

LE SUEUR COUNTY NEWS

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referendum
to propose
2-building
district
7A



LOCAL
Wilson
named Le
Sueur
County Farm
Family
8A

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FARM FACTS

Cleveland's Ponwith Farm teaches teachers about agriculture

By CARSON HUGHES
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There's no better way to learn something new than experiencing it, so when education specialist Emily Ponwith wanted to strengthen agriculture curriculum in the classroom, she and her husband and Cleveland farmer Ryan Ponwith decided to give teachers a firsthand view of what farm life is all about.

On Tuesday, the Ponwith Family Farm in Cleveland was the last stop in a virtual agriculture tour for instructors. More than 60 teachers from across Minnesota participated in the summer tours organized by Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom.

The tours began on June 15 with the "Wheat — From the Farm to the Plate" tour, which included visits to wheat farm, Northern Crops Institute in Fargo, North Dakota, the Bakers Field Flour and Bread bakery in Minneapolis and a virtual cooking class with professional chef Joel Gamoran.

Then on June 22, educators visited the soybean farms at Northern Crops Institute and Featherstone Farm near Rushford, Minnesota. And the "Sota Grown Food Pod" tour focused on a hydroponic container farm in Wadena, Minnesota.

Teachers then finished their summer crash course at the Ponwith Family Farm for the "Soil Fuels Success" tour, where Ryan and Emily Pon-



with presented educators with a deep dive on how to till, fertilize and use soil on their farm.

The Ponwiths were not only a stop on the tour, they also helped organize it. Emily Ponwith serves as South Central Minnesota Regional Ag Curriculum Specialist for Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom.

"I thought 'Where better to bring them than our farm where we can showcase some of the amazing hard work that my husband and his dad have been pouring into this operation and ultimately the world,'" said Emily. "I think we're very innovative in our strip tillage and how we manage our soils and our crops, so I wanted to make sure we were able to showcase that to teachers and help them bring that knowledge to the learning space."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tour was held virtually, rather than in person, but teachers still received a close up of the farm, which has been in the Ponwith Family since its foundation in 1862. The Ponwiths were among the earliest settlers in Cleveland, and the farm has passed down through the generations since then.

See FARM on 3A

Ryan and Emily Ponwith led teachers on a virtual tour of their farm to inform them about agriculture in Minnesota. Ryan is pictured holding a drone the farm uses to get a birds eye view of any irregularities among the crops. (Carson Hughes/southernminn.com)



Ryan Ponwith talks to a virtual room of teachers through his headset and a cell phone camera about a diseased soybean. (Carson Hughes/southernminn.com)



(Metro Creative image)

Le Sueur electric rate restructure ups costs for residential, small rural properties

By CARSON HUGHES
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Le Sueur is trying to keep the lights on. At its July 12 meeting, the Le Sueur City Council approved a plan restructuring the city's electric billing to fund additional investment in the city's electric infrastructure. The change comes after the city received the results of an Electric Rate Study by DGR Engineering, which concluded the city would need to raise revenues over the next decade to support capital investment and restore the unrestricted cash reserve balance.

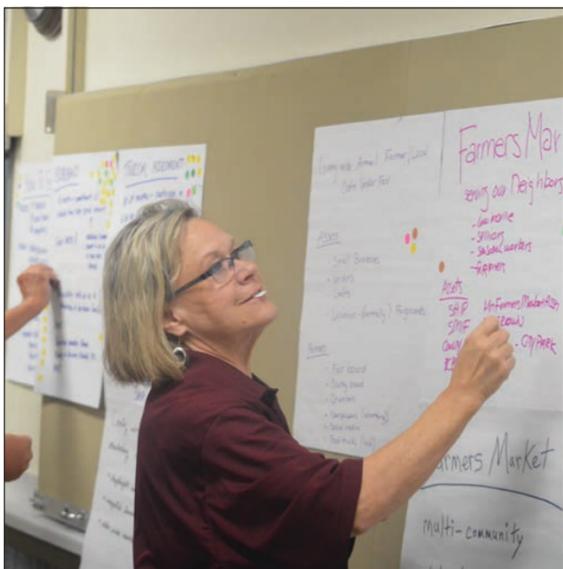
The approved changes seek to better reflect disparities in electrical use and support the costs of maintaining and expanding the grid.

For the average residential user consuming 600 kW a month, the rate restructuring will add a \$5.36 per month increase to their electric bill. The average small rural property will pay an additional \$7.38 per month, and the average general service commercial property will spend an extra \$0.57 per month.

Rate changes for other commercial classes in the city are highly variable depending on the size and usage of the business. Overall, city

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Community brainstorms economic development projects at countywide session



Community members vote on potential economic development projects with stickers at the countywide envisioning forum. (Carson Hughes/southernminn.com)

By CARSON HUGHES
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Building out broadband connections, linking communities with trails, promoting tourism and more were on the minds of the community on July 15.

Out of the Le Sueur County Fairgrounds in Le Center, the Blandin Foundation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation hosted a countywide envisioning forum to brainstorm ideas for economic development projects. City officials from Le Sueur, Le Center and Cleveland, Le Sueur County commissioners, economic development leaders and state representatives Brian Pfarr, R-Le Sueur, and Todd Lippert, DFL-Northfield, joined with county farmers and business owners for the opportunity to affect change in their county.

Using community insights, a steering committee of county leaders will develop projects to be completed within the next one to two years focused on strengthening



Farmers, business owners, city, county and state representatives bumped elbows at countywide envisioning forum. (Carson Hughes/southernminn.com)

the county's economy. Before providing feedback, participants took part in an asset mapping of the community. Hosts told the attendants to list assets within the community that could serve as a draw for business and new families. Participants also listed organizations and individuals

who could be a source of funding for community development projects. From there, attendants formed discussion groups to develop ideas to be voted on by the larger committee.

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