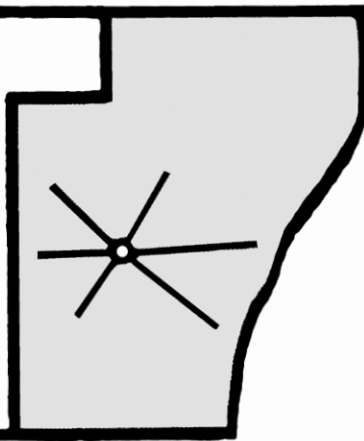


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DNR builds Great Lakes fishery

The state Department of Natural Resources continues to help enhance fish populations in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior through its 2023 stocking efforts. Since the start of the year, DNR fisheries have stocked in Lake Michigan approximately 405,000 brown trout, 1.4 million Chinook salmon, 242,000 coho salmon, 7,500 muskellunge and 523,000 rainbow trout. Data from previous years' fish stocking can be found on the DNR fisheries web-page.

Deficit seen in coming school year

District aims for lower tax levy despite tight budget

By Todd S. Bergmann

The Valders Area School District will see a budget with a \$1.23 million deficit, and a 5.7% lower property tax levy under tentative numbers for the coming school year.

A mandatory reduction in local property tax revenue and reductions in state and federal aid contributed to the deficit.

Business manager Michelle Lillibridge said district revenue will be down a projected \$1.1 million.

"That is going to be a big hole to fill," board member Travis Schisel said.

The school board approved the tentative 2023-24 school budget and individual parts of it on 5-0 votes on Monday at a special meeting. Board members Ashley Henneman and Steve Huebbe did not attend.

Members of the public may comment on and vote on the budget during the annual meeting, Sept. 18 at 7 p.m. in the cafetorium.

The school board will approve a final budget in late October, once enrollments are known and more information from the state becomes available.

The board will make up the \$1.23 million deficit by taking money from the reserve fund, also called the fund balance, Superintendent Debra Hunt said in an interview.

"That is the only way to look at it," she said. "A bake sale is not going to bring in that much money."

The fund balance is money the school district uses to pay salaries and other expenses while it waits for revenue from the state or the county and to pay for emergencies, such as needing a new boiler.

With a current \$2.8 million fund balance, the district would have just more than \$1.5 million after the money is taken out, which Hunt said would be the minimum comfort level.

Under the proposed budget, the estimated property tax levy will decrease from \$6.08 million to \$5.74 million. The tax levy is the total amount of property taxes collected in the district.

The tax rate is difficult to calculate at this point, Lillibridge said.

Although property valuations and the tax rates have not been set, school taxes on most properties will go down. Exceptions are new construction and where the state Department of Revenue calculates a large increase in value of properties in a town or village.

In setting tax rates, the state-calculated property value is not the same as the assessed value, Schisel pointed out.

For the 2023-24 school year, the total district budget is \$23.88 million.

That includes \$12.67 million in the general fund, \$214,000 in donations, \$2.55 million in the special education fund, \$2.26 million in debt service, \$4.43 million in the building fund, \$645,000 in the food services fund and \$113,000 in the community service fund.

The donations fund is an estimate of donations the district will receive based on previous years, Lillibridge said, adding that schools and school organizations may not

See Budget p. 14



Showing a Little Love

Anslee Wiesner is nuzzled by her Jersey calf, Bethany, during a petting

zoo at the Valders Community Picnic on Sunday. The petting zoo was put on by the Liberty Go-Getters 4-H Club. —Journal Photo

Picnic dips its toes into barbecue pit

By Todd S. Bergmann

The savory, aromatic smoke of ribs cooking filled the air around Valders Memorial Park on Saturday during the first amateur-style barbecue smoke-off competition.

The all-day cooking event—held in conjunction with the community picnic—ended at 5 p.m. Saturday when cooks removed the ribs from their grills and selected eight for judges to review.

Justin Ulness, former head chef at Autumn Ridge Golf Course, joined Valders Fire Chief Chris Dallas and Assistant Chief Brandon Sy in judging the contest.

A Valders High School graduate who went to culinary school in California, Ulness described the rib-judging process.

"First and foremost is moisture and texture," he said. "I give it a little squeeze to see if moisture comes out."

He said the first impression has to be good when biting into the ribs, which is more than having the meat fall off the bone.

"Ultimately, it is good flavor, tenderness and moisture," he said. "You don't want your mouth to get dry."

Ulness has entered rib cooking competitions himself in the past.

"This is the first time I am judging," he said. "It is fun. It is easier. It is a little more enjoyable."

"I have done competitive cooking through culinary school. I have done some high-pressure competition. I know the work and the effort that they put in."



Final Taste Test

Dillon Beyer and Bob Van Beek of the Smokin' Pigs and Brisket Babes team taste their ribs during the amateur-style barbecue smoke-off competition at the Valders Community Picnic on Saturday. —Journal Photo

None of the three teams in the Valders contest had been in competition recently, and one was new to competitive rib cooking.

In his first competition since before the pandemic, John Kleppen of Reedsville won with 74 out of 81 possible points, receiving the grand champion trophy, for his team called "Bud's Barbecue."

"I make them how I like to eat them," he said. "If the judges like it, then I win."

That happened to be Kleppen's fate on Saturday, as well as in a 12-team rib competition a few years ago in Green Bay.

Kleppen talked about his recent win. "I am happy of course," he said. "It is all

what these they guys decided."

During the multi-hour smoking process, Kleppen spritzed the ribs every 30 to 45 minutes, but declined to give his exact recipe for the liquid he used.

In its first barbecue competition, the Smokin' Pigs and Brisket Babes team received the grand reserve champion, or second place, award, with 71 points.

The team consists of Bob and Sheri Van Beek of Brillion and Dillon and Karley Beyer of Valders. Karley is the niece of the Van Beeks.

Bob said he came up with the name for the team for its first competition.

The four members said they like to smoke food on their smoker.

The process starts with buying ribs at a store and putting a binder, usually mustard, on them, followed by a rub or seasoning mix, Bob said.

At 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Bob put the ribs on the grill.

"Then we smoke at 225 degrees for a few hours," he said. "Then, we will wrap it up," he said. "It retains moisture when you wrap it."

"We will leave it wrapped for an hour or an hour and a half, depending on the temperature. We will pull it out of the wrap and put it back on the smoker."

During the cooking, Sheri said she spritzes the ribs with apple juice, about once every half hour.

See Ribs p. 10