

# Sentinel

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"The property itself is extremely important for the functionality of our public works department."

— Matthew York, Fairmont Public Works Director



The former public works building in Fairmont. The building and its condition was a topic of conversation during the Fairmont City Council meeting on Monday.

## City looks at purpose of old public works building

By Brooke Wohlraabe

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FAIRMONT — The Fairmont City Council discussed the usage and condition of the old public works building on East Margaret Street during its meeting on Monday.

Public Work Director Matthew York said the old public works building, at 425 E. Margaret Street, which houses the parks and streets and maintenance departments, was moved to the new public works building, just up the road at 801 E. Margaret Street, in the spring of 2023.

"Currently, what is in the old public works building, on the parks side... is a lot of materials that are parks-centric like our Sakrete, garbage cans,

park benches, et. cetera," York said.

On the streets side there is a brine making machine to make salt brine, along with barricades and a sweeper. York said there are a few other pieces of equipment that are used sometimes, but not all of the time.

He added that if the property were ever to be sold, it would be a loss of real estate that the city could use in the future, not to mention a loss of indoor and outdoor storage.

The exterior of the building is kind of where the property is used a lot. We have chips, seal chips and riprap and steel posts... anything and everything. It's kind of the center of our exterior storage," York said.

Speaking more about the property, York said that the

old public works building site is adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant and that there are materials buried in the rear of the property and that it would likely need to be unearthed and taken care of before the property could be sold.

He added that if the property were ever to be sold, it would be a loss of real estate that the city could use in the future, not to mention a loss of indoor and outdoor storage.

York instead suggested that the building could be rehabilitated or turned into cold storage. He also said the building could be demolished with outdoor storage remaining.

"The property itself is extremely important for the functionality of our public works department," York said.

After York's presentation, Council Member James Kotewa asked if the city was still utilizing the cold storage on the south side of Margaret Street and whether there was a way to eliminate that site and move the equipment to the old building and make a portion of it cold storage.

Street and Parks Superintendent Nick Lardy was present and said that about a quarter of the equipment could fit in the building because there was a lot already in it.

"We have a lot of equipment in there yet," Lardy said. "We keep our garbage truck in there, because it stinks."

### COUNCIL

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Photo by Daniel Olson

Linda Egeness celebrated her 50 year work anniversary as a secretary for the Erickson, Zierke, Kuderer and Madsen Law Firm on Monday. Since 1975, Egeness has handled important issues from this exact desk.

## Firm celebrates employee's 50 years

By Daniel Olson

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FAIRMONT — Monday marked 50 years for Linda Egeness as the Secretary at Erickson, Zierke, Kuderer and Madsen Law Firm.

The desk Egeness works from today is the same as when she first started in 1975.

"When I first started, there were seven attorneys here in this office," Egeness said. "My duties were receptionist, which is all the telephone work. You sit at the front desk, you greet the clients as they come in. I was scheduling appointments for seven attorneys."

Further down the line, Egeness said they had a maximum of 11 attorneys. She said this was one of her busiest times in her career. Throughout her career, Egeness said there have been several changes.

"Office equipment changed a lot," she said. "Office procedures, that type of thing. There are a lot of people that came and went, attorneys, staff, all that. I always adapted to it."

While the technology has changed, Egeness said the face-to-face has stayed relatively similar in her time.

### EGENESS

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## Hurricane Melissa brings flooding and catastrophic winds to Jamaica

By Dánica Coto  
and John Myers Jr.

Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Heavy floodwaters swept across southwestern Jamaica, winds tore roofs off buildings and boulders tumbled onto roads Tuesday as Hurricane Melissa came ashore as a catastrophic Category 5 storm, one of the strongest Atlantic hurricanes on record.

Landslides, fallen trees and numerous power outages were reported as Melissa hit with 185 mph winds near New Hope, with officials cautioning that the cleanup and damage assessment could be slow.

"There is no infrastructure in the region that can withstand a Category 5," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said. "The question now is the speed of recovery. That's the challenge."

Floodwaters trapped at least three families in their

homes in the community of Black River in western Jamaica, and crews were unable to help them because of dangerous conditions, said Desmond McKenzie, deputy chairman of Jamaica's Disaster Risk Management Council.

"Roofs were flying off," he said. "We are hoping and praying that the situation will ease so that some attempt can be made to get to those persons."

He noted that extensive damage was reported in the southwestern parish of St. Elizabeth, which he said "is underwater."

McKenzie said there are no confirmed reports of deaths and stressed that it was too early to talk about the extent of the damage because the hurricane — the strongest to hit the island since recordkeeping began 174 years ago — was still pummeling the country.

### MELISSA

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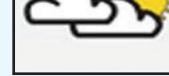
Associated Press

A man watches the coastline in Kingston, Jamaica, as Hurricane Melissa closes in Tuesday.



### Briefly

#### WEATHER



Today — Partly cloudy. High of 52.

Tonight — Partly cloudy. Low of 32.

Thursday — Cloudy. High of 52.

#### ALMANAC

In 1863 the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded.

In 1929 America's Great Depression began with the crash of the Wall Street stock market.

In 1969 the U.S. Supreme Court ordered an immediate end to all school segregation.

#### LOTTERIES

Numbers drawn Tuesday night in Minnesota NORTH: 2-17-23-24-33.

Pick 3: 2-1-1.

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## MELISSA

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Rohan Brown, with Jamaica's Meteorological Service, warned that as Melissa moves off the coast, its counterclockwise rotation would bring a heavy storm surge to northern Jamaica through the night. The storm is headed toward Cuba, where it was expected to make landfall as a major hurricane early Wednesday.

Nearly 15,000 people were in shelters in Jamaica and some 540,000 customers, or 77%, were without power, officials said.

Jamaican officials had warned against going outside during Hurricane Melissa, but curiosity got the better of a few Jamaican teens who had never experienced the wrath of a Category 5 system.

"When the wind howls, it feels as if the world is falling apart," 15-year-old Gavin Fuller said with a grin. "I wanted to know what it feels like to stand in the eye of something so powerful."

Colin Bogle, a Mercy Corps adviser, said most families were sheltering in place despite the government ordering evacuations in flood-prone communities. He was sheltering with his grandmother in Portmore, where everything went dark after a loud explosion.

"The noise is relentless," he said. "People are anxious and just trying to hold on until the storm passes."

### Jamaica prepares for the aftermath of a record storm

On Tuesday night, Melissa had top sustained winds of 125 mph and was moving north-northeast at 8 mph as its center moved into the Caribbean Sea, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami. The hurricane was centered about 50 miles east-northeast of Montego Bay, Jamaica, and about 160 miles southwest of Guantánamo, Cuba.

Its 185 mph winds and 892 millibars of central pressure tied two records for the strongest Atlantic storm at landfall. The pressure — the key measurement meteorologists use — tied 1935's Labor Day hurricane in Florida. The wind speed tied the 1935 hurricane and

2019's Hurricane Dorian, said hurricane scientists Phil Klotzbach of Colorado State University and Brian McNoldy of the University of Miami.

"It's been a remarkable, just a beast of a storm," Klotzbach told The Associated Press.

With a life-threatening storm surge of up to 13 feet expected, officials were concerned about hospitals along the coast. McKenzie said four main hospitals were damaged, with the storm knocking out power to one of them, forcing officials to evacuate 75 patients.

One man called a radio station saying he urgently needed to help a woman in western Jamaica who had gone into labor as the storm neared landfall. The show's host pleaded with listeners to let him know the safest hospital before an obstetrician called in to provide detailed directions on how to deliver a baby, if necessary.

In Kingston, officials warned residents of the surrounding area to watch out for crocodiles that might be displaced from their habitats by flooding.

McKenzie said the government was prepared for rescues immediately after the storm passes through: "We have boats, helicopters, you name it."

The storm already was blamed for seven deaths in the Caribbean, including three in Jamaica, three in Haiti and one in the Dominican Republic, where another person remains missing.

Tuesday evening, officials huddled in meetings to determine how best to clear the debris after the storm and launch the distribution of emergency relief supplies to avoid bottlenecks at Jamaica's ports, said Richard Thompson, acting general director for Jamaica's emergency management office.

Officials have said they hope to reopen the island's airports by Thursday.

U.N. agencies and dozens of nonprofits had food, medicine and other essential supplies positioned as they awaited a distribution rush after the storm.

## EGENESS

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"Working with the people, working with the public, working with my co-workers," she said. "Always have a need to be helpful. I don't want to be the cause for somebody to have a bad day. [It's] an empathy kind of thing where I want to be able to help out in a situation."

Law Firm President Greg Kuderer has been at the firm for nearly as long as Egeness, around 46 years. He said when he and Egeness got started, there were more lawyers in rural areas.

"It's not quite that way anymore," he said. "A lot of the legal work, for whatever reason, has drifted into the larger cities. I think that's probably because lawyers coming out of law school like the larger communities, and they want to be there in practice. Today, with the ability to practice remotely, you can still almost be anywhere and practice law through the computer."

In his experience, Kuderer said having Egeness at the firm has been priceless.

"Linda understands the area, the people, the clients," he said. "She essentially is the voice and image of our firm. I believe the successes we've had over the past few years are in large part because of Linda's input and contributions, that clients feel com-

fortable with her. She just handles it with such grace and professionalism that you can't replace."

With the experience accumulated over time, Kuderer said the work Egeness does goes further than just as a receptionist secretary.

"Legal assistant, semi-paralegal," he said. "She knows everything the paralegal would know, and I would trust her with anything in the case to do."

Having worked side by side for so long, Kuderer said it has been a privilege to work with Egeness.

"For Linda to have given us 50 years of her life to the firm and to the people that we have serviced and assisted," he said. "It's been truly remarkable. I wouldn't do it without her. It's just necessary to have somebody like that. At some point in time, she's going to be greatly missed."

Right now, Egeness said she doesn't have a plan as to when she'll retire, but she's looking forward to enjoying some time for herself.

"A little bit of travel would be good," she said. "I have a couple sisters not in the area, a family of six girls. I'm the oldest, so it'd be fun to share time with them. I've got kids, grandkids. Maybe just not do much of anything, kick back."

## When the government shutdown will affect SNAP, Head Start and military pay

By Meg Kinnard

Associated Press

With the federal government shutdown nearing the one-month mark, Americans are starting to see the cascading effects of programs shuttered by lapses in federal funding. Some states are scrambling to find ways to account for shortfalls in food and child development assistance, and members of the military are also about to miss their first paychecks.

Some federal workers have already gone without pay for weeks. But nearly a month in, reserves that had kept some programs afloat since the shutdown began are dwindling, meaning new layers of complications as Congress remains unable to reach a new agreement to fund the federal government.

A look at what millions of Americans can expect this week:

According to the Trump administration, funding will run out for the food assistance program that is relied upon by 42 million Americans to supplement their grocery bills. The administration has rejected using more than \$5 billion in contingency funds to keep the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program flowing into November.

SNAP helps about 1 in 8 Americans buy groceries



Associated Press

A sign that reads "Closed due to federal government shutdown," is seen outside of the National Gallery of Art on the 6th day of the government shutdown, in Washington, Oct. 6.

using debit cards normally loaded each month by the federal government. Some states have pledged to keep the benefits flowing even if the federal program halts payments, but a memo from the U.S. Department of Agriculture — which administers the program — says states would not be reimbursed for temporarily picking up the cost.

Another program that helps more than 6 million low-income mothers, young children and expectant parents purchase nutritious staples, like baby formula, will likely run out of funds the following week. Earlier this month, WIC received a \$300 million infusion from the Trump administration, but those funds are running

out, too.

Also on Friday, the nation's 1.3 million active-duty service members are at risk of missing a paycheck. Earlier this month, the Trump administration ensured they were paid by shifting \$8 billion from military research and development funds to make payroll. But it is unclear if the Trump administration is willing — or able — to shift money again.

Last week, the Pentagon confirmed that it had accepted an anonymous \$130 million gift to help pay military members during the shutdown, a bequest that amounted to a small contribution toward the billions needed to cover service member paychecks.

## COUNCIL

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He rattled off other pieces of equipment from various department that are in kept in the old public works building.

Council Member Britney Kawecki said, "three of us were here when you stood there and talked about the need for this new building and how the old building basically was inhabitable and there were OSHA violations and the heating and the cooling and everything."

She said she does not remember addressing the OSHA violations or the heating and cooling issues. Lardy said nothing has been done concerning those issues and Kawecki said that that was concerning to her.

"I'm having a really hard time with this because this is a huge expense to the tax payers. We built a brand new \$10 million building and now we're being asked to keep this building, keep the cold storage building, we have all of this — it appears — all of this excess equipment that other communities don't have and then the outdoor storage, 50 tons of seal coat chips," Kawecki said.

She questioned a few of the other materials that are kept on the site of the old public works building.

"When is it going to be enough room for a city that hasn't grown since the 70s?" Kawecki asked.

Lardy said he could explain each of the uses Kawecki just listed and proceeded to do so.

"It's all used," Larry said in summary.

Council Member Randy Lubenow said he had more concerns about the employees that work in the building and whether it was safe for them. He specifically brought up some electrical issues.

"I just think we really need to do something with the building... just leav-

ing it sit there, we were told we needed the new building because of how terrible of shape the old building was in but yet we still have some people working in there and we're still storing stuff so to me it continues to be a hazard," Lubenow said.

Lardy pointed out that when the new building was designed, it was made known to council that there would not be enough room in it for all of the city's vehicles.

"I wrote a winter use and a summer use and it was using the other two buildings. Just so everyone knows that," he said.

Mayor Lee Baarts encouraged the council to stay focused on the old public works building, rather than talk about the new public works building.

Council Member Jay Maynard said there was some concern about the old building as it looks like it's "about to fall over sideways." He recommended making some of it cold storage while making necessary repairs on the other part to keep the building upright.

Lardy said that the lights and water could be cut and that the roof could be fixed up. He also said the building could be torn down if that's what the council wanted.

"If we're going to keep this as a functional building, I think we should try to make it look as such," Lubenow said.

He said he would like to see some cost estimates for painting the building and repairing the roof so that the council can budget for the work in the future.

Lubenow also said he did not want diesel trucks to be running inside the building because it's known that there's not an internal system to get rid of the fumes.

"If you have the doors

wide open, that means we're heating the outside too so I don't really like that option either," Lubenow said.

Lardy addressed the concern and said that doors are open long enough to get the trucks out.

A motion was made to direct staff to continue utilizing a portion of the building at 425 E. Margaret Street for heated vehicle storage during the winter months with the remaining space used for cold storage and to include for future budgets, the cost for outdoor storage, screening and painting of the building, along with roof repairs, electrical repairs and door maintenance.

The motion passed 4-1 with Kawecki opposed.

On Monday York also spoke about vehicle purchasing standards. During budget workshops this past season, the council had requested a vehicle replacement schedule be made to help with future budget workshops.

As part of the program, the components that would make up the replacement criteria include months of service, mileage, mechanical condition, body condition, interior condition and equipment conditions.

"The purpose of doing this is to put vehicles on a replacement schedule so that we can... make sure that money is available when vehicles are up for replacement, and to also give staff the ability to track vehicles and look at their maintenance and how the vehicles are performing within the department," York said.

When asked what the cost of the program would be, York said, "All of this would be based on a spreadsheet... there is no cost for additional software or anything like that."

Kawecki said she didn't

## Saturday

More than 130 Head Start preschool programs won't receive their annual federal grants on Nov. 1 if the government remains shut down, according to the National Head Start Association.

Centers are scrambling to assess how long they can stay open, since nearly all their funding comes from federal taxpayers. Head Start provides education and child care for the nation's neediest preschoolers. When a center is closed, families may have to miss work or school.

With new grants on hold, a half-dozen Head Start programs have already missed federal disbursements they were expecting Oct. 1 but have stayed open with fast-dwindling reserves or with help from local governments. All told, more than 65,000 seats at Head Start programs across the country could be affected.

Also Saturday, the window opens for enrolling in Affordable Care Act health plans. In past years, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has allowed consumers to preview their health coverage options about a week before open enrollment. But as of this week, Healthcare.gov appeared to show 2025 health insurance plans and estimated prices, instead of next year's options.

have issues with the policy, but with the sequence.

"We need to be doing a deep analysis of the existing equipment that we have currently. We need to identify what is needed, what can be shared, what can be rented and what can be sold," Kawecki said.

She said that would be a starting point. York said that his department is currently looking at all vehicles and working to identify the purpose of each vehicle.

Maynard made a motion to approve the program as presented. The motion passed 4-1 with Kawecki opposed.

In other business:

— The council approved a request to continue conversations with Advantage Aviation Services to develop a land lease agreement and initiate a FAA review and approval process.

— The council awarded task order #3 to Bolton & Menk for lead service line construction management services. All potential costs will be reimbursable under the state program.

— York presented a power point on the maintenance status of unpaved roads within the city and discussed potential changes to the criteria for developing and evaluating future maintenance and/or pavement and dust control.

— The council approved a Cedar Creek Park wetland restoration project.

— The council approved of staff applying for the Minnesota Department of Health Source Water Protection Implementation grant worth \$13,000.

— The council approved, on a 3-2 vote, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for aquatic invasive removal and treatment in the Fairmont Chain of Lakes.

## ANNUAL HARVEST DINNER

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2  
10:30AM - 1:00PM

Turkey Commercial Assorted Salads Pies & Desserts

Take-outs Available Free-Will Donation

St James Lutheran  
108 S JAMES ST  
NORTHROP, MN

## Early Childhood Screening

November 13, 2025

8am-12pm

Sherburn Elementary



SCAN QR TO REGISTER

Thursday, October 31

Come trick and treat down the halls of the Lakeview Campus.

The fun begins at 3:30 pm and ends at 4:30 pm

Please enter Door 21 and exit Door 19

Lakeview Health Services  
Hope. Heart. Healing

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