

OPINION

AN ECHO PRESS EDITORIAL

An insightful guide for reopening businesses

Keeping track of all the actions that are being taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic is complex because it impacts so many facets of our lives, from educating children to changing the way we socialize, to how we dine out and how we do business.

This editorial should help with that last example, business from both a buyer and seller's perspective.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development offers the following information that focuses on Gov. Tim Waltz's executive order (20-48) last week, which allows workers in non-customer facing industrial and office settings to return to work. It also allows customer-facing retail businesses that sell goods to engage in curbside or outside pick-up and delivery. DEED provided the following commonly asked questions and answers:

Curbside pickup and delivery: What does it mean?

Retail stores and other businesses that sell, rent, maintain and repair goods that can be picked up outside, without entering the place of business and with limited interaction between employees and customers. Services like household goods rental, maintenance services, repair services and pet grooming are included. Other services are not. Salons and barbershops may do retail sales via outdoor pickup and delivery, but not provide services. In order to provide delivery, the business must have provided delivery services previously to the pandemic.

Industrial: What does it mean?

Industrial settings are places of employment in which goods are in the process of being created. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting qualify, as do mining, construction, utilities and manufacturing. Wholesale trade and warehousing also qualify as they are preparing those goods for sale to customers and consumers. Some of these settings are natural for allowing social distancing. Others will be more difficult and require businesses to change practices, including increasing space between workstations and reducing density of workers for each shift.

Office: What does it mean?

Office settings are places of employment in which workers do their work within an office space where people primarily do their work at their desk and whose work is primarily not customer facing. Some settings will be natural for allowing social distancing, with people primarily

working in individual offices. Others will be more difficult and require businesses to change practices, including increasing space between workstations and reducing density of workers for each shift.

Examples of what businesses can do:

- ▶ Allow customers to pick up purchases made in advance online or via telephone and paid electronically or using other means at the time of order, whenever possible.
- ▶ Maintain social distancing of workers inside the store facilitating outdoor pick-up.
- ▶ Customers should remain in the vehicle, and items should be deposited in the trunk, whenever possible.
- ▶ Provide contactless delivery at the customer's home or business, if eligible.
- ▶ Interact with co-workers while maintaining appropriate social distancing.
- ▶ Conduct virtual meetings with co-workers, customers and suppliers.
- ▶ Work at workstations as long as there is adequate space between workers.
- ▶ Follow the business's plan for social distancing.

Examples of what businesses can't do:

- ▶ Allow customers into retail stores or the business premises, even in scenarios where this is preferable based on a lack of online presence or based on a certain business model.
- ▶ Customers paying at the point of sale is discouraged, but allowed if other options do not exist.
- ▶ Deliver into customers' homes or businesses.
- ▶ Conduct customer visits in customer workplaces or homes.
- ▶ Invite customers into the workplace.
- ▶ Conduct meetings in conference rooms that don't allow social distancing.
- ▶ Work right next to co-workers.

What about critical workers/sectors?

Executive order 20-48 makes no changes to the definitions of critical workers/sectors from the governor's executive order 20-33. Critical Workers/Sectors can be open, as they were before this order. Please review the Critical Sectors guidance for information and clarifications about what workers are considered Critical Sector. If you still have a question about whether your business can currently be operating in Minnesota, you can email CriticalSectors@state.mn.us.

LETTERS

Roundabout would waste taxpayers' money

To the editor:

I completely agree with (letter writers) Rod Johnson and Bonnie Huettl in that a roundabout at County Roads 8 and 40 is unwanted, unneeded and a total waste of taxpayers' money.

One additional point: With the quarantine situation that has been forced upon us, these government entities are going to find their revenue deeply diminished in the very near future. Perhaps leading to a paradigm change of saving our dollars, stop spending it or lose it mindset.

Respect the taxpayer, this our money and our sweat paying your bills.

Pat Hanson
Alexandria, MN

If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

To the editor:

The roundabout issue at County Roads 40 and 8 was addressed in 2017 after a complaint of noise was brought to the attention of our district commissioner by a person in the neighborhood. The recommendation was turned down at that time due to opposition. And here we are, one more time, with a push for something that will be extremely expensive and, I believe, unnecessary.

I was born and raised in the area

of County Road 8 and am quite familiar with the intersection. My husband and I have lived practically on top of the intersection for the past 45 years.

I'm a member of the Garfield Fire and Rescue and Responders. The intersection at 40/8 is in our territory. Our department approached the township with a request for rumble strips after installation of flashing stop signs and decreased speed signs did not seem to be the perfect answer. The year before the rumble strips were installed, we responded to nine accidents within that year. After the rumble strips were installed, only one accident in the past 3-4 years.

The noise of the rumble strips is actually music to my ears. Each time I hear it, I am confident another driver is reminded of the upcoming intersection and the need to stop.

I feel a simple inexpensive working solution such as rumble strips certainly outweighs the unnecessary cost and expense of a roundabout. The commissioners need to reassess and reevaluate this project. At the very least, the public should have input before this moves forward. Using the excuse, to quote one of the commissioners, "Now we won't have the noise anymore" just doesn't cut it for the taxpayers!

Ardis Piper
Alexandria, MN

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ARCHIVES

2010: Home prices jump 28.9%

1920, 100 years ago: Reuter Brothers, Carlos, Minn. advertised – Macaroni, 7 cents a package – 1 lot of Apron Gingham, per yard, 22 cents – Potato Bags! Potato Bags! – Just bought 50,000 bags. Anybody interested, come in and see us. Bring in your eggs! We pay cash or trade.

1970, 50 years ago: Army Specialist Five James G. Tenhoff, Osakis, received the Bronze Star Medal during recent ceremonies near Qui Nhon, Vietnam. Spec. 5 Tenhoff earned the award for outstanding service in connection with military operations against hostile forces in Vietnam while assigned as a clerk in the Adjutant General Section of the command's headquarters.

Evansville Mayor Morley Paulson broke ground for the new Evansville Community Center. The community had overwhelmingly passed a \$125,000 bond issue as they voted 216 to 24, for the new community center which will feature a full-size gym-auditorium, which can be divided for use by two gym classes and excellent locker room facilities. Other features include a kindergarten room and a senior citizens room which can be divided by a folding wall and office space to be used by the village. Approval of the bond issue means that the School District 208 will have to purchase all equipment, provide for outside lighting, a parking lot, and landscaping in addition to a cash contribution of a little over \$60,000.

1995, 25 years ago: The Douglas County Commissioners approved nearly \$77,000 for



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communications equipment for the sheriff's dispatch area in the new Douglas County Services Center. Director of Information Systems Tom Reddick and Sheriff Bill Ingebrigtsen brought the bids for the new dispatch console control equipment and the board voted 4-1 to accept a low bid from Motorola Company. The new equipment is necessary, Ingebrigtsen explained, because the existing equipment was installed in 1978, is outdated, and might not "survive the move" over to the new law enforcement center. The equipment currently used will remain in the courthouse as a backup dispatch should anything happen to the new equipment.

Rolf's Rockhaus, a classic rock and roll specialty show, will be on the air over KXRA-FM four nights a week. A weekly show that started in 1987, the expansion was announced following an agreement between the station and Wolfgang Gerdes, the Alexandria man who created and who will continue to host the program Monday-Thursday from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

2010, 10 years ago: The Minnesota and Greater Alexandria Area Association of Realtors reported that the current median home price in the Alexandria market area for the first quarter 2010 is \$122,500, up 28.9% from the same

period a year ago.

For the 60th anniversary of the Nottoroy Skolekorps (School Corps) Band from Norway, the students were promised a trip abroad. After researching places online through the marching.com website, the location was selected – Alexandria, Minnesota and the Vikingland Band Festival. The marching band from Norway includes 105 members ranging in age from 10-19 and won the National Championship of Norway for street marching in both 2007 and 2009.

Just for fun – 1995 – 25 years ago: The new Douglas County Law Enforcement Center is located at 7th Avenue West, just a block west of Broadway. The entrance is the old Central School entrance across the street from the Congregational Church. When people come in with a problem or concern the dispatcher will direct them either to the right (the sheriff's department) or to the left (the police department). The large Plexiglas window, incidentally, is located where the old Central trophy case used to be.

Sports trivia 2010 – 10 years ago: A familiar name will don an Alexandria Beatles jersey this summer – at least for a little while. Former Cardinal and current Southwest Minnesota State University infielder Cody Curry was recently added to the roster after signing a temporary contract with the local Northwoods League team.

Rachel Barduson of Alexandria is a regular contributing columnist to the Echo Press Opinion page.

IN THE KNOW

Boating during COVID-19 pandemic

With so much uncertainty and so many changes in our lives these days, it is a relief to know that our lakes are open, and they provide plenty of room for social distancing. The beauty of the blue waters can change a person's attitude for the better real quick.

We want people to feel safe while enjoying their time on the lakes, and safety on the water is one of the responsibilities of the sheriff's office. It's our job to make sure you and your family stay safe as well as everyone around you.

One simple way to stay safe while boating is to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD). We would love it if everyone wore them. Children under 10 must always wear a PFD (life jacket) while on a watercraft. At the very least, there must be a wearable and accessible PFD for every person on board that is 10 or over. It can't be stowed away, and there has to be a throwable floatation device on boats 16 feet or longer. Everyone on a personal watercraft (jet-ski) must wear a PFD. For those in a canoe, kayak, paddleboat or on a stand-up paddleboard, there must be a PFD on board.



IN THE KNOW
TROY
WOLBERSEN
Douglas County
Sheriff

Exciting news for those that enjoy kayaking is that Douglas County will be installing a new kayak launch dock on Lake Brophy. This launch will be installed by mid-June and will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with an accessible transfer bench and a support grab rail.

Some people have "a need for speed" while boating. Feeling the wind in our hair, which we have plenty of these days, just needs to be done safely. Remember, we have three deputies who patrol the lakes. Unsafe and careless operation is not the preferred way to meet one of those deputies. Just like on the road; distracted/careless operation, unsafe speed, and alcohol are the leading causes of crashes on the water. It would be best if those operating the boat do not consume any alcohol until everyone is safely back on shore for the day.

The navigational buoys are in place on the lakes. The white and orange buoys

mark shallow areas, a rock or other hazard. The red and green markers indicate a channel. The red buoy is on the right when you are going upstream. If you choose to pass through the channel outside the markers, you may find yourself in a shallow or rocky area.

Before that first day on the lake arrives, make sure the equipment on your boat is working. There are a lot more accessories on boats today so check the charge on the batteries. Your boat's navigation lights need to be in working order if you plan to be on the water from sunset to sunrise. Also, don't forget to check that your fire extinguisher is in working order.

Please continue to be aware of the guidance for social distancing while on the lakes. Tying boats together and creating a large gathering goes against the spirit of social distancing. We expect the lakes to be busy this summer. The sheriff's office will be out there to help keep them safe so everyone can enjoy the sunshine and the beauty.

Troy Wolbersen is the Douglas County sheriff. In the Know is a rotating column written by community leaders from the Douglas County area.

LETTER

President's travel ban showed pure racism

To the editor:

On Jan. 31, 2020 the Republican president banned travel from Nigeria. He did this, he said, in the name of national security. Be aware that not a single terrorist act from anyone born in Nigeria has taken place since 1975.

Quite to the contrary, the Pew Research Center, which is a highly trusted source of reliable data, reports that

59% of Nigerian immigrants have a bachelor's degree. This compares to 33% of people born in the USA.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 54% of Nigerian immigrants work in highly skilled or professional jobs. This compares to 39% of those born in the USA. The median income for Nigerian immigrants is well above those born in the USA. In 2018 alone, Nigerian immigrants earned more than \$14

billion through their jobs. They paid more than \$4 billion in taxes. They meet every item on the Republican president's "merit-based" checklist.

He banned them because they're black and Muslim. Pure racism. Pure bigotry. Wake up, Republicans. Stop supporting this terrible human being.

Jon Koll
Alexandria, MN