

In Seneca

Changes arrived for school board

By CHARLEY PREUSSER
The Seneca School Board meeting Monday night started with a major statement by longtime board president Mark Johnson.

As the board prepared to re-organize the body after the recent election, Johnson began the meeting with his announcement.

"I love this school," Johnson said. "And, I want to make the best decision for the school. So, after giving the matter significant thought, I believe it would be best for the school if another member of the board would serve as president."

With Seneca District Administrator David Boland acting as temporary chairperson Adam Green, Shawn Lenzen-dorf and Crisse Reynolds were acknowledged as the three winners of the recent election.

The first order of business for the board was electing permanent officers, beginning with electing a new president.

After nominations for president were opened, Tyler Aspenson nominated Shawn Lenzen-dorf and Britney Joy seconded the nomination.

Mark Johnson had previously noted that he had learned recently that board members can nominate themselves.

Crisse Reynolds nominated herself as candidate for board president and Shawn Lenzen-dorf seconded her nomination.

With nominations closed small pieces of paper were handed out and board members wrote down their choice for president. When tallied, the vote was four for Lenzen-dorf and three for Reynolds.

"Shawn congratulations," outgoing board president Mark Johnson said when the results were announced.

From this point forward, every office had one person nominated and motions were made to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot in favor of the person nominated.

The next office up for election was board vice president. Lenzen-dorf nominated Crisse Reynolds and board member Charles Clark seconded the motion. Aspenson moved to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot in favor of Reynolds for vice president. Joy seconded the motion and it was passed.

Board clerk Rachael George did not run for re-election this time, so finding a new clerk was needed. Aspenson nominated Britney Joy and Johnson seconded the nomination.

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Little Britches Rodeo returns to Gays Mills

The annual Little Britches Rodeo will be held May 7 and 8 at the Crawford County Fairgrounds, south of Gays Mills along Highway 131.

The weekend starts off on Friday night with 4-D barrel racing. Registration starts at 5:30 p.m., exhibition at 6 p.m., and jackpot barrel racing at 7 p.m. Everyone is invited to compete.

There is \$300 added money. The entry fee is \$20, \$5 for exhibition, and a \$5 office fee.

A negative coggins is required. The rodeo will start on Saturday and Sunday at 9 a.m.

There is an admission of \$5 each day. There will not be any mutton bustin' this year.

Come on out and watch contestants from the ages of 6 to 18 compete in events such as barrel racing, pole bending, calf roping, chute dogging, bull riding, bareback and saddle bronc riding, team roping and calf undecorating.

There will be lunch available on the grounds. For info contact call 608-606-3466.



The pelicans are back

These are some of the very large flock of pelicans that took refuge in the slough behind the Gays Mills Community Commerce Center on a rainy Earth Day, Friday, April 22, 2022. How big was this flock of pelicans? Some estimates ranged to more than 100. One thing seemed certain, everyone who saw the birds seemed to have their spirits lifted by the sight. Welcome back pelicans.

On Earth Day

Corps leads a ribbon cutting for Mississippi River projects

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) joined members of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Friends of Pool 9, and various contractors to celebrate the completion of two restoration projects in the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Those two projects are in the Harper's Slough, and on Conway Lake, near Lansing, Iowa.

Colonel Jansen explains

"In my 36 years as Commander of USACE St. Paul, we have undertaken 55 projects on the river between Minneapolis and St. Louis, and accomplished restoration of over 100,000 acres," Colonel Carl Jansen explained. "Our proven track record with these projects has resulted in the appropriation from Congress being increased from the typical \$33 million to \$55 million."

Jansen explained that their work demonstrates that the cultural, ecological and economic significance of the Mississippi River can co-exist. He said that the Corp's work, along with their many partners demonstrates that "we can be good stewards of the environment."

Jansen said that in order to accomplish these restoration projects, it takes a team. That team is made up of Congress who makes the appropriations to support the work, state and federal partners such as USFWS, IDNR and WDNR, the USACE team, the contractors that help to complete the projects, and local partnerships with groups like Friends of Pool 9.

Contractors that worked on the projects included Kaiyuh Services LLC - Conway Lake Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP) (prime contractor); J. F. Brennan Company Inc. - Conway Lake Habitat (HREP subcon-

tractor); Water Works Marine Inc. - Harper's Slough Repair HREP (prime contractor); and Michels Corporation - Harper's Slough Repair HREP (subcontractor).

Harpers Slough

The Harper Slough project, just upstream of Lock and Dam 9, near Lynxville, protects existing islands and constructs additional islands using material from the backwater and main channel.

The project will slow the loss of existing islands, reduce the flow of sediment-laden water into the backwaters, reduce turbidity and increase the diversity of land and shoreline habitats.

Habitat restoration work was completed in 2017, but historic flooding in 2018 and 2019 prevented the constructed islands from establishing vegetation. In total, the project restored 1,680 acres of aquatic and island habitat.

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In Gays Mills

Right-of-way property raises some questions

By CHARLEY PREUSSER

The Village of Gays Mills is still considering the purchase from Crawford County of an abandoned railway right of way on the north end of the village.

The property in question runs parallel to Highway 131, north from the area roughly behind the Gays Mills Cemetery toward a property behind the Dollar General store.

The 100-foot wide right of way property in question was owned by Railroad Properties LLC, according to the village and the county. Railroad Properties acquired the property from CMC Heartland Partners through a Quit Claim Deed filed with the Crawford County Register of Deeds in 2005.

It should be noted that court documents show CMC Heartland Partners and Railroad Partners LLC are linked. CMC Heartland Partners was located in Suite 305 and Railroad Properties was located in Suite 315-B at 330 N. Jefferson Court in Chicago, Illinois.

In 2006, Railroad Properties LLC filed a correction to the Quit Claim Deed filed by Heartland Partners, which originally stated Railroad Properties owned all of the property formerly owned by Heartland Partners.

The correction to the Quit Claim Deed lists 17 properties that Railroad Properties LLC claims it specifically owns. Among those properties is one that appears to be specifically deeded to a property currently owned by Dr. Richard Dudgeon, the local veterinarian.

The property Railroad Properties LLC claims to own in its 2006 correction to the Quit Claim Deed from CMC Heartland Partners lies in Section 15 Township 10 Range 4 West appears to be identical to a parcel that was quit claimed to the Shickells in 1980 by Crawford County.

Records show that Crawford County Treasurer Martin Sprosty and County Clerk Milo Cooper followed much of the same procedures as Crawford County followed recently on the other properties Railroad Properties LLC claimed to own.

On Wisconsin River

'Kids Don't Float' kiosk is scheduled for Avoca

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

At their Thursday, April 21 meeting at Grandma Mary's Café in Arena, the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) learned that the Village of Avoca will become the latest addition to the 'Kids Don't Float' life vest kiosks.

The kiosks are placed at boat landings up and down the Lower Wisconsin River to offer free loaner life vests to citizens who recreate on the river.

"The Muscoda Lions have contributed \$500 to build and install the kiosk, and Mark Cupp and others will help," FLOW President Timm Zumm told the board. "The kiosk will be maintained by volunteers from the village."

FLOW board member Dave Krueger is the volunteer that drives the route weekly to make sure that all the kiosks in the Riverway are stocked with vests. He stated that he plans to begin placing life vests at the kiosks in the next few weeks.

Zumm told the board that new signs for the kiosks, from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) are currently in production.

Riverway map

Dr. Bill Gartner, professor of geography at UW-Madison, and his student Christina Dennis, were the featured speakers at the meeting. Dennis is working on a 'Lower Wisconsin River Cultural and Heritage Map' as her senior project.

Starting in 1973, Sprosty began billing property taxes. The county billed taxes, sent notices, took court action as required until November of 1979, when the county foreclosed on the property. In April of 1980, the county sold the foreclosed property to the Shickells for \$25. Of course, that property was part of the property later sold to Dudgeon by Karen Shickell.

An interesting question, that several people recognized, was why didn't Sprosty and Cooper just use the same process for the adjoining property in the railroad right of way that led the foreclosure on the piece deeded to the Shickells. While county government officials, local real estate people, and others familiar with the situation, recognized the question, no one knew the answer - yet.

Why the interest?

So, why is the Village of Gays Mills interested in the property? It was part of a vision for the Stump Dodger Trail to run on the old railroad bed north to County B. As it turned out, the Stump Dodger Trail runs from the county fairgrounds to Grove Street and loops back to the fairgrounds.

The purchase of the railroad right of way property, on which the county foreclosed, has appeared on at least two village board agendas, but has yet to be taken up by the board. The county has offered to sell the property to the village for \$3,200.

At a recent village board meeting, when the Independent-Scout asked for a clarification of the agenda item on the real estate purchase, village trustees and the village president explained they were waiting to hear about the matter from their lawyer.

Gays Mills Village President Harry Heisz later said the village is interested in the property for use as part of the trail in the future. He explained he thought it was important for the village to acquire the property rather than some other party.

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CUTTING THE RIBBON at an Earth Day celebration of the completion of two habitat restoration projects in the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge were representatives of federal, state and local partners. Seen cutting the ribbon, from left, are USACE Colonel Carl Jansen, USFWS Refuge Director Sabrina Chandler, Kirk Hansen of the Iowa DNR, and Larry Quamme of Friends of Pool 9. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Corps Engineers

