



The Globe

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Cummings chosen as mayor pro tem

By Ryan McGaughey
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WORTHINGTON — The Worthington City Council elected Chad Cummings as mayor pro tem for the remainder of 2021 and officially declared a city council vacancy and a plan to fill the seat during its Monday evening meeting.

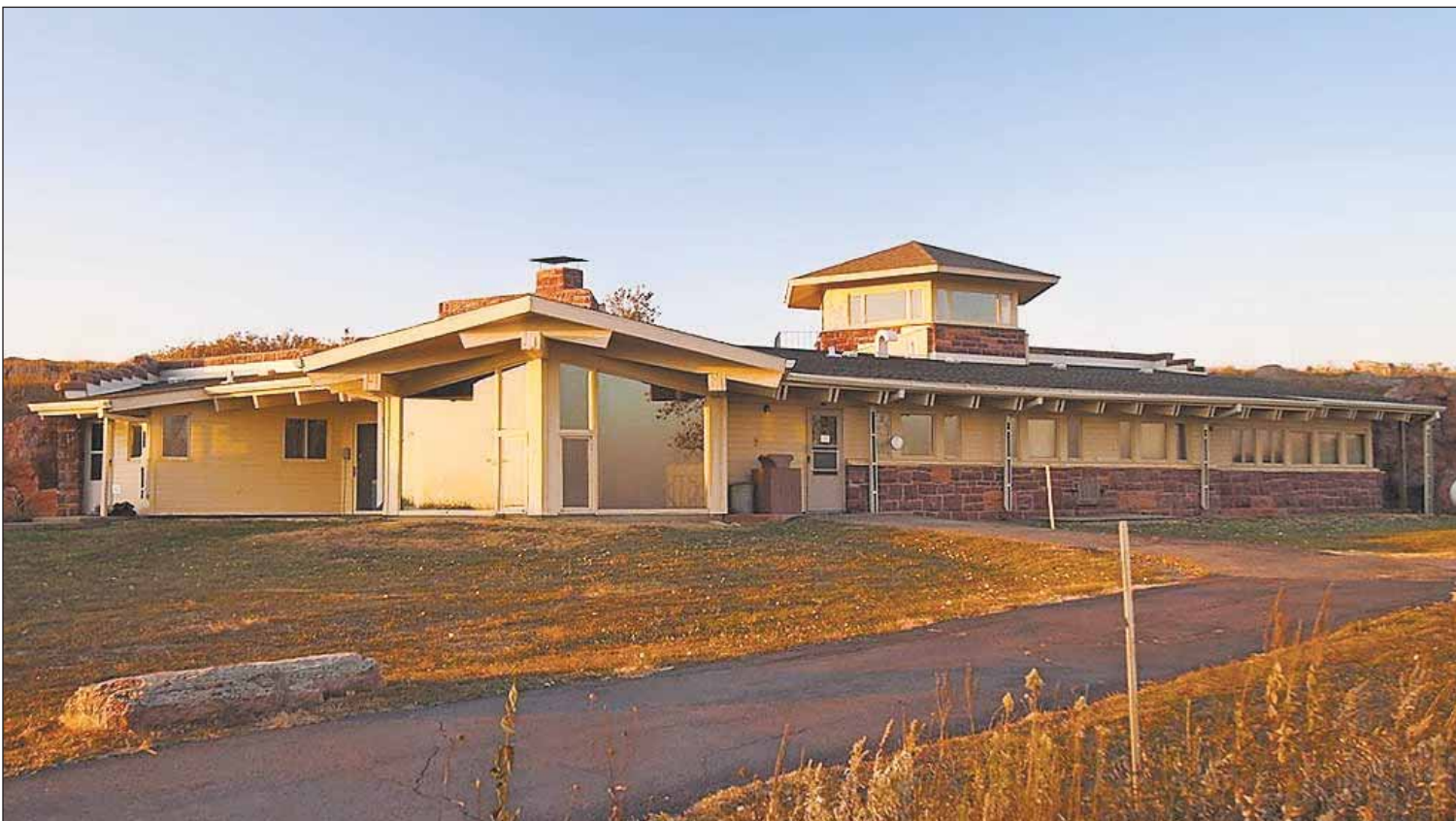
In a brief session of only 30 minutes, the council also acted unanimously on a host of mostly administrative and public works-related items. Members received paper ballots to cast their votes for the individual to replace Mike Harmon, who died March 7, as mayor pro tem. Cummings is an at-large member of the council and was elected to his second term this past November.

The city is now accepting applications from individuals interested in being appointed to the vacant city council position. Those applications, due March 31 to City Clerk Mindy Eggers, will then be reviewed by a subcommittee that will ultimately make a recommendation to the city council. It's hoped the council will vote on its new member during a scheduled April 12 meeting.

Among other actions taken Monday by the council, the third and final required reading of an ordinance to amend city code and create a new definition for maximum lot coverage that would include all buildings, structures and accessory structures was approved. Driveways, sidewalks and uncovered patios will not count against a person's maximum lot coverage, and maximum lot coverage will be a percentage of the total lot size.

Under the amended code, residential districts will have the following maximum lot coverage: R-1: 40% (one family detached district); R-2: 40% (one family, low density district); R-3: 40% (low density preservation district); R-4: 40% (medium density residential district); R-5: 60% (multi-family medium and high-density district);

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Special to The Globe

The former Frederick Manfred home opened as an interpretive center for the Blue Mounds State Park in 1976. It was closed in 2015 due to serious structural problems, from rotting beams to ponding water after rainfall.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MANFRED HOUSE?

Public to consider options for Blue Mounds State Park site

By Julie Buntjer
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Luverne

Nearly six years after the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources closed the Interpretive Center at Blue Mounds State Park, the agency has introduced a trio of options to reimagine Eagle Rock Vista Trailhead. All three options include deconstructing the interpretive center, originally built by Luverne author

Frederick Manfred and used as his home and writing refuge from 1961 to 1975.

While the DNR seeks public input on the three proposals — ranging from a basic trailhead site to a space with a picnic shelter for gatherings, or a trailhead with an outdoor event space — Manfred's daughter, Freya Manfred, is displeased with any idea that doesn't recognize the historical significance of her father's home.

Shortly after the DNR

announced it was seeking public comment on its plans, the Save the Manfred House group issued a press release stating the state agency didn't explore all of the alternatives.

"Over time, the DNR has demonstrated that it is not interested in maintaining or preserving the house, and has made the decision to demolish it without the kind of public review that such a decision deserves," the release stated, noting demolition of the

interpretive center would result in the "loss of a one-of-a-kind structure."

Freya Manfred and her husband, Thomas Pope, established Save the Manfred House Inc. in late 2019, fearing the DNR would choose to tear down the structure. Already, it had been four years since the DNR had closed the building, citing unsafe conditions with rotting ceiling beams, water damage, floor heaves and mold.

MANFRED: Page 6

Lake Ocheda drawdown produces hordes of dead fish

By Julie Buntjer
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WORTHINGTON — High winds over the weekend resulted in mass amounts of dead fish coming to the surface and floating to the shoreline on Lake Ocheda's three basins south of Worthington.

A massive fish kill was the hope of the Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District, which organized a wintertime drawdown of the 1,700-acre lake in hopes of freezing out the basins.

The lake has been on the state's impaired waters list since 2010 due to poor water quality. It's believed an extremely high population of carp in the basins stirred up sediment and impact-

ed the ability for vegetative growth in the lake.

On Monday, OOWD Administrator Dan Livdahl photographed hordes of dead fish along a 1,200-foot stretch of shoreline near the Al and Paul Langseth property on the lake's east basin. The strip of dead fish was about 20 feet wide, he noted. Dead fish had also floated toward shore on portions of the west basin.

Livdahl said most of the large fish appeared to be buffalo, with numerous carp, catfish, bullhead and freshwater drum (sheepshead) also dead. He also noted a few dead walleyes and a lot of dead frogs.

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Special to The Globe

Al Langseth of rural Worthington inspects the hordes of dead fish that have surfaced on the east basin of Lake Ocheda Monday afternoon, March 22.

NOBLES COUNTY

Progress continues on vaccinating Nobles County residents

By Julie Buntjer
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WORTHINGTON — Nearly 31% (6,719) of Nobles County's residents have received their first dose of vaccine against COVID-19 and more than 19% (4,150) have received the com-

plete series, according to Community Health Services Administrator and Public Health Supervisor Michelle Ebbers.

Ebbers gave a brief update on the coronavirus response to county commissioners during a Tuesday morning

Nobles County Board of Commissioners meeting. She said the county is at one of the lowest isolation levels currently, with just nine residents within their 10-day window of isolation.

"We're definite-

ly trending in the right direction," she shared.

Thus far, the local health department has met each benchmark set by Gov. Tim Walz, with 100% of doses administered within three days. Those eligible for the vaccine now include

Phase 1B, Tiers 2 and 3, as well as Phase C, Tier 1.

Ebbers reported that all Nobles County nursing homes and assisted living facilities have received the vaccine, and a majority of those ages 65 and older have been

vaccinated. Vaccination of child care workers is also complete, and work continues in vaccinating all school district employees who work in Early Childhood through 12th grade education.

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GOOD MORNING

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County adds 3 more COVID-19 cases

By Julie Buntjer
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REGIONAL — A small number of new coronavirus cases continue to be reported in the area, with Jackson County recording three new cases of the virus on Monday, Cottonwood County recording two, and Nobles and Rock counties each recording one new case.

On Tuesday, the Minnesota Department of Health reported 870 new cases of COVID-19 during the 24-hour period that ended at 4 p.m. Monday. The cumulative total of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases now stands at 507,231 (positive and antigen tests), with 490,340 beyond the 10-day isolation period. Thus far, 38,789 Minnesota health care workers have contracted the virus.

Seven new deaths were reported statewide during the 24-hour period, with all seven individuals residing in a private residence. Minnesota's death toll from the virus stands at 6,789, including 4,248 residents of long-term care facilities.

A local snapshot of COVID-19, with current cumulative positive and probable test results and deaths as reported by MDH, recovery data (beyond the 10-day isolation period) as of March 18, and the percentage of residents who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as of Sunday shows:

- ▶ Nobles County: 3,898 cases; 3,832 recoveries; 47 deaths; 30.9%. As of Monday, nine residents were within their 10-day isolation period, including one child aged birth to 10; one indi-

- vidual aged 20 to 25; three individuals aged 26 to 50; two individuals aged 51 to 64; and two individuals aged 65 and older.
- ▶ Cottonwood County: 1,426 cases; 1,343 recoveries; 20 deaths; 31.8%.
- ▶ Jackson County: 972 cases; 937 recoveries; 10 deaths; 27.3%.
- ▶ Murray County: 963 cases; 950 recoveries; eight deaths; 30%.
- ▶ Pipestone County: 1,035 cases; 994 recoveries; 24 deaths; 28%.
- ▶ Rock County: 1,185 cases; 1,153 recoveries; 17 deaths; 25.1%.

Johns Hopkins University reports a nationwide cumulative total of 29,872,398 positive cases of COVID-19 as of 10:30 a.m. Tuesday. Thus far, 543,057 Americans have died from the virus.

FISH

From Page 1

"We did not see any perch or northern pike," he added. "I think fish are just beginning to warm up and rot enough that they are starting to float. We're not seeing a lot of carp, which is surprising."

Al Langseth, who was on the east basin with Livdahl, estimated they saw five to 10 dead buffalo fish for every dead carp.

While Livdahl said he was happy to find dead fish, there's no way of knowing the extent of the fish kill until water clarity can be measured later this spring. It's certain it wasn't a complete kill, as fish have been seen splashing around in

the east and west basins. "I'm hopeful that we've had a significant enough kill to improve water quality," Livdahl said, adding that until the cold spurt in mid-February, he was concerned there was too much oxygen and not enough ice to freeze out the fish.

"Over the whole winter, we got a maximum of 22 inches of ice and that's less than a normal winter," he shared. "If we had a couple more weeks of cold weather, we may have been able to freeze it all out."

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is planning to stock Lake Ocheda this spring with northern pike and perch — two gamefish species known for feasting on carp eggs and helping to control carp populations.

MANFRED

From Page 1

Manfred said she wants the DNR's plans suspended until a more thorough review can be done and "all reasonable funding and preservation options can be considered fully."

Her dad sold the property to the Minnesota Parks Foundation (MPF), allowing it to become part of Blue Mounds State Park. In 1972, the Minnesota DNR purchased the land from MPF.

"His expectation — and that of all of us — was that it would be maintained for the future," Freya said last week from her home in Stillwater.

The Manfred house was designed to blend into the landscape, and built along a Sioux quartzite rock wall that was a focal point of the home's interior. Her father did his writing from a windowed studio atop the house.

Freya was 15 years old when her family moved to Luverne, and said it was her younger brother, Frederick Jr., who most loved the home. Prior to his death in 2016, he led tours of the home, organized poetry readings there and visited the site often.

With his loss, Freya hopes others will step up and support the cause to, if not save the house, at least recognize the site as the home of Frederick Manfred, the writer of more than two dozen books who gave this region of southwest Minnesota, northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota the name "Siouxland."

"Whether you tear down the house or don't tear down the house, the fact that he

lived there — that he wrote his novels there, that he named the area Siouxland — it's like somebody becomes a non-person," said Pope, noting he and Freya were both shocked by the absence of reference to Frederick Manfred in the DNR's plans.

"Would I be happy if there was some recognition? Of course I'd be happy," added Freya. However, she can't help but wonder if some part of the house can't remain — specifically the studio where he dad wrote.

Both Freya and her husband are disappointed that an historical architect sent to the site by the Minnesota State Historical Society wasn't allowed inside the structure to evaluate its condition. She said the structure qualifies to be on the National Register of Historic Places, but noted the DNR doesn't want the designation on the building.

In essence, Freya said the state had a legal duty to keep the building up and neglected it. Now, with deconstruction of the structure a part of all three options the DNR has presented for public comment, Freya is asking people to complete the DNR survey.

"It's a unique house, historically, architecturally. I just think all or part of it could be saved," she said.

And if it can't be saved?

"I do like the third option the best of the three, so there is cover and you can have poetry readings, weddings, gatherings for the arts," she said. "It could be a great meeting place for the arts. I think that that house invites conversation about the land itself and the

history of the land."

Realizing the 3,500-square-foot building would require complete reconstruction based on the severely rotted structural beam, continued moisture infiltration and mold — at an estimated cost of more than \$2 million — the Minnesota DNR hired TKDA, an architectural and design firm, to evaluate the interpretive center site and develop concepts for its future.

Chris Ingebretsen, Blue Mounds State Park Manager, said the initial options focus on the building and its deconstruction.

"In the years to come, we'll be looking at interpretive elements as well," he said, adding that it could potentially include information about the site being the former home of Frederick Manfred.

Ingebretsen said the name change to Eagle Rock Vista Trailhead is hoped to provide visitors with better information about the park's amenities.

"People were often confused because there were signs directed to an interpretive center that wasn't being used," he said.

Ingebretsen was the manager at Blue Mounds in 2015 when it was discovered that a load-bearing ceiling beam inside the interpretive center had significant rot. It wasn't the first sign of serious issues with the structure, though it was the one to cause the building to be closed. By 2018, the building was deemed unsafe for anyone to enter.

With three rather significant rain events at the park since 2013, Ingebretsen said the kiva — a recessed area on the main floor of the building — filled with water. The seepage is



A load-bearing beam inside the Blue Mounds State Park Interpretive Center shows significant rot in this image. The rot was discovered in 2015, leading to the center's closure.

due to the structure being built on the cliff line and water seeping in along that cliff. The seepage has led to mold and mildew issues, rot and floor heaves.

In addition, snakes and small rodents have made their way into the building through cracks in the rocks. Ingebretsen said the site is home to a snake hibernaculum.

Personally, Ingebretsen said he's excited that the DNR is moving forward with a plan for the site.

"It's clear that the public wants to see something happen in this area," he said. "I think all three proposals enhance the site. Moving forward, having a facility that's more welcoming to the public is just the right thing to do."

Ingebretsen said Blue Mounds State Park recorded its busiest season on record in 2020, with more than 65,000 visitors to the trailhead.

"People use it all summer long in

record numbers and I'm looking forward to providing a better facility for them to use," he added.

Minnesotans can review and provide comments through April 5 at mndnr.gov/bluemounds.

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