



Spring sports had barely begun before snowfall levels between six and 12 inches covered the area. Above, Catcher Tate Bounds attempted to stop the Pillager runner out at home. Below left, a common grackle cried out in a snow covered pine tree. Below middle, Verndale was one of the few schools that did not cancel classes on Thursday, April 11. They did have an early out that day as the snow and wind continued to hit the area. Below right, there were near whiteout conditions Thursday morning. See more information on page 4.

Spring sports made a brief appearance before winter returned this past week



Wadena County Commissioners Veterans Service Officer commended

by Trinity Gruenberg
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The Wadena County Commissioners held their regular meeting on April 9. Commissioner Bill Stearns was absent.

The commissioners closed the meeting three times to discuss threatened litigation, performance evaluation for Veterans Service Officer David Anderson, and for negotiation strategy for labor contracts.

Prepaid Tax Refunds

Wadena County Auditor/Treasurer Heather Olson asked the Wadena County Commissioners to rescind a motion from last year.

The motion was to require a written request to refund overpaid property taxes. This was a result of a change in tax law and people prepaid their property taxes in 2017 based on what their assets were. Olson asked that they rescind the motion and create a new one that would leave it to her discretion to refund them.

"It is no longer working for us," said Olson.

She added that she would dismiss any refund under \$5.

Wadena County Attorney Kyra Ladd wanted to check into it to make sure they can keep those funds under \$5 citing it's more work and would cost them more to do than the actual refund would be. The dollar limit was suggested by Commissioner Sheldon Monson. Olson shared she didn't mind if there was no

dollar limit as people would still have to stop in and verbally request the refund.

"What I am looking for is for us to be able to have a discussion at the window and give the okay to Tammy without having to go through steps to do the refund process," explained Olson.

Olson noted they have three refunds over \$2000. She shared it was a time consuming process to go through a written request and they can write it up as the request is made.

The commissioners approved to rescind the motion.

Veterans Service Review

Wadena County Veterans Service Officer David Anderson reviewed his last 13 years in the position.

If he helps someone from outside of the zip code he doesn't get credit.

Last year Anderson had 1303 veteran walk-in visits, took 1169 phone calls, transported 16 to appointments, had 673 articles published in four local newspapers, and 491 filmed clips for on air news.

"It's pretty rewarding. I'll have a veteran come in and they will clip the articles out, show me and ask me questions about it. That's really, pretty cool," said Anderson.

In 2017, county veterans used \$26,323 for special needs grants from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

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Verndale City Council Officer resigns, well project started



Matt Uselman snapped a picture of the work that has been done at the new well site near Verndale Custom Builders on Highway 10. Below, a crew installed a billboard at the gas station on Highway 10.

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The Verndale City Council held their regular meeting on April 8. Mayor Raye Ludovissie was absent.

Joeb Oyster with Moore Engineering said they have started construction at the well site. The estimated date of completion is January 1.

Fire Chief Mike Madsen said they had five fire calls for the month and five medical. They are planning the next meeting for the disaster drill on May 6. The pancake feed and plant sale is planned for May 18 and the annual auction is April 20.

Deputy Clerk Melissa Current shared the liquor store had an increase in sales of \$1241 over last year and a net profit of \$6142 for the month. They now have a dart board and would like to get a league started in the fall.

They have a list of items for the community center for renters to browse and see if there is a specific item they need to order more of for special events.

Public Works Supervisor Matt Uselman said the contractor was backed up and so is the plumber and they hope to start remodeling the bathroom this month.

Council Member Tara Erckenbrack said once the remodel is complete they will schedule a work day for staff, council members and anyone who wishes to help them paint the walls in the bar.

Police report

Police Chief Cory Carr shared that Officer Joe Lorenzi has resigned effective April 15.

"I was a little disappointed. I was hoping to get at least a year," said Carr.

Lorenzi has taken a job in Bemidji. Carr is hoping to hire again around June. He will check out potential candidates from law enforcement schools.

Council Member Jim Runyan was concerned if the school will be covered according to their contract. Carr said he will get some help from the sheriff's department to help cover the school in Lorenzi's absence.

Erckenbrack asked if they can change the hiring policy to avoid having to spend money on training just to have them leave. Maybe, look for reimbursement if they leave in less than a year.

The city had to pay for Lorenzi to get his license. Most of his training was paid through Sourcewell. City Clerk Barb Holmes said if they did change the policy, they could withhold fees from the final paycheck.

Chief Carr admits that Verndale is a stepping stone for law enforcement. While he is content here, others are not. He explained most places hire for no less than \$20 per hour. Some local towns hire for a few bucks less, and Carr suggested looking into that. Erckenbrack suggested having a market analysis done of the area.

The police committee of Ar-dith Carr and Jim Runyan will look into it.

Lorenzi had to attend extra classes because his license was about to lapse.

Public works report

Uselman discussed the sink-hole behind the shop.

The leaking hydrant will be repaired in a week or two. Water will be shut off for about three blocks to fix it.

He is looking into crack filling streets this year. Also a billboard is going up at the gas station that will be used by Tri-County Hospital.

Uselman talked to BNSF to see if they could lease or purchase property on the north side of the tracks for the proposed digital sign. He also asked about purchasing the park, but they have not heard anything back yet.

Current has been looking into the digital sign for the city.

They discussed plowing in the cul-de-sac. Uselman explained it's tight and they can't make a loop in there. The snow melted and froze causing problems for people getting out of their driveways.

Uselman discussed the \$1200 hook-up fee for a new water and sewer service. He asked if that could be waived just to get people to hook up to the new line. The service is going in for the new water project. Uselman explained they are putting in new curbstops out there. The council approved to waive the fee.

Other business

- Approved to transfer funds from the general fund money market account and the general fund capital funds to pay off the \$35,000 on the Family Life Church water main. The church said they will pay off their \$22,000 assessments on the church and parsonage.
- Approved Current to become a notary.
- Approved not to join the FEMA nation flood insurance program.
- Approved small wireless facility design guidelines.

