

Clark County Courier

The voice of Clark County since 1880

St. Patrick's Day is Friday

Spring starts on Monday

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Vol. 142, No. 37

www.clarkcountypublishing.com

\$1.00

The hometown newspaper of Mark Hanson, Springfield, Ill.

Clark School Board approves resignations

The March meeting of the Clark School Board took place this week. The board approved the second reading of the updates to the K1 policy in regards to solicitation in school as well as approved last month's minutes and financial reports.

Superintendent Travis Ahrens spoke about the recent legislative session and how there is a proposed seven percent increase in funding for teachers but it is awaiting signature from the governor. Ahrens also shared that there is a new CTE grant which will allow up to five million in funding for schools that Clark will apply for once the Department of Education has set the guidelines for the grant application.

Ahrens spoke about the purchases that were possible due to the surplus of older weightlifting

equipment and how the dumbbells and trap bars have added value to the field house. Ahrens stated that approximately \$1,600 has been able to go back into the improvements so far.

In the financial sector, Mary Nelson mentioned that requisitions are due Friday for teachers' supply requests so they can be used to update the budget. Nelson also stated that during this school year, Clark has received over 20,000 in grants to help with food services. Clark has been using these funds for the purchase of milk and will continue to do so.

Jennifer Heggelund's report included the week-long visit from a Behavior Specialist. The specialist was here and offered training and scenarios to teachers in the event that something behavior related should or does arise. Heggelund said that there was a state review over Zoom with the Special Education Department in regards to technical assistance.

Principal Heggelund commented on FFA week and that it was great to see the kids doing different activities and mentioned the inclusion pledge that middle and high school students signed talking about how a simple 'hello' can make a huge difference. The pledge cards can be seen pasted on the walls of the school.

Elementary principal Jon Redmond updated the board on Read Across America Week last week. Redmond spoke of the fun dress up days and stated that in total the elementary read over 14,000 minutes in just four days.

Redmond provided information on the new reading curriculum adopted for next year and a new

math curriculum that will also be adopted. Both curriculums are from McGraw-Hill, a company the school commonly uses. Redmond ended his updates with a point about the high number of preschoolers interested in school next year and there will be some solutions and other ways to accommodate, discussed at the April school board meeting.

The board went into executive session at around 7:00 p.m. They approved the resignations of Heather Patenode as a MS/HS cook and Ryan Larsen as second grade teacher and coach, both effective immediately.

Clark School Board met in special session Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m.

The next regular school board meeting will be Monday, April 10 at 6:30 p.m.

McElhone named as finalist for South Dakota Special Educator of the Year

Julie McElhone, a Clark High School Special Ed Aide, has been named as a finalist as the South Dakota Special Educator of the Year.

McElhone has been employed with the Clark School District for 13 years and has worked with Cayden Binger for 12 of those years. Binger's mom Andrea is the person who nominated McElhone.

"Cayden and I decided to nominate Julie because she has gone above and beyond for Cayden both in and out of school. She has pushed Cayden to be more independent and encourages him to step out of his comfort zone and try new things," said Binger of why her and her son nominated McElhone.

"Julie makes learning fun with her giggly personality. She has been there for Cayden through some tough personal experiences and he loves her more than he can explain. She has been there for Cayden since day one and they have been a perfect fit.

Julie doesn't treat Cayden differently than any other child. She holds him accountable when he needs it and is always there to cheer him on in every single triumph he has had," added Binger.

McElhone is married to Steve and they have four sons together. Schuyler is 21 and works and lives in Watertown with his girlfriend Angel. Ethan is 19 and attends Lake Area Technical College for Diesel Tech. Mason is 17 and is a senior at Clark High School, and Julian is 15 and is a freshman at Clark High School.

McElhone says her favorite part



Julie McElhone is pictured above with Clark High School student Cayden Binger. His mother, Andrea, nominated McElhone for the South Dakota Special Educator of the Year.

of her job is watching Cayden grow and learn and to see the joy in his eyes when he conquers things and can then do it all on his own.

WEATHER

Robert Cole - Official Weather Observer

	HI	LO	PR
March 7	21	4	0
March 8	25	15	T
March 9	24	17	0.05
March 10	32	18	0.13
March 11	31	22	0.17
March 12	33	18	0.05
March 13	33	11	0.01
2023 precipitation to date			2.22
2022 precipitation to date			0.63



The picture above, taken Monday evening, shows the damage done to the house by the fire on Friday morning.

House fire destroys home early Friday morning

On Friday, March 10 at approximately 6:11 a.m. Watertown 911 center received a call from the occupants of the home in the 300 block of North Commercial St. there was smoke and the smoke alarms were going off upstairs. Clark Fire Department along with Clark Police Department

were dispatched to the scene.

Upon arrival of law enforcement they observed smoke rolling out of the upstairs portion of the home. Clark Fire Department arrived on scene and began attacking the fire.

Approximately five hours later the fire was extinguished. The

occupant of the home was able to leave the residence with their animal.

Clark Fire Department was assisted by the Clark Police Department, Clark County Sheriff's Office, Clark County Ambulance and mutual aid by Raymond Fire Department.

The home is considered a total loss. A reminder please the fire hydrants cleared three feet around the hydrant, this can create excess time if fire department needs to clear the hydrant. Also, keep your natural gas meters clear of snow.

Two municipal elections will be held in Clark County

▲ Vienna and Garden City need elections

The deadline for Clark County municipal petitions has come and gone and the outlook leaves two active elections, one in Garden City and one in Vienna.

In Vienna, there are two three-year terms becoming vacant. The current board trustees that are re-running are Kirk Roberts and Mark Wilen. Richard Clark is also running for one of the two positions.

In Garden City, Debra Waples,

the incumbent is being challenged by Jacob Leibke for a three-year term as City Board Member.

There were no petitions filed or contested in Clark, Willow Lake, Naples, Raymond or Bradley. The Henry School Board will have two three-year seats empty due to no petitions being filed.

Tuesday, April 11 is the day to vote!

Clark pep band to play at boys state A basketball tournament

The Clark middle-high school pep band has applied and been accepted to be the boys state A tournament pep band this Friday.

"We are looking forward to a full day of playing at the Denny Sanford Premier Center," said director Amy Nelson. "We played last year for the girls state A tournament in Brook-

ings so we know a bit of what to expect. It's a lot of playing, but it's our favorite thing to do and the kids are very excited for the opportunity!" Nelson added.

Back in December, the pep band was to play at a USD game but the weather prevented that from happening.

Sunshine on government in South Dakota requires work

By David Bordeyik
Executive Director for SDNA

This week is Sunshine Week – a national observance of the importance of open government and the public's right to know.

As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said more than a century ago: "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants." It is a proverb often cited by journalists and others when making a case for why transparency in government is important.

Transparency about the workings of government proves effective in preventing corruption and misuse or abuse of tax dollars.

In South Dakota, that sunlight on government often comes in three forms: open meetings, open records and public notices.

Open meetings refer to the state laws that guide public boards such as school boards and city councils on when and how to promote and conduct their meetings in public. Open records refer to the laws

that dictate on how government officials make available upon request to the public information kept in file cabinets, computer drives and in cyberspace.

Public notices refer to the laws about what government – especially local governments – must publish in a local newspaper. Items such as meeting minutes, bid notices and proposed budgets.

However, this three-legged stool for open government – open meetings, open records and public notices – is not without its weaknesses and faults, especially when it comes to open meetings and open records laws.

The open meetings laws include provisions for when a public board may meet behind closed doors to discuss certain topics such as the conduct or performance of an employee or an ongoing lawsuit involving the public entity. Sometimes, the use of executive session by public boards is abused, either unwittingly or knowingly.

The open records laws include a laundry list of exceptions for when public officials may deny someone's request for information held by government. My experience has been government officials readily pick and choose from that laundry list of exceptions if they are not interested in complying with someone's request for government information.

To be fair, there are legitimate reasons why government officials should discuss certain topics behind closed doors or not release certain government records. Allowing a school board to meet in executive session to discuss its negotiating strategy for purchasing land for a new school building can serve to protect taxpayers from paying too much for the land. Personally identifiable information such as Social Security numbers and credit card information absolutely must be protected from public view when kept by government.

Still, the weaknesses in our current open government laws cannot be overlooked. Executive sessions provisions in the open meetings laws are vague and ripe for abuse. The exceptions in the open records laws are too plentiful and too expansive.

Work is needed to better educate public officials about these laws and to improve them through legislation – all easier said than done. Over the years we have seen improvements in our open government laws, but much more work is needed. We need more advocates and champions for open government in elected office, both locally and at the state level. We need you to be involved as well.

Why? Because the sunshine Louis Brandeis was talking about does not come naturally.

David Bordeyik is executive director for the South Dakota Newspaper Association, which represents the state's weekly and daily newspapers.



If you have any further information about these crimes and the persons involved please call the Clark Police Department at 605-532-3112 or email tips@clarkpd.com.

Local businesses burglarized

At 8:30 p.m. on Monday, the Clark Police Department and the Clark County Sheriff's office made the arrest of a juvenile male in connection to the burglaries reported early Monday morning from local businesses. The juvenile male has been charged with Burglary, Theft, and Unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, more charges are pending. Through the investigation, the

suspects gained entry to Hooker's Bait and Tackle and the Big C Travel Plaza, other businesses were attempted but unsuccessful.

If you have any further information about these crimes please call the Clark Police Department at 605-532-3112 or email tips@clarkpd.com. There is a cash reward for information leading to the arrest of the persons responsible.