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HARVEST GRANGE: New concept plan proposed PAGE 13

City sees return of multifamily housing to the market

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

HUGO — Over the past decade, the city of Hugo has continued to experience steady growth. On average, the city has added approximately 150 new homes each year, translating to an estimated 300 to 400 new residents annually.

Each year, the city's Community Development Department presents an annual report to the City Council.

"(The report) is a measure of how

"It's nice to see some multifamily (housing) coming back after a little bit of a drought,"

Max Gort
Associate Planner

we are growing in the community and then taking a look at some of the activities that the department has been doing to continue to manage that growth long term," explained Associate Planner Max Gort.

Based on estimates from the Metropolitan Council, Gort says the city's population is likely to be in the range of 17,700 to 18,000 residents.

Last year, 34 planning applications were submitted to the department, which is slightly down from 41 applications in 2024 and the same number

in 2023. Gort explained there are a few reasons for that. He explained that in 2025, there were three ordinance amendments and many "one-off" applications. Gort said the outlier in the data for 2025 is encroachment agreements regarding a change to fence requirements.

"We will likely see that inflated encroachment agreement number decreasing over the years going forward," Gort said.

SEE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, PAGE 11



FILE

Brides can get information from a variety of wedding vendors on Sunday, March 15 at the Wedding Show.

Press Publications hosts Wedding Show

BY MAYA BETTI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Press Publications and the White Bear Country Inn are set to host their 41st annual Wedding Show from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, March 15. The event brings together top local vendors in a low-stress setting, giving brides and their guests a chance to ex-

plore everything from venues to cupcakes without the crowds or high fees of big city shows.

Patty Steele, general manager at Press Publications, says the show is especially appealing to first-time attendees.

"First-timers are looking for an easy, convenient show that has a lot of good local vendors," Steele said.

According to Steele, the Wedding Show offers just that.

Up to 25 vendors will be on hand, including longtime favorites like Unreal Arrangements, Midwest DJ and Creative License, as well as newcomers, such as two balloon décor companies.

SEE WEDDING SHOW, PAGE 7

City takes over as ditch authority from watershed

BY MADELINE DOLBY
QUAD COMMUNITY PRESS EDITOR

LINO LAKES — Lino Lakes has asked the Rice Creek Watershed District (RCWD) to transfer management authority of portions of Anoka County Ditch (ACD) 55 to the city. The specific portion requested for transfer is known as Branch 8.

The segment of the ditch proposed for transfer lies entirely within Lino Lakes, east of Centerville. According to a report created by Chris Otterness, a professional engineer at Houston Engineering, the well drains west from the northeast quarter of Section 24, Township 31, Range 22 in Anoka County, crosses Interstate 35E and ends with its connection to the main trunk of ACD 55.

The total length of the proposed transfer is approximately 4,600 feet. Toni Schmidt, drainage and facilities manager at Houston Engineering, said the watershed district will still manage the remaining portions of ACD 55, including its main trunk.

According to Schmidt, under the transfer, Lino Lakes will have the authority to modify or replace Branch 8's system at its own discretion, but the city is still subject to local, state and federal rules, including RCWD rules.

"The city would inspect and maintain Branch 8 of the drainage system. It would manage it under its municipal authorities, rather than under M.S. 103E," Schmidt said. M.S.103E.812 refers to the state's statutes for drainage projects that affect state land or water areas used for conservation.

SEE DITCH AUTHORITY, PAGE 2

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DITCH AUTHORITY: District approves transfer

FROM PAGE 1

The city will still be obligated to manage the drainage system to meet the needs of upstream landowners. According to Otterness, the city and private developers will likely replace most of Branch 8 with urban stormwater infrastructure (storm sewer, open channels and ponds) to accommodate future development in the area.

“The alignment and makeup of the system will likely change due to development. This is one of the instigating factors in the city’s request to be transferred management of the drainage system,” Schmidt added. “They have an upcoming proposed project to extend Otter Lake Road . . . It would cross Branch 8 at least once, maybe multiple times.”

Until future development occurs, though, water flow to ACD 55 is physically limited by the capacity of the tile crossings under I-35E.

The design of the new stormwater infrastructure would be in adherence to the Otter Lake Road extension project. According to Henry Meeker, professional engineer at WSB, the city is also looking to construct components of a regional drainage system in accordance with the Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan (CSMP) prepared by the city of Lino Lakes and approved by the RCWD in 2018.

Included in the regional drainage system is regional wetland floodplain storage, an open conveyance ditch and regional pond with an outlet under I-35E. The drainage system will provide a surface flow outlet for land in the region for the first time since the construction of the Interstate. According to Meeker, the regional system roughly follows the alignment of Branch 8.

When it comes to water quality, Schmidt said the city is subject to NPDES MS4 permit requirements, which requires it to limit pollutants entering the stormwater system. The city is also subject to terms of the CSMP and RCWD rules.

“With all of these requirements, the city does adhere to objectives, with regard to water quality, similar to Rice Creek,” he added.

The RCWB Board of Managers approved the transfer in a 4-0 vote (Board Manager Janet Hegland was absent).

Editor Madeline Dolby can be reached at 651-407-1226 or quadnews@presspubs.com.



RICE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT | CONTRIBUTED

The segment of Anoka County Ditch 55 proposed for transfer, known as Branch 8, lies entirely within Lino Lakes. Branch 8, shown as the teal line on the map above, will now be managed by the city.

SCHOOL BRIEF

Lakes International Language Academy announces retirement of executive director



Shannon Peterson

CONTRIBUTED

Lakes International Language Academy (LILA) in Forest Lake has announced the upcoming retirement of Executive Director Shannon Peterson, a founding leader who has served the school since its launch in 2004.

Peterson helped transform a small parent-led vision into a PreK-12 International Baccalaureate (IB) World School offering Spanish and Mandarin Chinese immersion pathways, a full continuum of IB

programs, and expanded athletics and arts opportunities. Under her leadership, LILA earned IB authorization, becoming one of the few schools in the upper Midwest to offer the full continuum.

“Shannon’s leadership has shaped every chapter of LILA’s story,” said Chief Financial Officer Julie Lundgren. “Her steady vision, integrity and deep belief in our mission have positioned LILA not just to succeed—but to flourish well into the future.”

Peterson was recently named the 2025 Minnesota Charter School Leadership Award recipient by the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. LILA plans to honor Peterson at Family Fun Night on May 29 with a community art project celebrating her more than two decades of service.

LILA is currently interviewing candidates for its next executive director and a new leader is expected to be announced later this spring.

CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

• The American Indian Education Indian Parent Advisory Committee gave its annual presentation to the board. Within the Centennial School District, there are 181 students who self-identify as Native American and represent 89 Nations. Some achievements highlighted in the presentation included attendance, grade-point average (GPA) and graduation rates. So far, 59.6% of students missed less than 5% of school for the first semester. About 38% of middle school and

highschoolers received a GPA of 3.0 or higher and the graduation rate in 2024-2025 was 94%, a 10% increase from last year.

• Superintendent Jeff Holmberg will join the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) staff as an adjunct instructor following board approval. Holmberg has been invited by SCSU to instruct a graduate course for aspiring educational leaders. The course is structured over three weekends total during late February and March. As this is a

weekend cohort model, the instruction time will not interfere with Holmberg’s regular district business hours or his responsibility as superintendent.

• The 2025-2026 budget will undergo revisions following board approval. According to Executive Director of Business Patrick Chaffey, the revisions reflect updated assumptions and estimates based on new information regarding future enrollment, new settlements, staffing adjustments and prior year

audit results.

• Schwab, Vollhaber, Lubratt (SVL) will provide the necessary equipment to replace the chillers at Centennial, Golden Lake and Centerville elementaries after the board accepted its bid of \$535,600. The board also approved the other project bids: Boiler Services Inc. will install the chillers for \$498,600; Humeratech will provide the controls for \$47,406. The chiller improvement replacement project is included in the district’s long-term facilities plan

for renovation.

• Holmberg and Chaffey provided the board with an update regarding the district’s long-range plan. The plan, also referred to as Centennial Forward, will ensure schools remain vibrant, safe and ready to meet the needs of current and future students (see full story in next week’s issue).

• The board accepted several contributions made to Centerville Elementary, Rice Lake Elementary and Centennial High School.

The next regular school board meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 16.

Madeline Dolby

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

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ONGOING EVENTS

HUGO SENIOR CITIZENS PLAY '500'

When: 12:45 p.m. Thursday March 5 and the 1st, 3rd and 5th Thursday of every month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th Street N.
Details: Games begin at 12:45 p.m. Refreshments and coffee served. All senior citizens from the area invited.
Contact: 651-592-0369 or barbconnolly1958@yahoo.com

HUGO SENIOR CLUB

When: 1 p.m. Monday, March 16 and every 3rd Monday of every other month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th Street N.
Details: Planning meeting for 2026 followed by games. Coffee and refreshments served.
Contact: 651-592-0369 or barbconnolly1958@yahoo.com

CURRENT EVENTS

SECRETS TO DESIGNING A MODERN ESTATE PLAN

When: 10-11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 5
Where: White Bear Lake Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave.
Details: Learn how estate planning tools work to create a personalized plan that ensures peace of mind and security. Register online.
Contact: communityservices.isd624.org/adults-seniors/programs

LIFE ON THE RUN: GANGSTERS IN WHITE BEAR LAKE

Details: 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10
Where: White Bear Lake Armory, 2228 Fourth St.
Details: Deep dive into the areas most wanted guests.
Contact: whitebearhistory.org

FAT TIRE BIKING

When: 1-3 p.m. Wednesday, March 11
Where: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park
Details: Learn the basics of fat tire biking. Registration required.
Contact: anokacountyparks.com

ESTATE PLANNING

When: 10-11 a.m., Thursday, March 12
Where: St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 1965 East County Road E, White Bear Lake

Details: Learn about estate planning, estate administration, elder law, get answers to questions, and find resources to get started with planning; RSVP required. Doors open at 9:30 a.m.
Contact: 651-777-1107 or office@ststephenwbl.org

MUSIC OF THE DECADES: THE 1960S

When: 6-8 p.m. Thursday, March 12
Where: White Bear Lake Armory, 2228 4th St.
Details: Explore exhibits and enjoy a "tour" of folk music from the 60s era with Folk Revival MN. Open house style.
Contact: whitebearhistory.org

TRIVIA BINGO

When: 10:30-11:30 a.m. Friday, March 13
Where: White Bear Lake Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave.
Details: Take a nostalgic trip through the 50s, 60s and 70s with a fun twist on the classic game. Call to register.
Contact: 651-653-6121

'THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST'

When: March 13-22
Where: Hanifl Performing Arts Center, White Bear Lake
Details: Live performance of Oscar Wilde's timeless comedy that highlights absurdities of Victorian life.
Contact: lakeshoreplayers.org

GUIDED BIRD HIKE

When: 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, March 14
Where: Big Marine Park Reserve, playground parking lot
Details: Take part in a guided bird hike, listen to the sounds of nature and learn to identify the birds that call the St. Croix valley home. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
Contact: WashingtonCountyMN.gov/BirdHikes

MAHTOMEDI GARDEN CLUB

When: 9:30-10:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 17
Where: Mahtomedi District Education Center, room 103, 1520 Mahtomedi Ave.
Details: Monthly program "Ephemerals with Patrick Maun" is open to members and the public. Advance registration required.
Contact: mahtomedigardenclub.org



CONTRIBUTED

Fix-It Clinic

When: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, March 7
Where: Hardwood Creek Library, 19955 Forest Rd. N., Forest Lake
Details: Bring broken items and receive free guided assistance with repairs. First come, first served; two item limit.
Contact: washingtoncountymn.gov/3776/Fix-It-Clinics

ARE YOUR RETIREMENT DOLLARS TAX EFFICIENT?

When: noon-1:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 17
Where: White Bear Lake Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave.
Details: Workshop explores how investment taxes work and how to create tax-efficient income.
Contact: communityservices.isd624.org/adults-seniors/programs

TRAVEL SHOW

When: 10-11:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 18
Where: White Bear Lake Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave.
Details: Enjoy a brief educational presentation with highlights of trips and details of traveling with Premier World Travel.
Contact: 651-653-3124 or isd624.org

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Royal Credit Union announces Hugo branch manager



CONTRIBUTED

Anthony Cole Royal Credit Union recently announced Anthony Cole as branch manager of its Hugo office, located at 14602 Everton Ave. N. Cole will oversee all aspects of branch operations, including coaching and development of his team, delivering service to members and maintaining operational excellence. Cole joined Royal in 2021 as branch manager at the River Falls office. In this new role, Cole is looking forward to strengthening connections within the community and building meaningful relationships with the members he serves.

Cole is currently a student at St. Paul College studying computer programming. He is involved with Bolder Options, a Minneapo-

lis nonprofit that advocates for youth mentorship. Outside of work, Cole enjoys photography, riding motorcycles and spending time with family and friends.

New auto shop coming to Hugo

HUGO — Bobby & Steve's Auto World plans to open its doors for a soft opening in March followed by a grand opening in April. The business is located at 14797 Forest Boulevard N. in the former Key Automotive space.

Bobby & Steve's Auto World offers a variety of services, including 24-hour convenience and gas, 24-hour towing, everything "under the hood" automotive repair, restaurants and a car wash. The business currently has nine locations, including Eden Prairie, West St. Paul, Columbia Heights, three in Minneapolis and two in Bloomington.

"Bobby & Steve's Auto World is a growing company, and we are always looking for opportunities

to expand our business," said Ben Estby, director of convenience store operations. "Hugo is a great community, so when we had a chance to purchase this property, we were really excited not only for the growth potential for our company but also for the chance to be a part of the Hugo community."

The business tentatively has a soft opening planned for March 15 and a grand opening for April 1. For more information, visit <https://bobbyandstevesautoworld.com/>.



SHANNON GRANHOLM | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Bobby & Steve's Auto World is currently renovating the former Key Automotive space located at 14797 Forest Boulevard N.

WEEKLY WAG



Mount Everest is a loving companion with a big personality and an even bigger heart! He is playful, goofy and very affectionate. Mount Everest is a 2-year-old Husky/Siberian husky mix. He is social with other dogs, and he is friendly

to everyone he meets. He is house-trained, intelligent and playful, and he has a high energy level. Mount Everest is treat-motivated and he is eager to engage. He enjoys walks and exploring outside, and he would do best with a companion or with a family that can provide regular exercise and play time. Mount Everest is kennel-trained but he enjoys being with his people much more than he does spending time in his crate. He has boundless, silly and joyful energy, and he is certain to provide plenty of smiles and lots of entertainment.

Mount Everest is a big, lovable companion who wants to be part of a loving forever family that will provide adventure and fun. If you are interested in learning more about Mount Everest or adopting him, please fill out an application at www.ruffstartrescue.org. Once your application is received, Ruff Start Rescue will contact you as soon as possible.

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'I didn't want to wake up the dragon'

A few weeks ago, my alarm to get up for work didn't go off. The night before, I had forgotten to plug my phone in to charge and it died sometime in the night. Thirty minutes after I was supposed to wake up, my mom hesitantly knocked on my bedroom door, slowly opened it and proceeded to ask me if I had meant to sleep in late.



Madeline's Mail
Madeline Dolby

With my head shoved under a pillow, I mumbled that I had not meant to sleep through my alarm nor sleep in. After she told me I had slept an extra 30 minutes, the grey fog that always seems to fill my brain first thing in the morning disappeared and I rushed through my morning routine to make it to work on time.

As I waited for my coffee to finish brewing, my mom asked how I had managed to oversleep because it was something I had never done before, not even in

high school. I simply told her my phone had died and I use the alarm clock feature on my phone to wake me up.

During the conversation, she said "I was a bit hesitant to wake you up. I never know how you're going to respond... I didn't want to wake up the dragon."

For anyone who knows me, I genuinely love to sleep. I also am an extremely hard sleeper. I hate waking up early unless absolutely necessary. And I hate being woken up by someone else.

One night in college, at probably around 2 a.m. the fire alarms in the duplex I lived in started going off unexpectedly. I stumbled out of my bedroom, extremely annoyed by the disruption to my sleep, and was met with my roommates sitting on the living room couch asking how I had just woken up. Apparently, they had been going off since 1 a.m. They were amazed that I didn't hear them since one was in my bedroom.

My family has learned the hard way not to speak to me right after I wake up. I need time to "thaw" before interacting with those around me. If I don't, for reasons I still don't know why, I am extremely defensive and everything annoys me.

They also have learned not to wake me up early unless there is a good reason. My older sister used to wake me up at 6 a.m. on Christmas morning to open presents. When I became a teenager, I became vicious when she woke me up. I remember yelling at her that she could let me sleep for an extra hour because the presents would still be there. You could say that was when the "dragon" was born.

On Sunday, March 8, we will set the clocks ahead an hour for daylight savings time. My mind is already reeling about the fact I am going to lose an hour of sleep. It won't affect me for too long, but I do struggle to fall asleep that first week of the time change. I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Akinbolaji Akingbola, an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School, about the effects daylight savings time has on sleep. He provided a lot of good tips and tricks to help combat the change. You'll find my full interview with him in this edition of the paper. I hope you find it as insightful as I did.

Hopefully his tips and tricks will help tame "the dragon."

Madeline Dolby is the editor of the Quad Community Press.



You can't have one without the other

Freedom and civil rights are inseparable, and I don't think we talk about that enough. I fear freedom has been

reduced to a slogan associated with the armed forces. While the armed forces defend our country, the framers of the U.S. Constitution understood lasting personal freedom and liberty comes from strong civil rights protections.

My journey as a civil rights advocate began when I joined the Army National Guard in high school. I enlisted to experience my freedom, as I saw military service as an avenue to expand my horizons outside of my small town, pay for college, travel and meet people different from me. My experiences as a female service member in the Middle East during Desert Storm, in Guatemala and several U.S. states made me keenly aware of the link between freedom and civil rights. I was grateful to live in the U.S. where equality and liberty felt permanent. However, life experiences over the next 30 years erased any naivety that these protections are applied fairly and consistently. They only work when we the people hold each other, our elected representatives and our government accountable.

Civil rights define, protect and enforce the limits on government power. Our civil rights can be found as amendments in the Constitution.

The Bill of Rights protect individual liberties of speech, religion, press, gun rights, due process, fair trials and protection from cruel punishment by limiting government power. Civil rights are essential to freedom as they protect individuals, guarantee equality, enable democracy, safeguard private life, prevent tyranny and support peaceful change.

Having a list of civil rights is great but in the absence of strong protections, freedom under those rights is theoretical. Only when civil right protections are strong is freedom durable and communal. They are not obstacles to order but rather the foundation making a free society possible. The framers of the Constitution understood this. In The Federalist Papers, James Madison argued that freedom cannot survive without legal protection, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." Madison believed people abuse power, majorities can oppress minorities and officials can violate rights. Madison, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson firmly believed that freedom survives only when rights are protected by law, courts and engaged citizens. They designed the Constitution to make civil rights operational, not symbolic and built a system to defend freedom.

Something the framers did not believe was freedom was self-sustaining. Instead, they believed freedom had to be practiced by a virtuous and informed public. Madison warned that free governments collapse when citizens become passive. Power always tries to expand, officials respond to pressure, and silence enables abuse so citizens must

monitor government and speak out. When citizens stop paying attention, rights weaken, even if laws remain on paper.

Protecting our civil rights to live in freedom is our responsibility to each other. Voting is the most basic civic duty and as a volunteer with The League of Women Voters, I believe that all voices be heard at the ballot box. Voting allows citizens to remove officials who violate rights, support civil rights legislation, and shape courts through elections. Low voter participation weakens rights protection.

Defending civil rights can be incorporated into our daily lives to create a culture of liberty. We can challenge discrimination at work, support fair policies at school, question unlawful searches, report misconduct and teach children about rights. Supporting civil liberties organizations, independent media, legal aid groups and community advocates with our time and resources makes a difference.

I had the privilege to defend my country by serving in the Army National Guard but now I serve in organizations that advocate for freedom by protecting civil rights. The League of Women Voters understands civil rights survive not because they are written down, but because citizens insist they be honored. Freedom thrives when ordinary people choose to speak up, show up and stand up for the freedom and dignity of one another.

Kim Samrock is a Hugo resident and a member of the League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area.



Movers & Shakers
Kim Samrock

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- Submissions must include a full name, address and daytime phone number for verification.
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- Due to space limitations, letters that don't address local issues are not guaranteed publication.
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- Submissions containing libelous or derogatory statements will not be published.
- Submissions containing facts not previously published in The Citizen must be accompanied by factual verification.
- All letters are subject to editing.
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Work for beauty, find joy

A few days ago, I drove past a woman (let's call her Cruella) and her dog in my neighborhood in beautiful southwest Hugo. Her dog had just pooped, and I saw her continue their walk without picking up the poop. Shame on her! I should have stopped my car and offered her a poop bag and a conversation about responsible dog owners, but I didn't. Shame on me!

Yesterday, I was walking my own dog and came across a woman (let's call her Maria) who was picking up trash — including dog poop — up and down the block. Snaps for her! Let's all be Maria, not Cruella. For our neighbors, community, pets and ourselves. When we work for beauty, we find joy.

**Christina Ogata
Hugo**

Oil change facility proposed near Lino Lakes, Centerville border

BY MADELINE DOLBY
QUAD COMMUNITY PRESS EDITOR

LINO LAKES — A Valvoline Instant Oil Change facility is proposed at Clearwater Commons, a three-lot commercial subdivision, located at 7104 21st Ave. N. on the border of Lino Lakes and Centerville.

In June 2025, the city approved a preliminary plat for Clearwater Commons and the final plat was approved in September 2025 (See "Clearwater Commons development proposes 3 commercial sites," Quad Community Press, May 29, 2025). A site and building plan review for a Chipotle was also completed in conjunction with the preliminary plan.

The lot, referred to as Lot 3, is 0.64 acres in size and is zoned GB, general business. It is guided com-

mercial per the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The oil change facility will be approximately 1,462 square feet and will feature two service bays, office space and a restroom.

According to City Planner Katie Larsen, staff recommends the conditional use permit, submitted with the land use application, only be for automobile repair-minor, as defined in the City Code Section 100.7001(2) definitions.

An automobile repair-minor is defined as an establishment providing goods or services related to passenger motor vehicles such as car washes, repair businesses limited to minor engine repair, fluid changing, tire service and muffler repair and other uses of similar character, but not including uses defined as a major automobile business or automobile sales.

Lino Lakes Planning and Zoning Board Chair Michael Root asked James Douthit, Valvoline representative, about customer overnight parking and if it is a possibility.

"No. No vehicles are left onsite overnight," said Douthit. "We don't do any work outside. We don't do any storage outside. Everything is inside the building."

According to Douthit, Valvoline's services take anywhere between 15 to 20 minutes and 90% of the services its employees complete are oil changes.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval 6-0.

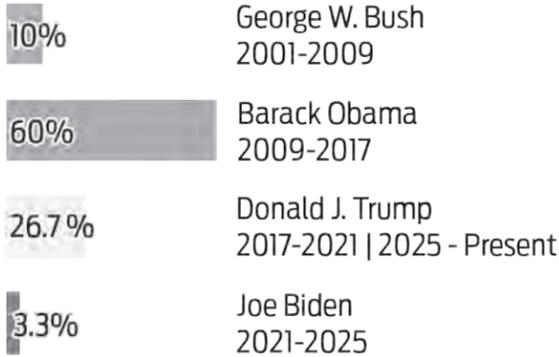
Editor Madeline Dolby can be reached at 651-407-1226 or quad-news@presspubs.com.

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White Bear Lake Area School Board debates changes to consent agenda policy

BY MAYA BETTI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A procedural debate is resurfacing amongst board members of the White Bear Lake Area School Board as they discuss revisions to Policy 203.6, which governs how items are removed from the board's consent agenda.

The consent agenda allows the board to approve routine items, such as meeting minutes and financial reports, in a single vote. Board members may request that an item be removed for a separate discussion.

Under the proposed revision to the policy, a board member seeking to remove an item from the consent agenda would be required to make a motion, receive a second and obtain majority approval from the board.

School Board Member Dan Skaar raised concerns with the proposed revision, arguing that requiring a second and majority vote could make it more difficult for minority viewpoints to receive public discussion.

"This policy in effect suppresses Robert's Rules, which looked for fairness for all to be heard. I think it's unprecedent-

ed, undemocratic and it's just a bold attempt to silence those who have a different point of view," Skaar said.

The policy discussion follows disagreement from the board's Jan. 12 meeting over whether a board member could move an item off the consent agenda without a second or vote. At the meeting, Skaar attempted to move an item off the consent agenda for separate discussion.

The board ruled that the item would not be removed.

Skaar said he consulted both Robert's Rules of Order experts and the Minnesota School Boards Association and was told that, typically, any board member may remove an item from the consent agenda without requiring a second or vote unless a district policy explicitly states otherwise.

Board Chair Scott Arcand said that if a procedural error occurred, it was his ruling — not the board as a whole — that was out of order.

Board members in support of the revision say the intent is not to silence discussion, but to reinforce established agenda-setting procedures.

"When we have board mem-

bers that are trying to pull things off the consent agenda, it appears from my perspective that people are trying to create their own agenda items," Board Member Christina Streiff Oji said.

According to Streiff Oji, this reduces the efficiency of the board and disrupts meetings.

"Questions can be answered, things can be pulled off and on, agenda items can be added," Streiff Oji said. "But one board member, since I've been on this board, does not add agenda items each week."

Others were in agreement. "There are ways to get things on the agenda, and perhaps some of the things you've (Skaar) introduced haven't been agreed on, but maybe they just weren't appropriate agenda items," Board Member Kathleen Daniels said.

The proposed revision to Policy 203.6 will return for a second reading and possible adoption in the board's March 2 meeting.

Maya Betti is a contributing writer for Press Publications. She can be reached by emailing news@presspubs.com.

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POLICE REPORTS

The Washington County Sheriff's Office reported the following calls for service:

- Residents in the 13000 block of 135th Court N. at 12:09 a.m. Jan. 23 reported receiving threatening messages.
- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies conducted a traffic stop at 9:13 a.m. Jan. 23 in the 14000 block of Forest Blvd. N. and issued a citation to the driver for speeding.
- At 6:52 p.m. Jan. 23 deputies initiated a traffic stop on Forest Blvd. N. and 140th Street N. for expired registration and cited the driver for the tardy tabs.
- A vehicle parked illegally in the 5000 block of 135th Street N. received a citation under the windshield wipers at 9:40 p.m. Jan. 23.
- Deputies on rolling patrol on Forest Blvd. N. and 170th Street N. at 11:36 p.m. Jan. 23 spotted a male walking along the highway and gave him a courtesy ride to a friend's residence in White Bear Lake.
- Deputies received a call about a suspicious, unidentified person observed in an unoccupied building in the 4000 block of Rosemary Lane at 9:41 p.m. Jan. 24. On arrival, deputies searched the premises and found no one. They contacted the owner of the building and learned that the person was a worker checking the heaters during one of the coldest nights of the year.
- A motorist was arrested for DWI in the 14000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 11:54 p.m. Jan. 24, after deputies on patrol noticed a vehicle committing several traffic violations as they looked on in amazement. The driver was pulled over, investigated and eventually arrested.
- Deputies conducted a welfare check on a resident in the 4000 block of Education Drive at 2:16 p.m. Jan. 25 after he wouldn't answer the door or phone when his son called. When deputies knocked on the door and windows, the occupant answered the door after a considerable amount of time. When he saw his son and deputies, he slammed the door in their faces. And

the medical welfare check was thus accomplished.

- Residents in the 5000 block of 149th Street N. reported a stranger at their door at 1:29 p.m. Jan. 26 looking for someone named "Stella." After telling the unfamiliar male that no one by that name was there, the complainants retrieved the vehicle description and license plate number.

Deputies used that information to locate the person looking for "Stella" and advised him she would never be at the complainant's home and to never go there again.

The subject replied "no problem" by return text.

- A person in the 14000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 3:58 p.m. called deputies for help in getting a vehicle unlocked after saying he left his phone and keys inside.

However, deputies would not help the complainant gain access because he was not the registered owner and wouldn't try to reach the registered owner.

- Deputies at 4:12 p.m. Jan. 26 were called out to the scene of a neighbor dispute about who owned the shared pond between homes in the 4000 block of Fair Oaks Circle N. One neighbor said the other neighbor claimed to own the pond, while the other neighbor said the original neighbor was leaving his own equipment on the rink and that the complainant's children had lost all the pucks.
- Damage to a car door reported at 4:59 p.m. Jan. 26 in the 5000 block of 126th

Street N. turned out to have been likely caused by road debris.

- In the Case of the Cold as Concrete Coyote, a frozen coyote was reported at 2:30 p.m. Jan. 27 on Geneva and Goodview Avenues.
- A motorist ill-prepared for all the paperwork necessary for driving a motor vehicle was cited at 12:34 a.m. Jan. 27 on Frenchman Road and Victor Hugo Blvd. N. for driving with an expired Minnesota license plate and failure to provide proof of insurance, following a traffic stop for no license plate light illuminated.

Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies assisted a woman with her broken-down vehicle at 4:59 p.m. Jan. 27 on Oneka Parkway N. and Evergreen Avenue N. Due to the cold weather and the fact that her vehicle was not blocking any roads or driveways, deputies gave her a courtesy ride to the Kwip Trip on Victor Hugo Blvd. N. and helped her order an Uber and arrange for a tow through her insurance.

- Raising questions as to whether ding-dong-ditch season had already begun, residents in the 5000 block of 137th Street N. at 5:42 p.m. Jan. 27 reported two unknown persons ringing their private doorbell. Having maintained their peak of season quickness during winter, the ringers were too swift to be caught in the act.
- Deputies conducted their first of five traffic stops on Jan. 29 at 1:32 a.m. in the 14000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. for an obstructed license plate. That driver received a citation for failure to provide proof of insurance. The second motorist was cited for speeding at 6:55 a.m. on Forest Blvd. N. and 150th Street N. The third was cited for driving after revocation at 7:12 a.m. on 120th Street N. and Forest Blvd. N. The fourth motorist was issued a verbal warning at 10:49 a.m. for parking in the right turn lane in the 4000 block of Heritage Parkway. The fifth driver was cited at 8:44 p.m. on Forest Blvd. N. and 145th Street N. for using a cell phone while trying to operate a motor vehicle.

- A vehicle stuck and abandoned due to the snowstorm was blocking access to a townhome neighborhood in the 15000 block of Emerald Drive N. at 5:39 a.m. Feb. 1 and was towed.

Deputies also assisted a motorist who took a corner too fast and slid on the snow in the 8000 block of 155th Street N. While trying to get the vehicle out of the ditch, the driver locked the keys inside the vehicle. Deputies facilitated in extricating and unlocking the ditchmobile.

- Homeowners in the 6000 block of Goodview Trail N. at 3:20 p.m. Feb. 2 reported finding their mail in the street when they returned home. The complainants didn't notice any missing or damaged articles.
- Deputies on patrol on Frenchman Road and Oneka Parkway N. at 4:07 p.m. Feb. 2 recognized the driver of a vehicle who they knew to be currently revoked and conducted a traffic stop. After a review of their mobile data computer confirmed deputies' suspicions, they cited the driver multiple times for violating Minnesota traffic laws.
- A business in the 14000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. N. at noon Feb. 3 reported a female shopper found with merchandise in her bag that she didn't pay for. The items were returned to the store, but staff didn't want to pursue charges. Instead, they issued an internal trespass notice to the woman and told deputies about it.
- The driver of a vehicle with a license plate covered with snow in the 15000 block of Forest Blvd. N. was pulled over at noon Feb. 3 for displaying an unreadable license plate and cited for multiple traffic violations after deputies learned that the driver was suspended and had no insurance on his vehicle.
- A resident in the 13000 block of Geneva Avenue N. at 9:00 a.m. Feb. 4 reported an attempted scam from a person claiming to be from the WCSO and that the complainant needed to show up in person to the courthouse. The caller ID showed no phone number, and the complainant did not fall for the scam.

Loretta Harding

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WEDDING SHOW: Features vendors

FROM PAGE 1

Attendees can browse offerings from photographers, florists, DJs, venue coordinators, bakers, décor specialists and club services, and can sample cakes and cupcakes, view floral arrangements and explore wedding apps. The show also features unique vendors such as Doggy Social, which provides professional wedding-day dog care, and a press-on nail art specialist.

“It’s the perfect opportunity to gather ideas, ask questions and envision a beautiful, personalized wedding right here in White Bear Lake,” said April Timp, the hotel’s catering and special events director.

The event also includes giveaways and prizes. Gary LaRue, an award-winning vocalist and longtime emcee, will call out basket prizes throughout the day, including a free room and dinner at the White Bear Country Inn. In addition to a cake walk that will

offer other prizes, the first 50 brides will receive swag bags filled with goodies.

Brides and ticket holders can also enjoy lunch at Rudy’s with a \$5 discount and enjoy the restaurant’s famous Bloody Mary bar.

“It’s exciting that I get to showcase our venue as a seamless, one-stop wedding destination —

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Brides who attend can meet with decor specialists, florists and other unique vendors such as Doggy Social and a press-on nail artist.

PUBLIC SAFETY BRIEF



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Fire crews were on scene of a house fire in the 6300 block of 151st Street in Hugo for approximately two hours Feb. 26.

Fire response likely saves Hugo home

Around noon on Thursday, Feb. 26, the Hugo Fire Department was dispatched to the 6300 block of 151st Street N. in Hugo on report of a fire on a deck.

Upon arrival, crews found that the deck and the back side of the home were on fire, and flames were spreading quickly to the attic.

An adult female was home at the time of the fire and was alerted to the fire when a window on the back side of the home broke. She was able to evacuate the home with her pets safely.

“Fortunately, we had three firefighters working their full-time jobs remote

while at the fire station and (they) were able to respond quickly to extinguish the fire,” Fire Chief Jim Compton Jr. said. “We had water on the fire in approximately 7 minutes from the time we were paged, and we believe that saved the home.”

The Hugo Fire Department was assisted by auto aid partners White Bear Lake, Forest Lake, Lino Lakes and Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View (SBM) along with M Health Fairview Ambulance and the Washington County Sheriff’s Office.

Fire crews were on scene for approximately two hours. There were no injuries. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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WEDNESDAY

9:00AM BINGO @ JIMMY'S | 5:00PM MEAT RAFFLE @ DOC'S
6:00PM BINGO & RAFFLE @ BEARTOWN

THURSDAY

6:00PM BINGO @ JIMMY'S | 7:00PM BINGO @ WB BAR

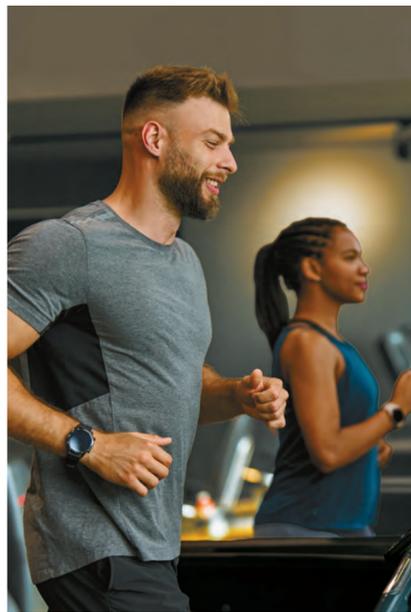
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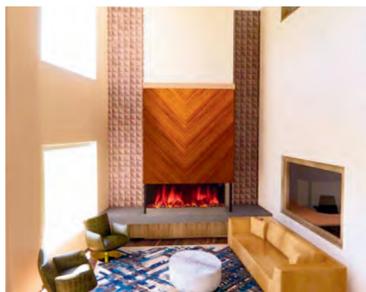
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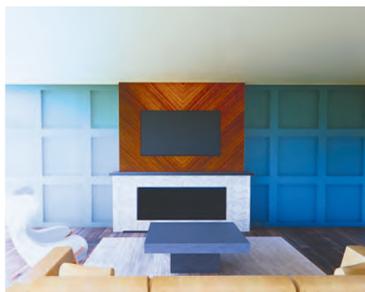
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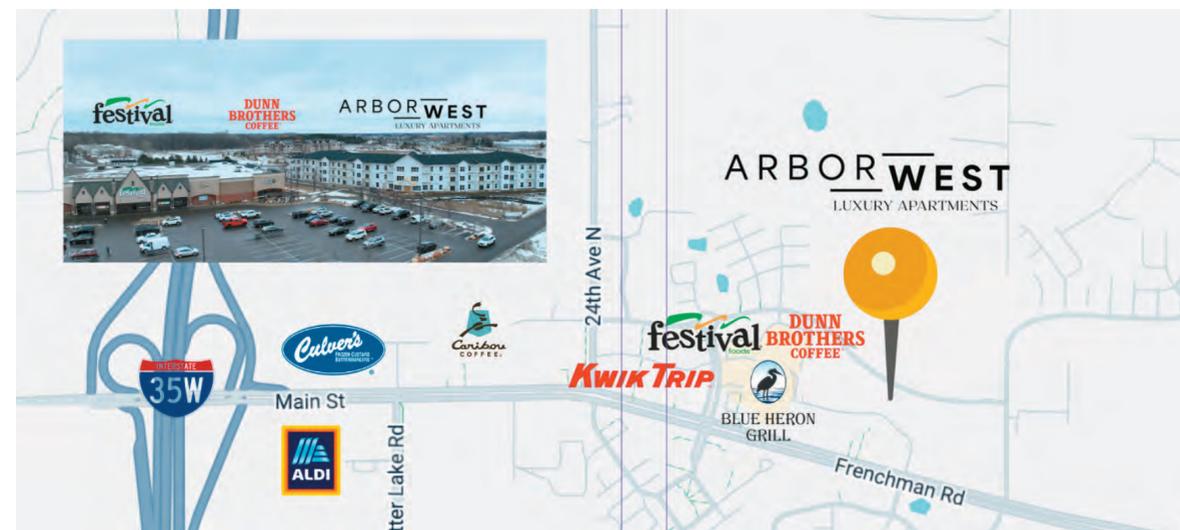
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White Bear skater competes in Olympics

Giorgia Birkeland, White Bear Lake native, competed in the Winter Olympics in speed skating as a member of team USA's pursuit team along with Brittany Bowe and Mia Manganello.

Her team placed fourth of eight teams in the quarterfinals to earn a spot in the semifinals, where they lost to Canada, the eventual gold medalists.

Birkeland, 23, is the USA team's youngest member. It was Birkeland's second Olympics. In 2022 in China, she placed 12th in the mass start event. In the 2023 world championships, her pursuit team earned a bronze medal.



Giorgia Birkeland

US SPEEDSKATING | CONTRIBUTED

Bruce Strand



USA CURLING | CONTRIBUTED

Showing their medals at an Olympics qualifying meet were Team Peterson, including Tara Peterson, third from left.

Dentist's curling team places 4th at Olympics

The USA women's curling team that included a White Bear Lake dentist turned in a solid showing at the Winter Olympics, falling just short of a bronze medal.

Tara Peterson of Isaacson Gentle Dentistry is a member of Team Peterson, headed by her sister Tabitha, which also includes Cory Thiesse and Taylor Anderson-Heide.

The Americans went 6-3 in round robin play to

earn a spot in the medal round for the first time since 2002. They lost to Switzerland in the semifinals and to Canada in the third-place match. They had beaten Canada in round robin.

It was the second Olympics for Tara and third for Tabitha. The sisters, Eagan natives, are longtime members of the St. Paul Curling Club.

Bruce Strand

Cougar swimmers score in 4 events at state

The Centennial swimmers, led by Benno Schuhbauer, scored points in four of their seven events in the state swimming meet on Friday and Saturday at the University of Minnesota.

Schuhbauer, a junior, placed tenth



SMUGMUG | CONTRIBUTED

Grant Page swam on relays that placed 10th and 13th in the state meet.

in both the individual medley in 1:53.46 and the backstroke in 51.60, lowering his own school records.

The Cougars medley relay placed tenth in 1:36.87 with Schuhbauer, Sawyer Celotta, Grant Page and Eliot Shepard. The 200-freestyle relay placed 13th in 1:28.13 with Page, Celotta, Shepard and Isaac Nguyen.

Not making the top 16 were Nguyen in the 200 free and butterfly, Celotta in breaststroke and the 400-freestyle relay.

The Cougars tallied 36 points, their most ever, said Coach Pete Crawford, and ranked 18th in the standings.

Bruce Strand

Akpan places 3rd with lone loss; collects 4th state medal

BY BRUCE STRAND
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR

Nora Akpan, star Centennial wrestler, was unable to repeat as a state champion Saturday but placed third at 155 pounds with just one loss for the season. She was 28-1.

Wrestling at 155 pounds, she started with a pin of Eniva Barry of Bloomington Kennedy in 1:10 and a 15-2 win over Madilyn Pulk of Badger Greenbush Middle River 15-2.

In the semifinals she met her match, pinned by Luverne's CeCe Redk in 2:13 in a duel of unbeaten. Akpan said she that

when she was on the bottom, she tried a gamble that backfired.

She came back to beat a Maple Grove wrestler 11-0, then pinned St. Paul Johnson's Elizabeth Hiler in 1:24 in the third-place match.

(Reck faced another unbeaten in the finals and lost to Apple Valley's top-ranked Cassy Gonzalez 7-4 in overtime.)

"Of course, it was disappointing to lose, but the thing about wrestling is you can learn from your mistakes and continue to grow, continue to grind away and eventually achieve your goals," said Akpan.

She intends to wrestle freestyle from now on and has several tournaments coming up including the women's nationals. She committed to the University of Iowa in January.

Akpan's loss to Reck was her only setback the past two seasons; she was an unbeaten champion at 130 as a junior. Akpan medaled for the fourth time. She placed third at 130 as a sophomore and sixth at 138 as a freshman.

Centennial's other girl entrant, junior Samantha Dougherty at 136, was pinned twice and finished 16-16.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Benno Schuhbauer

Centennial Swimming

March 3, 2026

Benno Schuhbauer, Centennial swimmer, had excellent meets at both sections and state to close his junior season. At state on Saturday, Schuhbauer placed 10th in both the individual medley in 1:53.46 and the backstroke in 51.60. In each, he lowered his team record that he had set at sections when he placed first and second, respectively. Schuhbauer also led off the medley relay team that placed 10th at state. As a sophomore he made the top 16 at state in backstroke and 100 free.



BRUCE STRAND | CONTRIBUTED

Nora Akpan pinned a St. Paul Johnson opponent in her final prep match at her fourth state tournament.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Hugo sees 'pretty busy year' for construction

FROM PAGE 1

When it comes to new residential construction, the city approved 118 permits for single-family homes in 2025 compared to 180 in 2024. For the first time since 2021, the city saw permits for multifamily units — 149 of them from two apartment projects (Arbor West and Oneka Fields).

"It's nice to see some multifamily coming back after a little bit of a

drought," Gort said.

The city also saw some commercial projects come through and approved three applications for Cedar Creek Solar Farm, Kwik Trip and The Dance Unit.

Gort said a good measure of building activity throughout the city is demonstrated by the number of inspections the building department completes each year. For 2025, city staff performed 4,818 inspections compared to 4,938 the previous year. Hugo staff also perform

inspections for other neighboring communities, including Scandia, Lino Lakes and Lake Elmo.

"It was a pretty busy year for construction," Gort noted. Projects under construction in 2025 include: Arbor West, Oneka Fields, the Liberty Classical Academy expansion, The Shores of Oneka Lake and Watercrest of Hugo.

Concept plans

Gort highlighted three concept plans that the city has either already seen or that will likely be coming forward for informal review soon.

"We are starting to see a few concepts coming through that are proposing a little bit more commercial than what we have seen in the past," Gort said. "So, the council can probably look forward to seeing a few things in the future."

The first one was reviewed by the Economic Development Authority back in November. La Delicious Bread, a bakery in Maplewood, is proposing a full-service restaurant that will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner and include a commercial space, retail space and row homes facing Egg Lake on the current city-owned property along Highway 61 and across from City Hall.

"They are proposing something a little more robust for this site," Gort said. "Right now, the city is working on a financial analysis with that group to make sure that they can make the project happen. The next

step will be entering a purchase agreement with that group."

Gort explained that city staff have also been working closely with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for some flexibility when it comes to shoreland regulations, particularly in the city's downtown area, which have often been the reason that projects have not moved forward on the Egg Lake site.

"At this point, the city has received agreement with the DNR for flexibility, primarily within the downtown areas with regards to setbacks, impervious surface and building height," he said. "Staff is preparing the new shoreland ordinance for the DNR to review. We will likely be bringing a formal update (to council) sometime soon."

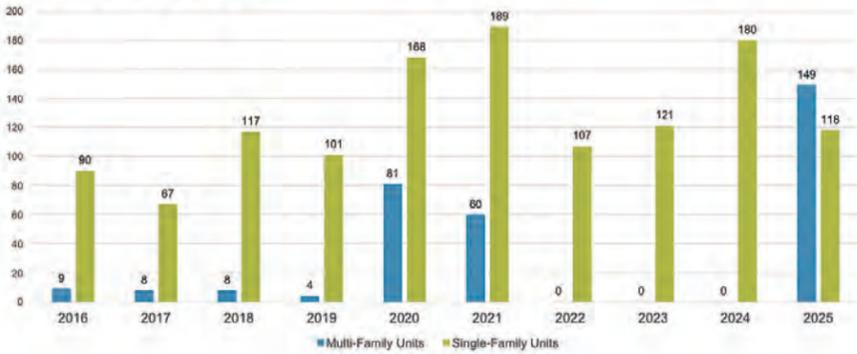
Another concept is Maplewood Development's proposal for Frenchman Village on the LaValle property located at the corner of Frenchman Road and Highway 61.

Fenway Land Company also has a concept for The Shores of Oneka Lake North, which would be an extension of the Shores of Oneka development currently under construction near Highway 61 and the 159th Street roundabout.

"Hopefully, we will have some formal applications soon," Gort said.

Managing Editor Shannon Granholm can be reached at 651-407-1227 or citizen-news@presspubs.com.

New Construction Residential Permits 2016-2025



CONTRIBUTED

The city approved 118 permits for single-family homes in 2025 compared to 180 in 2024. For the first time since 2021, the city saw permits for multifamily units — 149 of them from two apartment projects.

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Minnesota Snow Drag Tour makes first stop in north metro



PHOTOS BY SHANNON GRANHOLM | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

For the first time in the history of the tour, the Minnesota Snow Drag Tour hosted 500-foot drag races Feb. 28 on Egg Lake in Hugo. Spectators were invited to watch. In addition to side-by-side drag races, the event included a Show and Shine event hosted by the Hugo Knight Riders. After the event, an awards party was held at Hugo American Legion Post 620.

Reimagining Nelson Rehbein property: New concept plan proposed

BY MADELINE DOLBY
QUAD COMMUNITY PRESS EDITOR

LINO LAKES — Eighty-six housing units have been proposed by Twin Cities Land Holding to be built on a parcel located in the southwest quadrant of 20th Ave. S. and Cedar Street. The residential development is being called Harvest Grange.

The Planning and Zoning Board, as well as the City Council, reviewed a concept plan for this project last summer. At the time, it was known as the Nelson Rehbein Property and called for 90 housing units, 38 single-family lots and 52 townhomes (See “Residential development proposes 90 units,” Quad Community Press, June 11, 2025.)

Now Twin Cities Land Holding has submitted a revised preliminary plat for the site along with a request to rezone the property from R, Rural to R2, Two-Family Residential, and R3, Medium-Density Residential.

According to City Planner Katie Larsen, Harvest Grange will consist of 31 single-family homes on 60-foot-wide lots and 55 townhomes.

The site consists of three existing parcels. Larsen said the 11-acre parcel, owned by James and Kathleen Nelson, contains an existing house and accessory structure. The Rehbein parcels have been used for agricultural purposes. There is roughly 45% of open space throughout the development.

“We have three outlots on site, A, B and C. (Outlot A and B will be owned and maintained by the HOA (Homeowners Association), and then Outlot C will be owned and maintained by the city,” she added.

Per the city’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the 25-acre site is guided medium-density residential, which requires 4.0-6.0 units per net acre. “They are at 4.69 (units per acre), which is consistent with the density requirements,”

Larsen said.

Right now, 20th Ave. S. is planned to be a minor arterial reliever road. Street A, which will be within the development, will be a right in/right out only. Another street, Street C, will be private for townhome residents. A future connection to 6795 20th Avenue is also shown in the plan.

A traffic study was prepared by Transportation Collaborative and Consultants. The study area included the intersections of 20th Avenue and Cedar Street, 20th Avenue and Red Oak Lane and 20th Avenue and Birch Street. Per the study, the development is expected to generate 48 a.m. peak-hour trips and 57 p.m. peak-hour trips. The total daily trip generation is 644. According to Larsen, the proposed level of service (LOS) does not degrade by more than one LOS, which is not considered significant.

Larsen noted that the city’s water system has pumping capacity to supply the proposed development and the projected use falls within the city’s available firm capacity.

Resident Rick Pike, who lives in the Nadeau Acres neighborhood located south of the proposed development, said he is not fully opposed to the new development but did have some concerns.

“In the Nadeau Acres neighborhood alone, there is over 100 kids under the age of 18. We have no access to any trails or any parks,” Pike said. “I don’t like hearing we aren’t talking about putting in trails, we aren’t talking about putting in parks.”

Other residents within the Nadeau Acres neighborhood also said they would like to see trails and a park added for their young children to utilize. A few residents expressed concerns about traffic on 20th Avenue and pedestrian safety.

“Twentieth Avenue is extremely dangerous. It’s a 50-mile-per-hour speed limit, (which) seems reasonable until it’s nighttime, it’s raining, people are speeding,”

Grace Chiakowski said. “I recommend lowering the speed limit to 45 miles per hour and adding speed limit signs through Nadeau Acres and the new development.”

Kyle Vadner shared his thoughts about the level of traffic, too.

“The traffic on that road is insane. When my 4-year-old is asking me to go to the park (in the North Pointe neighborhood), we have to play ‘Frogger’ to try and get across. It’s kind of concerning,” he said.

Board Chair Michael Root said that ultimately, the city’s Park Board determines what parkland is going to be developed and the timing of it. Community Development Director Michael Grochala added that parks are constructed based on development.

“When we look at the development of parks, we look at a neighborhood service area. Our intent is to keep everybody within at least a half mile of a neighborhood park,” Grochala said. “When you look at where the location of this park is for this side of the area, it’s centrally located, so it’s between Centerville Road, 20th Avenue and Birch Street.”

With regard to improving traffic safety in the area, Grochala said neighborhood residents would have to approach the council asking for safety improvements. From there, the council would need to take some action to direct city staff to approach Anoka County.

“The county is not going to do it on their own unless there is a commitment from the local community to show they want it done,” he said. “That would be the start. It doesn’t guarantee anything, though.”

Editor Madeline Dolby can be reached at 651-407-1226 or quadnews@presspubs.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES - PUBLIC NOTICES - PUBLIC NOTICES

CITY OF HUGO ASSESSMENT NOTICE

Important Information Regarding Property Assessments This may affect your 2027 property taxes

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Appeal and Equalization of the City of Hugo shall meet on Thursday, April 2, 2026, in the Oneka Room at Hugo City Hall. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether taxable property in the jurisdiction has been properly valued and classified by the assessor, and also to determine whether corrections need to be made.

If you believe the value or classification of your property is incorrect, please contact your assessor’s office to discuss your concerns. If you are still not satisfied with the valuation or classification after discussing it with your assessor, you may appear before the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization. The board shall review the valuation, classification, or both if necessary, and shall correct it as needed. Generally, an appearance before your local board of appeal and equalization is required by law before an appeal can be taken to your county board of appeal and equalization. For more information, call the Washington County assessor’s office at 651-430-6175.

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Michele Lindau, City Clerk

Published one time in *The Citizen* on March 5, 2026.

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Published two times in *The Citizen* on March 5 and 19, 2026.

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Smokey's fish fry remains 'the best' 3 years running

BY MADELINE DOLBY
EDITOR

In honor of fish fry season, the Press will feature some Readers' Choice Best of the Press winners and finalists of the "Fish Fry" category in our coverage area.

During Lent, the aroma of sizzling fish fills the air as local churches welcome the community to their weekly or monthly fish fries. Throughout the season, some area restaurants join in the tradition and serve up their own special fish fry offerings in celebration of Lent.

Smokey's Pub N' Grill, located at 552 Lincoln Drive in East Bethel, established in 2012, has a unique approach to craft smokehouse foods and classic American dishes. The same can be said about its fish fry.

Smokey's Pub N' Grill has secured the title of "the best" fish fry in the Quad Community Press Readers' Best of the Press Contest for the last three years.

"The care, the love we put into the dish. Doing it from scratch really sets it apart from a lot of places," said Chris Leibel, co-owner and pit master of Smokey's.

The restaurant uses wild-caught Pacific cod and batters it by hand in a variation of an old Leibel family recipe. Leibel said a few years ago that he and Jeremy Huspek, co-owner of Smokey's, altered the recipe to make

the batter not quite as thick.

"It's really good. We thinned it out a little bit. We did some different variations of it," Leibel explained. "What we use now ... We knocked it out of the park and our customers love it."

One of the changes they made to the recipe was battering the fish in light beer. Before the switch, Leibel said Smokey's was using an IPA for its fish fries. When you order the fish fry, you'll receive three, four-ounce filets of cod, Memphis mustard coleslaw and a choice of fries or tater tots. The dish also comes with Smokey's homemade tartar sauce.

Smokey's offers a fish fry deal on Fridays all year long. During Lent, which runs between Feb. 18 and April 2 this year, the restaurant features a special fish fry promotion each week. Huspek said that the restaurant typically goes through five boxes of fish on a single Friday during Lent.

A few weeks ago, Leibel said Smokey's uploaded a video on social media showing the process of how the restaurant makes its fish fries, and the response from customers was great.

"The feedback was awesome. We had people say, 'I was just there. The fish was amazing.' All the feedback has been really positive," he said.

Editor Madeline Dolby can be reached at 651-407-1226 or quadnews@presspubs.com.



CONTRIBUTED

Smokey's Pub N' Grill's fish fry includes wild-caught Pacific cod, Memphis mustard coleslaw and a choice of fries or tots.

The Quad Community Press Readers' Choice 2025 Best of the Press categories Smokey's Pub N' Grill won, named finalist:

- Best Fish Fry
- Best BBQ Ribs
- Best Restaurant
- Best Tacos
- Best Beer Selection at a Bar (finalist)
- Best Bloody Mary (finalist)
- Best Bourbon Selection (finalist)
- Best Happy Hour (finalist)
- Best Lunch (finalist)
- Best Outdoor Dining (finalist)
- Best Appetizer (finalist)
- Best Appetizer Selection (finalist)
- Best Bar (finalist)

COMMUNITY BRIEF

Tickets on sale for Centennial Area Education Foundation annual gala

Those who are interested in attending the Centennial Area Education Foundation's annual gala can now purchase tickets for the event. The gala, Art & Soul, will take place from 6-11 p.m. Saturday, March 28, at the Bunker Hills Golf Club.

This year, proceeds raised at the gala will go toward the Fund The Need initiative, which focuses on enhancing music and arts education in Centennial schools.

To purchase tickets, visit www.caefoundation.org/gala. Bunker Hills Golf Club is located at 12800 Bunker Prairie Road NW, Coon Rapids.

CITY BRIEF

City of Hugo hosts 165th Street corridor open house

An open house will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, in the Oneka Room at City Hall to gather input on the 165th Street alternative urban areawide review (AUAR). The AUAR will confirm what land uses are in the area, where utilities are supposed to go and also address what kind of street improvements are needed. Final approval by the council is expected in May.

CALENDAR BRIEF

Masons gear up for smoked turkey booyah next month

The Forest Lake Masons will host a smoked turkey booyah drive-thru from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sunday, March 29, at the Masonic Lodge, 119 SE Eighth Ave. in Forest Lake. The comfort-food soup includes smoked turkey, vegetables, herbs and spices, and will be sold in 16-ounce to-go containers. Proceeds donated at the event will be matched by the Masons and benefit the Forest Lake High School clay target team. More information is available on the Forest Lake Masons' Facebook page.

LENT SPECIAL
FISH N' CHIPS - \$16.99
5 FILLETS WITH CHOICE OF SIDE

LITTLE VILLAGE PUB
FRIDAYS
11AM-10PM DURING LENT

Stop by a local
Fish Fry

Press
Publications

St. John's Men's Club of St. Genevieve's sponsor the
23rd Annual FISH FRY

Great Menu: Icelandic Cod, Baby Red Potatoes, French Fries, Cole Slaw, Macaroni-n-Cheese, Rolls, Pickles, Cookies, and Beverages

February 20th, 27th
March 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th
4:30 - 7:30 pm
Fortin Hall - St. John the Baptist Church
Hwy 61 & Cty Rd 14 - Hugo

Cost: Adults - \$15.00 • Seniors (60 & over) - \$12.00
Juniors 6-12: \$10.00 • Children 5 and under: Free

Best Fish Fry

WINNER WINNER WINNER WINNER

The Tavern
Bar and Grill
On Main

FISH FRY BASKET \$16.00
Starts Ash Wednesday, 11 am - 9 pm and Every Friday during Lent, 11 am-10pm

Includes:
• 4 pieces of house-breaded Alaskan cod
• French fries or tater tots
• Coleslaw

8001 LAKE DRIVE | LINO LAKES MN
(651)783-7106

WBL MINN
MANITOU
BAR & KITCHEN

Fish Fry Fridays
February 20 - April 3rd

DINNER SPECIAL 3pm - 10pm
ALL YOU CAN EAT COD
Served with fries & slaw \$19

LUNCH SPECIAL 11am - 3pm
TWO PIECE COD
Served with fries & slaw \$16

Purse Bingo 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the Month
Pulltabs & Etabs Available

RESERVATIONS AT
WWW.MANITOUGRILL.COM

2171 4TH STREET
WHITE BEAR LAKE,

VFW 1782

Fish Fry Friday all year long starting at 4pm.
Generous portion of freshly hand beer battered cod. Made with Hamm's tap beer. Comes with crinkle fries and slaw for \$19.95.

Voted Best Fish Fry by the White Bear Press!

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