

HENDERSON INDEPENDENT

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The state legislature adjourned Monday without approving a bonding bill, while Highway 93 once again closed due to flooding.

Wood duck boxes

More than wood ducks find their way into wood duck boxes. Let Al Batt list the varieties. P. 12



Fantastic floral landscape

The Altona Hutterite Colony garden sale beautifies the area every year. P. 11

Graduations are a go!

By Rachel Miller
Editor

COVID-19 has created a lot of uncertainty in recent weeks, with business changes, event cancellations and the moving of education online. This year's high school students were robbed of a prom and spring sports season, as well as the cancellation of band and choir concerts and the spring play, but this year's seniors will be celebrated.

Le Sueur-Henderson High School announced last week that they will be moving forward with the regularly-scheduled graduation date this Sunday, May 24 at 2 p.m. However, as with all things, the format will look a little differ-



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Tanner Tellijohn picked up his packaged cap and gown at LS-H High School on Monday, May 18. The school is following through with its graduation ceremony on Sunday, with some notable changes.

GRADUATION
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When will a fix for flooding get funded?

Legislative session ends without a bonding bill, even as Hwy 93 floods again



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Highway 93 into Henderson was closed again Monday as recent rainfalls resulted in flooding on Sunday. The re-flooding of Highway 93, which has already been closed twice this spring due to flooding, occurred even as the state legislature failed to produce a bonding bill by the time the session ended on Monday.

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Highway 93 into Henderson is underwater again.

For the third time this spring, flooded roads have forced the closure of Highway 93, which connects Henderson to the Le Sueur-Henderson School District, Ridgeview Hospital and mutual aid police and EMTs.

Ironically, the flooding occurred right as the Minnesota legislature adjourned its session that began in February — without passing a bonding bill.

When the session started, Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen and Senator Scott Newman, Henderson's representatives in the House and Senate, both said it would be a priority to get flood mitigation into a

FLOOD MITIGATION
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Sibley County offices reopen

Many Sibley County offices have reopened, with restrictions, as Stay At Home expired.
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Remembering departed vets

Henderson will not have Memorial Day services this year, but we remember those the city has lost.
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Stay At Home expires

Gov. Walz last week announced Stay At Home would not be renewed, and a new Stay Safer MN plan is taking its place.
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Distance learning grading

The LS-H School Board on Monday night approved a new grading policy for distance learning. Learn how your child will be scored.
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COVID-19 Pandemic

Businesses begin reopening as Stay At Home expires

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Gov. Tim Walz on Wednesday, May 13 announced that the Stay At Home order which has closed many businesses will officially end at 11:59 p.m. Sunday, May 17.

Starting on May 18, we are turning the workplace dial,” Walz said. “Non-critical businesses like retail stores and Main Street businesses can reopen if they have a safety plan and can operate at no more than 50 percent capacity. Small businesses are critical to the social and economic fabrics of our community all across Minnesota. I recognize how hard this pandemic has fallen on them and I hope this action charts a safe and prosperous path forward.”

Replacing the Stay At Home order will be a Stay Safe Minnesota order which still encourages Minnesotans who can work from home to do so, wear masks when shopping, limit travel to what is essential, keep gatherings to 10 people or less, and socially distance at least six feet apart.

In addition, Walz said he has directed his

cabinet to assemble similar guidance for how to safely reopen bars, restaurants, barber-shops and salons on June 1.

“We believe the safest place we can be is at home, but we know we can’t continue like this forever, so we are making turns on both the business and social dials in order to slowly and safely reopen our society,” Walz said.

The governor said Minnesotans should be prepared to “dial back if needed” if there is a potential spike in COVID-19 cases.

Walz also advised people with underlying health conditions and who are older than 65 to take extra precautions and stay home, if able to do so.

“We know the virus rides hardest on people who already have health challenges: people with lung and heart disease, asthma, diabetes or weakened immune systems are more likely to end up in the hospital if they get COVID-19,” Walz said. “We also know this virus is especially lethal for our elderly. It has already stolen the lives of so many of the Greatest Generation. We must do everything in our power to protect our older Minnesotans.”

COVID-19 weekly update

As of Monday, May 18, Minnesota had 16,372 positive COVID-19 cases, out of 156,606 completed tests. This reflects an increase of 4,573 cases since Monday, May 11.

Of the confirmed cases, 1,870 are in health care workers, 10,764 people no longer need isolation, 488 are currently hospitalized, including 229 in the ICU, and 731 people have died, an increase of 140 since Monday, May 11. To date, 595 of the state’s 731 deaths have been in long-term care or assisted living facilities.

There were 9 deaths reported on May 18, the lowest since May 4 (also 9 deaths), but followed six days with more than 17 deaths, including five days with at least 22 deaths.

The 70+ age demographic is most at risk from COVID-19, as 607 of the

total deaths to date have been in that age bracket. After that, 77 people age 60-69 have died, 37 age 50-59, seven in the 40-49 age range, and three in the 30-39 age demographic. Nobody younger than 30 has been reported dead from COVID-19 at this point.

COVID-19 cases in Scott County have continued to climb, going from 155 last Monday to 259 this week. However, its death toll has not moved and remains at one.

Sibley County more than doubled its cases in the past week, from four cases to 10, but has not reported any deaths.

Le Sueur County has 35 reported cases (an increase of five from last week) and reported its first death in the last week.

— Compiled by Rachel Miller

FLOOD MITIGATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bonding bill this session.

Then COVID-19 arrived on the shores of “The Land of 10,000 Lakes” and threw a wrench in the process. Although the Minnesota House is controlled by Democrats by a 75-59 margin, a bonding bill requires a two-third majority to pass, which means about a dozen Republicans would be needed to support any bonding bill.

“Currently the House GOP will not pass a bonding bill unless Governor Walz lifts his emergency powers and includes legislature in spending decisions in the future and opens the economy so all businesses have a chance to survive,” Gruenhagen informed the *Independent* on Saturday, May 16.

Although the House attempted and failed to pass a bonding bill on Sunday, that bill did not include funding to fix either Highway 93 or County Road 6, Gruenhagen

said.

However, the Senate bonding bill did include funding for both Highway 93 and County Road 6, but that bill also failed to pass.

With the regular session adjourned, it is likely a special session will be called this summer, with another chance for a bonding bill.

Henderson Mayor Paul Menne said residents will be doing themselves a disservice by thinking the session is over. Negotiations will be taking place between now and when a special session is called to order, and the likelihood of whether flood mitigation for Henderson is included will depend on how loud and vocal residents can be.

“It is as important now as it ever has been to call the Governor’s Office and let him know we need this project funded,” Menne said. “If [Gov. Tim] Walz wants something, his House will do it...If we get the governor to be for our project, the House will acquiesce

to his request. The key is the governor.”

The governor’s office can be reached at 651-201-3400.

Sen. Newman: 651-296-4131 or sen.scott.newman@senate.mn

Rep. Gruenhagen: 651-296-4229 or rep.glenn.gruenhagen@house.mn

Menne also recommended contacting House Democrats.

Menne said that one or two people calling won’t cut it — getting the state on board to fund a fix for flooding will “require effort from every stakeholder and every voter, and every child of every voter.”

“The biggest disservice is if people think it is over — the real

negotiation is just beginning,” Menne said.

THE NEED FOR MITIGATION

Flooding and Henderson seem to go together like peanut butter and jelly, although the coupling is anything but desirable for local residents and businesses who see hours added to their commute, and in some cases, their whole business model change as a result of closed roads.

The National Weather Service lists 39 historic crests of the Minnesota River in Henderson, and 20 of those have occurred since 2001. In addition, six of the top 10 crests occurred since 2001, including last year’s peak flood stage of 738.52

feet on March 24, 2019.

The cost of doing nothing is quite high, as Menne has previously stated that the state cost when Highways 19, 93 and County Road 6 are simultaneously closed due to flooding is \$93,000 a day. That cost includes vehicle hours traveled and vehicle miles traveled, but does not include the economic impact to businesses.

Since 1993, more than a dozen flood-related projects have been completed between Shakopee and Mankato, including six projects between Le Sueur and Mankato.

“While we don’t mind being last, we mind very much being forgotten,” Menne said.

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