

County hears more concerns about transmission line

**By Jordan Rusche
Report for America**

A proposed transmission line through parts of Divide County is still a topic of concern for some officials in Blooming Valley Township.

Bruce Verlinde expressed those concerns to Divide County commissioners during their meeting on Thursday and said he and the other members of Blooming Valley’s planning and zoning board are worried that their concerns about the route aren’t being heard by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

“It seems like every time I talk to these people, it’s like we don’t have any clout at all,” he said.

He added some residents in the township feel the power lines will be built much closer to their homes than they are comfortable with.

Commissioner Chico Eriksmoen said even if the township and county are both against the proposed route, the state Public Service Commission

can still override those wishes if it wants the transmission line in that area.

“If you have residents in the township that are coming to the township board saying, ‘we don’t like this,’ then they need to be referred to the Public Service Commission,” he said.

Verlinde said he’s contacted people from the PSC before but added, as far as he knows, there haven’t been any public meetings discussing the project yet.

Eriksmoen said one option for the township is to draft a letter to the PSC expressing its disapproval of the proposed route for the transmission lines, which the county would support as long as the concerns are valid.

“We have to know what the rest of the township feels about it,” Commissioner Rodney Johnson added. “Is the minority the one that wants it rerouted, or is that the majority?”

Verlinde also asked whether it’s

possible to prevent oil companies from drilling in certain areas.

“I’ve been trying to argue with this guy to try and keep it along the main roads,” he said.

Eriksmoen said if the land owner has already leased mineral rights to a company, there isn’t much that can be done to prevent them from putting a well pad there.

He did say the township is able to limit oil traffic on certain roads as long as companies still have at least one way to access their sites.

“You can’t deny them access to their facility as a township,” he said.

Sheriff’s office vehicles

An accidental oversight has led to the sheriff’s office ordering one too many new patrol vehicles.

County Auditor Gayle Jastrzebski said Sheriff Zach Schroeder made her and commissioners aware of the error.

“And I’m not saying we didn’t sign off on getting that,” Eriksmoen said.

“In his office, he needs to know what he’s ordering, because he told us he was canceling that.”

The extra vehicle was approved during the March 4 meeting when Schroeder presented a nearly \$45,000 quote for a vehicle that was also supposed to be delivered this year.

Jastrzebski said Schroeder was working on canceling that latest order.

“That’s where I said, ‘You get this in writing,’” she said.

County insurance plan

Commissioners also met with a representative from Blue Cross Blue Shield to discuss increased rates and the possibility of switching plans.

Jeffrey Wendt, BCBS representative, said prices for plans have increased about 15.5%, mostly because most insurance companies are now covering certain drugs that can be used for weight loss.

To potentially save the county money, Wendt suggested switching from

the current small group package to a large group package, which could be cheaper than the current plan depending on estimated rates.

“If you’ve got a lot of people in their 50s and families, you’re paying a lot less,” he said about the large group plan.

Large group plans are usually open to companies or organization with 50 full or part-time employees; while the county has slightly less than that, Wendt said BCBS can make exceptions if organizations are close to that number.

Commissioners said while the county does cover a lot of families currently, the payments they expect to make for some employees means switching to a large group plan wouldn’t really have as many benefits in the long run.

They added they were willing to compare rates, but unless the difference was substantial, they would likely keep the county’s current plan.



Submitted photo

From left, Karl Carlson, Tony Hall, Rob Hall and Bruce Morlock sit on the Swilcan Bridge by the 18th hole of the Old Course. The bridge is one of the most famous landmarks at St. Andrews Links.

GOLFERS: St. Andrews was ‘our ultimate trip’

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The group is spread throughout North Dakota now, with Tony Hall living in Minot, Rob Hall in Fargo, Carlson in Bismarck and Morlock in Grand Forks.

But the distance doesn’t stop them from meeting up as often as they can.

“We try to get together every summer at least once,” Tony Hall said. “Now that we’ve kind of been to our ultimate trip, we’re talking about doing a trip next summer where we go over to Minnesota and play different courses over there for a week.”

While the golf team is what brought them together, Carlson and Hall both said they’ve remained close over the last 30-plus years.

“Outside of my parents, there’s nobody that’s had a bigger influence on me than (Bruce),” Carlson said, “and you know, Tony and Robert are like brothers.”

“We have group texts, we text daily,” Hall also said. “Keeping in contact with these guys is special for me.”

Morlock, who coached golf at Divide County High School from 1979 to 1981 and again

from 1984 to 1990, said the friendship they all share is now built on more than just their shared interest in golf.

“I’m glad they still love and respect the game after all of these years,” he said. “For those three guys and myself, it hasn’t just been about golf these past decades, but really about life and all that goes with it.”

He added being included with that group beyond being their former coach is special, too.

“It really means a lot to me,” he said, “and the fact that they’ve stayed in touch through all of the career changes, through ... getting married, everything.”

And this most recent trip was just another opportunity for them to mark that bond they share through the sport.

“There’s a bridge on the 18th hole called the Swilcan Bridge, and every famous golfer’s had their picture taken on it,” Carlson said. “We’ve been friends for so long and played so much golf together, that was kind of the culmination, to have that picture of the four of us on that bridge with that view.”

Oil, gas production slips in February

By Jody Michael

Oil and gas production in Divide County fell back in February, ending a four-month streak of gains, though state officials said the decline was likely due to extreme cold temperatures.

The county’s oil production fell 4.4% in the month, to 42,165 barrels per day, after a 2.2% increase in January, according to a report released April 22 by the state Department of Mineral Resources. Gas production

fell even more, by 7.1%, to about 48 million cubic feet per day.

Statewide, oil production decreased for the third consecutive month in February, to 1.16 million barrels per day, down 1.1% from January’s nearly 1.18 million per day. Gas production fell 1.6% to 3.27 billion cubic feet per day from 3.32 billion the month before.

“We believe the slight decrease from January to February being due to the extreme

cold spell during the month of February,” said Nathan Anderson, director of the Department of Mineral Resources.

West Texas Intermediate crude oil, the U.S. benchmark, was priced at \$63.44 per barrel on Friday, down from \$67.95 at March’s press conference.

Potential reasons Anderson cited for the lower oil prices were a recent announcement by OPEC that it would increase output and general uncertainty

from the industry amid tariff threats and trade wars between the U.S. and other countries.

“I don’t believe that the current price levels are rooted in strong fundamentals,” Anderson said. “It could be more of a short-term thing, but time will tell, and I do expect prices to rebound slightly once all the sanctions and tariffs are better understood throughout the operating companies that work here in North Dakota.”

Noonan man charged with drug crimes

By Brad Nygaard

A Noonan man is free on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond following a court appearance Friday related to a number of drug offenses.

Douglas Johnson is charged with two felonies and three misdemeanors stemming from a search warrant being executed at his residence on April 17.

Divide County deputies and members of the Northwest Narcotics Task Force searched Johnson’s residence on the morning of April 17 pursuant to a search warrant for electronics, according to a declaration of probable cause filed by task force officer Byron Norston.

The declaration states Johnson was at home when officers arrived and, after being served

with the warrant, was detained in the rear of a patrol vehicle.

The declaration doesn’t indicate why authorities sought Johnson’s electronics, and applications for search warrants presented to judges by law enforcement are confidential documents under state law.

Officers did reportedly seize an undisclosed number of electronic devices, and the document indicates they also discovered a locked safe located in the master bedroom.

Johnson, who Norston states had previously been advised of his rights, reportedly provided officers with the safe’s code.

Prior to opening the safe, Johnson was reportedly asked if there was any contraband inside, and the declaration states Johnson initially denied the

presence of contraband before later admitting there was.

That admission resulted in officers applying for a second search warrant relevant to potentially finding drugs, and Norston’s declaration indicates a second warrant was approved.

With that approval, Norston opened the safe, and the declaration indicates he and other officers found a variety of drugs and paraphernalia including but not limited to roughly 11 grams of cocaine in two plastic bags, nearly a gram of psilocybin mushrooms, approximately 40 items containing marijuana or THC, a digital scale with suspected drug residue present and \$1,000 in cash.

Johnson reportedly told of-

ficers the substances were “for personal use.”

As a result of that discovery, Johnson faces felony charges of possession with intent to manufacture or deliver cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia, carrying maximum sentences of 10 and five years in prison, respectively.

Johnson is also charged with two misdemeanors related to possession of cocaine and hallucinogenic mushrooms that carry maximum sentences of nearly a year in jail, and a third misdemeanor related to possession of more than a half-ounce but less than 500 grams of marijuana that carries a maximum penalty of 30 days in jail.

Johnson’s next scheduled court appearance is a preliminary hearing set for June 20.

Severe Weather Awareness Week starts

By Jody Michael

Severe Summer Weather Awareness Week has started in North Dakota, with state officials and the National Weather Service’s Bismarck office reminding people that severe summer storms can cause not just property damage but also injury and death.

The National Weather Service office released information on five different types of weather events for which North Dakotans should be ready.

■Severe thunderstorms: In addition to damaging winds and large hail, severe thunderstorms are also capable of producing tornadoes, flash flooding and deadly lightning. Safety tips include seeking shelter inside a sturdy building and avoiding windows.

■Lightning: On average, there are 47 deaths each year in the U.S. resulting from lightning strikes. Anyone outside who can hear thunder is in danger of being struck:

Lightning can strike as far as 15 miles from any rain falling with the thunderstorm.

■Tornadoes: Seek the best available refuge area immediately when a tornado warning is issued. Good options include the interior room of a well-constructed home or building, or a basement. The best options are a tornado storm shelter or a specifically designed safe room.

■Flash flooding: During a flood, water levels and the rate at which the water is flowing

can quickly change. The NWS’ safety tips are to get to higher ground, do not drive or walk into flooded areas, and monitor the local radar or weather reports for updates.

■Extreme heat and fire weather: Heat is the leading weather-related killer in the U.S., the NWS said. Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke, which can cause death. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea and weakness.

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Qualifications:
Applicants must have a valid driver’s license.

Pay and Benefits:
Hourly pay is DOE.

How to Apply:
Applications can be picked up at Crosby City Hall or e-mailed if requested. The City Council will accept an application with resume no later than May 2nd, 2025 at 4:00pm. For more information please call: (701) 965-6029.

Email a resume to: crosbyauditor@nccray.com
Fax a resume to: (701) 965-6399
Mail a resume to: Crosby City Hall
PO Box 67
Crosby, ND 58730

The Crosby City Council reserves the right to accept or reject any/or all applications.