

Turf baseball field approved

By Angela Kolden
angela@ccreporter.com

The Central Cass School Board gave the green light to allow construction to begin on its turf baseball field project. The project is slated to begin July 22 and reach completion by September 30.

At its regular monthly Board of Education meeting, Kraus-Anderson Senior Project Manager Mike Barsness presented the board an executive cost summary of the project.

The big ticket items, in addition to \$642,000 for field turf are \$766,000 in site work costs for earthwork and drainage system.

The board approved the base bid of \$861,000 plus \$19,000 in alternates for replacing the chain link fence and link fabric. The total cost of the project is \$1.620M

“I feel comfortable that due diligence has been taken,” Forness said prior to the board vote.

Over \$1.6M in funds for the project have been raised through a Booster Club capital campaign effort that began in 2016.

With \$200,000 on hand, the district will receive annual payment of \$263,000 over the next five years based on existing pledges.

At the meeting, board member Brent Everson, who was instrumental in spearheading the fundraising effort, recognized members of the Booster Club for their commitment to the fundraising effort. Valley Processing Technologies earned Naming Rights to the new field with a donation of \$250K.

During Committee Reports, Superintendent Morgan Forness updated the board on a joint meeting held with Mapleton Elementary school leaders.

“We were pretty direct on the

impact to Central Cass and the students we get from Mapleton” Forness said, explaining the joining meeting allowed a lot of areas to be explored. “Mapleton is doing some information gathering on good options for them.”

Mapleton will do some strategic planning this summer, but wants an individual group to provide them information on funding options. Central Cass Board President Brandy Sprunk also attended the joint district’s meeting and reported Mapleton school officials indicated there may be another potential bond referendum in two to three years.

The Planning Committee reported having discussed summer maintenance projects and costs. It will convene again after the series of four community information meetings scheduled between April 15 and May 1.

In other business the board also:



COURTESY PHOTO

Construction on the turf Central Cass baseball field will begin in July. An executive cost summary of the baseball field project was provided during the April school board meeting.

- approved a 2024-25 teacher contract to Marley Herold in the amount of \$41,350.
- accepted formal resignations from choir teacher Kirci Wagner, sixth-grade teacher Rylee Workin, and high school math teacher and junior high basket-

ball coach Troy Roesler. The board also approved an early retirement agreement for Roesler.

The next Board of Education meeting is May 13 at 6 p.m. in the High School Conference room.

Cumbersome application process hinders township road funding

By Angela Kolden
angela@ccreporter.com

Cass County Township Officers were told at their annual spring meeting that millions exists in state allotted township assistance programs, but if they want it to continue, they need to do a better job of accessing it.

Of the \$432 million requested by townships during the last legislative session, \$84 million was funded. Of the \$84 million in available grant funds, townships only accessed \$65 million.

A cumbersome application process is the main challenge preventing townships from accessing the funds. The process is complex, therefore the county has hired two individuals to assist townships with the grant-writing application process.

“We want to show the need, so if we don’t have people applying for the existing funds, legislation will send the funding elsewhere,” the county representative said.

Larry Syverson, executive director of governmental relations of the ND Township Officer’s Association, provided legislative updates affecting townships. The issue with accessing the grants was the primary focus. He advised townships to take advantage of the county-assisted technical support. He also said when writing a grant it is advised not to request 100% of the amount needed. It will be met with greater success if the township puts in some of its own funds. Also, include letters of support from those who would benefit from the project. For example, if it is for a road, ask for letters from the school, area farmers or the elevator.

District 22 State Senator Mark Weber attended the meeting and spoke to the funding component including the NDDOT Township Assistance Programs and the Flexible Transportation Fund Grant.

“We can provide the funding,” Weber said, “but if we don’t have the expertise to access it...that’s something we need to hear so we can put together ways to improve access.”

According to the county, two townships in Cass County applied for Township Assistance Programs funding compared to 300 townships statewide.

In closing comments, Syverson encouraged officers to get involved at the state capitol.

“A lot of you can help us tell the Township Story.”

In other business:

• Cass County Sheriff Jesse Jahner provided an annual report.

He reported a jump in Calls for Service of nearly 15,000 from 2022 to 2023, attributing it to better reporting of crimes and also population growth. In 2022, the number of Calls for Service was 28,334. It was 43,156 in 2023.

The sheriff directly addressed the Cass County crime spree involving local rural businesses late last year in Alice, Kindred, Mapleton and Hunter and said the perpetrator has been arrested. He also mentioned the break-ins at elevators in Ayr, Arthur and Page.

“We have received a confession on those incidents and that individual is currently in custody,” he said.

Citing a yearly criminal offense chart, Jahner explained the highest jumps his department is seeing in Cass County involve theft of personal property, from 50 in 2022 to over 80 in 2023.

Burglary also jumped from about 22 to 35.

“We have received new reports of individuals driving into homeowners yards and knocking on the door. If the homeowner answers, they will ask for directions. If the homeowner is not home, they will burglarize.”

The biggest rise in crime was in Fraud Cases, jumping from 38 to 78. Other areas of crime that are on the rise include pornography, sex offenses and assault.

• Cass County Highway Department Deputy County Engineer Tom Soucy gave an overview of the 2024 road construction projects, an update on the rural roads that will be directly impacted by the FM Diversion and on update on the Lynchburg exchange.

Soucy gave a brief report on the roads impacted by the FM Diversion. Once the project is completed, the storm-water

diversion channel will have 12 county roads crossing over it. In recent weeks contractors installed bridge girders for the combined channel crossing for County Roads 4 and 31, east of Argusville.

Farther south, at County Roads 20 and 22, they are driving Hopiles for those crossings. The diversion is expected to be operational by 2027.

The bridge replacement project at the I-94 Lynchburg exchange is underway. The project includes removing the 24-foot bridge and replacing it with a new 44-foot bridge. The road, 153rd Ave SE, is currently closed.

To view upcoming areas of road construction within Cass County, visit: www.casscountyny.gov.



SYVERSON



COURTESY PHOTO

Larry Syverson, executive director of governmental relations of the ND Township Officer’s Association provided legislative updates affecting townships during the Annual Spring Township meeting this week.