

# BRAINERD DISPATCH

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Steve Kohls / Brainerd Dispatch

Jessie F. Hallett Memorial Library staff member Deb Weide wears her stocking cap while packing and cataloging books Tuesday, Feb. 11, at the library. The complete inventory of 44,000 books is being moved to a new location at 27 West Main in Crosby and two climate controlled storage containers following a roof collapse Jan. 25 at the library. Without power and heat, the entire library is being cleared of inventory and furniture, with no firm date for reopening.

## CROW WING COUNTY BOARD

### County's cleaning costs to rise

Board drops cleaning contractor in favor of higher bid

By Chelsey Perkins  
Community Editor

Cleaning services for Crow Wing County buildings will be completed by a new contractor with a significantly higher price tag following board action Tuesday, Feb. 11.

The Crow Wing County

Board followed staff recommendation and awarded a two-year cleaning contract to EnviroTech Building Services, a Waite Park-based janitorial company. The company submitted a bid for the cleaning contract totaling \$272,828 per year — nearly \$50,000

higher than North Country Janitorial & Supply Inc., the rural Brainerd-based contractor retained by the county since 2011.

Facilities Manager John Melson told the board a January request for proposals updated contract terms and expanded cleaning specifications for county facilities. A team consisting of county staff members interviewed representatives of the two

companies to determine the "best value" based on more criteria than bid price alone. EnviroTech, Melson said, scored higher on two areas with more weight — the company's technical ability and capacity to perform the contracted services, and demonstrated success in projects with similar requirements.

**CLEANING:** Page A7

### Former Baxter youth pastor faces sexual assault charges

By Jennifer Kraus  
Staff Writer

A former youth pastor at First Baptist Church faces criminal charges from an alleged sexual assault of a student at Lake Region Christian School in Baxter more than 30 years ago.

Todd Travis Hogue, 59, was charged Jan. 27 and summoned to appear in

Crow Wing County District Court on two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Hogue currently serves as a pastor at Community Baptist Church in Curwensville, Pennsylvania. He has been a pastor at the church since May 2003, according to the church website.

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## CROW WING COUNTY BOARD

### Planning to prevent aquatic invaders

More inspection hours, mobile decontamination on tap for 2020

By Chelsey Perkins  
Community Editor

A new lead inspector, mobile decontamination equipment and an increase in inspection hours are all part of Crow Wing County's plan to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in 2020.

Approving a prevention plan is an annual action taken by the county board as part of outlining how

the county intends to spend about \$450,000 in grant funding received from the state to combat invasives such as zebra mussels and starry stonewort. It includes a multipronged approach, combining watercraft inspections at boat landings, decontaminations at fixed and mobile locations, treatment of Eurasian milfoil, education and awareness through marketing efforts and early detection.

The county intends to allocate 17,040 hours to inspecting watercraft — 140 more than last year — at 42 public accesses selected through a data model to determine risk of AIS. The model takes into account the location of infested and uninfested waters, the average number of boats inspected per hour

at 48 accesses and the estimated number of watercraft moving from infested lakes to uninfested lakes, both within the county and across county lines.

"The results also showed that best prioritization of landings will be achieved when inspecting zebra mussel infested lakes with a lot of boat traffic and zebra mussel uninfested lakes with a lot of incoming traffic from out of the county," the county's plan stated.

These inspection hours combine with those provided by lake associations and local governmental units through delegation agreements with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

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Jennifer Kraus / Brainerd Dispatch

Lake Region Christian School and First Baptist Church in Baxter.

### Lawmakers welcomed back with calls to action



Dana Ferguson / Forum News Service

Gun control advocates from Moms Demand Action hold up signs outside the Minnesota Senate chamber on Tuesday, Feb. 11, as lawmakers filed back in for the first day of the 2020 legislative session.

Requests range from gun restrictions to immigrant driver's licenses

By Dana Ferguson  
Forum News Service

ST. PAUL — Gun control advocates cheered and held up "Welcome Back" signs as lawmakers funneled through Capitol hallways to the Minnesota House of Representatives and Senate chamber.

Chants calling for lawmakers to take up a plan to provide driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants reverberated through the Senate as lawmakers bowed their heads in an opening prayer.

And diabetics and family members of those concerned about affording insulin for themselves or others again filled a hearing room as lawmakers debated setting up an emergency insulin program for those who couldn't afford the hormone.

It was a busy day at the Capitol as lawmakers buckled in for the nearly four-month legislative session and as interest groups rallied, held news conferences and otherwise

tried to get to the top of legislators' priority lists on the first day of the 2020 session.

Unlike last year, Minnesota lawmakers don't have a constitutional responsibility to accomplish anything in 2020. The state's two-year budget is set. And while legislative leaders have said they'll prioritize a multibillion dollar borrowing plan to take on a series of public projects, it's not required.

And within minutes of the session's start, one

lawmaker, Rep. Steve Drzakowski, R-Mazeppa, called on his colleagues to close out the legislative session in an effort to avoid the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party's plans for Minnesotans.

"We should adjourn the session now and protect Minnesotans from what's about to come," Drzakowski said.

The effort failed on a bipartisan basis. And lawmakers continued about

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### Alpine Skiing

CONFIDENCE, EXPECTATIONS BOTH HIGH FOR WARRIORS AT STATE

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# Mom fears teen dating drama will lead to principal's office

**DEAR ABBY:** I've got a new one for you. My beautiful 16-year-old daughter was interested in a boy her age from school. He was interested in her, too. He told her he wanted to date her, but that he is "polyamorous" and would be dating many girls simultaneously. She told him he's just using it as an excuse to date multiple girls, and she wasn't interested.

He told a mutual friend he is "deeply hurt" he came out to my daughter and that she won't accept him as he is. I'm worried this will escalate, and he will claim that she shamed him for this.

Abby, I am all about supporting how people self-identify, but this is absolutely ridiculous. Personally, I think it's hilarious that this is the new excuse to be promiscuous and so does she, but I won't be laughing if we get called into the principal's

office. — NOT FUNNY IN COLORADO  
**DEAR NOT FUNNY:** That boy is sulking because his pitch didn't sell. Polyamory is the practice of openly engaging in multiple intimate relationships with the consent of ALL the people involved. What that boy may have meant was he enjoys "playing the field." Your daughter didn't discriminate; she showed good common sense.

**DEAR ABBY:** Our brother-in-law made a terrible mistake and is now serving time. My younger sister, "Tess," and I have visited him on a few occasions. Well, something happened that has put a damper on things. This brother-in-law sent Tess a letter, and in it he confessed to her that he had a dream, and she was in it. It wasn't a horrible letter, but I believe it was very inappropriate. He alluded to the fact that it was a sexual dream.

Tess has asked me if she should let our older sister, "Jane," know what her husband wrote. Jane has been through so much, so I told Tess it would not be a good idea to disclose

it and add to her misery. Tess says it isn't fair to her to have to swallow this pill for the sake of not making waves. She feels Jane should know what kind of man her husband is.

Should Tess inform Jane that her husband has been inappropriate? She now refuses to visit our brother-in-law and has basically written him off. Please give me your opinion and advice. — TORN UP OVER THIS IN TEXAS

**DEAR TORN UP:** Tess is right. It appears incarceration hasn't discouraged your brother-in-law from writing inappropriate material to inappropriate recipients. Tess should not be discouraged from informing Jane about what her husband has done and showing her the letter. Jane has a right to know. Please respect that Tess needs to distance herself from this troubled individual and his fantasies.

**DEAR ABBY** is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



DEAR ABBY

## ASSAULT

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Hogue's first court appearance is scheduled at 8:30 a.m. Feb. 26 before Judge Erik J. Skesgaard. The felony charges filed against Hogue, who was 27 at the time of the offense, state he used force and his position of authority to commit the offenses.

Hogue could not be reached for comment.

The victim, who now lives in Texas and whose family continues to live in the Brainerd lakes area, contacted Lt. Chad Kleffman of the Brainerd Police Department Dec. 3, 2018, to file a complaint against Hogue.

According to the criminal complaint filed against Hogue, the victim told Kleffman she was a senior at Lake Region Christian School in 1987-88 and Hogue was a youth pastor. During her senior year, she was 17 when Hogue sexually assaulted her by first touching her and groping her sexually. She reported the assault to First Baptist Church but, according to the victim, the church did not believe her. The victim said once Hogue realized no one believed her, he continued the sexual assaults further, including sexual intercourse, the complaint stated. She said the sexual assaults were never reported to law enforcement or social services.

The victim specifically recalled an incident she said occurred in a sound room overlooking the school auditorium. Hogue cornered her in the closet in the sound room and raped her. That assault took place during the fall of her senior year in high school, prior to her 18th birthday.

The victim was one of the school basketball team statisticians and Hogue

was the basketball coach. On several other occasions, while she was at basketball events at night, Hogue sexually assaulted her, the victim said. However, these incidents took place after she turned 18.

During the course of the investigation, Kleffman conducted numerous interviews of people who attended and worked at the church and school during the time in question. Many of those interviewed remembered Hogue frequently engaging in flirtatious and inappropriate behavior with some of the female students and was known to snap their bra straps, the complaint stated.

Also reported by more than one witness was a meeting by the Board of Deacons regarding allegations made by the victim that Hogue sexually assaulted her. Additionally, another former student reported Hogue sexually abused her, specifically that he touched her over the clothing and got her blouse off, but did not rape her.

Kleffman spoke with Hogue by telephone on a number of occasions. Hogue admitted he worked at First Baptist Church during the time in question and he remembered the victim. Hogue did not admit nor specifically deny the allegations, the complaint stated. Hogue stated he did remember appearing before the Deacon Board regarding an allegation that he "hugged" her.

### Victim speaks out

"They didn't believe me," the victim said in a telephone interview Monday, recalling when she told the principal and the senior pastor at the time of the sexual assaults against her during her senior year.

It is the Dispatch's policy to not name victims of sexual assault unless they

agree to be identified.

The victim said Hogue's inappropriate behavior with girls was seen by others at the school and church, including a teacher and a parent, who talked with the administration at the time, but "nobody listened and ... it was protected, to protect the institution at all costs," she said.

"Nothing happened to him and I was 100% convinced it was my fault," she said. "I was blamed because I flirted with him and was leading him on. I absolutely believed it because I was a 17-year-old girl, and he was a cute teacher. And all the girls had crushes on him. And he was flirting with me. So, you know, I felt honored. And then when all of this happened, I didn't feel so honored anymore."

"The last 33 years of my life were hell and I buried it. They had me so convinced it was my fault. How could I desecrate the name of this great man? For years I lived in fear."

The victim said the church and school had such a hold on her that when her son died when she was 24 years old she felt it was God's punishment. She said it wasn't until she went to therapy and learned she had post-traumatic stress disorder that she realized it wasn't her fault.

With encouragement from the #MeToo movement, the woman said she is coming forward now to help find closure and as inspiration for other potential victims.

"This has opened up a lot of ugly and nasty wounds,"

she said. "But it's also given me a chance to heal. And if there are other girls out there, they deserve that, too, and that's why I did it."

The victim said the current administration and staff at First Baptist Church and Lake Region Christian School are not at fault and she does not blame them as they were not at the school and church during the time of the allegations. She said she would be proud of being associated with the school and church now.

Lake Region Christian School Principal Steve Ogren declined to comment Tuesday. The school and First Baptist did release a statement, written by Ogren and Senior Pastor David Grotzke, that was being sent to church families.

"We have been notified that criminal charges have been brought against someone who last worked for our church and school more than 30 years ago," the statement read. "We have been and will continue to fully cooperate with local authorities in this matter. The safety of the students in our care and the staff who work here continues to be a top priority. More information will be shared at the proper time."

Anyone with information on the case or any potential victims who want to come forward may contact Kleffman at the Brainerd Police Department at 218-829-2805.

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## CLEANING

From Page A1

"They shared a lot of innovation and efficiency recommendations in their interview process," Melson said. "... They brought some technology to the table, which is new to us."

Among those services cited by Melson was a training program developed for the county's specifications, including descriptions and illustrations on employee carts explaining how to clean each space, a color-coded cleaning cloth system and electronic invoicing and scheduling. He also pointed to features, including a mopping system, a disinfection method using static electricity and surface hygiene testing.

By selecting EnviroTech, the county will pay \$95,656 more over a two-year period than if it had awarded the bid to North Country Janitorial. This year's bid also represents an \$85,148 annual increase over the previous North Country Janitorial contract, approved in 2015.

Acknowledging the higher bid price, Chairman Paul Koering asked Melson whether he'd done an analysis to determine at what point it would be more cost-effective to return cleaning services to in-house county employees.

"Not that I want to hire more staff," Koering said. "I think at some point it becomes cost-effective when these contracts get kind of expensive, where would it be, the breaking point?"

Melson, who took over the managerial post when Reid Thiesse took a similar position with the Brainerd School District in August, said he hadn't yet completed that analysis.

"We're not there yet," Melson said. "I think we're getting close to being there."

Another change to the contract this year has the county supplying larger equipment — such as floor sweepers — and cleaning chemicals, which were in the past

provided by the contractor. In a follow-up email, County Administrator Tim Houle said purchasing this equipment was expected to cost \$50,000-\$55,000. Houle noted both the cost of equipment and the higher cleaning costs were included in the 2020 budget, and together the expenditures came in below that projected figure.

Houle provided three reasons for the decision to purchase equipment: to lower the cost of entry for potential contractors during the bidding process, to make the county more independent in the event a contractor doesn't perform to expectations or it's more economical to perform the work in-house, and for occasional use in the jail, which is cleaned by inmates rather than the contractor.

Commissioner Steve Barrows made the motion to award the bid to EnviroTech, and Commissioner Doug Houge seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

When asked whether there were any problems with the services provided by the current cleaning company after Tuesday's meeting, Houle said he had no interest in denigrating a local company.

"We did talk about the assets that we think the other vendor brings over and above what the current vendor brings," Houle said. "We can talk about the part of the glass that's half empty or the part of the glass that's half full. We prefer to talk about the part that's half full."

Houle said county leaders should consider which opportunity provides the best return on the investment.

Koering said despite his reservations about spending taxpayer dollars, he trusted the judgment of staff.

"Believe me, as tight as I am, \$50,000 is a hell of a lot of money, but I'm going by what their judgment is," he said.

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