



POSTBULLETIN

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Things get moving with people mover

Two automated buses starting downtown loop for pilot project

BY ERICH FISHER
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Don't be alarmed if you see a small orange and purple shuttle cruising through downtown Rochester without a driver.

The automated shuttles are part of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's yearlong Med City Mover pilot project. They first hit the streets Monday night — driven by an operator this time — to conduct route mapping and programming between 6 and 10 p.m. in preparation for their launch for public use in late August.

The two shuttles planned for the project were originally scheduled to hit the streets in May 2020, but were delayed by the pandemic.

"We're finally moving things along," said Anne Meyer, a spokesperson from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. "COVID kind of slowed some portions of this down. But our goal is to have this shuttle available for folks to take a ride on it. It's got a designated route in the downtown area."

The 1.5-mile route will start traveling south on Broadway Avenue, head west on Sixth Street Southwest, go north on Third Avenue Southwest, and finish by turning east on West Center Street back to Broadway.

Once the project is underway, the shuttles will run the loop between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The route will have two designated stops near Mayo Clinic's Gonda Building on West Center Street and near People's Food Co-op on Sixth Street Southwest.

The shuttles, which are electric, will travel about 15 miles per hour, and hold six people each.

They are guided by GPS, and Meyer said there will be an "ambassador" in the shuttle who can answer questions and take over the shuttle manually in case of an emergency.

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Photos by Joe Ahlquist / jahlquist@postbulletin.com

Audience members pray after public comments were concluded during a Rochester School Board meeting Tuesday at the Edison Administration Building.

Tensions run high during School Board meeting

Crowd protests 'government speech,' critical race theory

BY JORDAN SHEARER
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Tensions ran high Tuesday night as a boisterous crowd attended the Rochester School Board meeting to raise concerns about "government speech," critical race theory and the mandatory use of masks throughout the district.

None of those topics were on the agenda, except for a policy change regarding masks. But the concerns brought forth reflected national conversations about racial awareness and free speech in the educational system.

Before the main business of the meeting, Brenda Hiniker expressed concerns about critical race theory. She said it's another form of discrimination in and of itself.

"Critical race theory is very misleading," she said.



Wes Lund reads from a piece of paper inside a copy of Dr. Seuss' "The Cat in the Hat" at the Rochester School Board meeting Tuesday.

"It talks about equity instead of equality. Equality is defined and supported by the Declaration of Independence, defended in the Civil War, supported in the 14th and 15th amendments, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of

1965 ... CRT creates reverse discrimination against the white population."

Hiniker also criticized the board for its April 27 decision regarding "government speech." At that time, the board passed a resolution designating

several statements, such as "Black Lives Matter" and "Stop Asian Hate" as government-protected speech.

The resolution read, in part: "We believe in the importance of sharing a general message of acceptance and inclusion of historically underserved/marginalized individuals, which is consistent with the District's legal obligation to provide a workplace and educational environment that is free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, and other legally protected classes."

Wes Lund came to the podium with a number of Dr. Seuss books, in an apparent reference to the decision by the business that preserves the author's legacy to stop publishing six titles because of racist and insensitive imagery.

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Harwick House appeal dismissed; 2nd case intact

BY RANDY PETERSEN
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A dismissed appeal related to the rejection of a proposed property split in the Pill Hill Historic District isn't expected to impact a later decision to allow the division.

"Harwick House case No. 1 and case No. 2 should be viewed as two separate cases decided on different legal principles," said Deputy Rochester City Attorney Brent Carlsen. "Despite the court's dismissal of case No. 1, the (Rochester) Planning and Zoning Commission's recent decision in case No. 2 stands."

The first case involved a Dec. 9 Planning and Zoning Commission decision to deny splitting the 30,796-square-foot lot, which was requested by new owners Mike Macken and Dale Jech. At the time, a majority of the commission raised questions about how the proposed split was evaluated.

Macken and Jech, who had purchased the property at 912 Eighth St SW for \$630,000 in August, appealed the decision in the 3rd Judicial District Court, but not until after they discovered the Rochester City Council would not review the request.

The delay resulted in

missing the 30-day deadline for the appeal.

At the time, former city attorney Jason Loos suggested the 30-day period should start Jan. 25, when the landowners were informed the appeal would not be considered by the city council.

However, John Beatty of Dunlap and Seegar, the attorney representing Chris Dueffel and Sara Hylwa, who initially disputed the property split, said the 30-day clock should have started with the Dec. 28 release of the commission's formal decision.

See **HOUSE**, Page 3



Post Bulletin file photo

The Harwick House is pictured Nov. 19, 2020, in Southwest Rochester.

BRIEFS

WABASHA, DODGE COUNTY FAIRS OPEN WEDNESDAY

WABASHA — Fairs kick off in two Southeast Minnesota counties starting Wednesday. With a full slate of 4-H activities on the docket, and plenty of fun to be had, the Wabasha County Fair opens at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday at the county fairgrounds, 99 Coulee Way, in Wabasha. Entertainment options include multiple shows each day of the All-American Lumberjack Show, a craft and vendor fair from 4-8 p.m. Friday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, free inflatables each day, and the A-Z Exotic Animal Adventures petting zoo and pony rides. There will also be a Playstation tournament each day at the Technocenter Virtual Reality and Gaming. Friday night will feature a talent show, and Saturday afternoon will include a cake decorating contest. “After missing out on the fair in 2020, we are excited to have the community back together,” said fair board member Rob Sexton. “We have a great fair planned and hope that everyone will be able to come out and join.”

Meanwhile in Kasson, the Dodge County Fair runs Wednesday through Sunday beginning at 8 a.m. Wednesday with 4-H and, later, FFA competitions, and continues each morning in the Horse Arena and Show Arena. Entertainment at the fair includes everything from the Dodge County City Mayors Milking Contest (3 p.m. Wednesday) and the quintessentially Minnesotan Hot Dish Competition (11:30 a.m. Saturday) to the Thunderbird Open Stock Car Races (7 p.m. Thursday) and the Rice Bull Riding

Challenge (7 p.m. Friday). For more information and a complete event schedule, visit the Wabasha County Fair website at wabashacountyfair.org or the Dodge County Fair website at dodgecountyfreefair.com. **DOG DISTRACTS DRIVER, CAUSING CRASH AND POWER OUTAGE** AUSTIN — A car crash Monday afternoon led to a power outage in Austin. A young man’s dog distracted him while he was driving, causing him to crash his vehicle into an Austin Utilities high-voltage box.

No injuries were reported from the crash, and power was later restored. David Contreras, 18, of Austin, was driving a 2002 Chevrolet pickup southbound at the intersection of 18th Avenue Northwest and Fourth Street Northwest when his dog jumped into his lap and he left the roadway. The vehicle knocked the voltage box off its foundation, causing an estimated \$1,000 in damage. Contreras received a citation for driving while having a revoked license. - Post Bulletin staff reports

Meeting

From page 1
Lund spoke past the allotted time about what he described as a hostile environment for anyone who doesn’t subscribe to a particular set of beliefs. “I look across our community, across this room, and I see a tremendous polarization,” he said. “Students and teachers,

parents and community members are afraid to voice their true opinions in our schools for fear of docked grades, threats to job security, and retaliation against their students and businesses. A singular social political narrative is being pushed, and anyone who dares to question it or speak against it is being attacked and demonized.” He also mocked the hiring of the district’s

interim superintendent, Kent Pekel. “Does everyone in the room realize that we have some ‘deep state’ characters right here in the room?” Lund asked the crowd, referring to Pekel’s work with the Central Intelligence Agency earlier in his career. “I don’t think everyone’s aware of that, because when you hired this guy, you did it over Zoom meeting. You should have had the public vet this character

to find out who exactly he is.” Board Chairwoman Jean Marvin banged her gavel in protest against Julie Kisgen-Reed, who came forward after the public comment period was closed. Kisgen-Reed spoke passionately against mask usage, though much of her initial comments were hard to hear as commotion in the room rose. The crowd didn’t stop there.

When Marvin introduced the meeting, someone in the crowd suggested the board start with the Pledge of Allegiance. The crowd of at least 50 then recited the pledge themselves, followed by a round of applause. As the crowd began to leave the room at the end of the meeting, someone suggested they recite the Lord’s Prayer. Many of them did, some with their arms raised in the air.

Neither Pekel nor the board responded to audience members during the meeting, but they provided comments afterward. Pekel and Marvin said many of the implications expressed were incorrect. For example, both clarified that Rochester Public Schools does not teach critical race theory. “This kind of misinformation is really disheartening,” Marvin said.

Mover

From page 1
“We always have someone who will be on the shuttle who can do that, and they will continue to do that for the duration of the project,” she said. The pilot project is in partnership with the City of Rochester, Destination Medical Center, Mayo Clinic, First Transit and EasyMile, with the goal of testing how the technology works for future transportation plans in the state. Meyer said public feedback is more than encouraged during the yearlong program. “This is just an opportunity to let folks get to know a little bit more about this



Joe Ahlquist / jahlquist@postbulletin.com
A Med City Mover is slowly driven along West Center Street through downtown Rochester. The automated vehicle was mapping its 1.5-mile route around the city’s downtown Monday for a yearlong pilot project. The public will be able to use the shuttles beginning in August.

technology, let them take a ride, and then share that feedback with us,” she said. “We want to hear what they like, what they don’t like,

because I think that type of information will be so helpful if we really get used to and get prepared for this evolving technology.”

House

From page 1
Judge Joseph Case agreed. “The court finds that the 30-day window for filing an appeal in the district court began on Dec. 30, 2020, and ended on Jan. 29, 2021,” he wrote in his ruling. While the initial case was still under review, Macken and Jech filed a second similar

request for splitting the property, using a review process suggested by the commission’s earlier rejection. Community Development staff approved the split, using the modified review. Duefel and Hylwa were joined by neighbors Jan and Rocky Daly in appealing approval of the second request, which again sent the issue to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The commission voted 5-1 on June 23 to support the split, but the official findings related to the decision will be discussed Wednesday. At this point, the June 23 decision has not been appealed in court, but Hylwa said it remains a possibility. “We have not been served with the decision yet, but are definitely considering all legal options,” she said.

CORRECTIONS

An “If you go” box on Page C7 of Tuesday’s edition listed wrong information for the Living History Fair this weekend. The fair will take place at the History Center of Olmsted County,

1195 W. Circle Drive SW, Rochester. Tickets cost \$5 for children ages 2 to 12, \$10 for ages 13 and older, and can be purchased online at olmstedhistory.com.

The Post Bulletin is committed to fairness and accuracy. If you have a concern, contact Randi Kallas at 507-285-7700 or news@postbulletin.com.

LOTTERY

- Minnesota Daily 3**
Tuesday: 2-7-1
- Minnesota Northstar Cash**
Tuesday: 4-13-14-26-27
- Wisconsin Supercash**
Tuesday: 11-24-25-28-31-35
Doublor: N
- All or Nothing**
Tuesday: 2-7-8-9-11-13-15-16-17-18-21

- Wisconsin Badger 5**
Tuesday: 2-17-21-26-27
- Wisconsin Pick 3**
Tuesday: 1-7-6
- Wisconsin Pick 4**
Tuesday: 3-9-6-2
- Mega Millions**
Tuesday: 3-10-17-26-55
Mega Ball: 24
Megaplier: 2X



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