

Winchester town board meets before election

By Brian Jopek
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

The Winchester town board Monday — the day before election day in Wisconsin — went over possible items that could be highlighted at the town's upcoming annual meeting.

Town chairman Joe Discianno said while the third Tuesday in April is "what we're bound to" by state law, what is normally done is the meeting is opened on that date, which this year is Wednesday, April 18.

The annual meeting is then postponed to a "later date in May ... when there's more people in town."

"That date right now we set at May 15," he said. "We're going to try and do a project review like we did at the budget meeting in November. What we're gonna do is show the people and tell the people where their tax dollars went for some of these projects that we did in '22. We have a much smaller list for '23 and I'm guessing once we get to '24, it's gonna be smaller. We did a lot of work in the last year ... that's one of the things we're planning on rolling out."

Earlier in the meeting and under an agenda item regarding the "statutory requirement for general fund balances, as well as fund balances in any town account," town supervisor Jeff Whitney said he'd gotten some information from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM).

The information was in a question and answer format, the first question asking if a municipality

"can lawfully accumulate surplus tax revenue."

He read from the LWM material that the general rule in Wisconsin "prohibits municipalities from accumulating surplus tax revenues if not designated for any particular purpose."

"It must be considered 'funds on hand,'" Whitney read. "They may not simply carry a surplus which does not have a particular use." In other words, Winchester is not a bank account for tax revenues."

He read some more from the LWM material. "Unappropriated tax funds are to be used the next year and lower the tax levy if necessary," Whitney read. "I did this (gathered the LWM information) a couple months ago because there were people coming to these (town board) meetings and yelling at us, screaming at us, telling us we're bankrupting the town, we're spending money like ... drunken sailors which we're not."

He said when the 2023 town budget was put together in the August to November time frame in 2022 "we had an approximate 23 percent surplus that we were going to be keeping through this year."

"We don't know where we're at with that because the books haven't closed," Whitney said. "We haven't really appropriated all of this budget."

He said he asked an attorney with the Wisconsin Towns Association if there was a requirement for the town to keep a certain percentage of tax revenue and was told there was no statutory requirement to do so.

"The towns she has talked to have told her the best practices they used were between 10 and 25 percent," Whitney said. "We were budgeting with about 23 percent for next year. So, it's just information, information that we've been following and going by but there's certain people (who) like to scream about how we're bankrupting the town which we're not."

He also passed on some other information from the LWM regarding funds raised by the town's volunteer fire department being town funds unless otherwise designated by town ordinance as fire department funds.

"However, even if such an ordinance is enacted, volunteer funds remain the municipality's property until disbursed," Whitney read from the LWM material. "They are not the fire department's funds. They are the municipality's funds." That's another question that's come up over the last several months for discussion. That's all I wanted to say about that. I just wanted everyone to know because it could influence things tomorrow."

The next day, in the April 4 election, Whitney, one of three candidates for the two open town supervisor seats with fellow incumbent John Grimmer and challenger Joe Osfar, was defeated, finishing in third place behind Osfar.

Brian Jopek may be reached via email at bjopek@lakelandtimes.com.

Step up, gear up, volunteer

At some time in your life, you probably wanted to be a firefighter or a medical responder. Now is your chance!

The Little Rice Fire Department, near Tomahawk, is adding firefighters and emergency medical responders to its team! The department is staffed by 25 volunteers and responds to 911 calls for fire suppression for structures and wildland and is also dispatched to medical emergencies. The department staffs a Canteen Unit that provides rehabilita-

tion and refreshment to responders on large incidents throughout the area.

The Little Rice Fire Department serves the townships of Little Rice and Lynne.

Candidates need to be at least 18 years old and live within 30 minutes of the station (you don't have to be a Little Rice resident). Both men and women are encouraged to apply.

The department provides training to candidates through formal coursework and in-

house classes.

A recruiting event will be held on Saturday, April 15, at 9 a.m. at the Tripoli Log Church on Highway 8. Please plan on stopping by to ask questions, meet the team, learn more and grab an application.

If the April 15 recruiting event doesn't fit with your schedule, you can call fire chief Larry Mathein for more information.

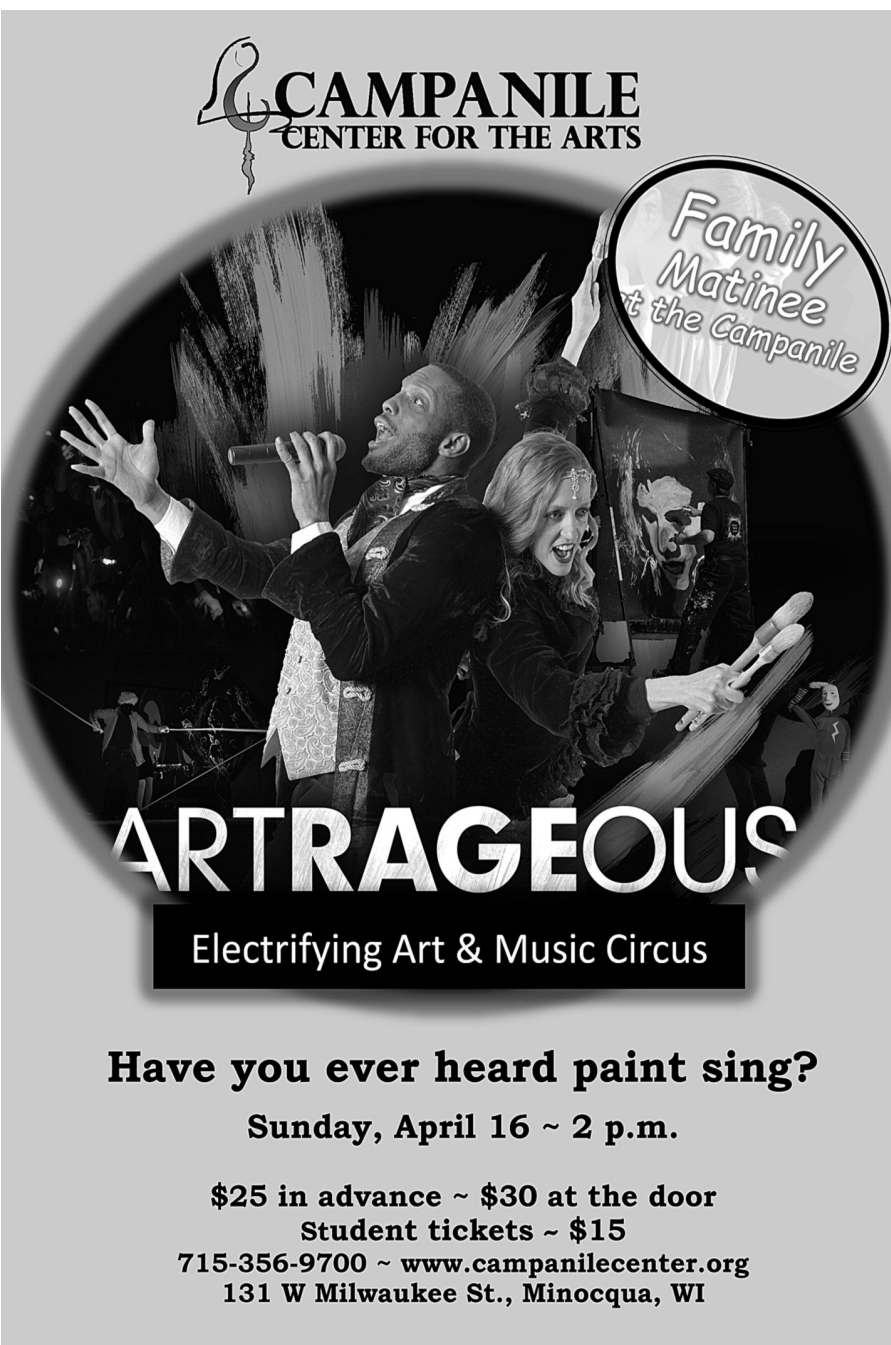
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Parent Meeting
For Parents with Children with Autism and other developmental disabilities and special needs

Saturday, April 22nd
1:00 pm

At Rising STAR Transition Center
311 Elm St. Woodruff, WI
(Above Davita Dialysis Building)

Contact:
STAR: 715.358.5259
Email:
parents4helpingparents.asd@gmail.com

Children are welcome to attend

Sponsored by Lakeland STAR
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