

Fiber optic installation underway

By CHARLEY PREUSSER

Projects to expand high-speed broadband internet, delivered on fiber optic cable to the premises, are being installed in Crawford County.

Two communications co-operatives, Richland Grant Telephone Co-op and Vernon Communications, are installing the fiber optic cable.

Both co-ops wish they were further along, but a late spring start, coupled with supply chain problems, are slowing progress. Nevertheless, White Construction Company is busy burying cable on the Vernon Communications project, which extends south from Rising Sun to Seneca and beyond.

Garin Mayer, the new Vernon Communications General Manager, is hopeful the first customers in the Rising Sun area could be hooked up by early October. From there, the spliced fiber optic cable will allow the co-op to continue installations at residences.

Vernon Communications hopes to have an outer ring of buried cable in place before that part of the project shuts down for the winter. The co-op will continue to splice cable and bring it into the residences and businesses.

Supply chain problem

The supply chain problem is what is currently delaying the installations for Vernon Communications.

"We started the project a little late with the late spring," Mayer explained. "We have no customers hooked up at this point. Like everyone, we are having a supply chain problem. It's starting to look like early October until we start hooking up customers. It was always a two-year project. We had hoped to be further along. It's supply chain problems, a broken piece of machinery here and there."

So, White keeps burying cable and another firm, Sorenson, is splicing the fiber and bringing it to residences. That's where the supply chain problem hits.

Vernon Communications ordered Optical Network Terminals (ONT) to be delivered in spring. An ONT is a laser-equipped device that transfers the information to the house network on the fiber optic cable from the CO (Central Office), which is equipped with a OLT. An ONT is perhaps best described as a sophisticated modem.

Well, the ONT are late arriving, but they're coming and with them exceptional broadband internet – one gigabyte internet. Most people will not need a gigabyte. In fact, an adequate 50 mbps basic package would cost \$55/per month. A gigabyte, which is rarely ordered, would cost about \$500/month.

Finished by next year

Next year, Vernon Communications hopes to bury cable for the middle of the project and have the entire network in place and operating by Sept. 1, 2023.

Vernon Communications just finished an earlier project at Eagle Mountain, a subdivision in Ferryville. Mayer said that project was very well received by the residents living there.

The Richland Grant Telephone Co-operative's Phase One fiber optic cable installation is located in the eastern portion of the county. It can be roughly described as an area from Rolling Round to Mount Zion to Plughtown to Petersburg. The project was made possible with the help of a federal ARPA grant in 2021.

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Jax and the Kickapoo walleye

Intrepid fisherman Jax Yonker caught this massive walleye near the dam in Gays Mills on Sunday night August 21, 2022. It measured 31" and weighed 12 pounds. Believe it or not, this fish is one of a half dozen 30" walleyes known to be caught in Gays Mills in recent years.

At North Crawford

Board votes to move forward with November referendums

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

After months of investigation and obtaining public input, the North Crawford School Board took action at their Tuesday, August 16 meeting to approve finalized language of two referendums to exceed the revenue limit for recurring purposes, and for borrowing for capital improvement projects.

Those two referendums will appear on the ballot for the November 2022 Partisan General Election, for voters in the North Crawford School District in Crawford, Vernon and Richland counties. The referendums were passed unanimously by school board members on a roll call vote. The

board also unanimously approved a resolution notifying the Department of Public Instruction that the school board approved the resolutions.

The language of the resolution to exceed the revenue limit for recurring expenses is as follows:

"BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the North Crawford School District, Crawford, Richland and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$300,000 for the 2022-2023 school year; by an additional \$250,000 (for a total

of \$550,000) for the 2023-2024 school year; by an additional \$200,000 (for a total of \$750,000) for the 2024-2025 school year; and by an additional \$150,000 (for a total of \$900,000) for the 2025-2026 school year and thereafter, for recurring purposes consisting of operational expenses."

The language of the resolution to borrow for capital improvement projects to district facilities and grounds reads as follows:

"BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the North Crawford School District, Crawford, Richland and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin that there shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$4,500,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school facility improvement project at the school building and site consisting of: capital maintenance, building infrastructure and site improvements, including roof and window replacement; renovations and facility updates, including Americans with Disabilities Act improvements and upgrades to instructional space; and acquisition of furnishings, fixtures and equipment."

"We are finalizing dates to host Community Referendum Meetings," North Crawford Superintendent Brandon Munson said. "Once the dates are decided, the district will begin advertising those dates with the hope of having high turnout at each of the meetings, where citizens can learn more about the upcoming referendums, and ask questions."

School Forest project

North Crawford Elementary School Principal Amanda Killeen reported that an effort is underway to restore the North Crawford School Forest for use as an outdoor education and recreation space. The forest is located just outside of Gays Mills on West Point Road.

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Advice varies by state

Should you eat fish from the Mississippi?

By BENNETT GOLDSTEIN & KEELY BREWER

Danny Paccasassi, a life-long Memphis resident, started fishing on the Mississippi River 40 years ago. Now he runs a fishing charter. But, he rarely eats the fish he catches.

Fishers on the Tennessee side of the Mississippi River are told: don't eat the fish. They may contain high levels of methylmercury, chlordane and other organic contaminants. Methylmercury is associated with neurological, reproductive and immunological health, and perinatal exposure can hinder children's cognitive and psychomotor performance.

But just across the river on the Arkansas side of the river, which is the state border, fishers will find no such warnings, even though it's the same water and, presumably, holds the same fish.

A 'do not consume' advisory means consumption would threaten the general population, not just sensitive groups like children, pregnant women and those who eat a lot of fish – like low-income subsistence fishers who rely on their catches for meals.

"They're not fishing for fun," Paccasassi said. "They're going to probably keep everything they catch."

There are tips for those who decide to eat the fish anyway: throw back the big ones, avoid fatty fish, wash them before skinning and fileting, broil or grill the fish and throw away the fat if the pollutant is an or-

ganic contaminant.

But even for the occasional fisher, Tennessee always advises against eating mercury-contaminated fish.

Fish consumption advisories are issued at the state level, so different agencies can offer conflicting advice along the Mississippi River, which forms a border between many states in the watershed. The Food and Drug Administration regulates commercially sold fish, but it does not claim jurisdiction over sport-caught fish.

The lack of clarity makes it difficult to make informed health decisions along the shared body of water, experts say – particularly for people who catch and eat fish in multiple states.

Lack of clarity for fishers

Fisherman Paccasassi said most of the fishers see the warning signs posted in Memphis, but they "aren't going to go online and check for the advisories," which provide more detailed information about the potential health impacts.

Most states collect and analyze fish tissues for contaminants to determine whether they are safe to eat.

That helps them determine how much and how often certain fish species should be consumed. The water body also may be listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act.

But states test for all different contaminants, and issue different warnings as a result.

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THIS SIGN WARNS people to not eat any fish caught in this body of water. It is posted on the Tennessee side of the Mississippi River. On the other side of the river in Arkansas, there are no warnings.

Democracy Tour visits Viroqua

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The Democracy Tour visited the City of Viroqua on Sunday, August 21. The little-publicized event drew ten citizens, attracted to the event organizer's message of bringing people together and healing political divisions.

"We need a revolution of love in America," organizer Tim Cordon said. "We have got to stop the erosion of our democracy, and build a movement that brings citizens together around our shared values, and the ideals of peace, justice, sustainability and democracy."

Cordon said that the 'Democracy Tour' had gotten its start back in early 2020, out in front of the 2020 presidential election. A private citizen, Charlie Uphoff, from the Madison area, conceived of an initiative to leave no stone unturned in turning out the vote for that election. Uphoff used personal funds to purchase a van, and to send it out on a 'Building Unity Vote Tour.'

"We started out in early 2020 doing indoor events on weekends, with our first stop at an International Women's Day celebration with the Ho Chunk Nation in Baraboo," Cordon remembered. "Right after that, the COVID-19 pandemic broke, and we switched to doing only outdoor events."

Cordon said that in 2021, their group had toured to the hometowns of all 16 members of the Wisconsin State Legislature's Joint Finance Committee, advocating for the legislature to adopt a 'just' budget – the People's Budget.

Cordon said that the tour would also show up at parades

and festivals, as well as events organized to oppose Enbridge Line 5, and more.

In 2022, the 'Democracy Tour,' operating between June 23 and September 23, has travelled to 45 cities in the state, offering their brand of political healing and unity building.

"I do what I do because I love my children, and I feel it is my responsibility to do what I can to create a world that they can live in," Cordon said. "I consider this work to be my spiritual calling."

Bound for Milwaukee

Cordon said the 2022 tour will end in the City of Milwaukee with a series of events, 'The Wisconsin Peace Convergence.' Those events include:

- Sept. 20: a voter registration day
- Sept. 21: celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace
- Sept. 22: work with local organizations on a voter registration drive
- Sept. 23: join with others travelling to Chicago for an event affiliated with the Global Climate Strike

Cordon's event in Viroqua gathered event participants in a circle, after enjoying a potluck meal. Cordon passed a talking stick, made for him by Larry Littlegeorge of the Ho Chunk Nation. Participants held the stick, when it was their turn to speak. The 10 participants discussed their feelings about the current state of political partisan divisions, and their vision of local actions they could take to try to help heal the divide.

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BUS DRIVER Rob Sailer watches Robbie Silvers and Johnathan Mormann get off his bus on Thursday, Aug. 23, the first day of classes at North Crawford. Sailer, who likes driving bus, has become the middle/high school principal this year. He taught math and drove bus the previous two years.

