



Arbor Vitae town board talks Oneida County ambulance contract

Bauers: Only two ways to cover rising costs, Vilas County creates own service or seek referendum

By Trevor Greene
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

The Arbor Vitae town board, at its June 21 meeting, talked about an annual ambulance service contract proposed by Oneida County,

which includes an increase in costs for the town from \$110,000 in 2023 to \$227,303 in 2024.

Town chairman Frank Bauers didn't waste anytime when he started the discussion by saying he "didn't like the amount" being

proposed.

"Almost double," he said. "And the year before that, we were (around) \$80,000."

Bauers said it never made much sense for the town creating its

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Fifield town board faces buoy backlash

Residents call for different ways forward

By Trevor Greene
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Though it wasn't on the Fifield town board's June 20 meeting agenda, a few residents took turns at the beginning of the meeting in public comment to voice their frustrations and propose a way forward with regard to illegal buoys placed on Pike and Round lakes.

Even though proper procedure was not followed when adding the additional buoys on behalf of the town, a Price County recreational officer was enforcing the new signage last season.

One boater, Troy Tabbert, shared with *The Lakeland Times* his \$232 citation he received on Aug. 16, 2022.

According to the town board meeting minutes for March 21, recreational warden with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Robin Miller told board members six additional buoys placed on the lakes in 2022 were illegal and should have been unenforceable.

And even though town board meeting minutes and others involved with the situation say there were six illegal buoys placed, the Pike Lake Chain Lakes Association claims it was four.

The town hasn't replaced the buoys on the lakes this boating season, but according to the lakes association, it will seek to follow proper and legal procedure this time in order to replace them.

Tom Birchell pointed this out when he was the first to comment on the buoy situation at the June 20 meeting. He read a recent lakes association Facebook post regarding a June 26 listening session for the placement of the buoys.

"It says 'A group of owners who have lakeshore property affected by large waves on our lake association board request the town of Fifield board to reinstall the four buoys purchased by the association,' Birchell said while reading the post. "These four buoys were in the water in 2022, but were not put back into the water this spring.' ... I got some problems with this."

Birchell expressed frustration as he recapped what happened at the meeting in March.

The town board when asked about where the buoys came from, he said, were "lock-jawed" and didn't have any answers at that time.

Birchell also took issue with the lakes association saying in its post it purchased the buoys.

"Why did it have to come out that way now this far into the game?" he asked. "And again at the March meeting, you (town chairman Bill Felch) made a motion to put the 10 buoys back in that were put in legally ... and now here we are, two months later, we're gonna have another



TREVOR GREENE/LAKELAND TIMES

TIME FLIES BY

Gavin Ambrosi and his three-year-old son Gabriel enjoy looking at one of the airplanes together during a "Flying Hamburger Social" at the Lakeland Noble F. Lee Memorial Airport on Thursday, June 22, in Arbor Vitae.

Print Run 5,200
Vol. 132 - Issue 37
1 Section, 20 Pages



Former MHLT teacher charged with possessing child pornography pleads not guilty

By Trevor Greene
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

A former fourth-grade math teacher in the Minocqua Hazelhurst Lake Tomahawk (MHLT) school district being charged with two counts of possessing child pornography entered a not guilty plea during an arraignment June 21 in Vilas County circuit court.

Lucas Aschbrenner, 45, was arrested at his home March 2.

Investigators also recovered Aschbrenner's laptop at the time of his arrest, which, according to the results of a subsequent forensic analysis, contained up to eight explicit internet searches related to child pornography and pedophilia and several downloaded images from books

depicting nude children.

Following his arrest, the state's department of justice issued a press release saying investigators obtained a search warrant based on a child sexual abuse material cyber tip originating from Aschbrenner's home.

The forensic analysis also showed, according to the March 6 criminal complaint, Aschbrenner's laptop containing a software used to remove and



Aschbrenner

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Sheriff's office provides update on pawn shop shooting investigation

BY RIVER NEWS STAFF

The Oneida County sheriff's office investigated a fatal shooting Thursday morning at a Rhinelander area pawn shop.

According to a press release issued by sheriff's captain Tyler Young, a call was received at approximately 11:35 a.m. Thursday reporting a shooting at Hodag Gun and Loan, 2262 Lincoln Street, in the Town of Pelican.

Upon arrival, law enforcement lo-

cated a deceased male, the release said.

Authorities noted that there was no threat to the community but asked the public to avoid the area as it was an active crime scene.

Less than three hours later, Young issued a follow-up statement.

"Upon further investigation it has been discovered that the deceased male suffered an intentional self-inflicted gunshot wound," he said.

No other information was released.



RIVER NEWS PHOTO

The scene outside Hodag Gun and Loan Thursday afternoon, June 22, following a report of a shooting. According to the sheriff's office, the victim suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Fifield

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meeting about putting illegal buoys back in the lake ... I'd like to know why."

Felch told Birchell it's the lakes association who will be having that discussion. Birchell, though, said the lakes association will be bringing it back to the town board at some point.

"I hope you guys do the right thing here," he said.

Felch said the town board has been in contact with the DNR, and if the buoy replacement does come to the board, "the board will have a decision to make."

Another resident interjected and asked if there would be any conflict of interest if one of the town board members is on the lakes association.

Town supervisor Ann Sloane is who the resident was referring to. She has been accused of placing one of the illegal buoys near her lakeshore property.

Felch told the resident there wouldn't be any conflict of interest.

He told others, as they started to accuse Sloane, that aspect of the buoy issue wouldn't be discussed.

Resident Butch Lobermeier was the next to comment on the illegal buoys placed on both lakes in 2022.

He read a prepared statement recapping the timeline of events and why it's important public officials are held accountable.

He shared seven reasons how the

"error of judgement on the part of the town board" hurt the community. Among the seven points, he said there is a loss of trust in elected officials and the local government system in general.

"Honesty, integrity, and selfless community service are the sweet fruits of high moral standards," Lobermeier said. "Buoygate has now illuminated some serious character flaws in many people. Are we surprised? Should we be surprised? How would any of you like to be unjustly accused and persecuted by these people?"

In conclusion, he called for the town board to "stand up" and "do what is honorable."

"The vigilant citizens remain vigilant," he said.

In a May 19 editorial, the *Times* requested the special prosecutor of Price County Tom Coaty investigate the town board and Sloane for their actions of voting to place and enforce the illegal buoys.

When resident Barb Bliefernich spoke during public comment, she said she thinks the town needs wait to take up this issue again after the dust set-

"Buoygate has now illuminated some serious character flaws in many " people."

Butch Lobermeier

ties.

"It's my opinion, and I will go to the lakes association meeting, but basically with everything that's gone on with the lakes association, I believe their credibility has been severely tainted," she said. "And quite honestly I think it would be best for our community and for the town to just let this lay for a year or two, let the dust settle, let whatever investigations go on, let that happen, revisit it in a couple years and see if

this is something we truly need."

Bliefernich said she feels the issue "just needs to go away right now."

Part-time resident Nate Ramker commented and said he would rather not have the issue paused. He wants it to be settled, he indicated, so everyone can move on.

Ramker made it clear he opposed adding new buoys and said he likes things the way they are. He also called for those who purchased the buoys, the lakes association, to be fined.

"I don't want to see anything banned, I don't want to see any new buoys put out there," he said. "I've been coming up here my entire life."

Meanwhile, the Price County circuit court decided to reopen Tabbert's case involving the boating violation he received because of one of the illegal buoys.

The first court date since the case has been reopened was June 23, at 11 a.m.

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TREVOR GREENE/LAKELAND TIMES

Part-time resident Nate Ramker comments on the illegal buoys placed on Pike and Round lakes in 2022 during a town board meeting Tuesday, June 20, in Fifield.

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Register your kids at www.faithwoodruff.com, VBS 2023. Both events are free!