

United for Ukraine parolees in North Dakota awaiting fate

(Continued from page 1)
Anxiety rising
Their fate matters to business people like Mitchell Page, administrator of Golden Acres Manor skilled nursing facility in Carrington.
Page employs around eight Ukrainian parolees out of a staff of around 70. Losing them would set off a scramble to staff difficult to fill positions due to long standing workforce shortages.
“They’re excellent workers and wonderful people,” Page said. “I certainly hope we don’t have to see them depart. It would leave a void at our facility, both in the workforce as well as in losing folks that we now consider friends.”

His Ukrainian employees are now pondering their future here and next moves with some anxiety.
“Some are a little anxious,” Page said. “Others are making plans based on some of the news, and looking at setting some time frames to begin working towards getting back to the Ukraine.”
Their fate also matters to the sponsors and groups who’ve supported Ukrainians to temporarily settle in North Dakota as the war in their homeland drags on for a full third year.
This includes helping them get to North Dakota, finding apartments, helping get furniture, assisting them as they looked for work and welcoming them into their communities. It’s been both a solid time commitment and a monetary investment.

Michael Southam, co-founder of the FM Volunteers for Ukraine in Fargo, a group that has helped around 200 Ukrainians settle in the area, said there’s a lot of anxiety among parolees about what comes next.
“The majority of them are very, very concerned and anxious,” Southam said, adding he was speaking in a personal capacity and not as a spokesperson for the group.
“If they’re given, you know, a 30-day window, for example, like the Cubans, to depart, there’s a lot of business to be handled. And, most importantly, where will they go? How will they live? How will they support themselves? Who is going to accept them?”
He added that some Ukrainian parolees feel a sense of betrayal regarding how the U.S. has changed course in just a couple of months from strong support of Ukraine to a less staunch commitment.
“Ukrainians that are here in a sense, lost their country, their future, their politics, their way of life by the war itself, and I feel, and I believe, that there is a feeling of a sense of betrayal now by our country,” Southam said.
Southam said that sponsors across the country are also unhappy with how the situation has taken a turn.

“We’ve done what we are supposed to do, and we were asked by our government to do it,” he said. “And now the rug’s kind of being pulled out from under us as sponsors. These beneficiaries are now our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers. They’re members of our family to a degree.”
Another who has lent a hand is Cory Thrall, lead pastor of Legacy Church, a United Methodist church in North Bismarck.

Thrall became involved from the start of the U4U program as families began arriving in Bismarck, helping them navigate living in a new country and community.
This included assisting with getting driver’s licenses, helping with language classes, and offering cooking get-togethers where they could learn American cooking and showcase their own home dishes.

He had around a dozen families and individuals regularly attending services until recently. With the news that they may have to depart, fewer have been active because of obvious concerns and the busyness of making plans for their next steps.

Thrall had hoped to become a sponsor himself of a single mother with two children before applications for new U4U sponsorships were ended in January.
“The city they were in was on the front and being rocketed, there was no stability for the kids, no school. They were in fear for their lives all of the time,” Thrall said.
“Until there is peace, that’s what these people would be going back to. Going back to the threat of a rocket taking out their neighborhood at a moment’s notice,” he said.

In one of its first acts, the Trump administration issued an executive order on Jan. 20 canceling all humanitarian parolee programs for the 875,000 migrants from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela who had legal U.S. resident sponsors to support their temporary status in the country.
There are currently around 280,000 Ukrainians and

70,000 Afghans in the country through humanitarian parolee programs who await decisions on whether their stay will be extended.
Derrick Gross, executive director of CATCH, works with rural communities in welcoming immigrants and filing much-needed workforce shortages, including a number of Ukrainian parolees.

Gross said it is important to note that nearly all adult Ukrainian parolees in North Dakota are working and accompanying children are in schools here, meaning any sudden shift in their status would wipe out those positive impacts.

Differing from migrants with refugee status, humanitarian parolees are the responsibility of their sponsors and their own hard work. Parolees must secure employment and care for themselves with few benefits other than what they may get from employers.
Sen. Kevin Cramer said he was keeping tabs on the situation and is advocating against deporting Ukrainian parolees for several reasons.

“They are basically refugees from a war-torn ally,” Cramer said. “They are culturally very similar, for obvious reasons, meaning they’ve acclimated well. And perhaps most relevant is, they are very productive in an economy that is workforce starved.”

Cramer said Ukraine will need citizens to return to the country to help with reconstruction when the time comes, but he saw no reason to rush their removal.
A piece of bipartisan legislation is currently being circulated in the Senate by Republican Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Democrat Dick Durbin of Illinois to grant Ukrainians in the U.S. temporary guest status. This would allow them to stay until the U.S. Secretary of State determines that hostilities have ceased in Ukraine and it would be safe for them to return.



Cory Thrall, pastor of Legacy Church in Bismarck (back left) along with members of the Ukrainian parolee community share deserts they’ve made at a recent event featuring American and Ukrainian cooking. Photo, Cory Thrall.

Cramer said he was interested in the legislation but hadn’t yet decided if he’d support it.
Gross said people often don’t see the post-war reconstruction part of the picture when thinking about humanitarian parolees. Most will eventually return to Ukraine unless they go through other legal processes to stay in the U.S.
“The whole point was to get them out of harm’s way in a situation that wasn’t safe and sustainable,” Gross said of the initial aims of the U4U program.
“When the war does end, Ukraine has a massive reconstruction to undergo, and they’ll need their citizens to execute that,” he said.

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Minutes Of Ellendale Public School Board Meetings

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING JANUARY 13, 2025 @ 7:00 PM	<p>Honor Band-Choir-All State 27183 Ellendale Public Schools 363.18 EFunds Fees</p> <p>27184 Ellendale True Value 82.07 Custodial Supplies</p> <p>27185 EPS Activity Fund 38.75 Back-ground Check</p> <p>27186 Ellendale School Lunch 10.23 GUK Supplies</p> <p>27187 Farmers Union Oil Co 707.41 Gas – Anti-Freeze</p> <p>27188 Foreman Sales & Service 5,939.35 # 8 Body and Glass Damage</p> <p>27189 Napa's Water System 230.00 Softener Salt</p> <p>27190 Learnwell 198.00 Student Tutoring</p> <p>27191 Mertz Lumber & Supply 89.45 Band Saw Blades, Bits</p> <p>27192 Metropolitan Mechanical Contractors, Inc 9,080.82 Heating System/Valve</p> <p>27193 Rebekah Middlestead 13.09 Library Games/Puzzles</p> <p>27194 Napa Central 12.69 Windshield Wipers #2</p> <p>27195 ND Center for Distance Education 229.00 Distance Ed Course-work</p> <p>27196 NDCEL 300.00 Principal Conference Re.</p> <p>27197 NDMEA All State 70.00 Registration</p> <p>27198 Office of Career Development 150.00 Job Fair Registration</p> <p>27199 Olson's Pest Technicians 175.00 Monthly Service</p> <p>27200 Quadient Finance USA, Inc 200.00 Postage</p> <p>27201 SEEC 3,623.18 Semester Reading Corp</p> <p>27202 Duane Sundberg Jr. 79.43 Public Mtg Meal Supplies</p> <p>27203 Time Management Systems 50.40 Monthly Fee</p> <p>27204 Top Notch Repair 1,170.00 Dec./Jan. Snow Removal</p> <p>27205 US Food Service 71.29 Supplies Public Meeting</p> <p>27206 Michele Vance 58.21 GUK Supplies</p> <p>27207 Verizon Wireless 443.09 Verizon Wireless Hotspot</p> <p>27208 Z's Fresh Market 325.57 FACS, Public Mtg Supplies</p> <p>ACH MDU 16,444.81 Electricity Total \$ 61,151.08</p> <p>It was motioned by Wagner, seconded by Miller to approve all of the items on the consent agenda. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.</p> <p>Wagner gave a report on the SE Region Career and Tech Center.</p> <p>The Collaborative Bargaining Committee shared information from the meeting this morning including legislative updates and teacher salary comparison information.</p> <p>Minutes from the Budget & Personnel Committee and Curriculum Committee were reviewed and discussed.</p> <p>EPS Spotlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congratulations to the senior class as they competed in the We the People competition in Bismarck on January 15th. Congrats to Haven, Aiden, and Ava who won the Unit 2 award!
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- Congratulations to the Ellendale Math Counts Team! They won the county level Math Counts competition (Alivia K, Riggins S, Urijah F, Louis S), which was held at Graham Library on the campus of TBC! For overall individual scores, Louis S placed 2nd and Riggins S placed 3rd Place.
 - Two students representing EHS were selected through audition to perform at ND All State Band, Choir & Orchestra. Katherine P. was selected for the mixed choir. John B. was selected for the band.
 - John B and Ethan M performed in the 40th Honor Festival at UND this weekend after being selected from well over 900 students across ND through a live audition process. Well Done.
 - Congratulations to Ellendale NASP Archers. Carson H beat the school record with 293 in the Bulls-eye. He won both the Bulls-eye and 3D competition at the high school level. Paisley H and Ceoyne H received 2nd and 3rd place respectively in the elementary girls 3D, and they received 3rd and 5th in Bulls-eye.
 - Congratulations to Walker M., Greg F., and Jaeger S. for winning their 100th varsity match. And to Ivan C for winning his 150th match.
 - Ava H and Katherine P got to perform with the NDACDA Women's Honor Choir in Fargo.
 - Congratulations to Katie G for winning the Ellendale School Spelling Bee! Urijah F is the runner up! ongratulations to all participants! Katie will now get to compete in the State Spelling Bee in March!
- Rall shared student outcomes data which included middle school NDA + testing data.
- Sundberg provided an update on job openings and 2025 mowing bid information.
- It was motioned by Wagner, seconded by Miller to approve the 25-26 teacher contract for Kristie Morrison. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Rall updated the board on upcoming scheduling and tech committee meetings as well as IAL walkthroughs and Cognia information. Information was shared regarding the PowerSchool data breach.
- Radermacher provided information on student attendance, behavioral health services, Federal Title monitoring, the ND CLIMBS grant, student assessments, Character Strong activities as well as upcoming events.
- Rall and Radermacher updated the board on changes that will be happening with Nexus Path counseling
- It was motioned by Miller, seconded by Wagner to set June 3, 2025 as the School Board Election date with polls open from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM in the south gym lobby. The Ellendale City seat currently held by Michele Thorpe are up for election. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Discussion was held on the completion timeline for the Business Manager and Superintendent Evaluations.
- Miller motioned, seconded by Gilbert to approve the 25-26 Maple River Col-

ony and Ellendale Public School District calendars as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to approve paying the CO-OP Architecture invoice in the amount of \$59,400.00 out of the building fund. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Goehring motioned, seconded by Wagner to approve paying Helms & Associates \$9,990.00 for the site survey out of the building fund. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Special School Board Meeting, Wednesday, February 26, 2025 9:00 a.m.

Special School Board Meeting, Monday, March 3, 2025 7:00 a.m.

Next Regular School Board Meeting, Wednesday, March 12, 2025 7:00 p.m.

Collaborative Bargaining Committee Meeting, Thursday, March 20, 2025 7:00 a.m.

Since there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager Formally Approved by the Board (published April 10, 2025)

**ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 13, 2025 @ 6:00 PM**

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on February 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. with the following board members present: Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Kristi Gilbert and Michele Thorpe. Absent was Jeff Goehring. Lana Norton, Allison Radermacher, Cindy Rall, Alana Eggers, Tom Hurlbert, Beau Norby & Tom Oster(Co-op Architecture), Anne Wuollett-online(PFM) and Chip Sundberg were also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. The following visitors were present: Lori Mattheis, Colette & Tyler Middlestead, Judy Pahl, Katie Rongen, Peggy Gilbert, Cassidy Olson, Megan Weibe, Derek Kraft, Pam Cook, Brian Vance, Mike Thorpe, Jim & Ashley Glynn, Renae Martin, Jason & Amber Miller, Sherri Riggan, Izabel Chavez, Jeff Glynn, Deanne Gall, Shiloh Comeau, Nadia Cotter, Brennan Hack, Justin Meidinger and Lucas VanZee.

Pledge of Allegiance

Michele Thorpe, Alana Eggers, Tom Hurlbert, Beau Norby, Tom Oster and Anne Wuollett presented information on a proposed building addition/safety upgrades and shared historical information.

The meeting was opened to questions and comments from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

(published April 10, 2025)

**ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2025 @ 1:30 PM**

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on February 17, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. with the following board members present: Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring and Michele Thorpe. Lana Norton

and Chip Sundberg were also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. There were no visitors or communications.

Pledge of Allegiance

It was motioned by Wagner, Miller seconded to approve Kelly Krege to replace Special School Board election clerk Lori Mattheis for the February 18, 2025 election due to a scheduling conflict. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Since there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:33 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager Formally Approved by the Board (published April 10, 2025)

**ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 26, 2025 @ 9:00 AM**

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on February 26, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. with the following board members present: Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring and Michele Thorpe. Lana Norton, Allison Radermacher, Cindy Rall and Chip Sundberg were also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. There were no communications. She welcomed Paul Stremick from Dakota Leadership Solutions

Pledge of Allegiance

Norton presented 2025-2026 expenditure and revenue budget information.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Gilbert to approve the MOU with Rebecca Herman for the 2025-2025 middle school teaching position. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Dr. Ralph Watkins was interviewed remotely for the 2025-26 superintendent opening.

The board recessed the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

The board reconvened the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Dr. Cheryl Peterson was interviewed for the 2025-26 superintendent opening.

The board recessed the meeting at 12:39 a.m.

The board reconvened the meeting at 1:36 p.m.

Mr. Jeff Ringstad was interviewed for the 2025-26 superintendent opening.

The board recessed the meeting at 2:32 p.m.

The board reconvened the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

Mr. Terry Baesler was interviewed for the 2025-26 superintendent opening.

Discussion was held on the superintendent candidate interviews.

The board unanimously agreed to reimburse Dr. Ralph Watkins for travel expenses up to \$1,000 for an in-person second interview to be held before March 7, 2025, and to designate Mr. Jeff Ringstad as the other finalist for the superintendent position.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager Formally Approved by the Board (published April 10, 2025)

**ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
MARCH 3, 2025 @ 7:15 AM**

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on March 3, 2025 at 7:15 a.m. with the following board members present: Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring and Michele Thorpe. Lana Norton, Allison Radermacher, Cindy Rall and Chip Sundberg were also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 7:16 a.m. There were no communications.

Pledge of Allegiance

It was motioned by Goehring, seconded by Wagner to enter into Executive Session pursuant to NDCC 15.1-16-22 at 7:18 a.m. with for the purpose of negotiation strategy for the 25-26 superintendent contract for Jeffrey Ringstad with Michele Thorpe, Jeff Goehring, Kristi Gilbert, Val Wagner and Cresta Miller. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

The executive session was adjourned at 7:26 a.m.

It was motioned by Miller, seconded by Wagner to offer the 25-26 superintendent contract to Jeffrey Ringstad as discussed. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 a.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager Formally Approved by the Board (published April 10, 2025)

**ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
MARCH 6, 2025 @ 7:15 AM**

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on March 6, 2025 at 7:15 a.m. with the following board members present: Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring and Michele Thorpe. Lana Norton, Allison Radermacher, Cindy Rall and Chip Sundberg were also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 7:16 a.m. There were no communications.

Pledge of Allegiance

It was motioned by Wagner, seconded by Miller to accept the signed 2025-2026 Superintendent contract with Jeffrey Ringstad as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 a.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager Formally Approved by the Board (published April 10, 2025)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The paragraphs on the following page contain the text of official documents voted and approved by the the Ellendale Public School Board They concern the February 18 special bond election and the issuance of bonds and reimbursement of certain expenditures