

July 2022

07-11-22

Residents in Alcona, Alpena and Presque Isle counties have an opportunity to learn more about the candidates they will be voting for in August, during separate forums hosted by the League of Women Voters of Northeast Michigan. Candidates who are running in contested races have been invited to the forums to answer questions from members of the audience.

Residents may submit questions on index cards that will then be handed to screeners to prevent duplication and to avoid inappropriate or irrelevant questions. They will then be passed along to the moderator and asked of each candidate.

The Alpena forum will be held from 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, (**JULY 13**) inside room 106 of the Center building at Alpena Community College. County commissioner candidates in Districts 5, 6 and 7 have been invited, along with candidates for county clerk.

The Presque Isle County forum is also being held Wednesday, from 7-9 p.m., inside the Presque Isle District Library in Rogers City.

Commissioner candidates for Districts 1 and 4 have been invited. The Alcona County forum will be held Thursday (JULY 14) from 7-9 p.m., inside the public library in Harrisville. Commissioner candidates for Districts 2 and 5 have been invited. The forum for Michigan House of Representatives District 106 candidates will be held next Tuesday, July 19, from 6-8 p.m., inside room 106 of the Center Building at ACC.

The Alcona, Alpena, and State Rep. forums will be available online. To receive a link for those forums, send your request to lwvnmed@gmail.com.

07-19-22 APS board makes changes during annual organizational meeting

The board of education for Alpena Public Schools made some significant changes for 2022-23 Monday, during an organizational meeting that's held annually during the first full board meeting following the start of a new fiscal year July 1. Ned Heath will serve a second term as board president, but Stacey Parr has been replaced as vice-president by Anna Meinhardt. Eric Lawson was elected treasurer replacing Gordon Snow.

The remaining board members include Ken Gembel and Thomas Hilberg. Outside of member roles, the biggest change the board approved was the replacement of various subcommittee meetings with a single “workshop” that will be held the second Monday of every month, starting at 5:30 p.m. That means there will no longer be committee meetings during the morning or early afternoon hours. The full board will now meet on the fourth Monday of every month, also at 5:30 p.m. The board previously met on the third Monday of each month. As part of the organizational meeting, the board also selected legal firms, an auditor, depositories for school funds and more. School board members serve 4-year terms without pay.

August 2022

08-03-22 NE MI voters approve most millages/renewals

The majority of voters across the four-county region of Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency and Presque Isle counties were feeling generous during Tuesday primary election, approving most millages and millage renewals on the ballots.

That cannot be said about voters in Alpena Township, which turned down two proposals – one for public roads and ditches and the other for fire department operations and equipment.

Countywide millages for veterans, older persons and youth and recreation all passed.

There were three contested races for Alpena County Commissioners – all on the Republican side. In District #5, Brenda Fournier was the top vote getter. In District #6, incumbent commissioner Kevin Osbourne lost to Burt Francisco. And in District #7, Travis Konarzewski **[CONNER-SHESKEE]** received more votes than Eric Smith.

All millage or millage renewal requests passed in Alcona County. The closest to going down was a general operating fund increase millage in Millen Township, which passed by only one vote, 71 to 70. There were two contested county commissioner races – both on the Republican side. The winners in those races were Craig Johnston and John Small.

In Montmorency County, only two millage requests failed – a general operating millage in Avery Township; and a parks millage in Briley Township that was four votes short of passing. Don Edwards and Dell Bolser won the only two contested county commissioner races – both on the Republican side. And, Presque Isle County voters approved all of the millages or renewals on their ballots, including two countywide taxes – one for recycling and the other a tax limitation

renewal proposal. Rogers City voters also approved the sale of some property. There were two contested county commissioner races – both on the Republican side. Clifford Tollini beat Nancy Shutes in District #1; and Wayne Saile, Jr. received more votes than Darrin Darga in District #4. At press time, and without all votes counted, Cam Cavitt was last leading Geyer Balog for the Republican 106th District house seat by a sizeable margin. All results are unofficial until certified by local boards of canvassers.

08-25-22 Alpena airport receives Violation Notice for PFAS runoff

The Water Resources Division (WRD) of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has issued a second Violation Notice to Alpena County Regional Airport for storm water discharges of PFAS that exceed Water Quality Values (WQV) developed in accordance with Water Quality Standards to protect Michigan waters.

The airport's storm water discharges into the Lower South Branch of the Thunder Bay River. PFAS, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. They are found in humans, animals, and are present at low levels in a variety of foods, products and in the environment.

PFAS that exceed Water Quality Values were first detected at the Alpena airport, or more specifically in the ground water at the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in 2017. Subsequent water well tests at residences around the airport revealed the vast majority of wells held water with PFAS levels below required Water Quality Values.

The contamination at the airport was caused by firefighting foam containing PFAS that was used for decades by the Air National Guard. Airport manager Steve Smigelski told a county committee Wednesday, the CRTC has claimed "full responsibility" for the contamination and the cleanup. But, because the county is the landowner, it received the Violation Notice and is ultimately responsible for the cleanup. The county paid to have a study of

the airport's storm water runoff following the first Violation Notice from EGLE, which was issued in late November, 2019. The study was conducted between November 19, 2020, and September 7, 2021. The results of that study led to the recent Violation Notice due to higher PFAS levels in the storm water. Brian Zuber is a Sr. Environmental Quality Analyst with the Water Resources Division, and told True North Radio Network that while the PFAS concentrations in the airport's storm water exceed Water Quality Values, they are relatively low. Zuber, who signed off the Violation Notice, is asking the county to work with his department voluntarily, to draft and negotiate an Administrative Consent Order, which would essentially provide the framework that identifies the contamination, addresses the discharge, ongoing monitoring, and corrective action, and establishes target dates. The county has until September 1 to notify the Water Resources Division whether it will agree to draft and negotiate an Administrative Consent Order. Smigleski and County Administrator Mary Catherine Hannah are meeting with EGLE representatives on Friday to discuss how to proceed.

September 2022

09-07-22 City closes on 1st parcel on US-23, extends PA on two more lots
The City of Alpena recently closed on the sale of the first parcel of a larger piece of land it owns on US-23 north, which it has been marketing for over two decades.

The Municipal Council Tuesday night, also approved the extension of a purchase agreement on two more parcels on the same 93-acre 'L-shaped' piece of land, which is located across the road from the industrial park and bordered on the north by Hamilton Road. The city closed on the sale of a 4.4

acre parcel for \$125,000 on August 26 with Nathan Engstrom, who owns The Boat House & Storage. A portion of the sale money will be used to construct an access road off Hamilton Road, which will not only provide access to the Engstrom parcel but also a second access road for future development on the city-owned property. "We are excited that this purchase has closed and are hopeful that it will spur more development on the property," said City Manager Rachel Smolinski.

Meanwhile, a purchase agreement with WSSA, LLC for two more parcels along US-23 was extended until March 23, 2023. That sale is contingent upon WSSA being awarded a long-term lease with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) for a new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility. Smolinski noted there is no timeline for the GSA lease, so the purchase agreement could be extended again if there continues to be interest from both parties. WSSA has a purchase agreement with the city on a 3rd parcel off US-23 as well.

09-21-22 Alpena Green Stormwater Infrastructure Visioning Program

The City of Alpena and the non-profit conservation group Huron Pines are seeking public input on potential designs for capturing and filtering stormwater runoff to preserve and protect the Thunder Bay River and Lake Huron. Stormwater carries pollutants like road salt and oils into nearby waterways, which can cause beach closures, degrade wildlife habitat and impact the economic and environmental health of a community. Green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens and permeable surfaces, help reduce water pollution and flooding by capturing and filtering this runoff. Area residents are invited to participate in an interactive program in which participants will have the opportunity to look over a slate of artistic renderings of proposed green stormwater infrastructure and provide feedback for ranking the designs. The goal of the project is to protect water health in and around the City of Alpena by implementing nature-based solutions for stormwater management. The Green Stormwater Infrastructure Visioning Program is being held inside the library in downtown Alpena on Thursday, October 13, from 4 to 6 p.m.