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YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN



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f t w v VOLUME 139 NUMBER 21

The Dakotas' Oldest Newspaper | **14 PAGES** | www.yankton.net

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PARTY TIME AT THE SUMMIT



The Yankton High School orchestra prepares to play the recessional while the YHS Class of 2013 celebrates with strings of its own during the school's annual commencement exercises Sunday at the Summit Activities Center. A large crowd packed the main gym as this year's senior class bid farewell and the school year officially ended, with the exception of some state athletic events this coming week.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

City Eyes Upgrades To Bridge Plaza

Improvements To Yankton Site May Begin This Year

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

Work could get under way this year on improvements to Yankton's Meridian Bridge Plaza.

The Yankton City Commission decided late last year to form a Meridian Bridge Plaza Committee that could evaluate the improvement plans devised for the site approximately six years ago and offer recommendations on how to proceed.

The plaza is an extension of the Meridian Bridge, which was opened up as a bicycle/pedestrian trail in November 2011. The upper plaza is at the northern approach of the top deck, while the lower plaza is at the northern approach to the bottom deck.

The Meridian Bridge Plaza Committee consists of Yankton Parks and Recreation Director Todd Larson, Yankton Community Development Director Dave Mingo, City Commissioner Dave Knoff, City Commissioner Craig Sommer, Edward Koster, Lisa Scheve and Gregg Kopetsky.

During a City Commission meeting earlier this month, the committee's findings were presented.

The top priority outlined by the committee is that the city negotiate with the owner of the tank farm at the southwest corner of the plaza to purchase the property and have the tanks removed. Other ideas include building a raised concrete oval that could be used as a stage, installing shade elements, incorporating RiverWalk sculptures, constructing a decorative fountain and adding more flora.

Committee members proposed that the plan be divided into three phases. The first would be completing the aforementioned upgrades to the upper plaza, and the second phase would be improvements along Walnut Street from Second Street to Third Street that would help draw bicycling and pedestrian traffic into the downtown. The final phase would be improvements to the Second Street intersection with the upper plaza and installation of an interactive water feature in the lower plaza area. The third phase was suggested for 2016, after the state has completed the reconstruction of Fourth



Larson

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Paul Lowrie ended a two-term run on the Yankton City Commission last week. He said that six years was enough time on the board and wanted to make way for new people and ideas.

'Eyes And Ears' Outgoing City Commissioner Reflects On Time Of Service

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

When Paul Lowrie looks back on his six years with the Yankton City Commission, he is proud to have been an advocate for government transparency.

"I wanted to be the eyes and ears for everyone and make sure there was accountability," he said.

That role was perhaps most visible — and controversial — in September 2008 when Lowrie and former Commissioner Charles "Murph" Murphy revealed that, in a series of executive sessions, the City Commission was in discussions to sell the "Cornerstone Property" at Fourth and Burleigh to a retail developer. Not everyone on the commission was happy about the two commissioners sharing what had transpired during sessions behind closed doors.

Lowrie said that and other instances convinced him that South Dakota needs to hold government entities more accountable for their actions in executive sessions.

"I think there was a huge abuse of executive sessions and too much temptation to wander off during discussions," he stated. "I'm happy to have called that out

"People were hard on me because I was rocking the boat. Well, I was happy to rock that boat."

PAUL LOWRIE

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Maker Of Finely Textured Beef Continues To Struggle

SIoux CITY, Iowa (AP) — The beef-processing company that makes the product that critics call "pink slime" continues to struggle more than a year after the initial stories on the lean bits of beef that Beef Products Inc. makes.

The *Sioux City Journal* reports the Dakota Dunes, S.D.-based company lost 80 percent of its business after the uproar over what BPI calls lean finely textured beef.

The meat BPI separates from trimmings with heat and treats with ammonia to kill bacteria used to be widely used in hamburger, but consumers objected to it after media reports depicted it as unsavory.

Many schools and retailers pledged to stop using BPI's products after the "pink slime" reports, and the company saw demand fall to 2 million pounds a week from the previous 5 million pounds a week.

The private company closed three of its four plants, scrapped expansion plans in South Sioux City and eliminated more than 700 jobs, which won't return soon. The plants that closed were in Waterloo,

Iowa; Amarillo, Texas; and Garden City, Kansas.

BPI spokesman Rich Jochum said the company has had little success winning back customers.

The company has filed a \$1.2 billion defamation lawsuit against ABC News and scientists who criticized the product, and that lawsuit is pending.

The outcome of BPI's defamation lawsuit could affect the company's future, but legal experts say BPI will still have a difficult time succeeding with its lawsuit.

"I think BPI probably has a pretty steep uphill climb to win the case," said Erika Eckley, a staff attorney at the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation at Iowa State University.

Former BPI employee Oscar Gomez said it's unfortunate so many people lost their jobs. Gomez, who serves on the South Sioux City, Neb., City Council, was able to find a job at a credit union because he has a banking background.

"It worked out for me," Gomez said. "I'm sure other people didn't have those options."

Obama Urged To Make Economy A Bigger Topic

BY JIM KUHNHENN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Five months into President Barack Obama's second term, allies and former top aides worry that his overarching goal of economic opportunity has been diminished, partly drowned out by controversies seized upon by Republicans in an effort to weaken him.

The former White House insiders, including longtime Obama adviser David Axelrod, say Obama needs to make his case anew for government's role in expanding education and innovation and to give, as Obama put it in one of his early seminal speeches, "every American

a fighting chance in the 21st century."

Among their suggestions is that the president deliver a major address, perhaps at a commencement, that once again places his economic vision at the center of his agenda and speaks to what continues to be the overriding concern of the American public.

Instead, absent major legislative victories, Obama's second term has become a series of small actions overshadowed by a trio of recent troubles over the administration's response to the attack in Benghazi, Libya, that killed four Americans, the IRS's targeting of

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STATE CHAMPS!



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

The Hartington boys' track and field team poses with the team trophy after they won the Class D title at the Nebraska State Track and Field Meet on Saturday in Omaha, Neb. It was Hartington's first boys' track and field title since 1948. For more details, see page 9.

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