



PATRIOT OFFICE

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The Patriot is the official newspaper for Clear Lake, Clearwater, Orrick, Palmer & Santiago Townships, City of Becker, Becker Township and Becker School District #726, City of Big Lake and Big Lake School District #727. The Patriot is also the legal newspaper for the Sherburne County financials.

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The Patriot welcomes letters to the editor. Call 763-275-0275 or email Bill at reporter.bill@patriotnewsmn.com. Addresses and phone numbers are required for verification purposes. **The deadline for all letters is 11 am Wednesday. Limit letters to 200 words or less.** Letters will be printed at the discretion of the Editor and are subject to editing for grammar, libel and brevity. Two letters per writer per subject each year.

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PIZZA DEPOT SPREADS JOY WITH SANTA VISIT

By Don Bellach,
Contributing Writer

Santa has already been to many places throughout the communities the *Patriot* covers; for breakfasts, for tree lightings, for fundraisers and more. On Sat., Dec. 13, Santa came to Pizza Depot in Becker for joy.

CommunityM inded

For the past nine years, Pizza Depot has invited Santa Claus to visit so its customers could spend some quality time with him, pose for photos, and have fun with the jolly old elf. Three years ago, they added a craft and bake sale to showcase local talent, not to sell more pizza, but to serve the community.

Owner Morgan duMonceaux explained, "We strive to do stuff for the community, something smaller, because it's nice to have an event with a small family feel."

She has created that family feel by being consistent. She has used the same Santa for the past nine years, and every vendor who was present on Saturday has been present for the past three years, and her niece, Myla, and friend, Arya, were the elves who helped kids make ornaments and decorate Christmas cookies.



LINCOLN approached Santa Claus cautiously. (Patriot Photo by Don Bellach).

"I just enjoy seeing the kids coming in every year. It brings joy!" said duMonceaux, who was not worried about the near zero temps lowering turnout. "We don't do this for the money; we do it for the experience.

We could have two kids come in and it would be worth it."

Lincoln i sits Santa

DuMonceaux's family was ready to meet Santa. Her brother Brady, his wife Kayla, and their two kids,

Lincoln (3) and newborn Elowen, were waiting patiently for his arrival.

Brady explained that Lincoln had not sat on Santa's lap since becoming a toddler but was very interested in who he was.

"You definitely want to get that classic picture because it's something you'll look at for years and years, but we're coming in with

**SANTA
to page 2**

Clear Lake Fire Chief Ron Koren retires

By Don Bellach,
Contributing Writer

Clear Lake Fire Chief Ron Koren had already floated the idea of retirement to members of the council a month earlier, but during Monday's regular City Council meeting on Dec. 15, 2025, he made it official. With all the members of the council present, using few words, Koren announced his retirement both as Fire Chief and as a member of the Clear Lake Fire Department, where he has been since November of 1977. Koren has been the Fire Chief since 1987 and will officially retire on January 2, 2026.

Interim Chief Named

Council Member Lance Gilliland opened the discussion about Koren's temporary replacement, reporting that the Personnel Committee had nominated Assistant Fire Chief Matt Lunser. Gilliland also explained that council needs to adopt a process for hiring



CLEAR LAKE FIRE CHIEF RON KOREN submits his resignation to City Clerk Ryan McCann. (Patriot photos by Don Bellach)

a new chief before a full-time replacement is named, a process that should begin in March of 2026 to conclude by April 7.

A motion was made and seconded to appoint Lunser as Interim Chief.

The motion was approved, with Chad Nelson abstaining, while all other members voted in favor. Lunser will serve as Interim Chief beginning January 2, 2026, through April 6, 2026.

Misc.

Higher-than-recommended levels of manganese were detected during recent repairs in well #3, as parts of the discharge piping had shown signs of corrosion. Public Works Supervisor Even Johnson suggested that the city may have to replace some discharge piping sooner than expected and that they will need to inspect the piping in well #2 later in 2026.

City Engineer Keith Yapp noted that the state has issued guidance on manganese levels, but does not require cities to meet those requirements.

There was a brief discussion about current city regulations regarding snow removal on city sidewalks. It is the homeowner's responsibility to clear the sidewalk. Mayor Tim Goenner asked Johnson if the city could assist some residents, and Johnson responded, "We don't have the proper equipment to do it." He continued to say it could be something they consider next year.

City Clerk Ryan McCann updated the council about current updates to the city's website, which included a new .gov site and online payment options.

CL CityR esponds

The Clear Lake City Council issued the following statement a day after Koren announced his retirement:

Clear Lake Fire Chief Ron Koren has announced his retirement from the Clear Lake fire department, effective January 2, 2026. We thank Chief Koren for his many years of dedicated service to the community and of course wish him well in his retirement.

The city council is currently in the process of modifying future policy regarding the selection and term of the fire chief position. That being said, in the interest of continuity of leadership, the City Council has nominated Assistant Chief Matt Lunser, to be the new interim Clear Lake Fire Chief.

2 Big Lakers facing felony charges for drugs, child endangerment

Submitted Article

Two individuals from Big Lake are facing felony drug charges after law enforcement executed a search warrant at their residence and allegedly discovered fentanyl and cocaine in locations accessible to a child, according to a criminal complaint filed in Sherburne County District Court.

Maggie Elizabeth



MAGGIE ELIZABETH USELTON (L) and Mason William Brown (R) of Big Lake have been charged with drug counts and endangerment of a child. (Sherburne County Booking Photos).



Uelton, 31, and Mason William Brown, 28, have both been charged with one felony count of 5th Degree Drug Possession (Schedule 1, 2, 3, 4) and one gross misdemeanor count of Endangering a Child in a Situation Could Cause Harm or Death.

According to the complaint, on or about December 10, 2025, Sherburne County law enforcement officers executed a search

warrant at a residence on Henry Road in Big Lake. Officers made contact with Uelton and Brown in their vehicle as they arrived at the garage.

Upon removing the defendants from the vehicle, officers allegedly observed that Brown appeared to be heavily under the influence of a controlled substance.

**FELONIES
to page 2**

INSERTS

•Menards

(All Zips)

•Runnings #1

(All Zips)

•Becker Fire Calendars
(55308)

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Many Positive Things

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I have decided to begin a regular editorial because there are many positive things happening in the City of Big Lake, including more than \$65M in new valuation added to the tax base in 2025 (50% increase over 2024). I look forward to sharing updates and engaging with you through the *Patriot*. Future editorials will focus more closely on the significant private economic development activity occurring in our community amongst many other things!

My focus, today, is on our new City Council meeting schedule as well as the Big Lake Public Safety Facility Project.

The Big Lake City Council has recently adjusted its meeting schedule, moving from two meetings per month to one. We are hopeful this change will create greater efficiencies for city staff and allow for more productive and focused City Council meetings. As of January 1, 2026, the City Council will meet on the third Wednesday of each month, starting with a Workshop session from 5:00–6:30 p.m., followed immediately by the regular City Council meeting at 6:30 p.m.

All City Council agendas and meeting packets are published on the city’s website at www.bglakemn.org. Workshop sessions are audio recorded, and City Council meetings are both video and audio recorded; all recordings are also available on the city website. I encourage you to stay engaged by reading, listening, and watching to keep up with city happenings.

If you haven’t yet heard, the City Council’s Public Building Planning Committee has been working on a city facility project for the past several years. This effort was prompted by the Big Lake Economic Development Authority’s (BLEDA) successful planning and acquisition of the building connected to City Hall. The BLEDA has been formally planning for redevelopment of the City Hall site since 2018. Currently, this site generates no tax revenue and sits on what is arguably one of the most visible and marketable pieces of real estate in the city.

In addition to acquiring the building connected to City Hall, the BLEDA also purchased five acres of land to be held for a potential new city facility. This step was taken to ensure the city had viable relocation options should the outcome, after fully vetting all alternatives, result in new construction.

After two years of planning and conducting a comprehensive space needs analysis, the Public Building Planning Committee formally recommended construction of a new Public Safety Facility to house City Hall, the Big Lake Police Department, and the Public Library. This recommendation was presented during the September 24, 2025, City Council Workshop, and the City Council reached a majority consensus to move forward. Additional details can be found in the September 24, 2025, Workshop packet available on the city’s website.

This recommendation reflects the pressing need to relocate City Hall to unlock redevelopment opportunities. At present, both City Hall and the Big Lake Police Department are operating in buildings that are overcrowded and



By Paul Knier
Big Lake Mayor

outdated, with significant limitations in safety and technology. Moving forward will not only address these challenges but also better position our city to serve residents efficiently and safely.

Following a thorough evaluation of financing options, the Committee and city staff determined that Lease-Revenue Bonds are the most appropriate funding mechanism for the Public Safety Facility Project. This approach allows the city to move forward efficiently, minimizes the risk of cost escalation due to market conditions, and provides greater control over overall project costs. Lease-Revenue Bonds have been successfully used in the past to fund major city projects, including the current City Hall, Lake Liquors, Public Works facility improvements, and the Big Lake Fire Station. The bonds will be issued with a not-to-exceed amount of \$33M, with the goal of delivering the project at a lower total cost.

The Committee also conducted a Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposal process to select a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR). Bradbury Stamm was chosen to provide comprehensive construction management services. Bradbury Stamm has assembled a design and engineering team that includes GLTArchitects, BKV Group, True North, and Bolton & Menk.

If you are interested in following this project more closely, please consider adding the following dates to your calendar:

5:30 p.m., January 12, 2026 – BLEDA Meeting

Public Hearing on the Establishment of an Economic Development District

(State law requires this district to be established for BLEDA to issue Lease-Revenue Bonds.)

6:00 p.m., January 20 – Special BLEDA Meeting

Consideration of the Bond Purchase Contract and authorization of lease documents

6:30 p.m., January 21, 2026 – City Council Meeting

Consideration and approval of the Lease-Revenue Bonds and City/BLEDA Lease Agreement

Consideration and approval of the CMAR Contract

Consideration and approval of a resolution requesting Great River Regional Public Library to begin work on its assessed needs

I encourage you to attend meetings, review materials, ask questions, and share your perspective. Your input matters, and it helps ensure that the choices we make reflect the needs and values of our residents. As always, I welcome your feedback and any questions you may have. Please feel free to call me at 612-817-6758 or email me at pknier@bglakemn.org.

TO THE EDITOR:
Rep. Tom Emmer, I have been calling your office, but I am not getting any information back from you. Your update in the *Patriot* on December 13th didn’t cover healthcare. I retired early at 62, and one of the deciding factors, was having affordable healthcare for myself through the ACA. I have asked you what your plan is for the country. The deadline was December 15 to sign up or change your plan. I had to make a decision without having the knowledge of what your plan was. The Republicans were offering \$1,000 for the year in an HSA. Do you realize my plan doubled from \$549 to \$1100 a month? Small businesses, farmers, early retirees and many others need a plan that is not catastrophic with thousands in deductables. The whole ACA could be reworked to “fix” it instead of just throwing money at it. I agree with your there, but why wait until the last minute to blame the democrats that the \$1,000

Walz Facing Mounting Pressure

Minnesota’s epidemic of fraud continues to get the national attention it warrants, and Governor Tim Walz is facing mounting pressure for his failures as federal investigations are underway. Last week, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform announced that it will open an investigation into the massive fraud, the state’s efforts to cover it up, and retaliation against whistleblowers inside the state agencies. Additionally, the U.S. Treasury Department, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Small Business Administration have all announced that they are actively investigating Minnesota.

I, along with the Minnesota Republican delegation, have been demanding action, answers, and accountability from Gov. Walz about the fraud in the state since 2022. Thanks to President Trump and his administration, we are hopeful this will give Minnesotans the answers they deserve and those responsible will pay for their crimes.

Demand for Re-ation of Illegally ssued CDLs

Last week, I joined Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach, Congressman Brad Finstad, and Congressman Pete Stauber in sending a letter to Gov. Walz demanding he revoke illegally issued Commercial Driver’s Licenses (CDLs). The Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy and the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration conducted an audit that discovered one-third of Minnesota’s non-domiciled CDLs were issued illegally. This negligence and oversight have put Minnesotans and Americans in harm’s way. Yet again, we see Gov. Walz’s dereliction of duty and Minnesotans paying the price for it. If the Governor refuses to revoke the illegal CDLs, Minnesota is at risk of losing its federal benefits.

Ending waste,fraud, and abuse in SNAP

On Tuesday, I joined the Minnesota Republican Delegation and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn “GT” Thompson in demanding that Gov. Walz end waste, fraud, and abuse in the state’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Pro-

a year didn’t pass? It is time to come up with a real plan to help the whole country.

**Cindy Stoll
Becker, MN**

TO THE EDITOR:
I have to chuckle over the fact that Rep. Tom Emmer is constantly complaining about Gov. Walz. If Emmer is so unhappy with Walz’s performance, why doesn’t he enter the governor’s race in 2026? But he won’t. Because Tom is enjoying the perks of being part of the DC elite in his job as GOP Whip. That and the fact that Trump and Emmer have ballooned the federal deficit by passing huge tax cuts for the millionaires and billionaires of this country while ignoring the needs of their working and middle class constituents aren’t making folks happy. And then there’s the embarrassing fact that Emmer has been the number one cheerleader in DC for crypto currency, which is rife with fraudulent activity and is the favorite currency of organized



By Rep.
Tom Emmer

gram (SNAP) and comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s request to see Minnesota’s SNAP data. Minnesota is one of the twenty-two states that have not complied with the USDA’s request. In 2024 alone, Minnesota erroneously paid \$77 million in SNAP benefits. Our governor is playing political games and putting Minnesotans’ SNAP benefits in jeopardy instead of following the request to keep Minnesota in good standing to safeguard funding.

Minnesota Farmers

On Wednesday, we met with the CEO of Land O’ Lakes, Beth Ford. We had a productive meeting discussing the opportunities and challenges facing Minnesota agriculture and the ways we can support our farmers, ranchers, and rural America. I look forward to continuing to work with Beth.

Annual Defense Bill

I was proud to see the House of Representatives pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026 this week, with my support. The NDAA authorizes \$900.6 billion for our national defense. Additionally, the legislation cuts left-wing ideology and DEI initiatives from the military and authorizes a 3.8% raise for our troops. The bill will be going back to the Senate for a vote and then to President Trump, who has already pledged to sign it into law. This legislation will make President Trump’s Peace Through Strength agenda a reality and ensure that the United States remains the most lethal and effective fighting force in the world.

As always, please do not hesitate to let me or my staff know if we can assist you with anything, and thank you for allowing me to represent you in Washington.

crime. Tom Emmer should be ashamed of his disastrous record. I suspect that Emmer is aware of the problem because he’s been afraid to face his constituents in Town Hall meetings. He prefers the back room conclaves at the Capital in DC. That’s where Tom feels comfortable these days. Best regards,
**Anthony Thompson
Big Lake, MN**

TO THE EDITOR:
Unguarded Data Fence. You don’t let strangers wander your property without permission. So it’s fair to ask why our digital lives are treated any differently. This month, President Trump signed an executive order pushing a single, light-touch national AI standard while blocking states from setting their own rules. Federal agencies are now encouraged to challenge state AI laws and even threaten funding for states that resist. At the same time, major tech companies are expanding how they use personal data to train AI. Platforms like

Meta, Google, and LinkedIn can draw from public posts, profiles, and user activity, often with limited or confusing opt-out options. The U.S. still has no comprehensive federal privacy law, leaving Americans with fewer protections than users overseas. Here’s the common-sense part: corporations/billionaires (greedy) don’t give money away for nothing. They fund campaigns, initiatives, and flashy projects (ballrooms, airplanes, etc.) because they expect access, influence, or fewer rules in return. State laws were trying to set basic guardrails: transparency, accountability, and the right to know when machines make decisions about you. Now many of those guardrails are being pushed aside before real national protections exist. AI is new. Power isn’t. If we don’t ask who’s paying and what they’re buying, we’re not paying attention.
**Vanessa Davenport
Big Lake, MN**

SANTA from page 1



OWNER MORGAN DUMONCEAUX(R) gets elves Myla and Arya ready to help kids decorate ornaments and cookies. (*Patriot* photo by Don Bellach)

low expectations,” Brady said.

He was very conscious of how his son perceived his visit with Santa.

“From a kid’s perspective, they’re thinking, ‘Why are you pushing this guy in a red suit on me?’”

This year, Lincoln would not be pushed, he would be led. Around 1 p.m., duMonceaux grabbed Lincoln’s hand and guided him into the kitchen. A moment later, Lincoln ran out excitedly yelling, “Santa’s here!”

That was the cue that other families needed to get ready for Santa’s entrance. Smiles lit up on everyone’s faces and a line quickly formed in front of Santa’s

chair. First in line was Lincoln, who looked at Santa and said, “Hi, I’m Lincoln.” He quickly took his place next to Santa Claus to talk to him.

Lincoln’s mother Kayla said shortly after, “I was so proud of him!” Recapping his conversation, she explained that he told Santa he was good and was taking care of his baby sister before asking him for a red monster truck.

Throughout the afternoon, that same experience was repeated by all the families who came to visit Santa and that is the joy that duMonceaux was talking about—the simple joy of being together, a joy that will be repeated for years and years.

FELONIES from page 1

The complaint states there was an “overwhelming chemical odor consistent with fentanyl being consumed in the vehicle.” Officers noted a car seat in the rear of the vehicle and arranged for a relative to take custody of Victim 1, a child who would normally have been returning to the residence.

During a search of the vehicle, officers allegedly discovered a plastic container in the center console next to where Brown was seated. The container held a white powder substance that field-tested positive for cocaine and fentanyl, weighing approximately 1.0 grams.

Officers also located a purse belonging to Uselton in the vehicle. Inside, they allegedly found another plastic container with a substance that field-tested positive for both cocaine and fentanyl, weighing 2.14 grams. A digital scale and Narcan were also reportedly found in the purse.

According to the com-

plaint, Uselton provided a Mirandized statement admitting to using fentanyl the morning the warrant was executed. She allegedly indicated that Brown had been smoking fentanyl in the vehicle that day, and admitted that she and Brown smoke fentanyl in the vehicle where Victim 1 rides.

A subsequent search of the residence allegedly revealed a plastic container with a white powder substance on a coffee table in the living room. Uselton reportedly claimed it was makeup, but the substance field-tested positive for cocaine. A digital scale with residue was also found under the coffee table. The complaint notes these items were within reach of Victim 1, a five-year-old child.

Both defendants are charged pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 152.025.2(a)(1) for the drug charges and 609.378.1(b)(1) for the child endangerment charges.

K-9 and SCSO visit Refuge Rangers



SCSO K-9 DEPUTY NICK CARLSON and his partner, Bane, visited the Refuge Ranger 4-H club last weekend, answering questions and doing a demonstration for those in attendance. The 4-H leadership was pleased with the program and wanted to extend their appreciation to Deputy Carlson, K-9 Bane and the SCSO for their time and effort in planning the event. (Submitted Photo).

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BECKER LEGION TO HOST CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER

By Mark Kolbinger, Contributing Writer

The Becker American Legion Post 193 is once again hosting a Christmas Eve dinner for the community from 4:30 until 7:30 p.m. on December 24 at the Legion building at 12155 Hancock Street. There is no charge for the dinner, which is open to the public, however people can bring store bought desserts to share with the other attendees if they chose.

Free-will donations will be accepted at the door, and anyone interested in donating to the event can also send their offering to the Legion at the above address.

dress. According to the Legion's First Vice-Commander Mark Swanson, the meal is being offered as a service for people, including Veterans, so they can experience companionship at a critical time of the year.

Swanson notes that Veteran suicide is an ongoing problem, and for anyone experiencing the holiday season without family by



their sides, loneliness and depression are a real thing. "This is giving an outlet to the

community so that no one is alone at this time of the

year," Swanson says. "We want everyone, including Veterans, to know that they are not alone."

In recent years, the American Legion has been active in supporting Veterans within the community through the use of the hashtag, #betheone, which symbolizes the mission to prevent Veteran suicide.

"The meal is open to anyone that wants to come and join us," Swanson says. For more information, Swanson can be contacted at legionpost193@aol.com.

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* 403 (B) Matching Retirement Options

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Developing Self-Directed Learners to Thrive in a Changing Global Community

The City of Becker is accepting applications for the position of **Full-Time Streets and Parks Supervisor** in the Public Works department. Essential functions of this job include first level supervisory, skilled/technical, and some administrative work to coordinate the day-to-day maintenance and repair of all city infrastructure and assist the Public Works and Parks Assistant Director in the division's administration and construction program. In addition, this position uses personal/organizational knowledge and technical expertise to ensure staff are properly trained, effectively supervised, and that work is completed timely and meets quality standards. Must be able to respond, in person, to urgent and emergency situations.

Minimum requirements include: a high school degree or equivalent, Class A or B commercial driver's license, four or more years of experience in the construction, maintenance and repair of comparable infrastructure. In addition, two or more years of leadership or supervisory experience with comparable duties for a group of full-time employees. Preferred qualifications include a strong mechanical background with demonstrated skills in troubleshooting/problem-solving a variety of operating concerns/issues with equipment, machinery and mechanical systems. Four or more years of experience with snow removal activities including route planning and coordination. Four or more years' experience as a supervisor or lead in a municipal, county or state public works department.

Wage range is \$37.28 - \$48.46/hour dependent on qualifications and experience. Becker has an excellent benefit package including PERA retirement, employer paid health insurance, health savings account, dental insurance, life insurance, long term disability insurance.

For more information go to <https://www.ci.beckermn.us/Jobs.aspx> for the job description and application materials. Submit cover letter, application, supplemental questions and resume by Monday, December 22 at 4:00 PM to City of Becker, Attn: Shannon Mortenson, 12060 Sherburne Avenue, Becker, MN 55308 or email to smortenson@ci.beckermn.us. EEO/AEE

CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Ad Deadline is 11 AM **WEDNESDAY**

For your convenience we accept:



MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION CLASSIFIEDS

AUTOMOBILES
GOT AN UNWANTED CAR??? DONATE IT TO PATRIOTIC HEARTS. Fast free pick up. Patriotic Hearts' programs help veterans find work or start their own business. Call 24/7: 1-833-485-1046. (mcn)

Get a break on your taxes! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 1-855-977-7030 today! (mcn)

Donate your car, truck, boat, RV and more to support our veterans! Schedule a FAST, FREE vehicle pickup and receive a top tax deduction! Call Veteran Car Donations at 1-888-429-2331 today! (mcn)

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
GET FREE MY nine-day Money Miracle Report. Documented proof. I've made \$2,000 in seven days. Call Now 24 hour recorded message (888) 349-2626 code WALN01 (mcn)

CABLE/INTERNET AFFORDABLE TV & INTERNET. If you are overpaying for your service, call now for a free quote and see how much you can save! 1-833-472-7954. (mcn)

DIRECTV- All your entertainment. Nothing on your roof! Sign up for Directv and get your first three months of Max, Paramount +, Showtime, Starz, MGM+ and Cinemax included. Choice package \$84.99/mo. Some restrictions apply. Call DIRECTV 1-866-296-1409. (mcn)

EMPLOYMENT/HELP WANTED
FREE REPORT REVEALS The Only Way Left for The Little Guy To Earn A Large Income From Home in This Economy Call 24 our recorded message 1(888) 349-2626 Code SPOLN1.(mcn)

FINANCIAL
Inflation is at 40 year highs. Interest rates are way up. Credit Cards. Medical Bills. Car Loans. Do you have \$10k or more in debt? Call NATIONAL DEBT RELIEF and find out how to pay off your debt for significantly less than what you owe! FREE quote: Call 1-866-552-0649. (mcn)

HEALTH & MEDICAL
DENTAL INSURANCE from Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. Coverage for 400 plus procedures. Real dental insurance - NOT just a discount plan. Do not wait! Call

now! Get your FREE Dental Information Kit with all the details! 1-855-973-9175 www.dental50plus.com/midwest#6258 (mcn)

PORTABLE OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR May Be Covered by Medicare! Reclaim independence and mobility with the compact design and long-lasting battery of Inogen One. Free information kit! Call 844-716-2411. (mcn)

STOP OVERPAYING FOR HEALTH INSURANCE! A recent study shows that a majority of people struggle to pay for health coverage. Let us show you how much you can save. Call Now for a no-obligation quote: 1-888-772-8454. You will need to have your zip code to connect to the right provider. (mcn)

ATTENTION OXYGEN THERAPY USERS! Discover Oxygen Therapy That Moves with You with Inogen Portable Oxygen Concentrators. FREE information kit. Call 1-833-650-5916. (mcn)

HOME SERVICES
Don't Pay For Covered Home Repairs Again! Our home warranty covers ALL MAJOR SYSTEMS AND APPLIANCES. We stand by our service and if we can't fix it, we'll replace it! Pick the plan that fits your budget! Call: 1-833-816-2128. (mcn)

WATER & FIRE DAMAGE RESTORATION. Our trusted professionals will restore your home to protect your family and your home's value! Call 24/7: 1-833-879-1480. Mold Remediation services are also available! (mcn)

MISCELLANEOUS
These Might be the Bible Answers you've been Looking for! <http://www.MusingsAboutGod.com> Logical, Clear, Respectful... ahhhh... but a little Different. (mcn)

Reach over 1.4 million homes for just \$249! Advertise your business or item with a classified ad in the Midwest Free Community Papers. Simple, cost-effective, and powerful. One call, and you're done! Boost your visibility now! 888-899-6327. (mcn)

NEED NEW FLOORING? Call today to schedule a FREE in-home estimate on Carpeting & Flooring. Call Today! 1-833-641-6323. (mcn)

INJURED IN AN ACCIDENT? Don't Accept the insurance company's first offer. Many injured parties are entitled to cash set-

tlements in the \$1000's. Get a free evaluation to see what your case is really worth, 100% Free Evaluation. Call Now: 1-833-879-1534. (mcn)

Prepare for power outages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a FREE 5-Year warranty with qualifying purchase. Call 1-877-228-5789 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move. (mcn)

NO MORE CLEANING OUT GUTTERS. Guaranteed! LeafFilter is backed by a no-clog guarantee and lifetime transferable warranty. Call today 1-855-577-1268 to schedule a FREE inspection and no obligation estimate. Plus get 75% off installation and a bonus \$250 discount! Limited time only. Restrictions apply, see representative for warranty and offer details. (mcn)

THE BATHROOM OF YOUR DREAMS in as little as 1 day. Limited Time Offer - \$1000 off or No Payments and No Interest for 18 months for customers who qualify. BCI Bath & Shower. Many options available. Quality materials & professional installation. Senior & Military Discount. Available. Call Today! 1-833-618-1178. (mcn)

Replace your roof with the best looking and longest lasting material steel from Erie Metal Roofs! Three styles and multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited Time Offer- up to 50% off installation+ Additional 10% off install (for military, health workers & 1st responders.) Call Erie Metal Roofs: 1-844-907-2386. (mcn)

REAL ESTATE
WE BUY HOUSES for Cash AS-IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Call today for your fair cash offer: 1-888-715-0513. (mcn)

WANT TO BUY CASH PAID FOR HIGH-END MEN'S SPORT WATCHES! Rolex, Breitling, Omega, Patek Philippe, Heuer, Daytona, GMT, Submariner and Speedmaster. Call 1-833-641-6646. (mcn)

WE BUY VINTAGE GUITARS! Looking for 1920-1980 Gibson, Martin, Fender, Gretsch, Epiphone, Guild, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Prairie State, D'Angelico, Stromberg. And Gibson Mandolins / Banjos. 1-833-641-7028. (mcn)

MCAN
Minnesota Classified Advertising Network

<p>EMPLOYMENT SUBSTITUTE CUSTODIAN Night Shift 2:00-10:30PM, M-F, during the school year. Daytime hours in summer. Salary Range: \$15.36 -\$17.20 with \$0.065 differential for shifts starting after 12:00PM apply online at: www.applitrack.com/isd876/onlineapp/</p> <p>MISCELLANEOUS GET A BREAK ON YOUR TAXES! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 844/220-9501 today!</p> <p>CHOOSE EARTHLINK FIBER Internet for speeds up to 5 Gigs, no data caps, no throttling. Prices starting at \$54.95. Plus, a \$100 gift card when you make the switch. Call 844/453-6983</p>	<p>MISCELLANEOUS SAFE STEP North America's #1 Walk-In Tub. Comprehensive lifetime warranty. Top-of-the-line installation and service. Now featuring our FREE shower package and \$1,600 off for a limited time! Call today! Financing available. Call Safe Step 833/966-3882</p> <p>DON'T LET THE STAIRS LIMIT YOUR MOBILITY! Discover the ideal solution for anyone who struggles on the stairs, is concerned about a fall or wants to regain access to their entire home. Call AmeriGlide today! 866/852-5506</p> <p>SATELLITE TV + INTERNET! Get Dish! Free install, free HD-DVR upgrade, 80,000 on-demand movies, plus limited time up to \$600 in gift cards. Call today! 855/562-4309</p>	<p>WANTED TO BUY WE BUY HOUSES for cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 844/978-0683</p> <p>Classified Advertising That is EASY</p> <p>The Minnesota Classified Advertising Network</p> <p>Make an impact with your advertising dollar with classified advertising that reaches over 1MILLION READERS</p> <p>Your newspaper representative can provide complete details or you can call MNA: 612/332-8844</p>
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Xcel Energy to build Upper Midwest's largest battery storage site

Submitted Article

Xcel Energy plans to build the Midwest's largest battery energy storage site at the Sherco Energy Hub in central Minnesota. The project is among a series of investments that will strengthen the region's energy security and expand the company's investment at Sherco and beyond.

"We're making a significant investment in battery storage because we see it as a critical part of Minnesota's energy future," said Bria Shea, president of Xcel Energy-Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. "Batteries help us store energy when it's inexpensive to produce and dispatch it when needed,

allowing us to continue delivering reliable electricity to customers while keeping bills low."

The proposal, filed with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission on Oct. 31, will:

- Double the amount of battery storage adjacent to the Sherco coal plant in Becker, which is scheduled to retire by the end of 2030. The Commission previously approved 300 megawatts of storage. The new proposal increases the capacity to 600 megawatts;
- Add 135.5 megawatts of battery storage at the company's Blue Lake facility in Shakopee.
- Expand the company's Sherco Solar facility with an additional 200-megawatt solar array in Clear Lake Township.

If approved, the company intends to start construction on the battery storage projects in 2026, with the batteries serving customers by late 2027. The projects will use lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery cell technology, which has a strong track record for reliability and safety. LFP batteries discharge energy in four-hour increments and are quick to recharge, allowing for regular use.

The batteries will re-use existing grid connections, allowing Xcel Energy to store energy produced across its Upper Midwest system at its wind, solar, nuclear and natural gas facilities and release it during periods of high demand.

The Sherco battery projects will create more than 150 high-quality, union construction jobs and an estimated \$200 million in local tax payments combined. The Blue Lake project will create an estimated 55 construction jobs and \$60 million in local tax payments.

"For half a century, LIUNA members have kept

the lights on in Minnesota by building and maintaining Sherco coal units. Today, we're proud to transform the plant into a clean energy hub—pounding posts for solar panels, planting pollinator habitat, and constructing pads for battery storage," said Joel Smith, president and business manager, Laborers' International Union of North America—Minnesota and North Dakota. "In our work with Xcel Energy, we're meeting Minnesota's climate goals while supporting local workers and communities."

Xcel Energy expects the projects will qualify for federal tax credits (offsetting 30% of the cost for the Blue Lake battery and 40% for the Sherco battery projects and Sherco Solar, which are in an energy community). The company passes these tax credits directly to customers in the form of lower bills.

Sherco Solar Expansion

Xcel Energy's proposal to add a fourth phase to Sherco Solar would bring the facility's total generating capacity to 910 megawatts by 2029. The expansion will create an estimated 300 union construction jobs and \$90 million in local economic benefits.

Sherco Solar is the Upper Midwest's largest solar generating facility. It has a strong record of delivering carbon-free electricity for customers since it went into service in 2024. The first two phases are already online, with a third phase under construction and scheduled to start producing electricity for customers in 2026.

The latest proposals are among a series of investments Xcel Energy is making in central Minnesota even as coal operations wind down. Learn more about Xcel Energy's work at the Sherco Energy Hub.



PUBLIC NOTICES - NEWS

Office of the Minnesota
Secretary of State
Certificate of Assumed Name
Minnesota Statutes,
Chapter 333

The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

ASSUMED NAME: **diamond tax**
PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS: **707 Highway 10 Elk River MN 55330 USA**

NAMEHOLDER(S):
Name: **Stacy Hollenbeck**
Address: **707 Highway 10 Elk River MN 55330 USA**

If you submit an attachment, it will be incorporated into this document. If the attachment conflicts with the information specifically set forth in this document, this document supersedes the data referenced in the attachment.

By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

SIGNED BY: **Stacy Hollenbeck**
MAILING ADDRESS:
707 Highway 10 Elk River Minnesota 55330
EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES: **stacy@diamonntax.net**
Work Item: **1604900900029**
Original File Number: **1604900900029**
STATE OF MINNESOTA
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FILED
12/03/2025 11:59 PM
/s/ Steve Simon
Secretary of State
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF SHERBURNE
TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
INFORMAL PROBATE
Court File No.: 71-PR-25-185
In Re the Estate of Steven Charles Laske a/k/a Steven C. Laske a/k/a Steve Laske, Deceased.NOTICE OF INFORMAL
PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND CREDITORS:

Notice is hereby given that an application for informal probate of the above-named Decedent's Last Will dated May 9, 2013, has been filed with the Probate Registrar, and the application has been granted.

Notice is also given that the Probate Registrar has informally appointed the following: Michelle Lynn Hansen, 816 W. Elm St., West Salem, WI, 54669, mmhansen@aol.com, 608-769-0840, as personal representative of the Estate of the Decedent. Any heir, devisee or other interested person may be entitled to appointment as personal representative, or may object to the appointment of the personal representative. Unless objections are filed pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-607, and the court otherwise orders, the personal representative has full power to administer the Estate, including, after 30 days from the date of issuance of letters, the power to sell, encumber, lease or distribute real estate.

Any objections to the probate of the Will, or to the appointment of the personal representative, must be filed with this court, and will be heard by the court after the filing of an appropriate petition and proper notice of

hearing.

Notice is also given that, subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801, all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four (4) months after the date of this Notice, or the claims will be barred.

/s/ Pamela Kreier,
Probate Registrar
/s/ Katrese Ringham,
Court Administrator
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF SHERBURNE
TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
PROBATE
Court File No.: 71-PR-25-174
In re the Estate of Sharon Elaine Ringwelski, Decedent.

Notice and Order for Hearing on Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy, Determination of Heirship, and Appointment of Personal Representative and Notice to Creditors.

It is ordered and notice is given that on December 24, 2025 at 1:30 p.m., a hearing will be held at Sherburne County Courthouse via zoom hearing for the formal adjudication of intestacy and determination of heirship of the Decedent, and for the appointment of:

Name: **Ryan Patrick Ringwelski**
Address: **101 10th Street East #342, St. Paul, MN 55101**
as Personal Representative of the Estate of the Decedent in: an unsupervised administration.

Any objections to the petition should be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing.

If proper and if no objections are filed or raised, the personal representative will be appointed with full power to administer the Estate including the power to collect all assets, to pay all legal debts, claims, taxes and expenses, to sell real and personal property, and to do all necessary acts for the Estate.

Notice is also given that (subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801) all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this Notice or the claims will be barred.
Dated: October 16, 2025
/s/ Katrese Ringham
Court Administrator
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF SHERBURNE
TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
PROBATE DIVISION
Court File No.: 71-PR-25-198
In Re the Estate of Marilyn J. Arthur, Deceased.

NOTICE AND ORDER FOR HEARING ON PETITION FOR SUMMARY ASSIGNMENT OF DISTRIBUTION (EXEMPT ESTATE).

It is Order and Notice is given that on March 18, 2026, at 3:30 p.m., a Zoom hearing will be held in this Court for the assets of the Estate to be summarily assigned or distributed without probate administration. Any objections to the petition must be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing. If proper and if no objections are filed or raised, the Court may issue a decree distributing or assigning the Estate's assets.
/s/ Katrese Ringham
Court Administrator
Attorney for Petitioner:
SMITH, PAULSON,
O'DONNELL & ERICKSON, PLC
Mollie H. Teaster, ID #0398839
Daniel D. Kastonek, ID #0504446
201 West 7th Street
Monticello, MN 55362
763-295-2107
mollie.teaster@spoelawyers.com
daniel.kastonek@spoelawyers.com
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/20/25, 12/27/25).

TOWNSHIP OF BECKER
SHERBURNE COUNTY, MINNESOTA
ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
TWO-YEAR GENERAL MAINTENANCE
CONTRACTOR SERVICE AGREEMENT
Bids will be received until
Tuesday, December 23rd at 6:00 p.m.

Bids for a Two-Year General Maintenance Contract will be received by Becker Township until Tuesday, December 23, 2025 at 6:00pm.

The Becker Town Board will meet at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, to consider said bids. You can attend via zoom for opening, review and award by the Town Board. Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86383968670> Meeting ID: 863 8396 8670 Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/koXQbF1qk> If you have any issues accessing the meeting, please call the town hall at 763-261-5301 and someone will be happy to assist you with meeting ID.

The said bids shall be for the furnishing of equipment, labor and materials for general maintenance of all township roads as more thoroughly described in the proposed Agreement. The agreement documents are available at the town website www.BeckerTwpSherburneCoMN.gov or www.QuestCDN.com. Quest Number 9980162. To be considered a planholder for bids, register for a free 'Regular' membership by clicking 'Join'. You may download the digital documents for \$0.00 by entering the Quest Number 9980162 on the search page.

Downloading the documents and becoming a plan holder is recommended as plan holder's receive automatic notice of addenda and bid updates. Contact QuestCDN Customer Support at 952-233-1632 or business@QuestCDN.com for assistance in membership registration and downloading digital documents. Quest Number 9980162

Bids may be submitted to the Town Hall in a sealed envelope with a statement thereon indicating submission is for General Maintenance Service Agreement for Quest number 9980162. Bids shall be addressed to: Lucinda Messman, Town Clerk, Town of Becker, 12165 Hancock Street, PO Box 248, Becker, Minnesota 55308.

Bids received by the Town Clerk after the time set for receiving bids shall be returned unopened. The Township Board reserves the right to reject any and all bids or any portion thereof for any or no reason.

By order of the Town Board of the Town of Becker.

/s/ Lucinda Messman,
Becker Township Clerk
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25.)

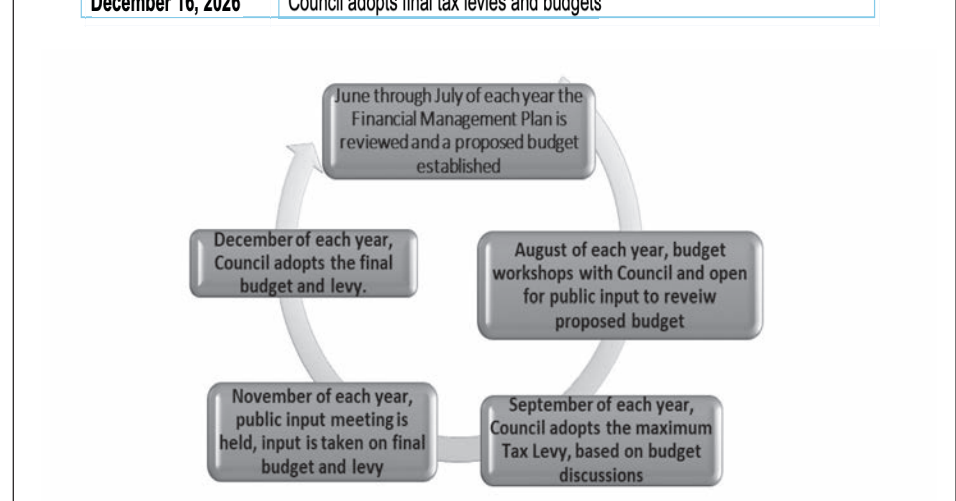
City Summary Budget Statement			
The purpose of this report is to provide summary 2026 budget information concerning the City of Big Lake to interested citizens. The budget is published in accordance with Minn. Stat. Sec. 471.6965. This budget is not complete; the complete budget may be examined at City Hall, 160 Lake Street N, Big Lake or one may contact the Finance Director via email at dwegeleben@biglakemn.org . The City Council approved this budget on December 10, 2025.			
General Fund 2026 Adopted Budget			
	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Adopted Budget
Revenues			
Property Taxes	\$ 4,467,046	\$ 4,887,540	\$ 5,205,407
Special Assessments	1,456	1,000	1,000
Licenses & Permits	645,801	713,445	804,690
Intergovernmental	690,357	497,579	474,715
Franchise Fees	471,667	451,263	452,223
Charges for Services	279,690	248,078	252,869
Fines & Forfeitures	44,786	49,250	51,250
Investment Income	606,124	64,534	95,500
Contributions/Donations	11,870	1,500	1,500
Miscellaneous Revenue	49,885	2,500	2,600
Transfer In from other Funds	450,000	450,000	450,000
Total - Current Year Revenues	\$ 7,718,682	\$ 7,366,689	\$ 7,791,754
Prior year donations - Designed Fund Balance	3,566	-	-
TOTAL GENERAL FUND REVENUES BUDGET	\$ 7,722,248	\$ 7,366,689	\$ 7,791,754
Expenditures			
Mayor/Council	\$ 34,340	\$ 33,681	\$ 34,284
Planning	214,460	238,666	196,704
Elections	29,613	2,000	33,100
Administration/Finance	595,422	588,655	608,421
IT - Computer/Software	135,327	160,539	297,576
Big Lake Community Service Center/Library	83,117	73,661	72,496
Economic Development	181,796	183,411	219,677
Building	214,167	223,104	229,354
Engineering	102,943	137,914	143,303
Fleet/Equipment Maintenance	237,881	232,182	245,962
Streets	610,875	765,234	762,756
Parks	571,100	692,430	671,004
Police	2,697,339	3,104,124	3,292,790
Fire	401,149	348,918	236,013
Community - Recreation (other)	114,724	121,309	114,303
Transfers Out to other Funds	1,010,822	460,861	634,011
TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURE BUDGET	\$ 7,235,075	\$ 7,366,689	\$ 7,791,754
Increase (Decrease) In Fund Balance	\$ 487,173	\$ -	\$ -
Property Tax Levy Requirement to Fund This Budget	\$ 4,542,990	\$ 5,042,703	\$ 5,351,395
Cost per Capita of 13084		\$	409.00

Enterprise Funds 2026 Adopted Budget				
	Adopted 2026 Budget			
	Water	Sewer	Storm Sewer	Liquor
Sales and Cost of Sales				
Sales - net Loyalty Program				\$ 5,406,725
Cost of Sales (COS)				(4,065,413)
Gross Profit				\$ 1,341,312
Operating Revenues				
Utilities Revenues	\$ 2,217,562	\$ 3,682,814	\$ 278,828	
Total Gross Profit and Operating Revenues	\$ 2,217,562	\$ 3,682,814	\$ 278,828	\$ 1,341,312
Operating Expenses				
Personnel	946,218	948,585	165,176	927,445
Professional Services	108,360	53,500	3,000	10,100
Operations	605,503	857,166	28,600	280,253
Depreciation	954,005	1,435,595	181,700	75,158
Total Operating Expenses	2,614,086	3,294,846	378,476	1,292,956
Operating Income (Loss)	(396,524)	387,968	(99,648)	48,356
Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)				
Interest Earnings	21,000	51,000	9,000	40,400
Debt Service Interest and Charges	(7,680)	(123,866)	-	-
Total Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)	13,320	(72,866)	9,000	40,400
Income (Loss) before operating Transfers	(383,204)	315,102	(90,648)	88,756
Operating Transfer In (Out)	(258,000)	(286,000)	(35,000)	(485,000)

2027 Financial Planning and Budget Calendar

The yearly budget schedule is listed below, please watch for information pertaining to the City's 2027 budget on the City's Website and Social Media and join us.

Meeting Dates	Discussion Topics
June	Financial Management Plan review provided to departments
July	Meeting with departments regarding needs and discussion for Council Workshop
August 12, 2026	Council workshops to review preliminary budget
September 16, 2026	Council adopts maximum Tax Levy
December 2, 2026	Public Input Meeting regarding final levy and budgets for upcoming year
December 16, 2026	Council adopts final tax levies and budgets



(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/20/25).

FILING NOTICE TO QUALIFIED VOTERS IN SANTIAGO TOWNSHIP

Notice is hereby given that a Town Election will be held in the Township of Santiago, Sherburne County, MN. on March 10, 2026. Notice is hereby given to qualified voters of Santiago Township, Sherburne County, State of Minnesota, that filing for town office will be held for a two-week period beginning Tuesday, December 30, 2025. Affidavits of Candidacy shall be filed by appointment with the Town Clerk, Kathy Woolard. Affidavits will be accepted from December 30, 2025 through January 13, 2026. The Clerks office will be open for filing January 13, 2026 from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm. There will be a \$3.00 filing fee. Offices to be filled at the Annual Election in March are as follows;

- Supervisor for a three-year term
- Clerk for a two-year term

The clerk's office, located at 16943- 20th Street, Santiago, MN., will be open Saturday, March 7, 2026 for P.A. Testing and for the purpose of absentee voting.

/s/ Kathy Woolard, Clerk
Santiago Township
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25.)

TITLE AND SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE AND AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY'S FEE SCHEDULE

The City Council of the City of Clearwater, Minnesota, Counties of Wright and Stearns, does hereby amend the City's fee schedule ordinance for 2026 effective January 1, 2026. Shown here is a summary of the changes.

- Modified EDA Message Board Fees to \$10.00/week or \$35.00/month.
- Removed fees for maps and printed budget reports.
- Increased utility fees by approximately 5% for water, sewer, storm sewer, refuse/recycling, and mosquito fees.
- Increased WAC charges to \$,000.
- Increased SAC charges to \$,000.

A complete copy of the Ordinance is available for inspection at the City Office, 605 County Road 75, Clearwater MN 55320, and on the City's website at www.clearwatercity.com.

/s/ Annita M. Smythe
City Administrator
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/20/25.)



PALMER TOWNSHIP NOTICE FOR FILING

Notice is hereby given that a Town Election will be held in the Township of Palmer, Sherburne County, Minnesota Tuesday the 10th day of March 2026.

The first day of filing affidavits of candidacy will be Tuesday, December 30th, 2025, and the last day to file will be Tuesday, January 13h, 2026, with a closing time of 5:00 pm.

Filings may be made with Clerk Amy Bragelman, at the Township Hall, 4180 – 105th Ave, on Tuesdays between the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or by appointment -612- 704-3308

The following vacancies will be filled for the terms expiring:

- SUPERVISOR - for the term of 3 years.

The filing fee is \$3.00.

Given under my hand on this 16th day of December, 2025

Amy Bragelman,
Palmer Township Clerk
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/20/25, 12/27/25.)

TPL Expands
at 2 Inlets in
Sherburne
County

Submitted Article

Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership with Sherburne County, is pleased to announce the expansion of the Two Inlets at Bdé Heháka – Omashkooz Zaaga'igaans Regional Park.

In 2022, TPL and the County protected 436 acres of land near St. Cloud in Sherburne County on Big Elk Lake which became the new regional park. The current acquisition protects a six-acre inholding totally surrounded by the existing park ensuring the continued integrity of the park.

The land includes sites of cultural significance to the Dakota and Ojibwe peoples, and TPL and Sherburne County are collaborating with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from the Upper Sioux Community, the Lower Sioux Indian Community, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe to interpret and program for both historical and contemporary Indigenous connections to the site.

The landscape also spans a mixture of shoreline, grassland, forest, oak savanna and habitats of high biodiversity, making it a valuable addition for recreation and nature-connection for nearby communities.

“This land protection matters on many levels,” said Sophie Harris Vorhoff, Minnesota State Director for Trust for Public Land. “We’re creating a park where everyone can enjoy the outdoors while honoring the deep histories and enduring relationships of the Dakota and Ojibwe peoples with this land.”

“The acquisition of this parcel protects additional cultural and natural resources and re-affirms our commitment to collaborating with partnering Tribal Nations to develop a space that honors and respects history while educating those who enjoy its beauty,” said Gary Gray, Sherburne County Commission Chair.

Beyond recreation and culture, the Two Inlets project addresses vital environmental goals. Protecting this corridor helps conserve shoreline and wetlands, supports native habitat restoration, and contributes to greater ecosystem resilience in the face of development pressures.

Funding for the acquisition and protection of the property was provided in part by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission and the Minnesota DNR's Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program.

About Trust
for Public Land

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 4 million acres of public land, created more than 5,504 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places, raised \$112 billion in public funding for parks and public lands, and connected nearly 10 million people to the outdoors. To learn more, visit tpl.org.

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Donald Joseph Kalla, 93 Clearwater, MN July 5th, 1932- December 13th, 2025

Donald Joseph Kalla, age 93, of Clearwater passed away peacefully after a life richly lived in faith, family, hard work, and quick-witted humor.

Donald was born on July 5th, 1932, to Peter and Rebecca (Emmel) Kalla. He grew up during the great depression teaching him valuable lessons of resourcefulness. Donald grew up on the family farm in Albany where his mother was a schoolteacher. He proudly boasts that he skipped the 3rd grade. After graduation, he served his country in the United States Army with honor, an experience that shaped his strong work ethic and lifelong sense of duty.

On May 28th, 1960, he married the love of his life Marlene Kuechle, beginning a devoted journey of marriage and family. In May of 2025, they celebrated 65 years of marriage. In 1970, Donald fulfilled a lifelong dream when he bought a farm in Clearwater, MN, where he lived the life he loved—working the land, caring for his animals, and enjoying the outdoors. He found great joy in farming, fishing and hunting, and remarkably, he continued hunting right up to the age of 93.

Donald was known for his quick wit, sharp sense of humor, and infectious smile. He could make anyone laugh, often when they least expected it. Just as easily as he brought laughter, he brought solutions. Don had the rare ability to fix anything and could invent a creative solution to any problem set before him.

He spent many years as a highly skilled backhoe operator for Barbarossa Construction Company, working on sewer and water systems in the five-state area. He was also a proud member of the Albany Legion and the Local 49ers Union. He remained active in the Local 49ers for 66 years, a testament to his dedication, talent, and work-ethic.

Donald was a man of deep faith and was an active member

of St. Lukes Catholic Church where he lived out his beliefs through service and quiet leadership. He was also a devoted member of the Clearwater Lions where he was honored with the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award for outstanding service to the community.

Above all else, Don deeply loved his children—Wayne, Gary, Lisa, and Kenny, and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. His family was his greatest pride, and he showed that love through a steady presence, life lessons, and unwavering support.

Donald will be remembered for his strong faith, quick humor, mechanical ingenuity, love of the outdoors, and enduring devotion to his family and community. His legacy lives on in the many lives he touched and the values he passed down.

We would like to send a special thanks to Dr. Scott Rahm and the many doctors and nurses at CentraCare and St. Croix Hospice.

Survived by: Marlene Kalla (Wife); children, Wayne (Special Friend Kay), Gary (Special Friend Joann), Lisa, Kenny (Lila); Joanne Anastasia (Sister); many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Donald was proceeded in death by: Parents; Peter and Rebecca. Brothers; Delmer, Ronald, Dale, Gerald, and Floyd. Daughter-in-laws; Patricia Kalla (Wayne) and Lisa Kalla (Gary). And many brother/sister-in-laws.

Visitation will be held at the Church of St. Lukes in Clearwater, MN on December 18th, 2025, from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m., and Friday, December 19th, 2025, from 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Mass will be on Friday, December 19th, 2025, at 11 a.m. Memorials can be directed to the Parkinson's Foundation or Coblorn's Cancer Foundation.

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David Woolard, 81 Princeton, MN August 3, 1944- December 12, 2025

David Woolard, age 81 of Princeton, passed away December 12, 2025 at the Elim Home in Princeton. Memorial Service will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, December 19, 2025 at the First Presbyterian Church in Foley. Rev. Beverly Brock will officiate and a visitation will be held from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the church on Friday. Reception to follow at Mr. Jim's in Foley. Burial will take place at a later date in the St. Francis River Cemetery in Foley. Service with Dignity provided by the Foley Funeral Home.

David Lee Woolard was born August 3, 1944 in Princeton, Minnesota to LeRoy and Alma (Uran) Woolard. He attended Foley High School and married Rose Henry in Santiago, Minnesota. David farmed

most his life near Santiago and worked for Federal Cartridge for 40 years. In his younger years he enjoyed hunting and fishing. He also liked driving tractor and mowing lawn. He drove tractor for Gilyard Farms for several years. David loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

He is survived by his daughters and son; Tammy (Dean) Remer, Milaca; Peggy (Tom) Gilyard, Clear Lake and Wade of Princeton as well as 12 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren, brothers and sister, Mike, Santiago, Pat, Big Lake, Angela Monroe, Foley and special friend, Linda King of Foley. He was preceded in death by his parents, wife, Rose and son, Mark Woolard.

Norman Larry Olson, 80 Becker, MN April 4, 1945 – December 3, 2025

Norman Larry Olson, age 80 of Becker, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, December 3, 2025. He was born in Monticello on April 4, 1945, the son of Ervin and Eunice (Johnson) Olson.

Norman graduated from Becker High School in 1964. He continued his education at Dunwoody College, taking up carpentry. He was a talented and skilled carpenter and proud of the work he accomplished. In Norm's career, he built 300 houses, the last 100 he had built by himself.

Norman married Sherry Knutson and later divorced. Norman later married Gwen Wood and they were blessed with four children: Melissa, Bryan, Kristina and Ariana who passed away at birth.

Norm's goofy personality and lifetime of jokes will be missed by all. He enjoyed bible studies, and spending time with his family and friends.

He is preceded in death by his daughter, Ariana; mother, Eunice; father, Ervin; brother, Gordon; and brother-in-law, Alan Myers.

Norm is survived by his children, Melissa Olson, Bryan Olson, Kristina (Clint) Pierson; grandchildren, Romeo, Riley, Madelyn, Adrianna, Sophia, Eva, Ivy; sister, Sharon; and many other family and friends.

Burial will be held Friday, December 19, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at Snake River Cemetery in Becker, MN. A funeral service will be held Friday, 20, 2025 at 11:00, with visitation beginning at 10:00 a.m., at Becker Baptist Church, 11951 Hancock Street, Becker, MN.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Peterson-Grimsmo Funeral Chapel of Monticello, MN. 763-295-2918. www.peterson-grims-mochapel.com.

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3 adult Big Lakers facing burglary charges

Submitted Article

Three men from Big Lake are facing felony burglary charges after allegedly using a tunnel system to enter a local business office from a pizza restaurant.

According to criminal complaints filed in Sherburne County District Court, Nicholas Ashton Geisler, 33, Carter Dewaine Juntilla, 22, and Jakob Henry Osowski, 25, have each been charged via summons with one count of Felony Burglary in the 3rd Degree (Minn. Stat. 609.582.3(a)).

On July 29, 2025, a Big Lake Police Investigator was dispatched to the Big Lake Chamber of Commerce on Lake Street North regarding a report of suspicious activity. An employee reported finding items moved around the office, cabinets open, and pens on the floor after returning from a weekend off.

According to the complaint, the investigator discovered a tunnel underneath the office containing various items, including paper, water bottles, and portfolios. DNA samples were collected from the scene. The investigator followed the

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- Luke 2:10-11

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FFB plans big night Dec. 22

By Mark Kolbinger,
Contributing Writer

When frigid weather forced the postponement of the annual Christmas celebration at the Farm Friends Barn celebration last weekend, volunteers had to quickly pivot and find a new date for the popular event.

After careful consideration and intense negotiations with the North Pole, an opening was found in Santa and Mrs. Claus' schedule and now the big event will happen on December 22 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Once again, bonfires, refreshments, and cookies will be served and the barn will be open to display their awesome Christmas decorations.

The ever-popular horse drawn Wagon Rides by RJ Stables will also be featured, which is sure to delight the entire family.

Pictures with Santa and his wife are always a big hit at the event, which is likely the last chance for locals to see Jolly Old St. Nick before he is busy circling the globe with his team of reindeer just days later.

The event is free of charge and is sponsored



THE FARM FRIENDS BARN will once again host Santa and Mrs. Claus for their annual Christmas at the Barn celebration. (Submitted Photo).

by Farm Friends Barn, Arnold's Equipment, Structural Buildings, Nutrien and B&J Evergreen.

The "Friend of 4-H Award" was presented to Marck Koch.

The "Outstanding Service Award" was presented to Michael Schlough.

The "M & M Award – Mentorship & Motivation Award" was presented to Brady Roberts.

Additional awards given in 2025 were the following:

The "Leader Achievement Award" was presented to Kayla Kasella.

The "Honorary 4-H Member" was presented to Dan Ziegler.

As the night was concluding, Olson shared the following.

"Exciting news — 2026 will feature a Patriot theme as America nears its 250th birthday," she said. "And in 2027, Benton County 4-H turns 100 years old! We're already planning a big Centennial Celebration and want you to be part of it. Let's make it unforgettable!"

66TH annual BentonCounty 4-H Adult Volunteer Banquet

Submitted Article

This year, over 185 Benton County 4-H volunteers, gave an incredible 7,400 hours of service.

"That's equivalent to almost four full-time employees working year-round to create opportunities for our youth," said Ann Olson, Benton County 4-H Extension Educator.

Her remarks came at the 66th Annual Benton County 4-H Adult Volunteer Leader's Banquet, held last Sunday at Jack & Jim's in Duellm.

The event marked the end of the 4-H year and included an appreciation dinner and awards program for their 4-H adult volunteers and leaders. Over 100 adult volunteers, leaders, and special guests attended and enjoyed a delicious dinner. The theme for the evening was "Lighting the Way - the volunteers guiding, mentoring and inspire the youth."

Some of the special guests included Benton County Commissioner Scott Johnson, Commissioner Pam Benoit, U of MN Extension, Regional Director, Lori Vicich, Associate Dean & MN 4-H State Director Jennifer Skuza, Benton County Extension Committee members Cheryl Scapanski and Angie Arnold.

After dinner University of Minnesota Associate Dean and MN 4-H State Director Jennifer Skuza, took a moment to say a few words. She had written a poem, specifically scribed for the group of Benton County 4-H volunteers.

Next to the podium was Juanita Beachamp, 4-H Adult Volunteer, who shared, "Lead by Light, Serve with Purpose."

Recognition pins signifying the numbers of years in volunteering/leadership roles, were presented by Olson and Benton County Extension Support Staff, Megan Gerads. **First-year recipients** included: Nicole Ackerman, Nicholas J Dahler,

Sarah J Dahler, Kyle Hackett, Eden Keegan, Jake Keegan, Marizza Lenz, Clint Mielke, Jen Pekarek, Brady Roberts, and Sarah Tasa. Not in attendance: Callie Czech, Brooke Goertz, Kaylee Jurek (Pyka); Kayla Kasella, Anthony Lyon, and Emily Schreindl.

Five Years recipients: Teresa Ferkinhoff, and Ann Barringer.

Four Year recipients: Tasha Ackerman, Angie Arnold, Josh Kirchenbauer, Marcy Reding, and Tristan Reding. Not in attendance: Mitch Ackerman, Brent Betker, Kelly Nelson, and Shannon Nelson.

Three Year recipient: Bev Mendel.

Two Year recipients: Tracy Hunt, (Not in attendance) Natalie Schmitt.

40-year recipient: Karen & Larry Sakry.

The "4-H Pioneer Award" was presented to John and Barb Bemboom.

The "Leader Achievement Award" was presented to Cindy Vannurden.

A group of hockey players in blue and white uniforms are celebrating on the ice. They are huddled together, with some players raising their sticks in the air. The players are wearing white helmets and blue jerseys with white stripes. The background shows the ice rink and the boards.

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Hornet wrestlers 7th at Crimson Invitational

By Ken Francis,
Contributing Writer

The Big Lake wrestling team finished seventh of 10 teams at the Crimson Invitational in Maple Grove last Saturday.

Five Hornets finished in the top five spots in their respective weight classes.

Liam Mayer was the individual champion at 189 pounds. The junior opened by pinning Brandon Jackson of St. Paul Highland at 3:01. He pinned Bennett Topeff of Blaine at 3:46, then beat Nathaniel Li of Eagan 11-2. He beat Shawn Henderson of Cambridge-Isanti, 13-7 in the championship match to take the title.

Eli Schaller placed second at 121 pounds. The junior pinned Seth Mayer of Sauk Centre/Melrose at 0:34 in his first match. He beat Lincoln Rudek of Maple Grove 10-9, then lost to Brady Huntley of Cambridge-Isanti, 18-2 in the championship match.

Jaylen Rand was third at 133 pounds. The freshman pinned Westin Brecke of Eagan at 6:40 in his opening match. He lost by pin to Pierce Wegleitner of Blaine in his next match, but came back to pin Lucas Leisering of South St. Paul at 3:52 in his final match.

Hank Kuchera took fourth 285 pounds. The senior opened by pinning Kalen Strand-Chrys of

Eagan at 0:41. He lost by pin to Darnell Watkins of Eagan at 5:24, then lost 9-8 to Brandon Finley of Champlin Park in his last match.

Junior Grant Volk took fifth at 127 pounds. After a bye, he lost to Suhaad Salim of Blaine, 11-0, then beat Aren Matascastillo of St. Paul Highland by tech fall, 17-0 in his final match.

Last Thursday the Hornets lost a dual meet to St. Francis, 46-25. Big Lake won five matches in the meet.

At 121, Elijah Schaller beat Landon Borgen, 16-10.

At 127, Grant Volk pinned Johnathan Barth at 0:24.

At 189, Liam Mayer beat Jude Yahnke, 13-2.

At 215, Austin Frederickson pinned Abraham James at 1:37.

At 285, Hank Kuchera pinned Ryon Forman at 1:12.

The Hornets are not scheduled to compete in any meets until Jan. 2.



Hornet boys trounce North Branch by 20+

By Bill Morgan,
Editor

The Big Lake Hornet boys basketball team improved to 2-1 with a road win over North Branch last Friday night.

The final score was Big Lake 87, North Branch 65.

Will Newland led the offense with 25 points including seven three-pointers. Trevor Stukenholtz

tallied 17 as the Hornets ran off to a 45-29 lead by halftime.

Other scorers for the Hornets were: Lane Pettis with 12, Eddie Reinert with 12, Leroy Hamrin with 11, Maurice Yekeku with four, Carter Gerlach with two, Caelin McConville with two and Danny Rotz with two.

Vs. Chisago Lakes
In a game versus Chis-

ago Lakes, the Hornets captured another big win, this time it was Judd Layton scoring 16 pints to lead the Hornets to a 81-79 win Monday night.

Also scoring in double digits were: Leroy Hamerin (15) and Eddie reinert (14).

Merry Christmas

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Becker gymnastics beat Princeton in conference opener

By Maria Moore,
Contributing Writer

Becker gymnastics competed in their conference opener, along with celebrating Parents' Night recently.

The girls have been doing exceptionally well, being confident and keeping their composure. The meet against Princeton in the conference opener went great, with Becker taking first place with a score of 142.95 and Princeton taking second with a score of 122.375.

Vault results included Maggie Graning - first place (9.3), second place - Karli Kirk (9.25), third place - Alyse Denne

(9.175), fourth place - Brielle Kuschel (9.0), and fifth place - Chloe Spear (8.8).

Bar results included first place - Kirk (9.1), second place - Graning (8.8), third place - Denne (8.65), and fourth place - Kuschel (7.85).

Beam results included first place - Denne (9.35), second place - Kirk (9.25), third place - Kuschel (9.175), fourth place - Sabrina Jensen (8.6), and fifth place - Graning

(8.15).
Floor results included first place - Graning (9.2), second place



- Denne (9.15), third place - Spear (8.75), and fourth place - Lillian Bonsante (8.35).

All-around results included first place - Denne (36.325), second place - Graning (35.45), and third place - Kirk (32.1).

On a sad note, veteran senior all-arounder Karli Kirk suffered a season-ending injury at the end of the meet. The team has been there to support her and is regrouping to head into the rest of their season.

On Dec. 20, they travel to St. Cloud Tech to take on conference foe Cambridge-Isanti as well as St. Cloud Crush.

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DUE TO THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, THE PATRIOT WILL NEED ALL LEGAL AND ADVERTISING SUBMISSIONS TO BE IN OUR OFFICE BY 11 A.M. TUES., DEC. 23 AND DEC. 30

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Sports News - Area News



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Becker Wrestling Sits at 3-1

By Maria Moore,
Contributing Writer

The first season opener that Becker wrestling competed in, they lost in a very close dual against Foley, 33-29. Last week, Becker hosted and came back by winning all three duals against Rocori, Pierz, and Chisago Lakes. The biggest win was over Pierz, who is currently ranked #8 in the state. They will continue competing this Thursday in St. Francis and then head on up to Pequot Lakes Friday and Saturday to wrestle in a 34-team tournament.

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Bulldog boys win 2 in M8

By Mark Kolbinger,
Contributing Writer

The Becker boys basketball team picked up a pair of wins last week in the M8 Conference, defeating Chicago Lakes 71-51 Thursday evening on the road, before downing St. Francis 78-70 on Friday evening.

Vs. Chisago Lakes

Against Chicago Lakes, three Bulldogs were in double figures scoring, led by Isiah Boyer's 31 points, while the team's defense was suffocating.

Junior guard Isiah Boyer delivered a standout performance, leading all scorers with 31 points while adding five assists, three rebounds, and a game-high six steals.

Head Coach Cory Nuest said at halftime, the Bulldogs made a conscious adjustment to create space and emphasize attacking advantages.

"Fun to see our players' unselfishness," Nuest added. "At halftime, the players' halftime discussion was centered around giving Isiah space and opportunities to attack."

Bryce Paumen added 16 points and seven rebounds, while Nathan Weiss chipped in 10 points, five rebounds, and six assists.

Other Becker stats included Troy Nuest with six points, five boards, four assists and three steals, while Nolan Burau had six rebounds and Saul Kreft was physical inside with five rebounds.

Vs. Saints

Friday night, the Bulldogs had their toughest test of the season and had to play a total team effort to knock off the Saints.

St. Francis came out aggressive and physical, scoring 41 points in the first half and controlling the offensive glass with 10 offensive rebounds before the break.

"Our goal is to hold teams under 60 points and less than five offensive rebounds," Nuest said. "Credit to St. Francis — they came out more aggressive than us in the first half."

However, Becker remained composed and focused on responding rather than reacting.

Offensively, Becker recorded a season-high 27 assists.

Bryce Paumen delivered a dominant performance, finishing with 28 points and 17 rebounds while competing at an elite level on both ends of the floor.

Boyer added 24 points and added six assists, while playing lockdown defense in the second half.

Nathan Weiss finished with 12 points, seven assists, and four rebounds, while Troy Nuest added 10 points, four assists, four rebounds.

On the glass, seniors Saul Kreft and Nolan Burau played a major role, each pulling down nine rebounds and providing physicality, toughness, and extra possessions.

Bulldog girls down Saints

By Mark Kolbinger,
Contributing Writer

A huge second half performance from the Becker girls basketball team gave the Bulldogs a 70-60 win over St. Francis last Friday.

The Saints had a blistering first half, racing to a 37-29 lead behind balanced scoring a high energy defense. But the Bulldog youngsters were not deterred, as they poured in 41 points after intermission claim the M8 win.

Adele Changamire scored 19 points (eight rebounds and five assists) for the Bulldogs and sister Andie put in 21 points, 15 in the second half. Rowan Hausmann added seven rebounds for the Bulldogs.

But perhaps the biggest statement came from Becker eighth grader Alyse Denne, who led all scorers with 25 points, as she rained in five threes from deep territory and also went

a perfect six-for-six from the free throw line.

With three scorers in the high double figures, the Bulldogs proved to be too much to handle for the veteran Saints squad.

Vs. Magic

Tuesday night, Becker took a nice halftime lead against the Monticello Magic, 32-24, before falling 54-50 down the stretch. The Bulldogs held the Magic to just eight field goals in the first half before the Class AAAA team found its offensive rhythm after the intermission.

Andie Changamire had 26 points to pace the Bulldogs, as she was the lone Becker player in double figures.

Becker hit seven three pointers in the game, while Monticello had just three; however, the Magic enjoyed a big advantage at the free throw line, hitting 15 of 21 shots to the Bulldogs' four-for-six performance.

Becker dance competes at Eastview

By Maria Moore,
Contributing Writer

The Becker dance team traveled to a large competitive invitational at Eastview High School last Saturday. This was the first time that top state contenders went head-to-head in a mini-state tournament at the beginning of the season.

Becker performed well with Jazz taking seventh place and Kick taking eighth place. They fell right behind St. Francis, who they hope to beat at the Conference Championship Meet in North Branch.

The girls have been working really hard this season with the hopes that they can secure a trip to state after they compete in the section tourna-

ment January 31. A spotlight shines on Varsity Jazz after they were invited for the first time to perform at The University of Mankato Dance Team's send-off for nationals.

"We're honored to be recognized as good enough to perform there," said Head Coach Nadia Fischer-Dan-zeisen.

THE BECKER 2025-26 DANCE TEAM after taking seventh in Jazz and eighth in Kick at the Eastview High School Invitational. (Submitted Photo).