



JBS ANNOUNCES INDEFINITE CLOSURE

The Globe moving to weekly print edition due to COVID-19

E-editions will continue on twice-weekly basis

For more than a month, The Globe has dealt with the monetary side effects that have accompanied the coronavirus pandemic, just like so many other businesses in our region. We have filled our pages with news about the pandemic and how it has affected area residents and businesses. Our news staff knows this is a time like no other, and one that requires us to continue to provide useful and trusted information for our readers.

During the pandemic, we've also seen our revenue dwindle, again like so many other businesses. And with no guarantee of a complete or speedy economic recovery, it leads us today to a difficult announcement: Within a month, The Globe will reduce its print publication to once per week.

We'll still produce Wednesday and Saturday e-editions that look like the newspaper, as we do now, but publication of a print edition will be reduced to Wednesdays. The Globe will continue around-the-clock news every day on our website, as it does now, and the subscription pricing will remain the same.

In a column that announced changes by our parent company, Forum Communications Co. President and CEO Bill Marcil Jr. said that although newspapers were declared essential businesses in both North Dakota and Minnesota, they're still suffering losses as a result of the pandemic.

"The reality is, one in five newspapers shuttered its doors in the last 15 years — and that's without a pandemic," Marcil wrote in a memo to staff this month. "We've been hit hard before, and this might be our hardest battle yet. But it's one we get to fight, and so many media companies can't say that."

Among other pandemic-induced changes within Forum Communications, The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead recently reduced its print days from seven to five, the Grand Forks Herald reduced from six to two and the Mitchell Daily Republic reduced from five to two print days.

Even with COVID-19, the company's dedication to the news has not wavered. Reporting, however, costs

GLOBE: Page A2

Growing number of positive COVID-19 tests results in shutdown of Worthington's largest employer

By Leah Ward
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WORTHINGTON
JBS USA announced Monday morning the company will close its Worthington pork processing plant indefinitely to allow for employee testing, facility cleaning and the formation of a plan to re-open in a safe way.

The announcement came days after employees and community members voiced concerns about the novel coronavirus circulating among employees there. The state of Minnesota sent a team

from the departments of health, agriculture and labor and industry to evaluate the virus's spread at the processing plant. "We don't make this decision lightly," said Bob Krebs, president of JBS USA Pork, in the company's press release. "We recognize JBS Worthington is critical to local hog producers, the U.S. food supply and the many businesses that support the facility each and every day."

The JBS facility was to wind down operations early this week

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'We're at war with this virus'

Pork producers face dire days in the wake of plant closures

By Julie Buntjer
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ADRIAN — Anger, frustration, despair, devastation.

Each of these words describe the feelings of area pork producers at the sudden closure and unknown reopening of pork processing plants in Worthington, Windom and Sioux Falls, S.D. within the past eight days due to the spread of COVID-19 among workers at those facilities.

JBS announced Monday it was closing its Worthington facility indefinitely, and Prime Pork in Windom followed suit with suspension of operations Tuesday afternoon, noting an employee there tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

When Smithfield announced the temporary closure of its Sioux Falls plant little more than a week ago, David Bullerman — one of the five brothers in the elder generation of owners of Adrian-based Son-D-Farms — said he wasn't too concerned because he thought they'd get the plant up and running again within a few days.

Now, though, he's not just worried. He's scared and angry.

"We're at war here with the virus and it's going to affect everybody," he said Tuesday, referencing dairy farmers dumping milk, vegetable farmers burying produce and hog farmers facing the unthinkable — euthanizing full-grown market

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Photos by Tim Middagh / The Globe

Above: Vehicles line up Monday afternoon for drive-through COVID-19 testing at Sanford Worthington Clinic.

Top: A tent at which JBS employees are required to proceed through for medical evaluations prior to entering the pork processing plant facility is shown Monday afternoon in Worthington.

City projects still coming along despite pandemic

By Ryan McGaughey
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WORTHINGTON — Business has slowed dramatically in Worthington as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a multitude of city projects are continuing to progress.

Phase one of the projects approved by voters in the November 2018 local option sales tax referendum includes improvements at Buss Field and Centennial, Slater, Ludlow, Pleasant and Sunset parks, along with work on a fieldhouse building and the planned 10th Street Plaza.

Worthington City Administrator Steve Robinson said the phase one projects have a projected budget of \$10 million.

"Just with the economy and

how it's being impacted because of the coronavirus, the work that the city is doing is providing some stimulus into the local economy," Robinson said. "I think it's very important that the city try and maintain its project schedule to provide some stimulus and not contribute to the downturn of the economy."

Robinson said local contractor Clair Van Grouw Construction is leading work at Buss Field, as well as Centennial and Slater parks, while Dan Krueger's Ideal Landscape and Design and Allen Drost's Prairie Landscaping are also doing city jobs. Ongoing work at the Beach Nook and movie theater, meanwhile, are being led by Tri-State Construction of Jackson. Several other local and area subcontractors

are working on municipal projects.

Here's a brief status update on city projects:

Parks

BUSS FIELD: A new restroom building is under construction near the parking lot. The footings and foundation work are completed, so work is set to start above ground.

"The mason is getting ready for that," Robinson said. "Work will be coming above ground either this week or the following week, so you'll soon start to see some actual building taking place."

CENTENNIAL PARK: Footings and foundation work for the new shelter house is complete, with masonry and wood con-



Tim Middagh / The Globe

The boat landing at Worthington's Sunset Park is shown Monday in the process of replacement.

struction to start once the concrete is set. The facility will be "almost identical," said Robinson, to the old shelter house,

except its architecture will complement the new Beach Nook.

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GOOD MORNING

Carol Andersen
Worthington
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PORK

From Page A1

ready hogs because processing plants are shuttered and there's nowhere to go with them.

Son-D-Farms is one of the county's largest pork producers, delivering multiple loads of market weight hogs to processors each week. Bullerman said food processors need to not just reopen, but reopen "at full throttle."

"How do we do that? I don't know the answer," he said. "The president, the governor have to declare war on COVID-19."

Bullerman said when this country was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, people didn't stay at home — they fought back.

"We're at war here with the virus and it's affecting everybody," he said.

While he understands the fear among workers at the plants, Bullerman asked, "Are we going to let a virus beat us? Let a virus starve us?"

"As long as these food plants are shut down, the food costs are going to go up," he added.

At JBS in Worthington, the workforce processed 20,000 hogs per day, often running six days per week. Smithfield in Sioux Falls was processing approximately 19,500 hogs a day and Prime Pork in Windom, which opened in 2017, processed about 5,100 head daily.

The reality on hog farms around the region is that if there's no market open to receive them, farmers are going to have to employ euthanasia.

"Here we are, the greatest country in the world. The supply is there — we need to get it from the farm to the plate," Bullerman said.

He fears the dire circumstances in the agriculture sector will get



Tim Middagh/The Globe

A trucker returns to the cab of his semi after checking in at the JBS gate with a trailer loaded with hogs Monday afternoon in Worthington.

worse before they get better.

Mike Mouw, a rural Leota hog farmer who serves on the Minnesota Pork Producers Association Board of Directors, expressed similar concerns.

"The conference calls that have been happening in the last week have been distressed calls," shared Mouw, who with his brother raises hogs through Pipestone System. He and others who get pigs from Pipestone's sow barns must decide what to do with them when they can't market the hogs already filling their barns.

Decisions are being made on sow farms to decrease production, including decreasing the number of sows and gilts to be bred. Though sows have a relatively short gestation period — three months, three weeks and three days — the deci-

sions made by producers today will lead to fewer hogs and higher prices for consumers in the months ahead.

"It's just starting to become real for us now," Mouw said. "A week from now, I may be saying something different."

"We're still able to keep pigs in the barn and we're going to do everything in our power to do that," he added. "The reality is the longer these plants stay closed, we need to decide what to do with those market weight pigs in the barn."

While dairy farmers may be dumping milk, at least they still have the cows to keep producing, shared Mouw. Beef producers can reduce energy in an animal's diet to slow down its weight gain if it's already at market weight. Pork producers, though,

have more challenges.

"Even the diet we're switching to right now will still have them gaining up to a pound and a half a day," he said. "It's really, really hard with a pig to feed them anything that sustains them but keeps them from growing."

For now, Mouw said they are taking whatever steps they can, short of euthanizing 280- to 300-pound market weight hogs.

"Some people don't have any options right now," he said. "Two weeks from now we're probably going to be in the same boat."

Getting food processing plants cleaned up and safe for employees — and running at full production — is what producers need most, and the sooner the better.

"Everybody is hurting right now in this ag industry," Mouw said. "You go from the crop farmer to the dairyman, pork producer and beef producer, everyone is hurting right now. It's just not good."

Back at Son-D-Farms, Bullerman said he wants to see National Guard troops deployed to get processing facilities reopened. He has a niece in the Guard and said she's "more than willing to get these plants going."

Deploying troops, he said, would also help fill

local motel rooms and benefit that sector of the economy.

Until the processors reopen, Bullerman said "there's no good solution to us as hog farmers."

"This is devastating. We're going to have to euthanize hogs, and there's no win in that — that's huge losses."

As Mouw reflected on the situation, he said, "It's in the good Lord's hands. We want people to stay safe, and we've got to try the best we can to get people going."

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