

The Forum

OF FARGO - MOORHEAD

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West Fargo Schools building task force mulls over feedback about potential new bond

BY WENDY REUER
The Forum

WEST FARGO — The West Fargo Schools Facilities Planning 2.0 task force met for the final time, Wednesday, May 1, before recommendations for a potential new building referendum will be presented to the school board on May 20.

In September, a \$147 million bond referendum failed, primarily due to low voter turnout. The bond would have funded the building of a new elementary school, several additions and renovations to existing school buildings, including an expansion at Horace High School and Heritage Middle School, and \$5 million to help fund another sheet of ice and an addition at Veterans Memorial Arena.

The task force, comprised of about 75 parents and community members, met in a series of meetings in February and March and held public feedback-gathering sessions throughout April.

West Fargo Schools spokeswoman Heather Leas gathered feedback from all the prior meetings, including former task force meetings and

public forums, and then synthesized the information by utilizing Artificial Intelligence for Wednesday's meeting.

In general, Leas said there were many who expressed frustration with a perceived lack of foresight and efficient management of taxpayer funds, questioning why the expansions of Horace High School and Heritage Middle School were not completed when the schools were first built.

The district has routinely explained that when the \$106.9 million bond was passed in 2018, it included money to build the district's third high school and middle school, but the district built smaller to keep the overall impact to taxpayers as low as possible at that time and also to account for the potential for slowed growth in the district.

However, growth has not slowed down. The district remains projected to grow by around 400 students each year for the next 10 years, the same rate it has grown each year in the past decade. The district is now considering a second bond

TASK FORCE on A6



Wendy Reuer / The Forum
Members of the West Fargo School District's Facilities Planning 2.0 task force met Wednesday at Horace High School.



Photos by Chris Flynn / The Forum

Cameron Halverson, a Barnesville high school student, helps Mary Ann Scheffler with outdoor projects at her home during the second annual Barnesville Day of Caring event on Wednesday. Barnesville high schoolers and adult community members go to the homes of senior citizens and help with projects like washing windows, raking leaves, trimming shrubs, cleaning garden and flower beds, small repair work, cleaning gutters, and cleaning air conditioner units.

HELPING HANDS

Students, older adults bridge generational gaps by volunteering for Barnesville Day of Caring

INGRID HARBO
The Forum

BARNESVILLE, MINN.

Mary Ann Scheffler watched from her front porch as high school students climbed on top of her roof and knelt in the garden beds in front of her house. As the group of four boys cleared the gutters and weeded the garden beds, Scheffler noted they were going above and beyond in their work.

"The only thing I asked for was the gutters — the rest here is a bonus," she said.

The group of high school students was one of around 20 groups



Asher O'Brien, a Barnesville high school student, volunteers for the second annual Barnesville Day of Caring event on Wednesday. The event arranges for local volunteers to go to the homes of senior community members to help them with outdoor projects.

scattered throughout Barnesville on Wednesday morning, May 1, for

the second annual Barnesville Day of Caring.

The event, hosted by the Barnesville Area Community Fund, pairs high school students with older adults in Barnesville to help with outdoor projects. Across town, students were completing tasks like cleaning gutters, weeding gardens, raking lawns and washing windows.

This year, around 100 students and 30 adults volunteered to help 70 older adults across the town.

Volunteers were coordinated through Barnesville HELPERS, a community group that assists Barnesville residents

DAY OF CARING on A8



Forum file photo

The North Dakota Attorney General's Office released nearly 100 emails from Wayne Stenehjem's AOL account to media outlets on Wednesday.

Stenehjem's private emails don't mention lease deal slated for trial

BY APRIL BAUMGARTEN
The Forum

BISMARCK — Private emails from former North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem have turned up no information about a lease deal that led to a criminal case set for trial this week.

The Attorney General's Office said it continues to review thousands of

government emails and text messages that belonged to Stenehjem.

The North Dakota Attorney General's Office released nearly 100 emails from Stenehjem's AOL account to media outlets on Wednesday, May 1, as part of an open records request made by The Forum. The release of the communications comes two days before Stenehjem's campaign treasurer, state Rep. Jason Dockter, R-Bismarck, heads to trial on Friday in Burleigh

EMAILS on A6

Family of man fatally shot by BIA officers appeals lawsuit dismissal

BY APRIL BAUMGARTEN
The Forum

FORT YATES, N.D. — The family of a man who was fatally shot by a Bureau of Indian Affairs officer on the Standing Rock Reservation has appealed the dismissal of a federal wrongful death lawsuit.

The children of George "Ryan" Gipp Jr., under the guardianship of their mother Corrine Kopp, filed the appeal in mid-April with the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. It seeks to overturn the North Dakota U.S. District Court's dismissal of the case in January.

Gipp had pulled up to Hagel's gas station in Fort Yates in a vehicle with his parents when he accidentally discharged his shotgun, according to court documents. Gipp and his parents had gone turkey hunting before stopping at the gas station, the appeal said.

His mother said she believed Gipp was trying to unload the gun when "it just went off," the appeal said. No one was injured.

The mother drove the family back home, a civil

complaint filed in North Dakota U.S. District Court said. Gipp threw the gun out the window before he was pulled over by BIA Officer Raymond Webb, the appeal said.

Gipp's parents complied with orders to exit the vehicle, the appeal said. At one point, a second BIA Officer, Gary Sandland Jr., arrived at the scene.

The officers ordered Gipp out of the vehicle, the appeal said. Court documents said Gipp disregarded the commands for two minutes but eventually exited his parents' vehicle.

When Gipp was in front of Webb's vehicle, Webb used a stun gun on Gipp twice, the appeal said.

As Gipp ran behind Sandland's vehicle, Webb fired a semiautomatic weapon 17 times at Gipp, according to the appeal.

Gipp died from the shooting, and a medical examiner said he was hit with six to 10 bullets, the appeal said. He was 35 years old.

The Gipp family initially filed a lawsuit in September 2019 in North Dakota U.S. District Court against Webb and



Contributed / U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals
George "Ryan" Gipp Jr. just moments before he was fatally shot by a BIA officer in October 2017.

Sandland, claiming they used excessive force and wrongfully detained and arrested Gipp. The family agreed to dismiss its claims against Sandland after learning he didn't fire his firearm or stun gun.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Traynor ruled Webb was justified in firing his stun gun and firearm at Gipp. Gipp had his hands inside the pockets of his hoodie and recklessly disregarded officer commands, the judge wrote in his order to dismiss the case.

Webb said he thought he saw Gipp had a gun, though attorneys for the family dispute that, according to court documents.

"There was no gun on or near Ryan," the appeal said, adding that his

parents told officers that there was no weapon in their vehicle or with Gipp.

Webb had reason to believe Gipp had an object in his hoodie pockets that could be used to harm the officers, Traynor wrote.

"Officer Webb employed a reasonable use of force by discharging his taser to try and effect the arrest of Ryan," the judge wrote. "This stands equally true regarding Officer Webb's use of deadly force."

Fort Yates is about 65 miles south of Bismarck.

Readers can reach Forum reporter April Baumgarten at 701-241-5417 or abaumgarten@forumcomm.com. Follow her on X, formerly known as Twitter, @aprilbaumsaway.

DAY OF CARING

CONTINUED from A1

over the age of 65.

Scheffler said she had never signed up for volunteers to help her with tasks before, but needed help clearing the gutters. The added work of weeding the garden bed would save her a couple of hours, she said.

"I'm not used to being around young people — it's a nice way to get to know them and see how well they work," Scheffler said.

From Scheffler's roof, Barnesville student Peyton Amundson said volunteering during the Day of Caring allowed students to give back to community members that support them.

"In all of our sports over the years, we're always backed by our community, so just giving back," Amundson said.

"We're eventually going to need help when we're older," said Zachary Bredman, another student clearing the gutters.

Karen Lauer, executive director of the Barnesville Economic Development Authority, helps organize the event. She said the idea for the day was sparked by a need among older adults in the community for help with some tasks as they age in their homes. Meanwhile, the Philanthropy and Youth student organization and chapter of the National Honor Society at Barnesville Public Schools are already actively involved in giving back to the community.

"It was a situation where we decided there was one group of people that had needs, we had another group of students who wanted to give back, and it was a matter of just matching the two groups," Lauer said.

While older adults in



Chris Flynn / The Forum

Barnesville high school students Peyton Amundson, left, and Zachary Bredman volunteered for the second annual Barnesville Day of Caring event on Wednesday. The event arranges for local volunteers to go to the homes of senior community members to help them with outdoor projects. They helped clean the gutters for Barnesville resident Mary Ann Scheffler.

the community are being served by the students, both parties benefit, Lauer said.

"At the end of the day, it's really difficult to know who's benefiting more, if it's the students or the senior citizens," Lauer said. "Last year, the kids told us that they so enjoyed meeting the senior citizens, hearing their stories and being able to help them."

During the first Day of Caring, in 2023, only students in Philanthropy and Youth and the National Honor Society participated. This year, all senior, junior and sophomore students had

an opportunity to participate.

Across town from Scheffler's house, a group of girls had just started on their second house of the morning, armed with rakes and gardening gloves. A too-short ladder only delayed the group for a couple of minutes — after a quick call, another community member stopped by with a ladder tall enough to reach the gutters.

Bailey Thompson, one of the adults volunteering, said students were excited to help out around town and older adults were excited to talk to the kids.

"The camaraderie and the two different age groups coming together and helping out is fun to see," said Thompson.

Student and National Honor Society member Carli Vigesaa was volunteering for the second year in a row. She said the event helps build community relationships.

"All the younger people are getting connected with the older people, and it brings everyone together more," Vigesaa said.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Ingrid Harbo at iharbo@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5526.



Chris Flynn / The Forum

High school and adult members of the Barnesville community volunteered for the second annual Barnesville Day of Caring event on Wednesday. The event arranges for local volunteers to go to the homes of senior community members to help them with outdoor projects.

LOST & FOUND

LOST DEEP BROWN
DISTRESSED LEATHER
CUSTOM HAT



Identifiable by:

- ✓ Carving of a bird on the side
- ✓ Dogwood Flowers carved into the back of the brim
- ✓ Chef knife carved into the side of the brim
- ✓ Longitude and latitude carved on the back inside

Last Seen between downtown and 13th Ave. mid last week.

REWARD AVAILABLE

If you find this hat, please contact owner by sending an email with a picture of the hat to chefEricgephart@gmail.com

This hat holds a lot of sentimental value and is irreplaceable.

Fargo, your help on this would be very much appreciated.



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