

TOP 10: Continued from page A-1

McEvers was elected by more than an 80 percent majority when ballots were counted Dec. 10 in the election for chief justice of the Supreme Court. She was chosen to replace Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen.

Before attending law school McEvers worked for Hon. Judge James H. O’Keefe at Walsh County Courthouse in Grafton. She said the experience was instrumental and sparked the idea that one day she might like to be a judge if the opportunity ever presented itself.

4 Aune dies in Walsh County jail
Patrick Donald Aune, 39, of Park River, died in the Walsh County Law Enforcement Center some time between Saturday night Oct. 4 and Sunday morning Oct. 5, after being arrested on several felony counts.

Aune had an eventful day in Park River up until he was arrested by Walsh County Sheriff deputies at approximately 6:30 p.m. on the evening of Oct. 4.

Aune’s brother allegedly reported that Patrick Aune had started a fire inside the home (119 Pine Street) by pouring gasoline inside the structure and cutting an active gas line outside the home.

At approximately 5 p.m. Walsh County Deputy Jose Martinez arrived on the scene and observed heavy smoke coming from the residence (119 Pine Street). He also observed fire coming out of the gas line at 120 Pine Street, which is located just east of Aune’s residence.

Martinez observed Aune inside his trailer with soot on his face and blood around his head and arms. According to the complaint Aune was allegedly breaking windows inside the residence. Martinez and his shift partner approached the front door which was locked. Martinez then forced entry into the home. The two deputies gave orders for Aune to exit the residence, which he did.

After being medically cleared Aune was taken to the county jail in Grafton.

Shortly after 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, correctional officers noticed an inmate suffering from what appeared to be a medical emergency. Correctional officers and deputies immediately began lifesaving measures. The Walsh County paramedic and Valley Ambulance and Rescue Service were called to the jail to assist in medical intervention, but all attempts were unsuccessful and the male inmate passed away. The autopsy has yet to be made public and the Walsh County correctional facility has remained closed since shortly after Aune’s death due to lack of jail staff.

5 Lessard residents appeal specials
Lessard Avenue residents got a lesson in public notices, the workings of government and public servants at a special city council meeting held Aug. 21 for the purpose of confirmation of Special Assessment List for Street Improvement District No. 8-24.

After initially approving a half-mill and overlay the



Many of the residents on Lessard Avenue attended an Aug. 21 special meeting of Grafton City Council to protest their specials for the new street, which is costing many residents upwards of \$48,600.

paving project on Lessard went sideways when the contractor Strata said that wasn’t feasible and dug up the entire road leaving just the base, more than tripling the cost of the project leaving approximately 20 property owners with a \$1,000,000 bill.

Prior to the August meeting the city had been presented with a list from Lessard residents protesting their assessments.

City Administrator Nick Ziegelmann, realizing that the Lessard Avenue paving project was different from the rest of the mill and overlay projects included in the paving district suggested to the council to separate the Lessard project from the others. For starters the differences included curbs and gutters, no other streets were receiving that, and the city installed drain tile under that curb and gutter to help move the water along so eventually the whole scope of the project changed with reconstruction of the entire street. The suggestion of separating the Lessard street project from the others was voted down by the city council. The council also voted down the residents’ appeals on a 4-3 vote with Mayor Chris West breaking the tie.

6 The McIntyre The Hoople
community started the 2025 year with a bang. After a little over two years of planning, prepping, construction and designing the city’s new community center was christened, The McIntyre. The reason for the name was because that was the original name of the old hotel/bar when the first hotel was built in 1890, Robert McIntyre named it. The ballroom inside is named Frazier Hall, after Lynn Frazier, governor of North Dakota from 1917 to 1922, and a senator from 1923 to 1941.”

The phone has been ringing off the hook after the grand opening was held New Year’s Eve to book the new space for future events. The building is brand new, but the namesake is a perfect ode to the history of Hoople.

7 Mayor Dan steps down
Mayor Dan Stenvold stepped aside as chief executive of the city of Park River after nearly

18 1/2 years as mayor. The reason he stated was due to failing health attributed to his three tours as an artillery soldier in Vietnam.

Stenvold stepped aside midway through what he described as his final term. If he had served out that term he would have had a 20-year legacy as mayor of Park River. Before that he had served as a city council member.

Stenvold, in an interview with The Walsh County Record said he takes, “Seventeen pills a day and a minimum of three shots in the belly and it’s progressed to the point that the medications aren’t working the way they’re supposed to be. My doctor told me it’s time to get out of the stress.”

As a result of Stenvold stepping down the city of Park River headed to the polls Tuesday, June 10, to fill the vacated term of Stenvold. In June’s election Mayor Kyle Halvorson garnered 242 votes, while the other candidate, Robert “Bob” Lundquist, received 148 votes.



Dan Stenvold, former mayor of Park River, stepped aside from his duties due to medical reasons as a result of his service overseas during the Vietnam War. He served Park River for 18 and one-half years.

8 Cellphone ban
North Dakota lawmakers passed bills April 7 that would prohibit student cellphone use during the school day, reviving one bill that had been defeated the previous week.

SB2354 and HB1160 differed on which schools would be affected and whether school districts would have the power to allow cellphone use during noninstructional time, such as in between classes or over the school lunch period. SB2354 passed the House on a 61-29 vote.

The cellphone ban went into affect for the 2025-26 school year. A number of principals were interviewed months after the start of school and all area principals interviewed said students were more engaged. Some went as far as to say the atmosphere in school was more relaxed as students aren’t checking social media between classes.

9 State Radio
What was presented as a cost savings measure and a solution to staffing problems the Walsh County Commission on the urging of commissioners Paul Houdek and Amy Suda



Linda Meberg, spoke at an Oct. 22 public hearing concerning local dispatch, as interim dispatch supervisor Kristle Kjemhus looked on.

looked into having the state provide dispatch services to the public.

Staffing has been and continues to be an issue for Walsh County Dispatch that requires six to seven people to adequately provide dispatching services 24/7. Neighboring counties Cavalier and Pembina have already made the switch, primarily due to staffing issues.

A public hearing was held Oct. 22 in the Farmers Room of the Walsh County Courthouse with approximately 60 people in attendance. The room was filled mostly with former dispatchers, first responders and law enforcement officials who almost universally supported keeping the dispatch services local.

The commission was weighing the decision to make the move with the chance of getting similar services for a better price. An estimation was given at

the public meeting that the county could save approximately \$350,000 by going with State Radio. At the time of the public meeting Walsh County had five dispatchers. The office is budgeted for seven employees. So staffing the department has been an issue.

In November the commission voted to keep dispatching services local on a 4-1 vote. Houdek was the dissenting vote.

10 Library vote
2025 was a contentious year for Carnegie Regional Library (CRL) in Grafton.

Starting with a budget request that was mishandled by CRL Director Jill Sanderson, who was unprepared to present the budget to the commission, claiming the duty was dropped in her lap at the last moment.

CRL treasurer Katrina Hodny presented the budget via Zoom at the Sept. 9 meeting of the Walsh County Commission. Approximately 30 supporters of the library were present at that meeting. Hodny said the library board passed a budget that was 20 percent less than the previous year, but failed to take

into account the 3 percent cap imposed by the North Dakota Legislature making it very challenging to get that funding restored.

After hearing from supporters the commission voted unanimously to fund the library at \$100,000.

The library was again in the crosshairs of the commission in November when chairperson Kristi Brintnell wanted to amend the joint services agreement between the city of Grafton and the commission to include that the commission could pull its funding on a two-year notice with a majority vote by the commission.

The joint services agreement was signed by Skorheim in 2021 and did not include that provision. Houdek opposed amending the agreement to include Brintnell’s proposal. Discussion followed. It was moved by Skorheim and seconded by Barta to put the matter before residents of Walsh County at the next general election. The motion passed on a 3-2 vote. Residents of Grafton and Park River will be excluded from the vote as their municipalities levy their own library tax and are not subject to the county’s levy.



The future of Carnegie Regional Library will be decided by voters in the November 2026 general election, when a measure determining its continued county funding goes to the ballot.



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