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A closer look at Hwy. 61 roundabout

by CHRIS ROGERS

An up-or-down vote on the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (Mn/DOT) proposal for roundabouts on Mankato Avenue is less than two months away. While plenty of Winonans are not sold on the

plan, the Winona City Council largely is.

For skeptics, the main concern is congestion at Highway 61 and Mankato Avenue, where Mn/DOT's proposed two-lane traffic circle looks to be the busiest roundabout in the state. This summer, on www.mankatoa-vereconstruction.com, Mn/DOT released a

video of simulated traffic flowing through all four proposed Mankato Avenue roundabouts. It was meant to demonstrate how much better the roundabouts would be than the existing stoplights, but some citizens walked away with the opposite impression. In the video, long lines of cars can be seen

stacking up waiting to enter to Highway 61 roundabout. Near the end of the simulation, cars back up all the way past a nearby gas station entrance and into the station's

see **ROUNABOUT** page 9a



'You just keep plugging away'

by CHRIS ROGERS

It's been a crazy year for local farmers. The Driftless Region officially reached moderate drought conditions last week, and COVID-19 has been disrupting agricultural industries across the board.

Crop prices are low — corn fell to \$3.07 in Minnesota in June, according

to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While milk prices appeared to have topped break-even levels for the first time in months — Minnesota milk rose to \$21.20 in June, according to the USDA — a feature of the nation's complex milk-pricing system means that

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Photo by Chris Rogers

Becky Clark and her family raise dairy cows outside Rollingstone. This year they dealt with price swings and dry weather this year.

Colleges put COVID plans to the test

by ALEXANDRA RETTER

With COVID outbreaks at a number of universities in the U.S. resulting in those higher education institutions implementing remote learning for students once more, Winona State University (WSU) and Saint Mary's University (SMU), where students recently arrived for fall semester, have prepared plans for quarantining, isolating and testing students, and are considering factors from how many people are testing positive to the availability of cleaning supplies as they think through when and if they may have to return to remote learning.

Quarantining and isolating

At WSU, 1,751 students are living on campus. About 200 of those students will have roommates, as they are living in residence halls that are apartment or suite style, according to WSU Director of Housing and Residence Life Paula Scheevel. Those halls have individual bedrooms and private bathrooms.

About 900 students are living on campus at SMU. Around 400 of those students are living in single-occupancy rooms. Students not in single-occupancy rooms may be sharing a space such as a bathroom, kitchen or living room.

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Safety coaches proposed to WAPS Board

by ALEXANDRA RETTER

When the Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) Board unanimously agreed to end the district's school resource officer (SRO) contract in June, board members directed Superintendent Annette Freiheit to develop a potential temporary safety plan for the district and bring it before the board within two months. Many community members called for a cultural liaison to be hired as a way to support students and families of color, though that was not presented as part of the safety plan. The potential temporary safety plan arrived at the board table last Thursday and proposed that student safety coaches with an approximate salary and benefits cost of \$36,481 to \$45,246 be assigned to the elementary schools. Current middle school, high school and Alternative Learning Center (ALC) school safety specialists' jobs should be shifted to student safety coach positions.

The aim is to have at least one safety coach at each school, Freiheit said in an interview. For six-and-a-half hours a day, 184 days a

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Winona unveils draft plans for ERC



Artist's rendering by ISG, city of Winona

The latest draft design for an all-ages community center combining the Winona's senior center and East Recreation Center would add a second gym, lots of green space, and a pump track for bikes (foreground).

by CHRIS ROGERS

It has two gyms, plenty of green space, and no up-to-date cost estimate yet. Winona city staff this week unveiled the latest draft, conceptual plans for expanding the East Recreation Center (ERC) to relocate the city's senior center, the Friendship Center, and create an all-ages community center. One of the biggest

changes from past designs is the addition of a second gym, in part a response to concerns that relocating Friendship Center programs into the ERC's single gym would displace youth recreation. The concept is still in a rough draft phase. The City Council gave architects the nod to work toward producing near-final designs and cost estimates by November.

"I think it'll be a huge asset for the

community when it is done," Mayor Mark Peterson said.

"This is one impressive redesign of that entire block. Very, very sharp to look at," City Council member George Borzyskowski said. "And [it is] kind of in our plans, you know, if we do want to move the existing center. And I guess I'd be for

see **ERC** page 8a

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FAMILY Milestones

obituaries

Brand, Judy A.

Judy A. Brand, 76, of Rushford, Minn., died on Friday, August 21, 2020, at her home with her family at her side.

Judy Ann Mierau was born on November 27, 1943, in La Crosse, Wis., to Arthur and Agnes (Gastad) Mierau. Judy was raised in Money Creek, Minn., and was a 1961 graduate of Rushford High School. She was united in marriage with John Brand on July 14, 1961. Judy owned and operated the Judy Brand Agency as a realtor in Rushford for many years. She was very active in her community. Judy was a member of Mrs. Jaycees, Good Shepherd Lutheran Home Foundation, Rushford Area Society for the Arts, Rushford Area Business Association, Rushford Lutheran Church and was the originator of and organized the Good Shepherd Lutheran Foundation golf fundraiser for many years. Judy was a very avid bowler and golfer. She participated in several national bowling tournaments and could be seen at Fern-



dale Country Club through the summer enjoying many rounds of golf.

Judy is survived by her husband, John; two children, Sherryl (Bruce) Brunner of Rushford and Michael Brand of Mason City, Iowa; three grandchildren, James Brunner, Karissa Brand and Raygen Brand; one great-grandchild, Matteo Hernandez; one brother-in-law, Larry (Jane) Mierau of Rushford; a sister-in-law, Carol Mierau; and by many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother, Ron Mierau.

Per Judy's wishes there will be no services at this time.

The family prefers memorials directed to Rushford Lutheran Church.

Hoff Funeral and Cremation Service in Rushford is assisting the family with arrangements.

Please leave a memory of Judy and sign her online guestbook at www.hofffuneral.com.

Safety

continued from page 1a

year, student safety coaches would work to foster connections with students and families, encourage positive behavior and supervise students in common areas such as hallways, among other responsibilities. Freiheit shared that she could see the safety coaches walking through the building, talking with students and providing support to other staff members if someone tried to enter a school building without authorization. In researching districts that had replaced their SRO, Freiheit found that one had great success with student safety coaches, she said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they would assist with isolation rooms at the schools for those who display COVID symptoms during the school day.

The district had allocated \$88,000 for fiscal year 2021 to pay the Winona Police Department for the school resource officer. These funds came from the safe schools levy. That money would go toward the school safety officers, and potential costs above the \$88,000 could come from revising the general fund balance, Freiheit noted.

Safety staff would also take part in training on topics including de-escalation strategies, trauma-informed practices and implicit bias and anti-discrimination. Staff development funds of \$5,000 could be put toward that training.

Currently, there are two safety specialists at the middle school, two at the high school, and one at the ALC on an 0.6 full-time equivalent basis.

The SRO contract was dissolved amid Winona, like the rest of the U.S., grappling with questions of equity and inclusivity after the death of George Floyd. In June, a rally took place at which students of color, parents and staff members voiced that they would like the SRO contract to end and spoke about instances of racism and trauma in WAPS. During that time, students and families also expressed their wish for a cultural liaison to be hired to serve students and families of color. The board did not approve hiring a liaison in a split vote while approving the budget for this academic year that same month.

The directive the board gave Freiheit stated that the plan would address replacing the SRO with resources tied to counseling, mental health and trauma-informed practices. The directive also said that WAPS would continue its analysis of students support services, such as counseling and social work. The board approved this analysis in June and will receive updates on the study periodically, with one coming to the September 3 meeting. A final report on student support services will be at the board table by December.

Board member Allison Quam noted that she had wished for the board to support a cultural liaison position when it ended the SRO contract. Freiheit explained that she viewed the student safety coaches as being move involved in school safety and a cultural liaison as being more involved with supporting students and families.

Work regarding the possible development of a cultural liaison position is still being done. Considering the position is part of the study of student support services on which the board will receive an update in September, Freiheit noted in an interview.

"We would want any type of position like that to be one that is sustained from year to year," Freiheit shared of a cultural liaison position.

In addition, the district's Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) earlier this month approved recommending to the board that the position be established. The committee also voted to recommend to the board that a person of color with experience in bolstering students, families and communities of color be hired to fill the position; that the job description for the position be developed by multiple stakeholders, including students of color and community members; and initial responsibilities for the person chosen to hold the position include helping students of color academically and behaviorally and being involved with staff development about cultural competency and related topics.

DEC member Rose Carr shared that she supports the creation of a cultural liaison position, but she also wishes people of color were hired for other professional roles in the district. "What about integration in all levels?" Carr said. "And I'm saying that not as an 'I don't support this.' I completely support this. And it makes me frustrated that we're not talking about bigger, to stretch it further."

DEC member Dwayne Voegeli shared that he hoped for the recommendations about the cultural liaison position to be approved by the committee at its August meeting so the suggestions could go before the board as soon as possible and a cultural liaison could possibly be hired before the beginning of this school year.

"... Part of the biggest problem that we're not talking about most of the time is how everything is delayed and delayed and delayed, months, years," Voegeli noted. "I would bet you a dollar that if we don't approve it today, it won't be approved for two or three or four months. And we'll be talking about this in December, about how we should be getting a person of color in the district. So, justice delayed is justice denied ..."

Freiheit asked whether a DEC member had reached out to her to see how the recommendations may fit in with the work she is doing to create the potential temporary safety plan and said she had not heard from anyone. "I support having the position, so I'm a little upset that I seem to be the person non grata in this group," Freiheit shared during the DEC meeting.

Some DEC members expressed concerns about recommendations regarding how to fund the position, as well as some language initially used to describe a recommended hiring process for the position. Those recommendations were ultimately not approved or changed before approval by DEC.

Board member Allison Quam recommended that the committee center its recommendations on why having the position is important. "We will get lost within all of these other details ... and we'll end up focusing on the funding part, and, 'Oh, can we use staff development and Title IV [funds],' and the whole point of this position, the discussion of having it, will get lost in these other things, which are just as important, and I think should happen, but first and foremost, I think the School Board needs to be convinced we should hire such a position," Quam noted.

The board will next meet on Thursday, September 3, at 6 p.m. The meeting may be viewed at <https://winonak12mnus.finalsite.com/district/school-board/live-stream>.

After 40 years of teaching, Lori (Mrs. Nicklay) has decided to close this chapter of her life and move on to new adventures. If you have a special memory of Lori as a teacher, we would love it if you could share this with her in a note. Cards and notes can be sent to 462 Sioux Street, Winona, MN 55987.

- Her Loving Family.



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of Fountain City
Married August 22, 1959

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for making my 95th Birthday
so "happy" with all of your
cards and wishes! I will
enjoy reading my cards often!

-Marie Williamson



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