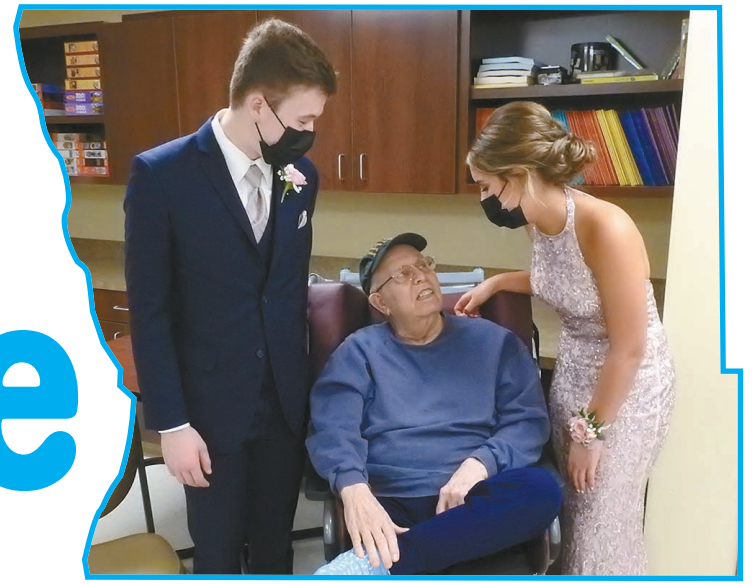


# Kittson County Enterprise



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## Pictured above, Megan Larson and Brandon Ristad

visit with Jim Larson, Megan's grandpa, after the mini-grand march on Friday, April 22 at the Kittson Healthcare Nursing Home. Thirty-three students attended prom held at Kittson Central School. (Enterprise photo by Anna Jauhola)

## 'I've never seen this before'

Ice fully blocking culverts is causing expensive damage

By Anna Jauhola

A strange situation has developed in Poppleton Township northeast of Lancaster.

The Kittson County Commissioners heard Tuesday, April 19 that two concrete box culverts are completely blocked by ice. This forced water in the ditch to breach Township Road 68 and cause damage around the culverts. Dennis Anderson from the township contacted the county about the situation, which led the highway department to get involved.

"Because we inspect culverts and bridges for townships, we went out there," said Keith Klegstad, assistant county engineer and bridge inspector. "It's two 9-by-5-foot box culverts on State Ditch 84. ... I've never seen this before. It is a 9-by-5 solid block of ice from end to end. It is not allowing any water through."

On Tuesday, April 12, the state allowed for disaster declarations due to severe weather that swept through the area. The commissioners approved Resolution 22-14, a disaster declaration for a severe weather incident. With approval from the state, the township will receive 75 percent reimbursement for the costs of damage and repair.

Because the ice in the culverts is impeding the water's flow, it has taken other routes, including through the embankment where it has washed out aggregate around the pipe and possibly underneath. Klegstad said there is cracking in the road between the two pipes, which is a direct sign of an impending road collapse once the frost thaws.

Klegstad said a half mile south on the ditch is a water



A SOLID BLOCK OF ICE formed in each of two 9-by-5 foot culverts in Poppleton Township, northeast of Lancaster recently. As shown above, no water is flowing through due to the solid wall of ice. (Submitted photo)

control structure operated by the Two Rivers Watershed District, which is used to dump that water into the Two Rivers.

Poppleton Township officers closed the road on Thursday, April 14 placing barricades at either end. However, due to the severity, Klegstad informed the state bridge office, which recommended they place three barricades with flashing lights. These barricades are much more difficult to move and provide more safety for the general public.

Klegstad said the township road sees local traffic, specifically from cattle farmers, but is not a mail or bus route.

While there isn't an estimated cost for repairs, or a specific plan, Klegstad indicated it will be significant.

"The rip rap in the side between the pipe is gone. It's sunk. The embankment material is washed away," he said.

He added there is a similar set of culverts in St. Joseph Township to the

north and this freezing issue did not occur.

"We don't know if that (Two Rivers Watershed) control structure a half mile downstream backed up water into (the culvert) and it froze. Or, we've had hellacious winds from one direction and then the next, it could be plugged with snow," Klegstad said. "It's quite odd because it did not freeze up that way."

In other business, the commission:

- Approved hiring Amey Swenson as accounting clerk II at the highway department, filling the position left by Kris Thorlacius. Swenson is making a lateral move from the tax services office to the highway department, and will stay at the same pay and grade, which is currently in union negotiations. Once those are finalized, the anticipated pay will be \$22.06 per hour. She will tentatively begin in that position the beginning of May.

Continued on page 2

## Elevator cause of late fire call at courthouse

By Anna Jauhola

Issues with the elevator at the Kittson County Courthouse led to a close call late Monday, April 18 into the early morning hours of Tuesday, April 19.

Around 11 p.m., the Hallock Fire Department was called to the courthouse after a sheriff's deputy smelled smoke coming from the elevator shaft. The county commissioners discussed what happened during their meeting on Tuesday morning.

"There had been issues with the elevator working on Monday," said Brian Buhmann, county administrator. "But we never turned the electricity off. So the electric pump was spinning like crazy trying to lift it."

The pump had been running all day, but it wasn't until 10 p.m. that someone noticed a burning smell in the building.

Deputy Terry Bayne was on the lower level of the courthouse, when he walked down the hall, thinking the burning smell came from the break room area. As he got closer to the elevator at the west end of the building, he realized its actual source.

"I think we should consider ourselves extremely fortunate," said Kevin Klein, Hallock fire chief, who stopped at the commission meeting Tuesday. "I'm glad they smelled it. When we got up in (the penthouse) and started venting (the smoke), the thermal imager was reading over 400 degrees in the pump system for the elevator. The oil in the tank was about 180 degrees. I mean, we were burning oil — we were close to igniting. There's oil down

in the bottom of the elevator."

While the penthouse, the storage area on the topmost floor of the courthouse, was filled with smoke, there doesn't appear to be any smoke damage from early reports, Buhmann said.

Troubles with the elevator go back several years to when Eric Christensen was the administrator.

At the Feb. 4, 2020, meeting the board approved hiring Larson Elevator of Grand Rapids, Minn., to replace hydraulic seals, which were leaking, and install an oil return pump at the bottom of the elevator shaft. In that meeting, the commission heard the hydraulic fluid kept leaking into the pit, and collected into a 5-gallon bucket.

The biggest mystery is why the smoke alarms and heat sensors didn't activate, Klein added. He'd also like to see the county have its controls company visit for an inspection.

The sensors in the penthouse are not the only fire safety issue as of late.

Klein and Buhmann acknowledged the manual pull fire alarm on the east end of the building has activated of its own accord several times in the last six months. Klein suggested there could be a wiring or connection issue.

"That should not go off just sitting there," he said.

Buhmann said the elevator repair company was scheduled to visit Tuesday. Later in the week, Buhmann said he's awaiting word from the company on estimates and specific equipment needs.

He added that he's contacted Advantage to schedule an appointment.

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WATER RUSHED THROUGH THE EMERGENCY SPILLWAY at Hallock's dam early Monday morning, April 25. According to the National Weather Service at Grand Forks, the Hallock Municipal Airport recorded 2.54 inches of liquid precipitation from April 22 to April 24. The Two Rivers at Hallock will be reaching its third crest this spring, likely by the end of this week, at about 808 feet above sea level, which is moderate flooding for the river. The Red River at Drayton and Pembina are expected to continue rising and possibly hit major flood stage by the weekend. On Monday, at Drayton, the Red was in minor flood stage at 39.5 feet. The Red at Pembina was also in minor flood stage at 41.94 feet. (Enterprise photo by Anna Jauhola)

## Lancaster looks at another year of patchwork food delivery

By Anna Jauhola

Lancaster School is looking at another year of piecing together its food delivery service on its own. After regional provider Cash-WA (formerly Food Services of America) dropped contracts with dozens of schools through Lakes Country Services Co-op, schools such as Lancaster, Kittson Central and Tri-County were all scrambling.

"We're back on our own basically," said Mendy Coffield, business manager.

To fill in the gaps this school year, Lancaster has been ordering food through Cash-WA, which then delivers directly to J&S Foods. From there, the food is brought to the school. There was hope earlier this spring that Lakes Co-op would be able to hash out direct to manufacturer pricing, but the group announced it would not be able to organize the data into a cohesive plan until the 2023-24 school year.

However, there is a light

at the end of the tunnel.

During the Lancaster School Board meeting Wednesday, April 20, Coffield said Lakes Co-op directed school districts to contact four major vendors. She said Cash-WA has agreed to deliver food again, through J&S Foods, for the 2023-24 academic year, but will not agree to any set prices because the market is still so volatile.

"They have agreed to continue on with once a week. They won't go more than once a week," Coffield said. "And the other that's agreeing to look at us is US Foods. They currently go to Bully Brew in Hallock."

Coffield said other area schools will likely receive shipments from Cash-WA as well, and another area school is looking into US Foods.

The board approved putting out a call for bids on food for the year.

"We're just going to do what we can," Coffield told the board. "In talking to the service co-op, you should still

open it up so you're calling for (bids) so you have that process, documenting what we're doing."

In other business, the board:

- Approved the resignation of Tara Garland, paraprofessional in the special education classroom. Her last day is Friday, May 13. With this loss, Principal Nicole Thompson and staff are working to figure out how to best handle the special education classroom. The board also approved advertising for a new paraprofessional.

- Approved termination of the principal contract for Thompson, who was recently hired as the superintendent/principal for the 2022-23 year. Because she signed a two-year contract, it had to be terminated. The board then approved her new superintendent/principal contract. Thompson signed a one-year contract and her annual salary will be \$100,000.

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