

# SAVAGE PACER



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PRIOR LAKE-SAVAGE

### Fewer students than expected

Open enrollment in, out sets record

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CRIME

### Next step in recording case

Court hears arguments on adult charges

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LOCAL



### Lodge at the center of the village

Tribe opens cultural center, museum

page 9 >



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE SCHUSTER

Marion W. Savage elementary is one of eight underutilized schools in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage District being considered for closure next year.

## District to decide on school closures before year's end

BY CHRISTINE SCHUSTER  
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**B**urnsville-Eagan-Savage District families could see a plan for school closures, grade restructuring and boundary changes as soon as November.

The Board of Education expects to reach a final decision on how facilities will factor into budget cuts no later than Jan. 1 amid falling enrollment, according to a timeline presented by district administrators this month.

Board members agreed to adhere to a tight timeline at a work session on Aug. 8 and said they want to host a public hearing in November in hopes of reaching a decision before winter break.

The district saw its lowest enrollment figure in a decade with 8,334 students last year, and the district projects the student count will drop to around 7,600 by 2023.

The district has slashed millions of dollars of spending in recent years, laying off staff and cutting athletic programs. The Educational Program and Facility Review, provided by the Baker Tilly consulting firm last month, found underused facilities significantly contribute to the district's financial strain.

Eight schools operate significantly under capacity when compared to state standards, the review found. It recommended closing two elementary

Closures to 2 >

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## SCHOOL NEWS

### Speech competition with \$1,000 first prize extends deadline

The deadline to apply for a statewide high-school-age girls speech competition has been extended to Sept. 14, organizers recently announced. Metro Republican Women sponsors the Speaking Proudly competition, which this year

will center around the theme "A republic if you can keep it: Rising to Benjamin Franklin's Challenge." It's set to happen at the Capitol on Oct. 26.

This is the event's first year. The first-place finisher wins \$1,000; \$500 goes to second and \$250 to third.

Applicants must provide a one-page document including their speech title, summary and outline along with a \$50 deposit. This year's topic references a quote attributed to Franklin about the challenge

and risk of maintaining the country's form of government. More information is available at speakingproudly.org.

### K-8 robotics registration opens

Registration is now open for the Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools' KING TeC robotics teams for kindergarten through eighth grade.

Information and online registration are available at

KINGTeC2169.com under "Progression of Programs," according to a news release from the program. The robotics season begins Sept. 3.

Prior Lake-Savage students compete at all grade levels in different robotics competitions throughout the year. Students younger than high school compete in what's called First Lego League, which uses motorized LEGO kits and other equipment, during the fall, according to the team website.

## NEWS BRIEF

### BHS class of '69 to hold reunion

The Burnsville High School Class of 1969 will celebrate its 50-year reunion on Saturday, Sept. 7, at the Buck Hill Event Center in Burnsville, organizers said this week.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. Tickets cost \$45, according to the event's website.

There will also be a tour of the school on Friday, Sept. 6, at 4 p.m., followed by a casual meet-and-greet at Morgans Bar at the Best Western Hotel on Nicollet Avenue. No registration is needed for the Friday events.

Registration and more information can be found at burnsvilleblaze.com or by emailing gaj55@gmail.com.

## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

The Savage City Council plans to meet at 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 19, at City Hall, 6000 McColl Drive. The agenda includes:

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PRESENTATIONS, ETC.
3. MODIFICATIONS
4. MINUTES
5. PUBLIC HEARINGS
6. CONSENT AGENDA
  - A. Personnel
  - B. Engineering/Utilities
  - C. Planning

Consider adopting a resolution approving a conditional use permit for increased impervious surface at 5592 River Oak Drive.

Consider adopting a resolution approving a CUP for increased impervious

surface and variance to rear yard setback at 8269 132nd Lane.

Consider approving a development agreement for Big Sky Estates 2nd Addition.

- D. Police/Fire
- E. Parks and Recreation
- F. Public Works
- G. Finance
- H. General

Consider approval of a temporary expansion of premises license for Whiskey Inferno.

Consider approving a special event permit for McHugh's Public House for an outdoor event Sept. 22.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS
 

- A. Consider adopting a resolution approving final plat and site plan/building design review for Enclave

Edge Addition, Project 18-65.

B. Consider approval of the developer's agreement for Enclave Edge.

C. Consider adopting an ordinance to amend Loftus Landing Commercial 2nd PUD and adopt a resolution approving Site Plan/Building Design Review to allow Hy-Vee Aisles Online at 6040 Egan Drive, Project 19-36.

D. Award contract for the County Road 42 median plantings.


8. APPROVE AUDITED CLAIMS

9. CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

10. GENERAL INFORMATION AND FOLLOW-UP

11. ADJOURNMENT


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## CLOSURES

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schools and one middle school and selling the Diamondhead Education Center at the end of next school year.

Facing an estimated \$5.5 million in cuts in 2020-2021, district officials are also considering a referendum to ask voters to approve a new operating property levy that would generate around \$1.6 million a year for general expenses.

A group of administrators and school principals reviewed the facilities study and supported exploring the possibility of closing schools, selling the Diamondhead Education Center and reconfigur-

ing grades at the elementary level, Assistant Superintendent Brian Gersich said at the recent work session.

They'd also like a neutral expert to facilitate the process, he added.

Gersich said grade reconfiguration could mean separating pre-kindergarten through second-grade students from third- through fifth-grade students in different schools, which could save money by filling more classrooms.

Gersich also said the entire decision-making process will focus on equity and creating a balanced district. Planning documents say creating inequities or racially or socio-economically identifiable schools is unacceptable.

"We have to be data-driven," Chairwoman Abigail Alt said. "Objectivity and data has to drive our decision."

Board Treasurer DeeDee Currier emphasized the importance of including voices from Community Education, the district's all-ages education program, in the conversation. Participants in that program always played an important role in getting voters to the polls during a referendum, she said.

Currier also sits on the Intermediate School District 917 board. She said there are "some ideas that are not in this plan that could help us" related to the Cedar School in Eagan, where the Burnsville Alternative High

School is located alongside other programs.

Currier worked as an administrator in the district for 20 years and cautioned against selling the Diamondhead Education Center and decentralizing administration.

"Finally, we get our administrative team all in one place, and now we are talking about moving people around," she said. "We put a major investment in this site, and the whole idea from its inception ... was to be a multi-use building."

Superintendent Theresa Battle and board members said it's important to find community partners to use the closed buildings.

"Unfortunately, in my long tenure as an educator, I've had too much experience in this area," Battle said, referencing school closures in Osseo and Minneapolis.

Battle said St. Paul's Con-way Community Recreation Center was on the closing list when the city's recreation department needed to cut costs, but a community partner stepped in to keep the facility running.

"It really is a hub of the neighborhood," she said.

Alt said she expects enrollment to rebound at some point, and she also hopes community partners will step in in the meantime.

"This is an opportunity for us to right-size ourselves and have an even bigger impact on our families," she said.

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