



Just Another Week

By Andrew Dannehy

Arcadia Has A Bad Policy

I could have just filled out the form and paid five bucks, but that really isn't the point.

Upon hearing a few weeks ago that someone had crashed into the front of the Arcadia Post Office – closing the facility at a time when people need it the most – I wanted to report what, exactly, happened. I requested a report from the crash from Arcadia Police Chief Diana Anderson, but was told I would have to fill out a form and mail it to the city along with \$5.

On the surface that doesn't seem like a major ask, but I was feeling a bit frisky and stubborn that week. Furthermore, part of my duty as the editor of the official county newspaper is to make sure local governments are following the rules. If they were going to insist that I follow their rules, I was certainly within my right to insist they follow the state's rules.

While legal, it isn't typical for newspapers to be made to pay for such reports, especially in a case like this because the information included would be to the benefit of the public. The police report provides an accurate account of what happened and can quiet the rumor mill. Personally, I have heard two rumors about the crash — one stating it was an elderly person and the other saying it was a teenager who was just learning how to drive.

Regardless of the city's desire to inform the public, taxpayers have a right to know what happened to the public building. I'll admit I was a little annoyed that I even had to ask for a report because a press release of some sort should've been sent out the day the crash happened. But I did have to ask, then was told that I'd have to ask the exact same question again by mail and pay them because they have a policy that states as much.

Arcadia having a policy regarding public records requests is fine, but the fact that the policy, apparently, doesn't align with state statutes is problematic.

State statutes make it quite clear that not only does someone requesting records from Arcadia not have to use the city's preferred form, they don't have to use a form at all. Statute 19.35(1)(h) states "a request may be made orally." Furthermore, section 19.35(1)(i) states "no request... may be refused because the person making the request is unwilling to be identified or to state the purpose of the request."

I pointed out that my initial request, while informal, certainly fulfilled the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. However, I was told that I would still need to print out the form and mail it in. I wanted the information that day, mailing a form to get it wasn't an option and state law clearly says that the city could not require that I do so.

I sent my concern to the city attorney, thinking he surely would step in and realize that the city policy didn't match state law. However, he told me he would only intervene if the city asked him to.

So, then I reached out to the city mayor. To be clear, I don't expect the mayor to know the open records laws and Arcadia Mayor Kevin Mayzek did about all I could ask, which was to look into it. I was certain that once he communicated with the city attorney, the problem would go away. However, he apparently was informed that the city would enforce its policy above state law.

At any point someone could've stepped in and just sent me the report. Instead, the mayor had to speak to the attorney who reportedly charged the city for that time. It would've cost the city nothing to just send me the report, instead it lost a lot more in attorney fees than the \$5 would cover.

On what legal grounds was my request being denied? I asked, but never got an answer.

This isn't about \$5 and it isn't about a form: it's about the principle. Government is supposed to be open, that's why these laws exist. I'm cool with the city having policies and even being strict on those policies, but it shouldn't pick and choose which rules it wants to follow. This isn't the first time I've had to make a public records request, but it is the first time I can recall that I've had to fight for it.

From The Early Files



Compiled from: The Arcadia News-Leader, Galesville Republican & Whitehall Times

25 YEARS AGO January 1, 1998

Barring a sudden surge of interest in the next few days, there won't be many decisions for Whitehall-area voters to make when they go to the polls on April 7. With the deadline for filing candidacies only five days away, there are no contests so far for the Whitehall city council, Whitehall district school board or Trempealeau County board of supervisors seats. The only race, apparently, will be on the Independence district school board.

A rural Arcadia dairy farmer was ordered to pay a forfeiture and court costs for violating state rules governing sanitation in milk production. Trempealeau County Circuit Judge John Damon on Dec. 17 signed a consent decree negotiated between Tim Pronschinske and the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection this past summer. The decree settled a complaint filed by the DATCP in Trempealeau County Circuit Court citing

multiple violations of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. According to the civil complaint, milk from Pronschinske's town of Arcadia farm exceeded limits on somatic cells in the code's agriculture, trade and consumer protection section. A high somatic cell count in milk indicates health problems with the cows producing it and often reflects on the sanitation practices of the dairy producer.

Gold'n Plump officials recently did their part to ensure that victims of domestic violence and abuse were not forgotten during the holiday season. The company announced the donation of chicken to 36 families so they can enjoy the season.

The recall petition against Blair-Taylor school board president David Quarne has been certified. It is not yet known who will appear on the ballot to run against Quarne, a 13-year board member. The petition was led by Daryl Rose of Taylor.

Midge Feyen of Ettrick has been appointed postmaster for the Blair Post Office. A

ceremony will be held on Jan. 9 with West Salem Postmaster Sig Czeiska, who served the Blair office for more than 10 years, presiding.

50 YEARS AGO January 4, 1973

Among the Trempealeau County officers sworn in this week Tuesday morning were two new ones, District Attorney Roman Feltes and Register of Deeds Nels Hegge. Two others, Clerk of Court Evelyn Maldonado and Sheriff Wayne Holte, are starting their first full terms, having been elected in November after being appointed to their posts earlier in the year.

Mary Matthews of Independence, who has served eight months of a 27-month prison sentence for her part in the kidnapping of an Eau Claire youth last March, has been denied probation.

By a joint resolution, the county boards of Buffalo, Trempealeau and Jackson counties have changed the name of the West Central Community Mental Health Center. The new name is the Mississippi River Mental Health Center. All service and locations in Alma, Mondovi, Independence and Black River Falls remain

exactly the same.

The 13th child born to Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Kotlarz of Arcadia is Arcadia's New Year Baby and thus became the recipient of many gifts awarded by local business and professional people in the 18th annual First Baby of the Year Contest. The baby boy, named Kerry Joseph, arrived at 12:25 a.m. Jan. 1 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Arcadia. He weighed eight pounds and seven ounces and measured 19 inches at birth.

Edwin Sullivan and Wendell Sacia have purchased the former Schilling electric building on Mill Road in Galesville from the Galesville Manufacturing Corporation. Their plans for the factory have not been disclosed.

Henry Kopp of Ettrick was elected director of the Tri-State Breeders cooperative at the annual meeting for Trempealeau County members in Whitehall.

75 YEARS AGO January 1, 1948

The public is warned to use precaution when approaching crossings on the Green Bay and Western Railroad. With through

(continued on Page 16)



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Why be a volunteer?
It's not for money, it's not for fame. It's not for any personal gain.
It's just for love of fellow man. It's just to send a helping hand. It's just to give a tithe of self. That's something you can't buy with wealth.
It's not for medals won with pride. It's for that feeling deep inside. It's that reward down in your heart. It's that feeling that you've been a part of helping others fare and near. That makes you a volunteer.

Paul Halvorsen,
Arcadia

To the Editor:

Hello fellow Times readers!
Did you tire of everyone joyously wishing you a Merry Christmas this year? I didn't! Each salutatory greeting was music to my ears. It was one thing that took the edge off from my experienced trials and tribulations of 2022.
Mind you; this wasn't always the case for me individually. Some members of my family could attest, the holiday's often caused me to withdraw from the status quo. A casual reserved effort at best so as not to spoil another's experience.

I'm talking about the horrors of social anxiety disorder. It's characterized as an intense, persistent fear of being watched and judged by others. It typically begins in the early to mid-teens though it can sometimes start in younger children or adulthood. Experts don't know exactly why it happens. Maybe a chemical imbalance in the brain.

Some of the signs are evident only if you're aware of them. Blushing, sweating, trembling, avoiding people, standing rigidly, difficulty speaking, their mind goes blank, dizziness or lightheadedness, and rapid heart rate. It's pretty interesting to hit the old interweb and do some reading on the subject.

Most people who experience the malady, like myself, hiding it so well that no one would ever know. So, I'll close with this:

Look back on your family gatherings. Close your eyes and do a little meditation. Was anyone in your acquaintance showing signs of social anxiety? Knowing and understanding is half the battle.

Give us a break on New Year's Eve this year!

Anxiety issues and depression suck, but they're treatable. Then, like me, someday you will be able to cherish the holidays again.

Have a safe and happy New Year!

Mr. Dana B. Auer
Galesville

Trempealeau County
Times

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WEEKLY POLL QUESTION

Do you make New Year's Resolutions?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Vote at www.trempecountytimes.com or call us at 715-538-4765. Voting closes at 8 a.m. Tuesday morning..

LAST WEEK'S POLL QUESTION RESULTS

Do you have any Christmas traditions?

64% YES 36% NO