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Schiek to run for Oneida County judge

DA set to take on Burns in spring election

By Richard Moore
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Oneida County district attorney Michael Schiek is officially running for Oneida County circuit court judge, for the seat first vacated by Patrick O'Melia upon his retirement this past year and now held by Mary Roth Burns.

Burns is filling out the remainder of O'Melia's term, which ends next July 31, and has already declared her candidacy for a full term.

Schiek confirmed his candidacy to *The Times* late last week, and said he would be providing more information about his run this week. Schiek's candidacy surfaced on the Facebook page of the Oneida County Republican Party, which urged its members to circulate nomination papers for the district attorney.

The February 21 primary is non-partisan, but

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High levels of PFAS detected in testing of private wells in Stella township

By Heather Schaefer
OF THE RIVER NEWS

A number of private well owners in the rural township of Stella are the latest Oneida County residents to learn that their wells contain high levels of dangerous

chemicals known as PFAS. PFAS (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a group of man-made, fluorinated chemicals manufactured and used since the 1940s. Because they are designed to be stable and unreactive to water, grease,

heat, and other elements, they are often referred to as "forever" compounds. Studies have shown a link between human exposure to PFAS and adverse health effects.

According to the Department of Natural Resources,

a handful of private wells in Stella, recently tested as part of a statewide project, were found to have higher PFAS levels than what was detected in the two City of Rhinelander wells taken of-

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JEREMY MAYO/RIVER NEWS

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

James Williams Middle School students performed a holiday concert Monday, Dec. 12, 2022 in the John & Dori Brown Performing Arts Center at Rhinelander High School. Pictured are members of the seventh and eighth grade band sharing the sounds of the season.

Investment advisor with ties to Rhinelander barred from practicing following DFI investigation

By Heather Schaefer
OF THE RIVER NEWS

The State of Wisconsin's Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) Division of Securities has issued an order permanently barring Anthony B. Liddle, a broker and investment advisor with ties to Rhinelander, from practicing following an investigation into alleged dishonest or unethical practices in the securities business.

According to the DFI order, from June 2019 through May 2022, Liddle solicited approximately \$1.9 million from 11 Wisconsin and two Michigan investors. The investors intended for the funds to be used to purchase so-called L Bonds but the monies were actually put toward Liddle's personal and business expenses, according to DFI.

"Pursuant to Liddle's instructions, the 13 investors made checks payable or sent wire transfers to Prosper Wealth Management (a limited liability company operated by Liddle and

his former spouse), which Liddle deposited into a business bank account he controlled," the DFI order reads. "Liddle did not invest any of the funds which were deposited into the business account. Instead, he used the investors' funds for personal and business expenses and to pay down debt. Liddle also used investor funds to make monthly payments to certain investors even though those monthly payments were not generated from any investments made on their behalf. These monthly payments lulled investors into believing that Liddle had invested their money as he had promised."

According to Investopedia, L Bonds were "a high-yielding debt instrument that financed the purchase of life insurance policies on the secondary market."

"The Respondents employed a device, scheme, or artifice to defraud, and engaged in an act, practice, or course of business that operates or

would operate as a fraud or deceit upon the investors ... in violation of Wis. Stat. §§ 551.502(1)(a) and 551.502(1)(b) by using investors' money in a manner contrary to what they had represented, and for Liddle's personal benefit," the order states.

Of the 13 investors identified, 10 were 65 years old or older at the time of their initial investment, according to the order.

A "waiver and consent to order," dated Aug. 3, states that Liddle and Prosper Wealth Management "decided not to contest the issuance" of the disciplinary order.

"The undersigned Respondents understand and agree that the attached Order shall prohibit Respondents from transacting any securities business in the State of Wisconsin, effective on the date the order is issued," the waiver reads.

Further, Liddle and Prosper Wealth

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PFAS

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flin in 2019 due to PFAS contamination.

Some of the readings from Stella were among the highest levels ever detected in testing of private wells in the state, according to the DNR.

James Yach, Secretary's Director for Northern Wisconsin, said the Stella results varied from no PFAS detected to "super elevated" levels.

"The results are kind of across the board," he said, noting that "some were at marginal levels, some at non-detect or below the health advisory limit."

He described the number of Stella wells with extremely high PFAS levels as "about a handful."

"There's continual testing and I'm sure we're going to see some other exceedances that are going to be at similar levels," he added.

When asked if the DNR has any theory as to why a broad spectrum of PFAS levels would be detected in wells located in this small township, Yach focused on the natural topography of the

"At this point in time, we are still in the investigative stage. We don't know the source of it, we don't know the extent of it. It's early in the investigation."

David Brunette, Stella town chairman

area.

"The only explanation that I can really offer you on that is that it's an area of complex hydrogeology," he said. "And so when groundwater flows, there's a shallow sand aquifer and a deeper bedrock aquifer and the way the groundwater interacts with both of those aquifers you could have literally a couple wells within a few hundreds yards of one another and they could have complete different results from their water quality tests based on where they are in the aquifer as far as depth and laterally."

He agreed that Stella, often referred to as Starks in honor of founder Leonard Starks, is significantly different from the area where the two Rhinelander wells are located. While the city wells are located near the Rhinelander-Oneida County Airport and several manufacturing facilities, Stella is pri-

marily an agricultural community.

As the town's website notes, in 1912 Leonard Starks purchased 10,000 acres of land from the Menasha Wooden Ware Company and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway Co. for agricultural purposes.

"Mr. Starks, known as the 'Potato King' became a producer as well as a buyer of potatoes," according to the town website. "After his death, his daughter, Lelah Starks, took over the land and became one of Wisconsin's most prominent potato growers and an internationally recognized authority in the specialized field of seed potatoes. Since then, seed potatoes from the farms in Stella Township have been shipped all over the United States. In recent years, a lot of the farm land has been sold off as residential parcels, and today the Town of Stella is largely a mix

of agricultural and residential property. It is a very pretty site as various crops are rotated annually, displaying an array of color throughout the entire township. Our community has a population of approximately 670 residents, creating a 'big family' atmosphere in the town."

Yach was hesitant to offer even preliminary thoughts as to the source of the newly discovered contamination and noted that he can't necessarily "draw a correlation" between the Rhinelander contamination and the situation in Stella. He did note that the results from Stella have drawn the attention of the federal government, in the form of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the DNR is hopeful that the federal agency will provide "investigative help."

"We understand that there's a desire to figure out exactly what the cause is and what the recourse and

cleanup is, but it's going to be a drawn-out process to determine that," he added.

In the meantime, Yach said he would encourage those who have been contacted by the DNR to take the department up on its offer to test their wells.

Furthermore, anyone in Wisconsin who is concerned about PFAS can get their well tested, he added. There is a list of certified well testers posted on the DNR website at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/PFAS/Labs.html>.

Meanwhile, town chairman David Brunette said town leaders are doing what they can to assist the affected residents.

He noted there is a possibility that the town hall well could be a source of clean water for residents, as its PFAS levels were found to be "very low."

"We want to get it tested for nitrates before we open that up for people to get water at the town hall and it's

not a high-capacity well so we don't want to go dry on it either," he noted.

"With a very small town you have very limited resources," he added, noting that he understands that "there's a lot of concern" among Stella residents and those who live in other eastern Oneida County townships adjacent to Stella.

He said he recently spoke with a Three Lakes resident who is concerned about potential contamination there.

"As the crow flies, (Three Lakes) is not far away," he noted.

"At this point in time, we are still in the investigative stage. We don't know the source of it, we don't know the extent of it," he said. "It's early in the investigation."

For more information on the Stella contamination, a PowerPoint presentation produced by the DNR and DHS and presented to the public during the town's Dec. 13 meeting, is available on the town website, www.townofstella.com.

Heather Schaefer may be reached at heather@rivernewsline.com.

Digest

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ship throughout the ongoing pandemic, during her time as secretary, Timberlake has headed the state's leading health agency during a national infant formula shortage and mpox outbreak. She has overseen efforts to expand the healthcare workforce through initiatives like the Wisconsin Caregiver Careers Program, invest in mental and behavioral health services for kids and families, especially as the state has seen increased needs due to the pandemic, and address the opioid epidemic and overdose deaths across the state.

Additionally, Timberlake has worked to reduce disparities in health and make Wisconsin's public health and healthcare systems more equitable and inclusive, Evers said. Those efforts included investments in telehealth services to make services more accessible, particularly in rural communities and prioritizing investments in community-based organizations that work with historically underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

Prior to her appointment by Evers in 2021, Timberlake was most recently a partner at Michael Best Strategies, LLC in Wisconsin advising in areas of

public health, healthcare delivery, and healthy community investments, as well as business development strategies.

Prior to joining Michael Best, she was the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute director and an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

Timberlake also served during former Gov. Doyle's administration as the director of the Office of State Employment Relations before being appointed as deputy secretary at DHS in mid-2007 and eventually serving as DHS secretary in April 2008, where she served for the remainder of former Gov. Doyle's tenure.

Gallagher outlines vision for select committee on China

After being named chairman of the Select Committee on China, Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin) immediately worked to outline his vision for the committee in the 118th Congress.

In a joint op-ed with expected House speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-California), Gallagher wrote that the Select Committee on China will restore supply chains and end critical economic dependencies on China; strengthen the military; end the CCP's theft of American personal

data and intellectual property; and contrast the CCP's techno-totalitarian state with the values of the Free World.

Gallagher also joined America's Newsroom to discuss how the Select Committee will defend the U.S. from CCP aggression.

"We need to reduce our economic dependency on China, and we need to make sure that we are surging hard power west of the International Dateline in defending Taiwan in particular," Gallagher said. "We also need to understand how China is trying to corrupt and subvert our domestic institutions and make sure that they are not allowed to do that going forward. So this is an important effort... The Chinese Communist Party is our foremost threat in the world today."

Gallagher made clear in an interview on Special Report with Brett Baier that he wants the nature of the Select Committee on China to be bipartisan.

"The predecessor to this [committee], the China Task Force led by chairman Mike McCaul, tried to get Democrats to participate," he said. "Kevin Mc-

Carthy opened that up to Democrats, and they refused for partisan purposes. We want this to be a bipartisan effort. We want the Democrats to nominate serious, sober people to participate because defending America from Chinese Communist Party aggression should not be a partisan thing."

Johnson urges NLRB chairman to reverse rules detrimental to franchises

Earlier this month U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin) joined U.S. Sen. Mike Braun (R-Indiana) and 67 of their Republican colleagues in writing a letter to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) opposing the board's joint employer proposed rule that they say is inconsistent with common law, circumvents congressional authority, and will have a detrimental impact on the franchise business model, job opportunities and the nation's economy.

"The board's joint-employer proposed rule would have immediate and long-term negative effects on millions of workers and thousands of businesses at a time when

the economy is already facing the highest inflation rates in four decades," the lawmakers wrote. "Franchises in particular would be negatively impacted should the proposed rule go into effect. Franchises cover over 300 different business lines, including restaurants, child care, hair care, fitness, tutoring, amusement parks, automotive repair, lodging, and senior care."

Additionally, they wrote, the proposed rule would cost franchise job opportunities that provide up to nearly 4 percent higher wages for their employees when compared to non-franchise counterparts.

"Due to this negative economic impact, the proposed rule's inconsistency with common law, and the NLRB's attempt to use powers reserved to Congress, we urge the board not to move forward with its proposed rule for determining joint-employer status," they wrote. "Instead, the board should maintain the 2020 rule, which brought clarity and certainty to the business community."

On September 7, the National Labor Relations Board published

its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking entitled, "Standard for Determining Joint-Employer Status" ("proposed rule"), which would replace the 2020 Joint-Employer Rule that focused on "direct and immediate control" and replace it with the "indirect, reserved" control standard.

In the United States, there are nearly 775,000 franchises that employ 8.2 million workers and provide \$800 billion of economic output. This is projected to grow in 2022 to nearly 800,000 franchises. Businesses such as universities, hospitals, home healthcare, agriculture, cleaning services, security services, hospitality, waste management, delivery services, home builders, retailers, and others that contract or subcontract would be negatively affected.

The International Franchise Association (IFA) found that the BFI joint employer standard, nearly identical to the proposed rule, "cost franchise businesses \$33.3 billion per year, resulting in 376,000 lost job opportunities, and led to a 93% increase in lawsuits."



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