



THE LAKELAND TIMES

FOOTBALL PREVIEW



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Vilas County board says no to ATV ordinance amendments

Burkett: 'This will come back to us'

By Brian Jopek
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

The Vilas County board on Tuesday rejected three proposed amendments to the county's ordinance for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and utility task vehicle (UTV) use.

The decision was reached after nearly 90 minutes of presentation and discussion.

The amendments were for year-round ATV/UTV accessibility to portions of county highways in the towns of Manitowish Waters, Plum Lake and Winchester.

Each town, along with the town of Boulder Junction, has conducted surveys or referendums in the past few years, the results showing a majority of people responding to the surveys and voting in a late 2020 Manitowish Waters referendum didn't want ATV/UTV use on public land or town roads.

However, Chapter 26 of the county's ATV/UTV ordinance, as it was amended last year by the county board, provides the opportunity for anyone, not just a municipality, to

request the opening of county highway sections to be designated as ATV/UTV routes and a way for ATV/UTV enthusiasts to be able to have greater access to trails.

In late 2021, the Vilas County highway committee forwarded to the county board recommendations to open county highways in Manitowish Waters, Plum Lake and Winchester after requests were received by the county to do so.

Those requests didn't come from the towns themselves.

In January, the county board was to consider the amendments and make a decision.

During that discussion, there was concern expressed by some members of the county board that the will of the people in those towns who were in the majority was being ignored. County supervisor Marv Anderson made a motion to create a subcommittee to look into the issues in those towns with the intent being for the subcommittee to meet for six months and re-

port to the county board at the end of that six-month period.

The subcommittee was formed by former county board chairman Ron De Bruyne and county supervisor Holly Tomlanovich was appointed its chairperson.

The subcommittee held its final meeting in July and the Chapter 26 amendments for the three towns were once again on the county board's agenda for its meeting Tues-

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TREVOR GREENE/
LAKELAND TIMES

Mary Stichert-Fried leads a group of Camp Agawak's oldest alumni through Siegel Park — named after Oscar Siegel, a previous owner of the camp — en route to the pottery studio.



Come, take a walk through Camp Agawak

The all girls camp celebrates 101 years

By Trevor Greene
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Warren G. Harding was president in 1921, and the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was ratified the year prior. Films starring Charlie Chaplin could be seen in theaters and baseball fans were still getting used to seeing Babe Ruth in a Yankees uniform.

In the same year, Minocqua's Camp Agawak opened its doors for the first time, offering girls from all over a chance to learn valuable life skills and an opportunity to build friendships that last a lifetime.

Last weekend, Agawak alumni from around the world packed their bags and made their way to camp yet again to celebrate its 101st year on the

shores of Blue Lake.

The camp would have held its 100th anniversary last year, but it was postponed due to lingering concerns related to COVID-19.

"We have so many generations here, from like the 1940s to the '50s to the '60s to the '70s to the '80s to the '90s," said longtime owner and director Mary Stichert-Fried. "And they all come back. Some for the first time in a long time."

Just before noon on Friday, Fried took some of Agawak's oldest campers on a tour around what is now a 200-acre property to reminisce, also showing them some of the camp's latest additions.

"It's so different now," 91-year-old Bindy Morris Bitterman said, the oldest alumna on campus. "I can't think of a single thing ex-

cept Blue Lake that is still the same."

Bitterman attended camp in the early 40s, and she said there were 14 cabins with six girls each, making the total number of campgoers just over 80 — a significant difference from now, as the camp boasts enough housing to support 250 girls at a time.

"And the lodge had a great big stone fireplace, which was gorgeous," she said. "We would have shows in the lodge, next to the campfire ... that was wonderful."

Unfortunately, the fireplace had to be taken out due to bats, Fried said, but agreed how wonderful it was.

"Everything is totally different, but the spirit, the spirit is the same," Bitter-

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LUHS provides WINGS

\$18,000 Board rejects band's donation request of \$14,000

By Trevor Greene
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

In the early morning hours of Aug. 8, a fire in a Chevrolet Suburban parked next to Copy Cat Printers not only engulfed and destroyed the vehicle but the fire spread to the building.

No one was injured but there was severe damage as a result of the fire.

In the lower front portion of the structure was the "T-Bird Nest 'n Brew," a business sponsored by the Working Independently and Gaining Self-Determination (WINGS) program at Lakeland Union High School (LUHS).

The WINGS program is for recently graduated students with disabilities.

On Monday, the LUHS board of education agreed to provide \$18,000 to the program's business, which, according to the district's director of pupil services/special education Beci Jablonski, will help cover the loss in the fire of inventory and equipment.

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day.

'Never seen such bias'

County board chairman Jerry Burkett began the discussion regarding the three proposed amendments.

"We have all been more than inundated with emails this week," he said. "A very serious situation here about allowing ATVs in three townships that don't want ATVs."

Burkett said he'd asked the opposite sides of the issue to name a spokesperson who would have 10 minutes to address the county board and he said there would be no other public comment on the matter with the exception of the board discussion following the two presentations.

"You've all read every single email, I know," he said to the other 18 members of the county board at the meeting and said a coin was flipped to determine who would address the county board first.

The winner of the coin toss was Manitowish Waters town chairman John Hanson, who was representing those against allowing ATVs and UTVs access to county roads in the towns. He chose to speak after Rich Hajt, president of the Northwoods ATV Club, representing those in favor.

"The goal (of the subcommittee) was to com-

promise and find a viable alternative to opening all county roads," Hajt, a member of the subcommittee, said. "Our club leadership took it seriously."

He said the way the Northwoods ATV Club proceeded was to "gain acceptance of our town constituents" and members of the town board.

"The 'How to' was to educate and to listen to our town constituents," Hajt said. "We did this via four town hall meetings, two in March and two this past summer."

He said he also contacted 17 property owners that would be directly affected by an ATV/UTV trail on Circle Lily Road in the Manitowish Waters and Winchester areas which resulted in a Zoom meeting with two respondents.

"Still a good meeting," Hajt said. "Then came the interesting replies ... we attempted to meet with anyone and everyone and listen to their concerns and try to educate them on what we were trying to accomplish. The sum total of all those efforts was almost zero compromise. They only wanted silent sports."

He said the Manitowish Waters chamber of commerce was approached and asked if their marketing was essentially silent sports-related.

"They said no, so it's become a mantra from some unknown source but something people continue to talk about," Hajt said, adding that

those people want the towns to pay for "the little conveniences they want," such as good internet access, paved bike trails and a good 911 emergency system.

"I've been educated in this process in many ways," Hajt said. "One of those is a term called 'NIMBY.' Not in my backyard. That's kind of the feeling that we received when dealing with people."

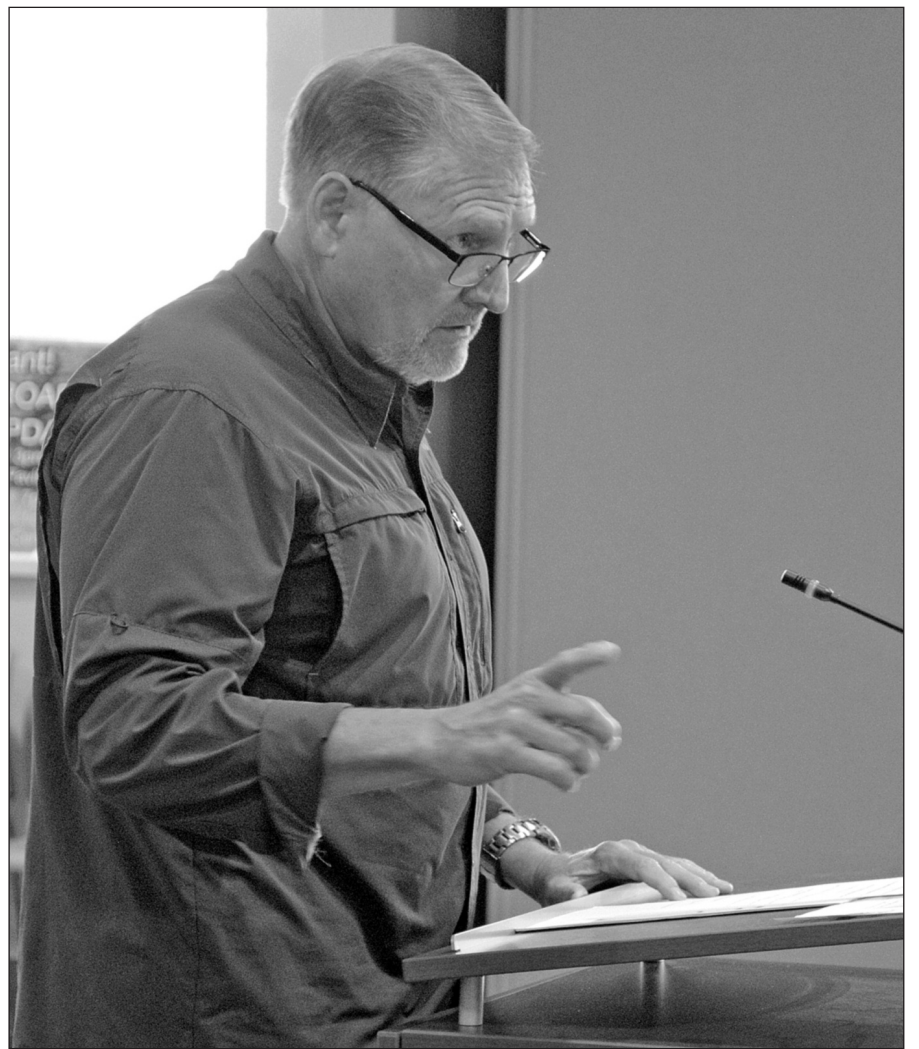
Passing the amendments was critical, he said, because "I've never seen such bias and indifference in my life."

"I only thought I saw it on TV when we're talking about what's going on from the federal standpoint," Hajt said. "Unfortunately, it's here in the Northwoods as well."

He then zeroed in on the recent actions of the Manitowish Waters town board, which in May, re-ratified the town's master plan that included a provision for ATVs and UTVs. Hanson, Hajt claimed, verbally supported the ATV/UTV portion of the town's master plan.

He said there were efforts to get copies of the master plan "to be reviewed" with no success until Tomlanovich filed an open records request with the town.

Hajt said when Todd Bierman, the county's recreation director in the forestry department, reviewed the Manitowish Waters master plan, there was nothing indicated for ATV/UTV use.



BRIAN JOPEK/LAKELAND TIMES

Northwoods ATV Club president Rich Hajt addresses the Vilas County board on Tuesday, Aug. 23.

In July, the town board, on a 2-1 vote, had ATV/UTV provisions removed from the plan.

At that meeting, Hajt said Manitowish Waters town supervisor Bob Becker urged the removal of ATV/UTV provisions because they were "confusing" and said Vilas County supervisor Mike Biszak asked Hanson to keep the provision in the plan.

He said town supervisor Mike Kramer voted to keep the provision but Becker and Hanson voted against.

Hajt then addressed Biszak.

"Mike, I don't know how you're able to work with somebody that violated your trust," he said. "I couldn't do it."

Burkett interrupted Hajt.

"Sir," he said. "Let's

keep the personalities out of it, please," he said to Hajt who later apologized for that but not for how he said he and others ended up feeling.

"We're tired of being played," Hajt said. "The poor people in Winchester have been trying for 20 years now to get a single trail ... I ask you please. The mantra of our club is very

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straightforward. Always do the right thing. We're asking please, do the same."

Hanson, in his opening remarks, to the county board mentioned an email sent to the

county board by the Manitowish Waters town board outlining the reasons for the opposition.

"One of the things I'd like to say offhand is I'm not opposed to ATVs or UTVs," he said. "I just think it has to be done in the proper place. I feel that Mani-

towish Waters does not lend itself to ATV/UTV traffic."

Hanson highlighted results of the November 2020 advisory referendum in the town in which a majority of voters were against the use of ATVs and UTVs on town roads, 368-179.

"At the same time, we

surveyed the non-voting residents of Manitowish Waters ... we had almost 600 responses to that survey," he said. "The results were the same. There were 199 in favor of the use of ATVs on town roads and 400 against. So, in my mind, that's a mandate and really was the deciding factor in supporting any ATV traffic on our town roads."

Following the presentations, the discussion moved to the county board, with most of the 19 board members who spoke, including Burkett, stating they would vote against the amendments.

Much of their reasoning related to the lack of support from, at this time, the individual town boards.

"I'm in a conundrum," Burkett said before calling for a vote on the amendments. "I believe in anything that brings people to Vilas County ... I want them to have fun. I want them to come back and I want them to please bring money."

He summarized the

process for getting ATV and UTV access for city streets in Eagle River, which included two public hearings.

"Being elected is one of the most serious jobs you can do," Burkett said. "I know it's serious because no one wants to run (for office). You have an election process. If your townships want ATV/UTV, all you can do is find someone who will run on that and see if he or she gets in."

He said when he was on the highway committee, he voted on opening portions of County Highway G in the Phelps area after the town made requests to do so.

"It always came from the town because the county was not going to usurp their authority," Burkett said. "I, for one, want to tell all three of your townships you should probably plan, you should probably find (a way) ... because this group's never gonna give up."

That was a reference to Tomlanovich and other people who made

up the ATV/UTV subcommittee.

"It's like a school referendum," Burkett said. "Start out at \$10 billion and settle for \$1 billion. They'll just keep working it. So, make it your idea. Not theirs because they won't give up."

He said as it stands, he wasn't comfortable "asserting authority" on a town that "doesn't want something in their township."

"I don't like it when the state does it to me," Burkett said. "I don't like it when the federal government does it to me and how do you think Ukraine feels when (Russia) is doing it to them? I think we're all civilized, grown people. I think there's room for compromise. I also think this will come back to us."


He then called for a roll call vote on each of the three amendments and the outcome for each was the same, 14 no votes and five yes votes.

Brian Jopek may be reached via email at bjopek@lakeland-times.com.



BRIAN JOPEK/LAKELAND TIMES

Manitowish Waters town chairman John Hanson represented those opposed to ATV/UTV access to portions of county roads in the towns of Manitowish Waters, Plum Lake and Winchester at Tuesday's meeting of the Vilas County board.



Celebrating 42 years in business!

My Bayou story continues but just not this week, I'll save it for another week!

I'm reminded Labor Day is fast approaching, students heading back to school, the sun rises later and is setting earlier, boats going into storage, and some folks heading south, a few leaves changing color, cranberry tours begin... ..and soon the white pants and shoes return to the closet till next year, unless you are lucky enough to take a winter vacation to a warm climate!

On to Labor Day weekend, we will be OPEN through Sunday 9/4. Then we will close 9/5 thru 9/11 reopen on Monday 9/12. Our team has stepped up and given above 100%, so we will take a week for ourselves. I appreciate all they do!

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