

# Inman from front

Anderson recommended the action to the board, and commissioners plan to retain Anderson as they pursue civil action against Inman.

Legal proceedings could cost the county \$35,000-\$65,000. The estimate in cost has a wide range as a case such as this is uncommon and may require substantial time to research the law, depose witnesses and prepare court documents, according to Benton County Administrator Monty Headley.

"This has been the No. 1 issue for me since day one of being a commissioner," said Steve Heinen commissioner and board chair. ... "It's been ongoing for a very, very long time, and there's only one way, in my opinion, to get rid of this issue. Take a look at it, figure it out and take care of it."

Questions about Inman's residency date back to the previous composition of the county board, which consisted of current commissioners Ed Popp and Heinen as well as former commissioners Spencer Buerkle, Warren Peschl and Jake Bauerly. Though the issue was brought up, Commissioner Scott Johnson said neither the past nor current board was aware of the investigation or its findings.

"It would've been nice to have this back in October 2020 when all of this information was available," Heinen said. "Maybe that's on us for not asking for it, but here we are, sitting in March 2022, dealing with this."

Commissioners expressed displeasure and frustration that

neither the previous board nor the current board were made aware of the investigation into Inman's residency or its findings.

"If we agree that our Benton County Attorney's Office had this information even dating back to July 2021, one of the things I have a very serious problem with is with the memo from (Benton County Attorney Philip Miller)," said Jared Gapinski, commissioner. "Basically, going through the whole residency issue, the only thing that was referenced was that (the Sherburne County Attorney's Office) were not pursuing any criminal charges."

Gapinski continued in referencing what he considered to be a failure to communicate comprehensive information in the memo Miller sent in December 2021.

"There was no reference to any of the eye-raising information in the whole investigation report where (Sherburne County Investigative Sergeant Luke McLean) didn't find any residence," Gapinski said. "There are some significant issues here, in my opinion. ... It just doesn't look good. It's unbelievable."

In a separate interview with the Benton County News, Miller responded.

"I wrote the memo from the vantage point that, if they were going to pursue legal action against Inman, that these were the issues that they were going to have to overcome," Miller said.

Miller said some of the items, like Inman's cell phone records, were not forwarded to him from the Sherburne County Attorney's Office. He said, at the time, he was aware of some other additional information

that was not included in the memo. Although Popp ended up voting in step with other commissioners, he said the timeline for election and the fact that many people in the county might not know about the situation – or care about it – was weighing on him. Popp said the board should consider whether the potential to spend \$65,000 is worth removing Inman from office with elections coming in November.

Other commissioners disagreed that Benton County residents are not aware or are not concerned with the potential wrongdoing from their auditor-treasurer.

"Everybody I've talked to is appalled," commissioner Beth Schlangen said.

Johnson said the dollar amount, while high, is worth pursuing, even though he said the current board did not create the issue.

"For me, it becomes more of an issue of principal on whether or not we're going to move forward, and I understand the dollar amount," Johnson said. "I don't like it either – not one dollar of it, especially when it's not something that we did."

Before calling for a motion, Heinen said seven of eight elected officials are following the law by living within the jurisdiction where they were elected.

"We all signed an affidavit saying that we are residents of Benton County," Heinen said. "Let's be residents of Benton County."

Inman did not respond to emails or phone calls Star Publications regarding the matter.

– Supervisor Steve Wollak, of Watab Township.

In Maywood Township, no one filed for re-election. Two supervisor seats are open with no candidates, and newcomer Tiah Chapp has filed for the clerk position.

Newcomer Steve Bistrup has filed for the clerk position in Granite Ledge Township, and the clerk position in Mayhew Lake Township is open with no candidates.

For open seats, voters can choose an elected official by write-in vote, but the declared winner would also need to accept the seat. Should a write-in candidate decline the oath of office, the vacancy could be filled by appointment by the township board.

Watab Township has also placed a question on the ballot this year. Voters will be asked if they wish to fill the township's treasurer role by appointment rather than through election. The treasurer position, currently held by Deborah O'Keefe, expires in 2023. Similarly, Watab's clerk seat is filled by appointment.

# Township Day from front

Although write-in candidates are an option for voters, running unopposed for re-election are:

- Supervisor Raymond Novak and clerk Robert Thaler, of Alberta Township.
- Supervisor Doug Lezer and clerk Sabrina Hess, of Gilmanton Township.
- Supervisor Gary Nelson and clerk JoDee Kampa, of Glendorado Township.
- Supervisor Duane Brenny and clerk Deborah Scott, of Graham Township.
- Supervisor Arnold Evensen, of Granite Ledge Township.
- Supervisor Dan Schlichting and clerk Anita Seviola, of Langola Township.
- Supervisor Jerome Molitor, of Mayhew Lake Township.
- Supervisor Mark Ebnet and clerk Cynthia Abraham, of Minden Township.
- Supervisor Donald Martin and clerk Christine Scherbing, of St. George Township.
- Supervisor John Kothenbeutel and clerk Daryl Sheetz, of Sauk Rapids Township.

Sunday, March 6, 1 p.m. – **St. Joseph Catholic Church Quilt Bingo.** Lunch provided after bingo and drawing. Handicap accessible. St. Joseph Parish Hall in Morrill, 33018 Nature Road, Foley.

Monday, March 7, 12:15 p.m. – **Rice Senior Citizens Monthly Meeting.** Old Creamery Café, 405 E. Main St., Rice.

Monday, March 7, 6 p.m. – **Rice City Council Meeting.** Rice City Hall, 205 E. Main St., Rice.

Tuesday, March 8 – **Township Day. Annual elections and meetings.** Residents should check with their respective township for polling and meeting times.

Tuesday, March 8, 11 a.m. to noon – **Living Waters Lutheran Church Food Shelf Distribution.** Living Waters Lutheran Church, 1911 Fourth Ave. N., Sauk Rapids. If in need of emergency food assistance, call 320-255-1135.

Tuesday, March 8, 7 p.m. – **Free Grace Recovery Meeting.** Hosted by Free Grace United. All are welcome; everyone struggles with something. Food and fellowship beginning at 6:30 p.m. The ROC, 141 Fourth Ave. N., Foley. For more information or support, call 612-512-4745.

Thursday, March 10, 3-5:30 p.m. – **Rice Area Food Shelf Distribution.** Old Village Hall, 30 E. Main St., Rice.

Thursday, March 10, 7 p.m. – **Sauk Rapids Legion Post 254 Monthly Meeting.** Legion meets the second Thursday of each month at the Sauk Rapids VFW Post 6992, 901 N. Benton Drive, Sauk Rapids.

Friday, March 11, 11 a.m. to noon – **Living Waters Lutheran Church Food Shelf Distribution.** Living Waters Lutheran Church, 1911 Fourth Ave. N., Sauk Rapids. If in need of emergency food assistance, call 320-255-1135.

Sunday, March 13, 3 p.m. – **Free Concert.** Featuring violinist Elizabeth York, of St. Paul. Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W. St. Germain St., St. Cloud. Call 320-259-5463 to reserve seating.

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