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Basketball, basketball *Hee-haw, it's donkey basketball*



With a few burros bucking under the baskets, some hee-haw laughs and a lot of outright obstinance, donkey basketball came to Hettinger County last week. More photos on page 8. Above at New England and to the right at Mott. I NEW ENGLAND PHOTO BY LAYN MUDDER, MOTT PHOTO BY RACHAEL MAYER



Mott hears concerns on special assessments

BY LUANN DART

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The Mott City Council held the first reading of updates to its flood plain management ordinance and heard from a citizen questioning special assessments on church property during its regular meeting Jan. 12.

Randy Reich, representing the Zoar Congregational Church, expressed concern about recent special assessments being applied to community churches, which do not pay property taxes. Zoar Congregational Church has been assessed a total of \$5,492.49 on its church and parsonage property, according to City Auditor Pamela Steinke.

"I didn't realize specials were going to be assessed on the church," Reich said. "It's no secret to those that go to church, (the churches) are struggling."

He expressed agreement with special assessments being placed on a parsonage.

"It's a place of dwelling. It can always be resold as a place of dwelling if the church ever had to sell it," he said.

"We're getting tithings from people that are already paying specials on their houses in town," he said. "I just want it on record as part of the church I don't think it's quite fair to put double specials on the congregation, as most of them are paying hefty

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Abandoned mines to be reclaimed in Hettinger County

BY LUANN DART
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Six abandoned coal mine sites from decades ago are scheduled for reclamation in Hettinger County.

The projects will be completed under the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program, administered by the

N.D. Public Service Commission, which held a public meeting Jan. 14 to review the upcoming plans.

The entire 2026 Hettinger County Phase II AML Project involves backsloping and backfilling approximately 3,250 feet of dangerous highwall on the abandoned surface coal mines. The proposed work is planned between May and November.

Five of the sites are approximately 9 miles south of Lefor, and one site is 4 miles south of Mott, all in Hettinger County.

The proposed reclamation will disturb approximately 24 acres in total. The surface mines are characterized by steep eroding highwalls up to 30 feet high. The proposed construction work involves backsloping and backfilling the highwalls with earthen material from adjacent spoil piles. Affected areas will be reseeded

with locally adapted grass species native to western North Dakota. Erosion and sedimentation will be controlled.

The six sites currently include:

- Abandoned surface coal mine adjacent to cropland and Mehrer Creek of 4.6 acres.
- Abandoned surface coal mine adjacent to cropland and Thirty
- Abandoned surface coal mine adjacent to cropland and Mile Creek of about 5 acres.

Mile Creek of about 5 acres.

• Abandoned surface coal mine adjacent to cropland and Thirty Mile Creek of 2.7 acres.

• Abandoned surface coal mine in grassland of 5 acres.

• Abandoned surface coal mine in pastureland adjacent to Thirty Mile Creek of 3.7 acres.

• Abandoned surface coal mine in pastureland

adjacent to Thirty Mile Creek of 2.7 acres.

The surface mines date prior to 1957, when aerial photos on file indicated they were abandoned at that time.

During the reclamation process, a plan is designed to reclaim the landscape back to its original condition as much as possible, based on surrounding landscape

and the landowner's wishes. The topsoil is stripped and stockpiled, and earth is moved to reclaim the property.

Reclamation of the six sites in Hettinger County is budgeted at \$500,000. All work is completed at no cost to the landowner, and reclamation is completed only if the landowner agrees.

The AML Program was approved by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1981 under authority of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. Program funding comes from a federal reclamation fee on coal that has been mined in the United States since the late 1970s. These fees are placed into the AML fund and the money North Dakota receives from this fund is used to eliminate existing and potential public hazards resulting from abandoned surface and underground coal mines, according to the



*Site one is an abandoned surface coal mine adjacent to cropland and Mehrer Creek. I
SUBMITTED PHOTO*

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