

MIDWEST DIGEST

Arlington Voters Reject Street Repair Bond

ARLINGTON (AP) — Voters in the eastern South Dakota city of Arlington have rejected a \$1.1 million bond issue. The money would have been used for street repairs. City Finance Officer Sue Falconer told KSDR-AM that 103 people voted yes on the bond issue Tuesday, but 118 voted no. The issue needed 60-percent approval to pass.

Two Campaigns Work To Recall Omaha Mayor

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Two Omaha groups upset about tax increases are moving ahead with campaigns to recall Mayor Jim Suttle.

A group called the Omaha Citizens Coalition began its petition drive to collect 26,643 signatures Wednesday. The other group, the Mayor Suttle Recall Committee, announced Wednesday that it plans to file its recall affidavit with Douglas County on Friday and launch its own petition drive to force a recall vote.

Omaha's budget for 2011 includes increases in property taxes, a new 2.5 percent tax on restaurant and catering bills and new fees. Suttle's chief of staff Steve Oltmans defended the mayor. He says Suttle took office in spring 2009 at a time when the city faced a financial crisis and has worked hard to balance the budget.

500 Acres Of Nebraska Rangeland Charred

ANGORA, Neb. (AP) — Nearly four dozen firefighters and more than 20 vehicles were deployed against a range fire that charred an estimated 500 acres of rangeland in Nebraska's Panhandle.

Officials say lightning touched off the blaze around 8 p.m. on Monday in northern Morrill County, east of Angora. Alliance Fire Chief Troy Shoemaker says that once crews and vehicles made it through the rugged terrain, it took about two hours to put out the fire.

He says firefighters from five different districts were called in to help: Alliance, Bayard, Bridgeport, Broadwater and Dalton. No injuries were reported.

Gravestones Turn Up In Omaha Garage

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Police are trying to return several gravestones found in the garage of an abandoned house in south-central Omaha.

Officers responding to calls about trespassers last week found 11 complete stones and parts of two more.

Omaha television station KETV says complete names were visible on only three of the stones: George Andrew Tate Jr., Freeman Embree Brown Jr. and Howard H. Biggs. KETV also says it found information that pointed to military service by all three and a connection to Knoxville, Tenn.

Omaha police say they're trying to find the last tenants.

Catholic Bishops Rebuke Creighton Sex Book

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has sharply rebuked a book by two Creighton University theologians on the church's teachings about sexuality.

The 23-page statement released Wednesday says "The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology" contradicts the church's positions on sexuality, marriage and contraception.

For example, the book says "some homosexual acts may be morally right."

The book is by Todd Salzman, chairman of the Creighton's Department of Theology, and professor emeritus Michael Lawler. It was published in 2008.

Creighton is a Jesuit university. In a statement Wednesday, the university is committed to the Catholic tradition and presents students with true church doctrine but also offers academic freedom to researchers.

Census Sees Rise Of Hispanic-Owned Firms

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — The U.S. Census Bureau says the number of Hispanic-owned businesses in South Dakota has grown at a higher rate than the nation in five years.

The state saw an increase of 68 percent from 2002 to 2007, while the nation saw a 44 percent climb. Despite the growth, Hispanic-owned businesses still make up only a fraction of businesses in the state. South Dakota has 595 Hispanic-owned businesses, or less than 1 percent of the state's 77,134 businesses.

Hispanic-owned operations in South Dakota saw a greater growth in revenue, with receipts more than doubling from 2002 to 2007. In 2007, Hispanic-owned businesses in the state reported \$317 million in revenue.

Juan Bonilla, president of the Spanish Speaking Community Association of Sioux Falls, told the *Argus Leader* that he sees the biggest growth of Hispanic-owned businesses in Sioux Falls in industries such as restaurants, small grocery stores and tax preparation businesses.

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No Refund For Georgia Man Who Overpaid Neb. Taxes

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Georgia man who has overpaid his property taxes in southeast Nebraska for 16 years can't get a refund.

Edward Hansen lives in Savannah, Ga., and owns about 80 acres in the north end of Nebraska's Lancaster County.

According to the *Lincoln Journal Star*, Hansen's mother, Carole Pitts, represented him before the County Board on Tuesday. She told board members that the county assessor's office had misclassified all the land as capable of sustaining crops, when only 19 acres could do so. She said the rest was covered with trees and grass and should have been assessed at a lower value.

The previous owner had been similarly overcharged for five years before selling to her son, Pitts said.

"There was no red flag for us to question anything," she told the *Journal Star* after Tuesday's meeting.

A farmer who rented the land from Hansen noted the discrepancy this year, she said.

Hansen requested compensation from the county, although he did not provide an overpayment figure in a letter he sent to the county last month.

County Assessor Norm Agena said Hansen would qualify for a refund for the past two years if the error were clerical, but that it wasn't.

"When the appraiser went out he made an assumption from what he could see from the road," Agena said.

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Neb. Family Welfare Groups Say Closure Eminent

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. — Several organizations that help families navigate Nebraska's child welfare system could be forced to close their doors, some by the end of the month, because funding from a state contractor has been cut, advocates for the groups said Wednesday.

Representatives of about a dozen such groups from across the state came to a hearing held by a legislative oversight committee for children's behavioral health, and several parents who used the groups gave emotional testimony.

Norfolk-based Parent to Parent, among several groups that did not have their contract renewed by Iowa-based Boys and Girls Home Inc., would be forced to shut down Sept. 30 if the funding isn't renewed, said Bob Gereaux, the organization's director. Parent to Parent serves northeast Nebraska.

When asked what would happen to families who rely on his organization if it closed, Gereaux said: "I don't think it will be possible for these families to find similar services."

Parent to Parent is one of seven groups in Nebraska that belong to the Nebraska

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, whose funding was cut by Boys and Girls Home. The groups are family-centered, non-profits run mostly by volunteers to support families who have children with behavioral, emotional or mental health disorders.

Calls Wednesday to Boys and Girls Home officials were not immediately returned.

Boys and Girls Home is one of three private contractors the state has to provide essential child welfare services. The state started out last year with five contractors, but lost two of them in April when Visinet Inc. went broke and Cedars Youth Services canceled its contract with the state.

At the time, Cedars Youth Services said the state didn't pay enough to cover the cost of services, and Visinet said it lost at least \$10,000 a day under the state contract.

Samantha Taylor of Lincoln sobbed as she told lawmakers of the trials she's undergone since adopting two abused and neglected children, one of whom has severe behavioral problems. She said it was a peer volunteer at Right Turn, a Lincoln-based adoption support group, who showed her what services were available to her. She said the group kept her from turning the 6-year-old girl over to state custody.

"I got more out of that peer person than all of the psychiatrists I've seen," Taylor said.

Another parent, Janay Bahnsen-Price, tearfully said she was initially told her son, who suffers from behavioral health problems, "would not ever succeed" but has thrived with the help of Scottsbluff-based Parents SPEAKOUT.

If not for the support of the group, "my son could be in a very different place right now," Bahnsen-Price said.

Todd Reckling, who oversees child and family services for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, said Wednesday through an agency spokeswoman that he is aware of the funding matter and is working with the Federation of Families and Boys and Girls Home. He did not elaborate.

The looming closures of the family-run groups is simply another sign that the state contracts with the three child welfare service providers are underfunded, said Sarah Helvey, who oversees child welfare programs for the Nebraska Applesseed Center for Law in the Public Interest.

"We're very concerned about the impact that's having and children and families," Helvey said.

Alcohol To Be Allowed In Most Neb. State Parks

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Dave Heineman approved a measure Wednesday to allow alcohol in state parks, except at Lake McConaughy in western Nebraska and state wildlife management areas.

Heineman's decision followed a May vote by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to lift a 15-year-old ban on drinking alcohol in state parks. Visitors will be allowed to imbibe starting Jan. 1.

The ban dated to 1995 and stemmed from complaints of alcohol-fueled parties and violence, especially at Lake McConaughy near Ogallala. Opponents argued it

penalized responsible adults and cost Nebraska revenue that went to other states, while the ban's backers said it cut rowdiness and noise and increased safety.

Heineman gathered public opinion on the matter throughout the summer, and said in July that he met with people on both sides. He said then that the majority he met were OK with lifting the ban at Lake McConaughy if there was adequate law enforcement, but most told him they do not believe there is enough law enforcement there.

"The strongest opposition has

been at Lake McConaughy," Heineman said Wednesday.

"Citizens want our parks to be family friendly ... but also want to be able to drink at park restaurants, at receptions and while fishing."

Heineman said authorities will more closely monitor the parks to ensure alcohol restrictions are followed, and that the Game and

Parks Commission has the authority to rescind alcohol privileges at any park where repeated and significant violations of the rules occur.

"Plain and simple, if park guests act irresponsibly, then patrons of that park will lose their privilege to consume alcohol in a responsible manner," Heineman said.

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DO

- Stop the water flow if possible
- Remove as much excess water as possible
- Towel wood furniture, counter tops, etc.
- Relocate all knick-knacks, lamps, etc. to a dry safe place
- Use wax paper or wood blocks under furniture that cannot be relocated to a dry area
- Pin up draperies and upholstery skirts to prevent water circles
- Turn on your heating and/or air conditioning system, provided water has not entered the ducts
- Remove all non-color fast items like rugs, pillows, etc. and place in a dry area
- Remove all loose items on the floor to a dry area

DON'T

- Go near contaminated (sewer) water
- Use electrical appliances and outlets in wet areas
- Use your household vacuum to extract water
- Place wet items on any absorbent surface
- Turn on your heating and/or air conditioning system if water has traveled in or through the ducts
- Enter rooms if the ceiling is wet and sagging
- Leave absorbent materials like boxes, papers, pillows, etc. in the wet area
- Let children or the elderly enter the affected areas

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