THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2022

<u>In Seneca</u>

Changes arrived for school board

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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 Lenzendorf 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 Lenzendorf 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 Lenzendorf 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 Lenzendorf 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. Lenzendorf 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.

See BOARD Page 8 Col 1

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 PUMPLUN

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,

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 environ-

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 US-FWS, 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 subcontractor); 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

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.

See PROJECTS Page 14 Col 1



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 courtesdy of U.S. Army Corps Engineers

<u>In Gays Mills</u>

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

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 Railroad originally stated 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

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.

ONE DOLLAR

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. At least, no one knows 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.

See PROPERTY Page 8 Col 2

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

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.

"To date, Christina has added in various features such as effigy mounds and other known cultural and heritage features on the Riverway, Gartner explained. "She has also met with Mark Cupp and Don Greenwood of Cultural Landscape Legacies for input about features to include on

When the map is completed, it will be available both in print, and as a downloadable feature that can be displayed on a smart phone. The maps will be available free of charge at the offices of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway Board (LWSRB) in Muscoda.

"Once the map is downloaded on a phone, it will be linked with a global positioning system," Gartner said. "So, not only will the map enhance the experience on the river for those enjoying it, it will also serve as a safety feature, allowing paddlers who may experience an emergency to help first responders understand their location on the river."

Gartner said that the final part of the map development project will employ an innovative technique called 'participatory mapping.' He said that the plan is to hold meetings in communities up and down the Riverway to present the map and invite community discussion and feedback about the features represented on the map, features that could

See FLOW Page 8 Col 1

School district's public input policy adjusted to mirror other districts' policy

BOARD from Page 1

Lenzendorf moved to close the nomination and cast a unanimous ballot for Joy. Aspenson seconded the motion and the board passed it.

nominated Charles Clark for board treasurer. It was seconded and a motion to close to the nominations and cast unanimous ballot was made, seconded and passed.

Mark Johnson agreed to continue as the district's representative to CESA #3. Crisse Reynolds agreed to be the district's official representative for the Wisconsin Association of School

There were also some adjustments to the school board committee assignments based on changes to the board.

After the official business of re-organization was done, Mark Johnson rose and presented Rachael George with a plaque thanking her for her six years of service as the board's clerk. He noted he had enjoyed serving on the board with Rachael, who he said had a great big heart.

"I want to thank all of you for the support you have given me and I want to thank the community for supporting us especially the last few years. Thank you."

Public input policy

With no old business on the agenda, the first order of new business was the first residing of Policy #1536 'Public Comment at Board Meet-The board's policy com-

mittee brought forward the revised public comment policy to make meetings function better and be more consistent with other local school districts, according to Johnson.

Board members George, Reynolds and Johnson modeled the policy after the public comment policies of school boards at Fennimore and North Crawford. Following the first reading at the April meeting, the policy will be brought back to the next meeting for a vote on final approval.

In other business In other business, the Sen-

eca School Board:

· approved the low bid for new signs in the gym of \$2,880 from Graphic Design in Prairie du Chien

 approved BS Refrigeration's low bid \$18,025 for a furnace mounted on the rooftop over the high school-the work will be done by July 1, and expensed in the current

 approved the low bid of Mezera Plumbing and Heating for three heating/AC units for the LMC at low bid of \$13,014

• decided the cost of AC for the gym was too high for the limited benefits that would be enjoyed

· agreed to hire Stalker Brothers, the installers of the original gym floor for a big redo of the gym floor that would include sanding down the current floor to bare wood and repainting and refinishing it at a cost of \$21,450

• approved allowing two extra COVID days beyond the regular allotment of the sick days for those who had to stay home for reasons due to the pandemic

• learned the 2022-2023 district property insurance premiums with Tricor will decline because worker compensation claims were down

• created a Capital Improvement Plan and a Fund 46, where surpluses that occur in budgets some years could be put for use on future capital improvements

• approved the 2022-23 SWEEP Agreement that allows the district to use field maintenance equipment for a \$100 per year membership in a consortium of local school districts

Administrator report

During the district administrators report, the board learned the budget was running as expected at this point in the year.

Boland also told the board the CPI (Consumer Price Index) was 4.7 percent this year-the number is used to adjust wages in the district. He also noted that several local school district's had already approved increasing wages to match the CPI.

Boland told the board that the district was looking to replace an increasingly obsolete phone system with VOIP (Voice Over Internet Proto-

col) phones. The district was

investigating three possible

Boland told the board that fourth grade students had requested having a sleepover at the school, and teachers Debbie Varo and Jessica Dworschack had agreed to the idea. The sleepover will occur on a Friday night, and pizza will be on the menu.

The board also learned that in accordance with county health department

would turn on the bubblers, in addition to the water bottler fillers that will remain in operation as well.

Boland told the board the Wisconsin Reading Corps application was approved by the DPI, and there is action to fill the position underway.

The Seneca Area School District Monthly Recognition Award for April went to:

• All Conference Academ-

ic Students-Nick Kirchhoff, Willow Roensch and Kadin Wallin.

• Grace Varo for being a State Spelling Bee partici-

• Middle school state wrestling participants-Sawyer Swiggum, Evan O'Kane, and Gavyn Wilkins.

• State Forensics participants-Al Rewey, Willow Roensch, Tanner Kilburg, Jacob Payne, Serena CorelCoaches Laury Nelson and Jenny Fisher.

• Mona Jones: Special Ed Instructor for 42 years of ser-

• Barb Fisher: Middle School Instructor for 17 years of service.

• Janet Kilburg: Reading Specialist for seven years of Following a closed sesopen session and: • approved hiring Annie

Janousek as a high school English teacher

 approved hiring Kelsey Kleven as district reading specialist

• approved Dave Benzing as trap team adviser

· approved transferring English teacher Jenny Fisher to the middle school

Abandoned railroad property ownership will continue to engage that Dudgeon owns the prop-**BOARD from Page 1** of way and, certain landown-

Landowner Richard Dudgeon has another opinion on the matter. He believes he already owns all of the property, including the abandoned railway right of way. Dudgeon recalls real estate

agent Ray Babb asking him

Soils store more carbon

than all the vegetation on

the Earth's surface. How-

ever, there are still many

unanswered questions about

precisely which processes

favour accumulation in the

soil. Under the leadership of

the Helmholtz Centre for En-

vironmental Research (UFZ),

a team of soil scientists have

developed a new method to

show where and under what

conditions carbon is stored f

in the soil. As they write in

Nature Communications, it is

primarily the network of soil

pores that controls the spatial

In the public debate on

climate protection, the im-

portance of soil is often for-

gotten. However, soils store

considerably more carbon

globally than forests or the

atmosphere. The long-term

storage of carbon can be

quite complex. On one hand,

it depends on how much at-

mospheric carbon enters the

soil through root growth, var-

ious mixing processes (e.g.

soil cultivation or the activ-

ity of earthworms), and the

seepage of dissolved organic

compounds. On the other

hand, it depends on whether

the existing carbon in the

soil can be stabilised or is

decomposed by bacteria and

fungi. Which process is more

efficient -- storage or decom-

position -- is determined pri-

marily by the structure of the

soil (e.g. the size of the network of pores that help trans-

port air, water, and nutrients).

It had previously not been

possible to study the distri-

bution pattern of the organic carbon within the millimetre

and micrometre sized pores.

UFZ have now managed to

do this. With their new meth-

od, they can precisely local-

ise the carbon in the soil. It

is based on the staining of

the organic compounds with

osmium tetroxide, which

sorbs onto the carbon-con-

taining double bonds and is

then visualised using X-ray

computed tomography (CT).

By scanning the soil sample

before and after staining, the

researchers can infer the dis-

tribution of the carbon from

the differences in the images.

Until now, this was possible

only with the help of elabo-

rate synchrotron CT meth-

ods. However, because there

are only two particle acceler-

ators of this kind in Germany,

access is severely limited. In

contrast, X-ray CT is more

widespread at soil science

institutes in Germany. The

new approach thus facili-

tates research. This provides

important information about

processes in the soil and thus

also about the consequences

they have for the stabilisation

and decomposition of carbon

scientists tested their meth-

odology at three sites with

different soil types and dif-

ferent moisture regimes: a

Chernozem site with low

As an example, the soil

But the scientists at the

distribution of carbon.

if he wanted the abandoned railway right of way property included in his purchase. Dudgeon remembers saying he did want it included.

Robin Babb, Ray's son, who owns a property that borders Dudgeon at the abandoned right of way, believes

annual precipitation at the

UFZ research station in Bad

Lauchstädt, a fine-textured

Luvisol site with seasonal

water logging in the foothills

of the Alps, and a permanent-

ly wet Gleysol site influenced

by groundwater near Gießen.

The result: in the immediate

vicinity of the pores (i.e. in

a margin of 50 to 100 mi-

crometres), the concentration

of carbon is lower than in the

rest of the soil. This is mainly

because microbial activ-

ity decreases with increasing

distance from the pores. In

contrast, there are differences

in the carbon content around

organic material such as plant

residues. In dry Chernozem

soil, the carbon decreases

with distance to the plant res-

idues. The bacteria and fungi

are attached to the plant resi-

dues so they can easily get at

the carbon and metabolise it.

The decomposition products

then accumulate around the

plant residues. In the Gley-

sol, the opposite was true.

The scientists found no en-

richment of products around

the plant residues. One ex-

planation is that dissolved

decomposition products are

more easily transported over

longer distances under the

erty in question.

"I think the property belongs to Dudgeon," Robin Babb said.

Nevertheless, Crawford County Treasurer Deanna Lutz stated back in February when the county cleared the property for sale, that Soil structure determines carbon storage capacity

now opens up interesting re-

search perspectives such as

how the carbon is distributed

in the subsoil (i.e. the deeper

soil layers up to one metre).

So far, there is only circum-

stantial evidence that the

distribution patterns of car-

bon in the subsoil are differ-

ent from those in the topsoil.

That's because the latter is

not influenced by tillage and

is not so intensely mixed by

burrowing animals. Carbon

can reach deeper layers only

through accumulation at the

few roots or the diffusion of

dissolved organic substances.

"It would be exciting to find

out more about these pro-

cesses. Because of climate

change and the resulting

frequent droughts in the top-

soil, plants are increasingly

lacking water. "The impor-

tance of the subsoil for plant

growth is thus increasing,"

says Vogel. With the new

method, the researchers hope

to better understand the pro-

cesses of carbon storage in

deeper layers as well as the

causes of the differences in

the carbon balance between

different forms of land man-

agement (e.g. grassland use

Source: Helmholtz Centre for En-

and arable farming).

there was a legal, mappable description to the property. However, the title search' required by law, meant the title search only had to go back to 2005, when CMC Heartland Partners filed the Quit Claim Deed transferring their ownership of Crawford County properties to Railroad Properties

For his part, Brad Niemcek, a leader of the trail committee years ago, is not ready to take up the trail cause

Niemcek explained there was a flurry of activity last year, inspired by local businessman Ritchie Stevenson. to reconstitute the Gays Mills Economic Development Association. The Stump Dodger Trail committee functioned under the umbrella of GM-

Niemcek said the trail committee ended up with sufficient funds to purchase the railway property in question from the county. Those funds currently reside in the However, Niemcek ac-

knowledged that there was resistance to the idea of the trail on the abandoned right

Lickapoo reekside

Eat . Drink . Relax

SAFELY

ers won't agree to allow it, and might litigate over it.

One cause for concern is that both Dudgeon and the Babbs pasture livestock in the area. In fact, Dudgeon pastures cattle that are in the abandoned right of way, and Babb has horses across the fence.

Niemcek said the need for fencing was addressed by the

However, the former trail proponent believes the effort may not have the enthusiasm necessary to move forward, and notes there is opposition Yet, Niemcek still believes

if the trail were built on the abandoned right-of-way it would be able to be the visitor attraction it was envisioned to be. Both Dudgeon and Babb

are skeptical of the interaction of the public on the trail with cattle and horses on pasture. Furthermore, they question the village's ability to keep up with fencing in an area prone to flooding. It seems the story of the

abandoned railroad right-ofway may not be over yet.

OPEN

Tues-Fri 4 p.m.

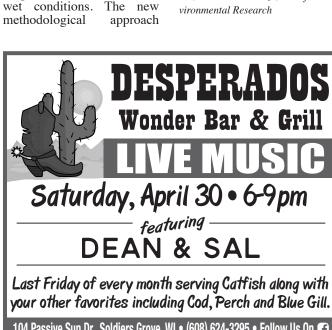
Sat & Sun 11 a.m.

HWY 14

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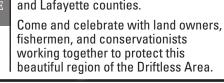
\$8 PER MEAL FIRST SATURDAY IN MAYI Saturday, May 7 AT THE SOLDIERS GROVE FIRE STATION 11 am until 3 pm or sold out • Hamburgers • Potato Salad Brats Chips Hot Dogs • Beans













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North Crawford Gveryone Welcome **High School** Show &

Concessions Hosted by: For questions please contact North Crawford MacKenzie Knutson 608-735-4311 ext 180

or John Powell 608-624-5201 ext 236

SATURDAY, Food | Drinks | Drawings Come Check Out Our Camp Sites! **MAY 7, 2022** 11:00 - 3:00

DODGER CAMPGROUND

OPEN HOUSE

KICKAPOO STUMP

REMEMBER: Stump Dodger Bash is July 1-2