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Builders Guide Inserted in today's edition



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Fatal boating accident in Forest County

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City council authorizes soil testing at Lindey, Kabel sites

By Heather Schaefer OF THE RIVER NEWS

The years-long process of returning 28 and 34 South Stevens Street to a usable condition as something other than a parking area has new momentum after the Rhinelander Common Council voted unanimously late last month to direct city administrator Patrick Reagan to apply for a Wisconsin Assessment Monies (WAM) grant to fund testing of soil at the sites for contaminants.

The two locations have long histories as commercial sites but have been vacant for some time. 34 S. Stevens was the home of the Lindey Cleaners building while Kabel Auto was the last business to operate from 28 S. Stevens. The Lindey building was torn down in 2015 and the Kabel Auto building came down in 2017.

The sites are now vacant gravel parking lots owned by the city.

"The City of Rhinelander is willing to do whatever necessary to clean this property up and move it towards a state wherein it can be developed," the WAM grant application reads.

See **Testing**. . . page 5

DNR officials to return to Stella for PFAS discussion

By Heather Schaefer OF THE RIVER NEWS

Eight months after Town of Stella residents first learned that dangerous lev-

els of PFAS (per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances) had been detected in water samples taken from local wells, Department of Natural Resources officials are set to

return to the small eastern Oneida County community to provide an update on the ongoing PFAS contamination investigation.

According to a notice

posted on the Town of Stella website, a meeting with DNR officials is scheduled for 5 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 15 at the town hall.

See **PFAS**. . . page 6



HEATHER SCHAEFER/RIVER NEWS

GETTING REDIKULUS

Shoppers basked in the summer sun while perusing the Redikulus Dae sidewalk sales in downtown Rhinelander Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2023. The summer street sale is a Rhinelander tradition dating back to the early '60s. It features fantastic bargains, interactive activities, and delicious food and snacks, courtesy of participating vendors.

Local man ordered to serve additional 6 months in jail for burning his house down

By Heather Schaefer OF THE RIVER NEWS

A 35-year-old Rhinelander man was ordered Monday to serve six more months in jail, to be followed by three years probation, after pleading guilty to one count of unsafe burning of own home, a Class H felony.

Chad J. Bambrough has been in custody since March 2, shortly after firefighters from several departments were called to extinguish a fire at his residence on U.S. Highway 8 in the Town of Crescent.

According to a press release from the Oneida County sheriff's office, a call was received at approximately 3:40 p.m. March 2



Bambrough

reporting the structure fire .

"Initially, it was unknown if there was anyone else in the building," the release said. "The caller stated that there were flames 10 feet into the air."

By the time first responders arrived, the structure was fully engulfed and deputies later determined the fire was started intentionally.

In the release, the sheriff's department noted that deputies believed the ingestion of illegal drugs was a factor in the incident.

According to the criminal complaint, Bambrough admitted to using methamphetamine and THC in the hours before setting the fire and stated that he had been awake for several days.

Bambrough told investigators he used a lighter to light a piece of paper on fire and then sprayed it with an aerosol "to get the fire larger."

After the fire started to take off, Bambrough said he took a bottle of olive oil and emptied it on the floor of the residence, believing it to be flammable, the complaint continues. He also said he turned on the gas stove in an attempt to strengthen the fire.

Bambrough stated his intent was to harm himself and he would never have set the fire if anyone else was present, the complaint said.

At sentencing, Oneida County assistant district attorney Mary Sowinski acknowledged Bambrough has a "lengthy trauma history" dating back to his childhood, as well as from his time in the military, but noted that his decision to set his own home on fire after using drugs to self-medicate put other people at risk.

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Digest

From page 5

“A work atmosphere built around worker well-being is the result of partnerships among employers, workers, and training providers,” said DWD secretary-designee Amy Pechacek. “Wisconsin is committed to a workplace that is fair, just, and above all, safe. This approach benefits workers, their families and communities while supporting the competitiveness of employers statewide.”

Worker’s compensation insurance rates are adjusted annually by a committee of actuaries from members of the Wisconsin Compensation Rating Bureau. The independent body examines and selects the methodology and trends that produce the proposed

rate adjustment, which is then reviewed and approved by the Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance. While the overall rate level will decrease by 8.4%, the impact to policyholders will vary based on specific circumstances.

“The continued decreases in worker’s compensation rates reflect the workplace safety practices that support a strong workforce in our state,” said insurance commissioner Nathan Houdek. “Employers doing business in Wisconsin can count on our competitive insurance marketplace for affordable, high-quality coverage for their business and employees.”

DWD’s Worker’s Compensation (WC) Division administers the state’s WC program through a collaboration with WCRB, OCI, Self-Insurers Council and

the Worker’s Compensation Advisory Council, which is composed of representatives from management and labor and recommends WC law changes. Most employers in Wisconsin are legally required to have Worker’s Compensation insurance policies.

Legislators introduce bill to help legally blind get to and from work

State Rep. David Steffen (R-Howard) and Sen. Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield) have introduced legislation that would create a tax credit for people who are legally blind (as defined and qualified by the IRS) to help cover a portion of the costs associated with getting to and from work.

According to the Wisconsin

Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, 70 percent of people with visual impairments are unemployed and another 22 percent are underemployed.

“Transportation is often the greatest barrier to employment for this community — which helps explain their staggering unemployment numbers,” Steffen said. “While folks who are legally blind possess the motivation, education and talents to professionally contribute to the workforce, they remain almost entirely untapped due to transportation barriers. This bill works to remove this obstacle to employment for people who are legally blind.”

The tax credit will cover up to 50 percent of transportation costs and is capped at \$1500 per tax year. As this credit is non-

refundable, the credit is essentially self-funded via tax revenue generated by the claimant. This proposal is supported by Beyond Vision.

“There are many people who can work and want to work, but getting to work is prohibitive simply because their vision is impaired,” Hutton said. “This legislation helps them afford safe and reliable transportation. With our current workforce challenges, lowering these barriers for skilled, dedicated, legally blind employees is both the right thing to do and another way for the private sector to meet its workforce needs.”

The bill is currently being circulated for co-sponsorship support before it will be available for a public hearing later this legislative session.

PFAS

From page 1

“The Town of Stella, Oneida County, invited Department of Natural Resources staff to provide updates about work to protect public health from PFAS contamination in the Town of Stella,” according to a notice posted on the DNR webpage devoted to the Stella contamination issue. “The DNR staff will discuss possible long-term water solutions for households that are PFAS-impacted, and state resources community members may be eligible to receive to address it. After the formal meeting, attendees may discuss their unique circumstances with DNR staff. Local, licensed drinking water well and treatment professionals have also been invited to attend and may be available to connect with community members individually. This meeting will be held fully in-person with no option for attending virtually. If unable to attend, questions may be submitted to DNRStellaPFAS@wisconsin.gov or by calling 888-626-0605.”

This will be the third time DNR representatives have met with Stella residents in the last year related to the PFAS issue. Agency officials first visited Stella on Dec. 13, 2022 to provide initial information on the contamination, which was discovered by the DNR as part of an ongoing statewide testing project.

DNR officials returned to Stella on Jan. 9, 2023 for a follow-up meeting.

Since that time, additional, broader PFAS testing has taken place.

Some of the results from Stella, which is located approximately 11 miles from Rhinelander, represent some of the highest PFAS readings found in the state to date, ac-

ording to the DNR. One woman who spoke during the January meeting with DNR officials said her next door neighbor’s well showed PFAS contamination at more than 40,000 ppt (parts per trillion).

For context, the recommended safe level is 20 ppt.

PFAS are a group of human-made chemicals used for decades in numerous products, including non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, stain-resistant sprays and certain types of firefighting foam. These contaminants have made their way into the environment through accidental spills of PFAS-containing materials, discharges of PFAS-containing wastewater to treatment plants and certain types of firefighting foams, according to the DNR.

These chemicals are known to accumulate in the human body, posing several risks to human health including certain cancers, liver damage and decreased fertility.

“Ultimately, we’re trying to figure out some kind of long-term solution here,” Chris Saari, the DNR’s Northern Region Program Manager for the Remediation and Redevelopment Program, told the *River News* in April. “We’re trying to find the edges of it and in a reasonable fashion figure out how widespread it is.”

DNR officials have stressed that it may take years, if ever, to determine what caused the contamination in Stella

“(PFAS) marches to the beat of its own drummer in the environment,” DNR remediation and redevelopment program manager Christine Sieger stated during a late January media briefing on the Stella PFAS investigation. “It doesn’t behave like other things in the environment and so in-

vestigation into PFAS... like any other contaminant, can take years. In some cases we’re not going to find a responsible party. We’re going to look and we might find that we can’t tell where it’s coming from. We could find that there are multiple sources responsible. It’s an iterative process and it’s one that takes time.”

One potential source of the contamination mentioned by Stella residents during the January meeting was the use of sludge on agricultural fields in the town.

On Feb. 7, in response to an inquiry from the *River News*, the DNR confirmed the City of Rhinelander and the Ahlstrom-Munksjo paper mill spread sludge in Stella from the late 1990s to 2011, in the case of the city, and 2021 in the case of the mill.

“We can confirm that both sewage sludge (also known as biosolids) from the Rhinelander Wastewater Treatment Facility and Paper Mill Sludge from the Ahlstrom-Munksjo Specialty Solutions Facility (also known as Expera Specialty Solutions) was spread in the Town of Stella,” DNR field operations manager Tim Ryan said in response to a request from the newspaper for information on the agency’s documentation of the use of sludge in Stella. “The City of Rhinelander has spread biosolids on 8 different sites in the Town of Stella between 1997 and 2011. Ahlstrom Munksjo (or previous owners) have spread paper mill sludge on 63 different sites in the Town of Stella between 1996 and 2021.”

In disclosing the information on the past use of sludge in Stella, the agency was careful to note it cannot definitively say the spreading of sludge caused the contamination.

“The Department does not have PFAS data for the paper mill sludge or sewage sludge/biosolids that was land applied,” Ryan said. “The Department is in the process of identifying potential sources.”

In response to the report, Addie Teeters, head of marketing communications & public affairs for Ahlstrom Munksjo, stressed that the company received permits from the DNR for its “landspreading activities.”

“Since Ahlstrom acquired the Rhinelander mill in 2018, it has continued participating in a regulated biosolids landspreading pro-

gram administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources,” Teeters wrote in response to an email request for comment on the DNR report. “As part of that program, we have received and operate pursuant to permits issued by the Department. We maintain records which are provided to the Department relating to our ongoing landspreading activities.”

“Ahlstrom has led the marketplace in developing PFAS-free technology for more than a decade and utilizes our FluoroFree® technology at the Rhinelander mill,” she added.

“At this time the City cannot validate what spreading the DNR may have authorized in the 1990s and early 2000’s,” city attorney Steve Sorenson wrote in response to a request for comment from the city regarding its past history of spreading sludge in Stella. “Since I have been with the City there has been no spreading of biosolids in the Town of Stella by the City,” he added.

For more information on the Stella PFAS investigation, visit <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/PFAS/Stella.html>.

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ACROSS

- 1 German pronoun
- 4 Zoo animal
- 7 Amt.
- 10 Forest grazer
- 11 Edinburgh girl
- 13 Halo, of sorts
- 14 Drag into court
- 15 Singer — James
- 16 Mouse appendage
- 17 Level off
- 19 Leaf source
- 20 — Mineo of films
- 21 Boors
- 23 Running wild
- 26 Livy’s language
- 28 Float (along)
- 29 Zig’s opposite
- 30 Gets closer
- 34 Porcupine quill
- 36 Puffin kin

DOWN

- 38 Decline, as stock prices
- 39 Reversal (hyph.)
- 41 MLB maneuver
- 42 Hannibal’s foe
- 44 Tavern
- 46 Auto import
- 47 Future bride
- 51 Ditka of football
- 52 Creep along
- 53 Auto fuel
- 55 Software buyer
- 56 Polynesian carving
- 57 Crude metal
- 58 Ike’s rank
- 59 Kitchen meas.
- 60 Exercise place

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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