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Paynesville Press



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PAYNESVILLE SCHOOLS

District hires Jesse Rasmussen as principal

Dean of students picked to replace veteran principal David Oehrlein

By Erica Reinke and Michael Jacobson

The Paynesville School Board officially hired dean of students Jesse Rasmussen as the new secondary school principal for the 2024-25 school year at their meeting on Monday, April 23.

Rasmussen, a longtime science teacher at the secondary



Jesse Rasmussen, who has served as the PHS dean of students the past two years, has been hired as the new secondary school principal.

school, who will be replacing David Oehrlein, the current

principal who has taken the superintendent position in Rothsay, Minn.

Rasmussen has spent the last two school years – 2022-23 and 2023-24 – as the dean of students, working closely with Oehrlein, who has spent 13 years with the district, first as the elementary principal and the last five years as the secondary principal.

In addition to teaching science, and now being an administrator, Rasmussen has coached golf, the e-sports team, and has helped direct the one-act play. Last year, he was a finalist for the principal position at EV-W High School.

Rasmussen was selected by a committee of staff, students, and community members during a hiring process in March.

In Other Business...

The board approved a donation of \$187,337.12 from the Frank, Cy, and Dick Dillon Charitable Fund, directed towards career and technology education programming. This money is used in the Innovation Center to replace equipment on a schedule, “pulling in some pieces, passing out some pieces, a really nice way of bringing innovation into the programming, as

SCHOOL BOARD – Page 3

News Briefs

Friday, May 3

Open house at new nursing home

The Paynesville Health Care Center will hold a public open house at their new nursing home – next to Koronis Place, off Highway 55 – on Friday, May 3, from 2-5 p.m. The public is invited to come and tour the new facility. Beverages and snacks will be provided. The current nursing home residents will move to the new nursing home in May.

Sunday, May 5

Alumni concert planned for Bungum

Having impacted the lives of hundreds of students, Cheryl Bungum is retiring this spring and hanging up her choir robe for the last time. Since she has played an instrumental role in so many lives, each and every one of her students is invited back for one last concert for her to direct. Come celebrate with her on Sunday, May 5. Alumni should complete this Google form to sign up: docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc1pXz_vhfO-0JEGsx_SDSSE1zclXrt1J5dd64ifKc0RuMcxPbw/viewform (the form is also available at www.facebook.com/isd741). Singers will practice from 3:30-4 p.m. in the auditorium. There will be an open house starting at 4 p.m. in the PACC lobby for alumni and the public to greet Bungum, and the concert will start at 5 p.m. in the PHS auditorium.



Photo by Michael Jacobson

The Paynesville Health Care Center – the new nursing home being built in Paynesville, connected to Koronis Place – will have an open house on Friday, May 3, from 2-5 p.m. for the public to come and see the new facility. It will open in mid May.

NEW NURSING HOME

Open house at new facility on Friday, May 3

After two years, new nursing home will open in May

By Michael Jacobson

Paynesville will get a first glimpse at the new nursing home in town on Friday, May 3, when the Paynesville Health Care Center holds an open house from 2-5 p.m.

“Just for the public to come and see,” said administrator Nathan Theis.

“It’s to let the community get eyes on it,” continued

Theis. “We want them to see the finished product.”

The new nursing home, connected to Koronis Place and located off Highway 55, will officially open on Tuesday, May 14, when all the current residents are moved to the new facility in one day.

The new facility will replace the former Koronis Manor, which was built in the 1960s.

While housing roughly the same number of residents – 51 beds in the new facility – there will be more single rooms (43) and fewer doubles (only four).

“Space,” said Theis of the improvements. “Personal bathrooms.”

“It’s very resident friendly,”

added Sandy Dougherty, who is the director of nursing.

“There’s a lot of family space,” continued Theis.

“That’s huge,” said Dougherty. “The building is all about the residents.”

While their company, owned by Tom Opatz and Fred Struzyk, have added onto several nursing homes, and built three new assisted living facilities, including Koronis Place, this is their first new nursing home built from the ground up. With Koronis Place, the new nursing home represents a \$22 million investment in Paynesville. “Obviously, we’re looking to stay, to grow here,” said Theis of the company’s

commitment to Paynesville. “There’s always a need.”

One big benefit of the adjoining facilities will be a continuum of care – with assisted living in Koronis Place, where seniors can add services as needed, and then the new nursing home. With the nursing home move, Stearns Place will switch to independent living (and drop its assisted-living services).

“The whole continuum of care on site, on one campus, is really a plus to families,” said Theis. “One spouse can live there, and the other here. They’re connected.”

The building, which took

NURSING HOME – Page 2

CITY OF PAYNESVILLE

City makes final offer for Washburne Court

City wants to buy building and lot as future library site

By Erica Reinke and Michael Jacobson

While the City of Paynesville approved purchasing the former Washburne Court building in December, intending to use the vacant lot to build a new library, a purchase agreement has yet to be finalized. At their meeting on Monday, April 22, the council approved offering a proposed land swap again, and giving

the building owners 10 days to sign it.

The Paynesville Public Library is operated by the Great River Regional Library system, with the City of Paynesville providing the building. The library wants to move to a bigger building, and the Friends of the Library board has evaluated many city locations and recommended that either the Washburne Court building, or the empty lots behind it, are the best location for a bigger, newer, better public library.

While the city agreed to purchase the property in December, finalizing the purchase agreement has stalled.

At the council meeting on

Monday, April 8, as frustrations grew with lack of progress, the council motioned that a purchase agreement for Washburne Court and/or its adjacent lots be signed within 15 days or the city would pursue other options. “Well, the offer was that we have a signed purchase agreement that we would say ‘yes’ to within 15 days. Do we have that?” asked Mayor Shawn Reinke at the Monday, April 22, meeting.

“Not that I’ve seen,” replied city administrator Tariq Al-Rafai.

As a final effort to reach an agreement, the council decided to offer a land swap again, trading some lots owned by the city. “We’ve tried this

already, and it’s been rejected. We’re going around and around and around,” Reinke said.

The city could try to use eminent domain to obtain the vacant land it wants for a public purpose. However, as one last good-faith effort, a motion was made to draft a purchase agreement for this land swap and present it to the owners of the Washburne Court building, giving them 10 days to sign.

Police Secretary

The Belgrade/Brocton Police Department’s clerical staff recently resigned, and Paynesville was contacted to see if its police secretary

CITY COUNCIL – Page 3

NEW NEWSPAPERS

CherryRoad announces papers for Litchfield, Hutch

New Jersey group starting newspapers in May

CherryRoad Media, the nation’s fastest growing newspaper company, announced on Friday, April 26, that it will open newspapers in Hutchinson and Litchfield, to fill the void left with the closing of the Hutchinson Leader and the Litchfield Independent Review.

The Leader and the Independent Review, both published since the 1880s, printed their final editions on Wednesday, April 24, leaving the communities without a local newspaper to chronicle their respective histories, triumphs, and challenges. CherryRoad, experienced at opening newspapers in communities that have lost theirs, has responded.

“We are in the business of serving communities like Hutchinson and Litchfield,” CherryRoad Media CEO Jeremy Gulban said. “When we heard these communities would lose their papers, we quickly reacted. We don’t want to see these towns, and their citizens, fall into another news desert. Too many small towns across this country have faced that prospect in recent years. If we can help

avoid that here, well, count us in.”

CherryRoad will be launching the newspapers, The Hutchinson Station and The Litchfield Rail, with first editions targeted for Thursday, May 9.

“We wanted this to be seamless, without a break in community coverage, and we are going to deliver that as closely as possible,” said Lee Bachlet, COO of CherryRoad Media. “The citizens of Hutchinson, Litchfield, and surrounding areas will go one week without a local paper, but only one week. And then they will be served by familiar faces, albeit under new names.”

The names are rooted in the towns’ histories. Hutchinson was founded in 1855 by Asa Hutchinson, a member of the famed Hutchinson Family Singers, and was originally named Hutchinson Station. And Litchfield has a long, intertwined history with the railroad, starting with it being originally platted in October 1869 by the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad as the company extended its lines to the area.

Joining these new endeavors will be familiar faces, including previously existing editorial and advertising staff, led by editor Brent Schacherer, who has been doing journalism in Hutchinson and Litchfield for 25 years.

“I am excited to be a part of

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