

## FIERY CRASH ON HIGHWAY 10

trailer's straight truck. Rosentreter said everything that followed seemed to happen in just a few minutes—the truck caught fire and the vehicle behind Perala pulled over; two men hopped out and provided assistance to the young man.

Andrew Perala's father Dean, also of New York Mills, said he was told this son called 911 after the crash.

"When he saw flames he crawled out," he said. "These two guys from the Vergas area were driving by and one told the other, 'I think I see somebody crawling on the road.'"

"It's amazing what bystanders will do for a total stranger," Perala continued. "These guys carried him off the road, and stayed with him and prayed with him in the ditch until ambu-

lances arrived. It's miraculous what people are willing to do. This is the luckiest young guy. He's lucky those guys were there and lucky to be alive."

Perala shared that one of the men who stopped to help his son owns Foam Solutions in Vergas, and the other is an employee. He noted he'd been in contact with both of the men, and one was struggling with what he saw at the accident site.

"I told him I spent 16 years on the Mills fire department," he said. "I understand what you're going through. When you see something like that for the very first time you don't forget it. It's forever etched in your mind. What these guys did for my son, it gives me goose bumps."

While Rosentreter was unscathed, Perala's son,

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who was wearing a seatbelt, was taken to Sanford Health in Fargo, where he remained as of Friday, April 26. His father stated his son is recovering from a compound fracture to his right leg, a broken sternum and contusion to his lungs.

"The doctors are most concerned about his leg being able to heal properly," Perala said. "It's in the area where the skin is thinnest."

A compound fracture is one in which the bone penetrates the skin, giving concern not just for the bone break healing process but also for infection risk.

Perela said his son will likely be released from the hospital once he regains the ability to perform primary daily health functions, but it could be months before he is able to return to daily occupational duties.

## PROPERTY CONCERNS RAISED

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refuse, unlicensed vehicles and more, as well as testimony of seeing varmints on the property.

Vergas City Clerk Julie Lammers explained to the residents that the commission had already taken notice of the property and sent a violation letter, along with information on what needed to be addressed.

A second certified letter was then sent when nothing was done. The second letter notified property owners that they had 15 days to address the concerns, as required by state statute.

Lammers said the 15 days had expired, and the concerns listed still had not been addressed.

Lammers explained, if the council moved forward the next step would be pursuing a court judgement.

The city attorney would present the case to a judge, and the city would need to outline all of the hazardous conditions and ordinance violations with dated pictures.

If the judge favored the city, the city could get a judgement allowing them to correct the violations at the property owner's cost, she continued.

When asked if aesthetics would be considered an issue, Lammers explained if a door were in danger of falling on a person walking on a sidewalk, then yes, but if a window was broken, then no.

"The violations need to address the health, safety and general welfare," Lammers said.

When residents asked when they could expect to see results, Lammers explained the commission makes recommendations to the city council, and the council has final say on if the city would take the issue to court.

The next regularly scheduled council meeting is set for Thursday, May 6 at 6:30 p.m.

Lammers added, if the council approved going

to court, she wasn't sure how long such a judgement would take.

The commission then moved on to another ordinance violation concern along South Pelican Avenue.

A resident reported garbage had been tossed out a back door throughout the winter and had yet to be taken to a proper disposal site.

The commission viewed photographs and agreed to send a nuisance violation letter to the property owner.

There was also discussion about nuisance violations along Eva Street and Diane Avenue.

The commission agreed to look back in their minutes and see what deal was made with the developer awhile back, as far as maintaining the area and correcting the violations.

At the next planning commission meeting, which is set for Wednesday, May 29 at 6 p.m. at the Vergas Event Center, the group also agreed to review information collected from touring the city in regards to other violations.

### Relocation of yard waste site recommended

Vergas City Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane asked the commission to consider relocating the city yard waste site.

Residents in city limits are allowed to drop off grass clippings, tree limbs and other yard waste at the site, which also has recycling bins.

Residents outside of the city are able to purchase permits to utilize the site. Lammers stated more than 100 permits had already been purchased this year.

DuFrane explained while cameras at the site have reduced the amount of illegal dumping of items like furniture, refrigerators and garbage, there are still issues on occasion.

He added aesthetically, having a yard waste site along a busy entrance to

town was not appealing. The site is located along Otter Tail County Highway 17.

DuFrane added the space is also limited, and when burns happen the smoke may become an issue for residents, as the site is in a residential area of town.

Several years ago, the city council purchased 19.09 acres (10 acres are swamp) at 310 West Lake Street. The land deal happened through foreclosure proceedings after the owner had passed.

With a fence located along the road, DuFrane recommended utilizing that site for yard waste, as it offers more land to collect debris and less chance of smoke fumes impacting neighbors when the debris is burned.

DuFrane added it would also open up prime real estate coming into town, as well.

The commission agreed the idea should be given more consideration.

### In other news

- Reviewed its sign reflectivity policy and inventory of streets that don't meet the requirements.

- Learned about what the city would stand to gain from creating a comprehensive plan.

- Requested the city engineer firm, KLJ, to provide an updated capital improvement plan.

- Approved construction permits for four properties. The properties were: 275 Railway Avenue for replacing a plastic pond; 102 Altona Avenue for replacing a metal shed with a wood one; 131 First Avenue South for replacing eight windows, siding, a door and interior work that may include raising the roof or flooring; 123 West Mill Street, a commercial landscaping business, to install a four-foot wide sign that extends seven-feet high, as long as it doesn't impede the vision of drivers coming down the hill where the sign would be located.

## FACING MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

cards. Monson explained "card flippers" hit the pavement and pedestrians that approach receive a business card that often has a well-endowed female in a promiscuous pose as the focal point.

"People call the number on the card and order a female, or go to a website and click on one of the photos and order her," Monson said.

The cards Monson handed out appeared to be like the other card flippers, but what awaited those who took a card was a jagged pill of reality.

"They would go to the website and find pictures of ladies scantily dressed, but when they clicked on one of them, their story appeared," Monson said. "I'll show you."

He spun around his laptop, brought up the web address on the card and it was just as he said. He clicked on one and the picture turned from life to death. She was slumped over with blood on the wall.

"This girl committed suicide," he said. "These girls that people buy have stories; they are human beings, and most do not choose to be slaves. Our goal is to have the men who take a card think about what they are actually doing."

While Monson did educational prevention work in Sin City, he emphasized human trafficking happens in Becker County, and very possibly in Frazee.

### Life mission ignited by reading

Monson became enlightened to the reality of human trafficking through stories he read.

"I learned the average age of a person being trafficked for the first time is 13," he said. "Thirteen!"

The youth pastor for Harvest Church said when he looks at the faces of the youth group in his church, he is mortified to think children just like them are experiencing something so horrific.

"Something really tugged at me, and I wanted to help those who it has happened to," he said. "I didn't have to look too hard to find that this is a big issue youth ministries are addressing."

Monson's street activism started when he saw a call for volunteers on social media to be trained to spot street walkers and how to offer assistance.

The non-profit group providing the training was called F.R.E.E. International, which began in 2007 with headquarters in New York City, but works throughout the country to raise awareness about human traffick-

ing and abolishing the modern-day slavery.

Those attending the training/activism efforts were provided a list of 30 children who were missing.

"The reality is one in two is trafficked within 48 hours after they go missing," Monson said.

The fliers had less than six faces on them and were handed to gas station clerks, hotel clerks and more.

"By the end, 24 of the 30 had been found," Monson said. "One that I heard about had already been trafficked."

### Spotting a victim is nothing like in the movies

"The first training day we learned what trafficking looks like and why it is an issue," he said. "Some envision people chained in a basement, but the majority walk the street. They aren't free though, they are controlled psychologically with fear, and if they don't do what is demanded of them they will be beaten."

The second day was about action.

Monson explained there are thousands of massage parlors a few blocks from the main drag, which are known hotbeds for trafficking. A group went to the parlors, and buzzed the doorbell to gain access.

"Initially, we entered posing as customers and asked who gave massages," Monson said. "Once we make contact with the girl, then we asked if they were interested in talking. We asked how many work there, and left gift bags."

Inside the bags are lucrative hygiene products donated by churches. There is also a card providing a number to call if they want help.

"Some decline the bags, and you can see the fear wash over their faces," Monson said. "There are cameras all over, and it's obvious they know someone is watching them. Others are grateful for the gift."

Calls for help do happen. Monson reported the first week he was training one came in from a 20-year-old Spanish speaking woman who didn't know where she was, how she got there, or where her 3-year-old child was being held.

Monson helped victims who called the number are rescued in force. Then begins the long journey of healing and learning to live amongst the free.

### Supply and demand rule still true on the streets

Monson was invited to partake in a second session as a trainer, and with a focus on addressing demand.

"That is a sad reality," he said. "Selling people is a

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multibillion dollar business. I wish people realized that a human is being sold."

To reach the buyer, Monson became a card flipper.

"When I handed out the cards it was so hard not to throw them against the wall and," he sighs; his voice trails off; his head shakes. "I just hope we got through to them. I hope they understand that they are purchasing a person, not a product."

### Continuing to pound the pavement

Monson has never run a marathon. Last year he ran half of one, and this year he is upping the ante all in the name of raising funds for F.R.E.E. International.

"I'm running, or running and walking, 30 miles, and I'm hoping some will pledge \$1 per mile," he said. "But any pledge would be appreciated; it all goes directly to helping a person who needs help."

Donating can be done at [www.venturemiles.org/myVM/monson](http://www.venturemiles.org/myVM/monson) or sent to Harvest Church in Frazee, 806 Frazee Road, Frazee, MN 56544. Call (218) 334-3101 for more information.

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