

Bakken Briefs

Divide schools get food aid

The Divide County School District is a major beneficiary of a new round of grant awards from the John and Elaine Andrist Charitable Trust. In total, the trust on Dec. 5 approved over \$141,000 in grants for the second half of 2025, with 15 projects receiving funding.

One is a \$16,675 award directed to the Great Plains Food Bank, but it will support the Divide County School District's "backpack program," providing weekend food assistance for children in need, and also establish a new school food pantry. Some of the funds will also support food purchasing for the county's existing food pantry.

Another award of \$12,000, for the elementary school, will help launch a "One School, One Book" program, in which each student at the school receives books to read at home.

--The Journal, Crosby

Burke gets battery hearing

The North Dakota Public Service Commission will hold a public hearing in Bowbells on Dec. 19 regarding a proposal to construct a battery energy storage system in Burke County.

Northern Divide Energy Storage is requesting a siting permit for a 100-megawatt battery energy storage system with a four-hour duration capable of storing excess energy available on the grid when production exceeds demand.

The estimated project cost is \$130 million.

The project is proposed to be located adjacent to the existing Northern Divide Wind Energy Center and would connect to the existing substation. The project area would encompass approximately 20 acres in Burke County.

The Dec. 19 hearing is at 10 a.m. at Bowbells Memorial Hall, 100 Main St. NW.

--Burke County Tribune, Bowbells

Community center for Stanley?

Elevate Stanley, a new group seeking ideas to improve the city of Stanley, hosted a community meeting Dec. 2 to solicit public input and feedback on its proposal for a community center.

The project is currently in the idea phase, and whether it moves forward will depend on community input and future decisions.

Attendees were asked whether such a center should prioritize wellness and fitness uses; social gathering spaces; or spaces and activities for youth, seniors or families, among other questions to provide further guidance for the group.

Comments in support of the initiative cited reasons such as improving local physical and mental health across all age groups, offering year-round recreational opportunities and helping to attract and retain residents.

--Mountrail County Promoter, Stanley

Williams' new bookmobile

The Williston Community Library has replaced its Williams County Bookmobile.

The new bookmobile departed from the library for the first time Dec. 2, stocked with 1,019 books. About five minutes later, it pulled up outside of Little Rascals Clubhouse Daycare in Williston, where children eagerly awaited.

Library Director Andrea Placher said the bookmobile serves the "littlest and oldest," making 35 monthly stops at public schools, day care centers, preschools and senior facilities.

The library travels throughout the county, stopping in Grenora, Zahl, Ray, Alamo, Wildrose, Tioga, McGregor and Epping, in addition to Williston, said Tori Lee, mobile library coordinator.

The previous bookmobile had served the county for the past 15 years, Placher said.

--Williston Herald

Water project finish delayed

Delivery of water from the Northwest Area Water Supply project will be delayed until possibly mid-2026, a Minot official said Dec. 1.

The Northwest Area Water Supply, once operational, will bring Missouri River water to the Minot, Berthold, Kenmare, Mohall, Westhope and Bottineau areas to improve water quality.

Jason Sorenson, utilities director for the city of Minot, said his prediction in July that water would be flowing by the end of 2025 turned out to be overly optimistic. While events were moving smoothly in the right direction at that time, there have been project delays since, he said.

The biggest delay, Sorenson said, is related to filters at the water treatment plant near Max, as an engineer's evaluation found a defect that the supplier must remove and replace.

--Minot Daily News

Watford plaza plan advances

Watford City's collective dream of a vibrant, centralized downtown area is quickly becoming reality as the city council advances a downtown redevelopment plan for North Main Street.

This initiative is intended to create a destination hub that will generate revenue and hopes to spark community life, directly answering the needs expressed by residents in a 2024 survey.

The city recently selected Construction Engineers as the project's construction manager.

The project has two phases. One phase is for a "commercial hub," replacing three existing single-story buildings with a multilevel building hosting both retail and office space.

The other phase is for a 10,000-square-foot Main Street Square urban park, offering event space as well as a permanent, covered stage.

--McKenzie County Farmer, Watford City

City Council Meets:

Council Appoints New Member; Approves New Chief

By Mary Kilen

Stanley City Council held their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 9. Highlights of the meeting included EDC funding requests, appointment to fill the council vacancy and the approval of a new police chief.

Planning & Zoning Recommendations

Planning and Zoning committee chairman Todd Heidbreder reported on the committee's meeting the previous evening.

The first item was a variance permit request from Cody Gerich. The city had previously approved a replat for their property at 618 4th St. SE to split it into two lots. They are looking to move a house onto the south side of that property, but the lot size with the replat is 50' x 100', which is smaller than required by the zoning ordinances. The committee discussed the number of lots in town that are that size or smaller and moved to approve the variance. The council moved to concur and approved the variance.

The committee had a request submitted by Lucinda Douglas to replat lots in the Douglas Subdivision, Outlot 3 which is south on Highway 8 and lies within the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction. The request would create two lots. This has already gone through the county for review. The council moved to concur with the committee and approved signing the replat of the lots.

The committee received the state health inspection paperwork for Peco's Taco/Carlos Delgado. With the final necessary paperwork received, the committee presented the mobile food permit for approval. The council moved to approve the permit.

This year, committee member Skip Wing's term expires. Wing recommended his great-nephew Ben Wing to serve on the committee. This position requires residence in the city's extraterritorial area. The council moved to approve the appointment of Ben Wing to the committee effective January 1. Heidbreder also expressed his appreciation to Skip Wing for his many years of service to the committee and the city.

The committee also discussed the council's recent decisions to table any items that were not fully complete from planning and zoning rather than approving applications contingent upon approval. Heidbreder said they will not send any items to them until they are fully complete and approved in the future.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Amanda Dennis presented the council with one building permit for approval: 504 1st St. NW, new front yard fence. The council moved to approve the permit.

EDC Requests

Brandi Larson presented the council with two new funding requests from the Stanley EDC fund. The Stanley Park District submitted a request for \$300,000 for a new shelter/pavilion in Wilson Park. MCMC submitted a request for \$200,000 for the MRI suite in the new hospital construction. The committee was recommending \$150,000 in grant funding for each request.

The committee was also recommending approval of the \$25,000 loan/grant for Lostwood Media under the terms of the EDC's current application. While the city has been working on a new application that would better protect the city's ability to collect in the event of default, owner Gina Footh has waited almost a year for the funding and the new application process. She had actually withdrawn her request based

on concerns with the revised application, but the city had tabled that withdrawal as they looked for a way to help her as she rebuilt her business after the fire in her former location. The council moved to approve this request.

They discussed the other two requests, saying that both of those entities already receive funding from the city sales tax. Larson said that their tax collections are usually used as part of their operating budget, while they need additional help for some of these extra projects.

The council agreed that both projects benefit the city and the area and moved to approve those funding requests.

City attorney Ryan Sandberg discussed the park district project, noting that depending on the cost they will likely have to put the project out for bids and also have engineering done.

They also discussed the revised application for funding, saying that they are getting closer on getting that application ready for use after the first of the year.

Larson discussed the committee members, saying that they currently do not have terms for members. Committee member John Westby is stepping down from the committee. The council approved the committee recommendation to have Dustin Cossette fill that vacancy.

Council Vacancy

Mayor Marlin Ranum reported that he has talked to a number of people about filling the vacancy on the council left with the passing of Kirk Johnson. Other council members had also had some discussions with people about the position. Ranum said that Darren LeRohl is interested in filling the spot until the next regular election. The council moved to appoint LeRohl to the seat as well as having him fill the committee positions previously held by Johnson.

Rian Addition Lots

The council reviewed the revised documents to put up the city owned lots in the Rian Addition for sale. The minimum bid on those lots will be based on the amount the city has paid in taxes and special assessments on those lots. The city has also certified the amount for the demolition on the one property, but is not including that in the prices. The council moved to approve the bid packet for the sale of lots. The city will begin advertising the six lots for sale in January.

Engineering Updates

City Engineer Patrick Carabello of Brosz Engineering updated the council on current and future projects.

Major work west of 5th St. has been completed in CIP3. Topsoil and seeding will be completed in the spring. The project has now entered winter suspension. Based on the work completed thus far in Schedule A, he projects the project will finish \$150,000 under budget. Schedule A will also need a substantial completion walkthrough in the spring.

Carabello also noted the city would be able to apply for a Department of Water Resources Grant for this project. This is a 60/40 split and could provide \$710,000 in grants for the water portion of the project if approved. The council moved to apply for the grant and appointed Auditor Ada Arneson as the legal authority to sign the cost-share agreement.

The council approved pay application #6 on this project in the amount of \$289,267.01. They also approved the amended work order for Brosz Engineering to cover costs over the original work order in the

amount of \$12,097.50.

Carabello reported they have looked at the pay application for the work in the John Rian Addition. He said that after speaking with Public Works Director Dave Brown, the electrician bills included the labor. The council moved to pay the final pay application #6 in the amount of \$82,684.11.

Carabello updated the council on the lead service line work, saying that NDDEQ has signed work orders and letters/surveys are being sent out to unknown private service lines. Brosz is doing the work for the DEQ and they are hoping to finish this over the winter. This phase is to gather the information from the homeowners to identify if there are lead service lines running in or to their properties.

As for future projects, Carabello discussed the special road fund applications for CIP4 being submitted. They also discussed the maps showing aged infrastructure and utilities in the proposed CIP4 area. There are PAR grants available to cost share for preliminary engineering reports and cost sharing for running cameras on the sewer lines. The council noted this would be a 2027 project as they are not planning to start another major project for the 2026 construction season. The council moved to approve application for the PAR grant.

The council also approved the SRF final closeout checklist and certifications for CIP2.

Floodplain Ordinance

City Auditor Arneson received a letter from ND Water Resources regarding legislative changes affecting floodplain management ordinances. After research, it appears the city does not have a floodplain management ordinance. Arneson will follow up with the state to see if the city needs to have such an ordinance.

Police Committee Report

The police committee met and interviewed to fill the vacant chief of police position. The committee recommended hiring Officer Sam Pesik as the new chief. They will determine the pay scale before the council's special meeting at the end of December. The council approved the hiring of Pesik as Chief of Police effective immediately.

Police Report

Chief Sam Pesik presented the council with the contract renewal with Axon for the department's body cameras. The council had approved the contract for the tasers and taser training at the last meeting. The council moved to renew this contract in the amount of \$42,456.42 for five years.

Pesik also updated the council regarding the private citizen that assisted their department with a call in October. That citizen does not want to be publicly recognized, but the department purchased a medal of appreciation that Pesik will present to him with the thanks of the department and the city.

Pesik also discussed the naming of Highway 200 as the ND Fallen Peace Officers Memorial Highway. Cities may purchase signs to recognize officers they have lost. He was looking for permission to purchase two signs for officers who died in the line of duty: Christian Madison in 1922 and Chief Arthur Sem in 1942. The council approved the purchase.

Pesik also reported he is working on some bills received from Axon dating in 2023, 2024 and 2025. He said they have told him to disregard the 2023 bill. They are researching the 2024 bill. The city will have to pay the 2025 bill of just over \$18,000 for the dash cams.

Public Works Report

Public Works Director Dave Brown reported they finished the lagoon project before the weather turned. The council discussed this project, saying they may want to extend that work further to the east in the spring. They asked Brown to determine cost to take that project to the outlet.

The council also discussed the GPS unit purchased by the city

to document utilities and facilities. Councilman Chad Hysjulien showed the council what that map looks like with the work done and data gathered to date. While there is still work to be completed, the system will be very beneficial not just to city crews, but also to residents. This will be a continuing growing record. They will also be adding a zoning layer to the maps in the future.

The council also approved the agreement for utility services and driveway repairs as discussed last month with David and Claudia Faulkner.

Auditor Updates

Auditor Arneson provided the council with the list of pledged securities from Bravera Bank. These securities protect city accounts above the FDIC insured coverage. The council moved to approve the list.

Arneson also provided the council with the acknowledgment letter from the ND Water Resources. It reflected their receipt of the city's letter of objection to the Highline Water permit application.

As the city's temporary employment agreement with Joan Hollekim ends at the end of the year, the council approved advertising for a part-time office assistant position.

The council set a special meeting for Tuesday, Dec. 30 at 4:00 p.m. to handle any year end business. The employment committee will meet on Monday, Dec. 29 for any recommendations they may have.

Attorney Updates

City Attorney Ryan Sandberg had provided the council with three ordinance updates last month. They included Chapter 9 - traffic; Chapter 12 - offenses; and Chapter 20 - municipal court. The council approved first reading on Chapter 20 last month. The council approved first reading on Chapters 9 and 12 and second reading on Chapter 20 at this meeting.

Council Concerns

Councilman Ty Taylor commended the city crews for the work they are doing to keep the city streets clear as winter has set in.

Mayor Ranum thanked all those involved with the tours at city hall for high school students.

The council also discussed overtime in the police department, with Chief Pesik saying that once they are fully staffed again that should decrease. The council also discussed medical costs if an officer is injured during a call. While workman's comp will cover the costs, the council discussed ways to seek reimbursement from the person who created the incident including filing that documentation as part of the packet provided to the courts.

Golden Age Club News

Wednesday, December 17th: Supper of stroganoff with noodles, vegetables, salad, fruit and dessert served at 5:30 p.m.

Friday, December 19th: Dinner of roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetables, salad and birthday cake served at 12:00 p.m. Happy Birthday to all the December guys and gals! Tentative Christmas music to be provided by the High School Choir at 11:30 p.m. Bingo with Cindy and Michelle at 1:00 p.m.

Monday, December 22nd: Dinner of chicken parmesan casserole, vegetables, salad, fruit and dessert served at 12:00 p.m.


Dr. Susan Asheim
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