

Glacial Lakes Area Digest

Whites withdraws

IROQUOIS — District 6 Democratic House candidate Ron Whites of Iroquois has announced that he has had his name withdrawn from the ballot due to time away from business. District 6 encompasses all of Clark, Hamlin and Kingsbury counties as well as Codington County outside of Watertown and the eastern part of Beadle County.

Jason Soren of Lake Preston is on the Democratic side of the District 6 ticket. In the June primary, Republicans Paul Nelson of Hetland and Kristi Noem of Castlewood advanced to the general election.

Anyone that would like to take his position on the ballot may contact Whites at 546-2326 and he will pass that name on to the central committee before the Aug. 8 deadline.

Watertown man found

A Watertown man was found dead, apparently by suicide, Monday in his home in the 100 block of First Avenue Southeast, officials with the police department reported Tuesday.

Police found Myron Regnier, 42, formerly of Vienna, after receiving a call reporting a suspicious death at 5:37 p.m., Det. Doug Ries said. The estimated time of death is between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Furness Funeral Home in Clark.

Day County declares fire emergency

WEBSTER — Short of calling for a burning ban, the Day County Office of Emergency Management has declared a fire emergency for the county.

The declaration requires anyone seeking an open fire to apply for a special permit from the Day County Sheriff's Department. Any controlled burning that takes place with a permit during the emergency also must be monitored to prevent the spread of fire.

Open Meetings Commission to meet here

PIERRE — S.D. Attorney General Larry Long said today that the next Open Meetings Commission meeting will be held in Watertown on July 24, at 10:30 a.m. at the Watertown City Council Chambers.

The agenda will include oral presentations on the following open meeting complaints: South Dakota Board of Regents, City of Tripp, Melrose Township in Grant County, and the Roberts County Commission.

The meeting is open to the public and those interested are encouraged to attend.

South Shore 'Hoe Down' is Saturday

SOUTH SHORE — The South Shore Community Club will be hosting a musical "Hoe Down" this Saturday, July 22. The entertainment will get started at 7 p.m. in the South Shore Community Center on Main Street.

Lunch will be served and door prizes awarded. A free will offering will be taken for both admission and lunch.

Watertown coaches honored

A pair of Watertown coaches were honored during the National Forensics League National Tournament, held late last month in Dallas.

Donus Roberts became the first coach to earn his ninth diamond. Also, Scott Walker earned his second diamond for coaching.

Arrow students competing included Houston King and Meghan Hansen in duet interp, Alexandra Robertson, student congress; Justin DiRose, international extemp; and John Roby and Zack Bierscheid, policy debate.

Roby and Bierscheid passed their six preliminaries, but were ousted in a run-off round by a team from California.

Bierscheid and Robertson are juniors who will be returning next year. All other Arrows competing were seniors.

Also competing in Dallas were speakers from Milbank. Erik Lambrechts advanced out of the Lincoln-Douglas preliminary rounds with a run-off victory, before being eliminated.

Student Congress competitor Chris Erickson advanced to the semifinals.

Jesse Liebe competed in foreign extemp.

Group wants city to fund housing assessment need

■ It wants a better grasp on the affordable housing situation in Watertown.

By JENNIFER NIELSEN
Public Opinion Staff Writer

A local group is calling for more affordable housing in Watertown after a recent survey revealed that the city currently lacks affordable single-family houses in a reasonable price range.

The group, which is now calling itself the Work Force Housing Committee, approached the Watertown City Council in March asking for help in funding a housing needs assessment survey to reveal the current affordable housing situation in Watertown.

Dick Endenstrom with First District Association of Local Governments presented the results of that study to the council at its meeting Monday.

During the time that the study was conducted in April and May, there were 164 active real estate listings for homes in Watertown

with prices ranging from \$29,900 to \$795,000. The median price for a home during that time was \$154,900, Endenstrom said.

Of those 164 listings, approximately 51 percent were priced over \$150,000, while about 15 percent priced less than \$69,900. Only 33 listings were available in the \$90,000 to \$150,000 price range, Endenstrom said, which is where the major housing demand is in Watertown.

The study also found that the average construction cost for a 1,500-square foot house was approximately \$180,000 or about \$120 per square foot.

"Which does not represent affordable housing," Endenstrom told the council.

At the time of the study, 66.2 percent of Watertown residents owned homes, while 33.8 percent rented.

The study found that 51.9 percent of Watertown homeowners

have monthly mortgage costs ranging from \$500 to \$1,499. That is broken down to 20.9 percent having payments ranging from \$700 to \$999, and 13.5 percent having payments ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,499. The median mortgage and monthly owner costs is \$787, Endenstrom said.

The study also revealed that the median household value in 2000 was \$84,600, while the median household value in 2006 is at \$113,370.

First District conducted a study a couple of years ago of the communities, counties and development corporations in its area attempting to determine specific needs and concerns.

"And the No. 1 problem (identified) ... was affordable housing," Endenstrom said.

There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration when discussing affordable housing, he said, from interest

rates and household incomes to transportation charges and building materials.

"None of us are soothsayers, but we all have to take a look at these factors in determining affordable housing," Endenstrom said.

Merlin Jeitz updated the council on the work being done by Work Force Housing, saying the group is not asking the council for money, but will need the support of every community organization it is going to make a difference in affordable housing in Watertown.

The groups, which has been meeting at least once a month, has been working with officials in Aberdeen to determine how their affordable housing initiative is set up, Jeitz said.

He said the group already knew the housing situation in Watertown, but the First District study really was able to highlight

the problems.

"Dick and his group have verified our thoughts on that and shown that there certainly is a need for this type of housing," Jeitz said.

The group has met with a couple local contractors who have said it may be possible for them to build a few 1,000-square foot homes for about \$100 per square foot, he said.

"If a person owns a home living here in Watertown, versus renting, they're more likely to stay, should the lose their job," Jeitz said. "It's just one indication of pride of ownership and having a home."

Jeitz said it may take several years to really get the project off the ground, but he said Work Force Housing has a dedicated group of people determined to see a change, and they believe more people will be willing to help.

Flood insurance rates have gone up more than expected

■ Homeowners urged to check into it soon.

By JENNIFER NIELSEN
Public Opinion Staff Writer

Watertown City Council President Brad Johnson shared some 'rather disturbing news' regarding flood insurance with the council Monday, advising Watertown residents to check into flood insurance now before the new flood map goes into effect.

Johnson said he went to renew his flood insurance and found that rates have increased dramatically. He said he currently

has a preferred policy, which costs about \$300 per year, on a household outside of the flood zone. He planned to switch to a standard policy at this time before his property enters the flood zone.

"In order to be grandfathered in, I would have to go to a standard policy prior to the new flood map being adopted," he said.

Johnson was told about a year ago that the standard policy would cost about \$600 per year. What he found out is that that rate is rising to \$1,500 per year.

Houses that currently are in the flood zone have paid \$1,500 per year for the standard policy, he said. That rate is rising to \$5,000 per year.

Watertown is not immune to the impact of the hurricanes

that hit several southern states last year, Johnson said.

"We're going to see the impact of that here right in Watertown, as well," he said.

That is why it is extremely important for anybody moving into the flood zone to take action now and to purchase the standard policy, he said, which can be grandfathered in with the flood map change and can transfer along with that property.

"That will save you money and increase your property value," Johnson said.

"This is going to have a greater impact than we originally anticipated, and everybody should make appropriate plans," he added.

Council approves ordinance change for off-road vehicles

■ ATV drivers need license to drive on roads.

By JENNIFER NIELSEN
Public Opinion Staff Writer

Drivers are now required to be licensed to operate ATVs on public roadways in Watertown and are prohibited from driving off road except on private property and on frozen waterways, such as lakes, rivers and streams.

The Watertown City Council approved an ordinance change Monday regulating the use and

operation of off-road vehicles.

ATV use is allowable on private property as long as the operator has written permission from the land owner.

The ordinance has an exception for law enforcement officers and governmental workers who use ATVs for off-road work purposes.

In other action Monday, the council:

- Agreed not to approve a memorandum of understanding with the Watertown Community Foundation that would have established a City of Watertown Grants Program and authorized the Community Foundation to review and distribute city funds

to local non-profit organizations.

Instead, Mayor Paul Fox created a committee to meet with representatives of the non-profits to determine what funds should be distributed in the 2007 fiscal year budget. Sitting on the committee are Aldermen George Heller, Al Meisenheimer and Dennis Solberg.

- Re-elected Brad Johnson as council president by a vote of 6-4 over Alderman Gordon Garnos. The mayor broke a tie vote to name Meisenheimer as the new council vice president.

- Fox reappointed all of the current city department heads for the upcoming year.

Winters have been warmer for the past 20 years

■ At least they have in southeast South Dakota.

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Winters have been warmer in southeast South Dakota the past 20 years, according to Mike Gillispie, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in Sioux Falls.

Gillispie, who has studied weather records dating back 110 years, said winter temperatures were fairly stable from the early 1900s through the late '70s.

"In the last 20 years, we've seen a rise of almost 5 degrees on the 10-year mean temperature in that period, so in the recent history here, the winters have been considerably warmer over what we've seen in the long term," he said.

And despite drought that has hit some parts of the state, the trend in the southeast has been wetter, according to Gillispie.

"Basically, since the late 1930s on, we've had a pretty constant increase in the average spring precipitation. For the March, April and May months, we've seen the long-term averages increase by about 2 inches in the last 70 years," he said.

Gillispie said the data indicate southeast South Dakota can expect wetter and warmer springs.

He also said it's hard to know if global warming has had any effect on such a small region.

"When you start looking at long-range outlooks — 30, 60, 90 days — as we head into winter; if the trend continues with what we've seen here the last 20 years, we're probably going to be above normal, or at least the long-term normal, in the winters here for the next five to 10 years at the current rate that things are going."

On Sunday, temperatures again soared past 100 degrees across much of the state. But few if any records were broken because July 16, 1936, was a record-setter.

But Saturday was a different story. It was 117 in Pierre — 10 degrees hotter than the previous record from 1936.

Chamberlain recorded a high of 112; Pine Ridge, Winner and Faith had 111 degrees; and Aberdeen and Huron topped out at 109.

And rancher who records temperatures for the National Weather Service reported a high of 120 degrees Saturday on a ranch 27 miles northwest of

Faith, near the town of Usta.

If it stands, the reading will tie the all-time state record set July 5, 1936, at Gann Valley.

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Creek is part of a cleanup plan

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A slow-moving creek that has a history of problems from smell to silt is getting a cleanup plan from area officials.

The James River Water Development District and the city of Aberdeen will each contribute \$50,000 to develop

a plan to clean up Moccasin Creek, said Wayne Miller, chairman of the district's board of directors.

The money will fund just the plan, which should show what needs to be done to revitalize the creek.

The actual cleanup would likely cost millions of dollars to put into action, Miller said. He said he hopes that money will come from the state and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

The district and city plan public meetings on the issue.

This Date In

REMEMBER WHEN...

History

Events of local interest

These historical notes were taken from the *Public Opinion* newspaper archives.

100 years ago...



The most notable event in the city of Watertown today was the turning of gas into the mains of the new plant just completed for the Watertown Gas company by the American Construction company. For weeks and months past many men have been engaged in the work of laying mains and constructing the plant on West Dakota avenue, and the company inaugurated the service this afternoon at 2 o'clock by turning into eight and one-half miles of mains the product of the completed plant. The large gas main leads from the container, sunk sixteen feet beneath the surface, to the downtown district, and from thence to every portion of the city. 125 houses are connected and ready to burn gas for either illuminating or heating purposes. Those who have their lamps in readiness will be able to read by gaslight tonight, should they so desire, and those who possess gas stoves that are connected with the system can cook their evening meal today, without coal, gasoline or wood.

75 years ago...



Mr. & Mrs. S.X. Way and daughter, Miss Vera Way of New York City, and house guest Mr. Emile Mogabgab of Funchal, Madeira, returned home Wednesday evening from a tour of the Black Hills. Many points of interest were visited including Sylvan Lake, the Game Lodge, Mount Rushmore and a trip was made up the new highway to Iron Mountain.

40 years ago...



Ten Boy Scouts from Watertown, Britton and Ortonville, Minn., left recently for a ten-day canoe trip from the Sommers Canoe Base Camp at Ely, Minn. Their scoutmaster is Warren Dahl of Watertown. The boys are Pat Jensen, Greg Storiem and Tom Mack, all from Ortonville; Wayne Dahl, Mark Sprau, Roger Waite and David Pappone all from Watertown; and Garry Wallace, Mark Nesland, and John Harris, all from Britton. The group spent Saturday night at the Duluth Air Force Base and will average 10 hours daily paddling and portaging in the Canadian wilderness.

15 years ago...



Jan Warrick showed some of the learning materials to Ernie Edwards on Monday during the open house at the new day care center at Lake Area Vocational Technical Institute. Warrick heads LAVTI's child development department and Edwards is superintendent of the Watertown School District. Also present was Jackie Bietz, an instructor at LAVTI. The day care, which is scheduled to open Monday, August 5, can handle 55 children, ages 4 weeks to 5 years.

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