

Students compete at Monarch Fair

Eleven Cloquet Middle School students along with six high school and one college alumni volunteer attended the Ecology Monarch Insect Fair Dec. 9 at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. These students attended with their teachers/mentors: Cynthia Welsh, William Bauer, and Lindsey Gallagher. Seventh-graders Miles Fischer, Roen Rock, Aili Buytaert, Emmie Doesken, Timber Latavia, Aaliyah Finch, Paige Stish, Brianna Conant, Kloey Jensen, and Zach Line competed at the fair.

The Cloquet High School students vol-

unteered at the fair to chaperone the younger students and serve food at the fair. They are Marcy Ferriere, Pery Boyd-Affias, Taylor Anderson, Claire Taubman, Abigail Smith, and Maya Fairbanks. UMD student Christine Neumann also helped out at the fair. Although the projects were judged that day, middle school projects awards will be mailed to students in the next couple of months.

The Monarchs in the Classroom Ecology Insect Fair (formerly called the "Monarch Fair") is based on a science fair model, with many of the projects

centered on monarch butterflies. The Ecology Insect Fair encourages students to engage in all steps of the research process, including the important final step of data presentation.

Participation in the Monarch Insect Fair is supported by Cloquet Public Schools and the Cloquet Educational Foundation with project funding assistance from the Minnesota Power Foundation. The NE MN AI Regional Science Fair major sponsors are Essentia Health, Minnesota Power Foundation, and the Swenson College of Science and Engineering.



Cloquet Middle School students and their high school/alumni chaperones take a group photo at the Ecology Monarch Insect Fair Dec. 9. *Contributed Photo*

Police officer, continued from page 1

An 18-year veteran of the department, Beckman was disciplined in 2016 after an outside investigation confirmed he falsified a search warrant application in February of that year — behavior that triggers a disclosure of the person's past behavior or discipline by a prosecuting attorney to the defense. That disclosure didn't happen until August, even though County Attorney Thom Pertler received a letter advising him of Beckman's behavior in March of 2017. However, the Carlton County Attorney's office dismissed 18 cases that Beckman was involved in in July and August, filed no charges in another four cases, and continues to review another 25 criminal cases in which Beckman played a role, according to acting County Attorney Jeffrey Boucher.

According to a previous public data request to the City of Cloquet, the City has investigated at least 14 complaints against Beckman over the course of his career, and taken no disciplinary action as a result. There were three complaints which did result in disciplinary action.

Retired Cloquet police chief Wade Lamirande, who now runs the law enforcement program at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, also disciplined Beckman in 2012, after the police officer pleaded guilty in a criminal case in St. Louis County.

According to the criminal complaint in that case, Beckman's vehicle was rear-ended after he attended a Ted Nugent concert at Fortune Bay Casino in Tower, Minn. He didn't stop, and told two different stories to two different officers who contacted him after the accident. He ultimately pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of failure in the duties of a driver to give notice by the quickest means of communication to law enforcement. Two other misdemeanor charges — hit-and-run for failing to immediately stop and remain at the scene of an accident, and falsely reporting a crime for allegedly providing false information to an officer regarding the conduct of others — were dismissed under the terms of the plea agreement.

Under Lamirande, the CPD conducted an internal investigation after the criminal case concluded and found that Beckman had violated five different department rules of conduct, including: unbecoming conduct, violation of rules, immoral conduct, use of alcohol off duty and conformance to laws. He was given seven days unpaid suspension and required to apologize to those affected by the incident.

According to discipline files, Beckman also was given one day's unpaid suspension in July 2016 but details on the cause of that discipline were not included in any documents given to the Pine Knot News.

Sixth District Chief Public Defender Daniel Lew believes the county should review all cases involving Beckman, going back even further than the 2016 case involving the falsified search warrant application. He said Beckman's disciplinary records revealed "sustained acts of dishonesty."

Lamirande said he stresses to his students the need for absolute honesty in law enforcement.

"I had probably four or five judges that I saw consistently. Obtaining search warrants, your word matters," he said. "How you testify, how people think of you in the community, your character, your reputation, it all matters."

He noted that it's not unheard of for law enforcement officials to "get so focused on getting the bad guys that they decide the end justifies the means."

"It's called 'noble cause corruption,'" Lamirande explained, adding that such officers often excuse their behavior by claiming it's for the betterment of society.

"But it's not," he said. "You can't violate the constitution in order to arrest somebody."

Council vote

Only councilors Maki, Kolodge and Bjerckness responded to a request from the Pine Knot News to explain why they voted the way they did on the release and separation agreement, but all three stressed that they were advised by city officials/attorneys that they can't comment on the agreement itself.

Maki noted he was out of town when the council voted 3-3 to not dismiss the police officer in 2016 when then-police chief Steve Stracek and then-city administrator Brian Fritsinger recommended Beckman be terminated for falsifying a search warrant application. At that time, Mayor Dave Hallback and councilors Jeff Rock and Steve Langley voted to not dismiss Beckman after the mayor made a motion to that effect, and councilors Kerry Kolodge, Laura Wilkinson and Dave Bjerckness voted against the mayor's motion.

The Dec. 18 vote on the separation agreement was split at 4-3, with Mayor Hallback and councilors Roger Maki, Barb Wyman and Langley voting to approve while councilors Kolodge, Bjerckness and Jeff Rock voted against the agreement.

Maki said there was "no good choice" for last Tuesday's vote on the agreement with Beckman.

"Based on everything I knew about the situation, I felt that my vote was the best for the citizens of Cloquet," the mayor-elect added.

Kolodge and Bjerckness both said they were advised to not explain their most recent vote and outgoing Councilor Bjerckness left it at that.

Kolodge said "nothing has changed from my vote in August 2016" (when he essentially voted to terminate, by voting against the motion to *not* terminate).

When asked what kind of follow-up action the city should take in the wake of the dismissed cases, Kolodge said he didn't feel he had enough information yet to make an informed decision.

"Once I have that, I will feel better personally as to what future action to support," he said. "Whatever we do, we must try to restore the trust and confidence of the citizens of Cloquet."

"The new council will need to look into what has happened and determine a path forward," Maki said.

Separation agreement

The terms of the separation and release agreement between Beckman and the City of Cloquet include the following conditions:

-Beckman voluntarily "retires" effective Sept. 30, 2019. He will be "employed by and on leave from employment with the city from Dec. 17, 2018 through Sept. 30, 2019."

-From Jan. 1 through Sept. 30, 2019, the city will pay Beckman a base monthly wage of \$4,500 plus a lump sum payment of \$2,000 to resolve a grievance through payroll in December 2018. The city will also pay him a lump-sum payment equivalent to the number of his vacation, comp time and one-third of his accrued sick leave hours.

The agreement states that the city will not provide Beckman any other compensation or benefits other than those already stated in the agreement.

In return, both Beckman and the Teamsters, Local No. 346, agree to voluntarily withdraw any grievances pending and waive his (and the union's) right to pursue the city and its affiliated bodies, employees, officials, etc. from any and all future grievances or actions arising out of acts or occurrences that occur on or before the effective date of the agreement.

The agreement was signed by Beckman, his union representative and city officials on Dec. 19.

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