

postscript

by Frances Edstrom, columnist

Got MnDOT figured out!

It has taken me a while, but I think I finally figured it out. MnDOT, that is!

Because of where I live, off of Homer Road, I must traverse the roundabout construction on highways 61/43 on a daily basis, sometimes several times a day, due to appointments and needs, i.e., groceries, etc.

Several weeks ago, before construction even began back in April, MnDOT put up orange construction drums along Homer Road, far from the future location of the highway roundabout. Why? I'll get to that.

Then when construction began, if you lived in the Highway 43 area in Burns Valley, you could always get into town along Sugar Loaf Road and Lake Boulevard. If you lorded it over your friends who were not so close to Sugar Loaf Road, it soon became apparent that you were premature in feeling lucky. Sugar Loaf Road was blocked by construction at Lake Boulevard.

Wily drivers coming into the intersection from the direction of La Crosse began cutting through the Fleet Farm parking lot. Oh, but "It is unlawful for any person to avoid obedience to any traffic control device by driving upon or through any private property," says the law. So policing began along that route, forcing drivers into the intersection.

Now we're three months into the construction, and a water main break closed Mankato Avenue for a few days, and the backup on Highway 61 at times extended all the way to the lights at Huff Street.

For someone who is a big fan of the "zipper merge," which most Winonans think is cheating and budging in line, this one-lane backup causes a lot of heartburn. When I drive up to the merge in the absolutely empty second lane (use both lanes during traffic back-ups, the sign says) I get the stink-eye from other drivers. Good thing I have a talisman, for just such evil-eye occasions, that I got from Gary Diomandes, who is Greek and knows a lot about evil-eye stuff.

As MnDOT most likely anticipated, impatient drivers such as myself finally are tired of trying to outsmart them. If I were rich, I'd buy a helicopter. I wonder if I could land one on the roof of

Midtown Foods without crashing through into the meat department?

Why has MnDOT made life so miserable for us? Why is it so hard to get to the hardware store when all you need is picture hangers? Why is it so hard to get to the grocery store that you go through the pantry and wonder what you can make with the canned oysters that you bought by mistake last year? Why are you punished when all you want is to get your grandchildren, who are staying with you for a couple of weeks, to WSU in order to take a filmmaking class offered by GRSF? Or to the Aquatic Center? Or to the band shell? Or to the river? Or to the office? Or anywhere except Homer Road?

Why? I'll tell you!

The more painful this construction project is to us Winonans, who thought that intersection was just fine, the better for MnDOT. As this construction drags on and on, producing more and more orange construction drums (I should have stock in that company!) around bigger and bigger piles of dirt and gravel and louder and louder earth movers, we motorists are all this while forgetting exactly what the roads were like pre-construction. The more we concentrate on the present chaotic situation, the more we will be relieved when it is finally over and there is a brand-new roundabout, complete with flowers in the center, and the orange cones are carted away to the next project.

Then, we will say to ourselves, and anyone within earshot, "Thank goodness that construction is over, and we have a real road to drive on once more." We'll be so happy to drive through a huge roundabout and three little ones just to get a cup of coffee, that we won't even blink when city government and MnDOT take credit for our happiness.

They will have defused any protest of the idiocy of creating this chaos in the first place, because they have planned this psychological assault so carefully. In the meantime, however, I silently protest the idiocy on a daily basis, sometimes twice, three or four times daily. I sure am glad I'm retired and have so much time on my hands.



letters

Meyer made the right call on Advocacy Center

From: Julie Chiasson
Winona

I'm writing in response to Joe Bernaix's letter: "Surely some other organization could provide services to victims of sexual and domestic violence." Really? Please let us know which organization you are referring to. The Women's Resource Center, now the Advocacy Center of Winona (ACW), was started to fill the void in 1978. I have been involved with ACW for years.

The accusations Bernaix makes are insulting and ridiculous. In April, ACW was invited to provide a lesson on healthy sexual relationships to a local charter school. An employee of ACW distributed a pamphlet with college-level content without approval from the ACW director. An apology was provided with action taken; the employee was fired. No pornography was distributed. ACW is doing an impeccable job providing services to over 600 victims annually (federal 550 report), while contracted with Winona County. To cancel those contracts would mean victims suffering alone or having to travel long distances for support.

There is a procedure in place to move a discussion forward at a board meeting. Commissioner Meyer followed that procedure. I continue to support the ACW and Chris Meyer. Please vote for Chris. She is always available to hear your concerns.

Another blow to youth in Winona's core

From: Theresa Hyle
Winona

I recently attended the July 5 public hearing, regarding the proposed demolition of the East End Rec. Center in order to expand and provide new facilities for the Winona Police Department and the Winona Fire Department. Potentially, should the parish decide it wanted to sell the building, St. Stan's school and site could be acquired to demolish and potentially build a new, albeit much smaller, recreation center/senior citizens' center combination. Although it was mentioned that there would be expanded opportunity for green spaces, looking at the St. Stan's site, it is difficult to understand how it would be possible to include more green space in a space that is, at most, half of the size of the site now occupied by the East End Rec. Center.

I fully understand the needs to provide adequate facilities for the Winona Fire Department as well as the Winona Police Department. What I do not understand is exactly why it is that the children of Winona are once again being expected to give up recreational and educational space for the needs of some adults. Or perhaps, I should be more precise and say that I do not understand why it is that the children living in Winona between the Mississippi River and Lake Park are expected to once again give up space designed for their needs in order to accommodate adult needs. Three elementary schools have been closed, along with the playgrounds which had been equipped largely by funds raised by the local PTA, leaving no public playground within walking distance for children who once attended Madison, Central, or Lincoln schools. Children living in Knopp Valley and Valley Oaks still have lovely green spaces, playground equipment, and ball fields marked out for their use, as well as signage noting reduced speed limits and children at play. Why are we asking the children and families of Winona's East End to give up their recreational space?

I served on the WAPS transportation committee for years, trying to get reduced speed limits, stop signs, and signage around elementary schools. Eventually, we did get some stop signs, but to my undying shame and regret, those stop signs did not come until a child was killed crossing Broadway.

When my family moved here 34 years ago, we saw so many parks and schools. We believed that Winona would be a great place to raise a family. In more than three decades, the disappearance of three neighborhood schools and their recreational space has led us to conclude that Winona doesn't value children's safety or education as much as we were led to believe and certainly values some neighborhoods much more than others. Why? Why do the children of Winona's city center — and specifically now, the East End — count less than the children of Valley Oaks, Knopp Valley, Garvin Heights, and other neighborhoods located in valleys and on bluffs? Does one need to live in the (white) right neighborhood to count?

letters

Check out local candidate forums

From: Ruth Charles
Winona

The League of Women Voters - Winona (LWV) would like to invite the community to its candidate forums for the primary elections. The mission of the league is to encourage informed and active participation in government, work to increase understanding of major public policy issues,

and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

Our primary candidate forums are being held before the primary election on August 9. On July 19 we heard from candidates for the Winona County Auditor-Treasurer and from 7:30-8:30 p.m. from candidates for Winona County Board Commissioners, District Two. The recording for this can be found on the LWV-Winona Facebook page or on YouTube.

On July 26 will be our second primary forum held at 5:30-6:30 p.m. On this day we will be hearing from candidates for the

at-large seat for the Winona Area Public School Board.

The public is invited to attend in person or watch on public access TV on HBC Channel 19 or Spectrum/Charter 987. There will not be a Zoom option. The public is also invited to submit questions one day in advance through email at lwvwinona@lwvnmn.org or on the league's Facebook page — or call in during the event (number will be given out during the show).

We thank the candidates for running for office and we ask the public to register to vote and become informed voters.

Let's try someone new in District Two

From: Chasity Serocki

In the upcoming primary election on August 9, those living in District Two of Winona County will vote for whom we'd like to see advance to the general election this November. We have three people to choose from, and I am encouraging all of my fellow residents in the district to *not* vote for Voegeli.

On his campaign website (dwaynevoegelicountyboard.org), Dwayne Voegeli says under the heading of "Public Service Principles" that he supports "Term Limits. Max of 8 years in a row." Usually when one speaks about term limits, they mean that a particular individual should have a limit to the total number of terms they

serve in a specific seat. They do not refer to the number of terms served in a row. I am not sure how having a gap between terms of service in an elected public office constitutes a "term limit." It is clear to me, though, why Voegeli has included this as one of his principles: He'd like to have his cake and eat it too.

Many people support the idea of term limits. Limits can curb corruption in our politicians by restricting their ability to hold decades-long (even lifelong) appointments. Limits also allow those who otherwise may not have a strong chance of unseating an entrenched incumbent to run for public office. This brings fresh perspectives and new opportunities to our various government bodies. Of course Voegeli would like to support this idea: It's popular with the people!

The problem is Voegeli has already served two terms on the County Board

from 2003-2010. This explains why he would add the caveat to his support of term limits, that no one should serve more than "8 years in a row". This allows him to claim he supports term limits despite his previous two-term tenure on the board. I'm sorry, but that's not how term limits work. Voegeli's twisted idea of "term limits" could allow any person to hold a particular seat for decades, as long as there was a break between terms. Would this method be effective in curbing entrenchment and corruption? I don't think so.

The County Board has become mired in ideological narratives and division, and as a result, has become stagnant and unproductive. We need a shake-up and fresh start next year. I think it's time to try someone new on the County Board. Let's elect to bring in new ideas and new perspectives! Please give your vote to either of Voegeli's opponents this August 9.

Vote Wilbright for auditor-treasurer

From: Joan McNeil
Winona

Chelsi Wilbright is running for Winona County Auditor-Treasurer and has my vote. I met Chelsi at the Winona County Fair. She has already worked in the office of the county auditor, so she has a strong understanding of the duties of the office. Most of us have had experience with paying county taxes through the auditor's office. But another very important duty is being the chief elections officer for Winona County. With her past experience in the auditor's office, she will help us to have a good election season.

Vote for change on Winona County Board

From: Mary Cichanowski
Homer Township

When considering candidates for Winona County Board of Commissioners, please consider this mid-term election is about change to the board as a whole. We have had this 3-2 majority for way too long.

This majority board may have attempted to appoint certain people to the Board of Adjustments to facilitate the denial of variances. District Court Judge Kevin Mark ruled, "This decision made by the

Board of Adjustment is so severely tainted by members of the Board of Adjustment that it can't stand" (Winona Post Jan. 5, 2022).

District Two (far Western Winona and Goodview): We have the opportunity to select from two newcomers, Todd Frahm and Jerry Obieglo. Both of these candidates would bring desired change to this board. Dwayne Voegeli previously held this board seat and was part of the very controversial zoning ordinance update, and voted to pass it in 2010. Mr. Voegeli had decided not to run for re-election earlier in 2010. I would like to thank Mr. Voegeli for his past service, but he is not the change we need to this board, and would likely only sustain the status quo. This seat has a primary on August 9. Please vote!



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