

## Seneca School District School board candidates articulate their positions

**By CHARLEY PREUSSER**  
Eric Grimsled wants changes in the Seneca School District, so he's running for one of the three open school board seats in the upcoming election. Grimsled is a 49-year-old farmer, who raises beef. He lives with his wife Janelle and two children, a 14-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl, at 18450 State Highway 27 Gays Mills.



**Eric Grimsled**

Grimsled graduated from Seneca High School. He also received a degree from Southwest Tech after completing a one-year machinist program.

Grimsled is a member of the Mount Sterling Lutheran Church. He is also a former Seneca firefighter and EMT.

In addition to raising beef cattle, Grimsled also runs a dozing company. He previously spent 15 to 18 years doing road construction.

The local farmer is running for the school board because he doesn't like the way the board and administrator are running things.

"The board should be running the administrator, not the administrator running the board," Grimsled said. "They should listen to the public. Nobody on the board has a spine."

Grimsled believes declining enrollment is the biggest issue facing the district.

"The biggest issue is 40 percent of the students are homeschooled. There's only 67 students in the school and that's not enough to keep it going."\*

Grimsled believes the district needs to meet with the homeschool parents and try and get the students back in the school.

"We need the kids," Grimsled said.

The candidate also believes the board needs to hold the administrator responsible for his actions.

"We need a leadership change," Grimsled said. "The first thing that needs to be addressed is the administrator. There's a lot of dead weight working there. Fifteen of his family work there."\*

Grimsled needed to add one more point.

"We are dumb enough to leave windows open in every classroom with a fan blowing hot air out all winter," Grimsled said. "That's a waste of taxpayer money."

**Shawn Lenzendorf**

Shawn Lenzendorf was appointed with Crisse Reynolds to fill out the terms of board member Larry Kelley, who died, and Chad Sime, who resigned.

Shawn lives with his wife Sonya and three daughters (fourth grade, eighth grade and a high school junior) at 20480 State Highway 27 in Gays Mills.

Lenzendorf, 39, graduated from Seneca High School and attended Southwest Tech where he received an Associate Degree in Law Enforcement.

Lenzendorf is currently employed as a Crawford County Traffic Deputy. It's a position

that he has held for the past 10 years.

Previously, he worked as a dairy farmer, and continues to raise beef on a part-time basis.

Lenzendorf also serves as a supervisor on the Seneca Town Board. He also volunteers as a Seneca First Responder and as a Seneca firefighter.



**Shawn Lenzendorf**

Lenzendorf said he serves on the school board because he has a vested interest with three children attending the school, and being an alumni himself.

The incumbent school board member, who has lots of experience serving on the school board, feels the biggest issue facing the district at this moment is politics. He feels that issues that surfaced during the COVID pandemic caused people to draw lines for one side or another around issues like masking and other COVID responses.

The long-serving board member prides himself on being in the middle on most issues.

"I run right on the middle," Lenzendorf explained. "I listen to both sides to make a decision that I feel best suits the needs of the children. And, not everyone agrees with me. That's how it goes."

"If I get elected, I'm not going on the board with an agenda," Lenzendorf said. "I'll just be ready to deal with whatever comes up. Twelve years ago, when I was first elected I was ready to set the world afire. Then, you find out what you can do and what you can't do."

"So, I have no agenda at this time. I will look at what comes up and try to do what's best for the kids."



**Crisse Reynolds**

Another board member with lots of experience, who is running in this election, is Christine "Crisse" Reynolds. She was first elected to the school board in 2007.

After serving a couple of terms, Reynolds stepped aside to let others have a chance to serve on the board. She has recently rejoined the board along with Shawn Lenzendorf to fill two vacant seats.

Crisse, 53, and her husband Brian have five adult children including two sons, who graduated from Seneca High School in 2012 and 2014.

The youngest boy, Christopher, lives in Ferryville and works at the Trane Company. Crisse pointed out that her son got the job in part because he learned how to weld in Seneca's ag education program. Christopher also went on to take classes at Southwest Tech.

Crisse Reynolds graduated from Franklin High School in suburban Milwaukee. She went on to graduate from Mt. Senario College in Ladysmith,

See SENECA Page 14 Col 1



**GAYS MILLS FIRE CHIEF Earl Winsor, right, along with another member of the team, are seen at the scene of a 24-acre grass and structure fire that broke out mid-afternoon on Monday on Swiggum Road in Utica Township. Chief Winsor seems to be tracking the progress of Wisconsin DNR forest firefighters in battling the grass fire as his team and members of the Soldiers Grove Fire Department had the structure fire in the shed well in hand.**

## On Swiggum Road Debris fire ignites grass/structure blaze

**By GILLIAN POMPLUN**

On Monday, March 21, units from Soldiers Grove, Gays Mills, and Readstown fire departments responded to a grass and structure fire that broke out mid-afternoon at a property on Swiggum Road in Utica Township.

"The fire originally was called in to Soldiers Grove, but Gays Mills was able to arrive on scene first," DNR Senior Forester Trevor Hamdorf said. "By statute, our team is authorized to assist with fire suppression outside of municipal boundaries, and our assistance was requested by Crawford County as is standard for grass fires."

The DNR Forestry team, based in Boscobel at the Wilson State Nursery, supplied

three firefighters, a dozer to build fire lines, two brush trucks, and aerial surveillance. Hamdorf said the fire was started by burning debris at a time of day when burning was prohibited.

"In all, the blaze burned approximately 24.16 acres of alfalfa hay, and also burned down debris in a narrow slice of woods bordering the fields," Hamdorf said. "We used our dozer to build fire lines to prevent the fire from spreading more into the woods or jumping over Swiggum Road."

Soldiers Grove and Gays Mills primarily worked to suppress a structure fire in a shed, with backup and extra water from Readstown. Gays Mills Fire Chief Earl Winsor

said that both Gays and Grove put about seven firefighters on the job each, and were onsite for about three hours, going through approximately 3 to 4 thousand gallons of water.

Soldiers Grove firefighter Paul Kinserdahl was one of the members of that fire department that responded, and he said his team had used three trucks to fight the fire for about four hours.

Gays Mills Fire Chief Earl Winsor emphasized that conditions have been very dry, and currently a DNR burn permit is required for burning, which is not allowed until after 6 p.m. Even with a burn permit, permittees are required to check the DNR website to see what burning is allowed on that day.

## For November 2022 ballot North Crawford pursues referendum

**By GILLIAN POMPLUN**

The North Crawford School District completed the third in a series of four community input meetings about maintenance or improvement projects for district facilities. The district's intention is to pursue placing a referendum to exceed state tax levy limits on the November 2022 ballot.

The school board is expected to take up recommendations from the Advisory Task Force (ATF) composed of district citizens and administrative staff at their April 20 meeting.

One last community input meeting is scheduled for April 13, from 5:30-7 p.m. At that meeting, Kramer Construction is expected to present refined estimates for projects identified as priorities at the March 21 meeting.

The district is working with three contractors on the referendum development project. Those include FEH Designs out of Des Moines, Iowa, Baird Financial Advisors, and Kramer Construction.

**Goals and timeline**

Kevin Eipperle of FEH Designs led the presentation at the March 21 community input meeting. To start, he reviewed the 'Goals for Success,' generated through discussion at the first two meetings of the 'Advisory Task Force' (ATF). The ATF is made up of interested citizens who attend the meetings.

North Crawford 'Goals for Success' in the facility maintenance/upgrade prioritization process include:

1. Long range maintenance plan, budget for operations, and achievement of projects we do not have the budget for.
2. Take a comprehensive look at needs, and capture needs from all stakeholders.
3. Maintain the infrastructure elements that need it.

4. Find out if there is a need for daycare.

5. Attract and retain staff and students.

6. Expand partnerships with communities and families. (technical education, collaboration, meeting space)

7. Promote pride.

See DISTRICT Page 8 Col 1



**COUNTY BOARD SUPERVISORS Wade Dull (left) and Don Stirling (middle) attended the 'Spark Design Session' held by FEH Design all day Monday at North Crawford. The session allowed citizens to share ideas and have them translated into drawings.**

## Gays Mills Village board candidates on their positions

**By CHARLEY PREUSSER**

There are three open positions for two-year trustee terms on the Gays Mills Village Board, and four candidates on the ballot.

There are two incumbents, Lee Ruegg and Seamus Murray; a former village president, Craig Anderson; and a newcomer, Ethan Eitsert.



**Lee Ruegg**

The veteran of the group is Lee Ruegg, who lives at 228 S. Gay Street in Gays Mills. Ruegg, 67, lives in the floodplain and has seen her share of flooding. She has three adult children, one of whom lives in the village. She survives her spouse David George, who passed away five years ago.

Ruegg graduated from Logan High School in LaCrosse. She also graduated from WWTC in LaCrosse with an associate degree in computer science. Ruegg studied busi-

See VILLAGE Page 14 Col 2

## High speed chase crosses multiple county/state lines

Vernon County Sheriff John Spears reports that on March 16, at 9:10 a.m., Vernon County Sheriff's Deputies were investigating a theft of gas from Richland County. A white U-Haul van, matching the description, was located at Walmart in the City of Viroqua. The vehicle was stolen out of the State of Michigan the previous day.

Deputies attempted to make contact with the driver, who fled Walmart, and went north on Highway 14, failing to stop. A pursuit ensued on 14 and secondary roads in the Town of Viroqua. Due to concerns for public safety, the pursuit was stopped south of Westby in hopes the suspect would slow down through the City of Westby.

The vehicle continued traveling at a high rate of speed, and started driving into oncoming traffic. Due to the immediate threat to the public, the pursuit was re-activated, with continued efforts to stop the vehicle, west of Westby on 14. The vehicle was pursued to LaCrosse County, where it was decided to end the pursuit.

The LaCrosse Police Department located the vehicle, and it continued to flee through LaCrosse into Minnesota. Minnesota State Patrol was contacted, and located the vehicle on I-90 in Winona County. Additional attempts to disable the vehicle were successful.

The driver, Demandre Andrew-Tyshann Fraizer, 26, of Las Vegas, Nevada, was taken into custody. A large amount of marijuana was located in Fraizer's possession.

Fraizer was transported to the Winona County Jail, where he is currently being held, awaiting extradition back to Wisconsin for charges of Felony Fleeing, Reckless Endangering Safety, and multiple traffic offenses.

During this pursuit, numerous vehicles were forced off the road by the erratic driving of Fraizer. The Vernon County Sheriff's office is asking anyone who was forced off the

See CHASE Page 12 Col 4

At North Crawford Schools

Final ATF Meeting planned for April 13 before recommendation to board

DISTRICT from Page 1

Resulting from ATF discussion, the following decision-making criteria was agreed upon by the group for making a recommendation to the school board:

- i) Safety & Security
ii) Maintain building and site
iii) Part of the long-range plan
iv) Retain staff and students
v) Improves learning
vi) Promotes pride
Facility assessment

A high-level assessment of the facility by FEH Design and Kramer Construction yielded the following:

- roof replacement, restroom updates, window replacements, paving, sewage vault repair, flooring replacement, misc. estimated costs.
• it was stated the existing restrooms, other than the Middle School do not meet the current ADA requirements. It was explained that since it is a law and not just a code requirement the changes needed to be made and it just depended on whether it was paid for under the referendum dollars or if it came from a different funding source.

currently the women's restrooms are short three water closets for the gymnasium (assembly) occupancy. All other spaces have enough fixtures per the current code.

Cost and budget

Eipperle reported back to the ATF at the March 21 meeting about several items of information requested at the prior meeting. Those included district debt service, data on successful recent referendums, a comparison of local school district mil rates, and the school's history with open enrollment.

"When asked for a simple show of hands for what your 'emotional number' is for a total referendum dollar amount at the last meeting, it seemed the number was about \$5 million," Eipperle said. "Then, when asked what dollar amount you would feel comfortable paying on your property tax bill to fund the additional amount, the number seemed to be about \$200 per year."

Superintendent Brandon Munson pointed out to the group assembled at the third ATF meeting that \$200 per property-tax-paying household would equal a total dollar amount greater than \$5 million.

Eipperle shared that the district's 10-year general fund balance had dwindled in recent years. In 2012-13, the balance was \$2,652,759.99, and in 2021-22, the balance is \$2,252,672.84. The biggest decreases came in 2016, and then in 2020.

Eipperle shared with the group that overall, the district has a relatively low debt service obligation of \$55,385 per year. That amount, he said, would be paid off in 2026. He also pointed out that the district's mil rate at \$7.77 was low or average compared to other school districts in Southwest Wisconsin. A mill is one one-thousandth of a dollar, and in property tax terms is equal to \$1.00 of tax for each \$1,000 of assessment.

Mil rate comparison

Mil rates for other districts in the area were Seneca, \$7.05; Prairie du Chien, \$10.66; Wauzeka, \$11.42; Boscobel, \$8.29; DeSoto, \$8.13; Viroqua, \$8.05; Kickapoo, \$8.15; Riverdale, \$8.56; River Ridge, \$9.59; and Richland Center, \$9.12.

The last time a referendum, proposed for 'non-recurring' purposes (not for operational revenue), was passed by the voters in the North Crawford School District was in 2003. The amount levied to property tax payers in the district was a total of \$1,800,000. That amount was levied over six years, from 2003-2009, at \$300,000 per year.

Other districts

The Prairie du Chien School District proposed an eight-year referendum in the total amount of \$7,600,000 for 'operational needs of the district,' in 2003, which failed to pass. In 2005, the voters passed a \$1,200,000 referendum for facility replacement and repair projects. In 2007, \$995,000 was passed for improvements to the high school. In 2016, a referendum in the amount of \$1,340,000 was passed for 'recurring op-

erating expenses.'

Seneca School District proposed a referendum in 2001 for 'non-recurring purposes' in the amount of \$600,000, which failed. Another referendum in 2001, for 'non-recurring purposes' in the amount of \$625,000 passed. A 2003 referendum for 'maintaining operations of South Elementary School' in the amount of \$180,000 failed.

Two referenda in the Wauzeka-Stauben School District, put to the voters in 2006 and 2020, passed. In 2006, \$600,000 was approved for 'operational and maintenance expenses.' In 2020, a 'non-recurring three-year operational' amount of \$954,000 was passed.

Kickapoo School District passed a referendum in 2005, in the amount of \$675,000, 'non-recurring purposes of maintaining existing educational programs and facilities.'

In 2020, voters in the LaFarge School District passed a referendum for improvement to district facilities in the amount of \$5,500,000. Construction is in progress at this time.

Open enrollment

As far as open enrollment, the North Crawford School District has shown a consistent trend in recent years of open enrollment out of the district exceeding the number of students who open enrolled into the district.

When open enrollments in, and out, are combined, the numbers show

- a loss of two in 2012-13
• a loss of 15 in 2013-14
• a loss of seven in 2014-15
• a loss of eight in 2015-16
• a loss of 15 in 2016-17
• a loss of 28 in 2017-18
• a loss of 36 in 2018-19
• a loss of 36 in 2019-20
• a loss of 47 in 2020-21
• a loss of 53 in 2021-22.

Eipperle pointed out that the pandemic, and an increase in home schooling, had likely contributed to some of the larger losses of students open enrolling out in the last several years.

The district also has seen considerable staff turnover, combined with teacher retirements, in the last several years.

Possible projects

At the top of the list of must-have projects to maintain the district's current facility is replacement of the roof. The roof has exceeded its lifespan, and the membrane is causing leaking into insulation.

To replace the roof is very roughly estimated at a cost of \$2.9 million, salvaging perhaps as much as half of the insulation. Related to that, are needed repairs to the exterior stucco, just below the roof, which has deteriorated and is allowing leakage. A very rough estimate of the cost of both these projects combined is \$3.7 million. To add sloped roofs with steel roofing on just three parts of the building would add, at very rough estimate, about \$620,000-\$920,000.

Eipperle told the group that cost and availability of insulation is very high and very scarce at the moment. He emphasized that orders for insulation are as much as 11 months out at this time.

"Any numbers presented as rough estimates tonight will almost certainly change before a referendum is passed by the voters, and bids let for the project," Eipperle emphasized. "With current inflation and petroleum market volatility, the estimated costs would likely change before the next meeting of the ATF on April 13."

No cost estimates were provided for repair or upgrade of the district's sewer vault, nor was the topic discussed at the meeting.

Other quick and dirty project estimates provided to the ATF by FEH Designs and Kramer Construction include:

- Concession stand - \$11,000 to \$15,000
• Restrooms, including addition of handicap accessible stalls - \$58,000 to \$75,000
• Four unisex bathrooms - \$80,000 to \$90,000
• Paving upgrades - \$575,000 to \$640,000
• Windows - \$125,000 to \$150,000
• Library update - \$30,000 to \$35,000
• Daycare facility - \$110,000 to \$130,000
• Storage mezzanines - \$230,000 to \$290,000
• Replace middle school flooring - \$110,000 to \$125,000
• Update FACE classroom - \$13,000 to \$17,000
• Add trophy displays - \$12,000 to \$24,000
• Paving at bus barn - \$60,000 to \$68,000
• Playground fencing - \$1,000 to \$1,200
• Athletic field press box improvements - \$90,000 to \$100,000
• Various landscaping - \$22,000 to \$25,000
• Various classroom improvements - \$12,000 to \$15,000
• Greenhouse - \$55,000 to \$65,000
• Shop area equipment - \$275,000 to \$355,000
• Auxiliary gymnasium - \$2.3 million to \$2.6 million
• Wifi to the press box - \$3,000 to \$5,000
• Multipurpose room (wrestling) - \$105,000 to \$115,000
• Restrooms near theater - \$6,000 to \$8,000
• PA system (retain speakers and wiring) - \$45,000 to \$50,000

Ideas sparked

FEH Designs was present in the building all day, Monday, March 21, for a 'spark design session.' That session allowed staff or members of the community who had additional ideas or alternative models to address a previously addressed need, to have their ideas roughly translated into an architectural drawing.

As explained by Eipperle, these ideas were fresh that

day, and Kramer Construction did not have time to create any rough estimates for project cost. After the ideas were presented, ATF participants were asked to use stickers with the numbers '1,' '2,' and '3,' to rate the sparked ideas and pre-existing projects researched in order of importance. A '1' sticker indicated most important, with '2' and '3' being second and third choices. Reports of this voting will be on the agenda

of the April 13 meeting of the ATF.

Projects generated from the spark design session included:

- two different iterations of high school locker rooms and showers, incorporating handicap accessible bathrooms and showers
• three different iterations of a possible daycare facility in the building
• a 50x80 indoor multipurpose room

• an indoor concession stand

• Additional meeting room and office space for contracted professionals that work with students in the building on a periodic basis

- mezzanine storage ideas
• alteration/expansion of the student services/media center
• an 86 x 54 wrestling/multipurpose area, plus restrooms

Bee gut microbiota and pesticide interaction

A major review by University of Ottawa researchers has provided the first field-wide summary of how pesticide exposure affects social bee gut microbiotas and what pesticide-induced disturbances mean for bee hosts.

The researchers present the results of their review in the article "Pesticide-induced disturbances of bee gut microbiotas", published in FEMS Microbiology Reviews.

It is well known that social bees, such as bumble bees, honey bees, and stingless bees, are very important pollinators for agricultural and native plant communities.

"These bees have highly specialized gut microbiotas that provide benefits to the bee hosts, such as protection from pathogens and parasites," explained first author Michelle Hotchkiss, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Science at the University of Ottawa. "If pesticides disturb these microbial communities, then there's a possibil-

ity those benefits will be lost and bees will experience a decline in health and performance, which may impact bee colony growth and pollination services."

Hotchkiss and her co-authors, Drs. Jessica Forrest and Alexandre Poulain, worked the computers for more than a year and a half, and searched literature databases to find articles where researchers exposed social bees to pesticides and then tracked changes in their gut microbiotas. "The earliest studies we found were published in the 1970s and the most recent ones in 2020," said Hotchkiss.

"We summarized what methods were used to collect data, including which bee hosts and pesticides were examined. To summarize how the abundances of core microbes changed after pesticide exposure, we looked at studies that used molecular methods to characterize changes in microbial abundances," she added.

"Importantly, we determined which microbes are most commonly affected by pesticide exposure and how they are affected. For example, does abundance increase or decrease after exposure? To what extent?" said Hotchkiss.

The researchers also found that, currently, the scientific community has a limited understanding of how these common changes in microbial abundance affect bee hosts, which is a major gap in this field.

This review made Hotchkiss and her colleagues realize that more research on this topic is required.

"Social bees have gut microbiotas that contribute to their health, just like we (humans) do. Further research on the interactions between pesticides, bee gut microbiotas, and bee hosts will help us better understand how pesticides affect bee health and performance."

Source: University of Ottawa

Farmers Union premieres 'Get Loud' film about ag issues

A new short film premiered last week by Wisconsin Farmers Union digs in on the concentration crisis in America. "Get Loud: The Fight for the Soul of Agriculture" features voices from WFU, alongside antitrust researcher and author Austin Frerick. The core question at the heart of the film -- what kind of food system do we want?

"The current food system is not serving farmers, laborers in the supply chain, nor consumers. Instead, it's serving a handful of powerful monopolies who control nearly every aspect of the food supply chain and incentivize consolidation and concentration," said WFU Communications Director Danielle Endvick. "We are at this fork in the road where we can either restore some vibrancy to rural America or we can continue down the path we're on.

The film shares how a decline in the vitality of rural communities coincided with concentration in agricultural and retail food markets, with family farms bearing the brunt of this injustice.

"There's a concentration crisis in America," notes Frerick, who serves as Deputy Director of the Thurman Arnold Project on competition policy and antitrust enforcement at Yale University. "We've seen the collapse of a lot of family farmers, first in hogs, then in dairy, and now it's happening in beef."

"Farmers are being both squeezed on the input and output side," Frerick adds. "So when they buy their seeds and when they buy their fertilizer, both of which are super concentrated, they're paying monopoly prices for it. Then when they go to sell, they are selling to monopolies. So not only are they overpaying but then they're getting underpaid."

Concentration in Agriculture was again chosen as one of the core Special Orders of Business by the WFU grassroots membership at the family farm organization's annual convention in January. It also has been a priority issue for the National Farmers Union, which kicked off a Fairness for Farmers campaign in 2021.

WFU is empowering members to lend their voice to a growing national conversation on antitrust and monopoly power.

"We do need to get a little bit loud about this issue," Endvick said. "Reach out to your legislators and demand some change. A big step is educating ourselves and consumers."

Learn more about the fight for a fair and just food system and view the film at wisconsinfarmersunion.com/monopolypower

PAL STEEL T&E TOOLS New • Used • Surplus MULTI-METAL DISTRIBUTION CENTER Pipe • Plate • Channel • Angle • Tube • Rebar • Bar Grating, Expanded Metal • Sheet • Lintels • B-Decking • Pipe Bollards • Decorative Iron Parts 1 & H Beams \$3 & up per foot STAINLESS STEEL & ALUMINUM ROUGH SAWN LUMBER & BUILDING SUPPLIES STEEL ROOFING & SIDING FABRICATION • CRANE SERVICE • STEEL PROCESSING 414 3rd Street, Palmyra • 262-495-4453 • www.PalSteel.com

WE'RE LOOKING FOR 30 HOMEOWNERS WHO WILL RECEIVE A FREE INSTALLATION ON A CABINET/REFACING PROJECT! 18 MONTHS, NO INTEREST, NO PAYMENTS! SENIOR & MILITARY DISCOUNTS! \$50 AMAZON GIFT CARD WITH IN-HOME ESTIMATE! MAD CITY KITCHENS CALL TODAY! 608-338-1170 www.madcitykitchens.com

ASHLEY FURNITURE SALE IN GAYS MILLS Kith • La-Z-Boy England Bedding • ORDER FLEXSTEEL You want to pay more? Go elsewhere! We may be small, but that's not ALL! KITH BEDROOM SET Queen Size Bed Set \$859<sup>86</sup> DRESSER, MIRROR, CHEST, Queen Size Bed Set \$859<sup>86</sup> ASHLEY FURNITURE (Limited Supply) Sofas from \$299<sup>95</sup> Loveseats from \$299<sup>88</sup> Recliners from \$299<sup>98</sup> Sleeper Sofa \$899<sup>35</sup> Sleeper Sectional \$699<sup>95</sup> Seven Piece Dinette \$699<sup>96</sup> ENGLAND MATTRESSES Single from \$129<sup>85</sup> Full Size from \$189<sup>95</sup> Queen Size for \$299<sup>95</sup> "Boxsprings" Extra GIANT BEAN BAGS BUFFETS POWER RECLINER END TABLES • LAMPS TO KEEP OUR OVERHEAD LOW 205 Main Street • Gays Mills FIND PRE-INFLATION SALE PRICES!