



CARS ON DISPLAY

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Ashland Daily Press

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Ashland Police equipped with new gadget

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Ashland Police officers are sporting a new, high-tech piece of equipment on their uniforms.

Officers are now wearing body cameras on their vests that record them while out and about on the job.

The 15 cameras provided by Motorola were purchased with help from a \$52,000 sub grant from the Department of Justice, with the other half already budgeted by the city.

Motorola representatives recently helped install the cameras, showed officers to use them and helped show how to navigate the database system the videos will be stored on.

So far, the officers have had no problems with operating them.

"A few minutes after doing policies and trainings, they were using them," said Lt. Brandon Marten. "Our officers are eager to use them. The technology is so user friendly that the learning curve has not been that steep."

Among the policy items being discussed was what video would be available to the public.

"Based on the request, we have to determine can it be released per statute, what needs to be redacted, see if there are juveniles involved. So it's the same process if you wanted to make a request for a report," Marten said.

Prior to receiving the cameras, the department relied on an audio recorder on their belt and in their vehicles. Equipping the cameras will increase evidence quality, while promoting accountability with residents and reduce complaints, Police Chief Bill Hagstrom said.

More **CAMERAS** | A5



The Ashland County Board of Supervisors has denied the claims from La Pointe regarding law enforcement. (Contributed photo)

Ashland County responds to La Pointe's claims

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Ashland County has denied the claims filed by the town of La Pointe as part of a potential lawsuit arguing the county isn't providing adequate police protection to the community.

Earlier this year, Ashland County ended a decades-long agreement under which it essentially refunded a portion of La Pointe's property taxes to help the

town pay for its own police department. State law requires sheriff's departments to provide police coverage to all towns within their boundaries. By terminating the agreement for 2023, the county is legally obligated to provide La Pointe the same level of patrol, response and backup that it provides other communities — which is not happening, Town Administrator Mike Kuchta said.

More **CLAIMS** | A5

Ashland County looks for answers to Sanborn property tax issue

ASHLAND DAILY PRESS

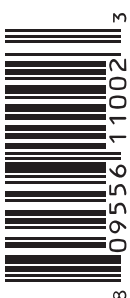
Ashland County joined forces with Bayfield County and several others to encourage state legislators to find a solution in the midst of a crippling property tax issue.

The issue began when about 85 percent of Sanborn's land was declared tax-exempt last year when a federal appeals court ruled that Bad River tribal members who own property that was once sold to non-native

tribal residents but has come back into tribal hands cannot be taxed under the 1854 treaty between the United States and the Ojibwe Nation. The ruling leaves the remaining 15 percent of property owners bearing the tax burden for the entire town of Sanborn. A similar issue is taking place in the town of Russell over in Bayfield County, where taxes rose roughly 30%.

More **TAX** | A5

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William Richard "Bill" Stenson: Bayfield

Cameras/from A1

A red light appears when the cameras are recording. There are two ways they start recording, he said. They automatically turn when a vehicle's lights and sirens are activated or when the camera is manual activated by an officer. An officer will activate them when there is any enforcement or investigative action, he/she conducts a traffic stop, or when any contact becomes dangerous, Marten pointed out.

If the police department sends a case to be reviewed by the district attorney, the body camera footage is now included with that package of information, he said.

"It may play a role in the case as they are prosecuted," Ashland County District Attorney David Meany said.

Bayfield County Sheriff Tony Williams is in the processing of purchasing body cameras and dash cameras that would



An Ashland Police Officer shows off one of the new body cameras equipped to their vests. (Tom Stankard/Staff photos)

make the department more transparent, Williams said.

"If there's a complaint, we can look at the cameras and not have to take one person's word versus another," he said.

Recordings can also be used for training purposes, Williams said.

"If there is an incident, we can research it, and learn from them, how we could have handled it better and make us better deputies all around," he said.



The Ashland Police Department received 15 body cameras intended to make the department more transparent with the public. (Tom Stankard/staff photo)

Claims/from A1

Before the Ashland County Board of Supervisors voted June 6 to deny the claims, member George Bussey said, "I don't see any claim that the sheriff has defaulted in his duties."

Although Kuchta feels Bussey is wrong, he expected the county to still deny the claims.

La Pointe represents 2.7% of Ashland County's population, but provides 20.1% of the county's property-tax revenue, town officials said. The town's claim for \$363,655 is limited to the portion that La Pointe property owners pay into the sheriff's patrol budget, Kuchta said. It is not seeking any of the roughly \$555,000 in additional money that residents pay to the county to provide 911 service, emergency management or other services.

La Pointe officials met with the state Department of Revenue in April for a hearing in Madison on a separate but related petition in which the town is asking the state to permanently transfer a portion of the county's tax levy to the town's tax levy.

"The town will wait to see what the Department of Revenue decides before we

take action on the county. With the county's denial, we are now clear to file a lawsuit with the county. We have six months to make that decision," Kuchta said.

The county has said it cannot afford to provide police service to the island and that the money it formerly sent to La Pointe is being used to pay corrections officers in the jail.

Ashland County Administrator Dan Grady declined to comment about how many correction officers they have on staff or how many have been hired since the agreement was terminated.

Kuchta said he understands the county's hardship, but terminating the law enforcement agreement isn't the right response.

"I understand they need correctional officers. The truth is it's difficult to recruit

law enforcement at any level. I understand the challenge they are facing. They just don't have a plan in place to provide La Pointe the same level of service," he said.

During his campaign, now Sheriff Brian Zupke was against the idea of

terminating the agreement and said "I'm still not for it."

"It will be difficult to provide. That's the county's decision," he said.

"I understand they need correctional officers. The truth is it's difficult to recruit law enforcement at any level. I understand the challenge they are facing. They just don't have a plan in place to provide La Pointe the same level of service."

Mike Kuchta, Town Administrator

County store, luncheon set to return

ASHLAND DAILY PRESS

The public is invited to attend the annual Country Store and Luncheon at Cable United Church of Christ on Friday. The Women's Fellowship country store will feature a homemade jam and bake sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The salad bar luncheon will be open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall for a \$12 fee. This will include bread, dessert and a beverage.

Take-outs will be available. The Cable UCC 2nd Chapter Thrift Shop will also be

open for visitors to browse. Cable UCC is located at 13445 County Highway

M in downtown Cable. For more information, please phone (715) 798-3066.

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NEW HOLLAND

Tax/from A1

This decision has led to over \$900,000 in tax collection reductions across Ashland, Bayfield, Iron, Sawyer, and Vilas counties, according to the resolution approved by the Ashland County Board of Supervisors earlier this month, or approximately \$1.8 million over the next two years. That amount is expected to increase as more parcels are removed from the tax roll, the resolution stated.

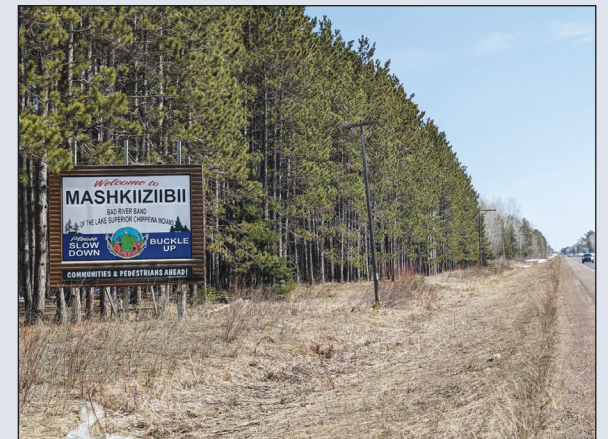
Although Ashland County officials are still waiting to hear back from state legislators about what the next step will be, County Administrator Dan Grady said he wants a solution that respects everyone involved.

"We all want everybody to be treated fairly and in a uniform manner. The state is trying to do something, they just don't know what they want to do. We probably won't hear anything until the end of the month, if that," Grady told the board of supervisors.

Because of the court's decision, taxes have gone up from about \$2,168 on a \$100,000 property last year to \$4,438 this year in Sanborn. As dire as that sounds, Bad River Tribal Chairman Mike Wiggins Jr. has said tribal members suffered more over the years as they were unfairly taxed.

The impacted counties proposed a solution. Similar to how

the federal government pays local governments payments in lieu of taxes for Federal Forest land/parks, the counties are requesting the federal government do the same for properties no longer subject to tax, but still in need of tax-funded assistance. More particularly, Ashland County is joining other impacted counties in asking the state to reimburse them for settlement payments of \$3.6 million made in accordance with state law between 2015-2022. The counties are also requesting the state makes aid payments over the next two years equal to the tax on the valuation lost as a result of the court's decision in the amount of \$1.8 million, until a permanent solution can be developed.



Ashland County officials are encouraging state legislators to find a solution to a property tax issue that caused 85% of Sanborn's land to be declared tax-exempt. (File photo)

THE CHEQUAMEGON THEATRE ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

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BY LAUREN GUNDERSON
 DIRECTED BY NICOLE FOSTER

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JUNE 18 - 2:00PM
JUNE 22, 23, 24 - 7:30PM
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