



**D. CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL:** A copy of current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Husch Blackwell, as of July 17, 2017, is attached for your review. I would ask each Director to review this report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

**E. PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP REPORT:** The Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership Subcommittee meeting scheduled for July 27, 2017, was cancelled. The next Partnership meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2017.

**F. NEWS CLIPS:**

- ✓ July 16, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Douglas County homeowners who saw property valuation hikes can expect a higher tax bill
- ✓ July 17, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Papio-Missouri River NRD will likely keep property tax rate flat
- ✓ July 18, 2017, Sioux City Journal article, Danish Alps rec area gaining visitors
- ✓ July 18, 2017, Douglas Co. Post-Gazette article, Omaha seeks name ideas for Dam Site 15A recreation area
- ✓ July 19, 2017, Stothert's proposed \$903 million budget focuses on streets and public safety, offers no tax cuts
- ✓ July 21, 2017, Blair Enterprise article, A refuge away from it all
- ✓ July 23, 2017, Sioux City Journal article, Corps reminds public: Missouri River sandbars closed to use
- ✓ July 24, 2017, Sioux City Journal article, South Dakota and Nebraska fighting common foe: Zebra mussels
- ✓ July 26, 2017, Burt Co. Plaindealer article, Wildlife program intends to save more than animals
- ✓ July 27, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, What's in a name? A possible snub, say NRD board members miffed about naming of new park
- ✓ July 28, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Sarpy asks state to raise valuations in Douglas
- ✓ August 1, 2017, Associated Press article, Farmer suicides rise in India as climate warms, study shows
- ✓ August 1, 2017, Pilot-Tribune article, Water main to Cargill fails
- ✓ August 2, 2017, Papillion Times article, Sarpy growth plan on areas outside cities
- ✓ August 2, 2017, Omaha World Herald Opinion, Douglas-Sarpy Issue Be careful on valuation policy
- ✓ August 2, 2017, Omaha World Herald Editorial: New Omaha park is the city's to name
- ✓ August 4, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Increases in Papillion, La Vista budget proposals reflect major construction projects in Sarpy County
- ✓ August 4, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Trump nominates Steve Gras for 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

**G. CONSTITUENT FEEDBACK:**

- ✓ Dam Site 15A Naming, Scott Stronck
- ✓ Park Naming Process and Information, Mark Welsch, Omaha Coordinator, Nebraskans for Peace

## **July 2017 Information/Education Report**

### **Information:**

Attended I&E meeting in Sidney  
Visited all field offices and staff  
Setting up one-on-one meetings with project managers to learn about projects and timelines  
Assessing budget  
Meeting with potential new vendors  
Assessing I&E department job duties and work-load  
Working with Joe Riebe on a Papio NRD fishing map app  
Gathering the public's input on features for a fishing map app  
Increasing number of social media posts on all platforms and engaging with "fans."  
Created weekly media summaries  
Updates to website

### **Education:**

#### **July Programming Schedule:**

7/3- OPL Millard Storytime- 64 children and parents (2-6yo)  
7/6- OPL Washington Branch- Recycling- 16 children and parents  
7/10- OPL Millard Branch- Reptiles- 48 children and parents  
7/11- OPL Benson Branch- Owls- 48 children and parents  
7/12- Durham Museum- 3 programs- 74 kids  
7/13- OPL Washington Branch- Owls- 32 children and parents  
7/14- Holy Cross Lutheran Church- Owls- 34 children  
7/17-7/19- Boy's Challenge Camp- 25 boys  
7/21- La Vista Library- Insects- 44 children and parents  
7/24- OPL Abraham Branch- Insects- 29 children and parents  
7/25- Premier Academy- Animals- 32 children  
7/26-7/28- Girl's Adventure Camp- 20 girls

### **Planning/Coordination:**

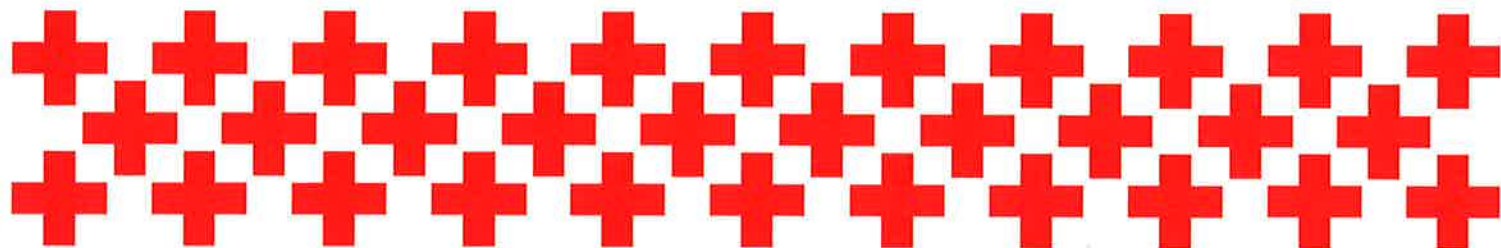
General NRD Animal Care  
Outdoor Classroom Grants  
MORE Nature Website Updates  
MORE Nature Social Media Posts  
Newspaper Drop-off for Wildlife Rescue  
Focus on Forest Teacher Workshop

### **Meetings/Trainings:**

Health, Wellness and Safety Committee Meeting  
Cabela's Conservation& Business Partners Open House

**American Red Cross**

*Give blood.* Help save lives.



**Blood Drive**  
**Papio-Missouri River NRD /**  
**Chalco Hills**

Board Room  
8901 S 154th St  
Omaha, NE 68138

**Tuesday, August 15, 2017**  
**10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**

Schedule an appointment: Visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) - search sponsor code "PapioNRD"  
OR contact Nicole at [NGust@papionrd.org](mailto:NGust@papionrd.org).



Scan to schedule  
an appointment.

[ 6 ] • Order ID: 470642 • Qty: 8 of 10 • 009599601

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) | Download the Blood Donor App

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# BITCO INSURANCE COMPANIES

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Omaha, NE 68154-5299  
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August 3, 2017

Jean Tait  
Papio Missouri River NRD  
8901 South 154th Street  
Omaha, NE 68138

Dear Jean:

This letter confirms my visit to your Organization on 07/19/2017. The purpose of the time was to survey any active field operations around the Omaha NE area. This is part of BITCO Insurance Companies' Risk Control services toward its customers in assisting them in identifying and mitigating any loss potential directed against their Company.

I contacted Bill Warren, Construction Manager, who gave me information about the mowing around the levee in Sarpy County, NE. The focus of the survey was to determine any hazards regarding working around construction equipment, falls off equipment, construction equipment traffic patterns, and any general liability exposures.

As a consequence of the visit, no recommendations for improvement were generated.

Please thank Bill for getting the information to me to survey this operation.

I'm looking forward to my next visit which is scheduled for October 2017. I'll give you so that you can coordinate the visit for me. During that time, I'd like to continue surveying the field operations of the organization.

In the meantime, if any need arises that you think that BITCO Insurance could possibly meet, then please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Eric C. Balcom, CSP  
Senior Risk Control Consultant

cc: The Harry A Koch Company  
File #627354

This survey and this confirmation letter are limited exclusively to the items mentioned. It does not include every loss potential, nor violations of federal, state or local statutes, ordinances or regulations unless specifically designated herein.



**Tait, Jean**

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**Subject:** FW: Thank You

**From:** Allen Schoemaker [<mailto:ars@blairnebraska.org>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 01, 2017 9:01 AM  
**To:** Nelson, Zachary <[znelson@papionrd.org](mailto:znelson@papionrd.org)>  
**Cc:** Winkler, John <[jwinkler@papionrd.org](mailto:jwinkler@papionrd.org)>  
**Subject:** Thank You

Zach,

I wanted to send you an email thanking you and your staff for their assistance this past Saturday during our water emergency. It was also nice to be able to put the back feed into service and have it perform so well. As we talked about Sunday, I want to run the back feed without a fire truck to see if we can fill the tower without the aid of a fire truck as was observed on Sunday.

Thanks again for the help and support. Please pass this along to your staff as well.

*Al Schoemaker*, PWLF  
Director of Public Works  
City of Blair  
402-426-4191  
[ARS@blairnebraska.org](mailto:ARS@blairnebraska.org)



City of Omaha  
Jean Stothert, Mayor  
August 1, 2017

Office of the Mayor  
1819 Farnam Street, Suite 300  
Omaha, Nebraska 68183-0300  
(402) 444-5000  
FAX: (402) 444-6059

Omaha, NE – By unanimous vote, the City of Omaha Naming Committee has recommended the new lake and park at 168<sup>th</sup> and Fort be named for the founder of Boys Town, Father Edward Flanagan.

The committee reviewed more than 200 suggested names offered by citizens. Flanagan Lake was the top suggestion. Many people noted this year's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Boys Town in their recommendations including this nomination:

*"My suggestion for naming the park is Father Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town. He is a strong charitable historical figure in Omaha, who contributed so much to children in our city during his lifetime, and left a lasting positive impact on our city and county. What better person to name the new park after during the 100th anniversary year of Boys Town?!"*

The naming committee's vote must also be approved by the Parks and Recreation Board and the Omaha City Council. The Parks and Recreation Board will meet this month.

Under a 2012 interlocal agreement between the City of Omaha and the Papio Natural Resources District, the City will take possession of the property in September. The park is expected to open next year.

By City Ordinance (27-142) the Naming Committee must review and provide recommendations regarding the proposed naming or renaming of city property. The Naming Committee includes three members appointed by the mayor and six department directors required by ordinance (Police Chief, Fire Chief, Parks Director, Planning Director, Public Works Director, and Library Director). The appointed members are Douglas County Commissioners P.J. Morgan and Marc Kraft and Mike Kennedy. The advisory committee met Monday July 31<sup>st</sup>.

The top recommendations from the public:

Edward Flanagan	28 nominations
Kerrie Orozco	22
Andrea Kruger	12
Susan La Flesche Picotte Park	6 (including NRD)
Dr. Don Benning	4
Bob Gibson	4
Jean Stothert	4
Johnny Rosenblatt	3
Jesse Lowe	3
Buffett Family	3

A complete list of suggestions made by the public is attached.

**Report on Purchases**  
**Construction Services, Professional Services, Personal Property**

**July, 2017**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Item / Task</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Cost</b>
7/1-31/2017	Project Maintenance	Rip Rap	Martin Marietta	\$18,730.17
7/19/17	Wetland Mitigation Monitoring for PJ 15	404 permit monitoring	Olsson Associates	\$26,704.00



Updated: July 17, 2017

## **Current and On-Going Projects P-MRNRD Legal Counsel**

★ = Top Priority

F = Future Work – No Assignment

N = New Assignment

O = Others Handling

W = Work in Progress

P = Counsel Portion Completed

B = Next Board Meeting

- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
  - **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
    - ★ Culverts Rehab Phase 2 Contract w/ FYRA (N)
    - ★ Culverts Rehab Phase 2 Interlocal w/City of Omaha (B)
- **West Branch:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96<sup>th</sup> St.) (P)
- **Western Sarpy Dike:** (Cleveland/Petermann)
  - NRDs/NE-ARNG Interlocal for Camp Ashland Property (F)
- **Floodway Purchase Program:** (Laster/Grint)
  - Arlington Purchase Agreements, Deeds, etc. – Public Hearing (October Board) (W)
- **Trail Projects:** (Williams)
  - ★ Hwy 75 Bridge Trail – Local Funding Interlocal (B)
  - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Potential Tyson Access License Agreement (F)
  - ★ West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Omaha/La Vista Interlocal Amendment for Construction (B)
- **Missouri River Corridor Project:** (Becic)
  - Draft Purchase Agreement with Reserved Easement for MUD (Platte River Sites/Missouri River) (N)

- **USDA PL 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed:** (Schumacher/Cleveland)
  - Papio PL 566 Site W-2 Issues (F)
  - ★ Tek-Mud 9A Watershed Structure Bank Stabilization Contract (N)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:** (Grint/Laster/Williams)
  - ★ ROW Acquisition Documents for WP6 & WP7 (F)
  - ★ Transfer Deed to City of Omaha for Zorinsky Basin 1 (P)
  - ★ City of Omaha Interlocal Agreement for ZB-2 (W)
  - ★ WP6 & WP7 Interlocal Agreement with Papillion and Sarpy Co. (P)
  - ★ Purchase Agreements and ROW Documents for Z-B2 (W)
  - ★ City of Omaha Interlocal Agreement Amendment No. 2 for DS-15A (P)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Grint)
- **Southern Sarpy Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Laster)
  - ★ Interlocal with City of Omaha for Construction Inspections (W)
- **Missouri River R-613 and R-616 Levees:** (Cleveland/Woodward)
  - Offutt AFB Culvert O&M Agreement (W)
  - ROW Acquisition Documents (F)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Nelson)
- **Other:**

# Douglas County homeowners who saw property valuation hikes can expect a higher tax bill

- [By Jeffrey Robb / World-Herald staff writer](#)/July 16, 2017

Higher tax bills appear to be on the way for many Douglas County homeowners, given a hike this year in their property valuations.

When the Douglas County assessor proposed a major valuation increase earlier this year, some local government officials floated the idea of cutting tax rates to soften the blow on taxpayers. But after much debate about those preliminary valuations, local governments around Douglas County are seeing their property tax bases rise much more modestly — around 3 percent overall.

So instead of reaping a huge increase in property tax revenue, local governments are in line for a modest revenue increase that will help fund regular increases in expenses.

“There really is no windfall,” Douglas County’s fiscal director, Joe Lorenz, told the County Board last month.

Rather than cut property tax rates, local governments are mostly looking to keep their rates stable.

Last week the [Douglas County Board approved a budget](#) that would keep the tax rate the same as it has been the past two years. The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and Metro Community College want to keep their rates the same. The Millard school district is looking at a very slight decrease.

A couple of important entities have yet to indicate where their tax rates are heading. Mayor Jean Stothert will release her proposed City of Omaha budget Tuesday. The Omaha school district is working on its budget and plans to share information before a school board workshop Aug. 5.

But here’s the equation shaping up for Douglas County taxpayers:

If local governments across the board end up holding tax rates stable, your property tax bill will most likely rise or fall based on how your valuation changed.

A large share of property owners won’t be pinched at all. About half of residential property owners saw a drop in their valuation, had no change or received an increase of \$1,000 or less. So it’s entirely possible many of those property owners could see a lower tax bill, or a small increase at most.

But on the other end, more than 37,000 residential property owners had an increase of 10 percent or more. Even if tax rates don’t change, that means those homeowners will pay hundreds of dollars more in property taxes.

(Also consider: A state-funded property tax credit will be calculated in September, and that could tweak the bottom line on your tax bill.)

Douglas County Assessor Diane Battiato, who took heat for proposing large valuation hikes earlier this year, has repeatedly made the point that her office is only half the factor in deciding someone’s property tax bill. She said local governments are the next step in the process.

“The bottom line is they can level that playing field,” Battiato said.

Across Douglas County, taxing entities are now discussing their spending budgets and tax levels.

With the relatively modest increase in the tax base overall, officials say the local governments they represent need the additional funding to help cover increased costs for basic items such as salaries and health care.

Lorenz said increased costs in the criminal justice system also are affecting Douglas County. By keeping its tax rate stable, Douglas County will generate nearly \$2.5 million more in property tax revenue.

County Board member Mike Boyle, speaking at a county budget discussion, said the budget is fair and functions well for taxpayers. “It’s a tight budget, and one that is realistic,” he said.

John Winkler, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River NRD, said the agency is facing “astronomical” increases in land acquisition costs for its dam site and flood control projects. The NRD will collect some \$800,000 more in property taxes by keeping its tax levy flat.

“There’s not a shortage of need,” he said. “There’s just not.”

At Metro Community College, which like the NRD spans multiple counties, a flat tax rate will bring in about \$2 million more for the college.

Dave Koebel, college business officer for Metro Community College, said one of Metro’s challenges is building and staffing three new buildings on its Fort Omaha campus as the college expands its construction education and student support programs.

“It’s really part of the urgency we had to build the buildings,” Koebel said.

Stothert declined to provide details of her proposed 2018 budget before she releases it publicly Tuesday.

She said earlier this year that if the city received a “windfall” from valuation increases, she would move to reduce the city’s property tax levy.

However, City Finance Director Steve Curtiss said the city’s tax base is projected to increase by about 2.5 percent.

That increase would mean an increase in property tax revenue of less than \$4 million, at the current tax rate.

In a nearly billion-dollar budget, that likely wouldn’t be enough to fund a significant property tax cut of one cent or more.

Carol Ebdon, a professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s School of Public Administration and former finance director for the City of Omaha, said local governments face an increased demand for services each year — which means they have to come up with more money.

Schools, in particular, face a challenge because they rely so heavily on property taxes, not funding from the State of Nebraska, Ebdon said. Compared with other states, Nebraska has ranked in the bottom few in the proportion of support coming from the state.

Just as people typically pay a higher cost of living every year, Ebdon said, government faces higher costs to do business.

“To keep doing the same thing — it costs more money,” she said. “The same thing is true in government.”

**World-Herald staff writer Roseann Moring contributed to this report.**

# Papio-Missouri River NRD will likely keep property tax rate flat

- By Roseann Moring / World-Herald staff writer/July 17, 2017

Constituents of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District will likely be paying the same property tax rate in the next year.

The district, which is responsible for water policy in a six-county area, has released its proposed budget for the 2018 fiscal year.

Under the preliminary budget the district would spend \$69.2 million next year, with about \$23.6 million of that coming from property taxes.

The overall budget is down slightly from the 2017 budget, which was \$70.5 million. But the proportion that comes from property taxes would be slightly more.

The 2018 budget runs from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018.

The district's mill levy would remain at 3.804 cents per \$100 of valuation, which means that the owner of a home valued at \$150,000 for tax purposes would pay \$57.06. The overall bill would be much higher because the NRD is just one of many entities that make up each tax bill.

Even when the property tax rate remains flat, an individual will have to pay more if the valuation has risen.

The Papio-Missouri River NRD covers Douglas, Sarpy and Washington Counties and parts of Burt, Thurston and Dakota Counties.

The NRD board will hold a public hearing on the budget Aug. 10 and vote Sept. 14.

At the Thursday board meeting, constituent Shawn Melotz told the board that the budget is too high. She noted that the district's long-range plan approved last year said the 2018 budget would be about \$56 million. She said the board should ask the staff to cut the proposed budget to that level.

She also said she is unhappy that the district is speeding up its timeline for the construction of six dam projects.

"It is painfully obvious that the timeline was misrepresented to the public," she said. "This is why there's a lack of trust."

NRD General Manager John Winkler said the long-range plan was intended to be a guide. He noted that next year's proposed property tax revenue is within \$1 million of what was projected by the plan.

Winkler said the reason the budget is \$13 million higher than earlier expected is because of projects that weren't finished as expected, as well as new projects with outside funding, including federal grants.

Winkler said the NRD is pushing up the timeline for the dam projects because of pressure from landowners in the areas of the dams.

He said the district gets requests often from those landowners, who are unhappy with the uncertainty of waiting to see if the district will buy their land to build a reservoir.

He also said a faster timeline could save money because of inflation and increasing construction costs.

The six dam sites are:

» 168th Street and Bennington Road, with a price tag of \$13.8 million

» 216th and Fort Streets, \$20.7 million

» 192nd Street and Giles Road, \$23.7 million

» 180th and Fort Streets, \$13.7 million

» 180th Street and Giles Road, \$9.9 million

» 204th Street and Schram Road, \$9.9 million

The district is also planning for a seventh project, which is intended to improve water quality at Zorinsky Lake.

District officials hope to shrink the timeline to build all of these projects from an end date of 2048 to 2026. To do that, though, they would need to obtain \$5 million each year in outside funding, such as federal grants.

Winkler said the district doesn't plan to increase property taxes to get the projects done faster.

### **Papio-Missouri River NRD budgets (by fiscal year)**

2007	\$37.4 million
2008	\$44.2 million
2009	\$52.4 million
2010	\$83.7 million
2011	\$59.6 million
2012	\$82.5 million
2013	\$87.4 million
2014	\$93 million
2015	\$83.4 million
2016	\$71.9 million
2017	\$70.5 million
2018*	\$69.2 million

*\*proposed*

# Danish Alps rec area gaining visitors

- [NICK HYTREK nhytrek@siouxcityjournal.com](mailto:NICK_HYTREK@siouxcityjournal.com) / July 18, 2017

HUBBARD, Neb. | As the temperature climbed on a humid summer morning, a few anglers and kayakers had a nearly new lake all to themselves.

Just how Justin Jarman likes it.

"It's a relaxing place, not too many boats out here. The fishing's good," said Jarman, of Cedar Bluffs, Nebraska, who said he's made several trips to the Danish Alps State Recreation Area, which opened two years ago a mile southeast of Hubbard.

One of the newest recreation areas in Nebraska, the 740-acre park, tucked among the hills along Nebraska Highway 35, is still being discovered by new visitors.

Named for the hilly terrain that is reminiscent of the Danish homeland of the immigrants who settled in the area, the park isn't visible from the road, and visitors must drive a little more than a mile on a gravel county road to get there.

For Jarman, it's worth the trip.

"I fish here a lot. I duck hunt out here quite a bit in the fall and pheasant hunt here," he said as he fished recently with friends Cameron Bancroft, of Valentine, Nebraska, and Morgan Keating and Ashten Gibson, both of Wayne, Nebraska.

It was the second visit to the lake for Keating and Gibson. Both said it's a good recreation destination in an area of the state that previously didn't have much more than farm ponds.

"It's close to small towns that don't have a lot of water," Keating said just after reeling in a bass.

Gibson also liked the handicapped-accessible pier that enables her brother to enjoy fishing from his wheelchair.

Those are just a few of the reasons that Nebraska Game and Parks Commission officials believe the park and lake will, over time, become a popular destination.

"In all typical new areas, we're trying to get erosion controlled, areas green, trees growing," said Jeff Fields, Northeast Regional Supervisor for the Game and Parks Commission.

The park had an estimated 34,000 visitors in 2016, its first full year of operation, and parks officials are pleased with the turnout thus far in 2017.

Park superintendent Kyle Madsen said camping areas are at about 50 percent occupancy most weekends, and the park was nearly filled during the Memorial Day weekend.

With all the young trees, there isn't a lot of shade yet. But many visitors are coming for the park's centerpiece, 220-acre Kramper Lake, which began filling in 2012 with construction of a conservation dam backing up Jones Creek. Named after Vince Kramper, a Dakota City farmer and conservationist, the lake has been stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, walleye and channel catfish, all of which are growing -- and biting.

"We have a lot of great stories. Over the next two years it's really going to blow up," Madsen said of the fishing conditions.

Fishing isn't the only attraction. Because it's a no-wake lake, Madsen said Kramper Lake has become popular for kayakers.

The park also features RV and tent camping, equestrian camping facilities, day use areas, a 3-mile walking and hiking trail, and 12 miles of equestrian trails.

And more features are coming at the \$17 million recreation area, which is part of an erosion and sediment control project overseen by the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. The NRD owns the Danish Hills property and the Game and Parks Commission maintains it.

Already established is a group camping site designed for scouting groups or families that's separated from other campsites and offers more privacy.

A fish-cleaning station and boat wash-out station are in the works. Also under development is a kayak-in campsite that kayakers can paddle up to. It will be the first of its kind to be found in any of Nebraska's state parks and rec areas, Madsen said.

Another 3 miles of hiking trail are being developed, as is a bird hide, a camouflage shelter in which park visitors can sit and watch birds without being seen.

As word gets out about the fishing conditions and added amenities, Fields said he expects the rec area to see more visitors.

"I think it's met expectations," he said. "I think it'll get better and better."





## Omaha seeks name ideas for Dam Site 15A recreation area

by Emily Heinzen

The City of Omaha is asking for help from local residents in naming Dam Site 15A at 168<sup>th</sup> and Fort Streets, which is slated to open in spring of 2018.

While the recreation area is on schedule to be completed around September and open for use in early 2018, it is still only known as Dam Site 15A. The City of Omaha has asked for suggestions from the public for a formal name for the park, which will then be decided by a City Naming Committee, first established in Omaha in 2010.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District has developed the flood control reservoir and public recreation area. The formal park name, however, will be determined by the Committee and approved by the Omaha City Council.

The park itself will fall under management of the Omaha Parks, Recreation and Public Property

Department. The Omaha City Council approved an interlocal agreement in 2012 that allows the City of Omaha Parks Department to manage the dam site and surrounding park when it opens next spring.

Funds for the park are already in the Capital Improvement Plan. This will be the first time the City Naming Committee will make a decision on a park site name since the ordinance has been in place. To generate ideas, the Committee is asking for suggestions from the public, which will be accepted until July 24.

The naming committee consists of three members appointed by Mayor Jean Stothert, as well as six department directors, as required by the 2010 ordinance.

The committee includes a police chief, fire chief, parks director, planning director, public works director and library director. Appointed mayoral members are Mike Kennedy, P.J. Morgan and

Marc Kraft. Morgan and Kraft both serve as Douglas County commissioners.

The 700-acre dam site includes a 220-acre lake with a boat ramp, two picnic shelters, playground, parking, restrooms and a five-mile trail loop.

The dam site will retain storm water runoff from an upstream area of approximately 11 square miles. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has provided \$1,125,000 towards fish habitat creation and boating access for the dam site.

The estimated total cost of the project is \$44,100,000. An initial feasibility study began in 2009, while construction started in May of 2015.

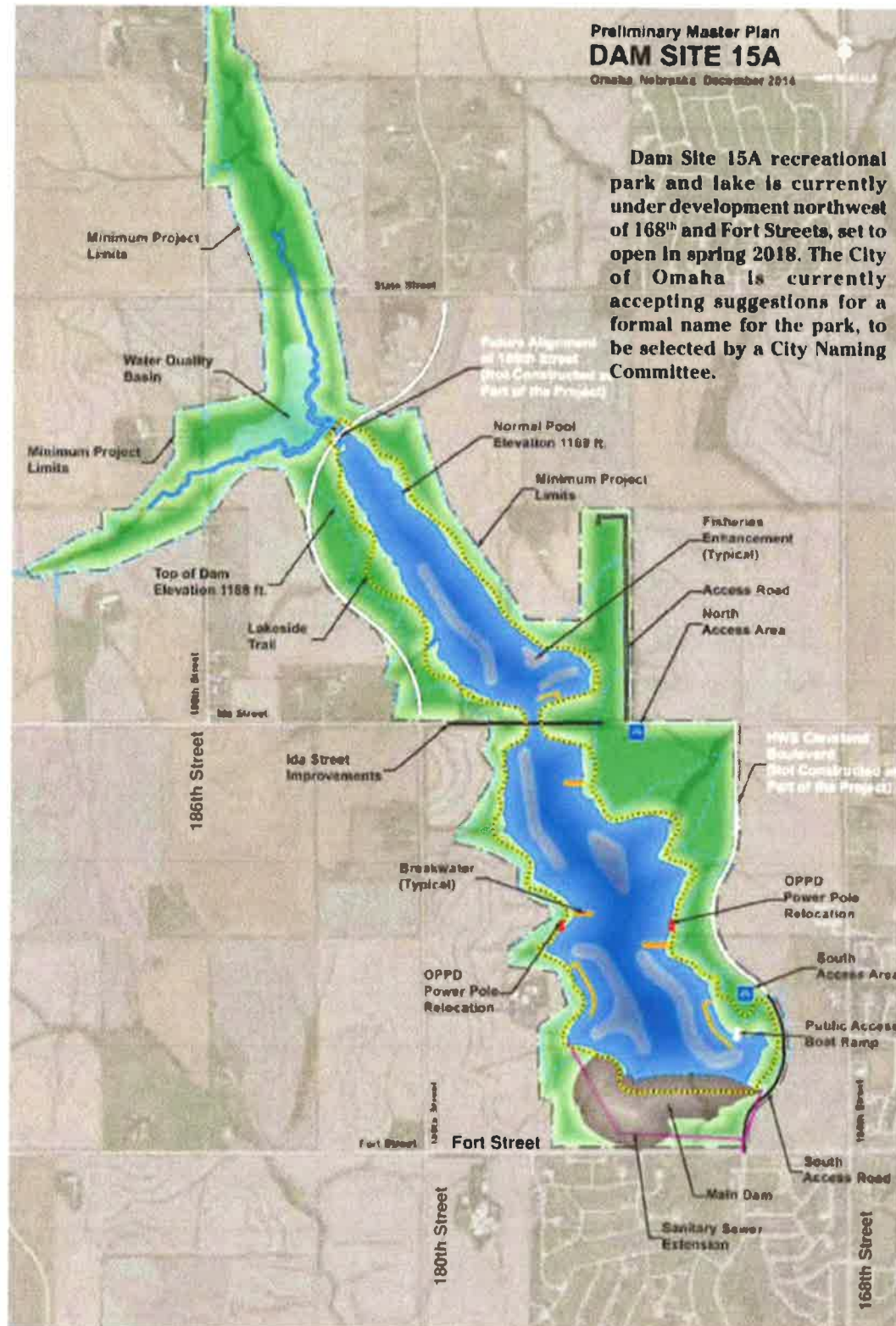
Name suggestions can be emailed to [namethepark@cityofomaha.org](mailto:namethepark@cityofomaha.org).

According to the ordinance guidelines, consideration for the park name should honor and commemorate noteworthy persons associated with the city; celebrate local history, places, events or

culture; strengthen neighborhood identity; or recognize native wildlife, flora, fauna or natural features related to the community and the city.

Other dam sites developed by the NRD and managed by the Omaha Parks, Recreation and Public Property Department include Zorinsky, named for former U.S. Senator and Omaha Mayor Ed Zorinsky; Standing Bear, named for Ponca Chief Standing Bear; Cunningham, named for former U.S. Congressman and Omaha Mayor Glenn Cunningham; and Youngman, named for *Omaha World-Herald* war correspondent Lawrence Youngman. Youngman's daughter was a principal donor to the park.

Suggestions will be accepted until July 24. The City Naming Committee will then meet to select a name and submit their choice to the Omaha City Council to be voted on in August.



# Stothert's proposed \$903 million budget focuses on streets and public safety, offers no tax cuts

- [By Roseann Moring / World-Herald staff writer](#) / July 19, 2017

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert chose more police officers and funding for street repairs over a tax cut in her 2018 budget proposal.

She said she heard those priorities from Omahans during this year's city election.

"Roads, roads, roads," Stothert said. "That's what we've heard all the time."

Stothert said projected county property valuation increases will not be high enough to support a meaningful tax cut. And she said she wasn't able to propose a cut while also funding her other priorities.

Stothert presented her \$903 million budget to the City Council on Tuesday. Next, the council members will hear from constituents and possibly make changes. A public hearing on the budget is scheduled for 7 p.m. Aug. 8 at City Hall, 1819 Farnam St., with a vote scheduled for Aug. 22.

Council President Ben Gray, who represents north Omaha, hadn't had a chance Tuesday to review the whole budget. Generally, he said, he's happy that the mayor beefed up the streets funding. But he wants the city to put more money toward job training programs and demolitions of condemned properties.

Gray also said he's glad that Stothert didn't propose a tax cut.

"We've got more work we've got to do," he said.

Councilman Rich Pahls, who represents southwest Omaha, said he would have liked to see a tax cut. But he said in his initial review of the budget, he agreed with Stothert's priorities.

"If we could (cut taxes), I'm sure the mayor would," he said. "We know what her feelings are, well the council's, too, on property tax."

Stothert proposed that the city add \$1 million for street resurfacing, bringing that total to nearly \$12 million. She also wants to put more money toward brick street repair and upgrading residential streets that weren't built to city standards.

Stothert acknowledged that the city will need to do more to fix its \$800 million problem with streets. But she doesn't have a target annual figure for street spending.

[\[PDF: View the City of Omaha's proposed budget for 2018.\]](#)

The mayor also wants to add 20 police officers and six firefighters, plus civilian employees in those departments.

The additional police officers are part of Stothert's plan to bring the department's full sworn strength from 860 this year to 900 in 2019, when the city intends to open a fifth police precinct in Elkhorn.

The new firefighters would staff a new ambulance, which is going into service this year at the fire station on 144th Street south of West Maple Road.

Overall, discretionary spending in Stothert's budget proposal grows by 4.5 percent, to \$387 million. It's the largest year-over-year spending growth of any of the five budgets she's proposed — in previous years, she said her goal was 3 percent growth or less.

And the budget is not accompanied by a tax cut.

When the Douglas County Assessor's Office announced property valuation increases of nearly 6 percent in Omaha, Stothert said she would propose a rate cut.

But after an amended proposal, the final valuation increase was 2.5 percent in the city. (The city's property tax revenue is projected to grow by more than that — 3.3 percent — because of other increases.)

The valuation increases bring a little more than \$2 million to the general fund.

Those increases alone aren't enough to support a property tax cut of even 1 cent per \$100 of valuation.

"There's really no windfall at all to the city," Stothert said.

And in the overall budget, Stothert said it was more important to boost spending on streets and public safety than to reduce the tax rate next year.

The flat tax rate of 47.922 cents per \$100 of valuation means that property owners who saw their valuations increase this year will receive a higher tax bill.

The owner of a home valued at \$150,000 would pay \$719 annually in city property taxes. The City of Omaha's tax rate is one piece of an Omahan's property tax bill; the county, school districts and other governmental entities make up the rest.

Stothert has also been a vocal opponent of the city's 2.5 percent restaurant tax, but she again made no move to decrease that tax rate.

She said it remains her goal to eliminate that tax, though outrage over it has subsided.

"It's not as much of an issue to people, but to me it's an issue of credibility," she said. "I don't want people to think I say something just to get elected."

Other changes Stothert proposes:

- » Two new library security guards, to be stationed at the Benson and Abrahams branches.
- » an increase in funding for Heartland Workforce Solutions job training, from \$440,000 to \$500,000. Gray said he wants to see that figure grow to \$900,000.
- » A \$757,000 allocation for demolitions. Stothert's plan includes asking donors to provide an additional \$400,000. Gray said he'd like the city to spend at least \$1 million and said he doesn't believe donors will be willing to fill city budget gaps.
- » An increase in funding for the Step-Up summer jobs program to \$1 million, as she had previously said she would do.
- » 10 new Public Works employees and two more in the Planning Department.
- » The city will take over maintenance of Abbott Drive from the Peter Kiewit Foundation, at a cost of \$150,000 a year.

Stothert has also added some projects to the city's six-year Capital Improvement Plan:

- » Improvements to Adams, Mandan, Sunken Gardens and Lawrence Youngman Parks, to be completed in the 2020s.
- » A new southwest Omaha library and a replacement for the downtown branch, both scheduled for 2020.
- » A fifth police precinct, in Elkhorn, in 2019.
- » A midtown parking garage.
- » Street improvements, including Leavenworth Street between 31st and 39th Streets, Pacific Street from 169th to 183rd Streets and intersection improvements at 84th and Dodge Streets.





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# A refuge away from it all

## DESOTO AND BOYER CHUTE UPCOMING EVENTS

All participants in both activities will earn a DeSoto or Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge Junior Manager badge

### FISHING CLINIC

**WHAT:** Kids in kindergarten through age 15 can discover fishing with refuge staff and volunteers; fishing poles, tackle and bait provided

**WHEN:** 9:30-11:30 a.m. Wednesday

**WHERE:** DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. 30 between Missouri Valley, Iowa, and Blair; meet in South Gate area near fishing dock

**COST:** Free

**MORE INFO:** 712-388-4800; desoto@fws.gov; fws.gov/refuge/desoto

### GUIDED NATURE HIKE

**WHAT:** Kids in K-12 invited to learn about ecosystems on 90-minute hike; bring bug spray, water and walking shoes; reservations encouraged, but not required

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. Aug. 5

**WHERE:** Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge, County Road 34 east of Fort Calhoun; meet at main parking lot kiosk

**COST:** Free

**MORE INFO:** 712-388-4800; desoto@fws.gov; fws.gov/refuge/boyer\_chute

## Boyer Chute offers free glimpse into river habitat

BY KATIE ROHMAN

editor@enterprisepub.com

"It's great to be a scientist who investigates poop," Amanda Dague says. "Kids love poop."

A biology major at the University of Nebraska Omaha, Dague is interning at DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges this summer.

She pauses on the trail and bends over to examine some turkey scat. She explains that when it's in the shape of a "J," it comes from

a turkey tom.

"Anything to get kids interested in nature," she says with a laugh.

Dague and volunteer Suzanne Gucciardo led a guided nature hike at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday morning. The refuge will host another guided nature hike, tailored for kids in K-12, at 10 a.m. Aug. 5.

Located east of Fort Calhoun on County Road 34, Boyer Chute is the lesser

SEE REFUGE, 10A

## REFUGE: Boyer Chute offers glimpse into river habitat

FROM PAGE 1A

known of the sister refuges.

DeSoto Refuge, along U.S. Highway 30 between Missouri Valley, Iowa, and Blair, is more visible to passersby. It also has a staffed visitor center and several designated fishing areas with docks.

Boyer Chute Refuge was established in 1992 as the first side-channel restoration project on the Missouri River. The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers worked to restore the area.

The Boyer Chute — or "channel" — is located at the center of the refuge and runs parallel to the river. It carved its path from an island formed by the Boyer River. It was blocked in 1937 to make boat travel easier, but the project disturbed wildlife.

Thousands of acres of floodplain forest, tallgrass prairie and wetlands are protected at Boyer Chute. Visitors may see great blue herons, bald eagles, sev-

eral species of ducks and other birds. Anglers catch a variety of fish: walleye, shovelnose sturgeon, white bass, flathead catfish, drum and, occasionally, even gar and pallid sturgeon.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, explorers Lewis and Clark captured a badger in the area that is now Boyer Chute Refuge. The animal was likely sent back to President Thomas Jefferson.

On the guided hike Saturday, the small group learned about plants like wild licorice, Canada wild rye, sunflowers, goat's rue and germander. Blair resident Linda Ferring caught and released painted lady and monarch butterflies, which the hike leaders examined and discussed.

The rustic North Island Trail, where the group hiked Saturday, is 3.6 miles around the whole loop. The South Island Trail, also accessible from the main entrance, just over the bridge, is 3.5 miles. The

Meadowlark and Oriole trails are each less than a mile. A picnic shelter is located at the start of the Oriole trail.

Gucciardo said the 2011 flood promoted the growth of cottonwood trees at Boyer Chute. Sand "dunes" interspersed throughout the North Island Trail area

may be similar to what a natural Missouri River island resembled.

The guided hike for kids Aug. 5 will focus on ecosystems. Participants are urged to dress appropriately for the outdoors, wear comfortable walking shoes and bring bug spray and plenty of water.

Boyer Chute Refuge is open daily from a half-hour before sunrise until a half-hour after sunset.

A 2.3-mile paved road through the refuge leads to parking areas and restrooms. There is no visitor center or scheduled staff, but two kiosks provide brochures and maps.

The refuge does not have dumpsters or trash bins available, so visitors must "pack in, pack out."

There is no entrance fee or parking permit required at Boyer Chute Refuge. Both are required at DeSoto Refuge.



KATIE ROHMAN | ENTERPRISE

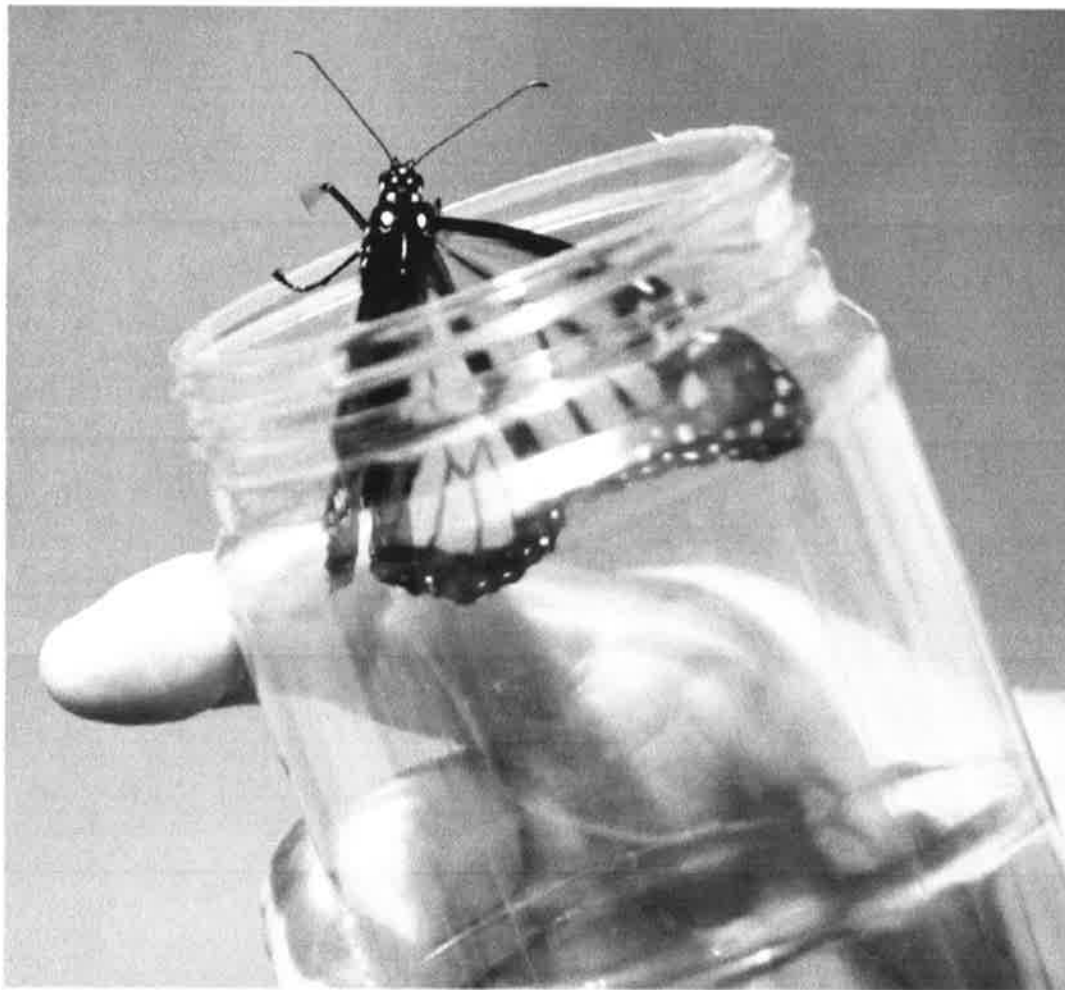
Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Calhoun, hosted a guided hike Saturday. Kids in K-12 are invited to a hike Aug. 5.





Visitors to Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge must "pack in, pack out" trash because dumpsters aren't available.

PHOTOS BY KATE REDMAN/ENTERPRISE



**A monarch butterfly is released from a jar at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday.**



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**Linda Ferring of Blair catches a butterfly at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Calhoun, on Saturday.**



**Linda Ferring of Blair holds a jar containing a painted lady butterfly at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge.**



**Trails at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge begin at the main parking lot and the South Chute parking lot. A picnic shelter with tables is located at the beginning of the Oriole Trail.**



## **Corps reminds public: Missouri River sandbars closed to use**

OMAHA, Neb. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is reminding the public that some sandbars in the Missouri River between Nebraska and South Dakota are closed to recreational use to keep endangered bird species' nests safe.

The Corps says endangered interior least terns and threatened piping plovers are currently nesting on sandbars around the Fort Randall Dam in South Dakota and Ponca State Park in Nebraska. The birds use the sandbars to lay their eggs and hatch chicks.

Corps Senior Program Manager Mark Harberg says closed sandbars are marked with signs warning the public to keep out of the area, but that some signs have been vandalized.

The nesting season runs from mid-May through August.

—Associated Press



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# South Dakota and Nebraska fighting common foe: Zebra mussels

DILLON DWYER

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan

YANKTON, S.D. — Stop aquatic hitchhikers! Zap the zebra! Clean, drain and dry!

You might be familiar with some of these rallying cries if you've recently spent time near Lewis and Clark Lake or the Missouri River along the South Dakota and Nebraska borders. They are references to multiple efforts being deployed to combat the spread of zebra mussels, aquatic invasive mollusks that have made their way into regional waters, the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reported.

"When I started working awareness events nine years ago, the vast majority of people were confused as to why we were doing them," said Paul Lepisto of the Izaak Walton League of America, a wildlife conservation group. "They thought that we didn't have to worry about invasive species in this part of the United States. They had heard about zebra mussels in the Great Lakes, but they were shocked to hear that they were in the Missouri River.

"The fact is that the threat of these things isn't coming anymore. They are here and people have to make changes to the way they do recreation. It doesn't matter if you are fishermen or recreational boater; we all have to work together to keep the water healthy and productive for the next generations."

With zebra mussels making their permanent home in the Missouri River and Lewis and Clark Lake, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and Nebraska

Game and Parks Commissions have stepped up their efforts to educate the public and prevent the further spread of aquatic invaders to other bodies of waters in the regions through the promotion of awareness programs and the enforcement of stricter laws and guidelines regarding boating in both states.

Zebra mussels originated in the Black and Caspian seas near southern Russia and Ukraine, but have since invaded North America, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Sweden by attaching themselves to ships and passing into international waters undetected. One adult female alone can produce 1 million eggs in a lifetime and zebra mussel veliger, or larvae, are microscopic and can attach to almost anything in the water.

"The impact that invasive species have on a body of water once they get in it is nearly irreversible," said Lepisto. "They are virtually impossible to eradicate. The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is so true with zebra mussels. If

we can keep zebra mussels out of our lakes and rivers, those waters will never have to deal with the same problems that hinder recreation in already-contaminated waters."

The main problems caused by zebra mussels are usually related to structural damage. The mussels can range in size from microscopic to nearly two inches long with a tendency to cluster up on structures as they multiply. With the way that they group up together, zebra mussels can

easily clog intake pipes and boat motors. They have also been known to grow on the bodies of other aquatic species like crayfish and native mussels causing them harm.

"The biggest problem with zebra mussels at this point is that they damage infrastructure because they attach and layer up on anything that is in the water for an extended period of time," said Jeff Schuckman

of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

It isn't just structural damage that zebra mussels are causing on parts of the Missouri River, though. It is also relatively unknown yet what impact the mussels will have on native animal and plant species and the overall ecosystem and food chain in the region.

"A zebra mussel can filter up to a liter of water per day," Schuckman said. "If you start to multiply that by the number of zebra mussels out there, that is a pretty big number. We don't know what effect they are having on the phytoplankton and zooplankton levels in the area. They are working at the bottom level of the food chain and could cause disruptions in the future."

One of the ways that Nebraska is working to help educate the public and prevent the spread of zebra mussels is through the implementation of a

\$15 aquatic invasive species stamp that must be purchased by out-of-state boaters before launching their boats into Nebraska waters. While the stamp is required for out-of-state boaters, residents are also

required to pay an extra fee that goes toward the aquatic invasive species program when they register their boats every three years.

"The money from the stamp and fees goes toward paying the wages of invasive species technicians working across the state," Schuckman said. "Right now, in the northeast district of Nebraska, we have three technicians who are responsible for doing boat inspections, handing out literature and collecting veliger samplings."

As a separate measure of defense against the spread of zebra mussels, Nebraska and South Dakota both promote the concepts of cleaning, draining and drying boats before leaving a body of water. The states ask that individuals clean their boats by removing plants, animals and mud from the craft and thoroughly washing all equipment that came into contact with water. Boaters are also asked to drain all water from their wells, bilge, ballast and other equipment before leaving.

If a boat isn't able to completely drain its live well, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recommends a 20-minute soak in vinegar to kill zebra mussel veligers. The final step is to let all equipment dry completely before launching into another body of water. Along with cleaning, draining and drying boats, the states also ask that fishermen dispose of their live bait in the trash and not the water supply.

"I think that people are taking this very seriously now," Lepisto said. "They

are realizing the way we used to do things isn't the way we can do them anymore. The reality of zebra mussels is that now we must involve those extra steps every time we are done enjoying the river to make sure that the future of our recreation stays available. If we clean, drain and dry our equipment every time we come off the water, our chances of spreading zebra mussels is almost none."

Decontamination stations are another way that both Nebraska and South Dakota are working to help prevent the spread of zebra mussels from one body of water to another. The stations are operated by trained technicians and designed to remove both adult zebra mussels and veligers.

"Our technicians conduct a hot flush with 140-degree water for a three-to-four-minute period to kill any veligers and then they power wash any attached mussels," said Schuckman. "We are trying to get boat shops trained to do decontaminations in Nebraska in case we aren't around at the time."

Nebraska laws make it illegal to leave an area with an aquatic invasive species attached to your boat. If a

boat is contaminated by an aquatic invasive species, it has to be decontaminated by the Nebraska Game and Parks or a trained boat shop. The only other option is for that boat to be impounded for up to 30 days.

It is illegal in both South Dakota and Nebraska to transport water from one body to another. Both states are working to further develop their aquatic invasive

species laws and practices to help ensure that lakes, rivers and streams are protected for future use.



**TIM GALLAGHER, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL FILE**

Boaters are shown on Lewis and Clark Lake near Yankton, South Dakota, in 2013. Zebra mussels were recently found on boats at the lake, which feeds into the Missouri River.



## ***Wildlife program intends to save more than animals***

**By Katy Moore**

It could have been a disaster.

Craig resident Ed Olson described the day he nearly lost a lifelong friend to a vehicle collision. At a local intersection, Olson's friend Wayne was unknowingly on a collision course with a semi-trailer.

"He was headed eastbound, and his wife Joan was headed westbound," Olson recounted. "He stopped, and then his wife stopped at the intersection. He thought she stopped for him so he went on through the intersection, and the semi went right after him. 'It sprayed him with gravel, that's how close it was.'"

It was the towering corn, rooted into the corners of the intersection, that prevented Wayne from seeing a full view of all oncoming traffic, Olson explained. It wasn't the first time a near-miss occurred at that location. "There have been other times when we've just held our breath as people went through that intersection," Olson added with concern.

He attributes that day as the main reason he joined the Corners for Wildlife program in Burt County. A collaboration between several local and state entities, the Corners programs aim to increase safety at traffic intersections while also encouraging wildlife habitation. Eastern Nebraska's farm bill wildlife biologist, Scott Schmidt, explained that the Corners program assists local landowners in

setting up wildlife reserves on crop acreage that abuts traffic intersections. The process, he said, couldn't be simpler.

"The application is a simple one-page application," Schmidt said. "If you compare it to the process with any CRP, the eligibility paperwork is a lot of work, but (Corners for Wildlife) is simple and straightforward, in hoping that landowners see the benefit of the program."

The criteria for program qualification is also simple – the land in question must be cropland of one to three acres in size, and has to be located at an intersection. The agreement includes a five-year contractual period in the Corners program. In return, the landowner will receive 75 percent cost-share on seeding and establishment costs for the contracted acreage and a rental rate of \$250 an acre per year.

Olson added that one of the participating organizations, Pheasants Forever, gave him additional assistance in the remaining setup fees on the acre he currently has enrolled in Corners. "It's not costing (me) anything except a little time to get it sowed and maintained," he said.

Schmidt said the Corners participants are free to maintain the plot however they wish, but he encourages weed control to improve establishment of the seed mix and keep the intersection visible. He added that there is no limit to how many

qualifying acres can be entered per landowner, but only 20 acres total can be enrolled each year in the program.

A collaboration between Pheasants Forever Inc., Quails Forever, Nebraska Natural Resources District and Nebraska Game and Parks, the Corners program for Burt and Washington Counties is one-of-a-kind in the state. Whereas other Corners programs in Nebraska are geared toward center pivot irrigation acreage, the Burt/Washington County program was tailored specifically for Eastern Nebraska's landscape and climate, where center pivot irrigation isn't widely used. Additionally, the seed mix for Eastern Nebraska has a large variety of short to midheight native grasses and wildflowers that will sustain local pollinators and wildlife throughout the entire growing season, with emphasis on attracting monarch butterflies, pheasants and quail. Milkweed is vital to the seed mix, Schmidt said, and some of the wildflowers featured are black-eyed Susan, lemon mint, clasp cone-flower, blanket flower, upright cone-flower, western yarrow and wild bergamot.

"When you consider a pheasant chick's diet is 90 percent insects, it's clear that pollinator habitat is also good for pheasants," Schmidt explained. "(Corners for Wildlife) benefits everyone... it provides for the landowner, for wildlife, and

provides for the community in safer roadways."

The first to sign up in Burt County, Olson is in his second year of the Corners for Wildlife program. After some experiments on the Corners acre last year, Olson said his family has ironed out an efficient system in year two and the plot is on track for good growth. He credited the wildlife and conservation agencies involved in the program for being readily available to answer questions and offer assistance as his family worked to make a success of their plot.

"My wife and myself have always enjoyed wildlife on the farm," Olson began, "but with \$7 corn and \$11 soybeans, everything went into production. There are less and less places for wildlife to live. This program is helping wildlife, and \$250 an acre is a no-brainer - why wouldn't you put it in?"

"It just makes sense, that's all there is to it."

For more information about Burt and Washington Counties' Corners for Wildlife program, contact Scott Schmidt at 402-426-2625. Also heavily involved in the conception of this Corners for Wildlife chapter, Terry Schumacher with the Papio-Missouri River NRD can be reached at 402-426-2415. Schmidt and Schumacher can also be found in the Blair USDA Service Center at 1060 Wilbur St., Blair, Neb.

# What's in a name? A possible snub, say NRD board members miffed about naming of new park

- By Natalia Alamdari / World-Herald staff writer/July 27, 2017

It seemed like a simple, feel-good story.

A new park was set to open, and the city was seeking name suggestions from the public.

But for some board members of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, news of the naming contest for what's currently known as Dam Site 15A came as an unexpected blow.

The NRD, which developed and paid for the \$44 million project as part of a flood-control reservoir, had already suggested a name to the city six months earlier.

When it opens next spring, the 220-acre lake and 475 acres of parkland northwest of 168th and Fort Streets will be managed by the City Parks Department, as the city and the NRD agreed to in 2012. That agreement included ceding naming rights to the city.

But at a January board meeting, the district submitted a resolution to the city, recommending that the site be named after Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte, a 19th-century Omaha doctor recognized as the first Native American to earn a medical degree.

Then on July 6, the city announced it would take public suggestions for naming the park. It received about 200 suggestions.

Although the NRD's resolution was nonbinding, the city's decision to seek other names was still a surprise, member Jim Thompson said.

"It's a \$44 million project," Thompson said. "The city didn't build it, we did. We did all the work. I kind of think they owe it to us."

Fellow board member Larry Bradley echoed Thompson.

"After the NRD did all the heavy lifting to create the lake, the city snubbed the NRD's request," Bradley said.

The Mayor's Office said the contest was meant to build engagement with the public ahead of the park's opening.

"Mayor Stothert always wants to engage the public," spokeswoman Carrie Murphy said. "Input on all topics is valuable."

On July 7, the day after the Mayor's Office announced the call for name suggestions, the NRD submitted a second recommendation to the city, in order to be officially considered when the City Naming Committee meets Monday.

The committee will evaluate the names and present an official recommendation to the City Council by mid-August. This will be the first park the committee has named since its formation in 2012.

John Winkler, NRD general manager, said all the district can do is wait for the city to go through the outlined naming process.

“You have the naming rights, you have our suggestion,” said Winkler. “Whatever you choose, you choose. It’s theirs to name.”

Thompson said if the city goes with a different name, he’ll evaluate interlocal agreements more carefully in the future. He cited the millions the NRD has contributed to city projects in the past.

“You give the city money for a major project like that, you kind of hope they’ll pay attention,” Thompson said. “It’ll be kind of a slap in the face, to be honest with you.”

Thompson came up with the idea for naming the park after Picotte after reading an article about her life.

Picotte graduated from medical school in 1889. She turned down job offers in big cities and returned to Nebraska, where she was the only doctor treating Omaha Indian patients.

Thompson and Bradley have shared their suggestion of naming the new park after Picotte with tribal elders in the area.

“Some of these elders want to know why, after the NRD wished to name the lake after Susan La Flesche Picotte, the city seemed to ignore that request and put it out for a naming contest,” Bradley said.

The city accepted suggestions through Monday and sent members of the naming committee the full list on Tuesday, along with the NRD’s July 7 letter and January resolution.

Before Tuesday, committee member Marc Kraft said he hadn’t heard the NRD’s recommendation. When told about it, he said he had not heard of Picotte, but said he thought it was an idea worth considering.

“I think that we have to see what the committee is comparing it to, but it’s nice because Native Americans have so often been overlooked, today and so dramatically in the past,” Kraft said.

There are already a park and school named after Picotte, but Thompson said she deserves more.

“What a wonderful contribution to the state of Nebraska,” Thompson said. “We’re basically telling the city, ‘Here, we’ll make the decision easy for you.’ Nobody is going to say, ‘Geez, why did you have to name it after her?’ ”



FIRST IN THE  
WORLD-HERALD

# Sarpy asks state to raise valuations in Douglas

Sarpy board chairman says  
petition highlights inequity  
that hurts taxpayers

By EMILY NITCHER  
AND CHRISTOPHER BURBACH  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS

The Sarpy County Board is trying to change residential property valuations in neighboring Douglas County.

In a rare move, the board has petitioned the state's Tax Equalization and Review Commission to force Douglas County to raise its median property valuation to 96 percent of market value, matching Sarpy County.

In its petition, filed this week, Sarpy County cited a letter from state Property Tax Administrator Ruth Sorensen and the uniformity clause of the Nebraska Constitution.

If successful, such a move could add thousands of dollars to the valuations of homes across Douglas County.

But it's not clear whether Sarpy County can even make such a request.

Sorensen, who has held the position since 2007, said she has never seen a county petition to raise valuations in another county. As of Thursday afternoon, Sorensen said she had not seen Sarpy County's petition.

The commission is set to have a hearing this morning to determine whether the commission has juris-

See Valuations: Page 2

## Valuations: Douglas County will fight Sarpy's petition

Continued from Page 1

diction to make adjustments to property in Douglas County at the request of Sarpy County.

Sarpy County Board members have long complained that the differences between the two counties' assessment practices have led to Sarpy County residents paying more into shared entities such as the Omaha, Millard and Gretna school districts, the Learning Community and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Sarpy County Board Chairman Don Kelly said the county's goal was not to have punitive action taken against Douglas County residents but to highlight a problem that has existed for a long time and needs to be corrected.

"I'm not poking Douglas County in the eye," Kelly said. "It's not a Douglas County issue. It's a state issue. Everything they're doing is probably in compliance with state statutes. But those state statutes are too broad."

Douglas County will oppose Sarpy County's request. Representatives of the Douglas County Attorney's Office planned to appear at today's hearing.

Douglas County Board Chair Mary Ann Borgeson said Sarpy County and Douglas County have different housing markets, and the difference in percentage of market valuations doesn't necessarily mean the taxes are unequal between the counties.

Asked about Kelly's assertion that the valuations mean Sarpy taxpayers are paying more than

their fair share, Borgeson said, "He's gotta do what he's gotta do for his taxpayers, and I'm doing what I've gotta do for ours. It's not as black and white as they (Sarpy County Board members) are trying to make it."

Douglas County Assessor Diane Battiatto declined to comment, saying she had not read the petition. Sarpy County Assessor Dan Pittman also declined to weigh in.

Sarpy County's move continues a year of controversy over Douglas County property valuations.

Douglas County's 2017 valuations landed at the current level because of complaints from taxpayers and several Douglas County Board members about Battiatto's preliminary valuations. Those would have included large increases on many homes in Omaha and surrounding suburbs.

Douglas County's preliminary 2017 valuations would have put the county as a whole at 99 percent of actual value. Under pressure from the County Board and taxpayers, Battiatto agreed to lower the increases to make the new valuations more palatable. She then adjusted residential property valuations so the county would be at 93 percent of market value.

Borgeson said there "probably are" properties in Douglas County whose property tax valuations are too low. The county is working toward correcting that, she said, but it wasn't fair to taxpayers to do so in one year by raising valuations 25 to 30 percent.

The Tax Equalization and Review Commission ruled in May that Battiatto's final valuations

meet state law, which requires a county's median property valuation to be between 92 and 100 percent of market value.

In Sarpy County, residential property is valued at 96 percent of market value. Pittman has said he aims for property to be assessed in the middle of the range.

Sarpy County Board members have argued that everyone should be shooting for the same number.

Jim Warren, another member of the Sarpy County Board, said the board is taking the issue to the tax review commission as the state suggested.

Warren was referring to a letter the board received in March from Sorensen after a previous complaint. That letter said the board could consider a specific statute "which provides the county board of equalization an opportunity to petition the TERC for an adjustment to a class or subclass of property to ensure equalization within the county and across county lines."

The letter is the first exhibit in the county's petition.

Kelly, chairman of the Sarpy County Board, said the fundamental goal of Sarpy's petition is to get a discussion about property valuations started.

"This is an issue of equalization or lack thereof and we want the state to step in and fix it," Kelly said. "We feel like in Sarpy County our constitutional rights are being trampled on by the state."

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# Farmer suicides rise in India as climate warms, study shows

- By KATY DAIGLE Associated Press/August 1, 2017 Updated Aug 1, 2017

NEW DELHI (AP) — When Rani's husband died by drinking pesticide, he left the family in debt. But even if they could pay off the loans, Rani said their farming days are over.

"There are no rains," said the 44-year-old woman from drought-stricken Tamil Nadu, one of hundreds of farmers protesting in the capital for more government support. "Even for drinking, we get water only once in 10 days."

A study suggests India will see more such tragedies as climate change brings hotter temperatures that damage crops and exacerbate drought. For every 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming above 20 degrees C (68 degrees F) during the growing season in India, there are 67 more suicides on average, according to the findings published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, or PNAS.

The message "is that farming is an inherently risky occupation, with annual incomes often held hostage to the weather, and it's getting riskier in the era of climate change," said Vikram Patel, an Indian psychiatrist and mental health expert with Harvard Medical School in Boston who was not involved in the study.

Experts said the study's findings should raise alarms, especially with India's average temperatures expected to rise another 3 degrees C (5.4 degrees F) by 2050. That will bring more erratic weather events, more drought and stronger storms.

"Anything that will affect occupational stability is going to affect farmers' mental health," Patel said.

Farming has always been considered a high-risk profession, and a single damaged harvest can drive some to desperation. With agriculture supporting more than half of India's 1.3 billion people, farmers have long been seen as the heart and soul of the country. But they've also seen their economic clout diminish over the last three decades. Once accounting for a third of India's gross domestic product, they now contribute only 15 percent of India's \$2.26 billion economy.

There are many factors that can contribute to suicide, including poor crop yields, financial devastation or debt, access to easy methods of self-harm, or a lack of community support. In India, many farmers will drink toxic pesticides as a way out of backbreaking debt, with the government in some cases guaranteeing monetary aid to their surviving families. That provides a perverse incentive for suicide, "rewarding people who end their lives by paying family compensation, but only if they die," Patel said.

"We may not be able to stop the world from warming, but that doesn't mean we can't do something to address suicide," including providing more financial stability and paying more attention to mental health, he said.

The study released Monday should make those efforts even more urgent, experts said.

"It provides evidence for a causal pathway — from unfavorable weather to poor crop yields to rural misery to increased suicide," said Dr. Howard Frumkin, a University of Washington environmental health professor who was not involved in the study. "With climate change bringing increasingly chaotic weather in many places, this causal pathway is likely to intensify."

India's farms are already hit regularly by strong storms, extreme drought, heat waves and other extreme weather events. Some still rely on rainfall rather than irrigation to water their crops. Scientists have shown that extreme weather events are already increasing as the planet warms.

For the study, researcher Tamma Carleton looked at suicide data from India's National Crime Records Bureau between 1967 and 2013, along with data on agricultural crop yields and on temperature change.

"I estimate that warming temperature trends over the last three decades have already been responsible for over 59,000 suicides throughout India," writes Carleton, who studies agriculture and resource economics at the University of California, Berkeley. In other words, warmer temperatures were a factor accounting for a 6.8 percent increase in suicides, the study says.

She noted limitations in the study, including an inability to differentiate between urban and rural suicides because the crime records bureau only began classifying farmer suicides in 1995. Other experts also noted that the actual number of suicides may be higher than the crime database counted, but said these concerns were unlikely to undermine the study's core findings.

India's farmers, often complaining about being ignored, hold frequent protests to demand better crop prices, more loan waivers and even water delivery systems to guarantee irrigation during dry spells. Sometimes, they stage sit-ins or dump truckloads of vegetables onto highways to disrupt traffic.

For the past month, hundreds of farmers — some carrying human skulls they say are from farmers who committed suicide in the drought-stricken southern state of Tamil Nadu — have been staging what they say will be a 100-day protest in a central New Delhi square to "prevent the suicide of farmers who feed the nation."

The government recently introduced legislation to subsidize crop insurance aimed at reducing some of the financial risk faced by farmers who take out loans to buy seeds and agrochemicals. But experts note there is almost no discussion about mental health as it relates to India's farming community.

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told lawmakers Thursday there were 11,458 farmer suicides in 2016 — the lowest number in two decades. It was also a year of mild temperatures and normal monsoon rains.

He acknowledged that the number of farmer suicides had gone up by about 9 percent in each of the previous two years, both of which were marred by drought. The crime bureau found that 58 percent of the 12,602 farmer suicides in 2015 were driven by bankruptcy, indebtedness and other farming-related issues. Most of the victims were marginal cultivators or small-farm holders with less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land.

"Suicides occur due to extreme economic despair," said M.S. Swaminathan, a geneticist whose work on high-yield rice and wheat crops helped drive India's Green Revolution in the 1960s. His research in the late 1980s found that a 1 degree C (1.8 degree F) temperature rise reduced a crop's duration by about one week, causing losses in the overall weight of harvest. His foundation works to find farming solutions not only to rising heat, but also to drought or salinity from coastal sea rise. Given these growing risks, he said, government policy has a large role to play.

"Suitable crop insurance and a prompt compensation of losses due to climate-related factors will help to avoid a sense of hopelessness that leads to suicide," Swaminathan said.

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Follow Katy Daigle on Twitter at [twitter.com/katydaigle](https://twitter.com/katydaigle)

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# Water main to Cargill fails

## System connection feeds city's south tower

BY KATIE ROHMAN

editor@enterprisepub.com

Emergency measures were taken to connect to rural water systems after a 30-inch transmission water main from the City of Blair to Car-

gill failed Friday night.

The main was repaired and back in service as of mid-morning Sunday. Al Schoemaker, director of Public Works for the City of Blair, said the break occurred at the water treatment

plant.

"We are still cleaning up and putting things back, which will take most of the week, but none of these activities affect the water main," he said Monday.

The water main break

didn't impact Blair residents because the water main is dedicated to Cargill, Schoemaker confirmed.

The city supplied

**SEE CARGILL, 5A**

# CARGILL: System connection feeds city's south tower

FROM PAGE 1A

water for the plant from its other mains and the south water tower. This resulted in a strain on the city's ability to pump water up the hill to feed the tower.

A connection between the Washington County Rural Water 1 and 2 systems was established in 2009 to provide the City of Blair with a backup water source, explained John Winkler, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District (PMRNRD).

Water from Washington County Rural Water 1 was used to help fill the south tower. Winkler said a couple of fire hydrants were accessed using a fire department pumper truck.

The PMRNRD water mains were flushed. The Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD) and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services were notified.

"The rest of Blair was not in any danger of losing water, as we were able to keep all of the reservoirs full during over the weekend," Schoemaker said. "The back flow from MUD through PMRNRD rural water was precautionary."

Winkler said the water main has been fixed and the connection process "performed as designed."

"It's huge because it's a redundancy for the City of Blair if there's a tornado or another disaster ... they have it available," he said. "We consider that a big success for something that had only been tested."

"Obviously, water's important to everyone all of the time, and when you turn on the tap, you expect it to be there," Winkler said.

The PMRNRD will buy the water from the MUD, and the city will reimburse the PMRNRD. Schoemaker said the amount of water involved "will not be significant" because the back flow was less than 24 hours and at 500 gallons per minute.



## Sarpy growth plan on areas outside cities

By Eugene Curtin

*Times Associate Editor*

The 2017 Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan outlining a 20-year program for building out Sarpy County was forwarded to the Sarpy County Board July 18 by the Sarpy County Planning Commission.

The plan focuses entirely on developing unincorporated areas outside the jurisdiction of the county's five cities, areas over which the county has direct planning and zoning authority.

Sarpy County Planning and Building Director Bruce Fountain told planning commissioners the plan was developed in cooperation with representatives from all five cities, and that special focus was given to areas on the periphery of the cities. Those areas will eventually be annexed by the nearest city, he said, and the county wants to prepare them in ways most likely to support plans drawn up by the cities.

The plan's executive summary positions it as "a unified vision" and an "umbrella document" for building out all of Sarpy County, including the cities, while recognizing planning commitments made by the cities, other governmental bodies and even community organizations.

The portion of the county over which Sarpy County government has sole jurisdiction is rapidly

shrinking. A map included in the comprehensive plan shows the cities of Bellevue, Papillion, La Vista, Gretna and Springfield now have zoning and planning jurisdiction over about 80 percent of the county's developable land that sits above a geographical ridge line that runs from Gretna in the west to the Missouri River. Development south of that ridge line is hampered by the absence of sewer infrastructure.

It is that area where the county maintains most of its jurisdiction, and where the comprehensive plan focuses its attention.

Very little of it sits in the vicinity of the City of Bellevue, whose zoning jurisdiction now extends south to within a few miles of the Platte River.

A much larger portion sits south of Papillion between approximately 48th and 120th streets.

Most of it sits south of Interstate 80 west of Springfield and south of Gretna to the Platte River.

The plan divides county land into four zones — a conservation zone, an urban reserve zone, an urban development zone and a rural development zone.

An urban reserve zone reserves land for urban development until infrastructure is in place that will support urban growth. Most of the land that sits south of Papillion and between Papillion, Springfield and Gretna is

so designated.

Undeveloped land sitting above the ridge line, roughly from 144th Street west to 204th Street and north of Interstate 80, is designated for immediate urban development.

Tom Ackley, commission chairman, urged county planners to be more embracing when investing the county's infrastructure dollars. He said the county, which has made economic development a primary goal, should take a countywide approach and assist economic development even if opportunities arise within the boundaries or within the extra-territorial jurisdictions of the cities.

Ackley, who is also a member of the Bellevue Planning Commission, said 5,000 acres of developable industrial land is located south of Offutt Air Force Base. While the land sits within the City of Bellevue's zoning jurisdiction, it is part of Sarpy County and the county should recognize that fact, he said.

"It is critical that we install sewer infrastructure below the ridge line if that area is to develop," Ackley said.

"But we also have prime industrial areas inside the limits of the municipalities, and unless the county expends some money with the municipalities, development in those areas is just not going to happen."



# OPINION

DOUGLAS-SARPY ISSUE

## Be careful on valuation policy

Omaha World-Herald

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2017 PAGE 4B

Terry Krueger, Publisher • Cate Polson, Editorial Page Editor • Mike Reilly, Vice President for News  
Editorial Staff: Jeff Koterba, Aaron Sanderford, Caitrice Simmons, Tim O'Brien

State law gives Nebraska counties leeway in how they handle their property valuations. By law, a county's median valuation needs to be between 92 to 100 percent of a property's market value.

That range is a long-familiar part of county government in Nebraska. One result is that the median valuations in neighboring counties won't necessarily be the same percentage of market value.

The Tax Equalization and Review Commission responded appropriately after the Sarpy County Board asked it to force Douglas County to match Sarpy's approach. This year, Sarpy County's median valuation was at 96 percent of market value, while Douglas County's was at 93 percent. Sarpy officials argue that that difference is unfair to Sarpy residents when it comes to funding multi-county entities, including certain school districts, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

and the Learning Community.

The commission rightly said relevant state statutes give it no authority to take the action requested by Sarpy County: "In the face of such plain statutory language and clear meaning, the argument is without merit."

Under state law, Douglas County is operating within proper bounds. It's a local government making decisions based on its own interests as it sees them. Sarpy County government is doing the same.

Whether Nebraska should require the same valuation approach in neighboring counties would be a policy decision for the Legislature.

Such a change, however, would break from longstanding practice and affect far more than just Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

Lawmakers should tread carefully before imposing requirements that could have ramifications well beyond this particular Douglas-Sarpy matter.



# **Omaha World Herald Editorial: New Omaha park is the city's to name**

- World-Herald editorial/Aug 2, 2017

Some members of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District are unhappy the City of Omaha didn't accept their unsolicited suggestion for naming a new park near 168th and Fort Streets.

NRD board member Jim Thompson asserted that the city should defer to the NRD on the name because the NRD approved the flood-prevention project. "It's a \$44 million project. The city didn't build it, we did," Thompson said. "We did all the work. I kind of think they owe it to us."

He's wrong. The NRD contractually agreed that the city would name the park. Moreover, this park isn't the NRD's property. It belongs to the public — the taxpayers footing the bill.

Board members' complaints come across as petty, especially in light of Mayor Jean Stothert decision to seek public nominations for the name. The city announced Tuesday that Flanagan Lake, in honor of Boys Town's Father Edward Flanagan, was the most popular name based on public recommendations.

The Papio-Missouri River NRD does a commendable job protecting six eastern Nebraska counties from flooding. But board members need to fulfill the NRD's contractual obligations and remember that they serve the public — not the other way around.

# **Increases in Papillion, La Vista budget proposals reflect major construction projects in Sarpy County**

- [By Hailey Konnath / World-Herald staff writer](#)/August 4, 2017

Papillion and La Vista both introduced proposed budgets at council meetings this week that highlight the major construction projects going on in Sarpy County.

Papillion's proposed total budget is \$93.4 million — up from the \$65.8 million budget approved last year.

The increase in the 2017-2018 budget largely stems from construction of the new \$45 million community center, which the city will mostly pay for using a voter-approved half-cent sales tax increase. That increase went into effect Jan. 1 of this year.

The budget includes a general fund of \$26.8 million. The 2016-2017 general fund was \$24.5 million.

La Vista's budget is biennial, so a two-year budget was adopted in 2016. At Wednesday's meeting, an amendment was introduced that would increase the budget for 2017-2018 from \$101 million to \$102 million.

The 2016-2017 budget totaled \$74.1 million. This year's increase comes from major projects, including the [redevelopment of 84th Street](#) and infrastructure for the [Nebraska Multisport Complex](#).

The cost of the 84th Street project will be covered by sales tax revenue earmarked for that redevelopment. The half-cent sales tax increase was approved by voters in 2014.

The general fund for the upcoming year is budgeted at \$18.8 million. The 2016-2017 budget had a general fund of \$17.2 million.

In both cities' budgets, the property tax levy would stay the same. Papillion's levy is 45 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, and La Vista's is 55 cents per \$100. While the cities' levies won't change, a city makes up only one part of a property owner's tax bill. And an owner's tax bill will still rise if the property's valuation increases.

An ordinance amending Papillion's 2016-2017 budget also was introduced at the City Council meeting on Tuesday. The amendment reflects an extra \$8.8 million in costs tied to cleanup from storms and removal and replacement of the Washington Street bridge.

But it would be offset by a \$9.2 million increase in revenues from "unforeseen" grants, donations and an annexation.

Papillion and La Vista's budget ordinances will require two more readings before they can be adopted.

[hailey.konnath@owh.com](mailto:hailey.konnath@owh.com), 402-444-1216



[http://www.omaha.com/news/nebraska/trump-nominates-steve-grasz-for-th-u-s-circuit-court/article\\_220c225a-7883-5cc4-8214-25e0f92b4f23.html](http://www.omaha.com/news/nebraska/trump-nominates-steve-grasz-for-th-u-s-circuit-court/article_220c225a-7883-5cc4-8214-25e0f92b4f23.html)

## Trump nominates Steve Grasz for 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

By Joseph Morton / World-Herald Bureau Aug 4, 2017 Updated 2 hrs ago



Steve Grasz, a Nebraska attorney, nominated by President Trump to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has nominated Steve Grasz to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit.

The nomination was applauded by Sens. Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, both Nebraska Republicans, who recommended Grasz for the seat.

Grasz must be confirmed by the Senate.

Grasz currently serves as senior counsel at Husch Blackwell LLP in Omaha. He previously served as Nebraska's chief deputy attorney general.

Joe Morton

**Stauss, Jennifer**

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**From:** Scott Stronck <skinzfan23@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 29, 2017 9:59 AM  
**To:** Papio website admins  
**Subject:** Dam Site 15A Naming

I am writing in response to the recent Omaha World Herald article regarding naming rights to the newest dam site.

I think it is absolutely ridiculous that board is whining about the city's decision to open up naming rights to the citizens of Omaha and surrounding communities (the people who will use the park in the first place). Might I remind you that the board and it's entity is funded solely by property taxes which come from the homeowner. Don't forget who is paying the bills. If the board members were privately funding these with their own resources, I can understand the frustration, but as it is, the taxpayer has every right to be a part of the naming decision.

It is so easy to spend other people's money but you need to remember who is paying for your salary and projects that you take on.

Sincerely,

Scott Stronck

**Tait, Jean**

---

**Subject:** FW: Park Naming Process and Information

**From:** Mark Welsch [<mailto:nfpomaha1970@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 08, 2017 12:00 PM

**To:** Stauss, Jennifer <[jstauss@papiionrd.org](mailto:jstauss@papiionrd.org)>

**Subject:** Fwd: Park Naming Process and Information

Dear Jennifer,

Would you please forward this note to all NRD board members and senior staff?

My contact information is below. If there is anything anyone thinks of that I can do to help get Dam Site 15A named after Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte, please let me know.

I have communicated with Mayor Stothert and have asked my City Council Member, Chris Jerram, to return my call so we can talk about this.

I strongly support the name for Dam Site 15A that was recommended by the NRD board to the City of Omaha. Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte, the first Native American doctor, would be a great name for this park. Native people I've talked with say that this land was stolen from them a long time ago. And now, they feel like a name for the park, honoring one of their people, is being stolen from them as well.

The City of Omaha seems to be trying to name Dam Site 15A as quickly as possible, even though it won't be open to the public for almost a year. I've included an email I just received from Carrie Murphy, in Mayor Stothert's office, below my signature.

Mayor Jean Stothert announced a naming contest that was supposed to "generate public interest in the park." However, that process was "open" for 18 days. The winning name of that contest got 28 votes. That might be the number of people in a small Catholic family who got together and submitted their recommendations. Considering that Omaha has a population of 447,000 people, it's absurd that 28 would be considered a majority vote.

The result of the contest makes me think that they didn't try very hard to generate public interest in naming the park. In a city of almost half a million people, they should have easily gotten many times that number of votes for a name.

The way to contact the Omaha Parks and Recreation Board is listed on their webpage <https://parks.cityofomaha.org/park-planning/parks-and-recreation-advisory-board>

[Submittal procedures](#) are provided to assist the public in preparing documents and presentations for the Board. Questions: Contact Dennis E. Bryers, FASLA, PLA, Landscape Architect-Park & Recreation Planner, (402) 444-3798 or [Dennis.Bryers@cityofomaha.org](mailto:Dennis.Bryers@cityofomaha.org). If he is unavailable and you need assistance, try 402-444-4915.

All the best,

Mark Welsch, Omaha Coordinator, Nebraskans for Peace

and  
Co-Leader, Citizens' Climate Lobby - Omaha Chapter  
P.O. Box 6418  
Omaha, NE 68106  
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[NFPomaha1970@Gmail.com](mailto:NFPomaha1970@Gmail.com)  
[www.NebraskansforPeace.org](http://www.NebraskansforPeace.org)  
[www.CitizensClimateLobby.org](http://www.CitizensClimateLobby.org)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Carrie E. Murphy (Mayr)** <[carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org](mailto:carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org)>  
Date: Tue, Aug 8, 2017 at 9:56 AM  
Subject: Re: Park Naming Process and Information  
To: Mark Welsch <[nfpomaha1970@gmail.com](mailto:nfpomaha1970@gmail.com)>  
Cc: "Brook K. Bench (PMtc)" <[Brook.Bench@cityofomaha.org](mailto:Brook.Bench@cityofomaha.org)>, "Elizabeth Butler (CClk)" <[elizabeth.butler@cityofomaha.org](mailto:elizabeth.butler@cityofomaha.org)>

Good Morning Mark.

I believe this is the information you are asking for

The attached spreadsheet lists the city parks, locations, and size. If there is historical data about how parks were named, it will be in paper files in the parks department. If you want to go through those files, Brook Bench can arrange that for you. I spoke to Brook today and copied him on this email so he knows you may contact him about the individual park files

This is information about the board provided by Dennis Bryers in the Parks Division:

"The by-laws for the Omaha Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (copy attached) state that all meetings are open to the public, but non-members may address the Board only by permission of the Chairperson and not for over ten minutes on any one subject, unless the Board shall agree to grant a longer time.

The Omaha Municipal Code Charter does list what the board shall be required to do (see attached). The Board acts as the liaison between the community and the Parks, Recreation & Public Property Department so a citizen could file a request to address the Board on a specific topic/project, assuming the request is received two weeks prior to the board meeting. The two week requirement is to provide time for the park staff to review the submission, get comments back to the applicant and prepare a staff report that becomes part of the board member package that is mailed out to the board members prior to the meeting. With the special meeting set for Thursday, August 24th, submissions would have to be received no later than Thursday, August 10, 2017."

I can't answer your question about when each local media outlet reported on the naming process.

Regarding the board members and terms, the list on the city website which I attached in my last message is current and correct. The paper copy I sent was old. The members with terms expiring are in the process of reappointment or replacement and all terms will be current when the board meets.

The NRD is scheduled to transfer ownership of the property to the City on or approximately September 1, therefore the timeline was established to officially name the property during the month of September. We learned yesterday that the parks Board will meet 8/24.

If you have additional requests for documents, I ask that you make your request through the City Clerk, Elizabeth Butler. This is the standard process for making records requests, and the Clerk will either respond or direct your request to the appropriate department.

Carrie Murphy  
Office of the Mayor  
Deputy Chief of Staff/Communications  
[402-444-3520](tel:402-444-3520)  
[carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org](mailto:carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org)

On Fri, Aug 4, 2017 at 4:25 PM, Mark Welsch <[nfpomaha1970@gmail.com](mailto:nfpomaha1970@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Carrie,

Thank you for sending. A lot of the eight pieces of information I requested in my email below, dated July 31, 2017. I'm looking forward to getting the rest of the information.

I'd like to modify number 6 on my list to get an Excel file with all of the City Park's names along with their addresses and sizes. If that file has the information requested in number 7, the history of the person or family behind the name of the park, that would be appreciated.

I found this City website about the Parks and Recreation Board, <https://parks.cityofomaha.org/park-planning/parks-and-recreation-advisory-board> It states: "Board meetings are open to the public in accordance with the State of Nebraska Open Meeting Act." This website shows that the public has to submit information to this board two weeks before their meetings. I know that my Native friends and I want to submit information to this board before their next meeting.

Because their next scheduled meeting will happen very soon, I hope they do not rush this process and have an earlier meeting.

Could you please explain to me why the Parks and Recreation Board meetings are required to be open to the public in accordance with the state law, but the Naming Committee Board is not?

That website lists the names of the people on the Parks and Recreation Board, where and when the board meets and says their meetings are open to the public. So, unless any of that changes, I have the answers to numbers 2, 3 and 4 on my list.

Please let me know why you say it is likely that this board will meet this month instead of waiting until their published meeting next month on September 7, 2017, just a month from now? What is the hurry to have an earlier meeting? The park is not scheduled to open until the spring of 2018.

This process of selecting a name for the park seems like it is being rushed very quickly, and the public isn't being given very much time to even be informed. Receiving only 203 suggested names from a city with nearly half a million people is not a very big number.

There was not enough time for neighborhood associations and other groups to publish information about this contest in their newsletters so their members could enter the contest. Besides the one story in the Omaha World Herald on July 7th, where else was the public able to learn about it? Was it published in the Omaha Star in North Omaha, the South Omaha Paper, Nuestro Mundo or the Jewish Press? These are not daily papers, so it takes them longer to publish information that is sent to them. When was the contest mentioned on KPAO, Omaha's Public Access channel on Cox TV Channel 22 or on KFAB, KOIL or any other local radio stations or on any of the TV stations?

On the Park Department's website, <https://parks.cityofomaha.org/parks>, I clicked on the "Park and Recreation Finder", on the left side of the page, and was sent to this URL: <https://www.dogis.org/parksfinder/> This has a lot of information about all City Parks. Is there an Excel file that was used to create this website that could be sent to me?

Thank you very much for your help,

Mark Welsch, Omaha Coordinator, Nebraskans for Peace  
and  
Co-Leader, Citizens' Climate Lobby - Omaha Chapter  
P.O. Box 6418  
Omaha, NE 68106  
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[www.CitizensClimateLobby.org](http://www.CitizensClimateLobby.org)

On Fri, Aug 4, 2017 at 12:04 PM, Carrie E. Murphy (Mayr) <[carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org](mailto:carrie.murphy@cityofomaha.org)> wrote:

Hi Mark-

Here is most of the information you have requested.

The attachment is a spread sheet of the Parks and Recreation Board members. Mr. Meadows term has expired and we will be appointing a replacement for him. All boards and commission members are also listed on the Mayor's website, this is the link to the Parks and Rec board page: <https://mayors-office.cityofomaha.org/2-uncategorised/205-parks-recreation-board>

I checked with the City Attorney's office about open meetings and providing board contact information. The meetings are public meetings, however there is not a public comment opportunity. The personal contact information of the members is not public record.

A date for a special meeting has not been set yet.

I am still waiting to get the spreadsheet of the parks, but in the meantime you can find a lot of park info in the Discovery Guide; <https://parks.cityofomaha.org/images/dg2017FINALspreadSmall.pdf>

Carrie

<Omaha Parks List.pdf>

<Muni Code for Park Board.docx>

<Park Board By-Laws.pdf>