

# THE Groton Independent

South Dakota  
Growing Families & Opportunities

Vol. 136 No. 42 ♦ Groton, South Dakota ♦ Wednesday, June 12, 2019 ♦ Established in 1889

## Winburn, Eichler are great negotiators for language arts

Deb Winburn and Emily Eichler gave a curriculum review of elementary language arts. They showed the new books that will be used for the upcoming school year. The cost of the program was originally quoted at just under \$100,000. Eichler and Winburn negotiated with the company and they got the price down to \$65,000 which is what the cost is now of the course. That is for a six-year program. Board Member Deb Gengerke said that she was impressed with the amount of prep work that went into the presentation and their negotiating skills. "Thank you for all your hard work," she said to Winburn and Eichler.

Cody Swanson made a presentation about a potential co-op agreement with Langford Area for show choir. He said Langford does not have a show choir and there has been interest from Langford students to participate in the Groton program. He said there is for sure four Langford students interested in participating, with up to a potential of 15 musicians.

Swanson said having more students would help Groton in competitions. The official request will have to come from Langford to join the Groton program. Board member Marty Weismantel said that Langford should pay for their share of expenses in all fairness to the Groton taxpayers. Swanson said they would have to pay the dues like anyone else and also help with fund raising efforts. Swanson said he will meet with the Langford Area School Board in July.

There is about 2,000 square feet of tuck pointing that needs to be done at the elementary school and Midwest Masonry of Groton would do it for \$13.40 per square feet. The contract was approved.

The board approved the bid from Allied Climate Professionals of Groton for the high school boiler replacement. The bid came in at \$89,184. The other bid was from a Mitchell company for \$119,240.

The board approved membership into the North Central Special Education Cooperative. The co-op now has its own board so the financial part, which has been done by the Groton Area School Business Office, will now be done by the cooperative.

Matt Locke, who has been the eighth grade girls basketball coach for the past couple of years, will now be the head high school girls' basketball coach. Becky Erickson will be going back to eighth grade girls' basketball coach, which she was before becoming the assistant GBB coach under Coach Shaun Wanner.

Teacher contacts were approved.

Lowell Harms requested that one of his adopted children play football. The student is a home-schooled student. Since it was not on the agenda, the board could take no action. The item will be placed on the next school board agenda for June 24.



## Groton Area places sixth at State Clay Target Tournament

Groton Area received sixth place at the SD State Clay Target tournament that was held in Aberdeen. Groton Area also placed second overall in conference 2A. Kayde Stange and Tina Zoellner each earned second place overall in the conference, and Luke Simon shot a straight 25 during the State Tournament.

Eight members of the Groton Team qualified for the All State Team pictured in the left are Kayde Stange, Jamesen Stange, Caleb Furney, Taryn Taylor, Trevor Harry, Tristan Kampa, Tina Zoellner, and Lane Krueger.

The large group photo below is of all the Groton Area participants in the State Tournament. (Photos Courtesy of Vicci Stange)



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 6/22 – Aladdin, PG  
 6/29 – Secret Life of Pets 2, PG  
 7/6 – Closed – Happy Fourth!

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 Paul Irvin Kosel, Publisher  
 paperpaul@grotonsd.net ~ 605-397-7460  
 Tina Kosel, Office Manager  
 office@grotonsd.net ~ 605-397-7285  
 Notices: legals@grotonsd.net  
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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

DAKOTA ROYAL CHARITY DRAFT Horse Show - 6-horse hitches from 10 states. Swif-tel Center, Brookings, SD 1 pm June 22 & 23. https://www.facebook.com/dakotaroyaldraft-show/

**AUCTIONS**

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**NOTICES**

**Hoops Reunion**  
 John and Mary Hoops reunion will be held on June 23rd at the community center. Pot Luck dinner at 12:30 with chicken and drinks provided.

**Jenifer Fjelstad Named to Augustana University's Dean's List**

SIoux FALLS, SD (06/05/2019)-- Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, announced today that Jenifer Fjelstad of Groton has been named to the Dean's List for the spring semester of the 2018-19 academic year. The Dean's List recognizes full-time students who have a minimum of 12 credit hours with grade-point averages at 3.5 or above.

**Kennedy Clark named to USF Dean's List**  
 SIOUX FALLS, South Dakota—The University of Sioux Falls has released its Dean's List for spring semester 2019, and over 550 students made the list. To qualify for the Dean's List, a student must achieve a semester grade point average of 3.5 or greater on a 4.0 scale. Kennedy Clark, Senior, Elementary Education, Groton, made the Fall Semester 2018 USF Dean's List

## Groton School June 10, 2018

### Meeting Minutes

UNOFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS  
OF BOARD OF EDUCATION  
GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6  
REGULAR MEETING  
June 10, 2019

President Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the High School Conference Room. Members present: Fjelstad, Gengerke, Harder, Pharis, Rix, Smith and Weismantel. Others present were Supt. J. Schwan, Principals B. Schwan and Sombke and Business Manager Weber.

Moved by Weismantel, second Pharis to approve the agenda as proposed. Motion carried.

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

Moved by Gengerke, second Harder to approve the following consent agenda items as presented: North Central Special Ed Coop school of record agenda items, District minutes of May 13, bills, financial reports, agency accounts, investments, school lunch report, transportation report, 2019-20 energy quote requests, 2019-20 newspaper quote requests and publication of 2019-20 Groton Area School District Budget with 8:00pm public hearing set for July 8th. Motion carried.

GENERAL FUND: Net Salary – 175,945.11; FIT – 16,339.18; Medicare – 6,752.36; FICA – 28,871.92; American Funds – 542.80; Washington National – 98.40; SDRS – 29,123.54; Health Savings Account – 100.00; Waddell & Reed – 1,440.00; Horace Mann – 1,011.61; Thrivent – 228.90; AFLAC – 3,032.96;

Delta Dental – 3,898.40; SD Supplemental Retirement – 4,510.39; Breit Law – 626.45; Wellmark – 59,976.00; Reliastar – 742.68; Avesis – 239.41; Aberdeen Awards – awards, 3,520.50; Advanced Auto Parts – supplies, 158.54; Agency Funds – advance pays, 15,937.71; Allied Climate Professionals – repairs, 2,212.86; Amazon Capital Services – supplies, 25.95; American Solutions for Business – supplies, 20.09; Bahr's Jungle Lanes – pizza 283.37; Brown County Treasurer – mosquito control, 123.76; Cole Papers – supplies, 2,857.04; Dependable Sanitation – garbage, 1,238.00; Brian Dolan – background refund, 43.25; Farnams – supplies, 26.00; Flute Talk – subscription, 12.00; GCR Tires – bus tire, 70.00; Lynette Grieve – meals, 45.88; Groton Area – Robotics reimbursement, 6,475.00; Groton Area – food service reimbursement, 313.09; Groton Chiropractic – physical, 95.00; Groton Daily Independent – legal, 192.08; Groton DQ – gift cards, 234.00; Joel Guthmiller – meals, 16.36; Hauff Mid-America Sports – letters, 463.50; Aaron Helvig – meals, 48.72; House of Glass – mirror, 19.50; JW Pepper – music, 111.94; Jerke Irrigation – repairs, 338.74; Mid-American Research Chemical – supplies, 914.14; Milbank "M" Club – golf fee, 41.38; MJ's Sinclair – gas/diesel, 6,663.39; Moberg Pollock School – golf fee, 40.00; Northwestern Energy – natural gas, 1,568.99; Obermiller Nelson Engineering – engineering, 11,900.00; QQP/Midstates – awards, 95.00; rSchool Today – scheduler, 1,293.57; S&S Lumber – supplies, 1,452.91; Brian Schuring – meals, 60.00; SDCA – membership, 115.00; Cody Swanson – music refund,

16.61; Taylor Music – music/aprons/towels, 122.68; CWD-Aberdeen – Food, 1,235.99; Dean Foods – milk, 362.37; Earthgrains – food, 160.25; Kristi Eckrich – lunch refund, 229.00; Shannon Garduno – lunch refund, .25; Cory & Tammi Geffre – lunch refund, 7.45; Groton Area – lunch transfer, 10.00; Vince & Chris Hanson – lunch refund, 16.99; Jason & Kathy Holm – senior lunch refund, 23.55; Dave & Glenda LaMee – senior lunch refund, 27.90; Jami Larson – lunch refund, 150.67; Darren & Lisa Locke – lunch refund, 227.95; Connie O'Neill – lunch refund, 41.50; Reinhart Foodservice – food, 884.83; Lee & Jennifer Thompson – lunch refund, 106.05; US Foods – food, 1,118.38; Holly Vensel – lunch refund, 20.20. Total Food Service – \$15,995.08. Fund 53: Net Salary – 1,543.04; FIT – 101.18; Medicare – 55.08; FICA – 235.50; SDRS – 189.88; AFLAC – 163.93; Wellmark – 671.00; Reliastar Life – 16.92; Agency Funds – advance pays, 38.30; Groton Area – supplies, 77.68; Groton Ford – repairs, 129.42. Total Fund 53 - \$3,221.93. Enterprise Funds – \$19,217.01. AGENCY FUND: Total – \$48,912.37. RECEIPTS: Local Sources, Taxes – 1,837,218.22; Other Local Sources – 118,624.95; County Sources – 2,937.77; State Sources – 177,777.46; Federal Sources – 6,378.94. Total Receipts – \$2,142,937.34. Members of the public are allowed five minutes to address the board on any topic of their choice. Lowell Harms requested permission that his 7th grade son be allowed to play junior high football next year. Current school policy does not allow students to participate in

school activities unless they are enrolled. Mr. Harms' children are home-schooled. The board could not respond to or act on the request since the item was not officially listed on the agenda. Mr. Harms requested the issue be listed on the agenda of the upcoming June 24th board meeting. The board agreed, and the issue will be officially addressed at that time. Moved by Pharis, second Weismantel to approve second reading and adoption of proposed amendments to graduation requirements. Motion carried. There were no committee reports given. The following items were discussed in administrative reports: end-of-year reporting to SD Department of Ed, website progress, summer custodial work, arena floor to be closed for re-finishing June 19th through July 7th, staffing update, ASBSD/SASD convention, Title grants management system, ESy staffing changes, 2019-20 class schedule on-line, student assignment books, CLI-Annual NeighborWorks Community Leadership Institute and auxiliary work agreement update. Deb Winburn and Emily Eichler presented the elementary language arts review. Expenses will be incorporated into the 2019-20 budget. Music Instructor, Cody Swanson, presented a potential co-op agreement with Langford School District for show choir. No action was taken. Schwan presented a proposed contract for elementary tuck-pointing work from Midwest Masonry. The estimated cost is \$13.50/square foot for 2,000

to 3,000 square feet plus excise tax. Moved by Weismantel, second Gengerke to approve as presented. Motion carried. HS boiler replacement bids were announced from the June 6th bid opening as follows: Krohmer Plumbing - \$119,240 and Allied Climate Professionals - \$89,184. Moved by Rix, second Pharis to approve low bid from Allied Climate Professionals. Motion carried. Moved by Fjelstad, second Gengerke to approve NCSE Coop District Membership Agreement for 2019-20. Motion carried. Moved by Harder, second Weismantel to hire Matt Locke as Head Girls Basketball Coach for 2019-20. Motion carried. Move by Gengerke, second Pharis to reassign Becky Erickson from Assistant Girls Basketball to JH Girls Basketball. Motion carried. Moved by Rix, second Weismantel to approve signed teacher contracts with salaries to be printed in July. Motion carried. Smith declared a recess at 8:05 pm. The board returned from recess at 8:14 pm. Moved by Harder, second Rix to go into executive session at 8:15 pm pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations. Motion carried. Smith declared the board out of executive session at 8:37 pm. Moved by Rix, second Weismantel to adjourn. Motion carried. M. J. Weber, Business Manager Steven R. Smith, President The addition of signatures to this page verifies these minutes as official. Published once at the total approximate cost of \$96.93. 17601

MONTHLY DISTRICT FINANCIAL REPORT FOR GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 06-6										
For the reporting period beginning July 1, 2018, and ending May 31, 2019										
	General Fund	Restricted Gen Funds	Capital Outlay	Special Education	Pension Fund	Bond Redemption	Capital Projects	Enterprise Fund	Agency Fund	Total for District
<b>1. Beginning Balance</b>	<b>897,628.74</b>	<b>32,052.21</b>	<b>489,434.08</b>	<b>12,306.23</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>134,552.63</b>	<b>1,314,764.45</b>	<b>48,128.70</b>	<b>247,806.64</b>	<b>3,176,673.68</b>
a. cash	897,628.74	32,052.21	489,434.08	12,306.23	0.00	134,552.63	1,314,764.45	48,128.70	247,806.64	3,176,673.68
b. petty cash	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>2. Transfers in</b>										
<b>3. Revenue to date</b>	<b>4,294,239.46</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1,540,785.43</b>	<b>886,082.17</b>	<b>752.75</b>	<b>203,631.39</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>270,942.05</b>	<b>827,651.35</b>	<b>8,024,084.60</b>
<b>4. Total accounted for</b>	<b>5,191,868.20</b>	<b>32,052.21</b>	<b>2,030,219.51</b>	<b>898,388.40</b>	<b>752.75</b>	<b>338,184.02</b>	<b>1,314,764.45</b>	<b>319,070.75</b>	<b>1,075,457.99</b>	<b>11,200,758.28</b>
<b>5. Transfers out</b>										
<b>6. Expenditures to date</b>	<b>4,029,987.86</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1,201,287.51</b>	<b>619,252.88</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>210,266.25</b>	<b>295,932.50</b>	<b>280,088.94</b>	<b>840,959.23</b>	<b>7,477,775.17</b>
a. encumbrances	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
b. disbursements	4,029,987.86	0.00	1,201,287.51	619,252.88	0.00	210,266.25	295,932.50	280,088.94	840,959.23	7,477,775.17
<b>7. Ending Balance</b>	<b>1,161,880.34</b>	<b>32,052.21</b>	<b>828,932.00</b>	<b>279,135.52</b>	<b>752.75</b>	<b>127,917.77</b>	<b>1,018,831.95</b>	<b>38,981.81</b>	<b>234,698.76</b>	<b>3,723,183.11</b>
a. checking	1,161,880.34	32,052.21	828,932.00	279,135.52	752.75	127,917.77	1,018,831.95	38,981.81	234,498.76	3,722,983.11
b. petty cash	(0.00)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	200.00
May Receipts	1,129,114.55	0.00	545,210.97	291,802.61	170.60	62,247.91	0.00	30,598.80	83,791.90	2,142,937.34
May Expenses	398,898.03	0.00	8,697.88	56,675.36	0.00	0.00	13,531.40	28,941.95	48,912.37	555,656.99
Agency Checking	234,498.76									
District Checking	3,488,484.35									
Certificate of Deposit	0.00									
Agency Cash on Hand	200.00									
<b>Total all Funds</b>	<b>3,723,183.11</b>									

## Groton Street Project to begin next week

Action will start to pick up on the Groton Street Project for the summer. A pre-construction meeting was held yesterday at City Hall. According to Terry Herron, city supervisor, the street project could begin on Monday. State Street will be the first one to get worked on.

## St. John's Day Celebration Planned In Turton

The 120th annual St. John's Day Celebration will be held on SUNDAY - June 23, 2019 at the Turton Community Center in Turton, SD. The meal will be served from Noon to 2:00 p.m. it includes beef sandwiches, baked beans, potato salad, veggies & dip, fruit, pie and beverage. The cost for the meal is a free-will offering. The Barrel Train Rides, Inflatables, Games and Raffle will begin at 12:00 p.m.

Everyone is welcome and we hope to see you on SUNDAY, June 23rd in Turton.

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The Dakota Media Group is looking for a motivated individual to join our team as a full-time Managing Editor.  
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- Ability to manage others
- Ability to effectively handle newsroom budget and write consistently clear.
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Interested candidates please email resume to Kevin Shaw  
**kshaw@aberdeennews.com**

## Frederick Town June 6, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Town of Frederick  
June 6, 2019 Minutes  
Frederick's Town Board meeting was held Thursday evening June 6, 2019, in the Frederick Community Center beginning at 7 PM. Attending the meeting were Chairman R. Scott Campbell, board members Troy Millard and Gary Schlosser, Assistant Finance Officer Mariah Heine, and citizens Ray Bower, Gary Peterson, Leroy and Sharon Ham and Tami Nickelson.

Chairman Campbell opened the meeting and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The zoning application from Ray Bower was addressed. There was a motion to approve the variance for permitted use and a 20 foot setback with the stipulation of finding the property markers to ensure keeping 20 feet back from the property line made by T. Millard/R. S. Campbell. Motion Carried. After this approval, the planning and zoning board session ended to begin the regular board meeting.

The May minutes were read and approved along with the minutes of the planning and zoning special meeting on May 20, 2019. Motion to approve minutes was made by T. Millard/G. Schlosser. Motion Carried.

The financial statements were accepted with a motion by T. Millard/G. Schlosser. Motion Carried.

The accounts payable for June was approved without the checks to Thorpe Excavating, Helms and Associates, and One-Call with a motion by T. Millard/G. Schlosser. Motion Carried.

**ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:**  
Ashley Gunther EBL, fill-in for Libr. 20 hrs EBL \$170.85; Community Store Supplies FO \$9.18; D. Bruns HP ink reimburse Gen'l \$83.05; D. Bruns, Wage CC \$124.17; D. Bruns, FO Wage+mtg+mileage FO \$1,376.92; DSG Sup SP \$171.88; Farm Plan JD Mower Repair Gen'l \$425.77; FU Oil Co Unleaded Mun. Bldg \$829.98; FDC Econ Dev \$1,200.00; Frohling Law Office Attorney Fees Wastewater Proj \$765.00; G. Schlosser, BM Wage 2 mtgs Gen'l \$46.17; GDI Legals Gen'l \$259.88; Hach Company testers Wtr \$92.85; Isaac Morlock Mowing Gen'l \$124.67; JVT Gen'l/FO/Wtr/EBL \$330.43; Kelli Hart Reimburse Elect use Wtr \$187.63; M. Cox Wage EBL \$438.13; M. Heine, AFO Wage FO \$854.24; MDU Sts/Mun Bldg/EBL/BP/SP/Wtr/Swr \$1,315.12; Menard's Supplies Park/Sts \$180.63; R. Bakeberg UT Mgr Wage Sts/Wtr/Swr \$428.83; True Value Sup S. Park \$27.63; R. Bakeberg Veh Allowance Sts/Wtr/Swr \$75.00; R.S. Campbell, Chrmn Wage 2 mtgs Gen'l \$92.34; R.S. Campbell Reimburse mower repair Gen'l \$586.34; SD Dept of Rev Lab Wtr/Swr \$171.00; SD Dept of Rev Sales Tax Garb \$72.82; Sumption Farms Bales Wtr \$320.00; T. Millard, BM Wage 2 mtgs Gen'l \$46.17; USDA-RD AP Water Repair Loan \$475.00; WEB Water 443,100 gals Wtr \$2,389.91.

Utility Manager/Maintenance R. Bakeberg left his utility report in his absence.

No report from Frederick Forward, Historical Society, nor Frederick Development Corp.

Other Old Business included: A. discussion of interim financing for the wastewater project which will be explored throughout the month to make partial payment of bills from Helms and Associates next month; B. upcoming work by Dahme Construction Co., Inc., on the waterline project

that should begin next week; C. work was done by Craig Martin blading on RR Ave; D. information on a One Call system, The board discussed that the one call system does not appear that it will be beneficial to the city and would not like to use the system.

**New Business:**  
LeRoy and Sharon Ham had concern about unmarked vehicles in their neighbor's yards as well as overgrown yards. The board discussed the city ordinances that don't allow either of these things and will be sending a notice to the neighbors.

The board accepted a proposal to clean the water tower from Maguire Iron, Inc. with a motion to accept by R.S. Campbell/T. Millard. Motion Carried.

Gary Peterson asked about a tax break for the new spec house in Frederick. He proposed a plan of lower property taxes for the new homeowner increasing each year charging 20% of the taxes the first year, 40% the second year up to the full amount in the fifth year and going forward. He expressed that this would be very beneficial for the new homeowner and would help encourage someone to move to Frederick. The city was interested in the idea and will look into the next steps. Gary Peterson also would like to seek a variance on the spec house by moving it forward 15 feet closer to the road to allow leaving a tree in place in the backyard. The city will publish a notice and schedule a special meeting.

An offer was made by Melanie Flinn to pay \$2000 to pay off the debt to the city for removing the rubble from their yard. The board chose to decline the offer and made a motion to add it to their taxes with a motion by G. Schlosser/T. Millard. Motion Carried.

There was a discussion about storage pods in town to which the board will create a new ordinance to address the use of storage pods in the city.

The city sent an application for a mosquito control grant and awaits to hear a response.

The board reviewed the Restricted Use Facility Report by Don Rosowitz of DENR.

There was a question to the board about vacation rates for homes in Frederick used strictly for hunters. The board discussed that they can choose to have their water shut off while they are gone to not be charged water fees.

The board received estimates for repairs on the door for the community center and back bathroom. The board would like to table the offer to next month, but approved a motion to get a new quote to change the old back bathroom into a janitor's closet with a floor sink. Motion made by T. Millard/G. Schlosser. Motion Carried.

Tami Nickelson discussed a meeting of townspeople where they discussed the issue of recycling. They are looking to get a cart for cans, and the store and restaurant have pledged to implement new recycling programs in their businesses.

There is a debit/credit workshop in Pierre on June 26th, USDA Board & Council Training in Britton on July 23rd, and an Elected Officials Workshop in Pierre on July 17th. The board was given an opportunity to nominate an outstanding woman in the community for the Spirit of Dakota Award.

The board set the next meeting for the second Monday in July, the 8th at 7PM. They also proposed to set all city meetings going forward to be the second Monday of every month to keep consistency.

Motion to adjourn was made

by T. Millard/G. Schlosser at 8:27 PM. Motion Carried.

**M. Heine**  
Assistant Frederick Finance Officer

Published once at the total approximate cost of \$66.12. 17596

## Brown County June 4, 2018 Meeting Minutes

JUNE 4, 2019 - GENERAL MEETING

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair Fjeldheim at 8:45 A.M. in the Commissioner's Chambers, Courthouse Annex, Brown County, SD. Present were Commissioners Feickert, Kippley, and Wiese. Commissioner Sutton was absent. Commissioner Kippley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES:**  
Moved by Wiese, seconded by Kippley to approve the General County Commission meeting minutes from May 28, 2019. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**CLAIMS**  
Moved by Kippley seconded by Feickert to approve the following claims:

Insurance: Insurance Plus \$872.74; SDACC \$10,798.00. Professional Fees: Aberdeen Advanced Care Ambulance \$258.64; AMG - Emergency \$351.79; AMG - Radiology \$38.82; Avera St. Luke's \$2,139.82; Bantz, Gosch & Cremer \$9,744.88; Carrels & Bain Family Dental \$574.16; Faulkton Area Medical Center \$716.81; Harmelink, Fox & Ravensborg \$190.40; Independent Viking Glass \$1,955.00; Interprecrops \$90.00; NEMHC \$1,447.00; Otis Elevator \$2,640.00; Sanford Clinic \$1,074.03; Sanford Health \$66.46; SD Humanities Council \$50.00; Christy Griffin-Serr Law Firm \$658.00.

**Publishing:** Aberdeen American News \$172.68; Groton Independent \$125.24. Rentals: Pantorium \$88.80. Repairs & Maintenance: Aberdeen Clean-All \$185.00; Asphalt Zipper \$153.74; GCR Tires \$49.00; Graham Tire \$94.98; Great Western Tire \$20.00; HF Jacobs & Son Construction \$5,266.95; J & K Painting \$1,040.34; Jason's Electric \$305.24; Lawson Products \$11.99; Leidholt Electric \$61.22; Sewer Duck \$600.00; Three Glass Doktor \$135.00; Tru-Green Chemlawn \$97.20; Woodman Refrigeration \$1,592.67. Supplies: Aberdeen Transmission \$200.00; AgTegra \$23,536.86; Asphalt Zipper \$1,930.00; DPM Mercantile \$39.95; Double D Body Shop \$3,050.00; DT Pharmacy \$2,971.33; Elks Lodge \$235.00; Farm Power Mfg. \$3,560.46; Fastenal \$429.93; Ferguson Enterprises \$126.43; Fire Safety First \$40.55; Great Western Tire \$4,940.03; HF Jacobs & Son Construction \$904.86; L.G. Everist \$1,021.95; Amy Lake-Harmon \$101.14; Lawson Products \$77.14; Leidholt Tool Sales \$63.30; Lien Transportation \$10,787.97; Mac's \$142.59; Menards \$426.19; Midstates Printing \$1,638.70; Mark Milbrandt \$20.00; Pantorium \$84.00; Running's \$4,057.34; Sander's Sew 'n' Vac \$29.95; Sherwin Williams \$202.42; The Glass Doktor \$401.51; Van Diest Supply \$3,236.00; Zastrow's \$143.16.

Travel & Conference: Erin Bacon \$105.00; Kathy Fischer \$107.00; Scott Kolb \$206.33; Joe Kraft \$107.00; Barry Kusler \$414.38; Russell Metz \$107.00; Mark Milbrandt \$276.00; SDSU Extension \$168.40; Sarah Swenson \$107.00; The Lodge at Deadwood \$302.00. Utilities: AT&T \$215.01; BDM Rural Water \$36.00; CenturyLink \$302.42;

Midcontinent \$425.53; NWPS \$9,206.05. Other: Pizza Ranch \$76.45.

All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**HR REPORT:**

Moved by Wiese seconded by Feickert to approve the following HR Office Report, which includes the following personnel changes: Approve hiring Candice Rose, full-time Dispatcher for Brown County Communications effective June 5, 2019 at a rate of \$16.71 per hour. Approve hiring Miranda Snell, part-time Correctional Officer in the Brown County Jail effective June 10, 2019 at a rate of \$13.95.

All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**FAIR CONTRACTS:**

Moved by Wiese, seconded by Kippley to approve and authorize the Chair sign the following contract for 2019 Brown County Fair: Ashley Smith (4H Judge - decline payment) All members present voting aye. Motion Carried.

**SURPLUS SALE AUCTION SERVICE QUOTE:**

Moved by Feickert, seconded by Wiese to accept low quote, submitted by Buntrock Auction Service at 4.5% on gross sales or \$1,200 (whichever is greater) for auction services at the Brown County Surplus Sale to be held at the Highway Complex (3133 8th Ave NE) on June 7, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.. No other quotes were submitted. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**SURPLUS PROPERTY:**

Moved by Wiese, seconded by Feickert to declare various items from county offices as surplus for purpose of sale at public auction to be held on June 7, 2019. Complete listing on file in the Auditor's Office (available for public inspection (Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)). All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**FIREWORK PERMIT:**

Moved by Kippley, seconded by Wiese to approve fireworks display permit for Brown County Fair to be held August 17, 2019 at the Brown County Fairgrounds. All members present voting aye. Motion Carried.

**LEASE AGREEMENT:**

Moved by Feickert, seconded by Wiese to approve and authorize the Chair sign the following lease agreements: Rhonda Dikoff for lease of Richmond Lake Youth Camp August 16-18, 2019 and Agetra for lease of two people movers (at no charge) All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**CLAIM ASSIGNMENT:**

Moved by Kippley, seconded by Wiese to approve and authorize the Chair sign documentation to assign claims against an individual to Credit Collections Bureau for the purpose of collecting a lien. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Moved by Kippley, seconded by Feickert to go into executive session to discuss personnel per SDCL 1-25-2(1). All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

The Chair declared the executive session closed with no action taken.

**PERSONNEL DISCUSSION MUSEUM DEPARTMENT:**

Sue Gates (retiring museum director) and Patricia Kendall (promoted museum director) discussed the need to fill the vacancy for full-time museum manager, previously held by Patricia Kendall. No Action Taken.

**LANDFILL DUMPING FINE:**

Individual called in to discuss fine received for dumping violation at a county dump site. No Action Taken.

**COUNTY FIREWORK PERMIT PROCESS:**

Discussion on proceeding with

new permit process for firework displays on county property. No Action Taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Moved by Feickert seconded by Kippley to adjourn the Brown County Commission at 10:02 a.m. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

Cathy McNickle, Brown County Auditor

Published once at the total approximate cost of \$65.53. 17597

## Brown County Hanson Rezoning Notice

NOTICE

Application has been made by Jeff Hanson to the Brown County Board of Commissioners for a change of zoning. Hearing to be held in the Commissioner's Chambers, Courthouse Annex, Brown County, South Dakota on June 18, 2019 at 8:45 A.M. for the purpose of rezoning the following property from Chapter 4.06 Agricultural Preservation District (AG-P) to Chapter 4.07 Mini-Agricultural District (M-AG): Lot 2, "Brunns Hanson Addition" in the SW1/4 of Section 32-T127N-R62W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (39546 112th St)

The public is invited to attend the hearing and to present comments and testimony regarding the amendment to Second Revision Brown County Ordinances pertaining to rezoning the described property. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Brown County Commission may adopt first reading of Ordinance No. 137.

**ATTEST:**  
Cathy McNickle, Brown County Auditor

(0605.0612)  
Published twice at the total approximate cost of \$22.92. 17578

## Columbia City June 4, 2018 Meeting Minutes

City of Columbia Council Meeting - June 4, 2019 7:00 pm  
CALL MEETING TO ORDER - 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL - Cara Dennert, Tyler Kampa, Cole Kampa, Ellen Harr, Trevor Meints

Community - Jeremy Dosch  
Ellen Harr called the meeting to order. Minutes were passed out from the May meeting. Cole Kampa made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Trevor Meints seconded the motion. All in favor - motion carried.

Warrant Vouchers: JVT - 118.13; B&B Contracting - 5388.91; Weber Landscaping - 4414.59; Runnings - 183.82; Jeremy Dosch - 419.98; Kelsie Ehresmann -293.99; Cara Dennert -823.50, GDI - 246.96; Great Western Bank - 569.81; Productivity Plus - 35.94; City Hours: Corey Mitchell - 26.30; Trevor Meints - 97.99; Cole Kampa - 63.00

Cole Kampa made a motion to accept the vouchers as presented. Trevor Meints seconded the motion. All in favor - motion carried.

**COMMUNITY COMMENTS / CORESPONDENCE - none**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS -**  
Nuisances -Trevor said that letters will be going out this week on vehicle violations.

Streets - Graveling of the streets has begun - blading to follow. Mosquito spraying should also begin this week.

Parks - Jeremy is doing a great job with the mowing. Tyler is looking into a tractor/mower to lease with a bigger deck to help with getting the mowing done in a more timely fashion with more mowers doing the work. There is a lot of cut grass that is piling up. Titan will be bringing out a tractor for us to use as a demo. The tractor that they are looking at leasing can also be used to blade streets/fix holes. The final decision on whether or not to lease was tabled until the next meeting.

Lagoon/sewer - Ellen is waiting for the water to go down. The road in that area might need some work - it is eroding in spots because of the water levels.

Rubble Site - Site is still needing to be burned - waiting for the right conditions. The state inspector was out to check the site this past week.

**NEW BUSINESS -** There is a new speed limit sign around the city park - 10 mph. It was decided to order some more Slow - Children signs to put up on both sides of the daycare in town.

**FINANCIAL REPORT -**Bank balances were presented. Ellen Harr made a motion to accept as presented. Trevor Meints

seconded the motion. All were in favor - motion carried. Cara will be attending Finance Officer's School in Pierre next week.

May 31, 2019 balances: SF - 148,641.00; GF - \$141,013.48; FIT - \$13,795.77 Cash on Hand - \$40.00

Tyler Kampa made a motion to adjourn. Trevor Meints seconded the motion. All were in favor - meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Wednesday, June 26, 2019 7:00 p.m. (because of the upcoming holiday the following week)

Submitted by Cara Dennert, Finance Officer

Published once at the total approximate cost of \$29.97 17599

## Claremont Town Awarded Loan for Improvements

Town of Claremont  
Wastewater Improvement Project

Claremont, South Dakota  
C461325 01  
DATE

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT AT CLAREMONT, SOUTH DAKOTA**

The South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) conducted a review of a proposal from the town of Claremont to upgrade the sewer system serving the community. The wastewater system improvements include replacement of most of the wastewater collection system throughout the town with approximately 8,500 feet of PVC pipe, rehabilitation of existing lift stations by installing new pumps and making wetwell repairs, and replacement of the clay liner in the treatment ponds with synthetic liners.

The town of Claremont was awarded a \$1,387,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loan to fund the project. The CWSRF loan has a rate of 2.75 percent and a term of 30 years. The current wastewater rate is a flat rate of \$23.00 per month. Repayment of the CWSRF loan will be with a wastewater surcharge assessment of about \$32.85 per customer per month.

Listed below are the reasons for granting a categorical exclusion:

1. The project involves sanitary sewer or storm sewer within the developed portion of the city.

2. The project is solely directed toward minor rehabilitation of existing facilities, functional replacement of equipment, or towards the construction of new ancillary facilities adjacent or appurtenant to existing facilities.

3. No comments requiring mitigative action were received from the South Dakota Historical Society, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, United States Department of Interior, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resource Conservation Service, or through the public participation process.

The proposed action does not involve any serious local objections nor does it meet any of the criteria for not granting a categorical exclusion as specified in [Section 6.505(c) (i) through (iii) of 40 CFR Part 6, Subpart E].

The Claremont Wastewater Improvement project will not affect any historical or archaeological resources. The project should have no direct or indirect adverse effects on plant life or wildlife. No other environmentally sensitive issues have been identified in the planning of this project.

The review process did not indicate that significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed project. Consequently, a preliminary decision not to prepare an EIS has been made. This action is taken on the basis of a review of the engineering report, environmental information documents, correspondence with responsible governmental agencies and other supporting data which are on file at the Division of Financial and Technical Assistance, Water and Waste Funding Program, DENR, Pierre, South Dakota, and are available for public scrutiny at the Claremont town office in Claremont, South Dakota.

Comments supporting or disagreeing with this decision may be submitted for consideration by DENR after publication of the Categorical Exclusion Determination. After evaluating the comments received, DENR will make a final decision.

Michael A. Perkovich  
Administrator  
Published once at an approximate cost of \$36.89. 17600

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## Residents suffer physical, mental and sexual abuse at S.D. youth home

By: Bart Pfankuch

Youths and young adults housed at the Aurora Plains Academy in Plankinton, S.D., have endured physical, mental and sexual abuse by employees amid an internal culture of secrecy and limited state government oversight, according to public documents and testimony from former residents and employees of the facility.

A six-month investigation by South Dakota News Watch has revealed a pattern of improper treatment of residents of the intensive youth treatment facility over the past decade that resulted in a variety of physical injuries and emotional trauma. In its review, News Watch conducted a dozen on-the-record interviews with former employees, residents and parents, examined independent reports on youth injuries and obtained complaint and inspection information from the state Department of Social Services.

Aurora Plains Academy is a privately run, government-funded institution that provides housing, treatment and education of residents ages 10 to 20, male and female, who have shown evidence of anger issues, self-harm or sexual deviancy. Residents, most of whom have not been convicted of a crime, are generally sent to the academy unwillingly by officials of the state corrections department, school districts and tribal agencies. The locked facility is owned by Wisconsin-based Clinicare Corp., a for-profit firm that operates four youth treatment centers in Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota.

The News Watch investigation has shown that:

- Some employees of the facility regularly use harsh physical restraints on residents, resulting in facial rug burns, black eyes, bloody noses, bruising and injured limbs. Though employees are supposed to restrain residents only when the residents are a danger to themselves or others, former residents and employees say some employees goad, deride or bully residents into acting out and then take them to the ground from a standing position, sometimes face-first onto carpet or concrete, simply for misbehaving or not following commands. Many incidents are not documented and injuries sometimes go untreated or are addressed only days later. Residents are often blamed by staff for causing their own injuries.

- Residents are sometimes over-medicated and become zombie-like; one girl said she was put on 19 medications and others say medications are frequently prescribed and then changed with little diagnosis. Parents say their children's personalities were adversely affected by over-medication at the academy.

- Girls who have stayed at Aurora Plains say employees have touched them sexually, and one former resident said an employee would pinch her breasts and cause bruising during physical restraints.

- Friendships and relationships among management and employees have created a culture of protectionism in which violent employees go unpunished, employees who protest are ostracized or fired, and many resident complaints are downplayed or not believed.

- Staff turnover at the academy is high, with employees paid low wages, forced to work long hours and subjected to resident-to-staff ratios as high as 12 to one.

- State oversight of the facility is limited. State DSS workers rarely investigate complaints of abuse or neglect. In addition, Aurora Plains is subject to only one pre-announced inspection each year by a Child Protective Services specialist within DSS. Records that describe complaints of child abuse or neglect are not available to the public, preventing the news media and taxpayers from knowing what is happening inside the academy.

David Fritsch, president of Clinicare Corp., was provided a list of News Watch findings



**Aurora Plains Academy is South Dakota's only intensive youth treatment facility. The privately run facility in Plankinton houses youths and young adults who have a variety of behavioral and mental disorders. A News Watch investigation has uncovered a history of physical and psychological abuse of facility residents by some staff.** Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

but declined an interview request, citing privacy laws and confidentiality of residents. In an email statement, Fritsch wrote that Aurora Plains is fully accredited and "committed to providing attentive, quality care that leads to positive outcomes for our residents."

Fritsch wrote that the company follows all state laws regarding the reporting of incidents involving injuries and that reports are also sent to the company headquarters "for review by management including a compliance officer to ensure all actions are in compliance with state and company training and requirements."

Officials with the state Department of Social Services, which oversees Aurora Plains and other adult and child in-patient facilities in South Dakota, declined requests to discuss specifics of complaints or allegations of abuse. Tia Kafka, spokeswoman for DSS, declined to make any DSS officials available for an interview with News Watch, accepting questions only in writing. A written request to interview the director of DSS or any top agency official was denied.

Gov. Kristi Noem was presented with News Watch's findings but denied a request for an interview. Instead, the governor provided News Watch with a written statement via email indicating that she will review the full findings when published and is willing to propose legislative action if necessary.

"The health and safety of our children is one of the most important tasks we have as a society. As a governor, who is also a mom, I take credible allegations very seriously when it involves children," Noem wrote.

"Incidents involving children at licensed facilities are reported to DSS and reviewed to determine what action will be taken. If changes in that system of checks and balances between the state agencies and private facilities are needed, we need to implement them. If the system isn't working as it should, I want to know about it so we can fix it."

In the email, Noem highlighted the state's rapid response to the recent disappearance of 9-year-old Serenity Dennard, a resident of the Black Hills Children's Home, a residential youth treatment facility in Rockerville run by the Children's Home Society. Dennard walked away from the facility in February, has not been found and is presumed dead by authorities, who continue to search for her. In the wake of the walkaway, the state cited the facility for inadequate emergency-response procedures, among other issues, which Noem said have since been fixed. Noem said the rapid investigation and corrective actions required of the facility are an example of how state oversight can work to correct child-safety issues that come to light.

In a roughly 10-year period from July 2009 to March 2019, a total of 400 complaints of child abuse or neglect were filed against Aurora Plains to the state by residents, academy employees or people outside the academy,

according to data obtained by News Watch through a public-records request.

In an email to News Watch, a representative of Clinicare said that 250 of the complaints filed to the state came directly from the facility, and that 100 of those incidents occurred before youths became residents. Phill Trewyn, a spokesperson for Clinicare, wrote in an email that Aurora Plains leaders "identified less than 10 reports that involved injury as a result of staff action such as a restraint hold. And in those cases, it is important to understand that injury sometimes occurs even when a hold is properly executed."

The state was unable to confirm Trewyn's data or the claims that abuse or neglect complaints were made before youths entered the facility.

Of the 400 complaints to the state, only 39 were formally investigated by the state. During the past decade, the state issued four corrective-action plans after investigations uncovered problems at the academy. Three of those corrective plans focused on inappropriate physical treatment of academy residents. One plan indicated that residents were physically restrained by academy employees an average of 150 times a month over a three-month period at the 66-bed facility.

It is difficult for the public to know exactly what occurs within licensed youth facilities overseen by the state of South Dakota.

Complaints of child abuse or neglect are confidential and not open to public view in South Dakota, though the number of complaints filed over a 10-year period was provided to News Watch after a public-records request.

Aurora Plains was the subject of about a third – 400 of 1,298 – of the abuse and neglect complaints filed over the past decade against the 20 youth residential treatment centers, group care centers and emergency shelters licensed in South Dakota, according to DSS data.

Complaints against Aurora Plains during that period peaked at 143 in fiscal 2010 and have fallen annually since then; 27 complaints were filed between July 1, 2018 to March 3, 2019, according to DSS.

After a separate records request, a lawyer from DSS provided News Watch with site-inspection and licensing-review records for Aurora Plains for the past 10 years. The inspections generally indicated few if any structural or administrative problems with the academy.

Interviews of those with first-hand experience with Aurora Plains reveal striking patterns in their description of life inside the academy. While some former residents and employees tell of staff members who care deeply about residents and try to protect, treat and educate them, there are other tales of dangerous physical restraints, unwarranted restraints, emotional abuse and bullying by staff, and a failure of management to protect residents from overly aggressive employees.

"There's a few people that are there for the paycheck and they have a short fuse," said Thai Le, who worked at Aurora Plains for five years before leaving in 2018 for a job at another South Dakota youth treatment facility. "They use more force than necessary during restraints and it gets messed up, with some staff doing things more out of anger than for the benefit of the kids."

According to former residents and staff at the academy, many incidents of violence go unreported or are not investigated by the academy or the state, and treatment of injuries is sometimes delayed in order to shield

**Continues on next page**

employees who were abusive.

Former resident Kevin Gerber of Redfield said he once had a temper tantrum and was pushing open random doors inside the academy. When he pushed open an outside door and stood in the doorway, "I got tackled from behind and went face-first into the concrete," recalled Gerber, now 22, who spent more than a year at the academy in the late 2010s. "I had scratches all over my face and it hurt a lot because the sidewalk was crumbly rock."

Gerber, who also was ridiculed by staff for having bad acne, said he never received treatment for his injuries suffered during that restraint or others in which he was physically injured.

"When they restrain you, they don't care what happens to you," he said. "They want to stop you at all costs, like you committed a murder or something."

State licensing requirements under the "Protection of Residents" subsection state that "each resident has the right to be free from restraint or seclusion, of any form, used as a means of coercion, discipline, convenience or retaliation."

Yet former residents and staff told News Watch that some academy staff routinely use restraints, physical force or seclusion to punish or hurt residents who upset them.

"They will taunt you just to stir up trouble," said LaDawn Bruguier, now 23, of Yankton, who spent two years in the academy starting when she was 14. "They want a response so they can use excessive force. They put us in holds for any little thing we did that they thought was not OK."

### 'Bruises all over his body'

Lauren Schroeder rushed to get her son out of Aurora Plains in 2015 because she felt that something wasn't right with the boy's treatment.

She had called the academy to speak to her 12-year-old son, whom she had voluntarily placed at the in-patient campus, but was told he couldn't come to the phone because he was being held in isolation. To Schroeder, that was even more worrisome than typical phone calls in which an academy employee would stand next to her son and monitor what he told his mother.

The next day, after a tense exit meeting in which Schroeder said she was berated by academy staff, she checked her son out of the facility (News Watch is not naming the boy to protect his privacy.) They went to a gas station to get a hot dog and the boy asked to change his shirt, which Schroeder noticed was stained. As Schroeder watched, her son pulled up his shirt to reveal obvious injuries both new and partially healed.

"He took off his shirt and he had fresh rug burns on both sides of his collarbone, and he had bruises all over his body," Schroeder recalled. "I asked him, 'How did this happen?'"

Schroeder's son told his mother that during only five months at the academy, employees had thrown him face-first into a wall, tackled him to the floor, squeezed him so hard he couldn't breathe and pummeled his legs with elbow punches.

The injuries were documented in a forensic examination conducted a few days later by an investigator with Child's Voice, a child medical-evaluation center within Sanford Children's Hospital in Sioux Falls. Schroeder's doctor advised her to have the boy independently examined.

The boy told the investigator that he was often put in illegal restraints by three Aurora Plains employees, according to a report on the exam. The boy testified that after misbehaving, one employee took him violently to the ground and elbowed him in the legs and stopped only when the clinical director walked in. On a separate occasion, the boy said, a different employee had taken him to the ground and lay on him, preventing him from breathing



**LaDawn Bruguier of Yankton discusses her strong desire to see improved safety for current and future residents of Aurora Plains Academy and her feeling that those responsible for abusing past residents should be held accountable.** Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

and nearly causing him to pass out.

The physical exam of the boy "revealed a large bruise by his right shin and a red, scabbed over area on his left shoulder," the Child's Voice investigator wrote in a confidential forensic report obtained by News Watch. "Injuries are consistent with his disclosure of being elbowed in the leg and being placed in a hold while on the floor."

Schroeder said she contacted local law enforcement, the Aurora County State's Attorneys Office and state child-protection officials and hired a private investigator, but that no one was ever held accountable for her son's treatment.

In the interview with the Child's Voice investigator, Schroeder's son reported that an academy nurse knew about his injuries but asked him only "if he knew why he had been in holds" and did not provide treatment.

The boy also said that one academy employee, who had once bloodied his nose by throwing him into a wall, told him "not to tell anyone about the holds or he would take him to the reflection room," where residents are held in isolation.

Child's Voice is a nationally accredited medical child-advocacy center within Sanford Health where medical professionals perform physical examinations and forensic interviews with children who may have been victims of child abuse or neglect, according to Stacy Weller, director of the center.

Final reports are provided to law enforcement and other agencies, and the group's findings can be used as evidence in court, Weller said. The center examines about 1,300 children per year, mainly from Minnehaha County and the surrounding area, she said.

"Questions are non-leading; they're really just asking kids [to] tell us what happened, where did it happen, how did it happen," she said. "We want kids to know that this is a safe place for them to talk, that we're here to support them in a safe place."

Weller said she was not able to discuss any individual complaints or cases and could not comment on whether Aurora Plains was a source of abuse claims beyond the one filed by Schroeder.

Schroeder also took her son to the Aberdeen Police Department, where an officer took photos of the boy's injuries and detailed his findings in an April 17, 2015 report. "I took several photos of bruising on [the boy's] shoulders, arms, knees, shins and hands," officer Curtis Kline wrote. "Most of the bruises were purple and varied in size from dime-size on the arms to baseball-sized on his knees and shoulders."

Schroeder, who has since been in contact with other parents of children who attended Aurora Plains, believes a culture of silence and protectionism is allowing abuses to continue unabated at the academy.

"I think there's a lot of things happening there that are being covered up," she said.

Schroeder has worked with other entities that have treated her son's emotional issues, and she said none was as punitive or violent as Aurora Plains.

"They're almost preparing these kids for a lifetime of imprisonment by putting them through the hell that they go through there," she said. "It's a cycle, a vicious cycle, and I feel horrible for the kids that are in there. It's just sad and disgusting."

## Same campus where Gina Score died

With its gray water tower, institutional structures and high chainlink fences topped by barbed wire, the Aurora Plains Academy cuts an imposing silhouette on the prairie just northeast of Plankinton about two miles north of Interstate 90. The site and structures were once known as the State Training School, which became infamous in South Dakota as the youth boot camp where 14-year-old Gina Score died in July 1999 when she collapsed after a forced run and was left to lie in the hot sun for hours before getting treatment. Score's death led to a financial settlement and juvenile-justice reforms.

Over the years, the state has moved away from running intensive in-patient youth treatment facilities. Meanwhile, private for-profit firms and nonprofits have stepped in to run them.

According to Michael Winder, spokesman for the state Department of Corrections, the state closed the training school in 2001 and later leased it to the Cornell Companies for a few months in 2003. Clinicare began operating the academy in January 2007 and the state sold the facility to the company outright in October 2017, Winder said.

Aurora Plains is an intensive residential treatment center licensed to house 66 people ages 10 to 20, with 48 beds for males and 18 for females, according to the facility website. The site refers to its clientele as a special population "characterized by high levels of verbal, physical and sexual aggression." A resident is eligible for treatment only after failing to respond to prior treatment or after being denied treatment elsewhere. The academy is regulated by the Division of Child Protection Services within the state DSS, which licenses group care centers and residential and intensive residential treatment centers.

Aurora Plains is mainly funded through the Medicaid program, with a combination of state and federal funds. In fiscal year 2018, the facility was paid \$7.34 million in government funds, with \$4.1 million in federal funds and \$3.2 million in state funds, according to Kafka. The funding covers residents referred to Aurora Plains by Child Protective Services, but also those sent to the academy by other state agencies, parents, school districts and Native American tribes.

The facility, according to the website, treats 40 diagnosed conditions, including alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, disruptive behavior, gender-identity disorder, impulse control, mild mental retardation, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, problematic sexual behaviors, Tourette's syndrome, victims of abuse and XXY chromosomal disorder.

Aurora Plains is one of 20 treatment centers overseen by the state DSS, which conducts one pre-announced inspection of the campuses each year, said Kafka of DSS.

When a compliance complaint is made, a state licensing-program specialist is assigned to work with the facility staff to make corrections. If an abuse or neglect complaint is made, the state makes a judgment on its veracity and may hire a contract investigator to review the case and then meet with facility officials to ensure any required corrective actions are taken, Kafka said.

The latest corrective-action plan filed by the state against Aurora Plains in March 2017 required the facility management to "improve restraints so they are safer for staff and residents."

The investigator also recommended remedial training regarding improper restraining of residents for an academy employee whose name was redacted in the report released to News Watch.

"It is recommended that [redacted name] avoid all restraints if possible until management is satisfied with his ability to perform them at the appropriate level."

That report on that incident also noted that the state investigators "expressed concerns

Continues on next page

## Continued from previous page

with the length of time it took for Aurora Plains Academy to seek medical attention for the resident."

A pair of corrective-action plans issued by the state in July 2012 and June 2013 also addressed the use of excessive force and inadequate reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect by staff.

The June 2013 report revealed how often restraints are used by staff at Aurora Plains. In that report, one employee whose name is redacted is described as having a reputation that "he is rough and quick to restrain."

The report states that the employee had conducted 25 physical restraints of residents, or 8 percent of the total at the facility, during a two-month period, meaning that about 312 restraints were used on residents of Aurora Plains during those two months. A later report confirmed that about 150 resident restraints, roughly five per day, occurred each month at the academy.

Both the 2012 and 2013 corrective-action reports indicate a need for the academy to better train employees to de-escalate situations, to reduce the need for violent restraints and to better document and review situations where force was used on residents.

### Criminal charge follows abuse

While former employees and residents of Aurora Plains say many violent restraints and physical injuries are either whitewashed by the staff involved or go completely unreported, the injuries suffered by 10-year-old Ender Murray resulted in a rare criminal charge. Ender and his mother have approved the use of his name and picture by News Watch.

According to a state investigative report, Ender was acting up on Feb. 16, 2013. The boy was first put into a physical restraint after jumping into a snowbank while being led to the cafeteria for lunch. Later, Ender admitted he was "whining and being a little turd" while medications were being handed out, and for that he was sent to "chair time" to calm down.

Ender told an investigator that he was banging on the arm of the chair and making a "cool beat" musical sound. The staff member monitoring Ender told the investigator that Ender was also shouting racial epithets and curse words and was agitating his peers by calling them names.

Emmanuel Yuyada, a therapeutic-support staff or TSS employee, showed up and told Ender to stop, but the boy did not comply.

Ender said that Yuyada then said, "That's it," and quickly threw him face-first onto the ground and mashed his body into the carpet. Ender suffered a black eye, a nose bleed and rug burns on his shoulder, knees and limbs. During the restraint, the investigative report notes, Ender cried out and wet himself.

Yuyada told the investigator that Ender intentionally banged his own head on the floor and kicked his legs to cause his injuries, which the boy denied.

The state investigator also interviewed TJ Stanfield, then clinical supervisor and now the director of the academy. Stanfield told the investigator that he had personally seen Ender get physically restrained about 30 times in the 18 months the boy was at the academy, sometimes for "breaking boundaries with his peers."

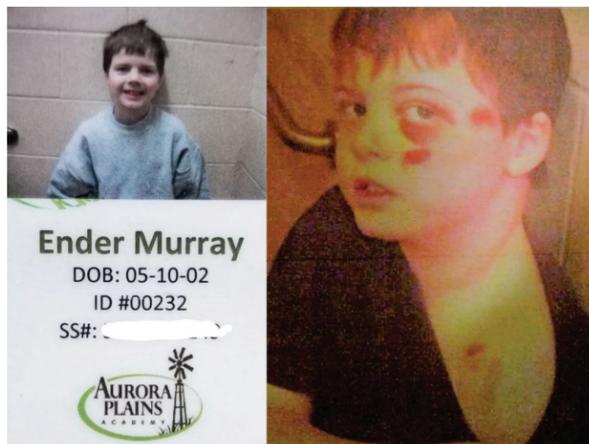
Jeremy Pischke, then a therapist and now clinical director at the academy, told the investigator that Ender was manipulative and "knows how to push people's buttons." Pischke told the investigator that his understanding of why Ender was restrained was that he was pounding on the chair.

State guidelines, however, say that physical restraints should be used only when a resident is a danger to himself or herself or others, not for being disruptive or making noise.

Yuyada was charged with simple assault, but after a preliminary hearing, a judge dismissed the case due to a lack of criminal intent. He is no longer employed at the academy.

Emily Mitchell, Ender's mother, said Aurora Plains employees changed their stories in court to soften the violence of Ender's restraint, and she said the state investigative report was not admitted as evidence. Photos taken of Ender days after the incident show him with a swollen black eye, redness about his face and neck, and rug burns on his knee and legs.

"My son is a sweet boy, and when he's nice, he's really nice, and when he's not nice, he's



**Ender Murray, shown in his admission badge at left, was just 9 years old when he arrived for treatment at Aurora Plains Academy. Less than two years later, in 2013, Ender was thrown to the ground and pinned by an academy employee, leading to significant facial, limb and torso injuries. Some of his injuries are shown at right in a photo taken by a sheriff's deputy.** Photos: Submitted

not very nice," she said. "But no matter how awful that boy behaves, it doesn't justify what they did to him and how they covered it up."

Mitchell believes her son's time at Aurora Plains did him more harm than good. She recalls visiting him after two months and noticing that "his eyes were dead, his teeth were black and the boy in him had died. He was a zombie case."

She said Ender was physically smaller than most other academy residents and was ruthlessly picked on and sometimes sexually abused by other residents of the facility while employees did nothing to help. She said her son was on numerous medications that made him doopey and withdrawn.

Mitchell's consistent questioning of academy procedures and employee actions got the full attention of academy leadership. In October 2013, eight months after the violent restraint of Ender, Pischke filed a court affidavit urging the state to terminate Mitchell's parental rights over her son.

"She has undermined his treatment by encouraging him to be 'unique' and question those in authority," Pischke wrote of Mitchell. "Instead of trying to motivate him to be successful in his programming, Emily often questioned Ender about how staff was interacting with him and she would suggest it was staff and not Ender needing change."

The petition to terminate parental rights failed. Despite requests for interviews, Clinicare officials declined to make Pischke or Stan-

**"I took several photos of bruising on [the boy's] shoulders, arms, knees, shins and hands. Most of the bruises were purple and varied in size from dime-size on the arms to baseball-sized on his knees and shoulders."**

-- Aberdeen police officer Curtis Kline after reviewing injuries suffered by the son of Lauren Schroeder while at Aurora Plains Academy

field available for interviews by News Watch.

### 'A sense of brutality'

Former employees of the academy say they are trained in the use of Jireh, a method of restraint that seeks to use the "least restrictive" methods possible to control someone. Under Jireh, the first response is to de-escalate through talk. If that's unsuccessful, a restraint begins -- involving holding back someone's arms while in a standing position, then moving to a sitting position before eventually taking the person all the way to the ground if he or she continues to resist. Employees are supposed to make three determinations that a person in a restraint is actually resisting and not just reacting before moving to a stronger restraint position, employees said.

Former employees interviewed by News Watch said youths who fought or tried to hurt themselves or others were often justifiably and safely restrained until calm. They said that some employees, however, routinely took residents hard to the ground from a standing position for minor infractions such as talking out of turn, refusing to immediately obey commands or wising off to employees.

One academy TSS supervisor with a reputation for having a quick temper and for restraining needlessly and harshly was mentioned by name by several former staff members and residents interviewed by News Watch (the employee is not being named by News Watch because he has not been charged with a crime.)

Jessica Lee, who spent two years at the

academy as a teen, said violence at the academy ticked upward when that same rough and easily angered employee was hired during her stay. "He would try to break my arm and pinch my boobs every time he had me in a restraint," said Lee, now 24. "He would leave bruises on our boobs because he would pinch us so hard."

Bruguier, a former resident, said during her time at Aurora Plains she was thrown face-first into a wall, body-slammed to the floor, put in a restraint for biting her nails, made to sleep without a blanket and taunted frequently by employees because she had a bad attitude.

"They would pull on my arms to the point I was screaming in pain," Bruguier said. "I was getting so mad because they were egging me on, saying, 'Your grandmother doesn't want you, so we get to go home to our people and you don't.'"

Charles Isaac, who worked at Aurora Plains for four years in the late 2000s, said most employees followed guidelines and tried to help residents. But Isaac said one employee would tell him to write and sign restraint reports even though Isaac wasn't physically involved. That employee, the same one mentioned by former residents, would also tell Isaac to tweak or rewrite the reports to reduce the culpability of himself and other staff, Isaac said.

"[He] should have been writing the reports, but he didn't so his name didn't keep showing up time and time and time again," Isaac said. "If you're sorting records by the name of the person reporting, then yeah, his name will show up only a tenth of the times that it should."

Jeff Gortmaker, a youth-development specialist at the academy for about six years from 2005 to roughly 2011, said one academy employee in particular seemed to enjoy having power over residents and staff and was confident that his superiors would protect him from scrutiny.

"There were numerous internal investigations of his hard restraints, and the state has investigated him at different times," Gortmaker said of the employee.

Isaac and other former employees said it was clear that some of their colleagues were spending time outside work with their superiors and that a "buddy-buddy" system exists at the academy. He and others said it was common knowledge that managers and non-managers hunted and fished together outside work.

"I would assume that if you're buddy-buddy with someone and they do something bad that there will be some covering for them," Isaac said.

Brittany Dozark of Sioux Falls spent two years as an employee of Aurora Plains and said major reforms are needed to improve therapeutic outcomes for residents but also to ensure their safety.

"I definitely think there's a sense of brutality there," said Dozark, who worked to counsel and aid residents at the academy. "There's nothing that says to these kids that, 'Hey, everything is going to be OK.' It's more like they messed up and they're in 'kids prison' now, not a place to get therapy, treatment or help for mental conditions."

#### About Bart Pfankuch

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal. Bart has spent almost 30 years as a reporter and editor.

## Groton Community Transit Fundraiser



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**Where:** Groton Community Transit

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## The Life of Roger Aberle

Memorial Services for Roger Aberle, 66, of Groton were held Saturday, June 8th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. The Rev. Jeff Whillock officiated. Military honors were provided by American Legion Post #39. Roger passed away June 4, 2019 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.

Roger Eugene was born on September 21, 1952 in Bismarck, North Dakota to Eugene and Barbara (Fettig) Aberle. He attended and graduated from Herreid High School. Roger continued his education at Northern State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Business. He served in the US Marine Corps from September of 1972 until his honorable discharge in October of 1974. In 1976, he was united in marriage with Linda Martin and to this union, two sons were born, Douglas and Scott. Roger managed the Starlight Truck Stop for many years and later worked ten years at K.O. Lee. In 1994, he met Kristi Jones and they were blessed with two children, Kaili and Austin. Roger worked at Horton's in Britton prior to his retirement and part-time at Ken's Fairway in Groton in his last years.

Roger had a passion for old cars, especially his GTO. He loved meeting new people and visiting with family and friends. He enjoyed dancing, the family pets, and being outside having a Budweiser and a smoke. He cherished time spent with his children and grandchildren and watching them grow.

Celebrating his life are his children: Scott Aberle and girlfriend, Emily of Conde, Kaili Aberle of Groton, Austin Aberle of Groton, daughter-in-law, Stephanie Aberle of Aberdeen, six grandchildren: Grant, Henry, Jack, Bailey, Taylor and Zander, his sisters, Shirley (Wayne) VanderLaan of Mound City, Lucille Aberle and boyfriend, Calvin of California and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding him in death were his parents, his son, Douglas and his brother, Allan.

## Stop Signs at 5th Ave. West discussed

After determining that only three were needed for a quorum, the Groton City Council met in session about 7:09 Tuesday evening at the community center. There is one vacancy on the council at this time so only three were required for a quorum. Shirley Wells David Blackmun and Karyn Babcock were present with Mayor Scott Hanlon presiding.

The stop signs at Fifth Avenue West and Washington Street were discussed. Police Chief Stacy Mayou said that once the street work is done, perhaps the signs could be reversed to face east and west instead of north and south. The item will be placed on the agenda for the next council meeting.

Mayou also reported on the D.A.R.E. Graduation. There were 46 students who graduated from the class. Mayou said that POET of Groton sponsors the whole program.

The council approved the second reading of the \$11.50 monthly increase in the water rate for the construction of a new water tower. The rate will remain in place for 30 years. Also approved was the adjustment in the waste water rate. The rate will be based on usage during November, December, January, February, March and April. During those months, the waste water rate may fluctuate slightly based on water usage. The rate will remain at the April rate through the summer months.

The amateur baseball team would like a BYOB at the home games on June 9, 16, July 14, 21 and 23 for beer and wind only. Councilman Karyn Babcock asked if something were to happen, would the city be liable since there was drinking allowed on city property. Since the city is not selling it, there would be no liability for the city. The council granted permission for BYOB.

The contract with Clark Engineering for the water system improvement was approved.

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