



## CIVIL SERVICE



Longtime Medford City Councilor Marie Sexton, pictured in the Medford Fire Hall after the council's meeting Monday, has ended her tenure after 24 years serving the city. (Lisa Kaczke/southernminn.com)

# END OF AN ERA

Marie Sexton ends her career as a Medford councilor

By ANNIE GRANLUND  
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### EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the second in a three-part series featuring long-serving elected officials whose tenures end early next month. These three, Rice County Commissioner Jake Gillen, Medford Councilor Marie Sexton and Faribault School Board member Jason Engbrecht, have dealt with a wealth of issues — from financial challenges to changing demographics to unhappy constituents. Starting Wednesday and running through Saturday we're shining a light on the people behind the decisions.

"Nobody stepped up to the plate," Sexton said three years ago as she reminisced about the eye-opening journey as a civil servant she embarked on all those years ago.

After she won her first election in 1996, she ran again and won in 2000, 2004 and 2008. On one occasion, she didn't even campaign. She figured, she said, that the people who were likely to vote already knew her. Either they knew her, liked what she was doing for the community and would vote for her, or they knew her, didn't much care for what she was doing and would vote for someone else. Either way, she felt there was no reason for her to go door-to-door asking people for their votes, so she didn't.

See **SEXTON** on 2A

be selfish to keep on doing it, that's it. It's not because I didn't enjoy it or I didn't love it and I think that will show in the next few years. I'm not going to just disappear."

Sexton first ran for the Medford City Council in 1996 and took office in 1997. In a 2017 feature on Sexton's time on

council, she told the People's Press she had never planned to be a part of the government board. In fact, she pinpointed a zoning issue in her neighborhood in the '90s that led her to become aware of a vacant seat on council that nobody was willing to fill.

## Faribault councilor proposes incentives he says would bring added housing

By ANDREW DEZIEL  
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Fresh off a successful re-election campaign, one Faribault councilor is proposing what he says could be a solution to one of the city's most difficult challenges: housing.

For years, the shortage of housing the average worker can afford has been at the top of the mind for the council and business community. While the challenge certainly isn't specific to Faribault or Rice County, strong economic growth has made it significantly more challenging.

With companies from Dain to SageGlass making record investments in the region, the need for more workers has increased, particularly in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. Yet across the state, a workforce shortage has left companies hard-pressed to find qualified workers. With families looking for where they can afford to live as they consider where to work, Community and Economic Development Director Deanna Kuennen promised to use the resources of the city's Economic Development Authority to deliver affordable housing.

In order to attract more builders to Faribault, Councilor Jonathan Wood said that just as multifamily developers and businesses have benefited from grant dollars and the creation of local TIF (Tax Increment Financing) districts, incentives may be needed to attract single family home builders.

Offering a break on building permit fees could be one option. Under Wood's proposal, the first permit fee would remain the same, but if a builder is building multiple homes, the second permit fee would be half-off and no permit fees would be charged on subsequent homes.

Wood said he's not aware of any communities that currently have a similar policy, and it would put a dent in the city's bottom line. However, he said the long-term benefits in greater revenues could more than cover that if the policy is successful.

"Every builder right now is thinking about what community will be the most friendly to us, because the margins are getting smaller," he said.

### If they build it

At least until recently, the city's shortage of multifamily housing was particularly acute. The city's most recent housing study, completed in 2017, showed a vacancy rate of less than 1% in the multifamily housing market, far below the recommended level of 5%.

Thanks to determined efforts, the city managed to secure several major multifamily housing projects. Leading the way was developer Mac Hamilton's 44-unit Hillside Apartments development, which opened across from the Community Center earlier this year. Hamilton's apartments don't exactly qualify as affordable housing, as the developer proudly boasted that he "spared no expense" with their construction. That helped him to get the units on the market quickly, since he didn't have to apply for affordable housing grant dollars.

Hamilton's project is far from the only project set to be completed soon. Others include the 111-unit Straight River Apartments, 76-unit Lofts at Evergreen Knoll, and 68-unit Titan Development project.

Once they're all complete, the local market will boast more than 300 new units. While some of those will be affordable and others will not, Kuennen said that increased availability of housing at all levels of the market is what is needed.

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Wood



Kuennen

## Owatonna native looks for love on 'The Bachelor'

By LISA KACZKE  
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Owatonna native Anna Redman will be competing for a man's heart on national TV beginning Monday, but the show's host suggests the experience may not be all roses.

Redman, a 2014 Owatonna High School graduate, is one of 32 women vying for the final rose from Matt James on the upcoming season of "The Bachelor," scheduled to premiere at 7 p.m. Monday on ABC. James, 28, is the first Black man to star as the lead in the series.

Contestants aren't available to the media before the show, but Bachelor host Chris Harrison said viewers should "definitely keep an eye on Anna" during a livestream announcing the show's contestants earlier this month.

"She found herself embroiled in one of the most dramatic moments of the season," Harrison said.



Owatonna native Anna Redman meets Matt James on the season premiere of "The Bachelor," scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Monday on ABC. Redman is one of 32 women competing for James on the upcoming season. (ABC/Craig Sjodin)

See **BACHELOR** on 2A

