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February 12, 2026

Volume 23 • Issue 2

Randolph School Kindergarten Round-Up!

Kindergarten Round-Up is a special event designed to help families get to know our school, meet our kindergarten teachers, and learn what to expect during your child's first year.

- During the event, families will:
- Tour kindergarten classrooms
 - Meet teachers and staff
 - Learn about curriculum, daily routines, and school expectations
- (continued on page 6)*

Randolph School Now Accepting Applications in All Grades

Randolph School Now Accepting Applications in all grades, K-12, for this current school year 2025-2026 and for next school year 2026-2027!

(continued on page 6)

Announcements

- February 12-13 Book Fair at Randolph School.
- February 12: Parent/Teacher Conferences at Randolph Schools 4-8p.m.
- February 13: NO SCHOOL; Parent/Teacher Conferences 8a.m.-Noon.
- February 16: NO SCHOOL.
- RANDOLPH RAILROAD DAYS MARCH 28 & 29. *(See ad on page 9)*

Celebrating National FFA Week

February 21-28, 2026

Randolph FFA Officers, back row: Logan Tate, Grady Taylor, Max Kuhn, Wyatt Herman, Colton Herman.

Front Row: Libby Larson, Mattea Quigley, Lindsay Taylor, Annalisa Larson, Karlea Roehl.



Students Represent Randolph at the Gopher Conference Art Festival



So proud of our Randolph Band, Choir, and Art students for representing us at the Gopher Conference Art Festival at NRHEG this past weekend!

(continued on page 9)

Need to Declutter? Let Us Help!

The Randolph Music Department will be hosting the 3rd Annual Community Garage Sale fundraiser on Saturday, May 16, 2026.



For \$25 you can reserve a 10x10 space to sell your clothing, toys, books, shoes, tools, craft items, antiques, etc.

Anything that you want to get rid of! You keep all the money from your sale and the music department benefits from the rental of the space! Go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe3un7cmhfZsb_fJfT7IIKKNksHOjt7QgE-Woc6_VbnIVA_vw/viewform to register. Deadline to register is April 1, 2026.

The music department will also be accepting donations of new or gently used items to sell at the event.

(continued on page 7)

FRIDAY NIGHT FISH FRY

- 2 Piece Fish Dinner *Deep fried or Broiled cod*
 - 3 Piece Fish Dinner *Deep fried or Broiled cod*
 - All You Can Eat Fish Dinner *Deep fried cod*
- Served with salad or coleslaw, choice of potato or vegetable medley and 2 slices of garlic toast.



Kitchen Opens at 11 am

Dinners and All You Can Eat
Fish Starts at 4pm

Sorry, but we do not take reservations during lent. First come, first served.

Upcoming Events...

For More Information: [f](#) The Trophy House

Bingo & Meat Raffles - Feb. 21 & March 7
Euchre Tournament - Feb. 28

[@](#) Trophy House - New Trier www.trophyhousenewtrier.com

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Does God Really Love Me?



By Ashley Dudek,
founder of Isaiah Ministries, bringing
Biblical teaching to help overcome
life's everyday challenges.
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A few years back, I was watching a typical ooey-goey Hallmark film. These are not necessarily my go-to movies anymore, but back then, they were a nice way for me to decompress. It was late evening; Jon (my husband) was already in bed. There was your typical happy scene in the movie of a mother and daughter having a nice time together, where your average person, as they watch, would be smiling with feelings of rainbows and sprinkles inside them. I can't quite remember what they were doing. Perhaps they were grabbing coffee together or were in the kitchen talking, but I started to cry. My eyes grew heavy, and I began, for just a little while, to long for things I never had. There's no such thing as the perfect, white-picket-fence family that Hallmark might portray, but boy did I desire it.

Then a few years later, I was listening to Steffany Gretzinger (a worship singer) talk about her father, who is now in heaven, and the amazing man of God he was. As she shared some various ways he parented, tears began to well up and fall down my face. My insides grew a little weighty, and sadness filled my heart. At first I softly said to myself, "I missed out."

Fast-forward a little bit more. Now, especially after long days of ministry, when I am

drained from pouring out, oh, how I can still long to be taken care of, like a little child being embraced by their mom or dad. To have someone cook me a meal and simply take care of me—ah, would that be ever so nice. When those days come, I begin to have a silent cry in my heart, and I can still grieve what I lacked as a child, teenager, and even as a young adult.

When these situations happen, yes, my heart starts to pitter-patter with sorrow. However, then love rushes in, my chest grows wide, and I start to breathe hope, in and out. I know I have a Father in heaven who will parent me with His love and fill in the gaps. The absence of my parents at times, has only richened my relationship with the Father. I thought I missed out, but I only truly gained.

You see, if you are ever so willing, something special happens when you come to Jesus in pain or loneliness. The various holes and crevices of your childhood as well as adulthood can be filled with the heavenly Father's love. Regardless of whether you have present parents or not, if they are stable or wobbly, kind or rude, when you run to the Father (and Jesus), He fills the gaps, He fills the pits, and He even fills the areas where the good parent falls short.

The Lord absolutely, one hundred percent loves you. I mean radical, bottomless, overflowing, and abundant love. Regardless of what you have done or are doing. That's right, He loves you. Now, He may not like some of the actions we have done or are doing, but His love for us is present, more present than we could ever imagine.

We probably all have heard the famous verse, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It then goes on to say, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

Pay attention to the onset of the last verse I just shared: "God did not send His Son into

the world to condemn." Let that sink deep down in your inner being. Listen, my friends, we do not have a God who does tummy twisties and points the finger in our face. He is not a God with hands on His hips. Jesus, the Lord and Savior, He squats low and meets us where we are at, all with the heart posture of love.

His love is unlike anything you have ever tasted, and Scripture even says that His love passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). I could present a few more verses that directly declare about this love, but I want to share His unconditional love with you, through the Bible, in more of an abstract way.

God (Jesus) must represent the Scriptures. If He has called us to "do" or "speak" something that is in the Word of God, how much more will He? God is the author of the Scriptures; therefore, He has to represent the following truths.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). If we are called to carry the fruit of the Spirit, how much more does God (Jesus)? God is Love. God is Joy. God is Peace. God is Patience (longsuffering). God

is Kindness. God is Goodness. God is Faithfulness. God is Gentleness. God is Self-Control.

"A friend loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17a). How much more will Jesus love at all times?

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1a). God is the most spiritual being. How much more will He restore you with gentleness?

You are loved by our heavenly Father (and Jesus) more than you could even imagine. When I need a reminder of the Lord's love for me, I will read over various verses that talk on His love over a cup of joe. The Word of God is truly alive and active, and as you absorb its truths, it will radically change you. Let the Lord parent you with His love; He really is a good Father.

Here are some verses on God's love if you want to check them out. You could even pour a cup of coffee or tea for yourself and invite Jesus along as you read them, kind of like a coffee or tea date with the Lord! Blessings, Ashley

Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 8:35-39; Ephesians 3:14-19; John 17:23; Psalm 89:2



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AREA CHURCH DIRECTORY

The Newness of Eternal Life

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. — John 3:16

The newness we celebrate at the start of each year pales in comparison to the ultimate newness we receive through Christ. Eternal life isn't just about a future promise; it's about a present reality that transforms how we live today. When we embrace the newness of eternal life, we accept that we are part of something far greater than ourselves—an unshakable kingdom that will never fade.

I remember when I first understood this truth fully. It wasn't until a hard season in my life that I truly grasped what it meant to have eternal life through Jesus. I realized that no matter what happened in the world or in my circumstances, the gift of eternal life could not be taken away. This profound shift in perspective gave me the peace that surpasses understanding. I knew I had a hope beyond what this world could offer.

Eternal life changes everything. It shifts our values, our priorities, and even the way we see hardship. Each day becomes a step closer to the fulfillment of God's promises. So when the trials of life come, we can face them with the confidence that we are secure in the love of God, which never ends.

As we conclude this devotional journey, let's remember that the newness we experience now is just a foretaste of the life we have in Christ that will never fade but last forever!

Lord, thank you for the gift of eternal life. Help us to embrace your love and the hope you have given us, trusting in your promises. Amen.

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Ronald James

Ronald James, age 88 of Northfield, passed away peacefully on Friday morning, January 2, 2026, at SuiteLiving in Lakeville.



Ron was born March 18, 1937, grew up in Waterloo, Iowa later attending Luther College. He received his masters degree in music

from the University of Michigan and his doctorate of education philosophy from the University of Toledo. He was a band director, principal, and superintendent of schools. He spent 19 years as the superintendent of schools in Randolph, Minnesota later becoming an adjunct professor at St. Mary's College after his retirement.

Ron's passion for education was only surpassed by his love of music. He was a jazz musician performing as early as high school. Later in life he was reunited with his band mates from Luther College where they formed the group Classic Jazz. He was an avid fisherman, devoted to St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield, Minnesota, and a brilliant intellect.

Ron's greatest love was his wife Carol marrying her August 26, 1961 sharing 61 years together. That love was showered on their three children: Jody Paulsen (Stephen), Amy Shanaa (Ali), and Daniel James (Jamie). They had 5 grandchildren: Jody and Stephen's daughters Alyssa (Mitchell) and Madeleine (Timothy); and Amy and Ali's daughters Amira (Tanner), Sabrina, and Safiya. They also had 4 great grandchildren: Mason and Millie (parents Alyssa and Mitchell), and

Lewis and Caroline (parents Madeleine and Timothy). Ron's unwavering love and support for his family is his lasting legacy making him a true patriarch.

He is preceded in death by his wife (Carol James), his daughter (Amy Shanaa), father (Otis James), and mother (Myrtle James). He is survived by his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

A Celebration of Ron's Life was held at 2:00 PM on Friday, January 16, 2026, at St. John's Lutheran Church of Northfield. Visitation was held for one hour prior to the services from 1-2 PM.

Memorials can be designated to St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield.

Arrangements are with the Bierman, Benson & Langehough Funeral Home & Crematory. www.northfieldfuneral.com

Donna Marie Tix

Donna Marie Tix, age 83 of Randolph, died peacefully on Wednesday morning, January 28, 2026 at her grandson's home in Hampton.



Donna was born on September 29, 1942 in St. Paul, the daughter of Orville and Angeline (Tinucci) Amos. She grew up and graduated from South St. Paul.

She was united in marriage to Wilfred "Bill" Tix on April 20, 1963 at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Inver Grove Heights. Donna worked at Armour's Meat Packing in South St. Paul, drove school bus for 10 years and later worked at Zumbrota Livestock. She also operated the family business, Tix Truck-

ing, hauling livestock for 20 years.

Donna was known for her strong work ethic and unwavering dedication to anything she put her mind to, but those who knew her best will remember her most for her big heart and deep love for her family and friends-who were truly what made her world go round. She was a devoted wife of 62 years and a loving mother who always put her family first, as well as a proud grandmother and great-grandmother who found her greatest joy in time spent with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, beaming with pride as she passed along valuable life lessons. Her faith was an important part of her life and guided the way she loved, served, and cared for others. She was a member of the Church of St. Mathias at Hampton.

She took great pride in the family's cattle operation and found joy cruising the neighborhood in her side-by-side. She was happiest when surrounded by the rolling wooded hills of their farm, at their peaceful lakeside cabin, and while spending quality time with the people she loved. Her hard work, resilience, and passion for nature live on through the generations that follow. Now resting in God's eternal care and tending to the cattle and gardens of heaven, Donna will be deeply missed by many.

She is survived by her husband Bill; children, Kim (Dean) Weber and Mike (Becky) Tix; grandchildren, Nicole Weber and Andy Bloomquist, Justin and Kayla Weber, Cody and Holly Tix, Taylor (Colton) Tix, and Mitch Tix; and great-grandchildren, Brody and Lainey Weber, Dawson, Colton, and Bennett Tix.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Orville and Angie Amos; and grandson, Colton Tix.

A visitation was held on Friday, February 6 from 4-7 pm at the Church of St. Mathias in Hampton. Mass of Christian Burial was on Saturday, February 7 at 11:00 am, with visitation from 10-11 am, at St. Mathias.

Honorary urn bearers were Patti Kopp, David Tix, Sandy Nicolai, Joe Huss, Brian Tix, and Stacie Beissel.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Donna's memory to St. Mathias Church, Hampton.

Marion Johnson

Marion Johnson, of Hampton, passed away peacefully on Thursday, January 29, 2026, at Regions Hospital in St. Paul.



Marion Beatrice Stroupe was born on March 1, 1937, in Red Wing, Minnesota, the daughter of Floyd and Elizabeth (Stumpf) Stroupe. She grew up in Red Wing, where she learned to fish, hunt, garden, and more alongside her family. After graduating, she worked at a bank in Minneapolis until she met the love of her life, Clarence Johnson Jr., while at a roller skating rink.

Marion and Clarence were married on August 11, 1956. They moved to Wisconsin and immediately began the family that would become their greatest legacy. In 1964, they returned to Minnesota and in 1968, settled into their home in Hampton.

Clarence and Marion were blessed with ten children. The skills Marion learned in her youth helped her become a devoted, resourceful homemaker to a large and active family. She worked tirelessly to care not only for her children, but also for many extended family members, and she truly treasured time spent with family. Marion drew constant strength from her deep faith and was a life-long, devoted Catholic, including nearly 60 years as a member of St. Mathias Parish.

When she wasn't spending time with family, friends, or at church, Marion could be found tending to her many plants or painting ceramics. This passion became a shared gift, as she taught ceramics classes at her shop in Hastings and later at her home, in a garage built especially for that purpose. She brought countless plants and works of art to life, gifting them generously to others - keepsakes now even more treasured.

Marion is survived by her children: Julie (Lee) Hinz, Donna (Daryl) Gonyer, Nancy (Michael) Brown, Susan (Larry) Kuehn, Dale (Renee) Johnson, Janet (Mark) Otte, Mark (Shelly) Johnson, Paul Johnson, and Gary (Gretchen) Johnson; 21 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her brother, Richard "Dick" Stroupe of Port Angeles, Washington; and her in-laws Jeanette Stroupe, Marion Johnson, Gale Truax, Dick Johnson, Gene Johnson, Larry (Kay) Johnson, Karen Gudim, and Kathy Spartz; as well as many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Clarence; her son Dean Thomas; a son in infancy; her parents; her brother Robert "Bob" Stroupe; and her in-laws Ray (Geraldine) Johnson, Jim (Dorothy) Johnson, Pauline Truax, Donny Johnson, Denny Gudim, Danny Spartz, and Gary Johnson.

Visitation was held at St. Mathias Catholic Church in Hampton on Wednesday, February 4, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., followed by a Funeral Mass at 11:00 a.m. Father Mike Tix presided.

Randolph Community Food Shelf

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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Farm Girl Chatter The Ones That Have Taught Me Life Lessons and True Love

By McKell Lemmerman

This article is dedicated to the animals that shape a farmer's life and give meaning to the work done before sunrise and after dark. While family and friends are essential, the deeper connection often lives in the pasture and the barn. It can be found in frost-lined fences at dawn, in the creak of a barn door opening, and in the quiet sound of hooves shifting. For many farmers, animals are the reason the day begins early and ends late. They are constant companions—silent speaking with no words back to you, but always present.

Many farmers, like me, grew up around animals, yet it is often with age and experience that their true value becomes clear. Farming teaches responsibility early, but devotion is learned over years of repetition. They depend on us whether the winter wind strikes through a coat, or the summer dust clings to our sweaty skin. They wait for us, they trust us, and they require our consistency. In your daily routine, you learn patience, and the quiet discipline that defines rural life.

Horses are often dismissed as “hay burners,” but their worth has never been measured by profit at my farm. Horses offer something deeper; they bring peace. Stepping into the saddle, feeling the leather between your legs, you escape your reality. There is saying that there is no better view between the ears of the horse, the land stretches wide and open, of-

fering perspective that few other places can. They are the ones who are spirited with attitudes, but when they know you have a hard time, they understand what you are going through. Galloping through the fields, they are the ones who give you the imagination of flying like a bird, arms out, soaring through the sky with the air bouncing off your body. They are the animals that can carry you for miles without hesitation, go through unwanted territory like they are a boy scout wondering about the woods. While horses still serve practical roles, such as helping me gather cattle, their greatest contribution is the calm they bring to an otherwise demanding life.

Then there are the dogs—the always present helpers and loyal shadows. Farm dogs are the hired hands who never ask for wages, just a treat or a good scratch. Farm dogs are up when you are up and go to bed when you go to bed. They follow their owners across every stage from sun baked pastures to snow kissed ground. They are always ready and always watching. A good farm dog understands your routine, the long hard days that are worked. No matter how busy the day becomes, the dog remains.

And finally, the heart of the farm is the cattle. For many farmers, appreciation for livestock grows with time. Calving season brings long nights and early mornings, but also moments that remind farmers why they chose this life. Kneeling in straw as a calf takes its first breath, watching a cow instinctively turn to her newborn. The cow gives a gentle moo of appreciation, thanking the farmer much like a new mother thanking the doctor who helped bring her baby into the world. Farmers help the cows raise these calves through storms and sunshine, knowing each one represents hours of care, effort, and hope—whether it becomes replacement stock or is eventually sold, they all have a purpose. The cows eventually know your routine and patiently wait at the gate for every meal that is served. They learn your voice and your body language. They know the sounds that follow



every action you do. So, when you give a call to the herd that is dispersed in open green fields, they shout back, saying I am here. They know you and because of that they come running, jumping, kicking with joy of excitement to see the person they trust most.

Farmers love their animals not because the work is easy, but because there is a bond built. Loving animals means sore muscles, sleepless nights, and heartbreak when one is lost. But it also means purpose. These animals shape daily routines and give meaning

to the labor that often goes unseen.

In the end, farming is not just about land or livestock. It is about a bond formed through routine, trust, and responsibility—a bond that demands everything and gives back just enough to make it worth it. That is why farmers love their animals: because in caring for them, they find not only their livelihood, but their identity.

Silent appreciation never goes unnoticed from the eyes of your four-legged animals.



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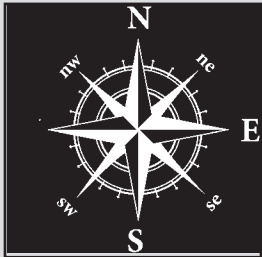


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Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes

Vacation Funland or Fraud



By Terry Campbell

This column is written by Messenger editor and Minnesota native Terry Campbell. Terry now splits his time between Minnesota when it's warm here and Tennessee when it's cold here.

Timeshares, we all have heard of them. Most have heard bad things about them. I owned one forty years ago when I had young kids. I paid \$6,800 for one week in Florida. We used it twenty-years and it worked out to \$120 per night. Couldn't get hotel for that price. Gave it to my ex-wife so I no longer owned it.

So, this year we rented the same vacation villa for \$99 per night when we visited Disney

World. We love the condo, the pools, the location, the restaurants and amenities on site. A great deal for \$99 per night. Then they offered us \$200 to attend their sales presentation. Only 90 minutes of our time. That is where it went off the rails. First of all, my wife and I knew there wasn't a snowball's chance on a Florida beach we were buying. The sales guy wasn't aware of that. He hadn't been told that some tourists weren't gullible.

They fed us breakfast, they gave us the tour, we saw the kids arcade, water park, paddle boats on the lake, bar and restaurants. They said no pressure, if it wasn't for us to not even consider buying. They wouldn't even tell us the price, just said that it would pay for itself. We would save so much money, our vacation would be almost free. It was a legacy to hand down for generations. Then a closer stepped in and was going to clinch the sale. She said to forget that "pinky" promise we made before we came that we would not buy.

All of this fanfare and we were shown the price. \$39,900 for one week per year. Why, this was an investment better than any we had ever seen. We should pull our money out of whatever we were vested in and place it with them. And maintenance and taxes were only an additional \$1,500 per year.

I am a farmer and I have hauled a lot of manure and have never seen this much shoveled out in such a short time. I replied that my investments made over 14% last year and that \$40,000 would generate \$5,600. Add in the \$1,500 maintenance fee each year and I was



throwing away \$7,100. I could rent the condo for \$700 a week and have \$6,400 to spend on vacation a week without risking a cent of my principal. Poor sales kid was speechless. They called in the boss.

This guy was certain he had us with a \$10,000 price reduction. We didn't even flinch. Then because, I had once been an owner he said he would sell us this unit for the incredible price of \$15,000. We still didn't blink an eye. He lowered his voice and said that for this hour only and never again offered, we could steal it for the measly sum of \$8,900. Three strikes and this guy's pitch was over.

By this time, we were three hours into the presentation and my wife had a spa appointment, she had booked the day before, in half an hour. So, we stood up to leave. A short

woman with long black hair stormed onto the scene. She was the clincher, all business, she was going to save the day, she was their last hope, she would make the sale. When she realized we were leaving she became rather insolent, demanding extra time to speak to us. I said we have a prior engagement and we were going. She looked right at me with fire in her dark eyes and scolded me for scheduling something the day of the presentation. I replied that her 90-minute presentation ended an hour and a half ago and walked away. Still part of me wished we could have stayed to have seen just how low they were willing to go.

We will go back again, we love the facilities. For \$99 a night it is a great deal. And after all, they will pay you \$200 to sit thru the ordeal.



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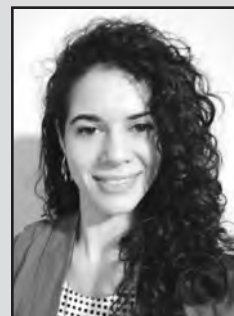


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A Minnesotan: Cats



By RosaLin Alcoser

Growing up in rural Minnesota cats were mainly an outdoor animal that sponged into existence in barns. Yes, there were plenty of people who had house cats, but the ones I saw were mainly outside cats.

Working cats who knew how to survive out in the world. And who may or may not scratch you if you got too close depending on the cat. Not indoor cats of leisure like all city cats appear to be.

My family did not have any cats; inside or outside. Mainly due to the fact that half of the family unit was allergic to them. We were a combination inside outside dog

family; the combination really depended on the dog. Since our first dog basically refused to come inside until she was quite old and my parents current dog panics if she accidentally gets left outside alone.

My husband, however, is from a cat family and he has two inside cats; because we live in the cities and outside cats are not a thing here. Which means that I now have two cats for the first time in my entire life. And I don't mean that they are a cat family like my family is a dog family. Where we have a dog and we love it because it's part of the family. I mean they are a cat obsessed family who takes their cats to the cabin with them and has cat images everywhere. It doesn't even have to be their cats or past cats, it just has to be a cat, and can be on literally anything.

I do like cats and I absolutely love our specific two cats; and with the cold weather we've been having, I am very glad that they don't need to be taken outside. There have been things that I have had to learn though to live with in order to live with indoor nonworking cats. Such as they will stand on us in our sleep and if they choose to sleep on your lap you're just sitting in that chair until they get off on their own.

Randolph School Kindergarten Round-Up!

(continued from page 1)

- Ask questions about transportation, meals, and support services
 - Complete or receive help with enrollment forms
- Date: Tuesday, February 24th
Times: 4:30 to 5:00 p.m. OR 5:30-6:00 p.m.
Location: Randolph Elementary School Kindergarten Room, 29101 Dawson Avenue, Randolph, MN 55065.

Randolph School Now Accepting Applications in All Grades

(continued from page 1)

Our school is officially accepting applications for all grades K-12. Families can begin the enrollment process now to secure a spot for their child.

Who should apply?

- Incoming kindergarten students
- New families moving into the district
- Families interested in open enrollment

How to apply:

- Complete an enrollment application (found on our website at www.randolph.k12.mn.us)
- Submit required documents
- Contact the school office if you need assistance or have questions

Early applications enable us to plan staffing, class sizes, and resources effectively – so we encourage families to apply as soon as possible.

Need More Information?

Our office is here to help with any questions about kindergarten, enrollment or required documents. Contact: Grades K-6 – Jill Wille at willej@district195.org OR 507-645-4773, ext.201. Grades 7-12 – Mary Kay Moorhouse at moorhousem@district195.org OR 507-645-4773, ext. 202.

A Huge Thank You to Kent Peine and Randolph School



Courtesy of Randolph-Hampton Fire District

A huge thank you to Kent Peine and the house class at Randolph School District for their craftsmanship in building 5 "Palmer's Boxes" for our fire department!

These compartment training tools, also known as "dollhouses," are game-changers for educating today's firefighters and officers. They bring fire behavior and fire dynamics lessons to life, reinforcing classroom lectures with small-scale, hands-on demonstrations.

Palmer's Boxes allow us to see and experience critical concepts like fireground ventilation, smoke reading, and predicting backdrafts and flashovers.

With tools like these, we can better prepare our teams to make informed, life-saving decisions on the fireground. Thank you, Kent and the Randolph School District!

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Randolph Hosts First Wrestling Meet in 6 Years



In January, a great crowd watched the first Randolph wrestling home meet in 6 years!
Courtesy of Randolph School



Need to Declutter? Let Us Help!

(continued from page 1)

Donations can be dropped off at the school the week of May 11. Any donations that aren't sold at the sale will be donated to the Epilepsy Foundation or brought to a donation center.

Money raised from the sale will be used to help defray costs of the band and choir trip in March 2027. For more information about the sale contact band director, Jackie Szczepanski, szczepanskij@district195.org, 507-263-2151.

NEED A NEW MATTRESS?

Wait and shop the Music Department's mattress sale on October 3, 2026, at Randolph High School! The past two sales we have sold over 110 mattresses and raised \$21,000. This sale is a fundraiser to help our music students raise money for their trip to New Orleans in March 2027.

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**2026 National FFA Week
 February 21-28**



February Upcoming Events

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| February 12 | 7 pm FFA Alumni Board Meeting, Ag Room |
| February 13 | Region Food Science, Dairy Foods, & Poultry CDEs, Riverland Community College, Austin |
| February 13 | FFA @ The World's Toughest Rodeo |
| February 25 | 7 am - FFA Officer Meeting, Ag Room |
| February 21-28 | National FFA Week |
| February 18 | FFA Farm Tour - Riverview Dairy (Leave at 6:30 am, return 5 pm) |
| February 21 | Proficiencies due to the state |

March Upcoming Events

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| March 1 | FFA State Band & Choir Apps Due |
| March 1 | FFA National Chapter, State Officer Applications due |
| March 1-3 | State Technology Career Conference - St. Paul |
| March 1-3 | Ag Policy Experience, St. Paul |
| March 3 | FFA Day at the Capitol |
| March 9 | FFA FFA Region Ag Mech, Crops, Vet Science, Ag Sales, Farm Mngt, CDEs, Winona |
| March 11 | 7 am FFA Officer Meeting, Ag Room |
| March 12 | 7 pm FFA Alumni Board Meeting, Ag Room |
| March 16 | 6 pm Chapter Meeting, Ag Room |
| March 16 | 7 pm Outreach Class, Ag Room |
| March 15-21 | National Agricultural Week |
| March 21 | 7-10 am FFA Farmer's Breakfast - Location TBD |
| March 25 | 7 am FFA Officer Meeting, Ag Room |
| March 30 | FFA Region Awards Banquet, Zumbrota/Mazeppa High School (Teams going to State) |

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Randolph 6th Grade Band Teams Up with the High School Band



Last week was extra special as our 6th grade band teamed up with the high school band for pep band! So proud of our youngest musicians for stepping up, bringing the spirit, and rocking the stands like pros. *Courtesy of Randolph School*



Gillette Signs Letter of Intent to Play Basketball at North Iowa Area Community College Trojans



Randolph senior Allie Gillette, center, during her signing day on Monday, January 12th, when she made her commitment official to play Division II junior college basketball for the North Iowa Area Community College Trojans. *Submitted*

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Students Represent Randolph at the Gopher Conference Art Festival



(continued from page 1)

They worked hard, supported each other, and did such a great job performing and sharing their creativity with other schools.

And next year... we get to host! Can't wait to welcome everyone to Randolph!

Courtesy of Randolph Schools

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Yes! Cold Weather Does Make You Ache More!



By Shauna Burslem, D.C.

Here it is. The answer to the most asked question during winter months pertaining to aches and pains: Cold weather exacerbates arthritis symptoms by affecting joint fluid, circulation, and muscle flexibility. As temperatures drop, the synovial fluid in joints thickens, making movements feel stiff and painful. Reduced blood flow and tightened muscles further amplify discomfort, while shorter days and less sunlight contribute to inactivity and vitamin D deficiency, weakening bones and increasing inflammation. These combined factors make winter particularly challenging for those with arthritis, as the body struggles to adapt to the seasonal changes.

Barometric pressure drops during cold weather also play a significant role in worsening arthritis pain. When the pressure decreases, tendons and muscles expand, creating additional strain on already inflamed joints. This internal pressure makes joints feel tighter and more sensitive, often causing discomfort even before a storm arrives. Additionally, poor circulation in cold temperatures



slows the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to joints, delaying recovery and heightening stiffness, especially in weight-bearing areas like the knees and hips.

Lifestyle changes during winter, such as reduced physical activity and dietary shifts, further contribute to joint pain. Inactivity weakens muscles, reducing their ability to support joints and increasing friction and stiffness. Immune system overactivity in colder months can also intensify inflammation, particularly in autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis. However, proactive measures like regular movement, heat therapy, and maintaining a nutrient-rich diet can help counteract these effects and improve joint health.

Nutrition and supplementation are crucial for managing arthritis symptoms in winter. Optimizing vitamin D and K2 levels strengthens bones and reduces inflammation, while consuming anti-inflammatory foods supports overall joint health. Warm bone broth, rich in collagen and cartilage-repairing compounds, nourishes joints and improves circulation. Avoiding inflammatory seed oils and replacing them with healthier fats like grass-fed butter or ghee can also reduce oxidative stress and support cellular health, further alleviating joint discomfort.

Daily movement, heat therapy, and sunlight exposure are essential strategies for staying active and pain-free during winter. Gentle exercises like yoga, stretching, or indoor walking keep joints lubricated and improve circulation. Heat therapies, such as warm baths or saunas, relax stiff tissues and restore flexibility. By combining these practices with proper nutrition and self-care, individuals with arthritis can reduce winter flare-ups, maintain mobility, and confidently navigate the colder months.

Improve Mental Health; Reduce Social Media time: A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association AMA Network Open revealed that reducing social media use to approximately 30 minutes per day can significantly improve mental health. The research found that participants experienced a 16% reduction in anxiety, a 25% decrease in depression, and a 15% drop in insomnia symptoms. However, loneliness scores remained largely unchanged, highlighting the dual role of social media as both a source of connection and stress. These

findings align with earlier studies, such as those from the University of Bath, which demonstrated that even a one-week break from platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook can enhance well-being, though such short resets are not substitutes for therapy or medical care.

The study, which tracked 373 young adults aged 18 to 24, used a digital phenotyping app to measure real-time social media usage and its effects on mental health. Participants were monitored over three weeks, including a one-week "detox" period where nearly 80% voluntarily reduced their social media use from 1.9 hours to just 30 minutes daily. During this detox, participants reported significant improvements in mental health, particularly those with severe symptoms at the start. Depression scores dropped by nearly 50% for those with moderate-to-severe depression, while anxiety and insomnia symptoms also saw notable reductions. Researchers attributed these benefits to reduced opportunities for negative social comparisons and addictive behaviors rather than simply cutting overall screen time.

Interestingly, the study found that behavior changes during the detox were subtle, with participants spending slightly more time at home and maintaining similar overall phone usage. This suggests that the type of content consumed on social media, rather than the total time spent, plays a more critical role in mental health outcomes. Experts emphasized that interventions targeting problematic engagement, such as late-night scrolling or unhealthy comparisons, may be more effective than focusing solely on reducing screen time.



While the study's short-term nature limits its ability to predict long-term outcomes, it highlights the potential of brief digital detoxes as a practical mental health strategy for young adults.

Mental health professionals have praised the study for its robust methodology and impactful results. Psychologist Mitch Prinstein of the American Psychological Association noted that the improvements observed in just one week rival those typically achieved after 8 to 12 weeks of therapy. However, experts caution that such detoxes should be approached thoughtfully, especially for individuals who rely on online communities for support. Planning and consulting with a trusted health professional can help integrate these experiments into broader mental health care. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of mindful social media use and its potential to positively influence mood, sleep, and overall well-being.

*Information and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and may not reflect those of The Messenger.

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Fertility



By Noel Aldrich, PhD, CNS
Licensed Nutritionist

While you may remember a discussion of “the birds and the bees,” with a parent or in a classroom setting, nothing of that content provides a helpful foundation for how to create a family. A couple can establish a household and have a stable place for raising children, but there are many more factors that go into creating an environment for conceiving a child. The perfect environment seems to be harder to achieve these days as the fertility

rate in the USA continues to decline. The Center for Disease Control has documented a continuing decline of fertility since the “baby boom” of the 1950s, and the British Medical Journal published a report in 2025 that the fertility rate in the US had reached an all-time low. Current fertility rates are not able to sustain a stable population. In order to create a perfect environment for conceiving children, a couple must begin with an evaluation of their nutrition.

My personal journey into nutrition began with this question of fertility as my wife and I learned how challenging conception can be. I am very thankful we were directed to a doctor who clearly outlined for us how important nutrition is for establishing a foundation of health that can support the creation of new life. This discovery has changed my life and the life of my family, which now includes two healthy young adult children. As the statistics from the CDC declare, there is an increasing number of couples across the country who need to know this information too.

Healthy conception is a team effort dependent on the health of the man and the woman. Sperm and egg quality reflect the quality of

food that has been consumed in the past six months. In fact, the study of epigenetics points to the impact a grandparent’s diet will have on the grandchild. The children of the “baby boom” were the result of family food practices that involved gardens and farm fresh foods. Very little processed food existed in the 1950s compared to what is on the store shelves today. But as processed foods, preservatives, fast foods, and sugar have increased in the nation’s food supply, the fertility rate has decreased due to decreased sperm and egg quality.

As my wife and I discovered, there are opportunities to select quality food sources and nutrition supplements that will heal the body and restore fertility. A few of those choices include:

Add healthy fats – Do not purchase any product with “low fat” on the label. Healthy cells egg and sperm cells require quality fats to function well. Whole milk yogurt, whole fat cheese, wild caught fish, eggs, Olive oil, and coconut oil are good examples of healthy fat sources. These whole food sources should be a part of each day to help promote the stable production of hormones that will direct the conception process.

Add protein to each meal – Protein provides the building blocks to make new tissue and new cells. Protein should come from whole food sources like poultry, fish, meat, beans, nuts, and cheese. Avoid protein powders as there can be additives and these products are more expensive forms of protein.

Add fresh vegetables each day – Fresh vegetables will provide the vitamins, minerals, and additional nutrients that will help the sperm and egg to function properly. Dark leafy greens like kale, collard greens, chard, and broccoli are rich in folate and minerals. Make an effort to add a rainbow of colors to your plate with carrots, red onion, cabbage, bell peppers, and black olives. Each color represents a different set of nutrients delivered to fertility system.

Within these primary food categories are important nutrients that sustain healthy fertility and a stable environment for a growing baby. Key nutrients for fertility include: Omega-3 fatty acids, folate, zinc, selenium, iodine, Vitamin D, iron, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Vitamin B12, and choline. Both the male and female need to give attention to consuming these nutrients to improve fertility and give the next child the best chance of a healthy start. Your grandchildren in the future are affected by your diet now.

I enjoy helping couples develop a healthy food plan for their households that result in greater health and stronger families. Contact me to discuss your health goals for the coming year. Nutrition is designed for healing. I can help you reach greater health freedom in 2026. Contact me at nutritionproportion@gmail.com, or check out my website at www.nutritionproportion.net.

**Information and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and may not reflect those of The Messenger.*

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The Savvy Senior How to Turn Down the Volume on Tinnitus



By Jim Miller

Dear Savvy Senior,

What treatments are recommended to help with tinnitus? I started noticing a subtle ringing in my ears about 10 years ago, but it's gotten much more bothersome since I turned 60. - Ringing Ronnie

Dear Ronnie,

Tinnitus is actually one of the most common health conditions in the country. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders around 10 percent of the U.S. adult population – over 25 million Americans – experience some form of tinnitus.

For most people tinnitus is merely annoying, but roughly 5 million people struggle with chronic tinnitus and 2 million find it debilitating.

While there's no cure, there are a range of

different strategies you can employ to reduce the symptoms to make it less bothersome. Here's what you should know.

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus (pronounced TIN-a-tus or tin-NIGHT-us) is the sensation of hearing a ringing, buzzing, roaring, hissing or whistling sound in one or both ears when no external sound is present.

The sounds, which can vary in pitch and loudness, are usually worse when background noise is low, so you may be more aware of it at night when you're trying to fall asleep in a quiet room.

Tinnitus itself is not a disease, but rather a symptom of some other underlying health condition. The best way to find out what's causing your tinnitus is to see an audiologist, or an otolaryngologist – a doctor who specializes in ear, nose and throat diseases (commonly called an ENT). The various things that can cause tinnitus are:

Hearing loss, which is the most common cause.

Middle ear obstructions usually caused by a build-up of earwax deep in the ear canal.

Side effects of many different prescription and over-the-counter medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen, certain blood pressure medicines and diuretics, some antidepressants, cancer medicines and antibiotics.

Various medical conditions such as high blood pressure, vascular disease, diabetes, allergies, thyroid problems, ear or sinus infections, Meniere's disease, Lyme disease, fibromyalgia, otosclerosis, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder, a tumor, an injury to the head or neck, traumatic brain injury, depression, stress and more.

Treatment Strategies

There are many ways to treat tinnitus depending on the cause. For example, if your tinnitus is caused by a wax build-up in your ears or a medical condition like high blood pressure or a thyroid problem, treating the

problem may reduce or eliminate the noise.

Or, if you're taking a medication that's causing the problem, switching to a different drug or lowering the dosage may provide some relief. If you have hearing loss, getting a hearing aid can help mask your tinnitus by improving your ability to hear actual sounds.

Another strategy that can help suppress or mask the sound so it's less bothersome is "sound therapy." This can be as simple as a fan or white noise machine, or you can use sound therapy apps like ReSound Tinnitus Relief, myNoise or NatureSpace.

Cognitive behavioral therapy and psychological counseling can also be helpful, as can tinnitus retraining therapy (TNT). This combines counseling and sound therapy to train your brain to ignore the sound in your ears. The new MindEar app offers TNT.

There are even new innovations like the FDA approved device Lenire that uses electrical stimulation of the tongue to alleviate symptoms.

There are also certain medications that may help. While there's no FDA approved drugs specifically designed to treat tinnitus, some anti-anxiety drugs and antidepressants have been effective in relieving symptoms.

Your audiologist or ENT can help you figure out the best treatment options.

Other things you can do to help quiet the noise is to avoid things that can aggravate the problem like fatty foods, salt, artificial sweeteners, sugar, alcohol, tonic water, tobacco and caffeine. Also be sure to drink plenty of water as dehydration can worsen symptoms. And protect yourself from loud noises by wearing earplugs.




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Ask A Trooper

By Sgt. Troy Christianson,
Minnesota State Patrol



Question: *I know you were talking about winter safety tips in your last article. Can you go over the items a person should have in their vehicle when traveling in the winter?*

Answer: When assembling a winter travel survival kit, it's best to include a variety of items that prepare you for cold, isolation, and unexpected delays. Even if you keep the kit in your vehicle year-round, review it regularly to make sure everything is in good condition and still in its proper place. A winter travel survival kit should focus on warmth, traction, communication, and basic supplies.

Winter Travel Survival Kit Essentials

Warmth

- Extra blankets or a sleeping bag
- Warm hats, gloves, socks, and scarves
- Hand and foot warmers
- Emergency thermal (space) blanket

Traction & Vehicle Safety

- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Small shovel
- Sand, cat litter, or traction mats
- Tire chains (if appropriate for your area)
- Jumper cables

Communication & Visibility

- Fully charged power bank and charging cables
- Flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
- Reflective vest or roadside flares
- Whistle for signaling
- Paper and pencil(s) to leave note/message

Basic Supplies

- Non-perishable food and snacks
- Bottled water (rotate to prevent freezing or expiration)
- First aid kit
- Multi-tool or basic tool kit
- Matches or lighter (stored safely)
- Paper towels, tissues, and wet wipes

Additional Helpful Items

- Map of the area (in case GPS fails)
- Emergency contact information
- Duct tape and zip ties
- Tow strap

Keeping these essentials on hand can make a critical difference if you're stranded or delayed during winter travel. Regular checks ensure your kit is always ready when you need it most.

Question: *My husband always used to say "never use your cruise control during the*

winter months". Is that still true with advances on tires and technology?

Answer: He is correct, cruise control should never be used on wet or icy roadways. If your wheels lose traction, the cruise control will continue to accelerate, causing the vehicle to skid. By the time you realize you are skidding, it could be too late.

With dry road conditions, cruise control helps you safely monitor your speed, stay within the speed limit and improve driving comfort on long, fairly straight stretches of road. It should be used only when you are able to drive at a steady speed with safe road conditions.

On icy, snow-covered or wet roads.

When deciding if you should set your cruise control:

- Ask yourself if it's safe to travel the speed limit. If not, it isn't safe to set your cruise.
- Is there limited visibility? If it's foggy, snowing, or raining and your range of visibility is significantly reduced, play it safe. Don't set your cruise.

• Is traffic moving smoothly? If it's stop-and-go, or there's heavy traffic around you, it's not safe to use cruise.

Remember that using your cruise control can be an advantage when driving long distances, but YOU are your vehicle's best safety feature.

Question: *I listened to your radio show the other day and you were talking about fatal crashes were lower last year, what was the break down on the numbers?*

Answer: In 2025, Minnesota saw a significant improvement in road safety, recording 370 traffic-related deaths. This marks the lowest fatality count since 2019 and reflects a 22% decrease from 2024 and 8% percent less than in 2023.

While the overall trend is positive, specific categories show where our roads are getting safer and where challenges remain:

Speed-related fatalities (98) were 29 percent less than in 2024 (138), 43 percent less than in 2021 (171) and the lowest since 2019. Unbelted deaths (70) were 31 percent less than in 2024 (101) and the lowest in the past seven years. Distraction-related deaths (21) were 30 percent less than in 2024 (30), 34 percent less than in 2020 (32) and the lowest in the past seven years. Bicycle fatalities (14) were twice as high as in 2024 (7). The next highest count since 2019 was in 2020 (10). Motorcycle deaths (57) were 25 percent less than in 2024 (76) and the lowest since 2019.

The Minnesota State Patrol remains committed to a dual-pronged approach for 2026. While public education on the dangers of speeding, impairment, and distraction is vital, it must be supported by extra enforcement.

Let's work together to make 2026 the safest year yet. Buckle up, put the phone away, and drive for the conditions.

Question: *I travel a lot and I see a number of people making some poor choices when it comes to passing semis and large vehicles. There is no way these big rigs can stop in time when people do these unsafe maneu-*



vers. Can you write about this?

Answer: A commercial vehicle is a motor vehicle or a combination of motor vehicles that weighs more than 26,000 pounds and is used to transport passengers or property. Buses, including school buses of all sizes, and smaller vehicles with hazardous materials placards are also considered commercial vehicles.

Before passing a commercial vehicle, make sure you have safe clearance to the side, behind and ahead of your vehicle.

- Passing on a level highway: It takes three to five seconds longer to pass a commercial vehicle than a car. Allow enough time to pass and return to the right lane before coming within 100 feet of oncoming traffic.

- Do not pass: If you plan to exit or turn off the road soon, stay behind the commercial vehicle until you reach the exit.

- Passing while going uphill: Commercial vehicles often lose speed on an upgrade, making them easier to pass than a car.

- Passing while going downhill: Commercial vehicles increase speed on a downgrade. Allow more distance to pass.

- Complete your pass quickly: Do not remain alongside the commercial vehicle. Move back into your lane only when you can see the front of the commercial vehicle in your rearview mirror. Maintain your speed after passing.

- When a commercial vehicle passes you: Keep to the far side of your lane and slightly reduce your speed. Do not speed up while the commercial vehicle is passing.

- Meeting a commercial vehicle from the opposite direction: Stay as far to the right as possible to avoid a sideswipe crash and reduce wind turbulence between the vehicles. Turbulence will push the vehicles away from each other, not toward each other.

- Judging speed and distance: Because of their large size, commercial vehicles often appear to be traveling slower than they actually are. Many car-commercial vehicle collisions occur at intersections because the driver of the car misjudges the speed and distance of the commercial vehicle.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson — Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848. (Or reach him at, Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us)

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Hampton City Council Meeting December 16, 2025

The Hampton City Council met on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at Hampton City Hall for a Public Hearing and the Regularly Scheduled Meeting. Present were Mayor John Knetter and Council Members Jerry Huddleston, David Luhning and Nick Russell, Nick arrived at 6:50pm. Also present were Cory Bienfang of Bolton & Menk, Chris Meyer, treasurer, Darin Blume, Marlin Reinardy, and a few Residents of the City.

Public Hearing Called to Order – Mayor Knetter called the public hearing to order at 6:35 p.m. and thanked staff and attendees, specifically acknowledging Chris Meyer for his work preparing and presenting the budget. Mr. Meyer explained that the hearing was an open public hearing for questions regarding the 2026 budget, noting that the Council had previously reviewed the budget during an August workshop and approved it in September, with no changes made to the budget or levy since that time. A resident asked about the 44% increase in property taxes, and Mr. Meyer explained that the increase was entirely attributable to the new water tower bond series, with 2026 being the first-year debt service payments would be funded through the levy. He emphasized that the City had not raised taxes for general government operations and that other areas of the budget had decreased. Mr. Meyer further noted that the debt service would remain level over the life of the bond, with a decrease anticipated in 2028 when another bond series drops off. Council members and the Mayor provided historical context on the long-term planning and necessity of the water tower project, highlighting infrastructure needs, water pressure, firefighting capacity, and rising construction costs, while acknowledging the burden tax increases place on residents. Mr. Meyer also noted that the levy increase was lower than originally projected. A second resident asked about mailed notices regarding unidentified water service pipes, and Mayor Knetter explained the state-mandated lead service line inventory process, outlining inspection requirements, reporting to the state, and future planning for remediation if needed. Residents were advised on how to submit photos or schedule inspections. With no further questions from the public, the Mayor thanked attendees and asked for a motion to close the public hearing.

Adjournment: Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0. The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:45pm.

Regular Meeting Called to Order – Mayor Knetter called the regular meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Disclosure of Interest – None

Approval of November 18, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes – Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the November 18, 2025 regular meeting minutes. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0.

Approval of Disbursements - Motion by Russell, seconded by Luhning, to approve the disbursements. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0.

Public Comments: None

Petitions, Requests, and Communications: Mayor Knetter acknowledged receipt of Councilman Anthony Verch's resignation letter and thanked him for his service to the community, noting that his resignation was due to relocating outside the city limits and expressing appreciation for his time, opinions, and expertise while serving on the council. A motion to accept Councilman Verch's resignation was made by Russell and seconded by Luhning. Upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously. Discussion followed regarding the procedure to fill the vacant council seat, with Mayor Knetter explaining that interested individuals would be solicited and the council would appoint a replacement to serve until the next election, as there was no eligible runner-up from the most recent election. Council members expressed the importance of maintaining full council representation and noted appreciation that residents had already expressed interest in serving.

Councilman Anthony Verch's Resignation Letter as follows:

Mayor Knetter

Hampton City Council

Dear Mayor Knetter and Council Members,
I am submitting my resignation from the Hampton City Council. Having recently moved just outside the city limits, I am no longer eligible to continue serving in this role.

Serving the citizens of Hampton for nearly two terms has been a great honor. I want to sincerely thank the residents, the mayor, my

fellow council members and our city clerk for the trust, collaboration, and dedication we shared. Working alongside all of you to support and strengthen our community has been a privilege I will always value.

Although my address has changed, my commitment to Hampton has not. I have lived here for 19 years—half my life—and I will always consider this community my home. I will continue to be present and involved, both through the Hampton Pump and through ongoing investments in the town's future. Hampton has shaped who I am, and I look forward to supporting its growth in every way I can.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve. I wish the council and the City of Hampton continued success, and I stand ready to assist in any way during the transition.

Respectfully,

Anthony Verch

Mayor Knetter called for discussion regarding the internal audit. Councilmember Huddleston reported that on July 31 he met with the Chris, the city Treasurer to conduct an internal audit, which included reviewing random samples of the city's bank statements, disbursements, receipts, and financial procedures for discrepancies. No discrepancies were found, and the annual internal review was completed successfully in approximately ninety minutes. Mayor Knetter thanked both staff and Councilmember Huddleston for their work. A motion to accept the 2024 audit was made by Luhning and seconded by Huddleston. Upon a vote, the mo-

tion passed unanimously.

Mayor Knetter invited Darin Blume, manager of the Hampton Cardinals town ball team, to address the council regarding interest in using charitable gambling proceeds to support the team, including potential improvements such as a new scoreboard and future field enhancements. Mr. Blume noted prior discussions with Meric's about hosting pull-tabs. Mayor Knetter explained that while charitable gambling is allowed within the city, participating organizations must obtain state-issued charitable gambling licensure and qualifying nonprofit (501(c)(3)) status, as the city does not issue licenses but does approve which organizations may operate within city limits. Mr. Blume, assisted by Michelle, expressed willingness to pursue the necessary nonprofit formation and licensing. Mayor Knetter further noted that the Lion's Club associated with Miesville had previously expressed interest in operating charitable gambling in the city, and that the city clerk would notify that group of the Cardinals' local interest. The council expressed support for prioritizing local organizations and encouraged Mr. Blume to proceed with the licensing process and return to the council upon completion.

Ordinances and Resolutions: Resolution 2025__ (9) Adopting the Final 2025 Tax Levy, Collectible in 2026 – Motion made by Huddleston and seconded by Luhning to adopt the Final 2025 Tax Levy, Collectible in 2026, all voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0.

(continued on page 17)



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Hampton City Council Meeting

(continued from page 16)

Resolution 2025__ (10) Resolution Calling for a Public Hearing on Approving the Issuance of Revenue Notes to Finance a Project by Fraser Child and Family Center and Authorizing the Publication of a Notice of the Hearing (Fraser Child and Family Center Project) – Motion made by Russell and seconded by Luhning to approve Calling for a Public Hearing on Approving the Issuance of Revenue Notes to Finance a Project by Fraser Child and Family Center and Authorizing the Publication of a Notice of the Hearing (Fraser Child and Family Center Project), all voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passes 4-0.

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees:

Engineer Report – Cory Bienfang of Bolton & Menk provided several engineering updates, including confirmation that the City of Hampton successfully completed and submitted its Phase II Lead Service Line Inventory under the MDH grant, fulfilled required public notifications, and remains in good standing, with the grant now closed and potential Phase III participation to be monitored. He also reported on the new water tower, noting that construction is complete, initial efforts to bring the new tower online were paused due to complications, and the old tower remains temporarily in service while repairs are addressed, with plans to transition fully to the new tower and delay removal of the old tower until spring or summer 2026. Extensive discussion followed regarding options for the existing water tower, including

demolition versus salvaging and repurposing it, with consideration of costs, funding sources, liability, lead paint mitigation, and long-term maintenance; while there was interest in preserving the tower as a landmark and offers of private financial support, council members expressed concern about unknown costs and levy impacts. Consensus leaned toward demolition unless clearer cost information could be obtained, and upon motion by Luhning, seconded by Russell, the council unanimously voted to table the decision until the next meeting for final consideration. Mr. Bienfang also announced that effective in 2026, Brad Fisher would assume the role of City Engineer, with Mr. Bienfang transitioning to other responsibilities while remaining available for historical context, and the mayor and council thanked him for his years of service to the city.

Water / Sewer Report – Mayor Knetter stated there were no major system issues at the time but noted ongoing challenges related to preparations for bringing the new water tower online. The city temporarily returned to operating on the old tower while crews addressed two water leaks, one located near Highway 50 and another serving the church. Mayor Knetter explained the leaks may be due to extreme temperature fluctuations, ground frost movement, or aging infrastructure, and that further assessment was underway. Water service had been shut off to affected areas, and the mayor indicated he would gather additional information following the meeting to determine repair timelines and communicate restoration updates to res-

idents west of Highway 50, including Sun Valley Lane and Water Street. He also outlined the required process for bringing the new tower online, including filling, sanitizing, and testing, which creates unavoidable delays.

Park Report – Councilmember Russell reported ongoing flooding conditions and recent efforts to flood and maintain the hockey rink. He stated that water was applied to the rink, which skimmed well, and that additional flooding would occur as weather conditions allow, with the goal of opening the rink once temperatures permit.

Street Report – Councilmember Luhning thanked Mayor Knetter for obtaining cold patch material, which allowed for timely repair of potholes on Water Street and Main Street. He noted that additional material remains available and that he will continue monitoring streets to address new issues as they arise. Discussion also included a resident complaint related to snow plowing, with Councilmember Luhning stating he would follow up directly with the resident to better understand expectations. Mayor Knetter noted that snow plowing was completed to the edges as required and moved the meeting forward to unfinished business.

Unfinished Business – Under inoperable vehicle signage, Mayor Knetter reviewed the city attorney's recommendation and proposed adopting an ordinance similar to Lakeville's, limited to city-owned parking lots and excluding streets, requiring inoperable vehicles to be moved within 48 hours. The ordinance would address issues involv-

ing boats, campers, and inoperable vehicles. A motion to approve the recommendation as amended was made by Luhning, seconded by Russell, and approved unanimously. The clerk was directed to work with the city attorney to implement the ordinance.

The council then discussed the installation of security cameras in city parks in response to ongoing vandalism. Councilmember Russell presented options and costs for mid-range camera systems, including equipment pricing and annual monitoring plans, and discussed possible camera placement to minimize battery use and vandalism risk. Council members agreed the cost was reasonable and within the existing budget, noting prior vandalism repair expenses. No formal motion was required, and staff was directed to proceed with obtaining and installing cameras.

New Business – Treasurer Chris Meyer reviewed the annual debt service transfers, explaining required fund contributions for various bond series and the handling of capitalized interest from the 2024 bond issuance. He requested approval to make the scheduled transfers to the debt service fund to cover annual bond payments due February 1 and August 1. A motion to approve the debt service transfers was made by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, and approved unanimously.

Adjournment – Motion by Russell, seconded by Luhning, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Kelly Roan



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