



BOARD OF ALDERMEN STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: January 13, 2026
To: Board of Aldermen
From: Mike Knight – Director of Planning and Public Works
Subject: Ice and Water Shield Requirements for Residential Roofing

At the request of the Board, City Staff has reviewed the concept of requiring the installation of ice and water shield underlayment on residential roofing projects within the City of Sunset Hills.

Ice and water shield is a waterproof membrane installed beneath roofing materials, typically at eaves, valleys, and other vulnerable areas. Its primary function is to provide additional protection against water intrusion caused by ice dams, wind-driven rain, or melting snow backing up beneath shingles.

Currently, the City of Sunset Hills contracts all residential building permit review and inspections to St. Louis County. Under that system, residential roof replacements do not require a building permit nor inspection. As a result, the City does not have an established mechanism to verify roofing underlayment installation in the field.

Adopting a local requirement for ice and water shield would therefore necessitate creating a separate City-level permitting or inspection process solely for roofing work. This would represent a significant departure from the current regulatory framework and could introduce confusion for homeowners and contractors, particularly since the work would not otherwise require County review. In practice, such a requirement would likely result in the City issuing municipal zoning approvals for roofing projects solely to verify a single construction component, which is counterintuitive to the existing permitting process.

Additionally, mandating ice and water shield would impose a uniform cost requirement on all homeowners, regardless of whether their roof design or conditions warrant its use. This could create a forced cost burden without a proportional or demonstrable benefit in every case, especially where roof slope, attic insulation, and ventilation already mitigate ice-related issues.

While ice and water shield can be a beneficial construction product when used appropriately, requiring it through local ordinance would present administrative challenges for the City, complicate the existing permit and inspection framework, and impose a blanket requirement where site-specific evaluation is more appropriate. Staff therefore recommends that ice and water shield remain a best-practice option rather than a City-mandated standard.