

Crawford County Finance committee eyes ARPA funding

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
The Crawford County Finance Committee met on Wednesday, Feb. 15. At their meeting, the committee took up appointments to the Prairie du Chien/Crawford County Law Enforcement Agreement Commission, use of remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, a county donation to the planned celebration of the 350th anniversary of the Marquette and Joliet Voyage of Discovery on June 16-17, and the Capital Projects Borrowing Terms for the 2023 Crawford County Budget.

Commission members
Crawford County and the City of Prairie du Chien are in negotiations about renewal of their agreement for law enforcement. This agreement pertains to shared offices and dispatch services.

Committee chairman Gary Koch reported that he had received the City's response to comments provided on the last draft of the agreement shortly before the committee meeting. He said that the group reviewing the agreement had not had a chance to meet and discuss their response, and so action on this agenda item would need to be rolled over to the committee's March 15 meeting.

However, Koch said that the committee could move forward with approving the county's members on the joint City-County Commission that oversees the agreement. Those commission members are the County Board Chairman Tom Cornford, Vice Chairman Brad Steiner, and Finance Committee Chairman Gary Koch. The City of Prairie du Chien also has three members on the commission, appointed by the Mayor.

The committee voted unanimously to approve the appointments.

ARPA funds
County Treasurer Deanne Lutz reported that there is currently \$40,500 budgeted for various office renovations in the county offices. Initially the quote was for three offices - Treasurer, Register of Deeds, and the Real Property Lister.

"Now there are more requests from other departments, and the price has gone up for the original request to \$61,400," Lutz explained. "The Public Property Committee has approved the project."

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GOVERNOR TONY EVERS, right, joined Wonderstate Coffee President TJ Semanchin and some employees of the Viroqua-based company for a roundtable discussion of paid family leave and the availability of affordable childcare.

At Wonderstate Coffee

Roundtable discussion focuses on relevant workforce issues

By CHARLEY PREUSSER
It didn't take Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers long to start messaging on the points he made in his annual state budget presentation on Wednesday, Feb. 15.

The governor was in Viroqua on Thursday, Feb. 16 at the Wonder State Coffee production facility to hear about topics like child care options and paid family leave in a roundtable meeting with employees.

Evers emphasized the importance of both ideas in increasing the quality of the state's workforce.

Wonderstate employees, who gathered for the roundtable discussion, seemed to largely endorse the governor's

points. Several women present for the event made it clear that access to childcare was essential to their employment at Wonderstate.

Both the governor and Wonderstate Coffee President and Co-Founder TJ Semanchin emphasized the need for paid child leave to remain competitive with states like Minnesota where it is now a state law.

"We're only 20 miles from Minnesota, as the crow flies," Semanchin pointed out.

Evers said he is hopeful the legislature will have a discussion about parental paid leave and childcare.

Semanchin also explained that increasing healthcare costs are presenting lots of challenges to smaller compa-

nies. He called trying to contain health care costs a losing battle.

Badger Care helped
Co-founder Caleb Nicholes, the Wonderstate Director of Coffee, explained he was luckily on Badger Care, when there were complications with the birth of his daughter and the medical costs came to \$60,000. He emphasized the importance of helping companies that are growing.

Governor Evers said there was a lot of interest in the state in helping out business.

"We're in good shape," Evers said. "We had 8,500 new small businesses start during the pandemic."

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North Crawford

Board approves bids for the priority work

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
The \$4.5 million referendum-approved, taxpayer funded project to make needed major repairs or upgrades to the North Crawford School District building and grounds is in progress. At their meeting on Feb. 15, the school board approved a total of \$3,659,266 in bids for projects approved by the board.

Those projects, referred to as 'Phase One' projects include:

- Re-roofing the building
- Exterior window replacement
- Exterior upper wall replacement
- Bathroom additions
- Shower renovations
- Upper level window replacement
- Repaving the north, west and south parking lots with concrete

The decision to replace the upper windows at the same time as the lower windows was made to maximize efficiency, and avoid wear and tear on the new roof if the windows were to be replaced at a later date.

"In the course of assessing the base of the parking lots in preparation for bidding that project out, we ended up actually getting a bid for the project," the Kramer Construction representative said. "When the bid came in, I was shocked to see that for only \$19,146, the repaving could be upgraded from asphalt to concrete."

In addition, an additional \$260,000 in bids was approved

for additional work, referred to as 'Phase Two' projects:

- Childcare renovations
- Courtyard drainage and concrete path
- North parking lot drainage
- Northeast playground drainage
- Updating theater stage rigging

The decision to undertake the drainage issues had to do with efficiency. The courtyard and north parking lot drainage issues need to be completed while the parking lots are torn up for resurfacing, and it is more efficient and cost effective to have all the excavating work needed for the various projects done at the same time versus having the contractor coming on multiple occasions.

The decision to replace theater rigging arose out of a presentation by Playhouse Coordinator Joe Ferrito and his technical director. They revealed that the rigging was not adequate to safely accomplish the suspension of theater lights, among other Playhouse issues like aging curtains and lights.

After all these projects approved by the board are accounted for, that leaves an additional \$580,734 for any remaining projects the board may approve at a future meeting. Projects still under consideration include:

- New flooring in hallways and common areas
- Greenhouse addition for Ag Program

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At Seneca Schools

Redman to end long career

By CHARLEY PREUSSER
The really big news at the Seneca School Board meeting on Monday night came at the very end, when the board voted to accept the resignation of veteran teacher Kim Redman-effective at the end of the school year.

Redman has taught high school phy ed and math at Seneca for the past 37 years. She is currently, and has been for many years, the high school girls basketball coach.

Redman was also a student at Seneca, and played on the first interscholastic girls basketball team in the mid-70s. In fact, she held the career scoring record for many years.

A particularly interesting topic of conversation at the Seneca School Board meeting involved the school calendar.

The discussion began, when Seneca School Superintendent David Boland pointed out in his report that the district had already used 3.6 of its allotted snow days this year with the possibility of some winter weather bearing down on the area later this week.

Alternatives outlined
Boland gave the board a couple of alternatives for solving the problem of meeting the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's required time of instruction.

The first alternative he offered was using one or more of the days at the end of upcoming spring break. A Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday would be available. The district administrator said the break could be shortened by eliminating a Wednesday, creating another day of instruction. If necessary the Tuesday and Monday could also become instructional class days.

Another alternative might be to add days at the end of the school year.

The last day of school on the current calendar is Friday, May 26 and May 29 is Memorial Day. Students could return to school on May 30 and 31 if necessary to add instructional time.

"It would be nice to be done before Memorial Day," Seneca School Board President Shawn Lenzendorf said.

Thursday, June 1 and Friday June 2 also could be instructional days.

Another alternative proposed by Boland was the virtual instruction of the students on snow days, when they stayed home.

The district administrator told the board that virtual days would work well with high school and middle school students, but would be tougher for the elementary school students because of short attention spans.

Board member Brittany Joy mentioned the idea of sending packets of materials home with elementary students to enhance their virtual experience.

Boland said virtual days would not be used without advance warning. Should there be advance warning of a virtual day this week?

For her part, Joy seemed to favor a wait-and-see approach.

"Let's see how we get through this week," Joy said.

Board member Adam Green recalled having minutes added to school days to make up time for missed days, when he attended school in Boscobel.

The board heard the options and discussed them, and everyone seemed ready to see what the weather created at the end of the week.

2023-2024 calendar

Well, it wasn't just this year's school calendar that was a topic of Boland's report. What will the 2023-24 calendar look like?

"Well, if you want it to look like this year's calendar, the easiest way to accomplish that would be to start in August and attend school on Tuesday, Aug. 29.; Wednesday, Aug. 30; and Thursday, Aug. 31; Boland told the board.

However, Wisconsin State Law does not allow school districts to start school before September 1, unless they are granted a waiver to do so by the DPI.

The district administrator said he would try to apply for a waiver and that the DPI was flexible, but they needed a reason to grant the waiver.

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Justices Kelly and Protasiewicz will vie in April vote

With 71 percent of the vote recorded, in the Wisconsin Supreme Court Primary Election, it seemed certain that progressive candidate Janet Protasiewicz would be the first place finisher with 46.4 percent of the vote (354,482).

However, it only seemed probable that the second place finish would go to Daniel Kelly with 23.7 percent of the vote (181,407). Kelly, one of the two conservatives in the race, led the other conservative Jennifer Dorow, who had 22.3 percent (170,925).

Progressive candidate Everett Mitchell was in fourth place with 7.6 percent of the vote (59,973).

Since the top two vote getters will face each other in the general election to be held on April 4, it appeared Protasiewicz would face Kelly.

Locally, Protasiewicz won in Crawford County with a more than a 400-vote lead over Kelly, who was the second place finisher. Protasiewicz also roundly defeated Kelly the second place finisher in Richland, Vernon and La-Crosse counties.

Crawford County Election Results Non-Partisan Primary February 21, 2023				
Candidate	Wisconsin Supreme Court			
	Daniel Kelly	Janet Protasiewicz	Jennifer Dorow	Everett Mitchell
Bridgeport Twp.	51	51	17	3
Clayton Twp.	42	122	18	5
Eastman Twp.	69	33	12	2
Freeman Twp.	40	104	17	9
Haney Twp.	20	31	11	1
Marietta Twp.	29	24	20	10
PdC Twp.	64	45	15	8
Scott Twp.	20	60	10	4
Seneca Twp.	57	65	9	2
Utica Twp.	27	81	21	9
Wauzeka Twp.	23	26	2	1
Bell Center	6	9	3	2
De Soto	6	6	2	1
Eastman	24	15	5	4
Ferryville	14	27	8	2
Gays Mills	16	50	5	3
Lynxville	8	17	3	1
Mt. Sterling	10	13	3	2
Soldiers Grove	12	30	9	5
Steuben	10	11	0	1
Wauzeka	16	30	10	3
City of PdC	166	346	53	23
Total Votes	730	1,196	253	101



North Crawford Board still considering other projects, including greenhouse

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- Theater storage
- Library renovations
- Elementary classroom new cabinets, countertops, and sink

While some of the costs of proposed projects are already well understood, others require more investigation by the district's contracted professionals before the board can make decisions.

One item to be investigated is the per-square-foot cost of flooring replacement, so that the board can decide what if any areas of flooring they might choose to have replaced. There is broad agreement that Middle School flooring is a priority, but in other areas of the building, they might want to replace only portions – for instance the commons, cafeteria and in front of the performance center.

Another area requiring more investigation is the proposed greenhouse for agricultural education. Initially proposed was a 2,000-square-foot (30'x40') greenhouse addition, with an estimated price of \$430,000. The board has asked Kramer Construction to investigate what a smaller size greenhouse would cost, and also what the cost reduction would be with

a gravel versus a poured concrete floor.

More work is also needed to refine the proposals for theater storage and library renovations.



PRIOR TO STARTING their Feb. 15 meeting, members of the North Crawford School board toured the site of proposed projects in the school building. Here, Superintendent Brandon Munson discuss solutions to the theater storage challenges.

Contractors hired

Contractors whose bids were approved by the board include:

- Block Iron - doors and frames
- Floor360 – flooring
- Protective Coatings - epoxy flooring
- Hall Ceilings – ceilings
- LaCrosse Glass – windows
- Zander Solutions - air and vapor
- Luther Webber – painting
- MUZA Sheet Metal - metal wall panel
- Showen Company - excavation
- Milis Flatwork - concrete paving
- Zimmerman Plumbing-plumbing
- Winona Heating – HVAC
- McCormick Electric – electrical

- approved the district's Achievement Gap Reduction semester report
- approved a complete slate of returning spring athletic coaches including Ben Kandler as baseball head coach, with Adam Anderson as assistant; Jim Chellevold as softball head coach, with Amy Byl as assistant; Andy Watters as high school head track coach, with Liz Bransky, Grace Roth and Caleb Jacobus as assistants; and Canisius Johnson and Brian Steyer as middle school track coaches
- approved a 2023-2024 district calendar with the first day of classes on September 1, graduation on June 8, and fewer inservice days.

In other business

In other business, the board:

- heard that 20 students and 11 staff are participating in a tutoring program funded by a \$250,000 grant
- heard that the district has been awarded a \$70,000 grant to provide enrichment to older students, with possible uses of additional supplies for the Outdoor Adventure Club, STEM materials, family engagement opportunities and a fifth grade trip to Upham Woods
- heard that Amy Anderson and Elementary Principal Amanda Killeen have just submitted a grant application

to fund the Beyond the Bell Program for the next five years

• heard that Middle School/High School Principal Robert Sailer was close to creation of the perfect bell schedule and class schedule for the next school year, and that the goal is to make a schedule that will not need to be changed every year

• approved Brittney Salmon as a volunteer to chaperone the spring break band trip in March

• approved a two-night field trip for the Drone Team to compete in the Spacejam2 Drone Competition at the Fiserv Stadium in Milwaukee, and then attend a Milwaukee Bucks game

Committee donates \$10K to 350th

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ects, but there is currently not enough funding to cover these increased costs of the renovations."

Lutz reported that there is currently \$55,823 left in unallocated ARPA funds, and with the additional requests for renovations from other departments, the amount required is now a total of \$105,000.

Needs in addition to those originally proposed include renovations in the Register of Probate office, the Circuit Court office, and for Public Health/Human Services in order to allow for private meetings with clients.

Lutz reminded the committee that there is another \$50,000 coming in Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF) from the State of Wisconsin in 2023.

Committee member Gerald Krachey, District 15, Wauzeka, said that before the committee could commit to the projects, they would need firm numbers. He said that the total project cost should be limited to \$110,000.

The committee agreed to table the matter to a future meeting when firm numbers for the proposed work were available.

350th Celebration

Carol Roth from Driftless Development attended the committee meeting to ask for a \$20,000 donation to the planned celebration of the 350th Anniversary of the Marquette & Joliet Voyage of Discovery in Prairie du Chien on June 16-17. Prior to the meeting, Roth had provided the committee with budget numbers for the event as requested.

"This will be a huge event, with lots going on, and will be a good thing for the County," Roth said. "There are events planned on St. Feriole Island and downtown, including a performance of a Native American dancer who recently performed at the Super Bowl."

Roth said that radio and TV stations have already been engaged to promote the event, and organizers have been conducting a capital campaign, which includes the request to the County.

"You knew that this was going to be happening four months ago when we were creating our budget – why didn't you approach us then, so we could budget for this?" Supervisor Gerald Krachey asked Roth. "At this point, these funds would have to

come from the \$100,000 County contingency fund, and it is only February, and who knows what might come up between now and the end of the year."

Committee chairman Gary Koch explained that the committee needs to see all requests in advance of the budget process so the requests can be prioritized.

"It's only February, and it's hard to tap 20 percent of our contingency fund so early in the year," Koch said. "Furthermore, the timing of this event is the same time as the annual Rendezvous event – there will already be people in the City and the County."

Roth responded that the timing of the event was driven by the actual day when the Marquette & Joliet expedition landed in Prairie du Chien. She pointed out that attendance at the Rendezvous has declined in recent years, and that the 350th Celebration would likely help that event.

"The City of Prairie du Chien is contributing \$35,000," Roth said. "We are asking the County for \$20,000."

Krachey said that he couldn't see contributing more than \$10,000 to the event from the contingency fund at this point in the year. He encouraged the group to revisit the issue later in the year, when more time has gone by and the County was a little less concerned about things that could arise.

"Also, what if a village in the County has a celebration, and comes to us to ask for a contribution?" Krachey asked. "If we contribute to this event, then would we also have to contribute to that event?"

Gary Koch moved, and Tom Cornford seconded, a motion to contribute \$10,000 from the County contingency fund to the 350th Celebration. The committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Capital borrowing

Koch reported that the Capital Borrowing Plan, approved by the Board of Supervisors, was for a total amount of \$349,000. The funds disbursed in January of 2023 will pay for an elevator, IT projects, and a police car. Repayment will be in the form of six payments of \$57,700, with the first payment due December of 2023.

The committee agreed Treasurer Deanne Lutz will reach out to the bank about combining the first two payments.

Childcare availability is crucial to local business success

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Wonderstate Chief Financial Officer Amber Oppriecht was quick to point out the importance childcare made in her ability to work for the coffee company.

Oppriecht, a Gays Mills resident, is receiving childcare through the North Crawford School District. The current childcare opportunities at North Crawford are offered primarily to the school's staff, but some spaces are available to the public for local residents like Oppriecht.

The Wonderstate CFO feels lucky to have childcare through the school and noted that there was a waiting list of 25 people seeking childcare through the school

Wonderstate Communica-

tions manager Lydia Corran echoed what Oppriecht had said.

"I have two young kids, who impact what I can do," Corran said.

Luckily, she has access to childcare, allowing her to work at Wonderstate. She emphasized that available childcare and a functioning workforce were tied together.

Wonderstate brand manager Aaron Aslin moved to Viroqua from California and was quick to point out that other people he lived and worked with in California might not move to Wisconsin because of the lack of things like paid parental leave and available childcare.

Aslin noted that childcare in Viroqua was being addressed by a partnership of the Viroqua School Dis-

trict and Vernon Memorial Healthcare, who are working to remodel a nursing home into a childcare facility.

Wisconsin State Representative Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) noted the project is presently under construction.

Oldenburg said that both sides of the childcare situation must be addressed and better pay and training are necessary for the professional personnel providing the childcare.

Several people pointed out that in many cases losing a childcare worker means workers that can't work for you anymore.

Governor Evers said he was calling on Republicans to help solve the problems.

Representative Oldenburg responded by saying

Republicans understand the need and he favored paying childcare workers more and investing in more childcare facilities.

In response to another question, Evers said that expanding childcare through the school districts, like North Crawford, was a possibility. He noted that when he was the superintendent of the Oakfield School District many years ago, the school had a childcare program.

The roundtable discussion seemed to agree that initiatives aimed at securing paid parental leave and making more readily available childcare were important to increasing the quality of the workforce in Wisconsin. It seems getting there might be the challenge.

Crawford County Land Conservation

Committee discusses burials on private land and more

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The Crawford County Land Conservation Committee met on Tuesday, Feb. 14. Each meeting of the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee is divided into two sections; Land Use, and Soil and Water Concerns.

In the Land Use portion of the meeting, the committee discussed septic system ordinance enforcement, burials on private land and green burials, and funding options for septic system replacement.

County Conservation Director Dave Troester reported that the first court date for septic system owners that had not complied with the order to have their systems inspected and/or pumped had recently taken place. The next court date will take place on Feb. 20. Citizens fined by the courts will pay a \$100 late fee and a \$263 court fee. Fees will increase to \$350 for subsequent failure to respond to the order for inspection and/or pumping.

"We had 23 individuals scheduled for a court date, and asked for and received judgment on four," Troester said. "Nine of the 23 were dismissed because they either got their system inspected or got on a list to have it inspected, and 10 have been waived forward to a May 1 deadline because we're not sure if they received our letter."

Troester said that for the Feb. 20 court date, two of those sent letters will be extended for a while pending legal proceedings, four will be dismissed, seven individuals sent the letter did not sign for it, requiring the letters to be sent again. He said that 15 of the letters sent had been signed for, and one was issued to the wrong person.

Burials on private land

Zoning and Sanitation Technician Jon Mayer reported that he'd had a discussion with the County Register of Deeds regarding developing an ordinance to regulate burials on private lands.

"It's not just the County – likely the townships will need to have something in place too," Committee Chairman Don Olson said. "Green burial has also become a big new thing, and I think you need to check with the Town's Association about how this should be regulated."

Supervisor Mary Kuhn weighed in on the topic as well.

"We have a problem with the Amish in our area," Kuhn said. "They just do whatever they want."

Olson said he wasn't sure, but wonders if the Amish have their own cemeteries.

Mayer said that he thought there could be an issue if the burial location is in a floodplain. He said that Buffalo County has an ordinance in place that he plans to look at.

Septic system funding

John Molinar of Ferryville addressed the committee in the public comments section of the Land Use agenda. He said that he and his wife had recently retired and bought a property in the Ferryville area.

"I have no quarrel with the need to replace my septic system, though it is currently working," Molinar said. "I've been an environmentalist since the '60s, but for retired people like us, financing for a replacement is very difficult unless we are living at a poverty level."

Molinar said that "someone higher up should have looked into this, and not let people like us fall through the cracks." He said that they don't qualify for grants because their income is too high to qualify. He said that he was approaching the committee to learn what options there might be for him.

"I spoke with Robert a couple of weeks ago, and his situation is not unique," Troester said. "When people respond to our letters, we're trying to work with them – he's gotten a soil test done and he took the initiative to call us, and so avoided a citation. We want to work with

people, and we want to see progress."

Troester said that Molinar should have his system inspected. If it is currently okay, he said that would buy him time, but if it's not, then that is a different issue.

"I'd like to see some kind of county funding to help citizens with replacements, but I don't know if that is going to happen," Troester said. "Wisconsin Land+Water advocates for more funding from the state for septic system replacements, and for more conservation staffing for the counties."

Troester said he has no idea why funding for the Wisconsin Fund wasn't renewed, and he doesn't know if there will be money for this from the federal Inflation Reduction Act.

CPI to increase to eight percent

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"I'm not sure we can get a waiver," Boland said..

In other business

In other business, the Seneca School Board:

- learned consumer price index to which staff salaries are generally tied is predicted to reach eight percent in the next year, and school districts are in a quandary as to how to deal with the situation
- approved a continuation of the district's soccer co-op with Prairie du Chien and River Ridge at a cost of \$100 per participating student
- renewed there 20-year

Soil and Water

In the Soil and Water Concerns portion of the agenda, the committee discussed the grant for repairs of the PL-566 flood control dam, the Blackhawk-Kickapoo Dam, on Johnstown Road. County Conservation Specialist Travis Bunting said that bids would be let for the project in March or April, after the permit is received from the DNR.

Crawford Stewardship Project's Joe Childs addressed the committee in the public input section of the agenda. He reported that the North Crawford School Board had approved the "North Crawford Community Pasture Program," where sheep would be pastured by Childs on school grounds.

wrestling co-op agreement with North Crawford at a pro-rated cost based on number of students participating from each school

- conferred the Seneca Area School District Monthly recognition award on Grace Varo, Sam Gallagher and Lilly McCullick, the Seneca Spelling Bee Champions, for their performance at the Sectional held at Southwest Tech; Jared Grimsled for wrestling his way into the WIAA Sectional; and to senior basketball player Evan Payne for scoring 1,000 career points and being chosen 'Student Athlete of the Week' by a local radio station.

—PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY—

—MEDICAL—

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SENECA SCHOOL
Child Development Screening

THURSDAY, MARCH 16TH 8:30 AM - 2:00 PM
4K Room at Seneca Elementary

Please remember to bring along your child's **birth certificate and immunization records**. Parents who wish to have their child screened should call the school at 608-737-9177 and speak to Mrs. Cale at **ext. 1314 by March 9th** to schedule a time for screening. The best time to reach Mrs. Cale is in the afternoon.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Parents who wish to enroll their child in the 4 Year Old Kindergarten Program. (Children who will be 4 years old by **September 1, 2023**)
- Parents who have children 3-5 years old **AND** have concerns about their child's development.