THE SUN AND NEWS
Your Hometown Newspaper Serving the Middleville, Caledonia and Gaines Township Areas
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STORMS COULDN'T STOP ASHES & ARROWS SHOW
PAGE 9



Locals pack downtown Caledonia for Celebration on Main

Karen Turko-Ebright
Staff Writer

The Celebration on Main descended upon Caledonia for the second year last week on Wednesday, Aug. 6 and Thursday, Aug. 7.

Sarah Buer, who is in her first year serving as chair of the Enhancement Committee for the event, said the celebration has proven to be a success. "Last year was our very first Celebration on Main," she said. "I was involved in some of the planning and volunteered on the day of the event. After seeing how special it was for the community, I was excited to step into a bigger role this year."

The celebration on Main Street in Caledonia is spread over two days. This year's event drew in a larger crowd than last year, according to event organizers. The festivities included a car show and Family Tavern Cruise Night, Taste of Caledonia displaying tasty treats, Brink's Ice Cream Express, Sugar Momma's Bakery, Farmgirl Cake Pops and more.

In addition to the festivities, live music from Easy Idle String Band served as a soundtrack during the event. On Thursday, there was fun for the whole family including a tractor show, a farm animal pet and play area, Caledonia Farmers Market and the Pet Parade, plus live music from Candid Antics.

Buer said the first day of the event is always a highlight with a car show and the Taste of Caledonia, where local restaurants and food trucks serve up delicious samples. This year included face painting, dance activities for kids and a performance by the Caledonia Dance & Music Center dancers.

"The vibe was incredible. Main Street was absolutely packed. At times, it was even hard to make your way through the crowd," Buer said. "We easily had over 1,000 people out enjoying the evening (Aug. 6), which really shows how much our community loves coming together."

See **CELEBRATION** on 6



Organizers say Caledonia's Celebration on Main would not be a success without volunteers. From left: Enhancement Committee Chair Sara Buer, Caledonia Village President Jennifer Lindsey and Mindy Brink, owner of Brink's Ice Cream Express. **Photo by Curtis Brink**

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Sun and News building for sale

HASTINGS — View Newspaper Group, owner of 22 community newspapers including the *Sun and News*, is pleased to announce they will be relocating to a new office space following the sale of their current space on M-43 in Hastings.

"When View Newspaper Group acquired the *Sun and News*, the current office space for the newspaper was not part of the sale. As such, we knew a move would be in our future," said View Newspaper Group Publisher Wes Smith. "The current owners of the building announced recently their intention to sell the space. Some readers have contacted our team asking if the paper is also for sale. To be clear, the sale only relates to the building. View Newspaper Group and its 22 locally-owned, locally-connected newspapers are not for sale and not going anywhere. We are proud to be your community connection and look forward to serving readers for generations to come."

Smith added that the new office space will be near the current office space and more details will be announced when available.

Questions about the building can be directed to the number on the for sale sign located on the property.

Questions regarding View Newspaper Group can be directed to Brand Manager Emily Caswell at ecaswell@mihomepaper.com.

— *Molly Macleod*

Middleville man receives new, reduced sentence

Dennis Mansfield
Staff Writer

A Middleville man will still be serving years in a Michigan correctional facility, but that stay might now be shorter than originally anticipated and much shorter than some would have liked.

Scott Raymond Handley, 55, of Middleville was sentenced to 57 to 180 months in prison, with 938 days credit for time already served, during a hearing before Judge Michael Schipper in Barry County District Court on Tuesday, Aug. 12. That was after previously having entered a plea of no contest to a felony charge of operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated causing death in April 2023.

Tuesday's hearing was actually the second time Schipper had sentenced Handley to prison for his role in the death of 62-year-old Jenison resident Matthew Fuller, who perished in a head-on crash on M-37, near Whitmore Road in Rutland Township, on Jan. 27, 2023.

According to previous news reports, an investigation by the Barry County Sheriff's Office indicated Handley was driving a Chevrolet Silverado truck eastbound on M-37 when it crossed the center line and slammed head-on into a westbound Ford Transit van driven by Fuller, who was killed instantly.

Handley allegedly had a blood alcohol level of 0.16 at the time of the crash. In Michigan, operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 or more is illegal.

At the original sentencing hearing in July 2023, Schipper sentenced Handley to 120 to 180 months in prison. That despite a recommendation by the county's Probation Department for a sentence of 29 to 57 months.

But Handley received somewhat of a reprieve from the Michigan Court of Appeals, which issued a ruling in November 2024 to vacate the sentence and remand the case back to the local court.

Jessica Payne, an assistant prosecuting attorney with the Barry County Prosecutor's Office, provided Schipper with a photo of Fuller at the start of Tuesday's hearing.

"I have to speak for the (Fuller) family," Payne said. "They want you to remember that just isn't a name.



Scott Handley of Middleville turns and apologizes to the family of Matthew Fuller, who died in a fatal wreck caused by Handley, during his 2023 sentencing hearing. Handley was resentenced to 57 to 180 months in prison, with 938 days credit for time already served, during a hearing before Judge Michael Schipper on Tuesday, Aug. 12. **File photo**

"This did not just take the life of a good man; it took a whole family," she added. "To them, he was very much murdered. They feel strongly about that."

According to Payne, Handley still needed to be held responsible for Fuller's death, having allegedly been found "highly intoxicated" and "with drugs in his system" at the time of the fatal crash.

"This was not an accident," Schipper said. "It was (Handley's) decision to drink and his decision to drive.

"It wasn't murder. It wasn't an accident," the judge added. "It was something in between."

Fuller's wife, Kim, said that drinking was a "lifestyle" for Handley and questioned whether he'd change, even after being sentenced to prison.

"I'm not OK," she added. "I got sentenced to life."

Schipper apologized to her and the Fuller family "for the whole system" that he said reduces the loss of a family member to a number.

"Is 15 years enough?" he said. "It's not going to seem right."

However, Handley's defense attorney, Susan Walsh, said he suffered from alcoholism and had used marijuana to deal with previous work-related injuries.

"He did not ask for this disorder," Walsh said.

But Schipper said alcoholism should not be an excuse for a person to commit a crime, nor should it be compared to any "real" diseases, such as cancer.

"I just think that's an offense to people with real diseases," the judge said. "That's not what (alcoholism) is.

"He chose to drink that day and he chose to drive," he added. "And, he put people at risk. He killed someone."

Schipper stated he wanted to reinstate Handley's original sentence for 10-15 years in prison, believing it was appropriate. However, he said he believed the state court would simply reassign the case to another court if he

See **REDUCED** on 5

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Developer provides update on possible housing project

Jayson Bussa
Contributing Writer

Development plans for a proposed housing development at 36 State Street in Middleville are coming into focus, though a purchase agreement for the property has not yet been finalized.

Greg Taylor, senior development specialist for Grand Rapids-based CopperRock, attended the Middleville Village Council meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 12, to provide an update on the project, which would be located adjacent to Thornapple Valley Church along the Thornapple River.

The preliminary development would include two, three-story apartment buildings. In total, it would include around 42 units.

"Coincidentally, it's about a 42,000-square-foot development that our architects have indicated would be necessary for the scope of the project," Taylor said. "It would probably take about 15 months to fully develop from ground breaking."

CopperRock recently broke ground on a 135-unit complex along the river in Hastings, as well. Taylor added that the development firm would use a similar model for the Middleville project, albeit, on a smaller scale.

"We're very open to exploring other ways to integrate this project with other village amenities, whether it be a walking path or anything else along the river side to help attract people downtown," he said. "We're excited and ready to mobilize on that."

The village, its attorney and CopperRock have gone back and forth on the purchase agreement, which is pending a few final clarifications, according to reports.

Brighton-based company to install new playground equipment at Calvin Hill Park

Jayson Bussa
Contributing Writer

The Middleville Village Council voted to get out its checkbook at its meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 12, approving two significant purchases.

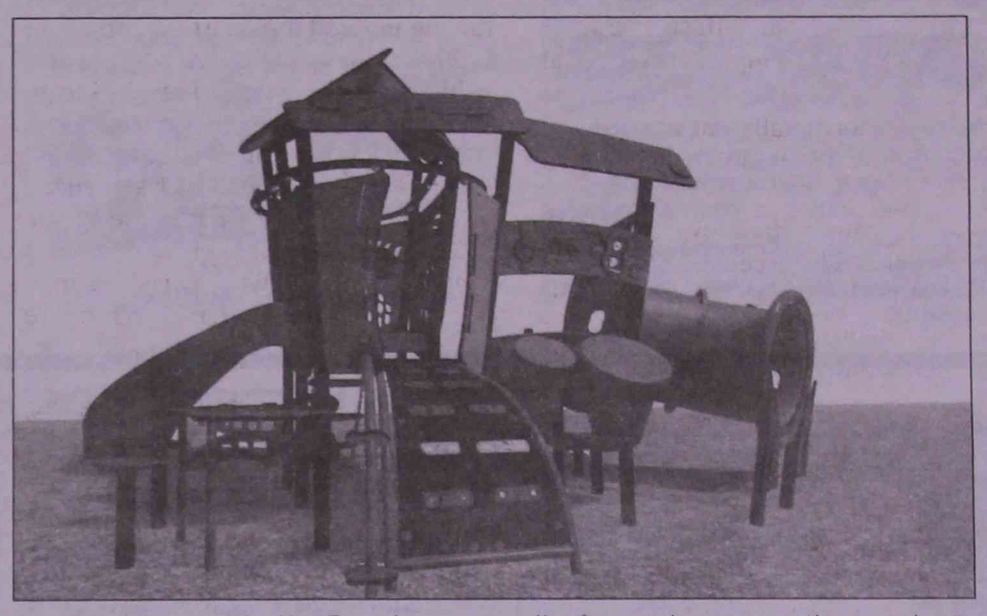
After kicking around the idea for a long time, council members gave a thumbs up to a proposal that will bring new playground equipment to Calvin Hill Park.

"We've discussed improving the Calvin Hill Park over and over again and I think this is a good move in terms of public structures and gathering spaces," Village President Kevin Smith said. "I feel like that side of town is not well served and I think this would be a boon for that. I hear a lot from families who take their kids there."

Council members heard from representatives from Brighton-based Penchura, which will bring in the new playground equipment after the village pulls out the current, outdated equipment.

In June, the village council reviewed design proposals for three different vendors before choosing Penchura. The council approved up to $163,000 from the Parks and Recreation budget for Penchura to carry out the work.

A private donor has pledged $15,000 to help defray costs associated with the project. The village also applied for a Barry County Parks and Recreation Grant for another $15,000, but was unsuccessful.



A rendering provided by Penchura, a retailer for outdoor recreation products based out of Brighton, provides a look at the type of playground equipment that will be installed at Calvin Hill Park in Middleville. **Courtesy photo**

Also, at Tuesday's meeting, village officials OK'd spending more than $176,000 on a new leaf vacuum system.

The council approved a measure to work through the MIDeal program — where the state teams with municipalities to source equipment at reduced prices — to purchase the equipment used in the village's annual leaf pickup service.

The village will not receive the equipment, which still has to be built, until next year.

"The village provides a lot of really great services to the residents," Smith said. "Picking up leaves and brush, it's a lot more than just doing those tasks. It's extremely expensive.

"The leaf vac system breaks down frequently and is very expensive to maintain. … These are very highly specialized pieces of equipment."

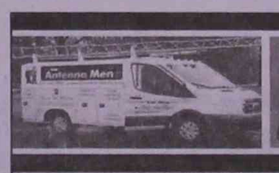
The current leaf vac system, purchased in 2001, has far exceeded its useful life, according to village officials. But, it requires extensive maintenance, including installation of a new engine in 2015.

The new purchase is expected to save time, labor and maintenance costs. While the current truck requires five individuals to operate, the new truck reportedly would need

See **PLAYGROUND** on 4

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MIDDLEVILLE
TOPS 546

The Aug. 11 meeting opened with roll call and the secretary's report. There are two fish in the fishbowl.

Maryellen's program was from the March/April TOPS magazine titled "Working Out to Stay Sharp." Experts recommend getting at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity every week. There are many benefits to exercising. It helps you maintain healthy weight by burning fat, keeps your heart healthy, helps to build muscle mass, strengthens bones, improves flexibility and range of motion, helps with balance and can improve brain health. When you exercise, molecules are sent into your bloodstream and get your cells ready to take on the physical stress of exercise. It also seems to withstand the effects of aging. Some molecules boost cognitive function. It's OK to start small. A little bit goes a long way.

Chapter members continued the contest by filling in one dot for each one-tenth of a pound lost.

Virginia won the Ha-Ha Box.

The meeting ended with marching in place as the group recited the TOPS pledge.

TOPS, a weight-loss support group, meets every Monday at Lincoln Meadows in Middleville. Weigh-in is from 3:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., followed immediately by the meeting. Press the white buzzer for entry.

The chapter is looking for anyone interested in a group that supports weight-loss journeys without shame.

Anyone with questions may call Virginia, 269-908-8036, or Maryellen, 616-318-3545. The first meeting is free.

PLAYGROUND
Continued from Page 3

only two. Also, the new equipment will have three times the fill capacity as the current model.

The village got a quote for the equipment back on July 8 for $171,000 but the quote was only good for 45 days. The cost has since ballooned to nearly $183,000, though the dealer was willing to split the difference.

The purchase was planned for next year, but accelerated due to the dire condition of the current equipment. Due to the acceleration of the purchase, Smith cautioned that the village may have to sacrifice a capital improvement elsewhere.

Officials stated that leaf removal is important to the village in order to keep dead leaves from clogging storm drains.

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Caledonia woman sentenced for lying to authorities during campaign finance probe

Molly Macleod
Editor

A Caledonia woman was sentenced this week to 3 months of reporting probation, 20 hours of community service and a $2,500 fine for providing false information to authorities during their investigation of a campaign finance issue that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sandra Baxter, a 65-year-old Republican fundraiser, admitted to giving a false statement to a peace officer during a criminal investigation in June. Judge James Jamo in the Ingham County 30th Circuit Court sentenced Baxter with the maximum punishment allowed by law.

The case stems from a campaign finance complaint filed in 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. A movement known as Unlock Michigan sought to place a ballot proposal before voters that would repeal the 1945 Emergency Powers of the Governor Act, which Governor Gretchen Whitmer used to issue emergency orders throughout the pandemic.

Campaign finance laws require that the names of donors contributing to ballot initiatives be made public to avoid dark money donations. However, a complaint was filed alleging that donors circumvented this requirement by contributing first to nonprofit organizations, which then donated to the campaign.

Baxter solicited donations for a nonprofit called Michigan! My Michigan!, which had ties to former State Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and the group Michigan Citizens for Fiscal Responsibility.

During the investigation, Baxter was asked about her role in fundraising. Under oath, she claimed that she did not have a working relationship with Shirkey, which investigators found to be false.

Because of that false statement, Baxter was originally charged with perjury, a more serious offense that carries stricter penalties.

She ultimately pled guilty to the lesser charge.

"For too long, dark money has operated in the shadows of Lansing with little accountability," Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said. "The Unlock Michigan investigation shed light on corruption in campaign finance that was long considered common practice. Fair elections depend on transparency and honesty, and attempts to skirt the system or mislead law enforcement and the people of Michigan will not be tolerated."

—Contributing Writer Jayson Bussa contributed to this report.

REDUCED

Continued from Page 2

did so and did not want the local court to lose its oversight of the case.

"I can disagree with it, but it is what it is," Schipper said. "It's sad.

"I don't know if this is grace for you," he added, in addressing Handley directly. "It's not coming from my heart."

During Tuesday's hearing, Handley stood to apologize to members of Fuller's family, stating he couldn't express the grief and remorse he felt since the fatal crash.

"I'm very, very sorry," Handley said. "I'm hoping you someday can accept my apology."

It was not a sentiment that was well-received by Kim Fuller.

"Today is not your day," she said.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the July 16, 2025 Township Board of Trustees Meeting that were approved on August 6, 2025, are posted at the Township Offices at 8196 Broadmoor Ave., and on the website at www.caledoniatownship.org.

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Dancers from the Caledonia Dance & Music Center shone at Celebration on the Main in Caledonia last week. Pictured here are (bottom row) Sophia Delarosa, (middle row, from left) Mariana Joseph, Emma McIntosh, Mylee Grinnell, (top row) Kinlee Giegling, Demi Sonza and Sophia LaHaie.



With a tiger painted on his face, five-year-old Teddy Buer had friends guessing his name at Celebration on Main in Caledonia. **Photos by Sarah Buer**

CELEBRATION

Continued from Page 1

Celebration on Main could not happen without volunteers and support from the community, Buer said.

Planning for the event is a lot of work, but Buer has help and started planning over three months ago. There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work that happens before the big day, so getting an early start is key, Buer said.

"It truly takes a village to make a village event great. On the day of the event, I had around 35 incredible volunteers helping to bring everything together.

"But the work starts long before that—since May, I've been meeting once or sometimes twice a month with a group of about 10 dedicated Main Street business owners and council members to plan and coordinate every detail.

"Everyone involved, from volunteers to planners to community partners, plays an important role in making Celebration on Main such a success. I'm so grateful for each and every one of them."

Additionally, Buer said the volunteers she worked with were instrumental in making sure that Celebration on the Main ran smoothly.

Besides volunteering for her community, Buer works at her family's business, Buer Well Drilling, on Main Street. She said it means a lot to her to help create an event that brings the community together.

Between committee work, two other jobs, and raising two kids, life stays busy for Buer, but she said what makes it all worth it — being a part of something that celebrates Caledonia and strengthens community connections.

Buer said it has been incredible to see local businesses step up, whether by contributing financially, volunteering their time, or just showing up to support the event.

"Celebration on Main wouldn't be possible without them. It's a beautiful reminder of how important it is to come together as a community and celebrate our town," Buer said. "Events like this help strengthen the connections that make Caledonia such a special place to live and work."



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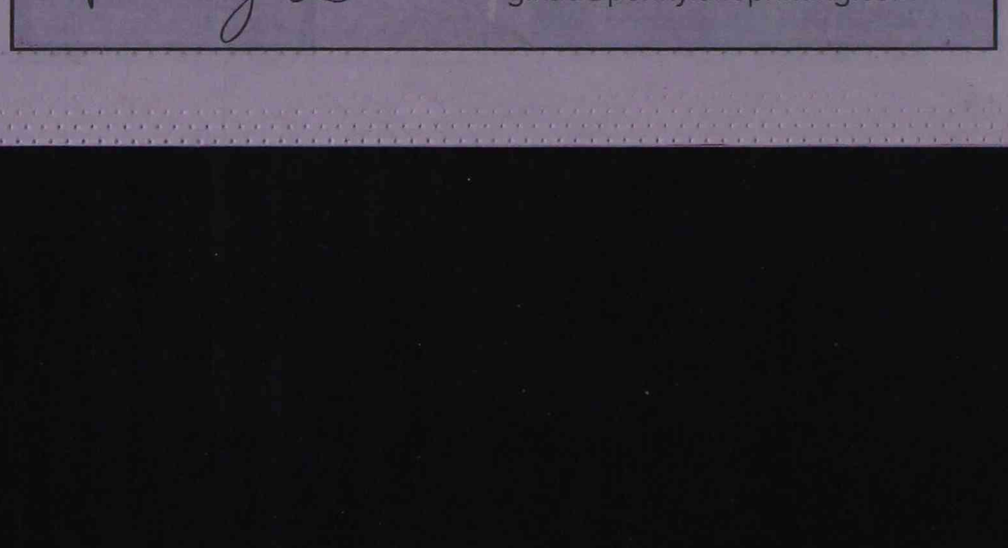
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Sheriff official addresses misinformation about camera system

Jayson Bussa
Contributing Writer

Barry County Sheriff's Office officials addressed what Sgt. Scott Ware described as a significant amount of misinformation circulating about Middleville's Flock camera system during the Middleville Village Council meeting Tuesday, Aug. 12.

Flock cameras, which are used in many municipalities throughout West Michigan, are designed to capture images of the rear of vehicles as they pass through an area.

Late last year, the Middleville council approved the installation of cameras in strategic locations throughout the community.

During his regular report to the council, Ware reiterated how the cameras operate and what type of information they collect, hoping to dispel rumors and misunderstandings circulating around the village.

Ware, who leads the sheriff's Middleville unit, said the only data the cameras collect is a still image of the vehicle's license plate.

"In order to figure out who that vehicle belongs to, and the make and model, we have to run that plate as law enforcement," Ware said. "Flock is literally only capturing license plates.

"It's taking whatever it sees and creating a digital version of that," he added. "It's not recording any personal information whatsoever and, after 30 days, it drops out of their system altogether and is no longer searchable."

Ware also dispelled the idea that the BCSO is using the cameras to collect information that could later be used to "stalk people or track people down."

"That's just not the case," he added. "It's not how the system works."

However, Ware said the cameras allow law enforcement to create a "hot list" of vehicles tied to criminal investigations.

The BCSO sergeant cited a recent example involving a theft at the Flats at Mid-Villa construction site, where a vehicle connected to the incident was added to a hot list. The system was then able to identify where and when the vehicle was seen.

According to officials, all activity within the Flock system is logged, including who accessed it, why it was accessed and the outcome. Only select members of the department have access, and a case number along with a purpose code used to identify the nature of a crime is required to conduct any search.

"There is much misinformation going on around our community," Village President Kevin Smith said. "If you go online, it's even worse. People have it tracking locations and doing speed checks and it's simply not what the platform does."

In other updates, Ware reported an increase in thefts at self-storage units in both Middleville and Hastings. He urged residents who rent storage units to check on them regularly, use two locks if possible and keep an itemized list of stored belongings.

"We cannot help you if we do not know what's missing," Ware said.



About 200 people usually attend the free children's "Movie in the Park" held outside the Gaines Township Hall. This year's event is set for Friday, Aug. 22, with festivities starting at 6:30 p.m. **Source: gainestownship.org**

Plans set for 'Movie in the Park' on Aug. 22

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

Plans are being finalized for the 10th annual "Movie in the Park" event outside the Gaines Township Hall on Friday, Aug. 22.

The animated film "Dog Man" will be shown on a large inflatable screen on the lawn facing the adjacent Prairie Wolf Park. The 89-minute movie is a comedy released by DreamWorks Animation earlier this year.

Township Treasurer Laurie Lemke said the movie was highly recommended by staff members of the Gaines Township branch of the Kent District Library.

"The movie being shown has generated a lot of excitement," she said.

Movie-goers are encouraged to bring blankets or lawn chairs.

Township Manager Rod Weersing called it a "fantastic event."

See **MOVIE** on 9





Gaines Township considers potential partnership with Kent County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

Some legislative changes made by the State of Michigan in recent years could help spur economic development in Gaines Charter Township in the coming years, if it opts in as a Kent County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority partner.

That is according to the Authority's Director of Strategic Impact, Josh Spencer, who gave a presentation to the Gaines Township Board on Monday night. He spoke about the benefits of providing brownfield incentives through Act 381, also known as the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act. It authorizes municipalities to establish Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities.

Traditionally, the authorities have facilitated the revitalization of blighted, contaminated or functionally obsolete properties. Those types of properties have been eligible for financial incentives through tax abatements.

But Spencer told the Gaines trustees that the changes in Act 381 have opened the door for other types of property to be considered under the brownfield designation.

"A couple years ago, (the state) added housing activities as an eligible use," he said. "A traditional brownfield was meant to prevent (urban) sprawl … But now, with the housing shortage that we have in our state and in our county, there is a need there."

In many municipalities, a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district is set up to help fund redevelopment. TIF allows extra property tax revenue generated from redeveloped property to be captured and used to pay for brownfield plans. The increment refers to that extra tax revenue. Developers are then reimbursed for their expenses.

Currently, Gaines Township does not have a TIF district. If one were to be established, the captured tax revenues that typically go to local school districts, for example, could be redirected to the local development authority. So, during the capture period, schools would not receive the increased tax revenue that is generated by the redeveloped property. But the state would reimburse the school districts for the lost revenue through the School Aid fund.

"I think they may not all know this, but the school districts can apply for those taxes that they're giving up in that increment, and get reimbursed," Gaines Community Development Director Dan Wells said. He also is the vice chairman of the Kent County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) board. "The local school districts, technically, do not lose any money on this if they go through the right process to get reimbursed."

Spencer said the Kent County BRA was established in February 2024, and that it promotes the revitalization, redevelopment and reuse of property for housing development. The BRA is overseen by a seven-member board comprised of community representatives and two county commissioners.

On July 18, 2023, the state modified its law to allow housing activities as an eligible use for Tax Increment Financing. That means that brownfield sites where housing is developed can now be included in TIF districts.

"So, communities that did not see themselves as having traditional brownfield properties would probably now be approached by developers wanting to use this (TIF) tool," Spencer said. "In order to use this tool, a local government like Gaines Township would need to opt in by passing a resolution of concurrence to join the (county) Authority."

According to miplace.org, the benefits of joining a county BRA might include governmental cost savings, administrative efficiency and greater Local Brownfield Revolving Fund (LBRF) resources. A LBRF helps finance the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Opting in would allow the county and township to collaborate on brownfield projects.

"Even if you opt into an Authority – I think this is critical – no plans can move forward unless this body (township board) approves them first," Spencer told the Gaines trustees. "So, your staff works with us at the county for just getting the technical accuracy of the plan, but it does not move forward unless you approve it on a project-by-project basis."

Spencer explained in his slide presentation to the board which properties are eligible for brownfield TIF incentives. Those include facilities that are contaminated by substances above a federal threshold and pose a significant risk to human health or the environment. Other eligible properties are those that are blighted, functionally obsolete, transit-oriented, or considered a historic resource.

Also eligible for the TIF program are owners of rental housing units for qualified rehabilitation.

"This is affordable housing that's used in this legislation. It's aimed at households that make at or below 120% of AMI (area median income)," Spencer said. "So, for a family of four in Kent County, 120% AMI is $126,000 a year."

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority TIF program is designed to support housing that is accessible to a wider range of income levels. Spencer said the expansion of the brownfield redevelopment law to include TIFs is part of the state's strategy to address a significant housing shortage.

Gaines trustee Tim Haagsma asked about the fact that developers profit from such projects.

"So, you're actually artificially reducing the cost of construction for the developer so they can offer the housing at a lower price point," Spencer replied. "You want to feel comfortable with all of the expenses and the profitability of the development overall. Because no matter whether you put it here or there, what you're doing is lowering the cost of construction, so those houses are affordable to your teachers and your schools, your public safety officers. Everybody that does the work in the community; these are the folks who are having trouble affording starter homes."

Wells told the township trustees that they should evaluate what is of public benefit.

"Because we as stewards of the tax dollars that are coming in and how they're being distributed, need to look at, 'How does this benefit our residents in the long term?'," Wells said. "The issue that we're faced with now is housing affordability for people trying to come in and buy a house for the first time. They're basically priced out of our market."

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP

NOTICE OF PUBLISHING

At a regular meeting of the **Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees**, held on Monday, August 11, 2025, at the Township Hall located at 8555 Kalamazoo., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316, the Board of Trustees approved an amendment to the Gaines Charter Township Ordinance as provided for in Chapter 32 thereof by amending Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (B). Said section (Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (b)) thereof, which restricts all early stars including multifamily structures. The amended text of Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (B), will allow multi-family early starts.

A true copy of the approved ordinance amending the Gaines Charter Township Ordinance as provide for in Chapter 32 thereof, Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (B), can be obtained at the Clerk's office during normal business hours (8:30am-5:00PM Mon-Fri).

Said amendment to the Gaines Charter Township Ordinance as provided for in Chapter 32 thereof by amending Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (B). Said section (Section 22-136, Building Permits, Section (b)) thereof shall go into effect seven (7) days from the date of first publication.

Michael A. Brew

Gaines Charter Township Clerk

Storms couldn't stop Ashes & Arrows show

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

It was two concerts for the price of none as Ashes & Arrows played a long-awaited Caledonia Concert Series show Tuesday.

The band's trio of vocalists and guitar players, Claran McMeeken, Jonathan Calhoun and Justin Roelant, performed an acoustic set underneath the pavilion at the Caledonia Community Green to get the evening started. Close to 100 spectators gathered under the rooftop with more folks, many holding umbrellas overhead, lining the perimeter.

When it became clear the worst of the summer thunderstorms would be rolling across Michigan just south of Caledonia, a full-band set with the addition of drummer Ted Marks and bass player Trevor Stoyer kicked off on the amphitheater stage. Ashes & Arrows shared its stylistic mix of rock, country and whatever else it could work in.

McMeeken, Calhoun and Roelant had the crowd singing along with hearty "Yo Ho!"s on "Pirate Song," performed a cover of Jason Isbell's "Cover Me Up," and played what they claimed to be an unfinished, unrecorded, unnamed and mostly unrehearsed tune that the band is working on that felt fitting for the evening.

"Roll on my brother like lightning and thunder.

Take on the high road, don't you ever sink low,

Cause 10,00 lifetimes may not be enough.

So roll on my brother until the stormin' is done," sang Calhoun.

Calhoun also promised during the acoustic set that, "if we do have good weather, we're going to move down to that stage and some of these songs, you're gonna hear them twice."

Ashes & Arrows was unable to perform a scheduled show at the Caledonia Concert Series during the 2024 summer season. Event organizer Adam Stauffer was thrilled to have the opportunity to bring the band to Caledonia for the 2025 season.

Ashes & Arrows gained world-wide acclaim last summer as a part of the television show "America's Got Talent." The band released the full-length album "Chapter One (The Long Road North)" in October 2024. McMeeken, Calhoun and then bandmate Benjamin Voigt performed "Wild Horses" during the "America's Got Talent" quarterfinal round earning a spot in the show's semi-finals with their performance.

"I didn't want to cancel again, and they didn't want to cancel again. The acoustic set was amazing," Stauffer said as the band prepped for its amphitheater performance. "You can't control the weather, but the acoustic set was amazing and I'm glad we're going to get a couple songs here plugged in.

"They are awesome. They sound great. They harmonize. They are the biggest band I've ever gotten as far as their online support."

It took an encore spurred on by the crowd and the evening's emcee, Josh Rose, to get the band to repeat at least one song in the end. Everyone was treated to an acoustic version of the band's hit "Wild Horses" at the pavilion and then the full-band version at the amphitheater.

"It's in our blood
We are, we are wild horses
Chasing dreams
No one, no one could ever stop us
Try and stop us
You can't tame wild horses," they sang.

The rain certainly didn't stop them in the finale of the 2025 edition of the Caledonia Concert Series.

"It has been a good summer," Stauffer said. "We had a lot of talent come through town and good turnouts. A little warm, but here we are."

The event Tuesday was sponsored by Frontier Heating and Cooling, the last of a long list of sponsors that made the summer concert series possible along with a handful of dedicated volunteers.



Ciaran McMeeken of the band Ashes & Arrows sings the band's song "Sexy" in his best country music voice prompting giggles from bandmates Justin Roelant, Jonathan Calhoun and Trevor Stoyer in the background during their electric set at the Caledonia Community Green amphitheater Tuesday. Their performance, which dodged raindrops with an acoustic set inside the pavilion first, was the finale of the summer's 2025 Caledonia Concert Series.
Photos by Brett Bremer

MOVIE

Continued from Page 7

The free flick, which will be shown at 8:30 p.m., will not be the only highlight, with the event getting underway at 6:30 p.m. According to Lemke, the fun and festivities will include kids games, food trucks and other activities. Various public safety vehicles will also be on display.

"The (Kent County) sheriff's office will be here, a (township) fire truck will be here," Lemke added. "We have Disney characters coming that will be on site. Last year, we had Captain America and Cinderella."

Swan Orthodontics in Gaines Township is sponsoring the appearances of the characters.

"We love hosting Movie in the Park," said Connie Giarmo, chairperson of the Gaines Planning Commission. "It is one annual event that I think we all look forward to.

"We encourage our families to come out and have fun and see what their township hall looks like and meet some of the people that are their neighbors."

Township Trustee Rob DeWard said he is looking forward to the upcoming event.

"I'm going to try to get my grandkids here for that," he said.

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Gaines board updated on Natural Resource Inventory

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

Two top executives at EnviroScience Inc. have given the Gaines Township Board an update on a Natural Resources Inventory the company is conducting.

They spoke with the trustees online via a remote video connection during Monday night's board meeting.

In December 2024, the trustees voted to authorize township staff to spend up to $35,000 for the inventory by the company based in Stow, Ohio. The trustees said they wanted to get that information before staff began renegotiating a sewer service agreement with the City of Grand Rapids. The existing 40-year sewer contract with the City of Grand Rapids expires in 2028.

Board members also said at that time that they also wanted to preserve and potentially purchase some open space and park land, but they first needed to receive biological field-verification studies on soils, vegetative cover and wetlands.

EnviroScience Senior Ecologist Michael Liptak and EnviroScience GIS Operations Manager Anna Piazza detailed some of the information they have accumulated about open spaces and residential development in Gaines Township.

"They've put together some maps and crunched a lot of data," Community Development Director Dan Wells said. "They have created a storybook, which is a GIS-based, easily digestible presentation of all the data that they've collected from a pretty exhaustive set of resources."

He added that much of the information was compiled from REGIS Online, local and state-provided data.

"We've been meeting with them virtually over the last couple of months – usually once or twice a month – and we've got it now to a point where we think it would be good for the board to see it and give their input," Wells said.

Piazza showed on the video screen an interactive story map that she drew up as part of a geo-spatial model that identifies potential priority areas for open space or park development.

"It really provides a data-driven spatial tool that can help focus conservation, restoration or just management efforts in general where they will have the greatest impact," she said. "It really supports the planning process by creating this baseline summary of natural resources within the township. And then, to use these features to identify areas of potentially high ecological value."

Piazza displayed a land-cover map showing the rapid growth of development in the northwest section of the township in five-year increments beginning in 1985 to the present day.

"And one of the most significant changes we've seen is the loss of converted crop land and the (300-percent) increase in the developed land," she said.

Township officials have repeatedly expressed a desire to preserve as much of Gaines' rural character as possible and protect some of the township's plentiful farmland.

A topographical map showed how glaciers shaped the land more than 10,000 years ago.

Some of the key concepts the EnviroScience consultants considered in developing the model were the importance of water features like wetland streams, in terms of ecological and social value. And cultural resources.

"So, we know that it was used by the Native Americans. And there are some archaeological sites, as well," Piazza said.

Another goal is to protect forested land. She showed a map depicting what pre-settlement vegetation looked like in Gaines around the year 1800.

"It predominantly was a beet sugar maple forest with some pockets of white pine and mixed hardwood areas. Swamps mixed in there. It's really important the area was heavily forested. So, just thinking about protecting those areas," Piazza said.

The natural resources model considers habitat connectivity and the importance of protecting lakes, streams and other wetland areas.

Liptak mentioned that Dan Wells and Township Manager Rod Weersing have participated in conversations with EnviroScience about which metrics are important to include in the model.

"We at EnviroScience were guided by a lot of good information and input from Gaines Charter Township. Because we, ultimately, want this to be something that's useful to you. That's our north star," Liptak said.

Piazza said they are building the modeling framework to identify how to rank and score various areas and produce spatial outputs. Those are the different map layers that visualize and organize geographically relevant data. The information can assist township staff with their planning efforts.

The consultants used a parcel-scoring method that is used in Geographic Information Systems for assessing the suitability land parcels for purposes such as conversation, development and resource management. They also used an Esri software platform called ArcGIS that uses a suitability modeler tool. It shows topographical information such as land cover and elevations. Piazza said it can analyze which areas might be most suitable for park or agricultural development, for example.

"It provides a raster output and gives each pixel an assigned score," she said. "It's all interactive, as well, so you can click on parcels to view … parcel IDs, acreage."

Liptak said parcels that township officials have prioritized for a visit by EnviroScience biologists also have been included in the Natural Resources Inventory.

"We will visit as many high-ranking parcels as we can. That is probably a spring-like field effort," he said.

Gaines Supervisor Bob Terpstra thanked Liptak and Piazza for their presentations.

"Ultimately, this is going to be a great tool for us trying to identify areas that we want to preserve in the township," Wells said. "And this also will give us good information to work with (the state) when it's providing grants to purchase land and get it set aside for the long term."

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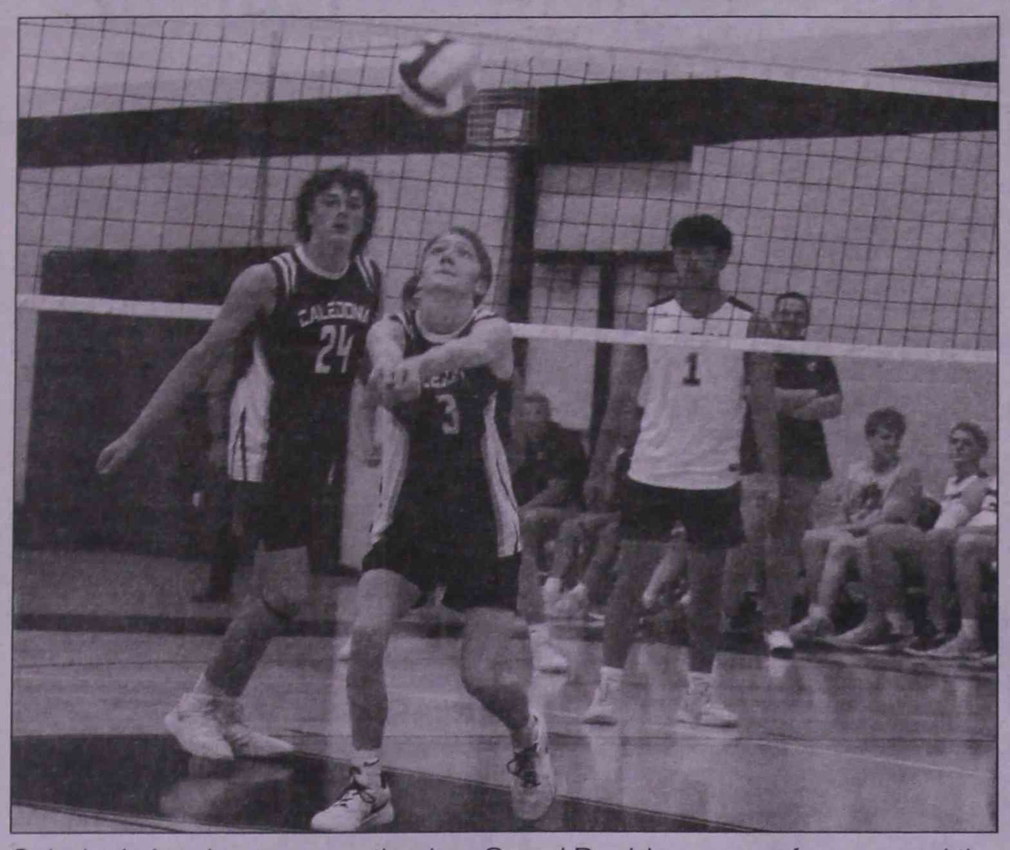
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Village of Middleville COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the July 22, 2025 Regular Council Meeting, that were approved on August 12, 2025, are posted at the Village Hall at 100 E Main Street and on the website at www.villageofmiddleville.org.


THE SUN AND NEWS
MHSAA has a few changes in the
Photo by Brett Bremer

MHSAA has a few changes in the works during 2025-26



Caledonia has been competing in a Grand Rapids area conference and the Michigan Boys Volleyball state tournament for a few years now. For the first time during the 2025-26 school year the MHSAA will sponsor a boys' volleyball state tournament. The MHSAA is also adding girls' field hockey to its slate of state tournaments this school year. **Photo by Brett Bremer**

The addition of girls field hockey as a sponsored postseason championship sport and a revised schedule for Lower Peninsula Boys Tennis Finals are the most significant changes to fall sports as practices get underway this week for an anticipated 100,000 high school athletes at Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) member schools.

The fall season includes the most played sports for both boys and girls; 36,210 football players and 19,679 girls volleyball players competed during the Fall 2024 season. Teams in those sports will be joined by competitors in girls and boys cross country, girls field hockey, Lower Peninsula girls golf, boys soccer, Lower Peninsula girls swimming & diving, Upper Peninsula girls tennis and Lower Peninsula boys tennis in beginning practice next week. Competition begins Aug. 15 for cross country, field hockey, golf, soccer and tennis, Aug. 20 for swimming & diving and volleyball, and Aug. 28 for varsity football.

Girls field hockey is one of two sports set to make its debut with MHSAA sponsorship during the 2025-26 school year. Boys volleyball will play its first season with MHSAA sponsorship in the spring.

There are 37 varsity teams expected to play during the inaugural field hockey season. There will be one playoff division, with the first MHSAA Regionals in this sport beginning Oct. 8 and the first championship awarded Oct. 25.

To conclude their season, Lower Peninsula boys tennis teams will begin a pilot program showcasing Finals for all four divisions at the same location – Midland Tennis Center – over a two-week period. Division 4 will begin play with its two-day event Oct. 15-16, followed by Division 1 on Oct. 17-18, Division 2 on Oct. 22-23 and Division 3 played Oct. 24-25.

Also in Lower Peninsula boys tennis, and girls in the spring, a Finals qualification change will allow for teams that finish third at their Regionals to advance to the season-ending tournament as well, but only in postseason divisions where there are six Regionals – which will be all four boys divisions this fall.

The 11-Player Football Finals at Ford Field will be played this fall over a three-day period, with Division 8, 4, 6 and 2 games on Friday, Nov. 28, and Division 7, 3, 5 and 1 games played Sunday, Nov. 30, to accommodate Michigan State's game against Maryland on Nov. 29 at Ford Field.

Two more changes affecting football playoffs will be noticeable this fall. For the first time, 8-Player Semifinals will be played at neutral sites; previously the team with the highest playoff-point average continued to host during that round. Also, teams that forfeit games will no longer receive playoff-point average strength-of-schedule bonus points from those opponents to which they forfeited.

A pair of changes in boys soccer this fall will address sportsmanship. The first allows game officials to take action against a team's head coach in addition to any cautions or ejections issues to players and personnel in that team's bench area – making the head coach more accountable for behavior on the sideline. The second change allows for only the team captain to speak with an official during the breaks between periods (halftime and during overtime), unless another coach, player, etc., is summoned by the official – with the penalty a yellow card to the offending individual.

A few more game-action rules changes will be quickly noticeable to participants and spectators

In volleyball, multiple contacts by one player attempting to play the ball will now be allowed on second contact if the next contact is by a teammate on the same side of the net.

In swimming & diving, backstroke ledges will be permitted in pools that maintain a 6-foot water depth. If used in competition, identical ledges must be provided by the host team for all lanes, although individual swimmers are not required to use them.

Also in swimming & diving – during relay exchanges – second, third

See **MHSAA** on 12

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High school sports season underway this weekend

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Caledonia High School and Thornapple High School student athletes were able to kick off the 2025-26 school year with the first official practices of the fall season this week.

The first contests of the fall season are already this weekend.

The Caledonia varsity boys' tennis team has a busy weekend in store with the Dobber Wenger Invitational planned for Aug. 15 and a trip to a tournament in Holland today, Aug. 16.

The Caledonia varsity girls' golf team was also set to open play at The Jenison Invitational at The Meadows Friday, Aug. 16.

The Caledonia High School football program was set to host its annual Purple and Gold scrimmage Aug 16 at Scotland Yard as renovations finish up at Ralph E. Myers Stadium.

Caledonia and Thornapple Kellogg both have one new varsity head coach this spring. Long-time assistant coach Whitney Bell is now at the head of the Caledonia varsity football team. Haley Grams, a special education teacher at Thornapple Kellogg Schools, is the new leader of the Thornapple Kellogg varsity volleyball team.

Bell and the Fighting Scots are set to open the 2025 season at home taking on Holy Names Catholic from Windsor, Ontario, Thursday April 28.

Grams and the Trojan spikers will host their opening competition of the season, a quad, Aug. 26 at the high school in Middleville.



Haley Grams started her first official practices this week as the new head coach of the Thornapple Kellogg varsity volleyball team. **Photo provided**

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MHSAA

Continued from Page 11

and fourth swimmers must have one foot stationary at the front edge of the deck. The remainder of their bodies may be in motion prior to the finish of the incoming swimmer.

In football, when a forward fumble goes out of bounds, the ball will now be spotted where the fumble occurred instead of where the ball crossed the sideline.

The 2025 Fall campaign culminates with postseason tournaments beginning with the Upper Peninsula Girls Tennis Finals during the week of Sept. 29 and wrapping up with the 11-Player Football Finals on Nov. 28 and 30.

— BB

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