



Medford Area Quilt Show  
page 9

\$1.50



THE STAR NEWS

Sue Gebert and Gayle Perrin were among the many people out enjoying summer-like weather along the Medford Riverwalk on April 14. The area saw temperatures climb into the 80s last week causing people to breathe a sigh of relief thinking winter was over. (left) Unfortunately, area residents were in for a rude awakening come Monday morning when more than a foot of snow fell throughout the area causing school cancellations.



# Shaking things up

Supervisor calls for consolidation of county committee structure

BY BRIAN WILSON  
NEWS EDITOR

Taylor County is showing the first signs of moving toward a more streamlined and centralized power structure.

County board members on Tuesday approved on an 11-6 vote a resolution calling for the reorganization of the county board to “commit to the development of goals through a strategic plan, restructuring and consolidations within the next 12 months.”

Opposed to the resolution were board members Catherine Lemke, Rollie Thums, Lester Lewis, Scott Mildbrand, Ray Soper and Jim Metz.

The proposal was brought forward by county board member Lori Floyd. She noted that the county currently has 37 different committees several of which have overlapping areas. She said that in 2022, the county spent \$110,000 on per diem and mileage for board members attending the committees. She said that in February the county had 16 committee meetings spending \$5,395 in per diem and mileage and in March there were 17 meetings with the county spending \$5,395 in per diem and mileage. She said

See COUNTY on page 12

# Laying the groundwork

Rib Lake board eyes plans to connect middle and high school buildings

BY ELIZABETH WILSON  
REPORTER

With the goal of potentially going to the voters next spring, Rib Lake school board members are doing their homework about the needs and possible solutions to address building needs district-wide.

April’s school board meeting held

April 13, hosted Baird Director of Public Finance Kevin Mullen, Excel Engineering Muellenbach, and Excel Engineering Architect David Vanden Avond. All were there to advise the board on potential upcoming decisions on major projects, and to start laying the groundwork for major infrastructure improvements to all three buildings in the district.

Board members gathered an hour earlier than usual to go on a facilities walk-through with their visitors from Excel Engineering. The group walked through Rib Lake High School, Rib Lake Middle School, and Rib Lake Elementary School.

At this point, both Muellenbach and Vanden Avond know all three of the schools as if they went there themselves. Since September of last year, the Board has been busy conducting a facilities audit of the Rib Lake School District, hiring Excel Engineering in December. Many employees of Excel, including architects and engineers, have been in and out of the Rib Lake schools, even going as far as to take 360 degree photos to create a virtual walkthrough of the buildings. The team from Excel opened every door, looked in every nook, took data about classroom usage, and interviewed staff, board mem-

See RIB LAKE on page 10



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

Supervisor Lori Floyd called for the county board to set a plan for the future and streamline committees.

PAGE 20: Medford Parent Teacher group hosts science fair



SPORTS: Medford hosts early bird track meet



INDEX

OPINION	6A	SPORTS	1B
PUBLIC NOTICES	15A	LIVING	12B
OBITUARIES	18A	CLASSIFIEDS	14B



From the **Getting to Know Your Community** series...  
**SUPPORTING HEALTHY AGING**  
 Attend this free session to learn more about the local services and programs available for you & your loved ones as we age.  
**Tuesday, May 2, 2023 - In-Person or Online!**

Repeated sessions held at 11AM and 1PM at NTC-Medford Campus. Free lunch served at noon. **RSVPs requested online at <http://bit.ly/3o8VeFk> or to 715-748-1420.**  
 Brought to you by Commission on Aging, Health Dept., Aspirus Medford, ADRC, Human Services, Stepping Stones, Extension Taylor County, & Northcentral Technical College. Funded generously through WI DHS and Aspirus Medford Community Benefit.



## ★ County board commits to strategic planning, committee overhaul

Continued from page 1

at a time when they are calling on departments to make cuts, she said the county board must also be willing to make cuts to be more fiscally responsible.

"I love the concept," said board member Mike Bub. He said his question is who would come up with how it would be done. "We pass these resolutions with great intentions and there they sit," he said, questioning if it would be the full county board or a select committee to review and make recommendations.

Mildbrand said that while he was in favor of combining some of the committees, he cautioned against the county mirroring other counties too much. He also said he did not feel it needed to be done by resolution and instead suggested it would be set up as a special committee. "How am I supposed to vote for a reorganization plan if I don't know what the plan is," he said.

Board member Greg Knight said they needed to view this action as starting the process to come up with a plan and in the process hopefully realize some cost efficiencies. "The resolution helps get the process going," he said.

Knight described the current committee structure as being "highly siloed" with very little overlap or interaction outside of those committees. "How do we get all the members involved in these policy questions?" Knight said, noting the lack of ability for people not on committees to be able to have an impact on county operations in those areas.

Lewis said his first instinct was to vote yes on the resolution, however he said the problem he has is the timeline saying it had to be done in 12 months. He said he strongly supports developing a strategic plan noting he has been involved with creating them for several organizations. "It is a good, messy, complicated way of doing things," he said.

He said any strategic planning committee would have to be under nine board members to avoid having a board quorum and that it needs to include not just supervisors but the heads of the major county departments. He said it is important for every board member to have a say in how the plan would be developed.

"I strongly believe in creation of a five year strategic plan, I don't think it should be committed to a timeline," he said.

Board member Sue Swiantek said she was strongly in favor of the resolution and noted that other counties have gone through this process with success.

"I want Taylor County to commit to doing this," Floyd said.

"It isn't going to happen overnight," she said, noting



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

County board member Mike Bub (left) makes a point in support of a resolution calling for the board to do strategic planning including potential consolidation of committees. Board member Scott Mildbrand (right) said he supported looking at planning and the goals sought after, but didn't feel it needed to be done by a board resolution.

that it would likely be a smaller committee doing the work but bringing it back frequently to the full board. "This is for our kids and grandkids after we are gone," she said.

"I think this a great start," said board member Lynn Rosemeyer.

Board member Rod Adams noted that both the counties that were presented as examples of doing this had county administrators.

"I am not requesting Taylor County go to an administrator," Floyd said, instead she said she is focusing on improving how they are working now.

In a related action, Floyd also proposed a change to the rules of the board to set quarterly meeting dates for the county board on the third Tuesday of the designated months.

She noted that the county board met as a body on average five times a year over the past three years. She said having scheduled quarterly meetings would save costs and make it easier for board members to schedule and attend the meetings.

The meeting dates for the October budget meeting would continue to be the last Wednesday in October as spelled out in the code.

Lewis said he was supportive of the scheduled meetings, but said it looked as if it would eliminate the ability to have additional special meetings between those scheduled meetings. Floyd noted her proposal would only affect the four scheduled meetings and any others could be called at the discretion of the chair as they are currently.

There was a discussion on if the board meetings should start at 10 a.m. or at 9 a.m. A vote to change the default times to start to 9 a.m. passed 15-2 with Lewis and Thums opposed.

Board members voted to approve the rule change scheduling four meetings per year.

### Veterans Service Officer

On a unanimous vote, board members approved hiring Sheila Wundrow as the Taylor County Veterans Service officer to replace Dan Judnic who resigned effective March 24.

Wundrow completed a 20-year career with the United States Navy including four seas duty tours and three shore duty tours. Wundrow also recently graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a bachelor's degree in social work.

She was scheduled to begin working for the county starting on April 19 and will be up for review and reappointment in January 2025.

Wundrow introduced herself to the board and the audience which included a number of area veterans. She highlighted her service experience and the places and ships she served on during her military career.

During the rules discussion portion of the meeting, Rosemeyer presented a proposal to require the county to seek input from area veterans organizations when there is a veterans lay member position open on the veterans service committee.

Bub said he welcomed getting input from the veterans organizations, but objected to having outside groups appointing someone to serve on a county committee.

Rosemeyer said the intent would be for the county board chairman to make the final appointment.

Lewis said he did not like the wording Rosemeyer used and suggested that it should instead say all the VFW and American Legion posts may make recommendations to the county board chair for someone to be appointed to the veterans service committee.

Board members agreed to the rule change to invite county veterans groups to recommend people to serve in the designated veterans seats on the veterans service committee.

Following the rules revisions, the county board went into recess for members of the committee on committees and rules to discuss the filling of vacancies on the veterans service committee due to the resignations of Steve Voss and Lewis from the committee. Brian Carey was appointed to fill the seat previously held by Voss and Rod Adams was appointed to fill a county board member position. Catherine Lemke was appointed to serve as the new committee chairman for the veterans service committee replacing Lewis in that position. Other members remained the same.

### Land Information Department

In a move that is projected to save the county at least \$50,000 a year in ongoing labor costs, board members approved on a 13-4 vote the creation of a land information department in the county.

The new department merges the existing land information office, which had been under the county treasurer with the surveyor's office which had been a stand-alone two person department.

With the upcoming retirement of county surveyor Bob Meyer, the employees in the two offices had proposed the



Sheila Wundrow is the new Taylor County Veterans Service Officer.

### Arbor Day Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, In 1872 J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees, and

**WHEREAS**, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska,

**WHEREAS**, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, and

**WHEREAS**, trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate the temperature, clean the air, produce oxygen and provide habitat for wildlife, and

**WHEREAS**, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products, and

**WHEREAS**, trees in our City increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, and

**WHEREAS**, trees are a source of joy and spiritual renewal, and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Medford has been recognized as a Tree City USA by The National Arbor Day Foundation and desires to continue its tree-planting ways,

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Michael Wellner, Mayor of the City of Medford, Taylor County, Wisconsin, do hereby proclaim Friday, April 28, 2023 as

"Arbor Day"

in the City of Medford, and I urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to support efforts to care for our trees and woodlands and to support our City's community forestry program, and

**FURTHER**, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the hearts and promote the well-being of present and future generations.

Dated this 21st day of April, 2023.

Signed:

/s/ Michael Wellner  
Mayor

WNAXLP

**Glass**  
**TO GO**

AUTO & HOME GLASS REPAIR

- Windshield Replacement
- Windshield Repair
- Windshield Wipers
- Equipment Glass
- Forestry Windows
- Skidsteer Windows

1369 N. 8th Street • Medford, WI 54451 • 715-748-3757

**FREE PICKUP AND DROP OFF IN TOWN**

change with the current real property lister becoming the new department head. The department would continue to report to the land information committee.

Lewis said they are projecting at least a \$50,000 savings due to the elimination of Meyer's position and reducing the staff of the two offices from four people to three. However, it was noted there would be the need to hire outside contractors to do some of the surveying maintenance work. In addition, with the changes and shifting of job duties, the existing positions are being reevaluated to see what their new spots in the pay scale should be.

Board member Rod Adams objected to the change because the resolution brought forward to the board did not include any assurance that the real property lister staff would be available to help assist the treasurer's office during tax time as they have done in the past.

Human resources director Nicole Hager said that was included in the job descriptions for the department staff.

According to Lewis, the \$50,000 in savings is the lowest case scenario and he said he hoped it would be more.

Bub questioned the change saying it was creating a new department head at a time when the county was looking to reduce positions. Lewis emphasized that it does not create any additional department heads simply replacing one for another. "We did not add at the administrative level," he said.

Lewis went on to note that this was an employee-driven idea on ways to be more efficient and save the county money going forward. "This is one of the things we are asking employees to do," he said, praising them for coming forward with the idea.

On a roll call vote, the new department was approved 13-4 with Mildbrand, Adams, Swiantek and Bub opposed.

In other business board members:

★ Approved the grant requests from the power line impact fee: \$6,000 toward the creation of two sand volleyball courts in the Gilman Park; \$6,000 to complete the ceiling and purchase picnic tables for the outdoor pavilion at the Rib Lake Public Library, \$15,000 to the Gilman Development Foundation to build a new park and farmer's market space in the village; \$15,000 for upgrades to the Sackett Lake County park.

★ Approved on a 16-1 vote with Bub opposed, a resolution to enter into the settlement agreement with major pharmacy retailers to get a share of an opioid class action settlement that was reached. Bub went on record in opposing the action noting that he felt the pharmacies did nothing wrong in filling opioid prescriptions and that the target should be those who over-prescribed them. He said the retailers would end up passing the expense onto consumers through higher costs. Knight countered that if Taylor County did not vote to get their share of the settlement money somebody else would get it.

★ Approved on a 16-1 vote with Lewis opposed, purchasing a new voting system for the county board at a one time cost of \$1,400. The system includes hand-held devices which have buttons that can be programmed for yes, no or abstain or can be designated to be for specific individuals for board elections. Board members will click on the button for their vote and after the voting period is closed the vote tallies and how each voted would be displayed on a screen in the board room. The devices will allow for more streamlined voting rather than calling out each board member individually. Because all board members would vote at the same time, it would also prevent people from being able to decide how to vote based on how others on the board voted. Money for the purchase will come from the county board budget line item.

★ Approved an amended revision to the county employee handbook which is intended to streamline the recruitment process. Under the change, department heads in consultation with their oversight committee chairs may post for established positions immediately when they become vacant with the condition that the department's oversight committee vote on it before the position is hired. Currently there is a delay in posting positions while department heads wait for the committees to meet to approve routine hiring for vacancies. Soper had opposed the draft of the handbook change that had been prepared by Hager.

★ Approved an ordinance change streamlining the hiring process for sheriff's deputies to reflect the actual process currently being used in the county.

★ Approved on a 16-1 vote with Thums opposed a species and habitats conservation agreement regarding three endangered or soon to be listed bat species. Under the agreement, which was developed by department of natural resources personnel and bat experts from Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, the county agrees to follow some basic habitat preservation steps such as creating buffers around winter nesting sites. In return the county would get an incidental take permit which would protect them from federal enforcement if the bats were inadvertently disturbed or killed.

★ Approved a resolution recognizing Cheryl Ketelhut for more than 12 years of employment with Taylor County human services. Ketelhut retired in January.



County board chairman Jim Metz presented Rose Thums (left) with a plaque in recognition of her many years of service to Taylor County. Thums had more than 36 years in the clerk of court office.



County board chairman Jim Metz presented Linda Daniels (left) with a plaque in recognition of her many years of service to Taylor County. Daniels had more than 27 years of service to the county.

Let your graduate know how much you care

# CLASS OF 2023

# STRONG

Say Congratulations to your graduate with an advertisement in the

## 2023 GRADUATION SECTION

**Deadline is Friday, May 12**

This section includes...

- ✓ Individual photos of EACH student with the names of their parents and future goals.

Ad Size	Price
2x2	for \$41.00
2x3	for \$61.50
3x3	for \$92.25

Please include this information for your ad...

Name of graduate: \_\_\_\_\_

School graduating from: \_\_\_\_\_

Future plans/college planning on attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies/Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Who the ad is from: \_\_\_\_\_

Photo that you would like on the ad - either emailed or brought in to be scanned.

Email to [snads@centralwinews.com](mailto:snads@centralwinews.com),

put GRAD AD with their name in the subject line

What size ad (see above): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name & daytime phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Call  
**715-748-2626**  
with  
questions

Class of  
**2023**  
Congratulations

Ads can be dropped off at The Star News, 116 S. Wisconsin Ave., Medford  
OR emailed to [snads@centralwinews.com](mailto:snads@centralwinews.com).  
Please include your name & a daytime phone number where you may be reached for payment.

THE **STAR NEWS** published by

**BANNERS AVAILABLE**  
We offer banners at reasonable prices  
made of non-tear stock  
suitable for short-term use **OUTDOORS**