

Pursuit of a Cure

Times photographs by Andrew Dannehy



Ettrick man faces child sex charge

By Debbie Foss
Times Staff

An Ettrick man who called police because people were threatening him was himself arrested for alleged inappropriate behavior with a 15-year-old.

Brian Blair Smythe, 41, of N25233 Flaaten Lane, has been charged with second-degree sexual assault of a

child, use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime and an attempt to possess child pornography following the August 10 incident.

Court records say Smythe called the sheriff's office to report two people were outside his home threatening him. Upon arrival, a deputy said the people outside were "very angry" and accused

Smythe of assaulting the 15-year-old.

According to the criminal complaint, Smythe "tested" the child by brushing against her as the two worked together. The contact escalated, included Facebook messages and eventually the girl sent Smythe suggestive pictures, the criminal complaint alleges.

Revote ahead after illegal school board vote ups G-E-T school meal costs

By Benjamin Pierce
Times Staff

The Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau school board will have to revote on increasing costs for school meals after the board illegally added the change to their agenda at last Monday's meeting.

Superintendent Michele Butler told the Times after learning of the issue that the board will revote on the change at their board retreat next week. Butler was the one who told the board that they could add the item to the agenda and vote on it because she believed this was legal so long as the motion got a second and a two-thirds vote.

But a board cannot opt to add a new item to the agenda on the spot, and voting on an item that was not previously posted to inform the public of possible action violates state statute 19.84 on notice, according to Wisconsin Newspaper Association attorney James Friedman.

A school board "should not discuss, let alone vote on, items not included in the notice," Friedman said in an email to the Times.

Butler said she would ensure that the matter was resolved quickly and in accordance with the statute. She also said the board retreat will feature a conversation on the proper way for board members to bring hot topic discussions to the board and that is to get them put on the agenda beforehand by talking to the president.

Two community members in attendance raised concerns about the change and were visibly upset that the board was voting on the increase without public comment or prior notice.

"Nobody wants us to be surprised at a meeting either," Butler said. "That's something that I think all of the people at that meeting would agree. So we'll review that, we'll get better and we're going to learn and keep doing a better job as a board."

School meals could increase about 25 cents

Regardless of timing for approval, it appears that the cost of food in the G-E-T district is about to see an increase of about 25 cents per meal. Without the increase, the district faces a projected \$70,000 deficit for its lunch program, business manager Cary Brommerich said Monday.

Former school board president Gene Hogden asked the board if the price increases could be acted on by the board because he knows that the board has acted on increases in the past. He eventually voted against the motion because the increase is higher than he remembers.

"I do recall that we've raised it a nickel, a dime. We've done that over the years, probably every year in some cases, years ago," Hogden said. "So a 25, 30 cent jump, that's a significant jump."

Hogden said two parents have already told him that they don't think they can afford breakfast for their kids with the prices.

The state has paid for school meals for the past few years to help offset COVID costs. This will be the first school year in which parents will have to begin paying for meals again.

"There's going to be parents with sticker shock because we've had free food for quite awhile," Hogden said.

Families that utilize free and reduced lunch prices due to low income have not had to fill out the forms the last two years, so it's hard to know how many families will utilize that in the district, Brommerich said. Those prices haven't changed from 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch.

Butler said the goal of the changes aren't about mak-

ing a profit, adding that the increase is due to increased food prices that can be seen across the industry as well as to provide quality food. The district has received "a lot" of complaints about food quality the last few years, she told the board.

It's the first time in six years that school meal prices are increasing, so it is better to add a 25-cent growth now than to possibly need a bigger increase in a few years, Butler said.

The motion—which will be revoted on—originally passed 7-2 with Hogden and Harold Olson voting against the increase.

"We've spent ESSER funds as far as I'm concerned on a lot less (important) things than feeding kids here," Olson said. "I think in retrospect we could have spent some of those ESSER funds on food for kids."

G-E-T School Meal Price Changes

School	Previous	2021-22	Increase
ES Breakfast	\$1.50	\$1.75	\$0.25
ES Lunch	\$2.45	\$2.75	\$0.30
MS Breakfast	\$1.60	\$1.90	\$0.30
MS Lunch	\$2.75	\$3.10	\$0.35
HS Breakfast	\$1.75	\$2	\$0.25
HS Lunch	\$2.95	\$3.25	\$0.30
Adult Breakfast	\$2.25	\$2.50	\$0.25
Adult Lunch	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$0.35
F/R Breakfast	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0
F/R Lunch	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0
Milk	\$0.40	\$0.50	\$0.10

G-E-T administrators

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District hires other administrators

The high school opening wasn't the only administrative opening filled on Monday, as the board also approved the hiring of a new pupil services director while also adding a principal at Ettrick Elementary.

Scott Moline will be paid an annual salary of \$99,000 to lead pupil services and comes to the district with a plethora of experience, Butler said.

"He's very qualified, lots of experiences and has a strong background as a school psych(ologist), but he's also a special ed direc-

tor," she told the Times. "So we are in good hands."

Derek Newsom comes to Ettrick Elementary from Arcadia and brings 10 years of elementary education experience as well as a Master's Degree in education leadership, according to board documents.

Newsom's position is ESSER funded and has no guarantee of lasting longer than two years, according to previous board discussions. He will be paid \$79,000 a year in his new job, which is split between principal and achievement gap reduction teaching. This likely means focusing on literacy and math, the board has previously discussed.

Garden of Eatin' Family Band at Old Main Aug. 27

Galesville's Garden of Eatin' Family Band, led by Billy and Amy Hembd, will bring a climax to the end of Old Main's "Under the Stars" summer season of concerts on the lawn Saturday, Aug. 27 at 6 p.m.

A free will donation is asked for the concert and pop-corn. Drinks are available for purchase. Attendees are asked to bring lawn chairs. Children may dance and play as the crowd listens. Proceeds help support

the operation of Old Main, which keeps bringing its stories from the past into the present and future. Galesville University offered guitar, piano and melodian lessons to students the day it opened in 1859. The sounds of guitar and voice still bring life and stories to concerts on the lawn at the Old Main edifice.

Old Main is located at 20869 College Ave; the stone building on the left side of the street.

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