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HUGO CITY COUNCIL: Receives update on Hopkins Schoolhouse efforts **PAGE 15**



Honoring the fallen

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Memorial Day will be observed on Monday, May 25. For the 80th consecutive year, American Legion Post 620 will visit several local cemeteries on Memorial Day, including Walker Cemetery, Withrow Cemetery, Gethsemane Methodist Cemetery, Incarnation Lutheran Cemetery, St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery, Twitchell Cemetery, St. Genevieve's Catholic Cemetery and St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery.

City of Hugo gears up for summer street project

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

HUGO — Residents and business owners who live in and around Bald Eagle Industrial Park should gear up for a summer full of construction related to the street improvement project.

The project consists of full-depth pavement removal; paving and mill and overlay improvements; spot curb and gutter replacement; and trail, street lighting and minor utility improvements. (See "Council sets public hearing for street project," Nov. 28, 2025, The Citizen.)

The city received four bids ranging from \$3,774,284 up to \$5,095,769; the engineer's estimate was \$4,337,316. The City Council selected low bidder Bituminous Roadways' proposal for \$3,572,331, which includes two bid alternates. Alternate 1 is for the 140th Street trail and Alternate 2 is for the Fenway Boulevard trail.

The city of Hugo will fund \$3,669,043, or 78.22%, of the project; the remaining \$1,021,357 (21.78%) will be covered by assessments to benefiting property owners. Property owners within the partial reconstruction portion of the project will be assessed \$4,100 per unit for residential or approximately \$77 per foot for commercial. For the mill and overlay, property owners will pay \$2,100 per unit for residential or approximately \$39.87 per foot for commercial.

SEE STREET PROJECT, PAGE 8

Centerville assessment shows slight drop in property valuations

BY LORETTA HARDING
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Centerville City Council recently had its yearly visit from City Assessor Mary Wells, SAMA, and her team.

Accompanying Wells at the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting were Chris Larson, AMA, Erik Skogquist, SAMA, and Diana Stellmach, senior manager in the Anoka County Assessment Office.

Their presentation of the city's 2026 property assessment report included a public hearing that opened and closed quickly without comment. During the presentation, Wells focused on residential values, while Larson focused briefly on commercial valuation.

The 2026 assessment for Centerville is based on 1,664 parcels of property within the city, 260 of which were inspected during the quintile review process (20% of all properties within a city are

inspected each year). The 71 properties where building permits were issued for improvements, remodeling or demolition were also reviewed.

For the remaining 80% of properties that were not reviewed this year, real estate sales are used to determine their valuation. The city saw 65 total sales recorded during the 2026 assessment study period, Oct. 1, 2024, through Sept. 30, 2025. Residential sales made up 60 of those sales and commercial/ industrial

made up the rest. Of the 60 residential sales, 40 of those sales met the criteria of "qualified sales," according to the Minnesota Department of Revenue. These sales were the basis for adjustments made to the improved residential properties throughout the city. Only one commercial sale met the criteria for a "qualified sale," so commercial/ industrial valuations

SEE ASSESSMENT, PAGE 8

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Math Corps provides learning pathways for Centerville Elementary

The Math Corps, a program offered through Serve-Minnesota, is providing pathways to learning for Centerville Elementary students.

Centerville Elementary has a Math Corps member providing tutoring for K-5 grade students, helping them build math skills based on state educational standards. Tutors are assigned a school-based staff member as a coach, who provides tutors with day-to-day support, teaching tools and feedback on student progress.

“Students that are not meeting all of the math standards are getting an extra boost every week in a small group setting. This helps with their confidence, fills in gaps with their math knowledge, and helps them work on specific skills they need to improve,” says Angie Anderson, Math Corps coach at Centerville Elementary. “It also gives students another adult in the building that they can build a relationship with.”

Since the start of the school year, the CenterPoint Energy Foundation’s \$100,000 grant to Math Corps has supported the placement of 150 tutors in nearly 60 school districts and charter schools within CenterPoint’s Minnesota service area.

Over the last four years, Math Corps has received \$300,000 in grant funding from the CenterPoint Energy Foundation to help elementary and middle school students build foundational skills.

For more information about Math Corps and to get involved, visit www.serveminnesota.org/program/minnesota-math-corps.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BRIEFS

County Board approves contract for spring lane striping project on roadways

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$289,200 contract with Sir Lines-A-Lot LLC for the spring latex striping project on roadways within the county. Lane striping is required on roadways meeting certain width and traffic volume thresholds as outlined in state standards and various federal regulations that require the state to establish such mandates. Many Washington County highways meet these thresholds. Bids for latex striping are requested on an annual basis.

Washington County also partners with local communities throughout the county for roadway pavement marking. Cities and townships will be able to have their roads striped under Washington County’s contract and reimburse the county for those quantities. The contract total includes these anticipated local requests.

Mental Health Local Advisory Council appointments made

Commissioners recently made two appointments to the Mental Health Local Advisory Council. The board appointed Shannon Stone to a partial term as an educational representative for a term that expires Dec. 31, 2028. The board also appointed Sheri Cindrich to a partial term as a certified peer specialist representative; the term also expires Dec. 31, 2028.

County Board reappoints Veterans Service Officer

Commissioners reappointed Ryan Carufel to a four-year term, effective June 3, as the Washington County Veterans Service Officer. Carufel leads a team of four assistant veterans service officers who provide services to approximately 13,000 veterans. They also assist surviving spouses, active duty, reserve and National Guard members residing in Washington County who are seeking or applying for federal, state and local benefits. Carufel was first

appointed in June 2014 and was reappointed in 2018 and 2022.

Take a survey to help shape Climate Action Plan

Share your feedback on Washington County’s proposed Climate Action Plan goals, objectives and strategies by taking a short survey, open through May 25. The county is developing a Climate Action Plan using community input and research and analysis while collaborating with experts and stakeholders. The plan will define the county’s role in climate action, outline action steps to reduce the county’s greenhouse gas emissions and illustrate strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The survey will help the county better understand whether the proposed goals, objectives and strategies align with the priorities of Washington County community members. The survey is available at SurveyMonkey.com/r/WashCAP. For more information about the county’s Climate Action Plan, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ClimateActionPlan.



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6:00PM BINGO @ BEARTOWN

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 | 6:00PM TRI-WHEEL @ WB BAR
5:00PM MEAT RAFFLE @ JIMMY'S

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MAY 14, 2026

www.readthecitizen.com

THE CITIZEN 3

ONGOING EVENTS

HUGO SENIOR CLUB

When: 1 p.m. Monday, May 18 and every 3rd Monday of every other month

Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th St. N., Hugo

Details: The meeting will include discussion on change of officers and committee members. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Games will be played after the meeting.

Contact: 651-592-0369 or barbconnolly1958@yahoo.com

HUGO SENIOR CITIZENS PLAY '500'

When: 12:45 p.m. Thursday, May 21, and every 1st, 3rd & 5th Thursday of each month.

Where: Rice Lake Centre in Hugo, 6900 137th Street N.

Details: Games begin promptly at 12:45 p.m. Refreshments and coffee will be served.

All senior citizens from the area are invited.

Contact: Barb at 651-592-0369 or barbconnolly1958@yahoo.com

CRIBBAGE

When: 1 p.m. May 25, and every 1st & 4th Monday of each month.

Where: Rice Lake Centre in Hugo, 6900 137th Street N.

Details: All senior citizens from Hugo and surrounding areas are invited to for an afternoon of Cribbage. Coffee and refreshments will be served.

Contact: Alice at 651-429-4413

CURRENT EVENTS

AGING WELL SENIOR EXPO

When: 9 a.m.-noon, Thursday, May 14

Where: St. Genevieve Parish Center, 6995 Centerville Road, Centerville

Details: Hosted by the Centennial Area Chamber. Event features vendor booths, health screenings, prescriptions and sharps collection, prizes and more. Registration required. Sign up through the Centennial Area Chamber website.

Contact: centennialareachamber.com/senior-expo

LAKESHORE PLAYERS GALA

When: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, May 14

Where: Hanifl Performing Arts Center, 4941 Long Ave., White Bear Lake

Details: Evening of cocktails, dinner, games and live entertainment by the Champagne Drops followed by performance of "Once Upon a Mattress". Annual fundraiser for Lakeshore Players. Ticket information online.

Contact: lakeshoreplayers.org

FUTURE CLIMATE

When: Thursday, May 14. Dinner at 6 p.m. followed by talk from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: White Bear Lake United Methodist Church, 1851 Birch St.

Details: Press Publications Meteorologist Frank Watson will recount the Twin Cities climate and it's past, present and future. A light dinner will be served.

Contact: watsonwx@aol.com

MUSIC @ MANITOU

When: 6-8 p.m. Friday, May 15

Where: Manitou Ridge Golf Course, 3200 McKnight Road N., White Bear Lake

Details: Lineup of artists curated by the community's recommendations, who will perform covers and originals.

Contact: 651-353-2004

LIVE MUSIC BY SETH DOUD

When: 6-9 p.m. Friday, May 15

Where: Lino Lakes American Legion Post 0566, 7731 Lake Drive

Details: Come on out for the Live music of one-man band Seth Doud. Stay and enjoy your favorite drink and some food too with Friday specials.

Contact: 651-783-0055

WARBLERS AND WOODLAND BIRD HIKE

When: 9-11 a.m. Saturday, May 16

Where: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Campground, 7373 Main St., Lino Lakes

Details: Migration is in full effect and it's a great time to look for songbirds. Tally up birds to add to your life list and year list and discuss birding apps and locations to help. Binoculars provided. Sign up through Anoka County Parks.

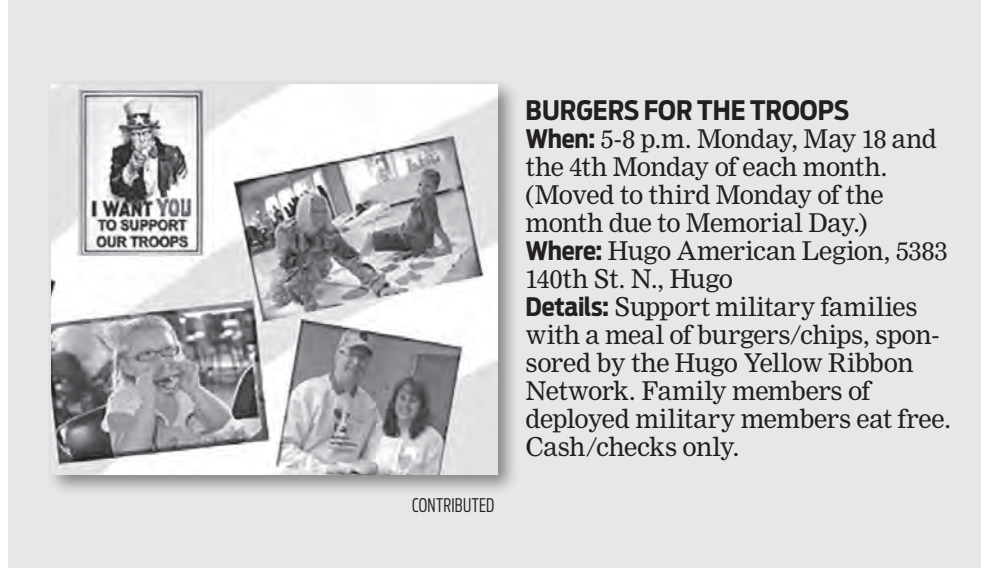
Contact: www.anokacountyparks.com

BELWIN BISON FESTIVAL

When: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, May 16

Where: Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields, 15601 Hudson Rd. N., Lakeland

Details: See the release of the 2026 NorthStar Bison herd onto the Bison



CONTRIBUTED

BURGERS FOR THE TROOPS

When: 5-8 p.m. Monday, May 18 and the 4th Monday of each month. (Moved to third Monday of the month due to Memorial Day.)

Where: Hugo American Legion, 5383 140th St. N., Hugo

Details: Support military families with a meal of burgers/chips, sponsored by the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network. Family members of deployed military members eat free. Cash/checks only.

Prairie, complete with food trucks, live music, eco-art, and a 5K "Run with the Bison". Check-in begins at 9 a.m. and tickets sold per car.

Contact: belwin.org/bisonfest

SEMLAK STRONG FUNDRAISER

When: 2-6 p.m. Saturday, May 16

Where: The Dog House, 2029 Woodlynn Ave. E, Maplewood

Details: Fundraiser to support Andy Semlak, who is dealing with Stage IV Renal Cell Carcinoma, and his family. Taco feed, silent auction, raffles.

Contact: semlakstrong.org

HERE COMES THE SUN! (AND WIND AND BATTERIES)

When: 6:30-7:30 p.m. Monday, May 18

Where: White Bear Lake Library, 2150 2nd St.

Details: Dr. Steve Jorissen, professor of chemistry at the University of St. Thomas, will talk about the clean energy transition that is happening now and how new technologies will make it even cheaper and more reliable. RSVP for Zoom link.

Contact: bit.ly/NEMCA0518

SIP INTO SUMMER

When: 4:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19

Where: Boatworks Commons, 4495 Lake Avenue S.

Details: Sip wine, meet community members, and hear about the Greater White Bear Lake Community Foundation. RSVP.

Contact: gwblcf.org

CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL BOOSTERS ANNUAL MEETING

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 19

Where: Trapper's Bar & Grill, lower level, 6810 Lake Drive, Lino Lakes

Details: All members of the Centennial Baseball Boosters are welcome to attend and vote for the 206/2027 Board Members.

Contact: sites.google.com/view/centennial-high-school-baseball/home

DOG DAYS

When: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, May 23

Where: Washington St. and Railroad Park, downtown White Bear Lake

Details: Meet dog rescue organizations, discover dog-loving local vendors, and enjoy a day that's as fun for you as it is for your pup - all while giving back to the dogs who need it most.

Contact: downtownwhitebearlake.com

LIONS VOLUNTEER PARK CONCERT

When: 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, May 27

Where: Peder Pedersen Pavillion at Lions Volunteer Park, 5524 Upper 146th St. N, Hugo

Details: The city of Hugo will kick off its Lions Volunteer Park concert series with A Hard Days Night with a high-energy, authentic replication of a Beatles performance.

Contact: 651-762-6342

HUGO BITS AND PIECES

- The city continues to ensure it will be fully staffed during the summer by seasonal employees within the public works department. The council previously approved the hiring of five seasonal employees. Since then, one of the seasonal employees received an offer for a summer internship and will not take the city position. Also, a regular full-time employee is expected to be out on medical leave for much of the summer. City staff requested the council approve the hiring of two seasonal employees, Adler Siebenaler and Ben Clausen.

- The Hugo American Legion continues to donate to the Hugo Fire Department from pull-tab proceeds. Most recently, the Legion donated \$1,000 to the department to be used for equipment.

- Mi Sota Essence Cannabis LLC has requested approval of a cannabis microbusiness registration that would allow for cultivation, production of consumer products and retail operations at 13419 Fenway Boulevard North (Suite 103). The business is proposed to operate under the name Carma Cannabis. The microbusiness' primary use would be the cultivation of cannabis flower and production of consumer products with cannabis flower, with an accessory use of retail sales of products manufactured on site.

Carma Cannabis has received preliminary license approval from the Minnesota Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) and has requested the cannabis microbusiness registration to hold one of the two available retail registrations within the city while it develops final plans of record and applies for full state license approval. The registration will not be effective until the applicant has received full state license approval.

- City Council member Dave Strub has applied for a water surface use permit to allow waterskiing on the slalom course on Sunset Lake. Now that the council

has given the OK, the Washington County Sheriff's Department will issue the permit.

- Residents and business owners who live in and around Bald Eagle Industrial Park should gear up for a summer full of construction related to the street improvement project. (See full story in this issue.)

- The city is seeking volunteers to serve on its various commissions. Currently, there is a vacancy for a regular member and alternate member on the Economic Development Authority; one vacancy on the Planning Commission, two vacancies on the Parks Commission and a vacancy for an associate member

on the Historical Commission. The City Council will conduct interviews at 6 p.m. July 22. Those who are interested can find more information as well as an application form on the city's website.

- City Administrator Bryan Bear's performance evaluation has been rescheduled to Monday, May 17, as Mayor Tom Weidt was not able to attend the review scheduled for May 4.

Shannon Granholm

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Bittersweet new beginning

When we bought our home in Hugo back in 2018, I never planned to move again ... but here we are. What makes this move so bittersweet is that I love our house. I love the front porch, layout, kitchen and the backyard view.



BLOOMING PORTRAITS | CONTRIBUTED

It's underneath this roof that we welcomed new dogs, restored a VW bus, brought home our son Royce from the hospital and said goodbye to our beloved German shepherd Frosty.

Since we are car people, we needed more garage space. Because of our lot size, expanding our garage would have been complicated and too expensive.

We casually started looking at homes on the market to see what was out there. If we couldn't find something, then we'd stay. Along the way, some of the homes caught our attention and we went to see them. We were not prepared for the up-and-down roller coaster that searching for a new home would bring.

As the days turned into months and our offers continued to get beat out by other buyers, we began to lose hope that a new home was in the cards for us. They say, "third time's a charm," but in our case, it was four. We made an offer four times before we finally "won." It was devastating to fall in love with a property and envision yourself there just to have it all swept away. Our realtor was so patient and kept assuring us that the right one would come along. If I got too down, he would send me a corny motivational quotes to cheer me up like "Choose to be optimistic, it feels better," and "When everything goes against you and you get to a point when it seems you can't hang on a minute longer, never give up - for that's just the place and the time that the tide will turn."

I'm a firm believer in signs. After my father's passing in 2015, I started to hear the song, "You Should Be Here," by Cole Swindell during moments when I needed it the most, like milestone anniversaries of his death or the birth of our son. While we were looking at the home, my mother sent me a picture of her TV screen. The song randomly started playing while we were there. It is definitely not a coincidence that my sister and I both close on our new homes days apart.

We have moved into our new home, which just so happens to be eight minutes away from our previous home. We are so excited that we get to stay in Hugo, keep our day care and continue to create new memories in a home surrounded by 5 acres of beautiful trees. And it even has an outbuilding!

I have so many mixed emotions. Of course, I'm excited for this new adventure, but I'm also sad to leave all these memories and our amazing neighbors behind. It's hard to think about saying goodbye to my son's first room and not seeing the crabapple tree we planted in the front yard grow bigger. And although we get to keep our day care, it will not be the same driving my son there versus walking across the street. It's also sad to think about the memories I have of Frosty sitting in her favorite spot on the back patio.

But I'm looking forward to our new favorite spots. My husband's favorite spot will be the outbuilding, mine will be the private deck off the master bedroom, Royce's will be his tree house in the backyard and the dogs' will be the woods.

Shannon Granholm is the managing editor at Press Publications.



Shannon's Shenanigans

Shannon Granholm



Talking social media and mental health with U of M

Social media is an ever-present part of our experience in the world. In recent years, the potential impact of social media use on mental health in young people has become a top concern as teen mental health has worsened.

For Mental Health Awareness Month in May, Kathryn Cullen, MD, with the University of Minnesota Medical School and M Health Fairview discusses the impact of social media on children's mental health and offers advice for parents.



University of Minnesota
Dr. Kathryn Cullen

effects of media use on mental health outcomes for children and teens. On the positive side, social media offers opportunities for learning new things, creative expression, sharing humor and receiving support from peers. The latter is especially important for young people from marginalized backgrounds who may not be able to find the support they need in their own 'real world' community.

Q: What are some of the ways that social media impacts children's mental health?

A: Studies have shown both positive and negative

On the other side, growing evidence links problematic social media use in teens to negative mental health outcomes, though risks vary by behavior. Endless scrolling can interfere with healthy activities, causing teens to miss real-life interactions, fall behind academically and sacrifice exercise, time outside, and sleep, despite knowing it makes them feel bad. Compulsive posting and checking for reactions heightens the risk of relying on others' validation and feeling rejected, particularly during adolescence. Finally, exposure to adverse experiences like bullying, false information, harmful content and manipulation, underscoring the need for critical parental guidance.

Q: What amount of screen time is considered unhealthy for kids?

A: Research by our group found that compared to screen time alone, problematic media use — defined as media use that interferes with at least one aspect of a child's functioning — is more important when predicting clinical problems like depression, suicidal thoughts and self-injury. Concerns should arise when media use negatively impacts areas like academic success, sleep, family engagement or interpersonal relationships. In these cases, limit-setting is important, but it's also not simple. When I was a kid, parents had a hard enough time setting limits on TV time. Now,

most kids have phones in their pockets with ready access 24/7. Because of this, many parents feel like limit-setting is a losing battle. In navigating this process, it's important to be both realistic and consistent. Some specific recommendations include turning off screens during family meals and removing them from bedrooms 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime. While homework will often require some kind of internet access, using other kinds of entertainment media while doing homework is discouraged.

Q: What advice would you give parents who may be concerned about their children's social media usage?

A: I encourage parents to talk to their kids about their social media use. They may find that their kids themselves are also concerned and feeling confused about what to do. Approaching these conversations with curiosity and without judgment can open doors that allow parents to learn more about what kids are learning and experiencing, which can help them guide their kids. Having regular discussions about experiences with social media is a good thing, and these conversations don't need to be one-way. There's a lot parents can learn from kids, too.

Dr. Kathryn Cullen is a professor and the head of the child and adolescent mental health division at the University of Minnesota.

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- Letter writers are limited to six letters per year and

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- Due to space limitations, letters that don't address local issues are not guaranteed publication.
- Repeat letters by the same writer about the same subject matter will not be published.

- Submissions containing libelous or derogatory statements will not be published.
- All letters are subject to editing.
- Deadline is 5 p. m., Wednesday of the week prior to publication.
- To submit a letter, e-mail it to

- citizennews@presspubs.com, fax it to 651-429-1242 or mail or deliver it to Press Publications, 4779 Bloom Ave., White Bear Lake, MN 55110.
- Press Publications publishes 99% of the letters to the editor that meet the guidelines.

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CENTERVILLE TIDBITS

• City staff received a conditional use permit (CUP) request from the owners of commercial property at 7075 21st Avenue S. to provide flexibility to the code standards for the number of off-street parking spaces required on commercial property. The owner, FGS Properties LLC (Lukas Peters), is proposing to bring in a retail tenant for this site. However, the parking lot is not code compliant in that it lacks curbing, a bituminous or concrete surface and the required number of parking spaces. The property must become code compliant before it can establish new uses on the site.

The applicant and property owner proposed to remedy the physical improvements by installing curbing and a new asphalt surface but requested a CUP to allow for flexibility in the total number of parking stalls required by code. A change of use requires a CUP to have flexibility with parking. The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing over the request for a CUP for fewer than the required number of parking spaces and recommended approval of the request. City staff recommended six conditions of approval for the CUP, and council approved them all.

• After council addressed the issue of removing trees on city property adjacent to 6886 and 6890 Deer Court, they then discussed what the city's tree removal policy would be in the future. There are approximately 16 dead or hazardous ash and box elder trees leaning significantly toward the two properties adjacent to city-owned property. Some of the trees threaten to fall on homeowner outbuildings at 6886 and 6890 Deer Court. Other damage to spruce trees and underground drainage and irrigation could also result.

Staff obtained two bids to remove the trees. The city will pay the low bidder, Dehn Tree Company Inc., \$8,700 to remove the trees and restore the yard. The residents have their own trees to remove at their own expense. Money for the removal

of city trees will come from general fund-park maintenance. The city anticipates having more dead trees to remove, said City Administrator Athanasia Lewis, and wondered what the city's policy should be, as this expense was not included in the city budget. Council Member Anita Rios suggested that the city revisit the budget and include costs for removing city trees in the budget. "We're going to lose trees, and we have to take care of them," she said. Rios also said she appreciated the low bid the city received for the current work.

• The city contracts out for turf fertilizing and weed spraying services at City Hall and in the city's parks every season. In 2025, TruGreen Commercial was the city's service provider. For 2026, TruGreen submitted an estimate in the amount of \$8,532 for services. The second-place bidder submitted a bid for \$10,608. City staff recommended the city award the contract to TruGreen for fertilizing and spraying for 2026 in the amount proposed. Funding will come from the general fund.

• The city also has a portable toilet season and has received two quotes for those services. The low bidder, LRS company, will rent out and clean the city's six handicapped toilets for an amount not to exceed \$13,000. The provider will keep the cost for 2026 service the same as the 2025 cost, which is \$135 per cleaning once each week.

• Every time an establishment that sells liquor or tobacco products is bought or sold, new licenses must be obtained. Council approved off-sale liquor and tobacco licenses for NY liquor, 7093 20th Avenue S., pending the establishment's purchase. All the appropriate paperwork has been submitted, and a successful background check has been completed by the Centennial Lakes Police Department.

• Council approved a request from city staff to allow them to continue to take part in a rebate program with the Metropolitan Council. The program encourages annual water use reduction and reduced sewer

flows. The Metropolitan Council will cover 80% of the grant, and Centerville 20%. Staff plans to apply for a \$5,000 grant with a cap of \$150 per parcel. The participating homeowner will cover any costs that exceed \$150 for replacement only. The grant will be implemented in early July. The city will pay \$1,000 in match funding for the total rebate of \$6,000. Money will be provided by the water fund.

• City budget includes funding for leadership development opportunities. A provision in the city administrator's contract calls for annual attendance at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) national conference. However, the city's administrator is unable to attend this year's conference and will receive executive coaching with Dave Webb of Homerun Leadership over a 12-month period. The cost of the leadership development coaching is similar to the cost of attending the ICMA conference. Council approved the executive leadership development from Homerun Leadership for \$2,880, which will be paid for by the general, water and sewer funds.

• City staff are working on updating the city's capital improvement plan and requested the city engineer to complete an analysis of the existing water system and identify needed repairs and improvements. Costs for this work are not to exceed \$3,974 and will use money from the water fund.

• In her city administrator's report, Lewis noted that the Rice Creek Watershed District will give Centerville Lake its final alum treatment this spring. Anyone interested in applying for the City Council seat left vacant by the departure of David Kubat may stop by City Hall, visit the city website and click on the link for an application, email Lewis at alewis@centervillemn.com, or call her at 651-792-7931.

Loretta Harding

WEEKLY WAG



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POLICE REPORTS

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

- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies on patrol near Greystone Avenue N. and 137th Street N. at 8:00 a.m. March 23 observed an elderly male with a backpack walking along Egg Lake Road on a cold morning and stopped to conduct a welfare check. The male said he had dropped off a car at TKG for repairs and was walking home because he didn't have a ride. Because the sidewalk ends long before his house, and the shoulders are narrow and dangerous for walkers through the curves, deputies drove the male one mile to his house.
- A motorist in the 9000 block of 170th Street N. received a citation for a moving violation at 7:52 a.m. March 24.

• A juvenile was cited at 5:40 p.m. March 24 for vandalism after deputies responded to a report of juveniles spray-painting the skatepark in the 5000 block of Upper 146th Street N. and arrived in time to catch the suspect and his friend.

- A commercial enterprise in the 14000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. N. called deputies out at 5:43 p.m. March 25 to issue a trespass notice.
- Deputies on patrol at 7:12 p.m. March 25 observed a vehicle traveling on 120th Street N. and Forest Blvd. N. with 2024 registration stickers and cited the driver for the tardy tabs. Deputies conducting a second expired registration traffic stop cited that motorist at 9:43 p.m. March 25 on Frenchman Road and Victor Hugo Blvd. N.
- A motorist flying past deputies on the shoulder conducting an expired registration stop at 9:30 p.m. March 25 in the 4000 block of Frenchman Road also had a traffic stop conducted on him and was cited for endangering a fellow deputy's safety by violating the Ted Foss Move Over law.
- A speeding motorist was cited at midnight March 26 in the 4000 block of 170th Street N., after deputies observed a vehicle traveling faster than normal and activated their front radar. The radar showed the vehicle speeding at 84 mph.

- A driver was arrested for DWI at 9:00 p.m. March 26 on Frenchman Road and Forest Blvd. N., after deputies pulled the vehicle over for expired registration and smelled a strong odor of alcohol when they made contact. After the driver fared poorly on the standardized field sobriety tests, he was taken into custody and booked.
- A firearm was reported found at 12:20 p.m. March 27 on 152nd Street N. and Jeffrey Avenue N.
- Late night door-knocking activities have resumed after a resident in the 14000 block of Francesca Avenue N. reported juveniles knocking on her door at 9:40 p.m. March 27. Meanwhile, residents in the 12000 block of Irish Avenue N. reported unidentified subjects banging on their front door at 9:38 p.m. March 28.
- A motorist was arrested at 1:31 a.m. March 28 on Flay Avenue N. and 147th Street N., after deputies conducted a traffic stop and performed computer research that showed the subject's driver's license had been cancelled.

• Following a complaint of construction noise occurring on Sunday March 29 at 10:05 a.m. in the 5000 block of 135th Street N., deputies arrived on scene to advise the construction crew that city ordinance forbids construction on Sundays. The crew stopped construction and went on their way to enjoy their new day off.

- A motorist crossing the center line on Forest Blvd. N. and 165th Street N. at midnight March 30 was issued with a written warning by deputies on routine patrol, following a traffic stop.
- In the Case of the Deputies' Deer, deputies on routine patrol struck a deer at 3:34 a.m. March 30 in the 6000 block of 137th Street N.
- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies took a report at 11:00 a.m. April 4 from the 6000 block of 145th Circle N. about a wallet that had been stolen in White Bear Lake. The complainant knew he had to speak to the White Bear Lake Police Department and asked deputies to transfer him, which they did.
- In the Case of the Eagle Emergen-

cy, an injured eagle was reported near Frenchman Road and Oneka Parkway N. at 4:49 p.m. April 4. After deputies checked the area and found no eagle, they had a more in-depth conversation with the complainant that led them to realize the eagle may not have been really injured. The eagle having left the scene was probably vital to the conclusion.

• A male driving a gold Toyota Corolla and wearing an Amazon vest in the 12000 block of Fondant Trail was reported at 7:48 p.m. April 4 for giving a 3D printed knife to juveniles. The youths threw the knife down the drain, and the male drove off. Deputies were unable to locate the suspicious male.

- A woman in the 14000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. N. at 4:19 a.m. April 5 reported being assaulted during a previously reported incident.
- A hit and run accident with no injuries was reported in the 14000 block of Flay Avenue at 2:53 p.m. April 5.
- Deputies on routine patrol at 12:11 a.m. April 6 on Frenchman Road and Victor Hugo Blvd. N. observed a vehicle with expired registration, pulled it over and cited its driver.
- Deputies received a phone report from an unknown Hugo location at 3:40 p.m. and 3:56 p.m. April 6 about threats made by an ex-boyfriend who took a picture on Snapchat that had threatening wording on it.
- A business in the 14000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. N. reported a disturbance at 4:23 p.m. April 6 involving a female customer who was having difficulties with an employee. The employee was following store policy, which the complainant didn't understand. The problem was resolved, and the customer left without further incident.
- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies observed juveniles with e-bikes at a park in the 5000 block of Upper 146th Street N. at 6:42 p.m. April 6. After contact, deputies advised the youths about park rules and possible consequences.

• A suspicious person was reported for driving recklessly through neighborhoods in the 15000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 8:36 p.m. April 6 while wearing a ski mask and pointing lasers at residents. Deputies searched for the person without success, at first, but later found the party. Deputies had a chat with the person, the subject of which was the concerning behavior exhibited.

- A motorist was cited at 7:41 a.m. April 7 on Egg Lake Road N. and Geneva Avenue N. for a moving violation, following a traffic stop. A second motorist was cited for speeding and failure to provide proof of insurance at 7:53 p.m. April 9 in the 14000 block of Forest Blvd. N., following a traffic stop for speeding. A third motorist was cited for speeding at midnight April 11 on Frenchman Road and Forest Blvd. N.
- Harassment was reported from the 15000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 10:32 a.m. April 7.
- A case of fraud was reported at 11:10 a.m. April 7 from the 10000 block of 180th Street N.
- Residents in the 14000 block of Fountain Avenue reported an unwanted person on their doorstep at 10:34 a.m. April 8 who was looking for someone unknown to them.
- A resident in the 15000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 2:06 p.m. April 8 reported his son, who was out on conditional release and not allowed near his residence, for coming over and taking car keys from the house. The son then left in the complainant's minivan. According to the county attorney, the incident didn't constitute a burglary, but rather a trespass with joyriding. The report was forwarded to probation officers for possible CRV. In criminal court, CRV usually means "confinement in response to violation". CRV usually involves mandatory jail time of 90 days as a punitive measure, whenever someone breaks probation rules, as opposed to committing a brand-new crime and fully breaking probation rules.

Loretta Harding

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF HUGO CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

The Hugo City Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 7:00 PM to consider the request for renewal of a home occupation interim use permit (IUP) for Terry Luedeke, 17627 Henna Avenue North. The home occupation IUP was approved in 2011 to allow for the operation of a motor vehicle repair business on the property. The subject property is generally located south of 177th Street North and east of Henna Avenue North, and is legally described as that part of the Southwest Quarter (SW ¼) of the Northeast Quarter (NE ¼) of Section 3, Township 31 North, Range 21 West. Full legal description is available at City Hall.

Anyone wishing to comment on the request can be heard at this time. Please call Rachel Juba, Community Development Director at 651-762-6304 if you have any questions or comments on the application and would like to participate in the meeting.

Rachel Juba, Community Development Director
Published one time in The Citizen on May 14, 2026.

CITY BRIEF

Neighbors invited to share input on Frog Hollow Park project

The playground equipment at Frog Hollow Park in the city of Hugo is scheduled for replacement this year. The existing equipment will be removed and recycled. Minor improvements to the landscaping and site furnishings will also be made.

Residents are invited to help select the new playground at a neighborhood meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 20, at the Peder Pedersen Pavilion at Lions Volunteer Park. Multiple playground designs and color schemes will be presented. The Parks Commission will ask for input and hold a neighborhood vote. Kids are welcome to participate. For more information, contact Parks Planner Shayla Denaway at 651-762-6342.



CONTRIBUTED

Frog Hollow will be the city of Hugo's next playground replacement project.

Pitfalls that can lead to spending beyond your means

There are many ways for individuals to determine if they're spending beyond their means. One such avenue is to determine the level of consumer debt they're carrying, which could be an eye-opening metric for millions of people.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, credit card balances rose by \$27 billion in the second quarter of 2025, ultimately reaching \$1.21 trillion. Though millions effectively manage credit and thus use it to their financial advantage, others struggle to keep their heads above water after accumulating large amounts of consumer-related debt. And such debt is not the only pitfall that consumers can look to avoid in an effort to spend within their means.

• **Failure to budget:** A failure to budget can make it hard to know how much is coming in and how much is going out. Budgeting is a financial strategy embraced by consumers across generational lines, as a recent poll from NerdWallet found that 83% of millennials, 67% of Baby Boomers and 74% of Gen Xers adhere to a monthly budget. Those who fail to embrace budgeting may not save much money and thus be more likely to accumulate debt when unexpected expenses arise.



• **Failure to save:** Budgeting and saving go hand in hand. Budgeting helps people avoid daily overspending, and it also helps people finance costly expenditures like travel and big-ticket purchases by facilitating saving. A failure to save money leaves individuals with no financial safety net, which can force them to use high-interest credit cards to pay for significant expenses like home repairs and medical bills. When credit card balances are not paid in full each month, the resulting interest charges can quickly add up and even exceed the initial expense.

• **Impulsive spending:** According to CapitalOne Shopping Research, 36% of consumers indicate the majority of their purchases are unplanned. Impulse buying has long been an issue for many people, but it might pose an even bigger threat now. That's because smartphone shopping apps mean the next purchase is never more than a smartphone swipe and click away, which is perhaps one reason why CapitalOne reports the average consumer made 9.75 impulse buys per month in 2024. Smartphones are here to stay, but consumers concerned about their ability to resist impulse spending can turn off shopping app notifications and opt against storing credit card numbers in shopping apps and on websites. The added inconvenience of being asked to enter personal information each time you make a purchase might compel some shoppers to spend less impulsively.

Increases in consumer debt suggest many people are struggling to avoid various pitfalls that can lead them to spend beyond their means. A concerted effort on the part of consumers to right their financial ships involves recognition of the various pitfalls that can threaten their financial security.

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ASSESSMENT: Based on 1,664 parcels

FROM PAGE 1

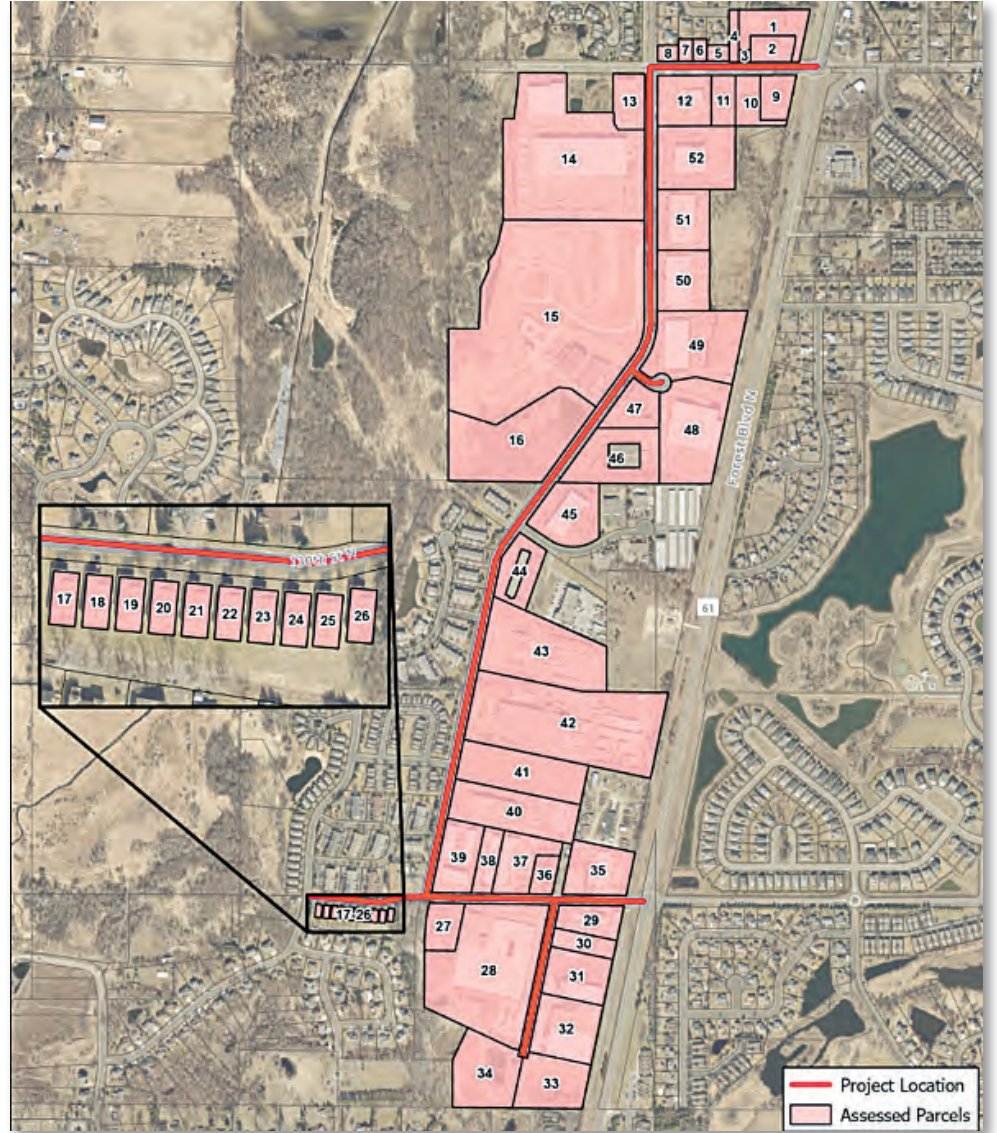
were guided by overall county trends. A qualified sale is an open market transaction that does not meet any of the Department of Revenue's 31 disqualifying factors such as a sale to relatives, a bank sale, an estate sale or prior interest sale. Sales and appraisals are only a part of the means to determine valuation. There is also a statistical analysis used to ensure accuracy and equity at neighborhood, municipal and county levels. The overall city property valuation for 2026 is \$707,995,800, a 1.26% decrease from last year. Agricultural properties increased in value by 5.44%; apartment properties increased by 2.79%; and single-family waterfront properties increased by 0.87%. On the other side, industrial properties valuations decreased by 7.84%; commercial properties decreased by 1.42%; townhomes decreased by 1.03%; and single-family nonwaterfront properties decreased by 0.33%. Owners of properties whose valuation has gone up may or may not see an increase in their tax bill. The same is true for properties whose valuation has gone down. A property owner's tax bill depends on the budgets of the various jurisdictions that receive revenue from those property taxes, which can be described as a pie that all property owners in that jurisdiction all share in. A property owner's piece of the tax pie will be apportioned according to the classification and tax bracket that property is in.

Loretta Harding is a contributing writer for Press Publications. She can be reached at news@press-pubs.com.

STREET PROJECT: Council awards construction contract

FROM PAGE 1

Assessments can be pre-paid prior to Nov. 15 without interest. Otherwise, assessments are to be paid over a 10-year period with an interest rate of 4.55%. City Council Member Dave Strub wanted to know more about the railroad crossing improvements. City Engineer Mark Erichson explained that the project will include the removal of a rail crossing at 140th Street, as well as a trail extension along the north side of 130th Street from Highway 61 to Fenway Boulevard. All the funding and agreements are already in place for that. "It will provide nice connectivity to a future regional trail," Erichson said. Resident Fred Rau spoke during the public hearing for the project and said he had some safety concerns regarding a walkway being included along 130th Street (west of Fenway Boulevard). "While the speed limit may be 30 mph when you're walking down there, it seems like some folks are not paying attention to that, so I'm concerned about safety. I don't know if we



CONTRIBUTED

Several residential and commercial property owners will be assessed for the 2026 Bald Eagle Industrial Park street project. The city of Hugo will fund \$3,669,043, or 78.22%, of the project; the remaining \$1,021,357 (21.78%) will be covered by assessments to benefiting property owners.

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have ever had an incident there, but I get a little nervous," he said. Erichson explained that there were several options for that stretch of the project along 130th Street, including widening the narrow roadway and adding a trail. To construct a trail, the city would have had to acquire property from the homeowners association, and he said there "wasn't much interest" in that. "We will monitor safety and speed and keep an eye out for that," Erich-

son said. "Oftentimes when we have a roadway project, we want them (the Washington County Sheriff's Office) to be out on site when the roadway is new, fresh and smooth. They can monitor and set the standard there for people that utilize the roadway and issue citations if people are abusing the speed limit there." Construction is expected to begin in June and be substantially complete in September. Erichson reminded residents that

during the project there will be a lot of street closures as well as one-way traffic. Residents and business owners who live in the area should expect information to be mailed with more details after the city has its preconstruction meeting with the contractor. "There is going to be a lot of changes," Erichson said. He noted that 130th Street, 132nd Street and 134th Street will be closed at Fenway Boulevard, and everyone will be required to go west.

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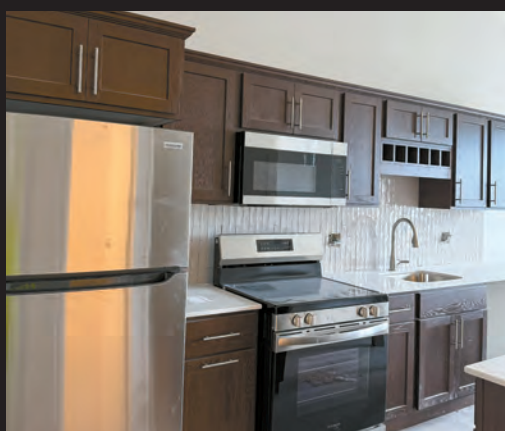


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Bears girls track and field place 2nd overall in true-team sections

BY BRUCE STRAND
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR

The White Bear Lake girls were runners-up in the Section 2AAA true-team meet. Top three teams among eight were Stillwater with 900, the Bears 835 and Eagan 681. "I am so proud of our athletes' performance," said Coach Briana Siebel. "We have a lot of young and new talent and I'm looking forward to watching their confidence grow in each of their events. I look forward to next year's True Team meet."

Top scorer was Mabel Nethercutt, eighth-grader, winning the 1600 (5:25.85) and the 3200 (11:42.42). Logan Bailey was second in the 3200 (11:45.47) and fourth 1600 (5:27.68).

Taylor Comer won the 300 hurdles (49.60) and was fourth in 100 hurdles (16.96). Grace Weierke was second in the 100 dash (12.57). Grace Mueller second in triple jump (34-9), and Hadley Everhart third in long jump (16-6) and eighth in the 100 dash.

The Bears as always scored heavily in throws. Madelyn Erickson was second in shot put (39-4) and seventh in discus. Karen Enow was second in discus (106-6) with Emily Reeves third (104-4). Pearl Niemioja was fourth in shot put (34-6) and Enow was seventh.

"We have strong athletes in throws and a coach who is doing a really great job with them," Siebel said. "Angie

Guenther, White Bear Lake alum and hall of famer, joined our coaching staff last year. The girls have really enjoyed working with her and the results speak for themselves."

Ariana Minor and Marina Demanou each high-jumped 4-10 with Minor placing third and Demanou sixth. Khloe Pankonien took fourth in triple jump (34-5 3/4) and fifth in long jump (15-8 1/2). Brynn Heinsohn was fourth in the 800 (2:26.60). In the pole vault, Lydia Moore, Sophie Sargent and Anna Lindholm placed 6-7-8.

Relay teams placing second were the 4x100 with Weierke, Everhart, Abeni Zollinger and Mueller (51.46), and the 4x200 with Brooke Johnson, Heinsohn, Annie Vomela and Maddy Compton (1:50.10).



Hadley Everhart hits the sand on the way to third place in long jump.



Hailey Peterson cleared the bar at 10 feet in pole vault, placing third.

Cougar girls place 3rd, win 5 events at true-team

Cougar softball 3-3 in 6-game week

Centennial (9-6) played six games last week and won three of them while losing to two powers by shut-out.

Kendall Cochran clubbed two homers for four RBI's in a 9-3 win over Armstrong. Denver Hogberg was 2-for-4 (double, two runs) and Kendal Saffert threw a four-hitter with nine strikeouts.

Rogers (17-2) nipped the Cougars 1-0 as AnnaBelle Waldoch fired a one-hitter with 17 strikeouts, out-dueling Saffert (six hits, no walks, eight strikeouts). Lily Renslow had the lone hit.

The Cougars beat East Ridge 7-2 behind Saffert's five-hitter with nine strikeouts. Renslow went 3-for-3 (two doubles, two RBI's) and Grace Lien 2-for-4 (two runs).

Park (15-4) blanked the Cougars 5-0 as Ava Youngquist held them to four hits and a walk. Saffert took the loss (four innings, two unearned runs).

Saffert and Brooklyn Springman combined for a two-hit shutout with



Grace Lien stole second base during a 4-3 loss to Delano.

13 strikeouts in a 6-0 win over Brainerd. Lien was 3-for-3, scored three runs and stole two bases. Cochran had a two-run single.

In a 4-3 loss to Delano, Tiger pitcher Charlotte Morrisette struck out nine and got the win over Saffert.

Gracie Nickle and Brooklyn Springman each hit an RBI double and Springman had a sac fly. Brynn Krueger hit a solo homer for Delano (9-4) and Tori Keen was 3-for-3.

The Centennial girls track and field team placed third of ten teams in the Section 5AAA true-team meet, winning five events, on Tuesday at Forest Lake. The top four teams were Blaine with 1127, Forest Lake 976.5, Centennial 899.5 and Duluth East 765. Reginae Tandoh racked up four first place finishes. She won the 100 dash (12.52), the 200 dash (26.03) and long jump (17-1/4) and led off the first place 4x400 relay that included Josie Stenihoff, Natalie Lauinger and Lauren Klein (4:09.33).

(2:14.03) and was second in the 400 (59.28). Hailey Peterson took second in high jump (5-0) and third in pole vault (10-0). Charly Hayes was fourth in pole vault (10-0) and Maylin Schneider fifth (9-0). Amelia Sutch placed third in both long jump (16-6 1/2) and triple jump (36-2 1/2) and 10th in discus. Also in the top ten were Deborah Timothy, sixth, discus, and seventh, shot put; Anna Swanson, eighth, 1600; and Eloise Johnson, eighth, long jump.

Klein won the 800

Bruce Strand

Bruce Strand



ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Riley Helmberger

White Bear Lake Baseball & Hockey

May 14, 2026

Riley Helmberger, White Bear Lake senior, was an all-conference goalie in hockey and is following up with an excellent baseball season. The 5-foot-10 infielder and captain is batting .404 (19-for-47) and had key hits in two recent wins by the Bears. "True leader on and off the field," coach Ryan Fitzpatrick said. "He has an incredible glove, and is really coming up clutch with his bats." As the Bears goalie, he posted a .923 save percentage and 2.2 goals-against-average.



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Warm weather is here, so are the e-bikes

BY LORETTA HARDING
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With the arrival of summer that brings increasing e-bike use, communities are experiencing challenges in many areas. Chief James Mork of the Centennial Lakes Police Department recently gave a presentation to the Centerville City Council and talked about e-bike safety and law enforcement efforts.

Some of the concerns about e-bikes include high speeds and reckless driving, serious injuries and potential for death, crowded bike paths, a disregard for the seriousness of riding an e-bike and municipalities that lack well-defined laws on the books.

Cities and public safety agencies have yet to come up with guidelines and laws that work for the different types of e-transportation available, but in the meantime, the CLPD has a plan to make everyone safer.

To address e-bike issues and keep everyone safe, the CLPD will engage in education and enforcement, provide information on social media, work with area schools, post electronic sign boards with new information, increase CLPD bike patrols during peak times, work with lawmakers to update state statutes, share information at bike rodeos and summer events, and examine local city ordinances.

Even though clear guidance on e-bikes may be lacking at the moment, Chief Mork said it is always a good idea when riding a bicycle to follow basic bicycle safety rules:

- Wear a helmet
- Avoid distractions
- Walk your bike in crowded areas
- Announce “on your left” when passing on a shared pathway
- Ride in the same direction of traffic and never against
- Look both ways before entering an intersection
- Be respectful.

E-bikes versus e-motos

Whether you pay \$2,000 for your electric transportation or \$30,000, know the differences between an e-bike and an e-moto: they are significant.

The three-tier e-bike classification system was adopted in 2014 by PeopleforBikes, a national advocacy group and industry trade association) and the Bicycle Products Suppliers Association (BPSA). This classification is now used in statutes adopted in more than 36 states (www.peopleforbikes.org).

An e-bike may or may not have a throttle. Class I

The Anoka County Sheriff's Office has been educating and enforcing laws regarding electric-assisted bicycles, motorcycles, dirt bikes and motorized foot scooters.

Electric-Assisted Bicycle

- Must be 15+ to operate.
- May operate in the same manner as provided for operation of other bicycles.
- Electric-assisted bicycles have a saddle and fully operable pedals for human propulsion.

Motorcycles (electric or gas) and electric dirt bikes

- Valid license with a motorcycle endorsement.
- Not allowed on bike paths or sidewalks.
- All traffic laws apply to the operation on roadways.
- Must have operational headlights and taillights, at least one rearview mirror, and insurance.

Motorized Foot Scooter

- Must be 12+ to operate.
- Protective headgear required for operators under 18 years old.
- Must be equipped with a headlight and taillight.
- Shall have the rights and duties applicable to the operator of a bicycle.

Learn more about the applicable laws at <https://www.lmc.org> or scan QR code. If you witness someone operating one of these items in a dangerous manner, please call 911 to report it to law enforcement.



From Anoka County Sheriff's Office Facebook post

and Class III e-bikes do not have a throttle; riders must pedal to make the bicycle go. Class I e-bike motors cease to provide further assistance when the bicycle reaches 20 mph. Class II e-bikes have a throttle, but the bicycle's motor ceases to provide further assistance after speeds reach 20 mph. Class III e-bike motors cease to provide further assistance when the bicycle reaches 28 mph. All e-bikes, however, are electric-assist, meaning they have functioning pedals.

Under Minn. Stat. §169.011, a legal electric-assisted bicycle must have functional pedals, a motor that does not exceed 750 watts, and a top assisted speed of 28 mph. An e-bike may be ridden in city parks and on streets and trails, according to Minnesota's e-bike law.

An e-moto, on the other hand, can reach speeds of up to 60 mph; e-motos don't have functioning pedals, just a footrest. An e-moto is for off-road riding and must be ridden on private property.

Some local jurisdictions have adopted regulations for e-bike and e-moto use, while the Minnesota Legislature is currently discussing how to regulate them. The University of Minnesota, for example, currently does not allow e-motos in its biking facilities, shelters, lockers and bike lanes (<https://pts.umn.edu/>).

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

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Anita Loft, a cook at Centennial High School, has been named the Midwest Region Employee of the Year by the School Nutrition Association (SNA). The award recognizes the valuable contributing school nutrition employees who exhibit remarkable commitment to both their school meal program and students they serve.

Loft knows students by name. She serves more than 350 students on her own each day in the store, where they have options from the school's grab-and-go menu, and provides healthy alternatives such as fresh salads to the main lunch menu. She works to develop a connection with each student. Some students will not stop at the store

on the rare days she's absent.

The Employee of the Year Award was created to recognize outstanding school nutrition employees who influence the quality of school meals through customer service, an interest in young people, cooperation, work attendance, creativity, participation in professional development and their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Professional growth and development are important to Toft. She is working to earn her SNA Level 4 Certificate and is eager to watch training videos to keep up to date with the latest best practices related to her profession.



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Local writer doesn't allow mental illness to 'have the last word'

Longtime White Bear Lake resident Tammy Waldoch is opening up about her personal journey in her debut book, "The Plight of the Pudgy," in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. Blending humor with heartfelt honesty, Waldoch explores themes of body image, mental health and self-worth, drawing from her own experiences with bipolar disorder and decades of struggle with toxic body shame. Now in remission she is using her voice to encourage others and hopes her story will help readers feel understood, less alone and inspired to hold onto hope.

Q. Tell us about yourself. How long have you lived in White Bear Lake?

A. I am a longtime resident of White Bear Lake, having lived here most of my life. I so enjoy what this community has to offer for the arts. I have especially benefited from belonging to a small group called The Writer's Well at the White Bear Center for the Arts. It was there that the inspiration to become a published author was born.

Q. What inspired you to write 'The Plight of the Pudgy'?

A. I had written some humorous, satirical and witty parodies that I have sung on my YouTube channel for women who have struggled with weight loss issues, poor self-image and toxic body shame. I chose to use them as a backdrop for my stories, highlighting my own struggles of being a slave to the scale for nearly 60 years. I hoped to write a book as an open invitation where others could connect authentically with someone who wasn't afraid to be transparent. I wanted my readers to feel deeply understood in their own struggles after reading it. This is my heartfelt rendition of transformation

as I discovered I did not need to live my life scrambling for a tiny morsel of value from a number on a scale or otherwise.

Q. You shared that you are now a decade into remission from bipolar disorder. What does that milestone mean to you?

A. Once upon a time, because of my mental illness, I felt discarded by society with no place to fit in. The road was long with multiple setbacks. I found myself in and out of the psych ward and I became hopeless, believing my life would never be useful to God. I thought that all my long-lost dreams would not come true. Today I am proud to say that I have been given the right combination of drugs to restore my chemical imbalance. As a result of this victorious milestone, I am able to see that God isn't finished with my story yet. Today I have a sound mind, which enabled me to become an author and write this book. My illness did not have the last word.

Q. What were some of the biggest misconceptions about mental health you had to unlearn personally?

A. I had to learn it is okay to disclose my personal journey with bipolar disorder. That meant relearning to embrace my weaknesses, knowing that God could use them as my greatest strength. It meant discovering that I could say goodbye to the secrecy and shame and let go of the misconception that I was less than others because of it.

Q. Humor plays a part in your storytelling. Why is it important to talk about heavy topics with levity?

A. Humor breaks down defenses and provides a backdrop to discuss feelings that would ordinarily go unsaid because it is so uncomfortable to bring



CONTRIBUTED

Tammy Waldoch shares her personal mental health journey in her book, "The Plight of the Pudgy." Waldoch credits the White Bear Center for the Arts for inspiring her to become a published author.

those dark feelings up. My material was written with levity to lighten the struggles and insecurities of bodies of all shapes and sizes. I created multiple moments of comic relief to provide a momentary release from insane attempts to find an unrealistic body ideal. I think the impact of laughter upon a human heart is sometimes the only balm necessary to enable you to acknowledge your own pain while facing with power new challenges that lie ahead of you.

Q. Your book also explores toxic body shame. How did that intersect with your own mental health journey?

A. My book is not only a book about overcoming toxic body shame, but also a memoir of my private battle with mental health and the journey I was on to overcome the stigma associated with mental illness. I hoped to share my private path of redemption in the hopes that someone else who is struggling might feel less alone. Many years prior to writing the book, I had a dream that I believed was from God about how He would use my life. I tell the tale of the years I spent waiting for God to fulfill that vision and how He helped me overcome the temporary setbacks due to bipolar disorder. My story is a tale of triumph, despite my history of depression and mania.

Q. For people currently in the middle of their own struggle, what do you wish they could understand about hope and healing?

A. To all of those who are out there who suffer from any battle with their mental health, I am here to say "Hold on!" God isn't finished writing your story. I know this by heart because of the years I battled my own illness and the ups and downs that accompanied my life story. God took my life and transformed it, and He can do the same with yours. As I celebrate mental health awareness month, I leave you with this quote by Audrey Hepburn: "People, even more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed and redeemed. Never throw out anyone."

I pray they would come to understand that healing is a process, and that even if hope feels fragile and you might even feel abandoned by God or discarded by others, He is at work redeeming what is lost. I would tell them

that my life is a testimony, that there is hope and not to give up the fight, that there is hope on the horizon for them, too.

Q. If your book sparks one takeaway for readers this May, what do you hope it is?

A. For anyone who is searching for a new identity (due to their mental health or having been a prisoner of the scale), I hope they realize how perfectly they are loved by God just the way they are.

For those suffering from mental illness, I hope my book leaves them with this sentiment:

Too often those suffering from mental health disorders are marginalized and stigmatized, making them outcasts in society. Especially when the battle goes on for months or even years. Some may give up hope of healing ever occurring after repeat trial and errors with medications that seem to be ineffective. At which point, some will want to throw in the towel and give up hope. Your mental illness does not define you and does not have the last word.

For those on a perpetual diet or suffering from poor body image or toxic body shame — I hope my book enables you to come out from underneath the lies of your negative self-critic and the scrutiny of the mirror. May you know the liberation that comes from being comfortable in your own skin. You are more than what you weigh, and I pray you will find healing from cultural expectations and societal norms that tell you that you must be thin to be beautiful. May you embrace God's love for you just the way you are.

Q. Where can people find your book?

A. My book can currently be found at Lake Country Booksellers in downtown White Bear Lake.

You may also pick up a copy on Amazon or Bookbaby.com.







Q. What's next? Are you planning on publishing any more books?

A. I just launched my blog on Substack, which is tied to my Facebook account. I also hope to start a support group for women who have suffered from toxic body shame. I have no plans for another book as of yet.


Compiled by Shannon Granholm

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Council receives update on Hopkins Schoolhouse efforts

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

HUGO — The members of the Hopkins Schoolhouse & Heritage Center Committee continue to make progress on the restoration of the historic building located on the northwest corner of 170th Street N and Highway 61, but there is still a long road ahead.

“Phase 4 is probably going to be the most challenging in terms of fundraising,” explained Hopkins Schoolhouse and Heritage Center President Liz Cinqueonce. “We are starting to look at all the core infrastructure that is needed within the schoolhouse, the septic system, well, heating and air, plumbing. Those are big-ticket items that don’t have the pretty aesthetics.”

The committee accomplished several of the goals it set for 2025 and will continue to pursue some of those while pursuing new goals for 2026. In terms of the restoration, the front door has been replaced and the side door was also repaired, although it has yet to be installed. The railings were also replaced on the front stairs. Interior demolition and framing is complete and the front of the furnace has been restored.

Cinqueonce explained the reasons they have made so much progress is because of their partnership with the Washington County Sentence to Service program, which has provided a lot of the labor. In addition to many donations of services and materials, the city’s public works crews and building official have also been instrumental.

Still to come will be the installation of the side door and 1928 stained glass arch window. An interior site plan and selec-



The Hopkins Schoolhouse & Heritage Center Committee has implemented a new program to engage students in Heritage Center activities.

tion/placement of exterior light fixtures are also in the works. Although a preliminary site plan has been approved, a final plan will have to wait until the septic system has been designed.

Behind the scenes, the group officially received its 501(c)(3) status, but it is still waiting to hear from the state on its sales tax exemption. Next up will be a business plan.

“This year, a core piece of our work is going to be focusing on the continuing evolution of the business plan for the Hopkins Schoolhouse and Heritage Center upon the opening of schoolhouse,” Cinqueonce said. “Most of the activities right now have been focused on doing fundraising and implementing the restoration activities on the building, but once it is open we want to be ready with that business plan and for how it is going to be funded and how the organization’s activities can be supported.”

In addition to shifting fundraising focus to core infrastructure pieces, Cinqueonce said the group has run into the challenge of having volunteers who want to help but can’t due to the nature of the job. “We had somebody who could help us with HVAC, but it would put their pension at risk if they did the work for us,” she explained.

She said the committee is reaching out to various trade schools in hopes they can form a type of partnership to help achieve some cost efficiencies. In addition, there are also some grant applications pending.

City Council Member Mike Miron thanked Cinqueonce for the update. “It’s easy to drive by the building and see the progress that aesthetically has been made but certainly appreciate getting this detail, because there is a lot of behind-the-scenes things that are going on, a lot of logistics and planning that



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

In 2026, the Hopkins Schoolhouse & Heritage Center commissioned the development of a model of the schoolhouse from Les Kuiper that can be used in programming with school children and in promoting the efforts underway to restore the building.

you as a group are all preparing for,” he said.

Mayor Tom Weidt also expressed his appreciation to everyone involved in the effort. “This was a project that was dead for over 40 years that nobody ever really took on, and the progress that you guys have made as a group is phenomenal,” he said. “It is really a remarkable structure that is going to be a great asset to the community when you get it done.”

For more information or updates, visit <https://hopkinsschoolhouse.org>.

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

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CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

• Centennial High School Principal Tom Breuning recognized senior Neha Potti for being named a National Merit Finalist. The National Merit Scholarship Program, begun in 1995, is an academic competition for recognition in scholarship. According to Breuning, around 1.5 million students enter the national merit program. Out of the 1.5 million students, Potti is one of 15,000 students to receive the title of finalist.

• Superintendent Jeff Holmberg recognized the district's finance department and Executive Director of Business Services Patrick Chaffey for receiving a certificate of excellence in financial reporting from the Association of School Business Officials.

• The board has approved a memorandum of understanding with the CEA (Centennial Education Association), the local teacher union, according to Executive Director of Human Resources Dan Melde. Under this agreement, the district and CEA will revise the compensation structure for long-term

substitute teachers to align with the teacher contract beginning on day one of the assignment, rather than on day 31, according to Melde. He added this adjustment is intended to enhance Centennial's competitiveness in recruiting long-term substitute teachers. Melde said this agreement will go into effect July 1, 2026.

• Adjustments to the 2026-2027 budget will be made following board approval. The updated forecast budget adjustments, according to Chaffey, total \$2.4 million. These adjustments will impact legislative funding decisions, annual enrollment, contract settlements, contract services and inflation.

• The board adopted a resolution to terminate probationary teachers. According to Melde, there are three main reasons why the district terminates probationary teachers. Those reasons are enrollment and registration, alternative licensing and performance. He added all of these teachers have been told their contracts will be terminated.

• Revisions will be made to the district's long-term facilities maintenance plan following board approval. The plan will be updated to reflect current projects, cost updates and realignment with future projections, according to Chaffey.

• The board has approved the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District's long-term facilities maintenance budget and authorized the inclusion of a proportionate share of the projects in the district's application for the fiscal year 2028 long-term facilities maintenance revenue. According to Chaffey, the School Board of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District has approved a long-term facility maintenance program budget for its facilities for the 2027-2028 school year in the amount of \$600,500, of which the district's proportionate share is \$39,095 for pay-as-you-go projects.

• Holmberg and Chaffey provided an update on the district's long-range plan, also referred to as Centennial Forward. The board has had individual and

small group meetings that allowed its members to ask questions and provide feedback on the financial impacts of the plan. In May, discussions will continue between the district and stakeholders regarding the plan. At the next regular board meeting in May, the board will be asked to authorize the district to submit the plan(s) to the Minnesota Department of Education for review and comment (see full story in next week's issue).

• Various policies regarding student attendance, projection and privacy of pupil records, immunization requirements, the establishment and adoption of school district budgets and more will undergo revisions following board approval. These revisions include updates in language.

• The board accepted several contributions made to Blue Heron Elementary, Centennial Middle School and Centennial High School.

Madeline Dolby

WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

• School Board Member Daneil Skaar requested that the School Board add a discussion item to the agenda to discuss the shift to multigrade classrooms for next year for fourth and fifth grade. Chair Scott Arcand explained that the item was on the school board's work session agenda for April 27 (after press deadline).

"I want to talk about how we can get more parent/ guardian input on the process. We received a very thoughtful, articulate email from a concerned parent and I've also heard from a couple of other parents," Skaar said.

Arcand responded, "I'd kind of like to wait until we hear from the committee when they come in and talk about it so that we have more information ... I think it's important to hear from the designing team before to see what they are going to bring forward, because we don't really know what's coming forward yet."

• Next September, fifth grade students from Otter Lake Elementary will attend Deep Portage Environmental Camp for hands-on experience to expand the science curriculum. Approximately 90 students are expected to attend and miss three days of school.

• Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Dr. Allison Gillespie and four principals recently visited the school board to dive into the recently released graduation rates data as well as estimated attendance data. (See full story in this week's issue.)

• Every other year, the district issues long-term facilities maintenance (LTFM) bonds to fund deferred maintenance projects across its multiple sites. The last LTFM issue was in 2024. The board previously

approved a resolution stating the intention of the district to issue facility maintenance and refunding bonds related to the district's outstanding 2018A issuance. Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Tim Wald explained that market conditions have changed since that time and there are no longer enough savings to warrant the refunding of the 2018A bond issuance. For that reason, the issuance was narrowed to a facility maintenance bond only.

Shelby McQuay, of Ehlers Public Finance Advisors, said there was a lot of interest in the bonds. Ten bidders submitted with an interest range of 3.0355% up to 3.2501%. Jefferies LLC out of New York submitted the low bid.

Skaar asked what the consequence would be if the board did not ratify the award of the facility maintenance bonds. McQuay responded, "If those bonds wouldn't be awarded, underwriters would take note and it may get more difficult to sell bonds the next time you take bonds out to the competitive market."

The board voted unanimously to adopt a resolution awarding the sale of \$17,680,000 in general obligation facilities maintenance bonds, Series 2026A. The funds are scheduled to close May 7.

• Second readings are planned for a variety of policies at the May 11 meeting, including: Legal Status of the School Board (201), School Board Officers (202), Operation of the School Board Governing Rules (203), Out-of-State Travel by School Board Members (214), School Board Member Code of Conduct (215), Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults (415), and Video Record-

ing Other Than on Buses (712).

After a second reading, the board approved three policies: Criminal or Civil Action (211), School Board Member Development (212) and Naming of School Buildings or Facilities (809).

• The American Indian Parent Advisory Committee has issued a vote of concurrence, meaning it feels the district is meeting the needs of its American Indian students. Each year AIPAC must discuss and vote on a "resolution of concurrence" when finding that the district has been meeting the needs of American Indian students.

Shannon Granholm



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