

HENDERSON INDEPENDENT

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Below the fold

A Henderson woman is facing felony and misdemeanor charges for calling in a false bomb threat last Wednesday.

Flyover honors the fallen

Le Sueur hosted a flyover on Saturday to honor three local veterans, including two from Le Sueur, who never made it home from their service. P.3



Exploring America from the back of a bike

Henderson's David Rice is on a mission to bike from Minnesota to Maine this summer. P. 6

Gov. Walz comes to town

Henderson flood mitigation efforts are "on the 5-yard line"

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Gov. Tim Walz arrived in Henderson on sunny Thursday afternoon, July 16 to express his support for flood mitigation efforts in Henderson along Highway 93.

The governor was backed by other state representatives, chief among them Sen. Scott Newman, Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation Margaret Anderson Kelliher and MnDOT District Engineer Greg Ous, who all expressed support for the project.

Highlighting the need for flood mitigation, the tall camping directional sign on Highway 93 by Henderson was affixed with more than 20 markers showing the water levels and years that flooding occurred, including four separate markers for the four different flood events that have occurred this year, closing Highway 93 each time.

"Now it is critical because the frequency has increased so dramatically," Mayor Paul Menne



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Gov. Tim Walz, flanked by State Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen (left) and Mayor Paul Menne (behind Walz's hand) and Sen. Scott Newman (far right) shared how funding flood mitigation efforts in Henderson is a top priority. Walz later confirmed for the *Independent* that if a bonding bill makes it to him that includes funds to fix Highway 93, he will keep it in.

said.

However, finding the end zone recently has proved difficult, as House Republicans, who are needed to pass a bonding bill,

have been very vocal about not doing so unless Walz agrees to end his emergency powers and work with the legislature on COVID-19 measures.

The impasse has resulted in multiple failures to pass a bonding bill

GOVERNOR VISIT
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Henderson woman charged with making false bomb threat

By Rachel Miller
Editor

A Henderson woman has been charged with a felony and a misdemeanor for allegedly making a false bomb threat to police at 1:07 a.m. on Wednesday, July 15.

According to the Henderson Police Department incident report:

Kelly Ann Sharstrom, 39, of Henderson, told Sibley County Dispatch that the Wagar's building

at 422 Main St., Henderson was possibly wired to explode and her nephew was in her apartment with a large cache of ammo and would shoot anyone who entered the building.



Sharstrom

BOMB THREAT
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Indy to resume normal print operations in August

Subscribers to the *Henderson Independent* will soon notice a return to normal print operations.

Beginning in August, the *Independent* will go back to weekly print editions, although the paper will continue with the existing all black and white format for the time being.

"I want to thank everyone who has hung in with us for the last few months as we

have navigated the tough waters caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Editor Rachel Miller. "It isn't over yet, and we ask for your continued support as we do our best to keep you informed of everything going on in the Henderson area. Local journalism is so important to a community's success and vitality, and we are grateful every day for the opportunity to serve Henderson residents."

COVID-19 cases rise

Minnesota saw another big jump in COVID-19 cases this week, and a slight uptick in deaths. P. 7

New business moves in

Two new businesses have joined Heart of Henderson in the last month. P. 9

School enrollment projected to decline

Bad news on the horizon: LS-H is projecting a steady decline of students in future years, leaving a big financial hole. P. 14

Fire training on the river

Henderson firefighters received some training on the Minnesota River last week. P. 14

Giants fall to Northfield

A last inning homer did the Giants in last Thursday. P. 15



GOVERNOR VISIT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

this year, and Gruenhagen confirmed that the House still holds that position.

"This project is on the 5-yard line; we just have to punt it into the end zone," Gruenhagen added.

Walz was hopeful that would be changing, as the legislature convened another special session on Monday, July 13, but unfortunately a bonding bill failed to come to fruition by the time the session ended on Monday, July 20.

As a result, Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget Myron Frans said the state would need to redo its offering statement for bonds, as they are only good for five to seven weeks.

What this means for future flooding in Henderson remains to be seen, although Walz confirmed that funding flood mitigation efforts for Henderson is a priority of his. Should a bonding bill that includes flood mitigation for Henderson get approval at the House and Senate, Walz told the *Independent* last week that he would sign it.

"Henderson's voice was heard loud and clear," Walz said.

HIGHWAY 93 PROJECT

Finding a solution for flooding in Henderson has been a major effort in the past six years, and for good reason.

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.

Right now, the state is hoping to move forward with a project that would raise Highway 93 out of the 100-year flood plain. This would involve raising the roadway up as much as eight feet in some places, including by the levee on Highway 93. Doing so would require bridge replacement at the Rush River, with possibly a second bridge, MnDOT Project Manager Matt Young informed the *Independent* on Friday.

In order to do that, MnDOT crews would need to rip up the ex-

isting road and haul in enough aggregate to build up the road. The project would also require widening the road by two feet on each side, and the shoulders would go out six feet, Young said. Altogether, the project is estimated to cost \$23-25 million.

According to Young, if the project goes through this year, they would be planning to start construction in 2023.

"Right now we are moving forward as if we are getting this funding," Young said.

Preliminary design work has already started and they are working on a hydraulic analysis of the Rush River.

"That analysis will identify what our bridge needs will be and what acquisitions around the area will be like," Young added.

The biggest part of the project will be right-of-way acquisitions with the land owners all along the Highway 93 corridor between Henderson and Highway 169. Young estimates that alone will be a two-year process.

During the governor's visit on Thursday, Henderson resident Brendan Moore echoed his belief that fixing flooding on Highway 19 would be more beneficial not only to local residents and businesses, but for Sibley County as well.

However, that project comes with a significantly higher price tag. When the feasibility study was completed in 2017, the cost of bringing Highway 19 out of the 100-year flood plain was approximately \$40 million. Young said adjusting for inflation, a new preliminary estimate to fix Highway 19 is around \$57 million, and would likely cost more.

Young also stressed that Highway 93 is more prone to flooding than County Road 6 or Highway 19. While all three roads were flooded for approximately two months last year, this year flooding has closed Highway 93 four times totaling 22 days, while the other two roads have remained open.

The road closures cost MnDOT a lot of time and energy as well, as crews need to put up signs announcing the road closures, monitor the river and river levels during the closure, remove any log jams



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER

A contingency of state and local officials joined together in Henderson to discuss funding to bring Highway 93 out of the 100-year flood plain last Thursday. Among them were (from left) MnDOT District 7 Engineer Greg Ous, MnDOT Project Engineer Matt Young, Sen. Scott Newman, Gov. Tim Walz, Henderson Mayor Paul Menne, House Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen, Minnesota Department of Transportation Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Sibley County Commissioner Bobbie Harder (third from right).

that occur as a result of flooding, and clean and repair the road when waters recede.

"This has been a long time com-

ing, has been needed for a while and MnDOT wants to see this happen," Young said, also highlighting the safety component as

being able to keep Highway 93 open will connect Henderson to mutual aid from police, fire and ambulances in Le Sueur.



Henderson resident Brendan Moore spoke with the governor and shared how he believes fixing Highway 19 would benefit more Henderson residents and businesses, especially those in the truck and farming industries, and greater Sibley County residents.

Thank you

2019 Sponsors

The Sibley County Fair is an event that showcases the best of Sibley County. A place where fairgoers can come socialize with friends and family, a place where 4-Her's showcase their hard work and talents. The Sibley County Fair Board strives to make the fair fun, safe and memorable for all who attend. Last year we celebrated our 150th fair, and we would like to thank our sponsors, volunteers, exhibitors, vendors, entertainers and all who attended for helping to make it such a great event.

The safety of everyone who attends the fair is important. With the current restrictions, rules and regulations, along with an uncertain future, the Sibley County Fair Board made the difficult decision June 4 to cancel the 2020 Sibley County Fair. The decision was not an easy one. The Fair means as much to us as a Fair Board as it does to you. We understand that many are affected by this decision. We considered many options, but in the end, safety is our top priority.

Even though we will not be getting together to celebrate in 2020, the Sibley County Fair Board will be looking to 2021. We will use this time to make improvements and plan for next year. The Fair is a tradition that will live on. We would like to thank everyone for your continued support. We thank our sponsors who, each year, help make the fair such a great event and we encourage everyone to continue to support and shop our great local businesses.

We are all saddened by the cancellation of the 2020 Sibley County Fair but look forward to seeing everyone in 2021, where we will once again gather to celebrate Sibley County and the "Best Little Fair in Minnesota."

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