

# The Groton Independent

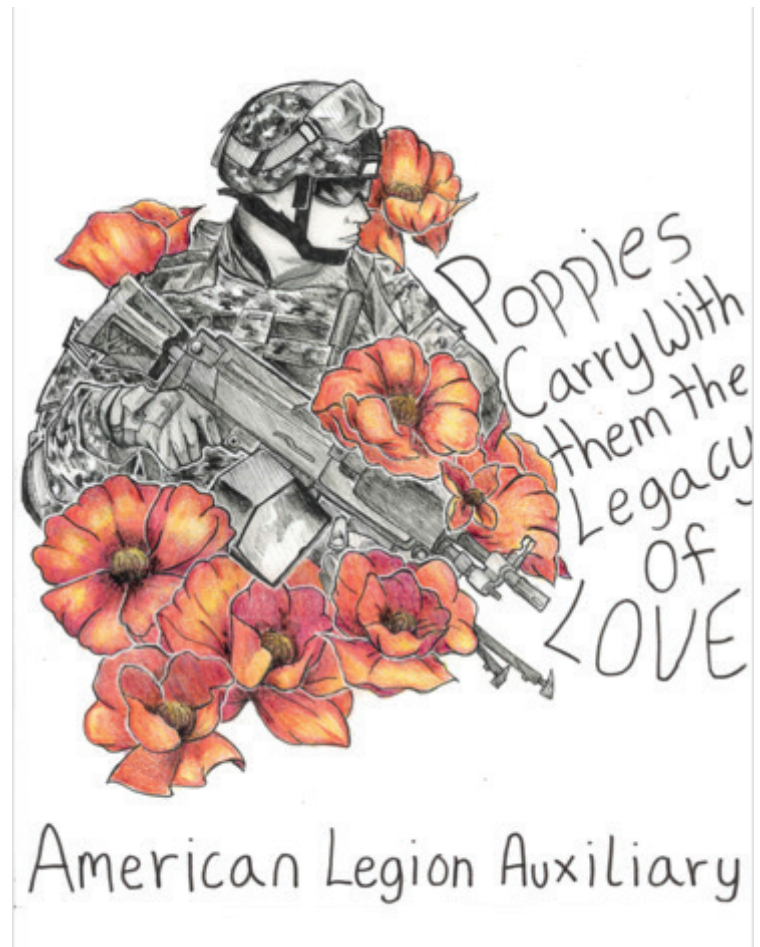
Vol. 143 No. 08 ♦ Groton, SD ♦ Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025 ♦ Established in 1889

## Columbia Auxiliary honors De Eh Tha Say for national Poppy Poster award

A powerful piece of student artwork from De Eh Tha Say has earned national recognition in the American Legion Auxiliary's Poppy Poster Contest, placing first in the Northwestern Division.

The contest, which teaches youth about patriotism, sacrifice, and honoring fallen service members, encourages students in grades 2–12 to create posters featuring the red Memorial Poppy — a symbol of remembrance inspired by World War I battlefields and carried forward as a tribute to those who lost their lives in service to the United States.

Columbia American Legion Auxiliary Unit 58 selected senior De Eh Tha Say as this year's Class 5 winner from their local entries. Her artwork advanced to the South Dakota state competition, where it also won top honors, before moving on to the national contest. From there, it earned first-place recognition across the Northwestern Division of the United States.



The Award Winning Poster

Cara Dennert, representing the Columbia Auxiliary, emphasized the importance of the tradition.

"Over a century after the First World War, the red poppy remains a symbol of sacrifice and gratitude," Dennert said. "Through this contest, our young people not only develop artistic skills, they learn the meaning behind the poppy and why we honor those who gave their lives for our freedoms."

A copy of De Eh Tha Say's award-winning poster was shared with audience members during the ceremony. Dennert noted that beyond recognition, winners help support veterans' families — as donations are made in their name toward scholarships for children of fallen service members.

"We're incredibly proud of her work," Dennert added. "Her creativity, respect for veterans, and heartfelt message captured the spirit of the poppy. It's an honor to see a student from our small community receive national recognition."



Cara Dennert is pictured with De Eh Tha Say at the Veteran's Day Program when Tha Say was recognized for her national award. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## Groton students share veterans' stories; Quilts of Valor presented



Frank Daly



Don Peckham



The speakers and Veterans who were present at the Veteran's Day Program to receive their quilt are pictured above. In back, left to right, are Ashlynn Warrington, Kira Clocksene, Mia Crank, Teagan Chantel, Carly Gilbert, Addison Hoffman and Gavin Kroll; in front, left to right, are Olivia Stigelmeier, Gary Sieber, Kenny Sieber and Dennis Mitchell. (Photos courtesy Jan Seibel)

A special moment during Monday's Veterans Day program at Groton Area High School came when students stepped forward to tell the stories of several local veterans.

Senior Olivia Stigelmeier introduced the segment, explaining that the presentations were based on interviews students had conducted with area servicemen. "A special part of our program today is the opportunity to listen to the real stories of some local veterans as learned and told by the Groton Area High School students," she said. "Today we will hear the stories of Frank Daly, Dennis Mitchell, Don Peckham, Gary Sieber, and Kenny Sieber."

Following the student tributes, Ashlynn Warrington spoke on behalf of the Groton American Legion Auxiliary as part of a heartfelt Quilts of Valor presentation. The handmade quilts were created by Karen Wolter, who began the project several years ago to combine her passion for sewing with her desire to honor veterans.

"Karen had a vision a few years ago to honor veterans through her love of quilting," Warrington said. "So today we are here to fulfill Karen's mission to honor veterans touched by war with love, prayer, and healing thoughts by presenting them with a Quilt of Valor. Dennis, Gary, and Kenny, we hope that when you need a hug, you'll wrap your quilt around yourself and it will provide you the comfort and healing that has been sewn into every seam. These quilts say thank you for your service, your sacrifice, and our freedom."

Frank Daly and Don Peckham received their Quilts of Valor earlier this month. The stories of all five honored veterans will be published in upcoming editions of the Groton Daily Independent.



By David Adler

## Trump's Self-Aggrandizing Pardon of Crypto King Makes the Case for Constitutional Reform

In a wide-ranging interview with "60 Minutes" on November 2, President Donald Trump pretended that he did not know the Binance founder, Changpeng Zhao, the cryptocurrency billionaire whom he pardoned, even though in 2023 Zhao had pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four months in prison for violating the Bank Secrecy Act for failing to implement anti-money laundering procedures. For those who think this a minor or vanilla offense, consider that the United States government had accused him of inflicting "significant harm to US national security," and said that he had "violated US law on an unprecedented scale." In the pursuit of profit, Binance's money-laundering acts had allowed "money to flow to terrorists, cybercriminals and child abusers through its platform." The terrorists included Hamas and al-Qaida. Why did Trump pardon such a criminal?

Trump said he had been told that the prosecution of the crypto king was an example of a "Biden witch hunt." Trump said that Zhao "was treated really badly by the Biden administration," although he claimed that he had "no idea who he is," but acknowledged, in the same breath, that "he is a successful guy." Skeptics doubt Trump's explanation. How about self-aggrandizement as a motive for Trump's pardon of Zhao? Zhao's company has had business dealings with World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency company owned by Trump's son's, Eric and Donald Jr. While seeking a pardon, Zhao hired lawyers and lobbyists with connections to the Trump Administration and struck a deal with Trump's sons that was expected to generate tens of millions of dollars a year for the Trump family for years to come.

When "60 Minutes" host, Nora O'Donnell, asked Trump if he was concerned about "appearance of corruption," Trump replied, "I'd rather not have you ask the question. But I let you ask it." Trump stood alongside his sons in 2024 when they rolled out the family's cryptocurrency business. The specter of self-aggrandizement, or more pointedly stated, a "pay to play" pardon raises anew the need to amend the Constitution to check the constitutional grant of the pardoning authority to the president.

Various presidents have granted pardons that rightly faced backlash. When Gerald Ford pardoned Richard Nixon in 1974 for "all" the offenses that "he has committed or may have committed" since his election, Ford sought, in his words, to free the nation from the paralysis of Watergate and spare Nixon from potential prosecution and his family further humiliation. Ford declared to America: the rule of law has prevailed. On the contrary, the Nixon pardon foiled the application of the rule of law. If, and when, Nixon had been tried and convicted for his illegal acts, perhaps Ford might have found grounds to pardon the humiliated ex-president, but all he accomplished in granting a pre-trial pardon to Nixon was to spare the Watergate president. Americans were deprived of the opportunity of learning whether the rule of law and the criminal justice system could bring an errant president to heel, and whether the rule of law would enjoy widespread support when a president is forced to stand criminal trial.

The Nixon pardon, alone, it seemed to me years ago, was sufficient to justify a constitutional amendment to place checks on the presidential pardoning authority. In a peer reviewed, scholarly article, I argued in favor of Sen. Walter Mondale's proposal in 1974 for a constitutional amendment that would arm Congress with the power to check presidential pardons that seemed, well, unpardonable. Mondale's proposal stated: "No pardon granted to an individual by the President under Section 2, Article II, shall be effective if Congress by resolution, two-thirds of the members of each House concurring therein, disapproves the granting of the pardon within the 180 days of its issuance."

In practice, few presidential pardons would be so worrisome to Congress that members would intervene to block it. Only controversial pardons would draw deep concern from Congress. Trump's pardon of Zhao is such a pardon. His self-aggrandizing exercise of a constitutional power intended to temper justice, is so fraught with conflicts of interest that it demands enactment of the Mondale proposal. A Congress suspicious of the motives behind a pardon to a convicted criminal that coincides with his investments to enrich a president's family invites scrutiny. The specter of corruption at the center of the Trump pardon of Zhao deserves scrutiny, even without the Mondale proposal.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League

**Week #1 Team Standings:** Foxes 3, Cheetahs 3, Shihtzus 2, Jackelopes 2, Chipmunks 1, Coyotes 1

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 185, Ron Belden & Randy Stanley 179, John Sippel 177

**Women's High Games:** Suzie Easthouse 226 & 183, Vicki Jorgensen 174, Sam Bahr 166

**Men's High Series:** John Sippel 504, Brad Waage 496, Randy Stanley 474

**Women's High Series:** Suzie Easthouse 557, Sam Bahr 449, Vicki Jorgensen 434

## Conde National League

**Nov. 10 Team Standings:** Giants 23, Braves 22, Cubs 22, Mets 21, Stooges 21, Pirates 11.

**Men's High Games:** Austin Schuelke 174, Porter Johnson 161, Dion Bahr 148.

**Men's High Series:** Porter Johnson 421, Austin Schuelke 418, Dion Bahr 401.

**Women's High Games:** Amanda Morehouse 158, Joyce Walter 157, Sam Bahr 156.

**Women's High Series:** Sam Bahr 452, Alice Severson 430, Joyce Walter 427. \

**Nov. 3 Team Standings:** Stooges 21, Mets 20, Giants 19, Cubs 18, Braves 16, Pirates 14

**Men's High Games:** Skip Klapperich 184, Chad Furney 167, Butch Farmen 157

**Men's High Series:** Skip Klapperich 470, Chad Furney 439, Austin Schuelke 437

**Women's High Games:** Vickie Kramp 179, Sam Bahr 175, Suzi Easthouse 171

**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 493, Vickie Kramp 455, Sam Bahr 413

**Oct. 27 Team Standings:** Giants 18, Stooges 18, Mets 17, Cubs 15, Braves 15, Pirates 13

**Men's High Games:** Dion Bahr 181, Chad Furney 177, Dalton Locke 155

**Men's High Series:** Dion Bahr 460, Chad Furney 434, Skip Kettering 416

**Women's High Games:** Alice Severson 167, Suzi Easthouse 164, Vickie Kramp 164, Deb Schuelke 162

**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 473, Vickie Kramp 434, Deb Schuelke 429

**Oct. 20 Team Standings:** Stooges 17, Mets 15, Cubs 15, Giants 14, Braves 12, Pirates 11

**Men's High Games:** Jeff Wacholz 173, Butch Farmen 171, Austin Schuelke 170, Dion Bahr 170

**Men's High Series:** Jeff Wacholz 488, Butch Farmen 461, Dion Bahr 444

**Women's High Games:** Alice Severson 198, Suzi Easthouse 175, Sam Bahr 169

**Women's High Series:** Alice Severson 483, Suzi Easthouse 480, Sam Bahr 429

**Oct. 13 Team Standings:** Stooges 15, Mets 14, Cubs 14, Giants 11, Braves 9, Pirates 9

**Men's High Games:** Skip Kettering 180, Dion Bahr 176, Porter Johnson 167

**Men's High Series:** Dion Bahr 469, Porter Johnson 457, Skip Kettering 446

**Women's High Games:** Sandy Hoops 207, Deb Schuelke 167, Suzi Easthouse 155

**Women's High Series:** Sandy Hoops 479, Suzi Easthouse 428, Vickie Kramp 414

**Oct. 6 Team Standings:** Mets 13, Stooges 11, Cubs 11, Giants 9, Pirates 9, Braves 7

**Men's High Games:** Skip Kettering 190, Austin Schuelke 181, Chad Furney 170

**Men's High Series:** Skip Kettering 476, Chad Furney 433, Dalton Locke 430

**Women's High Games:** Sandy Hoops 176, Suzi Easthouse 169, Nancy Radke 156

**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 479, Sandy Hoops 468, Sam Bahr 436

**Sept. 22 Team Standings:** Cubs 10, Mets 8, Braves 6, Giants 5, Stooges 4, Pirates 3

**Men's High Games:** Butch Farman 201, Chad Furney 200, Skip Kettering 185

**Men's High Series:** Butch Farmen 615, Chad Furney 461, Skip Kettering 452

**Women's High Games:** Suzi Easthouse 185, Sam Bahr 178, Deb Schuelke 175

**Women's High Series:** Sam Bahr 494, Suzi Easthouse 480, Vickie Kramp 473

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## Tigers Battle to the End, Fall in Five-Set SoDak 16 Thriller

FORT PIERRE — In a match filled with momentum swings, emotion, and postseason pressure, the Groton Area Tigers pushed Rapid City Christian to the limit Tuesday night in the SoDak 16 at Stanley County High School before falling 3-2 in a five-set classic. Set scores were 25-18, 26-28, 25-21, 20-25 and 15-8.

The Lady Comets built separation in the opening set by breaking a 10-10 tie with six straight points en route to a 25-18 win. Groton responded in gutsy fashion in set two, erasing several late deficits. Tied at 24-24 and again at 26-26, the Tigers delivered the final two points to pull out a dramatic 28-26 win and even the match.

Set three featured 10 ties and four lead changes before Rapid City Christian strung together another six-point run, turning a 14-14 deadlock into a 20-14 lead on the way to a 25-21 win. Once again, the Tigers answered. Trailing 8-7 in the fourth, Groton surged back, tying the set at 15-15 and taking control down the stretch to force a deciding set with a 25-20 victory.

Rapid City Christian set the tone early in the fifth, racing to a 6-1 lead. Groton continued to fight, but the early hole proved too deep as the Comets finished off the match 15-8 to punch their ticket to the state tournament.

### Coach Hanson: "They are a true team"

Groton head coach Chelsea Hanson praised the intensity and environment of the postseason showdown.



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

"The atmosphere in that gym tonight was more than anyone could ask for in a high school game," Hanson said. "It was so loud and the momentum shifts were up and down the whole game."

Hanson credited Rapid City Christian's performance while expressing deep pride in her team's effort.

"Rapid City Christian played an unbelievable game — even if we played our best volleyball it would have been tough to overcome what they were doing offensively," she said. "Tonight was our best blocking night of the season and it still just wasn't quite enough."

She noted the Tigers' composure and resilience.

"I felt like we competed and we never gave them the game. Our girls battled back from behind multiple times — we just couldn't slow them down like we needed to."

It was Groton's first five-set match of the season — a testament, Hanson said, to how much the Tigers left on the floor.

"We got as much as we could out of our players," she said. "I am so sad for our players that they couldn't get into the state tournament, but I am beyond proud of all that we have overcome."

Despite adversity throughout the season, Hanson said her team stayed united.

"We've had injuries, we've had fatigue, but of all the things we've had, I am the most proud of how these girls had each other's back all season long. They are a true team — one that every kid dreams of being a part of."

She also thanked the program's seniors.

"Our leadership was so great and we will miss our four seniors immensely. They all had skill, but they are great people and amazing role models."

With heavy hearts but hopeful spirits, Hanson said the Tigers will cherish this season.

"We're all a bit numb tonight, but this group has bright days ahead, whether it's in volleyball or not."

### Individual Tiger Statistics

Chesney Weber: 38 assists, 12 digs, 2 ace serves, 3 solo blocks, 2 assisted blocks

Rylee Dunker: 12 kills, 27 attack attempts, 2 solo blocks, 1 assisted block

Tevan Hanson: 9 kills, 35 attacks, 2 assists

Taryn Traphagen: 9 kills, 17 attacks, 3 assisted blocks

Sydney Locke: 4 aces, 15-for-16 serving

Jaedyn Penning: 14 digs, 1 ace, 16-for-16 serving

Jerica Locke: 27 digs

McKenna Tietz: 12 digs  
(Team totals: 45 kills, 38 assists, 89 digs, 9 blocks, 8 aces)

### Rapid City Christian Statistical Leaders

A dominant offensive night for the Comets

Chloe Weber: 33 kills — a powerhouse performance that fueled the victory

Faith King: 17 kills, 41 assists, 14 digs, 5 blocks, 1 ace

May Callahan: 3 aces, 17 digs

Maddie Estelle: 6 kills, 4 blocks, 5 digs, 1 ace

Liza Kiefer: 3 kills, 2 blocks, 2 digs

Brecklyn Hermanson: 3 kills, 1 block

(Team total: 54 kills, including 50 from Weber and King combined)

Weber's 33 kills stood out as one of the top hitting performances of the season statewide, repeatedly swinging momentum.

Groton closes a memorable season at 25-6. Rapid City Christian moves on to the state tournament at 29-11.



**Jaedyn Penning**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

## Three Teams Lead NEC All-Conference Volleyball Selections

The Northeast Conference has announced its all-conference volleyball team, with the league's three tri-champions leading the way in representation. Groton Area, Hamlin, and Clark-Willow Lake each placed three players on the honor squad, underscoring the depth and balance that carried them to the top of the standings this season.

For Groton Area, honorees include Chesney Weber, Jerica Locke, and Rylee Dunker. Hamlin is represented by Addie Neuendorf, Addie Jensen, and Issie Steffensen. Clark-Willow Lake's selections are Shelby Begeman, Ella Sass, and Zoe Nichols.

Other players earning NEC All-Conference recognition this fall include Rylee Voeller and Elyana Roach

(Aberdeen Roncalli); Jaelee Grupe (Britton-Hecla); Ella Kerkvliet (Deuel); Avery Schuneman (Milbank); Hayden Gall (Redfield); and Malory Steiner (Webster). Sisseton and Tiospa Zina did not have selections this season.

### King Crossword —


Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

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**Rylee Dunker**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

**DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦**

♦ Moderate   ♦♦ Challenging  
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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The Minnesota Vikings welcomed the Baltimore Ravens to U.S. Bank Stadium on Sunday for a mid-season interconference matchup. The Ravens, who are a perennial Super Bowl contender, were 3-5 coming into this contest, while the Vikings were 4-4 and one game back in the division.

The Ravens got the ball to begin the game, and the Vikings' defense held them to a three-and-out. The Vikings' offense, led by quarterback J.J. McCarthy, marched down the field with a seven-play, 86-yard drive that found the endzone to give Minnesota a 7-0 lead. Baltimore responded with a field goal drive, then both teams traded punts.

The Vikings added another field goal early in the second quarter to take a 10-3 lead, then the defense forced another Baltimore punt. The Vikings had all the momentum, and it looked like they might start pulling away. Unfortunately, McCarthy threw a deep pass to Justin Jefferson that was overthrown and intercepted by the

Ravens, who turned the turnover into three points. The Vikings got the ball back with about a minute left in the half, but a quick three-and-out gave the ball back to Baltimore, who went 63 yards in four plays to add another field goal before time expired to cut the deficit to one heading into halftime.

The Vikings got the ball to begin the second half and were moving the ball well until another deep shot to Justin Jefferson was intercepted. Three plays later, the Ravens were at the Vikings' four-yard line, but the defense held strong and kept them out of the endzone. The Ravens settled for a field goal to take a 12-10 lead. Myles Price fumbled the ensuing kickoff to give the ball right back to Baltimore, who finally found the end zone to take a 19-10 lead. Price fumbled again on his next kick return, and although the Vikings were able to recover this one, they turned the ball over five plays later after a failed fourth-down attempt. A missed field goal by Baltimore gave the ball back to Minnesota, but this game was starting to unravel. The Vikings managed a field goal late in the third quarter, making the score 13-19.

The Ravens found the end zone again in the fourth quarter, and a two-point conversion made it a 14-point game. The Vikings failed a fourth-down conversion on their next possession, but the defense was able to force a Ravens punt. With time winding down and needing two scores, the Vikings put together an ugly drive that somehow found the end zone, but they failed the two-point conversion, so they were still down by eight with about three minutes left. The Vikings' defense once again held the Ravens and forced a punt, but the Vikings couldn't scrounge another TD, ultimately losing 27-19.

## The Groton Independent

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Losses like this are the worst kind. I've said it hundreds of times, I don't mind losses if the team plays well. But the team was horrible today, especially with procedural stuff. The team had eight false starts in this game (which was at home!). That sort of thing is absolutely unacceptable, and unfortunately, it clearly points to an issue at the coaching level. I am a big fan of Kevin O'Connell, and in no way do I think he should be replaced, but he NEEDS to get this simple stuff corrected quickly.

J.J. McCarthy completed 20 of 42 passes for 248 yards, one touchdown, and two interceptions. He also led the team in rushing, with 48 yards on five carries. Aaron Jones had 12 total touches for 69 yards and a touchdown. Jalen Nailor had five catches for 124 yards, while Justin Jefferson and Jordan Addison were both held in check.

The Vikings' defense played well, all things considered. Blake Cashman once again led the team in tackles, Jonathan Allen had the team's only sack of the day, while Andrew Van Ginkel had two pass breakups and a QB hit.

Looking ahead, the Vikings will play the Bears at U.S. Bank Stadium. The game is on Sunday and will be a noon kickoff. Chicago is 6-1 after losing the first two games of the season (one of which was against the Vikings in week one).

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## Groton Author Brock Abeln Releases Inspiring True-Life Memoir — A Powerful Christmas Gift of Faith and Perseverance

A powerful story of courage, faith, and determination is now available just in time for Christmas giving. "My Journey: Learning to Triumph" by Brock Abeln shares the remarkable true story of a small-town young man whose life changed in an instant — and how he refused to let adversity define his future.

Growing up in rural South Dakota, Abeln loved the outdoors, hunting, and the simplicity of small-town life. At age seventeen, he was looking forward to his senior year of high school and the future ahead. But just one month before classes began, a traumatic work-related accident left him a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Suddenly faced with unimaginable challenges and an uncertain road ahead, Abeln could have given up. Instead, he leaned on faith, family, and the support of his community — and found strength to keep moving forward, rebuilding his life one determined step at a time.

His new book takes readers inside his journey — the medical battles, the emotional highs and lows, the moments of doubt, and the victories that came through perseverance and God's grace.

"With the true power of God, determination, and a positive attitude, nothing is impossible." — Brock Abeln

Early readers have praised the book, earning it a 5-star rating on Amazon. One reviewer, Tina Carman, wrote:

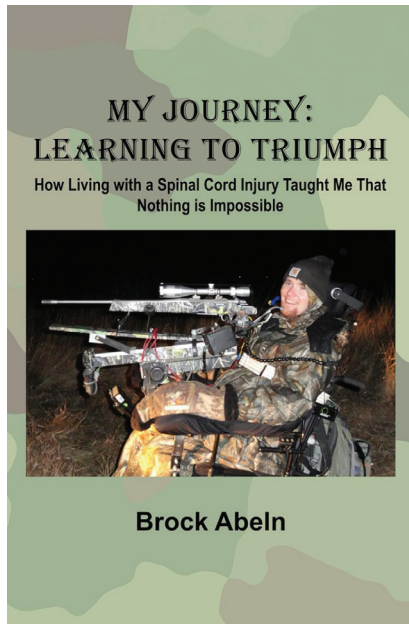
"A very well-written book; it kept me turning pages all the way through in one sitting! Brock went through what the average person would say is hopeless and he found hope! Faced death multiple times and beat it! ... I really respect that he addresses mental health in the book and encourages people to get help when they need it. ... I love that he acknowledges God's grace and gives Him glory; as well as thanking his family and caregivers. One can't travel the road that he is and be successful without a strong support system."

Through every chapter, Abeln's story reflects courage, positivity, and unwavering belief that life's greatest trials can shape us into stronger, more faithful people. His journey shows what can happen when community, faith, and hope come together.

Filled with gratitude, inspiration, and testimony to God's strength, "My Journey: Learning to Triumph" is a heartfelt reminder that even when life changes in an instant, our purpose and spirit can remain unshaken.

This uplifting book makes a meaningful Christmas gift for anyone seeking encouragement, faith-based inspiration, or a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit.

"My Journey: Learning to Triumph" is available on Amazon, and at Lori's Pharmacy in Groton and at Novel Ideas, 410 South Main Street, Aberdeen, SD.



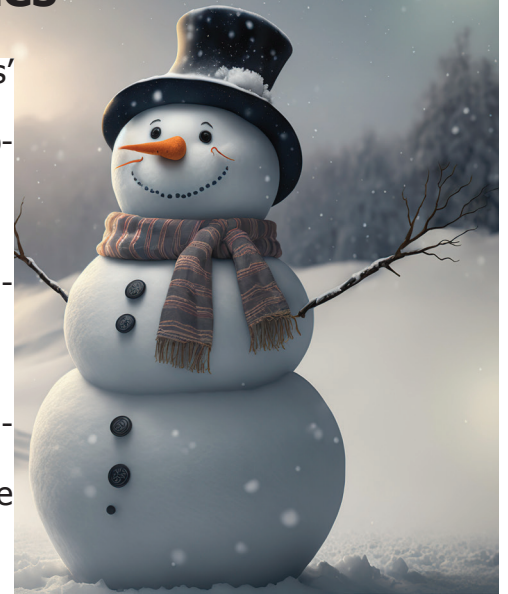
Brock Abeln

## Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen Contest on Sunday, November 30th, at 4:00 pm.

### 2025 Frosty Clues

1. Love celebrating others' successes
2. Graduated from a SD Public University
3. Love sports
4. Was born in Miller, SD
5. Enjoy serving my community
6. Have 2 kids
7. Don't live in Groton
8. Country music is my favorite
9. My favorite class in college was Courtship and Marriage



Senior Jayden Schwan played taps for the last time at a Veteran's Day Program. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Ella's style
- 5 Haydn nickname
- 9 Oklahoma city
- 12 "Hell — no fury ..."
- 13 Pitcher
- 14 Goose egg
- 15 Long-snouted mammals
- 17 "Mazel —!"
- 18 Actress Ryder
- 19 Puccini work
- 21 ICU worker
- 22 Tablecloth material
- 24 Broadway production
- 27 Silent
- 28 Pesky insect
- 31 Poetic dusk
- 32 Khan title
- 33 "Hail, Caesar!"
- 34 Evening, in an ad
- 36 Rep.'s rival
- 37 Blue shade
- 38 "It's nobody — business"
- 40 Yes, to Juan
- 41 Least desirable
- 43 Iraqi currency
- 47 "Entourage" character
- 48 South Pole region
- 51 Corp. boss

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15				16						17		
18								19	20			
			21			22	23					
24	25	26			27				28		29	30
31					32					33		
34			35		36				37			
		38		39				40				
41	42						43			44	45	46
47					48	49	50					
51					52					53		
54					55					56		

- 52 Leeway
- 53 Bandleader
- 54 Lith., once
- 55 Art Deco master
- 56 Leftovers recipe
- 8 Incendiary crime
- 9 Feelers
- 10 Couturier
- 11 Thomas — Edison
- 16 Raggedy doll
- 20 Identify
- 22 Olympic sleds
- 23 Mosque leader
- 24 Stock holder
- 25 Maui souvenir
- 26 Toward the front
- 27 Constructed
- 29 Director
- 30 Aviv preceder
- 35 Golf's Ernie
- 37 Colors lightly
- 39 Intent look
- 40 — Lancelot
- 41 Some WWII vets
- 42 Unrefined metals
- 43 Title for Judi Dench
- 44 Bickering
- 45 Bar mitzvah, e.g.
- 46 Garbage barge
- 49 Neither here — there
- 50 Preschooler

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**Groton Post No. 39 American Legion**

# Annual Turkey Party

**Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025**  
**Starting at 6:30 p.m.**

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

**Turkey, Ham and Bacon to be given away**

Lunch served by Auxiliary **DOOR PRIZE!**

**FREE ADMISSION**



UNOFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6

REGULAR MEETING NOVEMBER 11, 2025

President Rix called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m. in the GHS Library Conference Room. Other members present: Fliehs, Harder, Lerseth-Fliehs, Strom, Weber, and Weismantel. Absent: None. Others present were Supt. J. Schwan, Principal Edwards, and Business Manager Hubsch.

Moved by Weismantel, seconded by Harder, to approve the proposed amended agenda, with the addition of second reading and approval of recommended policy changes to the federal grants manual, and open enrollment #26-09, #26-10, and #26-11. Motion carried.

Pursuant to SDCL 23-3, no potential conflict of interest disclosure was reported.

Moved by Fliehs, seconded by Lerseth-Fliehs to approve consent agenda items: October 14, 2025, board minutes, and October 2025 financial reports, custodial accounts, investments, bills, lunch report, transportation, and authorize business manager to pay district bills up to \$75,000 in advance, using the custodial advance payment account to be approved by the board for reimbursement at the following regular board meeting. Motion carried.

**GENERAL FUND:** Net Salary 327,900.68, Net Benefits 87,476.46; Advance Auto Parts - parts, 264.21; Amazon - supplies, 211.58; Brown County Treasurer - mosquito control, 1,201.74; Cahill Bauer and Associates - audit services, 18,750.00; Brandon Clocksene - Robotics lodging, 673.20; Cole Papers - janitor supply, 238.45; Custodial Fund - advanced payments, 30,929.46; Dependable Sanitation - garbage, 1,464.00; EMC Insurance Company - insurance, 15,115.41; Farmer's Union - oil, 2,517.86; Groton Daily Independent - legal printing, 337.35; Hillyard - janitor supplies, 33.72; Tom Hilsendenger - referee services, 169.00; House of Glass - toilet parts, 270.00; Brittany Hubbard - CTE Health Totes, 75.33; Rebecca Hubsch - meal, 33.45; JW Pepper - music, 75.00; Jerke Irrigation - FB field, 275.00; Jostens - yearbook, 2,935.00; Ken's - supplies, 86.55; Matheson Tri-Gas - supplies, 1,293.48; Medco - medical supplies, 157.80; MJ's Sinclair - gas/diesel, 8,393.22; Northside Implement - repairs, 935.61; Petty Cash, Kristi Peterson - reimbursements, 674.17; Productivity Plus Account - repairs, 2,826.34; Robotics Education & Competition - team registrations, 1,580.00; S&S Lumber - football field marking paint, 2,937.64; Sanford Health - athletic training services, 2,887.50; School Specialty - supplies, 28.27; SD Dept of Public Safety - wrestling Scale, 28.00; Taylor Music - instrument repairs, 179.00; Postmaster - postage stamps, 78.00. Total General Fund - \$513,032.48.

**CAPITAL OUTLAY:** A&B Business - managed print agreement, 1,899.46; Amazon - equipment, 674.45; CF Promo - VB jersey, 234.00; Custodial Fund - advanced payments, 1,469.09; Dakota Supply Group - parts/materials, 505.55; Daktronics - scoreboard parts, 710.00; Follett Content Solutions - elem library books, 1,016.50; Hauff Mid-America Sports - basketball materials, 630.60; Hub City Roofing - roofing work contract, 22,200.00; NSU Finance Office - digital textbooks, 691.94; US Bank - principal/interest, 456,292.50. Total Capital Outlay - \$486,324.09.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION:** Net Salary 51,552.64 Net Benefits 14,618.34 Avera - PT/OT, 19,819.20; Custodial Fund - advanced payments, 69.00. Total Special Education - \$86,059.18.

**ENTERPRISE FOOD SERVICE:** Net Salary 11,314.23, Net Benefits 3,257.62 Food Service: CWD - food, 1,033.64; East Side Jersey Dairy - milk, 1,143.45; Performance Foodservice - food, 6,520.36; Petty Cash, Kristi Peterson - transfer, 58.00; US Foods - food, 4,065.10. Total Food Service - \$27,392.40.

**ENTERPRISE OST:** Net Salary

**GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 06-6 FINANCIAL REPORTS**

	General Fund	Capital Outlay	Special Ed.	Food Service	OST	Driver's Ed	Custodial
<b>October 1 2025</b>	<b>\$1,781,863.78</b>	<b>\$614,692.30</b>	<b>\$310,338.36</b>	<b>\$122,274.20</b>	<b>\$39,997.25</b>	<b>\$20,937.01</b>	<b>\$227,545.43</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>							
Local Sources	\$342,620.32	\$88,511.85	\$39,769.76	\$16,783.40	\$4,947.05		\$111,621.30
County Sources	\$3,542.39						
State Sources							
State Aid	\$46,591.00						
Wind Farm							
Mentor Teacher Program							
State Apportionment							
State Reimbursements							
Bank Franchise							
Federal Sources	\$9,217.32						
Sale of Assets							
Due from Govt/Others							
Transfer In/Out							

<b>TOTAL MONTHLY RECEIPTS</b>	<b>\$392,753.71</b>	<b>\$88,511.85</b>	<b>\$39,769.76</b>	<b>\$26,000.72</b>	<b>\$4,947.05</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$111,621.30</b>
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>\$2,174,617.49</b>	<b>\$703,204.15</b>	<b>\$350,108.12</b>	<b>\$148,274.92</b>	<b>\$44,944.30</b>	<b>\$20,937.01</b>	<b>\$339,166.73</b>
<b>MONTHLY DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>(\$494,623.12)</b>	<b>(\$61,513.58)</b>	<b>(\$113,362.44)</b>	<b>(\$39,808.12)</b>	<b>(\$4,786.97)</b>		<b>(\$88,575.98)</b>
<b>JOURNAL ENTRIES</b>	<b>\$1,204.16</b>	<b>(\$0.27)</b>	<b>\$275.00</b>				

<b>October 31. 2025</b>	<b>\$1,681,198.53</b>	<b>\$641,690.30</b>	<b>\$237,020.68</b>	<b>\$108,466.80</b>	<b>\$40,157.33</b>	<b>\$20,937.01</b>	<b>\$250,590.75</b>
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GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL EDUCATION	FOOD SERVICE	OST
<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Payroll</b>
Instruction \$327,900.68	Instruction \$51,552.64	Instruction \$11,314.23	Instruction \$3,257.62
Employee Benefits \$87,476.46	Employee Benefits \$14,618.34	Employee Benefits \$3,257.62	Employee Benefits \$349.61
<b>Total \$415,377.14</b>	<b>Total \$66,170.98</b>	<b>Total \$14,571.85</b>	<b>Total \$3,412.09</b>
<b>Driver's Education</b>			
Payroll			
Instruction \$0.00			
Employee Benefits \$0.00			
<b>Total \$0.00</b>			

3,062.48, Net Benefits 349.61, Amazon - OST Supplies, 254.88; Ken's - OST Snacks, 754.54. Total OST: \$4,421.51.

**ENTERPRISE DRIVERS ED:** 0.00.

**CUSTODIAL:** 88,575.98

Members of the public are allowed five minutes to address the board on any topic of their choice. With no members present, the board continued with the agenda.

The Board conducted its second reading of the recommended policy changes to the Federal Grants Manual. Moved by Fliehs, seconded by Weismantel, to approve recommended policy changes to the Federal Grants Manual. Motion carried.

The following items were discussed in administrative reports: J. Schwan: Veterans Day Programs begin at 7:30 am with breakfast at the elementary school, followed by a program at 12:30 pm at the GHS Arena. Schwan provided an update on the comprehensive property task force, including a summary of the task force's approved proposals. Schwan will participate in the upcoming meetings, including the statewide superintendent meeting and CTE Professional Learning at Lake Area Technical College, and will hold the first master planning meeting with Co-Op Architects.

S. Edwards reported that she and B. Schwan will introduce literacy training professional development to staff and begin the training after winter break. The Bags food program is transitioning to Mrs. Jodi Schwan, who will coordinate students' food needs along with the comfort closet. Edwards is working on formal observations, and the staff have been meeting on Wednesdays for PLC (Professional Learning Community) meetings.

B. Hubsch gave an overview of the FY 2025 finalized audit and informed the board that there were no sealed bids turned in for the 2001 Dodge Van and the 2002 Oldsmobile. Hubsch also discussed future elections and the implications of holding a combined election with counties under the new law that hosts elections in June and November, and asked the board to consider hosting school elections on campus in the gym arena lobby, instead of at four different precincts because of the accessibility now to absentee vote by mail or in the office, and the difficulties of finding election workers.

The Board conducted the first readings of the recommended policy changes: DLA Payday Schedules, DJG Vendor Relations, and DJ Purchasing. DJBA Incidental Accounts and DJF Purchasing Procedures are to be reviewed for removal as policies.

The Board discussed school district elections. No action was taken.

Moved by Harder, seconded by Weismantel, to approve the FY2025 District Audit. Motion carried.

Moved by Fliehs, seconded by Strom to approve the volunteer coaches for winter sports: Girls Basketball, Justin Hanson; Boys Basketball, Ryan Tracy; and Girls Wrestling, Jeremy Krueger. Motion carried.

No bids were received for the 2001 Dodge Van Wagon or the 2002 Oldsmobile Intrigue.

Moved by Weber, seconded by Fliehs, to approve open enrollments for #26-09, #26-10, and #26-11. Motion carried.

Moved by Weber, seconded by Weismantel, to adjourn at 7:41 am. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be on Monday, December 08, 2025, at 7:00 pm at the HOT Spot in Bristol, SD.

Becky Hubsch, Business Manager

Grant Rix, President

The addition of signatures to this page verifies these minutes as official.

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November 4, 2025

The Groton City Council met on the above date at 7:00pm at 120 N Main Street for their first monthly meeting with the following members present: Babcock, Bahr, Shilhanek, Wambach, and Mayor Hanlon presiding. Also present were, Douglas Heinrich, Terry Herron, Dwight Zerr, Todd Gay, Darrell Hillestad, and Elizabeth Varin.

Moved by Babcock and seconded by Wambach to approve the agenda with no additions or changes. All members present voted aye.

Public comments were welcomed pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1, but none were received.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Shilhanek to table the approval of the Kolker Second Subdivision plat. All members present voted aye.

Department reports were reviewed and discussed. Gay and Hillestad addressed an issue with electricity at the airport.

Herron, Zerr, Hillestad, and Gay exited the meeting.

Moved by Shilhanek and seconded by Wambach to surplus the old vehicle lift at the city shop. Sealed bids will be due by December 2, 2025, at 5:00pm. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Shilhanek and seconded by Bahr to approve the installation of gates on 3rd avenue for the soccer complex. All members present voted aye.

Mayor Hanlon proclaimed that November 3rd - 9th, 2025, as HOSA Future Health Professionals Week.

Moved by Shilhanek and seconded by Wambach to approve the first reading of Ordinance No. 792 - 2026 Appropriations with the removal of \$15,000 for a trailer and a contingency of a grant assisting the purchase of new lights for the scoreboard at the baseball field. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Babcock and seconded by Bahr to begin accepting applications for skating rink employment. All members present voted aye. Positions are open until filled with a preference to have applications in by December 2nd.

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Bahr and seconded by Wambach. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Shilhanek and seconded by Babcock to authorize the following bills for payment. All members present voted aye.

Payroll, \$32,007.87, Employee salaries; Executive, \$720.87, ; Administrative, \$5,053.51, ; Public Safety, \$10,866.90, ; Public Works, \$15,195.28, ; Culture & Recreation, \$171.31, ; A Touch Up, \$3,000.00, Priming/painting of community center; Dacotah Bank, \$6,710.81, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dakotaland FCU, \$600.00, Employee savings; Dacotah Bank, \$810.41, HSA contributions; Dacotah Bank, \$4,678.08, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dacotah Bank, \$100.00, HSA contributions; AFLAC, \$435.76, Employee insurance; Colonial Life, \$69.40, Employee insurance; Allied Benefit Systems, \$14,403.02, Employee insurance; Reliance Standard Life Insurance, \$88.10, Employee insurance; Payment Service Network, Inc., \$200.00, PSN Gateway fees; SD Supplemental Retirement, \$540.00, Supplemental retirement; NW Energy, \$13.49, Natural gas service - PD Generator; Steven Lust Automotive, \$711.31, Brake pads and rotors for 2023 Tahoe - Police Dept. ; Cannon Technologies Inc., \$5,056.00, 2026 annual Yukon software support - Electric Dept. ; Core & Main, \$1,075.20, Manhole covers/frames - Sewer Dept. ; Verizon Wireless, \$40.01, Wireless router - Rubble Site; Sanitation Products, Inc., \$412.55, Street sweeper broom - Street Dept. ; The Groton Independent, \$52.88, Publishing costs; Grand Slam Computers, \$281.25, Troubleshooting Nordic backup for file server - City Hall; AutoZone, \$1,715.98, Transmission parts ; Dakota Fluid Power, Inc., \$340.00, Repairs on plow truck - Street Dept.; McGannon Plumbing & Heating, \$3,565.31, Install valve for ice maker, troubleshoot water heater, repair toilets, service a/c, and repair leaking urinal - Multiple Depts. ; US Bank, \$700.00, 2015A Refinance Bond administrative fees; Midwest Pipe Lining, \$11,669.41, Pipe relining - Wastewater Dept. ; S&S Lumber Co, \$192.19, Loctite, antifreeze, adhesive remover, plug, trimmer line, screw extractors, gloves, dremel bit, seals, caution tape, pipe cap - Multiple Depts.; Dollar General, \$247.25, Paper towels, creamer, marker, batteries, candy for Downtown Trick or Treat, garbage bags, bottled water, car wipes - Multiple Depts. ; SD Retirement System, \$12,539.00, Employee retirement; ;

Announcement: City Offices will be closed on November 11, 2025, for Veteran's Day.

Varin exited the meeting.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Babcock to adjourn into executive session for personnel and

legal matters 1-25-2 (1) & (3) at 8:55pm. All members present voted aye. Council reconvened into regular session at 9:29pm.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Wambach to adjourn the meeting at 9:30pm. All members present voted aye.

Scott Hanlon, Mayor

Douglas Heinrich, Finance Officer

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Town of Westport General Meeting

The Town of Westport met on November 3, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., with Mitch Wilson, Shane Storm, Troy Tschappat, Jason Bender, Jennifer Bender, and Deb Schlosser present.

Public comments: The following bills were presented:

City General: NW Energy-utilities (\$309.59), Groton Independent-October minutes (\$23.47), Jason Heagley-cemetery mowing (\$6,000.00), Jeff Schroeder-city mowing (\$244.99), SDML-workers comp (\$517.00), Elan Financial Services-computer support (\$21.23), Brown County Treasurer-mosquito spraying (\$310.08), DSG-city supplies (\$137.33)

Sewer: NW Energy-Lift Station utilities (\$43.97)

Water: WEB-water (\$2106.62), Public Health Laboratory-water testing (\$250.00), Water Maintenance District-water testing (\$688.78), Core & Main-FlexNet Support (\$3700.00)

Troy Tschappat motioned, second by Shane Storm to pay all bills.

The following deposits were presented:

City General: State of SD (\$5833.21), Brown County Collections (\$310.17), Shane Storm (\$330.20), Interest (\$75.39), Building Permits (\$80.00)

Sewer: Resident Payments (\$2876.56)

Water: Resident Payments (\$4314.84)

Old Business: Shane Storm motioned, second by Troy Tschappat to approve bid from CWF Concrete & Masonry, Inc. for snow removal.

New Business: 2026 liquor license for The Shed was approved.

Meeting dismissed at 7:20p.m.

Deb Schlosser, Finance Officer

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## Conde National League

**Sept. 15 Team Standings:** Braves 6, Cubs 6, Mets 4, Stooges 4, Giants 3, Pirates 1

**Men's High Games:** Chad Furney 200, Skip Kettering 185, Dion Bahr 165

**Men's High Series:** Chad Furney 461, Skip Kettering 452, Dion Bahr 433

**Women's High Games:** Suzi Easthouse 185, Sam Bahr 178, Vickie Kramp 171

**Women's High Series:** Sam Bahr 494, Suzi Easthouse 480, Vickie Kramp 473



Notice of Surplus Property

The Groton City Council has declared the following items as surplus property: Direct Lift 4 post hoist with a 9,000lb capacity. The hoist is operational but needs a slide repaired. Bids will be accepted at Groton City Hall, 120 N Main Street or mailed to PO Box 572. Bids are due by December 2, 2025, by 5:00pm and will be opened that same evening during the regular council meeting at 7:00pm. Please call 605-397-8422 with any questions. The City Council reserves the right to refuse any and all bids.

Published November 12 and 19, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$13.01 and may be viewed free of charge at [www.sdpublicnotices.com](http://www.sdpublicnotices.com). 26194

## Thank you for subscribing!

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

5	9	6	1	3	8	4	7	2
8	7	3	4	9	2	5	6	1
4	1	2	6	7	5	8	9	3
2	6	4	8	5	9	1	3	7
1	8	5	7	6	3	9	2	4
7	3	9	2	4	1	6	5	8
3	4	7	5	8	6	2	1	9
6	2	8	9	1	7	3	4	5
9	5	1	3	2	4	7	8	6

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## School board discusses upcoming election changes, property tax proposals

by Elizabeth Varin

At its meeting Tuesday morning, the Groton Area School Board reviewed recent proposals from the state's comprehensive property tax task force and discussed changes coming to school district elections.

Superintendent Joe Schwan briefed the board on discussions from the statewide comprehensive property tax task force. While some of the group's ideas would have little effect on the district, several proposals could directly impact local school budgets.

Among the potential changes proposed were:

- Reducing the maximum annual budget increase for K-12 school districts from 3% to 2.5%.
- Creating a dedicated fund for state aid to education, directing all revenues from video lottery into general and special education funding.
- Repealing authorization for capital outlay transfers to the general fund, which could limit flexibility in how districts allocate resources.
- Calling on the executive branch to propose a 5% spending cut as part of the 2026 budget plan.

The task force's proposals are recommendations at this stage. Any changes would require legislative approval, and Schwan noted that how the bills are written will be critical in determining their impact on school districts.

"These are just proposals from the committee to the legislators," he said. "Sometimes with these things, the devils in the details."

Some of the proposals may happen, and some may not, Schwan said. It's a combination of things that might change when the legislative session starts.

Board elections may see changes

District Business Manager Becky Hubsch explained some of the impacts of House Bill 1130, state legislation that will require municipal and school district elections to be held in either June or November,

aligning them with state and federal election dates. Groton Area faces a unique challenge as the district boundaries span multiple counties.

Hubsch said the district includes territory in five counties, meaning it would need to coordinate with all of them to combine election efforts. Some counties have expressed hesitation about entering into such agreements.

To simplify the process, an option would be to change polling locations, Hubsch said. Instead of using the district's four existing precincts, one option would be to host all voting at the school site.

Board members raised concerns about closing those precincts, with Heather Lerseth-Fliehs asking if a person would have to vote for some things in their community and then have to travel to Groton to vote in the school district election.

Tigh Fliehs also expressed concerns, saying, "the outlying community would be pretty upset I would think."

Hubsch emphasized that these are just options and issues she is running into. She added that the last board member election the district has had was almost a decade ago as there haven't been more people running for the board than the number of board positions available.

Middle/High School Principal Shelby Edwards told the board about moving the B.A.G.S. for Tomorrow program from the elementary school to the high school. Currently Elementary School Principal Brett Schwan is handling operations of the program that provides bags of food for students signed up for the program in order to supplement their weekend food intake. The program will now be combined with the Comfort Closet set up at the high school that provides essential and comfort items, such as hygiene products, clothing and school supplies, for those in need. This change allows the district to provide a little more on-site for kids who need it.

- The board approved volunteer coaches for winter sports.
  - o Justin Hanson for girls basketball
  - o Ryan Tracy for boys basketball
  - o Jeremy Krueger for girls wrestling

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A new and expanded 18-bed behavioral health unit at Avera St. Luke's Hospital will serve adults and offer crisis stabilization for adolescents.



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# Tigers outlast Britton-Hecla with gritty four-set victory

Groton Area fought past a determined Britton-Hecla squad Thursday night in Groton, earning a 3-1 win in the Region 1A semifinals. The Tigers relied on senior leadership, timely runs, and a composed response to momentum swings to finish strong before a packed home crowd.



**The Groton Area Volleyball Team receives the SoDak16 Volleyball as the Tigers advance to Tuesday's match with Rapid City Christian.**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

Groton took control early with a 25-13 win in the opening set, using a six-point surge to jump ahead 9-2. Britton-Hecla answered in the second, battling through 10 ties and five lead changes before closing with a three-point push for a 25-22 win.

The match turned in the third set. Britton-Hecla opened with nine straight points for a 13-3 lead, but the Tigers stormed back with eight straight to move in front 18-16 and eventually took the set 25-21. Groton carried that momentum into the fourth and never trailed after building a 10-5 advantage, finishing the night with a 25-17 win.

Head coach Chelsea Hanson said her team felt early nerves but settled in.

"There was a little bit of tension," Hanson said. "Without Chesney there was some stress, but they figured it out. They communicated and trusted each other."

She credited her seniors for steadying the group during the comeback.

"We could have folded — easily. But they didn't panic. They chipped away one point at a time."

Hanson also praised sophomore setter Talli Wright for stepping into a major role, saying, "Huge shoes to fill — and she handled it."

## STAT LEADERS

Groton served 80-for-88 with seven aces and finished with 50 kills, led by Tevan Hanson (13), Rylee Dunker (11), Jaedyn Penning (11), and Taryn Traphagen (9). Wright recorded 34 assists, while Jerica Locke led the defense with 22 digs.

Britton-Hecla was paced by Daynika Zuehlke with 11 kills, Karlie Zuehlke with eight, and Madelynn Micko with seven.

## Understanding Macular Degeneration: The Importance of Early Detection and Specialized Care

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the leading causes of vision loss among adults over 65. This condition affects the back of the eye where light is processed by macula. The macula is the part of the retina providing sharp, detailed vision needed



**By: Jed Assam, MD, Founder and Vitreoretinal Surgeon, VRA Vision**

for reading, driving, and recognizing faces. Two categories of macular degeneration are "dry" and "wet". This article will focus on dry macular degeneration and therapy options to help slow vision loss from it.

### Early Signs and Symptoms

Macular degeneration begins silently. Early symptoms may include mild blurring, difficulty seeing in low light, or the appearance of wavy or distorted lines. Later on, a dark or empty spot near the center of the vision can develop. In advanced stages, central vision may be lost entirely. Regular eye exams are crucial because early AMD can be detected during a dilated retinal examination or with specialized imaging.

### Impact and Risk Factors

A few major risk factors include age, family history, current smoking, and genetics. Individuals with a family history of AMD should be especially vigilant about screening.

### The Importance of Eye Exams and Specialist Care

Routine eye exams with an optometrist or general ophthalmologist are the first line of defense in identifying AMD. However, once AMD is suspected or diagnosed, referral to a retina specialist is essential. Retina specialists undergo additional years of fellowship training specifically in identifying and treating diseases of the retina and macula. This specialized expertise allows for detailed diagnostic imaging, tailored treatment plans, and access to the latest clinical advances in emerging therapies for AMD.

### Current Treatments and New Technologies for Dry AMD

For patients with intermediate dry AMD, one of the most promising new therapies involves photobiomodulation (PBM) using the Valeda Light Delivery System, an FDA-authorized device. PBM works by exposing the retina to specific wavelengths of light that stimulate the mitochondria—the "powerhouses" of our cells. By energizing these tiny structures, PBM helps improve cellular metabolism and reduce oxidative stress thought to have a role in slowing AMD.

Clinical trials, including the LIGHTSITE III and LIGHTSITE IIIB, have shown that PBM can lead to improved visual function and contrast sensitivity in patients with intermediate AMD. These studies support PBM as a safe, non-invasive treatment option for eligible patients.

In addition, there are FDA-approved injections for geographic atrophy, a more advanced stage of dry AMD. These treatments aim to slow progression and preserve remaining vision, marking a major milestone for patients who previously had limited options.

For AMD that has advanced beyond the ability to benefit from the therapies mentioned there are still options. Many vision aids and tools are available today that can help optimize remaining vision. Getting a referral to a Low Vision specialist is another step available to help individuals affected by advanced AMD.

### Treating Early to Protect Vision

Early identification and intervention is key. Just like controlling blood pressure or diabetes early to prevent complications later on, addressing macular degeneration before it becomes advanced can make a significant difference in the long run. Current therapy slows down AMD to keep vision better for longer, but does not completely stop or reverse dry AMD. Regular follow-ups and referral to a retina specialist can ensure timely diagnosis, access to cutting-edge treatments, and personalized care to preserve sight for as long as possible.

Dr. Jed Assam is a board-certified, fellowship-trained retina specialist dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of AMD along with other macular and retinal disorders. He is the founder of VRA Vision in Sioux Falls, a Center for Excellence in Macular Degeneration, and is passionate about patient education and early intervention to prevent vision loss. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

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