

NEW RICHMOND/REGION

ST. CROIX COUNTY

Board establishes budget priorities

BY HANNAH COYLE
Staff Writer

The St. Croix County Board of Supervisors established its 2023 budget priorities for the county administrator to consider at the May 3 meeting. The priorities guide department heads as they prepare budget requests for next year.

The outline focuses on reducing the equalized tax levy rate by utilizing the unassigned fund balance, when creating the 2023 budget. Here are the priorities:

- ▶ Structural deficit.
- ▶ Employee compensation.
- ▶ Health insurance.
- ▶ New positions.
- ▶ Operating expenses.

Taxpayers will see an increase as the county levies money for its government center renovation. Finance committee supervisors are considering options to reduce the overall impact by adjusting other areas of the budget.

All present supervisors voted

in favor of the priorities.

Over the next few months, the budget planning process will continue. The board will host a public hearing prior to voting on the final 2023 budget on Nov. 2.

Small business week

Economic Development Corp. President Angela Popenhagen and Executive Director Bill Rubin worked with St. Croix County Board of Supervisors Chair Bob Long to proclaim May 1-7 Small Business week in St. Croix County.

There are about 37.5 million small businesses in the U.S., Rubin said. Two out of every three new jobs are created by small businesses.

"All things considered, the strength of any community really starts with small businesses," Rubin said.

He and Popenhagen thanked the board and Chair Bob Long for their contribution to bring-

ing awareness to the work of small businesses this week.

Finances

\$7.5 million of COVID recovery funds have not been allocated by the county. In the coming months, the county administrator will bring that decision to the board, after the second payment comes through in May.

Additionally, an update on the opioid settlement was provided to supervisors. The county is set to receive \$2.8 million over a number of years with the first scheduled payment in July.

Vice Chair Bob Fiedler attended a meeting in Eau Claire where he learned more about the situation. It may be possible for counties to receive their funds upfront, with the understanding that it would be for less than the \$2.8 million.

"It's a complex situation, but [Fiedler] has a good grasp of it," County Administrator Ken

Witt said.

Galli

The Justice Support Services does just that – offers supportive services to the justice departments in the county, whether that be the sheriff's office or the court system.

Dr. Phill Galli was appointed to be the director Justice Support Services, heading the department that helps address the different needs of those who find themselves in the justice system.

Fiedler commented on the extraordinary academic record of Galli. He has been a drug counselor, probation officer and worked at seven universities, most recently the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

"We were absolutely convinced," Fiedler said.

Galli was approved unanimously.

Readers can reach Hannah at hcoyle@orourkemediagroup.com

Quick hits

▶ David Peterson and Tim Hall were present to accept certificates as two of the departing board members.

▶ Christine Hines took the reins as county clerk at the meeting. Cindy Campbell recently retired as county clerk. Hines read a letter to the board from Campbell thanking them for nearly two decades as clerk.

▶ The IT department provided an update. It was able to finish projects from 2020 and move forward with 2021 projects, like helping transition staff from working at home to back in the office or in a hybrid format.

NEW RICHMOND SCHOOLS

Elementary mom raises \$1,200 for book fair

BY HANNAH COYLE
Staff Writer

During the spring book fair, every first-grade student at Hillside Elementary had the means to pick out not one, but two books. On May 4, 224 books were sent home at no cost to families, thanks to one mom and son duo and their generous supporters.

Since her son, Jacob Kosse, started school at Hillside Elementary School, Jayna Emerson has not been able to volunteer because of the pandemic.

In February 2022, she was allowed, for the first time, to help with the Scholastic book fair; an event nostalgic for many adults.

"I don't know if I was more excited or he was more excited," Emerson said.

Emerson and Kosse had a blast picking out books to bring home, but Emerson caught sight of some parents shuffling their children away from the book fair without stopping.

Although she and Kosse had the means to bring home some treasures, that hadn't always been the case. Emerson knew not all families had the money for a book at the fair, a place she'd been before.

Knowing a second book fair was coming up in May, she decided to go to Facebook to see if she could raise enough money for each child in Kosse's class to pick out a book.

\$200 was the set goal so each of the 20 children



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Hillside Elementary students hold up their brand new books. At the end of the day, they went home with their new found treasures, at no cost.

in the first-grade class could have \$10.

Before she even knew the post was approved, Emerson had a donation. And more followed. Quickly.

By the end of the first day, she had raised about double her goal.

That was only the beginning.

Dollars floated in from Florida, Texas, North Carolina and California as people from all corners of Emerson and Kosse's life donated to help the young students buy a book.

Emerson works for Bibliotheca in Oakdale, Minnesota, an organization that works with 30,000 libraries around the globe to make the physical and digital library experience

seamless, intuitive and inclusive. Several of her coworkers donated.

After three weeks of the fundraising efforts, Emerson and Kosse had \$1,200 for their book fair efforts.

It was important for Jayna to explain what was going on to Jacob and for him to be a part of the efforts.

Kosse presented Hillside Principal Heidi Link and his first grade teacher Nicole Olson, with a check for \$1,200 to be shared with each of his first-grade classmates.

"[Jacob] was gracious, too," Link said. "One of his classmates was like, 'You raised all that.' And he's like, 'Well, actually, my mom did that for us.'"

When the 224 books were rung up, the actual cost would have been \$1,650, but thanks to Scholastic's "buy-one-get-one free", it was \$900.

The "Babysitter's Club" and graphic novels were some of the hottest commodities.

"They don't really know, like the cost of the things," Olson said. "They might bring up two like \$5 books, and they still think it's just as awesome as the kids who brought up like two \$14 books."

Emerson volunteered at the May book fair, witnessing the emanating joy from students as they shopped the shelves.

"I got tons of thank yous and even a couple of little sweet hugs," she said.

Emerson was earnest in her doings. Though she may have thought up the idea and organized it, she gave due credit to the donors that truly made the opportunity possible.

By the end of the day, the roll-away shelves were looking bare, so Link decided the remaining funds would be gifted to Kosse's class for an end of the school year ice cream and pizza party.

Though she is now a part of the New Richmond Elementary Parent Association, when Emerson began the fundraiser, she was just an enthusiastic parent with a devout history of volunteer work.

She's now demonstrated that generosity to her son and his classmates.

Readers can reach Hannah at hcoyle@orourkemediagroup.com



Jayna Emerson (L) and Jacob Kosse presented Heidi Link and Nicole Olson (R) with a check for \$1,200, providing all first graders a chance to enjoy the book fair.



Each first grader at New Richmond's Hillside Elementary browsed the Scholastic Book Fair shelves. They took two books home.

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