

# The Caledonia Argus

\$1.25 • Vol. 149 No. 7

www.hometownargus.com

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

## Heart Rock Coffee snags Main Street spot in Spring Grove

By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

The vitality of Spring Grove's Main Street still shines bright and attractive, as an existing business plans to make space in the Bluff Country Artists Gallery building.

Heart Rock Coffee of Caledonia will split the space with the gallery, as Jeff and Tricia Babinski plan to remodel and move into the new

space. The Babinski's recently purchased the building.

"I just got a good feeling about this building. I love that it's on Main Street," Tricia Babinski said. "The partnership was available to us. That was important. The gallery will still be here in the building."

Imagine if you will, the ESB depository will be removed to make way for a separate entrance. On the left side will be the gallery

and all of its offerings.

On the right, Heart Rock Coffee, which will have a small retail space and a large picture window to watch the coffee roasting process.

Antique oak doors given to the couple by Tricia's father will enter into the roasting space. The front space will have Heart Rock Coffee's wide variety of roasted coffee beans and woodwork by Jeff.

Eventually, Tricia said she plans to hold coffee classes, such as tastings and the history behind coffee roasting. The gallery can also rent out the front space for art classes too.

Tricia said the retail shop will support the small coffee shops in the area. Right now, those are Free Range Exchange in Hokah, The Wired Rooster in Caledonia, the Caledonia Bakery and Red's IGA in Spring Grove.

Before that can happen, there's a bit of remodeling to do, including adding a bathroom on the gallery side, tiling the floor in the roasting space, adding a separating wall with a picture window, then bring in the roasting supplies and also install a chimney stack.

"It's an opportunity to expand. We're looking at this year, getting a bigger roaster and to reach out to



Jordan Gerard/The Caledonia Argus

The Bluff Country Artists Gallery building was purchased by Jeff and Tricia Babinski of Caledonia, who plan to share the space with their coffee roasting company, Heart Rock Coffee.



Jordan Gerard/The Caledonia Argus

## Snowscapes and sub-zero temps

Here's to warmer temperatures on tap for this week! Houston County survived an arctic air blast for the past week and a half, 5-6 inches of snow two weeks ago and finally, temperatures are staying above 20 degrees at least for a few days. This view looks over Riceford Creek near Hidden Bluffs Resort on the snowmobile trail northwest of Spring Grove.

## Houston seniors earn Triple A award



By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

Two Houston High School seniors have been awarded the Triple A Award for the 2020-21 school year.

Minnesota State High School League Triple A award stands for Academics, Arts and Athletics.

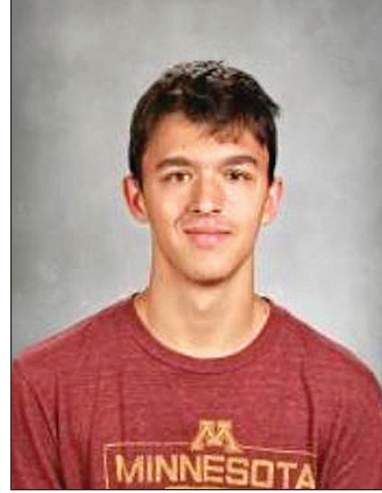
To qualify for the Triple A award, seniors must: be a high school senior, have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, participate in at least one league-sponsored athletic program and one arts/activity program, comply with MSHSL's Student Code of Conduct and complete the application form and submit it by the deadline.

Houston seniors Noah Kingsley and Allison Papenfuss have earned the 2021 Triple A award.

**Allison Papenfuss**  
Current GPA or at time of application: 4.0

Art activities: I play the alto saxophone in senior high band.

Athletic participation: I participate in volleyball, basketball, and track and field.



What makes you strive for success in school? I am self-motivated to do the best and strive for excellence in school.

What are your current plans after high school? I am currently planning to attend North Dakota State University to study radiologic sciences.

What would you tell your peers who also look for success? Success doesn't come easy. You have to work hard for it and learn from your mistakes.

**Noah Kingsley**  
Current GPA or at time of application: 3.6

Art activities: Choir  
Athletic participation: Basketball

What makes you strive for success in school? I want to get into college and get good grades for sports.

What are your current plans for after high school? Attend Winona State University

What would you tell your peers who also look for success? Just keep working, always find different ways or people to keep you motivated.

## Houston Council moves OHV trail project along

By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

More than a few years in the making, it seems Houston's projected Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail is moving along as more decisions are made by the Houston City Council.

The resolutions passed at Houston City Council's regular meeting on Feb. 9 does not necessarily mean the Off-Highway Vehicle project will or will not happen, but it does set a few requirements in motion and take a few more steps.

First of all, the council accepted a sound test proposal from OHV Acoustics LLC from Random Lake, Wisconsin, for \$2,000. Grant funds can be used to pay for the study.

Owner and engineer Alexander Bub said sound tests would be run per two Minnesota departments, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The MPCA's regulation 7030.0040 test will include readings averaged over an hour of time, while the DNR's J1287 is a test that every OHV has to pass before being allowed on a trail. This test also applies to

larger 4x4s, such as Jeeps.

The company doesn't stop there, as a background sound level is also averaged for an hour at property line locations closest to the nearest neighbor's properties. Multiple positions are recorded at the same time using multiple sound level meters.

It's not just one OHV that is used for testing. OHV Acoustics uses a minimum of eight OHVs on the trail for an hour, each of which need to

**HOUSTON COUNCIL**

Continued on page 9

## Caledonia City Council resolves to borrow \$10.5 million

By Craig Moorhead  
The Caledonia Argus

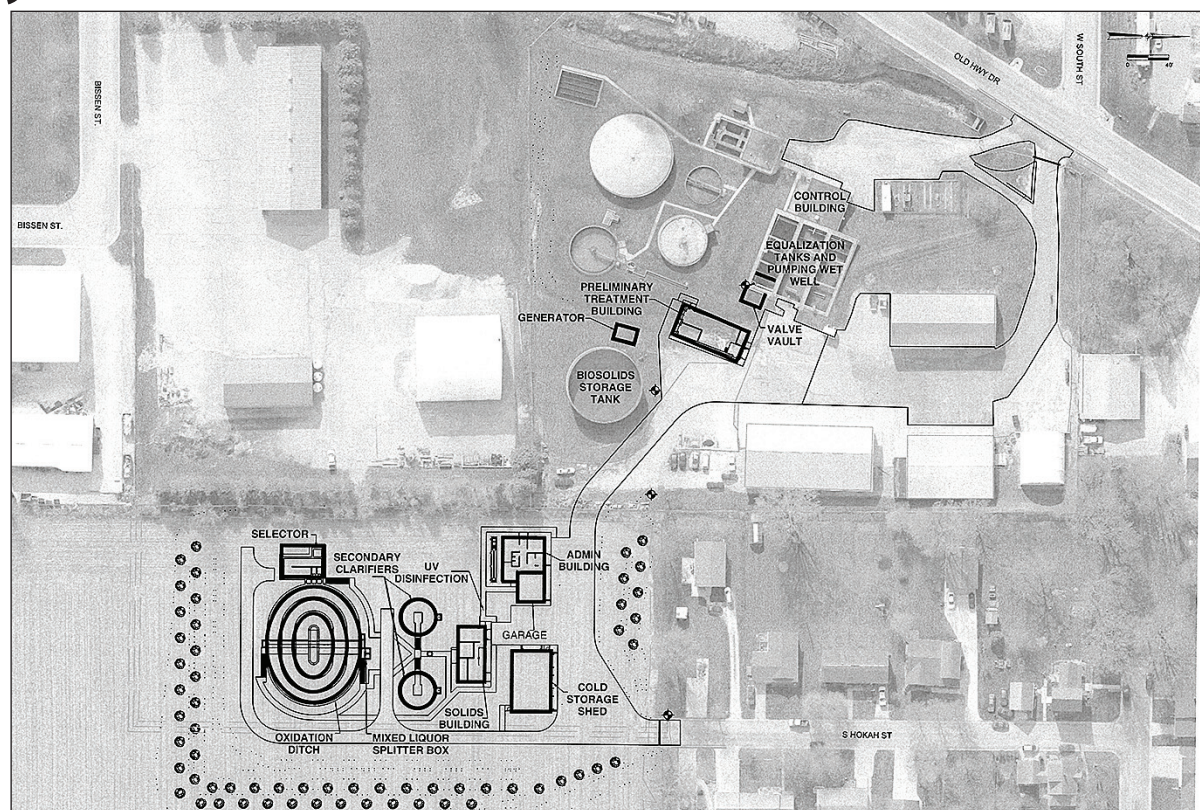
With a major rebuild of the City of Caledonia's wastewater treatment plant looming on the horizon, city council members authorized staff to apply for some serious funding from the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority (PFA) on Monday, Feb. 8.

The city has already been awarded a \$7 million State of Minnesota grant to help pay for the project. And the actual PFA low-interest loan amount which would be needed to pay for the rest of the cost could remain a moving target for quite some time. But the resolution to apply for the loan pegged the amount at \$10,559,889.

"Because we're going to have some contingency (funds) built in there, your final loan amount won't be determined until the project's done..." Caledonia clerk/administrator Adam Swann told the council.

**CALEDONIA COUNCIL**

Continued on page 3



Submitted

A layout of what Caledonia's new wastewater treatment plant will look like. For reference, Old Highway Drive is in the upper right corner of the photo.

## Community County Board

Vaccinations top 15%

See page 7

## Houston School

Board accepts superintendent's resignation

See page 3

## Sports Area basketball

Warriors pick up win over Lancers  
Hurricanes take loss with Randolph

See pages 9 & 10

## Wrestling

Warriors take on two teams

See page 9

## Obits

Herman G. Kurk III

See page 5

## CONTACT US

The Caledonia Argus

225 S. Kingston St., PO Box 227  
Caledonia, MN 55921

www.hometownargus.com

Phone  
507-724-3475

## Email

**Editor:**  
jordan.gerard@apgecm.com  
**Staff Writer:**  
craig.moorhead@apgecm.com  
**Advertising:**  
greg.petersen@apgecm.com  
**Billing:**  
jean.becker@apgecm.com

The Caledonia Argus



# HOUSTON COUNCIL

Continued from page 1

pass the J1287 test before it is considered a test vehicle.

And though it's not required, a Housing and Urban Development sound test for high density housing areas will be performed. It's included in the event that more housing is brought into the area and resides adjacent to the trail system.

Part two was accepting a Recreational Trails Program grant for a requested \$150,000 to help construct the 7.5 miles of trail. The city will need to match 25% for the grant, which is part of the Federal Recreational Trails Program. Additionally, the city can also find monetary help through the Minnesota Trails Assistance Program grants, according to the resolution.

As a requirement of the grant, the city accepted a prepared Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS), which determines environmental and cultural resource impacts from the proposed trail.

Summarizing the EAS, it is expected that the trail will not degrade air quality, as previous air quality studies of OHVs have shown little or no impact; the trail will have construction impacts, as it's yet to be built; the trail will not have an impact on endangered species, as there were no threatened or endangered wildlife found in the project proposal area. Some areas of prairie were found, and the project will protect the prairie, where possible.

The trail could have some erosion effects, as some trail areas will be in sandy soil. The report cites that the design of the project was done by an Enterprise Team of the US Forest Service to keep trails sustainable and erosion possibilities to a minimum.

On the noise front, the trail is expected to have some noise, but the report cites the anticipated sound levels will meet the MPCA and federal sound level requirements.

On the topic of soil, the trail is not expected to contribute to canopy degradation. On wildlife, the trail is expected to have minimal impact to wildlife as the trails are within the City of Houston with the normal movement of people and vehicles near the trails, the report stated.

If the project is not completed, the city would need to sell the property in order to return the funding to the OHV accounts from which the funding came.

Two main goals for the project

are to bring positive economic impacts through tourism and give local residents a legal and designed place to ride OHVs.

Finally, part three was submitting a Natural Heritage Information System Data Request form, which is a collection of databases that provides information on Minnesota's rare plants, animals, native plant communities and other rare features, the form explains. The cost for this report was a minimum fee of \$90, but depending on the time it takes to complete, could be higher.

Still, some residents were concerned about the impacts of the trail, especially on wildlife. International Owl Center Executive Director Karla Bloem expressed concerns that signing off on the EAS before the noise study had been performed, did not "seem like a true statement." She also wondered if the trail activity would affect deer movement and push them into town.

On the other hand, the trail could bring more tourism into town, as Marlene Schultz pointed out.

"It needs to be tried ... pursued," Schultz said. "...We take four-wheelers across that land all the time. The deer, turkeys, coyotes come back. It might affect the first few months, but not forever. That's my opinion."

Mayor Dave Olson pointed out that the people building the trail were not amateurs.

"They build these all the time. We won't lose it in a rain storm," he said. "They're planting stuff along the trail to deaden the noise."

Again, the trail is not yet a done deal for go or no go.

**Wastewater Treatment Facility**  
The council accepted the low bid from Wapasha Construction, Inc. in Winona for \$3,471,000 to construct a wastewater treatment facility.

The city is working with the Minnesota Public Facility Authority (PFA) to utilize the Clean Water Revolving Fund program, which is a low interest loan program with some grant components for communities in the hardship level, a recommendation from Bolton and Menk said.

The PFA is able to offer about \$2.9 million in wastewater infrastructure financing grants with a loan of about \$1.26 million on a 30-year repayment term.

The city did wait a year in order

to await a bonding bill that presented grant potential.

**Public comment**  
Houston resident Mitch Publitz asked the council if city water and sewer would be available on his property on Anderson St. where he owns 13 lots and has had interest from people wanting to build.

However, the council would need a development agreement before utilities would be installed.

**Other news**  
The council accepted a resolution that supports the reconstruction of Westgate Drive between Cedar St. and West Spruce St., projected for construction in 2023. The resolution will allow pursuit of 2020 Local Road Improvement Program funding from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

That program makes \$1.25 million available for cities to apply toward projects on local roads that are regionally significant, result in safety improvements, address transportation deficiencies and contribute to economic development.

The council accepted the adoption of various stand-alone ordinances in line with the Minnesota Basic Code, 2019 edition. Such ordinances include permits for fences, tree ordinances, weed control, zoning, and more.

The council approved an annual levee re-certification agreement with MnDOT for Highways 16 and 76. Added this year were two sections of the levee that were not included in the original flood control agreement.

The city also accepted a purchase agreement for \$12,000 to sell a piece of property on the Prairie Meadows Addition to Lee Zenke.

Also approved was a Health Savings Account benefit plan for city employees who qualified.

The council approved a change order for \$3,395 in order to install conduits in the police department and community room.

Lastly, the city authorized a job search for seasonal help this summer, and approved the City Emergency Operations Plan.

The council scheduled the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting on May 10, at 5:30 p.m.

**Next meeting**  
The next meeting of the Houston City Council will be March 8, at 6 p.m. at 109 W. Maple St.

# Houston basketball has tough game with Randolph

By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

It was a tough game for the Houston boys basketball team, as they took on Randolph last Thursday, Feb. 11, and took a loss, 69-24.

Houston did show good ball handling skills, as players managed to save the ball from out of bounds several times.

The team was quick on offense, which did manage to confuse Randolph more than a few times. Houston also worked hard on defense to upset Randolph's offense.

**Randolph 69, Houston 24**  
RANDOLPH (69)  
Nathan Weckop 5 P, 6 R, 1 3-PT; Jacob Weckop 2 P; Devon Schultz 10 P, 2 3-PT; Jack Hines 9 P, 3 3-PT; Jack Roberg 6 P; Alex Whitson 9 P, 10 R, 1 3-PT; Mason Lorenzen 11 P, 3 3-PT; Tyson Cooreman 2 P; Clay Nielsen 14 P, 7 R.

HOUSTON (24)  
Landon Carrier 2 P, 3 R; Noah Kingsley 16 P, 3 R, 2 3-PT; Kenny Grupe 4 P, 3 R; Maddox Rodriguez 2 P, 4 R; Zach Olson 4 R.

Halftime: RAND 39, HOU 14.  
Free throws: RAND 6-6, HOU 6-10.

Three-point goals: RAND 10, HOU 2.

## Hurricane BBB schedule

Feb. 15-19 & 22-26

Feb. 16, home, Schaeffer Aca.  
Feb. 18, away, Schaeffer Aca.  
Feb. 23, away, Kingsland  
Feb. 26, home, Lyle-Pacelli  
*Please note: All games are subject to change due to winter weather or COVID-19. Please see school website www.houston.k12.mn.us. All games start at 7:15 p.m. unless otherwise noted. See opponent website for live away games.*

## Hurricane GBB schedule

Feb. 15-19 & 22-26

Feb. 16, away, Schaeffer Aca.  
Feb. 18, home, Schaeffer Aca.  
Feb. 23, home, Kingsland  
Feb. 26, away, Lyle-Pacelli  
*Please note: All games are subject to change due to winter weather or COVID-19. Please see school website www.houston.k12.mn.us. All games start at 7:15 p.m. unless otherwise noted. See opponent website for live away games.*



Above: Ayden Florin chases a Mabel-Canton defender in a recent game.  
Below: Carter Geiwitz dribbles on the three-point line as teammate Landon Carrier blocks a Cougar defender.



# Warriors host gymnastics meet

By Craig Moorhead  
The Caledonia Argus

Caledonia/Spring Grove gymnasts hosted their second meet of the season on Thursday, February 11. The event was a triangular, with athletes from Byron and La Crescent competing along with the Warriors.

The C/SG varsity earned 31.575 points on vault, 21.525 on uneven bars, 25.225 on balance beam, and 28.850 on floor exercise, for a total of 107.175. Byron totaled 129.50, and La Crescent 123.825.

Warrior Braelyn Lange scored 29.450 points in the All-Around, earning marks of 8.050 on vault, 6.825 on bars, 6.875 on beam, and 7.70 on floor. Two teammates placed well, too. Cameryn Kruse totaled 26.550 points (7.80 on vault, 6.075 on bars, 5.975 on beam, and 6.70 on floor). Brianna Johnson garnered 8.175 points on vault, 4.275 on bars, 5.975 on beam, and 7.20 on floor, for a total all-around score of 25.625.

The top All-Around score went to Amber Roble of Byron, who totaled 33.50 points.

In the JV rounds, Caledonia totaled 75.50 team points. Byron scored 126.75, and La Crescent 89.30. Sabrina Lisota and Camryn Klug both recorded excellent vault scores for the junior varsity, earning 7.55 and 7.50 points respectively.



Craig Moorhead/The Caledonia Argus

Kandis Privet has competed on both JV and varsity events this year.

# Wrestlers go to Lewiston-Altura

By Craig Moorhead  
The Caledonia Argus

Caledonia/Houston wrestlers headed to Lewiston on Feb. 12, taking on Chatfield and Lewiston-Altura/Rushford-Peterson.

Due to various reasons, the Class A Warriors had to forfeit seven weight classes to the Chatfield Gophers, and eight weights versus the AA Cardinals of LARP.

"Our varsity was pretty light for different reasons," Caledonia head coach Shay Mahoney reported. "The few matches we had we wrestled well."

One such match pitted Warrior Isaac Blocker against Cody Guen-

ther of Chatfield at 132. Blocker

lost a 5-2 decision against his talented opponent on January 30. But on Feb. 12, Blocker defeated Guenther 11-5. Teammate Tucker Ginther also got a 19-3 technical fall versus Chatfield at 145. But the rest of the weight classes went to the Gophers, who won 68-8.

Versus LARP, half of CH's weights were forfeited to their opponents as well, and one (145) was left open by both squads. The Cardinals won 57-18.

Highlights for Caledonia/Houston fans included a pin from Will Allen at 106, and another fall earned by Blocker at 132. Corey Scanlan also pinned his man at

138.

Looking ahead, Mahoney said that most of the CH wrestlers who were forced to sit out the Lewiston meet should return to action next week, giving the Warriors a better chance at generating some additional team points.

A triangular scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 18 in Caledonia has been rescheduled for March 6, but the following night, CH is slated to travel to Fillmore Central to take on FC/L/MC and Dover-Eyota. Then on Saturday, February 20, Caledonia hosts highly-ranked AA Kasson-Mantorville and Austin/Pacelli, a AAA program.



Craig Moorhead/The Caledonia Argus

Isaac Blocker got an impressive win last Saturday. He's pictured here at a match he won earlier this season.

**Informed Is In Style**  
Have you read the newspaper today?  
**The Caledonia Argus**  
225 S. Kingston St.  
Caledonia, MN 55921  
507-724-3475