

# The Chetek Alert

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Chetek, Wisconsin | One Dollar & Twenty-Five Cents

**FIRST LOOK**

**City compost site open for season beginning April 26**

Spring has sprung, and the City of Chetek compost site will be open beginning today, April 26. The site will be open from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays. This service is available to city residents only and a city utility bill will be required to prove residency upon arrival at the compost site.



JIM MORAN | THE CHETEK ALERT

**Old Knapp St. Ford, Chevy garage demolished after snowy winter**

Demolition of the Del Sportswear building on Knapp St. began on Monday, April 24 and was completed Tuesday, April 25. During the Tuesday, April 18, city council meeting, city building inspector Joe Atwood, said the demolition was originally slated to begin Tuesday, April 11, but he requested that they wait a week. Due to weather conditions last week, the demolition had to be pushed back one more week. Atwood said engineers are looking at the shared wall with the pool hall during the excavation process to assess the damage. The excavator engineer will peel back one or two layers of the shared wall, so engineers can assess whether it is sound or if the pool hall will also need to be demolished. Atwood told the council he had deemed the pool hall unfit for habitation until a thorough assessment was made. As of press time, information wasn't yet available on the pool hall's fate, but there is a large portion of the wall currently missing after demolition was completed. The historic structure's roof collapsed after a winter of heavy snow on Sunday, March 12.

**City approves detachment of Hwy. 53 'island' parcel**

BY KENTON TROUTMAN

The City of Chetek Common Council met for its monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 18.

Council members Terry Hight, Scott Bachowski and Earl Grover had a

plethora of agenda items to discuss.

The first item on the agenda's "new business" section involved the detachment of territory from the city of Chetek under ordinance 788A.

The parcel owners, Dave

and Karen Theesfeld, were present at the meeting and brought a representative to speak to the council on their behalf. The couple's representative, Dave Raley, stepped to the podium to discuss his clients' reasons for

seeking detachment from the city of Chetek and their intent to join the township of Prairie Lake.

The parcel was turned into a geographical island after Hwy. 53 separated the parcel from

SEE DETACH, PAGE A7

**Fraudsters may target residents for fallen officers' fund**

Two Rice Lake residents reported what police advise is a possible financial fraud in the wake of the April 8 shootings of two police officers from Chetek and Cameron, according to Barron County dispatch logs.

The residents called 911 on Wednesday afternoon, April 19, 2023, to report receiving "a call from someone looking for donations to the Fallen Officers Fund," according to the log entry.

The callers provided dispatchers with a telephone number that has a 920 area code. The two city residents said they did not give a donation. They were advised that the call was probably fraudulent.

A credible fund for the community to donate can be found at Sterling Bank, where a memorial fund has been set up for Officer Emily Breidenbach. Those wishing to contribute can do so by mailing or dropping off funds.

All checks should be payable to City of Chetek with Emily Breidenbach Memorial Fund included in the memo. They can be mailed to Sterling Bank, PO Box 106, Chetek, WI 54728 or dropped off at any Sterling Bank location.



**Lake Country Marina celebrates opening of outlet**

Lake Country Marina is celebrating the grand opening of its outlet on Thursday, April 27, through Saturday, April 29. Visitors can expect to find great deals on items for camping, decorating the home or cabin and being on the lake. There will be a "Spin the Deal Wheel" where customers can receive up to 50% off their total purchase at the outlet. Chetek out the ad on B8 of this edition for the outlet's hours of operations and contact information.

**Barron County reducing public rifle range hours**

BY RYAN URBAN | BARRON NEWS-SHIELD

Barron County is reducing shooting hours at its two public rifle ranges, cutting out Mondays and Tuesdays and reducing hours on Sundays.

The change comes after increasing complaints from surrounding property owners, including littering, vandalism and excessive noise from high-caliber rounds and exploding targets.

New Sunday hours are 12-6 p.m., while hours for Wednesdays through Saturdays are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Ranges are closed during gun deer seasons.

Ranges affected are the Owen Anderson Public Shooting Range on Hwy. D (9th Avenue) near Arland and the "Straw Pit" public range on 29 1/2 Avenue, west of Barronett.

"Hopefully, it will do the trick, but if we have to get stricter to maintain order at those rifle ranges, we'll do so," said County Board Chair Louie

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# Flirting with Nature



KENTON TROUTMAN | THE CHETEK ALERT

**Flirty Gardens Greenhouse welcomes spring with grand opening**

Flirty Gardens Greenhouse celebrated its first season in Chetek during its grand opening on Saturday, April 22 and Sunday, April 24. Mother Nature has been unpredictable this spring and Saturday was no exception but luckily for the Flirty Gardens owners, visitors found refuge inside where they could meander around the gift shop and insulated greenhouses filled with succulents, cacti, various annuals and perennials including vegetables. Outside the greenhouse are various bushes and ornamental trees and fruit trees. Two members of the Chetek Chamber of Commerce were at the event for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Pictured above from left to right is Jennifer Blatz chamber of commerce event coordinator, Stephani and Tony Shepler owners of Flirty Gardens and Lois Klay chamber president with Christie Karr, Stephani's mom.

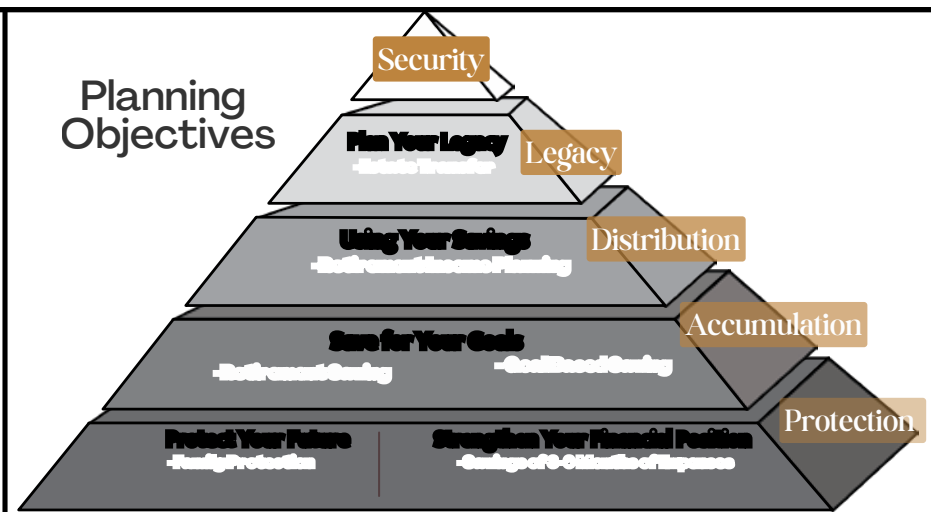
**DEATHS**

Janell Severson, 89, Chetek



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# COUNTY: Board approves thousands in ARPA funds, purchase of skid steer for county, ATV clubs

FROM PAGE A1

Okay. The board also approved an expenditure of \$25,000 in American Rescue Plan Act COVID-19 federal relief funds for technology upgrades at the Straw Pit, such as cameras. The Owen Anderson range has also had ARPA funds allocated to it for tech upgrades. Among other approved expenditures at the meeting was the purchase of a track loader skid steer to be used by both County workers and local snowmobile and ATV clubs.

The purchase marks a shift away from the County loaning funds to local clubs for equipment purchases. The County has made more than \$1 million in loans to six clubs since 2001. The Chetek club recently requested such a loan for a track loader.

County Administrator Jeff French said county staff have tried to find a more cost-effective approach. "This is going to encourage our clubs to share—they've never had to share before. We're trying to get away from having six skid steers and six snowmobile sleds (among the clubs)," said Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald, whose department's recreational officers serve as liaisons with trail clubs.

Some County Board supervisors were skeptical of the purchase. Audrey Kusilek asked why the County is renting to clubs when private businesses could do the same thing.

Supervisor Randy Cook suggested the County already has enough equipment on hand that could be used for trail maintenance.

Fitzgerald said the benefit of using county-owned equipment is

that it can be outfitted with a GPS to track use, which can then be billed to clubs. He added that rental equipment isn't always available, especially after storms.

Fitzgerald said that being cost-effective in supplying equipment to clubs also helps ensure they continue to operate, so that the trail maintenance work does not fall back on the County.

"What we have works. We need our volunteers and our clubs," said Fitzgerald.

The Board voted 25-3 to purchase the track loader, with Bill Effertz, Kusilek and Cook opposed.

Speaking of ATV riders, county trunk roads will soon be open to them as well.

Highway department staff reported at the meeting that signs have been obtained and will be posted throughout the county trunk highway system later this month.

County highways remain closed to ATVs until they are properly signed.

Not all county highways will be opened to ATVs entirely due to exceptions for safety issues and where existing ATV routes are close by.

In other business: County staff provided a financial update on the Highway Department construction project. The new main highway shop is fully operational. Construction of another storage building is set to begin this spring.

The current estimated completion date for the entire \$30 million project is June. As for finances for the project, which has seen its cost jump well above the initial \$25 million, more funding may be needed.

Earlier this year, \$4.6 million in highway department funds was

allocated to cover the

overtime. But when asked by Cook if that amount would be enough to complete the project, County Finance Director Jodi Busch answered, "No."

Sen. Romaine Robert Quinn addressed the Board in regards to proposed changes to the state's shared revenue system. He said that he expects the changes to pass, which would likely bring Barron County \$497,000 more shared revenue, a 43 percent increase. Other municipal entities would also see increases.

A proclamation was read in recognition of the Village of Turtle Lake's quasiquintennial (125 years).

Barron County District Attorney Brian Wright thanked the County Board for approving financial support for the office over the past year as assistant district attorney John Rafa Todd was deployed for military service overseas. Rafa Todd is now back in the DA office after being gone for a year, restoring a full staff of four prosecutors.

Fitzgerald thanked county administrator French and others for their support of his department in the days following the deaths of Cameron police officer Hunter Scheel and Chetek officer Emily Breidenbach on April 8. A moment of silence was observed for the fallen officers. During the invocation, local police chaplain Cody Kargus also mentioned the officers. He said, "We also pray for our law enforcement on the streets today, tonight. Be with their spouses as they worry, as we worry. They're doing the jobs they were called to do and we give thanks for that."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Community donates over 1,000 pounds of food for scouts' food drive

The Chetek Cub and Boy Scouts collected food and personal care items for their food drive, "Scouting for Food," on Saturday, April 22. Community members donated a total of 1,050 pounds of food, which was delivered to the Chetek Food Shelf. If anyone still wishes to donate, Scout leaders are happy to pick up contributions; contact Lloyd Persons at 715-764-2078 or Janice Gordon at 715-379-9277. Pictured above, scouts and parents prepare to bring the many bags of donated food and personal care items to the Chetek Food Shelf. Pictured are Ben Neilsen, Bob and Jacob Marek, Mike and Noah Nelson, Peter Wise, and Sebastian Roesler.

## DETACH: County, city confused when parcel owners requested law enforcement at address

FROM PAGE A1

other city property. Raley told the council that his clients obtained a legal survey of their property in order to present their intentions to the city.

Raley also pointed out that the city had approved the detachment of a property next to his clients' for similar reasons, years prior.

The approximately 36-acre parcel is being used primarily for agriculture which is currently against the city's zoning regulations. According to Raley, the parcel owners hoped the council would approve the detachment of the property, so they can continue to use it for agricultural purposes. "The parcel owners don't benefit from a lot of the municipal services from the city," Raley concluded, "It is not likely the city is going to bore under Hwy. 53 to provide any water or sewer or septic services." Additionally, the parcel is located at the far end or outside of the city's service areas for the community.

Raley said upon approval, he was willing to write the detachment ordinance and his clients agreed to absorb the cost associated with the detachment proposal.

Council member Grover said there were parcels in his ward without sewer or water and wanted a more specific reason as to why the couple was seeking detachment from the city. Dave Theesfeld explained to the council that because the parcel is technically part of the City of Chetek, the only animals the couple can have on the property are domesticated dogs and cats since larger animals associated with an agricultural property are in violation of the city's ordinance. "The city is meant for people who like to be close in town, but we want to be outside of town where we can grow."

Grover asked Chetek Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Joe Atwood about the city's future expansion and if that could include across Hwy. 53. According to Atwood, expansion across Hwy. 53 is unrealistic for the city and explained the city had previously approved a parcel to detach under similar circumstances.

Public Works Director Dan Knapp agreed with Atwood and explained his reasons in support of the owners' detachment that included the time and cost of picking up garbage six miles outside of town and plowing half of the roadway in the winter. Grover said he understood what Knapp and Atwood were saying but, "I'm just trying to think down the road with having an [expansion] opportunity because we're so landlocked."

Atwood agreed with Grover and mentioned that a zoning amendment might be a possibility to change the parcel to agricultural but it may be counterproductive, "It doesn't sound like they are getting anything from the city." Atwood noted that annexing the area across Hwy. 53 wouldn't solve anything because city sewer and water wouldn't be run out to the parcel.

Knapp agreed with Atwood, "It would be unlikely because of the cost. The city isn't picking up any other residents across Hwy. 53."

According to Knapp, there are other areas with utilities installed to make annexation more realistic.

Being the Chetek Public Works Director, Knapp brought a different perspective for council members to consider. He explained that a city employee has to drive

six miles out of the way to plow the road for one residence. The city was responsible for all road maintenance to the parcel until the city and Prairie Lake board members made a verbal agreement to split the responsibility. Knapp noted that this agreement was only verbal and is subject to change. If the council approves the detachment of the parcel, the city would no longer be responsible for road maintenance.

Karen Theesfeld told the council about an emergent situation where she needed to request a Chetek Police Officer for assistance, "They insisted that we were not their area because we are on the other side of the highway." Theesfeld continued, "We then called Barron County, and they said, 'No. We are looking at the map and you're in the city of Chetek.'"

City of Chetek Clerk/Treasurer Carmen Newman told Raley she had drafted an ordinance and would make changes to the corporate ownership of the parcel.

Bachowski made a motion to pass ordinance 788A detaching property from the city of Chetek with Newman's proposed changes on the districting of the parcel. Council member Hight seconded, and the motion was carried.

## Council approves water tower, housing development agenda items

BY KENTON TROUTMAN

During the City of Chetek's Common Council meeting on Tuesday, April 18, the council discussed moving forward with the replacement of the water tower.

Council member Scott Bachowski said he believed things were headed in the right direction with the water tower and made a motion to proceed with the replacement. Council member Earl Grover seconded, and the motion was carried.

The council also voted on another agenda item involving the water tower project. The council approved resolution 2023-5 to declare official intent to reimburse expenditures from the proceeds of borrowing through the state of Wisconsin Environmental Improvement Fund for the state fiscal year 2024, the new water tower and well pump project.

Grover said he supported the approval because the city wants to move forward with the Knapp St. Housing Development, "My perspective is that we have to go forward with the water tower as well because the two story apartments will require 55 pounds of pressure per square inch."

The council discussed the Chetek Fire District Articles of Agreement agenda item. There were proposed alterations made to the agreement

by the city's attorney. The city was waiting to hear if the Town of Chetek approved of the new verbiage.

Council member Terry Hight made a motion to approve the article of agreement, contingent on the Town of Chetek also approving the same verbiage. Grover seconded the motion and it was carried.

Nicolet Bank had an agenda item at the council meeting for community library at Main Street Park.

Bachowski said he was concerned the library would become the city's responsibility if Nicolet were to change hands or the staff overseeing the library were to leave.

City Clerk and Treasurer Carmen Newman agreed with Bachowski and said the park is currently housing other things as well. Grover and Hight said maybe the library could be installed on the bank's property where it would still be easily accessible for the public, but not the responsibility of the city.

The council decided not to move forward with the Main St. Library.

The council discussed an agenda item involving the housing development. Bachowski said it made sense to approve the hiring of professional services for the development agreement of the Knapp St. Housing

Development because it was practical and necessary.

Bachowski explained that the council had made prior approvals to agenda items involving the water tower and the housing development.

Hight asked whether the council was aware of its options and Newman explained that the city could hire an attorney or it could use a representative from MSA Professional Services.

Newman did notify the council that MSA had told her they were representing S.C. Swiderski and wanted the council to be aware. Additionally, Newman said the cost of having representation would come from the city's Tax Increment Financing District.

Bachowski made a motion to approve the hiring of professional services using a MSA representative and or the city's attorneys for the development agreement for the housing development. Grover seconded the motion and it was carried.

City of Chetek Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Joe Atwood shared an update with the council on proposed revisions to some of the city's ordinances. Atwood said the administration would be he and Newman's responsibility and the revisions would be done through the Plan Commission.

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