

Are you ready? COVID booster is coming soon

By CHARLEY PREUSSER

A panel of U.S. health advisers voted to recommend Pfizer's updated COVID-19 boosters that target the newest omicron strains for people 12 and older.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is expected to adopt the recommendation, the last step before shots can begin.

The panel then voted to recommend rival Moderna's version of the booster update, to be used in adults only.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has endorsed updated COVID-19 boosters. The decision opens the way for a fall vaccination campaign that could blunt a winter surge if enough Americans roll up their sleeves.

The new boosters targeting today's most common omicron strains should begin arriving in pharmacies and clinics within days. The decision by CDC Director Rochelle Walensky came shortly after the agency's advisers voted in favor of the recommendation. The shots made by Pfizer and rival Moderna offer the most up-to-date protection at yet another critical period in the pandemic.

What does this mean to Wisconsin?

What follows is Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake's Statement on CDC's COVID-19 Bivalent Booster Vaccine Recommendations:

"The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is pleased to see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation that eligible Wisconsinites will soon have additional protection against COVID-19 with the approval of COVID-19 bivalent boosters" Secretary Timberlake stated. "These bivalent boosters were developed through rigorous processes to provide broad protection against COVID-19 by including components of the original virus strain and the Omicron variant.

"This recommendation follows the decision by the Food and Drug Administration to authorize a single-dose Moderna COVID-19 bivalent booster vaccine for people 18 and up, and a single-dose Pfizer COVID-19 bivalent booster vaccine for people 12 and up. With the authorization of these updated boosters, the FDA amended its authorization of the previous (monovalent) vaccines for use as booster doses. These are no longer authorized for use as booster doses for people 12 and older, and remain authorized as safe and effective as primary series vaccines against COVID-19 and as a single booster dose for people 5 to 11.

"Federal, state, and local partners are working hard to make bivalent vaccines available as soon as possible through multiple channels. We anticipate that shipments of these vaccines may begin arriving at pharmacies, health centers, and clinics in a rolling manner over the next several weeks, and these locations will make appointments available as their doses arrive.

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Just in time for the parade

Banner bearers Alyza Wallace, left, and Madi Smith of the Kickapoo High School Band had to turn on a little track performance Monday to get out in front of the band as the Labor Day Parade got started in Readstown. Once in front of the band, things settled down and a great marching musical performance was enjoyed along the parade route. And the weather? Well it couldn't have been better—a sunny day in the low seventies with low humidity. Even the band seemed to enjoy the long march up Main Street. In addition to the band, there were quite a few politicians in attendance with the election just a couple of months away; and some interesting floats with lots of candy being thrown to the kids, young and old alike. Happy Labor Day Readstown!

Clayton Ridge

Local farmer gets grant to install solar

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

Clayton Ridge dairy farmer Jerry Coleman is well on his way to realizing his dream of reducing the energy costs for his 30-head dairy farm business. He has accomplished this through installation of a 24-kilowatt (kw) solar electric system, combined with two successful grant applications.

According to a USDA press release announcing the grant, the project will realize \$3,215 per year in savings, and will replace 28,451-kilowatt hours of electricity per year.

"For me the main motivation to install a solar electric system on my farm was to reduce my costs," Coleman explained. "Because 30 percent of the cost of the installation was paid for by grant funding, my pay back period on the system is now less than 10 years."

Coleman said that before the system was installed on the roof of his machine shed, his

average monthly electric bill was \$500. He said that in August of 2022, his bill was only \$50, and the highest bill he'd had since installing the system was \$200 in January of 2022.

Coleman applied for and received a \$10,722 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant targeted to farmers, as well as a State of Wisconsin Focus on Energy (FOE) grant, also targeted to farmers. The REAP grant paid for 25 percent of the project, and the FOE paid for another five percent.

"My system doesn't include battery storage, and if it had, that would have doubled the cost of it," Coleman said. "The current battery storage technologies require a specialized environment that I can't provide on my farm, but the technologies are evolving rapidly, and I hope in the future to have adding storage be something that will work for my operation."

Because he doesn't have battery storage, and he is "tied to the grid," Coleman said that when the grid goes down, then he is without electricity just like everyone else. He reports that on a sunny summer day, when his system produces more energy than he uses, he is able to sell the excess energy generated to Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative (SREC).

"When I buy electricity from SREC, I pay 11-cents-per-watt (cpw), and when I sell my excess energy to them, they pay me three cpw," Coleman explained. "Every energy cooperative does things a little bit differently, and some offer 'net metering,' which means that they would pay me the same price for my energy as I pay for theirs."

Coleman also responded to the objection to solar electric raised by some—that the panels are vulnerable in cases of high wind such as straight-line winds, tornados and derechos.

"My system is warrantied for 25 years, and it is insured," Coleman said. "Even the power lines of the grid are vulnerable to high wind, and that is why my system is insured."

Coleman said that he had worked with Olson Solar of Onalaska on installation of the system. The system was installed on his farm in June of 2021. Coleman said that even though he had not yet heard back about his grant application at that point, he decided to move forward anyhow because "it was a good investment for the future."

"After doing my research, I reached out to Olson Solar in January of 2021," Coleman remembered. "Mike Palen, a salesman with the company, responded to my inquiry, got out to my farm and did a site visit, and has been just great to work with."

Coleman credits the grant writing services of Brad and Lori Oeltjenburns of Ebenezer Management LLC with his successful REAP grant application. The company is based in the Des Moines, Iowa, area. He said the couple works for just a small percentage of the grant funds.

"REAP grant applications are very complicated," Coleman said. "When I first got the application materials, I almost decided not to bother applying. But, when I hooked up with Brad and Lori, then it all became possible for me."

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Dr. Jewel Bronaugh recently announced USDA is investing \$121 million in critical infrastructure to com-

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North Crawford District is answering referendum questions at upcoming meeting

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

On the November 8 General Election ballot, voters in the North Crawford School District will be asked to vote 'yes' or 'no' on two referendums. Those referendums concern ongoing revenue needs for the district to maintain programs and services, and needed capital improvements to facilities and grounds.

According to North Crawford Superintendent Brandon Munson, the annual impact of passage of the referendums to a district property taxpayer for a property with an assessed value of \$100,000, is \$66 per year for the operating referendum, and \$140 per year for the capital bonding referendum.

The school district will host three Community Referendum Meetings. The meetings will allow the district to provide additional details and information regarding the referendum, and to answer any questions the public may have.

The dates of those meetings are September 14, October 5, and October 26. All three meetings will be held in the North Crawford Performance Center, and are scheduled to run from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Our goal as a district is to educate as many of our voters as possible on the need for the referendum," Munson said. "When our residents go to the polls on November 8, I hope the district has done everything we can to support people making an informed vote. I hope many of our residents take advantage of these opportunities to hear directly from the school district."

A few points

Munson has a few points that he hopes district residents will consider.

"First, I hope our communities understand that our building opened up 31 years ago, with the addition opening five years later," Munson said. "Like any residential or commercial building, after a period of time you're forced to address building and maintenance issues."

Munson went on to explain that "due to routine and preventative maintenance, the district has been able to extend the life of many of the components of the building that would have otherwise failed several years ago." He said that the district is now at a point where the preventative maintenance is costing too much money each year.

Some replacement needed

"You get to a point where you have to consider replacement, and that's where we're at with several of the larger components of the building," Munson said.

Munson added, "we have made many upgrades and renovations over the years using existing district budget dollars. The projects we're asking our communities to support are too large in scope for us to be able to accomplish within the confines of our district's budget."

Regarding the operational question, Munson says he recognizes the complexity of the question, and how it will appear on the ballot.

"When we began to consider an operational question, there were several factors that we considered," Munson said. "First, we wanted to make sure we were asking our taxpayers to approve an amount that would set the district up for long-term financial stability. The last thing we want to do is come back to the taxpayers and ask for more money in a few years."

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JERRY COLEMAN is seen with his two son's, Allen, 5, left, and Charlie, 8, right. Both are students at North Crawford Schools, and Coleman serves on the district's school board.





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- Health Screenings
- PdC K9 Unit
- Prescription Take Back

- Teddy Bear Clinic

DOOR PRIZES & MORE!

In absence of adequate state funding, more districts turn to referendums

ANSWERS from Page 1

He explained that the district has been working with Baird Financial to assist in the district's budget and financial forecasting.

"I feel comfortable with the \$900,000 that we have arrived at. I believe it gives us the financial stability the district needs, but because we are phasing the amount in over a four year period, will lessen the tax burden on our residents," Munson said. "We're not necessarily looking at adding a bunch of new staff and new programs to the district. We are simply asking for the additional revenue to be able to remain regionally competitive with staff salary and benefits, to have updated technology available to staff and students, offer rigorous and relevant curriculum for student learning, to continue, being able to update our transportation fleet so students and staff have reliable transportation to and from school, and for the general upkeep and immediate and deferred maintenance needs of the district."

Munson said that the Wisconsin State Legislature has not been very helpful to public school districts over the last two years. He pointed out that school districts have not received any new operating revenue from the state with which to budget, while at the same time operational expenses continue to increase at historical rates.

"Balancing our district budget has been very difficult

the last several years as it is. Add to those challenges the fact that we have not received any additional revenue from the state, and the historical increase in the cost of operating the district, it's no wonder so many districts across the state have had to turn to taxpayers to approve operating referendums," Munson explained. "In essence, we have balanced our budget the last two years on the back of our federal COVID funding. The inherent problem with that is that is a funding cliff, and when we get to that cliff, and the federal stimulus money is spent, where does the revenue come from?"

Munson said the district is in a unique position in that it has an aging facility, while at the same time having a need to meet the operational demands of the district with limited revenue.

Referendums

The first question on the ballot will ask voters to approve an operational referendum in the amount of \$900,000 for recurring purposes. To minimize the tax impact, the district will phase this in over a four year period. The additional revenue will be used to maintain staff salary and benefits, technology, transportation, and general maintenance and building operations.

A copy of the ballot question is below.

Question Number I: Shall the North Crawford School District, Crawford, Richland and Vernon Counties,

Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$300,000 for the 2022-2023 school year; by an additional \$250,000 (for a total of \$550,000) for the 2023-2024 school year; by an additional \$200,000 (for a total of \$750,000) for the 2024-2025 school year; and by an additional \$150,000 (for a total of \$900,000) for the 2025-2026 school year and thereafter, for recurring purposes consisting of operational expenses?

Boosters coming in September will replace previous boosters

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"During this time, those 12 and older who may have previously scheduled appointments for a booster dose will need to wait for the arrival of the updated boosters. As

The second question on the ballot will ask voters to approve bonds in the amount of \$4.5 million for the district to perform capital improvement projects on the facility and grounds.

Priority projects include a complete replacement of the building's roof, the upper wall system, all exterior windows, and restroom renovations to meet state and federal codes and laws.

Other potential projects include parking lot pavement replacement, a childcare fa-

cility, new flooring, storage solutions, agriculture lab upgrades, and other building and grounds improvements.

A copy of the ballot question is below.

Question Number II: Shall the North Crawford School District, Crawford, Richland and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin be authorized to issue pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$4,500,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost

of a school facility improvement project at the school building and site consisting of: capital maintenance, building infrastructure and site improvements, including roof and window replacement; renovations and facility updates, including Americans with Disabilities Act improvements and upgrades to instructional space; and acquisition of furnishings, fixtures and equipment?

Superintendent Brandon Munson contributed to this story.

WEM assists in New Mexico

After wildfires and flooding resulted in widespread damage across New Mexico earlier this year, state and local resources moved quickly to assess the devastation and begin the recovery process. This monumental effort requires the work of many people and a great deal of time, prompting New Mexico to look outside of its borders for help.

Under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management put out a nationwide call for experienced emergency managers to come to the state and help with the recovery process. Members of Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) answered that call, deploying to New Mexico for almost four weeks to offer their expertise and experience to help counties impacted by these disasters.

EMAC is an agreement that allows states to request and share resources easily following a disaster. New Mexico is reimbursing Wisconsin for expenses related to the deployment, including salaries.

Learn, who has worked on the recovery efforts for several disasters in Wisconsin, was assigned to San Miguel County. He helped the county navigate the FEMA Public Assistance process, met with FEMA representatives, conducted damage site inspections, and helped develop projects to get reimbursed for their response and recovery efforts. The FEMA Public Assistance program provides funding for repairing public infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, in areas that have been granted a presidential disaster declaration.

WEM Public Assistance Specialist Patty Fahey spent her time in Mora County, where she served as an emergency management liaison assisting with response and recovery efforts. This involved helping the county start the FEMA Public Assis-

more details become available from federal partners, DHS will continue to share information so Wisconsinites can get protected as soon as possible." Secretary Timberlake concluded.

tance recovery process and working on resource request coordination through New Mexico's State Emergency Operations Center.

"The deployment was challenging and rewarding," Fahey said. "I learned a lot and worked with a great group of people. Communities are recovering from wildfires, while simultaneously responding to nearly daily flash floods that will extend through monsoon season this fall."

Fahey said that presents challenges, because the rainfall that would normally be absorbed by soil and vegetation is running off and carrying ash and debris with it downhill and downstream from burned areas. In Mora County, on multiple occasions the road crew repaired a road in the morning only to have it wash away again in the afternoon.

"I worked with an incredible team, including county and state employees, FEMA, National Guard, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and Emergency Management Assistance Compact personnel from varying emergency management backgrounds across the country," Fahey said.

Both Learn and Fahey have returned to their regular duties in Madison, but say they appreciate having gone to New Mexico to assist under the EMAC request. If given the opportunity to do a similar deployment again in the future though, both say they are ready.

"I would absolutely do another EMAC deployment," Fahey said. "I gained valuable experiences." "I would definitely do another EMAC deployment in the future," Learn added. "I thought it was a great experience. We were able to help another state and get exposure to different types of disasters we don't get here in Wisconsin."

Solar saves farmer money

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bat climate change across rural America. The investments include \$111 million for 289 projects to help people living in socially vulnerable communities.

"Rural America is on the front lines of climate change, and our communities deserve investments that will strengthen all of our resilience," Bronaugh said. "The Biden-Harris Administration

has created a roadmap for how we can tackle the climate crisis and expand access to renewable energy infrastructure. The investments we're announcing today and those that will be made possible by historic funding from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act will strengthen our energy security, create good-paying jobs and save Americans money on their energy costs."

Avian Flu in Washington County

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has identified a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a backyard flock in Washington County. This is Wisconsin's first confirmed case of HPAI in a domestic flock since May.

This year, 23 flocks in 15 counties have been confirmed with HPAI. All infected flocks are depopulated to prevent spread of the disease. This week, Indiana and Minnesota have also announced new cases of HPAI in domestic flocks, and there have been recent detections among wild birds in Wisconsin. The fall and winter could be a critical time for virus transmission, so DATCP urges all poultry owners to implement strong biosecurity measures to protect their birds from the disease.

HPAI viruses are highly contagious and often fatal to domestic poultry. The disease can be spread by contact with infected birds, equipment, or clothing worn by anyone working with the animals. Signs of HPAI include:

- sudden death without clinical signs
- lack of energy or appetite
- decrease in egg production; soft, misshapen eggs
- purple discoloration of wattles, comb, and legs

- difficulty breathing
- runny nose, coughing, sneezing
- stumbling or falling down
- diarrhea

DATCP reminds Wisconsin poultry owners to register their premises. State law requires that all livestock owners register where their animals are kept. Registration helps animal health officials communicate with flock owners during disease outbreaks.

To report increased mortality or signs of illness among domestic birds, contact DATCP at (608) 224-4872 (business hours) or (800) 943-0003 (after hours and weekends). For updates on how the virus is affecting domestic birds in Wisconsin, visit DATCP's HPAI webpage.

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