



Two for one
Restaurant shutting down but duo of eateries will take its place. **A10**

Top employers across the Northwestern Wisconsin Region detail job opportunities



Off to state
Rice Lake girls cross country wins sectional title, qualifies for state. **B1**

Brunette homicide trial to begin Monday

A Rice Lake man will face a jury trial on a first-degree intentional homicide charge beginning on Nov. 1 in the shooting death of a 24-year-old man in rural Chetek on Sept. 20, 2020.

Andrew J. Brunette, 26, pleaded not guilty on Dec. 9 in the death of Garrett Macone. Brunette's final pre-trial on Friday before Judge James C. was the last hearing scheduled before the trial is set to begin.



Brunette

The trial is scheduled to run four days. According to court documents, the prosecution anticipates to conclude with witnesses early Wednesday. The defense believes all of their witnesses will be done early Thursday morning.

According to the criminal complaint filed in Barron County Circuit Court:

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MAILING LABEL ONLY

SEMI-TRUCK TRAFFIC, SAFETY CONCERNS

PUT ON THE BRAKES



PHOTO BY MICHELLE JENSEN

Jay McGowan is advocating for a ban on semi-truck traffic on Wisconsin Avenue between Knapp and Allen streets. He has appeared before the Rice Lake City Council three times and plans to make future appearances as it debates studying the issue.

BY MICHELLE JENSEN
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Semi-truck traffic on Wisconsin Avenue is dangerous and travels too fast, says a homeowner who lives along the stretch between Knapp and Allen streets, and semis should be banned for the sake of safety. But a traffic study concerning the removal of semis from the arterial plus other costs could run the city up to \$29,800 and is unwarranted, says the city's director of streets.

Jay McGowan, who lives at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Allen Street, has appeared before the Rice Lake City Council three times recently to try to persuade it to ban semi-truck traffic on his residential street — and he plans to keep at it

even if he's going against the odds.

"Neighbors have said to me, 'Jay, we commend you, but we're telling you right now you're wasting your time. We've been after them for a long time. Other people have gone, and nothing has come of it.' Well, I won't have that. I stick with it," McGowan said.

In his quest to gain support, McGowan said he has obtained 55 signatures from Wisconsin Avenue residents on a petition. Only four people declined to sign for various reasons, he said, and many people have applauded his tenacity and hope the City Council will act this time.

McGowan, who originally hails from Chicago, came to Barron County by way of Florida in 2009 to help

his ailing father. He's happy here and moved into his Wisconsin Avenue home 2½ years ago. He immediately noticed there was too much traffic on the residential street, especially after it became a detour route when the roundabouts were under construction.

"Everybody got use to coming this way," he said.

McGowan cited the difficulty semis have making turns at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Allen Street, which can force traffic to back up to make way. He's heard the same happens on the north end of the stretch, and — according to him — some truck drivers have been rude when people call out to them to slow down.

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Three more COVID-related deaths reported in county

Number of new cases rebounds from previous week

Barron County Public Health says three more deaths related to COVID-19 have been recorded in the county, and after a steep drop in the number of new cases reported

last week, the toll has rebounded slightly.

Public Health said that three more people have died due to COVID-19 but did not reveal any further details on the deaths. This brings the total number of deaths attributed to the illness in the county to 93.

On Monday, Public Health said 170 new cases had been

confirmed over the previous week. This stands in contrast to 131 reported on Oct. 18.

So far, 22,846 — or 50% — of county residents have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Public Health also stated in its weekly report that the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths among fully vaccinated people

stands at 528.4 per 100,000 in Wisconsin in September. The number among people who are not fully vaccinated is 2,497.7 per 100,000.

For more information on those who have gotten sick after being vaccinated visit dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-status.htm.

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School Board OKs \$41M budget for 2021-2022

The Rice Lake Board of Education approved a \$41 million operating budget for 2021-2022 at its regular meeting that followed a budget hearing Monday evening. The amount is about a million dollars more than last year's budget.

At the budget hearing, Board President Keven Jensen said, "One of the main responsibilities of the Board of Education is to ensure that a budget is developed to maintain a sound financial footing for the district. This is one of our most important responsibilities."

He added, "The budget has been prepared by staff and administration with board oversight and is based upon district needs."

The district's tax levy was set at \$18.1 million, a half a percent decrease from last year, according to finance director Pat Blackaller.

After staying steady for the past three years at \$10.84 per \$1,000 of

equalized valuation, the mill rate will drop to \$10.14 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the district's state equalization aid is up, estimated to be \$12.2 million, an increase of \$801,752 from the aid amount received for this school year.

The district's revenue, by source, comes from property tax at 47%, state aide at 44%, federal aid and other local, both at 4% and intermediate sources at 3%.

About 77% of the district's expenditures are for personnel, with services at 18% and the remainder for equipment, supplies and other.

Blackaller said the district's debt has been declining with total remaining principal at \$17 million. He also said the Other Post Employment Benefits trust, which manages retirement costs, is not fully funded but close with a value, as of June 30, of \$3.7 million.

throughout Wisconsin," DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake said. "We ask that eligible Wisconsinites be patient as it may take time for everyone who needs a booster dose to get one."

DHS continues to await publication of the CDC clinical guidance for Moderna and J&J booster

To find a nearby COVID-19 vaccine provider visit vaccines.gov.

doses. Once those are published, vaccinators in Wisconsin will be able to begin providing booster doses and ensure they are following the safest protocols.

The CDC also recommended that health care professionals be allowed to provide a different COVID-19 vaccine as a booster than the one initially received, providing flexibility to health care providers and additional options for individuals. This recommendation applies to all three COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States.

To find a nearby COVID-19 vaccine provider visit vaccines.gov.

MOVING FORWARD

Transitional housing, highway projects are progressing

BY RUTHERICKSON
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At its Oct. 18 meeting, the Barron County Board of Supervisors heard updates on two projects in the works that are both taking longer than initially anticipated — a transitional housing project underway by the Salvation Army and the highway facilities project by the Highway Department.

Duana Bremer of the Salvation Army said The Family House Shelter, a transitional living program that is renovating a nursing home west of Barron into 34 living units, is coming along but will likely not open until February.

"We are a little bit behind because of the renovations," Bremer said. "I was hoping we would be open this winter, but that's not going to be possible."

She said despite not being ready to open their doors, the Salvation Army does not intend to leave anyone out in the cold and will be taking care of residents during the renovation with a service center that will include a hotline for hotel vouchers or emergency shelter.

"We hope to be up and running by February, able to house residents at the facility," Bremer said.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

The Family House Shelter, a transitional living site south west of Barron, is under renovation.

Its mission is to provide stability to low-income families or individuals by offering services to address their needs.

She told the supervisors that she loves the transitional housing program because the residents pay 30% rent, the program pays the rest, and the lease is in their name to help them develop a good rent history. She also likes that the program collaborates with a lot of other agencies, depending on the needs of the residents.

Supervisor Pam Fall thanked Bremer for attending their town of Arland meetings to keep neighbors up on the progress and waylay their concerns.

Bremer replied, "I did talk to all the neighbors. They are so supportive. We have had unbelievable volunteers from church and community groups sponsoring rooms. I am grateful for the community support

for a project like this."

Asked about current statistics on homelessness, Bremer said there are an estimated 5,000 homeless people in the state and 57% of them are in rural areas.

Supervisor Karolyn Bartlett said the latest number she's heard is there are about 400 homeless in Barron County.

"We don't see them," Bremer said. "They're hidden in campers, cars or Walmart parking lots."

She asked the supervisors to each take a pen, with the Salvation Army's contact information on it, on their way out and to leave it somewhere a homeless person might find it. For more details on how to help, go to SABarron.org or facebook.com/BarronSalvationArmy.

Highway Facilities update

Highway Commission-

er Mark Servi said good progress has been made in October on the Highway Facilities project on the north side of Barron.

"The last month has gone well; the weather has been good," said Servi, who is glad that conditions have been good for pouring concrete.

Supervisor Pete Olson said while the project was pushed back due to historical and asbestos concerns, some materials have been lagging too. Servi said their main materials are on site, noting "there's trusses everywhere." He said once the trusses are up, the structural steel will follow, but when they get to the roof, there might be a hold up.

"There's 46,000 screws going into the roof and they won't be delivered until January," Servi said.

Supervisor Punky Mosentine said the supplies were paid for a year and a half ago, with prices locked in. Servi said that's the lead time they're dealing with.

"We're starting to see some semblance of what the structure will look like, although we won't see the size and shape until late January," the commissioner said. "It's coming along on schedule now."

He encouraged residents to watch the progress through videos on the county's website.

» DEATHS

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Booster doses

In a news release, the state Department of Health Services said it supports the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation that certain populations who have increased risk of exposure

to or transmission of COVID-19 receive a booster shot of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after having received their second dose of the Moderna vaccine, and that individuals age 18 and older who received the J & J COVID-19 vaccine receive a booster dose at least two months after their primary vaccine dose.

"With three COVID-19 booster dose options now available, our national medical experts have given us additional tools to help stop the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant and slow the spread of COVID-19 in communities

Fortnightly Club honors Leamy

The Rice Lake Fortnightly Club recognized Rice Lake High School senior Anna Leamy on Oct. 12 as its senior girl honoree. She is the daughter of Jeffrey and Tonia Leamy and excels in academics, leadership and extra-curricular activities.

Leamy is an outstanding student who has received many academic awards. She has maintained a high grade point average while taking

many rigorous courses including advanced placement classes and five college classes at the UW-Eau Claire — Barron County Campus.

She stays involved in school and serves her community in numerous activities. She is an active member of the Rice Lake Young Ambassadors and National Honors Society. Over the past four years she has



Leamy

enjoyed volunteering with the numerous organizations including the Humane Society and the Chamber of Commerce.

As a gymnast, she is active in USA Gymnastics year-round. She is a level 9 gymnast at Deutsch's Gymnastics where she serves as the team captain. She is a pre-school and beginner coach to young athletes and just

passed her USAG judging test and will begin judging meets this month.

Through Rice Lake High School's Internship program, she is currently interning with Barron County District Attorney Brian Wright, Attorney Laura Sutton and Rep. Dave Armstrong. This is a great opportunity and will help with her future plans of attending a four year university to major in political science followed by law school.

Patients counting on blood, platelet donors

EAU CLAIRE — With Thanksgiving and the holidays approaching, the American Red Cross urges donors to continue to make and keep appointments now and in the weeks ahead to help overcome the ongoing emergency blood and platelet shortage that has significantly impacted the nation's blood supply.

Blood drive safety

Each Red Cross blood drive and donation center follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and additional precautions — including face masks for donors and staff, regardless of vaccination status — have been implemented to help protect the health of all those in attendance. Donors

are asked to schedule an appointment prior to arriving at the drive.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities in Barron County:

Nov. 11: Noon to 6 p.m., St. Ann Catholic Church, 320 Pine St. S, Turtle Lake.

Nov. 15: Noon to 6 p.m., Blue Hills Masonic Center, 225 W. South St., Rice Lake.

Nov. 16: Noon to 6 p.m., Blue Hills Masonic Center, 225 W. South St., Rice Lake.

Nov. 16: 12 p.m. — 6 p.m., American Legion Cumberland, 1225 Veterans Street.

Nov. 17: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Cameron High School, 750 S. First St.

Nov. 22: Noon-6 p.m., Community Center, 800 Memorial Drive, Barron.

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The stretch has no stop signs, which allows traffic to get up to speed in the 25-mph zone, and there are 10 marked cross walks, not including two major crossings at the high school, he said. McGowan equates living on Wisconsin Street with living on Highway 53 because of the noise, number of semis and the speeding.

McGowan feels semis should be routed onto West Street, a 45-mph stretch that marks the border between city and town of Rice Lake limits, and take Allen Street east.

But Streets Director Jim Anderson planned to advise the City Council at its Tuesday, Oct. 26,

meeting to put the brakes on McGowan's request.

Anderson's brief prepared for the City Council's meeting cites the cost for the city's consulting engineers to do a traffic study.

If SEH determines there are truck turning issues at the intersection of Allen Street and Wisconsin Avenue, it would provide an alternate concept design and study alternate signing and warning signals for a total cost of \$29,800.

West Avenue does not have safe traffic controls at the Allen Street intersection and southbound trucks have a blind spot when turning east to enter the city, Anderson said. A four-way stop would actually be more dangerous and installing a roundabout would

require the participation of the town of Rice Lake and be expensive, he continued.

In addition, the only two Rice Lake streets that intersect West Avenue along that stretch are Augusta and Allen, making it an impractical route for trucks delivering to businesses throughout the city, he said.

Wisconsin Avenue was last reconstructed in 1994 with the intention of evening out the street's width to accommodate two-way business and truck traffic, Anderson wrote in his brief.

The streets director also noted that a traffic study was performed in 2004 after a child was struck by a school bus at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Car-

son Street. As a result, bump outs were installed at the intersections of Wisconsin with Carson and Augusta/Messenger streets to slow down traffic and give pedestrians less distance to travel while crossing the street.

Anderson also said in the brief that Rice Lake Police Department Chief Steven Roux determined through a recent analysis that the average speed of traffic along Wisconsin Avenue is 29 mph.

Roux said in an email that he encourages residents to contact the department about perceived safety concerns and he will try to get officers into these areas with the available staffing.

"Our officers have recently enforced violations for speeding and operating while under

the influence on Wisconsin Avenue when we have specifically assigned officers to this area," he said, also noting that the department receives traffic-related complaints throughout the city and directs its attention to these areas to improve safety.

Instead of spending money on a traffic study of Wisconsin Avenue, Anderson planned to recommend that the city work with the Rice Lake Area School District to find funding for two overhead pedestrian-activated LED warning devices at school intersections.

Another recommendation is to buy four electronic LED interactive speed warning devices to place between Highway O and Knapp Street plus

another two at the south and north limits of the school zone.

"I have empathy for people who live on arterials," Anderson said. But he also noted they can't change traffic patterns based on 28 years of city planning and engineering studies to accommodate one person.

McGowan, on the other hand, wonders why the city needs a study and can't just enact a truck route ordinance. He and his neighbors feel ignored by the City Council.

"The council has failed us terribly as far as we're all concerned," he said.

Editor's note: An update on this story will be posted online after the Rice Lake City Council's Tuesday meeting.