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Plans for BRF municipal operations center continue to move forward

By Dakotah Bork

The project to construct a new operations center for the Black River Falls Municipal Utilities (BRFMU) is slowly starting to take shape. During the Black River Falls Utility Commission’s monthly meeting on Jan. 27, BRFMU general manager Casey Engebretson presented the updated design and a new estimate on the center.

The new BRFMU facility has an approximate square footage of 22,000 feet, which will include office and storage space and an outdoor storage yard. The project committee has been working closely with architects from Short Elliot Hendrickson during the design stage of the building.

As of Jan. 14, the estimated total cost of the project is now $5.238 million. The $150,000 difference from the estimated cost of $5.388 million in November is the result of potential changes to several cost-saving areas.

Some of the cost-saving areas include eliminating a stone pillar sign for some sort of signage over the entry door and changing the materials used to accent the building. On the design plans, the architect has individual stone masonry as a building accent. The stone could be replaced with different colored brick as an accent for cost-saving purposes.

“If we eliminated that and looked more into two different colored bricks, Miron put a cost savings on that alone at about $27,000,” explained Engebretson. “We are looking at different ways. It’s something we can always change.”

Another potential change to the operations center design that would save on the cost of the project are the pole bunks used to store power poles. The committee has a permanent option that is made from round sonotubes and placed with an I-beam structure, which would store power poles off the ground. For the other

See BRF municipal, page 2
option, the architect found a company from Eau Claire that has concrete bunks that are placed on the ground and could be moved around.

“According to Miron’s estimate, we would be saving about $47,000 by going with these (the concrete bunks),” explained Engebretson.

At the end of January, 50 percent of the design plans for the center were completed. A more finalized estimate of the project will be discussed at the BRFMU Commission meeting next month.
Eagle River Light and Water in conjunction with WPPI Energy recently donated $1,000 to three area organizations. Taking part in the presentation are, from left, Robin Ginner, executive director of Trees For Tomorrow, $200; Mike Sanborn of Light and Water; Rusty Wolf, president of the Sno-Eagles Snowmobile Club, $300; and Kim Emerson and Matt Haugen, Eagle River Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center, $500.

—Staff Photo By MICHELLE DREW
More Fire Events On West Liberty As Garages Burn

The Evansville Fire District, along with the Evansville Police and EMS were dispatched to a garage on fire in the area of 100 block of W Liberty Street on Friday, February 14, 2020 at approximately 9:23 PM. Fire units were on scene within approximately eight minutes of the initial page from Rock County 911 Center. Initial units on scene found two fully involved detached garages. Fire crews knocked the majority of fire down quickly, but due to energized power wires, suppression efforts were stopped until the Evansville Water & Light were able to deenergize the wires for the safety of the Firefighters. Once power was turned off to the wires and made safe, fire suppression efforts were continued and salvage and overhaul operations were completed. Cause of the fire at this time undetermined. Unfortunately the garages and contents are considered a total loss. The two garages were along a narrow alley behind the homes on W Liberty and W Church. All crews cleared the scene at approximately 11:45 PM.

The Evansville Firefighters would like to thank the Evansville Police Department, the Evansville EMS and the Evansville Water & Light for their assistance with this incident.

(Photo by Kelly Gildner)
Couple makes smart energy use a priority when building new home

When Jeff and Karen Forbes decided to build a new home, the couple took the lead and served as their own general contractors. They built a home that is not only beautiful, but also extremely energy efficient.

The Forbes are the owners of the first Focus on Energy® Certified New Home built in Florence County since 2012, with their commitment to energy efficiency producing a home that is an impressive 38% more efficient than required by state building code. As a result, the home is more comfortable, durable and energy efficient than the typical Wisconsin home.

A long-term employee of WPPI Energy, Jeff Forbes was familiar with Focus on Energy, Wisconsin’s utility-funded energy efficiency and renewable resource program.

“Having experience with energy efficiency in my career, I felt strongly we should build a home that is not only beautiful, but also extremely energy efficient.”

Owners of the first Focus on Energy Certified New Home built in Florence County since 2012, Jeff and Karen Forbes are excited to share information with anyone interested in improving home energy efficiency.

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Focus on Energy from page one

with low energy consumption,” Forbes said. “We hope to live in this home for quite some time, so energy efficiency was a major consideration.”

Focus on Energy connected the couple with building performance consultant Chuck Greening, who provided education, recommendations, inspections and final testing of the home. Greening visited the home twice during construction and spent about five hours inspecting the finished product in October 2019.

The 2,768 square-foot home features:

• Measured infiltration (air tightness) exceeding the program standard by more than 70%

• A ventilation rating 106% higher than the program requirement

• In-floor heating supplemented with a heat recovery ventilator (HRV) with ECM, an efficient way to bring in new, filtered air while removing stale air filled with humidity and pollutants

• A well pump with a variable speed drive, which saves energy by adjusting motor speed to maintain water pressure

• A high-efficiency septic force main pump, LED disk lights, super-efficient appliances, triple-pane windows, high levels of insulation in the walls and roof, extensive slab insulation methods, and a smaller-than-recommended furnace

Jeff highly recommends working with Focus on Energy when building a new home, especially in northern Wisconsin.

“With significantly more heating degree days in northern Wisconsin, building energy [efficiently] pays off when you consider the fuel spend alone,” he noted. “Additionally, the comfort of the home is far superior to our previous home and, should we decide to sell the down the road, the resale value should be higher due to this certification.”

Forbes encourages any local residents interested in learning more about his experience with energy-efficient home building to call him at (715) 495-7604.
Registration now open for Sustainable Forestry Conference

The 16th Annual Sustainable Forestry Conference will be held Thursday, April 23 from 7:50 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. at the Keyes Peak Ski Lodge, 4960 Hwy 101, four miles south of Florence. This year’s conference focuses on “Woods to Market”. Wood supply, demand and markets are always changing and so are the regulations related to doing business.

Organizers encourage individuals from Wisconsin and Michigan regional wood products and logging businesses, local government, forestry and land management, school boards and administrators, utilities, economic development, state government and other related associations and resource agencies to attend. A diverse audience has led to excellent discussions and networking at past conferences.

Morning speakers will present “Wood, Supply, Demand and Future Predictions,” “Drone Use in Forestry Operations,” “Rare Species and Forest Management, Wetland and Stream Crossings,” and “Hardwood Regeneration Studies and Issues.”

Afternoon speakers will address “Roundwood Purchasing Trends,” “Wisconsin Hardwood Exporting,” and “MI/WI Forest Industry Assistance Programs.” The conference ends with Henry Schienebeck, Executive Director with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, providing a Wisconsin and Michigan Legislative Update and a Wisconsin Forest Practices Study update.

Attendees must pre-register by April 14 and spaces fill up fast so sign up soon. View the brochure and register online via credit card at www.lumberjackrcd.org. Or print a registration form from the website and mail with a $35 check written to Extension Florence County, Attn: Sabrina Leffler,

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Forestry Conference from page one

5628 Forestry Drive, Florence, WI 54121. Contact Sabrina with registration questions at (715) 528-4480 ext. 1. Wisconsin loggers receive four SFI credit hours and Michigan loggers receive eight SFI credit hours via end of the day paperwork. Forestry professionals receive six hours of SAF CFE credits.

What a gas

On Friday February 14, Florence Utilities hosted a natural gas presentation at the Florence Elementary School. The presentation was given by two Wisconsin Public Service gas utility mechanics. During the presentation, the mechanics used natural gas in a number of demonstrations to illustrate the properties of this widely used heating fuel, the dangers of carbon monoxide, and how to react if a natural gas leak is detected. The students also received an appreciation of the history of natural gas and the long path it must travel from ground to end use. Approximately 55 students and faculty attended. Every other year, Florence Utilities partners with Wisconsin Public Service to bring this important safety program to 7th and 8th graders in the Florence School District.
Mayor Oppermann reports Jefferson is strong

JEFFERSON — The city of Jefferson is strong, with numerous upgrades completed during the past year and more projects underway in the next 12 months, its mayor told city chamber members.

Mayor Dale Oppermann gave the traditional "State of the City" speech at the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet Thursday night.

The event, at which both the city and the chamber presented numerous awards, took place at the 13 East banquet hall alongside the Jefferson golf course.

Oppermann began his address looking back at the accomplishments of the city in 2019. He said the first of the major projects undertaken by the city in 2019 was the renovation of the Jefferson Police Department and Jefferson Utilities building.

A priority due to water leakage in the original building, the project also allowed the city to make upgrades to improve the efficiency and security of the shared police department/utilities building.

Under the direction of construction manager Maas Brothers Construction of Watertown, the project was completed on time and under budget, Oppermann said.

In addition, in the last year, the city welcomed two new businesses and initiated an expansion of the community’s North Industrial Park.

"McDermott Top Shop and Stehling’s Taxidermy both built new structures and brought well-paying jobs to our city," Oppermann said. "We thank both the McDermott and Stehling families for expanding their businesses in Jefferson."

The expansion of the city’s North Industrial Park, meanwhile, provided "shovel-ready property for the next business prospects to build on," Oppermann said.

The next year will see lots of new construction efforts, bringing even more changes and renovations than the previous year.

In 2020, the City of Jefferson is slated to see the construction of a travel plaza with a new Best Western Plus hotel, BP gas station and Burger King restaurant on the north State Highway 26 interchange.

Oppermann said that construction is set later this year, with the goal of the hotel, gas station and restaurant to be completed yet this summer.

In another improvement, the city will install a new city welcome sign by late spring.

"In addition to the city logo, the sign will have a video message board to welcome visitors to Jefferson and to provide information about upcoming civic events," Oppermann said.

Downtown Jefferson will see many new improvements that will turn old and vacant properties into thriving new businesses and residential areas.

The first is the renovation of the former Schweiger Industries furniture factory into Riverside Lofts.

The second project, which is already under way, is the renovation of the former Rock Bottom Tavern on the east side of the Rock River near the Milwaukee Street pedestrian bridge into the new Stable Rock Winery and Distillery.

The winery, owned by the Lewis Station Winery of Lake Mills, is slated to open to the public in June.

In addition, the City of Jefferson is working to extend its riverwalk and to create a new riverwalk area in the same area, with completion expected in the early summer.

Looking down the line into 2021, Jefferson is slated to address the reconstruction of Riverside Alley, the mayor said.

The project will involve burying utilities and recreating the streetscape to create a safe, clean and welcoming environment rather than a traditional "alley" look.

Also looking into the future, the city is working on the Rock River Landing Park, to be constructed on the site of the former Jefferson County Highway Department shop. The park is slated for completion in late 2020, with additional amenities to be added in 2021.

On the east side, the city has an option to purchase the former Meadow Springs Golf Course property for a proposed nature conservancy, with the opportunity to add up to 20 residential building lots.

Oppermann wrapped up his address with a look at upcoming street projects in the coming months.

The 2020 street projects include the reconstruction of South Marshall Avenue, the mill and overlay of 100 East Milwaukee Street, and numerous other smaller projects.

In addition, Plymouth Street is due for major reconstruction in 2021, the mayor said.
Lodi Utilities is pleased to unveil a new logo that complements the city’s new image, while also recognizing the utility’s connection to the local community.

Lodi Utilities’ new logo features the utility’s name with a modern rendering of a duck flying overhead. The revitalized logo and brand is intended to reflect the utility’s emphasis on the beauty of Lodi’s natural resources while connecting the utility to the City of Lodi’s updated image. The logo for the city features a pair of mallards, which are native to the area.

“Our utility staff is proud of the area where we live and work,” said Jim Ness, Mayor of Lodi. “We wanted a utility logo that was meaningful to Lodi with elements that tie it to Spring Creek and the Lodi Marsh. We’re really happy with the final result and hope customers enjoy it as well.”

Susie the Duck has been the city’s official mascot since 1948 with Susie the Duck Day remaining a popular annual celebration.

“While the logo is changing, the utility’s strong commitment to working with their customers to provide excellent services and programs remains the same,” said Mayor Ness.

For more information, contact Lodi Utilities at (608) 592-3246 or visit the utility’s website at lodiutilities.org.
AMI delay: Negaunee council hopes to decide on electric/water meter enhancements in March

Feb 17, 2020 | Lisa Bowers, Journal Staff Writer

NEGAUNEE — Plans to implement advanced metering infrastructure for Negaunee’s electric and water services will have to wait.

The Negaunee City Council voted unanimously Thursday to delay a decision on the advanced metering infrastructure, or AMI, until next month’s meeting. This was due, in part, to the absence of Mayor David Kangas and councilmen Edward Karki and Paul Maino.

The city currently uses an automatic meter reading, or AMR, system to collect monthly meter data for customer billing, said Brett Niemi, services representative for Wisconsin Public Power Inc. Energy.

After 2021, the software used by the city in its electric and water departments for collection of customer usage information will need to be upgraded and the equipment used for field collection will no longer be supported by the manufacturer, Niemi told the council.

Under the current system, city electric employees travel through the city once per month and collect usage data from electric meters via a radio transmitter.

That information is then sent through WPPI’s central billing system where it is made available for billing by the city.

AMI meters would send information to the server every 15 minutes, Niemi said, allowing the city and customers to view the information in real-time.

“Customer expectations are changing,” Niemi said. “AMI provides more technologies than what AMR does. And, really, as billing systems, they are not apples-to-apples comparisons. The AMI provides you with a lot more capabilities. I kind of liken it to, think back in 2007 when the iPhone came out. Getting an iPhone in 2007 was kind of a luxury item. Today, a smartphone is pretty much standard equipment, and we are seeing a lot of similarities with AMI.”

He said AMI will give the water or electric customer more opportunities to analyze their usage.

“You can go in and set alerts and alarms, and because you have 15-minute interval data, you can get alerts on that to help yourself out,” Niemi said.

The advanced metering infrastructure will also provide real-time outage mapping, automatically generate service requests, send text messages and phone calls to utility personnel and record outage history, he said.

AMI implementation, if approved by the council, could cost up to $454,000.
The expense would be split, with the city’s electric fund paying $291,950 and the water fund absorbing $161,960. The project would be completed over a five-year period, with larger energy consumers slated for the first AMI meter installations.

The council approved the city’s 2020 fee schedule during a special meeting Oct. 3, which included a $1.42 per month increase in the city’s electric service fixed charge, effective Jan. 1.

The increase is meant to offset the cost of AMI implementation, officials said.

Councilman Don Gladwell, who made the motion to delay the decision, said while he appreciates the technical innovation AMI would bring, he would like to gather more information on the project before voting to approve its implementation.

“I see the benefits, I just don’t know if it is something that we need in Negaunee. What is the true benefit to the city?” Gladwell asked. “I just don’t know what we are going to gain from a city standpoint.”

Negaunee City Manager Nate Heffron said that overall, city utility customers will receive better service and more capabilities, but the city will also benefit from greater efficiencies because city staff will no longer be required to complete meter data collection monthly.

In addition, the AMI system will give city billing employees the ability to shut off or restart services right from the system, rather than sending an electric department worker out to manually shut off or restart service.

“Obviously there will be some savings in labor,” Heffron said. “And I think the more information we get out to our customers the more they will be able to adequately use our system.”

Lisa Bowers can be reached at 906-228-2500, ext. 242. Her email address is lbowers@miningjournal.net.
Refinancing to save $1,300,000 over 10 years

by Emmitt B. Feldner of The Review staff

PLYMOUTH – The city came up a winner again in the bond market Tuesday.
"I've got great news to share with you," financial advisor Phil Cosson of Ehlers reported to the City Council on the bond sale refinancing a 2011 utility revenue bond issue.
The bonds were purchased by FHN Financial Capital Markets of New York at an interest rate of 1.4682 percent.
That was less than the original interest rate projection and, added to a reoffering premium provided by Emmitt B. Feldner of The Review staff, reduce the amount of the bonds from the original $4.065 million to $3.785 million.
The original bonds being refinanced were carrying an interest rate between 4 and 4.375 per cent, according to City Administrator Brian Yerges.
The 2011 issue helped cover the cost of construction of the Plymouth Utilities Operations Center building on County PP along with several tax incremental finance district utility projects.
Cosson noted that the bond sale had six bids from financial institutions from New York to Dallas.
He attributed that wide response in part to the city's continued Aa3 bond rating from Moody's Investors Service.
In a press release, Moody's cited Plymouth's "average resident wealth and income, solid financial position and affordable debt and pension burdens."
Because the new bonds will be paid out of the city's general fund rather than Plymouth Utilities revenues, as the original issue was, Cosson said the sale will also have a positive impact on the utilities cash flow in the future.
"I'm always glad to come and deliver good news," Cosson concluded.

In other business, the council approved several items recommended by various committees, including:
• Repealing impact fees for land development. Yerges said the city adopted a sewer impact fee in the late 1990s but never enforced it and the recent adoption of new sewer connection fees made the impact fee unnecessary.
• Amended the zoning ordinance to allow buildings in the B-3 highway business district to exceed 30 feet in height with a conditional use permit. The change was requested by the Van Horn Group which plans to build a Cobblestone Hotel on Eastern Avenue which would be 50 feet high.
• Zoned the Depot Restaurant at 114 Depot St. to B-3 general business. Yerges said a recent inquiry led to the discovery that the parcel had no official zoning designation.
• Approved a corporate partnership agreement with Lakeland University. Under the agreement Lakeland will provide information on its programs and offerings to the city's human resource department and offer tuition discounts to city employees and their families.
Latest refinance more good news for city

At issue:
Refinancing savings

Bottom line:
Reward of sound policies

WISE FISCAL MANAGEMENT
PAID positive benefits for the city
of Plymouth once again this month.

As it has several times over the past few
years, the city sold bonds earlier this month to
refinance existing debt at a lower interest rate,
reducing debt service costs to the city and, more
importantly, to city taxpayers.

In this case, the refinancing was of a 2011
bond issue that financed construction of the
Plymouth Utilities Operations Center on
County PP as well as a number of tax incremental finance district
infrastructure projects.

The city was able to take advantage of current low interest rates to
reduce the rate of interest it pays on the debt from the original rate of
more than 4 percent a year to 1.4682 percent a year.

That translates to a total savings of around $1.3 million over the
10-year life of the new borrowing – welcome news for city officials,
who struggle constantly with finding the balance between providing
needed services and paying for those services without overburdening
local taxpayers. It frees limited city tax dollars for other necessary
purposes and lessens the tax dollars needed to pay off debt.

In the case of this particular bond sale, it is also good news for
Plymouth Utilities and its customers. The original 2011 borrowing
was a revenue bond, which meant it was being repaid out of revenue
earned by the utilities.

The new issue will be paid out of the city’s general funds. That
will ease the pressure on the utilities’ cash flow and make its financial
situation even stronger.

The city’s strong financial position made this latest bond sale
highly attractive to a wide-ranging number of potential buyers,
according to the city’s bond advisor Phil Cossen. That helped the city get the best bang
for its borrowing bucks.

It continues a trend the city has seen over
the past few years as it has refinanced existing
debt at lower interest rates, saving money in the
process.

The highly favorable rate was in large part a
result of the city’s favorable bond rating – Aa3
from Moody’s Investors Service.

In giving Plymouth that rating, Moody’s gave
the city credit for its “solid financial position and affordable debt and
pension burdens.”

That strong position is not by accident, but the result of careful
design and policy.

The city, under the leadership of City Administrator Brian Yerges,
Mayor Donald Pohlman and the City Council, with the support and
cooperation of city management and staff, has instituted fiscal policy
and financial practices over the years that have resulted in that “solid
financial position.”

City taxpayers have reaped the rewards of that in many ways,
including a stable property tax levy and tax rate for a number of years.

That has come while the city has continued to provide high-quality
services to its citizens, while also providing support for needed
growth and development in the city.

Achieving all of that is never an easy task for any local
government, but the city of Plymouth has done it successfully and we
all have benefited greatly from it.

All involved deserve credit for their wise and responsible
management of the public dollars that keep the city of Plymouth a
great place to live, work and raise a family.
Refinancing benefits city

by Emmitt B. Feldner
of The Review staff

PLYMOUTH — The city’s capital improvement projects fund will be the next beneficiary of the recent refinancing bond sale.

The City Council Tuesday approved a repayment of money previously advanced to tax incremental finance district 6 by the city to meet revenue shortfalls in the district.

The money, about $33,000, will go into the city’s capital improvement fund, City Administrator Brian Yerges told the council.

With a bond sale approved earlier this month reducing the debt payments on TIF 6 projects, Yerges said the TIF will be able to reimburse the city for the initial loan earlier than anticipated.

He also said that the district, created to support an expansion at Sargento Foods, will be able to closed on schedule and could see a surplus in funds at that time.

An outdoor storage facility could soon be added to the Plymouth Utilities Operations Center campus on County PP.

Yerges presented preliminary plans for the metal building, which would be used to house materials and equipment presently stored outside the center building, to the council’s Finance and Personnel Committee prior to the council meeting.

The building would also include a surrounding security fence.

Yerges would be able to pay the cost of the project out of its operating funds, so there would not have to be any borrowing to pay for it, Yerges said.

He presented a schedule for the project that includes review for approval by the Public Works and Utilities Committee in March and the Plan Commission in April. The project would be bid in April or May, with construction expected to be finished in August or September.

“Right now we have a situation where we have equipment stored outside. If you go to other utilities, you’re not going to find this kind of stuff stored outside,” Yerges told the committee. “Obviously, this is a risk we’re trying to eliminate. We think it’s long overdue.”

“I think it’s time for this,” Mayor Donald Pohlman agreed.

The committee also approved zoning fees increases to go into effect Sept. 1.

The increases will be the first since 2011, Yerges told the committee.

“We want to cover our costs,” committee chair John Nelson commented. “The percentage overall is pretty fair.”

The largest increases will be in the fees to file for zoning variances and appeals. The fee for a zoning variance application, for instance, will increase from $300 to $500.

Yerges explained that the increase is to cover the legal costs to the city of variances and appeals. Those can cost the city up to $1,000 in legal and other fees, he noted.

Alderman Greg Hildebrand suggested an effective date of Sept. 1. That would give the city enough time to publicize the new fees and would come after most new construction for this year would already be underway.
A Reedsburg manufacturer has partnered with the Reedsburg Utility Commission to complete a project. Cellox, which is also a supplier of foam packaging, collaborated with the commission to finish an energy efficient lighting effort that will not only reduce energy usage but also save on operating and maintenance costs.

The project, which was done in December, is expected to result in $15,000 in electricity costs every year. By upgrading to LED lighting and improving compressed air systems, Cellox will cut its energy consumption by 144,000 kWh per year, enough to power 13 homes.

The upgrades will also reduce Cellox's carbon footprint, and the upgraded compressed air systems are critical for Cellox’s expanded polystyrene molded products.

“When our customers take steps to conserve, they not only save on energy costs but they also help to lessen demands on the local electric system,” said Brett Schuppner, general manager of Reedsburg Utility Commission, in a statement.

To pay for the changes, Cellox worked with RUC to apply for grants through WPPI Energy and Focus on Energy.
Slinger iron filter project nears completion

By Joe VanDeLaarschot
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SLINGER — Slinger’s nearly $1.4 million project to install an iron filter on the village’s municipal water system could be completed by late this month or early March.

Village officials came up against an unexpected hurdle, which caused an additional expense and slowed the project. The project to install the iron filter and related work was not to exceed $1,445,000. It appears the project will come in at about that expected cost, but a repair to the well in pump house #3 will cost the village an additional approximately $63,000, which will come from the project’s contingency fund. This week the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources granted approval of the utility’s plan to repair the well. The well has also had to remain shut down while those repairs are completed. Village officials said Staab Construction is to have substantial completion of the work by the end of May.

The iron filter is a large piece of equipment that needs a separate building adjacent to village well No. 3 in the area of Community Park, Washington Street and Highway 144. The village spent $24,000 to purchase a narrow strip of land so the iron filter can be placed near the well. Once working, the filter will remove excess iron from the water. Once the filter reaches a certain level of service, it must be backwashed into the sanitary sewer system where the iron removed from the water is expelled from the filter and then sent on to the wastewater treatment plant. Because of the huge volume of water used in the backwash process, larger sanitary sewer lines needed to be installed in the area to handle the additional water load when the filter is cleaned.

Village Utilities Superintendent Greg Moser said the problem with the well was discovered while a temporary pump was being used during the filter’s installation. “It was observed that small gravel stones were being drawn into the pump through the (three inch) hole that was down about 120 feet,” Moser said. “The well will need to have a steel lining added that will cover that area.”

Village Engineer and Department of Public Works Director Jim Haggerty said the Department of Natural Resources had been slow in issuing the permits needed to complete the well repair. “The shut down of well #3 has not been causing any problems. Right now in the winter time the water uses are kind of at the lower end unless we have a major incident, like a fire or something which we, knock on wood, won’t have to worry about, we’re OK,” Haggerty said. “In the short term we could make up the capacity if we have to.”

Haggerty said water utility customers should notice an improvement in the water after the filter is working because high iron content can cause problems, including clogging water meters. Iron is a necessary mineral for human health as stated in a fact sheet from the DNR, but too much dissolved iron in the water can be a nuisance.

Village staff also preparing to drill new municipal well

Joe VanDeLaarschot/Daily News Staff

Slinger’s nearly $1.4 million water utility project is drawing near its conclusion. This is a view on Friday morning of the large iron filter that has been installed on the village’s municipal well #3.
Sustainable Stoughton will hold a “Green Thursday” event focused on renewable energy at 6 p.m. Feb. 20, at Lageret, 515 E. Main St. Stoughton Utilities will sponsor the event, which will include presentations on the latest solar and wind technologies and incentive programs.

Increasing concern over climate change is driving renewed interest in clean energy options like solar and wind,” read a Sustainable Stoughton news release. “While harnessing the wind and sun for clean energy is not new, what is new are the number of advances made in these technologies and current efforts to promote them as well.”

A speaker will begin at 6:30 p.m. about features the continuing efforts of Stoughton Utilities to make renewable energy available to residents, businesses, and nonprofits. At 7:40 p.m., a local solar installation company, Synergy Renewable Systems, will speak on the residential application needs of solar systems.

Representatives from Stoughton Utilities, Renew Wisconsin, Synergy Renewable Systems, Solar for Good, and Solar Speed will be available from 6 p.m. on to answer questions and provide technology information.

Attendees can interact with all presenters and companies during the wrap-up panel discussion at 8 p.m. or at each group’s booths before or after the presentations.

For more information, visit stoughtonutilities.com.

-Mackenzie Krumme
Waterloo council approves capital-improvement contracts

By Tammy Krueger
for the Daily Times

WATERLOO — The Waterloo Common Council approved 2020 parks capital improvements contracts for Waterloo Firemen’s Park baseball field renovations, park entry masonry repairs and sanitary sewer repairs during Thursday’s regular council meeting.

“The total that Gabe has for all three of the projects was $145,000 and all three of these combined put him at $24,000 under budget,” Mayor Jeni Quimby said in regards to Waterloo Parks Coordinator Gabe Haberkorn’s park project total projections.

Tower Sports LLC of Collins was approved for Waterloo Firemen’s Park baseball field renovations in the amount of $49,585, Betcheer Masonry Restoration of Sun Prairie was approved for Waterloo Firemen’s Park entry masonry repairs in the amount of $17,360 and Krause Excavating of Markesan was approved for Waterloo Firemen’s Park sanitary sewer repairs in the amount of $54,053.

Skalitzky Sod Farms, LLC of Waterloo has made a donation for the baseball field retiling and outfield renovations and the field will be renamed in the near future.

In other business, the council approved a contract to Forest Landscaping and Construction, Inc. of Lake Mills in the amount of $913,065 for 2020 street and utility improvements for Rood Avenue and Bluegrass Trail.

Street improvements to Rood Avenue and new construction to Bluegrass Trail are slated to begin in March.

“The (Public Works and Property) committee heard from Mitch Leisses (city engineer) earlier this evening and addressed questions and his recommendation is part of the packet. The recommended contractor has served as the city’s contractor for the prior two street projects and so they are very familiar with the firm,” said Waterloo city Clerk and Treasurer Mo Hansen.

Quimby shared with council members that new Christmas decorations have been purchased to replace the current decorations that are more than 20 years old, weigh 80 pounds each and not energy-efficient.

“With street improvements/construction over the years, the current light pole changes can not properly accommodate the existing decorations,” Quimby said.

Quimby noted that $3,000 had been budgeted to partially cover the costs of new decorations and that a matching fund by Waterloo Utilities and Wisconsin Public Power, Inc. (WPPI) brought the total to $6,000.

In the late 1990s, the late Hank Holley and his wife Karen Holley had donated $10,000 towards the soon to be retired Christmas decorations in memory of Karen’s sister Geraldine Bossa.

“I gave Karen Holley a courtesy call to thank her for the past donation and to let her know what was going on and that the decorations were going to be retired,” Quimby said.

Quimby shared with Karen Holley that the new LED energy-efficient decorations would be similar to the soon to be retired decorations with the exception of a white candle displayed in the middle instead of the current red candle. The white candles will match new banners that will also be purchased to coordinate with the new decorations.

Upon hearing of the Christmas decorations update, Karen Holley offered a $5,000 donation towards the new decorations.

“That was very sweet. Her (Karen Holley’s) family has done quite a bit for us (the city),” Quimby said in response to Karen Holley’s donation.

In other business, the council approved Jan. 16 regular meeting minutes, a resolution for the sale of municipal land located at 196 Schultz St. in the amount of $3,800 to Lee Columbus and tabled a resolution regarding 2019 financial carry over approvals until later in the month.

Quimby shared with the council that Jesus Burgos, director of the Waterloo CATV board, will be purchasing a smart television that will display information for city officials and meeting attendees to view during meetings.

All council members were present and the next regular council meeting is scheduled for Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. at city hall.
By Tammy Krueger
Courier correspondent

The Waterloo City Council approved 2020 parks capital improvements contracts for Firemen’s Park baseball field renovations, park entry masonry repairs and sanitary sewer repairs during Thursday’s regular council meeting.

“The total that (Waterloo Parks Coordinator) Gabe (Haberkorn) has for all three of the projects was $145,000 and all three of these combined put him at $24,000 under budget,” Mayor Jeni Quimby said.

Tower Sports LLC was approved for baseball field renovations in the amount of $49,585; Bettcher Masonry Restoration was approved for entry masonry repairs in the amount of $17,360; and Krause Excavating was approved for sanitary sewer repairs in the amount of $54,053.

Skalitzky Sod Farms, LLC made a donation for the baseball field retiling and outfield renovations and the field will be renamed in the near future.

The council also approved a contract to Forest Landscaping and Construction, Inc. in the amount of $913,065 for 2020 street and utility improvements.

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Waterloo to retire Christmas decorations

By Tammy Krueger
for the Daily Times

WATERLOO — New Christmas decorations will highlight the downtown area of the city of Waterloo during the 2020 Christmas season thanks in part to the generosity of Waterloo resident Karen Holley.

Holley recently made a $5,000 donation in memory of her late husband Hank Holley towards the purchase of the new Christmas decorations.

During the Feb. 6 regular Waterloo Common Council meeting, Mayor Jeni Quimby shared with council members that new Christmas decorations had been purchased to replace the nearly 30 year old decorations that weigh 80 pounds each and are not considered energy-efficient.

In addition, with street improvements/constructions over the years, the current light poles changes can not properly accommodate the existing decorations.

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In late 1992, Karen and Hank Holley, donated $10,000 towards the soon to be retired Christmas decorations in memory of Karen’s sister Geraldine Bossa.

Karen Holley said it had always been her sister’s wish to make a donation towards Christmas decorations for the city of Waterloo.

In a Dec. 10, 1992, Courier article, former Waterloo City Clerk and Treasurer Jaya Sharma was quoted as saying, “We think this is a very generous offer by Hank and Karen Holley and the decorations look very nice. Waterloo’s decorations look quite distinctive now compared to some of those in other towns.”

Quimby shared with Karen Holley that the new LED energy-efficient decorations would be similar to the soon to be retired decorations with the exception of a white candle displayed in the middle of a wreath instead of the current red candle. The white candles will match new banners that were also purchased to coordinate with the new wreath decorations.

Fifteen wreaths and 15 banners will be displayed from bridge to bridge on Madison Street and on both South and North Monroe streets. The light poles with electrical outlets will feature the lit wreaths and the decorative poles will feature the banners.

Upon hearing of the Christmas decorations update, Karen Holley offered a $5,000 donation towards the new decorations.

“That was very sweet. Her (Karen Holley’s) family has done quite a bit for us (the city),” Quimby said in response to Karen Holley’s donation.

Bossa was a lifelong resident of Waterloo and worked for the city of Waterloo recreation program, Ziebell Hardware and Gambles Hardware. She was also crowned Miss Waterloo in 1933 and made her own formal gown for the competition.

Hank Holley was employed at McKay Nursery Company for 41 years. He was a World War II veteran and a member of both the Waterloo American Legion Post 233 and the Waterloo VFW Krause-Langer Post 6614.

Karen Holley is also a lifelong resident of Waterloo and was employed at the Waterloo Farmers and Merchants State Bank for 35 years.

In addition to the new Christmas decorations, plans are in the works for the purchase of seasonal banners that can be displayed throughout the year in downtown Waterloo.

The soon to be retired Christmas decorations are now available for purchase at $50 each. Anyone interested in purchasing a decoration can contact Waterloo City Hall at 920-478-3025. Proceeds from the sale and donations will benefit the Christmas/street light beautification fund.
Holley helps make downtown jolly during holidays

Donates $5,000 in memory of late husband

By Tammy Krueger
Courier correspondent

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“I gave Karen Holley a courtesy call to thank her for the past donation and to let her know what was going on and that the decorations were going to be retired,” Quimby said during the Feb. 6 council meeting.

Quimby told Holley the new LED energy-efficient decorations would be similar to the soon to be retired decorations with the exception of a white candle displayed in the middle of a wreath instead of the current red candle. The white candles will match new banners that were also purchased to coordinate with the new wreath decorations.

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An example of what Waterloo’s new Christmas decorations will look like. The wreaths will be similar to what the city currently displays, but will have white instead of red candles.
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Customers of Waunakee Utilities will now be able to better understand, manage and control their home energy and water use, thanks to a customized online tool provided by the utility.

Utility customers can visit myaccount.waunakeeutilities.com to set up their personal account. By entering their account number and name, customers will be able to view current and past bill history. They may choose to pay online and will have the option to set up auto pay.
Phosphorus limits key to cleaner water

Communities reduce it in different ways

KEN THOMAS
kthomas@wiscnews.com

An element found in every living thing and essential to human life is also the enemy of clean water.

According to a study by the Earth Institute of Columbia University, phosphorus, “the 11th most common element on Earth is fundamental to all living things. It is essential for the creation of DNA, cell membranes, and for bone and teeth formation in humans.”

Phosphorus is also an abundant byproduct of life in the form of human feces and urine, and when phosphorus (as effluent from a wastewater treatment facility, or point source) reaches a body of water along with other run-off (non-point) it promotes the growth of algae. By removing phosphorus before it enters waterways, plant growth can be reduced and water clarity can be improved. Fishing and other recreational opportunities — such as swimming, boating and skiing — get better.

That task of regulating phosphorus in effluent is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency and regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Area wastewater treatment plants are preparing for new limits in different ways – some of which will undoubtedly impact the sewer rates that are charged to municipal customers.

Changes roll out with new permits

Five-year permits to regulate discharge are issued by DNR to municipalities across the state. Issue dates are staggered, in part, for ease of enforcement.

“With the revolving permit schedule, in any given year DNR is going to issue 20 percent of all permits in the state,” said DNR Phosphorus Implementation Coordinator Matt Claucherty.

“They’re all on five-year schedule. You have two years after the permit is issued to meet the limit. If you’re going to do a major upgrade to meet compliance you can have up to nine years to achieve that goal.”

According to Claucherty, it takes a lot of work to determine what phosphorus limits may be for point (treatment facility) versus non-point (field run-off or other source). In either case, cooperating is the norm rather than the exception.

“It’s all about working together to identify solutions,” he said. “Every community will have its own unique situation and it’s our job to work within our bounds to find a solution. We have to maintain our water-quality standards when we approve them so that’s the driving force behind what we do.”

A stream can handle less phosphorus discharge than a river, and a small river or lake can handle less than a large one.

“When we can do a TMDL (Total Maximum Discharge Limit) for a water body it basically is doing all the math to figure out how much phosphorus a water body can handle,” said Claucherty. “Then you assign allocations to different sources. Point sources are given a slice of the pie and non-point sources are also given one.”

Please see WATER, Page A5
Some cities face tight limits

Wausau, a city of more than 11,000 residents on the edge of Dodge and Fond du Lac counties, faces stringent phosphorus discharge limits, based on its location on a branch of the Rock River. The Wausau facility currently treats an average of 1.0 million gallons of water per day.

The city’s latest discharge permit calls for a reduction from no more than 0.1 milligram per liter to no more than 0.05 milligrams per liter. During high water events discharge limits change based on the volume of water present. Wausau has met limits even during heavy flooding, according to Randy Posthuma, general manager of Wausau Utilities.

Regular options to treat effluent — not related to flood events — include the addition of chemicals, filtration or Waupun’s chosen method of algae growth and harvest.

“Given the stringent levels that are being proposed for us, this is the only feasible option for us,” said Posthuma. “Our plans to grow and harvest algae will allow us to meet those limits in a cost-effective manner.”

Wausau is investing in a $32 million advanced biological nutrient recovery system, designed and engineered by Applied Technologies. Financing for the system includes a 40-year (EPA approved) loan of nearly $23 million at an interest rate of 2.375 percent, for an annual payment of nearly $890,000. An EPA grant of about $9.5 million will help to cover many other project costs.

The new system calls for the construction of a 35,000-square-foot greenhouse and processing facility on the north side of the wastewater treatment plant at 501 Fond du Lac St. Inside the greenhouse will be 84 miles of photo-bioreactors (clear tubes where sunlight interacts with liquid waste to grow algae). Equipment to process algae will also be installed, including a mechanical membrane separator, a centrifuge and a dryer.

Using the new system Wausau can achieve a higher standard of effluent purity than many other municipalities.

“It is assumed that most facilities will use chemical and filtration methods to meet their discharge limits,” said Clauherty.

“If there was a gold standard that would be it. If there’s a standard beyond that, the biological approach is perhaps the platinum key to success.”

Although the algae-growth system is largely covered by a grant and a loan, there are increased costs in debt service and operating expenses. Starting this April sewer rates in Wausau will increase 7.2 percent for the next four years ($2.2 percent total). Monthly sewer rates for residential customers will increase from $10.42 to $25.98.

Charges are projected to be in the lower range of 18 area cities and competitive with all of them. The Class C Utilities (similar size, volume and watershed) average is $3.52 per month.

Wisconsin River study delaying permits

“Baraboo is a city of more than 12,000 residents in Sauk County. The Baraboo wastewater treatment plant currently treats an average of 1.5 million gallons of wastewater per day. The treatment plant discharges wastewater into the Baraboo River, which flows into the Wisconsin River.”

“My limit may not change, or it may drop from the current 1 milligram per liter to no more than 0.36 milligrams per liter,” said Baraboo Sewer Utility Superintendent Wade Peterson. “The new limit hasn’t been blessed by the DNR and EPA so it has not been set yet. We meet our limit unless circumstances are unique. For the most part if numbers stay the way we expect we’ll be okay. If not my preliminary plan is to do a $7 million plant expansion to take care of phosphorus. We’re hoping, and I have my toes crossed, for good news.”

A currently unplanned expansion would include conventional chemical addition and filtration. Sewer rates could rise to meet increased costs.

“Baraboo is operating under a permit that expired about a year and a half ago. A sewer rate increase was approved about a year ago to fund a $3 million upgrade for treatment of bio-solids treated sewage sludge most often recycled as a fertilizer and soil amendment.”

According to Peterson, a recently completed Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study for the Wisconsin River may be delaying permit approvals in that area.

“We have not planned for any rate increases for phosphorus removal,” he said. “We’re still kind of in the wait and see mode. We’re expecting a permit to be issued soon but we have no firm date for when that may occur.”

Portage in Columbia County has about 10,000 residents. The plant’s average daily influent (wastewater to be treated) is 1.5 million gallons per day. Wastewater is treated with both chlorides and filtration. Treated effluent is discharged into the Wisconsin River.

According to Wastewater Utility Superintendent Dave Hornisher, the city is waiting for approval of new phosphorus discharge limits. The city’s current phosphorus discharge limit is one milligram of phosphorus per liter of treated wastewater.

“We do know it’s going to be lowered but we have no idea how far,” he said. “Right now we’re below our limit. We average anywhere from 0.5 milligrams per liter to upper 0.69 at the highest. There are so many variables — from where you’re located on a river, or a side stream, or what wastewater you’re in.”

No updates are being anticipated at this point.

“Once the new limit is established we will get some sort of timeline for implementation and we will have to fill out a form outlining how we will get down to that new effective level that might be,” Hornisher said.

The DNR’s new permit will be issued in late summer or early fall.

Phosphorus just part of the challenge

Clauherty said there are substantial challenges ahead.

“We have made quite a bit of progress on the wastewater front, however we have aging infrastructure at our facilities and our collection systems,” he said. “Sometimes we have increased industrial contributors. It’s hard to generalize about all of the communities in the state.”

Ultimately he believes that the DNR’s ultimate goal is attainable.

“Quite a lot of work has been put into determining at what point we can set baselines for phosphorus and algae growth, and at what point we see plant growth taking place. That goal has been identified as being 0.75. We’re hoping all streams can come in at or below that number. We know new rules are coming.”

He added, “Our goal is to have healthy and swim-able watersheds in the state. Reducing phosphorus is just one part of achieving that goal.”