

FINDING NEW HEIGHTS



David Samson / The Forum

Brian Brownwolf, 16, grabs some air on his scooter under a moody sky at dusk at the Fargo Skate Park in downtown on Wednesday.

Fargo to keep school mask mandate

Board votes 7-2 after hearing from health officials, parents

By C.S. Hagen
The Forum

FARGO — The Fargo School Board voted down a motion 7-2 to remove the mask mandate in schools on Tuesday, Sept. 28.

Board members Brian Nelson, Seth Holden, Tracie Newman, Jim Johnson, Robin Nelson, Nikkie Gullickson and Rebecca Knutson voted against the motion, and David Paulson and Jennifer Benson voted in support of the motion that would have made masks a recommendation and not a mandate.

Before the vote, Paulson said he was disturbed when he heard a parent say during the public comment period that their children were not allowed to go to the bathroom because of improper masking, and that such practices were “abusive” if true.

“We’re simply asking that parents be allowed to make the decision for their children,” Paulson said, adding

that he wanted to know the threshold for when masks could be recommended and not mandated.

Benson agreed with Paulson saying the board has a duty to recognize the impact that masks have had on children’s ability to learn.

“Every decision we make, it should be about the business of education. We are being heavily lobbied by a public health division whose opinion is a mask mandate,” Benson said.

Johnson challenged the board members who wanted to go against the advice of public health officials to take a good look in the mirror and ask themselves if they were ready to take on that kind of responsibility.

Superintendent Rupak Gandhi reported that during the week of Sept. 24 the district had 25 students test positive for COVID-19, and 77 students were in isolation.

Prior to voting, the school board heard from health officials

and concerned parents during the public comment session.

Brenton Nesemeier, a field epidemiologist for the North Dakota Department of Health, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report last week saying that masks are effective in schools.

“What they did find was that counties without school mask requirements experienced larger increases in pediatric COVID cases compared to those counties that had mask requirements,” Nesemeier said.

Another CDC study looked at the impact of mask policies in school-related outbreaks, Nesemeier said. The study included 1,020 public schools from July 19 to Aug. 31 and discovered 191 school outbreaks with 8.4% of the outbreaks in schools with early masking requirements; 32.5% in schools with late mask mandates; and 59% of the outbreaks were in schools without mask requirements.

“This just shows that masking in schools does work and it’s important to keep that in mind to keep school open,” Nesemeier said.

Daniel Stanislawski, chief science officer of the Midwest Public Health Coalition, disagreed, saying his studies show that COVID-19 was not dangerous to children. According to its website, the Midwest Public Health Coalition is a North Dakota nonprofit group “dedicated to understanding and disseminating the unbiased truth about COVID-19.” The group, however, lacks training in public health.

“Masking children does nothing to protect them as they are already safe. The flu is more dangerous for children,” Stanislawski said.

Desi Fleming, director of Fargo Cass Public Health, said hospitals are near critical capacity and that upward of 90% of people recently intubated due to COVID-19 were unvaccinated.

Childhood COVID-19 cases continue to increase across North Dakota, with about 30% of active cases occurring in children, Fleming said.

“Loosening mitigation strategies at this point of the pandemic would weaken the layers of prevention, increasing risk and ultimately jeopardizing the health of children and staff,” Fleming said.

Kristin Sharbono, a Fargo parent of five children, said her kids are being physically and physiologically hurt by the district’s mask mandate.

“If I don’t fight for our God-given rights and the freedoms that our ancestors fought for ... what freedoms will be lost next? There are way too many resemblances to Nazi Germany,” Sharbono said.

Jean Gullicks, a family nurse practitioner from Grand Forks, said she’s seen an increase in self-injury and a decrease in test scores in children because of school mitigation strategies.

“Their biggest fear is talking about talking to someone and not being able to breathe with their masks on,” Gullicks said.

Julie Anderson, a parent of two children who attend Fargo Public Schools, said she appreciated the school board taking the public health guidance seriously.

“Keep universal masking, contact tracing. This is a pandemic primarily of the unvaccinated, and none of our elementary students are vaccinated,” Anderson said.

Readers can reach Forum reporter C.S. Hagen at 701-241-5535.

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Yesterday's poll

Are you in favor of sheep grazing in Moorhead city limits?

Yes: 50% No: 46% Undecided: 5%

COMING UP

ON WDAY TV

Tonight on WDAY 6 News: Making it Meaningful: How you can help a group of volunteers make the Fargo National Veterans Cemetery more comfortable for mourning families.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

Changes coming for Fargo Invaders as season winds down. SPORTS

The Forum

OF FARGO-MOORHEAD

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David Samson / The Forum

Fargo Police Chief David Zibolski speaks during the Fargo Police Advisory & Oversight board meeting at Fargo City Hall on Thursday.

Questions raised over officer shooting

Video footage and police policy discussed at length at oversight board meeting

that the prosecutor in the case, North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley, made the decision to not release the video as he weighs whether to charge the officer with a crime.

Wrigley, who took over the criminal case from the Cass County state's attorney office, told The Forum in a Thursday interview there was no basis to make an exception in this case, adding that to release it now would be inappropriate. He said there are practical, constitutional and legal reasons behind the decision.

"I totally understand why people want to see that," he said, noting footage would be released following completion of legal proceedings.

SHOOTING: Page A8

FAIRLY BUSY



Photos by David Samson / The Forum

Above: The full moon rises over the Red River Valley Fair on Wednesday. The Buck Moon, also called the Thunder Moon, was the largest supermoon of 2022. **Left:** Sam Malcolm draws a crowd as he performs feats of juggling during the Downtown Fargo Street Fair on Thursday. **Right:** Jeff, Cassie and Carter Pender give their horse named Gracie a pre-competition wash before the start of the Clay County Fair in Barnesville, Minnesota, on Thursday.



Security cameras hope to curb downtown vandalism

Owner of Sammy's Pizza in Fargo hopes action is taken after another graffiti incident

By C.S. Hagen
The Forum

FARGO — Once again, a longtime pizza shop in downtown Fargo was hit by vandals, but this time, Teresa Tilock believes the suspect will be caught.

Sammy's Pizza, 301 Broadway N., has had its windows smashed in twice in 2020. In the past, fencing was destroyed, and the century-old facade was spray paint-

ed twice since 2019. In the last instance, which occurred on June 12, its brick facade was vandalized by spray paint graffiti.

Security cameras from a business owner caught the vandal red handed, said Tilock, who owns Sammy's Pizza.

"If someone wants to vandalize or do any graffiti, they're going to get caught because of all the business cameras downtown," Tilock said.

Surveillance footage was turned over to the Fargo Police Department, who reported that the case was sent to the Cass County State's Attorney's Office. So far, however,

no charges have been made, the office reported.

The most recent case of vandalism is especially disappointing to Tilock because construction workers spent two months repairing the building in 2021.

"Tuckpointing was done last year to restore, maintain and beautify the building. The building is over 100 years old and we want to keep the history of Fargo by keeping the building in prime condition," Tilock said.

The pizza parlor is reportedly the first pizza shop in the state, and has been at the same location for 66 years. Tilock has owned the business

for the past 43 years, she said.

The graffiti from June 12 was spray painted on decorative bricks, and "the paint just soaked right in," Tilock said.

Tilock said she is pleased with how the investigation has gone so far, but that "because of the multiple locations that were spray painted and the cost of the damage that has been done, that fines should be more severe and restitution should be made."

Crimes like spraypainting and causing damages to public or private property can be charged as criminal mischief. This could be a Class C felony

if the suspect intentionally causes a pecuniary loss in property damages in excess of \$2,000 without using an explosive or destructive device, according to the North Dakota Century Code.

The crime is defined as a Class A misdemeanor if property suffers a loss in excess of \$2,000 through recklessness, or if a suspect intentionally causes property losses of up to \$2,000, otherwise, the offense can be categorized as a class B misdemeanor.

The maximum punishment for a class C felony is five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine or both.

Class A misdemeanors are punishable by up to \$3,000 in fines and up to 360 days of jail time, according to the Century Code. A Class B misdemeanor conviction carries a \$1,500 fine and a sentence of up to 30 days in jail.

Victor Heitkamp, operations manager for the Downtown Fargo Business Improvement District, or BID, said that smaller scale vandalism occurs often, but mostly in the form of stickers on lampposts. Lately, BID employees have taken down more than 250 stickers, he said.

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Today's weather



88°
64°

Partly Cloudy
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BUSINESS: Fargo youngsters' hot cocoa bombs just perfect when it comes to helping homeless pets. **PAGE A7**

Omicron subvariants dominate in Minn.

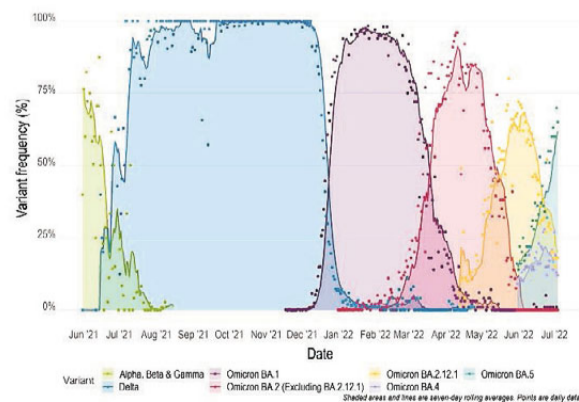
By Alex Derosier
The Forum

ST. PAUL — Yet another subvariant of COVID-19 is taking hold in Minnesota, raising concerns among public health officials at a time of year when rates of infection have typically been lower. So far, however, its effects remain to be seen.

As of early July, the BA.5 subvariant of the COVID-19 variant omicron has grown to become the dominant strain found in wastewater in the Twin Cities, according to data from the Metropolitan Council. The BA.5 and BA.4

variants, which are the most transmissible seen yet and can evade the immune system even if an individual has been infected by omicron before, now make up 80% of cases in the U.S., federal officials said Tuesday, July 12.

More than half a year after the omicron variant of COVID-19 first appeared in the U.S. and sent infection rates to record levels, its various offshoots have led to subsequent waves of infection. The growth in the variants prompted the White House to urge precautions such as masking and vaccine boosters.



Contributed / Metropolitan Council

COVID-19 variants in Twin Cities metro wastewater as of July 8.

The Minnesota Department of Health said the two variants have become more dominant in the state, and although the variants

OMICRON: Page A4



FAIR FAREWELL

Red River Valley Fair wraps up a successful 2022 run



David Samson / West Fargo Pioneer

Food stands are reflected in a puddle during the final night of the Red River Valley Fair on Sunday.

City proposes no change in the mill levy

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — The City of West Fargo may not have to raise its mill levy to cover its 2023 budget after valuations increased the mill values.

At a special meeting Tuesday, June 28, City Administrator Tina Fisk said each city mill was worth \$198,650 in 2022, and each one is equal to about \$234,434 for 2023.

She said the 2022 mill levy was 72.69 mills, and there is no change to the

total levy for 2023. Fisk said the change of mill values will increase the city's income from them by about \$2.4 million.

Although property taxes may not go up, increases in fees may be considered by next year. "Increases in fees are being investigated but are not included at this time," Fisk said.

The city also plans additional income due to interest. Interest income is about \$1.5 million higher for 2023 than it was for 2022, Fisk said.

The West Fargo City

Commission is planning to ask voters to approve a half-cent city sales tax in November to be used for police and fire services. Financial Director Jim Larson has estimated if the sales tax passes, it could generate about \$2.4 million in 2023.

The sales tax increase would also fund additional city staff, Fisk said. She included those added city positions in the 2023 budget: one position for the assessing department, two engineering staff and an additional communica-

tions staff member.

"If the \$2.4 million increase is not covered, if it has to be put in the budget, it would be an 11 mill increase," Fisk said.

The preliminary budget included adding five patrol officers and a record specialist for the police department, as well as 10 additional firefighters, an office coordinator and a fire inspector for the fire department.

The fire department will open its new headquarters in 2023.

LEVY: Page F3

"This is an ongoing discussion for any insight, input that you have."

BERNIE DARDIS.
WEST FARGO MAYOR

City finds additional savings for '23 budget

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — At the West Fargo City Commission's first meeting in August, it will need to approve its 2023 preliminary budget.

Once the preliminary budget is set, the city can lower the mill levy, but it cannot be increased. At a June 28 special meeting, City Administrator Tina Fisk presented a 2023 preliminary budget that would not pay for additional city staff and not increase the current mill levy from its 2022 levels, but it assumes West Fargo voters will approve a half-cent sales tax in November to be used for police and fire.

An increase in property valuations helped the city, as the increase was also reflected in mill values, increasing the city's income from them by about \$2.4 million.

After the late June meeting, individual commissioners met with Fisk and City Finance Director Jim Larson to request some line items be reduced so that the city will not need to make a \$1 million transfer from its reserves into the general fund in 2023.

Fisk said staff revisited fees in the planning department such as building fees and permit fees and it appears as though a new fee structure could generate about \$15,000 more in revenue.

"We have a number of fees we haven't increased in 10, 15 years," Fisk said.

Larson was able to further study the city's investment income and found earlier projections were very conservative. He said another \$150,000 is likely to come in.

The fire department also suggested some new equipment could be phased into its budget, saving the city about \$140,000 in 2023.

"So, instead of having to transfer \$1 million from the general fund, it would only be around \$500,000," Fisk said.

Mayor Bernie Dardis said commissioners are welcome to share any other cost-cutting ideas.

"This is an ongoing discussion for any insight, input that you have," Dardis said.

The City Commission's next meeting is at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 1.

Readers can reach West Fargo editor Wendy Reuer at wreuer@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5530.

Bella meets West Fargo city commissioners

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — With a wet nose and a bowed head, Bella, West Fargo's first comfort canine greeted the West Fargo City Commission.

Monday, July 18, Bella and Officer Todd Pearson met with the City Commission, about two months after she found her new home with Pearson. Bella and Pearson will work to foster positive relationships with students, parents, faculty and staff. The team plans to help students struggling with anxiety and depression, improve student morale and increase overall positive interactions.

The duo will also assist with public events and community outreach, as well as respond to traumatic and crisis response incidents. Bella will be a part of the department's officer wellness programs, including the peer support team.

The police depart-



Wendy Reuer / The Pioneer

West Fargo Police Chief Denis Otterness and SRO Todd Pearson introduce Bella, a 15-month-old Lab mix who will serve as the first comfort canine in North Dakota.

ment announced it was launching a new comfort team, made up of a school resource officer and K-9 in the West Fargo School District. They are the first comfort canine team in North Dakota.

Police Chief Denis Otterness said Bella's

personality is perfectly suited for comfort dog work.

"She's getting along perfectly with myself and my family," Pearson said. Pearson and his wife also have an 8-year old black Labrador at home.

"So she has a stepsis-

ter at home," Pearson said Monday.

Bella is a 15-month old Labrador mix from northern Iowa. She will achieve certification in the coming months. Pearson and Bella have been working on obedience commands and the two will start visiting the eight elementary schools in the northern part of the West Fargo School District when schools open this fall.

Pearson and Bella will also be working with a police department peer group that offers comfort to staff in the police department.

The team was funded in part by a donation by Scheels after the idea was suggested within the West Fargo Police Department.

"The idea of bringing on a therapy canine came directly from our SRO Pearson," Otterness said.

Readers can reach West Fargo editor Wendy Reuer at wreuer@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5530.

Ousted Clay County GOP chair fires back

Hahn threatens legal action against state party

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



Hahn

Edwin Hahn, who maintains he's still the local party chair, sent his own "cease and desist" letter to Republican Party of Minnesota Chairman David Hann, demanding that Hann immediately stop "interfering" with local management of the county organization, which Hahn said is outside the scope of state party functions. The letter, dated Wednesday, March 30, demands that Minnesota GOP staff stop making "slandorous and false public statements" about Hahn through press releases or social media posts. Hahn, of Moorhead, also asked for a public



Robin Huebner reports

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

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

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

The state party chair, Hann, issued

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

effort.

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

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

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

on April 29-30.

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

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

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

ND utility fined \$40K for unpermitted line route

By Adam Willis
The Forum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

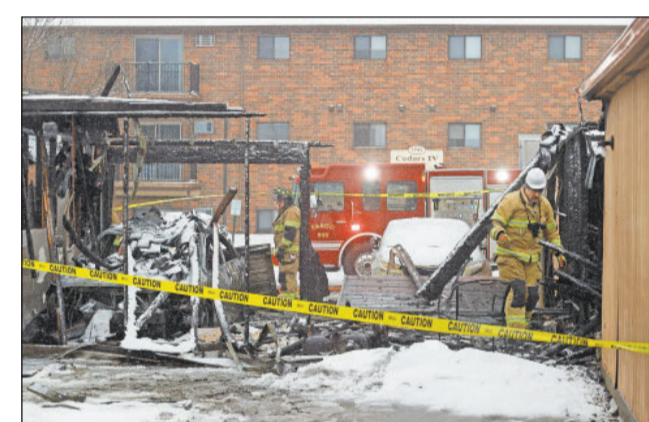
The incident has underscored the importance to MDU of having conversations with regulatory staff to make sure they are in compliance with state law, rather than simply making assumptions, Hanson said. He said he did not have an estimate for the costs of relocating part of the transmission line.

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

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

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

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



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

Apartment garages damaged in Fargo fire

Forum staff reports

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

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

17th Avenue South.

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

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



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

North Dakota AG replacing chief deputy

By Adam Willis
The Forum

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

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

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



Seibel

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

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

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

Wrigley was not immediately available for further comment Tuesday afternoon, and Seibel could not be reached for comment. Seibel told KFGO earlier this week that he understood and respected Wrigley's decision to appoint his own deputy. He added that he plans to take some time off and will

consider all options for his next steps.

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

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

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FUTURE FULL-FLEDGED DESTINATION

Epic Companies announces plan to build North Dakota's largest water park in Fargo, BUSINESS

The Forum

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Commissioners reject vote to add 2 members

By Barry Amundson
The Forum

FARGO — On a 3-2 vote, Fargo city commissioners Monday, July 25, rejected having a public vote on adding two more members to the commission.

Commissioner John Strand had floated the idea of expanding the City Commission due to a growing and more diverse city, with goals to add it on the upcoming November ballot.

A decision needed to be Monday, however, with the deadline to add a ballot question fast approaching. A question must be decided upon 64 days before an election, leaving just two more City Commission meetings left to first look at the language and then get it approved, according to Fargo City Attorney Nancy Morris.

Although Strand and Commissioner Arlette Preston favored the move, Mayor Tim Mahoney

and Commissioners Denise Kolpack and Dave Piepkorn were opposed.

Mahoney and Piepkorn had said before the meeting in media interviews they were opposed, while Kolpack was weighing the issue.

Despite saying during the campaign that she supported expanding the commission, Kolpack said she hasn't had enough time to "understand the implications of adding two more commissioners."

"I'm also not sure what the problem is we are trying to solve right now," she said as she praised the city staff and leaders for their "amazing work" and efficiency as she continues to meet with them on an almost daily basis.

She added that a new city administrator, once hired, could "bring some insights or ideas that could result in structure or realignment recommendations."

VOTE: Page 8



Fargo City Hall.

Forum file photo

Officials address noise concerns downtown

Leaders emphasize food carts, sidewalk performers won't be shut down

By Barry Amundson
The Forum

FARGO — Fargo officials made it clear that noise was the main problem on weekend nights downtown, and had no interest in closing down food carts, trucks or ending the work of sidewalk entertainers.

The controversy over late nights in downtown Fargo surfaced with a recent memo from city department leaders citing an increase in complaints over late-night noise after 10 p.m., and some of the litter and grease left from the food carts.

At the Fargo City Commission meeting Monday, July 25, the commissioners voted unanimously on three motions to deal with loud music by some sidewalk entertainers and food carts.

The motions call for an end to the permitting process for sidewalk entertainers, revoking their permits for amplified sound and to have city staff engage with them and the public on the proposed changes.

NOISE: Page 8

GRACEFUL GLIDER



David Samson / The Forum

A monarch butterfly glides in to land on a thistle flower in the Pollinator Habitat space along Center Street in West Fargo on Monday. Monarch butterflies were added to the endangered species list Thursday.

Collaboration to ease worker shortage

Teamwork, immigration reform critical to address F-M workforce needs

By David Olson
The Forum

FARGO — A consultant who is helping officials in the Fargo-Moorhead area find solutions to the region's worker shortage said Monday, July

25, the often "messy" process of collaboration will be key to solving workforce needs.

In addition, comprehensive immigration reform is necessary in order to fill jobs locally and across the country that are going unfilled,

according to Ted Abernathy, managing partner at Economic Leadership, a national consulting group.

"We need immigration reform, and we need it bad," Abernathy said at an event hosted by the Fargo Moorhead

West Fargo Chamber of Commerce at North Dakota State University.

He said factors fueling the nationwide labor shortage include the high cost of child care, which prompted many women to decide staying home makes

more sense than working.

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic led many people over the age of 55 to assess their work situation and come to the simple conclusion:

SHORTAGE: Page 3

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Today's weather



78°
58°

Scattered T-showers
Details, B8

Nearly 1.2M apply for hero pay in Minnesota

By Dana Ferguson
The Forum

ST. PAUL — Nearly 1.2 million front-line workers applied for bonus checks from the state ahead of a deadline on Friday, July 22, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry leaders said.

In all, 1,199,512 workers who'd remained on the job in person during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic submitted applications, they said. That's nearly double the total that state lawmakers believed were eligible to receive the payments.

And now, state officials will parse through the applications to determine how many applicants meet the criteria



Dana Ferguson / Forum News Service

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz encouraged front-line workers to apply for hero pay from the state and said more than 901,000 had applied so far for the benefits during a news conference July 6 at the Capitol.

and will get a check from the state. The total pool available is \$500 million.

That amount will be divided up evenly between all the eligible applicants.

Lawmakers initially estimated that each worker would receive about \$750 but with the broader applicant pool, workers could expect to see checks closer to \$400.

Several labor union leaders last week urged policymakers to approve \$500 million more to go out to front-line workers given the strong response to the checks.

"It's very important to give the full amount of \$1 billion to all front-line workers," said Deimili Jimenez, a Worthington meatpacking worker and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union Local 663 member.

HERO PAY: Page 3

SPORTS:
Moorhead's Carter Howell agrees to deal with Giants.
PAGE B1

WEST FARGO PIONEER



READY FOR SPRING



David Samson / The Forum

A robin reaches for a snack in the snow Saturday in West Fargo.

Crime down in West Fargo

Chief notes 8% decrease in overall crime, 10% drop in property crimes since 2020

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — As the city asks voters to approve a half-cent sales tax increase for public safety, West Fargo's calls for service and crime rates are on a downward swing.

West Fargo Police Chief Denis Otterness said Monday, April 18, that there was an 8% decrease in overall crime compared to 2020, and a 10% decrease in property crimes since 2020. Property and drug crimes also trended downward, he said.

"We remain signifi-

cantly below the six-year crime average," Otterness noted.

The department responded to 28,660 calls for service in 2021, a number that was down from 2020 when the department had a record 30,161 calls for service. It was also less than the 30,122 calls for service in 2019 and 29,967 in 2018.

However, as he prepared the West Fargo Police Department's annual report, he noted a slight increase in crimes against persons.

"We attribute most of those to some national trends related to COVID," Otterness said, adding crimes such as simple assaults were up.

In 2021, the department was authorized to employ 13 staff and 69 officers, plus volunteers. Otterness noted that, like many employees, his department has



File photo

Cameras are mounted on all four corners of the lights on top of a West Fargo cruiser in this 2010 file photo. The cameras scan and check every license plate the squad car encounters.

struggled to recruit new employees.

The department hired four new police officers in 2021, promoted Lt. Pete Nielson to assistant chief of police and promoted longtime employee Cody Beilke to lieutenant.

Otterness said the police investigations

division reviewed nearly 1,000 cases.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the department was one of the few public offices that continued to offer fingerprinting services, and 1,045 fingerprints were processed. Otterness

CRIME: Page F3

Valuations, building permits on the rise

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — For West Fargo residents who want to discuss the cost or rise of property taxes with city leaders, they will have to watch for a public hearing to be held sometime before Aug. 22 instead of last week's board of equalization meeting, which many found was not the place for tax talk.

Instead, the Tuesday, April 12, Board of Equalization annual meeting was focused on property valuations.

The West Fargo City Commission acts as its own board of equalization, the governing body that oversees property valuations, which are calculated by the city assessor.

"The local board of

equalization is concerned with the equity of all values, not taxes," Mayor Bernie Dardis said. "Property taxes are a budgeting issue and should be addressed at another meeting."

While about 20 residents attended the meeting, the first four who signed up to speak to the board said they came to discuss increases in taxes, not property valuations.

City Administrator Tina Fisk said a public hearing for residents to dispute or comment on city taxes will be held during budgeting. While she did not yet have a date for that meeting, she said it will occur before Aug. 22.

"I'm at the wrong meeting, because I'm more concerned with

PERMITS: Page F3

Scott named West Fargo assistant city administrator

By Wendy Reuer
West Fargo Pioneer/
The Forum

WEST FARGO — The city's first engineer has become its second in command.

Dustin Scott has been named the new West Fargo assistant city administrator.

"It's a tremendous honor," Scott said Monday, April 19. "I greatly appreciate the support. I'm looking forward to continuing my career in West Fargo. I was born and raised here; I have



Scott

a deep commitment to watching this community grow."

Scott graduated from West Fargo High School and earned a master of engineering degree from the University of North Dakota.

He was named the city's first engineer in 2019. Prior to that, the city contracted with Moore Engineering, where Scott

worked as a senior project manager providing engineering services to the city.

Before working for Moore, Scott gained experience with J-U-B Engineers in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, focusing on transportation and structural engineering, and at Houston Engineering in Fargo, where he started his career.

As the city's engineer, Scott has worked on utility and transportation improvements, development and redevelopment

projects; the core area infrastructure master plan; the West Fargo 2.0 comprehensive plan; and the decommissioning of the city's sewage lagoons.

Scott has also represented the city of West Fargo on technical committees for the FM Area Division, Metro COG Long Range Transportation Plan and other region-wide infrastructure collaborations.

As an assistant city administrator, Scott will

SCOTT: Page F3

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ND MAN ACCUSED OF RUNNING DOWN TEEN AT STREET DANCE NOW CHARGED WITH MURDER

LIFESTYLE | ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Fargo-Moorhead Opera sees 'Don Giovanni' through the light of #MeToo

"I'm playing this character as someone we don't want to win," says star Khary "K.F. Jaques" Laurent.



Khary "K.F. Jaques" Laurent plays the lead role in FM Opera's "Don Giovanni." David Samson / The Forum
Forum Communications Co.

By [John Lamb](#)

October 28, 2021 12:30 PM

 We are part of The Trust Project. >

FARGO — Despite being in various productions, [Khary “K.F. Jacques” Laurent](#)(<https://www.kfjacques.com/>) has never played the title role in

“Don Giovanni”(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Giovanni) before. So when he takes the stage with Fargo-Moorhead Opera’s version this weekend, he has one goal besides hitting his mark and notes.

“You really want the audience to hate you by the end,” he says.

That’s not necessarily hard as Don Giovanni is a self-centered playboy who shows no regard for his sexual conquests.

That was the feeling when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s classic opera premiered in 1787. Nearly 225 years later, today’s description may be a little more blunt. Predator. Sexual assailant. Rapist.

Laurent and [Director Austin Regan](https://www.austinregan.nyc/about)(<https://www.austinregan.nyc/about>) say the #MeToo movement definitely influences the work, starting with conversations among the cast and crew.

“There’s been a lot of careful discussion. There’s a lot to consider,” Laurent says.

No hero

While he may be the title character, Laurent says Don Giovanni is no hero.

Khary "K.F. Jaques" Laurent plays the lead role in FM Opera's "Don Giovanni." David Samson / The Forum
Forum Communications Co.

“I’m playing this character as someone we don’t want to win,” he says. “He’s about control and power and showing that control and power over people. He gets off on that. He’s one of those people who makes a mess and then looks at it like artwork.”

He says there has long been a bit of uneasiness about the character and that's only heightened by the #MeToo movement. In 2019, Slate published the piece, “Can Mozart Survive #MeToo?”

Regan says moving the setting from European mansions to the contemporary offices of a big tech company help make the story more relevant to today’s audience. The move updates the imbalance of power from class systems to hierarchy in the workplace, where upper management holds the power of lords and lowly interns are the equivalent of peasants and servants.

“There are so many parallels to our world today,” Regan says. “There have been so many conversations of rich powerful men forcefully taking what they want, abusing their power.”

Fargo native Austin Regan directs FM Opera's "Don Giovanni." Submitted / Austin Regan

He points out that while Don Giovanni is an awful man, the three principal lead female roles are all strong, three-dimensional characters, working to exact revenge on the man who attacked them. And, not to spoil the ending of a 200+-year-old classic, revenge comes for Don Giovanni.

Laurent praises FM Opera General Director David Hamilton for assembling a strong cast, particularly those female characters — [Takesha Meshé Kizart](https://takeshameshekizart.com/web/home.aspx) as Donna Anna, [Kara Covey](https://www.karacovey.com/) as Donna Elvira and [Anna Hashizume](http://www.annahashizume.com/) as Zerlina.

Kizart is a friend of his from Chicago who starred opposite him in “Corsair,” a short video opera Laurent wrote and directed in 2020. It was part of Decameron Opera Coalition’s “Tales from a Safe Distance” series during the coronavirus pandemic.

It caught Hamilton’s eye and he asked Laurent to play Don Giovanni. When he asked who Laurent would suggest to play Donna Anna, he didn’t blink in naming Kizart.

Khary "K.F. Jaques" Laurent plays the lead role in FM Opera's "Don Giovanni." David Samson / The Forum
Forum Communications Co.

“She’s going to steal the show. I take all of the credit for bringing her here,” he says with a laugh. “Fargo is in for a treat. She’s the real reason

to go. She's 100 percent the real deal.”

Regan is also happy with the casting. His first role as a director with FM Opera was in 2019, directing Lucy Thrasher's farewell, “Three Decembers.”

“It was fun to come back and work for her. She's such a delight,” Regan says.

A 2003 graduate of Fargo South High School, Regan was raised on Trollwood productions in the summer and opera in the winter, including the chorus in “La Boheme,” which Thrasher starred in.

“It's such an honor to be working with this company again,” he says. “It's the company where I literally fell in love with opera.”

If you go

What: FM Opera's “Don Giovanni”

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 29, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 31

Where: Reineke Concert Hall, North Dakota State University, Fargo

Info: Tickets range from \$40 to \$80; <https://www.fmopera.org/don-giovanni>(<https://www.fmopera.org/don-giovanni>)

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By [John Lamb](#)

For 20 years John Lamb has covered art, entertainment and lifestyle stories in the area for The Forum.

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Michael Vosburg / The Forum

North Dakota State's Christian Watson dances into the Youngstown State end zone during their football game Saturday in Youngstown, Ohio.

'Made this game a big deal'

Bison overpower Youngstown State, earn share of MVFC championship

By Eric Peterson
The Forum

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — North Dakota State is now a 10-time Missouri Valley Football Conference champion.

The No. 5-ranked Bison scored 21 points in the first half to spark a 49-17 victory against Youngstown State on Saturday at Stambaugh Stadium before 8,307 fans. The victory gave NDSU at least a share of an MVFC conference championship with one game remaining in the regular season.

The Bison (9-1, 6-1 MVFC) can clinch the outright league championship with a home victory against South Dakota next Saturday at Gate City Bank Field at the Fargo dome. NDSU rebounded from a 27-19 road loss against South Dakota State last weekend to win at least a share of the program's 10th conference championship since 2011.

"We made this game a big deal," Bison head coach Matt Entz said. "There was some more riding on it. To be able to get a share of the conference title, we weren't picked to be here."

The Bison previously won outright MVFC crowns in 2012, 2013, 2017, 2018 and 2019. They can add another outright crown to their mantle next weekend.

NDSU running back TaMerik Williams had a stellar performance, rushing for 137 yards and two touchdowns on 18 attempts. The Bison had four players gain at least 60 yards on the ground and the team rushed for 454 yards on 45 attempts.

Sophomore running back TK Marshall had a big fourth quarter, rushing for 146 yards and a touchdown on three carries.

"It's definitely been a journey," said Williams, who transferred to NDSU from SMU. "The biggest thing for me has been growth. I've been growing as a player, playing in games, getting a lot of experience under my belt. I love being here so far."

NDSU quarterback Cam Miller was efficient, completing 10 of 14 passes for 169 yards and two TDs. The Bison had five touchdown plays that were 49 yards or longer and finished with 623 yards on 59 plays.

"We tried to spread the wealth as much as we can," Entz said. "I thought we did a good job of spreading the ball out and trying to make Youngstown defend the entire field."

The Bison started strong in the second half. After forcing a Youngstown State three-and-out, the 6-foot-1, 225-pound Williams ripped off a 50-yard TD run for a 28-3 lead with 13 minutes, 16 seconds to play in the third quarter. On the play, Williams bounced off would-be tacklers and veered to the outside before zipping into the end zone on the one-play scoring drive.

"I'm mostly a downhill runner, a one-cut guy, I do none of that juking and stuff, that's not me," Williams said.

The Bison extended their lead later in the third quarter after Miller lofted a 1-yard TD pass to tight end Noah Gindorff for a

35-3 lead with 4:07 to play in the third. Miller's 40-yard pass completion to tight end Josh Babicz to the YSU 5 helped set up that Gindorff score.

The Penguins countered with the next 14 points. YSU receiver Bryce Oliver caught a pair of 2-yard TD passes from quarterback Mitch Davidson. The second touchdown catch cut the Bison lead to 35-17 with 10:19 to play in the fourth quarter.

Bison running back Jalen Bussey answered with a 61-yard TD run to give NDSU a 42-17 lead with 5:44 remaining. Marshall added an 84-yard scoring run to give the Bison a 49-17 lead with 1:21 to play in the fourth quarter.

"We need to be hitting that groove here late in the year," Entz said. "We need to be playing our best football in November."

The Bison found their groove early against the Penguins. They scored on three of their first four possessions to build an 18-point halftime lead.

NDSU took the opening kickoff and drove 69 yards on seven plays. Bison fullback Hunter Luepke capped that march with a 49-yard touchdown run for a 7-0 lead with 11:45 to play in the first quarter. On the run, Luepke broke multiple tackles before breaking into the clear and rumbling into the end zone.

The Bison were methodical on their next scoring drive, using 16 plays to cover 80 yards and take more than eight minutes off the game clock. Williams capped that possession with a

1-yard TD run for a 14-0 lead with 10:52 to play in the second quarter.

Bison receiver Christian Watson added a 71-yard touchdown catch from Miller for a 21-3 lead with 6:29 remaining in the first half. That one-play drive took only 12 seconds after Youngstown State had kicked a field goal moments earlier.

"I thought we played free from concern about making mistakes. It's not always going to be perfect," Entz said. "We got better. We got our confidence back a little bit, not that we lacked it."

Williams had a big first half, rushing for 78 yards and a TD on 15 attempts. Luepke added 63 yards and a TD on four carries before leaving the game due to injury. The Bison rushed for 166 yards on 27 attempts in the opening half. Miller completed 7 of 9 passes for 121 yards and a touchdown in the first two quarters.

The Bison had 287 yards on 36 plays in the first half, limiting the Penguins to 90 yards on 27 plays over the game's first 30 minutes. Williams got extended playing time in the backfield with sophomore running back Dominic Gunnella out with an ankle injury.

"We ran a lot of power," Miller said. "That's what this program is built on is power."

The Bison also have won at least a share of their 10th MVFC crown in the past 11 seasons.

"It's a really big deal," Miller said. "In the locker room you saw a lot of guys with a smile on their face so it was great to see. Obviously winning a conference championship is huge, especially in the Missouri Valley, but we need to build off it and use it for confidence in the playoffs."

Dragons rally falls just short against Wayne State in football season finale

MOORHEAD — Minnesota State Moorhead battled back from a 17-point deficit to pull within three late, but the rally came up just short. Wayne State held off the Dragons for a 24-21 victory in Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference football on a snowy Saturday before 984 fans at Scheels Field at Nemzek Stadium.

The Dragons ended the season at 5-6 both overall and in NSIC play.

Wayne State (7-4, 7-4 NSIC) led 24-7 in the fourth quarter when Dragons quarterback Tommy Falk connected with Jordan Marty for a 10-yard touchdown pass with 12 minutes, 53 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

Wayne State ate up more than six minutes on its next drive, but MSUM held them scoreless and got the ball back with 6:37 to go. Tommy Falk then tossed a 9-yard touchdown pass to Trent Marquart to pull the Dragons within three (24-21). That capped an eight-play, 73-yard drive that lasted 1:48. A 30-yard pass from Falk to Marquart a couple plays earlier put the Dragons on Wayne State's 10-yard line to set up the score.

MSUM took a lead late in the first quarter when Hayden Boll broke free for a 29-yard touchdown

run to put the Dragons up 7-0.

Wayne State answered early in the second quarter with a Nick Bohn 23-yard touchdown run to knot it at 7-7. Luke Sims then put the Wildcats up 14-7 with a fumble recovery returned 15 yards for a touchdown. A field goal and 9-yard Bohn TD pass gave Wayne State a 24-7 edge heading into the fourth quarter.

Bohn led Wayne State going 18-for-22 passing for 176 yards and a touchdown. He also carried 30 times for 122 yards and a touchdown. Falk finished 20-of-26 passing for 224 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions. Boll rushed for 57 yards and a TD on 11 carries. Grady Bresnahan hauled in six receptions for 67 yards, and Marquart had five catches for 73 yards and a touchdown.

Marcus Gulley anchored the Dragons defense with 13 total tackles (nine solo, four assisted). Josiah Behm had nine total tackles, six solo, with one quarterback sack. Matt Schoh and Cody Sorenson each tallied eight total tackles. All eight of Schoh's were solo tackles.

WS 0 14 10 0 — 24MSUM 7 0 0 14 — 21MSUM: Boll 29 run (Riedel kick)WS: Sims 15 fumble recovery (Powders kick)WS: Powders 20 field goalWS: Ducker 9 pass from Bohn (Powders kick)MSUM: Marty 10 pass from Falk (Riedel kick)MSUM: Marquart 9 pass from Falk (Riedel kick)

Forum staff reports



Photos by David Samson / The Forum

Minnesota State Moorhead receiver Grady Bresnahan and Wayne State's J'Von France battle for the football at Alex Nemzek Stadium on Saturday.



Minnesota State Moorhead's Hayden Boll breaks away from Wayne State defenders for a first quarter touchdown at Alex Nemzek Stadium on Saturday.

Gustavus football team thumps Cobbers in season finale



David Samson / The Forum

Gustavus' Jake Breitbach breaks away from Concordia's Nathan Phillips on a 48-yard touchdown reception at Jake Christiansen Stadium on Saturday.

MOORHEAD — A rough Concordia football season came to a rough end Saturday, with Gustavus defeating the Cobbers 39-7 at Jake Christiansen Stadium.

The Cobbers wrapped up their 2021 season 3-6 in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and 4-7 overall. It's the Cobbers' first sub-.500 season since 2006 and only the third since 2000.

Gustavus outgained the Cobbers 467-183. Gusties quarterback Brett Hufendick completed 19 of 28 passes for 371 yards and four touchdowns. Dalton Thelen caught five passes for 88 yards and two scores and Jake Breitbach and Matthew Kipper also caught TD passes. Gabe Loberg caught four passes for

117 yards.

Peyton Mortenson provided the lone bright spot for the Cobbers with an 80-yard touchdown run early in the fourth quarter. Mortenson carried 14 times for 138 yards.

The Cobbers' Noah Jensen was in on 14 tackles and Mitchell Sullivan, Marshall King and Chase Dockter all were in on seven stops.

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MILESTONES



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SENIOR MENUS

Thursday: Spaghetti with meat sauce, country vegetables, sliced tomatoes, fruit cup, brownie, garlic toast

wheat bun with tartar sauce, rice blend, coin carrots, fruit cup

Monday: Tater tot hotdish, Monte Carlo vegetables, fruit

cup, whole wheat bread

Tuesday: Homestyle chicken breast, baby baker potatoes, Malibu vegetables, fresh melon, croissant

Wednesday: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, stewed tomatoes, cherry cobbler and whipped topping, whole wheat dinner roll

GEESE

From Page F1

Hentges isn't the only person experiencing problems with the geese.

One family in the area has a basketball court that has been covered in droppings. The court has to be washed off every time the family wants to play on it.

A primary reason for the uptick in geese is public feeding. The various homeowners associations have since asked its tenants to not feed the wild geese.

Hentges recalled a group of people that were regularly feeding the birds in 2019 had

been approached by a resident, who asked the group to stop. The group ignored the request and continued.

Fast-forward to 2022 and the issue is still troubling the neighborhood, with one idea circulating to fine people for feeding the birds.

"We request that a significant fine of at least \$500 be attached as a penalty," said Kela Howell, a resident of the area.

The residents also asked the commissioners to administer a city ordinance with an agency enforcing the fines.

Assistant City Administrator Dustin Scott said the accumulation

of geese isn't new in the city.

"We have over the years experienced problems, especially with the geese," Scott said. "I know the park district has tried a couple of proactive measures to try to deter geese, but those were temporary solutions."

The commission agreed that the issue should be dealt with, and Commission President Bernie Dardis has created a committee consisting of city officials to help find solutions to the problem.

The lingering question remaining is, what can residents do about the geese that are currently occupying the area?

Michael Szymanski, the migratory game bird management supervisor for the North Dakota Game and Fish, said one simple fix to improve the situation is to stop feeding the birds.

"If people are feeding the geese, that's a big problem," Szymanski said. "Those are measures that people can take among themselves to stop doing."

Feeding the birds can create "bad habits." In one instance a goose knocked over a little kid for his sandwich, Szymanski said, adding the nearby water features create a situation that is impossible to avoid.

"There's always

going to be Canada geese," Szymanski said. "If you take those (Canada geese) away, there will be more Canada geese that show up probably the very next spring or later that summer or fall."

With the proper permitting, eggs can be submerged in corn oil, which permeates through the egg's shell and suffocates the embryo, preventing the eggs from hatching.

The technique is used throughout the country, Szymanski said.

"This is certainly not a novelty problem in West Fargo and Fargo," Szymanski said. "We are ready to help the community out if need be."

RETURNING TO DAYS OF OLD



Photos by David Samson / The Forum

Opal the Fairy spreads her magic during the North Dakota Renaissance Faire at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds on Sunday.



Colorful characters walked the grounds during the North Dakota Renaissance Faire at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds on Sunday.



Amberlyn and Sebastian Sayago from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, entertain the audience during the North Dakota Renaissance Faire at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds on Sunday.

HISTORY

From Page F1

take a trip back in time for two days and stroll through the pioneer village to talk with costumed guides and watch historic demon-

strations.

Demonstrations will include wet-plate photography, printing in the Hunter Times, butter churning, threshing, open-fire pie making, rosemaling, woodcarving, and others.

Jansen said there will be new food vendors

throughout Bonanzaville and horse-drawn wagons will be available to give rides through the historic village.

A kiddie tractor pull will be held along with a 2 p.m. parade on both Saturday and Sunday.

A special event admission for either a

single-day or two-day pass is available. A single-day pass will be \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids and a \$25 family pass is for sale.

A two-day pass will be \$15 for adults; \$10 for kids and \$35 for a family pass.

This is Bonanzaville's

64th Annual Pioneer Days. Proceeds from the annual event are used for projects and to help operate the year-round pioneer village.

Pioneer Days will be open Saturday, Aug. 27, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and noon to 5 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 28.

Bonanzaville's Facebook page will have more information about activities, demonstrations, and street dance tickets.

Readers can reach West Fargo editor Wendy Reuer at wreuer@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5530. Follow her on Twitter @ForumWendy.

FIRE DEPT.

From Page F1

13 new full-time employees in 2023. Those 13 new employees, including 11 full-time firefighters, have been preliminarily approved in the city's budget, though the budget has not been finalized.

Call volume climbing

Fuller explained to those in attendance that the staffing push is in response to an increasing number of calls for service and the strains those calls have put on the department.

Call volume has increased 100% since 2018, Fuller said. This year, from January through July, the number of calls for service per month has increased from 2021's figures as well. "It just shows that the need is definitely there," Fuller remarked.

According to city figures, 55% of the calls are for emergency medical services. That falls well below what's typical for a full-time department, Fuller said, crediting the work of Dell Sprecher, deputy chief of community risk reduction.

One way the department hopes to further decrease the number of EMS calls is by creating a "community health alliance" to mitigate risk among repeat, "super-users" of the 911 system, Fuller said.

The alliance would be aimed at individuals such as senior citizens who fall in their house and need help. The department would respond to pick them up, Fuller said, but they'd also ensure the resident has the necessary resources to prevent future calls.

It's a system that West Fargo is emulating from the St. Louis Park Fire Department in Minnesota. "The real point is to make sure that that population can age in place, stay in our community

and don't have the high medical bills, high ER visit bills and take up an ambulance when they don't need to."

Sprecher added the long-term goal for the alliance will be to establish a board of healthcare and social workers to oversee it. More developments are expected in September.

Forecasts also project that call volume will continue to rise. 2022 is projected to finish with 3,026 calls for service. By 2030, that number is expected to climb to 5,565.

Factors driving the increase in calls, Fuller said, include an aging population, aging housing stock, and population shifts. Still, he feels the department is well-positioned to handle the increase. "That just naturally brings more calls," Fuller summarized. "We're getting ready for it."

Over the life of the strategic plan, Fuller added that response times are "one of our large service gaps" to resolve.

Because fires can double in size in just a minute and common building materials burn "extremely well," Fuller said that response times are crucial for the department. He estimated that individuals have three minutes or less to escape a fire.

To improve response times, Fuller said the goal is to have 15 on-duty firefighters at all times, the number of firefighters the National Fire Prevention Association estimates are required to respond to a low-hazard fire. When the department added a full-time crew, Fuller said losses and damages caused by fires dropped immediately.

'A matter of time'

The crux of the issue, and what Fuller said keeps him up at night, is that the number of callbacks is rising.

In 2021, the department's



Chris Flynn / The Forum

Dell Sprecher, deputy chief of community risk reduction for the West Fargo Fire Department, addresses a group of citizens and community stakeholders at a public input meeting Aug. 16.

on-call crew was called back 239 times. That has improved this year, with 115 callbacks thus far. However, the number of times where the department has dealt with two or more ongoing calls is on track to rise from 2021. Those situations, during which the department had no companies available to handle an additional call, happened 266 times in 2021. This year is on pace for 318 such scenarios.

Those situations force the department to call for mutual aid from neighboring cities like Fargo. Not only does that pull resources out of those cities, it also comes with a longer response time. It can take at least 10 minutes for a truck to arrive on scene from another city, Fuller said.

Mutual aid "is what's making the system work right now," he said, but it's not ideal. "Every time we do that, it takes people out of their communities."

That scenario played out on July 8, 2021, Fuller said. The entirety of the West Fargo Fire Department responded

to a major structure fire on the south end of the city. Two engines were summoned from the Fargo Fire Department as well.

When a second fire started across the street, they were forced to call for further assistance from north Fargo. As a result of the delay, a woman was burned.

"It's just a matter of time before those two axes cross that we have a major incident in this community," Fuller commented.

Fierce competition

Adding employees means facing a competitive job market, Fuller said.

Currently, the department has 13 full-time employees in their operations division. That includes the deputy chief of operations, battalion chiefs, captains and firefighters. With 11 full-time employees preliminarily approved for 2023, the department expects to turn to its pool of 37 part-time firefighters.

Full-time positions have been offered to the part-time staff, Fuller said. He reported that of the approximately 50

applicants for those spots, 43 passed initial testing. Of those 43, the top 11 were all internal part-time employees. "It's worked out tremendously well for us to make this jump and make sure we're filling our gaps," he said.

As for back-filling those part-time positions, Fuller shared that it is a matter of attrition and that they'll need to "rebalance" the department's scheduling. More full-time staff, though, means fewer people need to be on call. Having less part-time employees will also help defray the wages of the added full-time employees as well.

While its current staffing levels are a weakness for the department, Fuller said the city's expansion has been positive. "It's a two-fold issue here because our strengths are also our weaknesses," he said. "We have weaknesses because of the growth of the community and the fire department needs to keep maintaining and growing to meet those needs."

Fuller categorized the department as "progressive" when it comes to investing in equipment, resources and employees, making it an alluring option for prospective employees. He added that West Fargo residents are also very supportive of their first-responders.

The department's mentality and pipeline of employees has helped matters when it comes to competing with other cities. "The people we're looking at attracting now, they've got other opportunities to go other places," Fuller remarked. "We have to get them into West Fargo because it really is the best place to be a firefighter in the state of North Dakota right now and we know that. We need to really be our own cheerleaders to push that out there."

Readers can reach Forum reporter Thomas Evanello at 701-353-8363 or follow him on Twitter @ThomasEvanello

GRAND SLAM DEAL

Minnesota company to make bats and more for Major League Baseball, BUSINESS

The Forum

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SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2022

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Music educator given ND honor

Merton Utgaard posthumously receives Rough Rider Award

By Jeremy Turley
The Forum

DUNSEITH, N.D. — Merton Utgaard, the founder of an influential youth music camp in the International Peace Garden near here, finally received an immortalizing award many North Dakotans believe he should have

gotten during his lifetime.

Utgaard's three children received the North Dakota Rough Rider Award on behalf of their father from Gov. Doug Burgum during a ceremony at the Peace Garden on Friday. Utgaard, who died in 1998 at age 84, is the 47th recipient of the state's highest citizen commendation. His portrait will be hung in the North Dakota Capitol at a later date.

UTGAARD: Page A3



Photo provided by the North Dakota Office of Governor Merton Utgaard, the founder of the International Music Camp, directs a group of musicians.

U.N. group calls for release of Peltier

Document alleges anti-Native American bias in prolonging imprisonment

By April Baumgarten
The Forum

NEW YORK — A United Nations document is calling for the United States to release a Native American activist who was convicted of killing two FBI agents during a controversial trial.

In a 17-page document made public last month, an arbitrary detention working group for the U.N. Human Rights Council said the U.S. government should free Leonard Peltier. It also said the country should

conduct an independent investigation into whether the Native American's rights were violated.

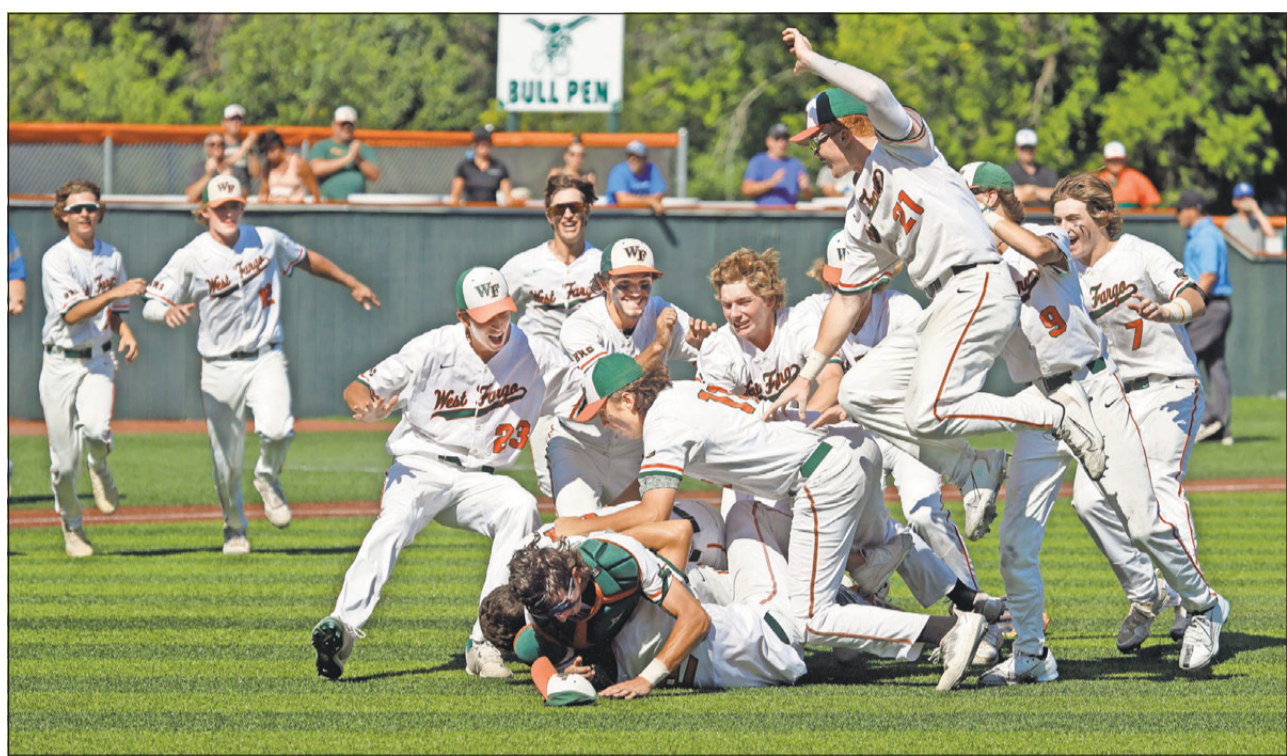
Peltier was convicted in 1977 in connection to the killing of FBI Special Agents Ronald Arthur Williams and Jack Ross Coler during a shootout in June 1975 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The trial was held in Fargo.

Two of his co-defendants were found not guilty due to self-defense.

Despite providing alibis that he did not participate in the shooting, Peltier, who was part of the American Indian Movement meant to

PELTIER: Page A4

Summer celebration



David Samson / The Forum

West Fargo Patriots players celebrate their 2-1 win over Jamestown in the North Dakota American Legion Class AA title game Saturday at Young Field in West Fargo. See Sports for more on the game.

Live horse racing may come to Fargo next June

ND tracks aim to swap race dates

By Wendy Reuer
The Forum

FARGO — Officials at the two North Dakota racetracks are open to switching their individual seasons so that live horse racing would come to Fargo in June and would be held in Belcourt in July.

Historically, the two tracks, Chippewa Downs in Belcourt and the North Dakota Horse Park in Fargo, have worked together to host racing at Chippewa Downs in June followed by the Fargo race meet in mid-July.

However, when it comes to Fargo, horse racing has to compete with many events happening at the same time. For instance, the Fargo track opened its three-weekend season on July 15 when the Fargo Street Fair, Red River Valley Fair and other events across the metro area were ongoing.

At the North Dakota Racing Commission meeting in Fargo on Friday, July 29, the two tracks suggested swapping their dates. The state commission regulates horse racing in North Dakota and declares race dates and funding for the two tracks.

"We think if we were to swap our dates, it would



David Samson / The Forum

Ron Beverly riding Hidden Charms, left, battles Zack Ziegler riding Special Dipper during a 350-yard Quarter Horse race at the North Dakota Horse Park on July 15.

be beneficial to both tracks," North Dakota Horse Park General Manager Hugh Alan Drexler said. "In Fargo, there is a lot of competition with the track. Also, it gets a little hotter here in July."

Chippewa Downs Track Superintendent Jamie Herman said the Belcourt track faces similar hurdles to attendance in June.

"We also have a lot of stuff going on in June in Belcourt," Herman said. "In July, it would be a lot better for us, because we also have our Turtle Mountain Days in July, and I think that could actually help bring in a lot more people to the horse races."

Racing Commissioner Richard LaFromboise, who is from Belcourt, noted family members who live around the country tend to return home in July, as well.

Herman said that when the track held races in August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance was notably higher than normal.

The change could also be safer for the horses and jockeys running. June is historically a rainy month in the Belcourt area, and the track often has to work around the weather.

Unlike the track at the North Dakota Horse Park, Herman said, the track at Chippewa Downs has

clay mixed into the surface. After heavy rain, it can become very muddy and has more potential to cause injuries.

North Dakota Racing Director Jack Schulz said the exact dates racing will be held in North Dakota would be voted on at a later meeting of the state commission, but he wanted the conversation to begin among the tracks and horsemen.

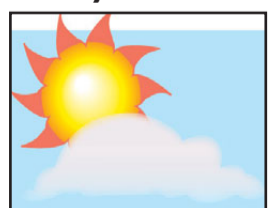
"I'm not asking for any decisions to be made today, but I wanted to hear from the horsemen and the two managers from each track," he said.

The commission earns funding through taxes
RACING: Page A4

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Today's weather



86°
58°

Partly Cloudy
Details, B8



SECTION: Minn. Food Network star Yeh secures deal with Macy's.
BUSINESS

Talking TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge)

Once-ignored Indigenous knowledge of nature now shaping science

By Mathew Holding Eagle III and Kirsti Marohn
MPR News

If you come into contact with people working in and around natural resources in Minnesota you may hear the term TEK. It's a popular buzzword, which, confusingly, has little to do with technology.

It's the acronym for

Traditional Ecological Knowledge, an umbrella term for information about the natural world collected by countless generations of Indigenous people.

Through observation and life experience, they gained knowledge — what plants were good to make teas to soothe a sore throat, what bark to harvest to bring down a fever, how certain species adapted to changes in climate and how fire can revitalize the forest floor to produce an abundance of berries.

TEK: Page A3

FARMLAND FOR SALE

FOR SALE: 15 1/2 Acre Hobby Farm in West Fargo, ND across the road from the WF Airport.

FOR SALE: Cass County Building Site with large barn, no house & a total of 40 acres of land SE of Erie, ND.

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