



THE CITIZEN

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SPECIAL SECTION: Fall home improvement offers tips for indoor and outdoor design **SEE INSIDE**



HAY CREEK ENTERTAINMENT | CONTRIBUTED

An Eagles tribute band performs at The Outskirts in Columbus. Hay Creek Entertainment opened The Outskirts this year, providing an outdoor concert and movie venue for the northeast Metro. For more details, see story on page 20.

Amendment asks voters to boost school funding

BY LORETTA HARDING
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Voters checking their ballots thoroughly during the Nov. 3 general election will notice an item at the very bottom on the backside of their ballots. That item will ask the following question:

“Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to increase the funding going to all school districts from the permanent school fund, which is a fund that supports school districts without raising individual income or property taxes, effective July 1, 2027?”

Voters will be asked to fill in the “Yes” oval or the “No” oval.

Not filling in either oval will be a vote for the “No” column.

Here is a little history to help voters make up their minds on this important question before they head to the polls.

When Minnesota became a state in 1858, the federal government granted millions of acres of land to the State of Minnesota for the use of its public schools. A fund called the Permanent School Fund (PSF) was created from the proceeds of land sales and leases, which were then invested and reinvested. This fund shares its earnings twice a year with every public school district and charter school in the state, based on student enrollment.

Since 1858, the fund has been managed by members of the State Board of Investment, who invest the money in stocks and bonds to make the fund grow in value. Wise investment will make both the principal and the dividends received by schools become more valuable.

SEE PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND, PAGE 2

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PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND: What voters should know about amendment

FROM PAGE 1

The membership of the State Board of Investment, as specified in the Minnesota Constitution Article XI, is made up of the governor (who is designated as chair), state auditor, secretary of state and attorney general.

The SBI operates much like the financial department of our school districts by looking for opportunities to make money. For example, the Mahtomedi School District financial team crunches numbers all year long with the goal of balancing the budget in an era of ever-rising costs by making the most of its investments and finding dollars here and there.

School districts search for millions of dollars in revenues to offset millions of dollars in expenditures. Funding from the PSF is one of the revenue sources school districts count on.

The Mahtomedi School Board recently studied the amendment question and presented information about the PSF and the changes the PSF is asking voters to approve.

The amendment is asking voters whether changes should be made to increase the annual payout to schools

from 2.5% to 4.5% of the fund’s average value. The changes to increase the annual payout will involve different, less restrictive investment strategies to yield more revenue and modernize the way the funds are distributed.

Given the rise in the performance of the new investments over the last seven to 10 years, the school trust investments have gone up in value. But the distribution amount could be much more without impacting the long-term viability of the principal, Mahtomedi Schools Superintendent Barb Duffrin said.

At present, each Minnesota district receives approximately \$68 per pupil. If the amendment passes, there is the potential for each district to receive \$101 per pupil. “It’s not a make or break for a budget, but it is a significant boost to the budget at \$100,000 for our district,” Duffrin said.

“It’s predictable funding, which is something we talk about a lot here,” Duffrin said. “When legislative changes are huge and don’t allow us to have predictable funding, that’s a real challenge for us, especially our small districts, so any place we can find more predictable funding is a good thing for us.”

More state history and a timetable involving the PSF lands follows:

- 1858: Minnesota became a state and received millions of acres of land from the federal government for public schools. These lands created the school trust lands.
- 1900: Many of the original acres in the southern part of the state had been sold. State policy then shifted to preserving remaining lands for the long-term interest of Minnesota’s public school students.
- 2024: The Minnesota Legislature established a nonpartisan task force to evaluate the PSF and make recommendations to the Legislature.
- 2026: In January, the PSF task force reported its recommendations to the Legislature.
- 2026: The Minnesota House and Senate passed legislation with bipartisan support to update how the PSF is distributed.

Of course, school districts such as Mahtomedi would be in favor of the “Yes” vote on the constitutional amendment question for reasons shown above.

“Who would vote ‘No?’ The money from the PSF land comes from leases, forestry and mining, which is a red flag for people who fear that mining and logging will increase. However, the land will continue to be used for the purpose it has always been used for,” Duffrin said.

The Minnesota School Trust holds approximately 2.5 million acres of land today, along with an additional 1 million acres of severed mineral rights. Most of these lands (92%) are concentrated across 10 northern Minnesota counties that include the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. These lands are also intermixed with county, federal, private and other state-owned lands.

To learn more about the Minnesota Permanent School Fund and this fall’s constitutional amendment, visit any of the following websites:

- Permanent School Fund at www.minnesotapsfamendment.org
- Association of Metropolitan School Districts at www.amsd.org
- Minnesota School Boards Association at <https://mnmsba.org>
- Minnesota Association of School Administrators at www.mnasa.org
- Minnesota Rural Education Association at <http://mreavoice.org>

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Howard Clarys of Circle Pines is the winner of Press Publications’ newsletter contest. Those who subscribed to the regional newsletter before Aug. 20 were entered into a drawing for \$250 in gift cards to Menards, Festival Foods and Wiseguys.

Press Publications’ regional newsletter provides weekly community news updates to readers of the Shoreview Press, Quad Community Press and The Citizen. To subscribe to the weekly regional newsletter, visit presspubs.com/signup.

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PAUL DOLS | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

WHITE BEAR TOWNSHIP DAY
When: 2-8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19
Where: Polar Lakes Park, 1280 Hammond Road.
Details: Community event filled with family-friendly activities including live music, kids activities, community demonstrations, a vendor market, Bingo, and car show. Day ends with fireworks at dusk. Shuttle from Otter Lake Elementary from 2 p.m. until after fireworks.
Contact: whitebeartownship.org

ONGOING EVENTS

HUGO SENIOR CITIZENS PLAY ‘500’
When: 12:45 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, 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: Jim at 763-639-4756 or allenj4992@gmail.com

HUGO SENIOR CLUB
When: 1 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21 and every 3rd Monday of every other month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th Street N.
Details: The meeting will include planning activities for future months and our monthly luncheons. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Games will be played after the meeting.
Contact: Jim at 763-639-4756 or allenj4992@gmail.com

CRIBBAGE
When: 1 p.m. Monday, Sept. 28; usually the 1st and 4th Monday of every month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th St. N., Hugo
Details: Senior citizens from Hugo and surrounding area are invited to an afternoon of cribbage. Coffee and refreshments served. Scheduled on Tuesday this week only.
Contact: Alice at 651-429-4413

CURRENT EVENTS

LUNCH & LEARN: STATE OF THE CENTENNIAL AREA
When: 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17
Where: Centennial Library, 100 Civic Heights Circle, Circle Pines
Details: The Centennial Area Chamber is supporting this lunch in which attendees will hear directly from local city leaders, police and fire chiefs, the superintendent and MnDOT as they share important updates and plans for our community. Register online at

centennialareachamber.com under the events calendar. Admission will be charged.
Contact: 763-786-9672 or president@centennialareachamber.com

‘COME BACK’
When: Sept. 12-27
Where: Hanifl Performing Arts Center Black Box Theatre, 4941 Long Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: In a quirky, heartfelt comedy, Sky sets off on a road trip to honor a dear friend’s final wish. Unexpected detours, unlikely companions, and tender moments of grief and joy create a witty, touching journey about love, loss and finding your way forward.
Contact: 651-478-7427 or tickets@lakeshoreplayers.org

AGING IN THE COMMUNITY
When: 10-11:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 17
Where: Sunrise Park District Senior Center 2399 Cedar Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Educational event focused on how seniors can safely and comfortably remain in their own homes will give attendees a better understanding of how home care provides personal and daily living assistance, while home health delivers skilled medical services under a physician’s order. Call to register.
Contact: 651-653-3121

SUMMER SIGNINGS
When: 10 a.m.-noon Friday, Sept. 18
Where: Lake Country Booksellers, 4766 Washington Square, White Bear Lake
Details: A.J. Marie will sign her debut sports romance, “Caught Looking” and Betty Brandt Passick will sign “Anatomy of a Death”, the third in her historical fiction gangster series.
Contact: lakecountrybooksellers.com

COLUMBUS FALL FEST
When: Sept. 18-20
Where: Columbus City Park and Community Center
Details: Exhibitors, demos, car show, live music, kids activities and bounce houses, raffles, food and beverages on Saturday. Lions pancake breakfast 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday.
Contact: columbusfallfest.com

GLORIA’S 14TH ANNUAL SHORTEST MARATHON
When: 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 19
Where: Bald Eagle Avenue between Second and Third Streets, White Bear Lake
Details: Join this one-block run to raise money for the White Bear Area Food Shelf. Treats before and after the race.
Contact: 651-407-5310 or whitebearfoodshelf.org

BINGO AT WHITE BEAR TOWN HALL
When: 4-6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19
Where: White Bear Town Hall, Polar Lakes Park, 1280 Hammond Road, White Bear Township
Details: Join the White Bear Lake Area Historical Society for Bingo. Cards \$2.
Contact: whitebearhistory.org

THE GREAT LAKESIDE FESTIVAL
When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19
Where: Lakeside Memorial Park, 95 East Broadway Avenue, Forest Lake
Details: Family festival with artisans and makers, local small businesses, food trucks, music, games, prizes.
Contact: gigi-ologyevents.com/the-great-lakeside-festival

MUSIC ON MAPLE PRESENTS SALSA DEL SOL
When: 7-9:15 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19
Where: White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church, 328 Maple St., Mahtomedi
Details: Salsa band performs a variety of Caribbean music. Tickets are pay-what-you-can.
Contact: zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/music-on-maple-salsa-del-sol

ONE LAST TRI
When: 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20
Where: White Bear Lake County Park, 5050 Lake Ave.
Details: Minnesota’s final triathlon of the season, featuring Olympic and Sprint distances, Aqua Bike options, and relay teams. Routes through local horse farms and vineyards, and along the lake. Registration information online.
Contact: www.mmracess.com/one-last-tri

OFFICER SHAWN SILVERA MEMORIAL 5K
When: 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 20
Where: Invisible Wounds Project, 78 Sixth Ave. SW, Forest Lake
Details: Run or walk in memory of Officer Silvera, who was killed in the line of duty. 5K run, 3K walk, and Daisy Dash, hot breakfast, food trucks and vendors, bounce houses, tour of fire truck.
Contact: iwproject.org/officer-shawn-silvera-memorial-5k

FRAUD AND SCAMS AIMED AT SENIORS
When: 1-2:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 24
Where: Sunrise Park District Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Community class to learn about the common scams aimed at seniors, including phone, mail, email and Medicare fraud, and what to do if targeted. Registration required.
Contact: 651-653-6121

SUMMER SIGNINGS
When: 10 a.m.-noon Friday, Sept. 25
Where: Lake Country Booksellers, 4766 Washington Square, White Bear Lake
Details: Brian Lutterman and Midwest Mystery Works members will sign their new book “The Kill Code Collective; Mama Rose will sign her debut book “Fearless: 27 Affirmations to Change Your Life.”
Contact: lakecountrybooksellers.com

CAR SHOW AND CONCERT FOR A CAUSE
When: 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 26
Where: Running Aces, 15201 Running Aces Blvd., Columbus
Details: Invisible Wounds Project fundraiser includes concert with headliner Chris Janson and other live music in the evening. From 10 a.m.-4 p.m. enjoy car show, food trucks, vendor fair, cornhole tournament, touch-a-truck and kids activities.
Contact: runaces.com/concert-for-a-cause

POLKA AND PUMPKINS IN THE PARK
When: Noon-3 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26
Where: Railroad Park, Washington Square and Fourth Street, White Bear Lake
Details: Celebrate beginning of the most colorful season in Downtown White Bear Lake with DJ Polka music at the gazebo and pumpkin painting for kids.
Contact: downtownwhitebearlake.com

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Pursuant to Chapter 333, Minnesota Statutes; the undersigned, who is or will be conducting or transacting a commercial business in the State of Minnesota under an assumed name, hereby certifies:

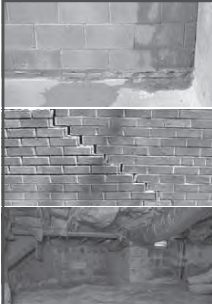
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Dated: April 14, 2026
Signed: Jenna Rodriguez
Published two times in The Citizen on September 3 and 17, 2026.



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The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1*

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Support local youth

This year, we are contracting with nearly 100 youth carriers to deliver the paper throughout local neighborhoods. Our carrier program is as strong as it has ever been in recent years. In Hugo alone, we have started six new carrier routes resulting in tremendous growth with more than 90 new subscribers to The Citizen last month. Our goal is to have 1,000 subscribers in Hugo by fall of 2027.

We all know our youth are being pulled in so many directions, from year-round sports and training to the digital world and impacts of social media. I am encouraged by this next generation when I see them walk through the front door to ask for a job. We explain that delivering the paper is an opportunity to run their own business. We give them some guidelines and tools, and it's up to them how they want to carry out the work. It is a unique opportunity for a young kid to get experience in customer service and

time management. Many famous people started out delivering newspapers as their first job and have publicly credited the experience with giving them a start to their future successes, such as Wayne Gretzky, Gene Simmons, Walt Disney and Warren Buffet. Astronaut Josh Cassada was once a Press Publications newspaper carrier, as was Daron Close, owner of Acqua and Mizu, along with many other local business people.

This would not be possible without the support of our readers. From your words of kindness to your tips and paid subscriptions, you are coaching and supporting the next generation of community and business leaders. We pass along 100% of tips on a youth route, and we help our carriers with supplies like bags and rubber bands at an extremely reasonable rate so they can earn as much as possible. I love talking to our carriers when they come in to pick up their papers and supplies and hearing about their goals and what they're saving up for. They are banking their paychecks for bikes and scooters or for camp fees, and the best part is they are learning the value of working for something they want.

We have fought hard to keep the carrier distribution system alive with youth and adult carriers, in addition to United States Postal Service delivery. Since 2010, various consultants have advised us to shut down our carrier program because of the time and staff support it takes to manage it, but we have stayed the course. I continue to believe that giving this opportunity to local youth is part of our service to the community.

If you are a long time reader, you know we ask you for your support in the form of a subscription twice a year. Why subscribe to a newspaper that you can get for free? With a 30% overall paid subscription rate, we become sustainable. We need your support to reach that benchmark.

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Carter Johnson is publisher of Press Publications.



Forgiveness is something worthwhile

Forgiveness is a fundamental part of our relationships. As the years go by, we come to realize how important it is. It can certainly make-or-break a relationship. If two friends are willing to forgive each other, then their friendship will continue and will flourish. If they are not willing to forgive each other, then their friendship will quickly fade away. If a couple is willing to forgive each other,

then they can make it through life's challenges together. If they are not willing to forgive each other, then they likely will not be together for long.

We want to be able to forgive others because it is a fundamental part of our relationships. However, forgiveness can sometimes be difficult. Just because forgiveness is important, it does not mean it is easy. As we all know, it can be hard to forgive someone. Especially when we are forgiving the person over and over for the same thing. This not only affects

us and the complete strangers we encounter. This also affects the people we care about. Because sometimes the ones we care about are the ones who can hurt us the worst. It might be a recent hurt or something that goes back years.

Thankfully, there are some practical tips to help us forgive others. First of all, it is much easier to forgive others when we are forgiven. All of us make mistakes. We all have times when we mess up and fall short. We know how much we appreciate it when someone is willing to forgive our shortcomings. It is a wonderful gift to receive and can sometimes make a big difference in our lives. We experience this in our relationships with others and our relationship with God. God knows every mistake and shortcoming we have ever done. And yet, He wants to forgive us. Jesus died on the cross and came back to life to prove how much He wants to forgive us. Because we know what it is like to be forgiven, this encourages us to forgive others.

Since forgiveness can be so difficult, what are some practical steps we can follow? Ambassadors of Reconciliation is an

incredible organization focused on conflict resolution. When we forgive someone, they talk about the four promises we make:

1. I will not dwell on this incident. When we forgive someone, it means we want to start moving forward.
 2. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you. When we forgive someone, we do not keep bringing it up and using it as ammo against them.
 3. I will not talk to others about this incident. When we forgive someone, we keep it between us. We all know how gossiping about a situation only makes things worse.
 4. I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship. When we forgive someone, it means we want to still have a relationship with them. Forgiving someone does not means they are now dead to us. We want to still have a relationship with them and we want what is best for them.
- Even though forgiveness is not easy, it is something worthwhile we strive for in our relationships!

Tim Heinecke is the pastor New Life Church – Lutheran in Hugo.

THE CITIZEN | ELECTION LETTER GUIDELINES

- Election season is considered to be when filing first begins until the day of the election.
- Limited to 350 words. Paid letters running longer will be charged \$10 per 30 words after that.
- Letters are free unless endorsing a candidate, party or question on the ballot. Endorsement letters will have a \$50 fee. Please call 651-407-1200 to arrange payment by credit card or mail a check payable to Press Publications to 4779 Bloom Ave, White Bear Lake, MN, 55110. Endorsement letters are labeled, "paid letter."
- Letters for or against a candidate will qualify as paid letters.
- Submissions must include a full name, address and phone number for verification.
- Letter-writers must live, work or have another connection to Press Publications coverage area.
- Letters are meant to express opinions. If letter-writers include facts, they must attribute those facts to a reputable source.
- Due to space limitations, letters that don't address local issues are not guaranteed publication.
- Repeat unpaid letters by the same writer about the same subject matter will not be published. Repeat paid endorsement letters will be published as space permits.
- Four weeks (or issues) must pass between publication of unpaid letters from the same writer. Exceptions may be made for rebuttal letters at the editor's discretion.
- Submissions containing libelous or derogatory statements will not be published.
- Letters by campaign managers or candidates designed to champion the candidate's position on a specific issue will be accepted as paid letters.
- Letters reprinted as part of letter-writing campaigns are paid letters.
- All letters are subject to editing.
- We reserve the right to not publish any letter.
- The deadline to submit a letter is 5 p.m. Wednesday the week prior to publication.
- The last batch of letters to be printed before the Nov. 3 election will be printed in the Oct. 29 issue and must be received by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21.
- To submit a letter, email news@presspubs.com or mail/deliver it to Press Publications.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support our schools by stepping inside them

As another school year begins, I'm reminded of the opportunities I had to support teachers and students as a school volunteer. While our two daughters attended White Bear Lake schools from 2000 to 2016, I was fortunate to spend time in classrooms and participate in activities that allowed me to support teachers while investing in the next generation.

Those experiences also gave me something equally valuable: the opportunity to see firsthand what takes place in our schools each day.

There is no shortage of conversation today about education: what is working, what isn't, and what schools and teachers should be doing differently. While those conversations are important, one of the best ways to understand our local schools is to spend some time inside them. Volunteer. Meet the teachers and staff. Interact with students. See both the challenges educators face and the dedication, creativity and care they bring to their classrooms.

My volunteer experience included assisting with small learning groups, helping with classroom and school events, attending field trips and teaching Junior Achievement lessons. But there are many ways to contribute. You don't need to be an educator or have children currently attending school. You simply need some time and a willingness to share your talents.

Volunteering is a tangible way to tell our teach-

ers, "We appreciate what you do, and we're willing to help." It also gives community members an opportunity to better understand education through firsthand experience. Our views about local schools should be informed not only by what we hear and read, but also by what we see and experience ourselves.

As the school year gets underway, I encourage community members with time and talents to share to consider volunteering. Contact a local school principal or program leader within the White Bear Lake Area School District and ask how you can help.

The time you give may benefit teachers and students — and give you a deeper connection to our schools and community.

Pauline Lacher
Hugo

On a course to success

As this school year begins, I am reminded once again what a gem we have in the White Bear Lake Area Schools! This district meets each and every student where they are and provides the educational and other services necessary to allow them to blossom!

For kids in our district with disabilities or special needs, the WBLAS provides comprehensive educational programming — from birth to age 21.

For our littlest learners, White Bear schools provides early childhood screening, family education, special education and, for our 3- to 5-year-olds, pre-

school!

Many kids enter high school knowing what they want to do for a living but need help getting there. For those kids, WBLAS' Career Pathways Program offers an opportunity in nine different career fields to acquire college credit and industry certifications and to participate in work-based learning through a job or internship.

And, for those students planning careers that require college or graduate degrees, White Bear schools offers several opportunities, including post-secondary education options (which provide the opportunity to enroll for free in a two- or four-year college or university to begin a degree specific to a career or industry) and Advanced Placement. These opportunities allow students to pursue college level courses while in high school, and obtain college credit for courses where they do well on the AP exams! As a parent of White Bear grads, (and a White Bear grad myself!) I can tell you from personal experience that the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school allowed my child to graduate from college in 3-1/2 years with a double major — all while saving us boatloads in college tuition!

No matter the path, White Bear Lake Area Schools can put your kids on a course to success!

Go Bears!

Janet Newberg
Hugo

PUBLIC SAFETY BRIEF

Hugo woman sentenced for threats to House Speaker

A Hugo woman who left a series of threatening voicemails for Minnesota House Speaker Lisa Demuth has been sentenced in Washington County District Court to three years of supervised probation.

Rachel Marie Welsch, 43, pleaded guilty in July to one felony count of threats of violence. The judge stayed imposition of sentence and ordered Welsch to complete 180 hours of community work service, among other conditions.

The Washington County Attorney's Office charged Welsch on Feb. 26, 2026, with one count of felony threats of violence. She pleaded guilty to that charge on July 6, 2026.

Speaker Demuth delivered a victim

impact statement in which she told the court that disagreement with elected officials should never lead to threats or violence, and that Welsch's calls, which her staff also had to listen to, caused fear for herself, her family and her staff. She said she hopes Welsch receives the mental health care she needs and noted that, out of compassion, she would not seek restitution.

Assistant Washington County Attorney Nick Hydukovich, who heads the office's Criminal Division, asked the court to place Welsch on probation for five years and order 300 hours of community work service. He told the court that threats like Welsch's have always been unacceptable and illegal, but that the assassination of former Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband and the shooting of Sen. John Hoffman made them even more concerning.

Public servants, he argued, must be able to do their jobs without fear that they, their families or their staff will be harmed.

Under the sentence, Welsch must:

- Serve three years of supervised probation through Washington County Community Corrections.
- Complete 180 hours of community work service, with at least 60 hours completed in the first year of probation.
- Have no direct or indirect contact with Speaker Demuth or any member of her staff known to Welsch.
- Not use or possess firearms, ammunition or explosives.
- Complete all mental

health programming, including taking any prescribed medication, as directed.

- Complete a cognitive skills evaluation and follow its recommendations.

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VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 33 (ELECT 1)

Karin Housley (R)

City of residence: Stillwater
Occupation: Real estate agent
List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Serving as board chair of the Mississippi River Parkway Coalition and as a member of the Great Lakes Commission, where I actively protect and preserve our state's precious waterways.
- Co-founder of Greater Stillwater Power of 100 Women, raising over \$100,000 for local charities in three years.
- Republican lead on the Capital Investment Committee, securing critical state funding for local infrastructure, roads, bridges, and clean drinking water across our district, including White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Dellwood and Willernie.



Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. Serving in the Minnesota Legislature for the past 14 years has been the honor of a lifetime. Every day, I am driven by a deep commitment to my neighbors and a passion for protecting the quality of life that makes our communities so special. My focus has always been rooted in common-sense solutions—advocating for families, supporting small businesses, and ensuring our government remains accountable and fiscally responsible. There is still important work ahead to build an even stronger future for the next generation, which is why I am running to continue serving.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. STOP THE FRAUD! We must stop the rampant fraud plaguing state programs. Imagine what relief could have been given to Minnesotans had we not lost billions to fraud? Next, we must provide meaningful tax relief by eliminating state taxes on worker tips and overtime pay. Working Minnesotans deserve

to keep more of what they earn to address workforce shortages. Finally, we must stop wasting taxpayer dollars, rein in excessive spending, and reduce regulatory burdens. By cracking down on fraud, easing the cost of living, and encouraging private-sector growth, we can ensure families and businesses thrive here.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Again, "Stop the fraud!" Billions of dollars of taxpayer money! We do this by going over the state's budget with a fine-tooth comb, each agency and their programs. In addition, Minnesota also faces outmigration to our surrounding states, driven by high taxation and life being unaffordable. From property taxes to license tab fees. To protect taxpayer dollars and keep families and retirees in our state, we must crack down on fraud, unfunded mandates and stop taxing Social Security. Addressing these priorities requires rejecting reckless fiscal policies, lowering our overall tax burden and focusing on core government responsibilities.

Nat Smith (DFL)

City of residence: Stillwater
Occupation: Attorney
List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Washington County Community Development Block Grant Advisory Committee
- Stillwater Human Rights Commission
- Community advocate for fraud prevention and whistleblower protections

I'm a Stillwater resident, husband, father, and attorney who has spent my career fighting fraud and protecting whistleblowers. I grew up in Minnesota, attended the University of Minnesota and William Mitchell College of Law, and built my legal career around holding bad actors accountable. I serve on the Washington County Community Development Block Grant Citizen Advisory Committee and the Stillwater Human Rights Commission.



As a whistleblower attorney, I've spent my career fighting fraud, holding powerful institutions accountable, and protecting the people who speak up when something is wrong. I've seen firsthand what happens when taxpayer dollars are misused. With billions of taxpayer dollars at stake, the Legislature needs members who understand how fraud happens, how to uncover it, and how to stop it. I will bring my expertise to the Legislature to protect taxpayer dollars, strengthen oversight, and restore trust in government, so we can focus on the issues families talk about every day: the cost of living, strong schools, affordable health care, and protecting the quality of life in our communities. I'm running to listen, work across differences and deliver results for the St. Croix River Valley.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesotans deserve leaders who will focus on making our state a place where families can afford to live, businesses can grow, and communities like ours can thrive. That means controlling unnecessary government spending while protecting the services Minnesota families rely on. We should invest in excellent schools, a strong workforce, reliable infrastructure, and affordable childcare and health care. We also need to make it easier for small businesses and entrepreneurs to succeed

by reducing unnecessary barriers and creating a predictable regulatory environment. We can continue to strengthen our economy, while also being strong environmental stewards. Finally, Minnesota must commit to taking fraud seriously. Every single dollar lost to fraud is a dollar that cannot be invested in schools, roads, public safety, or other priorities.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two challenges stand out to me: affordability and trust in government. Families like mine are feeling the pressure of higher costs for housing, health care, childcare, groceries, and just about everything else. We need to make Minnesota a place where families can afford to live, businesses can grow, seniors can thrive, and people have a real opportunity to get ahead. We also have to rebuild trust by making sure our government is accountable for every single taxpayer dollar. I've spent my career fighting fraud, and I know that accountability cannot be an afterthought. As a citizen, I've already worked to introduce a bill to help combat fraud. As your state senator, I would push for stronger auditing, better use of data to identify fraud, and stronger consequences when public dollars are misused. Minnesotans deserve to know their government is working for them—not wasting their money.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 36 (ELECT 1)

Heather Gustafson (DFL)

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Minnesota State Senator, District 36
List 3 most recent civic involvement roles: Chair, Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission. Vice Chair, Senate Education Finance Committee. Vice Chair, Senate State and Local Government Committee.

I have represented Senate District 36 since 2023. Before running for office, I spent many years as a high school teacher, following an earlier career in radio broadcasting. I hold a degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead and a Master of Education from the College of Saint Scholastica. I am the mother of four daughters. As a senator, I have focused on affordability, public safety and government accountability, building a strong record of bipartisan collaboration.



mother of four daughters, I saw the same pressures in my classroom as I did at my kitchen table. I see what happens when families fall behind on rent, when a school budget gets stretched too thin, or when a kid shows up hungry because breakfast wasn't an option at home. Those aren't abstract policy problems to me. I ran for office because I wanted to bring that problem-solving mindset to the legislature: listen first, find the people willing to work across the aisle, and get something done instead of just talking about it. That's how I passed the school meals program and created Minnesota's first independent watchdog for government fraud, with Republican co-authors. I want to keep doing that work so families can thrive, not just survive.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota prospers when people trust that resources are being used honestly and families can actually get ahead, not just get by. That starts with practical, bipartisan solutions to tackle the cost of living directly, from housing to child care to health care, so working families in our district aren't doing the math every time they're at the grocery store. Most people in our district, no matter their party, just want a legislature that solves problems instead of fighting culture wars. That's why I authored bipartisan legislation creating a Minnesota Entrepreneurship Task Force, to bring entrepreneurs, workers,

and educators together to strengthen what's working in our business climate and fix what isn't. I've built my record on working with Republicans and Democrats for exactly that kind of work, because the next four years shouldn't be about scoring points. They should be about proving state government can still deliver for people.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First, I've made government accountability a priority. I authored the legislation creating Minnesota's Office of Inspector General, an independent watchdog with authority to investigate fraud across state agencies, which passed with bipartisan support. I now chair the Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission, and I'll keep pushing to give that office everything it needs to catch bad actors before they drain public resources. Second, the cost of living has families in our district stretched thin. I've focused on meaningful relief: school meals, which save families real money every month, and consumer protections like click-to-cancel laws that stop companies from quietly draining people's wallets with recurring subscriptions. Going forward, I'll pursue an affordability agenda rooted in what families actually deal with day to day: groceries, child care, health care costs, and holding corporations accountable when they take advantage of people, so families here can actually get ahead.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 36 (ELECT 1)

Heidi Heino (R)

City of residence: Centerville

Occupation: Associate director of partnership development and small-business owner

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Member, Minnesota Task Force on Priority Admissions to State-Operated Treatment Programs
- President, Fellowship of Extraordinary Women, Twin Cities Chapter
- Volunteer, Eagle Brook Church One-on-One Care Team for eight years



today or save for tomorrow.

I am running because Minnesota government needs more people with private-sector experience who will ask hard questions, follow the money, and challenge the way things have always been done. Too often, government measures success by how much it spends instead of whether it solved the problem. I want to help restore accountability and make Minnesota a place where families can thrive.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?

A. Minnesota can prosper by making it easier for families and businesses to stay and grow here. First, state government must slow spending growth and review programs for results before increasing their budgets. Savings should be used to reduce taxes and avoid shifting state costs onto local property taxpayers.

Second, Minnesota should shorten permitting timelines, eliminate duplicative regulations, and give small businesses one place to navigate state requirements. The state should streamline permitting without dictating local housing decisions. Cities should have a say in how their communities grow.

Third, we must protect the foundations employers and families rely on: safe communities, dependable roads, access to health care, and schools that teach reading, writing, math, and critical thinking. Minnesota has talented people, strong

communities, and innovative businesses. The next five years should focus on removing barriers, protecting taxpayer dollars, and making it possible for people to build their future here.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?

A. The first challenge is fraud and the loss of public trust. Billions of taxpayer dollars have been placed at risk because state programs lacked adequate oversight. Once fraud is discovered, the money is often already gone. I would support stronger front-end verification, tiered oversight based on risk, better coordination among agencies, and meaningful consequences for those who misuse public funds. Fraud prevention must begin before the first payment is issued.

The second challenge is affordability. Families are being squeezed by property taxes, energy costs, housing expenses, and the rising cost of everyday necessities. If elected, I would work to restrain government spending, oppose unfunded mandates that increase local property taxes, reduce barriers to housing development, and lower the tax and regulatory burden so Minnesota can retain businesses and workers. Government cannot eliminate every financial pressure, but it should stop making those pressures worse.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 33A (ELECT 1)

Angela Thompson (DFL)

City of residence: Hugo

Occupation: Social worker / ICWA guardian ad litem

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Liaison to the WBLAS American Indian Parent Advisory Committee
- Vice chair White Bear Lake School Board
- Director, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District School Board



affordable lives, with access to healthcare and housing, family-sustaining wages, retirement security, strong public schools, and pathways to successful careers.

As a social worker and school board member, I listen to those most affected, seek expertise, examine evidence, ask difficult questions, and make informed decisions. I will bring that same approach to representing District 33A in the Legislature

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?

A. Minnesota prospers when the people who live and work here have opportunities to succeed. Over the next five years, we need to invest in strong public schools, workforce development and skilled trades, infrastructure, affordable housing and childcare, while supporting the small businesses that are important to our communities.

We also need to pay attention to affordability and the long-term impact of state decisions. When the state does not adequately fund its responsibilities, those costs do not disappear; they can be shifted to local governments, school districts, property taxpayers and families. We should use public dollars responsibly, measure whether programs are working, address fraud when it occurs, and invest in roads, bridges and infrastructure that support economic growth and family-

sustaining jobs.

Minnesota has tremendous resources and a strong workforce. Good planning today can create opportunities while keeping our communities affordable for the next generation.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?

A. Two challenges facing Minnesota are affordability and sustainably funding the services our communities depend on. Families are feeling the rising costs of housing, healthcare, childcare, insurance, property taxes and everyday necessities. There is no single solution. We need to increase affordable housing options, address healthcare and prescription drug costs, expand access to childcare, support family-sustaining wages, and examine how state decisions affect household budgets.

As a school board member, I have seen what happens when the state does not fully fund its commitments: the pressure often shifts to local taxpayers. We need to adequately fund education, infrastructure and essential services while being responsible stewards of public dollars. If elected, I will examine what is working, address waste and fraud, listen to the people most affected, and work with legislators from across Minnesota on practical, sustainable solutions rather than simply shifting costs from one level of government to another.

Stacey Stout (R)

City of residence: Mahtomedi

Occupation: AVP government relations

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Mahtomedi School Board ISD 832 2016-2026, four years as chair
- Northeast Metro School Board ISD 916 2025-2026
- Mahtomedi Finance Commission 2015-2018



I've built a proven record of accountable, transparent leadership and delivering results. I will be a principled voice at the Capitol, finding practical solutions for fraud prevention, lowering taxes, ensuring high-quality education in our schools, addressing healthcare costs, supporting public safety, and investing in the infrastructure our communities depend on.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?

A. Minnesota's economic growth is stagnating because our state has become increasingly uncompetitive and has been plagued by widespread fraud and inadequate oversight. To turn this around, the legislature must restore accountability, crack down on fraud, and create a more competitive environment where businesses of all sizes can grow, innovate, and hire—because a stronger private sector means more opportunity and greater prosperity for everyone. Strengthening our competitiveness will

help keep businesses here, expand opportunity, and grow wages for Minnesota families.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?

A. 1. Fiscal discipline – Minnesota had an historic \$18 billion surplus, but that has been spent. Instead of using the surplus to provide meaningful, lasting tax relief and strengthen our long-term fiscal position, the government grew significantly without prioritizing core government functions.

2. Fraud – Minnesota has a serious fraud and accountability problem. The billions of dollars lost through major fraud scandals have exposed significant weaknesses in the state's government oversight and financial controls. There should be meaningful consequences for fraud and there needs to be a system that follows through on preventing fraud to begin with.

ANOKA COUNTY SHERIFF (ELECT 1)

CANDIDATE BRAD WISE DID NOT RESPOND

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3 (ELECT 1)

Jeff Reinert

City of residence: Lino Lakes for over 50 years. I'm married to my wife, Lisa, for 37 years. We raised three daughters and have three grandbabies. I'm a business owner, currently an advisor in the biotech space and am Commander of Post 566 American Legion SAL in Lino Lakes.

Occupation: County commissioner

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- I've served our area for 20-plus years in public office, including as mayor of Lino Lakes.
- Lead Centerville Lake treatment efforts, finding outside funding for \$980,000 of the \$1.1 million cost.
- Lead the effort to purchase and install fencing around the Lino Lakes juvenile detention center, protecting nearby neighborhoods from runaways.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the County Board?

A. Running for commissioner of the fourth largest county is like applying for a job, and experience matters. I have the background



needed to make sound decisions for taxpayers and residents and I know how to get things done

If you don't have experience, you can't ask the right questions. If you can't ask the right questions, you won't make good decisions and won't serve the public well — in fact, you may do it harm. Good oversight and measurement lead to good management. While this common-sense approach is often missing in government, it is essential for operating efficiently and responsibly. As a business owner and your elected representative for more than 20 years, I have developed these skills and used them to improve how Anoka County operates.

I'm running for reelection because I love this community and want to continue making a positive difference for the people I serve.

Q. What can the county do in the next five years to help the area prosper?

A. The overall goal should be to grow the county's tax base and household incomes while keeping Anoka County an affordable, safe and desirable place to live.

We do this by supporting the cities and townships in our county. Although zoning property to attract residential and/or commercial development is in the hands of each city, the county plays a role in assisting cities to help navigate what is needed for development. As an example, our area has many hydrology and wetland issues as it relates to development, so helping cities work with the Anoka County Conservation District, the DNR

and the Rice Creek Watershed District is a big asset. I often meet with economic development directors from various cities in my district to bring the right parties together at the table to discuss issues and get things done.

Q. What are two challenges that the county faces and how might you solve them if elected?

- A.**
- New Jail: Challenges come from some people in the county wanting to build an oversized and overpriced jail. Even a study done by the State of Minnesota concluded we need only 70% of what the county wants to build. If we downsize the plan, litigation can be settled, we can build a jail the right size and save Anoka County taxpayers not only the cost of the overbuild, but also the ongoing cost of running an oversized jail.
 - FLOCK Drones: FLOCK cameras currently read license plates and are developing facial recognition capabilities. The company proposed a drone network covering Anoka County. Most county board members opposed the proposal, yet the sheriff signed a one-year contract set to begin in January. I believe a decision of this magnitude deserves public input and board oversight, and I will bring it back for discussion and transparency.

Melissa “Mel” Lawlis

City of residence: Lino Lakes

Occupation: Over 27 years with Anoka County Human Services, serving families and vulnerable residents through program support, casework and community services. Extensive experience in fraud prevention and investigations, ensuring program integrity and protecting county resources. Recognized policy expert involved in developing, interpreting and implementing county and state guidelines. Experienced trainer, mentoring staff and strengthening department-wide consistency and compliance.

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Centerville Lions Club (2020–present); President, 2024–2026, leading service projects, fundraising and community outreach.
- Homeowners association board member (2005–present); President for over 10 years, overseeing neighborhood governance and long-term planning.
- Centennial Youth Hockey Association Golf Tournament Chair, two years.



Q. Why do you want to serve on the County Board?

A. I'm running for County Commissioner because I care about our community, and I believe I can make a difference. My husband and I have lived in District 3 for 22 years, where we raised our two boys. I've also worked for Anoka County for more than 27 years and have been very involved in our community. I bring real experience working in county government and an understanding of how the county works. I believe in asking questions, looking for better and more efficient ways to do things, and making sure we are responsible with taxpayer dollars. If elected, this will be my full-time job. I want to be involved in the communities, talking with people, listening to their concerns and making sure they feel heard. I will work hard; be accessible; and represent District 3 with integrity, professionalism and civility. I would truly be honored to earn your vote.

Q. What can the county do in the next five years to help the area prosper?

A. Over the next five years, I think the county needs to focus on responsible growth and making sure we are planning for the future. That means maintaining and improving our roads and infrastructure, supporting public safety, and making sure our communities continue to be places where people want to live, work and raise their families.

We also need to make it easier to do business with the county by

looking at our processes, using technology where it makes sense and finding more efficient ways to provide services. I believe the county should work closely with our cities, townships, schools and local businesses so we aren't working in silos. Most importantly, as we grow, we need to ask the questions, set priorities, plan ahead and make sure we are being responsible with taxpayer dollars.

Q. What are two challenges that the county faces and how might you solve them if elected?

A. Two challenges facing Anoka County are the increasing cost of providing county services and the future of the county jail. As costs rise, we need to take a hard look at how we spend taxpayer dollars. With my experience working for the county, I know there are opportunities to improve processes and find efficiencies. We need to ask, “Is this required?” “Is there a better way to do it?” “Is this the best use of taxpayer dollars?” We also need to pursue state and federal grants and work with legislators to address unfunded mandates that increase county costs.

The jail is another major challenge. We need a safe, functional facility, but we also need to make the right long-term decision for taxpayers. That means asking the tough questions, looking at all reasonable options, and working with our cities and communities to find a practical and responsible solution.

WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF (ELECT 1)

Brian Mueller

City of residence: Lake Elmo

Occupation: Chief of Police for the city of Stillwater for almost six years. Previously spent 23 years at the Washington County Sheriff's Office in a variety of roles including: Patrol Deputy, Detective, Sergeant, Patrol Commander, Investigative Commander and Drug Task Force Commander, SWAT Commander, and Chief Deputy overseeing all Sheriff's Office operations

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Youth hockey coach - Stillwater Area Hockey Association
- Board member - Canvas Health
- Board member - United Way Washington County East

Q. Why do you want to serve as sheriff?

A. Washington County has been my home my entire life. It is where we are raising our five children and the community I have been privileged to serve throughout my 28-year law enforcement career. I want to serve as Sheriff because I care deeply about the safety and future of this community and believe my experience as Washington County Chief Deputy and Stillwater Chief of Police has prepared me to lead from day one.

Washington County is a safe community, and I want to keep



it that way. As Sheriff, I will focus on reducing violent crime, community-focused service, strengthening our response to mental health and substance use challenges, supporting our first responders, and caring for those in our jail.

I believe public safety is built on relationships. I will bring proven leadership and strong community partnerships while ensuring we remain accessible and responsive to the people we serve every day.

Q. What can the sheriff's office do in the next five years to keep the county safe?

A. Keeping Washington County safe requires strong, proven leadership, collaboration, and the ability to adapt to emerging public safety challenges. Over the next five years, the Sheriff's Office must strengthen partnerships with local, state, and federal law enforcement to target violent crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and repeat offenders.

We must also continue investing in mental health and substance use response, including crisis intervention training, co-responder partnerships, and alternatives to jail when appropriate. Recruiting, retaining, training, and supporting exceptional deputies, correctional staff, 911 dispatchers and professional staff must remain a priority.

Most importantly, the Sheriff's Office must remain connected to the communities we serve. Relationships within this county matter. I have built strong relationships with residents, schools, businesses, community organizations, and local leaders which

will allow us to identify concerns early, solve problems together, and keep Washington County safe for future generations.

Q. What are two challenges that the department faces and how might you solve them if elected?

A. Successful public safety depends on having well-trained, supported professionals. Having lived here my entire life, public safety in Washington County is personal to me, and taking care of the women and men who serve is paramount. As Sheriff, I will focus on competitive recruitment, leadership development, employee wellness, quality training, and maintaining a culture where employees feel valued and supported. Retaining experienced deputies, correctional staff, 911 dispatchers, and professional staff is just as important as recruiting the next generation.

Mental health and substance use challenges also require a coordinated response. I will strengthen Crisis Intervention Team training, expand co-responder partnerships with mental health professionals, and improve collaboration with hospitals, treatment providers, and community organizations. When appropriate, we should connect people with treatment and services rather than relying on jail as the solution. Both challenges require strong partnerships with all Washington County stakeholders, innovative thinking, and experienced leadership.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF (ELECT 1)

Jeremy Bolen

City of residence: Cottage Grove

Occupation: Commander of Administration and Executive Officer to the Undersheriff, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Grant manager and agency liaison-Ramsey County Sheriff's Foundation
- Team captain, communications Officer, and trustee-Law Enforcement United-Virginia Division
- Volunteer youth basketball and youth recreation soccer coach-Cottage Grove

Q. Why do you want to serve as sheriff?
A. I want to serve as your next sheriff to better Washington County with fresh ideas, a bold stance on crime, improved mental health and substance abuse response and programming, and enhanced community engagement between law enforcement and the communities we serve.

Q. What can the sheriff's office do in the next five years to keep the county safe?
A. Fill vacancies and improve recruitment and retention, restore safe staffing levels in our patrol division, jail, and dispatch center, support staff with balanced workloads and resources, expand mental health and substance abuse services, and ensure accountability through transparency and oversight.

Q. What are two challenges that the department faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. 1. Mental health and substance abuse response and programming. I will partner with community experts who have experience and knowledge within the field, and I will expand the co-response model where deputies respond to persons in crisis with a social worker.

2. Expand agency resources to coincide with the expansion of our communities. Ensure that sheriff's resources can supplement municipal agencies when understaffed or unavailable to respond to emergencies or calls for service.

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (ELECT 1)

Stan Karwoski

City of residence: Oakdale

Occupation: Retired, Graco Inc. – 38 year career in product development

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Elected – Currently Washington County Commissioner, District 2; past Oakdale Mayor and City Council Member
- Education – Volunteer service on the Century College Foundation Board and Metro State Foundation Board.
- Commissioner service – Workforce Development Board; Transportation Advisory Board; Washington County Park and Open Space Commission; Minnesota Inter-County Association Board - past President; East Metro Strong Board - Co-Chair; Greater MSP Board; Century Avenue Coalition; and several Local Chambers of Commerce.

our County Attorney’s Office to hold criminals accountable. Our county is also making investments in early mental health intervention by embedding our Social Worker Crisis Unit within policing to prevent costly crime and tragic incidents.

Clean Water and Protecting our Environment – Our county is protecting critical pristine water and natural areas to assure clean water for our future.

Workforce Development and Affordable Housing – My workforce commitment is helping residents find quality careers and improved wages. Also working with our Community Development Agency to increase private affordable housing investments. Quality jobs help make housing affordable.

future workforce needs. My priority is to use our residents to meet this shortage.

Housing Shortage & Affordability – Support adding housing that is quality and affordable for all ages.

Clean Environment, Water, and Natural Areas – Continue protecting important acreage for today and future generations.

Q. What are two challenges that the county faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First keeping Washington County a great place to live. Second, keeping county property taxes as low as possible.

I’m very active in our community and these are two importan challenges I hear consistently from our residents. A primary elected responsibility is listening and effectively representing all residents by getting their input. An example of listening and acting is building the Wildwood Library, new county 12 with sidewalks, and protecting land and water primarily using our land and water legacy program. These actions make our community a great place to live. Improvements must be made with financial discipline when facing challenges of providing federal and state mandated but needed citizen social service programs with increased federal and state cost shift responsibility to our county. We are managing this financial pressure by collaborating on projects for efficiency with our cities and increasing our county tax base with quality growth.

CANDIDATE EDISON VIZUETE DID NOT RESPOND

CENTERVILLE MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Nancy N. Golden

City of residence: Centerville

Occupation: Medical sales

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Elected Mayor of Centerville in 2024

City Council to actively seek out growth opportunities that align with the needs and goals of our residents.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. My vision is to help our city thrive over the next five years by prioritizing fiscal responsibility and strategic decisions.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. With the challenge of limited state funding, making informed local-level choices becomes even more critical.

CENTERVILLE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 2)

Anita Rios

City of residence: Centerville

Occupation: Talent management consultant

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Centerville council member
- Centerville’s Economic Development Authority
- Empowering Small Minnesota Communities Advisory Committee

responsible stewards of the city’s water, sewer, roads and trails. I believe Centerville residents deserve accountable leadership and meaningful opportunities to help shape decisions about the city’s future.

I currently work as a consultant after retiring from a 35-year career in public higher education.

Q. What can the city Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Implement the 2026 Downtown Vision Plan: I will support updates to the city’s zoning codes that align with the recommendations in the 2026 Downtown Vision Plan. I will also advocate for a clear request-for-proposals (RFP) process that encourages developers to bring forward projects with the amenities residents want to see in Centerville’s downtown area.

Increase opportunities for citizen engagement: I will continue promoting meaningful opportunities for residents to participate in planning and decision making. This includes town hall meetings, surveys, advisory groups and facilitated discussions so that everyone who wants to have a voice can be heard.

Balance fiscal responsibility with stewardship of city infrastructure: I will continue to support thoughtful, responsible decision making that keeps taxes as low as possible for Centerville residents while also addressing the city’s

essential public safety, infrastructure and maintenance needs.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Deferred city infrastructure maintenance: Centerville faces several important-yet-costly infrastructure needs that must be addressed thoughtfully over time. These needs affect services residents rely on every day: safe drinking water, reliable sewer systems, well-maintained roads. Soon, the city will need to replace a failing well, inspect its sewer system and replace aging equipment. Careful prioritization and sequence of these projects while seeking outside funding whenever possible will protect essential services while keeping tax levies reasonable.

Economic development: To make the most of the Downtown Vision Plan, Centerville should take a proactive approach to attracting the right kinds of investment. Rather than waiting to see what proposals come forward, I will advocate for a clear business development policy that gives developers guidance and incentives to bring forward projects that reflect residents’ priorities. This approach can help add desired amenities while preserving the small-town character that makes Centerville special.

CANDIDATE LINDA M. BROUSSARD DID NOT RESPOND

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

SPECIAL ELECTION FOR CENTERVILLE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 1)

Kale Haluptzok

City of residence: Centerville
Occupation: Small Business Owner
List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Parks & Recreation — Liaison
- Economic Development Authority — board member
- Coaching youth soccer and hockey



see our area change and grow over the years. Now, I'm raising my own family here, so I have an even greater personal interest in making sure our community remains a great place to live. I care about the people who live here, and I want to make sure their voices are heard. I want to be a council member who listens, is accessible and works with residents to find practical solutions to the issues we face.

I want to give back to the community that helped shape me and help create a safe, welcoming and strong community where my family, and future generations, can thrive.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Over the next five years, the City Council can help Centerville prosper by supporting local businesses, maintaining our infrastructure and investing in the services residents rely on.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two challenges I see in our city are preserving what makes Centerville special while also being open to thoughtful change, and making fiscally responsible decisions.

As our area grows, we need to protect Centerville's character and history while embracing new ideas and opportunities that benefit residents.

We also need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. I would focus on responsible spending, prioritizing essential services and making sure we get the most value from every dollar. I believe we can respect our city's past, thoughtfully plan for its future and make responsible decisions that keep our community strong.

HUGO MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Tom Weidt

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Sales manager
List 3 most recent civic involvement roles: Hugo Mayor 2012-present. Hugo City Council 2008-2012. Hugo Planning Commission 2004-2008

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I I want to continue to work with



this group on the city council, it has been instrumental in the direction of the city, and I wish to continue help with this team, that has kept Hugo going in a positive direction.

Q. What can the city Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. We need to attract investment into the city to provide the services our residents need.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. We need to have continued access to our water supply; we need to properly protect this resource by Reducing-Reusing-

Replenish our water supply to keep Hugo growing and evolving into a well-rounded city.

Our efforts to date have reduced our drinking water consumption by almost 100 million gallons last year and since the beginning of the program almost half a billion gallons.

We need to meet the challenge of the ever growing need to maintain our roads and infrastructure.

As Hugo grows, there are neighborhoods that are ageing and will need to have roads and infrastructure replaced we must navigate these projects to keep our roads safe.

HUGO CITY COUNCIL WARD 1 (ELECT 1)

Becky Petryk

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Talent management consultant.
List 3 most recent civic involvement roles: Incumbent Ward 1 Hugo City Council. Transportation Advisory Board MET Council. Youth Athletics: Former board member of the WBL Fastpitch Association and WBL Girls Hockey Director



Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to continue to serve on the Hugo City Council to ensure that the good work we are doing for the residents of Hugo moves forward. Hugo has an outstanding Mayor, Council, staff, and volunteer fire department. We also have many wonderful commission members and citizen volunteers who consistently step forward to do what is right for our city. I am grateful to be on the team and want to continue to be a part of it.

Q. What can the city Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. We must work to continue the policies that make Hugo a resident and business friendly city. I have constantly advocated for our low flat tax rate. I have worked to make sure that no resident or business is taxed out of Hugo. We must

also continue to make sure that City Hall is an easy place for businesses and residents to get answers and get help. We are all here to serve and we strive to make all citizen and business interactions with City Hall streamlined and effective.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. We continue to work with many governmental units to ensure that Hugo has access to an adequate and fair water allotment. Hugo has grown significantly over my tenure. Maintaining the successful balance between development and our friendly small town lifestyle is something I have always championed. I believe this work will need to continue as Hugo moves forward.

Please vote for me so I may continue to work for you.

Mark Koll

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Retired. Previous occupations: owner/ operator of Neighborguy Handyman and the Hugo Fire Department.
List 3 most recent civic involvement roles: Retired after 20 years on the Hugo Fire Department.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to serve on the City Council because of my long-standing commitment to the Hugo community. Through my 20 years with the Hugo Fire Department and my experience owning and operating Neighborguy Handyman, I have had the privilege of working directly with many residents and understanding their needs and concerns.

Having been part of this community for many years, I care deeply about Hugo's future. I believe I would bring a practical,



service-minded perspective to the council and would work to make decisions that reflect the best interests of the city and its residents.

I believe I will be a voice when others might be silenced for all citizens of Hugo responding to their concerns in a timely manner. Taking the lead while others stand silent.

Q. What can the city Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Responsible growth and downtown development. I would like to see Hugo continue to grow by encouraging new and improved businesses, especially in the undeveloped downtown area. A stronger downtown can help create a more vibrant community while supporting local economic growth.

Support for existing businesses. I also believe the City Council should review and support current businesses to ensure they remain responsive to the needs of the community and continue to contribute positively to Hugo's future.

Listening to residents. An important part of helping the city prosper is listening to constituents — their concerns, their hopes and their ideas for Hugo's future. Residents should feel heard as the city makes decisions about growth, services, and community priorities.

Programs for children and families. I would also work to create a summer children's park program so that more families have access to positive, engaging opportunities for kids during the summer months.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Fiscal responsibility and accountability. One challenge I would focus on is ensuring that city funds are spent responsibly and transparently. I would review payments made to vendors and contractors to confirm that they are meeting the terms of their contracts and delivering quality work for the community.

Residents should be able to trust that they are not overpaying for products or services and that public dollars are being used in the best interest of Hugo. If there are credible concerns involving fraud, waste, abuse, or improper payments — such as questions raised about alleged non-qualified pension payouts involving the Hugo Firefighters Relief Association — they should be reviewed appropriately, and any responsible parties should be held accountable through the proper process.

HUGO CITY COUNCIL WARD 3 (ELECT 1)

David Strub

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Retired, last employed as a quality manager
List 3 most recent civic involvement roles: Incumbent Hugo City Council for Ward 3. Previous to City Council I was on the Hugo Parks, Rec and Open Space Commission. Appointed member on the Met Council Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee



back to the community by serving on the Parks Commission and City Council. My key interest is in planning to guide development to maintain the Hugo character and enhance the amenities that make Hugo a great place to live.

Q. What can the city Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Hugo runs very efficiently, from our police via contracting with the Washington County Sheriff Department, to our outstanding part-time on-call Hugo Fire Department, to our lean and efficient city staff. All of this enables the City Council to maintain a flat tax rate.

The other issue is to look down the road for future expenditures and plan accordingly (i.e. do NOT kick the can down the road on the tough issues).

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First, water. Water is a precious commodity, and the city needs to continue to encourage conservation and prudent use of our water. Most new development in Hugo relies on reuse of storm water for irrigation. In addition, the city is continuing to appeal the lawsuit from the White Bear Lake Homeowner's Association regarding Hugo's use of water from the aquafer. I am supportive of the city's legal actions to appeal this lawsuit. I am also a member (representing MAWSAC) on the White Bear Lake Area Comprehensive Plan committee that is creating a report for the legislature on solutions.

Second, taxes. Hugo has maintained a flat tax rate for many years. I will strive to maintain the high level of city services while living within our budget.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Gloria Murphy

City of residence: Lexington

Occupation: Senior patient access specialist in the medical technology industry, and small-business co-owner

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Centennial ISD 12 school board member
- Director of Centennial Area Education Foundation
- City of Lexington planning and zoning commissioner, and parks board member

Students should feel safe, supported and known at school, and parents should feel confident sending them there each day. We also need to give teachers and staff the tools they need, direct resources toward classrooms, and be careful with every taxpayer dollar.

As both a school board member and Centennial mom, I want our decisions to be practical, thoughtful and focused on helping every child learn, grow and succeed.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Centennial's greatest challenge is meeting the needs of students and staff while the district and the families we serve are both facing rising costs. We must protect strong classroom instruction, reasonable class sizes, student services, transportation, technology and special education. We also need to close achievement gaps, keep students safe, care for aging facilities, and recruit and retain excellent staff. That means looking honestly at what is working, what needs improvement and whether our spending is actually helping students.

Parents and taxpayers deserve clear explanations of the choices before the board and the tradeoffs involved. The goal is simple: children should be known, challenged, supported

and prepared for life, and families should be able to trust that decisions are being made carefully and responsibly.

Q. What are your opinions on the two Centennial Forward referendum questions set for this year's ballot?

A. I support both Centennial Forward questions, but I do not view voter approval as a blank check. As a Centennial mom, I want every child to have excellent teachers, safe schools and opportunities to succeed. As a taxpayer, I know what families throughout our community are feeling. Everything costs more right now, and my family feels that pressure too. That is why every dollar must be justified, clearly explained and carefully managed.

Question 1 would provide \$375 per pupil annually to help maintain teachers, academic programs, services and class sizes. Question 2 would address safety, aging building systems, learning spaces and capacity needs.

I voted to place both questions on the ballot after years of planning and community input. If voters approve them, I will ask hard questions, demand clear budgets and make sure the district delivers what it promised. Our children deserve strong schools, and taxpayers deserve accountability.

Jessica Schwinn

City of residence: Centerville

Occupation: Educator

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Founded and run Centennial Area Mutual Aid Network
- Treasurer, Centennial ISD 12 School Board
- District Systems Accountability committee member

inclusive and safe space for all students. School should be a place that all students feel welcome, not a space they should have to worry about bullying or other unwelcoming behavior. Lastly, lunch for students has become a major concern of parents. In both the middle school and high school, the timing and length of lunch is an issue. Some students at the middle school are eating lunch as early as 9:51 a.m. District wide, a number of students won't eat lunch or throw much of it away as they don't like the taste and/or appearance of what is being served.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Education funding in Minnesota has not kept pace with inflation. There is a big lack of funding for Centennial, especially compared to neighboring districts. To fill this gap, districts rely on taxpayers via operating levies. The metro average for districts with operating levies is more than \$1500 per student. Centennial's current levy is about \$996 per student. Nearby districts like White Bear Lake (\$1668 per student) and Mounds View (\$2204 per student) receive significantly more in operating levy per pupil. Unfortunately, this funding gap affects everything from class size and student support

to what kind of electives and specialist classes can be offered to students. Until the Minnesota Legislature fixes the funding formula, Centennial will have to continue to make due with what we get and be good stewards while also planning for a rainy day.

Q. What are your opinions on the two Centennial Forward referendum questions set for this year's ballot?

A. As a current school board member, I cannot weigh in on whether community members should vote yes or no on the referendum questions. I can say that the district began this process almost two years ago. The board urged the district to conduct this process in a transparent way with a high level of community involvement. Throughout the process, an input team of 60 community members, parents and staff met to give feedback so that priorities on the plan could be established and adjusted accordingly. A design team made up of district leaders and staff also met throughout the process to give feedback and refine plans. I am satisfied with the time and care that was taken to establish this long-range plan. The current school board voted unanimously to place these questions on the ballot in November.

Joe Ackerman

City of residence: Lexington

Occupation: Chief engineer of critical operations U.S. Bank, St. Paul

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Volunteering for Centennial Elementary Parent Organization (CEPO) for 2.5 years
- Attend regular city council meetings and applying for board positions (unsuccessful)

- Heading up Lovell Road safety improvements in Anoka County (neighborhood collective)

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?

A.

- Improved school breakfast/lunch program — better quality food and common-sense reduction of waste.
- Invest in facility infrastructure and engineering. Keeping up with facility standards with regard to safety, efficiency and modernization.
- Call for more parent/community involvement. Encourage volunteering and school board meeting attendance.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Funding deficits, rising operating costs and aging facilities.

Q. What are your opinions on the two Centennial Forward referendum questions set for this year's ballot?

A. I hope to see them pass. When schools do better, the community does better. When schools are not invested in, the community suffers with students who do not get the support they need, teacher and staff burnout (added demands on them) and lower enrollment.

Laura Gannon

City of residence: Circle Pines

Occupation: Senior principal product security engineer, and small-business owner

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- SD36 DFL outreach and inclusion officer (2023-2026)
- Volunteer door guard at Don Julio's following Operation Metro raid
- Girl Scout Troop Leader, Troop 27519

are, especially neurodivergent learners and students with disabilities who are exhausted from trying to fit into systems never designed for them. We need adequate paraprofessional support and flexible teaching practices. Third, honesty in education means trusting our teachers with evidence-based curriculum, accurate history and science taught as science. Our kids deserve the critical thinking skills to navigate a complicated world. All three require competitive teacher compensation and retaining the talented educators we already have.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. The major issue facing Centennial is chronic underfunding. We spend just \$995 per pupil in local operating levy funding compared to a metro average of \$1,519. That gap is not abstract — it is the reading interventionist we cannot afford, the special education para burning out by December and the aging infrastructure we patch instead of fix. Our middle school is at 125% capacity. Teachers are leaving the profession because they are underpaid and overworked, often carrying tens of

thousands of dollars in graduate-degree debt. We cannot address mental health needs, modernize security or close achievement gaps without first closing this funding gap. Our children's education should not be a geographical lottery.

Q. What are your opinions on the two Centennial Forward referendum questions set for this year's ballot?

A. I support both Centennial Forward referendum questions. Question 1, the \$375 per-pupil operating levy, is essential to maintain strong programming and retain the educators our students depend on. Question 2, the \$108.9 million facilities bond, will modernize aging buildings, strengthen safety and security, and address capacity challenges across every school. The school board approved both questions unanimously after years of community input and data analysis. Without this investment, we face more painful cuts that will be felt directly in classrooms. Strong schools do not happen by accident — they happen when communities choose to invest in them. Every child in Centennial deserves a school that was built for them, not just the ones in wealthier zip codes.

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CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Tom Knisely

City of residence: Blaine

Occupation: Media relations coordinator, Three Rivers Park District

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Chair, Centennial School Board
- Director, Intermediate 916 School Board
- Past president, Centennial High School Baseball Boosters

new social workers, two for our elementary schools, one for our Alternative Learning Center and one for the Pines to help our students whose personal struggles impact their learning. My hope moving forward is to hire a social worker for the middle school and high school as well. Maintaining strong programs is vital. One good example is the expansion of our new Career Pathways Program from manufacturing to also include computer science, health and sports medicine.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Equitable funding for property-poor school districts like Centennial and unfunded state mandates that drive up costs are major issues facing Centennial. Due to funding inequities, Centennial Schools receive less state funding than other districts of similar size. This forces Centennial to meet the growing needs of the district with less money than others receive. It's difficult, but through sound fiscal management and constant rightsizing, we've managed. Unfortunately, new unfunded mandates from the state are making this increasingly difficult. New costs for summer unemployment, paid family medical leave and funding cuts to mandated special education programs are projected to cost

Centennial Schools an estimated \$2.7 million on an annual basis.

Q. What are your opinions on the two Centennial Forward referendum questions set for this year's ballot?

A. I support both questions. The operating levy will help maintain class sizes, services for students and strong academic programs. The levy will provide an extra \$375 per pupil annually. Even with this increase, our operating levy will still be below the average of north metro districts. The bond referendum is focused on urgent deferred maintenance (fixing the things that need to be fixed), school safety (new secure entrances and other safety enhancements), remodeling and additions that anticipate future growth and improve the day-to-day operations of our schools. The original plan came in at a cost of \$224 million. After dozens of public meetings and hundreds of public comments, plans were adjusted. The cost of the bond levy was cut in half and is now just \$109 million.

The cost of these two questions will cost the average homeowner roughly \$25 a month, the amount of a Carbone's pizza.

MAHTOMEDI SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Allyson Sellwood

City of residence: Mahtomedi

Occupation: Strategic Initiatives Consultant, Hennepin County

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

I in recent years, my civic life has focused on kids, starting with my own, ages 8, 6, and 4. I volunteer in their classrooms and with PTO events throughout the year. I'm a fixture at their sports and activities, and I've helped organize and manage our young Zephyr teams. As any parent of kids these ages knows, that's a full calendar all by itself.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?

A. First, excellent classrooms for every student. A decade ago, Mahtomedi was ranked the best public high school in Minnesota. We're still one of the top districts in the state, but "still very good" isn't the Mahtomedi standard. I'll keep the focus on strong academics and measurable results.

Second, supporting the teachers who make Mahtomedi special. Mahtomedi teachers know my kids by name, know how they learn, and teach them like it matters. Great districts keep great teachers by respecting their time and backing them in the classroom.

Third, honest budgeting. New state mandates have added real, recurring costs without permanent funding to match. I've spent my career where state policy meets local budgets. I'll plan honestly, push the state to fund what it requires, and make sure residents always see the full picture.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Long-term financial sustainability. District enrollment is essentially flat, which means state formula revenue is flat, while the costs (compensation, benefits, new state mandates) continue to grow every year. This is the reality the incoming board will operate in.

Mahtomedi voters have said "yes" to levies multiple times in twelve years, nearly tripling what they invest per student. That is extraordinary trust. My job will be to make sure our district keeps deserving it, which at its core is academic, strong schools

are why families choose Mahtomedi. Protecting that standard is the foundation of everything else, including the district's finances.

Most recently, the 2025 referendum passed with specific commitments. I will do my part to help deliver on every one of those commitments, while ensuring the district communicates effectively, transparently, and in plain language so district residents can understand their investment.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?

A. I support it and look forward to voting "yes" this November. The Permanent School Fund is one of Minnesota's oldest school funding sources, and raising its distributions sends more dollars to classrooms without raising taxes. As Mahtomedi faces rising costs, every reliable dollar that doesn't come from local property taxpayers matters. If I earn the chance to serve on the school board, I'll make sure these new dollars, just like every dollar this community invests, come back as results in our classrooms.

Erica Engelbert-Hensel

City of residence: Willernie

Occupation: Advanced practice esthetician

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

I have volunteered on the Maple Tree Childcare fundraising committee for the past three years.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?

A. Advocating for our community. While working in Mahtomedi

over the past 7 years, I have had the opportunity to connect with local parents, students, and staff. I am someone you can trust to listen, be transparent, and represent our district.

Supporting our teachers. Our incredible teachers are the backbone of our schools, and ensuring their needs are met is crucial for the health of our district.

Ensuring every single Mahtomedi student is represented. I believe all of our students are unique individuals who deserve to be celebrated, represented, and respected. My goal is for every single student to graduate from Mahtomedi feeling confident and prepared for their next chapter.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Ensuring our district receives enough funding while families navigate increased living costs.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?

A. I believe modifying the permanent school fund will be beneficial by offering consistent, dependable funding at no increase to taxpayers.

Jenny Peterson

City of residence: Mahtomedi

Occupation: Teacher since 2000 in Stillwater

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

- Founder and leader of OHA and Middle School Cribbage Clubs
- Founder of Annual Mahtomedi Kids' Triathlon since 2020
- Co-chair to improve outdoor city ice rinks

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?

A.

- To be a district people move to, and stay, for excellent public schools and community.
- Keep classes sizes below the metro average.
- Continue to offer a variety of pathways for all students in high school to achieve their highest potential after graduating.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Maintaining a healthy, balanced budget with the ever present wants vs needs, including open enrollment, new constructions, staffing, and unfunded mandates from the Capitol.

I would like Mahtomedi to look at policies surrounding screen

time and technology use for kids, especially K-5.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?

A. I don't see a downside to the amendment. It will bring our district money without taxing residents. The PSTF has bipartisan support with the House passing this 134-0, the Senate 43-24, and the new distributions would use a three-year rolling average to manage dips and gains in the investments. The PSTF has had historic gains, let's spread it out for who it is intended for, the kids in the classrooms.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

MAHTOMEDI SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Ryan Domin

City of residence: Grant

Occupation: Enterprise technology executive

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

For the past four years, my primary civic involvement has been serving on the Mahtomedi School Board, where I currently serve as treasurer and on the Finance, Facilities and Calendar committees, as well as liaison to the MSHSL. I've also had the privilege of coaching all three of my daughters in youth soccer. Beyond that, most of my remaining civic contribution seems to involve driving kids around Mahtomedi!

I'm a third-generation Mahtomedi graduate, and my wife, Jessica, and I are raising three daughters - an eighth, fourth and second-grader - who are all proud fourth-generation Zephyrs.



Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top priorities are academic excellence, responsible stewardship of the community’s resources, and preparing students for a rapidly changing future.
First, we must keep rigorous learning and teaching at the center of the classroom while preserving the breadth of courses and opportunities that distinguish Mahtomedi and allow students to find their passion.

Second, we must continue to be responsible stewards of community resources - maintaining strong financial discipline while investing thoughtfully in our schools and facilities.
Third, we must build on our strategic plan by keeping students engaged in their education, helping them discover their strengths and interests and preparing well-rounded graduates. As technology changes how we live and work, students need to use new tools responsibly while strengthening enduring skills such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, collaboration and sound judgment.
Our goal should remain simple: an exceptional education that prepares every student to thrive in whatever world comes next.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Mahtomedi is a strong school district in a unique community. Our challenge is to keep moving forward - navigating financial pressures and evolving thoughtfully while protecting what has long made Mahtomedi exceptional.
Over the past four years, our Board has worked collaboratively and focused on students rather than politics. We have maintained rigorous academics and broad student opportunities, responsibly managed resources, adopted a community-built strategic plan and earned voter support for investments in safety and security, HVAC, athletic facilities and high school modernization.
We need to build on that progress: attracting and retaining excellent educators, upholding the high academic standards

that distinguish Mahtomedi, implementing these investments responsibly and preparing students for whatever path they choose.
Whether you chose Mahtomedi or have called it home for generations, protecting what makes it special while strengthening it for the future is a responsibility we all share - and one that is deeply personal to me.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the amendment. It modernizes how Minnesota manages and distributes earnings from the Permanent School Fund, providing additional funding to public and charter schools without raising individual income or property taxes.
Just as importantly, it protects the long-term health of the fund by requiring it to remain a perpetual financial resource and preserve its purchasing power over time, balancing the needs of students today with those of future generations.
For a smaller district like Mahtomedi, additional state funding helps us sustain the rigorous academics and broad opportunities our community expects while remaining responsible stewards of local taxpayer dollars.
This is a bipartisan, practical approach that puts students ahead of politics, strengthens schools across Minnesota, and maintains responsible long-term management of an important public asset.

WHITE BEAR LAKE SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 4)

Amanda McFarlane

City of residence: Vadnais Heights

Occupation: Senior business analyst

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

• Chairperson Vadnais Heights Park, Recreation and Trails Commission

• Ramsey County election judge

• Volunteer at White Bear Lake Area Educational Foundation’s The Closet



Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top priorities are supporting all students, improving communication, and accessible transparency.
First, we must support all students. Every student should have what they need to succeed, and every student should need what they have. No student should feel that their needs are too complex for our schools to meet.
Second, communication should be proactive and two-way. At

times, it feels like families, staff, and community members must pull information from the district. I’d like to explore opportunities such as board listening sessions, like those implemented in Centennial, where stakeholders can share concerns and ideas directly with board members.
Third, transparency must be accessible. Posting ten years of financial reports is transparent in theory, but if the information is difficult to understand without specialized knowledge, it isn’t truly accessible. We need clear, understandable information so our community can meaningfully participate and hold the district accountable.
Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. One of the major issues facing our district is building trust with all our stakeholders, especially community members who do not currently have children in our schools. Our schools are a vital part of the entire community, and everyone has a stake in their success. We need to strengthen communication, create more opportunities for meaningful two-way engagement, and help all community

members understand how strong public schools benefit everyone.
Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment to increase funding from the Permanent School Fund. It would increase per-pupil funding at no additional cost to taxpayers while maintaining the fund’s long-term future. The proposed updates align with current trust best practices and would make disbursements more predictable, helping school districts plan responsibly for the future.
Importantly, local school districts would retain decision-making authority over how these funds are used. The funding is not tied to state or federal mandates, allowing communities to determine what best supports their students.
I also appreciate that this is a truly bipartisan proposal. Every member of the Minnesota House voted in favor, following the recommendations of a nonpartisan task force. This amendment represents a responsible, sustainable way to invest in today’s students while protecting the fund for generations to come.

Amy Puschinsky

City of residence: White Bear Lake

Occupation: Financial operations analyst

List three most recent civic involvement roles:

• Chair, Matoska International Elementary PTO (2024-present)

• Volunteer for Clare Housing supporting staff and tenants in South Minneapolis

• Volunteer supporting immigrant families through the Bear Solidarity Network



Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. Community-powered public education: Families and community members deserve to understand how and why decisions are made. I want to make district information easier to understand, listen to the people closest to our schools, and build stronger partnerships between the district and the community.
Every student belongs: I want every student to feel safe, supported, and connected at school. Students learn best when

they know they belong, and that means recognizing that students have different strengths, needs, and ways of learning.
Future-focused leadership: I want our district to make thoughtful decisions that serve students today while also considering their impact years from now. “Leave things better for the person who comes after you” is a value I try to bring to everything I do.
Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. I believe one of the greatest opportunities for our district is improving communication. As a parent and longtime school volunteer, I’ve seen how deeply families and staff care about our students. Information should be easy to find and understand, and people shouldn’t need to be experts in school finance or district policy to stay informed.
Strong communication starts with listening. As a board member, I want to listen to the people doing the work every day, including students, families, educators, and staff. Good decisions come from asking questions, looking at the data, and understanding the stories behind the numbers.
I also see supporting students’ sense of belonging and well-being as a critical priority. Students learn best when they

feel safe, connected and valued. Addressing these challenges requires transparency, collaboration, and a continued focus on what is best for students.
Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. As a financial operations analyst I support increasing funding for the Permanent School Fund. I believe Minnesota should be looking for sustainable, long-term ways to invest in public education, rather than continually asking local taxpayers to do more.
As someone who works with budgets and financial analysis, I also believe that additional funding should be accompanied by transparency and thoughtful decision-making. We have a responsibility to make sure resources are used effectively and ultimately benefit students.
I also appreciate that the Permanent School Fund is about thinking beyond the immediate moment. That fits with how I approach leadership: we should consider not only what our decisions mean for students today, but what they mean for the students who will walk through our schools five, 10, or even 20 years from now.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

WHITE BEAR LAKE SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 4)

Melissa Roberts
City of residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Assistant controller
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• PACER Center Parent & Community Engagement Participant
• Industrial Wastewater & Environmental Stewardship Community Contributor
• Public Works Community Support & Volunteer Involvement



must work for both students and parents. As a parent with two children in the district, I understand the importance of clear communication, consistent expectations, and meaningful family engagement. I want to strengthen accessibility of information and ensure district policies reflect the needs of our community.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. Our district is facing several significant challenges that require thoughtful, collaborative solutions. Safety remains a major concern, both in terms of physical security and the growing need for mental health resources. Students and staff must feel supported and protected in order to thrive. Additionally, fiscal pressures continue to shape how we prioritize programs and staffing. Rising costs, aging facilities, and evolving educational needs demand careful financial planning and transparency. Another major issue is ensuring policies keep pace with the needs of families. As a parent with two students currently enrolled, I hear directly from families about the need for clear communication, consistent expectations, and meaningful opportunities to engage with the district. Finally, we must continue addressing achievement gaps and ensuring all students and teachers have access to high quality instruction and support. These issues are

interconnected and require strong leadership and community partnership.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?

A. The Permanent School Fund plays an important role in supporting public education, and increasing its funding through a constitutional amendment is a significant decision. In general, I support efforts that strengthen longterm, stable funding for schools, especially when they promote transparency and accountability. Any amendment that increases investment in the Permanent School Fund should ensure that dollars are managed responsibly, distributed equitably, and used in ways that directly benefit students and teachers in the classroom. As someone with a background in finance, I believe it is essential that any changes include clear oversight, measurable outcomes, and protections to ensure funds are used efficiently. Minnesota’s students deserve reliable funding that supports academic success, safe learning environments, and modern educational resources. If structured well, increased funding for the Permanent School Fund can help achieve those goals.

Ryan Vernosh
City of Residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Elementary School Principal
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Governor’s appointee to the Professional Educator Licensing Board
• Coordinating support for immigrant families
• Board member for the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless



they are safe, supported, and valued for who they are. Finally, I believe the district must be intentional and transparent in its communication with families, staff, and the community—not only seeking feedback for major decisions, but clearly explaining how that feedback was used and, when it was not, why.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?

A. There are three major issues facing our district: literacy achievement, funding and budget challenges, and stagnant enrollment. Reading is the gateway to future opportunities. While our district serves most students well, we must strengthen support for students with dyslexia and other learning challenges to ensure every child has the opportunity to become a successful reader with access to any pathway they choose after graduation. School funding has not kept pace with inflation, and uncertainty around federal funding makes sustaining important programs more challenging. This increases the need to ensure every dollar is focused on student support and outcomes. Enrollment remains below pre-pandemic levels, with declining birth rates across the metro creating additional long-term challenges. With fewer students in our

district, we need to better understand why families choose White Bear Lake Area Schools and why some choose other options.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?

A. I support the proposed Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing disbursements from the Permanent School Fund because it strengthens funding for public education while preserving the long-term purpose and integrity of the fund. This bipartisan increase in funding does not raise taxes or change the purpose of the trust. Instead, it updates how the existing fund is managed to better align with modern trust and endowment management practices. This approach allows Minnesota to responsibly increase the benefits available to students today while protecting the fund’s long-term value for future generations. I recognize that this amendment will not solve all of Minnesota’s public school funding challenges, but it is a meaningful step toward providing schools with additional support.

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HUGO POLICE REPORTS

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

- **Deputies conducted a sidewalk stop at midnight July 28 in the 4000 block of Heritage Parkway N. after seeing a juvenile behind the wheel of a vehicle driving on the sidewalk at the school. The driver and passengers each received a citation.**
- A driver involved in a multi-vehicle crash received a citation at 9:49 a.m. July 28 on Frenchman Road and Victor Hugo Blvd. N.
- A motorist was pulled over for speeding at 1:14 p.m. July 28 on Elmcrest Avenue N. and Rosemary Way N. and issued a citation.
- Deputies arrested a motorist on Forest Blvd. N. and 170th Street N. at 4:39 p.m. July 28, following a traffic stop.
- A Keep Our Kops Safe alert was issued for a pickup and hold on a suspect in the 5000 block of 159th Street N. at 9:18 p.m. July 28, after a civil issue escalated.
- "The driver was issued a large sheet of citations," deputies said in their report about a traffic stop they conducted at 4:19 p.m. July 29 on Fondant Trail N. and 131st Street N. A traffic stop was initiated on a motorist for failing to stop for both a solid red light and for a large, red stop sign. After the driver was identified, it was revealed he was driving after revocation and failed to provide proof of insurance on the vehicle.
- Deputies on patrol at 5:59 a.m. July 30 on Forest Blvd. N. and 120th Street N. observed a vehicle performing a moving violation and cited its driver. They issued verbal warnings to three other drivers for committing moving violations on Forest Blvd. N. overnight July 29-30 and a verbal warning to a driver on Forest Blvd. N. at 170th Street N. at midnight for expired registration and a rear taillight not operating.
- **Residents in the 15000 block of Everton Avenue N. at 1:49 p.m. report-**

ed a possible fraud attempt that was cut to the quick before the fraudster had finished his opening gambit.

- In the first report of its kind expected to be repeated often in the months ahead, a political sign was reported stolen from a location near 170th Street N. and Forest Blvd. N. at 3:09 p.m. July 30.
- A motorist was arrested at 8:55 p.m. July 30 after deputies initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle parked on the wrong side of the road on Ingersoll Avenue N. and 165th Street N. A further investigation of the subject resulted in that person's arrest.
- A motorist was warned at 9:36 a.m. July 31 on Forest Blvd. N. and 140th Street N. for cellular phone use.
- Two Hugo residents reported damage to their properties on Aug. 2 and wanted it documented. The first report came in at 8:20 a.m. from the 5000 block of 147th Street N. The second at 9:51 a.m. from the 6000 block of 145th Circle N. At 10:42 a.m. Aug. 3 a resident in the 12000 block of Ethan Avenue N. also filed a report of criminal damage to property.
- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies conducted at traffic stop at 7:06 a.m. Aug. 3 on Forest Blvd. N. and 159th Street N. and issued a citation to the driver.
- Juveniles playing ding-dong-ditch tried to ditch deputies at 10:40 p.m. Aug. 3 in the 6000 block of Goodview Trail N. After being dispatched out to the scene, deputies found the youths and called out, "Police! Stop!" Well, they didn't. But deputies later found them and warned them about their curfew violation and advised them to stop with the ding-dong ditching activities.
- Deputies at 11:25 p.m. Aug. 3 later found the juveniles at a closed park in the 15000 block of Goodview Avenue who said they were looking for a phone that got lost when they tried to flee deputies. Deputies again advised them of their curfew violation.
- Perhaps considering doorbell ringing to be too risky, unknown people were reported for pounding on the complainant's door in the 4000 block of Rosemary Way at 12:52 a.m. Aug. 4 — just one hour after the ding-dong-ditching drama. This time deputies could not find the

nuisance makers.

- Deputies received two calls about scam attempts on Aug. 4, the first at 11:10 a.m. from the 17000 block of Forest Blvd. N. and the second at 1:49 p.m. from the 8000 block of 132nd Street N.
- Residents in the 15000 block of Farnham Avenue N. at 7:50 p.m. Aug. 4 reported being unhappy with the company they hired to fix a lock. Deputies advised the complainants to write a scathing review or contact management.
- Deputies conducted a traffic stop at 7:18 p.m. Aug. 5 in the 6000 block of 145th Street N. for registration that expired in February and cited the driver for failure to provide any proof of insurance. They conducted another traffic stop at midnight Aug. 6 in the 4000 block of Frenchman Road for a missing headlight and issued a written warning about the headlight and passengers not wearing seatbelts. The passengers were also advised of curfew and Minnesota seatbelt requirements.
- A black Lab was reported for nipping someone in the calf at 8:46 a.m. Aug. 6 in the 7000 block of 147th Street N. Deputies spoke to the alleged owner of a black Lab, who denied it was her dog.
- Residents in the 15000 block of Greene Avenue N. at 2:23 p.m. Aug. 6 reported a float plane flying over their house. The complainant was referred to the Federal Aviation Administration.
- Deputies on patrol on Forest Blvd. N. and Frenchman Road at 6:23 a.m. Aug. 7 sustained damage to the squad car after a rock from a moving vehicle in front of them bounced up and cracked their windshield.
- Residents in the 15000 block of Enfield Avenue N. at 7:58 a.m. Aug. 7 reported an egg thrown at their house that broke a window screen.
- A motorist on 170th Street N. and Ingersoll Avenue N. was pulled over at 5:48 p.m. Aug. 7 and cited for speeding.
- A resident in the 6000 block of Goodview Trail Circle N. at 7:23 a.m. Aug. 7 reported a domestic abuse no-contact order violation over Snapchat and Facebook.
- Deputies dispatched out to a disturbance in the 4000 block of Fable Road N. at 10:55 p.m. Aug. 8 located juveniles having a party under the supervision of an adult sister.

Loretta Harding





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GO BEARS!

MONDAY	9:00AM BINGO @ JIMMY'S 6:00PM BINGO @ SAK'S
TUESDAY	6:00PM BINGO @ JIMMY'S
WEDNESDAY	9:00AM BINGO @ JIMMY'S 5:00PM MEAT RAFFLE @ DOC'S & BEARTOWN 6:00PM BINGO @ BEARTOWN
THURSDAY	6:00PM BINGO @ JIMMY'S 7:00PM BINGO @ WB BAR
FRIDAY	5:00PM MEAT RAFFLES @ WB BAR & DOC'S 6:00PM TRI-WHEEL @ WB BAR
SATURDAY	12:30PM BINGO @ SAK'S 2:00PM MEAT RAFFLE @ COOPER'S 3:00PM BINGO @ COOPER'S 5:00PM MEAT RAFFLE @ JIMMY'S 6:00PM TRI-WHEEL @ WB BAR

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Renovations with the biggest bang for your buck



Home renovations are a significant part of homeownership. Naturally, people want to make their own personal marks on the homes they buy and ensure that their properties fit their needs and wants.

While many renovations add value to a home, some offer more value than others. When allocating dollars to renovations, particularly when finances are tight, homeowners may want to

direct their efforts to those projects that will offer the highest rate of return on investment. Each year Zonda Home, in conjunction with Remodeling magazine, puts together a list of high-return projects. Exterior projects drive the most value for owners who are selling their homes, and they consistently top the list of high-ROI improvements. Here are five projects offering a strong ROI that homeowners may want to consider.

1. Garage door replacement: A garage door replacement is part of the curb appeal improvements homeowners can consider. At an average cost of \$4,672, it offers a recouped cost of 267.7% according to the 2025 Zonda report.

2. Steel door replacement: Also boasting an ROI north of 200%, a steel door installation is a wise choice for homeowners

who want to drive up the value of their homes.

3. Manufactured stone veneer: Manufactured stone veneer is a manmade masonry product that looks like natural stone but is lightweight and easier to install. It can offer a recouped cost of 207.9% on the \$11,702 investment.

4. Fiber-cement siding replacement: Homeowners in the market for new siding can consider fiber-cement siding, which will see the investment recoup slightly more than 100% of its cost.

5. Minor kitchen remodel: Kitchens are the heart of a home, and a minor remodel offers a 113% return. Inside the home the golden rule is to keep things simple. Minor remodels tend to offer a better rate of return

than major ones. Buyers will pay for move-in ready and updated, but sellers likely will not recoup the costs for luxury upgrades or over-the-top renovations.

It's important to note that 2025 was the first time a practical backup generator made the list of top improvements. Falling into the number seven spot, the generator averaged a return of 95.3%, which underscores how homeowners are gearing improvements toward the changing climate and unpredictable weather.

Those remodeling primarily to increase equity for future sales may want to consider exterior projects and basic kitchen improvements.



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Stagehands put up a stage on their own in Columbus

BY LOGAN GION
STAFF WRITER

Adam Senarighi, owner and director of operations for Hay Creek Entertainment, has been in entertainment labor and event production for decades — setting up the stage for White Bear Township Day, assembling video walls for White Bear Lake High School’s Performing Arts Center, providing tech support for Boston Scientific’s annual employee recognition program in Arden Hills and managing audio and video for much of the 3M Open in Blaine.

“Stagehands, engineers, technicians — a venue will call and say, ‘Hey, we’ve got so-and-so coming. They need 20 stagehands.’ OK, no problem. We’ll provide the stagehands,” Senarighi said. “We are breaking into more and more production. Then we decided, about a year and a half ago, let’s do a venue (of our own).”

This year, Hay Creek Entertainment



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

A concert at The Outskirts. Owner Adam Senarighi believes the venue will provide families with unforgettable yet affordable entertainment.

opened The Outskirts, an outdoor entertainment venue next to Running Aces Casino, Hotel and Racetrack in Columbus. On Fridays and Saturdays,

audiences can attend concerts and “Pull-up Pictures,” movie marathons shown on a 120-panel LED video wall. Viewers can pull up a lawn chair or a vehicle, drive-in style.

Though the venue is locally owned, the setup is state of the art. Senarighi and Willey have used their experience to design a clean space with utility, tech and security capabilities tucked out of sight. Not a single cable runs aboveground.

In addition to safety and design, Senarighi noted that location and affordability make The Outskirts a major draw for nearby residents.

“People do not want to go to Minneapolis for entertainment anymore,” Senarighi said. “It’s just not worth it: drive down there, parking, waiting to find parking, walking three or four blocks to the venue, going through security. Then, the concert’s over — now, the mass exodus; now, you’re waiting in traffic or a parking ramp for an hour to get out.”

By contrast, The Outskirts can comfortably hold 4,000 people for a concert or 50 cars plus lawn-chair seating for a movie night. Attendees can park in the Running Aces lot and easily access Interstate 35 on the way out. Because Hay Creek Entertainment is a local company, visitors can skip many of the fees associated with tickets, concessions and merchandise, making Hay Creek’s events reasonably priced for couples, families or friend groups.

“People need affordability, especially these days,” said Jeff Willey, Hay Creek Entertainment’s production manager. “We want it to be a full experience, but we don’t want to break the bank ... We can give a little piece of happiness to the community by offering something that’s a little bit more affordable.”

The Outskirts hosts events mainly on Fridays and Saturdays, 15201 Running Aces Blvd., Columbus, next to Running Aces Casino, Hotel and Racetrack. For more information, scan the QR code or visit theoutskirtsmn.com.



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