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County Hears Opt-Out Concerns

Township Officials: Money Is Needed For Roads

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Officials from a couple Yankton County townships said Tuesday that they will not be able to do necessary road maintenance without expected opt-out funds.

Representatives of Utica Township and Volin Township shared with the Yankton County Commission their concerns since learning that the Yankton County Auditor's Office had not implemented their respective property-tax opt-outs. The issue was first brought to the County Commission's

attention last month.

"(The South Dakota Department of Legislative Audit) is working with the South Dakota Department of Revenue, trying to remedy this thing," County Commissioner Garry Moore said. "They are still searching documents in the Auditor's Office, trying to find out if there is any levy specific for the opt-outs. Therein lies the problem: The levy was never set in place specifically for the opt-out for either Utica or Volin townships."

Last spring, Utica Township approved an annual opt-out of \$45,000 that was to take effect in 2013 and last through 2015. It was to



Moore

County Auditor Paula Jones.

Jones has been on medical leave since February.

"We worked with them closely, and we've done everything necessary to make the opt-out come to fruition," Cap stated. "We've

be used for maintenance of gravel roads.

Robert Cap, the supervisor of Utica Township, said no one on the township board had previous experience with an opt-out, so assistance in the process was sought from Colleen Skinner with the Department of Revenue and Yankton

complied with South Dakota codified laws for notification requirements and the publication requirements. When we last spoke with Paula in April, we were told that, if anything else needed to be done, the Auditor's Office would be in contact with us. We did not hear from the Auditor's Office, so we thought everything was a go.

However, at its March meeting, the township board learned the opt-out was not in place.

When contacted by Cap about the situation, Skinner asked if Utica Township had received a letter from Jones in November or

COUNTY | PAGE 2

INSIDE TODAY



American Profile

* * *

Decision 2013

Gross: I Offer Firsthand Knowledge

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of our series of profiles on the seven candidates for the Yankton City Commission. The election is April 9. NOTE: The questionnaire from Ed Gleich, whose profile was scheduled for today's edition, was not received at press time.

Name: Charlie Gross
Family: I am a widower, having been married to Joan Taylor for 39 years. I have two married daughters, Christie (Doward) and Anne (Brian), and three grandchildren, Riley, Chase and Ellie.



Gross

Occupation: I have a BA from Oakland University, and an MBA from the University of Iowa. After 35 years of banking, I retired to teach at Mount Marty College in their Business Department.

Experience: I have served on the Yankton City Commission for more than 18 years, plus I served four years on the City Council in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

1. Why do you want to be a city commissioner?

Having been involved in city government for most of the last 20 years, I would like to continue serving the citizens of Yankton. We have a number of ongoing issues, not the least of which is the need for a new water plant, in which I have been involved for some time. At this time, I bring years of experience to the City Commission, and firsthand knowledge of many of the issues facing the commission. In addition, my financial background is useful as we face increasing budget issues.

2. The city is investigating the potential for approximately \$28 million in upgrades to its water treatment and water intake facilities. What are your thoughts on this process so far, and what

GROSS | PAGE 5

Obamacare Credits Could Trigger Surprise Bills

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Millions of people who take advantage of government subsidies to help buy health insurance next year could get stung by surprise tax bills if they don't accurately project their income.

President Barack Obama's new health care law will offer subsidies to help people buy private health insurance on state-based exchanges, if they don't already get coverage through their employers. The subsidies are based on income. The lower your income, the bigger the subsidy.

But the government doesn't know how much money you're going to make next year. And when you apply for the subsidy, this fall, it won't even know how much you're making this year. So, unless you tell the government otherwise, it will rely on the best information it has: your 2012 tax return, filed this spring.

What happens if you or your spouse gets a raise and your family income goes up in 2014? You could end up with a bigger subsidy than you are entitled to. If that happens, the law says you have to pay back at least part of the money when you file your tax return in the spring of 2015.

That could result in smaller tax refunds or surprise tax bills for millions of middle-income families.

"That's scary," says Joan Baird of Springfield, Va. "I had no idea, and I work in health care."

Baird, a health care information management worker, is far from alone. Health care providers, advocates and tax experts say the vast majority of Americans know very little about the new health care law, let alone the kind of detailed information many will need to navigate its system of subsidies and penalties.

"They know it's out there," said Mark Cummings, who manages the H&R Block office where Baird was getting her own taxes done. "But in general, they don't know anything about it."

A draft of the application for insurance asks people to project their 2014 income if their current income is not steady or if they expect it to change. The application runs 15 pages for a three-person family, but nowhere does it warn people that they may have to repay part of the subsidy if their income increases.

"I think this will be the hardest thing for members of the public to understand because it is a novel aspect of this tax credit," said Catherine Livingston, who recently served as health care counsel for the Internal Revenue Service. "I can't think of what else they do in the tax system currently that works that way." Livingston is now a partner in the Washington office of the law firm Jones Day.

There's another wrinkle: The vast majority of taxpayers won't actually receive the subsidies. Instead, the money will be paid directly to insurance compa-

CREDITS | PAGE 2

MAKING AN IMPACT



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Kelsie Thoreson, teen court coordinator for the Boys and Girls Club of Yankton, Moody and Brookings County, recently brought the program to Yankton. Teen court allows juvenile offenders to admit guilt in the cases in order to have their juvenile record cleared. The program seeks to lower re-offender rates among juveniles.

Teen Court Comes To Yankton

BY ANDREW ATWAL
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In order to give teens a taste of justice and responsibility, the Boys and Girls Club of South Dakota recently brought its teen court program to Yankton County.

"It's basically a juvenile diversion program offered to first-time offenders and put on by teens for teens," said Kelsie Thoreson, teen court coordinator for the Boys and Girls Club of Yankton, Moody and Brookings counties. "Teens play the roles of the jury and attorneys, and then we also have a local adult attorneys that serves as the judge for the court. There is also a real bailiff present and we have an adult jury monitor to make sure the jury members are staying on task and within their guidelines."

She added that the court is for sentencing only, meaning teens can only be a part of the program if they admit guilt to their offenses. If a teenage defendant successfully completes the program, they will have no juvenile record of the offense.

Volunteers in the teen court program also experience several benefits.

"It's great for teenagers that volunteer for their public speaking," Thoreson said. "It also gives them more of a knowledge about formal court and the court setting itself. We also have a number of incentives built in for youth volunteers that commit for a given amount of time."

Some of the incentives for volunteers include teen court

"The program really has a lot of positive impacts associated with it. Our re-offender rates have dropped for those that complete the program — there is a 90 percent chance they won't re-offend by the time they turn 18."

KELSIE THORESON

sweatshirts and name tags for all volunteers.

For defendants in the program, part of their sentencing requirements includes them having to be a member of the jury for up to six sessions. Jury members in their trial determine the number of sessions in which the defendants must participate.

In addition, defendants must complete several Community Action Points (CAPs) within 120 days of sentencing.

"The jury must decide how many CAPs a defendant must complete," Thoreson said. "It's on a point system, and there are a number of things a defendant can do to get all their points. If they do one of the activities with their parents, it doubles the amount of point for that activity."

COURT | PAGE 3



PHOTO COURTESY JEREMY WALTNER/FREEMAN COURIER
Josh Svatos, general manager of the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) in Yankton, speaks with a visitor during a welding simulator open house at the Freeman Junior-Senior High School. RTEC and Freeman officials partnered to offer welding courses in the schools and at manufacturing plants.

Freeman Welding Course Sparks Interest

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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FREEMAN — When local manufacturers look for qualified workers, they find there's no place like home.

In particular, Freeman manufacturers are looking for more welders along with upgrading the skills of their current employees. To help meet their needs, the City of Freeman and the Freeman Community Development Corporation (FCDC) have pursued local training opportunities.

"We are pushing workforce development," said City Administrator Dennis Nelsen, who also works with community development.

Nelsen contacted general manager Josh Svatos with the Regional Technical Education



Center (RTEC) of Yankton to provide training with its welding simulator. RTEC had purchased the simulator a

year ago with a Community Development Block Grant from the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED).

Freeman is finding success by developing its local talent, Svatos said.

"Face it, it's tough to bring in people that aren't familiar with your community. It's tough relocating entire families into a community," he said. "It's easier to look out the back door and

find opportunity right here. That's important from a retention standpoint."

RTEC provides the same advice for any community, Svatos said. "Our mission statement is: 'Home grow your own workforce,'" he said.

RTEC has reached out not only to Yankton businesses but also to surrounding communities, said GOED Commissioner Pat Costello. "When the community is able to help provide these types of training, it ensures they have a ready workforce," he said.

The RTEC-Freeman partnership reflects GOED's statewide effort, Costello said.

"Our goal is to expand primary job opportunities for all South Dakotans," he said. "We partner with communities and their local economic

FREEMAN | PAGE 7