

MASKS OFF

Orono schools relax mask policy

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PUT IT IN PARK

Parks at forefront of Orono council

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FEBRUARY 19, 2022

VOL. 4 NO. 48

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Masks can come off at Orono schools

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apegcm.com

Masks will no longer be required starting on Tuesday, Feb. 22 for students at Orono Public Schools.

That announcement was conveyed to Orono school families in an email on Friday, Feb. 11 by Superintendent Dr. Kristine Flesher and Orono School Board Chair Bob Tunheim.

In that email, Tunheim and Flesher said, "As we shared in our Feb. 4 summary from the Orono Schools' COVID-19 Response Team meeting, we have been elated by the rapid decrease in COVID-19 cases in our county, region and learning community. Based on the continued downward trend in recent days and the projected trends, the COVID-19 Response Team met again today (Feb. 11) to discuss the removal of more COVID-19 mitigation protocols in our schools and programs."

The changes to the COVID-19 mitigation protocols are: masks will now be strongly recommended beginning Tuesday, Feb. 22, following the Presidents Day holiday and will no longer be required. Due to federal regulations, all students and staff must still wear masks on the school bus; students in grades K-5 will return to the cafeteria for meals throughout next week; high school athletic teams and competitors will continue to follow COVID-19 guidance from Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) and all local



Pictured are parents and students protesting mask mandates in Orono schools at the beginning of the school year. (Laker Pioneer file)

and state protocols currently in place.

The reasons for the change in protocols is "a continued and substantial decline in viral transmission. Declining internal and external viral spread—coupled with increasing vaccination rates, and the milder Omicron strain of the virus—provided the team with an opportunity to relax layered mitigation strategies," according to the district.

The latest data is showing that internal active cases, student and staff illness, and quarantines are all declining significantly. In addition, county forecasts from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health School Opening Statistics indicate a continued steep

decline in COVID-19 case rates. The predicted case-rates will be approaching the CDC threshold between "High" transmission (100 or more cases per 100,000 people) and "Substantial" transmission (50 to 100 cases per 100,000) which is a standard the team has monitored throughout the pandemic. Attendance rates are consistently at 97-98 percent in all school buildings, which parallel pre-pandemic attendance rates, and rates are within a manageable range to maintain continuity of learning and prioritize health and safety with other layered mitigation strategies in place.

Even with those changes, the Orono school district is con-

tinuing with other mitigation strategies, such as asking that all students and staff members stay home when ill and report a positive case of COVID-19 in their household. Elementary classroom notifications will continue for families, with contact tracing focused on higher-risk situations.

Orono schools will continue to follow the CDC guidance for the 5-day isolation period at home for children and staff who test positive for COVID-19 and quarantine of students with COVID-19 in the home.

Classroom seating at a distance of 3 feet will be maintained as much as possible.

Elementary lunchrooms will return to normal throughout

next week, according to the district.

Rapid antigen tests are available for all staff and students, and families are welcome to pick up test kits in the main office of each school building at no cost.

The district's COVID-19 Response Team will continue monitoring health and safety metrics and meeting until they are out of high transmission and able to remove all layers of mitigation.

If there is an unexpected spike in transmission (more than 5 percent of the population in any building), the district will communicate the need to increase mitigation, which could include temporary masking.

The COVID-19 dashboard will continue to be updated by the district health team and monitored closely by the COVID-19 Response Team and as trends continue downward, they will remove all other layers of mitigation.

"Thank you to our entire school community for your diligence in following the layered mitigation efforts," the statement concluded. "We could not have accomplished an every-day, in-person school model for the last five and a half months without your collective commitment. We are grateful for your partnership and look forward with hope as we progress through a vibrant spring semester."

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Grant money aimed to school bus stop-arm violators

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Schools and bus companies across Minnesota have been given \$3.5 million in grant money to outfit school buses with stop-arm cameras.

The Minnesota Legislature has awarded

the grants to 32 schools and bus companies to purchase and install the cameras, as well as buy supporting software programs.

According to the state Department of Transportation, Minnesota

was seeing more than 1,000 stop-arm violations a year before the coronavirus hit and altered busing schedules. Adding the cameras will lead law enforcement to the violators.

State law requires mo-

torists to stop when a school bus driver extends a stop arm and activates flashing lights. The law applies to motorists both in front of the bus and in back of it.

Mike Hanson, the director of MnDOT's Office of Traffic Safety, calls the grants "a significant effort to keep kids safe, hold selfish or inattentive drivers accountable, and change dangerous driving choices."

"For a parent, the thought of losing a child to a vehicle blowing past an extended school bus stop arm is unthinkable," Hanson said in his agency's news release. "Yet we see too many drivers who are distracted or place their priorities over the safety of our youngest Minnesotans."

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Parks at forefront of Orono council meeting

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apgecm.com

Parks once again was the big topic at the latest Orono City Council meeting.

When the council last met on Monday, Jan. 24, much of the discussion was about what happened at a planning commission meeting in regards to a proposal by the Long Lake Rowing Crew to build a boat house at Summit Park Beach.

At that planning commission meeting, the LLRC asked that the proposal be tabled and it not be considered immediately. Despite the proposal being tabled, the commission allowed comment on Summit Park Beach, and most of the comments were against the proposed boathouse, including a letter from Bruce Dayton's family, who donated the land for the park.

At the city council meeting on Jan. 24, the council approved a motion by council member Victoria Seals to form a new committee to look into Summit Park Beach.

On Monday at the latest council meeting, in the public comment portion of the meeting, Summit Park Beach was the main topic of discussion.

First to speak was city park commissioner Brian Roath, who went through the process of the LLRC proposal and how things were done.

"There is much concern, confusion and misinformation in our Orono community about Summit Park," Roath said. "I would like to give a few comments from my perspective as both an Orono resident and as park commissioner. My goal here is to help clear up the miscommunication and set everyone's



Summit Park Beach has been the main topic of discussion at the last two city council meetings. (Photo courtesy city of Orono)

nerves at ease over the future of that park."

Roath said the LLRC came to the park commission in 2019 with an idea to have some of its operations at Summit Park Beach and asked for guidance from the commission and city staff. After that, the LLRC held several open houses to get public input on the project, Roath said.

In 2020, the LLRC presented to the park commission with a plan for what a facility might look like, but Roath said the commission did not pass recommendation to support the plan.

"Our viewpoint was that if anything was going to work out there would first need to be more iterations of the design based on input from the community and stakeholders," Roath said.

From March 2020 to January 2022, there was no activity and no new proposals from the LLRC about Summit Park Beach, Roath said.

"We are excited to hear the feedback from the

community but please, we need feedback on the facts. Feedback on misinformation does not help us," Roath said. "There is no one who wants to take away any parks, impede nature or disrupt anybody from their current activities at Summit, period. The commission will not support any plans that do anything but enhance everyone's use of the park."

When Roath's time was up, a few more Orono residents spoke about Summit Park Beach, including Elizabeth Weir, who read a paragraph from a letter written by Dayton's attorney, Louis B. Oberhauser.

"The City of Orono accepted the deed to this property as park property per the recommendations

from the park commission," the letter stated. "Mr. Dayton's desire and purpose of this contribution was to keep this property from being developed with structures that would destroy its natural beauty and have it used in the future as open space beach to be used by its neighbors."

When the public comment period was over, Seals informed the council and the public that the LLRC has no plans to come back to the city.

"I think they know and we know that what they presented and kind of the trail we got there, there is probably not a good route to get what they want and what they proposed," Seals said.

In other council news regarding parks in Orono, the council approved playground upgrades

at Crystal Bay Park by awarding a bid to Flagship Recreation to upgrade Crystal Bay Park for \$71,177.11. Funding will come from the Park Dedication Fund.


The work to be done at Crystal Bay Park includes replacing plastic borders with concrete curbing, removing pea gravel and replacing it with engineered wood fiber, restoring playground equipment surfaces and re-painting to match new equipment, moving all equipment to age appropriate pods, purchasing and installing new playground equipment, and removing a "tri-spinner" platform and incorporating a more age appropriate piece of equipment.

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MISSING

Female Rhodesian Ridgeback

fawn color, 80 lbs. Possibly still wearing black vest and collar with tags.



Went missing from the Minnetonka / Minnehaha Creek area on January 15th. Believed to still be on Lake Minnetonka or in the surrounding communities.

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Imperfect, abused confirmation process relies on good faith

The Minnesota constitution says governors may appoint notaries public and “other officers” with “the advice and consent of the senate.”

State statute gives the Senate leeway in its advise-and-consent authority over executive appointments, almost all of which rest with the governor. Senate committees and the full body may take them up for confirmation or not. In most cases appointments never come up for a floor vote, and many appointees serve without any Senate action on their appointments. Appointees serve at the governor’s pleasure — unless a majority of the Senate votes otherwise, at a time of its choosing.

That can spell trouble. Confirmation power over cabinet appointments has been increasingly weaponized in the last two decades, by Senate majorities of both parties.

It remains under threat from the Republican-controlled Senate during Tim Walz’s first term — in no small part over the DFL governor’s steps to guard public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In August 2020, the Senate voted against confirming Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Nancy Leppink, even though she had served since February 2019. Hers was the first such ouster of a cabinet member in 12 years.

In a special session a month later, Senate Republicans fired Commerce Commissioner Steve Kelley, citing in part his decision to appeal a permit for the controversial Enbridge 3 pipeline project.

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Next up was Laura Bishop, Walz’s Pollution Control Agency commissioner for two and a half years, whose Clean Cars rule to stock dealerships with more electric vehicles angered Republicans. On the verge of being rejected by the Senate, Bishop resigned in July.

Still uncertain is the fate of Department of Health stalwart Jan Malcolm, who has been commissioner under three governors — Jesse Ventura, Mark Dayton and Walz — and has managed the pandemic response hand in hand with Walz.

Malcolm and Leppink presided over the governor’s COVID emergency declarations, which stretched from March 2020 to July 2021 and were sustained — over vehement Senate opposition — by support in the DFL-controlled House of Representatives.

Fearing the Senate would oust arguably the most important member of his cabinet since the pandemic began, Walz didn’t call a special legislative session late last year to divvy up COVID relief payments to front-line workers. He wanted a guarantee from Republican senators that Malcolm and any other cabinet member wouldn’t lose their jobs.

Without clearer constitutional and statutory direction on confirmations, leaders

must resort to good faith. It has broken down.

Confirmation now appears to have little practical use outside of attacking a governor’s agenda and the conduct of his office. It’s an asymmetric exercise in power, a distortion of checks and balances.

Future would-be cabinet members might think twice before accepting an appointment that could make them disposable bait for political leverage. The chilling effect could inhibit governors from making appointments based on qualifications instead of rough-and-tumble politics.

As the 2022 legislative session gets underway, it remains to be seen whether Senate Republicans are still after Malcolm. Her ouster would amount to political malpractice. In addition to her three stints as state health commissioner, she has been a leader in health care delivery (executive posts with Allina Health and Courage Center) and academia and research (the University of Minnesota School of Public Health).

Hers has been a voice of reason and calm during the pandemic, including its fearful and chaotic early months, and she now oversees a state response predicated on keeping schools and business open, safely.

Republicans have been especially vigorous in the Walz era, but both parties have played the confirmation game.

In 2004 the DFL-controlled Senate

ousted Cheri Pierson Yecke, Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s education commissioner. Yecke’s alleged promotion of intelligent design as a competing theory to evolution in the state science standards was among the criticisms against her. In 2008 the Senate ousted Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau from her dual role as Pawlenty’s transportation commissioner, an arrangement some questioned from the start. Her firing followed a string of controversies involving Molnau and the Department of Transportation, including fallout from the 2007 collapse of the Interstate 35W river bridge in Minneapolis.

Senators mustn’t abuse their advise-and-consent authority to settle scores or advance an agenda they don’t have the numbers or a mandate to advance. Our imperfect confirmation system needs a fix.

We recommend that state law be changed to limit the Senate to a prescribed period — perhaps 30 to 45 days — while in session to confirm or deny an appointment. Absent Senate action, appointees would continue to serve, as they do now.

Ultimately, lawmakers should aim higher by including such language in a constitutional amendment to be decided by voters.

— An editorial from the APG of East Central Minnesota Editorial Board. Reactions are welcome. Send to: editorial.board@apgecm.com.



LAKER PIONEER

(21540)

Copyright © 2022 by APG of East Central Minnesota is published weekly by APG of East Central Minnesota, 10917 Valley View Rd, Eden Prairie, MN 55344-3730. Business, Editorial, and Circulation

Offices: 10917 Valley View Rd, Eden Prairie, MN 55344-3730. Accounting Office: 4095 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433-2523. Call 763-712-3544 to subscribe. Periodicals postage prices are paid at Hopkins, MN.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Laker Pioneer 4095 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433-2523.



CIRCULATION OFFICE

ECM Publishers, 10917 Valley View Rd, Eden Prairie, MN 55344-3730. Call 763-712-3544 to subscribe.

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The opinions of readers in the form of letters to the editor are a vital contribution to the healthy exchange of ideas on the Laker Pioneer Opinion page. We encourage readers to write letters to the editor as a way of communicating ideas and opinions with each other, with the goal being to make this a better community for all people who live, work and visit. Please be courteous in your letters and make the attempt to offer opinions that will be constructive, rather than destructive only in nature. When submitting a letter to the editor, please note the following:

- All letters must include the name of the writer (no more than five authors per letter) as well as the writer’s name and city. All writers must identify themselves in person or provide a phone number for verification. Letters may be submitted in person or via mail, fax or email. Anonymous letters will not be considered. Send letters via email to: jason.schmucker@apgecm.com or by mail to: 8 South Elm Street, Waconia, MN 55387.
- Writers are asked to follow a 350 word limit with their letters. Writers will be allowed only one letter per 30 day period for consideration. Rebuttal letters may be allowed at the discretion of the editor.
- Submitting a letter to the editor does not guarantee publication. The newspaper reserves the rights to accept, edit or deny any letter, solely at its discretion. Letters deemed to contain potentially libelous comments, or other material deemed to raise potential legal problems, will not be published, or will be edited appropriately. Writers should cite their sources and may be asked to provide sources before a letter is published.
- Letters may not be accepted for publication from people who reside outside the coverage area unless the letters are written on a topic of local interest or as the editor deems necessary.
- Opinions expressed in the letters do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper.
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WEST HENNEPIN PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT**FRIDAY, FEB 4**

3600 block Ihdhapi Trl, Independence. An officer was dispatched to a person reporting feeling dizzy and when he feels lightheaded he knows he's going to black out. He was transported by ambulance to North Memorial.

2800 block Becker Rd, Independence. A resident reported a dog that attempted to go into his home's doggy door and broke it. The dog was now in the resident's back yard. An officer picked the dog up and brought it to the address on its collar and explained to its owner the damage it had caused. The dog's owner will work with the neighbor to fix the doggy door.

2000 block S Lake Shore Dr, Independence. A resident reported a suspicious vehicle parked in his driveway but it left when confronted by the homeowner's son. An officer arrived in the area and spoke to the driver who was trying to get to an address in the area and his friend in the car behind him was going off Google maps that wasn't showing the address properly. Nothing criminal.

SATURDAY, FEB 5

CR 92/BNSF Railroad. 5:51 a.m. Police were dispatched to a train vs. car property damage crash. Upon the officer's arrival he observed the stopped train, a vehicle on the north side of the

tracks in the ditch and a male standing next to it. In speaking with the male, he was the driver of the vehicle and was not injured. He delivers packages for Amazon and was following his GPS. He drove through the barricades and got stuck on the tracks. A short time later he saw the oncoming train and a jumped out of his vehicle before it was struck by the train. The train conductor saw the vehicle's headlights but was unable to stop the train in time. BNSF workers arrived and checked the tracks for damage and moved the train. The vehicle was towed.

1600 Budd Ave, Maple Plain. An officer was dispatched to a male having trouble breathing and feeling a light pressure on his chest. North Ambulance arrived and transported him to Waconia Hospital.

CR 11/Lake Rebecca, Independence. A black SUV was unable to avoid a large amount of snow that sucked it down into the ditch where it struck a street sign. The vehicle had minor damage. It was pulled out of the ditch. County maintenance was dispatched to plow the snow from the roadway.

5100 block Main St, Maple Plain. A person fell in a bathroom and momentarily lost consciousness. North arrived and assisted. The officer left before a transport decision was made.

SUNDAY, FEB 6

5000 block Main St, Maple Plain. An officer was dispatched to a burning complaint. The fire was out when the officer arrived on scene and learned that the homeowner had been burning trash. He was verbally warned about burning illegal material.

MONDAY, FEB 7

5700 block Maple Ridge Dr, Maple Plain. An officer responded to a complaint of a male soliciting cameras and a security system door to door. Upon arrival in the area the male was unable to be located. The officer called the reporting party back who thanked him for checking it out.

5900 block Three Oaks Ave, Maple Plain. A report was received of a suspicious solicitor who'd been in the area 2 hours earlier selling security systems. The reporting party was calling on behalf of her mother, the homeowner, who has a ring camera and will save the video.

TUESDAY, FEB 8

5200 block Bryantwood Dr, Maple Plain. An officer responded to a parking lot to meet a male party for a domestic report. The male reported being struck on the side of the head by a female. When the officer spoke with the female, she denied hitting the male and reported the male threw beer at

her. She also showed him where the male had broken their bedroom door during a domestic two days earlier. The male left for the evening. No arrests.

5800 block Amy Ln, Maple Plain. A resident reported a solicitor selling home security had just left his house and was approaching a neighbor's house. An officer responded and located the solicitor who admitted soliciting. He was told he needed a solicitor's permit from the city. He was verbal warned for the violation of the city ordinance.

WEDNESDAY, FEB 9

CR 6/110. A vehicle was stopped for speed and not stopping at the stop light/sign to cross CR 6. The driver admitted not being aware of his speed or the stop sign. He also admitted not having a valid drivers license for 20 years. His vehicle displayed an expired temporary tag and his plates were in the vehicle door, not displayed on the vehicle. The driver's revoked license was confirmed, along with numerous driving violations. He was cited for DAR and speed and verbal warned for the stop sign and expired registration displayed/no plates.

Hwy 12/Delano Ave, Maple Plain. A westbound vehicle passed a stationary officer who observed the driver looking down, clearly using his phone. The vehicle was stopped and the driv-

er admitted using his phone to find a gas station. The officer advised him he'd just passed one while his head was down looking at his phone. Driver was cited for use of phone.

1500 Prairieland Ave, Maple Plain. A CenterPoint Energy contractor wearing a safety vest with CenterPoint printed on it and an ID badge was doing gas meter safety checks when a homeowner came out of his residence holding a gun and yelled at the contractor to get off his property. The contractor left and called police who had a lengthy discussion with the homeowner about personal protection and confronting people with a firearm on his property. He was encouraged to call police when he has a concern about suspicious activity.

1700 Howard Ave, Maple Plain. A resident reported someone accessed his cell phone account and ordered 2 iPhone 13 Pro max cell phones worth \$1,600 each. He was able to stop the transaction. The resident also reported that someone accessed his airline miles account and used it to purchase an airline ticket. He was provided an FTC Identity Theft Handbook and given tips on how to safeguard his identity and accounts. Case is under investigation.

15 contacts of citations, verbal and written warnings were issued for traffic and equipment violations.

MINNETRISTA/ST. BONI POLICE REPORT**MONDAY, FEB. 7**

Dirt spilled from a trailer at Highway 7 and County Road 44 when the driver made a sudden stop. Officers stopped traffic while it was cleaned up by a passerby with a snow plow was able to push the dirt off the road. Minnesota Department of Transportation was also advised for more thorough clean-up.

A Minnetrista male someone attempted to use his identity in an unemployment scam. The claim had been denied and he did not suffer any financial loss.

TUESDAY, FEB. 8

Officers responded to a medical call on Creekside Way.

A Minnetrista resident reported she applied for a job working from home. During onboarding, she gave out her personal information. She was then sent checks totaling \$1800 to make purchases from specific people via Venmo, PayPal and Bitcoin, which she did, later to find out the checks bounced and she'd been scammed.

Officers responded to a medical call on Highway 7.

A resident reported his teenage daughter had received inappropriate text messages. He was advised to have the number blocked.

A barking dog complaint was reported on Maple Lane.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 9

School staff witnessed a student with a THC vape and notified the School Resource Officer.

A custody dispute was reported in Minnetrista.

A Minnetrista resident heard her garage door open. On arrival, it was found to be a relative who had opened it.

Officers checked on a suspicious unoccupied vehicle on West Cove Lane and were able to make contact with the driver. Everything was fine.

THURSDAY, FEB. 10

Officers responded to a medical call on Cottagewood Court.

Officers responded to a medical call on Minneapolis Avenue.

FRIDAY, FEB. 11

Officers responded to a medical call on Wildwood Avenue.

A 911 hang-up call on Trista Lane E was found to be accidental.

A student driver slid on ice in the school parking lot and struck another vehicle. No one was injured.

Officers responded to a medical call on County Road 92.

A 911 hang-up call from Hilltop Drive was found to be accidental.

A suspicious vehicle was reported on Fielding Trail.

A missing adult female was reported from Minnetrista. It was later determined she had been hospitalized.

SATURDAY, FEB. 12

A suspicious vehicle was reported on Ridgewood Cove.

A suspicious vehicle was reported on Kramer Road.

A barking dog complaint was reported on Bayside Lane.

A suspicious vehicle was reported on Woodedge Road.

Officers responded to a medical call on Spruce Road.

A barking dog complaint was reported on Aspen Road.

A Mound motorist struck a deer on County Road 151. He was not injured.

A suspicious vehicle was reported on County Road 92.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR**ONGOING**

INTRO TO SQUARE DANCING - Laugh, exercise, meet new friends, and learn a few square dance calls at 7 p.m., Monday, Feb 28 and Tuesday, Feb. 22 at The Gillespie Center, 2590 Commerce Blvd., Mound. No previous experience required. Everyone's welcome: solos, couples, and families. Partners provided. No charge. Casual attire. 612-759-923.

FEB. 20**EARTH BATTLES: HOW OLD IS IT?**

This dvd reviews geologic evidence

from the Grand Canyon & finds that the evidence is not ambiguous, but rather very clearly points to a young Earth. The evidence points overwhelmingly in favor of worldwide catastrophic processes, not the slow & gradual processes that long-age geologists claim. This documentary includes beautiful 3D animation videos, while explaining the biblical flood model for the formation of Earth's basement rock & sedimentary fossil-filled layers. 6:00 pm at Calvary Memorial Church, 2420 Dunwoody Ave., Navarre.

FEB. 24

FUNERAL PLANNING - Funeral Pre-Planning and Elder Law Attorney from Huber Funeral Home will be on hand at the Gillespie Center on Thursday, Feb. 24, at 10 a.m. Get your questions answered.

FEB. 24

COOKING CLASS BY CHEF GREG SLETTEN - The class will be offered on Thursday, Feb. 24, at noon at The Gillespie Center. Cost: \$5. Register at the Front Desk. Limited number of spots. Learn to prepare a delicious Italian meal featuring chicken Ppar-

mesan. Cook and enjoy eating the meal that you prepared.

MARCH 5

KEG & CORK - The 6th Annual Keg & Cork is back at Our Lady of the Lake! Join us on March 5 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. for the only beer, wine & cider tasting in the area! Ticket price includes unlimited pours, live music by Matt & Laurel and taco dinner. Must be 21 to attend. ID required. Tickets available at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/keg-cork-beer-wine-cider-tasting-tickets-261394837997?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

ORONO POLICE REPORT

MONDAY, FEB. 7

2635 Kelley Pkwy. Orono - Police responded to a welfare check on a resident having hallucinations and staff was concerned he could harm himself. Resident indicated he wanted to go to the hospital and was transported by medics.

Shoreline Dr & Shadywood Rd. Orono - Vehicle approaching intersection when light turned green, so she continued through assuming the car in front of her would also proceed through. The car in front of her didn't move, and she rear-ended them. No injuries.

6th Av & Hwy 12. Orono - Officer conducting stationary radar when a vehicle was going eastbound at a high rate of speed. He conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle and ran routine checks on driver. Driver had a lapse in insurance coverage and was cited for no insurance - owner.

TUESDAY, FEB. 8

1700 blk. Baywood Shores Dr. Mound - Homeowner was walking dog and walked down to his dock and discovered a section of his dock was missing. No suspect info or indication of when theft occurred.

4515 Shoreline Dr. Spring Park - Officers took a call of an elderly male not breathing. Upon arrival, male was conscious and alert.

Son arrived on scene and advised officers of his father's medical condition and took over care.

1025 Old Crystal Bay Rd. Orono - Report of a vehicle that was broken into at Orono Ice Arena, however nothing was taken. No other reports of damage to vehicles this evening. No suspicious vehicles located.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 9

North Shore Dr. & Bohns Point Rd. Orono - Officer was running radar when a vehicle traveling at 57 MPH quickly slowed to 50 MPH in a 40 MPH zone. Officer initiated traffic stop while speaking w/the driver observed his slow speech and movements. Driver agreed to take tests to be sure he could drive safely. Driver failed SFST's and ultimately blew a .22 AC and was arrested for 2nd Degree DWI due to DL history and being over double the legal limit.

Wayzata Blvd & Old Crystal Bay Rd. Orono - Officer responded to a hit deer call. The driver was westbound on Wayzata Blvd when the deer jumped onto the roadway. She was unable to avoid the collision. Deer was deceased. Vehicle had moderate damage.

Lake Rd. Minnetonka Beach - Officers responded to residential burglary alarm. Arrived and checked the perimeter of property as well as all doors and windows. Residence was secure w/ no signs of illegal activity.

THURSDAY, FEB. 10

2500 blk. Commerce Blvd. Mound - Officers responded to a commercial burglary that occurred overnight. Upon arrival, officers noted forced entry and items were stolen - Open investigation.

2201-2211 Shoreline Dr. Minnetonka Beach - While conducting stationary traffic checks an officer came upon a vehicle that the registered owner had a suspended DL, the driver looked like the picture of the registered owner and a traffic stop was conducted. Upon approaching the driver's window the officer could smell a strong odor of marijuana. When asked, the driver pointed at the ashtray w/multiple burnt blunts. Officers conducted a search of the vehicle and found marijuana, a grinder. Driver was cited for DAS and Possession of Marijuana in MV.

FRIDAY, FEB. 11

2400 blk. Woodbridge Rd. Minnetonka Beach - Officers dispatched to theft from motor vehicle call. Reporting party thought her vehicle was locked, but realized it was not. Her vehicle was rummaged through and her wallet was missing from the vehicle. - Open Investigation

4559 Shoreline Dr. Spring Park - Officers dispatched to a medical call of one with a GI bleed. Paramedics transported her to hospital. 5000 blk. Glendale Rd. Mound - Officers responded to a call of a domestic. Was a verbal argument, there was nothing physical. Female half wanted to stay elsewhere for the evening and was picked up by a family member.

SATURDAY, FEB. 12

2155 Commerce Blvd. Mound - Call for an unwanted person. Bartender cut off a female from being served any longer. Unknown female became belligerent towards staff. She was told to leave and refused to do so. She was escorted out by the bartender and she turned and slapped him in the face. Officers attempted to locate the female but were unable to find her.

3000 blk Bryant Ln. Mound - Officer responded to lift assist. The Officer helped the elderly male off couch and to get a drink of water, then to his lift chair to go upstairs to bed. Officer assisted him into bed and with getting his sleep apnea mask on, and then assisted his wife upstairs to go to bed as well.

4800 blk Monmouth Rd. Mound - Officer responded to a complaint of noises going on for approx. 20 minutes. Officers checked around the house and didn't locate fresh prints around house. Reporting party had officers check inside the house as well. Everything was safe and secure.

SUNDAY, FEB. 13

2800 Northview Rd. Minnetonka Beach - Medical call, a male passed out by the pool. Officers arrived and met with party in question, he was conscious and breathing upon arrival and was given supplemental oxygen. Paramedics arrived on scene and cleared officer. Unknown transport.

2600 blk. Westedge Blvd. Mound - Officers called for a welfare check on daughter about a custody issue. The mother said the father was not going to follow the court order and meet for child exchange that day. Officer advised the mother that she couldn't do anything at the time and told the mother to contact family court for the violation of the court order. Officer later made contact with father who was on his way to the custody exchange. No further action.

2400 Interlachen Rd. Spring Park - Call of a neighbor reporting pounding, running, and jumping from apartment above them. Reporting party stated it's an ongoing issue and wanted it documented for management.

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Long Lake in need of election judges

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apegcm.com

The city of Long Lake is looking for election judges to help administrator elections in 2022.

Election judges administer

voting procedures to ensure a fair and accessible election for all eligible voters.

The City of Long Lake asks that election judges be available to work all day, from 6 a.m. through election results reporting at the end

of the night (approximately 10 p.m.)

To serve as an election judge, you must be eligible to vote in Minnesota; able to read, write and speak English; you cannot be a spouse, parent, child, or sib-

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If interested, contact

Long Lake city clerk at (952) 4736961 ext 1 to apply or to learn more information about serving as an election judge.

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St. John's completes renovation project

The arrival of furniture signaled the completion of a remodeling project at St. John's Lutheran Church of Mound that had been dreamed about for decades.

Ground was broken on the project in November 2020 after a congregational vote was held which supported moving forward with the project despite the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic.

The project included removing the church offices and their interior wall from alongside a frequently congested hallway outside of the sanctuary and repurposing the combined space into a huge, welcoming "Great Hall."

An adjacent area of the church was renovated to house the staff offices and the church library became a spacious meeting room. Outdated bathrooms were gutted, redesigned, reoriented, and completely updated. Outside the church, the entrance was expanded and a new, covered drop off area was constructed.

Remodel plans and oversight was provided by a team of congregation members – many of whom were pro-



St. John's Lutheran Church of Mound recently finished up renovations to its building that started in November 2020. (Submitted photos)

professionals in the industry – including Mike Wilkus of Wilkus Architects, PA and Curt Swanson of Swanson Homes. The team chose Rochon Corporation as the construction contractor for the project.

St. John's Interim Senior Pastor, Sara Vanderpan credits the church leadership, staff, and a positive, forward-thinking congregation for taking the bold step of beginning a major renovation during a time of change – not only because of the pandemic, but also because the church did

not have a permanent senior pastor in place.

"Coming in as an interim pastor, each situation is unique," Vanderpan said. "Certainly leading a congregation during COVID created challenges, but then for the congregation to embrace a large construction project during a time when we couldn't even gather together - it was quite a demonstration of faith."

That faith is being rewarded as people appreciate the new spaces as well as the open areas which allow groups of

people to be able to gather together yet have the physical space to distance themselves enough to feel safe.

As church council member, Jim Turner explains, "When we started planning the project, we couldn't anticipate what the future would bring. We just wanted to make our church home as welcoming as possible. Ultimately, the fact that the open spaces also help to keep us safer is an added benefit for which we are deeply grateful."

St. John's Lutheran Church of Mound, a congregation

of the ELCA, was founded in 1927 and over the past 95 years has been a place of worship, fellowship and mission serving the Westonka community. The congregation is led by interim Senior Pastor Sara Vanderpan and interim associate Pastor Matt Johnson.

St. John's hopes to have a community open house celebrating the project completion once it is safe to do so. More information can be found at www.stjom.org.

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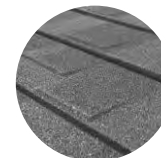
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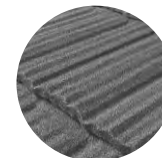


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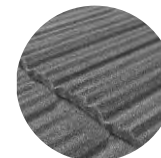
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Sunset Drive reconstruction to begin in 2023

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apgecm.com

Hennepin County is working with the cities of Spring Park and Orono and Three Rivers Park District to redesign Sunset Drive (County Road 51) between Spring Street and Shadywood Road (County Road 19).

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2023.

The existing roadway and underground utilities have not been updated for more than 50 years and the roadway lacks curbs and gutters along the corridor to provide adequate drainage.

Sunset Drive in its current design is not well suited for people walking, rolling and biking, and lacks curbs and gutters needed to help manage stormwater, according to officials. The best way to address this is through a road re-

construction project, Hennepin County said in a release.

Reconstruction of Sunset Drive is scheduled to begin in 2023, and the aging roadway and underground utilities will be replaced, and curbs and gutters will be added.

Other changes that will be made on Sunset Drive to meet present and future needs of the corridor include improving traffic flow and roadway function at key intersections for all forms of transportation; providing a safer space for people walking, biking and rolling; and improving connectivity and access for people across neighborhoods.

The project began last fall when Hennepin County started taking feedback from the public for the Sunset Drive redesign.

Project staff hosted a live online open house on Monday, Nov. 15, to share information about the project. The

purpose of the open house was to hear from people who live, work, visit local businesses on Sunset Drive and use it as a connector and to better understand existing concerns and needs to help inform a design that best reflects community needs.

People who use Sunset Drive are invited to check out an interactive online comment map at <https://www.hennepin.us/sunset-drive> to share any comments, needs or concerns about the existing corridor — and even pinpoint them to specific locations.

To keep the project moving along for

this phase, Hennepin County asks that residents share any initial comments, needs or concerns about the existing corridor. This will keep the project on track to begin sharing designs for the public's feedback in 2022.

Project staff will host outdoor locations to talk with the public about the project in 2022.

To learn more about the Sunset Drive reconstruction project, go to the project website at <https://www.hennepin.us/sunset-drive> and sign up to receive e-mail updates for any upcoming opportunities to provide input on the project.

Mine work stopped near BWCA

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota regulators on Tuesday told the company behind the stalled copper-nickel mine project near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness that it's stopping work on the state's environmental review.

The Department of Natural Resources will "redirect staff resources to other high priority projects," Commissioner Sarah Strommen said in a letter to Twin Metals Minnesota LLC chief executive Kelly Osborne.

The Star Tribune reports the letter mentioned the agency's concerns about the location for the large amount of semi-dry processing waste the company proposed stacking in an open-air mound above ground on the marshy site.

The \$1.7 billion underground mine project, widely condemned for being too close to the Boundary Waters, was in the very early stages of permitting in Minnesota.



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Orono student earns 'Grand Honors' for academics

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apegcm.com

It didn't take long for Orono fifth-grader Luke Mitchell's parents to recognize that Luke had a special ability when it came to numbers and math.

"We recognized it pretty early," Luke's mom, Amy Mitchell, said. "He could barely talk and just blurted out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and I said 'Did I hear that right?' He's had knack for it from since he was a toddler. He's just got a lot of talent that has just come easy for him."

That talent was rewarded when the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) recently awarded Luke with the Grand Honors award. He also received further accolades as "one of the brightest students in the world." CTY is an international program that identifies and recognizes the academic capabilities of advanced students around the world.

Luke is recognized for his exceptional performance on above-grade-level testing (such as the SAT, ACT or similar assessment) taken as part of the CTY Talent Search. He scored



Orono fifth grader Luke Mitchell earned the Grand Honors Award from Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth. (Photo courtesy Mitchell Family)

in the 99th percentile in math, which qualified him for CTY's highest honor. Luke was one of nearly 19,000 students from 84 countries who joined CTY in the 2020-21 Talent Search. Fewer than 28 percent of those participants qualified for the CTY ceremony, receiving either high or grand honors based on their test scores.

"At first I didn't know what it was then my mom told my what

it was and I was like 'Wow!'" Luke said.

Amy said they were looking for something a little more challenging for Luke than just the normal school year stuff and found the CTY and decided to just give it a try.

Luke said he went in and took the test and didn't really think anything of it at the time, and that some of the questions were easy while he really had to think hard on the other questions.

"They recommend that you don't study for the test, they want to just see what your natural ability is," Amy said. "We were pleasantly surprised with the results."

Luke received the Grand Honors Award during a virtual ceremony where Dr. Virginia Roach, CTY's executive director, congratulated honorees for earning top scores on their test.

"Your results place you at the top of the top, and that is a great accomplishment," Roach said, while adding that CTY's Talent Search isn't just about achievement - "It's about promise."

Honorees also qualified for CTY's Online and On-Campus Summer Programs. CTY offers

more than 250 online courses for advanced students in subjects including mathematics, computer programming, chemistry, physics, reading, and writing. There are more than 15,500 enrollments in CTY Online Programs courses each year. CTY will also host students at sites across the U.S. this year - including Johns Hopkins University, Loyola Marymount University, Seattle University and UC Santa Cruz - during its On-Campus Summer Programs.

Luke's accomplishment isn't any surprise to his Orono teachers.

"Luke is such a motivated and engaged mathematician," Jane Smith, who leads the elementary gifted and talented program for the Orono School District, said. "He can view the most challenging of problems as puzzles to be solved. He is always sharing this positivity with his peers and helping them see the 'play' in the work. He encourages others to look at things in a different way, and if it doesn't work the first time, try again. Luke displays outstanding responsibility and independence within his advanced coursework, and

these traits have supported him in his achievements. He is truly remarkable."

His fifth grade teacher John Smith concurred.

"Luke has a thirst for knowledge and an enthusiasm for learning that is sincere and infectious. He is a tenacious problem solver who uses mistakes as motivation to improve. Luke is a humble leader, fun to be around, well-liked by his peers and leads by example. I am so proud of all his accomplishments."

Both of Luke's parents are attorneys, so they are not quite sure where is math prowess comes from. Math isn't Luke's only talent as he is also a trumpet player and competes in both tennis and swimming and diving.

"He was very lucky at school to have teachers early on that really pushed him and challenge him and pushed him," Amy said. "We are just really excited to see his achievements be recognized and thankful to the schools for challenging him and meeting his needs."

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BUFFALO

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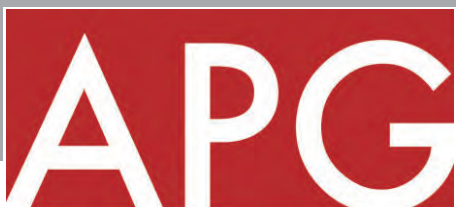
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Local Editor Position open



The Aitkin Independent Age is seeking an editor to lead our coverage in Aitkin, Minnesota. We're looking for someone who enjoys interaction with others and is committed to quality community journalism. Aitkin is located in the beautiful lakes country of north central Minnesota. If you love journalism, community and the outdoors, this may be the perfect job. The ideal candidate is someone who can engage readers, loves to write, will uncover interesting stories, understands the importance of community journalism and enjoys their work. Photography, layout, reporting and online posting a must. Recent college-grads encouraged to apply, as well as those with experience.

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Submit resume and clips (writing and photography) to Keith Anderson, director of news, keith.anderson@apgecm.com

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Many COVID-19 patients in December were vaccinated

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — More than half of Minnesotans who tested positive for COVID-19 in December were vaccinated, according to state health officials.

The Minnesota Department of Health breakthrough case data does not indicate if people had received booster shots.

Roughly a third of those who were hospitalized for COVID-19 or died during that month also were vaccinated, the data showed.

“We know omicron was a big part of it,” Daniel Huff, the health department’s assistant commissioner, said of the growth in breakthrough infections. “We know omicron was immune-evasive, much more so than delta. Even those who were vaccinated, even though they had protection against infection, it was less protection than they had against delta infection.”

Nevertheless, health officials say vaccines along with a booster dose remain the best way to protect against severe illness and to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

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Westonka teachers up for 'Teacher of the Year' honors

BY TODD ABELN
reporter.patriot@apgecm.com

Three local teachers are up for the state's most prestigious educators award.

All three teachers work in the Westonka School District and are among the 77 candidates for 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

Mara Drill from Hilltop Primary School, Lyndsay Geyen from Westonka Early Learning and Jodie Rasicot from Shirley Hills Primary School have accepted their nominations and completed the required materials to become eligible for the honor.

The 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year will be chosen from a field of 77 candidates. These candidates have accepted their nominations and completed the required materials to become eligible for the honor.

This year's program will name the 58th Minnesota Teacher of the Year. The program celebrates the tradition of excellence in teaching in Minnesota. Eligible candidates include pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade, Early Childhood Family Education and Adult Basic Educa-

tion teachers, from public or private schools.

An independent panel of leaders in the fields of education, business, government, nonprofit and philanthropy will read candidates' portfolios over the next few weeks and narrow the list to a group of semifinalists. In March, the panel will convene again and review additional materials from the semifinalists to choose a group of finalists. Because of safety precautions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the scheduled Minnesota Teacher of the Year banquet, set for May 1 at the Saint Paul RiverCentre, could be postponed.

Organized and underwritten by Education Minnesota, the Minnesota Teacher of the Year program receives support from Education Minnesota ESI, Educators Lifetime Solutions, EFS Advisors, Harvard Club of Minnesota Foundation, SMART Technologies and United Educators Credit Union.

The Minnesota Teacher of the Year award is no strangers to the Westonka School District, as Corey Bulman, an English teacher at Mound Westonka High School, won the 2017 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

Bulman is still teaching at Mound Westonka High School and was the 53rd recipient of the state's top teaching award and the first from the Westonka district.

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DRILL



GEYEN



RASICOT

Minnetonka Beach has Park Commission opening

Minnetonka Beach has an immediate opening on the Park Commission for a volunteer commissioner.

The mission of the Park Commission is to assist in protecting, maintaining and improving the City's Park System while having

fun doing so. The commitment to Parks works well for most resident's busy schedules - only seven meetings each year with a limited agenda. Knowledge of horticulture is not required. Ability to work as a team player while

working independently completing park projects on your own schedule a plus.

Call City Hall at (952) 471-8878 if interested.

Follow The Laker Pioneer on Facebook.

Bill would soften tracking device rules for police

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A Minnesota House committee considered legislation Thursday that would expand the use of mobile tracking devices by a law enforcement officers trying to track down stolen vehicles and avoid high-speed chases amid a surge in violent carjackings.

The bill, authored by Democratic Rep. Kelly Moller, of Shoreview, would let police officers use GPS tracking devices without a court order for a 24-hour period to recover stolen vehicles and prevent high-speed chases. Current state law requires law enforcement officers to have a warrant from a judge or consent from the owner of the vehicle before they can use a mobile tracking device.

"These chases lead to a risk to public

safety, risking the lives of innocent drivers who are on the road, the officers who are trying to stop these cars and anybody in those stolen cars," Moller said during the hearing. "When these high-speed chases are called off due to safety reasons, the suspect is not apprehended and evidence needed for a later prosecution is lost."

Ramsey County Undersheriff Mike Martin told lawmakers that officers' current process involves reaching out to registered owners of vehicles, which he called a "cumbersome" process that many times results in not being able to reach them. Should the new bill pass, he said officers would be able to use tracking technology that they could stick to a vehicle while in pursuit, allowing them to track the car and recover it later.

Legals

CITY OF MINNETRISTA

**EXHIBIT A
NOTICE OF HEARING ON ASSESSMENTS
2022 STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
(CITY PROJECT NO. 01-22)**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

TIME AND PLACE
GENERAL NATURE OF: Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of Minnetrista, Minnesota, will meet at the Minnetrista City Hall, 7701 County Rd 110 W, on the 7th day of March 2022, at 7:00 o'clock P.M., to consider objections to the proposed assessments for the 2022 Street Improvement Project (City Project No. 01-22) here tofore ordered by the City Council.

ASSESSMENT ROLL OPEN TO INSPECTION: The proposed assessment roll is on file with the City Clerk and available electronically for public inspection.

AREA PROPOSED TO BE ASSESSED: The area proposed to be assessed consists of those lots, pieces or parcels of land benefitted by improvements, which has been ordered and is as follows: those parcels adjacent to and with access via Jennings Cove Road, Upper Cove Road, East Cove Lane, West Cove Lane and Cove Circle, in the City of Minnetrista, Minnesota.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF PROPOSED ASSESSMENT: The total amount proposed to be assessed is \$301,800.00.

WRITTEN OR ORAL OBJECTIONS: Written or oral objections will be considered at the hearing.

RIGHT OF APPEAL: An owner of property to be assessed may appeal the assessment to the district court of Hennepin County pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 429.081 by serving notice of the appeal upon the Mayor or Clerk of the City within 30 days after the adoption of the assessment and filing such notice with the district court within ten days after service upon the Mayor or Clerk.

LIMITATION ON APPEAL: No appeal may be taken as to the amount of any assessment adopted by the City Council unless a written objection signed by the affected property owner is filed with the Clerk prior to the assessment hearing or presented to the presiding officer at the hearing. All objections to the assessments not received at the assessment hearing in the manner prescribed by Minnesota Statutes, Section 429.061 are waived, unless the failure to object at the assessment hearing is due to a reasonable cause.

DEFERMENT OF ASSESSMENTS: Under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Sections 435.193 to 435.195, the City may, at its discretion, defer the payment of assessments for any homestead property owned by a person 65-years of age or older, or retired by virtue of a permanent and total disability or a member of the military who has been or dered into active duty for whom it would be a hardship to make the payments. The City has established a deferment procedure pursuant to those Sections.

PARTIAL PREPAYMENT: The owner of any property specially assessed in the proceeding may, prior to the certification of the assessment of the first installment to the County Auditor, pay to the City any portion of the assessment. The remaining unpaid balance shall be spread over the period of time established by the Council for installment payment of the assessment.

MAILED NOTICE: The notice of this hearing mailed to property owners contains additional information per Minnesota Statutes, Section 429.061, subd. 1.

DATED: February 7, 2022

BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL
/s/ Dawn Motzko
City Clerk

Published in the
Laker Pioneer
February 12, 19, 2022
1204960

CITY OF SHOREWOOD LEGAL NOTICE PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Shorewood will hold a public hearing in the Council Chambers of the Shorewood City Hall, 5755 Country Club Road, Shorewood, Minnesota, on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 7:00 P.M. or as soon thereafter as possible. Due to the pandemic, the meeting may be held virtually. The purpose of the hearing is to consider various amendments to Section 700 (Animal Regulations) of the City Code that primarily affect section 705 Farm and Other Animals.

Verbal and written comments will be considered at that time.

Anyone having questions may contact the Planning Department at 952-960-7900 or email to planning@ci.shorewood.mn.us.

City of Shorewood
MARIE DARLING, AICP
Planning Director

Published in the
Laker Pioneer
February 19, 2022
1205689

CITY OF LONG LAKE PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Long Lake will hold a public hearing during their regular meeting on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at the City Hall Council Chambers located at 450 Virginia Avenue, beginning at 6:30 pm or as close thereto as possible, to hear comments and consider adoption of an Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance, Section 16: Regulations for I-1 Industrial District, and Section 16A: Regulations for I-2 Industrial District, to allow additional outdoor storage area subject to screening requirements and to address paving requirements in these zoning districts.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, or to obtain a copy of the agenda and information regarding the above public hearing, please feel free to contact Long Lake City Hall staff at 952.473.6961.

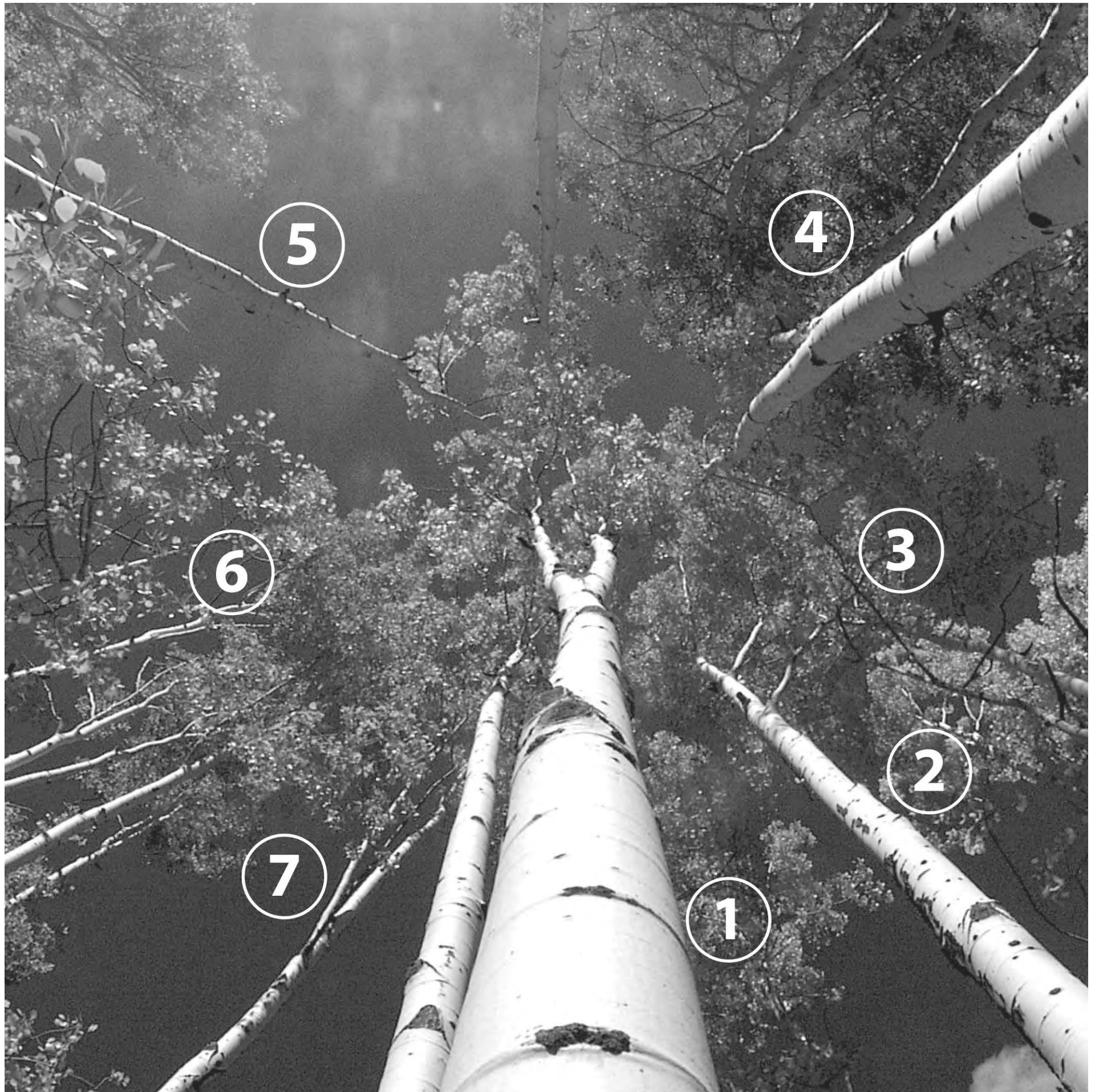
Jeanette Moeller
City Clerk

Published in the
Laker Pioneer
February 19, 2022
1206430

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Tonka Self Storage - Long Lake located at 2340 Daniels St., Long Lake, MN 55356 intends to hold an auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an online auction via www.storage-treasures.com on 3/2/2022 at 10:00am. Unless stated otherwise, the description of the contents are household goods and furnishings. Brandon Maslow. All property is being stored at the above self-storage facility. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Certain terms and conditions apply.

Published in the
Laker Pioneer
February 12, 19, 2022
1202120



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Spartans get trio of conference wins

The Orono Spartans made an impressive statement winning three big Metro-West Conference games last week, including completing a regular-season sweep over rival Benilde-St. Margaret's.

Orono also won a rescheduled game against Waconia and avenged an early season overtime loss to St. Louis Park with an eight-point victory.

The three wins improved the Spartans to 15-4 on the season and 8-3 in the conference, just a half game back of Benilde.

In the first meeting of the year between the two teams, Orono and Waconia had a tight battle on the Spartans home court.

Orono started strong, Waconia countered and just four points separated the teams at the half time break - Orono 31, Waconia 27.

In the second half, the game became more physical and the Wildcats took a late lead on some strong play from juniors Ty Miller and Joe Meath.

"Our new conference opponents are bigger, more physical teams," said Grant Gunderson. "To prepare for the physicality, we have committed to pushing each other in practice so we are ready for each game."

The Spartans, who were undefeated on their home court, turned the tide just in time to notch their sixth conference victory 63-56. Miller led all scorers with 27.

For the Spartans, Isaiah Hagen scored 24. Sebastian Loder came on strong in the second half to notch 17. Kyle Kallenbach knocked down three 3-pointers on his way to nine points and Cohen Kellogg continued his hot shooting to contribute seven points.

"I was really proud of the way the guys responded the last five minutes to pull away," said Coach Barry Wohler following the win against Waconia. Final score Orono 63 - Waconia 56.

The big game of the week, and a back-to-back for the Spartans, was the much anticipated rematch with Benilde.



FROM LEFT: Junior Isaiah Hagen prepares to lift senior captain Jake Farrell off the floor after a clutch hoop against Benilde. Juniors Cullen Dahl, Riley Snow, Will Fritz and Jhett Leibfried bring leadership and energy off the bench. (Photos courtesy Cooper Shannon Photography)



The top two teams in the Metro West Conference met earlier in the year with Orono pulling out the win 72-67 on their home court. This game, on the BSM campus, would likely have an impact on the section tournament's seeding in a month's time. This had the feeling of a playoff game.

"The atmosphere was crazy," said Gunderson. "There was constant energy from the jump. We did a great job staying composed and not getting rattled by the opposing crowd."

Benilde jumped out with hot shooting and an up-tempo style, building an early 12-4 advantage. To that point, the Red Knights were having success inside and outside. Orono had been limited to a driving lay-up from Hagen and a tip-in on the offensive glass from Gunderson.

Soon, the Spartans started to connect and the fast pace seemed to play to their advantage. The high talent level on both teams was on full display during the torrid first half.

When the first half buzzer sounded, the Spartans held to a slim 44-43 lead, and even the crowd was seemingly out of breath.

The second half was just as electric. Benilde again started hot

and built a three point lead before the Spartans came roaring back with a balanced attack, and some high octane offense from Hagen.

"The pace of the game was so much fun," coach Barry Wohler said.

The two teams traded baskets and some impressive defensive stops. Benilde freshman Jalen Wilson had a huge night, scoring 34 points. He hit three's and created room for himself under the basket. Ryan Warren added 18 points for Benilde.

But the Spartans countered with five players in double figures led by Hagen (24), Sebastian Loder (19), Gunderson (11), Jake Farrell (11) and a career high (10) from Zach Close.

"We had great balance tonight," said Wohler. "I thought Zach Close had his best game so far. We are getting great contributions from all 8 guys in our rotation".

At the final buzzer, final score, Orono 88, Benilde 74.

Hagen's all-around performance included six rebounds, four blocks and three steals.

"It was a great game to play in," Hagen said. "Everyone was playing with so much energy, and that energy earned us a big time win."

Gunderson fell two assists shy

of a triple double, adding 11 rebounds, eight assists, two steals and zero turnovers to his 11 points.

Close's length and aggressiveness on defense played a big role down the stretch, as he contested several shots and added six rebounds and two blocks to the winning effort. The Spartans had 26 assists as a team, with Kallenbach adding six, while Loder and Kopesky notched three each.

Considering the fast pace, Orono handled it well with just 12 turnovers as a team while forcing 17 from Benilde.

While the two teams will likely meet again in the section in another month, the regular-season sweep was an instant highlight for the Orono players and coaches.

To wrap up the busy week, the Spartans took on the St. Louis Park Orioles. An earlier meeting resulted in an overtime victory for St. Louis Park.

This time, the Spartans were defending their undefeated record at home. At the start, Orono burst out to a 9-0 and 12-2 run on hot shooting and a fast pace. St. Louis Park used a physical defensive style and ball pressure to turn the momentum in favor of the Orioles.

The contest was tied at 27-27 as

the teams came out of the locker room to start the second half.

The game was hard fought. More grit than flow and in the end the Spartans did enough to secure the Metro Conference victory, extending their winning streak to seven. Final score, Orono 62 - St. Louis Park 54.

"We are learning to stay patient against teams that want to slow the tempo down," said Wohler. "We were finally able to break loose midway through the second half."

All eight Spartans contributed in the scoring column - Hagen (14), Farrell (11), Loder (10), Jack Kopesky (9), Kallenbach (6), Gunderson (5), Kellogg (5) and Close (2). Hagen also led all rebounders with 11, with Farrell, Gunderson and Loder hauling down 9, 6 and 5 respectively. Farrell commented after the game, "As one of the captains, I am so proud of this team and what they have achieved. I am more than excited to continue and see how far we can go this season!"

The Spartans enter the final month of conference play with a 15-4 record.

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White Hawks wrestlers end regular season

The Mound Westonka White Hawks wrestlers traveled to Annandale High School on Friday, Feb. 10 for a conference triangular with Annandale/Maple Lake and Dassel Cokato/Litchfield.

The White Hawks dropped both matches to the state-ranked squads by scores of 58-20 and 54-27, respectively.

“We were down a few guys and just couldn’t match up against teams like that,” said head coach Todd Munsterteiger. “They have a lot of kids to draw from in both cooperatives which makes it tough to compete.”

Winning both matches for the White Hawks were freshman Cole Munsterteiger, soph-



White Hawks senior Ryan Butler on his way to a fall over Griffin Reiner of Orono at the Leopold Haglund Invite. (Submitted photo)

omore Jack Nelson and junior Sam Dioszeghy, who also picked up his 50th career pin.

The White Hawks hosted the Leopold Haglund Memorial Invitational on Friday, Feb.

11, which boasted several top-ranked Class 3A teams and wrestlers.

The White Hawks finished ninth overall, with senior Ryan Butler claiming 8th place,

Munsterteiger and Dioszeghy capturing third, and Nelson earning runner-up honors.

The spotlight match featured Nelson, a Class 2A state champion at 106 pounds last year, facing off against the Class 3A champ from a year ago, Alan Koehler of Prior Lake. Nelson nearly scored a winning last-second takedown, but Koehler was able to hang on for the 5-4 championship victory.

“It was a great match between two elite wrestlers, and was worth the price of admission,” said assistant coach Eric Rodelius.

The White Hawks JV squad also concluded their season on Saturday, Feb 12, competing at the Dassel-Cokato JV Jam.

Winning junior high titles for the White Hawks were seventh grader Deacon Ramthun at 90 pounds, and eighth grader Dawson Leinfelder at 182 pounds.

“The boys wrestled well, especially the last round. It was a fun way to end the season for them,” said freshman coach John Wardlow.

The White Hawks will begin postseason competition on Thursday, Feb. 17, when they travel to New Prague for team section preliminaries. The White Hawks will face Mankato East in the first round, which begins at 6 p.m.

Follow The Laker Pioneer on Facebook.

Orono girls basketball picks up win, loss in week

The Orono girls basketball team hosted conference foe Benilde-St. Margaret on Tuesday, Feb. 8 for their second conference meeting of the season.

In the first conference game, Orono was defeated 64-45. Benilde is led by Olivia Olson, a 6-2 long, athletic, positionless phenom averaging 22 points per game. They also boast a skilled and athletic point guard in Kendall McGee, averaging 16 ppg.

Neither team was able to gain its offensive footing in the first six minutes of the game, the score being 8-8 at that point. But, Olson and Benilde’s pick-n-roll play got rolling enroute to a 14-0 run over the next six minutes.

Orono struggled to score the basketball but a 3-point basket by Kayla Kallenbach at 5:30 cut Benilde’s lead to 22-11. That spurred a 12-0 run by Orono going into the halftime break. Two 3-point baskets by Kallenbach, along with scores by Kaila Youngs, Lauren Knudson and Mya Moore, put the

Lady Spartans in the locker room only trailing 23-20.

In the second half, Benilde quickly went on a 4-0 run behind missed baskets and turnovers by Orono. But following a quick timeout by Coach Bjorgaard, the Lady Spartans got back on track with another 3-point basket from Kallenbach.

Strong play under the basket by Grace Knooihuizen, including six points and a great hustle play to corral a loose ball and convert the layup, kept the Orono girls close at 35-32 with 13 minutes remaining. But Olson put her stamp on the game over the next five minutes. A 3-point basket, turnaround jump shot, and a handful of assists extended Benilde’s lead to 51-38 with 3:40 remaining.

Although Kayla Kallenbach had a stellar shooting night going 5-9 from 3-point range, Orono was not able to close the gap and lost the game 60-48. Kallenbach led Orono with 15 points

followed by eight from Grace Knooihuizen and Kaila Youngs.

The Orono girls basketball team traveled to St. Louis Park High School on Friday, Feb. 11 for its second conference game of the season against the St. Louis Park Orioles. In its first meeting, Orono won in an overtime thriller 70-69. Eliza Mckown hit two free throws with 1.2 seconds on the clock to win the game.

St. Louis Park started the game up 5-0. Grace Knooihuizen got the Spartan scoring started on a nice pocket pass from Kaila Youngs. Orono gained its first lead of the game on a 3-point basket by Eliza Mckown with 11:42 to play in the first half. Although the lead hung around 5-6 points during the first half, Orono was in control. Kaila Youngs had a strong first half scoring 7 of her 16 points. The Lady Spartans went into halftime up 31-26.

Orono played very well coming out of the halftime break, building a 42-

26 lead with 12:35 to go. Behind five points from Mya Moore, as well as four points from Evie Kompelien and a couple of assists, the lead was extended to 48-28 at the 10:15 mark.

Orono moved the ball very well on offense, outscoring the Orioles 43-15, eventually winning the game 74-41. Mya Moore led the Spartans in the second half with 10 of her 15 points. Lauren Knudson scored nine of her game high 17 points during the 2nd half rout. Kaila Youngs added 16 points on the night. Orono controlled the glass, out rebounding St. Louis Park 46-31, behind 13 rebounds from Kaila Youngs and Grace Knooihuizen with 10.

The Lady Spartans hosted Waconia, in a much anticipated rematch on Tuesday at home. They then travel to Robbinsdale Cooper High School on Friday, Feb. 18 for their final meeting of the year.

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ORONO SPORTS SCHEDULE

Date	Girls Hockey	Boys Hockey	Girls Basketball	Boys Basketball	Wrestling	Gymnastics	Boys Swimming & Diving
Mon., Feb. 21							
Tues., Feb. 22		Sections Home, TBD	Home vs. Chanhassen, 7 pm	@ Chanhassen, 7 pm			
Wed., Feb. 23							
Thurs., Feb. 24		Sections home, 12 pm					Section Finals @ Richfield, 12 pm
Fri., Feb. 25			@ Chaska, 7 pm	Home vs. Chaska, 7 pm	Section Individuals @ Delano, 5 pm		
Sat., Feb. 26		Section Semis, @ St. Louis Park, TBD			Section Individuals @ Delano, 11 am		Section Finals @ Richfield, 11 am



Lauren Knudson and the Spartans had a big win against St. Louis Park. (Submitted Photos)

Spartans bring home state table tennis title

The Orono Spartans table tennis team finished a great season in style by sweeping through the Open Division at the Minnesota High School State Team Championships in Richfield on Saturday, Feb. 13.

The team defeated Prior Lake 15-0 and host school Holy Angels 14-1 in pool play. Pool play consisted of 10 singles and five doubles matches in a best 2 of 3 game format. The Spartans pool play results earned the team a seeded spot in the championship bracket.

The format for the championship bracket play would be a best 3 of 5 game format with play stopping when one team reached eight wins of the scheduled 10 singles and five doubles matches.

The Spartans faced Lakeville North in the semifinals who had defeated rival Lakeville South 8-4 in the quarterfinals.

The Spartans did not even get to put all the singles matches out as they won the first eight matches for the shut out and their second trip in school history to the championship match. The Spartans fell to Wayzata in the 2019 championship match.

The Spartans would face longtime rival Eagan in the championship match. Eagan has won four Open Division State Championships since 2005



FROM LEFT: The Orono boys table tennis defeated Eagan to win the state championship. The Orono girls table tennis team earned a second place finish at the state tournament. (Submitted photos)

and eliminated the Spartans several times in the last 10 years.

As expected, the match delivered the most competitive matches of the event and this season. The Spartans won six of the 10 singles matches to gain a 6-4 advantage going into doubles play.

The Spartans got convincing wins from Aiden Ecker, Preston Perrill, Daigan Berger and Owen Skanse. The Spartans other two singles victories were dramatic comeback wins by Hugh Perrill and Jack Tanner. Both players trailed two games to none and won three straight games to bring home the matches that gave the Spar-

tans the edge heading into the doubles.

Senior captains Aiden Ecker and Preston Perrill quickly added the seventh win with a 3-0 sweep in their doubles match. Several minutes later seniors Jack Tanner and Sam Skanse clinched the championship with a 3-1 win which was followed by a win by Joe Kasner and Owen Skanse giving the Spartans a 9-6 victory and its first Open Division title.

Ecker and fellow captain and No. 1 singles player Matias Maule have been starters since seventh grade and finished their careers with an unforgettable undefeated season.

GIRLS MAKE SPIRITED STATE TITLE DEFENSE

The Orono girls came into the tournament as defending state champions and made a great run of their own at this year's event. Senior captain Carli Olsen, and teammates Gigi Martin, Mackenzie Callan and Kaavya Kokate all won multiple matches while sweeping pool play matches against Forest Lake, Mounds View and Lakeville North.

The Spartans faced Holy Angels in the semifinals sweeping the Stars to advance to its second consecutive final. The Spartans faced an incred-

ably talented Wayzata Trojans team. The girl's tournament uses a five match "Davis Cup" style format with four singles matches split up by a doubles match. Olsen and Callan played in the best match of the entire girl's tournament winning three straight games after dropping the first two games of their doubles match with the most spirited crowd of the day cheering for both teams. The Trojans ultimately clinched a 3-1 win to take its first school title in the Girl's division.

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