

# WASECA COUNTY NEWS



**AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE MOVES INTO PERMANENT HISTORIC LOCATION**  
1A



**HANSEN NAMED TO ALL-STATE FOOTBALL TEAM**  
1B

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## First COVID-19 vaccines administered in Waseca County

By LISA KACZKE AND BAILEY GRUBISH  
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The first COVID-19 vaccines were administered at the Mayo Clinic in Waseca on Tuesday, Dec. 22.

The Waseca clinic received 60 vaccines from Pfizer for its frontline staff. This is the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccinations that hospital staff expect to continue into 2021, said Dr. Gokhan Anil, the regional chair of clinical prac-

tice for the Mayo Clinic Health System. The vaccine is administered in two doses 21 days apart and the vaccine becomes 95% effective about a week after the second dose is administered, he said.

This first phase of Mayo Clinic's vaccine distribution is only available to frontline workers, specifically intensive care unit staff, emergency room staff and the emergency medical services workers because they are the first line of defense and the most at risk for exposure. It is unclear when the public will have access

to the vaccine, but it is coming, he said.

"The vaccine has been welcomed by the healthcare workers, being that the pandemic has affected us significantly," Anil said. "It's a welcome use for all of us in caring for patients and it has been very effective in protecting us from the COVID-19."

All vaccination time slots at the Mayo Clinics that have received the vaccine have been filled according to Anil, which he said "is great."

Those who have received the vaccine

so far in the region have physically reacted positively to it. Anil shared that with any vaccine people will have a mild reaction with the most common being irritation at the injection site or muscle aches. Another side effect is a mild headache or that muscle aches can last 24-48 hours after the injection. According to Anil, 15% of those who receive the vaccine will have mild symptoms, but he said symptoms show that the person's immune system is reacting. If anyone has a worse reaction to the vaccine, there are

healthcare workers on site prepared to react and help the person.

Though all healthcare workers are able to sign up for the vaccine, it is unclear when they will all be able to get it due to limited supplies and the distribution of it.

Anil said there are two companies manufacturing a vaccine at this time, Pfizer and Moderna, but supplies are limited.

See VACCINE on 3A

## Waseca school district tax levy to decrease

By BAILEY GRUBISH  
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The Waseca School Board approved the 2021 property tax levy with a 3.9% decrease.

The board set the levy at \$4.9 million with a decrease in the levy of about \$199,000.

Elizabeth Beery, finance director for the Waseca school district, presented the cut during the Truth in Taxation hearing prior to the board's vote on Monday, Dec. 21. The decrease is based on changes in population, state statutes and board authority, changes in property values, building bond and census data.

The general fund levy will decrease by about \$383,000, or 16.57%, while other funds will see an increase in 2021. The Community Education funds will increase just over \$64,000, or 28%, and debt services will increase nearly \$200,000, or about 5%, according to Beery.

Legislative actions have been taken over the years to allow smaller school districts to have the same opportunity as the larger school districts through a Local Optional Revenue School Board Authority for \$724. This does not require voter approval.

This is what the Waseca School District operates on and does not currently have a voter approved operating referendum and has not asked for anything beyond what the LOR has allowed the district to do. Waseca is one out of 102 school districts that only use the LOR at this time.

"We've been very fortunate. We are trying to do the best that we can financially and trying to be as fiscally responsible as we can and watching our fund balances," Beery said.

Long-term facilities maintenance revenue began with the 2016-17 fiscal year to also help close the gap. The revenue is intended to create greater equity among districts in funding for facility maintenance and the fund gives districts access to substantial additional revenue from state aid instead of the community.

Beery said most buildings in the district are older than 35 years, which allows the district to qualify for the maximum amount of revenue through this program. For the fiscal year 2019 most districts received \$380 per pupil unit.

"So, really to maintain your buildings, to make sure that you're able to upkeep and keep a safe and healthy environment that is what the Long-Term Facility Maintenance is for," Beery said. "So again, a very big deal for Waseca Public Schools and other outstates, because now we can still maintain the buildings that we need to and not draw from other funding and we get a state aid portion, rather than having to levy our community for all of it."

The Ag Bond Credit is another advantage for Waseca Public Schools that Beery highlighted in her presentation.

See LEVY on 3A

## HOLIDAYS



The first scene of the drive thru depicted an angel speaking to Mary about having a son and naming him Jesus. Two volunteers acted out the scene with a sign up describing the scene. (Bailey Grubish/Southernminn.com)

## 'TIS THE SEASON

### Two Waseca Lutheran Churches host drive thru Nativity scene

By BAILEY GRUBISH  
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Nativity on Dec. 18 and Dec. 19 to bring holiday joy to the community.

St. Paul Lutheran Church and St. John Lutheran Church teamed for a drive-thru

See NATIVITY on 3A



The final scene in the St. Paul Lutheran Church parking lot was Jesus in the manger. Live animals were brought by Huber's Hilltop farm and the Roemhildt farm. (Bailey Grubish/Southernminn.com)

## Waseca schools prepare to return to hybrid learning in January



Waseca Public Schools plan to move back into hybrid learning for all district schools the week of Jan. 11. The school administration continues to communicate with the district families of what it will look like. (Bailey Grubish/Southernminn.com)

By BAILEY GRUBISH  
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Waseca kindergarten through 12th grade students will return to the hybrid learning model the week of Jan. 11.

Waseca Superintendent Eric Hudspith shared the updates to the school learning model and school safety protocols at the Dec. 17 school board meeting.

The district is following Gov. Tim Walz's newest executive order, but he anticipates that some of the information and guidelines will change by January depending on how winter

break goes. "Right now, I'm optimistic, because our staff are doing the right thing, our students are doing the right thing," Hudspith said of returning on Jan. 11 to hybrid learning. "So we're looking at managing that first week in January with distance learning and then hybrid learning and getting them back in school."

Hartley Elementary School's hybrid learning model is in-person Tuesdays-Fridays, which the students and staff previously followed.

See HYBRID on 3A

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