

The Need for Speed

Gage set a blistering pace on the track
SEE SPORTS

Cassville and River Ridge hold their spring formal this past weekend
SEE PAGES 12A & 2A

Prom season has begun

Waiting on the river

Communities prepared for upcoming crest

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

"People did everything they can, and now we are just looking to ride it out."

Grant County Emergency Management Director Steve Braun touted the work by residents, businesses and communities in the past week to get ready for the ongoing flooding along the Mississippi River due to the winter melt off and spring rains.

Current projections have the river hovering just below the 2001 flood levels between now and the end of the month.

In Iowa, McGregor is looking to crest from April 28-May 1, while Guttenberg is expected to crest by mid-week.

As the waters rise, communities along the river in Grant County have been spending more than the past week preparing for the impending water.

A brunt of the impact of the flooding is striking from Bagley, down to the Potosi region, with Cassville and Glen Haven expected to see an impact.

"We haven't seen this in quite awhile," said Bagley Village President Chris Trautsch, noting he and some of the board are new since the last major

flooding.

Braun said that the area was already under a state of emergency declaration from Gov. Tony Evers, and a number of items have been deployed into communities before the water had even gotten to such high levels.

Grant County has stockpile of 50,000 sandbags in reserve, and has been deploying them for the past week, as well as pumps being used to help empty areas like stormwater levees.

Dane County has sent a sandbag filling machine that was deployed over the weekend. The Department of Natural Resources offered several items

for assistance, including the use of boats if needed to help residents trapped by rising water.

"Things seem to be going well overall," Braun said of the work to prepare for the high water.

Braun has a few areas he is watching, including the state of the levee walls in Glen Haven, which the Army Corps of Engineers have evaluated. The north wall is not in an ideal condition, but held in the 2019 flood, and continues to hold thus far.

In Bagley, which thus far is expected to have the most families displaced due to the flood, a shelter has been set up

by the American Red Cross, both at the village's storm shelter, as well as at the firehouse/village hall across the street.

As of Wednesday, no one has utilized the shelter.

Braun said that the high water has already displaced about 15 people from homes that are no longer accessible. Those people are staying with friends or family.

At this time, it is not believed there would be any other areas in the county that will see families in full-time homes displaced, although there is one

Flood | SEE 7A

Lancaster Schools readies for summer projects

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
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"The kids are excited, the staff are excited."

Also excited is Lancaster Community Schools District Administrator Rob Wagner, who will see one of the items he has long wanted to tackled be worked on as one of the summer projects, after the school board approved the conversion of the former bus garage into a new ag/tech ed shop.

The project is estimated to cost \$775,055 (with a \$50,000 contingency in budget) and is hoped to start sometime next month, with a hopeful completion date for the start of next school year.

Wagner said that the idea of the project that has been something on his mind since he came to the district in 2002, dealing with the cramped quarters of the agriculture and tech education programs.

With the purchase of the former Scenic Rivers headquarters adjacent to the middle school/high school complex, the district has been able to move bus, maintenance, and storage to the new complex, which will open up the old garage to have a shop and learning space for the students.

"We are pretty excited about this summer project," Wagner continued, noting that then they will be able to have more space for the programs in the main sections of the school as well.

Wagner noted how much having the Scenic Rivers space has meant for items like the school buses, which can be stored under a roof and out of the elements, as well as giving the district more storage for other programs.

He gave the example of being able to have a place to put the new pole vault and high jump equipment indoors.

Beyond the new shop space, the board also approved replacing flooring in Winskill for \$21,617, and half-way lighting in the middle school for \$38,629.

Another item the board approved was an encompassing \$50,000 to handle various little projects around all the school complexes. Wagner said that the line item is for handling items like repairing the grounds and reseeded, as well as improving an entrance for the middle school on the east side of the building, which needs new concrete, as well as seating areas for the students, which will be done by the high school construction program.

Another item Wagner hopes that will cover is the updating of the high school bell system. Now at end-of-life and not being supported by the original vendor, the district had gotten an early estimate of it costing in the neighborhood of \$188,000, but Wagner sated that High School Principal Mark Uppena got estimates from more vendors, and they are hopeful the actual costs will fit within the \$50,000 line item.

Wagner said part of the projects will be funded from this year's budget for maintenance, but a bulk of that funding went to finish the purchase of the former Scenic Rivers building. Most of the project will be covered

Lancaster | SEE PAGE 3A

Doing their part



Cassville High School students were outside Monday, making sandbags, and planting trees for different projects in the community.

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
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If you were looking for a Cassville High School student, you would have been hard-pressed to find one in the actual high school Monday.

For most of the student body, they were doing what they could for their community and the environment - most of the students were working to fill sandbags for residents and businesses, while others were planting 16 trees around the school grounds.

Things actually began on their volunteer efforts the previous Friday, April 21 just as the waters were rising along the Mississippi, as District Administrator John Luster explained that students answered the call to help the motel on Jack Oak Road.

Luster, along with Mr. Leibfried on this took the request, as students went to work, including members of the spring sports teams, went out to homes, along with the Eagle's Roost Resort, to create sandbags.

Over the weekend, the village asked for volunteers for all of Cassville, and the community stepped up, and then on Monday Mrs. Hauk organized students for Monday.

To make sure it was ok for families, Hauk set up items for 7-12 grade students, like permission slips.

Luster estimates that round 75-80 percent of the student body went yesterday to help out.

For Cassville instructor Valerie Martin, it was a bit of deja vu.

"I participated in community sandbagging back in 2001 as a student in Cassville and now in 2023 as a teacher," Martin said. "It was such a wonderful day watching the students connect with their community. This town has always been a wonderful support system for our students and it was great watching them return the favor."

For the students, the importance of helping out their community was easy to see.

"It just shows you what it's all about," said student Nathan Weiser, who was out creating sandbags with a smaller group Friday before being joined by a larger amount of the student body. "I think it just shows you what you can unify as a group."

Kenzi Mergen, whose father is an employee of the village, said that she was happy that she and all of the other students could participate in assisting the community. "He is working a lot of long hours, it's nice we can help out the workers."

Volunteer | SEE 3A



Garden Club clean-up

Members from the Lancaster Garden Club put some volunteer hours in at Ryland Park earlier this month, cleaning up sections around Schreiner Memorial Library. The group has maintained the garden areas around the library.

Lancaster

FROM PAGE 1A

Under the 2023-2024 school budget, but Wagner said the district will have their Fund 46 available.

Fund 46 is a mechanism where districts can put money away annually for future projects, allowing them to

budget for items without having spikes in budgets or borrowing.

Fund 46 requires that money be initially placed in the fund and not be tapped for five years, but after that date is reached, any money in can then be used for projects.

One other item the board did was after they were in closed session, and that was

to pass a resolution to deny a claim related to the bus accident that took place outside LaCrosse this past December.

A wheel came off a bus, and rolled into traffic while staff and students were heading towards a wrestling tourney. A vehicle was struck by the tire, and there were some other minor accidents caused by stopped traffic.

For any of the claims or damage on the accident, it had been handled by the district's insurance company, EMC.

On recommendations from EMC and the district's legal counsel, the board approved the resolution to deny the claim from George Hunt and Elizabeth Saxsby.



To the left are just some of the students that participated in planting trees around the Cassville Schools grounds. Below, dozens of high school students filled sandbags in the morning.

Volunteer

FROM PAGE 1A

While those students were filling sandbags, other high school student in the agriculture program were joined by community members, as well as elementary students planting 16 trees around the school.

The brainchild of Village Board Trustee Sue Krause, Alliant Energy and Trees Forever supplied a \$4,500 grant to purchase the trees.

"I'm thrilled about how things are going," Krause said of the project, which was meant to mark Earth Day.

Part of a greater plan to beautify Cassville, the village is working on a forestry plan to help maintain, replace, and add trees to the community. That plan is hoping to help plant a variety of trees around

the community, to reduce what is happening along Amelia Street, where several ash trees that line that drive have been lost to Emerald Ash Borer.

That forestry plan is not finalized yet, so Krause thought it made sense to plant this round of trees around the school grounds.

The trees involved are a variety native Wisconsin Oak trees, as well as Hackberry trees.

For student Nicholas Hampton, the project is a great way to help the environment, as well as provide something that future generations of Cassville students can enjoy.

"It's a great way to show how a community can come together," Hampton said.

"Maybe the next generation can put a swing on it," he quipped.



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Board hears update on childcare progress for the school district

BY SUSAN BERNHARDT

At its April meeting, the Cassville School Board heard an update on the progress towards providing childcare within the district, addressed staffing needs, and approved teacher/support staff increases for 2023-24.

In public comments, Sue Krause noted several items of interest to the Board. First, she had five classes participate in a field trip to her composting site. She also informed the board of a tree planting to take place on the school grounds on Monday. She concluded by discussing the village's pursuit of solar energy in its public buildings and urged the district to give consideration to this type of energy in the near future, especially with available favorable rebates.

In his superintendent's report, Mr. Luster listed a few upcoming events. On Tuesday, April 25, there will be a meeting of the Positive Learning Communities (a high school program). Mr. Luster asked if board members might consider attending to learn more about the program. Chantel Hampton and Tracy Fishnick agreed to attend the 7:30 a.m. meeting in Mrs. Polk's classroom.

On April 27 at 1 p.m., the Shullsburg Schools Director of the Childcare Program and a DPI representative will tour the district facility and the former Hughes Dental Clinic to determine the feasibility of implementing a childcare center. On August 1 at 6 p.m., there will be a CESA 3 Agency Conference, which will be attended by Chantel Hampton.

In place of Mr. Infield, Mr. Luster continued with the Dean of Students report. Upcoming events include the following: Junior Prom at the Sand Bar - April 22; the FFA Plant Sale - May 6-7; Class Night - May 10; High School Graduation Ceremony - May 13; 8th Grade Recognition - May 24; and last day of school - May 26. In the Activities Director report, Mr. Luster noted that there are 22 students participating in Trapshooting. Regional action begins as follows: Softball -

May 18; Track - May 22; and Baseball - May 25.

Following the recent spring election, newly elected member, Holly Mumm, and newly re-elected member, Lynn Kirschbaum, took their oaths of office. Each will serve a three-year term. Mumm will be taking committee assignments formerly held by Duane Kartman. Board members Chantel Hampton, Joe Uppena, and Holly Tasker were re-elected to the following offices respectively: President, Vice President, and Clerk. Mr. Luster informed the board of a \$4,000 increase in CESA 3 Services for the 2023-24 school year. The cost reflects increases in needs for physical and occupational therapy and in Speech and Language services.

Mr. Luster also asked the board to consider new policies proposed by the State, which include the flying of the flag over every public school, the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance or singing of the National Anthem daily, and the providing of a "Moment of Silence" when in attendance at patriotic assemblies. The district is already in compliance with the flying of the flag and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

In closed session, the board dealt with several staffing issues. The board accepted the faculty resignations of Barb Breuer (30 years) and Jerry Reising (33 years) and thanked them for their dedication to serving the needs of our students. The board then approved the hiring of the following Elementary School positions: Shay Soppe for the unfilled 3rd Grade position, which is currently being taught by Jennifer Tuescher and Riley Redell for the 1st Grade position, which is Mrs. Breuer's position. Letters of intent will be sent out, and the board approved 4% increases for the teachers/support staff for the 2023-24 school year. In a separate contract, the board approved a 4% increase for District Bookkeeper, Hanni Bahls.

The May Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 16, at 7 p.m.

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Flood

FROM PAGE 1A

residence in Jamestown Township that is of concern, according to Jamestown Town Chair Steve Freese.

Jamestown is seeing impact on flooding, having had to close Eagle Point Road, with one home underwater in the White City area.

"We may have four-to-five homes impacted," Freese said.

Freese also said that the fishing barge near the boat landing is seeing debris strike the ramp to the barge, and crews are trying clear it, so the \$40,000 ramp is not damaged or lost in the flood.

To show life goes on, Freese pointed out that despite the boat ramp being underwater near Eagle Point Road, people are fishing from the parking lot, and even walked down there when the road was closed.

Over the course of the weekend, and continuing on Monday, volunteers filled thousands of sandbags for residents and businesses along the Mississippi. On Saturday, volunteers were in Glen Haven filling bags for a home near the park.

Monday the sandbag filling continued in Cassville, where high school students worked to fill pallet after pallet with bags.

"There has been an outstanding outpouring of support," Braun said, a testament to the close-knit communities that make up Grant County, where dozens of volunteers have been making sandbags for the past week, including students.

As Wednesday progressed, Braun was gathering more pumps to help with seepage going on in Cassville. He stated that homes that are not on the front line of the river water are seeing the water sneak in to their basements.

"They are away from the river, but as the water table comes up, it is seeping into their basements," Braun said of homes along Front and Amelia streets.

Readying for the aftermath as well

Even before the river has crested, talk already began about how to deal with what is left behind after the waters recede.

Braun stated that he is already talking with Serve Wisconsin about the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) groups that coordinate volunteers who come into the area after a disaster to help with the cleanup.

"What do we do in a week from now," Braun said. He said they help residents who have homes that will have water over the first floor to help them clean up.

Braun also noted that the Grant County Health Department will also be offering information on how to deal with what to do with potential mold in the walls or giving info on what needs to be done to effectively clean up after the river water is gone.

"The health department is a really good resource," Braun stated.

Others are worried about the large amounts of debris that the water will leave when it's gone. Freese stated that river water has already deposited large tree trunks into O'Leary Lake, and for a lot of communities, there will be large amounts of debris under bridges, plugging culverts, which can cause issues if there happens to be a large spring rain before they are cleaned out.

"We are going to have to think what are we going to do with that debris," Braun said. He noted that since the damage will likely not reach federal disaster declaration levels, the region will be tapping the Wisconsin Disaster Fund, which has a limited scope of what funds are available for.

"It is a lot harder to get a declaration," Braun said of the federal declarations. Braun said that the state program covers 70 percent of costs, with communities also responsible for the first \$4.10 per capita of damage.

The Wisconsin Disaster Fund will cover infrastructure damage like damage to roads or bridges, but will not cover utility damage, like for wastewater treatment facilities.

Braun said that all the communities need to keep good records in order to get reimbursed, such as marking all time cards for workers with what specifically they were

doing during those times.

They also must keep good records on volunteers as well. Because of the state of emergency declaration, volunteers would be covered under the state workmans compensation insurance, so Braun said that they should have all volunteers sign in, and mark down hours, in case there is a mishap.

Still, Braun said that the county and the communities have done a good job in the past 22 years since the 2001 flood making sure to reduce the possibility of damage. "We are in better shape than the 2001 flood, even though we are going to likely see deeper water," Braun explained, talking about all the flood mitigation work that has been done.

He said homes that had been affected by past flooding have been removed, reducing the number of homes that are expected to be impacted in the county, estimating about a half-dozen full-time residences (there are a number of cabins or part-time residences that will be impacted as well).

Braun said that a lot of mitigation has been done, such as putting in new valves in municipal water and wastewater systems, which will significantly reduce infiltration problems they saw in the 2001 flooding.



It was a concerted effort to get ready for the incoming flood along the Mississippi this past week. TOP - Members of the Potosi-Cassville Track team spent part of their Friday making sandbags for the Eagle's Roost Resort in Cassville. At River of Lakes outside of Bagley, above, high water is already making several sites inaccessible. Road Closed signs are up in various places in the county, while in Cassville, water is taking over Wyota Street.

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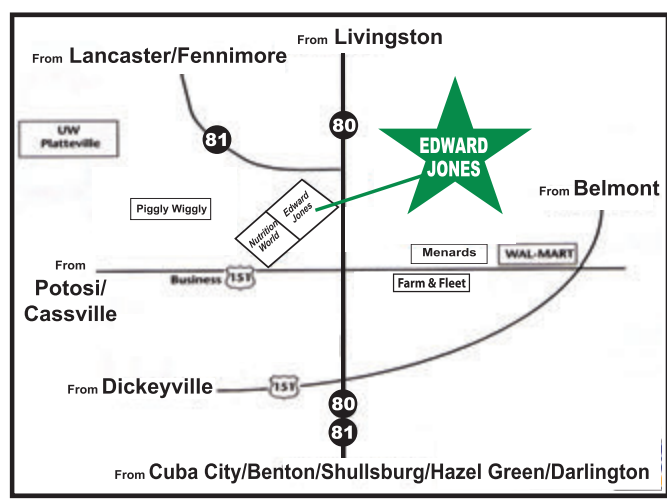
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