," the statement read.

Some residents welcomed the response, but Labadie said she also received calls from residents opposed to the statement.

"Everyone's entitled to their own opinion but I took a lot of comfort knowing we talked about it openly in public meetings at our council level, at the board level of the SLMPD. We included the SLMPD's input and then we issued this statement," she said.

Kevin Broas, a city council member from Tonka Bay, said that because Tonka Bay was so closely aligned with Shorewood as well as the South Lake Minnetonka Police Department, the city did not feel the need to weigh in.

Greenwood Mayor Tom Fletcher said the city did not take a position. After attending meetings and speaking with other cities, he said the general consensus was "the less ICE, the better."

"We're trying to make police more approachable and then you have ICE," he stated.

Deephaven City Administrator Dan Madsen said city staff and the Deephaven City Council held many meetings about ICE activity. The city itself saw very little federal presence, noting only one instance.

"As a council and the city, we're apolitical by nature. We didn't take any position on federal action. Our sole focus was to protect our residents and our citizens," Madsen said.

Excelsior City Council Member Jennifer Caron said the city had not received resident concerns about ICE activity. Although the council heard from the SLMPD during a meeting about how they were operating with federal agents.

Later in the meeting, one

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HSI vacates building in Minnetonka after unspecified work

HSI reported its evacuation from a commercial property off Bren Road after being contacted by the Minnetonka Police

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When Minnetonka police were alerted to a crowd gathering in a parking lot off Bren Road earlier this year, officers followed up with Homeland Security Investigations and learned the federal agency had been operating out of a commercial property, it had recently vacated.

The crowd left the parking lot by the time police arrived at the scene and law enforcement proceeded to contact HSI to verify its possible involvement. Once contacted, agents confirmed HSI had left the property but didn't specify the investigative work being conducted in the building.

"We are not aware of how long they were there. We are not notified when they take over property or when they really leave," Jessica Case, communications specialist with the City of Minnetonka, said. "They told us this time they were leaving, but no, we are not aware of when they got there."

Case emphasized that HSI did not perform any federal immigration activity in the area during the agency's temporary stay.

ABOUT HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS

HSI is a federal law enforcement agency within the Department of Homeland Security that conducts criminal investigations relating to the "illegal movement of people, goods, money, contraband, weapons and sensitive technology into, out of and through the United States," according to its website.

Investigations range from drug and weapons smuggling to cyber and financial crime, illegal technology exports and intellectual property crime. HSI is also involved in investigating crimes of exploitation, including child exploitation and human trafficking , among others.

ICE VS. HSI

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is a federal law enforcement agency responsible for detecting and dismantling transnational criminal networks that target the United States and its

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criminal networks that target the United States and its people, industries, financial systems and organizations, according to its website. The agency combats cross-border criminal activity — HSI's largest area of responsibility.

ICE's annual budget is approximately $8 billion.

The multibillion-dollar budget is primarily devoted to three directorates of ICE: Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) and HSI, according to the website. A fourth directorate — Management and Administration (M&A) — supports the three operational branches.

COMMUNITY BRIEF

Tree work scheduled for Minnetonka Mills Park

Tree removal will begin soon at Minnetonka Mills Park, along Minnetonka Boulevard and Plymouth Road, as part of a long-term plan to restore the site's natural streamside woodland, to improve safety and to highlight the Burwell House and Minnehaha Creek.

Several trees are at the end of their lifespan, including four large weeping willows, decayed boxelders, mulberry, an uprooted black walnut, a cottonwood and more .

Work began March 2 and may impact traffic with temporary lane closures.



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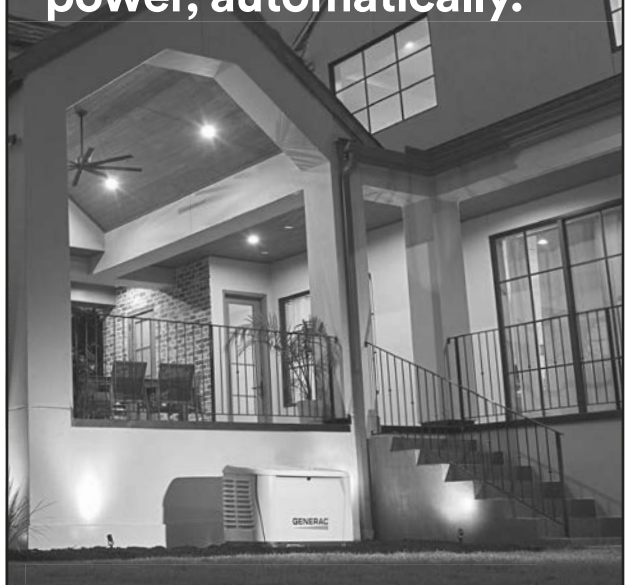
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