

Henning honors school paraprofessionals



Photo by Chad Koenen

Henning School paraprofessionals were honored last week as part of the state paraprofessional appreciation week. Henning paraprofessionals include: Front row: Lisa Nygaard, Ashley Gruber and Ariel Greenwood. Middle row: Marie Strand, Jennifer Jacobs, Amy Johnson and Courtney Torgerson. Back row: LuAnn Weniger, Pam Wiese, Heidi Reinbold, Teri Wogan, MaryLynn Borchardt and Chris Maland. Not pictured: Debbie Starry.

HENNING UPDATED ON ROAD PROJECT

lanes, potentially changing how some of the roads meet the highway and widening sidewalks.

Though the project has been discussed for quite some time, Vanderhider said discussions have been taking place between Otter Tail County and Mn/DOT over having the state highway turned back to the county. If that were to happen before 2024, Mn/DOT would no longer be in charge of completing the project and that responsibility would fall on the shoulders of Otter Tail County. If that were the case, Vanderhider said Otter Tail County would likely receive a payment to take over ownership of the road, but then would likely be in charge of deciding whether to complete the project, or leave the road as is.

"We haven't worked out any of those details...it's likely Mn/DOT would give the county some turn back funds for taking the road back and then the county would pick things up with the city," said Vanderhider.

In order to not let the planning process fall behind, Mn/DOT is hoping to continue the construction planning with the City of Henning to keep the project on schedule should an agreement with the county not come to fruition. The planning would also serve as a road map to complete the project.

As part of the project, the City of Henning is planning to replace the underground water and sewer lines that have gone past their useful life and could begin to fail in the future.

One of the biggest changes in the project is the proposed narrowing of the roadways and widening of the sidewalks in the downtown area.

In order to give residents an idea of what the driving lanes could look like in 2024, Mn/DOT conducted a survey last fall with temporary cones set up to demonstrate the new driving lanes. Fol-

lowing the demonstration, Mn/DOT received 63 online responses to the project, which brought varying responses on the proposed changes.

"I think the main thing that I want to touch on was we did get feedback that the people didn't really like the bump outs. We had some positive, but there was comments about the road being narrower and not liking the bump outs. We have heard that before in other communities where we actually implemented them and even had one community say that they wish they had done more. It becomes an educational process even throughout project development," said Vanderhider. "The purpose is to give better visibility so the pedestrian sees the car and the driver sees the pedestrian."

As part of the proposed project, bump outs were placed in front of city park, Good Shepherd and St. Paul's Lutheran Churches, as well in front of B&D Foods and Gateway Pub. The bump outs extend the sidewalk into the parking lane and are meant to provide an easier way to cross the road at heavy pedestrian access points.

Vanderhider said even with the changes to the sidewalks, people didn't seem to use the bump outs and extended sidewalk as much as was hoped. She said this isn't uncommon in many communities, but contended it's about educating the public about utilizing the bump outs and sidewalk.

"The one thing I noticed when we were out there that day installing the animal prints, was that even with having the defined mid block crossing, people still weren't using it," said Vanderhider.

After hearing concerns from people in the community about the narrowing of the driving lane, Henning Mayor Darren Wiese asked if the proposed project was set in stone, or if it could request to not have bump outs

or a narrower driving lanes.

Currently Douglas Ave. had a 14 foot driving lane on each side with a 10 foot parking lane, 2 foot of buffer and a 10 foot sidewalk. The current proposed project would narrow the road to a 12 foot driving lane, 10 foot parking lane, 2 foot buffer, 2 foot of boulevard that could include plants or decorations and 10 foot of sidewalk.

Safgren said there is a push at the state level to narrow the driving lanes. Mn/DOT will pay for 100 percent of the 24 foot driving lane, 90 percent of a 10 foot parking lane, Mn/DOT will pay for 100 percent of standard width sidewalk or the existing width of the sidewalk and everything else will need to be funded by the city for the roadway. She said it would likely cost more to leave the driving width as is, as opposed to narrowing the driving lanes and installing a larger sidewalk or buffer.

In addition to potentially widening the sidewalks, Mn/DOT is proposing to extend the current sidewalk all the way to the Dollar General store near Highway 210.

Vanderhider said the store is a destination and extending it would mean there would be a sidewalk to provide additional pedestrian safety for those walking to the store.

Another potential change in the project is the realignment of Balmoral Ave. and Highway 108 behind St. Edward's Catholic Church. Vanderhider said the angle in which Balmoral Ave. approaches Highway 108 presents some safety concerns. The plan would be to realign the road in order to come to more of a 90 degree angle.

"We are looking at it as a safety improvement," said Vanderhider. "It ranks high for safety criteria. It is a proactive change."

However, councilman Jim Haberer said that could create more potential problems in the future due to the amount of large trucks that

utilize the road to get to the industrial park and elevator. He said the current angle of the road allows for an easier turn on Balmoral Ave. and Highway 108.

"I think you are going to create more problems than leaving the street the way it is," he said.

Mn/DOT said it will take the comments the council provided on Monday night and will continue the planning process of the Highway 108 project.

The Mn/DOT representatives said negotiations with Otter Tail County to turn the road back from a state highway to county highway continue, but they will continue to move forward with the project as originally scheduled.

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Advocate honored with MNA awards

Advocate receives third place in General Excellence

By Chad Koenen
Publisher

The New York Mills Dispatch and Citizen's Advocate received a combined eight awards during the 2019-20 Minnesota Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest. The annual awards ceremony was held virtually on Thursday, Jan. 28 due to COVID-19.

There were more than 3,100 entries from newspapers of all sizes from across the state. The New York Mills Dispatch and Citizen's Advocate compete in the category of weekly newspaper with a circulation up to 1,000.

The Citizen's Advocate received third place in the category of Typography and Design. The judges wrote "Superior Photoshop skills. Good congruent mix of font styles." Placing first place in the category was the New York Mills Dispatch, while the Pine Knot News of Clouquet, who received the Mills Trophy as the best overall weekly newspaper in the state, received second place.

In the category of Best Use of Photography as a Whole, the Citizen's Advocate received third place. The judges wrote "Generally, a nice, polished look, good use of candid photos and packages." The Pine

Knot News of Clouquet placed first and the New York Mills Dispatch took second place.

Citizen's Advocate Publisher Chad Koenen received third place in the category of Best Sports Feature Story for an article he wrote about the end of the boys and girls basketball seasons last March. The article was entitled "Henning repeats as section champs" and the judges wrote "Good article on a sad outcome because of COVID-19."

In the prestigious category of General Excellence, the Citizen's Advocate placed third behind just the Pine Knot News of Clouquet and the New York Mills Dispatch. Judges wrote "Hard to walk past the strong above-the-fold imagery each week. The page design can be busy, but so are local communities and this approach offers numerous good windows into what's going on in the community each week. Inspiring profiles of community members. Good issues coverage of local affairs. Diverse editorial page voices. Good advertising. Good local sports covers. The community is well-served by this newspaper."

In addition to Typography and Design, Best Use of Photography as a Whole and General Excellence, the New York Mills Dispatch also received second place in General Reporting.

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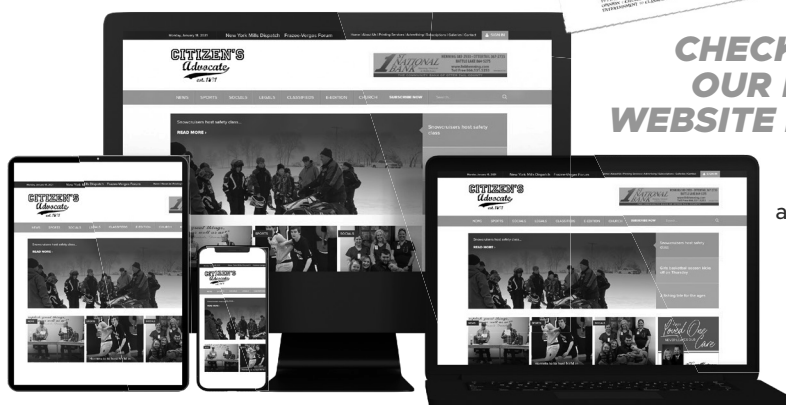
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