

PILT payment

Sibley County will be receiving \$51,805.90 from the state to support public lands. P. 7



Tennis

The Giants won four games to finish in second place at the St. James tournament. P. 10

Le Sueur Council

Le Sueur residents can expect to see a tax increase of more than 17 percent next year. P. 8



The Henderson Independent

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Community worship focuses on love and redemption

By Beth Cornish
Independent staff

Sunday, Sept. 26 was a beautiful, sunny morning for the almost 70 folks who turned up to Henderson’s community worship. The attendees, who ranged in age from youngsters through a few nonagenarians, gathered at the river under the new Bender Park shelter to share a

message of joy. Art Straub kicked off the day when he asked, “Shall we gather at the river?” and everyone answered, “Yes! We will gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.” Kitty Jo Collins and Lydia Rose presented epistle and gospel readings that empha-

COMMUNITY WORSHIP
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



PHOTO BY BETH CORNISH

Brandon Mueller shared his story of personal struggle while one of his sons looked on in loving support.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

LS-H announces Homecoming Court

Le Sueur-Henderson High School announced the 2021-22 Homecoming Court last week. This year’s court includes: kneeling, Nathan Gregersen and Hannah Lynch; middle row: Emma Osborne, Amy Hardel, Anna Pavlo and Victoria Ely; and back row: Mason Reinhardt, Keegan Straub, David Guppton and Tucker Adams. Keep an eye on the Independent’s Oct. 6 edition to find out who was crowned king and queen. Homecoming is next week, with the Giants football team taking on Sibley East on Friday, Oct. 8 at 7 p.m.

LS-H School District Referendum

Dozens turn out for Henderson’s referendum meeting



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Dozens of residents from Henderson and Le Sueur showed up to Hilltop Elementary School on Wednesday, Sept. 22 to hear about the upcoming school referendum and ask questions.

By Rachel Miller
Editor

The Le Sueur-Henderson School District held its second of four community information meetings on Wednesday,

Sept. 22 to discuss the upcoming proposed \$50 million referendum. Last week’s meeting was held at Hilltop Elementary School in Henderson, and a few dozen people from both

communities showed up to listen and ask questions. Superintendent Jim Wagner told those gathered that “it is crucial to have a presence in both communities” and that Hilltop is an asset for the

school district. “I think it would be a mistake to abandon this building. There is too much it can provide,” Wagner said. According to Wagner, the state does not support reno-

vating a school if renovation costs more than 60 percent of what a new building would be. Wagner said Park Elementary School would cost more than 60 percent to fix, but not Hilltop, which is why they would like to build a new K-3 building and renovate Henderson’s school. A big cost factor at Park Elementary School is the roof. There have been leaks, and if the roof needs replacing, it won’t come cheap. Wagner said the cost would be anywhere from \$5-10 million, and part of that cost is the fact there is asbestos. (Editor’s note: Last week’s article incorrectly stated the cost would be \$2-5 million.) “Right now cleaning up asbestos is not cheap because of the health risk. There are not a lot of companies that do it and the ones that do charge through the nose,” Wagner said. Community members did raise some concern about the cost. The district has proposed spending \$50 million to close Park, build a new K-3 school on to the Middle/High School, and renovate Hilltop for grades 4-5 in Henderson. Wagner said 22 percent of the project cost, about \$12.5 million, will be paid for by the state through the Ag2School tax credit. Le Sueur residents would contribute approximately \$30 million, while Henderson pays \$7.5 million.

The Ag2School tax credit helps even the score when it comes to needed school referendums. In rural communities, agricultural land owners tend to carry a disproportionate amount of the cost for school referendums. As a result, many metro school districts were able to pass referendums, while rural districts had a much harder time. The Ag2School credit allows agricultural land owners to receive a significant savings. When the tax credit was passed, ag owners received a 40 percent tax credit; in 2023 it will be 70 percent. Rich Perkins, who attended the meeting from Le Sueur, pointed out that “we are the state” in reference to the money that ag owners were saving. “They don’t print more money. Income tax goes up, they will get you one way or another. It will come out of the left or right pocket but it is coming

REFERENDUM
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Vaccinated people make up 30% of new cases

By Rachel Miller
Editor

In the past week, the state added 15,896 (increase of 1,002) new cases of COVID-19, with 4,717 of those cases occurring in fully vaccinated people. The state has recorded 28,047 of these “breakthrough cases,” which is less than 1 percent of all COVID-19 cases. To date, Minnesota has reported 699,966 COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began.

Speaking of vaccinations, 3,217,061 Minnesotans have received a full vaccine schedule (an increase of 23,747), which is 57 percent of the state’s total population. The number of Minnesotans who have received at least one vaccine is roughly 3.39 million, or roughly 60.1 percent of the state population. In addition, 93.4 percent of people age 65+ in the state have received at least one vaccine dose, and 73.2 percent of people age 16 and older.

Right now, 6,821 Sibley County residents have received at least one vaccine dose, and

6,523 (an increase of 8) are completely vaccinated.

In neighboring Le Sueur County, 14,651 (an increase of 40) people have received at least one vaccine dose, while 13,968 people (an increase of 74) are completely vaccinated.

In neighboring Scott County, which is part of the greater metro area, 90,363 (an increase of 197) people have one vaccine dose, while 85,964 (an increase of 427) have a completed vaccine series.

Unfortunately, Sibley County saw an uptick in both cases and deaths in the past week. While Sibley County added 46 new cases (an increase of 10) to bring its total to 1,686 cases, it also had two more deaths — the first in seven months — to bring its total to 12.

Le Sueur County added 71 new cases (an increase of 1) to total 3,339 cases, and reported one new death, bringing its total to 30.

Scott County added 298 (a decrease of 12) cases in the past week, bringing its total to 17,470, and 146 deaths (an increase of 1).

Outbreaks in schools have only continued to grow, with six affected schools in nearby Scott County. The affected schools include Falcon Ridge (New Prague), New Prague Middle School, New Prague Senior High, Jordan Middle School, Jordan High School and Shakopee High School. At this point, no schools in Sibley or Le Sueur counties are affected.

STATE OVERVIEW
The state conducted 276,185 tests in the past week, bringing its total to 12,327,958 tests on approximately 5,542,899 people.

Deaths are rapidly rising, with 105 more people dying in the past week. This is an increase of 16 percent in the past week, and 123 percent higher than two weeks ago. So far, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of 8,098 Minnesotans.

However, just 22 deaths, or 20.9 percent, occurred in assisted living facilities in the past week. That being said, Minnesota’s senior population continues to be the most susceptible, with 75 deaths occurring in people 70 and older. To

date, 4,624 (57.1 percent) of the state’s 8,098 deaths have been in assisted living facilities. At the same time, there have been 19,418 cases in those facilities (an increase of 126), which is 2.7 percent of all cases statewide.

Of Minnesota’s 699,966 total cases, 46,736 have been in health care workers (an increase of 419) and 672,634 (96.1 percent) no longer need isolation.

Hospitalizations saw a slight uptick, with 695 (an increase of 33) more people being hospitalized. To date, 37,555 people have been hospitalized due to COVID-19. The state also reported 138 (a decrease of 6) more patients needing ICU hospitalization. To date, 7,630 people have needed ICU care due to COVID-19.

Exposure in congregate care facilities have decreased, going from 10 to 8, in the tri-county area. Exposure is defined as a person diagnosed with COVID-19 who visited, worked or lived at the facility while contagious. Facilities are removed if they have not had a new exposure for 28 days.

Traditions of Montgomery and Traditions of Waterville remain on the list of affected facilities in Le Sueur County.

Affected facilities in Sibley County include Oak Terrace Health Care Center and Good Samaritan Society of Winthrop.

Scott County had two facilities drop off the list in the past week. Affected facilities include Lutheran Home Association Nursing Home, Shakopee Friendship Manor, Valleyview Assisted Living of Jordan, and St. Gertrude’s Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Demographics for deaths compared to total number of cases is as follows:

- **Age 100+:** 117 deaths (no increase); 358 total cases (an increase of 7)
- **Ages 90-99:** 1,844 deaths (an increase of 8); 6,763 cases (increase of 87)
- **Ages 80-89:** 2,719 deaths (an increase of 39); 17,693 cases (increase of 343)
- **Ages 70-79:** 1,800 deaths (an increase of 28); 32,610 cases (increase of 758)
- **Ages 60-69:** 977 deaths (an increase of 20); 65,816 cases

(increase of 1,227)

• **Ages 50-59:** 412 deaths (an increase of 6); 95,875 cases (increase of 1,579)

• **Ages 40-49:** 150 deaths (an increase of 2); 100,135 cases (increase of 1,940)

• **Ages 30-39:** 59 deaths (an increase of 1); 115,937 cases (increase of 2,503)

• **Ages 20-29:** 17 deaths (an increase of 1); 127,770 cases (increase 2,110)

• **Ages 5-19:** 2 deaths (no increase); 118,411 cases (increase of 4,677)

• **Ages 0-4:** 1 death (no increase); 18,555 cases (increase of 664)

As it stands, the top 10 counties in Minnesota for cases are:

1. Hennepin: 131,671 (+1,987)
2. Ramsey: 55,773 (+771)
3. Dakota: 47,553 (+758)
4. Anoka: 42,370 (+730)
5. Washington: 28,937 (+501)
6. Stearns: 24,268 (+619)
7. St. Louis: 19,312 (+578)
8. Scott: 17,470 (+298)
9. Wright: 16,299 (+357)
10. Olmsted: 16,216 (+467)

Sibley County will receive almost \$52,000 in PILT disbursement

This year, Sibley County will be receiving \$51,805.90 to support public lands through the Minnesota Department of Revenue’s Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), a property tax relief program that offsets tax revenues not collected on public lands.

Neighboring Le Sueur County will be receiving \$ 187,860.43, and Scott County will receive \$ 156,943.53. Statewide, a total of \$36.3 million is being distributed.

Counties have received PILT payments annually since 1979 in place of property taxes on 5.6 million acres of state-managed lands and 2.8 million acres of county-managed tax-forfeited lands. Money for the payments comes

from the state’s general fund.

Every county in Minnesota has public lands within its borders and receives an annual PILT payment. In 2021, counties received anywhere from \$21,443 in Red Lake County up to \$3,786,377 in St. Louis County.

“PILT is an important and consistent revenue source for counties, and the benefits of public lands go far beyond these annual payments,” said DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen. “With Public Lands Day on Sept. 25, it’s a good time to recognize how these lands support local economies, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism, create habitat for wildlife, and deliver important ecological benefits like clean air and water.”

The state makes PILT payments on public lands including state parks and forests, scientific and natural areas, wildlife management areas, school trust lands, and Consolidated-Conservation lands, as well as county-managed tax-forfeited lands. Payment rates vary according to land type and generally range from \$2 per acre, to three-quarters of 1% of appraised value.

More information about Minnesota’s public land portfolio, PILT payments, and a brief history of major public land transactions is available on the DNR’s website at mndnr.gov/publiclands. Follow DNR on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for more on Public Lands Day.

ASK A TROOPER

Sgt. Troy Christianson,
Minnesota State Patrol



Roaring motorcycles

Question: Why are LOUD motorcycles allowed to operate on Minnesota highways?

Answer: Minnesota State Statute 169.69 states: “Every motor vehicle shall at all times be equipped with a muffler in good working order which blends the exhaust noise into the overall vehicle noise and is in constant operation to prevent excessive or unusual noise, and no person shall use a muffler cutout, bypass, or similar device upon a motor vehicle on a street or highway. The exhaust system shall not emit or produce a sharp popping or crackling sound. Every motor vehicle shall at all times be equipped with such parts and equipment so arranged and kept in such state of repair as to prevent carbon monoxide gas from entering the interior of the vehicle. No person shall have for sale, sell or offer for sale or use on any motor vehicle any muffler that fails to comply with the specifications as required by the commissioner of public safety.”

The law does not specifically answer how loud a motorized vehicle can be, but it does say that a vehicle must have a good working muffler that prevents “excessive or unusual noise.” So any cutouts or bypasses, straight pipes or rusted out mufflers and exhaust with holes are illegal. After market mufflers, sometimes called “glass packs” or “cherry bombs,” can be an issue as they may produce “a sharp popping or crackling sound.”

Many counties and cities have local noise ordinances. A noise ordinance defines which sounds are and are not acceptable at any given time. So depending on where you live, I would check with the local authorities on their ordinances.

This law is frequently enforced and we do our best to educate the public on traffic safety and equipment violations through education and enforcement.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson – Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848 or at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us

REFERENDUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from the citizens of the state of Minnesota,” Perkins said.

However, Wendel Architects Principal Jim Wilson was also in attendance and pointed out that Minnesota residents are not just “the state,” so are people from other states like Wisconsin.

“A bulk of state revenue comes from the income and sales taxes,” Wilson pointed out, and places like the Mall of America generate taxes from people all over.

“The vast majority of income and sales tax generated in the state of Minnesota comes from the seven county metro area and corporations,” Wilson said. “So when the state offers this bread, it is a benefit to communities

that do not have the tax base that is in the metro area. Yes, we all pay sales and income taxes, but the vast majority is not generated by the citizens of Le Sueur-Henderson.”

Another point that was raised was the benefit the new buildings would have to both communities. Wagner said that LS-H is being “shopped” by parents, and it isn’t a pretty picture. The district is currently losing roughly 200 students to open enrollment out of the district, and taking in just 18. This is resulting in a loss of about \$1.4 million for the district.

FIELDHOUSE OPTION

The community will also be asked to vote on whether they will support a fieldhouse, which will actually reduce the construction cost at the new elementary addition, as they will not need to build a gymnasium.

The fieldhouse would be used as a recess area for elementary students during inclement and cold weather, but it could also host big company events or public speakers. And of course, sports tournaments that could include basketball, tennis, pickleball, volleyball and track and field.

Wagner said he was not aware of another Minnesota River Conference school with a fieldhouse. As a result, if the district has one, it could be a financial benefit if during inclement weather, the district could host events.

A second Hilltop meeting was held on Wednesday, Sept. 29, and there is one final community meeting scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 6 at 6 p.m. at Park Elementary School.

Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 2, but early voting for the referendum is now going on.

Editor's Choice

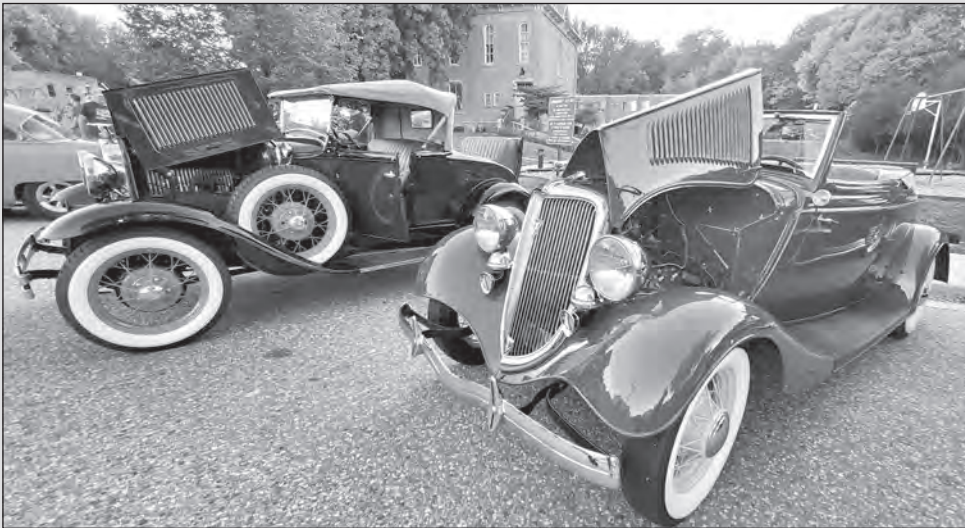


PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Editor Rachel Miller’s had a tie for favorite car of the week during the Sept. 28 Roll-in. Her favorites were the 1931 Ford Deluxe Roadster (left) and the 1934 Ford Cabriolet, both owned by Rob Ziehwein of Belle Plaine. Ziehwein found the Roadster in Mississippi six years ago, took it all apart and fixed it.



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State Tennis

LS-H junior Chloe Brandt went 1-2 at the Class A State Tennis Championship in Minneapolis last week. P. 9



Statebound!

Hailey Juarez placed seventh in the Section 2A Cross Country meet and became the first female Giants runner to make it to the state meet. P. 10



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Special Election 2021

LS-H voters turn down referendum

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Voters of the Le Sueur-Henderson School District cast a resounding “NO” on Tuesday in regards to the proposed \$50 million building referendum.

By the time the polls closed at 8 p.m. and the ink had dried, just 40 percent of voters supported the referendum, which would have built a K-3 school onto the existing LS-H Middle/High School in Le Sueur, refurbished Henderson’s Hilltop Elementary, and done deferred maintenance and expanded the CTE space at the middle/high school.

The following results are unofficial and represent just Tuesday’s in-person voting; absentee and mail-in ballots were still being processed by the time the *Independent* went to press Wednesday morning.

The referendum was the only question on the ballot in the two cities, and 31 percent of eligible voters came to the Henderson precinct to cast a ballot. A total of 415 ballots were cast out of 1,310 registered voters that encompassed the city of Henderson, along with Henderson, Arlington, Jessenland, Faxon, and Washington Lake townships.

The referendum was a tough one even among those voting in Henderson, with 216 in support, and 199 voting against.

While the referendum had a close victory in Henderson, it was met with 65 percent opposition in Le Sueur.

Voters in Ottawa, Tyrone, Sharon, Derrynane, Kasota and Kelso townships, along with the city of Le Sueur, all reported to the Le Sueur City Hall to vote on Tuesday.

A total of 1,106 ballots were cast at that location,

and a mere 391 supported the measure, while 715 voted against it.

There was even less support for the second ballot question, which asked voters whether they would support building a \$7.5 million fieldhouse, in addition to the building referendum. Between the two in-person precincts, 414 voters supported building a fieldhouse, while 1,089 voted against.

The path forward is uncertain. Although these results are preliminary as absentee and mail-in ballots still need to be counted, the final results are unlikely to change as opposition to the referendum has a 307-vote lead.

The Le Sueur-Henderson School Board will be canvassing the final results on Monday, Nov. 8, and in the

REFERENDUM
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PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Henderson voter Beth Cornish casts a vote at the Henderson Community Building on Tuesday, Nov. 2. The polling place looked a little different as the school district had to provide the voting booths, and used a couple dozen blue testing screens on tables as voting stations.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Le Sueur Mayor Shawn Kirby cuts the ribbon to officially welcome vehicle traffic to the newly reconnected Main Street on Monday, Nov. 1.

In attendance for the Main Street reconnection ribbon cutting on Monday morning were (from left) Planning Commission members Dan Ryerson, Melissa Huntington and Jack Roberts, council member Scott Schlueter, former council member Dave Johnson, Mayor Shawn Kirby, former council member John Favolise and council members Newell Krogmann and Mark Huntington.

Le Sueur’s Main Street reopens

By Rachel Miller
Editor

After roughly 40 years, Le Sueur’s Main Street is finally reconnected again.

On Monday, Nov. 1, a group of city employees and invested citizens came downtown for a ribbon cutting to officially open Main Street to vehicle traffic, with the Le Sueur Police Department making the inaugural trip.

It wasn’t more than a couple of minutes before others began turning down the road, even as the group of assembled people walked down it themselves.

Le Sueur’s Main Street was split when the existing mall was built, and in a symmetrical move, the mall’s redevelopment and city nego-

tiations are what allowed it to be reconnected once again.

Building Good Downtowns, LLC is the partner behind the Valley Green Square Mall redevelopment. Although they are financing the \$3.25 million mall redevelopment, the street reconnection is only possible because of a tradeoff between the city and the developer.

In order to reconnect and reopen Main Street, the city needed to acquire 20,000 square feet of right-of-way — no small acquisition, from Building Good Downtowns. In exchange, the city agreed to pay the developer \$250,000, reimburse \$300,000 for facade construction costs, establish a TIF district for the mall and

MAIN STREET RECONNECTION
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Prince moves to new home

By Rachel Miller
Editor

In the last four years, Prince fans have flocked to Henderson in droves, a dozen or more every week, to visit Prince Garden by the Henderson RoadHaus. But sadly, as of Wednesday, Oct. 27, Prince Garden is no more.

A dispute over the Henderson RoadHaus’ WiFi that was used to operate the garden’s security cameras ultimately culminated in the removal and dismantling of the garden last Wednesday, and moving the various memorial pieces in

and around Heart of Henderson, owned by Lisa VonLehe.

All that remains of the public garden is the large Prince mural on the side of the Henderson Healing Hub building, and the stone that once housed the names of the mural donors now notifies visitors of the new location.

Joel King, who runs the Prince Legacy Henderson Project Inc. non-profit, brought in Dan Anderson/McGraw Monuments to move both the Prince bench and statue to its new home at 501 Main St. Anderson is also the designer of the Prince bench. The monu-

mental effort took the better part of the day to pull off, but Prince is now nestled nicely in his own little space next to the store’s Prince vault, filled with Prince memorabilia crafted by local artisans.

The purple flower boxes line the east side of the building, ready for next spring’s planting. The purple mailbox containing the guestbook is on the front step, ready for visitors.

And inside the store, a special area has been carved out for Prince, his memorial bench and road sign, and the two donor plaques that helped make the entire thing possible in the first place.

People can visit Prince during store hours, or contact King to set up an appointment outside of normal store hours.

King also wanted to lay to rest the rumors that Prince’s move is only a temporary one. Indeed, King said he had thought about moving the statue to the Le Sueur Theatre that is currently undergoing renovations, but that changed once VonLehe was willing to offer her space to the music superstar.

King said Prince will remain at Heart of Henderson as long as VonLehe welcomes him.

PRINCE MOVE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ice cream, malts and shakes are just one of many draws at Toody’s Sweet Treats.





SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Halloween brings out the good, the bad and the graceful

Parker Wentzlaff, 7, turned to the dark side as he dressed up as Darth Vader for Halloween, while sister Paige, 5, twirled in the treats as a ballerina.

REFERENDUM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

upcoming weeks, will need to decide the best path forward. Superintendent Jim Wagner stressed that the proposed building referendum was “not a fancy Taj Mahal” construction, but was designed to be practical and efficient, while also taking into account the needs of learning in the 21st Century. Wagner believes two factors likely played a part in the failed referendum: 1) the loca-

tion, and 2) the price tag. The school board was previously asked to choose between two options: operating one K-12 school in Le Sueur, on the existing middle/high school site; or the proposed option to maintain Hilltop in Henderson, demolish Park Elementary and build a K-3 school onto the middle/high school. Wagner said some residents expressed to him that they would only support one school, while for others, the \$50 million price tag was a problem. “They are significant,” Wagner said of both factors.

If the price tag was the dominating factor, that could be an insurmountable problem for the school district. There is time for the school district to come back with a K-12 school referendum vote by early 2022, but at \$48 million, the tax impacts are unlikely to change very much. And since the proposed referendum only passed by 17 votes in the Henderson precinct, Wagner believes that trying to pass a K-12 school in Le Sueur would have even less support among the Henderson area voters.

“I appreciate the fact everybody came out and voted,” Wagner said. “At this point, it does not stop the district in what we have to do to do our jobs and provide what is best for our kids. We will continue doing what we can within our means and figure things out.” The *Henderson Independent* will post an update on its Facebook page when final results are tallied, and an update will be in next week’s paper, once the district has canvassed the results.

PRINCE MOVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The move couldn’t have come at a better time as well, as just

days later, cold temperatures started moving in. “He is warm and cozy, and I think it is a beautiful spot, and Lisa is a wonderful person and

we work really well together,” King said. While it remains to be seen if the move will impact the flow of people to town, five

people did find their way to Heart of Henderson on Saturday, including a couple from Stockton, California. Wherever Prince goes, his beloved Purple Family are never far behind.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Darrin Grapentine of Henderson and Dan Anderson with McGraw Monuments prepare to move the Prince memorial bench on Wednesday, Oct. 27. It took the better part of the day to dig up and safely move the bench, street sign and statue to Heart of Henderson.

LS-H November Students of the Month



6th grade:
Gabe Roby

Gabe is an outstanding student and classmate. He is respectful to others and excels at everything he does. Gabe has a positive attitude, works hard and stays on task in class and is a great role model for others.



7th grade:
Jack Thelemann

Jack is an active participant in class. He asks good questions and provides thoughtful answers during discussion. Jack has a great sense of humor and brings a positive attitude to class every day. He always tries his best in everything he does.



8th grade:
D'Lisa Gonzalez

D'Lisa is very respectful and fun to have in class. She is always willing to participate and help others. D'Lisa is a true leader and always sets a good example for others. She works hard and takes pride in everything she does.



9th grade:
Koreyann Straub

Koreyann always asks great questions during class that pushes everyone to delve deeper into other theories and possibilities to solve problems. She works hard to understand the content in class. Koreyann is an enthusiastic learner and gets her work done. She is positive and fun to have in class!



10th grade:
Kyline Solomon

Kyline is responsible and a hard worker and always does quality work. Even after being gone for over a week, Kyline had her work complete and ready to turn in when she got back. She is willing to put in extra time when she doesn't understand something and is always ready to participate.



11th grade:
Phillip Beseke

Phillip has really done a nice job in Economics so far this semester. He is more than willing to volunteer his answer or opinion in group discussions and he turns in thoughtful answers in his homework assignments. Phillip is respectful and helpful. He pitches in without being asked.



12th grade:
David Gupton

David is an outstanding young man in and out of school. He is well respected by students and staff. David is a positive role model and is very self-motivated and respectful. He is courteous, does excellent work, and provides thoughtful answers during class discussions.

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Centrally located for weather diversification near Glencoe, Shakopee, Mankato and New Ulm west of St. Peter, MN between 5 and 99 at County Rd 13. Bidder drive-by welcome. Green, contour, legacy, joint venture bids accepted. Bidder verify large equipment sprayer field access driveways and neighboring parcels. Watch for more advertising regarding these upcoming public land auctions and bidder list contacts. See Farmers National Company for additional information.
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RIDGEVIEW

NEW HOURS
BEGIN
NOV. 1

NEW URGENT CARE HOURS AT THREE RIDGEVIEW LOCATIONS

Changes begin Nov. 1, 2021, in Arlington,
Chaska and Le Sueur.

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9 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.
- + **Le Sueur Campus:**
Noon to 8 p.m., seven days a week.*
- + **Two Twelve Medical Center, Chaska:**
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Ridgeview will continue to provide 24/7/365 emergency care at Arlington, Two Twelve Medical Center in Chaska, Le Sueur and Waconia emergency departments.

*Closed holidays

RidgeviewMedical.org

Ladies Night Out

The event brought in 105 toys and \$395 for the Santa’s Helpers of Sibley County program. P. 4

Street closure

Le Sueur’s newly-reopened Main Street will be closed for the first time for a special event on Saturday. P. 4

State Cross Country

LS-H senior Hailey Juarez wrapped up a successful career at the state meet on Saturday. P. 9



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LS-H to perform SHREK!

By Rachel Miller Editor

Daring adventure, a damsel in distress, an unlikely hero and his faithful donkey friend.....Le Sueur-Henderson theatre students will take you on a thrilling and hilarious adventure when they bring “Shrek” to the stage on Nov. 19-20.

Le Sueur-Henderson senior Keegan Straub has been cast as Shrek, a gruff and misunderstood ogre who just wants to be left alone, but finds himself on a mission from King Farquaad to rescue Princess Fiona from her dragon-guarded tower.

Along the way, Shrek meets Donkey, played by Austin Kleinschmidt, who manages to break through Shrek’s gruff exterior with his boundless optimism and hilarious punch lines.

As Shrek tells Donkey, “ogres are like onions, they have layers.” One aspect Straub really loves is Shrek’s transformation from someone who hates the world to someone who embraces it, and his fellow fairy tale creatures.

Along those same lines, Princess Fiona (played by Alexa Olson) is forced to confront her own inner dragons and embrace her true identity. But her insecurities don’t stop her from steadfastly pursuing her dreams.

As Olson described Fiona, “she is very headstrong and resilient, and she knows

what she wants and is not afraid.” After a year of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Director Jennifer Weick said this year’s cast is very excited to be back in front of a live audience, and without restrictions.

This year’s production showcases a lot of experienced talent, as

SHREK

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Austin Kleinschmidt, playing Lord Farquaad, sings “The Ballad of Farquaad.”



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

EMR students Caroline Tuck and Keegan Straub see what it is like riding inside the medical helicopter, while flight paramedic Keith Witte shows students the stretcher that just fits in the middle of the ‘copter. Taller patients may have to bend their knees to fit, because as White put it, “we are built for speed, not comfort.”

Making every second count EMR students visited by air ambulance

By Rachel Miller Editor

Last Thursday, Le Sueur-Henderson students enrolled in the district’s Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) class received a special, in-person visit from a North Air Care medical helicopter, which landed on the school’s football field.

The visit was a real eye-opener for the 15 students taking Hovick’s course. North Memorial Flight Paramedic Rob Pearson educated students about the medical helicopter’s role in patient care while the helicopter was in-flight.

From a call coming in to the helicopter taking off is approximately seven minutes during the day, and 10 minutes at night. During this time is when helicopter staff are calculating fly time and checking the weather

not only in their area, but where they are responding to and where they will be transporting a patient.

For example, last Thursday, North Memorial Air Care staff checked the weather in Faribault (takeoff) and Le Sueur (where going). The helicopter averages 160 miles per hour, so it took roughly 15 minutes for the helicopter to arrive after departing.

Since it can take 20 or more minutes for a helicopter response, ambulance and paramedic response is still critical. In the interim, ambulance staff on the ground are still expected to stop external bleeding, secure any fractures, administer a sedative or narcotics for pain, if possible, and use extra tape to secure the patient for flight.

The medical ambulance is set up for speed, not comfort. There are two seats in the cockpit, and two seats in back, with just enough

room for a stretcher between the two medical personnel. Although there is space for the stretcher, a tall patient may need to bend their knees during flight.

Due to the small space in back, medical personnel must meet a weight limit to staff the ‘copter, and are weighed every couple of months. Keeping their weight down allows them to transport a patient up to 400 pounds.

However, Pearson said that the pilot, flight paramedic and flight nurse all have a say in whether the helicopter flies. If any one of the three do not feel safe flying, the helicopter stays grounded.

EMR CLASS

LS-H’s EMR class is in its second year, and the skills students are

EMR CLASS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

What next? School board mulls next steps for referendum

Six days after Le Sueur-Henderson residents soundly rejected a referendum that would have provided K-3 elementary school students with a new building, and addressed educational and deferred maintenance needs at Hilltop and the Middle/High School, members of the LS-H School Board began trying to piece together what another referendum request would look like.

The board canvassed the election results, which were as follows:

689 votes in support of the building referendum, vs. 965 votes against

482 votes in support of building a fieldhouse, vs. 1,153 against

In total, the election had a 36% voter turnout, with 1,654 residents casting a ballot, out of

4,598 registered voters.

With the failed referendum, the board now needs to see if they can find a more palatable option. Doing nothing is not really an option, as Park Elementary School has multiple

problems, including boilers that have failed multiple times in recent years, a leaking roof which also contains asbestos, and water issues that have impacted both the gymnasium floor and the kindergarten/pre-

school wing.

In the spring of 2019, a cracked pipe in the outside wall of the northwest corner of the gym caused high moisture issues, which necessitated a change in the school day and

activities that would normally have involved the gym and auditorium.

The district ran floor fans and dehumidifiers to try and lower the moisture level, but in the meantime half of the gym

had to be closed down as the floor was bowing.

Then on Christmas Day, 2020, the Le Sueur Fire Department was called to the school after a sprinkler head broke and sent water cascading down into the kindergarten/preschool wing. Repairs cost more than \$21,000.

As for the boiler failures, the school’s two boilers are not only decades past their life



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

School board members Steve Cross, Brian Sorenson, Joe Roby, Kelsey Schwartz, Chair Brigid Tuck, Superintendent Jim Wagner and board member Matt Hathaway raise their hands as they swear to uphold the Constitution and faithfully carry out the duties of the canvassing board.



SHREK
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

all four leads (Straub, Kleinschmidt, Olson and Joe Fixsen as King Farquaad) have been in middle or high school musicals.

Weick said she has wanted to produce “Shrek” for a long time, and as it turned out, it was the perfect fit for the cast that auditioned.

“I just love the humor in it and the characters are hilarious,” Weick said. “Austin, our Donkey, said, ‘You guys do such a good job of putting the right people in the right parts.’ We said, ‘No, the kids we choose rise to the challenge of being those characters and bringing them to life.’ They are each defined in their own way, but yet their own personalities shine

“You can be handed any character and run away with it and be that character, embrace it and bring that character to life.”

—Keegan Straub, on the impact theatre has had in his life

“They have a great bond with one another. I really think that helps them do well on stage,” Weick said.

Part of that bond is the freedom to be expressive with-

through.” Weick said the strength of this year’s cast lies in its flexibility. A few students, like Angel Calloway, Ian and Izak Nelson, Adrianna Ramirez and Ariel Ingles, are playing multiple roles. A few cast members dropped out early on, and Weick said some students wasted no time volunteering to pick up a part.

out fear of being criticized or made fun of.

“They are kids from all different walks of life, but they come in here and it is like you are one, and no one looks at anybody and judges them,” Weick said. “They have the freedom to let loose and they do, and we laugh with them.”

Olson shared Weick’s sentiments, and said that the theatre “has always been this judgment-free zone, and we are able to express ourselves in ways we want to.”

Although she is confident on stage as Princess Fiona, she was not always that

way. Olson’s love of musicals started as a young child, when her mother would play “Les Miserables” in the car. Olson was too scared to audition in sixth grade, but managed to

overcome those fears the following year, when she auditioned and landed a role as a fairy in “Peter Pan.”

Her co-lead Straub also loved watching plays, singing and acting from a young age.

“My favorite part of theatre is you can be handed any character and run away with it

and be that character, embrace it and bring that character to life,” Straub said. “I have always loved to be able to do that, to go from being me to someone else.”

Le Sueur-Henderson students will perform three shows over two days. Opening night is Friday, Nov. 19 at 7 p.m.,

and then on Saturday, Nov. 20, there will be a 2 p.m. matinee and 7 p.m. closing show. Tickets can be purchased from any cast member, or at the school office. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$4 for kids, and children 5 and younger are free if they are sitting on a lap. Activity passes will be honored.



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER

The cast of Shrek will perform three shows, an opening evening show on Friday, Nov. 19 at 7 p.m., and a 2 p.m. matinee and 7 p.m. show on Saturday, Nov. 20.



Being in the hero business can be exhausting, especially if you have to flee and dodge a dragon hell bent on keeping you prisoner in her tower. Austin Kleinschmidt, playing Donkey, leaped to safety as he and Shrek (Keegan Straub, not pictured) raced to rescue Princess Fiona (right), played by Alexa Olson.

The Cast and Crew of “Shrek”

CAST

Shrek: Keegan Straub
Donkey: Austin Kleinschmidt
Princess Fiona: Alexa Olson
Lord Farquaad: Joe Fixsen
Young Fiona: Elena Thelemann
Teen Fiona: Muriel Hilgers
Little Shrek: Kortland Amela
Gingy: Brandy Wolf
Peter Pan, Pied Piper: Kaylee Smykalski
Fairy Godmother, Queen Lillian: Lauren Miller
Baby Bear, Sugar Plum Fairy: Angel Calloway
Big Bad Wolf, King Harold: Luke Grapentine
Papa Ogre, Little Pig, Bishop: Ian Nelson
Thelonious, Little Pig: Izak Nelson
Mama Bear: Sami Pollack
Rat: Grace Hardel
Pinocchio: Ariel Ingles
Humpty Dumpty, Duckling: Nicole Johnson
Little Pig: Sean Kulzer

Dragon, Mama Ogre: Adrianna Ramirez
Dragon, Witch, Greeter: Janorra Childress
White Rabbit, Performer: Johnna Maxwell
Happy Villager: Jemma Maxwell
Happy Villager: Narriah Childress
Happy Villager: Kiandra Straub

ENSEMBLES

Guards: Angel Calloway, Izak Nelson, Ian Nelson, Adrianna Ramirez and Kaylee Smykalski
Knights: Angel Calloway, Ariel Ingles and Ian Nelson
Rats: Grace Hardel, Sami Pollack
Three Blind Mice: Angel Calloway, Brandy Wolf
Duloc Dancers: Adrianna Ramirez, Angel Calloway, Ariel Ingles, Ian Nelson, Izak Nelson, Johnna Maxwell, Kaylee Smykalski, Lauren Miller, Luke Grapentine, Nicole Johnson, Sami Pollack and Sean Kulzer

SCHOOL BOARD
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

expectancy, but undersized for the current load. If just one boiler were to fail to the point it could no longer be repaired, the replacement cost would eat up the district’s fund balance.

Those are just some of the facilities maintenance issues that Buildings and Grounds Supervisor Todd Vrklan has to contend with.

Compounding the issue is that the cost of renovating Park Elementary School exceeds 60 percent of the cost of new construction, which makes it highly unlikely that the Minnesota Department of Education would grant approval of a renovation.

Monday’s preliminary discussions focused on the timing of a new referendum, and what it could potentially look like. Although the board previously talked about another vote in February 2022, Gary Benson, the director of project planning and development for Kraus-Anderson Construction, stated that would be a rush.

Benson pointed out the dis-

trict would need to submit the referendum proposal to MDE 90 days before the election for the Review and Comment, and the district would need to be submitting that this week.

Since the state is redistricting next year, April and May elections are not an option, which would make the August primary the next option for the school district.

Board member Joe Roby raised the issue that the board had previously discussed a quick turnaround for a February 2022 election that would put the one-building option at the Middle/High School site. This option would close both Hilltop and Park elementary schools and send all students to a single building in Le Sueur.

Roby cautioned that if the district backed away from the single building option, after publicizing it as a viable fallback, it could affect community confidence in the board.

School Board Chair Brigid Tuck, however, expressed concerns about the price point of the one-building option. At \$48 million, the district would only save \$2 million over the failed

two-school referendum. Tuck added that she thought a \$38 million price point would pass.

Tuck said they need to talk with taxpayers about the cost and feasibility of renovating Park. Even if they could get approval and put \$20 million into fixing the school, it would come with tradeoffs and sacrifices.

“People need to be able to see real numbers on what it means to renovate Park, and what is the realistic use of the building,” Tuck said.

More discussions will be needed, and the board talked about discussing the issue further at its upcoming work session on Monday, Nov. 15, at the media center in the high school.

ENROLLMENT ON THE RISE

In a piece of good news, the district shared that enrollment is up for the second month in a row. After starting the year with 919 students, enrollment jumped to 927 in October, and most recently, 943 in November.

Although there were a few grades that dropped or gained 1-3 students, the high school saw a big jump.

In an ironic twist, both 9th and 10th grade increased by their grade number. The freshman class added nine students, going from 81 to 90 enrollment, while the sophomore class increased from 80 to 90 students.

COVID CASES

In other news, Superinten-

dent Jim Wagner shared that new COVID-19 cases are on the rise, with eight students testing positive for the disease this week, along with two staff members, one at Park Elementary and one at Hilltop.

“We can’t let our guard down at this point for the sake of safety and taking care of people,” Wagner said. “It is real, people are getting sick, so we have to be respectful of that and make sure we are as safe as possible.”

Along the same lines, Wagner said he wanted to pursue hiring a second registered nurse, using COVID funding.

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The board approved \$740 in grants and donations, which in-

cluded:

- \$500 from the Le Sueur Rotary Club for the 7 Mindsets curriculum and professional development;
- \$200 from the Le Sueur Rotary Club for the Literacy in the Community program; and
- \$40 from Brian and Kristan Pfarr to sponsor a student for the snack cart.

NEW HIRES

The board approved three new hires on Monday. They include:

- Sandra Hartmann as a long-term second-grade substitute teacher;
- Luke Wilson as the new wrestling coach; and
- Roma Pokibro as the new middle school girls basketball coach.

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De 9:30 – 11:30 am

En el Green Isle Community Room
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ARLINGTON

El jueves 18 de noviembre del 2021

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En el Arlington Community Center
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COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 cases are up, and deaths increased 80 percent in the past week. P. 4

Shrek opens Friday

Le Sueur-Henderson theatre students will be putting on three performances of Shrek this weekend. P. 7



Titans Swimming

Titans make history at Section 1A meet with best team finish and Ella Schmiesing advancing to state. P. 8



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Le Sueur-Henderson School Board

One school district, one school

LS-H is full steam ahead to put one building to the test

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Le Sueur-Henderson voters were warned: if the referendum that would demolish and build a new K-3 school and refurbish Hilltop Elementary fails, the school district will move ahead and put a single PreK-12th grade building in Le Sueur to the vote.

On Monday, the board made good on that promise, as they were all in support of moving forward with a new referendum to demolish Le Sueur's Park Elementary School, and construct a brand new elementary school onto the existing Middle/High School in Le Sueur.

The cost of the new referendum is not yet known, but will be lower than the \$50 million referendum that failed on Nov. 2. Not refurbishing Hilltop will lower the cost, and the district is mulling over whether to remove the high school's Career and Technical Education expansion from the project and instead put that as a separate second question, similar to the fieldhouse option the last time around.

If the referendum passes, Hilltop Elementary students will be bussed to Le Sueur when construction of the new school is complete, and Hilltop will be empty for either new development or possibly another school use.

One option Superintendent Jim Wagner raised was using Hilltop as an Alternative Learning Center. Right now, Wagner said other area school districts are sending their students to Mankato, and Le Sueur-Henderson could potentially gain those students and the state aid that follows them.

As an added bonus, Wagner said the existing setup (open school layout) is optimal for an Alternative Learning Center, and the district could set it up without additional spending.

"We are trying to provide everything for all of our students, and right now we are not," Wagner said. "Whether we like it or not, the model we have across the state and across the country accommodates 85-90 percent of the student body. Some kids don't learn in a square room, and if we want to provide service to all of our kids, that gives us the chance to

do so."

Tuck questioned whether residents would still think that is wasting money on Hilltop, to which Wagner replied, "Are those kids a waste of money? They deserve to have that."

Replacing Park Elementary School is something the school district desperately needs. The building, which was built in the 1930s and expanded in the 50s, has aging equipment that makes learning difficult, from failing boilers to an outdated electrical load, a needed roof replacement, and continual water damage to the gym floor.

The boilers are undersized for the school, and board member Gretchen Rehm shared how her daughter had to take the MCA tests while wearing a winter jacket due to how cold her classroom was.

"How do you expect her to do well on her MCAs, which is going against another student in the state in a normal classroom that is a normal temperature,"

WATER CONCERNS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

The LS-H School Board on Monday decided to move forward with a one-building referendum. Above, Kraus-Anderson Senior Project Manager Jason Peterson and Director of Project Planning and Development Gary Benson were present to gather information and offer insight. School board member Brian Sorenson also shared how he was disappointed with how the vote went in Henderson and did not see any viable way to save Hilltop.

VETERANS DAY 2021

Lessons from the veterans

By Beth Cornish
Independent staff

On Veterans Day this year, local schools provided fanfare and thanks to our veterans. The day began school at the Le Sueur-Henderson Middle School/High School when the members of the Le Sueur American Legion Post 55 presented the colors, before joining Le Sueur VFW Post 4297 and the Sibley American Legion Post 74 in the audience.

The LS-H Concert Choir, under the direction of Zachary Kubasta, performed an outstanding a cappella rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, then boarded a bus to perform at Park Elementary.

The LS-H Concert Band performed the Armed Forces Salute, a medley of the songs for each of the five branches of our military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marines before Dean of Students Jeff Christ read a list of LS-H alumni currently serving our country, a reminder of the sterling example of honor, patriotism and sacrifice made by those close to home. Keegan Straub finished off the program with a reading of the poem "In Flanders Field."

Later that morning, young students at Hilltop shared a program of patriotic music and messages, with the LS-H



PHOTO BY BETH CORNISH

From the left, Madalynn Seaver, Adrian Villanueva, Robert Riemann and Gavin Renstrom each read about patriotism during the Veterans Day program at Hilltop Elementary in Henderson.

Concert Choir providing another stirring rendition of the national anthem. Three of the veterans demonstrated the proper way to fold the American flag before a short presentation explained how each part of the flag has meaning.

The 13 stripes represent the original 13 colonies at the time of the Revolutionary War; the blue field is for the sky above our land; the 50 white stars are

for each state in the union; the red is for heart and the white is for purity. As the veterans prepared to leave, one of the classes filed back in to present a hand-written/drawn note of appreciation for each veteran.

Last but not least, the Minnesota New Country School in Henderson hosted another program in the afternoon.

SPEAKER AND HIS
MESSAGE

Commander Shannon Frost introduced Sam Gore, a two-tour Iraqi War veteran, who shared with the assembly at LS-H MS/HH and again at MNCS how and why he decided to join the Army. He was a junior in high school when 9/11 occurred and it

VETERANS DAY
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Henderson City Council

City considers new water treatment plant

By Beth Cornish
Independent staff

Surprisingly, after the number of complaints of discolored and smelly water around town, only half a dozen residents attended the special city council meeting on Monday, Nov. 15, to hear the results of the pilot water study.

Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc. performed a study of Henderson's water using their custom-built portable water plant over a two-week period earlier this fall. There is a some good news as no contaminants such as radon or E. coli were found in they city's water.

The EPA standard is 0.30 mg/L for iron and 0.05 mg/L for manganese. Both of these elements are considered nuisance or aesthetic issues as iron and manganese don't cause any health issues, but they can result in a metallic taste, an orange or brown color, staining and clogging of fixtures.

TESTING PROCESS

The city's water supply was sampled prior to treatment and then run through a number of scenarios using chemicals, aeration, detention and filtration. The raw water at both wells exceeded the recommended standard for iron with an average of 1.97 mg/L at Well 1 (more

than six times the standard) and 1.24 (more than twice the recommendation) at Well 2. Raw water at Well 1 was at the EPA standard for manganese of 0.05, but Well 2 had an average reading of 0.15, three times the recommended amount.

The first test step added chlorine to the water, then aeration was used to aid in the removal process. Step three was to hold the samples and the final step was filtration using a choice of substrates to trap the solids created from the chemical process.

TEST RESULTS

The results after testing showed a great improvement. Water treated with chlorine and filtered with greensand came in at an average of 0.049 mg/L for iron (six times less than the standard) and 0.046 with the addition of aeration. Manganese levels improved to 0.016 for greensand and 0.015

CITY COUNCIL
CONTINUED ON PAGE 6





Chuck Fraundienst gives direction to two other Le Sueur veterans during the flag folding demonstration at Hilltop.



Left: Sam Gore, a two-tour veteran, spoke to youngsters at the Le Sueur-Henderson Middle School/High School on Nov. 11 as part of the Veterans Day program. Right: Mary Ann Peck, who participated in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service program during WWII, shared her path to the U. S. Navy with the group at the Minnesota New Country School.

VETERANS DAY
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

made a huge impact on his life choices. After trying college, he realized he was not mature enough to handle college and not yet ready to make a long-term commitment to a career, so he approached an Army recruiter and decided to enlist.

Gore described the roller coaster ride of beginning training in warm weather in Oklahoma then running miles in the rain and mud as the season turned, then later moving to Kentucky where the reality of imminent deployment began to sink into the new recruits' consciousnesses. They arrived in Iraq realizing that basic training was just that, basic, and they had a lot to learn.

One of the most poignant memories Gore shared was of the day he was supposed to drive the Humvee on patrol, but when he reported for duty, his name was not on the schedule. He returned to quarters to enjoy his unexpected time off, only to learn later that the vehicle had a close call. They encountered an IED while on patrol and a piece of metal bounced off the armor plating between the two portions of the windshield, rebounded off the driver's helmet, bounced off the glasses of the passenger behind the driver, then fell in the passenger's lap. The driver "got his bell rung" but suffered no long-term damage while the passenger sustained only a small cut on his nose. The freaky part is that at 6'7" Gore would have taken that shrapnel not in the helmet, but right in the face.

Another scary situation happened one night when a group consisting of six Americans and four Iraqis were walking a patrol through a town where

you were not allowed to have a Humvee on the road after dark. The situation was extra tense because they did not have an interpreter that evening, so they were communicating using hand signals.

Gore and his lieutenant were on the street when they realized they were under fire from a building near the street. They had no idea where the bullets were coming from, but they took off running for cover, while hollering for another squad member to open fire on the second floor windows.

At that moment Gore realized he was very grateful for suppressive fire because the gunman stopped shooting at them and ran away. Gore got on the radio and called for Bradley tank support to come extract them from the town. It was extremely sobering later to realize that someone had actually been aiming a gun directly at him.

He and his fellow soldiers spent many nights sleeping in the mud or on a cot in a tent aerated by shrapnel or in a truck, living without showers and eating MREs for weeks at a time. It was miserable, but they learned to tough things out and move on to the next thing with their heads held high, knowing that they survived a situation that many people would not have been able to handle.

Maybe he had an angel on his shoulder during his tours, but he came home with all his parts intact, although he suffered permanent damage to his left shoulder and his knees, which he credits to the time spent carrying 70-plus pounds of gear.

He remembers his fallen comrades every day and considers himself lucky to make it home alive. He is now a financial advisor, volunteer as-

sistant fire chief, and married with two young sons. Although most of his message was very somber, he reiterated at the end how proud he was to serve.

After Gore spoke at MNCS he remained at the microphone for a question and answer section. Asked by the *Independent*, "If you knew then, what you knew now, would you still have volunteered?" He replied, "Absolutely. You get caught up in the patriotic side of things and that's why you enlist... Once the bullets start flying, it's more about the guys you are with and the bonds that you form. That's why I would go back."

The other veterans in attendance wrapped up the afternoon by introducing themselves and sharing a little personal information. The one individual who really stood out was Mary Ann Peck. She explained how she joined the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service program after President Roosevelt opened naval enlistment to women in order to free up sailors performing desk jobs to join the fighting overseas. Peck had been longing to enlist and even though she had to get her parents permission to go, she finally talked them around.

She loved every minute of her service and would sign up to go again. Her biggest regret was that during most of her service, the women were housed in hotel rooms so she didn't get the full barracks experience. On her final assignment they were housed in a dormitory so she finally got to sleep in bunk beds.

Editor's note: Peck turned 99 on Nov. 14 and is still going strong. She credits the Silver Sneakers exercise program for her longevity.

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Shrek debuts Friday

Le Sueur-Henderson students will open its fall musical, *Shrek*, this Friday night in the LS-H Middle/High School auditorium, 901 Ferry St., Le Sueur

Students will be putting on three performances: Friday, Nov. 19 at 7 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 20 at 2 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$4 for children, and children 5 and younger are free if they are sitting on a lap. Activity passes will be honored.



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER



Top: The four leads of *Shrek* are: Joe Fixsen as Lord Farquaad, Alexa Olson as Princess Fiona, Keegan Straub as Shrek and Austin Kleinschmidt as Donkey.

Above: LS-H drew on elementary, middle and high school talent to portray Princess Fiona as she grew from a young girl to adult. The roles include (left) Elena Thelemann as Young Fiona, (right) Muriel Hilgers as Teen Fiona and (center) Alexa Olson as Princess Fiona.

Right: Joe Fixsen, playing Lord Farquaad, sings "The Ballad of Farquaad."



REFERENDUM
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Rehm asked. "She is thinking about being cold while taking her state MCA."

Henderson board members Brian Sorenson and Rehm also echoed their frustrations that the referendum only passed among Henderson voters by a 17-vote margin.

"I expected more out of Henderson," Sorenson said. "But at this point something needs to get done, and as much as I'd love to see an elementary remain in Henderson, it just doesn't seem like it's viable anymore."

Board member Joe Roby, who lives in Le Sueur, said at least 15 people have told him the price tag wasn't the issue, but rather concern over being efficient with resources.

Board Chair Brigid Tuck aired that some people feel like the school district has not kept up with Park, and question why they should approve a new building as a result of the alleged neglect.

Except repairs on a school are much larger than a private

citizen's, and the board cannot just go ahead and do larger projects, unless they have the money in reserves. For example, a private citizen can go ahead and hire a contractor to do work like repairing/replacing a roof.

On the other hand, Park Elementary's roof is currently leaking into the gym, and since it contains asbestos, the replacement and mitigation costs are estimated to cost \$5-10 million. The amount is simply too large for the school district to cover without a referendum.

Tuck also shared an Aug. 3, 2018 article by MREA that addressed Long Term Facility Maintenance spending in Minnesota. An additional \$214-299 per pupil was allocated for LTFM Revenue.

According to the article, "Prior to this funding, the largest 25 districts covering half of the student body are able to spend \$2.79 per square foot on deferred maintenance while the other 314 districts with the other half of the Minnesota public schools' student body only spend an average

of \$0.58 per square foot."

"A lot of the general public just doesn't understand that we can't just go to the bank and borrow money like we do for our homes," Rehm said. "And then we don't bring in enough money on revenues to build that Long Term Facility Maintenance. When we go for these bonds, we are trying to fill that bucket of money for future repairs. We do [take care of our buildings], but we have never been able to fill that bucket."

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781 Main Street, Henderson, MN

The Henderson Outpost is hosting a variety of events in November and December! Stop by and enjoy a FREE glass of wine while you shop for holiday gifts!

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Ladies Night is back! Stop by, pick up gifts of jewelry, home décor and beauty products, and enjoy free wine.

Thursday, Dec. 16 6 – 8 p.m.
Guys Night is here! Pick up gifts for the special ladies in your life (gift cards too!), and enjoy some craft beer and cocktails.

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Absentee ballots

Ballots are now available for the Aug. 9 primary election P. 4

Weather

Get ready for more hot weather ahead. P. 7



Legion baseball

The Le Sueur-Henderson Giants smothered Cleveland before heading into a tough weekend tournament P. 7-8



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Vote Yes

Committee ramps up final referendum efforts



Erin Timmers



Christa Luna

By Rachel Miller
Editor

The Le Sueur-Henderson School District is just a few weeks away from a second and final vote on a school building referendum, which will chart the future of Le Sueur-Henderson Schools.

Should the vote pass, Le Sueur-Henderson will pursue a one-campus option for K-12 students at the Middle/High School site, and transition the Hilltop Elementary School site into an Adult Learning Center.

If the vote fails, there will not be another chance for

REFERENDUM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The referendum

The Le Sueur-Henderson School District is going to the voters with three questions on the Tuesday, Aug. 9 ballot.

The first and primary question is whether voters will support spending up to \$39.9 million to build a new K-5 school onto the Middle/High School site, including two gyms. Park Elementary School would be closed, and Hilltop Elementary School would be transitioned to an Adult Learning Center (no cost, can be used as-is). New construction is estimated to cost \$26.5 million, site improvements \$3 million, Park demolishing \$2.1 million, and another \$8.25 million is needed for fees, permits, testing, contin-

gency fund and bonding.

The school is also asking people to vote on two other questions, which can only be passed if the first question is approved.

Question 2 asks voters whether they will support spending \$6.14 million on deferred maintenance at the Middle/High School site.

The third question is whether the district should spend \$5.65 million for a third gym space that will allow recess and gym classes to be held simultaneously, and includes \$2.4 million to upgrade and expand Career and Tech Ed. Programming.

The referendum has received a positive review from the Minnesota Department of Education.



Building a better future

Editor's Note: This is the first article in a series the Henderson Independent has been working on regarding the need for skilled trade labor in our area and the region. Keep an eye on future issues of the Indy as we explore what businesses are seeing, what opportunities are out there, and how local schools are trying to bridge the gap. All articles in the series will be marked with the above "Trade Power" logo.

By Rachel Miller
Editor

America and Minnesota run on trade labor. From the motorized vehicle or public transport that gets you from Point A to Point B, the HVAC system that heats and cools your home, the electrician that keeps the lights on and the plumber who keeps your septic running smoothly, many of the daily activities we all take for granted would not be

possible without a tradesman or woman.

According to the Associated General Contractors of America 2021 Workforce Survey Results for Minnesota, 81% of responding businesses had unfilled hourly positions as of June 30, 2021, and 27% had more than 10 open positions. Among salaried positions, 57% reported unfilled positions.

project managers/supervisors among the salaried jobs; and carpenters, laborers, mechanics, truck drivers, and equipment operators-cranes, heavy equipment among hourly positions.

Project Build MN is a non-profit primarily serving the 13-county metro area, but Executive Director Joy DesMarais-Lanz has done virtual presenta-

“EMPLOYERS ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN THEIR COMPANY.”

- JOY DESMARAIIS-LANZ

- PROJECT BUILD MN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Of the companies with open positions, 93% said they were having a hard time filling hourly craft positions, and 89% had trouble filling salaried positions.

The most difficult to fill positions included estimating personnel and

tions all over the state.

Project Build MN's mission is to bring Minnesota's young people into construction careers. One way they do that is through the Explorers Post program

TRADE POWER
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

93%

*Businesses reporting open craft positions

63%

*Businesses reporting open salary positions

70%

*Businesses who increased pay rates

43%

*Businesses providing incentives/bonuses for craft/salaried personnel

Mayo Clinic Health System offering sports physicals for student-athletes

Mayo Clinic Health System will host several sports physical clinics across southwest Minnesota.

These clinics are for student-athletes entering grades 7-12 in the 2022-2023 school year. The physicals provided at these clinics fulfill Minnesota State High School League

sports requirements.

Sports physical clinics will be held at these Southwest Minnesota locations:

• New Prague

This clinic will be held July 26 from 4:45 to 6:45 p.m. at Mayo Clinic Health System, 212 10th Ave. NE, in New Prague.

Call Mayo Clinic Health System at 952-758-4461 for

an appointment.

These sports physical clinics are open to all, including those who are not Mayo Clinic Health System patients. A parent or guardian must accompany those under 18. Athletes who wear corrective lenses must wear them during their examination. The physical costs \$20, which is payable by cash or check.

The sports physicals provided at this event are not intended to replace care or treatment from a primary care provider.

If student athletes have an underlying medical condition or concerns about issues that restrict participation in sports, they're encouraged to schedule an appointment with their primary care provider.

RECYCLING UPDATE

The Henderson Feathers group asks that people continue to collect their plastic bags for a future recycling effort but to keep the bags at home for now. The required amount of plastic to finish the current project has already been collected and the bins have been removed temporarily from

the previous collection spots at Wagar's, MNCS and the Library. If you have a group that would like to do one of these projects, please contact Beth Cornish at the Henderson Independent, 507-248-3223 for more information. Stay tuned for the next project.

REFERENDUM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

years and the district will have to figure out how to put a band-aid on Park Elementary School with its failing boilers and old and outdated systems. LS-H Superintendent Jim Wagner has said that if this referendum does not pass, he will not go out for another one for at least four years.

The Vote Yes Committee is obviously hoping the latter does not happen, as Committee member Erin Timmers wants her two young children to be able to attend school locally.

One of the biggest questions they get is, "Why should we build a new school if the district could not take care of Park?"

Prior to 2014, districts outside of the metro area had very little access to maintenance dollars. Metro schools were able to participate in the Alt Finance program and as a result were able to spend almost 5x more on deferred maintenance (\$2.79/square foot compared to 58 cents).

In 2014, all schools in Minnesota began to receive Long Term Facility Maintenance dollars, which for LS-H is around \$350,000 a year. Unfortunately, that is a drop in the bucket when compared to the total improvements necessary at Park alone, which number in the millions.

Furthermore, fellow Vote Yes Committee member Christa Luna said a "No" vote does not mean there will not still be a tax impact. If the district continues to lose enrollment, the amount of state funding will continue to drop, which will shift a larger portion of the school budget onto the taxpayers.

Luna can see a number of positives for building a new school. One of which is reducing utility and transportation

costs, and putting that money back into educating children. She compared Park to an old car that needs more and more fixes to stay running.

"It is time to trade in that car and get a new school and be proud of what we can offer our children," Luna said. "We should be able to offer a safe and healthy place for children to learn, and it is so hard with so many inconsistencies."

Luna also sees a new building as a way to draw in young families to the area.

"To keep the towns thriving, we need to attract the young families with children, and to do that we need a facility that is safe and healthy," Luna said.

Whether people want to admit it or not, there is a lot of school competition in the area.

"Open enrollment is an attractive thing to families where they can pick and choose what is best for them," Timmers said, adding that her family is going to be in a critical decision making time soon as her kids prepare to start school.

"Without building a new school, I don't know if we can get Park where it needs to be long-term," Timmers added.

WHAT ABOUT HILLTOP? Regardless of whether the vote passes or fails, Hilltop Elementary School in Henderson will be closing after the 2022-23 school year.

A recent contractor study found the soil surrounding Hilltop to be incompatible with a major expansion, and Hilltop in its current form is too small to house all the elementary school students.

However, the plan is to repurpose Hilltop as an Adult Learning Center. This can be done with the current school setup, and does not require additional funding.

The move will likely be a revenue generator for the district as students from neighboring districts may open enrollment into LS-H.

TRADE POWER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that is held during the school year. One Saturday a month is set aside to explore a trade career, such as concrete, electrical, landscaping, lumber, etc.

DesMarais-Lanz said three teens who went through Explorers Post in the past year were able to narrow their trade focus.

"There is an abundance of opportunity, especially entry level," DesMarais-Lanz said.

Many companies just require a high school diploma or GED, and may even pay for any additional schooling in exchange for a work commitment.

"If you show you are willing to work hard and learn and have a great attitude, those skills in trades will take you a long way. Employers are willing to invest in people who are willing to invest in their company," DesMarais-Lanz said.

Who might be a best fit for a career in the trades?

A career in the trades will be both physically and mentally stimulating, and will likely be a good fit for any physical or interactive learners, DesMarais-Lanz.

The up-and-coming generation is used to learning and almost living online, and kids

with an interest in technology could also find an engaging career in the trades.

More and more, technology is weaving itself within the trades. While on a recent site visit to RDO Equipment in Dayton, MN, DesMarais-Lanz learned about the software RDO uses to operate its heavy equipment, and met the two people whose job it is to program the mini-computers for the heavy equipment.

Project Build MN also offers school counselor and high school trade instructor resources, and provides a platform for trade businesses to post job openings.

DesMarais-Lanz said the attributes most employers are looking for is someone with a "positive attitude, someone willing to work hard and not afraid to get dirty."

One misconception DesMarais-Lanz said is going away is that trade labor is hard, rugged work that doesn't pay well.

"Most of the people I know make well into the six figures. They are doing very well for themselves, and they love what they are doing," DesMarais-Lanz said.

For more information on Project Build MN, its programs, or career opportunities, visit <https://projectbuildmn.org>.

Yabba dabba doo!

More scenes from Henderson's Sauerkraut Days



UNLESS NOTED, PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER



Clockwise from top: The Henderson High School Class of '77 dressed up as the Flintstones for the Owl Parade; Grayson and Addie Jacobsen from Lakeville enjoy some rock prospecting, which was a new activity this year. The Jacobsen kids are pictured with grandparents Amy and Monty Braun of Le Center; Henderson Mayor Mike Swenson rides in the Grand Parade; Mike Bednar and Nathan Hrdlichka grill up brats for the hungry masses at Bender Park; Shaw Brothers was a hit with fans young and old on Friday night; cars take off in the Kraut Cruise; members of the SuFuDu Drumline performed Sunday after the Grand Parade at Bender Park; and Christopher Johnson tries to keep the Beast he is training in check during the Owl Parade.



PHOTO BY JOSH WILSON



EDITORIAL

LS-H referendum puts students first

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Growing up, I always chuckled at Helen Lovejoy’s over-the-top exclamation, “Won’t somebody *please* think of the children?” as Springfield residents usually faced some sort of moral dilemma on the hit show “The Simpsons.”

Clearly I was not the only one who found humor in Helen’s emotional proclamation, since that phrase has been turned into an internet meme many times over.

But there is a very real issue facing the children of the Le Sueur-Henderson School District that needs to be addressed: the state in which those children learn, especially our youngest learners, the 6, 7, 8 and 9-year-olds who attend Park Elementary School in Le Sueur.

I know there are people who are frustrated with the state of the school and feel school officials and administrators allowed Park to deteriorate. I’m not going to have that debate, because frankly it is as pointless as a circle. Unless one of our readers is in possession of a time machine, there is nothing we can do to change what happened. And if one of our readers DOES have a time machine, I wouldn’t say no to a weekend foray into the past — I have always wanted to see the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. Give me a call at 715-610-0936, I will bring snacks.

Back to the present...I have spent the better part of the past three years reporting on LS-H’s referendum efforts. I was there for every initial Task Force meeting, and the building tours.

For those that may not so easily recall my Oct. 30, 2019 article, “*Is Park Elementary School worth saving? School tour shines light on numerous health and safety concerns*” here are the highlights:

- The art room at Park Elementary School shares an air vent with the school’s garage, and art teacher Erika Kuhlers informed our tour group that during one instance she began to feel faint from exhaust fumes wafting into her classroom. Luckily, no students were in the classroom at the time and the incident was quickly identified and fixed.
- Although I have not been in the Park girls bathroom since COVID hit, the main floor bathroom smelled of mildew during my 2019 tour. Other



Rachel Miller

physical conditions include peeling wallpaper, buckling carpets and water-damaged ceilings.

- The teacher’s lounge cannot handle the modern-day electrical load, and if staff members try to use two microwaves at once, it will trip the breaker.
- I have worked at the Independent for 4.5 years now, and have written at least three stories in that time about boiler failures in winter months, not to mention the water damage the gymnasium suffered from a cracked pipe in the wall during the spring of 2019.

The children of Le Sueur-Henderson deserve better, and this is not about having “the best” or keeping up with the Joneses, Kardashians or anyone else. It is about providing a safe and healthy facility for children to learn.

Do you know what the referendum will actually cost you? You can calculate your increase by going to <https://www.ehlers-inc.com/micro-site/lsh2022/> and entering your property value into the residential, commercial or agricultural calculators. A \$160,000 home would pay \$20/month for just a new school, or \$29/month if all three questions were to pass. A home valued at \$250,000 would pay \$34-50/month, depending on what passes.

Frankly, even \$50/month would be a good deal to build a new K-5 elementary school, address deferred maintenance at the Middle/High School, and build a third gymnasium and expand the Career and Technical Education space and programming that currently prepares LS-H students for much-desired, good-paying careers in the trades. Not to mention that increase will be short-lived, as the Middle/High School bond payments will drop off at the end of 2024, and taxes would be roughly what they are now.

While I don’t reside in the LS-H School District and my

taxes are not at stake, I would happily pay for a new school if they were, because I can relate to the struggles. The building that has housed the *Independent* for the past 70 years was built in 1860 and is the oldest commercial building in town. Like Park, maintenance was not done for one reason or another, and the building is in poor shape.

It has dropped below 60 inside during winter months, as I have had to run a space heater to keep my hands warm while typing. We have damaged floor tiling (which likely contains asbestos); peeling ceiling tile paint (which likely contains lead); damaged and missing brick which allows water to seep into the basement; missing drop ceiling tiles which resulted in a bat dropping in one time; and for 3.5 years we had 3.5 walls in our bathroom which was finally fixed when my husband and father-in-law did the repairs this spring.

As a grown woman, it was my decision to remain with the paper and stay working in an office that frankly, was impossible to be proud of. I would hear comments of “they should tear that building down” and quietly agreed.

As the now business owner, I finally have recourse, and in August the Independent office will be moving down one block, to 507 Main St. We look forward to being completely moved out by Aug. 31 and hope to have an open house celebration after we are settle in.

But Park Elementary students don’t have that option. They CAN’T advocate for themselves, they have to make the best of a bad situation. Their only recourse is if their parents decide to send them to a neighboring school district, and based on enrollment trends over the past decade, many have done just that.

These children are the future of Le Sueur and Henderson. They will hopefully grow to be future leaders, school board members, business owners, volunteers, parents, neighbors and friends. An investment in them is an investment in our two communities.

So I will encourage everyone to 1) GO VOTE on Tuesday, Aug. 9; and 2) regardless of how you vote, try your best to put past grievances aside and focus solely on what is best for the children, current and future, of the Le Sueur-Henderson School District.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LS-H is worth the investment

I am voting YES on all 3 Questions in the upcoming Aug. 9 LSH School District Bond Referendum for the following reasons:

1. I respect and trust the current School Board members who voted unanimously to pursue the Aug. 9th Bond Referendum.
2. Passage of this Bond Referendum is crucial for providing quality facilities to support our students and also “level the playing field” for retaining and attracting student enrollment.
3. For the past 3 years — despite the COVID disruptions — the School Board developed and followed a strategic process to address our significant facilities maintenance is-

sues. They partnered with our Admin Teams and collaborated with numerous professional and citizen consultants, school staff, and the MN Dept. of Education to analyze needs and develop potential solutions.

4. For the past 3 years, the School Board provided numerous ongoing public information and citizen input opportunities including public surveys, task forces, mailings, newspaper articles, and public meetings in regard to prioritizing solution options.

5. A year ago, the School Board hired a tireless, “take-charge” Superintendent to partner with them to continue building public engagement and to promote the Nov. 2021 Bond Referendum...which failed, but provided needed perspective for a revised solu-

tion.

6. Since last November, the School Board (1) analyzed the failed bond referendum results, (2) solicited additional public input, (3) collaborated with the constituents referred to in #3 above, and (4) developed a scaled-back, 3-question Bond Referendum that address all facility needs, will attract student enrollment, and frees up funds for educational priorities rather than band-aids for facility maintenance.

Assuming you value the future of the LSH School District, please invest in LSH and take time to VOTE YES on Aug. 9th.

Dave Johnson
Facility Task Force consultant (2019-22)
Retired Supt. (2000-2011)
Former HS Principal

WORSHIP SERVICES

Centennial Lutheran Church
701 Locust St., Henderson
Pastor Dennis McManus, vacancy pastor;
Cell: (320) 808-0624
Sundays - 9 a.m. Worship

Church of St. Joseph
213 S. 6th St., Henderson
Msgr. Eugene Lozinski•
507-248-3550
Sunday morning service - 9 a.m.
Tuesday morning service, 8:30 a.m.

St. John - Assumption Parish
26523 - 200th St. Belle Plaine
Msgr. Eugene Lozinski•
507-248-3550
Saturday evening service - 5 p.m.
Wednesday morning - 8:30 a.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church
32234 431st Ave. Gaylord
Pastor Scott Richards
507-248-3550
Sundays: 9:30 - Faith Formation
10:30 - Worship

Creekside Community Church
Christian & Missionary Alliance
114 Shamrock Dr., Arlington
Pastor Tom McCracken
(507) 964-2872
Email: creeksidecma@gmail.com
Video worship at www.creeksidechurchcma.org

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS)
229 S. 6th St., Le Sueur,
Church 507-665-3477
Rev. Patrick Feldus
920-918-9949
Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
38597 State Highway 19, Arlington
Pastor Gary Ruckman (507) 964-2400
stjohnsarlingtonmn.org
9 a.m. Sunday School and Bible Study
10 a.m. Sunday Service

New Hope Baptist Church
2020 Marshall Road. Shakopee
Pastor Tim Douglas (952) 403-5146
Visit www.newhopebaptistchurchmn.com for links to online services

Word of Life Church
890 Kingsway Drive, Le Sueur
Pastor Jason Lang
Sunday worship in-person and online, 10:30 a.m.
www.wordoflifemn.com
New Prague Campus, 830 4th Ave. SW
Sunday worship, 9 a.m.

Sunrise Church
722 Sunrise Dr., St. Peter
Pastor Mark Thompson
10 a.m. Sunday service live streaming

Zion United Church of Christ
240 South Elmwood St., Le Sueur
Rev. Rosemary Rocha, Interim Pastor
Listen to a radio broadcast, 10 a.m., on KCHK 1350 AM or 95.5 FM.
In person worship has resumed at 9 a.m. Sunday.

St. Anne's Church
217 N. 3rd St., Le Sueur
Fr. Chris Shofner
Parish Office: (507) 665-3811
www.stanneschurchlesueur.org
See archspm.org/covid19 for mass and prayer resources

St. Paul's United Church of Christ
111 S. 6th St., Henderson
Rev. Deb Meyer - (507) 248-3594
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
9:30 a.m. Sunday Worship

Gaylord Assembly of God
26958 MN-5, Gaylord • (507)237-5341
Pastor Bob Holmbeck
Thursday, Feb. 24 Norwood Bible Study, 9 a.m.
9:15 a.m. Sunday School
10 a.m. Worship Service 6:30 p.m. Wednesday Evening supper, Bible classes and Youth Focused
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Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
14226 W. 280th St., Henderson
(507) 665-2932
Pr. Foy Christopherson
9:30 a.m. Sunday Worship service
Also on Facebook Live

United Methodist Church
730 South 6th St., Le Sueur
Pastor Terri Horn
1:30 & 7:30 p.m. broadcast CATV #7
lesueurumc.org
All services will be livestreamed on Facebook and later available for viewing on www.lesueurumc.org

Jehovah's Witness
Kingdom Hall, South 9th St., Henderson
Go to www.jw.org/en for video to download, or watch online

River Rock Church
PO Box 184, Belle Plaine (952) 873-5453
Chris Teien-Senior Pastor
Dan Jetto-Worship Pastor
330 S. Market St. in Belle Plaine.
www.riverrockchurch.com
Watch services online at www.riverrockchurch.com/watch

Our Lady of the Prairie Catholic Church
200 E. Church St., Belle Plaine (952) 873-6564
Father Michael Kaluza
www.ourladyoftheprairie.com
Mass Times: Saturday 4:15 p.m.,
Sunday 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.
Tuesday 6:30 p.m.,
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8:30 a.m.
Sacrament of Reconciliation 1/2 hour before Mass

First Lutheran Church
116 Inner Dr., Le Sueur
(507) 665-2615
9 a.m. In-person worship
Communion first & third Sunday
Visit www.firstlutheranlesueur.org for links to our live broadcast on our YouTube page

First Presbyterian Church
219 W. Main St., Belle Plaine (952) 873-2966
Email: fpcbelleplaine@frontiernet.net
Pastor Wayne D. Waibel (612) 750-3443
Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

HENDERSON SENIOR DINING MENU

- Thursday, July 28:** Swedish meatballs, scalloped potatoes, carrots, bread/margarine, dessert, low fat milk
- Friday, July 29:** Baked fish, rice pilaf, Oriental blend vegetables, warm apple slices, low fat milk
- Monday, Aug. 1:** Spaghetti with meat sauce, romaine salad with dressing, pineapple, Texas toast, cookie, low fat milk
- Tuesday, Aug. 2:** Pork loin, yams, broccoli, bread with margarine, dessert, low fat milk
- Wednesday, Aug. 3:** Chicken pasta salad, sliced cucumbers, fruit salad, dessert, low fat milk
- Phone number: 1-866-985-8514 (10 a.m. to noon, best time to call)**

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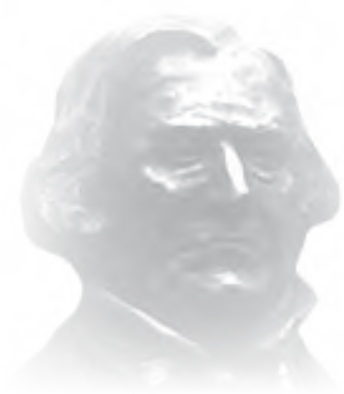
Doug Ohman delved into the men and woman who earned the military's highest honor. P.2

Giving back

The playground outside the Henderson Community Building has two new pieces of equipment, thanks to a local family. P. 7

Giant Days

The rain may have dampened the ground, but not the spirits of people who turned out in large numbers to attend Le Sueur's big summer celebration. P. 8



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Second time's the charm

LS-H new school referendum passes; MS/HS fixes, CTE add-ons fail

By Rachel Miller
Editor

The second time is the charm for the Le Sueur-Henderson School District. Preliminary results are in, and 53 percent of voters were in support of the referendum to build a new \$39.9 million K-5 elementary school in Le Sueur.

The statewide primary drew 2,229 registered school district voters (48 percent) to the polls, and 1,219 cast a "Yes" vote in support of a new school, compared to 1,080 No votes.

"I'm speechless. I still can't even believe it's true," said Le Sueur-Henderson School Board member Gretchen Rehm, who lives in Henderson and has students in the school district. "This has been a very long road for everyone involved, and to see both of our communities come together to do what is in the best interest

of our children and our communities is overwhelming. To say I am proud is an understatement. I am so happy to be part of Small Towns with Giant Opportunities. Thank you, LS-H!"

LS-H Superintendent Jim Wagner said the passing of the referendum will finally put LS-H in a spot to showcase what the district can provide for students and "allows both communities to market themselves as a destination place for families."

The vote was going to be a tough one for Henderson, as the passing of the referendum means Hilltop Elementary School, which currently houses fourth and fifth-grade students, will soon cease to be an elementary school.

City of Henderson residents voted against the referendum, with 160 No votes to 135 in favor. Henderson Township

followed a similar line, with 141 voting against and 113 in favor. The divide was even greater in neighboring Jessenland Township, with just 24 voters supporting the referendum and 75 voting against. Other municipalities voting against the referendum included Derrynane Township (3-13), Blakeley Township (3-5), and Faxon Township (2-3).

The greatest support for the referendum was in the City of Le Sueur, with 647 people voting for the new school, and 439 voting "No." Victories were also recorded in Ottawa Township (61-55), Sharon Township (94-61), Lake Prairie Township (13-7), Kelso Township (20-17) and Washington Lake Township (2-0).

Tyrone Township was split almost 50-50 on the issue, with 102 voting in support and 104 voting "No."

Le Sueur-Henderson Vote

Yes Committee Co-Chairs Christa Luna and Erin Timmers extended their gratitude to everyone who helped with the campaign, made phone calls or sent text messages, donated time or money and voted in support of the referendum.

"We understand the financial impact this vote has on everyone, so we greatly appreciate your support for building a new safe, modern and efficient elementary school," Luna and Timmers wrote in a statement to the *Independent*. "While it would have been incredible to see all three questions pass, we are thrilled with your support on question #1. #LSH-PROUD."

Results will not be final until the LS-H School Board canvasses the results on Monday, Aug. 15.

REFERENDUM
CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



INDEPENDENT FILE PHOTO/RACHEL MILLER

Le Sueur-Henderson students will have two more years at Hilltop Elementary School. The referendum's passing means LS-H will soon have two schools on one campus in Le Sueur, and Hilltop will be converted into an Alternative Learning Center.

Lieske, Koch will face off for Sibley County District 1 Commissioner

By Rachel Miller
Editor

The five candidates running for Sibley County District 1 Commissioner have been narrowed down to two: Henderson's own Morris Lieske will face Peter Koch of rural Gaylord in the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 8. Koch is the current District 3 Commissioner, but due to re-districting, boundaries for all five districts are changing.

Of the 841 votes cast on Tuesday, 291 went to Koch (34.6%), and 268 to Lieske (31.87%). Mark Brandt came in third with 172 votes, followed by Henderson's David Abraham with 64 and Justin Thaemert with 46 votes.



PETER KOCH



MORRIS LIESKE

Although Koch may have been the top candidate, Lieske won Henderson by a large margin. City of Henderson residents cast 99 votes for Lieske, 67 for Koch, 64 for Brandt, 22 for Abraham and 15 for Thaemert.

In Henderson Township, 101 votes went to Lieske, 59 to Koch, 44 to Brandt, 17 for Abraham and just eight for Thaemert.

COMMISSIONER
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PHOTO BY BETH CORNISH

This year's Sibley County Ambassadors met with Belle Plaine Royalty after the crowning. Pictured from left is Sibley County Miss Congeniality Grace Hardel from Henderson, Bar-B-Q Days 2nd Princess Kamryn Stier, Miss Sibley County Jacquelyn Wibstad, Miss Belle Plaine Courtney Eppen and Sibley County Ambassador Emily Holmquist.

Grace Hardel crowned Miss Congeniality

By Beth Cornish
Independent staff

Henderson's own Grace Hardel won the first award of the Sibley County 2022-23 royalty season when she won the annual essay contest. After an extended awards

presentation, Hardel received the second award as well when she was chosen Miss Congeniality for 2022-23. Although she does not have an official "Ambassador" title, Grace will still be participating in all

HARDEL
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Filing period closes Tuesday, Aug. 16

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Tick, tock, tick, tock! Time is running out to file for the local races for township supervisor, township clerk, school board and Henderson mayor and city council races.

The filing period for the Nov. 8 General Election opened on Tuesday, Aug. 2

and will close on Tuesday, Aug. 16 at 5 p.m. There is a \$2.00 filing fee for local races.

Henderson Council: The city council seats currently held by Randall Tiegs and Janet Boese are up for election this fall. According to City Administrator Lon Berberich, Tiegs has filed for re-election, and Mary Kay Wentto and Crystal Thomas

have also filed paperwork to run for council.

Henderson Mayor: Right now, no candidates have filed for mayor.

Le Sueur-Henderson School Board: The seats held by Matt Hathaway, Brigid Tuck, Gretchen Rehm and Jennifer Burns (interim for Joe Roby) are up for election. So far Hathaway and Burns have filed to run.

From Bigfoot to Brother Rat, oddities abound at Curiosities



“Brother Rat” stopped in to visit Curiosities owner Steve Thaemert during the store’s re-opening on July 23.



Has Bigfoot been traipsing through the trees near Shakopee? Only time will tell...

By Beth Cornish
Independent staff

Many Henderson residents will remember Archaica Curiosities, which used to occupy the shop at the front of the Henderson RoadHaus. Well, Curiosities has re-opened at 207 South Main Street in Le Sueur, right next to the movie theater, and includes a Le Sueur Bigfoot

wall and a studio area where owner Steve Thaemert and friends host podcasts. Attending the grand re-opening on July 23, visitors to the shop got to see a picture of a purported Bigfoot print taken by Steve and his wife while hiking in the Minnesota Valley Wilderness area in Scott County and a comparison shot of a black bear track; sample an alien-head vanilla cake pop produced by the owner’s lovely wife,

Erin (it is unclear as to whether vanilla is an alien’s favorite flavor or if aliens are vanilla flavored); chat with Paranormal Investigator and Founder of the International Paranormal Society Adrian Lee, and meet Jerry Ripley and Rick Loxton from Rat Rod Magazine. Also in attendance were “Brother Rat” with his rat rod and Bigfoot Researcher Paul Guffey. Lee shared results of paranormal research he conducted in Henderson.

He related that he spent some time in Brown Cemetery trying to reach the spirit of town founder Joseph Renshaw Brown, but said he was unable to be sure he was speaking to Brown because so many of the other people interred in the area were talking over each other. He later traveled to the JR Brown State Wayside Rest just south of Sacred Heart. This site displays the granite ruins of Brown’s home where he lived with his wife and 12 chil-

dren before it was destroyed during the Dakota War of 1862. Lee reported that he was able to communicate with Brown at that site and that during their conversation Brown proclaimed his innocence for the Birch Coulee battle. From aliens to rat rods to Bigfoot, this store offers a chance for your imagination to fly free and take home some cool souvenirs, including some great jewelry or a Bigfoot pillow.

DNR NEWS

DNR announces Chronic Wasting Disease sampling changes

As part of an adaptive approach to chronic wasting disease management statewide, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is broadening the options this year for hunters to get their deer tested for CWD. “Keeping Minnesota’s deer healthy remains a top DNR priority,” DNR Wildlife Section Manager Kelly Straka said. “The DNR’s commitment to sound surveillance and aggressive management of CWD has not changed. What is different is how we’re accomplishing

that from place to place and improving options for hunters to help us with disease surveillance.” Hunters will be able to submit samples through taxidermists who are partnering with the DNR or by dropping off deer heads at self-service sampling stations. Other options available include using mail-in kits (hunters remove the lymph nodes from deer themselves), dropping by one of the DNR-staffed sampling stations during the opening weekend of firearms season, or making appointments at area wildlife offices within CWD zones at any time during the deer hunting season. One notable difference this fall will be fewer self-service

sampling stations than in previous seasons. Self-service stations will be available only in firearms season, with the exception of point-based surveillance zones, which will have stations available starting in archery season and will remain available until sampling goals are met. Hunters should visit the DNR’s Make a Plan page (mndnr.gov/Hunting/Deer/Make-Your-Deer-Hunting-Plan.html) to learn more about self-service sampling station availability for the DPA they plan to hunt. This year’s revised approach to sampling will allow the DNR and hunters to work cooperatively to ensure robust data collection, particularly in CWD zones, while also mak-

ing efficient use of limited resources. The DNR listened carefully to hunters’ expressed preferences and also evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of last year’s data collection in developing this year’s sampling plan. “We’re encouraging archery and muzzle-loader hunters in CWD zones to use one of the alternative methods available to get their deer tested for CWD,” Straka said. “We’re still rigorously sampling in areas where CWD has been detected and samples from hunter-harvested deer provide critical information about the disease.” CWD sample submission will be mandatory in all CWD zones during the opening weekend of the firearms

A season (Nov. 5-6) for all hunter harvested deer one year or older. Locations of CWD sampling partners and DNR-staffed CWD sampling stations will continue to be updated on DNR’s website (mndnr.gov/CWD) throughout the fall. Carcass movement restrictions are in effect for CWD management and control zones during all seasons. Whole

carcasses cannot leave these zones until a “not detected” test result is received. More about carcass movement restrictions can be found on page 73 of the Minnesota Hunting Regulations. The regulations and links to complete deer season information are available on the DNR website (mndnr.gov/Hunting/Deer).

REFERENDUM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ADDITIONAL REFERENDUM OPTIONS

Voters were also asked whether they would support two additional measures: one to spend up to \$6.144 million to address deferred maintenance issues at the Middle/High School building; and spend up to \$5.656 million to build expand Career and Technical Education opportunities at the Middle/High School and build a third gymnasium. Neither of the add-ons garnered enough support at the polls to pass. The Middle/High School repairs option failed 1,094 (47.98%) to 1,186 (52.02%).

Since the second question failed, the school district will be moving forward with the second option with Honeywell. The \$4,648,500 project requires a \$100,000 capital contribution and will include new lighting, water, building envelope and building management systems at the Middle/High School. This project is projected to save the school district \$6,705,991 over a 20-year span, with annual savings ranging from \$155,726 to \$227,822 in energy and construction costs; \$52,847 to \$101,598 in operating savings, and \$92,015 in capital cost avoidance. The CTE expansion/gym option had even less support,

with 1,011 (44.56%) people voting in support, opposed to 1,258 (55.44%) against. **NEXT STEPS** If all goes according to plan, architectural design and bid work will get finalized in the upcoming months. A sub-committee of students, staff and parents will assist with final designs and ideas, and will tour other elementary schools to generate ideas. Wagner expects to start scheduling tours within the next two weeks, and have the process complete in time to send bids out right after New Year’s. Construction is estimated to begin in the spring of 2023 and finish in time to start the 2024-25 school year, at which point Hilltop will be converted

into an Alternative Learning Center. Wagner said he also wants to continue to reach out to people to share how this project is a positive step for both Le Sueur and Henderson. “We want to be the best for both communities, not just one or the other,” Wagner said. “It is a great step in the right direction for both communities on what we can offer for students, staff and the communities.”

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COMMISSIONER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Jessenland Township was a closer race, but still went overwhelmingly to Lieske with 43 votes. Koch received 36, then Abraham with 21, Brandt with

19 and Thaemert with 10. Koch’s greatest advantage was in Sibley Township, as he received 60 votes, 29 went to Brandt, four to Thaemert and just three for Lieske. Alfsborg Township also offered strong support for Koch with 46

votes, seven for Lieske, four for Brandt and two each for Thaemert and Abraham. Kelso Township, the final precinct, provided 23 votes to Koch, 15 for Lieske, 12 for Brandt, seven for Thaemert and two for Abraham.

Library movie night:
Sonic the Hedgehog 2

Looking for something fun to do this Friday? Stop on by the Henderson Library and enjoy “Sonic the Hedgehog 2” in the lower level, starting at 6 p.m. Popcorn, rootbeer floats and prize drawings are available. All families are welcome to attend, even if they did not participate in the summer reading program. Don’t forget to bring a pillow and blanket!

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