

Summer is here!

Town & Country Garden Club

Town & Country Garden Club will be choosing a "yard of the week," once a week, for eight weeks, during the summer, starting this week. It is a way to recognize the hard work of beautifying done by residents of the community, which makes ours one of the prettiest cities in North Dakota. Those chosen will be identified by a yard

sign that T&C Garden Club members will place in the winning yard for a period of one week. Criteria for selection will include color interest, landscaping, charm, and personalization. It is our goal to have snapshots of the winning yards in the Courier. There will also be a post on Facebook with additional photos. The Garden Club will have a small gift for the homeowner.

Agent from Page 1

North Dakota, I decided I wanted to stay here after college." She said that when she was working for the ND Soybean Council, she had the opportunity to attend various NDSU Extension Field Days or programs that the council had sponsored. She said that she worked for the North Dakota Soybean Council, starting as an intern and then going on to work as their Outreach and Engagement Assistant. In that role, she assisted with educational programs, events, and communications. She said that she feels those are all valuable skills for her role with Extension.

"It was at these events that I fondly remembered the Extension programs I attended as a kid and started thinking about a career in Extension post-grad," she said. "As I was looking at the different career paths before me, Extension really stood out and felt like a great fit!"

McClue said that her favorite part of the job is getting to be involved with 4-H and the county fair.

"Growing up in 4-H, the county fair was my favorite week of the year," she said. "Working with my livestock in the months leading up to the fair and then finally seeing my hard work pay off in the show ring was the best feeling, and now being able to help create that for other 4-H members is really special."

She said that a big priority for this position starting out is expanding her outreach within the community.

"There's already a strong foundation here, especially with the 4-H program," she said. "I'd really like to focus on strengthening partnerships with local schools, producers, and community organizations to ensure programs stay relevant and reflect the needs and interests of the community."

McClue said that she encourages people to reach out, whether it's by stopping by the Extension office to introduce themselves, calling with questions, or sharing ideas for programs.

"I'm really happy to be in Griggs County," she said. "I look forward to getting to know the community!"

Breeding duck numbers down again

ND Game and Fish Department

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's 79th annual spring breeding duck survey conducted in May showed an index of about 2.4 million birds, down 9.5% from 2.66 million birds in 2025 and 2.9 million in 2024.

The 2026 breeding duck index dipped below the 1948-2025 average for the first time since 1993, according to John Palarski, department migratory game bird supervisor.

In these spring waterfowl surveys, Palarski said they're counting a portion of what remains of last year's fall flight. Duck production in North Dakota has been poor in recent years and midcontinent duck populations continue to decline.

"Waterfowl here in North Dakota have to have those wetlands in order to nest. But many species like mallards, pintails and blue-winged teal that are upland nesting ducks, also need grass," he said. "And so, we've seen a couple million acres of grass in the form of CRP come off the landscape in recent years. Between those declines and wetland loss due to drainage and consolidation, that's going to impact our ability to produce ducks into the future which has



acute impacts for waterfowl hunters here in the state, but also has continental impacts, because North Dakota is the Duck Factory."

Historically, duck numbers in North Dakota paralleled wetland conditions closely. In the heydays of North Dakota duck hunting from 1994-2016, the breeding duck index frequently topped 4 million birds, but it is unlikely for that to happen again, even in the wettest years, until habitat availability improves.

Indices for individual species were variable. Mallards (up 6.8%), pintails (up 23.7%) and green-winged teal (up 20.9%) indices increased from 2025

while blue-winged teal, gadwall, widgeon and most diving duck species decreased. Although mallards are up from 2025, they're still down 15.3% from their long-term average.

Palarski and crew covered more than 1,800 miles of transects counting wetlands and waterfowl down to the species and social grouping on both sides of the road. This spring, the wetland count was similar to last year but 34.9% below the long-term average.

As always, the July brood survey will give a better idea of duck production and insight into what to expect this fall.

Commission from Page 1

by one person during the interim period. Alfson then shared his disagreement with the commission's earlier handling of Larson's resignation. The Commissioners acknowledged Alfson's comments.

Next, the commission reviewed the meeting minutes from June 8, June 16 and June 17. A motion was made by Alfson to approve all three sets of minutes and dispense with the reading.

Averill seconded the motion. Following the discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding the bills, Auditor Larson noted that payments for election workers' training and election duties were included in the bills. A motion to accept the bills as presented was made by Zorn and seconded by Averill. The commission approved the bills by a unanimous roll-call vote.

Next on the agenda was open meeting laws. Alfson started a discussion with the commission on open meetings laws and the recent restructuring of the Weed Board. Alfson shared his concern, feeling the ideas had come to the meeting after several board members visited outside the June 8 meeting. Tenneson reviewed guidance concerning meetings and "successive communications" between members. He also said that if there is a quorum of commissioners at the Weed Board meeting, the board can meet, as long as public notice is given. In the discussion following, Tenneson clarified that the revenue and expenses of the Weed Board are set up the same as they have been in the past, but changes can be made should they decide.

Regarding the tax director position, the commission considered a counteroffer from applicant Darcie Coombs. The original of

fer was \$39,000 annually, and Coombs countered at \$45,000. The commissioners reviewed current budget limitations, reserve funds, retirement and benefit costs, noting the County's long-standing effort to find a local person for the position. Coombs indicated that she would accept \$45,000 without requesting another increase after completing required training. Larson reported to the commission that \$124,538.17 remains in the Reserve account. Alfson made a motion to offer Darcie Coombs a starting salary of \$45,000. Averill seconded the motion. In the discussion, the commission decided to first talk with current contracted tax director Linda Morris to finalize how to fund the position. In the vote, all commissioners voted 'aye,' and the motion carried.

Auditor Larson outlined the transition plan for the appointed Interim Auditor, Maddy Eli. Eli said that she has many contacts and resources available, and her four years of experience working in the auditor's office in the past will also be helpful.

The commission began preliminary 2027 budget discussions. Department requests had been entered into the working budget, and Harold Rotunda was helping with health insurance and retirement figures. The commissioners discussed inviting department

heads to future meetings to explain budget requests.

Griggs County Highway Superintendent Wayne Oien informed the commission that grant applications for the Safety Improvement Program funding for County Road 8 and County Road 2 were both denied because of high costs relative to project length. The commissioners reviewed the funds they have to put toward projects. Auditor Larson reported the Road Special Project fund has \$1,361,896.78 and the Prairie Dog Fund has \$1,757,878.68. The Road Special Project fund was planned to be used to meet the County's portion of shared projects. Oien also updated commissioners on the hauling of sand for the horse arena, with the plan of two employees from the County providing the hauling. Regarding the Garrison Diversion pipeline project, County Road 9 has many speeding trucks, and complaints have been made to the supervisor.

Following a motion by Zorn and a second by Averill, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:21 a.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 6, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.

(This article is a summary of the June 22, 2026, Griggs County Commission meeting. To hear the entirety of the meeting, go online to griggscountynd.gov/meetings/Commission.)

			1			2		3
2		1			4		5	
	6			2	7			8
7	8			5		4		
9								2
		5		3			6	1
6			8	1			7	
	3		6			9		4
5		2			3			

SUDOKU PUZZLE

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

6	1	2	7	9	8	3	4	5
4	9	8	3	2	5	1	6	7
3	5	7	1	4	6	9	8	2
7	8	9	4	3	2	5	1	6
1	6	3	5	8	7	2	9	4
5	2	4	9	6	1	7	3	8
8	3	5	6	7	9	4	2	1
2	4	1	8	5	3	6	7	9
9	7	6	2	1	4	8	5	3

THIS WEEK'S PUZZLE SPONSORED BY:

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