



Edge, Pines to co-op
Sports, Page 8

CDACs to meet
Outdoors, Page 22



THE NORTHWOODS RIVER NEWS

Stage is set for
'Steel Magnolias'
Community, Page 2

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With some dissension, Jensen returns to county board

Crescent town
chairman says
he's a good fit
for the board

By Richard Moore
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Former Oneida County board supervisor Robb Jensen is now a current county board supervisor, after county board chairman Scott Holewinski tapped Jensen for the seat following the abrupt resignation of former supervisor Bob Thome.

Holewinski made the appointment — and Jensen was sworn in following board approval — at the board's April meeting.

The move was not without some dissension, as supervisors Linnaea Newman and Steven Schreier raised questions about the quick appointment.

Thome resigned the day before the meeting, and Holewinski immediately tapped Jensen after Jensen texted him his interest and posted an amended agenda.

See **Jensen** . . . page 23



Donation helps spur school district to survey community on technical education

Capital project
referendum a
possibility

By Heather Schaefer
OF THE RIVER NEWS

The School District of
Rhineland is taking a seri-

ous look at improving its technical education program and once again Dr. Lee Swank has jump-started the initiative by making a donation. During the April 17 meeting of the district's capital projects ad hoc committee, district superintendent Eric Burke announced that

Swank had made a five-year commitment of \$500,000 toward updating the district's technical education equipment.

"This isn't the kind of thing that (Swank) has normally been involved with but he sees the value of it, he sees how it can impact the

community and he's really getting behind it," Burke said.

This is not the first time Swank has given generously for the betterment of the community.

A \$500,000 donation from

See **Upgrade** . . . page 5



RENEE DRASKIEWICZ/RIVER NEWS

In the shadow of the historic Oneida County Courthouse, workers were busy Monday afternoon, April 24, 2023 removing trees as part of the Oneida Avenue street improvement project.

Oneida Avenue project underway

By Heather Schaefer
OF THE RIVER NEWS

After a one-week delay due to inclement weather, the spring road construction season is officially underway in the City of Rhineland and it's starting with the Oneida Avenue project.

City of Rhineland public works director Randy Myrum provided an update on the project during the April 24 Common Council meeting.

Myrum presented a series of slides showing the work that had been done as of Monday evening.

"Everything was delayed a week be-

cause of the weather we had," he said, adding that as of Monday the schedule had not been altered as a result of the delay. "I am not altering the schedule yet," he said. "Mark Barden from Town and Country and I are dis-

See **Project** . . . page 5

Oneida County sheriff explains search procedure

Questions raised after
bodies of missing teens
discovered in Enterprise

By Brian Jopek
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

In the days since the bodies of Lincoln County teenagers Dakota Brown, 16, and Aiden Grefe, 17, were found on Oneida County forest land in the town of Enterprise on April 17, questions have been raised regarding the search operation procedures used to find them.

The investigation into what led to the deaths continues but authorities believe cold weather was a factor.

One questions that has been raised is why the search operation was called off at 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 16.

Oneida County Sheriff Grady Hartman, the officer in charge who made the call to stop the search that night and resume the next morning, confirmed that was the case.

"The weather was bad and it was turning worse," he said of the colder temperatures and the start of what ended up being several inches of snow in the area. "We had the drone up as much as we could, we had people in the woods and we started to worry about ... we checked all the trails and the roads and we were working on the rest. I can tell you we were working on some other leads, that they

(Brown and Grefe) got picked up and might be in other places. So, we were working two different angles at the same time."

Hartman said there was definite concern not only for the two teenagers but "getting other people lost" and as the darkness fell on the night of the 16th, "we were gonna come up with a new plan and re-start at six in the morning when we had some light."

"The elements were against us and we wanted to get set for the morning and go from there," he said, adding that there were "more firefighters than I can count," six K-9s and law en-

See **Search** . . . page 5

Obits

From page 4

Reverend Richard Miller will be officiating. A complete notice will follow shortly. You may leave your private condolences for the Browne family at www.carlsonfh.com.

The Carlson Funeral Home (715-369-1414) is serving the Browne family.

Carol Rae Polinski

Carol Rae Polinski, 83, of Eagle River and a former Rhinelander resident, passed away on Monday, April 24, 2023, at Legacy of the Northwoods in Eagle River and under the care of Compassus Hospice.



Polinski

Carol was born on Dec. 22, 1939, in Phelps, to Walter and Norah (Moran) Byington. As a child growing up on

a farm just outside of Eagle River, Carol was the youngest of eight kids. She often spoke of how she enjoyed her childhood. Although her family didn't have much money, they always had food to eat, clothes to wear, and a roof over their heads. They had chores to do being on a farm, but they also had fun with what they had. She remembers riding bikes, playing baseball in the pasture, riding toboggans in the winter, and playing with dolls or the various animals around the farm. She also had fond memories of picking blueberries and rushing home so her mom could make the best blueberry cobbler.

Carol was a 1957 graduate of Eagle River High School. Upon completing high school Carol moved to Milwaukee where she was employed with Northwestern Mutual Life Company.

On June 7, 1958, Carol was united in marriage to LeRoy T. Polinski at St. Mary's Catholic Church. The couple made their home in Rhinelander. Carol had various part-time jobs

while raising their kids. As the children got older, Carol went to work full-time and was employed at Happiness Gift and Card Shop, and later at JC Penney in Rhinelander.

She will be dearly missed by her children, Ken (Tricia Harrod) Polinski of San Antonio, Texas, Beth (Neil) Terzinski of Rhinelander, Dennis (Ranneig) Polinski of West Bend; grandchildren, Tyler Polinski of San Antonio, Texas, Tanya Polinski of Austin, Texas, Jennifer (Matt Pritzl) Terzinski of Presque Isle, Ingrid (Bradley) Groth of Howards Grove and Greta Polinski of West Bend; great-grandson, Koda Mellgren of Austin, Texas, and her four-legged companion, Gunner. Also surviving are other relatives and friends.

Carol is preceded in death by her parents, four sisters, three brothers, husband, LeRoy Polinski, son, Michael Polinski, daughter-in-law, Becky Polinski and a granddaughter, Brittany Kropp.

Carol enjoyed watching and socializing at LeRoy's softball and snowshoe softball games, snowmo-

bling, camping and pontoon boat rides, watching her kids and grandkids participate in baseball, gymnastics, dance, and softball, and trips to Arizona, Texas and West Bend to visit family. She also enjoyed shopping, going to lunch with her former co-workers, Friday night fish fry, Sunday dinners with family and friends, attending Brewers games, and watching the Brewers on TV, never missing a game.

A private family service will be held at a later date.

Carol's family would like to thank the staff at Legacy of the Northwood's Assisted Living in Eagle River and Laura Jevencoski from ADRC of Oneida County. The support, love, and care you provided our mom/grandma, and her family will remain in our hearts.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Hildebrand Funeral Home & Cremation Specialists, 24 E. Davenport Street, Rhinelander, Wisconsin, 54501, 715-365-4343. Everyone is invited to sign the guestbook or leave an online condolence at

www.hildebrandrussfh.com.

Anna Mae Berndt

Anna Mae Berndt, age 95, of Rhinelander, died on April 24, 2023, at the Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital. She was born on Dec. 2, 1927, in Milwaukee, the daughter of John and Margaret (Crowley) Gardner. She married Ronald Berndt on Dec. 31, 1948, in Milwaukee.



Berndt

Anna Mae and Ronald lived in their home in Grafton for over 50 years, and visited their cottage in Rhinelander with their children every summer. They loved their log cabin that was built in the 1800s.

Bike riding, growing flowers and sitting on the pier were a few things she enjoyed doing at their cottage. It became a special place as she planted a memorial garden for her son Chuck there and

taught her kids how to fish off that pier. Anna Mae also loved to read and shared that with her kids by taking them to the library twice a week, all year round.

Anna is survived by her daughters Patricia (Eddie) Clinton, Barbara Mlodzik and Carol (Tony) Iadanza, her son Steve (Debbie Krug) Berndt, her grandsons Steve, Nathan, Peter and Michael, her great-grandchildren Theodore, Grace, Vincent, Gemma, Kyrsten and Kaylin, niece, nephews, other family and friends. She was preceded in death by her husband Ronald on Feb. 14, 2010, her son Chuck, her sisters Evelyn Keegan and Judy Stauss and her brothers Thomas and Patrick Gardner.

The family would like to extend a big thank you to the staff at Milestone for the excellent care Anna Mae received and the support they provided.

Per Anna's wishes, private family services will be held. You may leave your private condolences for the Berndt family at www.carlsonfh.com. The Carlson Funeral Home (715-369-1414) is serving the Berndt family.

St. Germain entertains request to open town roads to ATV/UTVs

By Fred Williston

SPECIAL TO THE LAKELAND TIMES

The St. Germain ATV Club submitted a written request to town board chairman Tom Christensen on March 23 asking to have all of the town's hard-surface roads opened for year-round ATV/UTV traffic. During the April 10 town board meeting, supervisors discussed the idea and took the first steps towards acting on it.

Gary Penner, president of the ATV club, opened the discussion by addressing the board.

"I've been getting a push on this — questions on this, requests for this — from the town residents for a couple of years," he said. "I know that there was a pushback from some of the original board members about not doing this, but at the time, we did not

have the roads open in town, specifically (Wisconsin State Highway) 155 and (Wisconsin State Highway) 70."

"Before, there was really no place to go," Penner said. "You couldn't get across 155 to go west, because that's a snowmobile trail up there. You couldn't go north or east, because you couldn't get out of downtown. You couldn't go south, because you couldn't get through downtown. Well, those roads are open now. 155 and 70 are open, and so now there's someplace to go."

"The towns around us — Eagle River, Minocqua, Woodruff... Newbold — have opened their town roads," Penner added. "And then, of course there are the county

See **ATVs**. . . page 21

Search

From page 1

enforcement personnel from three different counties — Oneida, Lincoln and Langlade — involved in the search.

"Obviously, the outcome isn't what we

wanted and when there is a bad outcome, law enforcement can't do anything right," Hartman concluded. "It's part of the job, I guess."

Brian Jopek may be reached via email at bjopek@lakeland-times.com.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured is a map of the temporary alternate route created to divert traffic during the Oneida project.

Project

From page 1

cussing if the schedule needs to be altered but right now we still see a chance to finish on the predicted time that we set out for ourselves."

He noted that motorists will have to take an alternate route when traveling in the work area.

"All traffic going westbound on Lincoln Street is going to be taking a left on Shepherd, making its way on the south side roads and re-establishing itself back on to

Courtney," he said.

"The only problem we had today was the excessive amount of traffic that was cutting through the Holiday station," he noted, adding that the station's management requested the city shut off access to Oneida Avenue.

That was accomplished via barricades and Myrum said he's confident motorists will eventually become accustomed to following the alternate route.

Excavation was set to begin on Tuesday, he added.

"Probably the deepest part of the entire

project we'll start tackling tomorrow," he said.

The Oneida project is one of a number of city and state road projects slated for the Rhinelander area this spring.

"2023 is going to be a huge year for road construction for Rhinelander," Myrum said during a public informational meeting on the projects in late March. "We have a lot going on this year. We're going to have the DOT's State Highway 17 project. Then there's going to be our Timber Drive project, our Oneida (Avenue) project. We have hotel

developments and there's going to be some construction there with some of those. So please brace for it."

"It's going to be beautiful in the end," he added.

To watch Myrum's presentation, as well as the rest of the council meeting, visit www.hodagtv.com.

As the work continues, updates on the project will be posted on the city website, www.rhinelandercity-hall.org, and on the city's Facebook page.

Heather Schaefer may be reached at heather@rivernews-online.com.

Upgrade

From page 1

the Swank family back in 2019 was the springboard for the construction of the 128,000 square foot Hodag Dome. The

mult-use indoor facility opened in 2021 and has become the community's centerpiece facility.

Last year, Swank donated 416.3 acres of property in the area known as Heal Creek to the City of Rhinelander for the

development of a seasonal recreational trail system.

Burke indicated that information gathering concerning improving the district's technical education offerings has been ongoing for some time and the donation has provided a

welcome boost.

A district group has visited eight schools to learn more about equipment and facilities in use elsewhere in the state, he said.

The goal is to pro-

See **Upgrade**. . . page 23

The Northwoods River News is a proud supporter of the Rhinelander Food Pantry. **Want to contribute?** Drop off your canned goods donation at the River News office: 232 S. Courtney St., Rhinelander

Upgrade

From page 5

vide students with the curriculum, equipment and facilities they need to meet the needs of employers in the technical sector.

A major component of this initiative will be a community survey, Burke noted.

"We're going to ask the board to survey the community, see if they would possibly support a capital project referendum for part of it, all of it, none of it, see what the interest is there," he said.

"The equipment is one piece and the actual facility is another piece and that's

where the capital project part of it comes in," he added, noting that such an upgrade would be a "tremendous value" that would "pay off big time for our community down the road."

Board member Mike Roberts agreed the survey is necessary to gauge the community's interest.

"We know we need to do something with tech ed, we need to bring it up to date," he noted. "We need to be able to serve our partners in the community."

"We're not saying we're going to referendum, (the) survey and those meetings will help determine that," he added.

"I'm excited that we have

someone that sees the value in it. I think we can build off of that, with or without a referendum," Burke added, noting that the district's technical education instructors are doing the best they can but some of the equipment they are working with is "Korean War old."

"We are currently working on finalizing a plan for facilities and equipment to take to the school board in June," Burke said in response to an email request for additional information on the technical education project. "We will be open to other sponsorship or donation from our partners and/or community members toward the project."

ONEIDA COUNTY COURT

The following cases were recently filed or heard in Oneida County Circuit Court from April 18-24

Dawn R. Poupart, 56, Lac du Flambeau, charged with battery or threat to judge/prosecutor/law enforcement officer, disorderly conduct, and bail jumping (misdemeanor), has an initial appearance on May 8 at 1:30 p.m.

Sierra S. Thoms, 26, Lac du Flambeau, charged with retail theft (intentionally taking <=\$500, repeater) and bail jumping (misdemeanor and felony, repeater), had arrest warrant issued for them.

Travis M. Williams, 29, Minocqua, charged with bail jumping (felony), restricting/obstructing an officer, possession of methamphetamines, possession of narcotic drugs, and possession of drug paraphernalia, has an adjourned initial appearance on May 15 at 2:30 p.m. and a cash bond of \$250.

Travis Timothy Johnson, 49, Harshaw, charged with child abuse (intentionally causing harm) and disorderly conduct (domestic abuse), has a status conference on May 15 at 2:30 p.m. and a cash bond of \$300.

Jensen

From page 1

That meeting notice did not meet the open meetings law's 24-hour normal posting requirement, though the county claimed a "good cause" exemption, saying Thome had resigned earlier in the day and it wasn't possible to provide 24-hours notice.

In raising his questions about the appointment, Schreier pointed out that, in his previous tenure on the board, Jensen had often called for positions to be advertised in the larger community. Jensen made those arguments, however, mainly about paid staff positions.

"As some of the members of this board served with Mr. Jensen in the past when he was a supervisor for the district that he's asking to represent today, it behooves me to point out that, more times than I can count, Mr. Jensen often chastised us for filling positions in the county without opening that position up to the public to make sure that we get the best candidate to fill that position, whether it was internally or externally," Schreier said. "I feel that we're kind of failing to do that today."

In looking at the timeline of when people were notified of the opening and of when Jensen was either approached or approached the county about filling the position, Schreier said, the board itself wasn't notified until 1:30 in the af-

ternoon through an amended agenda.

"So it's interesting to me that Mr. Jensen himself should be championing to at the very least put this off until we open up this process to the other residents of Crescent, so that we know that we're going to be filling this with the best person that we can possibly fill it with," he said.

And there was another factor to consider, Schreier said.

"It should also be pointed out that the seat was filled by Mr. Jensen until it wasn't," he said. "And Mr. Thome resided there through two election cycles. So apparently the people in Crescent did not find Mr. Jensen their choice in two election cycles. That should be taken into consideration as well."

Schreier said he had nothing against Jensen personally.

"I think he is qualified for the position, but it's about the process," he said. "And we have had two openings on the county board since I've been on it. One was district one, the last one, Moria King. And that was filled by Mr. Showalter and we had a previous county supervisor apply to have their position reinstated to them and they were turned down for whatever reason."

Then there was the appointment of supervisor Mike Roach, Schreier said.

"We had that position open," he said. "There were candidates that were brought in for consid-

eration. I think something like five different candidates. And so I would like to not see us deviate from that process. I don't see that this needs to be expedited and done today. I think it should just be addressed the way we have in the past."

Holewinski said there was no formal process for appointing supervisors to vacant seats.

"There is no policy on how I get to that point after receiving his text requesting to be on the board," Holewinski said. "With his experience and now being the chair of the town of Crescent, I felt that no matter if I advertised, that my decision would have been the same in the end. Plus now he'll be here for the next month where we've got meetings dealing with social services and Human Center and things like that."

Newman also raised the fact that the quick appointment differed from past practice.

"When Moria King resigned, I took that as to be the process of how we replaced that person," Newman said. "And when this happened, it happened in a blink. It's like I opened my emails and it was already done. And I am just wondering about the transparency."

Newman said she was not questioning Holewinski's right to choose whom he wished.

"But it didn't follow the pattern that I had seen before," she said. "And I'm wondering what our constituency is going to think of the

difference in those patterns, if anything."

Holewinski said simply that the constituency in his district supports what he does on the board and he had considered the matter carefully.

"I analyzed that, and between the county clerk and corporation counsel, this is what we decided to do," he said. "I said I don't think my pick would be any different a month from now than it was today. And so I chose to put it on. You can vote it down. We can wait a month. I can bring it back next month. I'm almost sure it'll be the same as it is."

Jensen's background

As a former supervisor with a long record of administrative experience, Jensen told the board he was well-suited for the job.

"I have county board experience for six years," Jensen told supervisors. "I served on the administration committee, capital improvement committee, the efficiency team, worked on UW Extension, and land and water."

He also cited his work on public works, the highway safety panel, and other experience, including his professional experience as an educator for more than 30 years — 14 years as a teacher, as an assistant principal, as principal at both private and public schools, as a CEO at a private high school and then school superintendent.

"I think the educational experience that I gained from UW-Madison, along with my ex-

perience in educational administration, gave me a skill set and experience that I thought would help on the county board," he said. "I also grew up in the town of Crescent. Obviously I was gone for 30-some years in administration. When I retired, I came back and reside on Crescent Lake, property that my wife's grandfather bought back in 1950."

His past service on the administration committee would make for an easy transition into the seat, Jensen said.

"Being on administration, you get a knowledge of what goes on in LRES (labor relations and employee services)," he said. "Those committees kind of work hand in hand. I have good knowledge of the LRES committee. I have good knowledge of what social services and the Human Services Center is from that [experience]. And then I also served on UW-Extension for six years and have experience as a lake district representative. So should that be the decision of the county board or chair to fill those positions, I feel that should be a pretty seamless move into those positions."

But Jensen said he would also be prepared to make tough calls on controversial issues.

"The other thing I think is we hear a lot is that county board is a nonpartisan position and that's true," he said. "However, we also deal with some very emotional and partisan issues. And I can suggest to you that my role in administra-

tion and also for six years on the county board, I have experience with that."

Jensen cited the county's controversial mining ordinance as an example.

"The state rewrote the mining ordinance, and it was a responsibility of the county board to align our local and county ordinances with the state," he said. "And we did that. And as soon as that vote came, all of us that voted to adopt the resolution to align with the state's statute, for whatever reason we get attacked for being pro-mining, and, for whatever reason, those who voted against it, they are not pro-mining. That's not true. The truth is, we aligned the ordinance with the state and it actually gave us more control."

Jensen reminded board members that they would soon be dealing with another controversial issue, the Pelican River Forest easement.

"I think I understand that whatever your decision is, you have to stand up for [that decision]," he said. "You have to do what's in the best interest of your constituents and some are going to agree with you and some are not going to agree."

Ultimately, the vote to approve Jensen's appointment was 18 votes for, with Schreier opposing and Newman abstaining.

Richard Moore is the author of "Dark State" and may be reached at richardd3d.substack.com.

LdF Road

From page 3

public hearing."

"We are allowed to go into closed session while negotiating other legal matters," Gaulke said.

"Not negotiating," Hornbostle said. "While you're setting up to negotiate, you as a board are allowed to

(convene into closed session) but you are not allowed to negotiate in private with any other organization."

"I'll have to double check on that," Gaulke said.

"Do you want the number?" Hornbostle asked and he provided a phone number for the attorney general's office.

"I've also filed an information report with

the sheriff's office that has been turned over to the district attorney also," he said. "So, anything that's been negotiated during an illegal meeting is void and not enforceable. So, no matter what you guys do, you can't hold the tribe to it. There's a way around it and that is don't go over there with a quorum. Go over with your attorney and one person."

After another 30 minutes of discussion, Gaulke called the question on Klingaman's motion and it failed, 33 against and 13 in favor of Gaulke's removal from the negotiating process.

One other motion was brought to the floor during the April 18 annual meeting.

The second motion came from Lac du Flambeau resident

Steve Bunda, who proposed the town create the position of administrative coordinator for town roads.

The purpose, basically, would be to have the person "codifying all town road records" and do the background on and oversee matters pertaining to the town's jurisdiction of its roads.

While several of those present ex-

pressed interest in the idea, there was concern it would take too long for the person hired to fill that position to be effective in helping resolve current questions regarding road issues in relation to tribal claims.

Bunda's motion was defeated, 24 to 22.

Brian Jopek may be reached via email at bjopek@lakeland-times.com.