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## GYM-

from what they were before."

From an estimated price tag of around \$600,000 in 2020, the expected cost of the gymnasium had ballooned to north of \$4 million by November of 2023, prompting a significant course change.

Rather than a brick-and-mortar gymnasium, the district took up the idea of a completely different method of construction - a permanent steel-frame skeleton clad in PVC fabric.

Board members at the time said this method would slash the gym's hefty price tag by more than half, as well as drastically reduce construction time - and the district has confirmed it still plans to build the gymnasium using this method.

However, updates on the project have been sparse or non-existent since that new construction method was approved.

Weisenburger and school board president Todd Allmaras said several factors have complicated the project, namely a change in administration and fundraising efforts for the Rockford Theatre.

When the historic theatre's roof collapsed in December of 2022, the effort to rebuild quickly drowned out any efforts to construct a second gymnasium, and community donations quickly shifted to the theatre rebuild.

"The heavy snow load of 2022-2023 collapsing the movie theater didn't help our cause, as now there were two big projects looking for funding in the community," said Weisenburger.

NR-S School Board President Todd Allmaras added that time and resources were redirected toward more immediate educational and operational priorities during a transition to the new administration.

Former NR-S Superintendent Jill Louters played a significant role in planning and advocating for the second gymnasium before she resigned in 2024.

But perhaps nothing has slowed the efforts to build a second gymnasium more than the loss of Tubby Bymoer - a 1964 graduate of New Rockford High School who passed away in March of 2024 at the age of 77.

"It was really tough to lose Tubby on this project," said Weisenburger. "It became a passion project for him. He was definitely the driving force for this project because he had the time, energy, and connections to keep this project moving. Losing Tubby was devastating."

Allmaras also acknowledged the void left by Bymoer when he passed away, saying they simply no longer had someone in the administration's offices to talk about the second gym every day.

"Dr. Louters and Tubby shared a common focus on this project," said Allmaras. "With Dr. Louters' departure from the district and Tubby's death shortly thereafter, the project lost both daily drivers within a short period of time."

Now, more than two years after Bymoer's passing, efforts to build the second gym appear to be restarting - though the path forward remains unclear.

The district's new administration and school board members haven't discussed the project in years. In fact, not one of the school board members that first approved the project in 2020 are still on the board today.

In a "question and answer" article published in a 2022 edition of the Transcript, the district said the addition of a second gym would not result in a property tax increase.

Allmaras acknowledged that previous school board members expressed little to no intention of using taxpayer funds to build the gym, but said the current school board has not had that discussion nor made any commitments.

"Today, the board's membership is almost entirely different, and I cannot speak

on behalf of the current board, as this matter has not been discussed," said Allmaras. "However, if a significant portion of taxpayer funds were ever considered for the second gym project, it would almost certainly be a decision presented to the public for approval at the ballot box."

"If we were to undertake a building project, of which there is no discussion of at this time, it would likely address additional facility needs as well, including office space, intervention and educational space, and support for CTE growth. Whether and when any of these needs might lead the district to go to the public is something only time will tell."

NR-S Business Manager Dave Skogen added that the district is still hoping to raise the funding necessary for this project via private donations.

He also said the second gym community foundation currently has about \$93,000 in donated funds.

Approximately \$140,000 in donated funds has already been spent on PACE Fundraising - a professional fundraising firm the school contracted to help raise money for the project. The district told the Transcript they still intend to work with PACE Fundraising moving forward, with their services having been fully paid for.

Without a cost estimate having been completed anytime recently, it's unclear how much funding the district would have to raise before construction can begin.

Ultimately, the district reiterated their belief that a second gym is necessary for the school district and an asset to the community.

Becker said the gym would reduce overcrowding in physical education classes and allow for a wider range of activities while eliminating disruptions when the main gym is closed for events.

"It would also ensure [physical education] can continue during inclement weather and provide a much-needed indoor recess space for elementary students," said Becker. "Beyond school use, a second gym could serve the community by offering space for walking, activities, and other public programs."

## FLICKERTAIL-

eliminate any regulations placed on wind energy development in Eddy County.

The most significant change was to add language in the county's zoning ordinance explicitly stating that wind energy facilities can be developed on agricultural land.

Nonetheless, several residents have launched a slew of petitions arguing the county weakened resident safeguards with their actions on March 10.

As of press time, a total of 22 formal petitions had been filed with Eddy County objecting to the recent ordinance changes - and 20 of those petitions share virtually identical language.

Notably, almost half of the petitioners are residents of Grandfield and New Rockford Townships, which control their own zoning regulations separate from the county - meaning the ordinance changes approved on March 10 do not directly impact the residents of those townships.

"As elected officials, you took an oath to uphold the laws of North Dakota and to protect the health, safety, welfare and property rights of all Eddy County residents," states the petitions.

"By weakening resident safeguards while prioritizing corporate interests, the Board has failed to uphold those foundational, building priorities."

Each petition enumerates several specific grievances, the first of which is the zoning board's decision to reject a proposal by former zoning commissioner Levi Rue for a 1-mile setback from non-participating rural residences.

The desire for a 1-mile

setback has long been a stated source of contention regarding Flickertail Wind, and despite initially saying such a setback would kill the project, developers have since re-designed their turbine layout to effectively give residents the 1-mile setback some asked for, despite no statutory requirement to do so.

Another stated grievance is "apparent conflicts of interest." This too has been a constant allegation made by opponents of Flickertail Wind toward several commissioners.

"Commissioner Dave Gehrtz and zoning board members Stuart Richter and Robert Hanson have signed lease agreements with Flickertail Wind, LLC," states the petitioners.

"Despite notices and prior disclosures, Gehrtz has refused to acknowledge or address the conflict, and Richter and Hanson did not recuse themselves during relevant proceedings."

However, county officials dispute the claim that commissioners were conflicted on March 10. Eddy County State's Attorney Ashley Lies has advised the board that no such conflicts exist so long as a siting permit is not pending before the county.

A previous attempt to have the N.D. Attorney General's Office weigh in was curtailed by the very lawsuits that allege conflicts of interest, due to the AG office's own policy of not commenting on pending litigation.

The petitions also list several specific requests for the board of county commissioners:

- "Reconsider and appeal the March 10, 2026 amendments;
- "Restore conditional use permit requirements and full zoning board evaluation/oversight for wind energy facilities;
- "Adopt or reinstate evidence-based protections, including a 1-mile minimum setback from non-participating rural residences, mandatory studies on sound/infrasound, shadow flicker and interference, and clear nuisance complaint resolution mechanisms with timelines and local responsibility; and
- "Investigate and resolve these apparent conflicts of interest (including requiring recusal where applicable under ND law) to ensure decisions serve all Eddy County residents."

With the petitions having been filed, Eddy County is required to hold a hearing for each petitioner, at which they'll be allowed to testify about their grievances and requests.

The current list of 22 petitioners could still grow in the coming days, as the deadline for submitting formal petitions related to the county's March 10 amendments is Wednesday, May 6.

As of press time, the hearings for each petitioner had not yet been scheduled. Those hearings will be open for the public to attend, but only the petitioner will be able to deliver testimony.

Meanwhile many supporters of Flickertail Wind also felt strongly enough to submit a petition recently.

Twenty-four residents and landowners in Grandfield Township submitted a petition to the board of supervisors for their township requesting an amendment to their ordinance explicitly allowing for wind energy development on agricultural land - similar to an amendment Eddy County approved on March 10.

"Many of us have farmed this land, raised our families here and participated in local civic life for generations. We value the relationships we share and the traditions that hold this township together," states the petition.

"As private landowners, we have voluntarily entered into lease agreements that allow for wind energy development on our properties. These agreements are in accordance with our individual property rights and our belief

that responsible wind energy development can bring meaningful economic benefits to our families, neighbors and the wider community as a whole."

The petition goes on to request "timely and transparent consideration" of the project's siting permit once submitted, and states that further delays or a refusal to consider their requests would have significant consequences for landowners who've chosen to participate in the project.

Levi Rue, a township supervisor for Grandfield Township, told the Transcript on Tuesday that they've received the petition, and that he's currently communicating with representatives of Flickertail Wind on what potential ordinance amendments might look like.

He also said he expects Flickertail's proposal to be submitted relatively soon.

"We're waiting on the developer," said Rue. "It would seem best to wait for their proposal so we can work collaboratively on this."

## CHARGES-

in \$100 bills, all real, and another \$500 in \$100 prop/counterfeit bills."

Speldrich has since been charged with a Class A misdemeanor for counterfeiting, as well as Class C felonies for possession for drug paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance.

As of press time, Raines has not been charged.

Meanwhile, Speldrich has pleaded not guilty to the misdemeanor charge for counterfeiting, and will have an opportunity to enter guilty or not guilty pleas for the felony charges at an arraignment scheduled for Thursday, May 7.

If found guilty, Speldrich faces a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$10,000 for each Class C felony, as well as 360 days' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$3,000 for the Class A misdemeanor.

Speldrich is considered innocent unless proven guilty.

## BASEBALL-

season and potentially into the summer, but said he thinks fans are going to enjoy the field's new look.

For starters, spectators will be several feet closer to the action with the backstop having been moved nearer to home plate, and the new mesh netting should allow for better viewing than having to look through an old metal fence.

"I think it's going to be awesome," said Weisenburger. "It's going to be really nice once we get all the little pieces in place, and we still have some ideas we might do. We have a lot of concrete space out there now to do things on."

The aim is still to have the field playable by the first home game of the season, which as of press time was scheduled for Tuesday, April 7.

However, the first two games of the season have been canceled or postponed by cold weather and winter storms, and Tuesday's weather forecast wasn't looking promising either.

So as mother nature continues to be uncooperative, it remains to be seen when the Rockets' spring season might finally begin and when the diamond needs to be ready.

## Community Calendar

**SPRING FEVER GARDEN FORUM** watch parties at the Eddy County Extension office on Monday nights until April 13 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The online sessions are free. Free seeds and bulbs will be provided each week. Registration is encouraged at <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/events/spring-fever-garden-forums>.

**WOMEN'S GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP MEETING** on Monday, April 6 at 3 p.m. at the Allmaras residence, 218 6th St. N., New Rockford. Everyone welcome.

**AMERICAN LEGION POST 30** supper and meeting on Tuesday, April 7. Post opens at 5:30 p.m., supper at 7 p.m. with meeting to follow. Election of Post 30 officers is on the agenda.

**WOMEN'S AUXILIARY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING** on Tuesday, April 7 at 7 p.m. at the Allmaras residence, 218 6th St. N. Everyone welcome.

**EDDY COUNTY ROD AND GUN CLUB** will meet on Thursday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at Carter Richter's shop.

**NR-S PROM** is on Saturday, April 11 in the NR-S gymnasium. Grand march begins at 8 p.m.

**EDDY COUNTY MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY** will meet on Monday, April 13 at noon in the conference room of the Eddy-New Rockford Public Library.

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY** will meet on Tuesday, March 14 at the Legion Hall. Supper will be at 6 p.m. followed by the meeting.

**NEW ROCKFORD SPRING CITYWIDE GARAGE SALES** on Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9. Sign up by texting 701-302-0513 or fill out a form online at <https://forms.gle/JyNiq2Tg6B27goVZA>. Deadline to sign up is Monday, April 27.

**APRIL ITEM OF THE MONTH** at the Eddy County Hunger Free Food Pantry is pasta sauce. Donations can be dropped off at First Lutheran Church, 436 1st Ave. N., New Rockford.

**BINGO** at Ostby Hall in Sheyenne on Saturdays at 7 p.m.

**EDDY CO. VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER** Same day appointments available. Please call 701-302-8087.

**RELAX & RETREAT MASSAGE** offers massage therapy through VA Community Care Program. For more information, call 701-302-0325.

**TOPS 370** is a weight loss support group. Meetings are on Mondays at 5 p.m. at First Lutheran Church in New Rockford. For more information call 701-947-2138.

**COMMUNITY AMBULANCE SERVICE BOARD** meets the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Ambulance Hall, New Rockford.

**SHEYENNE VFW** meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Sheyenne VFW Post 2696.

**LAKE REGION SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE** support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Room of North Star Community Credit Union, Devils Lake. For info call Theresa at 701-662-4790.

**FOOT CARE CLINIC** every third Wednesday of the month at Eddy County Public Health. Call 701-947-5311 for appointments. Cost is \$25.

**EDDY-NEW ROCKFORD LIBRARY BOARD** meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m.

**NEW ROCKFORD POST OFFICE** has a new phone number, 701-505-8842. The office is open 9-11 a.m. and 12:30-4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**SHEYENNE POST OFFICE** also has a new phone number, 701-404-1149. Open 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday - Friday.

Please contact the Transcript at [nrtranscript@gmail.com](mailto:nrtranscript@gmail.com) or (701) 947-2417 to have your event notices listed.

## Bridal Registry

**Hannah Haley & Bo Belquist**

- Bridal Shower - April 12
- Wedding - June 20

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