

LITCHFIELD

Independent Review

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2021



John Carlson talks with fellow City Council members Darlene Kotelnicki, sitting, and Betty Allen during the city’s open house last week.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BRENT SCHACHERER

Meeker County Fair returns

After one-year hiatus, fair is back with full schedule of events

The Meeker County Fair is back this week. After a pandemic-forced cancellation in 2020, the fair returns with a full slate of activities Thursday through Sunday at the fairgrounds in Litchfield.

Hours for the fair are 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$5 for adults 18 and older and \$3 for students, with no charge for children 10 and younger. No admission will be charged Sunday.

Among the attractions this year are three grandstand events. A tractor pull is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, with an “ATV Big Air Show” set for 7 p.m. Friday. Saturday’s grandstand attraction is a bull riding competition, which begins at 7:30 p.m. Grandstand admission is \$10 each night for those 5 and older.

Other events on the fair schedule include:

- THURSDAY**
- 3 p.m.** — Carnival rides open; **8-11 p.m.** Sub-Zero Entertainment DJ in the Towmaster Tent.
- FRIDAY**
- 10 a.m.** — Magic Show by Kevin Hall (also at 11:30 a.m., 3 p.m.) in the Towmaster Tent; **10 a.m.** — Rainbow Singers perform in the bandshell; **11 a.m.** — Euchre Tournament in the Beer Garden; **11 a.m.-1 p.m.** — Lunch at the Fair offers free admission to those who show a business card or wear company apparel; **11 a.m.** — Carnival opens; **11:30 a.m.** — Bell Choir (also 4:35 p.m.) performs in the Bandshell; **Noon** — Everett Smithson 45 Show in the Bandshell; **1 p.m.** — Senior Volunteer Awards in the Bandshell; **2-9 p.m.** — Dunk Tank;

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CAPITAL IDEAS

Open house gives public opportunity learn about, offer opinions on Capital Improvement Plan

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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Litchfield residents had an opportunity to look into the future last week, at least as it pertains to the city’s plans for investing in infrastructure and amenities.

In what some called a first-of-its-kind open house, residents were invited to review 33 projects that have been placed on the city’s Capital Improvement Plan calendar. The July 26 event allowed anyone interested about 45 minutes to check out project poster boards placed throughout the City Council chambers and in the City Hall entrance.

City Council members mingled with those who attended, listening to comments and questions. That was followed by a brief presentation from City Administrator Dave Cziok and City Engineer Chuck DeWolf, and then an open forum for residents to speak about the plans.

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Council member Sarah Miller takes notes as she listens to resident Jim Ellingson talk with others about the proposed wellness/recreation center.

Wellness/rec center receives support from public

School board members, city residents say facility would meet a long-time need

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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A week after a city council member urged his fellow councilors to move ahead with a wellness/recreation center, that charge found additional backing from individuals and another governmental entity last week.

During an open house July 26 designed to give the public an opportunity to learn about — and sound off on — the city’s five-year capital improvement plan, the wellness/recreation center received more attention than any of the other 32 projects.

“We are looking forward and wanting to

partner on this wellness/rec center,” Darrin Anderson, chairman of the Litchfield School Board, said during a public comment portion of the open house. “We will do everything in our power ... work very closely, on something that benefits not just the school district but the city of Litchfield for years to come.”

The school district and city have had off-and-on discussions about a wellness/recreation center for several years, as both entities explored ways to meet a perceived need for a facility that could include a swimming pool, basketball courts, walking track and other activity spaces.

The school district included a new swimming pool as part of a third question in its 2019 referendum. Though two other measures — one for an excess levy and the other for \$32.9 million in bonds to make upgrades at district



Darrin Anderson

schools — passed, the \$11.43 million question that included a pool and soccer field failed.

But Anderson offered full-throated support for a wellness/recreation center effort in which the city and school district cooperated on a facility that could satisfy many things, including a pool.

“The school district and community as one ... can achieve great things,” Anderson said.

That pitch was previewed one week earlier when Council member John Carlson spent more than five minutes reading from a prepared statement in which he encouraged the City Council to “unite, look at this project as a plus, not a negative and run with it.”

The city has a tremendous opportunity to make a wellness/recreation center happen, Carlson said, because of two bills passed by the Minnesota Legislature. One of those provides a \$5 million grant to the city to fund construction of a wellness center; the other permits the

Wellness to 2 >

State officials recommend masks at start of school year

For now, Litchfield schools will not have a mask requirement, superintendent says

BY DAVE ORRICK
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Minnesota officials last week backed new federal coronavirus guidance recommending that everyone wear masks indoors when schools reopen later this summer and fall.

That means everyone: students, teachers and staff, vaccinated and unvaccinated.

However, Litchfield Public Schools Superintendent Beckie Simenson, responding to a comment string on the Facebook page Real Life in Litchfield, MN, said the district does not plan a mask mandate at this time. “I want to make sure that our parents know that we are not going to require masks this year,” Simenson wrote,



Beckie Simenson

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