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PATRIOT



KISSING SANTA CLAUS. Mrs. Claus (Kristi Kelly) and Becker Mayor Tracy Bertram gave Santa (John Riebel) a peck on the cheek at last week's Farm Friends Santa Claus visit in Becker. The event featured trees, decorations, hot chocolate and cookies. (Submitted photo.)

Inside
CLEARWATER TWP. Clearwater Township is moving their recycling pickup day to Thursday instead of Fridays due to concerns about the dates and costs. See the story on page 2.

BECKER SPORTS
The Becker girls soccer team held a banquet recently to re-hash the successful season and hand out much-deserved awards. See the story on page 11.

BIG LAKE
Two new officers with the Big Lake PD were sworn-in at the most recent city council meeting. See the story on Chris Thull and Bill Saliterman on page 6.

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Deck the House contest underway



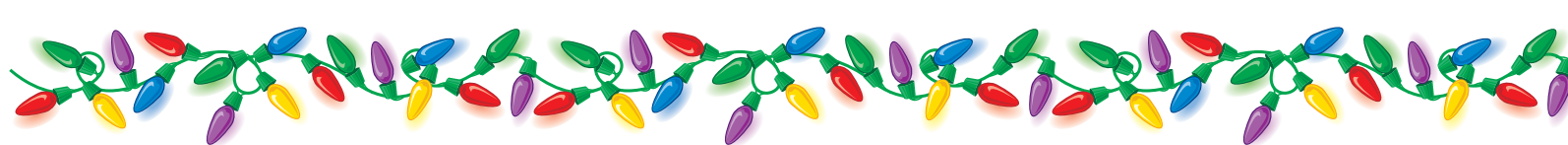
THE DETERSLAND LIGHTS PROPERTY has over 25,000 lights that would give the Griswold family supreme envy (Submitted photo.)

Four homes and two businesses Becker Community Center and Becker Parks & Recreation. Voting has ended as of this week but people of holiday cheer can still

visit and experience the sounds and sights of this year's entrants. The four homes are located at: 11159 Nikolas Ave.; 11157 Olympia Ave.; 11804 35th Ave., SE and 10221 18th Ave. The two businesses are: Studio 5 Salon at

13860 1st St. and Marvel Nutrition at 14275 Bank St. The Detersland family on Nikolas Ave. have a display of over 25,000 lights, a singing reindeer, and more! It runs every day from 5-11 pm.

By Bill Morgan, Editor, Staff Writer
reporter.bill@patriotnewsnmn.com



County approves 6.49% levy increase for 2023

The Sherburne County Board Tuesday certified the 2023 property tax levy at \$58,452,566. That represents a 6.49% increase over the 2022 levy of \$54,889,085.

has grown approximately 21.65% for taxes payable in 2023 and the latest census numbers indicate a 11.9% population growth rate since 2010 (88,499 to 99,074).

By Ken Francis, Contributing Writer
production@patriotnewsnmn.com

Building and new home permits continue to trend upward. Countywide, there were 474 new home permits in 2021, compared to 83 in 2011. The county also saw approximately \$221.5 million of new construction projects added to the tax rolls for taxes payable in 2023.

Last year, the levy was increased 4.86% from 2021.

The three largest levy-supported expenses in 2023 take up more than half of the levy total. They are Law Enforcement/ Corrections at \$19,219,312, up \$994,991 from 2022. Next is Public Works at \$10,702,229, up \$137,029 and Health & Human Services at \$10,541,542, up \$501,445.



The 2023 budget of \$122,897,214 includes several full-time employee (FTE) requests. But most of the new positions are expected to be offset by the increase in revenue, cuts to professional services and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. New positions accounted for less than a 1% increase to the levy.

The original budget and levy request presented at the August budget workshop meeting called for a levy increase of 6.99%. But those numbers were reduced by \$273,802 over the past few months through staff meetings, board workshops and public input.

Administrator Bruce Messelt said growth across the county has had a positive impact on revenues. The countywide tax base

Based on the 6.49% levy increase, the county tax rate will still see a reduction due to the increase in the tax base. The impact on the average homestead property would decrease if

COUNTY to page 3



PATRIOTIC SNOWMAN. Jodi Buesgens and her granddaughter, Caylah Chonsky, enjoyed making a patriotic snowman in Becker last weekend. (Submitted photo.)



GIANT SNOWMAN. Dalton Offerdahl assembled a larger than life snowman at his home in Big Lake. (Submitted photo.)

Movies that are perfect for families this holiday season

Various traditions take center stage during the holiday season. One of those traditions may be sitting down and enjoying any of a number of timeless Christmas movies or even newer holiday films that are quickly becoming favorites.

Submitted Article

Film fans have their own ideas about the best films to watch during the holidays, but the fol-

lowing movies are some kids and adults can enjoy together.

• **"The Polar Express" (2004):** A young boy enjoys a magical adventure to the North Pole aboard the Polar Express train. He learns about the true spirit of the holidays and the value of bravery and friendship along the way.

• **"The Muppet Christmas Carol" (1992):** Charles Dickens' classic story about a bitter miser might be a little frightening for young children to enjoy

in its more theatrical offerings. However, when the Muppet characters tell their version of the classic tale, the story becomes much more family-friendly.

• **"A Boy Called Christmas" (2021):** Based on the book

by Matt Haig, this movie is a reimagined take on Father Christmas. It focuses on Nikolas as he goes on an adventure to find a magical town called Elfhelm.

• **"Jack Frost" (1998):** When a father dies in a car accident, he comes back to life as a snowman in his son's



MOVIES to page 3

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COUNTY from page 1

their taxable value remained constant. However, since the average residential taxable valuation has increased approximately 22.5%, the impact would be approximately \$9.60 per month on the average residential homesteaded property in Sherburne County.

The board also certified the Regional Rail Authority levy in the amount of \$0. Although the county's actual share of Northstar expenditures for 2023 is \$1,194,180, no levy dollars will be used to pay that cost. The money will come from revenues collected through the Local Option Sales Tax.

Northstar Link
The board approved the annual Operating Grant Agreement with St. Cloud Metro Transit for the 2023 Northstar Link Commuter Bus Service. Mn/DOT, Sherburne, Stearns, and Hennepin County's Regional Rail Authorities have agreed to continue providing funding for the Northstar Link commuter bus service between St. Cloud and Big Lake. Sherburne County's contribution is 43.4% of the Net Operating Costs, or \$84,546. The plan is to utilize Emergency Relief funds, and not the tax levy, to cover the operating costs.

Hwy. 25 Study
The board approved a Joint Powers Agreement with Wright County for a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study of Hwy. 25. A PEL will define transportation improvements needed within the study area by evaluating several factors such as mobility, safety, reliability, economic development and congestion.

The cost is still to be determined, but both counties have agreed to acquire all necessary funding, utilizing the Central Minnesota River Partnership (CMRP) funds and Initiative funds to complete the initial phase of the study.

ARPA Expenditures
The board approved ARPA expenditures totaling \$363,663.81. That total includes \$68,926.28 for reimbursement for a Human Resources position in the sheriff's department; \$106,362.19 for jail overtime costs; \$65,000 for YMCA Drop-In child care staffing; \$164,62 for a file management system in the county attorney's department and \$8,750.04 in reimbursement for payroll in administration and maintenance for dealing with COVID-related programs.

MOVIES from page 1

front yard. Jack learns to keep his promises and make things right with his son - things he wasn't capable of doing as a human.

• **"Christmas with the Kranks" (2004):** The Kranks decide to forego their annual Christmas party and plan a vacation since their daughter will be out of town. But when said daughter decides to come home after all, chaos sets

in as the couple tries to figure out how to put together an extravaganza at the last minute.

• **"Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas" (1997):** The Beast does not favor the holiday season, so Belle must change his mind on the matter in this animated Disney offering.

• **"Elf" (2003):** As a youngster, Buddy was

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2022 comes to close for Santiago Board

The Santiago Township Board of Supervisors met last Wednesday for the final time in 2022, approv-

ing a broadband expenditure and reviewing ongoing road maintenance.

All three Supervisors voted in favor of approving a \$5,000 payment from their ARPA fund to Midco's broadband initiative within the township. Midco is paying the majority of the costs of the project, which is also being completed with some Sherburne County grant funds. Once completed, the project will

bring high-speed internet fiber cable to several township residences, as well as an important connection to enhance future infrastructure.

Even with the allocation, the Township's ARPA fund still has a little more than \$30,000 in it. Board Chair Jeff Pappenfus explained that he would like to see what shape the roads are in after this winter before spending additional ARPA funds.

The next item discussed was the road report, and Supervisor Dave Jehoich noted that with the recent rains and warm temperatures, the road beds had

thawed, making plowing very difficult. He said that in some cases, the snow was plowed, but the Class Five gravel was also falling victim to the blade of the snow removal equipment. This could make for some interesting conditions in the spring.

Sgt. Dan Frank of the SCSO was also on the agenda, as he reported on last month's call load. The Sheriff's Office responded to 81 calls for service, including 22 traffic stops, and seven car-deer collisions.

In voting-related business, the board approved a resolution signifying the Town Hall as the official Polling Place for any 2023

"the Four Realms" (2018): This is a newer take on the classic Nutcracker tale. This adventure sees Clara defending the Land of Sweets from the evil Mother Ginger.

Holiday films enhance the celebratory nature of the season. Certain movies are tailor-made for families to watch together during this special time of year.

elections.

In final action, the Board discussed the issue of unknown individuals dumping household garbage in the township dumpster. The dumpster is only to be used for Township refuse, as well as used oil filters for the drain oil drop off station.

After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to place increased signage near the dumpster and will also enhance the surveillance of the area in hopes of collecting photographic evidence of the offenders.

The board's next meeting will be on January 11, 2023.

Clearwater man involved in 2-vehicle accident

A Clearwater man was injured in a two-vehicle crash last Friday evening in Lynden Twp.

the vehicle of Nikita James Isaac, 35 of Baton Rouge, LA, collided at mile marker 174 in Stearns County.

Isaac was driving a semi truck and Middendorf was driving a 2002 Buick LeSabre.

Authorities reported the roads were covered in snow and ice. Midden-

dorf was transported to St. Cloud Hospital following the incident with non-life threatening injuries. Isaac had no injuries.

The attending authorities were Clearwater Fire and Rescue, Mayo Ambulance and the Stearns County Sheriff's Dept.



Submitted Article

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Notice to Counties and Municipalities, Under Minnesota Statutes Section 216B.16, Subdivision 1

Re: Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation Request for Increase in Natural Gas Rates, MPUC Docket No. 22-504

On November 1, 2022, Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (“MERC”) filed an application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) for a general rate increase for natural gas services provided to customers in the State of Minnesota. The requested increase is for 9.91 percent or about \$40,322,302.

State law allows MERC to collect an interim (temporary) rate while the MPUC considers the rate increase request. The interim rate increase is approximately 9.08 percent, including the cost of gas, or about \$36,973,887. The interim rate increase is effective January 1, 2023. All MERC gas customer bills will reflect the 9.08 percent increase during the interim period and this rate will remain in effect until a final decision is made.

In accordance with Minn. Stat. § 216B.16, subd. 2, the Commission has referred the matter to the Office of Administrative Hearings and delayed a decision on proposed final rates in order to evaluate the application. In addition to the review by the Commission, the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources will conduct an investigation of MERC’s books and records as part of the rate review. The Minnesota Office of the Attorney General – Residential Utilities Division may investigate this proposal, as well as other parties such as consumer or public interest groups.

The interim rate increase will be collected through a 32.82 percent interim rate increase on distribution margins. Distribution margins include the customer charge, the distribution charge, and if applicable, the daily firm capacity charge for firm/interruptible service customers.

The chart below shows an example of interim and proposed rate changes on monthly bills for customers with average gas usage. This calculation will not necessarily result in an interim bill that is uniformly 9.08 percent higher than present bill because gas costs are not included in the calculation of the interim rate increase.

PROPOSED CHANGE IN AVERAGE MONTHLY BILLS

MERC Customer Class	Average Monthly Usage (Therms)	Present Monthly Bill	Interim Monthly Bill	Proposed Monthly Bill
CONSOLIDATED SALES				
GS-CONSOLIDATED Residential Sales	72	\$79	\$86	\$87
GS-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 1	73	\$87	\$97	\$95
GS-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 2	555	\$533	\$571	\$572
GS-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 3	9,842	\$8,315	\$8,722	\$8,662
CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 2	3,399	\$2,566	\$2,652	\$2,673
CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 3	15,749	\$11,557	\$12,021	\$11,864
CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 4	101,748	\$69,073	\$70,234	\$69,330
CONSOLIDATED Agriculture Grain Dryer - Class 1	491	\$421	\$450	\$447
CONSOLIDATED Agriculture Grain Dryer - Class 2	2,397	\$1,768	\$1,815	\$1,825
CONSOLIDATED Electric Generation - Class 1	1,137	\$883	\$919	\$915
CONSOLIDATED C&I Firm/Interruptible Class 2	5,011	\$3,939	\$4,116	\$4,203
CONSOLIDATED TRANSPORT				
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 2	3,801	\$887	\$1,110	\$1,153
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 2 - CIP Exempt	5,015	\$960	\$1,185	\$1,312
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 3	23,664	\$3,381	\$4,332	\$4,216
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 4	124,171	\$7,187	\$8,717	\$7,472
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I FIRM Class 5 - CIP Exempt	1,962,554	\$15,092	\$11,138	\$16,407
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 2	6,101	\$915	\$1,106	\$1,107
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 3	26,565	\$2,960	\$3,754	\$3,477
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 4	129,765	\$7,245	\$8,758	\$7,572
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I INT Class 5	395,311	\$14,785	\$18,534	\$14,334
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I Firm/Interruptible Class 3	20,271	\$2,440	\$3,106	\$2,891
Transport-CONSOLIDATED C&I Firm/Interruptible Class 5 - CIP Exempt	1,001,711	\$7,479	\$5,543	\$7,275

*The “present monthly bill” amounts reflect the rates authorized in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, the cost of gas, and applicable Natural Gas Extension Project Rider and Gas Utility Infrastructure Cost Rider surcharge rates.

The Commission will make a decision on the rate increase in the fall of 2023. Final rate changes, if approved, will be effective after that date. If final rates are less than interim rates, the difference in the amount collected during the interim period will be refunded to customers with interest. If the final rate is greater than the interim increase, customers will not be charged for the difference.

The public may review the proposed rate schedules and a comparison of present and proposed rates at:

Minnesota Energy Resources

2685 145th Street West
Rosemount, MN 55068
Phone: 1-800-889-9508
Web: www.minnesotaenergyresources.com/company/rate_case.aspx

Minnesota Department of Commerce

85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101
Telephone: 651-539-1534
Web: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp>.

Select 22 in the year field, enter 504 in the number field, select Search, and the list of documents will appear on the next page.

An Administrative Law Judge will schedule public hearings. Customers will be notified by mail or bill insert of the dates of those hearings. Public notice of hearing dates and locations will be published in local newspapers in MERC’s service area.

Persons who wish to formally intervene or testify in this case should contact the Administrative Law Judge, Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 64620, St. Paul, MN 55101, Telephone: (651) 361-7900.

Questions about the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission’s review process?

The MPUC is asking customers to comment on MERC’s request for a rate increase. Send comments to the MPUC’s Consumer Affairs Office (CAO) or contact the CAO for assistance with submitting comments:

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul MN 55101
Phone: 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782
Email: consumer.puc@state.mn.us

Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call through their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.



Sports News

Becker girls soccer team holds banquet

The Becker girls soccer 2022/23 season was concluded several weeks back and the team wrapped

selves. "The win-loss record this season was both enjoyable from victories, and yet emotional with defeats," he said. "The girls worked hard,

with a slideshow of photos, and thank you video to the coaches, and a new candle tradition for each senior that symbolized the end of their high school career.

Varsity Awards All Conference (2):

Jr. Varsity Awards Most Valuable Player: Hailen Pettersen; **Most Improved:** Kaitlynn Finney; **Most Dedicated:** Wren Williams; **Rookie of the Year:** Lorelei Clouse; **Team Spirit Award:** Kylee Morton; **Bulldog Award:** Daelyn Brannan; **Coaches Award:** Leon Morris.

Congratulations go out to the team's new captains for next year: Charlie Ebert, Rebecca Lyon, and Abby Atwood.



THREE RETURNING BULLDOGS for the girls soccer team were chosen as team captains for next year's season. They are: Charlie Ebert, Rebecca Lyon and Abby Atwood. (Submitted Photo).

up their campaign with a banquet at Pebble Creek Golf Course for dinner and awards on Nov. 15.

Coach Ben Strom welcomed a large crowd of parents and families to enjoy an evening of great food, awards, honors, laughter, and recap memories from the season.

The captains gave speeches, as well as acknowledgment of all the support from parents who helped throughout the season. Coach Strom handed out awards to junior varsity and varsity players — these ranged from personal awards by seniors to underclassman (including the announcement of letter winners) academic awards, team, and Mississippi 8 Conference awards.

"Having the banquet at Pebble Creek is very enjoyable for the girls and it is nice to celebrate with their parents and families," said Strom. "I am proud of the academic achievements and the conference awards for our student-athletes this fall."

Strom went on to say it is important to recognize all the student-athletes that put in the extra effort to academically better them-

played through injuries, and stayed positive throughout all the games and practices. In the end, the measure of success is not just based on the win-loss record, rather, the friendships, and the lessons that come as the result of the hard work and effort they put in, the selfless commitment to the team, and their dedication to improve and be better. We have talented players on our JV and Varsity teams. We have a fun group of girls, and we will miss the seniors that are leaving."

The evening ended

Rachel Fuller and Abby Atwood; **All Conference Honorable Mention (4):** Liz Mackedanz, Hailey Szabla, Rebecca Lyon and Charlie Ebert; **Most Valuable Player:** Rachel Fuller; **Most Improved:** Kailey Thompson; **Most dedicated (2):** Abby Atwood and Hailey Szabla; **Rookies of Year (2):** Stella Bloch and Kailey Thompson; **Team Spirit Award:** Ava Ewald; **Coaches award (2):** Liz Mackedanz and Ava Ewald; **Bulldog Award:** Rebecca Lyon; **Scholar Athlete:** Alana McGowan

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Hornet wrestlers take first

The Big Lake wrestling team came home with the title at the 13-team Maple Grove Crimson Invitational two Saturdays ago.

By Ken Francis, Contributing Writer
production@patriotnews.com

The Hornets crowned two individual champions, had two second places and four other top-four finishes.

Zack Smith won the title at 145 pounds. After a first-round bye, he beat Isaac Roberts of North Branch, 14-4. After beating Clark Thompson of Bismarck Legacy, 16-13, he pinned previously undefeated Isaak Coolidge of Rush City-Braham at 1:53 in the championship match.

Nolan Reiter won the 152-pound title. He beat Sean Peterschick of Bismarck Legacy by tech fall, 18-3. He pinned Tanner Cummings of North Branch at 2:34, then pinned Jose Anaya of Paynesville Area at 0:25 in the finals.

Kale Westgaard took second at 106 pounds. After a first-round bye, he beat Tucker Gould of Rush City-Brainerd, 12-8. He lost by pin to Dylan St. Germain of Eagan in the championship match.

Cash Stortz finished fourth at 120 pounds. After a first-round bye, he beat Ethan Hong of Maple Grove, 11-0.

He lost to undefeated Zakary Johnson of Blaine, 4-3, then lost by pin to Joey Enzminger of Bismarck Legacy in his final match.

Dallas Sibbet placed third at 132 pounds. He pinned Americo Garcia of St. Paul Highland Park at 3:21. He pinned Hser Kalu Moo of Roseville Area at 3:31. After losing to Bryce Young of Blaine, 13-0 in the semifinals, he pinned Thomas Krueger of Eagan at 3:47 in his final match.

Cooper Cusick took third at 138 pounds. He pinned Brandon Haas of Paynesville Area at 2:00, then pinned Sam Cohen of Eastview. After losing by pin to undefeated Landon Umbreit of Rush City-Braham, he beat Darion Snyder of St. Paul Highland Park, 10-4 in his final match.

Carson Gellerman placed second at 170 pounds. He pinned Hamdie Osman of Blaine at 1:37 in his first match. He pinned St. Joshua Johnson of Park Center at 0:29. After a 14-4 win over Brett Miller of Bismarck Legacy, he lost a 5-3 decision to Dylan Cariveau of Roseville Area in the final match.

Gauge Hoffman took fourth at 182 pounds. He lost his first match by pin to undefeated Ezra Formanek of Eastview. He came back to

pin Gus Mastrud of St. Paul Highland Park at 4:51 by pin, then beat Jack Gilbertson of Eagan, 20-7. He lost by pin to Mitchell Babineau of Blaine in his final match.

Mason Krebs finished fourth at 220 pounds. He lost his first match, 8-6 to Carter Johnson of Bismarck Legacy. He got a next round bye before pinning Jace Allerton of Rush City-Braham at 3:00. He lost by pin to Cole Will of Eagan in his last match.

Kane Lapointe took third at 285 pounds. He pinned Chase Thein of Maple Grove at 2:56 in his first match, then pinned Treyson Renken of Bismarck Legacy at 1:05. He lost by pin to Spencer Eisenbraun of Paynesville Area, then won by injury default over Louis Ebi-Ndie of Roseville Area in his final match.

Final team scores were:
1. Big Lake 193.5; 2. Eastview 178.0; 3. Bismarck Legacy 151.5; 4. Paynesville Area 149.0; 5. Rush City-Braham 116.0; 6. Eagan 110.5; 7. Blaine 102.5; 8. Maple Grove 96.0; 9. North Branch 64.0; 10. St. Paul Highland Park 59.0; 11. Roseville Area 45.0; 12. Park Center 31.0; 13. Tartan 4.0.

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To our all clients who have had the patience and grace of saints. With all the challenges faced this year, both within our industry and personally, your understanding has been amazing and greatly appreciated. We are truly blessed to work for such great people.

-Ken Geroux

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