



The RECORDER

OCTOBER 17, 2019

Death Notices: (see page 3)

Gibbs, Tina Ann, age 60 of Albion

Carol “Ann” Freeman, age 80 of Albion

Harry Otis Cousins, 79, from Albion

Raymond Dale Jermeay, Sr., age 82 of Albion

AREA SPORTS IN THIS WEEK’S RECORDER

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Marshall High School
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Concord Area Master plan gets a preview at hearing
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Marshall wins road match at LCCHS
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Marshall earns regional golf title
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Springport earns gritty win against Quincy
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Concord Schools: Threats, Penalties and Consequences

By **KEN WYATT**
Contributing Writer

When four 15-year-old boys’ online threats prompted a one-day closure of Concord Community Schools, there were repercussions. For the four boys, there was expulsion, felonious charges and possible prison time. A month later, Concord school officials are sorting things out on the personal and school level even as courts deal with legal issues.

In a nutshell, here is what happened: Early the morning of Tuesday, Sept. 17, school officials learned that four 15-year-old boys, all members of the JV football team, reportedly had made school-related threats on SnapChat. They were being questioned by police. The high school principal, Cheryl Price, was the object of threats. Supt. Dan Funston decided to close schools that day.

Funston sat down with a Recorder writer to review the episode last week. The session began with a question: Would he have handled the situation any differently had law enforcement not been involved?

“I want to be very respectful of the police and prosecutor,” he explained. “We’ve spent countless hours on this, and I don’t believe we would have handled it differently.”

He went on to talk about the cooperation he had experienced from all the involved families.

“I’ve been an administrator since 2002 and have had to deal with similar situations over the years.” With that background, he said the co-operation from families has made this situation easier to handle than some others he’s faced.

Were there problems with rumors? He said that the basic facts were circulated pretty quickly. The only problem was a media report that three boys had been apprehended and a fourth was “on the run.” Actually, Funston said, that fourth boy was allowed to remain at home in his

bed until the morning.

What brought on the entire episode? “Apparently one of the boys was upset” over a relationship with a girl, he explained.

The impact on Concord’s students varied. Many of the elementary students were upset, while the high school students tended to handle the news better.

Going forward, the episode is being processed in one way by the school district, and in another way by the courts. This week’s JV football game with Homer was cancelled, and the JV team will play no more games this season - officially, “due to suspensions, injuries and eligibility issues.”

However, Funston said based on school officials’ interviews and recommendations, he expects the boys will be returning to classes. Two of them will resume classes later this month; the other two will be restored in November - all subject, however, to mental health evaluations through Lifeways.

Still, the threats they are charged with making on SnapChat are felonies. They are accused with Making a Terrorist Threat or False Report of Terrorism, according to Jackson County Prosecutor Jerry Jarzynka.

The offense carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison. Jarzynka explained in an open letter to the community, “While the punishments dictated by the criminal justice system are stern, students may face additional consequences, including: Loss of scholarships and federal aid; denied college admission; being required to disclose pending cases or criminal convictions on job applications.”

Responding to a query from The Recorder, Jarzynka said the four juveniles are no longer lodged in the county youth center. They will have a pretrial hearing on Oct. 31.

What is Snapchat? One online tech site (PocketLint) describes it this way: “Snapchat is a mobile app for Android and iOS devices.

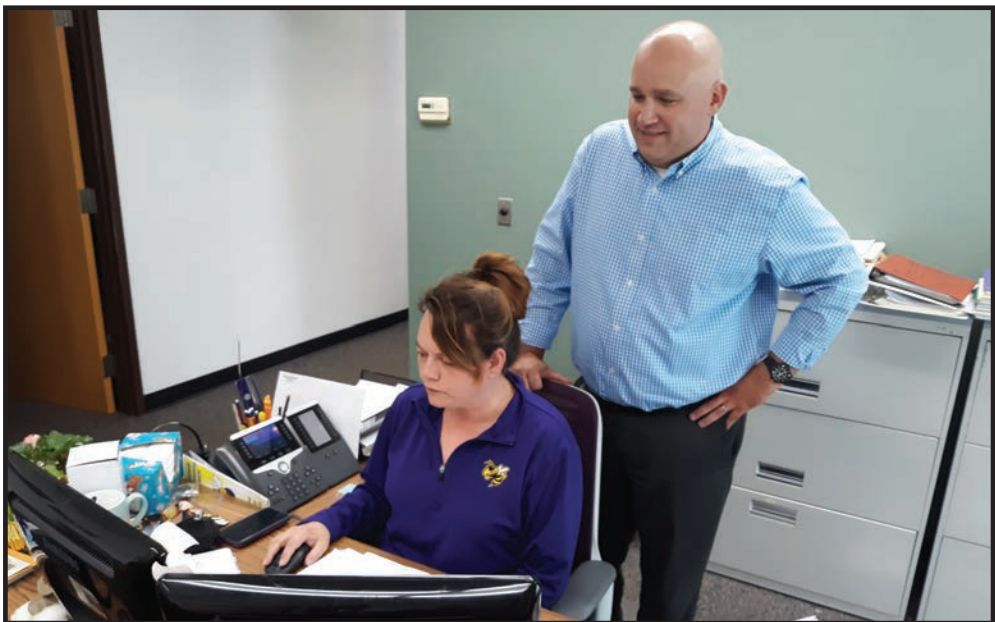


Photo by Ken Wyatt

Dan Funston, Concord superintendent, with Laurie Sinden, administrative assistant.

It’s headed by co-founder Evan Spiegel. One of the core concepts of the app is that any picture or video or message you send - by default - is made available to the receiver for only a short time before it becomes inaccessible. This temporary, or ephemeral, nature of the app was originally designed to encourage a more natural flow of interaction.”

Since its onset, Snapchat has been plagued by controversies over sexting, bullying and similar abuses of online usage. Since the Concord incident on Sept. 17, a similar situation was reported in the Daytona Beach area of Florida. A 15-year-old posted a photo of himself pointing a rifle at the screen with the caption, “I got sum for y’all just wait till 2:15.” The 15-year-old student has been arrested and faces charges of written threats to kill, a second degree felony

in Florida.

Concord plans to include programming in the coming months on the positive use of social media. Meanwhile, there is a message that prosecutors and school officials all agree on: Parents need to talk with their children about online use.

Jarzynka: “I urge you to talk to your children about the appropriate use of social media, and the lasting consequences of making threats against our schools. Please stress that there is nothing humorous about threatening to shoot up a school, and there is no such thing as a joke involving the threat of mass murder.”

Funston: “I would encourage all of our parents to have conversations with your children about their social media use to reinforce the messages they will receive at school.”

Springport hosts bald eagle fundraiser

By **JACKIE MERRITT**
Contributing Writer

On Friday, Oct. 4 the Village of Springport played host to the symbol of American freedom— a bald eagle. Thanks to village council member Vic Pennell, Wildside Rehabilitation, and the Michigan Avian Experience an eagle posed for photos with those donating toward building a proper flight enclosure for Wildside. Three injured birds were recently admitted to their facility.

Pennell had brought the need to Jennifer Naylor, village manager, and together they came up with the idea of a Cruise-In to raise some money. Meeting in Springport, classic car owners drove to the Onondaga Tavern, also huge supporters of Wildside, for food, a 50-50 Drawing and Silent Auction.

“Vic put this event together in 12 days. His efforts raised almost \$2000 (with more coming in) and untold awareness for the need of these eagles,” said Naylor. “Thank you, too, to photographer Ryan Kerns, Wildside and Michigan Avian, donors, and cruisers.”

The Wildside Rehabilitation and Education Center was opened in Eaton Rapids in 1995. A non-profit organization, it is staffed entirely by volunteers.



Photo by Ryan Kerns

Springport Village Manager, Jennifer Naylor poses with a bald eagle to raise awareness for the need of a proper flight enclosure for these birds at Wildside Rehabilitation and Education Center

Online ordinances are on the way

By **KEN WYATT**
Contributing Writer

Concord Township residents moved a little closer this week to having their local ordinances accessible online. At this month’s meeting, the township board agreed to spend \$8,400 to make it happen - but it will take a year.

Under the action, Concord Township will retain American Legal Publications of Cincinnati, Ohio, to condense its 154 pages of ordinances for online viewing. The work includes a range of services - review of the language in the ordinances for compatibility with state and federal statutes and laws, arrangement of the codes by subject, indexing and tables that cover such related topics as annexations, zoning map changes, easements, etc.

Currently, township residents must go to the township office to request a copy of an ordinance in which they are interested. While copies are generally

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Rec-pot ordinance revisions approved

By **KEN WYATT**
Contributing Writer

As a state-imposed deadline of Nov. 1 approaches, the Pulaski Township Board approved some final revisions to a draft recreational marijuana ordinance this week.

After consulting with the township attorney, board members set a cap of 30 Class C recreational grower licenses for the township. But the measure restricts those licenses to only entities that already have at least one medical marijuana license. A single entity would be limited to no more than five licenses combined - medical and recreational.

All governmental jurisdictions can opt in or out of both medical and recreational marijuana licensing. Pulaski has opted in on both, taking the position that is better to have some local oversight than to leave it to the state. Also, the township derives revenues or its oversight role.

In other business before the board: **Cemetery flags.** A resident asked the board what has happened to the small American flags that have been posted at the Pulaski Cemetery. Clerk Kris Runyon explained that the flags are placed at veterans’ graves for Memorial Day and she chooses to remove them at Labor Day because by then they are tattered. As the matter was discussed, it was pointed out that



Photo by Ken Wyatt

The Pulaski Cemetery, just north of the village of Pulaski along Pulaski Road, contains the remains of dozens of veterans of various conflicts ranging back to the Civil War.

the flags are helpful when the local Concord-Pulaski American Legion Post places Christmas wreaths at veterans’ graves later this year. Runyon said the township is trying to compile a list or guide to veterans’ graves to assist. Many veterans’ graves have some engraving on the stone, a veterans bronze plaque or a small sign identifying the grave as that of a veteran, but all

of those can be difficult to spot.

Sewers. On Tuesday, Oct. 22, a special meeting will be held to discuss a proposed Swains Lake sewer project. Back in the summer, a township-proposed project failed to gather enough support to proceed. Since then, a Swains Lake sewer committee has proposed a different sewer project. However, the town-

ship attorney and engineer say that such a project would have to be assessed to residents on a square-footage basis of the various homeowners’ properties. Stephens Consulting Services of Haslett, which the residents have retained for their sewer proposal, has argued that the expenses should be spread equally among the residents.