

CRAZY FINISH

CONCORDIA
LOSES ON
LAST-MINUTE
PLAY,
SPORTS, D3

The Forum

OF FAIRMOUNT HEAD

SUNDAY EDITION

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2019

INFORUM.COM



John M. Steiner / Forum News Service
The Jamestown Fire Department driveway is cleared by a snowblower Friday, Oct. 11.

'It's not easy, but farming never is'

Early snowstorm presents challenges for ND farmers

By Travis Svihovec and Blake Nicholson
Bismarck Tribune

BISMARCK — The early October snowstorm that buried much of the eastern two-thirds of North Dakota created an immediate crisis for farmers and ranchers and promised to present problems that will linger into next year's growing season.

The storm that moved in late Wednesday, Oct. 9, continued to drop snow in some areas on Saturday. Harvey had a storm total of 30 inches, and Bismarck a little more than 16, according to the National Weather Service. No travel was advised in central and northeast North Dakota, and Interstate 94 was closed for a day between Bismarck and Fargo. An estimated 300 people in the state were without power, mostly in the northeast, according to PowerOutage.us.

Snowdrifts in the Jamestown area rose as high as 5 feet, said Ryan Wanzek, who farms land south and west of the city. In his fields, corn and soybean crops sit unharvested after near-historic rainfall late this summer.

It's a situation farmers across the state are facing, and without a crop to sell, Wanzek is worried many of them will run into cash-flow problems.

"If you didn't get anything off and can't combine until January, how do you pay your bills?" he said.

There also is concern in ranching country, even with the storm being forecast well in advance.

SNOWSTORM: Page A8



Photo courtesy of Mandy Wentz
Soybean field north east of Aneta, N.D.



Photos by Patrick Springer / The Forum
Two buffalo bulls, part of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's herd of around 250, roam in a pasture west of Fort Yates, N.D. The tribe's herd started in 1968 when it received six buffalo from Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Ultimately, the tribe would like to expand the buffalo herd to 1,000.

LASTING SHOCK

Study asserts effects of buffalo slaughter evident in Standing Rock Sioux Tribe today

By Patrick Springer
pspringer@forumcomm.com

FORT YATES, N.D.
Standing Rock Sioux winter count remembers 1882 as the year White Beard went on a buffalo hunt with the Native Americans.

White Beard was the name the Lakotas and Yanktonai of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation gave to James McLaughlin, the agent who joined the Sioux in one of the last large buffalo hunts in North Dakota.

"This was a happy, though brief, interlude for the people who were now forced to eat government rations most of the time," a history written by the tribe in 1995 observed. By 1883, the northern herd, which once numbered in the millions, had been eliminated.

In fact, the sudden loss of the buffalo for tribes associated with Sitting Bull was a disaster that delivered



The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe maintains a buffalo herd, which it uses to provide buffalo as food for tribal members and as part of ceremonies. The buffalo were a staple for the Sioux, who suffered enduring economic and cultural setbacks from the near extinction of the buffalo in the 1880s.

an economic and cultural shock that persists today, more than a century later, according to a study by a team of economists.

The lingering adverse effects of the loss of the buffalo are dramatic,

according to the report, "The Slaughter of the Bison and Reversal of Fortunes on the Great Plains" by economists working for the Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.



This is the second of a three-part series examining the economic and cultural significance of the buffalo to certain tribes, with a focus on the Standing Rock Sioux.

The reversal of fortunes: "Historically, bison-reliant societies were among the richest in the world and now they are among the

BUFFALO: Page A6

INSIDE TODAY'S FORUM



LIFE: ND native goes from Valley City bike rides to helping Miles Davis in Switzerland.
PAGE B1

Whistleblowers warned of unwieldy child protection caseloads early on

Letter to Cass County leaders came a year before investigation

By April Baumgarten
abaumgarten@forumcomm.com

FARGO — Systemic problems troubling Cass County's child protection unit came to light this month after a caseworker's resignation spurred a county investigation

into allegations of a hostile work environment, as well as concerns about heavy caseloads.

However, it turns out county leaders were warned a year before the investigation began that increased caseloads had become unman-

ageable, according to a whistleblower letter The Forum obtained through a public records request.

The warning came from seven caseworkers who signed the June 1, 2018, letter, which said

CASELOADS: Page A9



Today's weather

Cloudy, flurries
38°
26°
Details, D6

Births C10
Classifieds G
Comics Z
Crosswords B3
Obituaries C8-C9
Opinion C6-C7

FARMLAND FOR SALE

SALE PENDING: Richland County Farmland 156.99+- acres of excellent land SE of Mooreton, ND.

FOR SALE: Wilkin County MN Farmland 80 acres, West Campbell Township, SE of Fairmount, ND. Excellent quality.

FOR SALE: Traill County ND Land near Portland ND. 135 acres combination Great Hunting Land along the wooded Goose River along with high productive tillable Land.

Johnson
Auction & Realty LLC
www.johnsonauctionandrealty.com
40 years of agricultural experience in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota



Phone:
701-799-5213
Steven Johnson
steve@johnsonauctionandrealty.com
R.E. Broker Auctioneer Lic# 976

CASELOADS

From Page A1

increased caseloads hindered social workers from "providing the best possible services." Also, a focus on prioritizing more severe cases led to missed deadlines and delays in responding to other cases, "which could have a detrimental impact on the safety of children and families," the letter said.

"We find it necessary to make a clear statement ... we are unable to maintain the enormously high volume of child protection assessments, which has prevented us as professionals from providing the best possible services to our community," the letter said.

The letter was sent to Social Services Director Chip Ammerman and managers in the child protection unit — Linda Dorff, Rick Van Camp and Tami Anderson — as well as human resources officials, County Administrator Robert Wilson and County Commissioner Vern Bennett, who held the social services portfolio at the time. Bennett died last month at the age of 86.

The signers of the letter met with Ammerman and Human Resources Director Cindy Stoick. Wilson was not present for the meeting, but was told the issues were "understood, acknowledged and were being resolved."

"Quite simply, we trusted that," Wilson told The Forum.

Ammerman said plans of improvement were discussed because of the letter, but the child protection unit got "caught up in the pace" of work and didn't follow through on some strategies.

Since the letter was sent, five of the signers — Chad Fischer, Larissa Marsh, Mandee Wersinger, Hannah Ritteman and Ashley Peterson — have quit working in the unit. Two signers, Sarah Goerts and Tessa Evenson, still work there.

The letter was sent about a year before the Cass County Sheriff's Office launched an investigation in June 2019 prompted by a resignation letter from caseworker Jennifer Aldinger. Aldinger worked for two months in the child protection unit before submitting her resignation letter on April 11, 2019.

Ammerman and Stoick asked the sheriff's office to investigate Aldinger's claims of a hostile work environment. The sheriff's office received the request in April 2019, but due to position changes in the sheriff's office, an investigator did not receive the case until June 2019, according to the investigation report.

Because Aldinger's letter presented allegations of a hostile work environment and unethical practices, Ammerman said it necessitated an investigation. He called Aldinger's allegations inflammatory, but he noted that the investigation raised concerns of systemic problems within the child protection unit, including unmanageable caseloads. Ammerman is working on a plan to address the investigation and needs within the child protection unit, which will be reviewed by the Cass County Social Services Board at a meeting on Monday, Oct. 21. Wilson said he believes the unit needs a comprehensive review.

'The right to be protected'

Caseworkers were handling 30 to 40 cases each when the whistleblowers' 2018 letter was written. The letter said such caseloads do not comply with guidelines set by the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Ideally, a casework-

er should not have more than 15 assessments in progress within a 31-day period. That number is more of an aspiration than a requirement, Ammerman said.

"Now me personally, I think it should be seven to nine, so they can do quality (work), and we're not killing staff," he said.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services was unaware of the whistleblowers' 2018 letter, but it was contacted by Aldinger about the heavy caseloads, said Marlys Baker, state administrator for child protection services.

Baker said Cass County is out of compliance with state guidelines, but it is not breaking any laws. Counties don't have control of how many cases they get, but the state is working with the county to "balance the case flow while keeping the focus on the safety of children," she wrote in an email to The Forum.

"Children who are reported to be in danger must be seen timely, even if it means that a worker receives more assigned cases than would be desirable," she said.

Cass County periodically prioritizes cases that need immediate attention while delaying less critical cases. That alleviates caseloads for social workers, but it's not ideal, Ammerman said.

"Every child deserves the right to be protected," he said.

County Commissioner Chad Peterson currently holds the social services portfolio and did so when Aldinger submitted her April 2019 resignation letter, which was sent to him and Stoick. He was also aware of the whistleblowers' 2018 letter. His wife, Ashley Peterson, was one of the seven caseworkers who signed the letter before she resigned July 31, 2019.

Wilson and Chad Peterson said they don't believe there was a conflict of interest with Chad Peterson holding the social services portfolio since the portfolios are rotated every couple of years. Chad Peterson also sits on the Cass County Social Services Board, but he said the state makes the final hiring decisions for social workers.

Caseworkers deal with awful situations on a daily basis, and though caseloads are part of the problem, it's the environment that needs to be fixed, the commissioner said.

Social services has added additional staff,

but "you could add 50 more people, and we're still going to have a problem," he said.

"A symbolic change is not what this department needs," he said. "It just needs a substantive change."

Positive reviews

Performance reviews for Ammerman and Dorff, the manager of Cass County's Family Services Division, before the investigation were mostly positive, according to documents obtained by The Forum. A public records request revealed no complaints against the two prior to Aldinger's letter.

Ammerman received positive marks in all categories in his last review, which was in 2017. Commissioner Bennett wrote few comments in the evaluation, other than Ammerman does "an outstanding job in all areas of responsibility" and there were "no areas requiring improvement."

Reviews of department heads are done at the discretion of the portfolio holder, Wilson said, so they may not be done every year.

Supervisors, staff and community members surveyed in 2017 and 2018 said Dorff has been a leader who embraces change, is able to meet staff needs, handles issues promptly and effectively, and is supportive.

"Linda has maintained a very positive attitude and continues to reflect on her actions for ways to improve," the evaluations said.

Last month's review also was mostly positive, though it mentioned the investigation. Those surveyed for Dorff's review noted "overwhelming caseloads and demands," lack of support from leadership and "antagonistic interaction" with Dorff. Dorff did not return a phone message from The Forum seeking comment.

"From the surveys, the impact of this dysfunction is apparent on the entire division and needs to be formally addressed with an intentional progressive plan to address the negativity that is pronounced," Ammerman wrote, adding that Dorff was "active in attempting to address" the issues by hiring emergency staff, reviewing practices, addressing supervision issues and working with the state.

Readers can reach Forum reporter April Baumgarten at 701-241-4517 or follow her on Twitter @aprilbaumsaway.

Muslim civil rights group, Democrats condemn Trump's rant against Somali community

By Ryan Faircloth St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations on Friday, Oct. 11, condemned President Donald Trump for targeting the state's Somali community during his Thursday night rally at the Target Center.

"President Trump's hate rhetoric places the entire Somali community in Minnesota and nationwide in danger from the growing white supremacist movement that looks to him for validation and encouragement," CAIR-MN executive director Jaylani Hussein said in a statement. The CAIR statement also noted that the remarks were met with "cheers and jeers by an almost all-white crowd."

Trump ranted about refugees — specifically those from Somalia — during his rally, drawing loud agreement from the raucous crowd of some 20,000 people.

He touted that he had reduced refugee resettlement by 85% since taking office. And he said the resettlement of the refugees from war-torn Somalia, including the family of freshman Democratic U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minneapolis, was done "without considering the impact on school boards ... and taxpayers."

Trump also boasted that he had kept a promise by ordering that no refugees would be resettled in any city or state without approval from that city



Dana Ferguson / Forum News Service Thousands fill the Target Center in Minneapolis on Thursday, Oct. 10, to hear President Donald Trump in a campaign rally.

or state. He apparently meant an executive order he issued two weeks earlier that said the federal government "should resettle refugees only in those jurisdictions in which both the state and local governments have consented to receive refugees."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey — whom Trump called "a rotten man" and a "bad mayor" — tweeted in reply: "Consent given. Immigrants and refugees are welcome in Minneapolis."

Minnesota's Somali community is believed to be the nation's largest, with estimates ranging from 40,000 to 80,000.

"Immigrants and refugees have helped make our state a wonderful place to live and work — which is far more than this president has done," tweeted Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who is running for president. "Stop using immigrants and refugees as political

pawns!" The president also took several shots during the rally at Omar, a Somali-American; the rally took place in the heart of her congressional district. He called her an "America-hating socialist" before asking the crowd how they elected her in the first place.

"How the hell did that ever happen?" Trump said. "She is a disgrace, and she is one of the reasons I'm going to win and the Republican Party is going to win Minnesota."

Omar responded to the attacks by using the opportunity to fundraise for her re-election.

"At his rally just now, Trump called me an 'America-hating socialist' and a 'disgrace.' He shouted xenophobic conspiracy theories about me. He scolded my district for voting for me," Omar tweeted. "His hate is no match for our movement. Stand with me by donating now."

Advertisement for Kmart store closing. Features large text: 'Kmart discover more @ kmart.com', 'DISCOUNTS AT THIS STORE ONLY', 'FARGO • 2301 S UNIVERSITY DR', 'STORE CLOSING', 'ALL Halloween Costumes 30% off', 'ALL Patio Furniture 50% off', 'ALL Footwear for the entire family PLUS ALL Bras 40% off', 'Stock Up for the Holidays! 30% to 50% off ALL Toys, Games and Dolls', 'EVERYTHING MUST GO! 40% to 60% off ALL Fashion Clothing', '70% off ALL Fine Gold, Silver, Diamond & Gemstone JEWELRY*', 'Now Hiring, Full & Part Time Seasonal Help, apply in store or online @ https://jobs.sears.com', 'STORE FIXTURES, FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT FOR SALE NOW!', 'ALL SALES FINAL. NO REFUNDS OR EXCHANGES. WE ACCEPT CASH, CHECKS, VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER, KSMART AND SEARS CARDS. WE ACCEPT KSMART GIFT CARDS. DISCOUNTS DO NOT APPLY TO PHONE CARDS, PHARMACY, TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND PREPAID GIFT CARDS. SOME FOOD ITEMS ARE EXCLUDED AS REQUIRED BY LAW. INVENTORY IS LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND. 10K GOLD JEWELRY UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED. ALL DEAL FLASH OR DEPARTMENT 36, 236 AND 436 MERCHANDISE IS MARKED AT THE PRICE AFTER ALL DISCOUNTS. THIS STORE IS NOT PARTICIPATING IN CURRENT KSMART CIRCULARS.', 'kmart A SHOP YOUR WAY PARTNER', 'NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY-IT'S FREE! kmart.com/shopyourway'

Advertisement for City Briefs. Features text: 'CITY BRIEFS', 'Place your City Briefs at citybriefs.forumcomm.com', 'FM AAUW's 61st Annual Used Book Sale Quality Books | DVDs | CDs proceeds go to scholarships for women', 'Friday, October 25th 9:00-9:00 Saturday, October 26th 9:00-5:00 (bag sale 2-5)', 'Book donations accepted at the mall October 20-24th Books can be dropped off outside the storefront during mall hours: Sunday 10/20 12-5 Monday 10/21 10-9 Tuesday 10/22 10-9 Wednesday 10/23 10-9 Thursday 10/24 10-9 *please no encyclopedias, magazines, or Reader's Digest', 'Located near the East or City Hall Mall entrance', 'jobsHQ.com NEW JOB OPENINGS ADDED EVERY HOUR WWW.JOBShq.COM Forum Communications Company'