

# Timberwolves

What should be at the top of Connelly's to-do list? Page A14

# Grand Forks Herald

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2022

## Strong storms cause damage in Minn.

By Shelby Lindrud  
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR, Minnesota — There were multiple reports of storm damage caused by nearly three days of stormy weather across west central and southern Minnesota over the Memorial Day weekend. This included reports of tornadoes.

Around 3:30 p.m. Monday there were unconfirmed reports of a tornado near the cities of Appleton and Milan in Chippewa County. One report from the National Weather Service said the tornado hit a farm about three miles north of Milan. The family was able to take shelter.

There were also reports from a storm spotter around 4:10 p.m. Monday of a rain-wrapped tornado on the ground about three miles west of Starbuck in Pope County. Tree damage, a pickup truck towing a trailer rolling and damage to a camper were all reported near Starbuck, according to a NWS report.

There were also social media reports of heavy rain and hail around the Appleton and Milan areas.

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## Cleanup on Greenway begins

Efforts have been prolonged process

By Meghan Arbegast  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — It's a sunny day as Kim Greendahl, the Greenway specialist for Grand Forks, looks at an uprooted tree trunk lying along the Red River.

"I've never had one that big here," Greendahl said as she looked for traces of how the tree got to its resting place a little bit down from the Flood Memorial Monument by downtown Grand Forks.

Besides the tree trunk, which will reside there for a while until crews are able to get to it, flood cleanup

along the Greenway has been a prolonged process. Greendahl, who's been the Greenway specialist for close to 20 years, said this year has been an interesting one.

"What's precedent about this one is how long it's been here stalled and I feel that way with the cleanup effort. I feel kind of stalled," she said.

The rainy start of the season has meant the Red River has crested multiple times and continues to keep crews from getting to the saturated areas.

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Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald  
Quincie Floden rakes away flood debris from a campsite at the Red River State Park and campground in East Grand Forks on May 25.

## SEEKING HISTORY IN AN UNLIKELY PLACE

Buxton man digs discarded pieces of history from region's outhouse pits

By Ingrid Harbo  
Grand Forks Herald

Buxton, N.D.

An old outhouse pit might not be the first place that comes to mind when searching for buried treasure. But for Tom Askjem, yesterday's toilets are a treasure trove of information that tell the stories of the past.

The 31-year-old from Buxton has made a career of digging bottles, dish fragments and other forgotten relics of the past in outhouse pits, many of which in the Red River Valley date back to the 1870s. He and his digging

partner, Jake Cariveau, from East Grand Forks, travel across the country in search of discarded items and their long-lost stories.

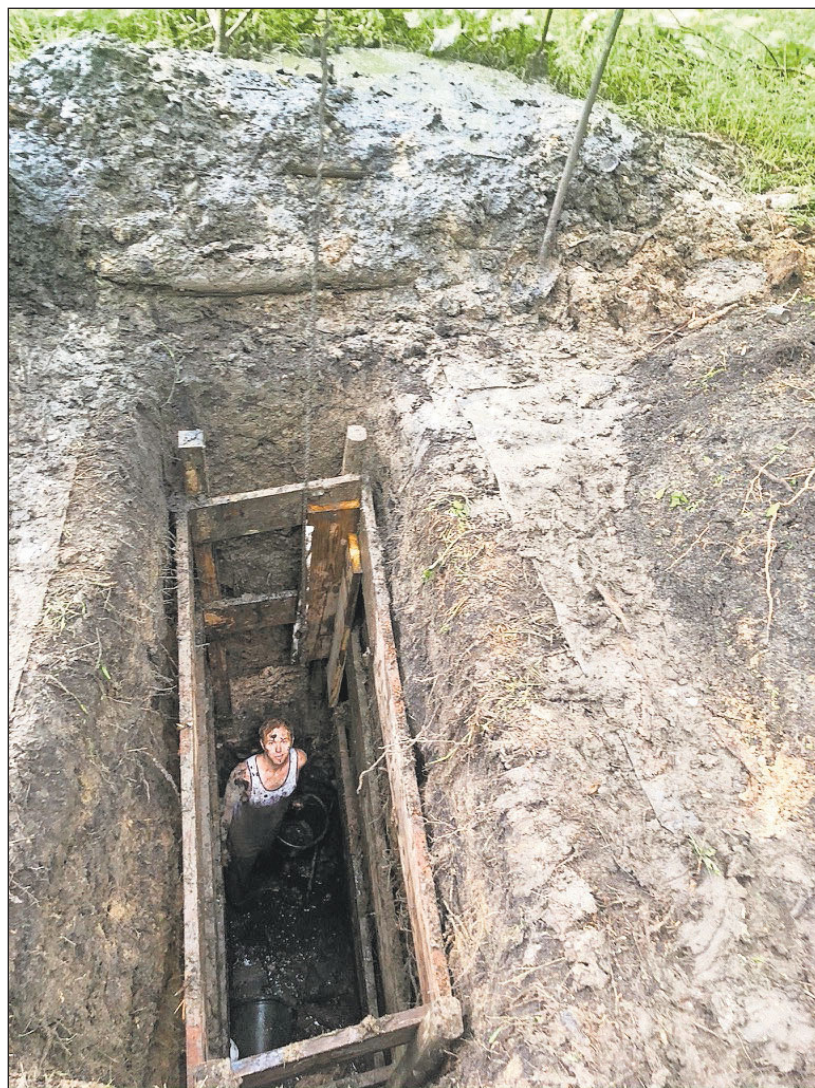
One can learn a lot about the people of the past from what they threw away, says Askjem. In the 1800s and early 1900s, most people did not have garbage services, so anything that couldn't be burned was thrown in the outhouse pit.

"It's interesting to piece the puzzle together, more or less, of who lived there and what their lifestyle was like," he said.

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Jake Cariveau, Askjem's digging partner, went on his first dig in 2016.



Contributed photos / Tom Askjem  
Tom Askjem of Buxton, North Dakota, digs for bottles and other discarded relics of the past in outhouse pits, like this one at the site of Fort Pembina, in Pembina, North Dakota.

## Council hopefuls outline city infrastructure needs

By Sam Easter  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — The city has a few capital projects that, for years, have felt like they're just on the verge of happening. A new Interstate-29 interchange, is one; a proposed bridge across the Red River is another.

But they're just two of Grand Forks' goals. City Hall is tasked with keeping the roads maintained, the water system running and more. And in this

year's City Council races, set for June 14, there are candidates that bring all kinds of ideas to their races.

This year's set of races are in three wards, two of which are open seats, and the Herald has been covering the race by asking questions about the community's future — on the city's workforce, its future with China-based Fufeng Group and more. The Herald polled City Council candidates on those issues by email,

and they responded earlier this month.

Today's question: "What should be the city's top infrastructure priorities in the coming months? How about in the next two or three years?"

Ward 2

The newly redrawn Ward 2 stretches from downtown Grand Forks into the city's northern industrial neighborhood. Incumbent Katie Dachtler isn't

COUNCIL: Page A8

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## STORMS

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High wind gusts were reported all over the area on Monday, starting with an 84 mph gust at around 3:55 a.m. in Olivia. A grain bin was blown onto U.S. Highway 212 early Monday about 1 mile east-northeast of Sacred Heart in Renville County.

Monday afternoon a wind gust of 65 mph was reported at 3:20 p.m. about 3 miles west-southwest of Graceville in Big Stone County; a gust of 67 mph was reported at 4:05 p.m. at the Benson Airport in Swift County; and a wind gust of 63 mph was reported at 3:25 p.m. at the Madison Airport in Lac qui Parle County.

NWS collected storm reports from Belgrade reporting trees down and power out around 4:19 a.m. Monday.

There was tornado damage reported to NWS in Forada and Maples Lake in Douglas County, southwest of Alexandria.

The storms also caused several communities to either move their Memorial Day events indoors or canceled them outright.

Earlier Saturday, Furniture Plus in Willmar found half of its roof peeled up Sunday morning, believed to have been caused by a quick burst of wind during a storm around 8 a.m.



Linda Vanderwerf / West Central Tribune

Part of the roof of Furniture Plus in Willmar was damaged in a storm Sunday morning. There was no damage inside the store.



Left: Eagle Creek Golf Course storm damage on Monday.

Submitted / Peter Hannig

Far left: The National Weather Service reported a tornado struck a farm about 3:30 p.m. approximately 3 miles north of Milan in Chippewa County. This tornado photo was posted by JTilly via Twitter.

Courtesy @ JTillyPGA / Twitter

## OUTHOUSES

From Page A1

In older pits, items that predate the homestead were likely brought there by homesteaders. The pits of rich families sometimes hold ornate dinnerware, while pits without a lot of items in them may have belonged to a poor family, or one that was living modestly. Sometimes, pits that date to the Spanish flu have more medicine bottles in them than older pits.

Askjem's experience living on an 1870s homestead sparked his interest in history and started his pit-digging career. His family moved from Grand Forks to the farm near Buxton, North Dakota, after Grand Forks' Flood of 1997.

"There were old wagons in the woods, the house had Victorian-era vibes and a lot of it was original, with the original door hardware and woodwork," he said. "So I just kind of got into the

history."

Askjem dug his first outhouse pit on his family's farm when he was in sixth grade. He discovered the pit when his family was clearing the woods with a tractor, and unearthed stove ashes and glass.

"I remembered reading online about ashes being thrown over old outhouse pits to neutralize the smell, so I started digging," he said.

He spent the summer digging the pit on his family's farm, and then started asking other local landowners about digging in the outhouse pits and abandoned places on their farms. Now, he has dug out more than 1,300 outhouse pits across the United States, from coast to coast.

Cariveau went on his first dig with Askjem in 2016. They knew each other, and Askjem had told Cariveau about digging in outhouse pits. But Cariveau had written it off as a bizarre interest — until he accompanied Askjem on a dig.

"It kind of blew my mind when he started pulling

out some of these bottles — they're completely intact — then everything just kind of clicked," he said.

Through years of experience and research, Askjem has learned how to identify what the different types of bottles may have been used for, and more than the items themselves, Askjem is interested in the stories they tell. The fragments of bottles he finds can confirm or add to stories about the places he digs.

"A lot of biographies about these pioneers don't always tell the full story," he said. "Sometimes I'll find pits packed full of liquor flasks or drugstore bottles, so sometimes these outhouses were used as a place to dispose of contraband, either by local law or opinion of the household, so to speak."

Cariveau says anything they dig up of historical value is offered first to local museums. Askjem and Cariveau keep a few items for their personal collections, and anything else is given to

property owners or reburied.

In January, Askjem and Cariveau started a YouTube channel called "Below the Plains," where they post videos of their digs and finds. The channel has approximately 4,720 subscribers, and their most watched video — a dig in Yankton, South Dakota — has more than 160,000 views.

Cariveau and Askjem started recording their digs two years ago, and Cariveau began putting videos together over the winter in 2021. He is surprised at how successful the channel has been.

"It took off faster than I expected," said Cariveau. "Obviously, it's gratifying to see your work paying off."

Askjem also has published two books — one about North Dakota soda bottles and the other about Nebraska soda bottles — and more are on the way. An ongoing book project has been documenting the earliest bottles made and used by companies in the western half of the United States from collections across

the United States. He also is working on a book about a dig he completed at the site of Fort Pembina, in Pembina, North Dakota, and two other books.

Not everybody is happy with the efforts. Askjem says people sometimes think he is akin to a grave robber; some take issue with the fact that he does not have an archaeology degree; some might think the pieces of history should stay in the ground.

"I'm not a grave robber. I don't dig up burial mounds or anything like that," he said. "I'm focusing on outhouse pits from the pioneer era, and I always dig on private land with the owner's permission."

Plus, he says, if it stays in the ground, we can't learn anything from it.

"There's that kind of cliched saying, 'If we don't know where we came from, then we won't know where we're going,'" he said. "The most interesting thing for me is noticing how human nature hasn't changed."

## COUNCIL

From Page A1

seeking reelection, and her seat is contested by Rebecca Osowski, a sales support specialist at LM Wind Power, and Matthew Ternus, former UND student body president and current staffer for the Community Violence Intervention Center.

Osowski referred broadly to "struggles with the water system," pointing out the city's request that residents limit washing machine and dishwasher use during this spring's wet weather — which came as the wastewater treatment plant saw a surge in water.

"There are many challenges to running a city the size of Grand Forks and we rely on the experts in their fields/departments to provide recommendations that the City Council can agree to that is the best for all citizens," Osowski said. "The City Council needs to have the support of experienced people on the side of Grand Forks citizens for recommendations to make the best decisions. Also, fix the roads."

Ternus said he'd like to see "various roads

around town" improved, as well as progress on projects like a 42nd Street underpass and a new Red River crossing.

"In the short term, I believe one of our priorities should be working to provide additional early-stage infrastructure for small businesses to form, grow, and expand. We have the opportunity to be an incredibly pro-business community — we just need to identify the space," he said. "In the long-term, we need to also identify areas to develop new single-family housing. With more people moving here, and with major projects in our city like the Sanford land purchase, more housing opportunities will soon be needed."

## Ward 4

In Ward 4, which runs through residential neighborhoods along the Red River, there's a three-way race to replace City Council member Jeannie Mock, who is forgoing reelection. Those seeking to fill the open seat are Ward Johnson, an attorney, businessman and former Army colonel, Tricia Lunski, co-owner of HB Sound & Light, and Harry Samuelson, a mechanic at Nelson International.

All three said they are monitoring ongoing

plans to build a new bridge over the Red River in coming years. It's been a tough issue for Grand Forks, because a new crossing would help ease traffic elsewhere, but its placement is a political hot potato, especially in Ward 4, where some residents worry the wrong placement could mean boosted traffic through their neighborhood.

Johnson's list of infrastructure priorities is brief but to the point, and he opposes a new bridge running through Ward 4.

"I haven't met a single person yet of any door that I've knocked on in Ward 4 that tells me that they think it's a good idea to put a bridge in Ward 4. If I'm going to be properly representing Ward 4, I'm going to be against a bridge in Ward 4," he said.

He also said "potholes and road repairs in total" are on his list of concerns, too.

"I've lived in Grand Forks since I came up here to go to college. ... In my entire time here, it's my personal opinion that the roads in Grand Forks are in worse shape than in Fargo, (or) than in Bismarck, where I grew up," Johnson said in a clarifying interview. "Nobody has the horrible potholes that we have

here. I just think that we can do better."

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Lunski voiced her own close interest in the bridge project, too, noting that she hopes to work with people throughout the ward, who are deeply divided, to find the right solution.

In a clarifying interview, she said "I'm for a bridge" and said there is a need for one.

"I've been meeting with Stephanie from the MPO and I've met with some other city people just to find out what's financially best for our city and what will have the best road potential," Lunski said. "I have been informed that both bridges (on 32nd and Elks) would be very neighborhood friendly so there wouldn't be trucks allowed. I haven't come to a conclusion yet."

She said that, if elected, she will vote for an intercity bridge, but said "it's going to be a very difficult decision to figure out what's best for the city. If I am elected I will be interested in talking with people and figuring out the best solution."

She also said she sees the downtown area as an important place for

change.

"Our downtown is having a huge growth spurt and the city needs to step it up and support that growth," Lunski said. "Town Square is in need of much repair, and with 3.9 million people visiting our downtown annually we need to make this a space people want to come back to."

Samuelson also mentioned a new bridge as "a big concern," and something he's opposed to in Ward 4.

In a clarifying call, Samuelson said he does not back any proposal to build a bridge on 17th, Elks or 32nd.

"No on all of them," he told the Herald. "I drive back and forth to East Grand Forks every morning because I work in East Grand Forks. ... The problem as I see it is the people in East Grand Forks want to get into Grand Forks easier. Fine. I can understand that. But that doesn't help Grand Forks, and especially if you're trying to avoid (building a bridge near) schools and stuff like that."

Samuelson said he supports a bridge project on Merrifield Road, south of Grand Forks.

He also said Grand Forks "has a road problem," despite a recent tax hike that he said

makes it all the more confusing.

"Residents have spent many dollars and voted for tax increases to address the road problems, potholes, etc," he said. "Why are the roads still such an issue?"

## Ward 6

Ward 6, which after redistricting now includes south-central Grand Forks, is represented by City Council President Dana Sande, who is running for re-election unopposed. He listed off some of City Hall's top projects — like a new 47th Avenue South interchange with Interstate-29, or a new bridge crossing further south of Grand Forks.

"In addition to all the infrastructure to supply roads and water to the wet corn milling plant (from Fufeng Group), the grade separation at 42nd Street and Demers Avenue is, in my opinion, the city's top infrastructure project," he said. "With the price of oil expected to remain high for the foreseeable future, longer trains and delays are expected at that intersection. These delays are a public safety issue, increasing the response time for both ambulance and fire to the northwest portion of our community."