



SPECIAL INSERT: Look for the Star's annual 'Source,' filled with helpful information for both counties.

Vacant seats on NBW&L Commission up to two

BY BILL STICKELS III
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The North Branch Water & Light Commission is back down to being three members, at least for the time being.

Just before the June 2 Water & Light Commission meeting, Thomas Hals turned in his resignation to both Chair Nathan Keech, along with North Branch Mayor Jim Swenson. Hals resignation comes just two weeks after then-chair Terry Smith abruptly resigned. In his letter of resignation, Hals gave no explanation for his decision to step down.

Since the city had already declared a vacancy and determined a deadline of noon on Friday, June 18 for turning in applications to fill Smith's seat, the council simply opted to continue on with that

timeline and hopefully fill both vacancies simultaneously. The requirements for filling Hals' seat are the same as for filling Smith's seat, where the person either has to be a resident of North Branch or an owner of a business inside city limits, and the residence or business must be a customer of either the water or electric division of North Branch Water & Light.

Depending on the number and quality of applicants, the City Council will decide at their June 22 meeting whether they need to conduct interviews with each of the applicants, or if they are comfortable appointing someone to fill one or both vacancies, or to reopen the call for applicants if there isn't at least two satisfactory applicants.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Sweet emotions

An emotional Emma Hurd gets a big hug from Madi Helin during the North Branch Vikings' celebration of their Section 7AAA softball championship win on Thursday, June 10 at Forest Lake. Hurd was also the starting catcher for the Vikings during their last state tournament berth in 2018. See page 15 for full coverage.



SUBMITTED

Parents of a gay child, Phil and Barb Schroeder of Ogilvie were among the founding members of the East Central Minnesota PFLAG chapter dedicated to providing support for LGBTQ persons, their families and friends.

PROUD DAD

Raising a gay child wasn't all rainbows. If given the choice, father and LGBTQ+ ally Phil Schroeder would have changed just one thing.

BY KIRSTEN FAURIE
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Almost two decades ago Phil and Barb Schroeder received a note from their teenage child. As they read, they realized it was a "coming out" letter, informing them that their child was gay. Phil looked at his wife and wondered ... so what else is new?

Call it a dad's intuition, Phil had known his child—who is now a transgender woman—was probably LGBTQ+, but was glad she finally felt confident enough to be herself and talk to family openly about it.

Phil admitted that when his child came out, as a parent, he was overcome with worry for

her welfare.

At the time, Phil worked as the dean of students at St. Cloud Technical and Community College. As such, he was aware of the challenges facing LGBTQ youth.

"So you're LGBTQ? That isn't a big deal. But the worry? ... This is the sad part of it all ... All I saw was a gigantic target on her back. I knew what she was going to face."

FINDING SUPPORT

The Schroeders reached out for help and found it with the nation's largest family and LGBTQ ally group: Parents, Families and

SEE PROUD, PAGE 8

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