



contact us: 507.452.1262 fax: 507.454.6409 email: winpost@winonapost.com P.O. Box 27, 64 E. 2nd St., Winona, MN, 55987

winona's twice-weekly newspaper since 1971

# winona **post**

sunday, september 15, 2019

volume 48, no. 73

winonapost.com

inserts: full circulation: ■ Menards ■ Slumberland ■ Fleet Farm

the winonapost ... proud to be your community newspaper for over 48 years

## Judge rules against WAPS in SOS suit

by SARAH SQUIRES

On Wednesday Judge Matthew Opat denied a motion made by Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) in its lawsuit against the community group Save Our Schools (SOS). Now the court battle will be resolved in one of two ways: a settlement or trial.

The courtroom drama has its roots in WAPS' decision to close Madison and Rollingstone schools for the 2018-2019 school year. SOS challenged the closure with an appeal to the Minnesota Court of Appeals, hoping the court would reverse the split-vote decision to shutter the schoolhouses. While that appeal was being heard, SOS filed notices of "lis pendens" on the titles

of the school buildings — legal notices that alerted potential buyers that the buildings were part of pending litigation.

Then WAPS Superintendent Rich Dahman assured the School Board that the notices affixed to the building titles would not affect any potential sales, and the district sold the two properties. After the sales, citing a desire to offer the new

owners "clean titles," in another split vote the board filed a lawsuit against SOS over the notices of pending litigation. While the district's insurance covered attorneys' fees for the Court of Appeals case against the school closure, insurance does not cover the cost of WAPS' ongoing litigation

see **SUIT** page 6a

## WSU wins voter drive contest



Photo by  
Chris Rogers

■ Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon (left) presented Winona State University Student Senate President Ben Elgen with a trophy for winning the state-wide Ballot Bowl, a voter-registration competition among colleges.

by CHRIS ROGERS

Holden Sill knocked on strangers' doors last fall and got a lot of rejections. "Half of the time, they wouldn't answer. They'd just look out and say, 'Oh I don't know you, I'm not answering,'" he recalled.

Sill was going door-to-door in the dorms — not for any particular candidate, but just

to get his fellow Winona State University students to vote, period.

Young people are less likely to vote. It's a general rule that has held true for decades. Only 17-percent of U.S. citizens age 18-24 voted in the 2014 midterms, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Over 16 million young people stayed home.

At Winona State University (WSU), stu-

dents and faculty worked hard last year to change that. Sill and dozens of other students went door-to-door, tabled on campus, canvassed on social media, and even drove students to the polls in an effort to get as many students as possible to register and vote.

see **CONTEST** page 6a

## Bike lanes, parking, and shelters on council agenda

by CHRIS ROGERS

On Monday, the City Council will vote on a host of zoning ordinance changes — covering everything from parking to homeless shelters — as well as a proposal to create new bicycle lanes. The latter would eliminate on-street parking on Huff Street to make space for bicycle lanes. The parking rule changes would allow apartment developers to provide covered bicycle parking instead of off-street vehicle parking. The change would allow small apartments to provide zero vehicle parking spaces in some cases.

A laundry list of zoning changes up for public hearings and a council vote includes the city's first-ever regulations for homeless shelters. The proposed regulations are relatively strict, requiring a conditional use permit (CUP) and prohibiting new shelters in residential zones.

### Bike lane proposal

The City Council will decide whether to approve a city-staff proposal to create dedicated bicycle lanes on Huff and

see **COUNCIL** page 5a

## Storms batter, but no major flooding yet

by CHRIS ROGERS

The Driftless Area was pounded by rain and even tornadoes last week, but as of Friday, local communities avoided major flash flooding damage. No one was hurt in a house fire in Rollingstone on Thursday night that may have been caused by a lightning strike, according to Winona County officials.

Parts of Winona County got over six inches of rain over the week, and the Elba area received 3.8 inches of rain in just 24 hours last Thursday, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). On Friday, the NWS and local authorities had not received reports of major flash flooding.

"It looked like you guys were fairly lucky except for the tornado touching down in the cemetery," NWS Meteorologist Jeff Boyne said. A short-lived tornado caused major damage at Woodlawn Cemetery in Winona (see story page 1a). Boyne noted, "It was a weak tornado, and no one was hurt. It could have been a lot worse." Another tornado hit Northeast Iowa late last week, the NWS reported.

see **STORMS** page 5a

## Tornado devastates Woodlawn Cemetery



Photo by Sarah Squires

■ A Wednesday morning tornado touched down at Woodlawn and caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage.

by SARAH SQUIRES

It only took one minute. From 6:23 a.m. to 6:24 a.m. on Wednesday, September 11, an 80-yard-wide F1 tornado swept through Woodlawn Cemetery in Winona. It ripped dozens of 100-year-old trees from the ground and tossed them down hillsides, battering

headstones and roadways, gouging craters into the bluffside final resting place for thousands of Winonans.

By Wednesday afternoon, crews had already hauled dozens of loads of wood from the cemetery, but it had barely put a dent into

see **WOODLAWN** page 5a

**BROSNAHAN LAW FIRM P.A.**

PAUL BROSNAHAN

507-457-3000 | 24-Hour Emergency: 507-450-2422

Located in Winona | Helping families throughout Minnesota & Wisconsin

*Helping Families*

with their personal injury & death claims.

[www.brosnahanlawfirm.com](http://www.brosnahanlawfirm.com)