

Our \$5 million test

Without question, the hottest topic in Windom these days is the effort to land a 46-unit apartment complex.

At first, we were hearing only from the project's opponents. Not anymore.

Lately, the most common viewpoint has not been one of optimism that the complex will be built. Rather there appears to be a lack of confidence that Windom — our city staff, council and the community as a whole — is up to the task of landing such a critical development.

Why are residents starting to take note of this project? For starters, they see it as a \$5 million investment that meets a major housing need — serving and attracting middle class residents. Also, the property's estimated annual taxes are \$80,000, a big factor if you are a taxpayer.

Projects like this do not come along every day. Former Windom Economic Development Director Aaron Backman worked several years to attract a developer such as this, but failed.

There's a growing sense that the time has come for council members to step up and show some backbone on this matter.

One comment we've heard multiple times is: "If the city council bows to every resident who doesn't want an apartment building near their home, it will never be built. No one wants it in their neighborhood."

To be fair, the project has only been proposed for two sites — first at the Community Center's overflow parking lot in 2016 and later on 18th Street, northwest of Windom Area High School. And, so far, the council has only rejected the Community Center site.

As for the 18th Street site, the jury is still out. The site was proposed as a way to fund water drainage solutions through Tax Increment Financing (received through the apartment project). If the project goes away, those drainage solutions get very expensive for residents in those neighborhoods.

Still, neighboring residents who would not benefit from drainage improvements in that area have spoken against that apartment

QUICK VIEWS

- There is momentum building in support of a \$5-million apartment complex in Windom.
- People question whether Windom is up to the task of landing this development.
- The developer has been patient (since 2016), but wants a site by March.

location during recent meetings.

Will the apartment complex get built? Right now, we cannot give a confident answer.

What we do know is that this apartment complex looks like a great option for the middle class. It has open floorplans, stainless steel appliances, garages, fire pits and lots of room. Some units even have vaulted ceilings.

Recently, the city hosted two town hall meetings seeking residents' input for finding a site for townhomes, single-family homes and the apartment complex. But it's clear the apartment complex is a key focus in these meetings.

Economic Development Director Drew Hage says Windom has until March to find a spot for the apartment complex, or the developer will move on to another city. Potential available sites identified by residents (and meeting the developer's criteria) include:

- The south end of Drake Avenue, overlooking the Des Moines River.
- Schmalz Park (across the Des Moines River from Island Park).
- The proposed 18th Street site.
- The Community Center overflow parking lot.
- A hillside site north of River Road, facing the golf course.

Most other suggested sites are either unavailable, or don't fit the developer's criteria. There is a chance other sites will emerge.

The bottom line is that this is a \$5 million opportunity for Windom. If council members fail this test they will no longer have to wonder why people are losing faith in city government.

— Rahn Larson

A more effective flu vaccine

Earlier this year, Shane McAllister grew worried when his 9-month-old son, Andrew, developed a 102 degree fever.

Shane is a Minnesota doctor, but even with his medical training, he was surprised to see his son quickly lose his cheerful energy and spirit. It scared him, so he rushed Andrew to the emergency room.

It didn't take doctors long to diagnose Andrew with a severe case of the flu. Thankfully, treatment returned the little boy to his normal self within a few days.

As a parent, I know that there's no greater feeling of helplessness than having your child sick and hospitalized. No parent should ever have to go through a health scare with their child, and certainly not for the flu.

But too many do.

Tough year for the flu

Last year's flu was the worst we've seen in years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 80,000 Americans died of the flu last season— including 180 kids. Annually, the flu also costs the nation \$10.4 billion in direct medical costs and \$87 billion in total economic burden.

And in Minnesota, nearly 6,500 patients were hospitalized for influenza, including 699 outbreaks in schools and 211 in long-term care facilities.

People rely on the flu vaccine to keep themselves and their loved ones safe from the flu, yet the flu vaccine isn't always as effective as it should be.

Some years the flu vaccine is more effective than other years depending upon what strain of the flu is spreading. Overall, the CDC has found that getting vaccinated for the flu reduces your chance of getting the flu by forty to sixty

percent.

A better flu vaccine

Too much is on the line, so we must redouble our efforts to improve the flu vaccine.

And one of the best steps we can take is getting the FLU Vaccine Act signed into law.

Earlier this year, I joined several of my Senate colleagues to introduce this bill to help support critical research at the National Institutes of Health and finally develop a vaccine that would be effective across multiple strains of the flu. The bill's objective is simple – to better protect Minnesotans and Americans everywhere from all variations of the flu.

In September, the Senate secured additional funding for the creation of a universal flu vaccine that I pushed hard for, but it's not nearly enough to get a vaccine over the finish line. We must pass the FLU Vaccine Act to further support this critical research.

Flu shots are important

But even without a universal vaccine it's still important to get a flu shot.

While it might not be 100 percent effective, a simple shot that reduces your risk of serious illness or even death is well worth it. Simply put, the flu shot saves lives.

So let's both take the time to get a flu shot and take action to support the next breakthrough vaccine. Because families, friends, and kids like Andrew are counting on us – in Minnesota and across the country.

For more information on the flu, including where to get a flu shot, visit Flu.gov.

Amy Klobuchar is a U.S. senator representing Minnesota. She was first elected in 2006 and was re-elected in 2012.



SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR
GUEST COLUMNIST

■ OUR READERS RESPOND

Why do you think you are on Santa's 'Nice List' this year?

Nolan Tjentland

■ WINDOM



"Because I take care of the dishes and I do my chores."

Grace Olsem

■ DUNDEE



"I stay quiet when I am supposed to be during school."

Macie Carlson

■ WINDOM



"Because I help my sister and I clean my room."

Miles Steffen

■ WINDOM



"Because at home I help my parents and I try to be really nice to my brothers and sisters."

A personal link to Highway 60

The prospect of Highway 60 becoming a four-lane highway has been around about two months less than me.

That's right, I was born two months and a week before the Minnesota Department of Transportation announced that it was going to make Highway 60 a four-lane highway from Sioux City, Iowa to Minneapolis in March 1961. Now, 57 years and 8 months later, it's finally a reality.

Yep, that's my link to Highway 60 — a pretty weak link at that.

There's one big difference between me and Highway 60, though. Fifty-seven years later, four-lane Highway 60 is a spring chicken. Me? Well, that mug at the top of this column pretty much tells the story — no hair, graying goatee, shaky eyesight and, what the photo can't show, hearing that is in serious need of an electronic upgrade.

As work began on the last stretch of four-lane from Windom to Mt. Lake a couple years ago, we all could begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Prior to that — and until Rep. Rod Hamilton crossed party lines to enact legislation that would finish the Highway 60 four-lane — I really wondered if I wonder ever live to see it happen.

In fact, Citizen Editor Rahn Larson can probably attest to the umpteen times I said to him, "I hope I see the day when I can drive from Windom to Minneapolis on four lanes."

Like many of you, I can remember driving Highway 60 when it was a dangerous two-lane road. When I moved to Windom in January 1984, I remember some harrowing winter moments on the highway. One, in particular, was just south of Windom, on the curve, where a big winter storm had left a snowdrift at least a vehicle high. I was traveling south and there was little more than enough room for one vehicle to pass through a hole carved in the drift. I met a semi truck coming from the opposite direction and slipped by in just the nick of time. Being a 20-something youngster, I was much more daring



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in those days. I also recall when MnDOT was constructing the bypasses around Butterfield and Mt. Lake in 1986. I was coming home from the Twin Cities late at night after watching the Boys State Basketball Tournament. The bypass had been constructed, but had not been paved. Rather than detouring traffic to

paved roads, we were allowed to drive the gravel road bed during the winter months. Of course, it was only for a few miles and then we were back on the regular road.

I rather doubt you would see that today.

I had my first trip on the final stretch of four-lane last week and I truly heaved a sigh of relief as I reached Prime Pork and began traveling the new, freshly-paved eastbound lanes. It is truly a nice — and safe — feeling to have two lanes traveling in the same direction on a busy thoroughfare that is expected to only get busier in the future.

I will admit, as much as I enjoy traveling four lanes all the way to the Twin Cities from Windom, or south to Iowa, there is a little part of me that misses the old two-lane. I suppose it's kind of like the old Route 66. People much prefer the interstate expressway, but there are also those who enjoy the opportunity to travel through the small towns along the route.

I remember the days before there was any four-lane between the Iowa border and St. James. You traveled Highway 60 right through Heron Lake and past PJ's Mini-Mart and, after passing through Windom, you strolled down Main Street of Mt. Lake and just a block off Main Street in Butterfield.

On the other hand, I don't ever recall dealing with the treacherous viaduct at Butterfield and I'm thankful I never had to.

Old two-lane Highway 60 had some nostalgia, but at age 57, I'm much more comfortable with the opportunity to travel four lanes than two. Most importantly, I lived to see a Minneapolis-to-Sioux City, four-lane Highway 60.

■ LETTER

Windom community comes together for a beautiful Cantata

"The Wonderful Cantata," the glory of Christmas was performed to a packed house on Sunday at American Lutheran Church.

The 45-voice choir was outstanding, with singers from a variety of churches. Karen Wojahn was their director. You can tell she shares a love for the work she does.

The beautiful singing and delightful screen drawings truly helped to get us in the Christmas spirit.

I also thought that the narrators, Josie Alvstad and Carter Squires, did an outstanding job of introducing the songs.

The Church of God Prophecy Band performed several Christmas songs. The young musicians and their leader did an excellent job on the instruments they played. We appreciated the band so much.

I was very impressed with the ALC Bell Choir, under the direction of Jane Cartwright. The beautiful bells were ringing and welcoming the coming of the Christ child, our gift from God.

I just want to say that we appreciated everyone who was a part of putting together such a beautiful Christmas concert.

Of course many hands helped with this event. The sounds of Christmas were wonderful.

— Irene Wiens Menken
Windom

We'd like to remind you that the uncensored content of this newspaper is made possible by the Constitution of the United States.

The Constitution

The words we live by.

QUICK HIT

Trevor Slette

Publisher



Top notch school arts programs

I cannot say enough about Windom Area High School's Arts programs. Whether it is the band, choir, musical, a play or any other programs our students always put on quite the show — with a ton of participation!

Last night's choir concert was very impressive. The last song, with the combined choir from grades 7-12, must have had more than 250 kids involved.

Windom is so lucky to have this type of success. It reflects on the directors and teachers involved.

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

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Fireworks safety

We know, the Fourth of July is still more than a week away.

However, the busiest time for lighting firecrackers, bottle rockets and other fireworks begins right now — about two weeks before the Fourth. We will probably start hearing fireworks around town in the next few weeks.

The sound can be annoying to some and will no doubt result in calls to the police. However, the bigger concern is the dangers surrounding fireworks.

Every year, we see stories about youngsters — and even adults — who lose fingers, damage their eyes, or undergo painful surgeries because of fireworks mishaps. In many cases, those same people handled the fireworks with extreme confidence. In other cases, parents were confident their children would act safely, that they were more than ready to experiment with fireworks.

Sometimes it is the overconfidence that gets you.

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, eight people died in fireworks-related incidents during 2017. Another 12,900 were injured.

While we tend to focus on injuries, fireworks are also a source of fires. The National Fire Protection Association reports more fires are reported on July 4 than any other day in the year. The yearly fireworks-related average is 300 vehicle fires, 1,300 structure fires and 17,000 other fires.

While your best bet is to leave

QUICK VIEWS

■ Starting this week, fireworks will become increasingly common through the July 4 holiday.

■ In 2017, more than 12,000 people were treated for injuries related to fireworks.

■ Fireworks also play a key role in fires.

■ In many cases, people are unaware of the danger factors related to fireworks.

fireworks to the experts, the National Safety Council offers these fireworks facts for parents and others:

• Parents often don't realize that something as innocent as a sparkler burns at 2,000 degrees. Sparklers not only cause severe burns, but can quickly burn clothing.

• Bottle rockets (a small rocket attached to a stick) are used by teens in bottle rocket wars, resulting in head and eye injuries.

• Firecrackers are supposed to be lit and explode on the ground, often in a series. However, youth often put them inside things to create explosions, which scatter debris and cause injuries.

• Roman candles eject exploding shells from a handheld tube. Too often, children lose fingers when the device gets jammed.

It is clearly not too early for families to begin talking about fireworks safety.

— Rahn Larson

Final Riverfest observations

Riverfest has barely entered our rear-view mirrors and already folks are looking ahead to 2020.

On the Sunday of Riverfest, as events neared conclusion, Riverfest Chair Clark Lingbeek grinned and repeated a favorite comment heard during Riverfest:

"We had the best Riverfest parade in years!"

The Riverfest committee will meet again in July and you can bet the parade will be a hot topic. Lingbeek said that it was at last year's early Riverfest planning meetings that the board resolved to greatly improve the parade.

"The parade was the thing we changed the most," Lingbeek said. "Having all of the American Legion representatives from the other towns was a big deal."

Deb Maxson, this year's parade chair, deserves credit for all of the time and effort she put into the event. Meanwhile, Lingbeek showed no signs of simply resting on this year's parade. Rather, he said, the goal will be to make next year's parade even better.

Volunteers needed

Lingbeek and Riverfest Vice President Greg Warner said one of the biggest needs for Riverfest is simple — more volunteers.

Many of the events and overall Riverfest operations would go much more smoothly if just a few more volunteers were available. Lingbeek said it is not too early for people to contact Riverfest about volunteering. To volunteer, contact BARC and provide your name and contact information.

Lingbeek said new volunteers and people with Riverfest suggestions are welcome to attend the upcoming Riverfest meeting.



RAHN LARSON

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"We will definitely listen to any ideas that people may have for Riverfest," Lingbeek said.

Business impact

And, while Lingbeek is grateful for all of the hard work by Riverfest volunteers, he stressed that at least some credit should go to local businesses.

"Without the business support, we wouldn't have a parade, or a lot of things for Riverfest," Lingbeek said. "They really stepped up."

Warner said he would love to see more funding for all Riverfest activities. Maybe the public can help.

"We were \$5,000 short on the fireworks fund," Warner said. "The pop can fund doesn't do it alone."

Lingbeek confessed that this is the first time he has seen some of the Riverfest events, adding, "I thought the Miss Riverfest Pageant was really cool. The Windom Women of Today did a really good job with it."

This year's Riverfest committee included: Lingbeek, Warner, Linda Loewen, Maxson, Melissa Cory, Michele Johnson, Jackie Jurgens, Randy Loewen, Dan Molitor, Carolyn Nichols.

NEWS & NOTES

■ Plans are coming together for Westbrook Fun Days, June 27-29.

■ Numerous volunteers recently spent time picking up stones that were carried into Island Park during the Des Moines River Flooding.

■ OUR READERS RESPOND

What is your favorite thing to grill during the summer?

Tom Wilde

■ WINDOM



"I'd say that a good T-bone steak is still the best thing to put on the grill."

Jerry Moon

■ WINDOM



"I just like to have a ribeye steak. I usually put a little seasoning on it, nothing special. I like my steaks medium rare."

Fran Lamote

■ WINDOM



"My favorite is a Hy-Vee choice ribeye steak, medium rare. I put on a little salt and pepper, a little garlic and some hot juice."

Marty Mollenhauer

■ WINDOM



"My favorite thing to grill is cedar plank salmon with a little bit of lemon pepper and dill."

Pirates are team to watch

The product on the baseball field in Windom these days is as good as any we've seen in the past.

And while the WRA doesn't offer the same ambience of watching amateur baseball under the grandstand at Island Park, no one can argue with the quality plying their trade on the diamond.

Indeed, Windom Pirates baseball is following up last season's run to the state tournament with another outstanding season. If you want to watch some fine, entertaining baseball, I strongly suggest you grab a lawn chair and make your way to the East Hill diamond in Windom.

The Pirates are presently 9-3 overall and boasting an 8-2 record in league play.

They've got four strong arms, which is a baseball team essential at any level. Veterans Collin Lovell and Ross Ackerman anchor the rotation that also includes Luke Gilbertson and Kobe Lovell. All four have pitched, are pitching or will pitch at the collegiate level.

When you come to a game — notice I wrote "when," not "if" — you're likely to see an exciting contest. Of the Pirates' 12 games this season, heading into tonight's showdown with the Horned Frogs at 7:30 p.m., in Lakefield, seven games have been decided by two runs or less. The Pirates are 5-2 in those games.

The Pirates are streaky when it comes to hitting. They can bust loose for five or five runs and then go four or four innings without crossing the plate, while leaving multiple men aboard.

However, also consider that they are now playing without their best hitter in Sam Huska who is playing for the Albert Lea Lakers in the Pioneer Collegiate Baseball League, a wood bat league for college players. He should be back sometime during the playoffs.

Devin Nielsen, another of the team's top hitters, is splitting his playing time between Windom and Sioux Falls, while he does an internship in South Dakota. Nielsen will be available sparingly and, in fact, wasn't part of the Pirates' doubleheader sweep of Worthington and Heron Lake on Sunday.

That is allowing some of the Windom team's younger players to see the field and gain some valuable playing experience that can



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only help Pirate teams in the future.

Your chances to watch the Pirates at home are dwindling, though, at least until post-season play. The Pirates host the Tracy Engineers at 2 p.m., on Saturday, June 29, and the Jackson Bulls, Wednesday, July 10, at 6:30 p.m. Those games are their only home games until playoffs.

However, if you don't mind a short drive, they'll play in Lamberton on Tuesday, July 2, at 7:45 p.m. That game is preceded by a Legion game between Windom and Lamberton. The Pirates also have a Sunday, July 7, date with the Mt. Lake Lakers at 2 p.m., then wrap up the regular season on July 14 in Heron Lake at 2 p.m.

First Night/Gopher League playoffs start July 17.

So, again, grab your lawn chair and come to a ball park near you to watch your local amateur team. With free admission, you can't beat the opportunity.

River watching

I am far from being the official river watcher in Windom. In fact, anyone with an Internet connection can watch the West Fork of the Des Moines River's rise and fall in Windom.

Nevertheless, I'm asked time and again, "What's the river level?" And, time and again, I'll probably know. I think I'm asked because I'm the National Weather Service's weather recorder in Windom. However, weather watching and river watching are not connected.

I won't say I'm obsessed with watching what the river does, but I check the level at least two or three times a week (if I remember to do so), mostly because I'm curious. I like to see what the river does after a light or heavy rain.

On Saturday, we received three-quarters of an inch of rain and it caused the river to go up slightly, but it quickly began to drop.

As of Tuesday at 1 p.m. — without any significant rain since Saturday — the river was at 15.29 feet, which is the lowest it has been since flooding at Island Park this spring. In fact, in the 17 days since we received 2.25 inches, the river has dropped almost 4.5 feet.

I'll still rest a bit easier if the river drops to 13 feet or less. Time will tell if that happens.

QUICK HIT

Cory Regnier
Composition



Parks and barks

With summer's warmer temperatures comes an increased population enjoying the outdoors.

My family is no exception. In the summer months my children practically live outside. They have their sprinkler and bikes and as a family we go on walks and frequent the parks.

It is in these same parks that we encounter many new dogs and their owners.

Most people have and keep their dogs on a leash, which is much appreciated.

However, I would like to remind those who do not that children and strange dogs do not often mix.

Even if the kids like dogs and the dog is well behaved, each new situation can yield different results.

Please be courteous and obey local leash laws.

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Windom will forever hold a place in my heart

Many of you know that this spring I accepted a high school principal position in my hometown of Fairmont.

As I enter my final days in Windom as the grades 7-12 principal, I find myself with a mixture of emotions. I am excited for the opportunity to be the principal in the school district where I graduated from high school, yet saddened by the thought of my time in Windom coming to a close. It is hard to believe that six years have come and gone so quickly.

There are so many things that we have accomplished over the past six years. This is in large part due to the hard work of our amazing high school staff.

A few weeks ago, as we prepared for the class of 2019 graduation ceremony, I took time to reflect on some of the memorable things

that we have accomplished.

• We expanded our college in the schools course offerings to 48 credits that students earn from our teachers, right in our building.

• We brought in 1-to-1 technology with every student having an iPad in their hands at school and at home throughout the school year.

• We developed a comprehensive list of course offerings that I am excited for our students to explore.

• We implemented Career Pathways programming that will identify students' potential career interests as a freshman and guide



JAKE TIETJE

GUEST COLUMNIST

them through a series of courses within that pathway through their high school years.

• We researched and designed a career and technical education center addition that will be added to the school and will open in the fall of 2020.

• We worked hard to educate students about great career opportunities within the Windom community.

• We partnered with local employers to develop work-based learning opportunities for students.

• We developed a block schedule that will provide students with longer periods of learning in their classes, compliment CTE program-

ming and prepare students for a schedule similar to what they will see in college. All this and much more has been accomplished due to tremendous support of Windom's students, staff and community.

Working in Windom has been a great experience and there are many people who have influenced my life in such positive ways. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and I genuinely believe the Windom school district has made me a better administrator and person. Windom will forever hold a place in my heart. I wish you all the best of luck!

For the past six years, Jake Tietje served as grade 7-12 principal for the Windom School District. He has accepted a position with the Fairmont School District.

Be careful out there

The statistic unveiled by the Minnesota State Patrol should have been startling — 10 parked squad cars were struck on state roads in the first 11 days of February.

Yet, if you have been driving on Minnesota highways at any time in the past two months, it may not come as a major surprise. Far too often, we see motorists zipping along on icy winter roads as if it were a dry, sunny day on the Fourth of July.

As a story on page 1 of this edition points out, too many drivers pay little attention to their surroundings. Whether it is caused by distracted driving, or simply not paying close enough attention, law enforcement people are seeing more cases where motorists approach parked squad cars at high speeds, passing too close to the vehicle.

Based on video evidence released by various news organizations, it appears we are fortunate that of the 10 cases in which State Patrol cars were hit, only five resulted in injuries. Several Minnesota law enforcement people have been far less fortunate over the years.

Like every other state, Minnesota law requires vehicles to pull over when they approach a parked squad car with lights flashing. If pulling over is impossible, motorists are required to slow way down. Failure to comply with the law can result in a \$100 fine and possibly additional reckless driving charges.

QUICK VIEWS

- There has been a rash of accidents in which parked squad cars — with lights flashing — were struck by passing motorists.
- Speed and poor weather conditions were often factors in those crashes.
- Area motorists often drive too fast for conditions.

Not only that, traveling safely on our highways is each driver's responsibility.

For some reason, some American motorists seem more prone to make winter driving mistakes these days. Sheriff Jason Purrington said some motorists have too strong of a sense of security while driving four-wheel-drive vehicles. They sometimes drive too fast for the conditions.

We've seen local drivers pass through uncontrolled intersection in Windom without slowing down to check side streets. That is despite the fact that large snowbanks limit their vision in those areas.

And, we've seen too many motorists approach stop signs as if they don't have a care in the world about potentially icy intersections.

It's winter, folks. Everyone needs to slow down and drive according to the conditions.

— Rahn Larson

Can we pause the campaign?

A few days ago, I heard a guy ask, "Is there any way we can push the 'pause button' on the presidential campaign?"

Don't we all wish it were that simple.

I did a little research on Tuesday and found a website, "Ballotpedia," which offers following list of notable people who have filed to run for president: Sen. Cory

Booker; New Jersey; Pete Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Indiana; Julian Castro, former San Antonio mayor; John Delaney, former U.S. representative from Maryland; Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, Hawaii; Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, New York; Sen. Kamala Harris, California; Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Minnesota; Sen. Bernie Sanders, Vermont; and, of course, President Donald Trump.

All of the names on that list are Democrats, except Trump and the Independent, Sanders.

Ballotpedia also provides this list of notable people who have formed exploratory committees: Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts; Bill Weld, a former governor of Massachusetts; Marianne Williamson, an author and lecturer; and Andrew Yang, an entrepreneur from New York. Weld is the lone Republican on that list.

If my math is correct, that makes 14 people who have either announced their candidacy, or formed exploratory committees. I have no doubt that if I had waited to write this piece in April we could add about eight names.

Delaney was the first to announce, on Aug. 10, 2017. That alone is reason enough to scratch his name off the list.

If that seems a bit harsh, I

should point out that my list only contained the candidates Ballotpedia considers "notable." I could have printed the entire list of people who registered with the Federal Election Commission as candidates, but I'm not sure we have the space. There are 537 names, including an Independent named "Sexy Vegan."

Don't get me wrong, the 2020 presidential election is important to all of us and to our country. We are in for will 21 months of mudslinging with countless half-truths and outright lies mixed in. We have until Nov. 3, 2020 to make sense of it all. I only wish there were less time to make a decision.

Our plow drivers

This has been a rough stretch for everyone, but I just want to take a moment to recognize the snow plow drivers.

They have a tough job, with long hours. They deserve a tip of the hat.

NEWS & NOTES

■ Cottonwood County Emergency Management Director Paul Johnson said last week, the Des Moines River is running very high and the region needs a slow melt to avoid flooding.

■ There is big concern among Windom city council members regarding the condition of streets. The street budget could be a key topic heading into 2020.

■ OUR READERS RESPOND

What do you do on a school snow day, when it's not an e-learning day?

Levi Weinberg
■ WAHS SOPHOMORE



"Usually I play Fortnite with the boys — for hours! After that we go to Hardee's."

Grace Becker
■ WAHS JUNIOR



"If my family is home, I go outside and play in the snow. Then I'll come inside and start reading a new book."

Daytona Smedsrud
■ WAHS JUNIOR



"I hang out with my friends, even though it's bad out. Sometimes we'll go to Abby Hill and sled."

Jenni Squires
■ WAHS GUIDANCE COUNSELOR



"I do scholarship applications with my senior son."

Creative names for school

Winfair Elementary Principal Jamie Frank shared that the Core Planning Community had a somewhat difficult task whittling the name of Windom's new elementary school down to just a handful of possibilities.

On the other hand, she also said it was a fun process.

Why? When you see some of the submissions, you'll understand.

For starters — and in case you missed it — the committee brought four names to the Windom School Board for consideration. Those four are:

- Windom Area Elementary
- Soaring Eagles Elementary
- Eagle Elementary
- Windom Eagle Elementary

From those four, the school board selected Windom Area Elementary at it's monthly board meeting last week. Judging from discussion at the January work session, the choice wasn't a big surprise since board members were leaning toward Windom Area Elementary or Windom Eagle Elementary.

So, how many submissions did the committee receive?

Frank said they considered well over 100 possibilities and, without a doubt, creativity reigned.

Submissions came from Windom Area elementary grades 1-5, middle school and high school student senates, employees of Windom Area Schools and Windom community members.

So, here's a look at what each grade or organization submitted (and their reason for choosing the name):

Kindergarten — Windom Eagle Elementary.

First grade — Super School
Second grade — Eagle Elementary ("We like our mascot and we're proud to be Windom Eagles.")

Third grade — Soaring Eagles Elementary ("We are Winfair Eagles and we soar higher!")

Fourth and fifth grades — Little Eagles Elementary (Students liked the name because the elementary school is for "small eagles.")

Middle School Student Senate — Windom Area Elementary or Windom Memorial Elementary (The idea behind "Memorial" would have halls or rooms named after



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members of the community or influential figures; for example: 'Tucci Music Hall.')

High School Student Senate — Winfair (Winfair is nostalgic and they like the school song), or Jim Tucci Elementary (Jim Tucci was beloved by all the students when they were in school at Winfair), or Eagle Valley (sounds catchy).

The most popular names submitted by the community included: Winfair Elementary, Tucci Elementary, Windom Elementary/Windom Area Elementary and Soaring Eagle Elementary.

Personally, I thought the Windom Memorial Elementary was a creative idea. I like naming classrooms and hallways after prominent people in Windom school or community history. The difficulty would be determining whose names would be used.

I also liked Eagle Valley Elementary for the very reason it was proposed — it sounds catchy.

In the end, it will no doubt be Windom Area Elementary, mostly, as a couple of school board members suggested, because it coincides with the Windom Area Middle High School name.

Frank also emailed some of the kindergarten suggestions because, as she noted, they "will make you smile." They include:

- Optimus Prime Elementary (related to the Transformers flicks)
- The New Steve School (no one knows who Steve is)
- Dandelion Elementary
- Hummingbird Elementary
- ABC123
- School of America
- Blue and Gold Elementary
- Cool School
- Good Eagle of America
- Rainbow School
- Flash School
- Learning School

Whatever the outcome, it was fun — probably more so for students — to be involved in naming a building. I'm willing to bet that a few of these students will latch onto the name they suggested and forever know it as "Such-and-Such Elementary," followed by the line, "Well, that's what it should have been called."

No arguments here.

QUICK HIT

Joel Alvstad
Sports Editor



Enjoying winter

When you travel the highways of Southwest Minnesota as often as I do, you know that winter in Minnesota can be fickle.

This month has been one of the coldest, snowiest Februarys on record. Students haven't had a full week of school since coming back from Christmas.

Yet, when the weather breaks, we flock to sporting events, plays or concerts. We head outdoors to ski, sled, snowmobile and fish. And we still do the things we enjoy, whether or not Mother Nature cooperates fully.

It takes a hearty soul to live in a place like Minnesota and to embrace weather like this.

It just means that we can enjoy things that much more once it warms up and the snow melts.

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

We welcome letters to the editor of up to 300 words on any topic. Letters must be typed and may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address and daytime phone number. The deadline for letters is noon on Mondays.

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Minnesota winters and the impact on Community Transit

Throughout Southwest Minnesota there is a common conversation emerging.

It starts something like, "I am so fed up with winter!" And, it is often followed by a belligerent, "I'm moving to Florida!"

While a few people may make good on the declaration to relocate, the reality is, most of us will take a deep breath and deal with anything winter has left to give us. This can be especially challenging for anyone who cannot drive.

However, Community Transit of United Community Action Partnership does everything possible to make sure people can get around and stay safe in winter weather.

Winter shutdown factors

The decision to shut down Community Transit service is never taken lightly because transportation is important in every facet of

life.

However, at times it is necessary to temporarily stop service in the interest of passenger and driver safety. In those times, a number of things have to occur at Community Transit.

Drivers begin to let the dispatch office know that roads are slippery, becoming drifted or that travel is difficult. Staff in the office document those conditions and look for existing travel or weather advisories.

If it looks like there is considerable safety risk, a service limitation or shut down will be announced to local media. Service for the next day is only limited or cancelled when weather predic-

tions are severe.

Once a shutdown is announced, staff strive to have buses off the road in two hours or less.

The staff stops taking new travel requests or performing outgoing trips and begins focusing on getting people home.

Drivers who live out-of-town are given the opportunity to leave, and their trips are moved to other buses. The phones, which normally ring continuously, become a flurry of outgoing calls. Dispatch staff look through each bus schedule to make sure every passenger who has gone somewhere earlier in the day has the opportunity to get home.



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