



Wadena County Fair

The 126th annual Wadena County Fair was held June 18-23. The wet weather didn't keep people away from the entertainment, rides, food and competition. The rain didn't stop these determined kids from riding a sheep in the mutton busting event at the fair on June 20. Waltn Januszkeski, 3, held on tight as his sheep sped out of the gate. See more from the fair inside this issue.

Wadena County Commissioners

Case against the county is dismissed

by Trinity Gruenberg
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The Wadena County Commissioners held their regular meeting on June 17. Commissioner Bill Stearns was absent.

Wentholdt vs. Wadena County

Deana Malone reviewed the case from Tami and Randy Wentholdt and Went North, LLC against the county and Park Rapids Clay Dusters, Inc. with the commissioners.

The suit was filed in April and was dismissed with prejudice. The Wentholdt claim was against the county and the Park Rapids Clay Dusters as they believed the zoning ordinance as it pertained to the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) given to the Clay Dusters was arbitrary and capricious.

"We were able to convince them otherwise and the case was dismissed with prejudice," said Malone.

The matter was closed completely and the attorney representing the county, Scott Anderson, made the convincing argument for the county using historical data. The Wentholdts agreed the case should be dismissed.

Parks and Building Position Change

Malone explained they were looking to take their parks operator and move the employee into a full-time position. Build-

ing Maintenance Supervisor Shaun Uselman was in agreement. The employee would be 58 percent with the parks department and 42 percent with building maintenance.

The job description would be amended to parks and building maintenance technician. There is little change to the essential job function. It was approved by the personnel committee and budget committee.

"The combined position would fill the need for building maintenance, especially in the winter months, and it would eliminate the payout of unemployment benefits through the parks department through those months," explained Malone.

It would be effective on November 1 and it won't negatively affect the park budget.

Commissioner Jon Kangas asked what it would cost for next year's budget. Malone said it would be \$22,200 in wages for the parks' 58 percent and the building maintenance part would be around \$20,000-\$22,000.

County Attorney Kyra Ladd added the personnel committee is looking at the cleaning contract for the building and if they had more help on staff they could reduce or eliminate the contract and reduce costs.

The commissioners approved.

Board Room Monitors

IT Director Dave Hotchkiss shared this has been a topic for a while to get monitors for the board room for the commissioners and the public to see the agenda items. He had sticky notes on the wall to show the size and possible location for a monitor.

He presented a quote for a two monitor system for \$5893 or a one monitor system for \$2238 for 70 inch monitors.

The system would work wirelessly with a passcode on a laptop instead of plugging it into the current module. It's one step closer to connecting to a video system.

Hofer got approval from the court system for one monitor. He will check if it would be okay for two.

Approved the purchase of the two monitors not to exceed \$6000.

Human Resources Restructure

County Coordinator and Engineer Ryan Odden presented a restructure of human resources.

Odden took over the duties of the human resources director after the last person resigned. The human resources specialist recently resigned and Odden asked to change that specialist position to a non-supervisory role. He asked that the specialist and the payroll benefits coordi-

nator report to him.

The commissioners approved the changes.

Other Business

- Approved the first half allocation of \$1500 for the Menahga Area Historical Society.

- Approved the first half allocation to the Initiative Foundation for \$1280.

- Approved to revoke a CUP for the Troy Meech property which would have allowed the construction of a 259' wireless communication tower. No building permit was applied for by Verizon and neither party responded to the notice.

- Approved the annual Boat and Water Safety grant agreement for \$2750.

- Approved the joint powers agreement between the Wadena County Sheriff's office and the Menahga, Sebeka, Wadena and Verndale police departments for sharing law enforcement data.

- Approved the low income septic system replacement grant for Doug Nelson of Sebeka for \$4470, and for Michael Hendrickx of Sebeka for \$6100.

- Approved the lawful gambling permit for the Staples Fire Department Relief Association to sell pull tabs at the Wahoo Valley Bar and Grill.

- Approved to fill the maintenance position with an intern.

Name released for deceased body found at fairgrounds

On Wednesday, June 19, the Wadena Police Department released the name of the deceased individual found at the Wadena County Fairgrounds on June 6.

He was identified as Roger Alan Donnelly, 54, of Minne-

apolis. No foul play is suspected in his death.

The Wadena Police Department was assisted by the Wadena County Sheriff's Office and the Midwest Medical Examiner's Office in the investigation.

One injured in two car collision in Verndale



On June 20, at 10:17 a.m., a Crown Victoria, driven by Raymond Ismil, 77, of Verndale, was traveling northbound on Brown Street and went to cross over Highway 10 when it struck a Toyota Corolla, driven by Christopher Roman, 42, of East Hampton, Connecticut. Roman was traveling eastbound on Highway 10. Ismil was taken to Lakewood Health System in Staples for non-life-threatening injuries. Roman was not injured. The Minnesota State Patrol was assisted by the Wadena County Sheriff's Department, Verndale Police Department, Verndale Fire, and Tri-County Ambulance.

Property damaged by car in Verndale



On Friday, June 14, at approximately 5:31 p.m., the Wadena County Sheriff's Office received a call of a motor vehicle crash in the city of Verndale on Farwell Street in front of the post office. A deputy from the sheriff's office responded to the scene and found there were minor injuries. The driver of the vehicle was identified as Virginia Ritari, 93, of Verndale. Ritari drove onto the sidewalk and ran into two businesses. A Pepsi vending machine and the front of the laundromat were damaged. Riatari was transported to Tri-County Hospital with minor injuries. The Wadena County Sheriff's Office was assisted by the Verndale First Responders and Tri-County Ambulance.

Ervasti taking painting classes on the road

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Maria Ervasti of Staples is an art teacher who has taught at Eagle Valley, Bertha-Hewitt and Verndale schools over the last six years. She received an e-mail from the Five Wings Arts Council saying they were looking for artists.

Sprout, based in Little Falls, was established in 2012 to bring together food, art, and culture by promoting healthy eating in food deserts in the style of a farmer's market. Helping local farmers and budding artists the À la cArTe Initiative hopes to increase food and arts accessibility due to its mobile nature.

"Sprout is trying to alleviate some of the pres-

sures people feel when they live in a food desert by having access to local, high quality foods," explained Ervasti.



Maria Ervasti of Staples tested out her new easel as she filled her cart with painting supplies. She teaches free classes at Sprout events throughout the summer. Her first event will be held at Sourcewell on June 25 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in conjunction with Sprout's mobile food market.

Sprout received funding to travel to small towns and set up marketplaces to sell goods and produce. They are focusing on high traffic areas and assisted living facilities.

"They want to incorporate artists in the mix to help make it a fun event and help draw attention to it," said Ervasti.

The Five Wings Art Council held a call out for artists from across the region. Interested artist submitted their proposals and four were selected, including Ervasti.

This plan helps to promote the Sprout mobile market events and the artists. Ervasti became interested in this because she and her two sons were

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