

Hayfield is back in the title game 6

Walz, Ellison keep fundraising edge 3

Victoria cousins celebrate opening day for Sorellina's 5



POSTBULLETIN

Minnesota Newspaper Association's 2022 Daily Newspaper of the Year

UNLOCK DIGITAL AT >>> POSTBULLETIN.COM/ACTIVATE | ROCHESTER, MINN. | THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2022 | ONE SECTION

Minn. electric utilities prep for summer grid strain

BY ALEX DEROSIER
Post Bulletin

ST. PAUL — With forecasters predicting a hotter than normal summer, electric utilities and regulators are warning that the coming months could bring the potential of forced blackouts and higher prices for some customers in the midwestern U.S.

Power companies big and small across Minnesota say they are prepared for potential challenges this summer, including the possibility of interruptions after the North American Electric Reliability Corp. and the region's power grid operator warned generation capacity could fall short of demand on the hottest days this summer. Above normal temperatures expected in the Upper Midwest combined with a historic drought will contribute to the strain.

"I'd rather be prepared and not need it, than not be prepared and need it, so that's why we're trying to notify our customers as much in advance," said Vernell Roberts with Detroit Lakes Public Utilities, which serves up to 17,000 customers in the summer. "We're not trying to waive any type of an alarm or anything like that. But we do want customers to know."

Electric utilities in Minnesota and parts of the Dakotas are part of a regional power grid operator that extends from the Canadian province of Manitoba to Louisiana called Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO. Providers across the system work together to manage energy production and consumption to ensure stable supply and the best possible prices for the 42 million people they serve.

Julie Pierce, vice president of Strategy and Planning for Minnesota Power, a northeast Minnesota utility that serves 145,000 customers, compares MISO to an air-traffic controller for the region, and the local utilities have been preparing to chip in however they can should the grid be placed under extreme pressure. This summer when millions of people crank up their air conditioning to fight off sweltering heat, the utilities plan to coordinate to produce more power and cut consumption where they can.

See GRID, Page 3



Photos by John Molseed / Post Bulletin

Tim Parkin, a member of the Save the Rookery group, speaks Tuesday at a Rochester Township planning and zoning commission meeting. The commission was considering whether to approve recommending a preliminary plat for a development at the site of great blue heron nest colony southwest of Rochester.

PLAN DENIED 2-1

Development at heron nest site goes to board

BY JOHN MOLSEED
Post Bulletin

ROCHESTER — The Rochester Township's planning and zoning commission denied recommending a preliminary plat design for a proposed housing development at the site of a great blue heron nest colony.

Despite the denial in a 2-1 vote, final approval of the design is still up to the Rochester Township Board. They meet July 14 to take up the issue.

The vote to deny Tuesday night came at the end of a nearly four hour meeting punctuated with an aborted attempt at a compromise and personal accusations during public comment.

International Properties LLC is proposing a 10-home development on about 30 acres of land south of Cascade Creek and north of Boulder Creek Lane Southwest.

That land housed a portion



Bill Tointon, of WSB Engineering Services Ltd., speaks with attorney Dan Heuel on Tuesday at a Rochester Township planning and zoning commission meeting. Heuel represents the developers, International Properties LLC, and Tointon is working with them to design it.

of a colony of dozens of great blue heron nests known as a rookery.

Environmental groups and neighboring property owners oppose the development plan.

Tim Parkin, a member of the Save the Rookery group,

said the decision to deny recommending the project to the Rochester Township Board is a turn in policy making.

"I'm cautiously optimistic the township is listening to its constituents and is changing direction," he said.

Nearly four dozen people attended the commission meeting Tuesday — most of them in opposition to the plan.

Most of the people attending had left the sweltering township garage at 4111 11th Ave. S.W., where the meeting was held by the time a decision was reached.

About a dozen commenters spoke, most bringing up environmental concerns and asking to preserve what is left of the rookery. Others noted the request would require township leaders to grant variances to land use and development laws to accommodate the project.

Commission member Arthur Handleman suggested the commission vote to approve a nine-lot development. After a brief recess, township attorney Peter Tiede said the commission couldn't do that without the plan being resubmitted.

See DENIED, Page 3

RPS leaders learn from students' perspectives



Jordan Shearer / Post Bulletin

Sara-Louise Henry, an equity coordinator with Rochester Public Schools, speaks about the Perspectives Project at a study session Tuesday in Rochester.

BY JORDAN SHEARER
Post Bulletin

ROCHESTER — At the conclusion of a new strategy session, the leaders of Rochester Public Schools sat down and tried to learn from the students. It was all about getting a new perspective.

The school board on Tuesday gathered to discuss the results of the initiative that has been dubbed the Perspectives Project. The school district began the project this year as a way to confront the issues of student disruption and violence manifesting throughout its secondary schools.

It included hosting small group sessions with students cited for their negative behavior. The idea of the

project was to get ahead of some of the issues rather than dealing with them in a reactive manner.

"How are we going to respond to the needs of our students?" said Will Ruffin II, director of diversity, equity and inclusion. "This is the moment, right here. How we respond will let us know who we are as a district. Are we going to be the district that people run to because we are the provider of choice? Or, are we going to have the opposite effect?"

The school board reviewed some of the themes from the discussions with the students. The school district worked with Wilder Research to help anonymize the students' responses into themes.

Although most of the

discussion focused on the results of the project, the board members briefly discussed the need to create actionable steps based on the data.

According to Ruffin, the project included interviewing approximately 100 students in various groups. The project also included getting the perspective of staff members. Ruffin said there were about 70 staff members who participated.

Some of the student responses referenced issues the district was already aware of: the need for more mental health services, the problem of feeling disconnected, and the issue of not feeling academically prepared for the content in the classroom.

See RPS, Page 3

Walz, Ellison keep fundraising edge over GOP challengers

BY ALEX DEROSIER
Post Bulletin

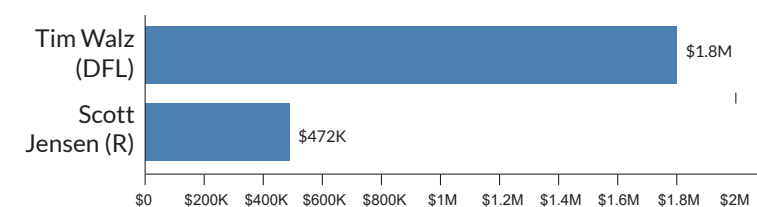
ST. PAUL — Incumbent Democratic-Farmer-Labor candidates for governor and attorney general continued to outraise their Republican challengers in the first five months of this year, according to campaign finance disclosures released Wednesday, June 15.

Between Jan. 1 and May 31, Gov. Tim Walz's reelection campaign raised nearly \$1.8 million and now has \$4.46 million on hand heading into the summer, June filings with the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board show. Republican challenger Scott Jensen raised about \$472,000 in the same period and had \$663,000 on hand as of May 31.

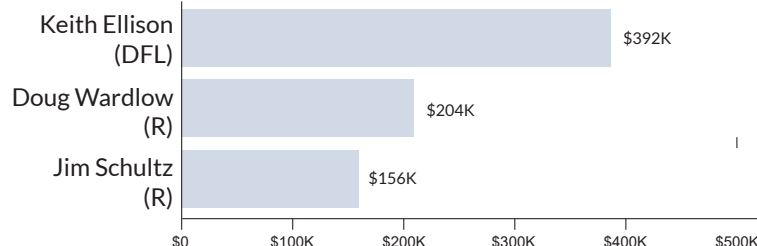
Fundraising figures offer a picture of where the campaigns stand ahead of the Aug. 9 primary election and the general election on Nov. 8.

In a statement, the Walz

Governor



Attorney General



Source: Minnesota Campaign Finance Board

Forum Design Center

campaign said more than 80% of its donations were \$50 or less, and said this was a sign of the campaign's grassroots support and concerns about abortion rights. A U.S.

Supreme Court draft opinion leaked last month showed the justices may overturn Roe v. Wade.

"Minnesotans know that Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. (Peggy)

Flanagan will always defend reproductive rights from anti-choice extremists," the campaign said. "Thanks to their support, our campaign will have the resources we need to compete in every corner of the state."

The Jensen campaign said it has raised about \$1.7 million since entering the race in March 2021 and said its support is driven by concerns over inflation and crime.

"From teachers to police officers, this campaign is fueled by hardworking Minnesota families who continue to financially support our candidacy despite crushing inflation and economic uncertainty," Jensen said in a statement.

Jensen and running mate Matt Birk gained the Minnesota GOP's endorsement at the party's convention in May. Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan faced no challenges from fellow DFLers at their convention.

Meanwhile, DFL Attorney General Keith Ellison also continued to outraise his GOP challengers, Jim Schultz and Doug Wardlow. Between Jan. 1 and May 31, Ellison had raised \$392,000, vs. Schultz's nearly \$156,000 and Wardlow's \$204,000. Ellison also holds a significant cash-on-hand advantage, with more than half a million in reserve. Schultz has about \$110,000 and Wardlow sits at about \$36,000.

Schultz won the Minnesota Republican Party's endorsement at the state convention in May, beating three other challengers in several rounds of voting by delegates. Wardlow, who ran for attorney general against Ellison and lost in 2018, is challenging Schultz in the August primary despite pledging to honor his party's endorsement.

Follow Alex Derosier on Twitter @xanderosier or email aderosier@forumcomm.com.

RPS

From page 1

"Our kids have spoken; they're waiting on us to respond," Ruffin said. "It's time for us to open our arms, hug our kids, love on our kids, show them they belong here with us, and do what needs to be done for their safety. I believe once we

do that, they will go to class. They will be more engaged. But it starts with us."

Although the students pinpointed some of the problems driving the disruptive behavior, they may not have easy solutions.

One of the teachers who participated in the Perspectives Project highlighted the difficulty of reaching students who

need extra support.

"The right answer is you want to get to the why, but I'm a quarterly teacher," said a staff member anonymously quoted in the report. "I have 165 kids a quarter. I got a class of 32 and seven that need me to have that conversation with them, and it's hard to make the time and find the time. I value that relationship investment,

you want to have those positive communications ... but it is getting harder and harder."

Nonetheless, several school board members and administrators highlighted the importance of the effort during Tuesday's meeting.

School board member Jess Garcia, who's also a professional mental health

worker, emphasized the importance of addressing student behavior by referencing recent school shootings.

Garcia indicated that increasing a sense of belonging and validation helps prevent students from searching for them in the wrong places.

"When these kids are bringing up these things, rather than a punitive response,

we need to be caring. We need to help them understand that when you come to us with this information, we're going to do something about it," Garcia said. "One hundred percent of behavior is communication. They may not know what they're trying to communicate, but they're trying to say something."

Grid

From page 1

The challenge isn't just because of the heat. MISO in its summer outlook said it could possibly expect 124 gigawatts of load, or power demand, with 119 gigawatts of regularly available electricity available for generation. To avoid blackouts or grid failure, MISO spokesperson Brandon Morris said the operator will likely have to rely more on emergency procedures. Already this week MISO has issued capacity advisories and hot weather alerts to utilities across the grid.

"We've been seeing this trend for the last few years, but this year's summer assessment and capacity auction reflect the potential for the tightest conditions we've experienced," Morris said in a statement. "The

overall stability and reliability of the system will not be compromised, as MISO will continue to implement any actions that may be necessary to prevent uncontrolled, cascading outages."

Pierce said there are many steps providers can take before taking the extreme measure of blackouts, including giving major industrial consumers an opportunity to shut down operations to avoid the higher rates that come with surging power demand. Roberts said his utility has been identifying industrial customers in Detroit Lakes to do the same.

As electricity providers across MISO's footprint retire gas and nuclear power plants and replace them with more renewable energy sources like wind and solar, the grid has experienced disruptions, industry

analysts say. In a recent report, energy investment research firm BTU Analytics said the retirement of older plants contributed to the shortfall in MISO's footprint.

However, more renewable replacements are on the way. Pierce said improving reliability is also a matter of improving and expanding transmission lines and power storage.

"You need more infrastructure to support the renewables that are being put on the system is probably the bottom line of it. And without that, you're going to see big swings," Pierce said. "This isn't because of renewables. This is because of the energy transformation that's happening in the United States right now."

Follow Alex Derosier on Twitter @xanderosier or email aderosier@forumcomm.com.



David Joles / Star Tribune / TNS

Swimmers flocked to Lake Nokomis Beach in Minneapolis last summer to deal with the extreme heat. With another hot summer already starting, power companies big and small across Minnesota say they are prepared for the challenges — including the possibility of interruptions. Above-normal temperatures expected in the Upper Midwest, combined with a historic drought, will contribute to the strain.

Denied

From page 1

"Anything beyond approving or denying what's before you runs some risk (legally)," Tiede said.

Handleman after the meeting said he believed a nine-lot plan could be a good compromise.

"If you look at the two lots being combined, it's a lot more attractive environmentally," he said. Those lots would be along Cascade Creek and could preserve more trees for the rookery, he said, adding that a nine-lot compromise would also eliminate some of the need for variances, Handleman added.

That's assuming the developers would agree to such a plan.

"The answer is no," said Dan Heuel,



John Molseed / Post Bulletin

People attend a Rochester Township planning and zoning commission meeting Tuesday at 4111 11th Ave. SW. The commission was considering whether to approve recommending a preliminary plat for a development at the site of great blue heron nest colony southwest of Rochester.

attorney representing International Properties LLC. "We'll give you an amended plan to make the 10 (acres) work."

Heuel said he plans to put the preliminary

plat plan before the township board July 14, 2022 regardless of the planning and zoning commission's vote.

The project has had success in a

similar position. The commission voted to deny recommending a general development plan for the development last fall. The township board approved the plan during its October meeting.

"There's a history of this working," Heuel said.

So far.

The Save the Rookery group filed a lawsuit in November 2021 accusing the township board of not following their own ordinances in accepting the plan. That suit is scheduled to be heard by a judge next month.

Nathan Clarke, Rochester Township Board member, said he doesn't support the plan generally but added that approving it while that lawsuit is pending would be risky.

Clarke was one of two votes against approving the plan Tuesday night.

Colin Patterson, who voted to approve the plan Tuesday night, said the area needs more housing. He also noted that variances to developments are granted routinely. Developers are also working to accommodate wildlife with the plan, he said, noting the proposed road, being a private road, is narrower than a public road and that the design calls for a rain garden. Rain gardens reduce water, fertilizer and pesticide runoff.

During the public comments, both sides accused the other of having ulterior motives.

Bill Tointon, a senior planner for WSE Engineering Services, Ltd, who is representing Aderonke Mordi, president of International Properties, LLC, in the development plan, accused

neighboring property owners of "not wanting neighbors."

Commenters accused township staff of shutting the public out of the process and rubber stamping the development.

Despite site plans still needing approval, construction of a road on the site is underway. Commenters accused former property owner Steve Connelly of deliberately waiting just before nesting season to destroy trees on the land to prevent the birds from nesting.

Great blue herons aren't listed as endangered but their nests, when occupied, are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Contact John Molseed at jmolseed@postbulletin.com.

POST BULLETIN
POSTBULLETIN.COM

Get a FREE MONTH added to your subscription

Enroll today!

SIGN UP FOR

EZ PAY



Call us: 800-533-1727



Email: memberservices@postbulletin.com