

Austin Post-Bulletin



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BONDING BILL PROPOSAL

Hormel Institute expansion alive

House to vote Monday, Senate Tuesday

By Heather J. Carlson
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ST. PAUL — Republicans are putting forward a new \$496 million bonding proposal that includes the Hormel Institute expansion, but few other projects in the region.

Austin DFL Rep. Jeanne Poppe said she was "absolutely thrilled" to see the Hormel Institute included in the latest bonding proposal and plans to support it. She said it will

create jobs and support important cancer research.

"It's just a really good project. It happens to be in Austin but it's one where we all win," she said.

The bill, which the Senate plans to vote on by Tuesday, includes \$13.5 million to expand the Hormel Institute with a 56,000-square-foot addition to house 15 state-of-the-art research labs and research technology space. Those facilities would support a new cancer research partnership agreement with Mayo Clinic. Overall, the project is expected to



Poppe

cost \$29.4 million.

For others, the news was what wasn't in the bill, which the House expects to vote on on Monday. It strips out funding for Rochester's Mayo Civic Center expansion and several other area projects.

News that the project failed to make the cut — even though Senate Majority Leader Dave Senjem hails from Rochester — disappointed civic center backers.



LEGISLATURE 2012

Senjem said the \$496 million construction borrowing bill negotiated with House Republicans is focused on preserving basic infrastructure such as college buildings, roads, bridges and flood mitigation.

"The centerpoint of all of this is core infrastructure," he said. Senjem is also chair of the Senate Capital Investment Committee meaning he played a central role in crafting this latest bonding plan.

The Hormel Institute was one of a few projects in southeastern Minnesota that did make the cut, including \$8.7 million to relocate the Rochester WorkForce Center to Rochester Community and Technical College and \$4 million to dredge Lake Zumbro, which is in Olmsted and Wabasha counties.

Initially, a vote was planned for Thursday night but the governor's office voiced concerns about Minnesota State Colleges and Universities slated to get nearly \$145 million while the University of Minnesota system would get only \$54 million. Bill sponsor Rep. Larry Howes, R-Walker, said they plan to tweak the bill this weekend to address DFL Gov. Mark Dayton's concerns.

One provision in the bill could possibly open the door to funding for the Mayo Civic Center. The proposal includes \$55 million for business development grants. Howes said the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development would be responsible for distributing those grant dollars.

AUSTIN TREES



Joe Michaud-Scorza / jscorza@postbulletin.com

Retired educator Gordy Kuehne stands beside a garden he has been tending for more than 30 years in Austin. Three years ago, Kuehne began seeing evidence that Japanese Beetles were damaging the plants.

Beetles, borers pose threats

By Adam Pulchinski
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A few years ago Gordy and Marsha Kuehne found some strange looking bugs in their grape plants at their home. The couple also noticed the leaves on their birch tree were about half gone. After capturing one of the bugs, the Kuehnes took it to Randy Berg of Berg's Nursery and found they were the victims of a growing pest problem — Japanese Beetles.

"Before that we never saw them," Gordy Kuehne said. "They eat everything in sight."

The Japanese Beetle is an insect that is fairly new to the area, according to Berg, but they've probably been around longer than people think. Often confused with the Asian Lady Beetle and

a variety of less invasive species, the Japanese Beetle poses a threat to plants in the area.

Chuck Meyer, a biology/earth science instructor at Riverland Community College in Austin, said like many things, the Japanese Beetle was introduced accidentally. Because there are no natural enemies in a new area like Austin, the insect flourishes.

"They have a two-part life cycle, like a butterfly," Meyer said. "If there's enough of them (larvae), they can do damage. They fly around after they enlarge and eat



Meyer

leaves."

There are some sprays and grub control products, but Berg said one of the best ways to help alleviate the insects' effect is by a trap that's available.

In a class, Berg also tackled another insect that has not yet been seen in the Austin area, but many believe is on its way — the Emerald Ash Borer. Like Dutch Elm Disease before, the effect of ash borers on ash trees has the potential to be devastating to many areas, including Austin.

"Austin has just under 3,000 ash trees," said Sara Fechtelkötter of Minnesota Green Corps, who is in the Austin area working with the Austin Park and Rec. "Damaged trees are hit first, so we know which ones to

check more frequently."

The Emerald Ash Borer gets to a layer of various species of ash trees just below the bark and eats them from the inside, stopping the flow of sap in the tree.

"Sap can't flow anymore, and the tree's days are numbered," Meyer said.

Berg, Meyer, and Fechtelkötter all agreed it is a matter of time before the ash borer makes its way to the Austin area. For now, the only thing that can really be done is to be observant and report anything suspicious to organizations like the Park and Rec. One thing people should not do is to prematurely cut down any trees or transport firewood from one area to another.

Adam Pulchinski is a freelance writer in Austin.

2009 MEMORIAL DAY CRASH

Survivor speaks to Austin students

By Heather Rule

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Eleventh-grader Morgan Turner stood and looked at the mangled van along with some of her Austin High School classmates.

"It's crazy," she said of the sight. She was just in an accident on Monday, when the other driver was texting and ran a stop sign, hitting and totaling her car.

"No one realizes how much one decision can change someone's life," Turner said.

Decisions are what Rita Seha talked about Thursday afternoon as she addressed students in Austin High School's Packer Gym. Seha survived the 2009 Memorial Day weekend crash that killed five of her loved ones.

Afterward, students had a chance to look at the damaged van that they were riding in when it was hit by a pickup driven by Christopher Frisch, 25, on May 23, 2009.

Frisch was driving east on Minnesota Highway 30 when he fell asleep and crossed U.S. 63, striking the van. Frisch's blood-alcohol concentration was 0.18 percent, more than twice the legal limit for driving.

"We all have choices," Seha said. "We have so many choices when we get behind the wheel.

"Please think when you put those keys in that ignition."

Seha and her family were on their way back to Rochester following some fishing and a family picnic to celebrate Seha's 5-week, 5-day-old son Raymond Milholland. Seha's fiancée, Terry Milholland, 45; Raymond; Seha's 19-year-old daughter, Heidi Newell; Seha's 2-year-old grandson, Carter Newell; and longtime family friend Jarah Beers, 23, were all killed in the crash.

Her grandson Carter "fought for his life" for six days after the crash before he died, Seha said.

"Why? Because someone chose to drink and drive," she said. Responsibility of your choices, is your own, Seha told the students. Frisch was sentenced to five years in prison and two and a half years probation. Seha said she's visited him in prison and she has forgiven him.

The talk was part of a pre-prom event. Austin High's prom is Saturday.



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Rita Seha points out some of the damage to the smashed van to senior Danielle Goulet Thursday at Austin High School.

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55 6 a.m. 56° Noon 69° 6 p.m. 72°

Corrections

The Post-Bulletin is committed to fairness and accuracy. If you have a concern, contact Managing Editor Jay Furst at 285-7742 or furst@postbulletin.com.

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