



Woman involved in standoff in Spicer faces weapons charge. **A5.**

Willmar back home against Eau Claire. B1.

WILLMAR, MINN.

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Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Zach Larson, of Willmar Municipal Utilities, installs new streetlights Wednesday along Sixth Street Southwest in downtown Willmar.

4 cities get state money to study leak sites

Legislature approves \$200,000 for work in Paynesville, Blaine, Alexandria and Foley

By Kirsti Marohn
MPR News

BRAINERD — Four Minnesota cities are receiving state funding to analyze whether leaded gasoline from leaking storage tanks is putting their drinking water at risk.

The Legislature approved \$200,000 to investigate petroleum leak sites in Paynesville, Alexandria, Foley and Blaine.

The additional study comes in the wake of a former Minnesota Pollution Control Agency employee filing a whistleblower lawsuit last year against his former employer.

Mark Toso raised questions about the state's petroleum remediation program where he'd worked as a hydrologist for a decade, and whether it was doing enough to prevent leaded gasoline from contaminating groundwater.

Toso's lawsuit is still pending. Meanwhile, state lawmakers authorized \$200,000 for Paynesville to take the lead in hiring a consultant to analyze the extent of leaded gasoline contamination and the threat it poses to each city's drinking water supply.

Paynesville Mayor Shawn Reinke called the funding "good news for the city." He said the additional analysis will help answer lingering questions city officials have about the site.

"This is just a study, just an analysis, to see if more soil removal would be beneficial and cost effective," Reinke said.

The Paynesville contamination, from underground tanks at a former service station, was first discovered in the 1980s. Chemicals from the petroleum leached into the groundwater and forced the city to close two of its wells. The MPCA replaced the wells.

LEAK: Page A2

BRIGHTER DAYS

New streetlights installed in downtown Willmar

By Jennifer Kotila
West Central Tribune

Downtown Willmar is getting brighter as crews work this week to install new streetlights as part of the city's streetscape project. The streetlights being

installed are more decorative than the lights they are replacing, which were installed in the 1980s. The city and Willmar Municipal Utilities are working together to fund the project, which has been in the works for several years.

The city received a Small Cities Development grant in 2019, and is using \$400,000 from the grant to fund the streetlights project, as well as a beautification project at Fourth Street and Litchfield Avenue Southwest.

The utilities are also working to replace all the

bulbs in the streetlights across the city with LED bulbs, and hopes to finish the project in 2022. As of March, there was a 36% reduction in the energy used to power the streetlights, which is enough to power 108 homes for an entire year.



Left: Willmar Municipal Utilities workers Jordan Stulan, below, and Zach Larson, above, install new streetlights Wednesday in downtown Willmar. **Right:** Zach Larson puts the finishing touches on the installation of a new streetlight Wednesday in downtown Willmar.

Papa Murphy's open; Subway not far behind

West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — If all goes well, the new Subway on First Street South will be open on Friday.

The new Subway at 605 First St. S. has been under construction for months, and it seemed like nothing was taking place for some of that time. However, the parking lot was paved this week, and new signage was installed as well.

"Optimistically, we are shooting for Friday," owner Gary Hendrickx told the West Central Tribune on Wednesday, noting that if all goes well with the building inspection and food inspection, it will be open for business.

If there are any delays with the inspections, it is unclear how long it will take before it can open, according to Hendrickx.



Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Left: Bob Albertson, of Duinick Inc., uses a smooth-wheeled roller to put the finishing touches on a section of parking lot Wednesday at the new Subway along First Street South in Willmar. **Right:** Papa Murphy's recently opened for business in its newly remodeled building along First Street South in Willmar.

Another new restaurant is Papa Murphy's. It recently opened at 1516 First St. S. after a renovation to the building, which previously was home to Insurance Center.