

Litch, Monte amped up for state. B1.

WILLMAR, MINN.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2024 - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2024

WCTTRIB.COM

For second time, Swift County rejects moratorium on wind power

BY TOM CHERVENY
West Central Tribune

BENSON — For a second time, the Swift County Board of Commissioners has rejected calls for a moratorium on wind power development.

A motion by Commissioner Larry Mahoney, of Appleton, calling for a moratorium of up to one year, failed to get a second and died as a result. The commissioner offered the motion Tuesday after about two dozen people attended the commissioners' meeting.

Eight offered comments, some favoring and some opposing a moratorium. The commissioners previously rejected calls for a wind power moratorium in May. They chose instead to appoint a renewable energy committee to review the county's nearly two-decade-old ordinance for wind and solar power. That committee has met twice, and will continue to meet, but is not under a specified timeline to make any recommendations, according to information at the meeting.

In making his motion in support of a moratorium, Mahoney said there were 410 signatures on a petition asking for one. A large renewable energy company, Apex Clean Energy, is proposing what it describes as a potential 400-megawatt wind farm

in western Swift County.

It would provide power to the grid by connecting to a proposed 345-kilovolt transmission line that Otter Tail Power and Missouri River Energy Systems are planning to build as the Big Stone South to Alexandria project.

"My comment is this," said Mahoney when introducing his motion. "Whether it's Jennifer, Tyler, Scott, Bernard or Dennis, the reaction has been nearly the same. They are stunned, there's disbelief, and they're unaware and then upset when they find out a contract has been signed up for wind around their home."

He said the county's environmental services director advised the commissioners last spring that "wind can divide a community, and it has."

Marilyn Anderson, of Appleton, was among the citizens asking for a moratorium.

"We know the turbines are coming, but we don't want them on our front steps," she said.

A moratorium would give the county time to look at revising setback regulations to protect residents and landowners, she and others told the commissioners.

Opponents of a moratorium pointed out that the county already has

WIND on A2



Tom Cherveney / West Central Tribune

About two dozen citizens attend the Swift County Board of Commissioners meeting on Tuesday with eight of them speaking for or against a proposed moratorium on wind power development. The commissioners took no action on a moratorium after a motion in favor of a moratorium by Commissioner Larry Mahoney failed to get a second.



Tom Cherveney / West Central Tribune

Jolene Carlson, with the Minnesota Soil Health Association and a licensed nutritionist, spoke on the link between soil health and nutrition to students participating in the Youth Eco Solutions fall summit at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center on Oct. 9.

Youth Eco Solutions helps students build our future

BY TOM CHERVENY
West Central Tribune

SPICER

We can't know the future, but we can help those who will make it.

That's Kalley Pratt's role as the director of Youth Eco Solutions, or YES. She believes it is important to give the middle and high school students involved with YES as much opportunity as possible to pursue what is important to them, and the voice to decide it.

"I believe they are the future and what they want to do matters," she told the West Central Tribune. "If they are passionate about it, they are going to do it."

Pratt spoke as roughly 120 students from eight of the 10 schools participating in YES this year gathered on the grounds of the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center on Oct. 9 for their fall summit, the kickoff to the year's activities.

With help from a variety of partners, the students took part in hands-on activities and workshops to learn about

everything from the importance of pollinators and native prairie to soil health. There were team-building exercises on the challenge course, and the opportunity to be inspired.

Emily Ford, who came to the attention of the outdoor community when she solo hiked the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin during the winter of 2021, addressed the students to show that the outdoors are for everyone.

New London-Spicer and MACCRAY are among the local schools participating in Youth Eco Solutions. The summit at Prairie Woods also brought students from schools in locations as dispersed as Mankato, Duluth, Westbrook-Walnut Grove and Royalton.

The students at each of these schools will be deciding on projects in their home communities. They will "put their fingerprints" on the environmental challenges they want to tackle, according to Pratt.

Students from the Harbor City International

YES on A2



Tom Cherveney / West Central Tribune

Students participating in the Youth Eco Solutions fall summit at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center on Oct. 9 took on the climbing wall as part of a team-building activity led by Cameron Kalkbrenner with Prairie Woods.

Q&A: How do we know if our Minnesota elections are secure?

BY MARY MURPHY
Forum News Service

ST. PAUL — Election tampering and voter fraud — they're common



Simon

concerns ahead of the Nov. 5 general election. What is being done in Minnesota to prevent it, and to keep elections secure? Minnesota election officials explain.

Information is according to the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office

and Minnesota election judges who spoke at a public testing of election tabulators in Blaine, Minnesota, on Thursday, Oct. 17.

Q: Is ballot harvesting legal in Minnesota?

A: Ballot harvesting is legal in Minnesota. This means someone can turn in your ballot for you. Absentee ballots have extra protections and go through extra screening to prevent any type of forgery or cheating; checking that another registered Minnesota voter signed your ballot

as a witness, checking that the name and address match what was on the absentee application, and checking that the ID matches the absentee application. Public databases that document deaths in the state also help ensure that someone isn't filling out the ballot of someone who is deceased or has moved.

Q: Why can people vote without their ID?

A: You need to have an ID when you register. Once you are registered, election officials have a photo of you and your information that they

confirm at your polling place, but you must go to the correct polling place, which you can check here.

So, if someone who is registered comes in without an ID, judges will have a copy of their ID and a photo of them in their database. But if they were never a registered voter, or if they haven't voted in four years, they won't be able to vote without an ID.

Q: Can undocumented immigrants vote?

A: No, undocumented immigrants cannot vote

in Minnesota. You must be a U.S. citizen to vote. While Minnesota's new automatic voter registration says that people who receive a Minnesota state-issued ID can be automatically registered, and the Minnesota Legislature also just passed a law allowing undocumented immigrants to get their driver's licenses, there is an exception for non-citizens.

If the DMV worker sees that a Minnesota resident is not able to show U.S. citizenship while receiving their driver's license, they will not be

automatically registered to vote. Automatic registrations are also cross-checked by humans.

Q: Why are some people mailed a ballot automatically?

A: In counties that are hyper-rural, and where there may not be a proper polling place nearby, the state automatically mails ballots to affected individuals. In all other cases, people are not mailed ballots automatically unless they have opted in to do so on the Secretary of State's website.

Q&A on A2



Scan for E-Paper
7 days a week

Weather A2
Opinion A4
Faith A5

Obituaries A8
Business A11
Sports B1

Classified B3
Extra C1
Comics C3

VOLUME 97, EDITION 249
\$2.00



7 85186 00141 5

WIND

CONTINUED from A1

started the process of reviewing its renewable energy ordinance to take into consideration the larger sizes of today's wind turbines. They also noted that utility-sized projects such as the June-grass Wind project proposed in Swift County by Apex Clean Energy are permitted by the state, and not the local government.

Bonita Ascheman, of Holloway, was among those who spoke against a

moratorium. She said people who signed the petition asking for a moratorium were not informed or aware that the county already has a committee looking at possible changes. She said the negativity about wind power has been "unfair and dangerous" for the county.

Dan Smith, also of Holloway, said wind power represents an important opportunity for economic development in the county. He suggested there has been too much fear-mongering, and said that state regulators do a thorough

job of using setbacks and other rules to protect residents. He likened the current opposition to wind power to the opposition that agricultural irrigation met in the 1970s.

"Very contentious, we understand that," Commissioner Gary Hendrickx, of Appleton, said of the wind power issue in the county. He thanked those who offered views on both sides, and said the county will "do our due diligence" in reviewing its ordinances.

Anna Hays, representing Apex Clean Energy,

said the company is aware of the sensitivity of the issue in the county. The company plans to outline its proposed June-grass Wind project to the Swift County Board in the near future. It will be opening an office in Benson in a couple of weeks.

She also emphasized that there is a lot of time to work on assuring what's best for the community. Current plans for the project call for not erecting the first turbine until 2030, according to Hays.

StormTRACKER



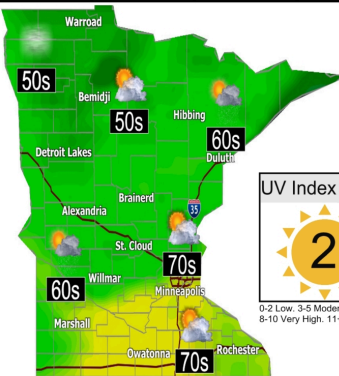
Dillon Vogt, Robert Poynter, Lydia Blume, John Wheeler, Chief Meteorologist, Jesse Ritka, Charles Pekar, Robert Daley

Get the latest weather news and alerts with up-to-date forecasts, current and future radar and more with the Stormtracker app.

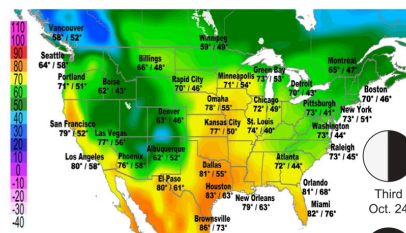


WILLMAR FORECAST

Saturday 62/48 AM Showers Wind: W 8 mph	Sunday 80/56 Sunny Wind: SW 15 mph	Monday 80/55 Partly Cloudy Wind: S 15 mph	Tuesday 71/39 Partly Cloudy Wind: W 12 mph
Wednesday 50/30 Partly Cloudy Wind: NW 16 mph	Thursday 58/34 Partly Cloudy Wind: SW 10 mph	Friday 61/45 Mostly Sunny Wind: S 11 mph	Saturday 68/45 Partly Cloudy Wind: SW 12 mph



Regional Weather	Today	Hi	Lo	Tomorrow	Hi	Lo
Bemidji, MN	58	47	73	49	61	61
Duluth, MN	60	50	74	54	82	60
Eau Claire, WI	74	54	81	57	74	57
Fargo, ND	64	48	77	50	67	51
International Falls, MN	95	45	71	43	64	48
Marshall, MN	67	50	81	61	81	61
Minneapolis, MN	71	54	82	60	74	57
Rochester, MN	74	57	81	58	81	58
Sioux Falls, SD	67	51	82	58	81	58
St. Cloud, MN	64	48	80	57	64	48



StormTRACKER Forecast
Clouds clear throughout the day and staying mild. Highs in the low 60s with more sunshine and 70s Sunday.

Almanac Through 6 pm Friday	High	Low	Third Oct. 24
Friday	72°	50°	New Nov. 1
Avg. Wind Direction Friday	S		First Nov. 8
Peak Wind Speed Friday	15 mph		Full Nov. 15



YES
CONTINUED from A1

School in Duluth are interested in water quality issues.

Students at the Royalton High School are focused on our prairie landscape. They are in the midst of a multi-year prairie restoration project, Pratt explained.

While learning was the focus of the fall summit, it was also an opportunity for the students to build friendships and camaraderie with like-minded peers, Pratt pointed out.

Prairie Woods and the Southwest Initiative Foundation launched YES as the "Youth Energy Summit" program for schools in 2007. Its early focus was on energy. Students took on projects such as installing solar panels and improving energy efficiency,

including a project by the New London-Spicer team to make possible a \$45,000 investment in improving the energy efficiency of the Little Theatre Auditorium.

YES teams have also built passive solar greenhouses at the schools in both New London-Spicer and Lac qui Parle Valley. They've taken on community wide recycling projects and found ways to save energy and reduce food wastes with projects in their own schools.

Today, the change in name to Youth Eco Solutions reflects the broadening of the goals to address a wide range of environmental issues, explained Pratt. As before, it is a volunteer program for schools that wish to participate.

It's about science, taking on projects, and even civic engagement. One of this year's projects will



Tom Cherveny / West Central Tribune
Scott Glup, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office in Litchfield, helped students identify native prairie plants during a program as part of the Youth Eco Solutions fall summit at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center on Oct. 9.

include a session on how students can engage with their legislators.

The program, as part of Prairie Woods, is made possible thanks to funding from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. It uses a

portion of the proceeds from the state lottery. Voters will be deciding this November whether or not to continue the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which originally was approved in 1988.

Q&A

CONTINUED from A1

Q: How does Minnesota know when a registered voter has died or moved?

A: "It's a question I get pretty frequently," said Secretary of State Steve Simon. "People will say, 'Well, what about people who are deceased?' We subscribe to and regularly filter all the millions of records through not one, but two death databases. Not a very chipper and happy subject, of course, but we subscribe to both the Social Security death index and the Minnesota Department of Health death index."

Regarding voters who have moved out of state or haven't voted in Minnesota in four years, those individuals' registrations are automatically deactivated, but Simon said that nationally, the states partner with each other to frequently cross-check registrations as well.

Q: How does Minnesota make sure voters don't vote both absentee and in-person?

A: "The poll books work in conjunction with data from Anoka County, so folks that vote absentee, that information is quickly sent to Anoka County and then uploaded to those poll books in real time," said Kathy Sorenson, head election judge at Anoka County. "So we make sure that no one does try to go to the polling place after they've submitted their absentee ballot."

When voters check in, judges are able to see this data and whether someone has already voted, Sorenson explained.

Q: Who are election judges, and how can I trust them?

A: Any eligible voter in Minnesota can be an election judge, though there are a few exceptions: no family members can work together as election judges in the same polling place, and a candidate for office can't work at a polling place where they are on the ballot.

"They are your neighbors, your friends, your people that you know in the community, and they

deserve our respect and admiration for taking the time to do this important work fairly, accurately, and lawfully," Simon said of election workers.

Minnesota State law requires that all county election boards have both Republican and Democrat Judges, and that any decision, like a certification of a signature, is made by two judges of each party. Judges can also never perform a duty alone — they must be accompanied by someone else to enter any area where ballots are stored.

Q: Where does my ballot go, start to finish?

A: If you vote by absentee, your ballot is mailed out from your county's office and directly to the address you gave on your absentee application. When you return it in the mail, the ballot is returned to the county's office, the address that appears on the yellow envelope for your absentee ballot. There, county officials will review your ballot by checking signatures and other voter information. If your ballot is accepted, officials will eventually insert your ballot into a tabulator machine to record your vote.

If you vote in person or are dropping off your absentee ballot in person, once your ballot is completely filled out, you can insert it yourself into the tabulator machine. Voters can hear the sound of their ballot dropping into the tabulator when they insert it, and can visually see if it was counted.

Minnesota state law says that after the results are recorded by the tabulator, the results must be reported from each polling place to the county by some physical means, whether that is the disk from the tabulator that records all the results or the receipt-looking tape that prints out of each machine with results. Minnesota also has a strict "no internet" law to prevent tampering of results as they're recorded, meaning the tabulators do not operate on any kind of internet connection.

After unofficial results are submitted, election judges will open the tabulator machines and

securely store the ballots in each county's office building.

Around a week after every election, when unofficial results have been submitted, all 87 counties conduct post-election reviews, where they recount ballots from randomly selected precincts by hand. A precinct where 2,000 or more ballots were cast is allowed a 5-vote differentiation from what tabulators recorded. After the recount, results are made official by the State Canvassing Board.

All ballots used for these reviews are then returned to the county office, where they will be securely stored for two years. After the two-year period, ballots are shredded. Any room where ballots are stored is locked and surveyed at all times. Only county officials have keys to these rooms, and nobody can go into these rooms without another person present.

Q: How common is it for people to cheat in Minnesota elections?

A: According to data from the Minnesota Judicial Branch, provided by the Secretary of State's Office, in 2023, five people in Minnesota were convicted of "ineligible voter knowingly votes." In 2022, five again, and in 2021, six.

The Experience We Need. The Values We Trust.

SCOTT VAN BINSBERGEN
FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

"I will defend our rural values in St. Paul."

VOTE
November 5
VOTE EARLY NOW

Want more information on voting? mnnvotes.org

Prepared and paid for by Scott for MN, SVforMN.com

the VAULT
Explore true crime stories.

wctrib.com/newsletter

West Central Tribune

wctrib.com
A Division of Forum Communications Company

Postmaster: Send any address changes to: West Central Tribune, PO Box 839, Willmar, MN 56201-0839

Editor: Kelly J. Boldan
Editor / Site Manager
kboldan@wctrib.com

Controller: Tammie Brooks
tbrooks@wctrib.com

Advertising Manager: Christie Steffel
csteffel@wctrib.com

Office hours: Monday to Thursday: 9 a.m. to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.; Friday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Newsroom: Contact during office hours or email: News@wctrib.com

Customer Service: (888-598-3162)
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, memberservices@wctrib.com

Classified ads: (320-235-6766)
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, classads@wctrib.com

Vol. 97 No. 249
(USPS 675080)
ISSN: 2834-6882 (print) and 2834-6890 (digital).

Publishing: The West Central Tribune publishes print and digital e-paper editions on Wednesdays and Saturdays and a digital e-paper edition Mondays through Saturdays. The Tribune publishes online at wctrib.com seven days a week. The newspaper is published by West Central Tribune at 2208 Trott Ave. SW, Willmar, Minnesota, 56201.

Membership Rates
Wednesday & Saturday Mail Delivery + Digital All Access: \$269.89 per year / \$24.99 per month
Digital All Access: \$148.00 per year / \$13.99 per month
Call for additional information.

EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE STATED HEREIN OR REQUIRED BY APPLICABLE LAW, YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FEE IS NONREFUNDABLE. If you cancel your subscription, you are not entitled to receive any refund or credits for the time remaining in your Billing Period, and you will continue to have access to your subscription until the end of your current Billing Period (unless we provide you with a refund or credit).