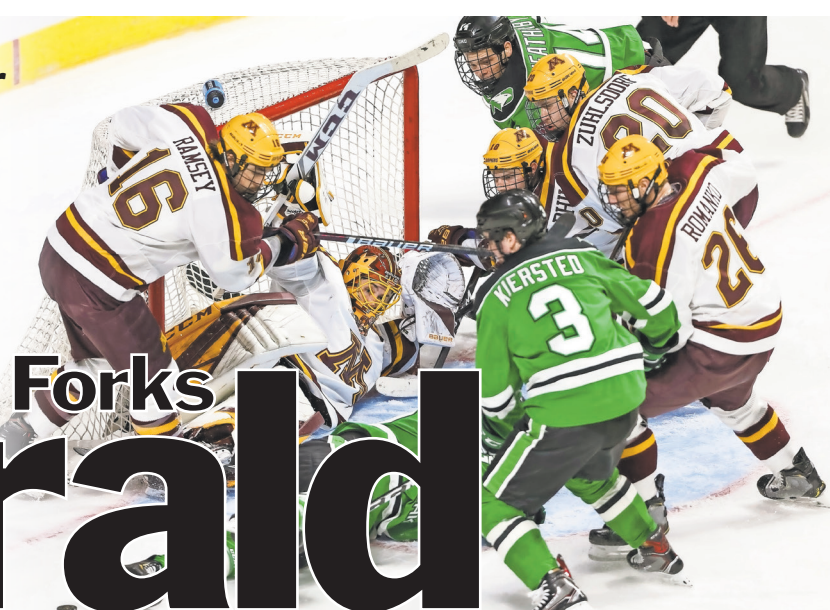


UND, U of M gear up for college hockey's most heated and contested rivalry, Page B1



# Grand Forks Herald

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## Crookston city administrator stepping down Resignation comes two months after mayor quit

By Hannah Shirley  
Grand Forks Herald

CROOKSTON – Crookston City Administrator Shannon Stassen has resigned, marking the second resignation by a high-ranking city leader in the past two months.

Stassen's last day will be Dec. 10. The City Council unanimously accepted a severance

agreement with Stassen at its meeting on Monday, Nov. 25.

According to the agreement, Stassen's resignation is voluntary and can be rescinded at any time before Dec. 10. Stassen's LinkedIn page indicates he has been Crookston's city administrator since January 2014.

Stassen's resignation comes two months after former Mayor Guy Martin abruptly resigned

his position.

In a Nov. 1 email to the City Council, Stassen expressed alarm at the "ineptness and unethical nature" of the Crookston Housing and Economic Development Authority. In the same email, Stassen informed the council of his intent to pursue a severance agreement if the council did not remove the executive director of CHEDA and

also work to reform the organization.

In his list of grievances, Stassen cited seven concerns, including what he calls "deception" by CHEDA Executive Director Craig Hoiseth regarding a \$250,000 forgivable loan to Red Wing, Minn.-based Epitome Energy for a proposed biodiesel soybean crushing plant.

"It is impossible for me, as

the city administrator, to overlook such an egregious act of deception involving hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money," Stassen wrote in the email. "I am left with no choice but to report this information."

Stassen summarized his concerns by saying CHEDA's general lack of business retention and

**STASSEN:** Page A6

## Correctional officer aided inmate, charges say

Woman accused of delivering contraband, sexual contact

By Hannah Shirley  
Grand Forks Herald

A former Grand Forks County Correctional Center correctional officer was charged Monday, Nov. 25, with delivering a controlled substance, a cellphone and tobacco to an inmate with whom she had a sexual relationship.

Savannah Marie Martin, 32, faces up to 20 years in prison for delivering a controlled substance to an inmate incarcerated in the GFCCC. She also faces charges of having a sexual relationship with the inmate from August to November and giving him a cellphone to communicate with her. Each of those charges carries a maximum five-year sentence and a \$10,000 fine. She faces an additional misdemeanor charge of delivering chewing tobacco to the inmate.

Martin was fired from GFCCC due to a non-related incident earlier this month, according to court documents.

On Nov. 13, Grand Forks Sheriff's Office Investigator Nicole Dvorak received a call from a woman reporting that her boyfriend, an inmate at GFCCC, had been seduced by a correctional officer, according to an affidavit for Martin's arrest.

The day before, a shakedown of the inmate's cell had turned up a cellphone, a vape pen, battery packs and super glue used to help hide the other items. The vape pen cartridges contained THC, a psychoactive compound of cannabis. All materials were allegedly delivered to the inmate by Martin.

In an interview with Dvorak, the inmate admitted to

**OFFICER:** Page A6

## WINGS IN THE WIND

Thief River Falls Airport Authority mulls over which airline should provide services



Adam Kurtz / Grand Forks Herald  
Members of the Thief River Falls Airport Authority board a Denver Air Connection 30-seat Dornier 328 for a tour.

By Adam Kurtz  
Grand Forks Herald

The manager at Thief River Falls Regional Airport said he would like to see a larger aircraft than that which now serves the airport, at its current 18 flights per week. But none of four Essential Air Service bids being reviewed meet that desire, and the U.S. Department of Transportation gets the final say.

With presentations by the CEOs of four bidding airlines completed on Tuesday, Nov. 25, the ball is now in the court of the Thief River Falls Airport Authority to prepare its comments to the DOT, as it mulls over which airline to throw its weight behind for its Essential Air Service route to Minneapolis/ St. Paul International Airport.

"That's the catch-22 that we're at," said

Airport Manager Joe Hedrick. "The DOT especially controls that. They say, if you go from nine seats to 19 seats, then we expect your frequency to drop down to 12 flights a week ... We think we have the demand for both of those things, so really we'll be just weighing what is more important to our customer base: Is it reliability, frequency

**WINGS:** Page A7

## J-turn on Highway 2 near Arvilla, ND, nixed

By Ann Bailey  
Grand Forks Herald

ARVILLA, N.D. — The North Dakota Department of Transportation will not install a reduced-conflict intersection on a portion of U.S. Highway 2 northeast of Arvilla.

Instead, NDDOT will extend the turn lanes on Grand Forks County Road 2 and remove the east-bound ramp, transportation department representatives told attendees at a public meeting at the Arvilla Community Center Monday, Nov. 25. About 40 people, mostly from Arvilla Township, attended the meeting and questioned NDDOT representatives about a revised plan for the intersection.

At a public meeting held in July, NDDOT officials had proposed to install a reduced conflict intersection, or J-turn, on a section of 800 feet west of County Road 2 to 700 feet east of the Turtle River State Park entrance.

Attendees at the July meeting expressed opposition to the project. The public's input during the two-week comment period afterward also was disappointing, said Aaron Murra, NDDOT's engineering manager.

"A lot of people didn't like the idea," said Murra, adding that, when there's opposition to a proposal, NDDOT officials reassess it. "We go back to the drawing board."

**J-TURN:** Page A7

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# Twin Cities travel expected to be 'very difficult to nearly impossible'

By Hannah Shirley  
Grand Forks Herald

Grand Forks is still expected to see minimal winter impacts throughout the week, with light snow accumulations possible over the holiday weekend. Travelers, on the other hand, will encounter severe weather.

A major winter storm warning is in effect in the Twin Cities area from 9 p.m. Tuesday to

noon Wednesday, Nov. 27. Areas from Little Falls, Minn., to Madison, Wis., could see snow-fall totals of 6 inches or more, with 9 to 12 inches expected in the Twin Cities. Travel will be severely impacted due to gusty, snow-blowing winds at least through Wednesday morning.

According to a Hazardous Weather Outlook put out by the National Weather Service, travel

will be very difficult to nearly impossible Wednesday morning in parts of northeast Minnesota. Stormy conditions mid-week will possibly be followed by a long duration of accumulating snow Friday through Sunday as another area of low pressure moves through the region, possibly impacting post-holiday travel.

A significant winter storm is

expected to hit central North Dakota, including the Bismarck area. According to a special weather statement from the National Weather Service, less than an inch of light snow is expected on Thanksgiving Day. There is an increasing chance of freezing rain and snow Thursday night, which is expected to create icy conditions on roads, sidewalks and bridges.

The freezing rain is expected to continue on Friday.

By Saturday, widespread snow across western and central North Dakota is likely, with blizzard conditions possible. While the National Weather Service statement said details about this storm are still uncertain, it's likely the southern part of the state will experience the worst impacts.

## J-TURN

From Page A1

Besides removing the eastbound ramp onto U.S. Highway 2, NDDOT's revised plan calls for widening the intersection of County Road 2 and U.S. Highway 2 to accommodate turning movements. Meanwhile, destination lighting will be installed at the Arvilla intersection and the Turtle River State Park entrance, and turn lanes at Turtle River State Park will be extended.

Some people at Monday's NDDOT's informational meeting, which was held in an open house format, were unhappy

with the removal of the eastbound on-ramp, telling NDDOT representatives that it will result in backed-up traffic during the morning commute to Grand Forks and that it will be difficult to merge onto U.S. Highway 2 from a stop.

The eastbound ramp onto U.S. Highway 2 is being removed to improve safety at the intersection, according to Murra, who noted that on-ramps typically aren't used to access highways and the ramp doesn't originate on a bridge, but from level ground.

"It's usual for the interstate, but not usual for U.S. 2," he said.

Larry Hagen, Turtle

River State Park manager, said he was pleased with the changes that will affect the park entrance. Extending and widening the turn lanes to the park entrance and installing lighting will make access to the park safer for weekend campers as well as day visitors, Hagen said.

"It's a very nice improvement," he said.

The revised project, which will cost \$637,000, is anticipated to be funded with 90% or \$573,000 in federal money and \$63,700 in state dollars.

The project, which will be combined with a concrete overlay, is expected to begin in the summer of 2021.



Ann Bailey / Grand Forks Herald

The North Dakota Department of Transportation plans to remove the eastbound ramp onto U.S. Highway 2 near Arvilla, N.D., during a 2021 construction project.

## WINGS

From Page A1

of flights or is it the capacity of the aircraft?"

The four airlines are Air Choice One, which is bidding \$3.7 million for its first year of the contract; Boutique Air, the current route holder, which is bidding at \$3.5 million for the first year; Denver Air Connection, which is bidding at nearly \$4 million; and Southern Airways Express LLC, which is bidding at \$3.3 to \$3.6 million.

Contracts run for two or four years.

The DOT requested bids for Thief River Falls Regional Airport's service to Minneapolis earlier in November, with the new contract slated to begin on June 1. The DOT required the bids to be "consistent with what the community currently receives, namely 18 weekly round trips, with eight- to nine-seat aircraft." The Department also would consider a larger 30- or 50-seat aircraft with 12 weekly round trips.

Hedrick, cognizant of the requirements for the route, would like to see more.

"I think the best for us would be to take our existing frequency of 18 flights a week and put that into the next capacity-size aircraft, which is that 19 seat," he said. "I don't see any bids that came through like that, 19 seats for 18 round trips per week."

As to capacity, Air Choice One has put forth an alternate to its regular bid, with a 19-seat option for 12 round-trip flights per week, at \$3.1 million for the first year.

Denver Air Connection is offering a 30-seat option on a Dornier 328 jet, and a 50-seat option on an Embraer EMB-145 both at 12 round-trips a week. That size jet also poses some issues.

"We certainly don't want to see a larger capacity airplane, like the Dornier 30-passenger or the 50-passenger EMB-145. We don't want to see them half full, or less," Hedrick said. "That just doesn't look good .... We would have to be confident that we could fill those planes up in the long run."

The choice, according to Airport Authority Chair Don Jensen, will not be easy, as the board must weigh other factors beyond number of seats and flights per week, such as the ability to operate in the harsh winter.



Adam Kurtz / Grand Forks Herald

Air Choice One CEO Shane Storz, right, presents a service proposal to the Thief River Falls Airport Authority.

"I would have to say that maybe Denver Air has probably got more of a climate like we do: snow and wind and whatever," Jensen said. "De-icing is a big issue."

Southern Airways CEO Stan Little said he believes his company's aircraft, the nine-passenger Cessna Caravan, will hold up to the winter weather.

"These planes will fly up to negative 50," Little said. "I hope that's not too often .... There are a lot of planes that negative 50 can be a problem for .... If you stay below 50 degrees below zero for a long period of time, we may have an issue, but we'll just pray hard that doesn't happen."

Though Jensen hinted at consistency being a

factor in his decision, he did not commit to any one airline.

"I think Boutique has been pretty darn good to us, and I hate that we are going to deviate from them real fast, but you never know," he said.

Money may be the deciding factor as to which airline winds up serving Thief River Falls. Should the airport

authority choose to support a more expensive bid, such as Denver Air Connection at nearly \$4 million, the DOT still may choose a cheaper option.

"In that scenario, they would look at our comments, and they

would look at the bottom dollar, bottom line, and say ... we're not going to go with the community comments on this.

They're going to stick you with somebody else," Hedrick said.

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