



INSIDE
SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT.
SPECIAL SECTION

Alexandria

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Internet access spotty in county

By Karen Tolkkinen
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(Editor's note: This is the first of an occasional series about internet access in Douglas County.)

As an applications engineer for a software company, Kevin Rankl needs good internet access. He had it, when he and his family lived in the Alexandria city limits.

When they moved into a neighborhood near Lake Carlos, however, he discovered that the access speeds adver-

tised by the internet provider were overly optimistic.

"My work is all based off the internet," he said. "We're making it work right now, but if anyone's home they can't go on the internet at all."

That means if his wife has to look up a recipe online, he stops working. After all, he wants to eat.

Around Douglas County, internet access is hit or miss. It's easy to assume, when you live or work with great access, that everybody has the same. The truth is, wide swaths of

the county find themselves waiting ... and waiting ... for pages to download and movies to buffer, and for internet providers to upgrade their homes to a faster speed.

Lots of frustration

An informal Echo Press query on Facebook drew a flood of comments, mostly from those unhappy with their service.

"Don't even get me started on the upload speed," wrote Brett Hanson of Nelson. "I could probably drive faster

than the speed of uploading."

Kayla Reigstad, who lives five miles outside of Alexandria, called her service "horse poop."

"Half the time we can't even stream on-demand shows due to internet speed and we have the highest offered in the area," she wrote. "Not to mention our bill is always going up."

Some commenters were pleased with their access, however.

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Karen Tolkkinen / Echo Press

Kevin Rankl sits in front of seven computer screens he needs for his home-based office north of Alexandria. His access times fall far short of Minnesota's goals. He supplements his internet needs with a hot spot, which provides access through a wireless cell tower.



Lowell Anderson / Echo Press

Jay Johnson cleans snow off of covered boats at Alex Auto and Marine in Alexandria after last week's snowstorm.

BRANDON-EVANVILLE SCHOOL BOARD

Facility options revealed

By Celeste Edenloff
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Four facility options were presented during a work session for the Brandon-Evanville School Board on Monday night.

Dave Bergeron and Jason Splett from ICS Consulting Inc., the firm hired by the district to help assess its facility issues and needs, walked through the information with school board members, administrators, staff and community members.

Each option included conceptual drawings with details about how the space in the buildings could be utilized. Those drawings, along with detailed information, will be posted on the Brandon-Evanville Chargers United website, www.bechargersunited.com.

Options A and B included remodeling and adding on to both schools in the district, with Option A putting students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 in Brandon and grades 6-12 in Evansville, while Option B is the opposite - Pre-K-5 in Evansville and grades 6-12 in Brandon.

Option C demolishes the school-owned portion of the Evansville School and remodels and expands the Brandon School, with all students attending school there. Option D calls for a newly-constructed building on an undetermined site and the demolition of the school-owned portion of the Evansville School.

Here's a look at the estimated budgets for each option:

OPTION A

► **Brandon PreK-5** - \$14.9 million (includes renovation, sitework and deferred maintenance)

► **Evansville 6-12** - \$16.5 million (includes some demolition, renovation, new construction, sitework and deferred maintenance)

► **Optional gym addition** - \$5.1 million

► **Total** - \$31.4 million (without gym), \$36.5 million (with gym)

OPTION B

► **Evansville PreK-5** - \$17 million (includes some demolition, renovation, new construction, sitework and deferred maintenance)

► **Brandon 6-12** - \$15.1 million

B-E SCHOOL: Page A3

APRIL STORM HAD IT ALL

Blizzard brought another foot of snow

By Ross Evavold
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Last week's storm brought high winds and lots of snow. Nothing new about that, especially during the winter of 2018-19.

However, this one came in April. Perhaps the fact that this storm struck a few weeks into the spring calendar was the reason that it was so wildly unpredictable.

The tipoff might have been that the height of the storm was Thursday, the day that the state chose to hold its tornado warning drill as part of Severe Weather Awareness Week. There's something blatantly wrong about having to cancel a tornado drill because a full-fledged winter storm is underway.

Yet, that's what it came

to. For the second consecutive April, spring has been put back on ice.

Thunderstorms

This storm, complete with a blizzard warning for Douglas County, seemingly had it all. What it lacked - at least initially in Douglas County - in snowfall amounts, it more than made up for in variety.

It started with just enough snow overnight Wednesday to produce a slick coating of ice on many roadways Thursday morning. By April, no one can say drivers aren't used to that.

The traditional sounds and sights of a winter storm were joined later in the morning by a warm-weather staple, a thunderstorm, that produced many



Ross Evavold / Echo Press

With I-94 shut down Thursday, semi trucks waited out the storm at the Pilot Travel Center. Several were unable to get moving Friday morning and needed assistance from a tow truck.

bright flashes of lightning and accompanying thunder. It was intermittent, but still occurred for a

couple of hours.
STORM: Page A11

Ag rebel pitches new plan to boost farm numbers

Can an unorthodox idea revive a reputation?

By Mikkel Pates
Forum News Service

If the bearish numbers in the March 29 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Prospective Plantings Report get you down, Alan Roebke says he has a plan to perk things up - the Roebke Plan.

Roebke, 69, in the 1980s was a sizeable Minneso-

ta farmer and sugar co-op mover and shaker. He says his plan can do for corn, wheat and soybeans what the sugar program does for the region's sugar beets. He says he thinks farmers need the government to raise commodity loan rates significantly and increased ethanol content in gasoline mixes.

Whether the program would

be affordable or politically feasible is debatable, but it has another problem: the author is a convicted felon.

More on that later.

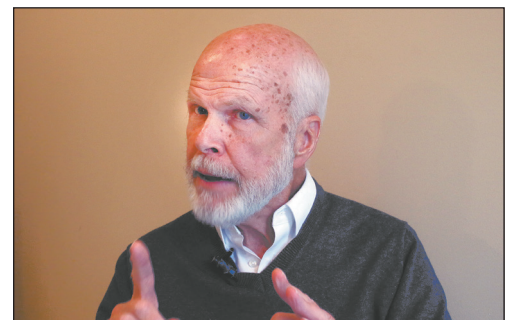
Consider the Roebke Plan:

► **70% loan increase.** Increase Commodity Credit Corp. loans by about 70 percent, to \$3.50 per bushel for corn; \$5.00 for wheat and \$8.50 for soybeans.

► **Recourse loans.** Make the commodity loans "recourse" loans - not the "non-recourse" loans typically used in farm policy. Under recourse loans, farmers cannot forfeit collateral loans, but would have to pay the loan off.

► **25% loan retention option.** Require that 75% of the loan must be repaid at the end of nine months. Farmers

ROEBKE: Page A11



Mikkel Pates / Forum News Service

Alan Roebke, 69, offers his "Roebke Plan" as an alternative to the current farm bill.

