



THE LAKELAND TIMES



DON'T FORGET!
Daylight saving time ends Sunday — set your clocks back one hour

MINOCQUA, WISCONSIN • FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2021

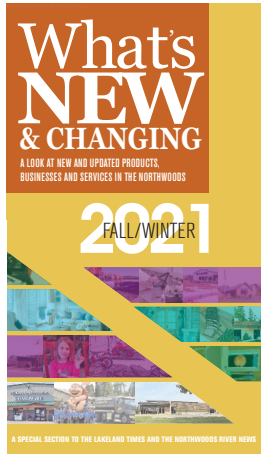
NOVEMBER 7, 2021

\$ 1.50

"THE VOICE OF THE NORTHWOODS SINCE 1891"

WWW.LAKELANDTIMES.COM

INSIDE: What's NEW & CHANGING



After teacher, parent challenge, Tomahawk school district retreats on vaccine policy

Policy allowed only vaccinated teachers to teach virtually during quarantine

By Richard Moore
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

After a determined challenge from a Tomahawk school teacher and support from parents and some other teachers, the Tomahawk school district has backed away from a contro-

versial policy that allowed only vaccinated teachers to teach virtually when their classes were in quarantine, while unvaccinated teachers were prohibited from doing so and forced to use sick days.

If sick days ran out, the unvaccinated teachers

would have ceased to be compensated by the district and would have had to pick up their own health insurance costs.

At an October 26 Tomahawk school board meeting and in a private meeting with school officials, Tomahawk elementary teacher

Sarah Miller called the policy discriminatory and said it invaded the medical privacy of teachers.

"Are you aware that the school district has a discriminatory policy that says if an elementary class is sent

See **Policy** . . . page 17

INDEX

Back thru the Times	34
Calendar of Events	18
Classifieds	30,31
Employment	32
Legals	8
Letters	14
Milestones	18
Obituaries	6,7
Opinions	14,15
Outdoors	25-28
Real Estate	38-40
Sports	20-23
Town News	35-37

Print Run 6,000
Vol. 129 - Issue 74
2 Section, 56 Pages



TREVOR GREENE/LAKELAND TIMES

MASKS FOR HALLOWEEN AND HEALTH

Kathy Cutforth of the Northwoods Wisconsin Face Mask Warriors hands father and son, Chance and Harrison Hanser, free handcrafted face masks during the Halloween in-town trick or treat festivities on Sunday, Oct. 31 in downtown Minocqua. The group gave out about 140 child-sized masks and over 100 youth to adult-sized masks in Minocqua and about 170 total the day before to trick or treaters in Tomahawk.

Tax levy pledge forces St. Germain to cut back on spending

Cooper: 'We kind of put ourselves in a spot'

By Fred Williston
SPECIAL TO THE LAKELAND TIMES

During a special meeting of the St. Germain Town Board last Thursday, supervisors discussed the town's ability to spend money on infrastructure projects and found themselves in a quandary.

Late last year, while in the process of committing

to the town's \$1.2 million fiber optic (broadband internet) installation project, supervisors pledged not to raise property taxes to pay for it. At the time they made that pledge, the town board also cautioned voters other projects would need to be postponed. One year later, taxpayers and supervisors are seeing the proverbial

chickens come home to roost.

Resident Bob Schell asked the board about reconstruction on Found Lake Road, which was split into three phases. The first phase has been completed, but work on the second and third has not yet begun.

See **Spending** . . . page 19

Oneida County board reinstates Wegner to zoning department

After new charge, board reconsidered its rehiring of long-time employee

By Richard Moore
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

After more than four hours of deliberation in closed session Tuesday, the Oneida County Board of Supervisors reinstated former assistant director Pete Wegner to a position in the county's zoning department, after firing him last spring.

Wegner will be reinstated with the wage rate and benefits he was receiving at the time of termination and will receive back pay. According to the closed session vote, the remedy in no way limits the ability of the committee of jurisdiction or the department head to set and evaluate the performance standards of the grievant and to take appropriate actions.

The county had fired Wegner as of the end of this past April after he picked up a fourth set of criminal misdemeanor charges related to his al-

See **Wegner** . . . page 33

Spending

From page 1

“MSA did their engineering in 2017. And it was put off in 2018 and part of it was finally done in ‘19. And partly because fiber optic came along, it was shelved in ‘20,” he said. “That road is really horrible. I know there are some bad roads in town, but that one’s been on the docket for a long time.”

The price estimate for work on phase two is \$324,000, but that quote was given with the assumption of work taking place in 2021. Most probably, the cost of the project will increase significantly as time passes.

“So the question is how long are we pushing off these projects,” said board chairman Tom Christensen. “We’re talking about not borrowing money, I believe, because of making the statement that the levy would not go up because of the fiber optic program. By the same token, then, these other projects that are just hanging — that we’ve already committed to by starting the projects and starting the work —

what are we going to do with those projects?”

Schell said “It was in late ‘20 when fiber optic was being discussed, and you said you would go out for bid on the Found Lake Road project in January ... I know you’re going to delay it, but I just want to make sure it stays on a burner — even if it’s a back burner.”

Supervisor Brian Cooper said “We kind of put ourselves in a spot because we wanted the fiber optic, which is a good thing. I’m not arguing with that at all. But we’ve put ourselves in a spot where we’re going to have to tighten the belt again and not spend as much.”

To proceed with work on Found Lake road and other already-prioritized projects, Christensen said “We would have to re-structure the loans that we have in order to keep the payment of those loans at what’s levied.”

“And obviously,” he said, “Re-structuring those loans would push the payoff of those loans out further than 2023. There’s a way that we can do some of the projects — maybe not at the same speed we

were doing projects at — but you could do some of them.”

“For those projects like Found Lake Road, that’s what would be required; to re-structure the finance. And then we’d have a payoff of probably 2024 instead of 2023. 2025, probably, with the fiber optic in there,” Christensen said.

“We’ve figured out and prioritized what we want to do first, so why don’t we figure out a way to do it?” he asked. “Fiber optic is part of the puzzle, yes. But by re-structuring the debt and putting the payoff further out, you don’t raise the levy and you get some projects that you’ve already committed to done finally.”

Cooper asked Christensen “So you’re saying right now we don’t have the money to spend on special projects, including the roads?”

“We don’t have that in the bank, no,” Christensen answered. “We would have to go out and borrow some money and re-structure however we’re going to do the loans in the future.”

“Or raise the levy,” Cooper said. Supervisor Jim

Swenson wondered whether it would cost the town more to pay extra loan interest or to face yearly increases in construction and labor costs as projects are delayed.

“In looking at what we got from MSA the other day, this new estimate for Found Lake Road is \$16,000 more than the last one. Would we be able to save by going ahead with this project and re-structuring the loan?” he asked.

Swenson’s question was apparently rhetorical, as no one provided an answer.

Cooper said “For the last three boards — at least — we’ve always been on an even keel with what we spend money on versus our debt service allowance ... That’s not how we’ve operated in the past.”

“It’s not what we’ve done in the past,” Christensen said, “But at the same time, it’s not a negative. It’s accomplishing the projects that we want to do within our budget.”

Cooper said “When we discussed that we were not going to raise the levy to pay for the fiber optic, my concern was that people are not going to hear ‘We are not going to raise taxes

because of the fiber optic project.’ They’re going to hear ‘We’re not going to raise your taxes, period’ for whatever amount of time.”

“That’s not what was said,” Cooper pointed out, “But that’s what was perceived to have been said.”

Supervisor Ted Ritter encouraged those attending Thursday’s meeting to read the town’s website, featuring a statement regarding the tax pledge. The statement was approved and agreed upon by the town board before it was posted.

Town Clerk June Vogel read the posting aloud. “ChoiceTel will provide the above-described cable installation at a project cost of \$1.2 million,” she said. “The town will borrow half of that amount — \$600,000 — with the balance to be paid from a grant already obtained by the town. The loan will be paid in full over the next two to three years.”

Vogel continued “A temporary hold of one or two years may be put on other town projects that typically require borrowing of money. Consequently, the town’s debt will

remain at approximately the same level as prior to undertaking this fiber optic project and there will be no increase in property taxes to pay for the delivery of high-speed internet service throughout the town.”

Ritter said “This is what we’ve said from the beginning. I don’t see where we can deviate from it. I’m not saying we shouldn’t re-structure the loan. But what we have told the electors is what we’ve posted.”

“At the rate the fiber optic installation is going,” Ritter said, “I don’t know that we can adhere to that for however many years it’s going to take. But we certainly said that for a year or two, we would postpone projects. In my thinking, the decision’s already been made.”

Swenson asked “So the temporary hold of one to two years, we’re saying that’s from 2020? Or are we saying it’s from 2021?”

“I don’t know that there’s a clear answer to that,” Ritter answered. “It could be argued that the first year is 2020, not 2021. But we’re still at least a year away from that.”

A Great Look Is Waiting for You!



THE SALON

Tuesday - Saturday 9 am - 4 pm
715-543-2223
 5966 County Highway W • Manitowish Waters, WI

For your business, home and auto insurance needs, see Steve Wiczek.



556 Hwy 155
 St. Germain
 715.542.3949
www.meyer-ins.com

MEYER & ASSOCIATES
 INSURANCE AGENCY, LLC

BUYING GOLD & SILVER



BASSETT
 JEWELERS & ENGRAVING
 “Your hometown jeweler for over 25 years”

Open Tuesday - Saturday
 527 Oneida St. • Downtown Minocqua • 715-356-7272
www.bassetjewelers.com • Like us on Facebook®

KELK
 LAND IMPROVEMENT & SEPTIC

LAND

- Trucking & Bulldozing • Topsoil • Site Prep
- Bobcat Service • Driveway Shouldering • Demolition
- Land Clearing • Foundation Excavation

SEPTIC

- Septic Installation • Septic Replacement
- Conventional Systems • Mound Systems
- Tanks & Holding Tanks • Camera Inspections
- Jetting & Thawing Septic Lines

3 Generations Improving The Northwoods and still getting Dirty!

FREE ESTIMATES, FULLY INSURED | 522 Balsam, Woodruff, WI 54568
715-356-6112

ALL YOUR LAND • YEAR-ROUND SERVICES
 • COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL
kelklandimp@frontier.com
www.kelklandimp.com

Michael Hamilton can see what’s possible.

We’re pleased to announce that Michael Hamilton, Wealth Management Advisor, is now part of our team of financial experts. Mike will use his experience to help families and individuals in our community work toward growing, preserving and passing on their wealth.

Learn how Mike and our other local financial professionals can help you simplify your financial life and see what’s possible.

US Wealth Management
 U.S. Bancorp Investments

Michael J. Hamilton
 Wealth Management Advisor
 9670 State Highway 70, Minocqua
 715.358.3515
michael.hamilton3@usbank.com



Investment and insurance products and services including annuities are:
 NOT A DEPOSIT • NOT FDIC INSURED • MAY LOSE VALUE • NOT BANK GUARANTEED • NOT INSURED BY ANY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY
 U.S. Wealth Management - U.S. Bancorp Investments is a marketing logo for U.S. Bancorp Investments.
 Investment and insurance products and services including annuities are available through U.S. Bancorp Investments, the marketing name for U.S. Bancorp Investments, Inc., member FINRA and SIPC, an investment adviser and a brokerage subsidiary of U.S. Bancorp and affiliate of U.S. Bank.
 ©2021 U.S. Bancorp 577008 CR-19039270

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE