

# Ousted Clay County GOP chair fires back

## Hahn threatens legal action against state party

**Moorhead**  
The ousted chair of the Clay County Republicans has fired back against the head of the Republican Party of Minnesota, the latest move in an ongoing saga.

Edwin Hahn, who maintains he's still the local party chair, sent his own "cease and desist" letter to

Republican Party of Minnesota Chairman David Hann, demanding that Hann immediately stop "interfering" with local management of the county organization, which Hahn said is outside the scope of state party functions.

The letter, dated Wednesday, March 30, demands that Minnesota GOP staff stop making "slandorous and false public statements" about Hahn through press releases or social media posts.

Hahn, of Moorhead, also asked for a public



apology from the Minnesota GOP and acknowledgment of delegates and alternates he says were elected at his gathering Saturday. Hahn said he's prepared to pursue legal remedies in the matter. The state party has also threatened legal action in a March 17 cease-and-desist letter it sent Hahn.

Issuance of the letter follows the state party's abrupt cancellation of the local party's convention set for Saturday in Moorhead, and Hahn's own impromptu gathering that followed at a home in Glyndon.

"He's in so deep now. He has no choice but to keep going," Rodney Johnson, the Clay County Republicans' newly elected chair, said of Hahn.

The state party chair, Hann, issued

a statement late Wednesday that said, in part, Hahn was removed as Clay County GOP chair due to his "increasingly erratic behavior."

"The public should know that Mr. Hahn has no affiliation with the Republican Party, does not represent it in any way, and any actions taken by Mr. Hahn are his own responsibility and have no bearing on the processes of the Republican Party to elect delegates, to hold conventions, or conduct other Party business," Hann wrote.

Repeated requests by The Forum for comment from Hahn have gone unanswered.

In a March 8 meeting, members of the Clay County Republicans' executive committee voted to remove Hahn as chair.

A notice, delivered to Hahn's home days prior, cited "ethical violations" and "consistent conduct unbecoming of an organization chair" as reasons for his removal.

Specifically, the executive committee said Hahn harassed and repeatedly tried to bully and intimidate board members and



Edwin Hahn, in red, protests during an Aug. 23, 2021, meeting of the Moorhead School Board where the board voted to require masks in school.

delegates and acted in ways that led to "significant negative public impressions" of the organization.

Hahn has said the effort to remove him March 8 was the work of a "small number of disgruntled members."

In Hahn's letter to the state GOP, he wrote, "Eight members of the executive committee" representing a quorum, who met in the same location that night, voted down the removal

effort.

He wrote that he remains the "duly elected chair" of the Clay County Republicans.

Johnson said the eight people Hahn is referring to were single-handedly appointed by Hahn that night, which he had no authority to do.

Johnson said he's unsure who will show up at the 7th Congressional District Republican Convention in Willmar, Minnesota,

on April 29-30.

Delegates and alternates elected in 2020 will have a seat on the convention floor that weekend, he said, but new delegates chosen at Hahn's event Saturday will not be allowed in.

Johnson said delegates who want to be disassociated with Hahn should write a letter stating that wish to him or Hann before the convention.

Readers can reach reporter Robin Huebner at rhuebner@forumcomm.com

## ND utility fined \$40K for unpermitted line route

By Adam Willis  
The Forum

BISMARCK — North Dakota regulators have penalized one of the state's major electricity providers for rerouting a transmission line without a permit and building too close to the homes of landowners in Morton County.

The three-member Public Service Commission voted unanimously at a meeting Wednesday, March 30, to penalize Montana Dakota Utilities \$40,000 for infractions related to rerouting portions of a 1.5 mile transmission line to deliver natural gas-generated electricity from the company's Heskett Station power plant in Mandan. An investigation by regulatory staff found that the line was rerouted without a permit and a portion was built within the legally-required 500 foot buffer of rural homes.

MDU spokesman Mark Hanson said landowners in the area are already dealing with other transmission lines, not all of them his company's, and they were particularly frustrated by the interruptions the line created for their view.

Commissioner Julie Fedorchak called the decision to build without a permit "a serious miscalculation" and said she hopes there

are several "lessons learned" from the incident. MDU had ample opportunity to clear up confusion with state regulators, she said.

"The disappointing thing for me is that MDU has been in our state for a very, very, very long time and has been involved in the passage of the siting law from the very beginning," she said. "They of all the companies should have a very good understanding of what is and isn't required by the siting law."

Hanson said the mistakes were the result of MDU's assumption that the regulatory requirements didn't apply, since they considered the development to be two distinct, shorter transmission projects. The Public Service Commission determined that the rerouted stretch constitutes a single line, meaning it has to meet the state's siting standards.

Aside from the \$40,000 fine, which was assessed for rerouting the transmission line without a permit, the commission approved the dismissal of what would have been an additional \$60,000 penalty for building too close to four homes. Commissioners said MDU worked hard to reach a deal with landowners, and Fedorchak said the fact that they are having to relocate a portion of the line amounts to "a penalty in itself."

MDU could be fined an additional \$10,000 if they commit any permitting violations within the next seven years.

The incident has underscored the importance to MDU of having conversations with regulatory staff to make sure they are in compliance with state law, rather than simply making assumptions, Hanson said. He said he did not have an estimate for the costs of relocating part of the transmission line.

The rerouted transmission line is part of MDU's ongoing work to retire two coal-fired units at Heskett Station and ramp up electric generation from natural gas.

Fedorchak noted that pushing back part of the transmission line likely will not satisfy the complaints of six residences in immediate view of the line, since it only needs to be moved back several dozen feet to meet legal requirements.

At a public hearing in Mandan last fall, the two sides weren't able to reach an agreement beyond the relocation of a portion of the line. For most of the landowners involved there was "a resignation that the line's gonna be there," Hanson said.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Adam Willis, a Report for America corps member, at awillis@forumcomm.com.



David Samson / The Forum  
Firefighters work the scene of a garage fire in the 4200 block of 17th Avenue South in Fargo on Wednesday, March 30, 2022.

## Apartment garages damaged in Fargo fire

Forum staff reports

FARGO — A fire burned 15 garages and at least one vehicle Wednesday, March 30, at an apartment complex near West Acres mall, according to Fargo Fire Marshal Ryan Erickson.

Fire crews were dispatched shortly after 6 a.m. to the 4200 block of

17th Avenue South.

Firefighters extinguished the flames, and no injuries were reported. The fire prompted road closures and traffic detours near West Acres.

A fire investigator is working to determine the cause of the blaze and a cost estimate of the damage.



WDAY photo  
Firefighters were called to the 4200 block of 17th Avenue South shortly after 6 a.m. on Wednesday, March 30, 2022.

## North Dakota AG replacing chief deputy

By Adam Willis  
The Forum

BISMARCK — North Dakota's newly appointed Attorney General Drew Wrigley is replacing his second-in-command.

Troy Seibel, who served as chief deputy attorney general since 2016, left his job on March 16, office spokeswoman Liz Brocker said.

Gov. Doug Burgum appointed Wrigley to attorney general last month after the death



Seibel

of Wayne Stenehjem, the longest-serving head of law enforcement in North Dakota history, in January. Stenehjem died of cardiac arrest at age 68.

Wrigley said in a statement to The Forum that "it is customary" for a new attorney general to appoint his own chief deputy. He added

that he appreciates the weeks Seibel spent helping him through the transition into the new position.

Wrigley was not immediately available for further comment Tuesday afternoon, and Seibel could not be reached for comment.

Seibel told KFGO earlier this week that he understood and respected Wrigley's decision to appoint his own deputy. He added that he plans to take some time off and will

consider all options for his next steps.

Wrigley announced a campaign for attorney general in December but was tapped to serve out the remainder of Stenehjem's term after his unexpected death. That term expires at the end of this year, and Wrigley is seeking the Republican Party's nomination for attorney general on the 2022 ballot.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Adam Willis, a Report for America corps member, at awillis@forumcomm.com.

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