

The year ahead

As we close the door on 2021, now is a good time to examine what lies ahead in 2022.

Needless to say, we are in a more settled position compared to 12 months ago. While the pandemic remains a concern and continues to impact everyday life, we have a better handle on the situation.

Meanwhile, there are obviously other pressing issues, both on the local and regional level.

County buildings

There's no doubt Cottonwood County Commissioners will take a long look at major building projects in 2022.

During last month's work session, commissioners reviewed options for \$23 million in bonding — \$15 million to construct a new public works shop and \$8 million for major improvements at the Law Enforcement Center and jail.

According to a bond consultant, both projects are well within the county's borrowing capacity and the county can lock in interest rates below 2% for up to 30 years. Given those rates, commissioners may be tempted to spend more than necessary on these projects. We have not seen the details, but a \$15 million price tag for a public works shop seems steep compared to Windom's \$4 million Emergency Services Facility.

At the very least, we should expect our commissioners to do a thorough job of selling the public on \$18 million worth of bonding.

Shelter/restroom project

Meanwhile, the city of Windom faces a project of its own in 2022.

Last fall, the council heard plans for a shelter/restroom project in Island Park. This project is overdue and greatly impacts how Windom is viewed by visiting guests and prospective residents.

■ LETTER

Reader: Staying connected to Windom is a key in my life

I was blessed to be born in Windom on July 4 1956.

It's hard to believe it has been 43 years since I left Windom to go to Brown in Minneapolis to study radio/TV. I now have lived in Albuquerque longer than I lived in Windom. I just shake my head how fast time is going.

For me, staying connected to Windom has been a key in my life. It is where my Christian foundation was built. I want that for every child. That is why I do what I do. Over the years, in my radio life, and now as a pastor, I share about my years in Windom and the awesome impact it had on me. I know much history about Windom, from the late-1800s through the present.

I love Windom because I know personally all the dedication and love it has taken to establish it as a strong community. The names have changed over the years, of course. Most do not know me, but I still follow my hometown with my subscription to the Citizen.

Some of you know I was a radio news reporter when I first

QUICK VIEWS

■ County commissioners are considering spending \$15 million on a public works shop and \$8 million at the Law Enforcement Center.

■ Windom's shelter/restroom project is planned for 2022.

■ Two new apartment projects could add more than 70 housing units to Windom.

As it stands, the park that's most popular for visiting guests will see a second summer without restrooms. This project has been delayed long enough. It's up to the council to make sure the new facility is completed in 2022.

Housing efforts

A year ago, Windom was making progress in increasing housing.

Heading into 2021, Lakeside Apartments and the Gove Acres housing development were steps in the right direction. Now, thanks to efforts of the Windom Economic Development Authority, HyLife and other private developers the housing situation looks even better in 2022.

The Gove Acres project is off the ground, with new structures in place. In addition, the Guardian Inn has been transformed from a motel to an apartment complex. Now, two more apartment buildings appear to be on the horizon.

If the EDA and Cemstone sign purchase agreements this month for Cemstone to move to North Windom Industrial Park, we will see yet another key housing effort take hold — the south Cottonwood Lake development. The key, through these efforts, is for the community to expand wisely, with minimal impact on taxpayers.

— Rahn Larson

started in radio, at the old Minnesota State News Network in 1979.

News reporting is very important to all of us as we stay informed on issues. The Citizen does that in an awesome way — non-partisan, no sensationalism in their reporting.

I was in radio for almost 45 years. I know good media when I see it! For the size of the Windom community you are blessed with an excellent weekly newspaper. Not many communities in America have what you have!

I had to share this, as we all need to express our thanks to those who bring us the truth and serve us in a wonderful way. I count Trevor, Rahn, Dave and Sue as dear friends at the Citizen. I know their hearts are in serving Windom. Look around and you will find many are working hard to serve the Windom Community. I am so touched by the growth and excellence of Windom Area Health and the Windom Ambulance Service. You are super blessed.

God Bless you all!

— Dewey Moede, Albuquerque, N.M.

■ OUR READERS RESPOND

Have you made a New Year's resolution this year?

Taunya Swenson

■ WINDOM



"Instead of a resolution, I have a goal to do a bikini fitness competition 16 weeks from now. I want to do it once in my life."

Kraig Nelson

■ WINDOM



"Yes, I am going to drink more water and less soda this year."

Shirley Hartzler

■ JACKSON



"I have in the past, but not this year. I wasn't feeling very good on New Year's Eve, so I decided to skip making a resolution this year."

Brooklyn Paulson

■ WINDOM



"No, because I feel like I can accomplish more things if I'm not focused on just one thing."

A trip to the movies

Normally I'd be either sharing about a book or books I read during the Christmas to New Year's break. Sadly, I've been rather lax in my book reading this year.

Instead, I offer a movie review. But before I get to the review, I must ask, how many actually go to the movie theater any more? I see a few hands going up, maybe a few more. I see a few hands doing the wishy-washy signal, indicating that you go occasionally.

I'm right there with you. I rarely go alone, although I'll see a show at the State Theater here in Windom alone. But to go to a movie out of town — alone — nope, I won't do that. Even if it's a new Star Wars movie, I either have to go with my wife, Donna, or one of my kids or wait until it arrives in Windom.

Donna and I will occasionally watch a pay-per-view movie through Dish Network, but that's probably less than an every-other-month occurrence. Last week, we watched "News of the World," a Western starring Tom Hanks that came out in 2020, during a free HBO weekend.

If we don't see a "newer" movie through those two methods, then we probably won't see a "new" movie again until it airs on one of the cable networks — three or four years after it was released.

I guess it doesn't matter to us, because it's still "new" to us.

So, why do I bring up movies?

For the last several years, Donna and I have made it a New Year's Eve tradition to go to Okoboji (or perhaps Worthington once its new theaters open) to watch a new release at the Great Lakes 7. It's her birthday, so I take her out for dinner and a movie. Usually there's always a new movie that intrigues us and it's the one time each year that's convenient for both of us. It's our New Year's Eve celebration.



DAVE FJELD

REPORTER

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Over the years, we've seen new Star Wars movies, a Lord of the Rings flick and I think we caught a Bette Midler/Billy Crystal movie in the theater on New Year's Eve.

That brings us to New Year's Eve 2021. We went to the Great Lakes 7 Friday night and watched "American Underdog," the story of Hall of Fame

quarterback Kurt Warner and his wife, Brenda.

I'm not about to give you a lengthy review of the movie. I'm not on the level of the late greats, Siskel & Ebert. (If you don't know who they are, ask your parents, or grandparents. There's a good chance they'll know.)

For those who don't know, Kurt Warner played college football at Northern Iowa and ultimately played 12 years in the NFL, winning a Super Bowl with the Rams and appearing in two others.

"American Underdog" is not about his success in the NFL, but about his journey getting there. I knew bits and pieces about his story — that he stocked shelves in a Hy-Vee grocery store and played with the Iowa Barnstormers in the Arena Football League before finally getting a shot with Dick Vermeil and the Rams.

What I didn't know is the couple's background story — how they met, how they struggled to stay together, that his girlfriend/ultimately wife Brenda had two children before she and Kurt married and just how poor the couple was before Kurt made it big in the NFL.

The story is at times comical, always touching, and many times tugs at your heartstrings, but it is a movie you must see. If you're a sucker for a story with a happy ending, this is one not to miss.

In the words of Siskel & Ebert, it gets two thumbs-up.

QUICK HIT

Joel Alvstad
Sports Editor



A taste of freedom

Ever since the first car rolled off the assembly line, Americans have been in love with their vehicles.

I'm certainly no different. If there is a trip to take, I'm often the one behind the wheel — more often by choice than by necessity.

But like virtually anything else in life, you don't know how much you appreciate something until you can't do it.

This week, I was able to climb behind the wheel for the first time since I had my ankle surgery in September.

For the first time in four months, I didn't need to rely on someone else to get someplace. It was, for lack of a better word, liberating.

While I'm grateful to my wife for being a chauffeur, I'm also grateful for another step toward normal.

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

We welcome letters to the editor of up to 300 words on any topic. We strongly encourage letters to be typed/emailed and may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address and daytime phone number. The deadline for letters is noon on Mondays.

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League is a voice for Minnesota cities at State Capitol

In just a few weeks, the Minnesota State Legislature will re-convene to begin the second half of its 92nd biennial session.

The League of Minnesota Cities is at the forefront of efforts to seek legislation to benefit our cities and their residents.

But why do Minnesota cities collectively need a voice to advocate for them at the State Capitol? Because policy decisions made at state government levels ultimately affect city governments and city residents.

What's on the agenda for cities?

In preparation for the upcoming state session, the League's board of directors approved the 2022 City Policies — a document addressing more than 200 legislative issues ranging from unfunded mandates, to economic development tools, to state-local fiscal relations. The policies are the work of officials representing cities of all sizes and locations that participated in the League's four policy committees in 2021. (Access the policies at www.lmc.org/policies.)

From that document, the board selected five issue areas as key League legislative priorities.

The policies provide a starting point for important issues to watch as the session begins. Those issues include:

Bonding

The League will advocate for a substantial bonding bill that includes appropriations for municipal water and wastewater infrastructure, local roads and bridges, funding for the local road wetland replacement fund, flood hazard mitigation, and dam repair and removal projects.

Housing

Cities across Minnesota are working to address locally identified housing needs and provide quality housing options in their communities.

The League supports preserving existing city decision-making authority to allow individual communities the right avenues to support their unique housing goals. The League supports state resources to aid cities in meeting demand for affordable housing that is sensitive to local conditions, emerging trends and changing demographics.

A lack of rental, single-family, and other housing options for new and current residents can hinder economic development and job

growth.

The League will advocate for additional local tools and programs that support workforce housing and affordable housing, including resources in a bonding bill.

Local control

Local decisions should be made at the local level.

The League will continue to oppose legislation that erodes the fundamental principle of local control in cities across Minnesota. We will also work to reinforce our core value that local elected officials are not only authorized by the voters that elect them to make public policy decisions related to health, safety and welfare within their communities, but remain in the best position to do so.

Aid to cities

League policy calls for future annual Local Government Aid appropriation increases to account at least for inflationary pressures and supports permanent funding for the Small Cities Assistance Account, plus immediate restoration of the Public Employees Retirement Association employer aid.

ment Association employer aid.

Workers' compensation

The League and the communities it serves recognize inherent dangers faced by peace officers and firefighters in the line of duty.

The duties performed by public safety employees sometimes lead to physical and mental injuries. In recent years, the number of public employees seeking duty disability determinations and worker's compensation claims for line-of-duty injuries has accelerated.

The League will advance legislative initiatives aimed at injury prevention and treatment and will seek state funding for certain disability benefits currently borne by employers. The League will oppose efforts to expand conditions presumed to be work-related for workers' compensation purposes.

The League envisions a future when all cities are thriving, taking advantage of new opportunities and successfully meeting ongoing challenges. The League's advocacy for policies benefitting our 830-plus member cities is a key part of meeting that vision. For more information, visit www.lmc.org.

Anne Finn is the assistant director of intergovernmental relations for the League of Minnesota Cities.



ANNE FINN

GUEST COLUMNIST