

Arrows advance to Class AA state softball tournament

In Sports



140th Year
No. 23 • USPS 433-940



Thursday,
June 6, 2019

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- Death notice: Ivan “Ike” Madsen, 86

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Teachers, coaches the driving force behind individual achievement

John Draper
Publisher

Summer, and looking forward to 2020

Kevin Enerson
PAS superintendent

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First Car Cruizin’ Night of the summer season

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MATCH-UP

State Tournaments

Softball and Track & Field

JUNE 6-7 & 7-8 IN NORTH MANKATO AND ST. PAUL

5 DAY FORECAST

Last Week’s Total Precip: 1.8”

THU
83°
60°

FRI
82°
62°

SAT
78°
60°

SUN
68°
52°

MON
70°
52°

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When severe weather strikes? You’re on your own.

Pipestone City Council rejects evacuation plan for mobile home park, requires its Georgia owner to build a safety shelter

Debra Fitzgerald | Editor
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THE CITY of Pipestone is requiring the owner of the trailer park southeast of the city to build an evacuation shelter for the residents in the event of severe weather.

The fact that Prairie View Mobile Home Park residents don’t have a safe place to go when they are required by law to have one was brought to the attention of the Pipestone City Council during their March 20 meeting by Doug Fortune, Pipestone building and zoning administrator.

“There’s no building out there that they could evacuate to that’s within 150 feet,” Fortune said. “There’s no building out there that can be defined as a shelter.”

The original plans for the mobile home park were



The Georgia owners of the Prairie View Mobile Home Park in Pipestone (above) are being required to build a shelter for the safety of the park’s approximate 100 residents. D.A. Fitzgerald

submitted in 1975 and today, there are 41 manufactured homes on site. The size and date of the park — greater than 10 sites and licensed prior to March 1, 1988 — means

the park, “shall provide a safe place of shelter for park residents or a plan for the evacuation of park residents to a safe place of shelter within a reasonable distance of the

park for use by park residents in times of severe weather, including tornadoes and high winds,” according to MN Stat. 327.20.

That same statute also grants the municipality authority to “require the park owner to construct a shelter if it determines that a safe place of shelter is not available within a reasonable distance from the park.”

Prairie View has an evacuation plan that’s on file, as required by state statute, with Southwest Health and Human Services (SWHHS), the local arm of the Minnesota Department of Health (DOH), the state agency responsible for licensing the grounds of manufactured home parks.

The evacuation plan consists only of holding each tenant or head of household “responsible for planning a Severe Weather Evacuation

Plan of their own.”

“It pretty much says that as a tenant, you make your own arrangements to evacuate,” Fortune said.

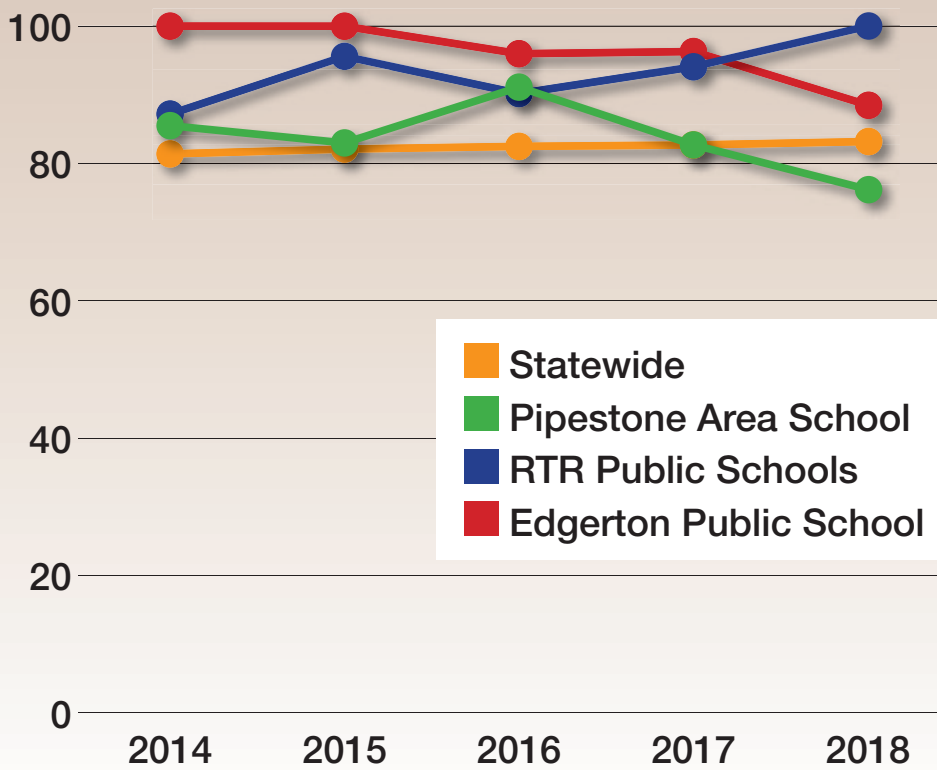
Since the evacuation plan isn’t really an evacuation plan, Fortune said he couldn’t recommend it. The council agreed that for the sake of the residents’ safety, they could not approve the plan and rejected it unanimously during their May 20 meeting.

Since then, Fortune sent a certified letter to the owner in Peach Tree, Ga., Prairie LLC, letting the company know that the council rejected the evacuation plan and why it was rejected.

“The closest building to Prairie View Mobile Home Park is approximately 873 feet away and does not meet the

MOBILE HOME PARK • PAGE 9

High School Graduation Rate



Source: State of Minnesota • Design/Illustration by Mike Hellie

Graduation rates dip

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THE PERCENT of Pipestone Area Schools (PAS) seniors graduating from high school dropped 6.5 percentage points to 76.2 percent in 2018, its lowest rate in at least five years, and below the statewide graduation rate of 83.2 percent.

“It is disappointing to see that,” said Cory Strasser, PAS middle and high school principal.

Strasser said he knew there was going to be a decrease in the graduation rate in 2018

and said it had to do with that particular class. He said there are various factors that can lead to a student dropping out such as trouble at home or the social or emotional wellbeing

of the student, but that the graduating class of 2018 was also smaller than most. There were 53 seniors at the end of last school year compared to

a five-year average of about 70 going into the final month of the school year.

Strasser said that with a class that small, one student dropping out “really moves the needle” as far as the graduation rate and he does not expect the drop in PAS’s graduation rate to be a trend.

“I do think it’s an anomaly,” he said. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) reported that 13 members of the PAS graduat-

GRADUATION RATES • PAGE 10

Owners dispute property values

Estimated market values rise in Pipestone 5-7% for residential, 10-17% for downtown buildings

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THE TIME of year when property owners can dispute the estimated market values (EMV) of their properties concluded recently for Pipestone residents with the annual Board of Appeal and Equalization process.

State statute requires that Boards of Appeal and Equalization meet annually to examine the assessor’s list for accuracy, hear any complaints and make any necessary adjustments. The process means property owners can question whether their taxable property has been properly valued and classified by the assessor.

The Pipestone City Council convened as this board during a May 14 meeting, to which seven property owners came to dispute their property’s EMV. Property owners also had the option of meeting with the city’s hired assessor, Erik Skogquist, prior to the Board’s meeting, and another 17 property owners did that representing 21 properties.

In the end, the city board granted four of the seven requests for reductions on EMVs, while Skogquist adjusted 13 of the 21 properties he reviewed, all but one a reduction. Total EMVs

PROPERTY VALUES • PAGE 10

Woman did not falsely report a crime, jury says

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A JURY of six people found Linda Anne Johnson, 67, of Pipestone, not guilty of falsely reporting a crime during a rare jury trial for a misdemeanor charge in Pipestone County District Court on May 30.

The trial began Thursday morning and the jury deliberated for about 30 to 40 minutes before rendering their decision at 3:32 p.m.

Johnson was charged with the crime on Nov. 1. According to the criminal complaint, Johnson came to the Pipestone County Sheriff’s Office on Oct. 26 and reported in person and in a two-page written statement what “she alleged as incidents of harassment by Ms. Terry Carson.”

Johnson alleged that Carson “repeatedly yelled, screamed, harassed, slandered, accused, gossiped” and had been “very cruel and mean-spirited” about and toward Johnson, according to the complaint. The complaint indicated that Johnson did not seek a harassment or restraining order and that a deputy told her he would advise Carson to no longer harass her.

According to the complaint, the deputy contacted Carson and informed her of the allegation and Carson denied the allegations. Carson is the treasurer of the

JURY TRIAL • PAGE 10

Session held with Sen. Smith on childcare access

Congresswoman’s first stop in Pipestone County also included a visit to the Monument

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U.S. SEN. Tina Smith, D-Minn., made her first visit to Pipestone since being appointed in 2018 to fill the seat vacated by Al Franken, a seat she won during the 2018 special election to fill the remainder of Franken’s term, ending in January 2021.

She said she wanted to learn “what’s happening in people’s

lives here in Pipestone County,” and more specifically, to try and understand how childcare “is or isn’t working in this part of the state.”

To assist with that understanding, the discussion groups that have been meeting about local childcare issues gathered at the Stonehouse Supper Club for a 1 p.m. visit with the Senator. The group represented local childcare providers, local businesses, and representatives from the groups that are spearheading the discussion groups: the Pipestone Economic Development Authority, the city

of Pipestone, the Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce and the Southwest Initiative Foundation.

Providers talked about some of the profession’s challenges, such as long hours, no health insurance and cumbersome and time-consuming annual training requirements. The enrollment fluctuations that childcare providers experience create wage uncertainties for the business owner, they said, and it’s not uncommon for childcare providers

SENATOR VISIT • PAGE 10



U.S. Senator Tina Smith (center) takes notes during a discussion with local childcare providers and businesses about the challenges in the childcare industry. D.A. Fitzgerald