

# The Caledonia Argus

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## Fire claims house, workshop in Hokah

Submitted

Hokah Fire Department responded to a fire on Main Street on Saturday, March 13, at about 8:30 a.m. La Crescent Fire Department assisted with mutual aid. The building belonged to Don Bissen. No one was injured in the fire.

## Houston author publishes historical fiction book at 98-years-old

By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

Take a trip to 461 B.C. in ancient Greece and jump into the lives of Cynthia and Jethro, and follow their twists of fate in a new book by Houston author Ellinore Ask, 98 years young, after her family surprised her with the published book.

The idea came to Ask when she was a high school freshman studying ancient history, and it stuck with her until she finally put it down on paper sometime in the 1990s when she still lived on the farm in Houston.

"When I can't sleep at night, that's when I come up with these things," she explained. It only took a year to write the manuscript to 400 pages.

"She wrote it about 25 years ago. I don't think any of us kids knew about it. We were busy raising families," Karla Nelson, Ask's daughter, said.

At that time, Ask had an electric typewriter and printer. She does recall lending the manuscript to her sister- and brother-in-law to read and they enjoyed it. She also sent it to her nephew, Glenn Dahl, who lived in California at the time. That was the only copy.

During a move to Florida, Dahl came across the manuscript again, and started the process of editing

and publishing it. Dahl and his cousins, Karen, Karla, Candy and Carl Jr., edited about five chapters at a time until it was ready to self-publish on Amazon.

As Nelson started reading and editing the book, she realized it was different from another manuscript she read previously. That manuscript was called "Ageless Aimless," and Ask had printed out various copies for her kids to read.

"I was doing the chapters and it was not matching up," she said. "This was a different book. When did she write this?"

Once the book was printed and shipped, the family got together for a Zoom call at Ask's apartment, even getting special permission to have an extra visitor in person. They watched her open the present and inside, the printed book waited. Ask couldn't believe her eyes when she saw the author's proof, followed by exclamations of surprise. Ask mentioned she had an idea for a sequel in her head as well.

Dahl also wrote the disclaimer paragraph in the beginning of the book, and Ask said she liked the way he wrote it. He writes, "Most of the characters are imaginary and are engaged in fictional activities; although these activities are repre-

ELLINORE ASK

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Jordan Gerard/The Caledonia Argus

Ellinore Ask is a published author at the age of 98. She wrote the manuscript for "The Twists of Fate" about 25 years ago. Recently, her family found it and surprised her by publishing the book. It's currently available on Amazon as a Kindle or print edition.

## Proposed OHV trail in Houston causing a stir

By Jordan Gerard  
Editor, The Caledonia Argus

Still a hotly contested topic of conversation, the proposed Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail in Houston is causing a stir nearly 12 years after the initial idea.

About 10 residents attended Houston City Council's regular meeting on Monday, March 8. During the public comment sec-

tion, many voiced opposition to the OHV trail.

Houston resident Sandy Fitting said the "trail won't be worth the headache every time it rains to have it wash down into the city."

She also expressed concern about how many meetings were held on the topic and what was posted in the minutes from previous council meetings.

Fitting also brought up a long-

standing question of what happened to the petition signed by over 100 residents in October 2012 to get the question for prohibiting use of motorized recreational vehicles in South Park on a ballot. South Park is the area of the proposed OHV trail.

The physical copy of the petition has since been lost, as City Clerk

HOUSTON OHV

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## Caledonia City Council ponders higher water, sewer rates

By Craig Moorhead  
The Caledonia Argus

Caledonia City Council members discussed a series of increases to water and sewer bills on Monday, March 8.

With a new well and a new wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) to pay for, the City of Caledonia will need to deal with an increased debt load for years to come.

The WWTP could cost up to \$17.5 million, while newly-drilled well No. 8 could cost \$1.3 million by the time the well house is built. The city has secured \$7 million in State of Minnesota funding to offset part of the cost of the WWTP, and has applied for \$10.5 million in low interest loan dollars to pay for the remainder of the project.

And the well, (except for approximately \$50,000 in water fund dollars) will need to be paid for entirely with

low-interest loan dollars. The well itself cost \$385,930 to construct. And the associated well house with its equipment is expected to cost close to \$1 million dollars.

One proposal would raise the fixed monthly charge for water from \$15.60 to \$17.30, and add 10 cents per 1000 gallons for water usage beginning in July of 2021.

Two proposals were offered for potential sewer increases. One would raise the monthly meter charge by \$8.60 for 5/8" and 3/4" service lines (more for larger lines), with an extra 80 cents per 1000 gallons.

The second would increase the monthly fixed meter charge by \$5.90 for the smaller lines, with higher charges for bigger lines and the same 80 cent increase per 1000 gallons.

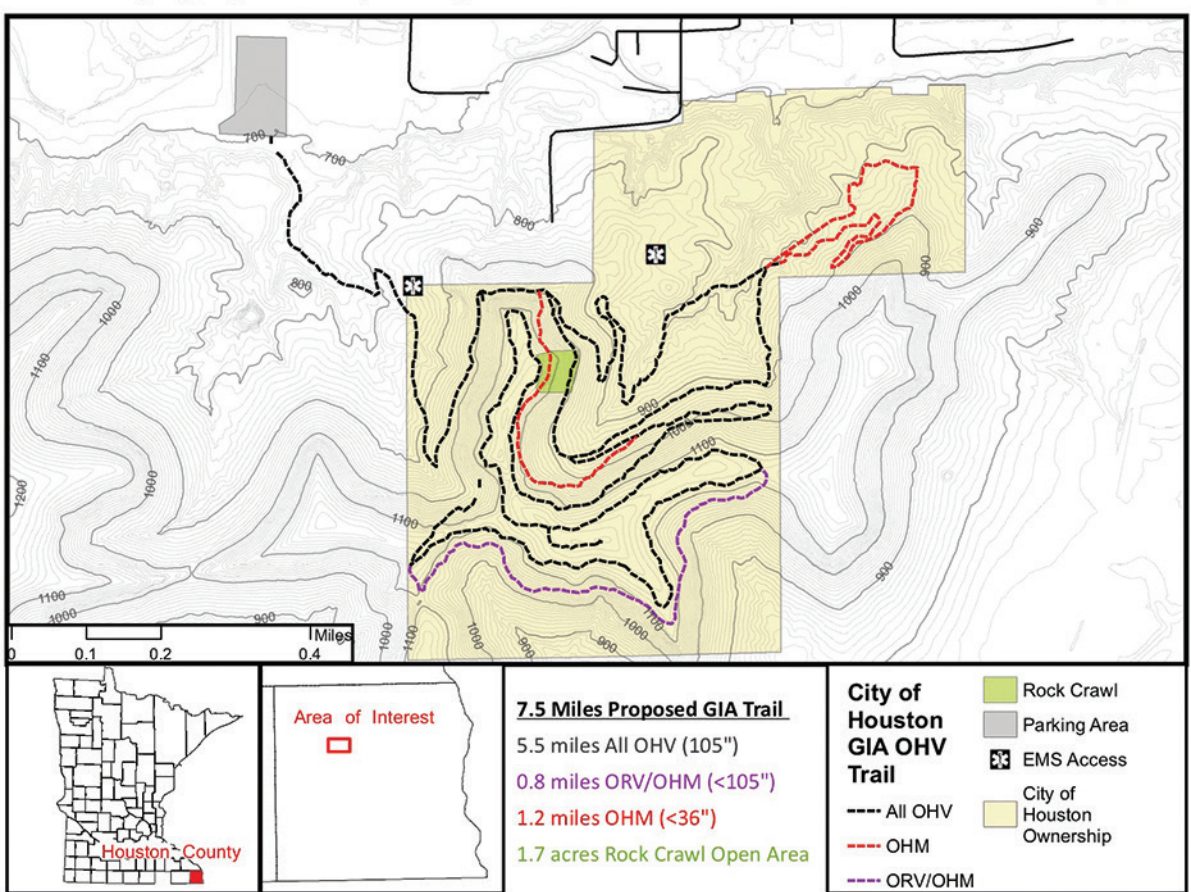
All of the proposals would take effect in 2021, with

CALEDONIA COUNCIL

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## Topographic Map - City of Houston Grant-in-Aid OHV Trail

January 11, 2019



Source: MN DNR/Houston OHV Trail Project

This map can be found in a bigger resolution online at the DNR website, but for now, this is the proposed trail map, including several different trail types such as all OHV, ORV/OHM, OHV only and a rock crawl area.

## County board briefed on immunizations

By Craig Moorhead  
The Caledonia Argus

Last week, Houston County commissioners learned that their Public Health Department has the ability to administer large numbers of COVID-19 immunizations - as long as vaccines are available and the Minnesota Department of Health opens the program up to additional eligible groups.

"As of yesterday, 79 percent of our over 65 population have received at least one dose (of the Moderna vaccine)," Public Health and Human Services director John Puleasa said during the March 9 board meeting. "I'm encouraged, because what they've said all along is we need to get to approximately 80 percent of our population to have herd immunity. And those folks in the over 65 population are considered some of the more vulnerable."

Puleasa noted local immuniza-

tion efforts have been successful because of a "community effort" which has brought together both public and private resources, including volunteers. No doses of the recently-approved Johnson and Johnson vaccine had arrived at the time of the meeting, but the county planned to administer second doses of the Moderna vaccine to around 570 persons on March 12, and another "first dose" clinic was planned to give an additional 200 shots.

"The big thing is, it sounds like Minnesota will be expanding eligibility for vaccines beginning Wednesday (March 10), so that includes phase 1b tier 2, and tier 3," Public Health supervisor Heather Myhre reported. "In a nutshell, they're looking at focusing on some underlying health conditions, food processing plant workers, and some other essential front line workers."

In addition, any phase 1a individuals who have not been immu-

nized will still be able to receive vaccines, Puleasa and Myhre noted.

"I'm encouraged," the director said. "We're moving in the right direction. We have a solid plan in place and the ability to vaccinate large groups of people."

On a related note, commissioners approved 66 grant applications for round two of the Houston County State Business Relief Grant program, using up the remaining funds available for that COVID-19 related effort. The second round will distribute \$55,399, EDA coordinator Allison Wagner reported. And the total for both rounds will be \$367,594, she added.

Other ballots

The board also approved a bid from Susurface Inc. (Moorhead, Minn.), to repair/line a major runway culvert at the Houston County

COUNTY BOARD

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## Community Township Day

Townships hold annual meeting

See pages 7 & 8

## 4-H Project Day

Local 4-H clubs having fun on Project Day

See page 6

## Sports Basketball

Playoffs begin for basketball teams

See page 10

## Wrestling

Wrestling gets going on tournaments

See page 7

## Obits

Lucille Peterson  
Daniel Joseph Meyer  
Jacob Dayton  
Mary Lampert  
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# HOUSTON OHV

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Michelle Quinn said she was not able to find it. It is also not included in any documents on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) project website.

Fitting told the *Argus* in February that it was sent to the DNR Parks and Recreation Department after it was finished. DNR Area Supervisor (Dept. of Parks and Trails) Jess Althoff did not respond by Monday's press deadline.

Houston resident Heidi Olson questioned why they would "want people outside of town running \$100,000 vehicles running up our hills and in city limits?"

"We have the best school district in the state. Let's do something to improve the lives of our children. We have no pool, no rec center," she said. "Do something to improve their life."

Several residents were also concerned about the noise disrupting the peace and quiet of the general area. Chris Moon said he comes home at night, has peace and quiet and does not want to hear four-wheelers up and down that hill.

Rick Fitting echoed those thoughts earlier and said Houston has a small town feel with peace and quiet.

"I work all week, relax on my back deck. I don't hear motorcycles, I don't hear off-highway vehicles," he said.

Fitting also voiced concerns about erosion on that hillside, asking "How do you people figure on stopping water and sand?"

Others questioned how the council kept residents informed on the project and expressed the need for better transparency.

Mayor Dave Olson said much of the information was sent out in 2009 and 2010. Council member Tony Schultz said the information was in the now-ceased *Houston Banner*, council minutes, public meetings and a community group.

"It's not some secret. It's been well opened. Every Hoedown, the group has been here to discuss it

publicly. They have a spot every year in the street," he said. "You can call or email council members to discuss it."

At the January and February council meetings, other residents voiced support for the project. The trail could bring more tourism into town, as Marlene Schultz pointed out in February.

"It needs to be tried ... pursued," she 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."

In February, International Owl Center Executive Director Karla Bloem expressed concerns to the council 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.

In January, Eileen Loken encouraged the council to consider the off-highway vehicle project further, and said the project has been 10 years in the making. She added the community needs it and her business, the Sawmill Inn, needs it.

She added though there's a risk of having the trail, there was a bigger risk of not doing the project. Loken cited that more people were going to Rushford for business.

"We need to find ways how to get the people here and not put all of our eggs in one basket," she said.

The project started in 2009, after "discussions among DNR Parks and Trails, the City of Houston, Houston County and OHV recreational groups led to the decision by three organized clubs to apply to the city for formal grant-in-aid (GIA) sponsorship in July 2010," according to agency correspondence dated Jan. 28, 2011.

Proposers listed on the project summary found on the DNR website are the City of Houston, Rochester Rough Riders, Golden Eagles Cycle Club (Rochester),

North Metro ATV Club, South Metro ATV Club, Twin Cities Trail Riders; in addition to All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota, Amateur Riders Motorcycle Association, Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association; and finally, trail administrators Jeff Klein, Milo Bjerke and Tom Steiger.

An informational session was held Aug. 9, 2010, with city administration and the DNR. Then on Aug. 23, 2010, the council approved sponsorship on the project, gaining support for additional land acquisition to increase park land. Later, the city added up to 120 acres to existing city-owned park land.

Perhaps what is more interesting about the documents on the DNR website is the dates of each study and the date of the design and layout of the trail map.

A noise study was completed on July 9, 2013, and the Federal Environmental Assessment was done Sept. 11, 2013, both by WSB & Associates from Minneapolis. However, the actual trail map and location was not determined until Oct. 25, 2015 by Trails Unlimited LLC, an enterprise unit of the U.S. Forest Service. That study suggests several water control and erosion control measures be used if the trail is built.

When questioned about the dates, DNR OHV planner Joe Unger stated "The EA did not need to review actual trail alignments, only allowing the new use," because the use of the land was changing to motorized.

The proposed trail alignment was sent to the DNR Environmental Review Unit to determine if a state Environmental Assessment Worksheet was required (EAW). It was not, Unger said, as it did not meet any mandatory categories that required an EAW, under Minnesota Administrative Rules 4410.4300 that is overseen by the Environmental Quality Board.

In February, the council accepted a proposal from OHV Acoustics

LLC in Random Lake, Wisconsin to perform a noise study for \$2,000, which grant funds can be used.

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). He has experience of 33 years with Harley-Davidson in the acoustics department as well as all homologation/certification testing for Harley-Davidson to meet all sound and tailpipe emissions standards world wide, he explained in an email to the *Argus*.

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 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 adjacent to the trail system.

An overview, maps and resources for the project can be found at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmt/plans/ohv/plans/houston-ohv-trail.html>.

No start date has been approved nor has any construction company been hired to build it yet. Stay tuned for more stories about the proposed OHV trail.

# Houston County 4-H holds Project Day

Submitted by Houston County 4-H  
By Garrett Waldenberger - 4-H Federation Reporter

Houston County Friends of 4-H Officers and Volunteers sponsored and instructed a 4-H Project Day for Houston County 4-H Youth on Saturday, Feb. 13. It was held at the Caledonia Auditorium and the Criminal Justice Center basement. The hands on learning projects that youth had to choose from included: String Art, Fairy Gardens, Canvas Art, Leather Stamping, Wood Burning, Log Animals and Cloverbud activities. There was a total of 35 youth from all over the county that braved the bitter cold to participate in the hands on learning activities.



# Scouts gather whopping 3,304 lbs. of donations

Submitted by Scout Leader  
Jon Hagerott

The Cub Scouts of Pack 51, with assistance from Boy Scouts of Troop 51, had a fantastic Scouting for Food drive this year. They gathered 3,304 pounds of donations for the Food Pantry - the largest amount they have ever collected. The Scouts extend a thank you to the residents of Brownsville, Caledonia, and Eitzen for helping them in Doing a Good Turn for our communities. Pictured is Winston Peterson (on his scooter) working on placing food drive flyers, and Landon Doering with donations ready for delivery to the food pantry.



# Bloodmobile in Caledonia on Monday, March 29

Many thanks to the Caledonia community blood donors for supporting the effort to help sustain the blood supply for those in need.

At the bloodmobile in January, 68 units of blood were collected, again exceeding the collection goal.

The next opportunity to donate blood at the Four Seasons Com-

munity Center is Monday, March 29, from noon to 6 p.m.

You can help ensure that patients have lifesaving blood products available. Log onto [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) or call Judy at 507-951-7453 to schedule an appointment now or even on the day of the drive.

The date for subsequent Cale-

donia blood drive in July will be Wednesday, July 7.

Other area blood drives dates are:

- Houston, March 23
- La Crescent, March 25
- Rushford, March 26
- Spring Grove, April 1
- Mabel, April 12

# Super heroes for a day

Submitted

St. Mary's Catholic School held a Super Hero Day and two students, Morgan Novak (left) and Lilly Novak, took the lead from their parents and dressed up as a firefighter and first responder. Morgan and Lilly are the daughters of Ben and Christine Novak.



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# Houston County Republican Party holds convention

Houston County Republican delegates, alternates and guests convened virtually via Zoom on February 3, 2021 in order to hold their annual county convention. The convention was chaired by the current Chairman David Pieper.

In following the county constitution's regarding the Executive Committee, elections of County Party Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and delegate and alternates to the Minnesota GOP State Central Committee were conducted. The results of these elections were:

- Chair David Pieper
- Deputy Chair Joe Sheffers
- Secretary Jan Deters
- Treasurer Jane Schiltz
- State Central Delegate: Jan

Deters

State Central Alternates: Mary Schroeder and David Pieper

Other business included some rewording of a section of the county constitution in order to further clarify the timing of elections of delegates and alternates to the county, district and state central conventions.

Guest speakers at the convention included: US Representative Jim Hagedorn, State Senator Jeremy Miller, State Representative Greg Davids, State Senator Mark Koran, MN GOP Chair Jennifer Carnihan, and GOP 1st Congressional District Secretary Aaron Farris. The convention's special speaker as well as a delegate was Emeritus State Representative Virgil Johnson.

In the first Executive Committee meeting following the convention, Mary Schroeder and Karyl Diersen were appointed to the Committee as Members at Large. Appointed to the 1st GOP District Central Committee were: Delegates - Mary Schroeder and Jan Deters, Alternates - Karyl Diersen and David Pieper.

The Executive Committee has already begun working on a hearty and positive plan for the Houston County Republican Party.

Prepared and paid for by the Houston County Republican Party, 137 E. Main St, Caledonia, MN 55921. David Pieper, Chairman. Not paid for nor endorsed by any candidate or candidate's committee.

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