

# Nebraska To Give Old Vets Home Property To Grand Island

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska will give an old state veterans' home property to the city of Grand Island, which is losing the facility to make way for a new home in Kearney, state officials announced Tuesday.

The deal between Nebraska and Grand Island officials follows protests by local residents who had fought to keep the 128-year-old veterans home and its 375 jobs from leaving the city. The new \$121 million, 225-bed Central Nebraska Veterans Home is set to open in 2018.

"We think this is a real win-win for the citizens of Nebraska and the citizens of Grand Island," Gov. Pete Ricketts said Tuesday, flanked by Grand Island Mayor Jeremy Jensen, state Sen. Mike Gloor and members of his administration. The transfer will allow

the city to use parts of the land for commercial and retail space, while maintaining a veterans' cemetery on the property. City officials hope to use some of the property as green space and some for a public cemetery. They're also making room for a cybersecurity training firm that works with veterans.

Ricketts said the arrangement honors the spirit of the original 1887 land transfer, when three farm families sold parcels of land to the state for \$1 each. Grand Island's city council must approve the current transfer of the property, which is now worth an estimated \$4 million to \$5 million.

Former Gov. Dave Heineman announced in 2013 that Kearney had won the project in competitive bidding with Hastings, Grand Island and North Platte. Kearney city officials agreed to commit \$8.5 million in direct funding and utility cost reductions for the project.

The commitment came on top of \$1 million approved by Buffalo County officials, \$100,000 from an economic development group, and \$500,000 promised by a veterans' memorial committee.

Critics of the state's competitive bidding process argued that it relied partly on subjective criteria, such as "cultural factors" and "community support," and didn't include input from the current home's residents.

"This is an opportunity to move forward," Gloor said Tuesday.

Nebraska lawmakers rejected his bill last year that would have required legislative review of any proposal to move a state service or agency from one community to another if the cost was \$15 million or more. Heineman said his decision was based on a recommendation from a committee of three appointed department heads.

The transfer will take place in two phases and would be completed once the new veterans' home is built. The state will transfer 77 acres of recreation area and 329 acres of farmland to the city, followed by another transfer of roughly 50 acres that include the home itself, a state veterans' cemetery and the United Veterans' Club.

Transferring the maintenance costs to the city will save the state about \$5.3 million over 25 years, said Byron Diamond, director of the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services.

Greg Holloway, the chairman of the Nebraska Veterans Council, said he was pleased with the announcement as long as the plan focused on serving veterans' interests.

"I just wanted them to work it out," he said.

## 2 SD Communities To See Tax Changes

PIERRE (AP) — Two South Dakota communities will soon be implementing municipal tax changes.

The state's Business Tax Division says the communities that will see changes starting Jan. 1 are Astoria and Buffalo Chip.

Astoria will increase its 1 percent general sales and use tax rate to two percent, while Buffalo Chip will impose a new two percent general sales and use tax rate.

South Dakota municipalities are able to implement new tax rates or change existing tax rates on Jan. 1 or July 1 each year.

## Rapper's Upcoming Tour Includes SD Stop

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Rapper Lil Wayne has included a stop in South Dakota as part of his upcoming tour.

The singer will perform March 1 at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls. The dates for his "Dedication Tour" were announced Tuesday.

A statement announcing the dates says the tour is a "personal thank you from Lil Wayne dedicated to all of his fans in cities he has rarely visited on his past tour runs."

Tickets for the Sioux Falls event go on sale Friday. Prices range from \$29.50 to \$79.50 with a limited supply of discounted tickets for students.

## L.A. Men Sentenced In Marijuana Bust

DEADWOOD (AP) — Two Los Angeles men caught with what authorities said was more than 50 pounds of marijuana in South Dakota have been sentenced.

The *Black Hills Pioneer* reports that 28-year-old Trevor Morris and 32-year-old Andre Bolourchi each was ordered to serve two years in the South Dakota State Penitentiary.

Authorities say the men were arrested after a search of their recreational vehicle in Lawrence County in November 2014 turned up 55, 1-pound bags of marijuana. They each could have faced up to 30 years in prison but reached a plea agreement with prosecutors late last month.

## Man Chased Couple With Butcher Knife

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A 36-year-old man has been accused of chasing a woman and man with a butcher knife outside of an apartment in Lincoln.

Lincoln police say Gaye Jackson was arrested following the incident Monday on the city's north side. He faces several charges, including two counts of terroristic threats and second-degree domestic assault.

Court records do not list an attorney for Jackson.

Officer Katie Flood says Jackson went to the home of the woman, whom he knows, and become upset. He is accused of finding the butcher knife in the kitchen and chasing the 23-year-old woman and her 26-year-old boyfriend. There were also two toddlers in the home.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports Jackson had a small cut on his hand at the time of his arrest.

## Officers Identified In Fatal Confrontation

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Lincoln Police have identified two of the three officers involved in a fatal weekend confrontation with a 29-year-old man.

Police said Tuesday that Officer Matthew Gilleland and Officer Angela Morehouse were both injured in the Sunday evening incident. Zachary Grigsby was fatally shot.

Gilleland was shot in the arm and was hospitalized afterward, but he is expected to go home Tuesday. Morehouse was punched during the altercation.

Police have said three officers were involved, but they refused to identify the third officer on Tuesday. Grigsby and both the officers identified are white.

Authorities have said Grigsby fired at the officers and declared he wouldn't go to jail after they learned he had a felony arrest warrant.

# Survey Indicates More Evidence Of Midwest Economic Slowdown

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The latest monthly survey of supply managers in nine Midwest and Plains states shows more evidence of a slowdown in that region's economy, according to a report released Tuesday.

The overall Mid-America Business Conditions Index fell to 40.7 last month from 41.9 in October, 47.7 in September and 49.6 in August. The regional index was affected by a reduction in manufacturing activity, especially for producers linked to international markets.

"Since our survey oversamples manufacturing firms, it is not surprising that our overall index has weakened significantly for states and industries heavily dependent on agriculture and energy, which are being hammered by a strong U.S. dollar,"

said Creighton University professor Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey. But he added that the weakness has yet to spill into the broader regional economy.

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests economic growth, and below 50 a decline. The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

The regional employment gauge slumped to 41.7 in November from 42.3 in October, indicating job losses for the manufacturing sector and the sector for value-added services, which includes warehousing and utilities.

"Over the past year, the region

has lost approximately 1.1 percent of its manufacturing jobs. This pace of job loss is roughly twice that of U.S. manufacturing, which is likewise shedding jobs," Goss said. Areas heavily dependent on manufacturing are experiencing the largest losses.

Economic optimism for the next six months, as captured by the November business confidence index, sank to 41.2 from 42.3 in October.

"Falling agriculture and energy commodity prices, along with global economic uncertainty, pushed supply managers' expectations of future economic conditions lower for the month," Goss said. Over the past 12 months, farm products and energy prices have fallen by 13.6 percent and 22.9 percent, respectively.

# Great Western Bancorp Buying Parent Of Home Federal Bank

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Great Western Bancorp Inc. plans to acquire HF Financial Corp., the parent company of Home Federal Bank.

The deal involving the two Sioux Falls-based banking companies will create an entity with \$11.3 billion in assets, \$8.5 billion in loans and \$8.6 billion in deposits. It will serve 127 communities in nine states.

The cash and stock transaction is valued at \$19.70 per share, or about \$140 million total. It's pending regulatory approval and expected to be complete by next summer.

Great Western Bancorp is the holding company for

Great Western Bank, which has locations in South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Arizona, Kansas and Missouri. Home Federal Bank has locations in South Dakota, Minnesota and North Dakota.

"This acquisition offers us the opportunity to expand our footprint and customer base by complementing our existing branch network presence in eastern South Dakota and adding locations in attractive markets in Fargo, North Dakota, and Minnesota," Great Western Bank President and CEO Ken Karels said in a statement.

The deal means four of 12 Home Federal and Great

Western branches in Sioux Falls will close, according to the Argus Leader newspaper. It was not immediately clear how many of the two companies' 505 employees in the city would be affected.

"In any merger you're concerned about the impact on people," said Steve Bianchi, Home Federal's president and CEO, adding that the company will reduce staffing through attrition where possible. "A larger organization like Great Western will create more career options and advancement potential for all employees."

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