



Partly Cloudy Day

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COURTESY PHOTO
Pictured are, from left: Dave Mingo, Amy Nelson, Al Viereck, Ann Clough and Mayor Dave Carda.

Yankton

Viereck Is Honored For Service

BY ROB NIELSEN
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City Finance Officer Al Viereck has been working in Yankton city government for more than 17 years. Last week, his contributions to his city received state recognition.

Viereck was the recipient of the 2015 South Dakota Municipal League Finance Officer of the Year Award in Pierre.

Viereck told the *Press & Dakotan* that it came as quite a surprise to him.

"(I was) totally surprised," Viereck said. "Staff here did a pretty good job of leading me on a ruse to get me up there unsuspecting."

During this week's Capital Improvements Plan meeting, city Manager Amy Nelson told the story of how they got Viereck and his family to Pierre in the first place.

"We told him we had a meeting with Toby Morris on financing and economic development projects," Nelson said. "We got in the van and we had it timed so about the time we got into Ft. Pierre, (administrative secretary) Colleen Bailey called and said, 'Your meeting's been canceled, but the Municipal League wants you to come to the Finance Officer's Dinner to represent the Municipal League Board.'"

Nelson said at one point the ruse was almost given up.

"In the meantime, Al didn't know this, but his family was traveling behind us," she said. "In fact, they saw us in Mitchell at the gas station and had to kind of hide."

She added that it turned into a great honor at the dinner that evening.

"They're starting to read all these criteria about the finance office, and Al isn't even listening — they're talking about this award and Al's kind of looking down," she said. "Then they got to some more specific things about grandchildren and being interim city manager, and then his ears kind of perked up. And his whole family was there, so quite a tribute."

AWARD | PAGE 2

Out Of The Blue

SD Education Task Force Convenes In Yankton

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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Things got pretty sticky Wednesday for the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Education.

Sticky, as in post-it sticky notes for writing down audience ideas and then displaying them on a large wall.

The task force, appointed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard, is holding six meetings across the state this month and gathered Wednesday in at the Yankton High School commons. The three separate sessions were geared toward educators, the business community and general public.

The first session drew 140 educators not only from Yankton but also from across southeast South Dakota. They expressed frustration with the lack of a consistent funding source from state government. They also spoke of South Dakota's national ranking of dead last in teacher pay.

One man made his point with a tongue-in-cheek comment when the audience was asked for suggestions.

"Build more roads and bridges!" one man said, referring to the exodus of South Dakota teachers to neighboring states.

State Sen. Deb Soholt (R-Sioux Falls) and State Rep. Jacqueline Sly (R-Rapid City) co-chair the task force, which focuses on K-12 funding. After this month's listening meetings, the 26-member task force will gather in July to draw up recommended laws for the 2016 Legislature.

For one Blue Ribbon member, Wednesday's meeting represented home turf. Beth Pietila of Yankton has three children attending the Yankton School District was appointed to the task force to represent parents and their concerns.

"I'm excited and also surprised (to be chosen)," she said. "It's a great opportunity for me and a great voice for Yankton."

Pietila admitted she didn't immediately respond a phone message with a state government phone number, thinking it was a fundraising pitch from one of the universities.

Three days later, she received a call from Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, a Yankton native, trying to reach her with the news of her selection. "I talked to Matt, and he was really excited," she said.

A stunned Pietila learned her name had been suggested by different sources. She accepted the appointment after consulting with her family about the commitment it would entail.

Pietila has been active in the Stewart elementary school PTA and has spent time in the schools. She is familiar with schools' needs — including the importance of keeping teachers.

For now, she said plans to listen, learn and speak out on what she terms some "dire" problems facing South Dakota education.

Yankton was a good choice for hosting a task force meeting in terms of a convenient location for many school districts, Pietila said.

"As far as it being here today, it's impressive to see lots of Yankton people and other communities. It's not just us," she said. "We get other people's input and see what can be done in the future. It will be an interesting process."

FINDING SOLUTIONS

At Wednesday's meeting, the educators talked about the need for stable school funding and looking at what works in



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

State Sen. Deb Soholt, co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Education, leads Wednesday's meeting for educators at the Yankton High School commons.

Napa-Platte Railroad Lease Extended 90 Days For Talks

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — More angles than in a pinball game seemed to be in play Wednesday on potential concepts for the state-owned railroad line between Napa Junction and Platte.

Right now the track is stuck on tilt, however. There isn't regular service, the western segment is defunct and there's no clear source of significant funding for the work needed.

But the present didn't deter dreams as plans came from four different directions to the state Railroad Board.

The current lease between the state board and the Napa Platte regional railroad authority was scheduled to expire June 20.

The state board agreed Wednesday to

extend the lease 90 days while talks proceed about possible next steps.

The authority's current leadership wants to keep control of the lease or have the track sold to a private owner that so far is anonymous.

The authority's lawyer, Ken Cotton, said business people are interested in operating along the line. He requested a five-year lease to allow the authority to be the operator or select its own operator subject to state approval.

Cotton said a company he didn't identify wants to buy 83 miles of track and another company is interested in leasing space for car storage. "These are the ones we know of this morning," he said.

RAIL | PAGE 3



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Rescue workers wrap up operations at Lewis and Clark Marina's B Dock after the body of a Sioux Falls man was recovered from the water Tuesday night.

Man Drowns In Marina Mishap

From P&D Staff Reports

A Sioux Falls man drowned Tuesday night when fell from a sailboat docked in the Lewis and Clark Marina west of Yankton.

According to the Yankton County Sheriff's Office, Richard A. Minder, 54, was on a sailboat that was docked at the marina's B Dock when he fell into the water and did not resurface. An emergency call was received by the sheriff's office at 10:04 p.m.

Minder's body was found by divers at 10:54 p.m. near a boat next to the sailboat. He was transported to Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 11:25 p.m.

Besides the Sheriff's Office, the Yankton County Emergency Management; emergency responders; Search and Rescue; the Yankton Fire Department; Game, Fish and Parks personnel and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel responded to the incident.

A Busy Weekend Looms For Yankton

BY REILLY BIEL
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The Yankton area has a busy weekend ahead of it. In addition to Czech Days in Tabor, there are several other events — from sport tournaments to a state convention — that could attract up to 2,000 people or more to town.

One of those is the Lewis & Clark Homestead Day this Saturday, June 20, at the Pierson Ranch Campground from 1-4 p.m.

Park Naturalist Kayla Loecker is anticipating a good turnout.

"We have lots of hands-on things for all ages," she said. "It's a fun Father's Day weekend activity for the whole family to participate in."

The event will have activities ranging from candle and butter making to musical performances and a pioneer dress contest.

The activities are free, although a day pass or a South Dakota State Park sticker are needed to gain entrance into the campground. Contact the Lewis & Clark Recreation Area Welcome Center at 605-668-2985 for more information.

The sporting events for this weekend include the 11th annual Yankton Invitational Soccer Tournament, which will be held June 20-21. An alumni game will be played on Friday, June 19, with the women's game starting at 6:30 p.m. and the men's at 8 p.m. at the Lewis & Clark Soccer Park.

Pam McBride, co-director of the tournament, was pleased to see the participation grow this year.

"We had 42 teams participate last year and this year that number has grown to 62," she said. "We have teams from North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota."

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TOMORROW: YCTC Brings Back Childhood Memories

YANKTON RECYCLING FOR THIS WEEK

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OF 15TH STREET