

Brown Co. To Pay \$5K For Training Of PI

ABERDEEN (AP) — Brown County will foot a \$5,000 bill for the training of a private investigator working for the defense team in a murder case.

The *Aberdeen American News* reports Judge Scott Myren has authorized the payment that will allow private investigator Mitch Vilhauer to attend specialized homicide training in Florida.

Vilhauer is assisting the defense team of 33-year-old John Hemminger. The Aberdeen man is accused in the death of 26-year-old Jessica Goebel, who was stabbed Jan. 7 and died five days later.

Court documents indicate Hemminger and Goebel had two children together.

Hemminger has pleaded not guilty to alternate counts of murder, including premeditated murder. The counts carry the possibility of a death sentence, with a minimum punishment of life in prison.

A trial date has not been set.

ID Of SD Man Found In Field Released

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Authorities in Sioux Falls have released the identity of a man whose body was found in a field last week.

Sgt. Mike Walsh with the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office says 47-year-old Wayne Fox was dead for at least three to four weeks before a farmer discovered his body Thursday in southwest Sioux Falls.

Police say Fox's roommate had a filed a missing persons report May 12 after not hearing from Fox for a week.

Walsh says Fox's cause of death is still unknown, but foul play is not suspected. Walsh says the body has no evidence of trauma or wounds caused by weapons.

The Sioux Falls man's body was found over 200 yards from the nearest street. Walsh says neither a vehicle nor vehicle tracks were found near the body.

Couple Sentenced In Wire Fraud Case

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A Lincoln husband and wife accused of bilking investors of more than \$675,000 to develop made-up inventions have been sentenced.

U.S. Attorney for Nebraska Deborah Gilg says 46-year-old Scott Usher was sentenced Tuesday to seven years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$519,000 in restitution on his wire fraud conviction. His wife, 53-year-old Robin Usher, was sentenced Wednesday to five years' probation and ordered to pay nearly \$86,000 in restitution for her accessory conviction.

Robin Usher was also ordered to serve home confinement for eight months and to serve 12 consecutive weekends in a detention facility.

Prosecutors say the couple took money from people under fraudulent promises that Scott Usher had developed a solar-powered wind turbine and a way to inexpensively remove salt from seawater.

Ex-Sheriff's Deputy Sentenced To Jail

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A former Douglas County sheriff's deputy has been sentenced to a year in jail for coercing a 19-year-old woman he had stopped into performing a sex act on him.

Cory Cooper was sentenced Wednesday to six months for third-degree assault and another six months for attempted tampering with evidence. Both counts are misdemeanors. The 31-year-old will serve his time in a county jail.

Cooper pleaded no contest, meaning he did not admit guilt but acknowledged that prosecutors had enough evidence to convict.

He was arrested after the woman reported that he forced her into a sex act in February 2013 in order to keep her boyfriend out of trouble.

Prosecutors say Cooper altered paperwork to try to cover up where he had had been on the night of the crime.

Golf Course To Become Part Of Park

HARRISBURG (AP) — A golf course in southeast South Dakota will eventually become part of Good Earth State Park at Blood Run following a wildlife foundation's purchase of a country club that borders the park.

The South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation on Wednesday announced its purchase of the Spring Creek Country Club. The foundation plans to lease the golf course back to the country club for the next decade and intends to donate the property to the park at the end of that period.

Good Earth became a state park in 2013 and is South Dakota's first new state park in four decades. It includes over 600 acres in South Dakota and 200 acres across border owned by the state of Iowa.

The golf course will add 200 acres to the park.

Man Charged In Death Of Fremont Boy

FREMONT, Neb. (AP) — A 22-year-old Omaha man has made a deal with prosecutors for his role in the death of a Fremont teen who was found outside in bitter cold last fall.

The *Fremont Tribune* reports Dakota McDonald pleaded no contest Tuesday to a misdemeanor charge. He was originally charged with a felony of procuring alcohol for a minor that resulted in death.

Prosecutors say McDonald purchased the alcohol that 16-year-old Jaime Valdez consumed before his death.

A city worker found Valdez on the morning of Nov. 16. The National Weather Service says the temperature was 2 degrees with a wind chill of minus 16 that morning in Fremont.

Authorities determined that Valdez died from hypothermia associated with acute ethanol intoxication.

McDonald is scheduled to be sentenced on July 20.

SD Cousins Sentenced In Federal Court

PIERRE (AP) — A South Dakota man and woman who are first cousins have been sentenced in federal court on incest charges stemming from a relationship they had while living on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation.

U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange has sentenced the 28-year-old man to one year in prison and the 22-year-old woman to four months in custody.

Federal prosecutors accuse the pair of having consensual sex in October 2013 that resulted in the woman's pregnancy. She later gave birth to a child with a genetic disability. Prosecutors say the child was the third born to the cousins.

Man Dies After Crop-Duster Crash

KADOKA (AP) — Authorities have identified the pilot of an alfalfa crop-dusting plane who died when it crashed shortly after takeoff in western South Dakota.

Jackson County Sheriff Ray Clements says 49-year-old Joseph Schneller, of Keystone, died at the scene Monday afternoon near Kadoka (kuh-DOH'-kuh).

Federal investigators are working to determine why the plane crashed. Clements says witnesses reported that the right wing of the single-propeller plane dipped after takeoff. The wing hit a light pole, and the plane went down near the fence of a sports field.

Schneller was a former U.S. Marine and a former Rapid City police officer.

Athletic Board Delays Decision On Revising Transgender Policy

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The board of directors decided Wednesday to wait until August to further consider changes to the transgender athletic participation policy for the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

Many state legislators and a variety of public and private school officials disagree with the existing policy that allows a student to apply to participate on athletic teams of the opposite gender.

The board discussed the matter for more than 90 minutes Wednesday. The proposed revisions call for using an independent hearing officer to handle applications rather than a SDHSA committee.

Board members reached a loose consensus that they wouldn't consider applications unless a student appealed the hearing officer's decision.

But the board snagged on the process for choosing the hearing officer.

Sandy Klatt of Brandon, who represents large school districts on the board, said there would be a perception of bias if the SDHSA executive staff or the board selects the hearing officer. "That's putting this board in a pre-

carious situation," Klatt said. "I think we have a conundrum I don't know how to solve."

Klatt argued that the existing policy should be rescinded while the new policy is developed. But she withdrew her remarks after Aberdeen athletic director Gene Brownell said school districts need a policy in place as fall sports seasons start.

Board member Dan Whalen, who recently stepped down as Pierre athletic director, said he remains concerned about safety and fairness if a boy is competing against a girl and they are the same weight.

Whalen said the board seemed focused more on legal protection than on competitive fairness.

"I know this ship has sailed. I hope its name isn't Titanic," Whalen said.

Whalen noted that people decorate their baby's bedroom according to the child's gender. "I think the birth certificate issue is valid. That's why we're running into these things," he said.

Whalen said the Legislature should "step forward and make that commitment" about gender. Many legislators favor using the gender listed on the athlete's birth certificate.

Board member Jason Uttermark of Aberdeen said the SDHSA board

would adhere to a legislative decision.

"I think we're getting closer. I think we need a policy. I don't know this is it yet," Uttermark said.

He agreed with Whalen's concern about safety and said privacy issues go beyond the scope of the association. "I've got a 10-year-old daughter myself. There are concerns," Uttermark said.

When Klatt called for rescinding the existing policy, Uttermark responded: "What's more dangerous — a policy that's not perfect or having no policy?" SDHSA executive director Wayne Carney defended the existing policy and the proposed revisions.

"I don't think anybody's not saying it's right," Carney said.

Klatt interjected: "I do."

That's when Brownell, a former board member, asked that the policy be kept in place so there is something to use. Brownell said he wants something to protect a student's rights and the school district.

Klatt said she would take back her comments about rescinding in respect for Brownell's comments.

Board president Rick Weber said the matter will be kept on hold until further revisions are brought back at the August meeting.

Lawmaker Wants Input Into Education Task Force

PIERRE (AP) — A Republican state lawmaker is concerned that a state commission studying education and South Dakota's teacher shortage isn't taking into account the concerns of legislators outside the group.

Rep. Elizabeth May said she's disappointed because she thought the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students would be more open to input from other lawmakers, KCCR-AM report-

ed. Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Republican legislative leaders in February put forward the task force, which will report recommendations to the 2016 Legislature about how to address problems in South Dakota's educational system.

An email sent out for the group last week told lawmakers that they are invited to attend public meetings to listen but said that lawmakers shouldn't offer input. The

group is visiting communities across the state through June.

May said she also thinks the group should examine Common Core testing and federal mandates.

"I'm just really disappointed. I thought that this task force would be more open and would include everything," May said.

Republican Rep. Jacqueline Sly, who is one of the leaders of the commission,

said the public meetings are just the first part of the process and that lawmakers will have opportunities to weigh in later.

When Daugaard announced the task force, he said South Dakota should strive for high student achievement, excellent teachers and a funding system to support them both.

Ricketts Seeks To Bolster Relationships With Nebraska On EU Trade Mission

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Pete Ricketts said Wednesday that he wants to strengthen Nebraska's relationships with European companies that already have ties to the state in hopes that they'll invest more.

Delegates from the governor's first overseas trade mission met this week with Italian food processors, including several with existing connections to Nebraska. Ricketts is visiting Italy, Belgium and Denmark to promote the state in the

European Union.

The delegation has met with officials from CNH Industrial, an Italian manufacturer with a facility in Grand Island, and Inalca, an Italian distributor that imports Nebraska beef. CNH Industrial's Grand Island facility makes many of the combines for the North American market.

Ricketts said face-to-face interactions with the companies help make clear that the state appreciates their business and welcomes any expansions.

"It's important that we start with people we're doing business with already,"

Ricketts said Wednesday on a conference call from Brussels.

The delegation includes the directors of Nebraska's agricultural and economic development agencies, who are promoting the state's workforce and abundance of commodities.

The delegation has also made use of the University of Nebraska, with presentations to business leaders on the university's Food Processing Center and Innovation Campus. On Wednesday, the group met with representatives from 26 companies in Bologna, Italy, and touted

the advantages of being in Nebraska.

Suji Park, a Korean restaurateur, talked about her experience in moving her company's global headquarters to Nebraska.

Ricketts said he has invited business leaders to participate in the state's Diplomat Program, which brings business prospects to Nebraska. Nebraska Department of Economic Development Director Brenda Hicks-Sorensen said she anticipates a number of business leaders will participate.

Consultants: Omaha Needs To Spend More On Fixing Bad Roads

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Omaha needs to spend more than double than what it currently does on fixing its bad roads, according to a group of consultants from area engineering firms.

The city spends around \$86 million annually on roads, but the city should spend around \$175 million on repairing them, the group said in a presentation to the City Council on Tuesday.

President Mike McMeekin of Lamp Rynearson & Associates, one of the firms participating in the report, acknowledged that they are in businesses that would benefit from increased roadwork. But he said that the appeared before the council as concerned citizens, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported.

The group looked at funding on street repair and rehabilitation, major improvement projects, bicycle and pedestrian needs and mass transit. McMeekin said the group already has shown

Mayor Jean Stothert its research and plans to visit with the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce next.

City leaders agree something should be done about the state of Omaha roads.

"I don't think anybody wants our streets to look like this," Councilman Pete Fetersen said. "I think we need to decide what our community should look like."

Newly elected Council President Ben Gray said he intends to make repairing roads a major issue.

The question remains though in how to pay for aging roads.

Stothert said she would oppose any new tax, toll or fee to fund roadwork but said she's looking at alternatives. She said as the city retires bonds in the future, roadwork will be her first priority for new bonds. The city could consider asking lawmakers for more of the state's gas tax revenue, she said.

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