

Council OKs Spongy Moth Spraying

Resident Praises Spraying to Save Oaks

By Chris Mertes

Times Tribune

A portion of Middleton will be sprayed to prevent the spread of the spongy moth thanks to action taken by the Middleton Common Council March 5.

A public information meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on March 18 at the Middleton City Hall for individuals who want more knowledge about the aerial spraying, which was praised by a Middleton resident during public comments on the council's agenda.

Boyd Rossing, a Sak's Woods resident, expressed

gratitude for the city's spraying efforts in 2023, noting a significant reduction in spongy moth populations and the positive impact on oak trees.

"I was a regular visitor here last spring, regarding the spongy moth," Rossing told the council. "Well, actually, much earlier than last spring, regarding the spongy moth outbreak. The first thing I want to do is thank the city for doing the spraying in spring 2023. As a resident there, the contrast was remarkable. The year before we had spongy moths everywhere, people didn't want their kids to play in the yard.

It was really really bad."

Rossing raised concerns about previous outbreaks that were not suppressed, resulting in the death of 12 oak trees on the properties immediately adjacent to his property as well as one in his own yard.

"So this really does have an impact. And when you spray and suppress you're saving oak trees, so we're very supportive — all the neighbors I've spoken to were very positive about the spray," Rossing added.

The Maywood Avenue resident also emphasized the importance of continued aerial spraying to prevent

major outbreaks and protect the city's valuable resource.

"This whole process has been very educational for us. We've learned about the cycle of the spongy moth, why and when and how often outbreaks occur and what the impacts are," Rossing said. "[And] what you can do individually to suppress [moths], but we all understand that our own individual actions are not going to be sufficient to prevent a major outbreak for a whole host of reasons. And so it's really something that requires an overall aerial spray which the city is poised to do."

During the meeting, alders approved a contract with Hendrickson Flying Service — the same company that completed the spraying in 2023 — for \$21,897 to spray *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk) product Foray 48B at a rate of 64 fluid ounces per acre.

According to Middleton Director of Parks and Recreation Kiley Scherer, the intended spray area is a total of approximately 106 acres and will need to be sprayed twice for a total area of approximately 212 acres.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, European

spongy moths (formerly known as gypsy moth) were accidentally introduced into Massachusetts in 1869 by an amateur entomologist. Since then, spongy moths have defoliated millions of acres of trees in forests and urban areas in at least 20 states and the Washington D.C. area. Spongy moth caterpillars feed on more than 300 species of deciduous and evergreen trees. First found in Wisconsin in the late 1960s, spongy moth population increases (also known as outbreaks) may occur every 10 years and have been found in every Wisconsin county, according to the DNR.

Demand at Dane County Food Pantries

Financial support more critical than ever to meet the need

Without food pantries, thousands of people in our community wouldn't have access to enough food to meet their basic needs.

The demand across six of Dane County's largest food pantries has reached record highs, more than doubling over the last two years, while charitable giving has plummeted nationwide during that same time period. The 112% increase represents the average increase in the number of household visits across the six pantries between December 2021 and December 2023.

Up to this point, community support has been a critical part of how pantries have met the need, local pantry leaders said.

"We have never turned anyone away, but we have had to put some limits on the amount of food people can take," said Ellen Carlson, executive director for WayForward Resources in Middleton. "We worry about how we and other local food pantries can continue to ensure that everyone in our community has access to

nutritious food."

The pressure on pantries to meet the need escalated in Spring 2023 as pandemic-era supports phased out, including the expanded child tax credit, universal free school lunches, and increased federal food and rental assistance.

"In the past four years, we've felt the impact of a pandemic, inflation, high housing costs and increased migration," said Tracy Burton, Badger Prairie Needs Network Food Pantry Director. "All of these combined have resulted in over five times the number of visits to our pantry from pre-pandemic levels."

Rhonda Adams, executive director of The River Food Pantry, said the number of households in need of the pantry's services began growing steadily over the past few years and then surged when most pandemic relief programs phased out last spring, resulting in over 276,000 visits by households in need of groceries and meals in 2023 alone. "Food insecurity is a com-

munal issue, even if we may not always recognize when it is affecting our friends and neighbors, and support from the broader community will continue to be essential to successfully addressing it," Adams said.

While inflation has slowed down, prices for basic goods and housing have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The consumer price index, the most widely-followed measure of inflation, remains about 20 percent higher than it was before the pandemic. In addition, the steep increase in housing costs in Dane County means many households in our community have to focus even more of their income on rent.

"Many of our customers are people who are employed full-time and finding it necessary to choose between paying bills and buying food," said Francesca Frisque, Goodman Community Center food pantry assistant director, who said growth there has been consistent and "sometimes staggering."

"We're thankful for so many generous partners throughout the community, and we have an incredible base of donors who give regularly. Even still, we're not seeing as many donations come in, and we're having a hard time keeping our shelves stocked," Frisque said. "Without help from the community, we wouldn't be able to meet the need of our Madison neighbors."

Food pantries help families stretch their budgets so they don't have to go without basic necessities and can continue to cover costs such as filling their gas tank to get to work and paying for prescriptions.

"We continue to respond to escalating pantry need with a variety of food options so people and families don't have to choose between paying rent and buying groceries," said Chris Kane, senior director of client services at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul — Madison.

See FOOD, page 5

Rosemary Garfoot Library

Village Board Candidate Forum

Learn more about the four candidates running for this year's Village Board vacancies, and hear about their vision for Cross Plain's future. You'll also have the opportunity to ask questions of your own so that you can make a more informed decision in the voting booth in April! The candidate forum will take place on Wednesday, March 20 at 5:30PM in the library community room.

Dungeons and Dragons for Adults

Join us on Thursday, March 21 from 5:30 to 7PM for a new series of DnD campaigns for adult players! We'll meet every month on the third Thursday to adventure through mini campaigns that can be completed in one sitting. New and experienced players are welcome—no registration is necessary! Contact kmckewin@rgpl.org with any questions.

Spring Break Specials!

Drop in on Thursday, March 28 between 1PM and 3PM to meet some live snakes at our demonstration by The Madison Herpetological Society! Stay tuned for more special spring break surprises too!

1000 Books Before Kindergarten

If you have a young one you'd like to help prepare for the wonderful world of reading, this is the program for you. For more information contact Catherine at the library. No child is too young to get started!

Tween Book Club

Our next tween book club will take place on Monday, March 25 at 4PM! This month's read is *The Eyes and the Impossible* by Dave Eggers. Contact Catherine at the library to preregister: 608-798-3886.

Carpe Librum Book Club

Our next Carpe Librum Book Club will take place on Thursday, April 4 at 6PM! Copies of the book we'll be discussing, *Mercury Pictures Presents* by Anthony Marra, are now available at the circulation desk, so stop by to pick one up soon!

Wi-Fi Hot Spot Now Available

Need reliable internet at home? The library now has a Wi-Fi hotspot available for check-out! The hotspot checks out for two weeks and comes with instructions for setting it up.

Friends of the Library Update

The Friends of the Library are now accepting donations of used books, DVDs, puzzles and games for their spring book sale, which will be held in May during Trout Days. The Friends are also accepting donations of art to be sold in the fall Art Auction—it's never too early to accept your pieces! Donations of any kind can be dropped off at the library during open hours.

Middleton • Cross Plains
Times-Tribune

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF MIDDLETON AND CROSS PLAINS

Published every Thursday by Finger Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 286, Black Earth, WI 53515

608-767-3655

Visit our website at: www.MiddletonTimes.com

Classified Advertising, Subscriptions or General Inquiries:
Call 608-767-3655 or email: classifieds@fingerpub.com

Subscription Rates: In Wis: 1 year, \$49; 2 years, \$96;
Out-of-state, 1 year, \$64; 2 years, \$124.

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Legal Notice Deadline is 11 am Friday the week prior to publication

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We would like them to arrive via email if at all possible. Send your letters to timestribuneeditor@fingerpub.com.

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Letters are edited for clarity, fact checked and sometimes trimmed to fit the space available in the newspaper. The opinions expressed are always the writer's own. The editor won't try to make you seem more (or less) intelligent than you really are, but may clean up some grammatical issues according to our style guide. We want your opinions, even when we don't agree with them. But this isn't the Internet, so you can't just say anything you want. Try to base your letters on reason and fact. We will not publish claims that are demonstrably false.

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Continued from page 1

BODYCAM

officers decreased by about 90 percent after the introduction of body-worn cameras.

‘We’re hoping to achieve similar results,’ he added.

It makes a difference when someone knows they’re being recorded, whether they’re a citizen or a law enforcement officer.

Cameras may contribute to the sharp reduction in use of force at a time when departments are also emphasizing officers use de-escalation measures to prevent encounters from becoming violent.

Deputies forgetting to activate their cameras may be an issue to address at training, Porter said. It should eventually become a habit but when the camera isn’t on when it should be the deputy must note it in an incident report.

The dash-mounted cameras are activated when a squad’s emergency lights are switched on and there are body cameras available that function similarly.

The introduction of body cameras has such welcomed by officers in many departments who wouldn’t want to go to work without them, said Porter.

The sheriff’s office plans to equip 32 deputies with body cameras in the West Precinct, including the two that patrol the town on contract. Porter anticipates that would begin this summer.

The cameras haven’t been purchased yet, deputies will need training on their use and a draft policy on usage understood, he said.

The draft policy outlines when the cameras must be used, when the deputy has discretion in activating the camera and

when they shouldn’t.

Porter said there’s no need to use the camera when a deputy is talking to someone in a situation where there’s an expectation of an individual’s privacy and when the contact is unlikely to result in an arrest or produce evidence.

On initial contact, deputies will be trained to inform the person they’re talking to that they’re being recorded.

Body cameras are likely to be activated during much of a deputy’s shift, Porter said, and when multiplied by 32 deputies working 24/7 that produces a lot of video. The videos become a public record and subject to release under the state and federal public record law.

The sheriff’s office already receives 1000s of open records requests annually and the use of body cameras will only add to that number, Porter said.

Incidents not subject to open records law include situations where sensitive medical and personal information is shared or an ongoing investigation.

State law requires these public to be retained for four months but the sheriff’s office would like to retain video for six months to cover unforeseen circumstances when the video would be useful, Porter said.

The pilot program will last a year to assess effectiveness of body camera in the field before a decision is made whether or not to equip all the deputies with one, Porter said.

During the pilot program, the draft usage policy will remain subject to change based on the experience in the field.

The village of Cross Plains begin to use body cameras in late 2021 and the most common reaction received

from the public during community outreach sessions was, ‘I thought you already had them,’ said Chief Tony Ruesga Jr.

With surveillance cameras monitoring the public from many locations and the ubiquity of cell phone cameras, why wouldn’t Cross Plains police wear body cameras?

The village initially funded the purchase of three body cameras but in order to equip every officer with one, Ruesga funded three more cameras from existing resources.

Combined with dash-mounted cameras in squad cars, the body camera provides a good record of public encounters, according to the chief.

The videos are spot checked monthly by the training sergeant for compliance with department policy and to acknowledge proper conduct during public contacts, he said.

To date, Ruesga said the body camera experience has been positive for his department. Any uncertainty of adopting new technology was replaced by the positive record of officer conduct they produced.

The Middleton Police Department began using body cameras in 2017, said Captain Jeremy Geiszler. A committee completed a usage policy by late 2016 and since then it hasn’t been substantially changed.

‘We have not had any pushback from the public, and I think the program has been a positive one for us,’ Geiszler wrote in an emailed response to a reporter’s questions.

Continued from page 2

FOOD

Here are some of their stories:

-Jeremy, Marcella (names changed) and their three young kids recently moved to Dane County. Even though both Jeremy and Marcella work full time, it’s still difficult to make rent each month, pay for utilities and buy food and diapers for the family. Thanks to the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, they can get essentials like milk, butter, eggs and bread to feed their kids. It’s things that help them get by each month while allowing them to expedite their savings so they can thrive long term.

-Ryan and Lexy (names changed) began visiting the WayForward Resources food pantry after he was laid off from a marketing firm where he had a promising career path. Lexy is in treatment for cancer and has significant medical bills. The couple is using all of their savings to maintain the health insurance coverage from Ryan’s former employer while he looks for another job. The

pantry is a critical piece of their stability, allowing them to stay in their apartment.

-Bill (name changed) visits the Goodman Community Center food pantry every week, and the variety of fresh foods have made a positive impact on his diet. ‘I use the pantry every week, and it allows me to eat more healthy foods than I could otherwise afford. I’m very grateful for it.’ Goodman pantry staff report that many customers share a similar sentiment, with some even bringing photos each week of meals they’ve prepared with food from the pantry.

-Mary (name changed) describes her experience at Badger Prairie Needs Network. ‘I’m a single mom just a hair above qualifying for food help. This pantry is a blessing every time. I have a young child with special needs. The items we get are incredible for him. We get so excited each time we go knowing that he will get food we couldn’t afford.’

‘-The pantry has helped me be able to stay in my home by providing food when my budget is stretched terribly thin,’ a client from The River Food Pantry said. Others who visit The River shared that being able to get food from the pantry meant they did not have to choose between eating and paying other bills. ‘My child and I would not be eating much without The River groceries. This is our key to getting by,’ another client said.

-Annie (name changed) found the Sun Prairie Food Pantry during the early days of the pandemic. At the time her son was a baby, and receiving diapers and wipes from the pantry in addition to food was a huge help. When the Child Tax Credit payments ended in 2022, Annie found herself needing to use the pantry again. ‘We [my husband and I] both work but some months we just can’t make it.’ They recently found out they’re

expecting again, and they’re relieved to know they can count on the Sun Prairie Food Pantry as their family grows.

‘We won’t turn anyone away, and we’re spending more money each month to make sure our shelves are stocked,’ said Catie Badsing, manager of food security programs at the Sun Prairie Food Pantry at Sunshine Place. As the gap between wages and cost of living continues to widen, Badsing said pantries will keep seeing more new families who need their services. More than 8 percent of employed adults in Wisconsin live in food insecure households, according to a recent Census Pulse Household Survey.

‘Our shifts outside of regular working hours are our busiest, which means most of our customers are working, sometimes multiple jobs,’ Badsing said.

There is a misconception that food pantries operate mainly with state or federal support, but only a small amount of food comes in through the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program. Instead pantries must stock their shelves by relying on a complex web of systems and collaborations. That includes strategic partnerships like those with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, food rescues from local grocery and convenience stores, as well as monetary and food donations from businesses, foundations, churches, and individuals.

‘Unfortunately, many grants have stayed at the same levels, pandemic era funding is gone, our guests’ SNAP benefits have been reduced, and our food banks have been struggling to keep up with this growth,’ said Burton from Badger Prairie Needs Network. ‘We’ve been grateful to be in a community that has always risen

to the need — but with this enormous growth, we will need to find new sources of food and/or money or will have to restrict access to the pantry.’

While generous food drives at the end of 2023 had a major impact for people in our community, hunger doesn’t end with the holiday season. Donations of money, food and your volunteer time can all make an immediate difference in the lives of so many of our neighbors who need our support now more than ever.

-This article was provided by Wayforward Resources in partnership with Badger Prairie Needs Network, Goodman Community Center, The River Food Pantry, Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Madison and Sun Prairie Food Pantry.

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WEEKLY

Health TIP!

Kombucha Lowers Blood Sugar


According to a new study, drinking kombucha (a fermented tea containing probiotics) may help lower fasting blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes. In the small study, researchers gave two groups of people with type 2 diabetes either 8 oz. of kombucha that they drank daily with dinner for 4 weeks, or a placebo. After the 4 weeks, they tested their blood sugar and then switched the groups. Results showed that drinking the kombucha significantly reduced fasting blood sugar levels, from 164 to 116 mg/dL on average.

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