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The Daily News

Sharing their blessings

Bouquets and Barbs

Editorial

January 18, 2025

From St. Vincent de Paul Society of Florence County Giving Tree Committee:

The St Vincent de Paul Society of Florence County would like to thank the community for sharing their blessings with our neighbors in need by supporting the Giving Tree Program. We were able to give new toys, clothing and food to 39 families with 101 children this Christmas because of your love and caring.

We would like to thank these churches and businesses for collecting gifts: Homestead Baptist, First Presbyterian, Bethlehem Lutheran and St Mary's Catholic churches, Great North Bank (Florence and Aurora, Wis.), The Marines Toys for Tots Project and the VFW for the use of their hall.

A special thank you to these businesses and organizations that made donations to the Giving Tree Program: K of C Council 2847, American Legion 211, Barb's Cafe, Bastian Electric, Pride Builders, Iron Mountain Automotive, Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home, Kastyl Insurance, Florence Hardwoods, Florence Trax, One O One Bar & Grill, Carquest, Northwoods Auto, Great North Bank, Dickinson Area Community Foundation, Stephens & Associates, The Pasty Oven, G & G Lumber, Demko Electric, Greater Green Bay Community Foundation, Dyer Inc., Florence Utilities, Shop with a Cop and many individual donations too numerous to mention. Thanks to the crafters who made hats, mittens and stuffed animals plus to the sheriff department for collecting food at Christmas in Florence.

God bless you all.



Hartford town house fire; garage, 2 vehicles destroyed

By FOX6 News Digital Team | Published January 5, 2025 7:36am CST | Hartford | FOX6 News Milwaukee |

HARTFORD, Wis - Fire gutted a town house and garage on James Court in Hartford on Friday evening, Jan. 3.

Hartford Fire & Rescue officials say their crews were dispatched to the house fire around 5 p.m. Friday. The first arriving command vehicle found a two-story town house with the attached adjoining garages on fire, a vehicle inside the garage on fire, and one vehicle outside of the garage on fire.

Everyone on both sides of the town house managed to get out safely.

Assistance was provided from **Hartford Electric & Water Utilities** and We Energies, which shut off the electric, water, and gas utilities.

Officials say the garages were destroyed by fire, along with two vehicles. Both units sustained minimal fire damage in the housing areas due to the rapid attack and fire extinguishment by fire personnel, but did experience smoke and water damage on all levels. The attics of both units experienced fire damage.

The fire was determined to be linked to a construction waste container which was located just outside of the garage.

The Source

The information in this post was provided by Hartford Fire and Rescue.



Hartford garage fire leaves multiple vehicles destroyed

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Photo courtesy of Hartford Fire & Rescue

A garage is seen destroyed following a fire in Hartford on Friday.

HARTFORD — Two vehicles have been lost following a garage fire that occurred Friday at James Court in Hartford.

According to a news release from Hartford Fire & Rescue, units responded for the report of a house on fire just after 5 p.m. The first arriving command unit found a two-story townhouse with the attached adjoining garages on fire, a vehicle inside the garage on fire, and one vehicle outside of the garage on fire. Hartford Police Department officers along with the command unit confirmed that all occupants had evacuated both sides of the townhouse.

The first-arriving fire engine initiated a rapid attack to extinguish the garage fires and vehicle fire. Crews then made entry into both units to

attack the fire which had spread to the attics. Additional crews vented the roof over both units to remove dangerous fire gases, heat, and smoke. EMS crews provided rehabilitation efforts to the firefighters and provided accountability of units on scene. Assistance was provided from [Hartford Electric & Water Utilities](#) and WE Energies, which shut off the electric, water and gas utilities, and Hartford Public Works provided road salt and personnel to assist with controlling ice as the freezing temperatures quickly froze the fire scene. Mutual aid assistance was also provided by Slinger Fire Department, St. Lawrence Fire Company, Lifestar Ambulance, Jackson Fire Department, Richfield Fire Department, and Neosho Fire Department.

No citizens or fire rescue personnel were injured in this incident, but occupants from both sides of the townhouse were displaced by the fire. The attached garages were fully destroyed by fire, along with both vehicles. Both units sustained minimal fire damage in the housing areas due to the rapid attack and fire extinguishment by fire personnel, but did experience smoke and water damage on all levels. The attics of both units experienced fire damage.

A fire investigator from Hartford Fire & Rescue along with a detective from Hartford Police Department conducted an origin-and-cause fire investigation, and the fire was determined to be linked to a construction waste container that was just outside of the garage.



Title: New Maquoketa officer sworn in

Author: LESLIE JACOBSEN

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Keywords: Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility

New Maquoketa officer sworn in

By **LESLIE JACOBSEN**
 Staff Writer

With his family in attendance, Adam Cirkl was sworn in by Mayor Tom Messerli as the Maquoketa Police Department's newest officer at the Dec. 16 Maquoketa City Council meeting.

Cirkl was the second of two officers hired by the city as a result of an effort to add more officers to the force that began this past May.

In other council business, the council unanimously approved the following items (5th Ward Council Member Mark Lyon was absent):

- A resolution approving the calendar year 2025 budget for **Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility**

- A resolution approving a change order to increase in the cost of the wastewater treatment plant project in the amount of \$35,688.45. The change order covers multiple job modifications, the most significant of which is electrical wiring and enclosures for a leak detection system. The job is due to be completed sometime around April 2025.

- A resolution approving a change order extending the timeline to April 30, 2025 for the stormwater levee improvement project. The change order carries no financial liability.

- A resolution approving and authorizing a form of Loan and Disbursement Agreement by and between the city and the Iowa Finance Authority, and authorizing and providing for the issuance and securing the payment of \$3,200,000 Sewer Revenue Capital Loan Notes. The revenue note will be used to pay for the remainder of the wastewater treatment plant project after the initial State Revolving Loan Fund note is exhausted.

- A resolution approving a change order increasing the cost of the 2024 mill and fill project in the amount of \$28,664 and approving payment to River City Paving in the amount of \$510,377.86. The change order was due to miscounts of manholes, and not accounting for intersection "depth" connections (when new road meets existing road). Public works director Jon Hopson is consulting with other public works directors and River City Paving's foreman to identify draft language that is more precise and acceptable for the city use when bidding mill and fills in an attempt to avoid these miscounts in the future.

- A resolution approving a change order increasing the cost of the Sunshine Learning Center project in the amount

of \$30,838.00 as submitted by Sheets Construction. This comprehensive change order request is considered, with confidence, to be a near final cost estimation of the project now that the demolition phases of the project are complete.

- A resolution approving a change order increasing the cost of the airport solar project in the amount of \$3,800 for a new breaker box and other minor equipment change-outs, as required by Alliant Energy.

- A motion authorizing downtown incentives grant reimbursement payment to Fred and Sharon Droste in the amount of \$15,000. The council had previously authorized a \$10,000 façade grant for the property at 229 S. Main St., but in light of the subsequent raising of grant support limits to \$15,000 in an attempt to help spur improvement and business expansion in Maquoketa's Central Business District, the city notified FY2024-2025 awardees and offered them a chance to take advantage of the increase.

- A motion approving payment in the amount of \$7,463.50 to Origin Design for plans to address the Maple Street Drainage Issue,

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to resolve stormwater runoff and spur additional E. Maple Street and E. Platt Street development.

■ A motion approving temporary construction easement payments at the South Main and Summit Street intersection project. Two property owners at the intersection will receive \$100 compensation each in exchange for a temporary construction easement.

Street department to relocate to old fire station

Street superintendent says his crew is 'excited' about the transition

By **WARREN BLUHM**
News Editor

The former Oconto Falls fire station at 98 Jackson St. is being turned over to the city street department.

The building was replaced last summer by a new \$7.3 million fire station at the south end of Memorial Field, which was built with the help of a \$7

million federal grant.

During its meeting Jan. 14, the Oconto Falls City Council approved allowing the street department to relocate its headquarters to the old fire station.

Street Superintendent Wally Remic said the city crew was very receptive to the idea when it was presented to them.

"They made it very clear to me that we're in

a building that doesn't fit all of our equipment right now, that we're spread out over a few different buildings the way it is," Remic said.

He then met with City Administrator Peter Wills and Fire Chief Tim Magnin to review the city's heating bills for the old fire station versus the west side garage.

"It's going to be a sav-

ings of at least one-half every month if we were to walk away from the west side shop," Remic said. "The crew is excited and very sure that we could work out of there more efficiently than what we're working out of our shop right now."

The Jackson Street facility is "a much nicer facility" and "My guys would absolutely love to move

into there," he said.

If the city continues to experience a lack of normal snowfall, Remic said, his department can be moving in between now and the start of spring.

"If it's not snowing, we have some time that we could be cleaning, moving, getting set up in there," he said.

The city has been exploring its options for

the old fire station since the fire department made its move last June. Another idea was for [Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities](#) to relocate there.

Magnin said the process of wrapping up the paperwork with the state on closing out the new fire station project is nearly complete.

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Oconto Falls Oconto County Times-Herald

Columbia Street work expected to start early

Project completion is due in time for middle school opening in September

By **WARREN BLUHM**
News Editor

The reconstruction of Columbia Street in Oconto Falls could begin as soon as February, City Administrator Peter Wills told the city council Jan. 14.

Dorner Inc. of Green Bay is the main contractor on the project, which involves the complete reconstruction of the street including pavement, water mains, and sanitary and storm sewers, along with sidewalks along one

side of the street, which will lead to three schools once the new Oconto Falls Middle School is completed next year.

The effort also includes reconstruction of a sewer lift station by Advance Construction of Howard. Wills said Advance has notified the city it wants to start next month, while Dorner has indicated it expects to get started in March.

The early start is affected by the city's Aug. 29 deadline to complete

the work in time for the 2025-26 academic year and the opening of the middle school.

Crews expect to begin work on the west end of the project, where Columbia Street intersects with Chestnut and Union avenues. During the work, traffic will be detoured along Chestnut and Union, which are part of state Highway 22, as well as South Main Street and North Farm Road, Wills said.

"We don't want the

(school) buses going on any of those interior streets — Wisconsin, Milwaukee, any of that stuff," Wills said. "We're really trying to keep everything to Chestnut, County I and South Main."

Greg Kuhn, general manager of Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities, said a meeting is planned toward the end of the month to have all the parties and the school involved. A letter is expected to go out to residents of Columbia and various

side streets to give them an approximate time line for the project.

"In that letter we are specifically calling out that it's closed to through traffic, local traffic only," Kuhn said. "I put in the letter, or in our update on the website, that we're going to monitor it, and if we catch people just blowing through there, there's going to be tickets issued, because we don't need that to become the norm in the construction site."

The total cost of the project is estimated around \$2.78 million. Part of the cost is being paid by the state Department of Administration with \$1 million of federal funding through the Community Development Block Grant program.

The project will include sidewalks on the south side of the street from Chestnut to Farm, connecting to existing sidewalks.

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SPSD completes solar array on high school roof

Through community collaboration, Sauk Prairie High School now has a 150-kilowatt solar array on its roof that will help save the district more than \$45,000 in annual utility costs. The district plans to install more in years to come.

“This isn’t the last set of panels we’re going to put in the district,” said Superintendent Jeff Wright.

“The rebates we received and the money we raised allowed us to save on energy costs. That funding could then be put into the classrooms, teachers, students and programs that make our schools successful.”

Funding for the \$645,491 project was procured in thirds: part Inflation Reduction Act tax credits, part district funds and part grants and community donations. Residents worked to-



SAUK PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The village of Prairie du Sac, the Sauk Prairie School District, SP High School and Prairie du Sac Utilities come together Dec. 10 to celebrate the installation of a solar array on the high school rooftop.

gether as part of Sauk Prairie Solar Schools to connect with other community members and explain how the technology works. Their efforts raised \$90,000.

That total included a contribution of more than \$42,000 from Prairie du Sac Utilities for

the high school project. The next aim is to install a 200-kilowatt array on the roof of Bridges Elementary School and the district administration office, which is set to be completed in 2025. The utility will contribute another \$46,177 for that installation.



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Photo courtesy of Slinger Utilities

From left: Slinger Food Pantry representative Kak Tennes poses for a photo with Slinger Village Clerk Tammy Tennes and Utility Clerk Savannah Menzia along with some of the donations Slinger Utilities collected through its most recent holiday food drive.

Slinger Utilities donation drives provide thousands of items for food pantry

SLINGER — Slinger Utilities recently announced that its month-long holiday donation drive, held between November and December, brought in thousands of items for the Slinger Food Pantry.

“The way people show up to help others really demonstrates the best of community,” Village Administrator Margaret Wilber said in a news release. “As a municipal utility, we are proud to host such a successful drive that will support those who need it this holiday season.”

According to the release, the drive was held from Nov. 13 through Dec. 13, and customers who brought in three or more items to Slinger Utilities were able to enter a drawing to receive \$50 in credit toward their utilities bill (five drawings were held).

“Utility staff dropped off a large donation to the Slinger Community Food Pantry in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, and again after the drive was complete,” the release said.



Sun Prairie, The Star

Sun Prairie Utilities receives national commendation for hurricane aid in Florida

CONTRIBUTED
Sun Prairie Utilities

Sun Prairie Utilities (SPU) has received a national commendation from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for its support in electric power restoration efforts in Lakeland, Florida.

On Oct. 9, 2024, SPU sent two journey lineworkers, Bob Kaufman and Cody Kuphal, with the Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin (MEUW) convoy of 22 Wisconsin public power communities to assist with widespread outages caused by Hurricane Milton.

Crews drove more than 20 vehicles, from bucket trucks to digger derricks, to

aid Lakeland Electric. They arrived the night of Oct. 10 and began working the following day to restore electricity to businesses and homes.

Lakeland Electric estimated that 38,000 of its customers were without power on Oct. 10. By the morning of Oct. 14, their staff reported that the number had dropped to 4,300. MEUW staff said crews had to repair broken poles, transformers, and downed wires in areas with extensive wind and flood damage after Hurricane Milton.

Wisconsin crews completed restoration efforts on Oct. 16 and left Florida the next day to drive back to their home state and families. When they returned, Kuphal

and Kaufman shared stories of their time helping restore electricity to Lakeland residents.

“One of the greatest actions that our public power community can take is lending a hand when bad things happen,” shared Andy Hirvela, SPU Interim Utility Manager and Supervisory Engineer. “SPU takes pride in sharing our talents and resources with public power friends like Lakeland Electric so they can get back on their feet safely and efficiently. We know Lakeland, or any of our MEUW partners, would be there for us as well.”

Sun Prairie Utilities participates in the American Public Power Association’s Mutual



CORA SEIBT

Bob Kaufman and Cody Kuphal in Beloit before traveling to Florida.

Aid Network, which coordinates with utilities and authorities during widespread power outages.

“Mutual aid is at the heart of what public power does, and the public power community

thanks [SPU] for stepping up to help a neighbor in need — whether they are next door or thousands of miles away,” stated Scott Corwin, APPA’s President and CEO, in the commendation letter.



Sun Prairie, The Star

Sun Prairie Mayor delivers State of the City address

ELLIE BOURDO
ebourdo@hngnews.com

Sun Prairie Mayor Paul Esser delivered his annual State of the City address on Wednesday. The address highlighted accomplishments from the past year and projects for the future.

This is Esser's last year delivering the State of the City address as he has announced his non-candidacy for the upcoming

mayoral election. In the address, Esser broke down the residents' tax bill. Of the 35% that goes to the city, the largest portion goes toward public safety. Esser said this is a priority for the city, especially as the population continues to grow.

"Fifty-one percent of the city's budget is

public safety," Esser said. "That's police, fire, EMS and building inspection.



Mayor Paul Esser

Police, fire and EMS are 24 hours a day, 7 day a week operation. So there's a lot of personnel and a fair amount of equipment in those and we have

been adding on to those over the years as the city grows."

Additionally, Esser spoke on the various projects that had been completed in the city in 2024, including the implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit, the operation of the wastewater 400-kilowatts solar array and the municipal operation of the fire department.

"We made the fire department, which for 125 years had been a volunteer

department, we made it a municipal operation because we were not competitive on the compensation we were paying firefighters," Esser said. "We had to increase that, so it became a city of Sun Prairie function, and we now provide fire service to the town of Bristol and the town of Sun Prairie on a contract basis."

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Esser also mentioned plans for the upcoming year, specifically development projects. These include the finalization of the library construction, the expansion of the new **Sun Prairie Utilities** building and affordable housing initiatives.

“We created a housing committee. It’s a group of people that are focused on addressing the housing needs in the city of Sun Prairie. And then we hired a housing coordinator, Becky [Binz],” Esser said. “So now on Jan. 27 we’re going to have a meeting, a joint meeting, of the Housing Committee and the city council, and Becky is going to present to them the affordable housing policy that needs city council approval. That’s going to set some direction on what we’re going to do

with it.”

The anticipated referendum was also a topic of discussion during Esser’s address. The city recently hired a communications consultant to assist in the planning and informational process of the referendum. Esser said the communications consultant will send a survey out to residents to determine the total of the referendum.

“We have to explain [the referendum] to the community, so we have engaged in... Mueller communications to assist us with this,” Esser said. “Probably what we’re going to have Mueller do is a survey to ask the community how they feel about a referendum and what level of referendum is tolerable to them.”

Esser concluded the address by asking residents to reach out to him if they have any questions.