



Aging population has housing options changing  
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# Pine Knot News

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## a NEW LIFE for the OLD LOG CHURCH



Bishop Paul Sirba stands outside the Sawyer Log Church Sunday along with members of the Knights of Columbus and parishioners who came for the blessing of the newly renovated historic church and celebration of Mass on Sunday. Photos by Pete Radosevich / Pine Knot News

## Sawyer refurbishing gets a blessing

Pete Radosevich  
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Del Prevost was looking sharp in his colorful jacket, tie, and creased slacks, but when he stepped to the pulpit at the end of Mass at the rededication of the Sawyer Log Church at Saints Mary and Joseph in Sawyer on Sunday, Sept. 8, a gentle chuckle wafted through the worshippers crowded in the small wooden pews. Apparently, no one was expecting the retired lawyer and former president of Members Cooperative Credit Union to deliver his words with such enthusiasm and energy. It was a fitting end to the celebration of the renovations of the original log structure that started more than seven years ago.

About 200 people filled the old log church and the more modern church, built next door in the 1960s.

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Parishioners and visitors from near and far crowded into the old log church Sunday, while others watched from a large screen in the more modern church next door.

### CARLTON/WRENSHALL CONSOLIDATION

## Consolidation crush is on for school boards

Mike Creger  
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There will be a flurry of meetings in the next two months as school boards in Wrenshall and Carlton continue to explore a consolidation of the districts. After joint meetings this summer with the full boards, members are moving in the direction of a single district with buildings in Carlton and Wrenshall, known as the two-site option.

This week, committees from both boards met to discuss needs at the current schools should the school populations be merged.

There are several state mandates that are pushing the boards along in the complicated process. There are 11 meetings planned between Sept. 23 and Nov.

14 to allow for public input, board discussion and, ultimately, approvals. What looms is a filing deadline with the Minnesota Department of Education for a "review and comment" that spells out the districts' plans and puts a monetary figure on the cost of consolidation. Once that is filed, the districts can lobby for state funding toward the merger through the state legislature when it convenes in February. The schedule could mean a referendum vote put to district residents on Feb. 12.

While referendums have failed in both districts recently, district officials are hoping consolidation — which should come with state aid for improvements — will turn the tide.

*Continued on Page 5*

## Many lessons learned after Extension inquiry

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The Carlton County Extension Office has made some procedural and management changes following an investigation last year conducted by the Aitkin County Sheriff's Office.

Allegations regarding a former Carlton County employee were "exceptionally cleared" following the investigation, in large part because the alleged wrongdoings were either not covered by county policy or impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt.

Information for this story was taken from an unapproved draft of an in-

vestigative report by Aitkin County investigator Steve Cook, and concerned allegations made against Troy Salzer, a longtime Carlton County University of Minnesota Extension Service agriculture educator.

Salzer headed the Extension service locally, arranging for lots of grant money to flow to local farmers. Experimental projects on types of crops and soil conditions were carried out to see what would thrive in our region. Part of his responsibility was to run the program on byproducts originating from material produced by the WLSSD for farm fields.

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## Extension ...

From Page 1

Ash and lime was distributed in that same network and has been produced by Minnesota Power, Potlatch of Bemidji and the Cloquet Sappi mill.

Since then, Salzer has left his job in Carlton County this spring and is now employed in St. Louis County. He was never charged with any kind of wrongdoing and the investigation was closed, although a copy was sent to the Minnesota state auditor.

The long-term result of the investigation was the ongoing restructuring of the Extension Office, which was basically a hybrid department that didn't clearly fall under the supervision of the University of Minnesota or Carlton County, which only served to exacerbate possible problems there.

### In the beginning

Former Carlton County auditor/treasurer Paul Gassert requested that the Carlton County sheriff's department investigate Salzer for allegedly keeping and using items purchased by Carlton County at his personal property in January of 2018.

There were also complaints that Salzer gave certain local farmers preferential treatment when he was in charge of the Carlton County byproducts program.

Carlton County Sheriff Kelly Lake requested that the Aitkin County sheriff's office conduct the investigation in January 2018, because it concerned a Carlton County employee.

Cook investigated the following complaints against Salzer and/or the Extension office:

1. Salzer has a trac-

tor, two pickups and a four-wheeler at his farm property which was purchased with county dollars. He allegedly uses the equipment for his own personal use.

2. Salzer oversees the Carlton County byproducts program and, as such, he appears to allow for special privileges or benefits to certain farmers, with respect to the delivery of various by product materials.

3. A van owned by Carlton County was used as a personal vehicle by former Extension office employee.

4. Salzer may have a private business, Bio Energy Consultants, LLC, and people expressed concerns he was using county resources and staff to assist him in doing his private business.

5. Salzer purchased a substantial amount of fertilizer, with county dollars, and he was storing that fertilizer at his farm, along with fertilizer that he personally purchased for his farm.

### Investigative report

According to the report, numerous county employees, Extension employees, people involved with the byproducts program and farmers in the area were contacted. The investigation is documented in an 11-page report with extensive personal comments given in numerous interviews.

The report said that when Cook interviewed Troy Salzer, Salzer denied any preferential treatment to farmers in the byprod-

ucts program. He said the John Deere tractor was stored at his farm and has been used in particular grant program work and for spreading biosolids and lime.

Salzer told the investigator he did not know why a 2004 Honda Foreman ATV was registered in his name. The county had paid for the machine. It had been used there to monitor experimental plots. Salzer said it was flood-damaged at his Sturgeon Lake farm and is now not usable.

Salzar said he had used the John Deere tractor and Extension pickups for Extension services to farmers and sometimes for his personal use, but provides his own fuel and makes necessary repairs. Extension fertilizer has been stored at his farm and the bags are marked "EXT" because the extension program does not have its own storage facilities.

Salzer said he has no knowledge of Bio Energy Consultants but had done private consulting in the past on his own time without using county vehicles. He said he had to fill out forms with Minnesota Extension in order to do this work.

In a letter written by Aitkin County attorney James Ratz, who reviewed the investigation and concluded that Salzer should be "exceptionally cleared" of all charges, Ratz said that with respect to allegations about Salzer using the tractor and trucks for his personal use, there did not seem to be a sufficient policy defining

incidental use of government vehicles.

"Further, with regard to storing the county-purchased property, there does not appear to be any policy in Carlton County addressing the storage of government-owned property on private property," he wrote about the fertilizer question. "To the contrary, past and current practice seem to suggest such situations are acceptable."

Use of the tractor, pickup trucks and ATV was cleared for basically the same reasons, that the policy was insufficient, and also that there was insufficient evidence to show substantive personal use.

Regarding the allegations that Salzer played favorites with farmers in the byproducts program and conducted private business with county resources, Ratz concluded there was insufficient evidence for either claim. He said the same about claims that a different Extension employee had used an Extension van for personal use.

Ratz did stress that the Extension office needed to make changes in his letter to Cook.

"With regards to the Extension Office, there is an apparent and immediate need for policies, procedures and internal controls to address all aspects with special emphasis on use of vehicle, maintaining inventories of Extension Office property, storage of vehicles and other property, outside consulting activities and administration of the byproducts program,

he wrote

### Aftermath

According to county coordinator Dennis Genereau, since the investigation there have been many meetings with county staff to re-evaluate the mission of the Extension program here, reassign staff duties, and hire needed staff.

They have determined that county employees need to be supervised by county staff, and extension employees need to be supervised by extension staff. Genereau said supervision of staff in the extension office was "a gray area."

He said Donna Lekander of the Carlton County Collaborative will now supervise the county staff that work in the extension office.

"This continues to take a lot of time," he said. "The basic staffing for the Extension program is financed through the management of the [byproducts] and ash programs for soil improvement in the county farm lands. Someone will manage that program as their primary duty. This will ensure prompt service to local farmers and all requests treated the same."

Genereau added that the county has been working to update or create policies for about five years now, and that for many years there was no issue with employees using county-owned things for personal use, on an occasional basis.

Salzar declined to comment on the investigation, but said he loved working in Carlton County.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to do the work I did in Carlton County for those years," he said.

Salzer is the Extension educator for ag production systems in St. Louis County now.

*Pine Knot editor Jana Peterson contributed to this story.*

# The long-term result of the investigation was the ongoing restructuring of the Extension Office.

## KNOT NOTES

### Principals shuffle at area schools

Carlton County schools has lost at least one principal to Duluth this fall, and moved one in from neighboring Pine County.

In Carlton, the school board held a special meeting Friday, Sept. 6 to approve the resignation of secondary school principal Barry Fischer, who had been with the school district just over a year.

After six years there, Barnum High School principal Brian Kazmierczak resigned as principal and girls basketball coach to become the new Lincoln Park Middle School principal in Duluth. Gregg Campbell, the high school principal at Willow River, was hired to replace him in Barnum.

Carlton superintendent Gwen Carman said Wednesday that the school board has not accepted Fischer's resignation, and planned to meet Wednesday evening to discuss the district's administrative structure.

"Mr. Fischer is currently our MS/HS Principal," Carman wrote.

### Volunteer, share some reading joy

The Power Lunch reading program seeks volunteers to share the joy of reading with children in the Cloquet School District. Both regular readers and substitute readers are needed. Power Lunch begins in October and concludes in March, and volunteers each receive a complimentary lunch. For more, call 879-3308 or email [ajones@isd94.org](mailto:ajones@isd94.org).

## Schools ...

Continued from Page 1

Wrenshall superintendent Kim Belcastro said she's been "amazed" by the public support of the consolidation. She hopes it leads to a successful future referendum vote.

The meeting this week dealt with rough needs at South Terrace Elementary should it be turned into a preschool-through-fifth-grade facility, and the Wrenshall school should it become the high school. It hasn't determined where middle school students would go, though board members on Monday leaned toward Wrenshall because of closer proximity to resources from the high school. South Terrace currently serves students in preschool through fifth grade. The Wrenshall school serves all grades. Carlton Middle/High School near downtown Carlton would be eliminated and likely swallowed by Carlton County as it looks to expand its jail facility next door.

Should the districts consolidate, student population figures would mean three sections in all grades. The enrollment would be 803 students, or about 60 students in 14 classes.

The districts are working with designers and architects from ARI in Duluth in assessing needs through the new configuration. Katie Hildenbrand from ARI took committee members through each school. It wasn't clear how much classroom space would need to be added as parts of the schools are repurposed. ARI will have a clearer plan, "a graphic look at buildings and the (costs)," Hildenbrand said, at the next committee meeting, scheduled for 6 p.m. Sept. 23 in Wrenshall.

Board members said they want to do things right in a consolidation and not have to go to voters for more money in a few years. They were assured that the needs ARI is looking at aren't over the top, and cover basic needs.

### South Terrace

ARI said the Carlton building

would need to expand its cafeteria and kitchen to accommodate more students. That could mean the current "cafetorium," a gym that also serves as an eating space for students, could become something else. It could mean a new gym.

Bathrooms would need to be upgraded for more students.

Community education would remain, as well as early childhood education. Updates are needed in administrative space and in securing the building and making outside traffic areas safer.

The playground would need updating.

Technology improvements could be made to the library and more lab space created for arts and science classes.

Both Carlton and Wrenshall have limited fields for sports. It hasn't been decided which school would host a football field and possible new track around it.

Both schools also have no, or limited, performance spaces.

Both schools have "envelope" needs, items such as roofing, heating and ventilation and sur-

face upkeep.

### Wrenshall

ARI says the plan to convert a former bus garage into a trade-school space might be scrapped and a new space created. Hildenbrand said the building needs significant repairs and is too far from the main school. It would also look at expanding the concept of trades education from skilled labor to include nursing, arts, culinary and lab teaching.

The high school would need to add two full gyms and make improvements to locker room and exercise areas.

Decisions would need to be made on the now-defunct pool — whether to upgrade it or convert the area for learning space.

Updates are needed in security and in "wayfinding" and accessibility around a building with multiple additions made to it.

Once the ideas gel after the Sept. 23 committee meeting, there will be a full school board joint meeting at 6 p.m. on Sept. 30 at South Terrace. Board members expect to have firm

dollar figures to discuss at that meeting. Plans would be fine-tuned through the regular board meetings in each district in mid-October.

Four public meetings are planned in late October for the public to weigh in, each beginning at 6 p.m. The first will be Oct. 21 in Wrenshall. Another will be at South Terrace Oct. 24. Another is scheduled for Oct. 28 at Sawyer Community Center. The final public meeting would be in Wrenshall October 29.

Votes on whether or not to send the final building and costs plan to the Minnesota Department of Education would be held by the school boards at separate special meetings on Nov. 12. The MDE could then allow for a referendum in February. It's doubtful that a full consolidation would occur by the 2020-21 school year due to the time needed for refurbishing and construction. Belcastro said a partial agreement could be reached, such as pairing all sports for next year.



Did pep band  
inspire a win?  
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# Pine Knot

## News

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# Consolidation cost: \$47.3 million

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The price tag is in on upgraded facilities for a consolidated Carlton and Wrenshall school district: \$47.3 million.

That was the estimate presented to district superintendent and school board members during a meeting Monday in Wrenshall. The firm ARI is working with the districts on the idea of a two-site

option for consolidation — an elementary at Carlton's South Terrace school and a high school in Wrenshall. Both current campuses would need significant upgrades under the two-site plan.

But the estimate is just that. Fine tuning will continue into meetings in the coming month. And a consolidation agreement has to be reached in order to put any referendum moves into place. If that should happen, both

school boards will have to convince voters that consolidation is worth the cost, which comes to about \$192 a year for 20 years for a district resident living in a home valued at \$150,000.

Superintendents for Carlton and Wrenshall said they weren't surprised by the costs. They remain hopeful that the consolidation will spur bond money from the state that could cut the facilities construction bill in half.

"It's pretty incredible, the funding we are trying to secure," said Wrenshall Superintendent Kim Belcastro. "This is a big deal."

School officials are looking at the funding Moose Lake received five years ago for its new school. That came under a "disaster" tag after the 2012 flood and after years of failed referendums there. Belcastro said she believes that working through the legislature

could bring a similar amount of money to the eastern part of Carlton County. A statute is in place for schools under consolidation to ask for bonding at the Legislature. It could be \$10 million or it could be more. School board members are hoping it's at least half of the \$47.3 million.

Story continues with school buildings schematics on Page 8

# Cloquet's health care twins make merger official

## Hospital, clinic will focus on local options

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Community Memorial Hospital and Raiter Clinic are joining forces, with the goal of keeping independent local health care thriving in the Cloquet area.

The merger came as a surprise for many, some who assumed that the two entities were already operating together.

The two have a long history of collaboration, said Raiter Clinic administrator Craig Ward.

"This partnership is a natural fit for the community," Ward said.

Dr. Jim Rogers, a Raiter Clinic physician, sees it as a positive move for everyone.

"We are excited to see our Raiter Clinic merge with Community Memorial Hospital," Rogers said. "It has been a long time coming and we see it is a win-win-win for the Raiter Clinic, CMH, and for the communities we serve. We will now have a unified medical campus that has retained its local independence."

Working together is what it's

all about, said CMH CEO Rick Breuer, explaining that although the nonprofit hospital is actually buying the clinic, the point is to be united, "to partner in local health care."

"There are other health care entities in the region or beyond, that really see opportunities to acquire a practice or a hospital as simply an opportunity to control that facet and draw people to their mothership," he said, pointing a finger at the move by Essentia Health to open a clinic in Cloquet in May 2020. "And we're really about better serving Cloquet and the surrounding communities."

By partnering with Raiter, he said, the two longtime local health care providers will no longer compete with each other — as they have done since CMH opened its own family clinic in May of 2018 — plus they will be able to offer more

services. It will also mean local residents won't have to choose between their hometown hospital and their hometown clinic.

The two organizations will become one on Jan. 1, 2020. That gives them time to work out details such as how to make

computer systems work together, and maximize efficiencies, Breuer said.

Continued on Page 5



Raiter Clinic and Community Memorial Hospital will merge, cementing a longtime cooperative partnership. It will face competition from an incoming Essentia Health clinic.



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# Schools ...

Continued from Page 1

## Wrenshall costs

In Wrenshall, the estimate for upgrades is \$30.7 million. The big-ticket item is an \$8.4 addition where the former bus garage/rec center sits today. It would add 28,000 square feet to the campus and include a new competition gym, cafeteria, lockerrooms and a secure entrance to the school. The next item, at \$8 million, is familiar to Wrenshall residents. It's the cost of improving air quality throughout the school. The Wrenshall board last week approved bonding without voter approval for that work last week should the consolidation talks fall apart. The improvements have been part of the past three failed referendums.

It would cost \$6.4 million to upgrade bathrooms and improve accessibility at the school.

Other costs include: \$1.9 million to repurpose the existing gym into a career and technical learning center, \$1.5 million to restore the pool and adjoining lockerrooms, \$750,000 for parking lots and driveways, and \$750,000 for science classrooms and labs. The other \$3 million would go to music and art upgrades, kitchen remodeling, roofing, asbestos removal, windows, tuckpointing and insulating.

The planned school in Wrenshall would include middle school students (grades 6-8) and high schoolers.

## South Terrace costs

The estimate at South Terrace is \$8.1 million for a K-5 school. It also would need a new gym at \$3.8 million. A series of proposed interior upgrades totals \$2.5 million. Another roughly \$2 million would go to remodeling classrooms for early childhood education, a new playground, new office, a secure entry and bathroom upgrades.

## Options?

Board members have yet to decide on how to approach what could be referendum add-ons. There are three projects totaling \$6.8 million that could be considered optional for voters. A new all-purpose football field and track would cost \$4 million. An auditorium would cost \$1.8 million and a new bus garage would cost \$1 million.

On Monday, board members from each district's facilities committee talked about how residents would digest the cost of consolidation with facility upgrades. The full boards need to decide how to phrase any future referendum language. The district will not be allowed to include any comments on



Plans at Wrenshall, above, include rehabbing the elementary portion of the school for middle schoolers and adding on to the back of the school. A gym would also be added to the South Terrace building, right. Both schools would gain secure entries and larger cafeteria space.

ballots about possible state funding easing the \$47.3 million burden. Taxpayers would have to face the full amount and decide if they felt confident it could be cut down.

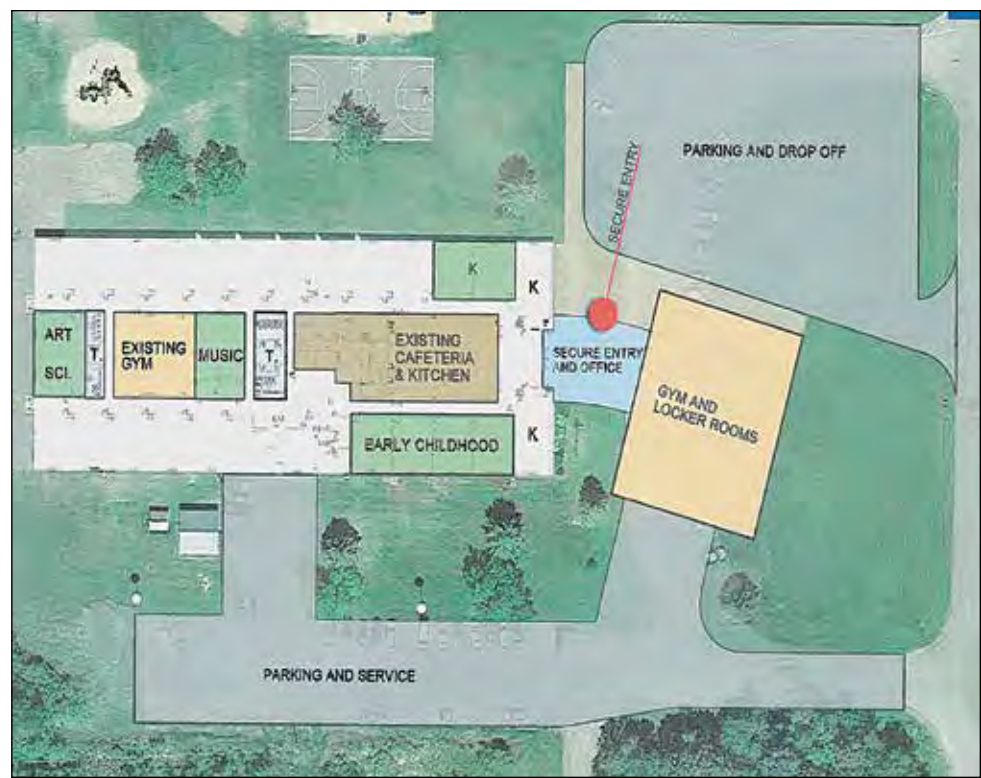
Janaki Fisher-Merritt of the Wrenshall board said that even if voters said "yes" to consolidation, a "no" to the funding would likely quash the consolidation. Carlton is still considering a one-campus plan for South Terrace and both sides are feeling the time crunch as state deadlines approach.

The districts could offer a referendum on bonds for facility upgrades in February. The other windows would be May and August. Part of the crunch is coming from the reliance on the State Legislature, which approves construction bonding in even-year sessions only. It appears the earliest you would see Carlton and Wrenshall students

sharing a classroom would be 2021.

Nothing is set in stone, of course. Far from it. There remains an intricate series of steps for board members. ARI is returning to Wrenshall Monday for a 6 p.m. presentation to committee members outlining a finer-tuned facilities plan. Board members will then discuss costs, ballot question language, timelines for referendum votes, and how each district will dissolve and meld their staffs, elected officials, debts and programs.

The next meeting that includes full school boards is at 6 p.m. Oct. 7 at South Terrace. Three public meetings on all the issues surrounding consolidation are scheduled in October. The first is at 6 p.m. Oct. 24 at South Terrace. Residents can attend the committee meetings but they are not allowed to speak.



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**CARLTON/WRENSHALL CONSOLIDATION**

# Districts might slow their roll on consolidation

**Mike Creger**  
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The full school boards for Carlton and Wrenshall schools will meet jointly Monday for the first time since committees from each district reviewed costs for facilities in a consolidated school district.

The cost of remodeling and building new parts of the schools in Wrenshall and South Terrace remains about \$47 million. The committees met Monday to fine-tune construction details and also consider an idea presented by superintendents from both districts. Wrenshall superintendent Kim Belcastro said she and Gwen Carman wanted to provide the

boards with an alternate timeline in the consolidation process to perhaps make it easier for district residents to swallow the price tag through a bonding referendum.

“It’d be really great to get the funding secured,” Belcastro said. The districts are planning on receiving state aid to help with the consolidation, as much as 50 percent of the projected \$47.3 million. But the districts would not know the fate of any state bonding until the Legislative session that starts in February. An original timeline for consolidation had the district putting out a referendum that month without knowing how much the state would kick in.

The new timeline presented

by the superintendents this week calls for an August referendum. Residents would then know how much they would be responsible for in shoring up the two schools and adding major spaces such as gymnasiums or an auditorium. The districts wouldn’t have to have a consolidation agreement in place, the superintendents found out from financial consultants for the district. The boards could formally approve consolidation after a successful referendum.

Voters would still know all consolidation plans before voting on facilities, the superintendents reported.

In the end, pushing the vote ahead five months would mean

getting a consolidation deal done by the end of 2020. Official consolidation couldn’t start until July 2021, with construction starting just before that and likely running through the first year of combined schools.

There has been a mad scramble this late summer and fall as the boards tried to reach state deadlines on officially declaring a consolidation. Under the new timeline, the pace would ease a bit. It isn’t clear how the slate of meetings, including three public input meetings scheduled for later this month, would be altered. Wrenshall will have its regular monthly meeting at 6 p.m. Oct. 14. Carlton’s regular meeting is at 7 p.m. Oct. 21. Both allow for

public comment. The first public discussion focused on consolidation is scheduled for 6 p.m. Oct. 21 in Wrenshall.

The meeting of the full boards Monday, at 6 p.m. at South Terrace in Carlton, will likely clear things up when it comes to how both districts will proceed. The Carlton board had a workshop meeting Thursday to discuss what stance it will take.

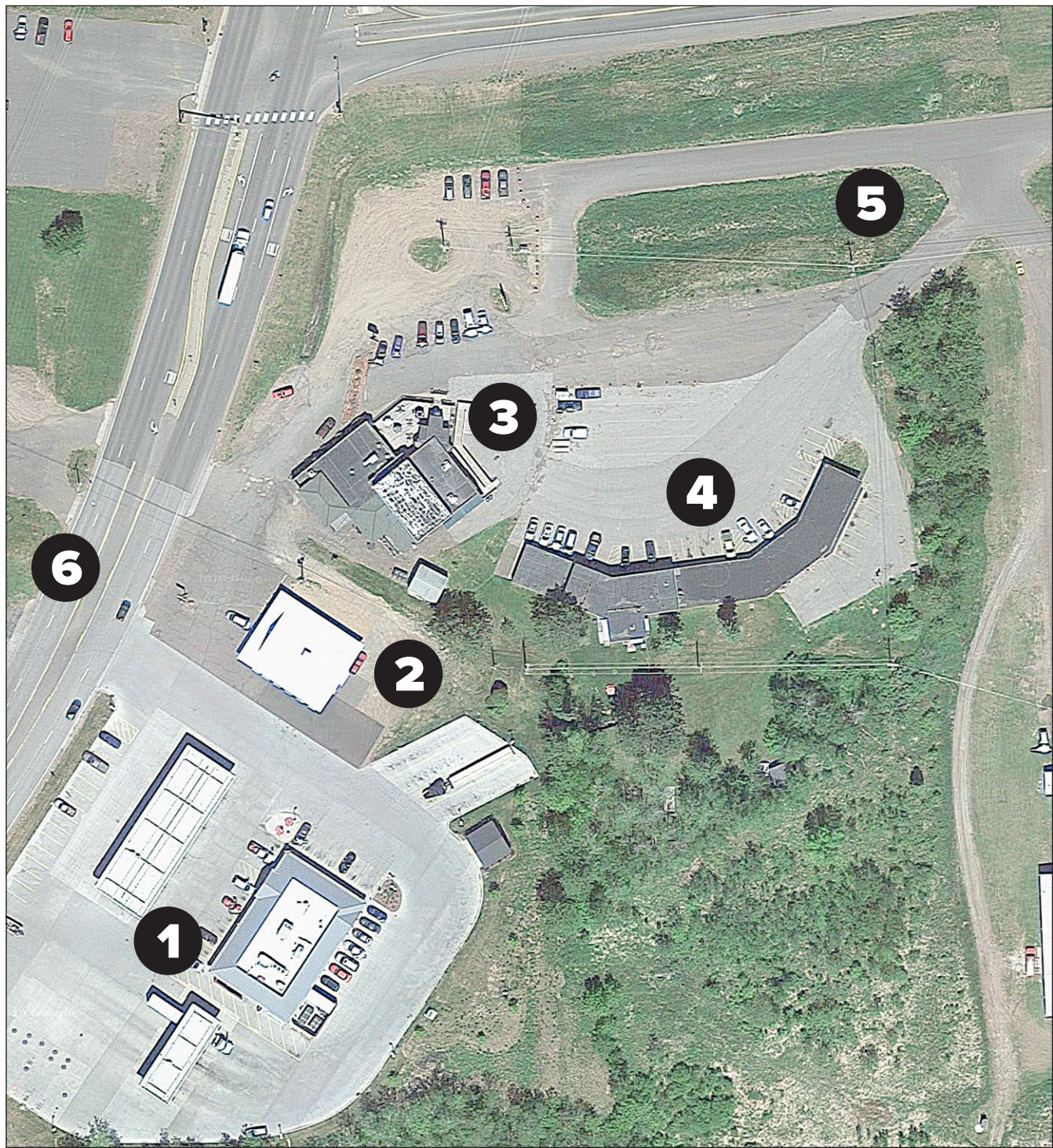
Belcastro said she hopes the boards will stay the course on a two-site consolidation effort despite the possibly eased timeline.

“We all need to be together on this,” she said. “We can’t be bouncing around.”

## Expanding on Kwik corner

1. Current Kwik Trip store.
2. Current Kwik Spirits liquor store, formerly Gramma Polo’s, to be demolished and replaced with car wash.
3. Trapper Pete’s is staying put.
4. Golden Gate motel will be razed and the area cleared for more parking and extension off the store for a liquor store.
5. Kwik Trip’s purchase of the motel will allow frontage road access to Minnesota Highway 61.
6. Entrances at County Road 45 have been congested.

*Image from GoogleMaps/Google Earth*



## Kwik Trip ...

*Continued from Page 1*

Teigen said Kwik Trip has always had an eye on expansion. Cindy Peterson, an owner at Trapper Pete’s Steakhouse & Saloon — the only other business remaining on the corner — said she was approached by the company when it moved here in December of 2014. She said the owner of the motel refused to sell, so Kwik Trip purchased property that held a restaurant and strip club in order to make room for the store.

Peterson said she welcomes the change. “It’s better with the hotel closed up,” she said. “It was a seedy place. Hopefully this will mean more business.” Trapper Pete’s is staying put, contrary to rumors, Peterson said. The restaurant recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

Kwik continues to drop stores across the “triangle area” between Duluth, St. Cloud and the Twin Cities area, Teigen said. It has added two stores in North Branch and one in Rush City on the I-35 corridor along with stores to the

west in Mora and Milaca.

“There’s room for a lot of stores,” Teigen said.

The Kwik Trip in Scanlon opened just days after a fire at the Golden Gate Motel in December 2014 displaced 32 residents. The motel was remodeled and renamed the Golden Gate Inn. Before closing this year, it had become a nexus for drug trafficking and other crimes.

Peterson said the motel owner just “up and left.”

County records show that Kwik Trip paid \$480,000 for the motel and the sale closed Aug. 29.





**CARLTON/WRENSHALL CONSOLIDATION DEBATE**

# Public gets say on school talks

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Public meetings are continuing on the question of consolidation between the Carlton and Wrenshall school districts and it seems a bit of a divide lingers between residents in each district.

A handful of people braved the nor'easter storm on Oct. 21 for the first public meeting outlining the two-site consolidation plan and its associated costs. There, the pressing question was about whether or not to keep the current nonfunctioning pool at the Wrenshall school or scrap it.

Another question rang loud and clear as well: What does the Carlton school board plan to do since Wrenshall seems pretty set on the two-site plan with an elementary at South Terrace and high school at Wrenshall?

Nothing became clearer after another public hearing

in Carlton Oct. 24. Long-time Carlton board member Tim Hagenah continued his support for the consolidated districts moving to one school site, despite the public being told at the meeting that the discussion was about the taste for consolidation, a two-site district and the sticker price for updating and right-sizing two buildings.

Carlton member Sue Karp said, "for Wrenshall, it's their way or the highway. I'm considering looking at all options."

Some in attendance said it's time to stop arguing over whether to consolidate or not. Others spoke out against it or in favor of a one-site solution.

Former Carlton board member Rick Santkuyl urged the boards to allow the residents to vote.

"The only way to get a real answer is to get a vote," he said. The answer is to let democracy work."

Superintendents from

each district said teachers from both districts overwhelmingly support the idea because it will give students more learning opportunities.

If that means a two-site option to get to consolidation, so be it, people at both public meetings last week said.

The district will seek money from the state through changing a bill to include funding for districts going through consolidation. Accountants for the districts estimate getting such a bill passed could mean a 47 percent reduction on the roughly \$38 million needed to add on to and improve the Wrenshall and South Terrace schools to accommodate larger enrollments and modernize.

The boards meet jointly on Nov. 12 and that will likely be the penultimate event before regular board meetings the following week. Both boards are expected to make commit-

ments to a timeline that included getting word of the state funding by the end of May and a referendum on consolidation and the bonding to pay for it in August. The two district could officially consolidate by July 1, 2021.

Although there would be a complicated and formulaic mix of current debt and levies spread among the district residents under consolidation, the mere cost of refurbishing both schools with another referendum would be about a \$180 increase in school taxes a year, or about 50 cents a day.

Students last week spoke out for consolidation, wearing Raptors team apparel, echoing their teachers.

"There is no perfect plan," said Carlton board member Ann Gustafson. "Everybody will sacrifice something. But that is what makes the best plan."

Timothy Soden-Groves contributed to this story.

# Deadly force deemed 'justified' in shooting

Pine Knot News

Following an investigation by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), a shooting by a Carlton County deputy while executing a warrant in July was deemed "necessary, justified and authorized by law" by the Carlton County attorney's office, according to a press release sent out Tuesday.

On July 29, 2019, the Carlton County Consolidated Emergency Response Team (CERT) responded to the home of Shawn Olthoff's mother in Moose Lake to execute a warrant for his arrest on charges alleging use of deadly force against a peace officer stemming from an incident two days prior in which Olthoff pointed a gun at an officer during a traffic stop and fled on foot. During the execution of the warrant, the CERT team entered the home, deploying a flash bang. Carlton County deputy sheriff Sgt. Warnygora made observations indicating to him that he and his teammates were about to

take gunfire. He fired two shots, striking Olthoff. Lifesaving measures were immediately employed. Olthoff sustained nonfatal permanent injuries. Numerous law enforcement agencies provided assistance at the scene.

Per BCA protocol, the file was submitted to Carlton County attorney Lauri Ketola to determine whether the actions of a law enforcement officer were justified and therefore legal under Minnesota Statute Section 609.066. In light of the close working relationship with local law enforcement, Ketola had the matter independently reviewed by retired St. Louis County prosecutor Vern Swanum.

Both county attorney Ketola and attorney Swanum concluded that the use of deadly force by Sergeant Warnygora was necessary, justified and authorized under the law.

Warnygora has been with the Carlton County sheriff's office for 14 years and was on standard administrative leave while the BCA investigation was ongoing.

# Cloquet district financials in good shape

Jana Peterson  
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As a result of making close to \$600,000 in cuts this past year and better than expected state aid, the Cloquet school board got some good news Monday following its annual audit. Instead of ending the 2018 fiscal year \$800,000 in the hole, the district instead had an average of \$450 in its general fund.

Including restricted funds such as transportation and facilities maintenance, however, the district actually ended the year with a \$448,617 increase to its fund balance. Most of the increase was in the long-term facilities maintenance fund, said district finance director Candace Nelis.

"Utilities, fuel costs, staff changes — who will retire, who will replace them, where they fall on the wage scale or insurance — those are all pretty difficult to predict," Nelis said. "All those little variables add up when you have hundreds of employees and thousands of kids."

Superintendent Michael Cary explained that the district is conservative with its revenue estimates, while it tends to overestimate expenses somewhat. He compared it to budgeting for a household, noting that most expenses can be

estimated in advance, but not known exactly.

The new auditing firm hired by the district, Bergan KDV, issued an "unmodified opinion," which is the best opinion an auditor is able to offer, explained CPA Jackie Knowles, who walked the board through an overview of its findings.

Knowles said the district has about three months of expenditures in reserve, which is in line with the state's maximum recommendations. She also said the amount the district gets in revenue from property taxes divided by the number of students is lower than the state average.

"So, education in Cloquet is a bargain," said chairman Ted Lammi, repeating a favored phrase. Knowles concurred that property taxes for the school district are lower than the state average in Cloquet.

The auditing firm did make some corrections and suggestions, Knowles said, after they found two internal control issues. The first was amounts related to capital assets that were incorrect because of previous misstatements, from work

done in 2016-18 that wasn't recorded and the sale of the old middle school. Everything is corrected for 2019, she said, and management determined the errors did not significantly affect the district's financial statements as a whole.

The auditing firm noted a lack of segregation of accounting duties due to a limited number of office employees, with a given individual being responsible for more than one aspect of an accounting transaction. While complete segregation of accounting duties is recommended, the cost for the number of staff to achieve that is "impractical," the report said. Instead, the firm suggested the board continue to monitor and be aware of potential problems.

Cary praised Nelis for keeping revenues and spending in line, and pointed out that the increase in long-term facilities maintenance funds will go toward projects to maintain district facilities to maximize the life of the buildings.

The school district is holding a strategic planning session Monday, Nov. 4. The session starts at 6

p.m. in the Cloquet High School cafeteria.



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# Commitment clash clouds consolidation

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The results of what at times was a contentious meeting of school board members from Wrenshall and Carlton Tuesday will be seen at each board's regular meetings next week. There should be two identical resolutions on the respective agendas. They will be worded the same, but judging from the conversation at the joint meeting Tuesday, they're being crafted by two

clashing mindsets.

Wrenshall board members were expecting a firm commitment from the Carlton board that it was moving ahead on consolidation of the districts using facilities from both cities. They didn't exactly get it.

"We're not united as a board," said Carlton board chairwoman Larae Lehto. What her board did agree on is that there should be a community survey done to better gauge what residents in both districts — and those with

students from outside the districts — think about consolidation, the \$38 million facilities plan, and the overall benefits of pairing the schools.

Lehto said the four community input meetings conducted in the past month gave a mottled impression. There seems to be a consensus on the value of consolidation, but mixed views on what it looks like, she said.

Obviously frustrated Wrenshall board members saw the request for a survey as more

indecision on the part of Carlton, especially since they were told going into the current negotiations that a two-site option was all that Wrenshall members would accept.

Wrenshall's Janaki Fisher-Merritt said he wanted to stay on a timeline that had both boards passing a resolution of support for the two-site option at their regular November meetings.

"It's important that we get a yes or a no," he said. While he believes a survey would be a

good tool in judging the appetite of voters in an inevitable referendum vote, he wants the Carlton board to make it clear that there will be schools in each district.

Lehto said the best her board could do was promise to keep moving forward, adding that there could be a resolution stating as much, that the board would "put aside any other plans."

*Continued on next page*

# Cloquet writers collect state honors in essay contest

Jana Peterson  
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While athletics and drama are often in the spotlight, three Cloquet High School juniors recently took centerstage for an academic endeavor, after placing first, third and fifth in a statewide essay contest.

Cloquet's Benjamin Bauer placed first, Lexis Gerard third and Brenna Mattson fifth in the Minnesota Best Prep Educational Forum Essay Contest. All participants were asked to respond to a prompt by fellow Minnesotan and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, from his book "Thank You for Being Late."

The prompt encouraged students to reflect on how we can be intentional and thoughtful people in our fast-paced world, a question stemming from Friedman's book.

CHS English teacher Jason Richardson submitted the entries after asking two sophomore classes write for the contest last year, after reading about 50 pages of the book.

The English teacher talked about the techniques that his

students used, in Bauer's case extending a metaphor, something they'd recently discussed in class. He said he liked the way the contest asked students to structure the essay but also include creativity.

"Formulaic writing provides the base: the structure is needed," the teacher said. "But the creative aspect makes writing shine."

He was also delighted by what his students wrote. And he hopes that all of the students learned that "writing takes a lot of hard work and grit and stamina, and this is a microcosm for life."

Richardson told the Pine Knot about the Oct. 7 event, noting that the young writers were greeted by the St. Paul mayor, and then Bauer got onstage and read his winning essay to over a 1,000 in attendance. He then met the keynote speakers: Friedman, a three-time Pulitzer Prize winning author, and Hubert Joly, CEO of BestBuy. Joly even offered him a job.

"It was a special night," Richardson said. "One English professor came up to me and asked, 'What's going on in Cloquet, Minnesota, to have writers like

this?'" I answered, "They read a lot in school."

The top 20 essay writers were honored in early October at a ceremony at the St. Paul River Center Grand Ballroom.

"It takes time and lots of effort to get our thoughts and ideas and beliefs on paper," Richardson said. "But once they're on paper, they are there forever. The writer grows as a person. Writing an essay or a narrative story is not the same as sending a quick tweet. There is no process in a tweet. But writing a story or an argument is a process, a difficult process."

He said Will Weaver, a writing friend from Bemidji, once told him: "Writing is a process, not a miracle."

"The three Cloquet kids put a lot of grit into their essays; they put a lot of 'process into it,'" Richardson said. "They read material, sketched ideas, revised, and peer edited. And the hard work paid off."

*Find Benjamin Bauer's award winning essay on this page. Read the other essays online at [www.pineknotnews.com](http://www.pineknotnews.com).*

## The Building Blocks of Community

Benjamin Bauer  
Cloquet High School

Faster. More efficient. No time. These are the trademarks of a successful person in our society. But is there time to pause, reflect, and think? We need to slow down and consider for a minute: what shapes us to be the people we are today? Is it the boundless realm of technology or the real, live, face-to-face, heart-to-heart conversations we share with people in our community? Perhaps both contribute to shaping our character and personal ideals, but talking over a phone shouldn't replace looking someone straight in the eye. Step back from the world of distractions and reflect on the community which has made you who you are today. How can we give back, improve, and make an impact on our community?

A community can be local, digital, or even global, but an effective community is cohesive. In the words of Thomas Friedman, "The country looks so much better from the bottom up." Much like a pyramid, our country and communities need an extensive foundation. Strong communities are built upon the unshakable foundation of hard workers and held together by the mortar of leadership. Communities need cohesive bonds so everyone is able to work together. Every person has a place and upholds the community. In a pyramid, every stone is laboriously placed and each is essential to the stability of the pyramid. Finally, the outer layer is put in place to make the pyramid look appealing, inviting, and polished. We polish our communities with feelings of inclusion and collaboration. A good community will look great from any angle, but all communities look best from the base up.

All members of a community can strive to support and become part of the foundation. A successful community is sustained by values such as trust, perseverance, and integrity. Take pride in your values. By caring and going the extra step, you could make someone's day or even week better. I am continually inspired by the values our cross country running community displays. After every race, rain or shine, we gather together to cheer on the last runners. Supporting all runners regardless of their team is important; we're shaping the next generation of runners to embody the core values of a community. Each stone of a community needs to be crafted and shaped to reflect the values important to that community. Every person who enters a community is a new stone ready to be crafted or an old stone waiting to be polished and added to the foundation. An inclusive community will support, work with, and look out for one another. All youth and young adults in a community deserve a caring mentor in their lives. Once a community reaches its polished state, there is only one option left: to expand.

A connected global community working together is now possible. We need to expand our "pyramid" globally. The interconnected base is growing, and each of us can be part of the base while contributing to the expansion of our knowledge. Previously, a vision such as this wasn't possible. Today our world is interconnected on a scale that allows for a global community—a community where the power of many individuals is combined in epic proportions and everyone is included. One of our biggest problems as a country is isolationism. With a base encompassing everyone, the impact we as humans could have for the better of the planet and ourselves is unimaginable. Anyone of us can make a difference. However, by working together as one, we can interlock to form the base a successful community needs. The "power of one" is huge, but the power of our global community joining forces is unstoppable. In this day and age, each and every one of us has the power of destruction and the power to uplift a community. Collectively we can make the right choice.

We need to think of future generations and what effect our actions will have on their world and community. Make sure your impact is beneficial to those around you. As Thomas Friedman asserts in his book "Thank You for Being Late," "I am built to think about my grandchildren. I am not a cheetah." We may not be able to keep up with the speed of technology, but we are wired to think about our children. Building a healthy community and world for future generations is essential. The building blocks are here; we need to put them in place.



Three Cloquet High School juniors were recently honored for writing exceptional essays in the Best Prep Educational Forum Essay Contest. From left, are Brenna Mattson (fifth place), Benjamin Bauer (first place) and Lexis Gerard (third place). *Contributed photo*



# Feds file charges in funeral shooting

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The Carlton County Attorney's Office announced Friday that the man at the center of a shooting at a funeral last month is being charged in federal court, rather than state court.

Shelby Gene Boswell, 28, of Hugo, Minnesota was accused of shooting and injuring another man in the back of the head at a funeral ceremony Oct. 18 in the Head Start gymnasium on the Fond du Lac Reservation. Boswell was charged with both first- and second-degree assault, being a felon in possession of a firearm as well as second- and third-degree drug possession in 6th District Carlton County Court on Oct. 21.

Those charges are now being dismissed, after a grand jury in St. Paul, for the District of Minnesota, indicted Boswell with possession and discharge of a firearm (a .22 caliber rifle) by a convicted felon.

Despite the allegation that Boswell put a gun to a

man's head and pulled the trigger, county attorney Lauri Ketola said a review of the investigation did not support a charge of attempted murder.

Ketola explained that her office has been working closely with newly appointed U.S. Attorney Erica McDonald, "who has committed to prosecuting violent offenders, particularly those committing violent and drug offenses in Indian Country."

Ketola said the mandatory minimum sentence is greater under the federal system, and sentences must be served consecutively. The fact that the offense was committed in a school zone — the Head Start building houses preschool classes, and is adjacent to the Fond du Lac Ojibwe K-12 school — brings with it a greater sentence.

According to the complaint, Boswell approached 45-year-old Broderick Boshay Robinson from behind before the funeral service started, then "produced a rifle and fired the rifle at the man's head."

Robinson was struck in the back of the head but remained conscious, and turned and saw the defendant pointing the rifle at him.

At that point, family members and funeral attendees moved to block Boswell from firing again, disarmed him and took the rifle to an empty locker in a nearby room. Robinson ran from the gym to another area. Robinson was taken to Community Memorial Hospital in Cloquet, then transferred to Essentia St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth and was released the same day.

The incident shut down the heart of the Fond du Lac Reservation for more than two hours, as law enforcement officials from multiple agencies responded and Reservation officials made sure everyone was safe and had almost immediate access to mental health care.

It wasn't the first violent crime Boswell has been accused of. Boswell was charged with two counts of second-degree assault

in 2010 for beating three different people with a baseball bat when he previously lived in Carlton County — an incident they said was related to Native Mob gang membership — and another federal case of "assault with a dangerous weapon in aid of racketeering" in June 2012.

Ketola said her office is committed to prosecution that maximizes the long-term safety of the community and collaborates "with law enforcement and prosecution agencies at all levels of government" to accomplish that.

"The amount of time and resources required to successfully prosecute a violent offender is significant for an office our size," Ketola wrote in response to questions from the Pine Knot News. "The assistance of the U.S. Attorney's Office in these efforts is greatly appreciated. Prosecution of Boswell by the U.S. Attorney's Office is the best use of resources while seeking the most optimal result."

## Shooting ...

*Continued from Page 1*

Thomas Allen Micklewright, 44, was subsequently booked into the St. Louis County Jail on a charge of second-degree unintentional murder. The incident occurred at Micklewright's residence.

On Saturday afternoon, a BCA mobile crime unit was parked outside Micklewright's home, and three Fond du Lac police cars were stationed along the road. The home is just over the Carlton County border in St. Louis County, about four miles from Big Lake Road in the Brookston area.

The St. Louis County Attorney's Office normally would have charged Micklewright by sometime Wednesday, but requested a one-day extension. The office said Wednesday that Micklewright would be charged sometime Thursday, after this issue the Pine Knot News went to press.

More details should be available from the criminal complaint after

Micklewright is charged.

When word of Couture's death came out on Facebook, condolences and fond memories of the man also known as "Weasel" poured in. Services for Couture were scheduled for Thursday morning, Nov. 14, with visitation at 10 a.m. and the funeral at 11 a.m. at Nelson Funeral Care in Cloquet. According to his obituary at nelsonfuneralcare.net, Couture was a member of the Fond du Lac Reservation and worked numerous jobs with them. He was an avid hunter, fisherman, outdoorsman and enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia; two sons, Christopher Houle and Jesse Seabury; four daughters, Jennifer Seabury, Katherine Couture, Leanne (Dale) Reynolds, and Tammy (Marc) Erickson; one brother, David Couture; two sisters, Marge Clark and Ella Netland; and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

## Schools ...

*Continued from previous page*

"It doesn't feel like moving forward," Fisher-Merritt said. "It feels like not moving backwards. Are you really in this with us?"

Carlton board members said they really didn't know if there is support for the cost of the two-site option. "What good does it do to consolidate if taxpayers won't provide money to build the buildings," Carlton's Sue Karp said.

Carlton's Tim Hagenah said, "I don't know when this board agreed to a two-site option. We agreed to look into it."

Hagenah's comment drew withering glances from Wrenshall board members.

"You guys came to us," Wrenshall's Warren Weiderman said. "It was two-site to begin with."

"You know what we think," Fisher-Merritt said. He said the serious business of asking people to raise their taxes deserves a strong stance from the school boards. He said that if the public perceives that the Carlton board doesn't agree on what voters will go to the polls on, "it will not pass."

"I know what Tim thinks," Fisher-Merritt said. "He doesn't think it's a good idea."

Fisher-Merritt pleaded that despite individual opinions, the Carlton board was bound to make a firm commitment to the two-site option. He said the boards can always change

directions as community consensus firms up. "We need to know what you think."

The comments drew applause from the audience of about 60 people, the first of a few such interruptions.

Jack Eudy said he feels animosity coming from the Carlton side. "I don't know where it comes from," he said. He said he was disappointed that Carlton appointed Hagenah to the committee that explored the two-site option when he didn't even back the idea. He said Carlton members need to ask themselves if they are "part of the problem or part of the solution."

Lehto said forcing the Carlton board to support the two-site option through a resolution would "only be divisive." She repeated that the board would approve a resolution seeking a survey and one offering general support for consolidation and no other talks other than the two-site option.

The survey would be rushed, superintendents for both districts said. It would go out to residents and parents of students outside the districts in January and results could come back in early February.

Knowing what the public thinks would be another tool in the two districts' efforts to lobby the State Legislature for state aid for consolidation based on aid sent to schools in emergency situations like the flood in Moose Lake. District advisors have said state aid could pay for nearly half of the \$40 million needed to add and refurbish spaces

at South Terrace and the Wrenshall school.

"We have to listen to it," Wrenshall superintendent Kim Belcastro said of the survey. The districts would split the \$10,000 cost to have the firm School Perceptions run the survey. It touts a high success rate in using survey results to tailor questions that referendum voters will accept.

Carlton's Sam Ojibway said the districts should focus on the consolidation and worry about the site options later. "We are going to cooperate," he said. "We need to get off the two-site discussion."

Wrenshall chairman Matt Laveau said he's seen consolidation talks in past go to a certain point and then fizzle. "It comes down to facilities," he said. "Time after time we say we're committed ... then walk away. I'm not doing that again. [Two sites] needs to stay a part of the discussion."

Wrenshall's Michelle Blanchard is a dean at Denfeld High School in Duluth and said she dreams of offering programs for students in Wrenshall that she sees in use at the larger school.

She's also wary of consolidation history.

"If this doesn't happen again, I don't think I can ever talk about consolidation again," she said.

In the final comments, after two hours of discussion, Hagenah said he has no "dis-ill (sic) for Wrenshall" but the public is still split on the two-site option versus one site in either city. He said there has to be

consideration about how consolidation will impact enrollment and improve education.

Hagenah said he knows he's "talking to a dead wall" because Wrenshall has insisted on schools in both cities. "Let's look at everything, all options," he said.

Janaki-Fisher said the burden on Wrenshall has been large since Belcastro has had extra duties concerning the past two months of consolidation flurry. She is the sole administrator at the school and the burdens cascade down the ranks, Janaki-Fisher said. The whole process "cost money and time," he said. "We're on a timeline."

He said Carlton's Jennifer Chmielewski was right in saying that Carlton's indecision was "disrespectful" to the process.

Laveau said the Wrenshall side would have to accept where Carlton is at and hope the survey will pin members down. "It's worth the wait if we can come out and be successful," he said. "I'd love to have a firm answer. I'm willing to wait."

Lehto said that if the community was unanimous, the school board would be as well. "We don't have a united voice."

The Wrenshall board will open its regular meeting at 6 p.m. Monday. The Carlton meeting begins at 7 p.m.

# I think Knot

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# News & Notes

## Carlton, Wrenshall students find harmony

### Boards continue wade toward consolidation

Jana Peterson  
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While the Carlton and Wrenshall school boards continue slow-moving consolidation talks, some students in the neighboring school districts say they want to be one school district already.

“The kids said they won’t play the Jug game,” Community Ed director Julie Jacobson told the Wrenshall board Monday. “They’re done competing against each other.”

Senior Randy Wimmer said that’s been a discussion point among his teammates. A football player on the inaugural Carlton/Wrenshall Raptors football team this fall, Wimmer is transitioning to basketball for winter and said the annual Brown Jug game between the two schools won’t feel like it used to, even if they do play it (which is likely, since it’s on the schedule).

“Now that we’ve practiced and played with each other 2-3 hours a day for months, it will be hard to revert back to that classic rivalry,” Wimmer said.

While Wimmer talked about how smoothly the co-op football team came together — how much fun, how there were no arguments about earning spots — the Wrenshall school board struggled to stay positive about its consolidation talks with Carlton.

Still, sitting in schools only a few miles away from each other, both boards took another step forward in the consolidation talks Monday, by approving money for a community survey and passing identical resolutions that committed to further steps in

exploring a two-site consolidated school district ... at least for now.

Wrenshall school board members vented about changes to the language in the resolution negotiated by Carlton after the last joint meeting on Nov. 12. Wrenshall board members thought they’d gotten a firm commitment from the Carlton board that it was moving ahead on consolidation of the districts with two sites. What the final negotiated resolution said — completed only about 30 minutes before Wrenshall’s meeting started at 6 p.m. — said wasn’t exactly that.

The sixth paragraph had been changed and now read: “Be it further resolved, that the [Wrenshall/Carlton] School District commits to information gathering only regarding alternative long-range facility options for the District, and will not actively move forward with other facility plan options beyond a 2-site plan until such time that either the Carlton or Wrenshall District formally notify the other of intent not to proceed with consolidation planning.”

Wrenshall board member Janaki Fisher-Merritt said his issue all along has been that Carlton won’t commit to anything, even when it initially appears they do.

“The information gathering is everything we’ve done so far, so this (resolution) means they can hire an architect, they can get consultants, they can continue to talk with every other district except us about consolidating,” Fisher-Merritt said. “In no way is it setting aside any other options.

It’s like, “Well, I’ll let you know in February if I’m going to marry you and I promise I won’t marry anyone else before February,” he added, to roars of laughter from the board and about 10 audience members. “Setting aside

other options really means ‘I’m not gonna go on any dates with anyone else.’”

Four miles away, Carlton school board chairwoman LaRae Lehto said the back-and-forth between her and Wrenshall chairman Laveau to modify the original resolution was “respectful and collaborative. We felt good about this.”

There was little discussion during the Carlton school board meeting about the resolution, save for some questions on how defined the limitations would be on exploring other scenarios that did not include a school presence in each city, which is the only consolidation option the Wrenshall board said it would discuss all along.

Lehto said the resolution is a “framework” around the two-site option “but not restrictive.”

Longtime Carlton board member Tim Hagenah said he didn’t want to be “handcuffed” if a district resident wanted to know more about other consolidation scenarios.

The entire resolution was passed unanimously by both boards, and additional points laid out a plan to survey both communities: follow the recommendations of the survey authors in moving forward with the long-range facility planning and a potential facilities referendum; and begin program, curriculum and budget planning for a two-site consolidation, as well as take steps to lobby the Minnesota Legislature to lobby for money to help with the consolidation costs.

If all of the proposed items come to fruition — survey, state funding, referendum — the final paragraph of the resolution noted that the districts would consolidate effective July 1, 2020.

Wrenshall board member Jack Eudy said he hopes community

members won’t get mad and just give up on the idea.

“People don’t realize the things we can get done together,” he said. “I have a fellow willing to help us get foundation money, but the only way you can get it is with consolidation.”

Consolidation could bring more than outside money from the state and Eudy’s mystery foundation.

Wrenshall sophomore Jordyn Harvey is excited about the opportunities for more extracurricular activities, more competitive sports teams and more academic offerings that would come with a combined student body. The volleyball player said that after the Wrens lost their first playoff game, the team went to cheer on Carlton ... dressed in Carlton colors and facepaint. It was fun, she said.

“It’s been neat to watch,” Belcastro said. “The hope that people making the decisions for both districts can be there to continue with the positive work that’s going on. I can’t say enough good about what we’ve been able to do so far.”

She added that the two districts are discussing combining their track and field teams in the spring.

In other matters Monday:

- The Wrenshall vote on the survey was not unanimous Monday, although a motion by board member Warren Weiderman to make Carlton pay all the costs for the survey died for a lack of a second after some lively discussion.

“I’m all for consolidation,” Weiderman said. “They need to do it or get off the pot. I say let them foot the bill. We’re being used as an ATM machine here.”

A motion by Eudy to split the costs of developing the survey and each district pay its own

mailing costs passed, with Weiderman the only “nay” vote.

- The Carlton board closed its regular meeting Monday to discuss an appraisal it received on the high school site. It is being eyed by Carlton County for expansion of the next-door county jail. The county wanted to hear from the school district in December on when it might make a decision on the property. Because of the ongoing consolidation process, the county likely won’t get a solid answer until the proposed referendum in August on paying for improvements at South Terrace and the Wrenshall school. Passage of a nearly \$40 million bond would allow Carlton to vacate its high school site because students would be attending an expanded school in Wrenshall.

- Wrenshall is still moving forward with its \$9.3 million nonvoter-approved referendum, to make health and safety and air quality improvements at the school there.

“We are still doing that and we really need to, I clarified that with (Carlton superintendent) Gwen Carman today,” Wrenshall superintendent Kim Belcastro explained after the meeting. “We really have significant facility needs that it’s important to move forward with, because we aren’t totally confident that consolidation will be agreed upon by both districts.”

Laveau said the improvements — to indoor air quality, asbestos removal, boiler update — are also part of the two-site plan. Carlton made similar improvements at South Terrace Elementary School through a \$5.5 million nonvoter-approved levy passed in 2017.

*Pine Knot News reporter Mike Creger contributed to this story.*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MARINES



This year the U.S. Marine Corps celebrated its 244th birthday, and a birthday ball was hosted by the Hebert Kennedy Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3979 in Cloquet. Cory Johnson, director of the State Veterans Cemetery in Duluth, was the guest of honor. The oldest marine present was Lance Corporal Ronald Guy Johnson, center, born Jan. 26, 1936, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1961. The youngest marine present, who also played “Taps,” was Lance Corporal Bryce Moe, left. The oldest and youngest marines took part in the cake ceremony. *Contributed photo*

## Hammitt loses interim label, named president

Pine Knot News

Interim Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College president Stephanie Hammitt got the job. She is FDLTCC president after serving as interim president for nearly 18 months. “Stephanie Hammitt has performed admirably as interim president,” said Devin-der Malhotra, chancellor of Minnesota State.

Malhotra said Hammitt is navigating the college through re-accreditation and the initial accreditation of the associate of science nursing program.

“She has earned overwhelmingly positive support from key partners and constituents including the Tribal Board of Education, the Tribal Business Coun-

cil, and internal stakeholders of the college,” he said.

Hammitt is an enrolled member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.



Stephanie Hammitt

Hammitt had served as the vice president of finance and administration from 2016 to 2018, as chief financial officer from 2008 to 2016, and as director of fiscal operations from 1990 to 1996.

She has also served on the college’s board of directors, including several years as chair. She served the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa as internal auditor from 1996 to 2001 and as comptroller from 2001 to 2008.

Hammitt had been serving as interim president since July 1, 2018 after the retirement of the previous president, Larry Anderson