



BULLS MAKE QUICK WORK OF EXPRESS

The Jackson Bulls opened the postseason with a quick sweep of the Tracy Express last week.

Story, B1



JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2020

130TH YEAR/ISSUE 31

AG's office cuts down county fair

Entertainment is off, youth shows on as scheduled

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Last-minute mandates from the state attorney general's office has forced the near cancellation of the 2020 Jackson County Fair.

Members of the fair's board of directors announced this past Friday the cancellation of all entertainment events at the 152nd Jackson County Fair, which runs through this Saturday at the Jackson County Fairgrounds in Jackson. That includes all grandstand events, concerts, commercial exhibits, the beer garden, children's

barnyard and car and tractor show.

Still scheduled are open youth livestock shows and non-livestock general project exhibits. Only exhibitors and family members may attend the shows.

Last-minute change

Rob Withers, president of the local fair board, said board members had

done everything right in advance of the fair — at the time one of only three still scheduled in Minnesota this summer. They had a COVID-19 preparedness plan built according to state guidelines, social-distancing protocol in place and events altered in order to maintain a safe environment. They spent time, energy and money in order to

provide a community event for youth and adults in the county.

"In June, we had guidance," said fair board treasurer Terri Bargfrede. "We contacted the state health department and we felt we were able to move on."

Last Thursday, those plans came crashing down.

The trouble started the Sunday prior.

"Late last Sunday, we got an email — at 9:35 p.m. — about the fair," Withers said.

It was from the office of Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison.

Representatives of the attorney general's office met with fair board members virtually to discuss their COVID-19 prepared-

See FAIR on A3



MASKING UP

PHOTOS BY JEN TEWES

Above: Sarah Stewart and son Aiden — along with furry friend "Penny" — sport matching face-masks back in early May, well before Gov. Tim Walz issued an executive order last week mandating face coverings in public. Right: Thomas Sauter and mom Krystal Kocak show off their team pride on their masks.



Inside...

A2

Gov. Tim Walz's recent executive order requiring the wearing of face coverings in public may spark anxiety in some, though it can be overcome.

Inside...

A4

COMMENTARY: There are so many problems associated with Gov. Tim Walz's statewide facemask mandate, it's hard to know where to start.

JCC hopes for return to school

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Jackson County Central administrators, teachers and parents are hopeful local students will be able to return to school this fall.

But the decision — expected to come this week — is the governor's.

"Our goal is to get K through 6 in the buildings — if the governor allows it — every single day," Barry Schmidt, superintendent of schools at JCC, said of elementary-aged students.

"We are trying our best and working really hard to get that done. With students in grades 7 through 12, we have a little more flexibility, if needed." Schmidt told local school



Barry Schmidt

board members on Monday administrators have developed several plans for various models of education that may have to be utilized in the coming months depending on state guidance and the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those models include in-person education, distance learning and a hybrid of the two.

Schmidt said teachers have largely been supportive of returning to school throughout the process.

"Our local education association has been working with us and helping us out," he said.

And early results of a parent survey seem to indicate a strong interest in getting students back in school as well.

"A lot of our families want to be in school, and we do too," Schmidt said. "But we need to listen to what the governor says."

Inside...

B4

The first day of school at Riverside and Pleasantview elementary schools will be Wednesday, Aug. 26, not Tuesday, Aug. 25.

Expanded county campus could cost upwards of \$23M

New jail included as part of project

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

The cost to expand the county courthouse campus and construct a new law enforcement center could

run upwards of \$23 million.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners got a first look at two plan options during a special meeting this past Friday in Jackson.

Designers from Wold Architects and Engineers presented the plans to the See COUNTY CAMPUS on A3

Local churches navigate ministry amid pandemic

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Local churches continue to find ways of ministering to the faithful despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Church leaders have had to overcome state-mandated closures, new safety protocols and different ways of doing things as the community continues to come to terms with a new normal.

For Pastor Nathan Jan-



Rev. Jonathan Fasnacht

zen of Jackson's First Baptist Church, the gravity of the situation hit him back in March when Gov. Tim Walz announced the closure of schools.

"When they announced, 'Come into school to Monday and get your stuff and head home,' that's when you knew church was going to have to change," Janzen said.

The decision was made locally, he said.

"Each church is autonomous in a way," Janzen said. "We began to realize, 'OK, this is something as a society that we need to take seriously.'"

The closure put a renewed focus on the church's

move toward small-group ministry, Janzen said.

"We've been trying to develop our small-group ministry," he said. "It wasn't a system we had developed strongly at that point, so it was good incentive to develop that."

The church used Zoom and Facebook for small-group sessions and youth ministry events and has since been able to reopen in-person worship.

"We reopened at 25 percent capacity," Janzen said. "I wore a mask the first Sunday and we moved our singing to the end of the service."

The church experiment- See CHURCHES on A3

Harden still thanking God — 60 years later

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Every day, Roy Harden looks at a small toy backhoe sitting on a shelf in his home and thanks God he's alive.

He said an extra word of thanks this past Thursday. For it was on that day, 60 years ago, when the rural Jackson man nearly lost his life in a trench cave-in in Jackson.

'I was a dead man'

Shortly after 11 a.m. on July 23, 1960, Harden began descending a

See HARDEN on A8



PHOTO BY JUSTIN LESSMAN

A small toy backhoe and an angel figurine serve as daily reminders to Roy Harden of his miraculous escape from death 60 years ago.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

New sales professional joins the team at EXIT Realty-Great Plains

Terry Aspelund is the newest real estate sales professional at EXIT Realty-Great Plains in Jackson.

Located at 401 Second St. in Jackson, EXIT Realty-Great Plains of Jackson is a member of EXIT Realty Upper Midwest's rapidly expanding network of independently owned and operated brokerages across the region.

Business yearbook in the works

Production of the Jackson County Progress edition, the annual business yearbook of Jackson County, is currently under way.

The theme of this year's edition is "Back to Business," as it will offer an opportunity for local businesses to show how they are weathering the COVID-19 pandemic and are prepared to emerge better than ever.

Businesses interested in being a part of the 2020 Progress edition are encouraged to contact the offices of Livewire Printing Co. at 847-3771 or by email at info@livewireprinting.com to ensure their spot in the much-anticipated and highly read publication.

Deadline for inclusion in the Progress edition is this Friday.

The 2020 Progress edition will insert into the Aug. 20 editions of the Jackson County Pilot and Lakefield Standard.

Local businesses are collection points for library used book sale

Two local businesses are collection points for gently used books and audiobooks, music CDs, movies, puzzles and games able to be offered for sale at the annual used book sale hosted by the Friends of the Jackson County Library.

Drop-off sites for donated items include Sunshine Foods and the Historic State Theatre in Jackson.

All donations are welcome, with the exception of magazines, encyclopedias, textbooks or books in poor condition.

The book sale will take place in September. Proceeds of the sale provide supplemental funds for programs, materials and other extras for the Jackson County Library System.

FAIR: Entertainment off, youth shows on

Continued from A1

ness plan, which had already been discussed with — and approved by — officials with the Minnesota Department of Health.

"The attorney general's office wanted to know how we'd be handling the bull ride and the concert, which we had a plan for," Withers said. "Then they stalled."

Last Thursday, the attorney general's office sent the fair board a 26-page document outlining new guidelines.

"On Thursday, they sent us a 26-page document," Bargfrede said. "Before, we'd had a three-page one."

Ellison's office wanted to meet that same day, giving board members just a few hours to review the new guidance.

Withers said he felt the new guidelines went well beyond the governor's mask mandate, announced last Wednesday.

"We went from three pages to 26," Withers said. "They added a lot more than wearing masks."

Among the requirements

was the fair could have no more than 250 people on the fairgrounds.

"On Thursday, they told us we could have 250 people on the entire grounds — all 25 acres of it," Withers said.

Another requirement was every attendee's movement would have to be tracked, so no part of the fair went over capacity.

"We were told there couldn't be any people moving on their own around the fairgrounds," said fair board member Jason Diemer. "If someone watched the show and then went to a food truck, we'd have to track that."

Withers asked the state officials if they understood the nature of a county fair and the number of active cases of COVID-19 in Jackson County.

"I asked if they had any comprehension of what our fair entailed and our case numbers," Withers said. "They basically didn't care."

Diemer said the fair was treated differently than

other businesses and organizations in the state.

"The Mall of America has free-flowing middle ground from store to store," Diemer said. "We're not allowed to have that."

The suddenness and severity of the new measures led the board to the admittedly difficult decision to cancel the fair's entertainment events.

"We were out of time," Withers said. "Did they ever say, 'You can't do it'? No; but when you can only have 250 people on 25 acres, it's financial suicide."

'Disappointing'

Withers and Bargfrede said vendors and other organizations set to participate in the 2020 fair agreed to finish their contracts and asked to come back for next year's fair, which has allowed the board to take care of some of 2021's planning.

"On the plus side, the 2021 fair is pretty much ready to go," Withers said.

Withers and Bargfrede

said the roadblocks put in place by the attorney general's office surprised them a bit, especially in light of response to fair plans by other state departments, including health and agriculture.

"We've gotten good responses from the secretary of agriculture," Withers said.

Diemer said the whole thing was disappointing, as the fair board had taken extensive precautions to keep people safe.

"The sad part is we prepared a safe environment for community activity," Diemer said. "To shut down at the 11th hour — that's the disappointing part."

That said, he is glad youth exhibits and shows will be able to go on as scheduled.

"For today, our focus is to have the youth events for the kids in this community," Diemer said. "We want to thank the community for its support."

COUNTY CAMPUS: Plan

Continued from A1

board. Architect Jonathan Loose said designers worked with county officials to reduce the final projected cost while taking into account the needs of the county.

"We're trying to be conservative here," Loose said, "but we're being realistic about what the need is."

The first option would entail building a facility just north of the Jackson County Government Center West, which is currently occupied by a parking lot. The second option would require the demolition of the 1962-built part of the government center, which would then be replaced by the new facility.

Commissioners on Friday said the plans are not final and don't represent any commitment on the county's part, adding future studies will be done to determine the best path for the county to take.

"We know that the county isn't ready to move forward with all of this," said Joel Dunning, one of the three architects present at the meeting. "This is simply to study what the law enforcement center would look like in the future."

The first option would be a two-phase project, with one phase being at midpoint in construction by 2021, and the second phase reaching its midpoint in 2023. The first phase would cost \$2.6 million, while the second phase would cost \$19.9 million, for a combined total of \$22.5 million.

The second plan, involving the demolition of the 1962 building, would cost a total of \$23.1 million.

Commissioners seemed to favor the first plan due to the cost savings and the flexibility offered by the project. In the event further additions are needed in the future, they said, there would be space available, which is not the case for the second plan. Additionally, because the first plan involves phasing, the cost may be spread over time.

John Naureth, a local resident who attended the meeting, expressed his concern about the fiscal effects of the project, especially with other large county expenditures related to the school system and drainage.

"It's going to be really expensive," Naureth said.

Commissioner James Eigenberg agreed with Naureth.

"You're right; we get it," Eigenberg said. "I've talked to a lot of people; we've got school, we've got drainage and there's no easy way out of this."

Given that other small counties in Minnesota may not have their own jails, commissioners raised the possibility of contracting beds with other counties.

"What I'll say is unless our criminal population increases a lot, I think you'd be looking to contract more beds," said Jackson County Coordinator Steve Duncan.

Help from the state is unlikely at this point, Duncan added, due to the failure of the bonding bill in the Minnesota Legislature and the state's historical reticence to fund county jails.

The board plans to discuss strategies for financing the project in the coming weeks.



Rob Moorlach (left), pastor of Jackson's United Methodist Church, and Nathan Janzen (right), pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, are taking several precautions in an attempt to lead safe worship services during the COVID-19 pandemic.



FILE PHOTOS

CHURCHES: Ministry amid global pandemic

Continued from A1

ed with moving services outside and was able to obtain a sound system from a youth group in Mt. Lake that had never used it.

"They donated it, and I was like, 'Thank you, Lord,'" Janzen said. "So I said, 'Let's meet outside as much as possible.' 'But as summer went on, we started moving inside.'"

Unlike at First Baptist Church, much of the direction for Jackson's United Methodist Church came from the top.

"In the United Methodist Church, we've been in communication with our conference," said Pastor Rob Moorlach of Jackson's UMC. "We received word from our conference that the bishop was recommending we pause in-person worship."

Online services allowed Moorlach to continue to minister amid the shutdown.

"We did online services on Facebook Live," Moorlach said. "We had already broadcasted our services, so we just scaled that up."

Though in-person worship has resumed, Moorlach said it does look different.

"We do social distancing," Moorlach said. "As far as receiving the Lord's Supper, we have the elements ready for people to receive and they come up one at a time and receive them."

Other measures include hand-sanitizing stations and separated pews.

"We've adapted our worship and the elements of worship," Moorlach said.

Moorlach said the hardest part of this whole thing for him is the inability to do in-person visits to the elderly and infirm.

"It's kind of sad," Moorlach said. "We can't do in-person visits, so we do phone calls, emails and

written cards."

Like with Jackson's Methodist church, much of the direction Father Jonathan Fasnacht followed for Jackson's Good Shepherd Catholic Church came from the bishop.

"Being Catholic, there's a blessing as a pastor where I have a bishop who makes a lot of those decisions," Fasnacht said.

The bishop sent out emails to parishes stating there would be no in-person Mass for a period of time.

"It was drastic," Fasnacht said. "It's probably the first time in the history of this diocese that we've canceled Mass."

Other events followed suit, with most of them being rescheduled for 2021. Thankfully, the church has been able to celebrate Mass

once again.

"We started Mass around six weeks ago and had about one-fourth of our turnout," Fasnacht said. "It's building up, and we're at about three-fourths now."

Mask wearing, spaced-out seating and only offering the host during communion are among the changes made to keep worship safe for parishioners.

"It's better to have it restricted than to not have it at all," Fasnacht said. "I'm grateful we're having Mass again."

Fasnacht said he hopes the community will continue to trust God amid the uncertainty of the pandemic.

"It's important to understand that God is still in charge," Fasnacht said. "We can trust him, and he will provide."

JACKSON COUNTY APPRAISER

The Jackson County Assessor's Office is seeking applicants for a full-time (40 hrs per/wk), FLSA non-exempt, Appraiser. The Appraiser is responsible, under the authority of the County Assessor, for the appraisal of residential, agricultural, recreational, and mobile home properties in the County. Interprets data observed and resolves questions through research and application of statutes and department policy. The appraiser may be called on to explain technical appraisal procedures and findings of fact to others in terms that are understood by non-technical audiences.

Minimum Qualifications as follows: Minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent. Certified Minnesota Assessor (CMA) designation is preferred. Must be able to achieve a Certified Minnesota Assessor (CMA) designation within two years of hire. Post-secondary training in a related field (e.g., real estate) or one year of closely related experience is preferred. Must have and be able to retain a valid driver's license. Must be able to achieve any State of Minnesota licensure within required timeframes (e.g., every individual who appraises or physically inspects real property for the purpose of determining its valuation or classification for property tax purposes must obtain licensure as an accredited Minnesota assessor from the State Board of Assessors by July 1, 2022, or within five years of that person having become licensed as a certified Minnesota assessor, whichever is later). Knowledge, skills and abilities include knowledge of basic accounting principles and the ability to apply them; ability to maintain clerical records and a filing system; strong word processing and spreadsheet software skills (Microsoft Excel & Word); and able to communicate effectively in both verbal and written form.

Please note that all interested applicants will be required to take a basic job skills test to be considered for an interview.

Salary range for 2020 is \$21.62 to \$28.11 per hour (Grade 12), depending on qualifications, and includes a competitive benefits package with health insurance & PERA pension.

An application and a full job description can be obtained on the county website at www.co.jackson.mn.us, from the Jackson County Coordinator's Office, Courthouse, 405 Fourth Street, Jackson, MN 56143; or by calling 507-847-4182. Resumes will be accepted, and are encouraged, but must be accompanied by a completed application. **Faxed or emailed applications will not be accepted.**

Applications must be delivered or postmarked by 4:30 pm, on Friday, August 7, 2020, to the Jackson County Coordinator's Office.

In order to ensure the safety of citizens, employees and property, Jackson County has adopted a drug and alcohol testing policy which applies to all candidates being considered for employment with Jackson County (Ref. Policy 501). A Drug and Alcohol test must be completed within 24 hours of all contingent verbal offers of employment, unless alternate scheduling arrangements are approved by the County Coordinator.

JACKSON COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

29460

HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR JACKSON COUNTY

Jackson County Highway Department has a FT opening for a Heavy Equipment Operator.

Minimum requirements for this position include:

- Graduation from high school or GED;
- Required to have passed the Class A CDL written exam; must pass the CDL driving test within the 6-month probationary period.
- Ability to operate a variety of machines and equipment necessary to perform this position, such as tandem trucks, motor grader, mower tractors, back hoe, dozer, excavator, skid loaders with attachments, pay loaders, shouldering machine, seeding machine, steel roller for patching, distributor, and sprayers;
- Ability to safely operate mower, chainsaws, tractors, power tools, hand tools, and light power equipment;
- Ability to operate using electronic controls;
- Working knowledge of survey techniques and the ability to read ditch maps;
- Ability to lift and carry 75 lbs;
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with others; and
- Ability to communicate effectively and the ability to courteously serve the public.

This position is classified Grade 10 in the county compensation plan with a starting wage of \$19.06 per hour or DOQ. Includes a competitive benefits package, including PERA pension. This is a full-time position working 40 hours per week.

An application and a full job description can be obtained on the county website at www.co.jackson.mn.us, from the Jackson County Coordinator's Office, Courthouse, 405 Fourth Street, Jackson, MN 56143; or by calling 507-847-4182. Resumes will be accepted, and are encouraged, but must be accompanied by a completed application. **Faxed or emailed applications will not be accepted.**

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JACKSON COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

29476

Highway 71 work completed last week, ahead of schedule

Work on Highway 71 north of Jackson is complete, and ahead of schedule.

The stretch of highway from Jackson to Windom opened last Wednesday afternoon.

Highway 71 had been detoured to I-90 and Highway 86 since May 4 for resurfacing and bridge replacement. Highway 71 from Windom to Highway 30 was also resurfaced under traffic. Together, the project completed 30 miles of new pavement.

Both Highway 71 projects were completed ahead of schedule.

Duininck Inc. was awarded both projects with bids of \$8,097,096 for the Jackson stretch and \$2,425,111 for the Windom stretch.

