



## GIRLS SECOND AT BUTTERFIELD

The Jackson County Central girls' cross country team placed second at Butterfield last week and the boys finished third.

Story, B1



# JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

130TH YEAR/ISSUE 38

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## STATE MANDATES LEAD LOCAL BUSINESS TO CLOSE ITS DOORS

Decision follows visit, warnings from inspector

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ  
Staff Writer

Rebecca Nestegard's coffee shop, the Coffee Nest, in downtown Jackson had always passed its health inspections without any problem.

"Most people that know me know that my shop is probably clean enough to eat off of the floors," Nestegard said. "We've always taken cleanliness very seriously. We've always passed our state inspections with flying colors."

This year, that changed, with an inspector from the Minnesota Department of Health recently informing Nestegard her business was in violation of all COVID-19-related executive orders.

Mandatory reservations, mask wearing, contact tracing and limiting seating space to half capacity are among the requirements laid out in Gov. Tim Walz's orders concerning bars and restaurants.

"What people don't understand is that it isn't as simple as just putting on a mask," Nestegard said. "There is signage, a way to enforce distance, a way to contact trace everyone who enters and moving or blocking off seating to allow for the distancing guidelines."

For a shop like the Coffee Nest, which Nestegard usually operates by herself and which has seating space for only 24 people, those requirements were onerous.

"We simply don't have the staff or the time to do it and run the shop efficiently," Nestegard said. "The problem we, like many others, face is that these mandates are making it nearly, if not completely, impossible to remain open."

See **COFFEE NEST** on A3



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA SCHUETZ

Signage posted in the windows of the shuttered Coffee Nest in downtown Jackson decries "unconstitutional mandates" from the state and questions the effect of those mandates on freedom and liberty.

## Locals assemble to support business, protest mandates

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ  
Staff Writer

Community spirit — and spirited discussion regarding the state's COVID-19-related mandates — was on full display Saturday morning as locals gathered to show support for Rebecca Nestegard and her business, the Coffee Nest.

Nestegard closed her doors after officials from the Minnesota Department of Health threatened her family with fines and imprisonment if they did not adhere to the guidelines laid out in the governor's recent executive orders.

Supporters met across the street from

See **PROTEST** on A3



Laura Stubbe (third from left), a frequent patron of the Coffee Nest, speaks to a crowd of concerned citizens Saturday morning as Rebecca Nestegard, owner of the shuttered Coffee Nest, nods in agreement.

## COVID-19 confirmed within JCC

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Officials with Jackson County Central schools have alerted students, families and staff of an unspecified number of lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the JCC community.

One of the cases is within the JCC Middle School community.

At least two staff members have contracted the illness.

The notification, issued last Thursday, came within the third week of the new school year at JCC.

Barry Schmidt, superintendent of school at JCC, and school nurse Alyssa Anderson said they have worked with the Minnesota Department of Health to identify those who had close contact with the infected parties. They also

See **JCC** on A3



Barry Schmidt

## Cumulative caseload hits century mark

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Jackson County's second largest one-week gain in lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began has pushed the county's cumulative caseload past the century mark.

And then some. Jackson County's 100th case of COVID-19 was recorded late last week. As of Tuesday, the county had added another dozen active cases, pushing its cumulative

See **COVID-19** on A3

## County considering 3.6 percent tax hike

Public hearing is Tuesday, Dec. 1

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Jackson County Commissioners are considering collecting more than \$11 million in property taxes next year.

Commissioners on Tuesday approved a preliminary property tax levy collectible in 2021 of more than \$11.2 million, an increase of more than \$390,000 over what was collected the year prior. The 3.6 percent tax hike the preliminary levy represents would be the highest since 2016.

The preliminary levy amount can be reduced prior to setting the final tax levy in December, but not raised. That's exactly what happened last year, as commissioners set a preliminary levy of more than \$11.23 million — an increase of nearly \$528,000 or 4.9 percent, over the

### Jackson County tax levy look-back

	Tax levy	% change
2015	\$9.88 million	+3.6%
2016	\$10.35 million	+4.7%
2017	\$10.61 million	+2.5%
2018	\$10.61 million	0%
2019	\$10.70 million	+0.9%
2020	\$10.85 million	+1.4%

### Proposed

2021	\$11.25 million	+3.6%
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Source: Jackson County

### Inside...

**B5** The Jackson County Board of Commissioners are preparing to review applications for funding through the Jackson County CARES Act grant program.

year prior — but trimmed around \$373,000 off before approving the final levy, resulting in a year-over-year increase of less than 1.5 percent.

Members of the public will have the opportunity

to weigh in on the final levy and the 2021 county budget at a hearing set for 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 1. The hearing will take place in the cafeteria room of the Jackson County Government Center.



PHOTOS BY JUSTIN LESSMAN

Jackson firefighters and emergency medical services personnel help load an injured resident of the Jackson Hi-Rise apartment building onto a stretcher last Tuesday.

## 'Something on the stove' blamed for fire at Hi-Rise

Two injured, more than 50 displaced

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Something left on the stovetop a bit too long caused the fire at the Jackson Hi-Rise apartment building last week that injured two and displaced more than 50.

The Jackson Fire Department, Jackson Ambulance Service respond to a fire at the Jackson Hi-Rise apartment building last Tuesday.



The Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Jackson Fire Department and Jackson Ambulance Service respond to a fire at the Jackson Hi-Rise apartment building last Tuesday.



## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### Jackson will transform into hub of curbside commerce this week

Jackson will transform into a hub of curbside commerce later this week and weekend as the city hosts its annual fall citywide garage sales.

Garage sale dates are Sept. 17-19, with some beginning earlier.

A full listing of sales and a locator map are included in the Sept. 13 Livewire, Jackson County's largest circulation newspaper.

### Businesses can unload old bulbs, electronics, appliances Sept. 18

Local businesses can unload old electronics, fluorescent bulbs and appliances later this week in Jackson.

The Jackson County Land Management Office hosts an e-waste collection for businesses this Friday at the Jackson County Fairgrounds. Collection times are 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2 p.m.

A residential collection will take place the following morning.

More details, costs and a collection form can be found in the Sunday, Sept. 13, Livewire.

### Main Street business plays host to Bike to Work Day celebration

A Main Street business plays host to the local commemoration of Bike to Work Day next week.

A Bike to Work Day event will take place at the R.E.S.T Stop in downtown Jackson from 5 to 6 p.m. Tuesday. The event is hosted by the Friends of the Jackson County Trails.

Trails committee member Luke Ewald said this year's event is taking place a little later than in past years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our main goal is to promote biking in Jackson," Ewald said. "It's typically in May, but because of COVID, it was moved to September."

The event will offer bike services for kids and adults alike.

"If folks want to have their kids get their helmets adjusted or bring their bikes in for a quick inspection, they can do that here," Ewald said.

Folks can also learn about the off-road trail planned for Belmont Park and enjoy some snacks and beverages along the way.

Bike routes will be up to individuals, but Ewald said there will likely be bikes from the local bike share system available for use.

### PAWS raising funds through retail

The local Precious Animals Worth Saving organization gets into the retail business next week as it hosts a three-day rummage sale fundraiser.

The sale kicks off next Thursday at the Jackson American Legion hall and runs through Saturday, Sept. 26.

More details are included in the Sunday, Sept. 13, Livewire.

### City of Jackson, business partner to offer extra garbage collection

The city of Jackson has partnered with a local waste management contractor to offer citizens a two-day extra garbage collection.

Waste Management will pick up extra garbage west of Highway 71 on Saturday, Sept. 26, and extra garbage east of Highway 71 on Saturday, Oct. 3.

Items to be picked up as part of the cleanup include furniture, mattresses, carpet and household goods. Tags are available for a fee at City Hall for electronics and appliances.

Items that will not be picked up include concrete, dirt, trees, building materials, branches, appliances without tags purchased from City Hall, white goods, hazardous wastes, auto bodies, lead acid batteries and used oil.

Residents who live in the city limits of Jackson can participate. No waste from non-residential customers, contractors, businesses or those residing outside the city limits will be accepted.

## FIRE: Two injured

Continued from A1

lance Service and Jackson County Sheriff's Office responded to the State Street apartment building shortly before 8:30 p.m. last Tuesday to a report of a fire in a second-floor apartment. Jackson County Sheriff Shawn Haken said the fire was extinguished by the building's sprinkler system by the time deputies arrived on scene.

A full evacuation was ordered, with firefighters and law enforcement officials going room to room to clear the building. The five-story Hi-Rise houses 49 one-bedroom apartments and one two-bedroom apartment. At the time of the fire, 51 tenants resided there, along with multiple pets. Two people were transported by ambulance to Sanford Jackson Medical Center with what Haken termed "minor injuries."

American Red Cross volunteers moved in shortly after the fire was extinguished and assisted

around 25 residents. Red Cross volunteer Jim Seitz said services provided included essential items, such as food, clothing, shelter and medications; comfort; and help beginning the long-term recovery process.

Western Community Action also assisted, transporting residents first to the Jackson County Government Center for temporary shelter, then later to local motels for the night.

Haken said the second-floor apartment where the fire started sustained "significant fire, smoke and water damage," while multiple other parts of the building also sustained smoke and water damage.

Jackson Fire Chief David Bond said the state fire marshal's office investigated the cause of the blaze and ruled it accidental.

"Something on the stove was accidentally left on," Bond said, "and it started a small fire."

## COFFEE NEST: Closed

Continued from A1

The day after the initial inspection and closure of the coffee shop, Nestegard said she received another visit from the MDH. The inspector took photos of the front of the business, where Nestegard had put up several signs in protest of the mandates.

"After taking pictures, she informed me that she would be 'sending the photos on' and letting them know we had decided to close," Nestegard said. "She also informed me that since we were now on their radar, we'd be watched very closely."

Nestegard posted about the experience on social media, and received an outpouring of support, as well as a number of hateful comments. The division became bad enough that she decided to remove the original post.

"My original Facebook post was meant to inform our small community that we would be closed. I never thought it would go viral like it did," Nestegard said. "I sincerely wish it hadn't."

Her family was contacted by multiple news media outlets and the story was published in sev-

eral newspapers throughout the state.

Nestegard said she is unsure when she will reopen, and added the pressure faced by small business owners throughout the county and state has only gotten worse over the past few months.

"At this point, we don't have a definite plan," Nestegard said. "We are constantly brainstorming to come up with innovative ways to make things work, but at this time, with all of the regulations forced on us, we aren't seeing a specific date."

Many small business owners have struggled amid the pandemic, especially those who work in the restaurant industry. Nestegard converses with others in her field frequently and said the pressure and fear have hurt the joy and satisfaction she and others feel in running their businesses.

"I'm frequently in contact with other small business owners and the joy is fading. The politics, the rules, the division — it's all wearing on us," Nestegard said. "I just want to be back in the shop that I love serving the people that I love."

## JCC: Notification

Continued from A1

said the district has taken action to clean and sanitize affected facilities and continues to work closely with MDH officials to monitor the situation.

On Friday, Schmidt acknowledged positive cases have been confirmed among district staff members, adding district officials continue to review and follow guidance from the MDH, Minnesota Department of Education and local public health agency "to ensure we keep staff and students safe."

Despite the positive cases popping up within the JCC community, Schmidt said community caseload numbers, which help determine what model of instruction schools must follow, are showing a downward trend overall. In fact, seventh-grade students at JCC were allowed to return to school nearly full time this past Monday after three weeks of only attending in person two days per week.

Schmidt and Anderson last week acknowledged this continues to be a "challenging time" for the district and community as a whole, adding they understand many are feeling stress or anxiety.

"We will get through this together as a community, and will be stronger when we emerge," they said in a joint statement. "There is nothing more important to JCC than the safety and health of our students, our staff, the families and our community."

## PROTEST: Supportive

Continued from A1

the establishment, where donations were accepted to support the Nestegard family. Coffee was provided at the event, which attracted people from across the state and from other states as well.

Hillary Rossow, who is friends with the Nestegard family, helped organize the event. She said it was a small way of giving back to a family that has given the community so much in recent years.

"The Nestegards are some of the best people around. They do absolutely anything they can for everyone they can," Rossow said. "It really hit me that we really need to give back to them and try to help them out."

Nestegard met with numerous people throughout the morning and said she's gotten support from across the country.

"It's just awesome to see all of the support," Nestegard said. "I've gotten calls from people as far away as Texas and North Carolina."

Several local politicians and civic leaders from southwest Minnesota, including Republican Minnesota House District 23A candidate Bjorn Olson and Lakefield Mayor Brian Rossow, came to the gathering as well.

Olson said the closure of the Coffee Nest is another case of how small businesses have been treated differently than their larger counterparts, something he's seen in his own backyard.

"My hometown's furniture store, which gets about one customer an hour, was shut down," Olson said. "But Walmart could still sell furniture with hundreds of people going through the store every hour."

Jackson resident Laura Stubbe, who frequents the Coffee Nest, said keeping

downtown healthy isn't just a feel-good talking point, but is central to the community's survival.

"It's so important for us to support our small businesses," Stubbe said. "Anyone who's ever lived in a rural, small-town area knows how important our small businesses are."

Stubbe pointed out local businesses help fund many of the programs valued by residents, including sports, the county fair and many local nonprofits as well. As such, even people who don't do their shopping

**"IT'S JUST AWESOME TO SEE ALL OF THE SUPPORT."**

**Rebecca Nestegard**

downtown are dependent on those businesses to fund many of the organizations and services they value, she said.

"Almost every local business donates to the sports programs, charities and other community organizations," Stubbe said. "Without our small businesses, those organizations and programs don't survive, and without them, the town won't survive."

Lakefield City Council member Brent Pavelko, also present at the event, said the fear among business owners has not been limited to Jackson and echoed others' frustration with the state's policies.

"There are business owners in Lakefield who have been threatened with fines and jail time," Pavelko said. "The state has sent letters to pretty much every business downtown."

While the community has pushed to help local businesses, Pavelko said many might not survive another wave of lockdowns or a continued decrease in revenue.

"Our businesses survived the first wave of lockdowns," Pavelko said, "but could they survive another, especially if the state gets so aggressive with enforcement? I don't know."

## E-WASTE COLLECTION

Electronics, Fluorescent Bulbs, & Appliances

### At the Jackson County Fairgrounds

#### Business Collection

Friday, Sept. 18th, 2020

9:30 am– 12:00 pm

1:00 pm–2:00 pm

#### Residential Collection

Saturday, Sept. 19th, 2020

8:00 am–12:00 pm

Description	Cost	Quantity	Total
All Bulbs	50¢		
Ballasts with PCB's	\$3.25		
TV's & Monitors (CRT)	\$25		
TV's & Monitors (LCD, Plasma, Etc)	\$10		
Small Electronics	\$10		
Appliances	\$15		
No Charge for Laptops & Towers		<b>TOTAL</b>	

*In order to better serve you, please cut out this ad, fill it in, and bring it with you to the collection. Exact change or checks are encouraged if possible.*

Jackson County Land Management Office

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