

The Chetek Alert

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Chetek, Wisconsin | One Dollar & Twenty-Five Cents

FIRSTLOOK

Barron County real estate taxes due July 31

Real estate taxes are due on or before Monday, July 31, 2023. The City of Rice Lake 2022 property taxes must be paid to the City of Rice Lake Clerk's Office. All other property taxes in Barron County must be paid to the Barron County Treasurer. Payment options, tax amounts, and payment status can be found on the Barron County Website at www.barroncountyiwi.gov. Please call the county treasurer's office at 715-537-6280 with any questions or for further information.



Bonifest chicken dinner, festivities returning July 30

The Bonifest chicken dinner and festivities is returning to the backyard of St. Boniface Church, located at 419 third St., on Sunday, July 30, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The \$13 dinner includes one quarter of a grilled chicken, baked beans, potato salad, a roll, dessert and drink. Takeout will be available at this event. Live music will be provided by popular Christian recording artist, Luke Spehar. Gift basket and 50/50 raffle drawings will be held at 1 p.m. Additional entertainment includes face painting and yard games. All are welcome at this event! This event is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and St. Boniface Church. Proceeds will support St. Boniface building improvements.

DEATHS

David Addison, 67, Bloomer



WCCO's "Goin' to the Lake" series featuring Chetek July 26

WCCO anchors Amelia Santaniello & Erin Hassanzadeh will visit Chetek on Wednesday, July 26, and Thursday, July 27, as part of WCCO's summertime series, "Goin' to the Lake."

Cameras will roll as Santaniello and Hassanzadeh visit local businesses, participate in community traditions, explore the area's history, and dine at favorite eateries.

"Goin' to the Lake has always been one of my favorite assignments. I'm looking forward to exploring Chetek and meeting the residents. On top of that, I get to do it all with Erin as my partner," said Santaniello. "The Chetek community has been through a lot, but we're excited to celebrate all the good that is happening in the area. We can't wait to see you out at the lake!" added Hassanzadeh.

In addition to filming activities throughout the day, Santaniello and Hassanzadeh will report live from Chetek during the evening news-

casts. The public is invited to join them at:

- Pokegama Lakeside Cantina - Wednesday, July 26, 4, 5 and 6 p.m.
- Gilligans - Wednesday, July 26, at 10 p.m.

This summer will mark the ninth year that WCCO has produced the series - having missed the previous three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The "Goin' to the Lake!" series highlights all that Minnesota and Western Wisconsin have to offer for outdoor living. Whether it's spending time on the water, exploring local history, or taking in the area's finest cuisine, WCCO is there to highlight the best that cabin country has to offer.

Viewers can watch Amelia and Erin's adventures in Chetek by tuning into WCCO newscasts throughout the day or by streaming CBS News Minnesota. The stream is available via wcco.com, on connected televisions or on the go with the CBS News App and Pluto TV.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

All fun and games at Culpepper & Merriweather circus

The Culpepper & Merriweather Circus visited Chetek for the first time in over 20 years—delighting the crowd with big cats, the tight rope, aerialists, horses, daredevils and so much more. The Chetek Fire Department sponsored event was well received by local and surrounding communities and ticket sales were so successful that online tickets for the event sold out and several of the local businesses selling tickets for the event were running low—a testament to the outpouring of support for the Chetek FD. The fire department will receive a portion of the ticket sales before the event to be used for equipment and additional training needs. The two 90-minute performances "wow'd" audiences both young and old. Pictured above are a couple of young attendees at the Saturday, July 22 event. Pictured below is Wendell the lion, C&M's newest addition. A total of the funds raised for the Chetek FD was not yet available as of print time.



KENTON TROUTMAN | THE CHETEK ALERT

Community invited to National Night Out 2023

National Night Out is less than a week away! The event will be held Tuesday, Aug. 1, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Chetek Fire Hall. The event will feature a dunk tank, bouncy house, police vehicle, ambulance and fire trucks. Lt. Jessica Larson said a medical helicopter may make an appearance at the event, but it will depend on whether it is needed for an emergency. There will be hot dogs brats, chips and water that will be free to the public. Attendees can also look forward to door prizes and various giveaways during the event. Pictured above is Lt. Larson and Officer Mike Lorenz helping event-goers with their raffle tickets at the 2022 National Night Out event that had hundreds in attendance. The Chetek Fire Hall is located at 1224 Railroad Ave.

Highway SS memorial dedication made official

The Barron County Board of Supervisors affirmed Monday, July 17, the recommendation of the county Highway Committee to dedicate Hwy. SS to two police officers killed in the line of duty.

About 5.5 miles of Hwy. SS from the village limits of Cameron to the city limits of Chetek will commemorate the memory of fallen officers Hunter Scheel and Emily Breidenbach.

Scheel, a Cameron police officer, and Breidenbach, a Chetek officer, were shot and killed while conducting a traffic stop on Hwy. SS just south of Cameron on April 8.

This is the first road in the Barron County highway system to be dedicated as a memorial road.

The board approved the highway dedicated without discussion with 28 yes votes, and one member absent.

Chetek Chain of Lakes—protection, improvement and local support

Editor's note: The following article is Part 3 of a three-part series composed by the Chetek Lakes Protection Association.

This is the third article in a three-part series highlighting the ways local organizations are protecting and improving the Chetek Chain of lakes and the Red Cedar Watershed. The Red Cedar Watershed covers 1,893 square miles of water in parts of Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, Polk, Sawyer, St. Croix and Washburn counties.

Runoff pollution is by far the greatest source of water pollution in our watershed. Most runoff pollution comes from several small sources scattered throughout the region. No single yard, field, or region is the cause, it is the practices and neglect from throughout the watershed that creates this pollution. There are a number of organizations working to analyze and understand the solutions to pollution.

LOCAL LAKE ASSOCIATIONS, DISTRICTS
The Chetek Lakes Protection Association

(CLPA) is based in Chetek and manages shoreline improvement projects including lake-weed control, Clean Boats Clean Waters inspections, Water Quality monitoring, fish sticks and fish cribs, and multiple DNR grants to co-fund projects.



In addition, the CLPA creates and distributes education materials to nearly 40,000 visitors and 1,500 lakefront homeowners on the Chetek Chain each year.

The Red Cedar Lake Association includes Red Cedar, Balsam, Hemlock, Bass, Mud, and Murphy Flowage. In recent years they have implemented clean boat inspections, healthy lakes shoreline grants, fishsticks, and removal of invasive curly leaf pond weed.

The Tainter Lake District was just formed in late 2022, and is establishing their goals and priorities. They have also connected with

the other groups in the watershed to synchronize with the rest of the watershed.

The Rice-Lake Lake District was formed nearly 50 years ago, and has set up multiple programs to stop invasive species and shoreline problems.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AT THE COUNTY LEVEL

Barron County Conservation Department works closely with lake groups and farmers to implement improvements to land use and storm-water runoff. In 2022, Barron County implemented 1600 acres of farmland under a Nutrient Management Plan, 800 acres of cover crops, three new grassland waterways, and six manure pit closures. They have also helped close 142 manure pits in the past 20 years to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen runoff to our lakes/streams.

Dunn, Rusk, Chippewa, and Washburn County Conservation Departments (also part of the Red Cedar Watershed) are also working similar goals and success converting manure pits and educating

SEE CLPA, PAGE A7

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CLPA: Farmers assisting in prevention of nutrient runoff

FROM PAGE A1

farmers on the use of cover crops, increasing plant diversity through crop rotation, and maintaining a living root in the soil after harvest. By doing so, farmers reduce fertilizer usage, prevent soil erosion, and reduce the risk of nutrient runoff into lakes and streams.

FARMER LED GROUP PROJECTS

There are several farmer-led groups working together in their neighborhoods to share best-practices, experiences, and gaining awareness and access to government co-funding to make substantial changes to farming practices. Some of the groups in our area that are working together include Farmers of Barron County Watershed, Red Cedar Conservation Farmers, Hay River Watershed Council, Landmark Conservancy, and other similar groups. These groups may also assist farmers needing assistance when fertilizer or manure discharge is detected by WDNR or County Conservationists.

UW UNIVERSITIES, OTHER WATER QUALITY GROUPS

UW-Stout is a very active participant in the Red Cedar Watershed. Their program: Environmental Sustainability Research Education for Undergrads (LAKES REU), has been in place for the past 8 years. Last summer, 11 students from around the country participated. Past and present research posters and summaries can be found at the UW Stout website. Projects covered a variety of topics including: Conservation farmer's barriers in adopting conversation practices, mapping agricultural land most at risk for soil erosion and nutrient run-off, how to create a network of low-cost lake monitoring stations, a preliminary study of how best to promote beef raised in a sustainable way, and more.

The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin supports water-related research and student projects in the watershed as well as a curriculum to train students to work in this area after graduation.

At the center of all these groups working together is the WDNR. The WDNR provides advice and counseling on various grant programs available to all these

partners and groups. Grants are a cost sharing where the DNR will typically fund 65-75% of a water-quality improvement project, with the lake-group paying 25-35% of the project cost. The WI DNR staff is also a valuable networking partner, having connections to its own divisions, and to other agencies, non profits, and resources to find funding or expertise for a given project in need.

In late 2013, many area natural resource professionals came together to form the Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership. Partners include representatives from local, state and federal government agencies, private business, lake associations, UW-Stout, nongovernmental organizations, and others. Using modeling and calculation formulas contained in the 10-year plan to estimate load reduction projections, an estimate of 10,500 pounds of phosphorus has been reduced across our entire watershed from the combined work of all these groups in the last eight years. Since one pound of phosphorus will generate 500 pounds of algae, this reduction of phosphorus has prevented five million pounds of algae growth throughout the watershed over the past eight years.

The CLPA is a member of the Red Cedar Water-Quality Partnership and also works directly and indirectly with the other groups to assist in meeting watershed goals, sharing information, and synchronizing with the other Red Cedar groups to improve the water quality of the Red Cedar Watershed.

WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE ANSWER?

The work of all these groups is essential but will never be enough by itself. We can all see an impact if we let these groups do their job, while the rest of us keep these facts in mind:

- Runoff pollution is the largest source of water pollution in our watershed,
- Runoff pollution only happens when rain falls and snow melts.
- Every single citizen can reduce water pollution by keeping streets and sidewalks clean, keep yard waste away from waters, stop erosion, and pick up pet waste and litter.

County approves mediation committee for overbudget highway shop project

BY RYAN URBAN | BARRON NEWS-SHIELD

After a closed session on Monday, July 17, the Barron County board approved a motion to appoint members of a mediation committee concerning the architect and construction management firm involved in its well over budget highway department project.

The motion appoints Barron County supervisors Louie Okey (Dist. 16, Town of Cedar Lake), Stan Buchanan (Dist. 22, Town of Rice Lake) and Peter Olson (Dist. 12, City of Barron) as well as County staff members finance director Jodi Busch and highway facilities manager Mat Kaiser to the mediation committee, along with lawyers from both sides.

The conclusion of the Barron County Highway Department facilities project remains ambiguous based on the comments of officials at the meeting Monday.

Highway Commissioner Mark Servi said that construction of one last building, known as Unheated Storage #2, will be completed in September at the earliest.

He said that completion of paving the parking lot in front of the main shop is on hold, depending on what funding is left.

Supervisor Randy Cook (Dist. 18, Town of Stanley and city of Rice Lake) asked if the county had enough funding to complete the project.

County Board Chair Louie Okey replied, "We have enough to finish the contracts with our vendors, possibly additional fees. What will be sacrificed will be paving and things we can control."

Barron County initially budgeted and bonded \$26 million for the project, but in the past year it became apparent that amount would fall well short.

Earlier this year the County Board allocated \$4.6 million of the highway department's fund balance to cover the cost overrun.

County finance director Jodi Busch said that as of this week, \$3.4 million of \$4.6 million remains.

Delays, inflationary costs and other unforeseen circumstances have been cited as reasons for the project overrun.



KENTON TROUTMAN | THE CHETEK ALERT

Barron County Fair attendees "Let the Good Times Grow"

The Barron County Fair celebrated the conclusion of another successful year. The fair started on Wednesday, July 19, through Sunday, July 23. The event had a rocky start on Wednesday, July 19, due to severe weather, but attendance was in full force for the next four days. Attendees meandered through large crowds of people waiting in line at various food stands and trucks—ready to satisfy their hunger for fair favorites like funnel cakes, elephant ears, gyros, cheese curds, and of course, the famous Barron County 4-H pie shakes. Crowds of people waited in line to ride their favorite fair attractions including the "Gee Wizz," as pictured above at left. One of the events that took place on Friday, July 21, was the crowning of the 2023 Barron County Fairest of the Fair, Elora Repman, 19, of Birchwood, pictured at left in the above right photo. Standing next to Repman is Brooke Shatley, 2022 Fairest of the Fair helping the new fairest with her sash. Pictured below at left is a 4-H club member taking a rest with her beloved cow. Laughter and screams were heard across the fairgrounds from those riding on the event's various attractions including the one pictured below in the center. The 4-H horse stalls were filled with onlookers as the majestic animals went about their business with an occasional "whinny" and nod of their head. Pictured below at right, a young fairgoer caresses the face of an old draft horse.



Plan commission holds public hearing, recommends Dollar General zoning denial

BY KENTON TROUTMAN

The City of Chetek Plan Commission held a public hearing on Thursday, July 20, for a zoning request at 1415 Eighth Ave., for a possible Dollar General development. The parcel currently owned by Kelly and Kim Cole, could be sold to a real estate developer for the purpose of building a Dollar General store.

Eric Barkovich, a representative for the engineering company working with Capital Growth Buchalter—a development company out of Alabama—spoke to the commission about the zoning request and explained that this is the first step in working toward the implementation of a Dollar General in Chetek.

At present, the property is zoned as a C-2 Highway Commercial property and the zoning request, if approved, would make the property a C-1 General Commercial property.

Building Inspector and Zoning Administrator Joe Atwood, was asked by the commission to explain why the zoning request was necessary. "The Dollar General does not fall into C-2 because of groceries and retail, so it fits better in a C-1 district." Scott Bachowski, city council member and plan commission member reminded the public and the commission of the purpose of the meeting. "[The purpose] is to strictly recommend either a rezoning proposal to the city council or not to recommend. We are not here to debate whether the city of Chetek needs another dollar store."

John Henneman, a city resident was the first to stand at the podium during public comment to voice his concerns about the development of a Dollar General. Henneman explained to the commission that his residence is next to the property that could become a dollar store, "The dollar store parking lot would be 15 yards from my dining room window." Henneman

continued, "It is fair to say that my property will be more directly affected by this change than any other. I am adamantly against this proposal" Several other residents spoke against the construction of a Dollar General. Henneman and other residents suggested a city park to be built at the parcel instead of another dollar store.

Alysha Jenneman, another resident affected by the possible zoning change of the parcel explained to the council that the proposed store would be 50-feet from her backyard where her children play. Her main concern was the level of activity at the store due to the company's open seven-days-a-week policy. Jenneman noted that based on her research, other Dollar General locations including those in Cameron, Rice Lake, Bloomer, Barron, Ridgeland and Turtle Lake do not border on residential properties.

The list of concerns and reasons for the plan commission to vote to reject the proposal included:

- Devaluation of surrounding residential properties. Henneman noted that his property would be worthless as a residential parcel and it might as well be changed to a C-1 General Commercial property with the proposed parcel.
- The loss of mature oak trees currently on the parcel that may assist with the prevention of flooding in the nearby area.
- The newly built Family Dollar-Dollar Tree a mile or so from the proposed Dollar General site.
- Traffic concerns on Dallas St. during the school year and the summer months.
- Safety hazards due to trucks and semis trying to make deliveries to the store on what residents referred to as a congested roadway.
- Snow removal during the winter was another concern brought to the commission's attention.
- Light pollution.
- Noise pollution and

whether the store would need to abide by the city's noise ordinance.

The need to implement a traffic signal to assist with traffic on Dallas St. if the parcel is rezoned.

The dangers posed to children living nearby due to increased traffic.

Barkovich did have answers to many of the citizens concerns about the proposal. As commission members began to discuss the proposal amongst themselves, Barkovich addressed the council, "It looks like the Family Dollar-Dollar Tree is a very similar situation based on the surrounding uses and zoning, so if we were to go in the direction of not rezoning this parcel, I would be interested to hear what the differences might be and why it's a different situation."

Plan commission member Sean Ayers made a motion to recommend the denial of the rezoning request. Commission member Dave Swangim seconded. Ayers concluded, "If this [parcel] was surrounded with other commercial [properties], I wouldn't struggle with it so much, but

it's backyard stuff and it's not zoned for this [use]."

A roll call vote ensued where Bachowski voted no to the denial, commission member Mark Etton voted in favor of the denial, commission member Del Wacker voted in favor of the denial, Swangim voted in favor or the rezoning denial and Ayers voted for the denial of zoning proposal. The motion to deny the zoning proposal was carried.

Bachowski reminded the commission and the public in attendance at the meeting this the plan commission is only making a recommendation to the council to deny the zoning request but the decision is ultimately up to the city council.

The Dollar General zoning request will be on the city council's August agenda. A public hearing will be held at the August council meeting for concerned citizens to speak in opposition or support of the zoning request. Visit the city of Chetek website at <https://cityofchetekwi.us/agendas-minutes/> for the date and agenda for the upcoming meeting.

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