

Otter Tail BOC Temporarily Pauses The Sale Of THC



The Otter Tail County Commissioners are, from left, front row-Dan Bucholz and Leland (Lee) Rogness; back row- Kurt Mortenson, Betty Murphy, and Wayne Johnson.

The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners has unanimously passed an interim ordinance that places a one-year moratorium on the sale of THC edibles and beverages in Otter Tail County. The ordinance takes effect February 1, 2023 and places a pause on sales until there are measures in place to protect those who call Otter Tail County home from the potential negative impacts of these products as well as ways to ensure responsible retailing can be developed.

While the legislature set some regulations around the sale of these products, gaps remain. The new law is silent on requirements for licensing, monitoring and enforcement, training of the individuals dispensing these products, sales locations, prevention education, and several other topics which deserve further study and public input. These gaps in the law and the concern for public

health and safety, particularly for youth, led the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners to pass the ordinance.

Cities located in Otter Tail County that establish and pass a local ordinance that addresses licensing, rules, and other regulatory issues, may, by resolution of the city council, be exempt from this moratorium.

"The support by our Board of Commissioners to take steps to ensure the health and safety of those who call Otter Tail County home is valued. While we hope the Minnesota Legislature will further address this issue next session, we now have some time to really review what we need to do here in Otter Tail County," said Jody Lien, Otter Tail County Public Health Director.

The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners listened to public comments during a scheduled public

hearing on Monday, November 21, and used the feedback in their decisions.

County Commissioner Lee Rogness commented at the recent board meeting, "When we listened to the public most seemed in favor of licensing, compliance, and age restrictions. We feel this (moratorium) gives an opportunity for cities to hold responsibility for licensing and create their own ordinances while allowing time for the County to put in place protections, especially for our youth."

To read the ordinance in its entirety please visit this webpage: ottertailcountymn.us/ordinances-and-policies. To subscribe to Otter Tail County notifications, go to the notification center and choose the news and event updates you would like to subscribe to at ottertailcountymn.us/subscribe-to-updates/

Rothsay EDA Has A New Direction In 2023

By Chris Buckingham

The Rothsay Economic Development Authority (EDA) is shaping up to have a new focus and direction starting in 2023.

Historically the EDA has simply been an extension of the Rothsay City Council. The EDA was the primary funding source in partnership with the Rothsay Schools during their trades program when they were building houses.

The EDA has been involved with supporting the housing improvement grant programs and supporting business development opportunities. Most recently the EDA and City in partnership with the Southern Valley EDA (SVEDA) and Red River diversion funding grants have led the remodeling and improvements to the Rothsay Event Center.

The EDA has been a great catalyst for improvements within the community throughout the years, but to extend EDA opportunities to the Rothsay Community beyond the borders of city limits, the City Council identified the best path forward is to separate the EDA from the City Council. The Rothsay Areawide EDA (RAEDA) was formally approved to start development at the September 2022 Council meeting and Chris Buckingham agreed to volunteer, and was appointed, as RAEDA Interim Director.

Chris previously served as a City Council Member (2009-2012) and Mayor (2013- 2017); while also serving on the EDA as Vice President (2009-2012) and Board Member (2013-2017). He also participated on the board of Rothsay Prairie Days from 2011-2018 and Coached Rothsay Youth Basketball from 2013-2016.

In addition to his public and community service, Chris was the founder and CEO of MinnDak Computer Services in 2009, providing IT Services to businesses through the region. He successfully built the business and made it attractive for acquisition, which was executed to Loffler Companies in March of 2020. Chris still works with Loffler today



as a Strategic Business Analyst.

Having a unique view as a previous council member, mayor, and business owner with a passion to create strategic and sustainable outcomes is one of the key factors in his appointment to lead the change.

The right change does not happen quickly and the RAEDA framework has been developing and will continue to develop over the course of 2023.

For the RAEDA to be successful it must start with a solid foundation. The first step was to draft a charter and authority which was adopted by the City Council at the November 2022 meeting. The next step was to create Mission Statement, Vision Statement and create a values lens for decision making.

The Mission Statement is:

Our mission is to support and guide to the community of Rothsay with sustainable growth that is generational.

The Vision Statement is:

Our vision is to embrace our bedroom community and small-town values to develop opportunities that benefit and enhance housing, business, and overall community wellbeing.

The Core Values identified are Transparency, Realistic, Outcome Driven, Open Minded, Positive Attitude, Respect, and Reliable. The definition of these can be found under the RAEDA section of the city website, www.rothsay.org.

The intent is to build a leadership team and sub-committees with members that align with 4 key focus areas

- Housing and Consumer Services
- Workforce and Business Development
- Fundraising and Community

Events

- Marketing and Social Media

It is important that we have committee members that are beyond the borders of city limits and engaged in supporting the areawide community that is Rothsay. It is also important that we look to partner with other organizations like SVEDA and Greater Fergus Falls. For fundraising events we want to support and work with local community groups like the Lions Club, Prairie Chix, TC's and more.

The success of this new EDA requires it to be led by the community at large, not the city. We need to have a solid balance of visionaries and executors when it comes to initiatives.

At the January 4, 2023, City Council Meeting the Leadership team to join Chris that were appointed include: Jim Boyce, Craig Sullivan, and Travis Olson. A future councilmember "at large" will be added in March or April of 2023.

More information can also be found online at www.rothsay.org



CHRIS BUCKINGHAM
RAEDA INTERIM DIRECTOR

Major Cleanups Across The Region Underway

With all of the snow and blowing snow we have gotten lately it seems hard to believe that we are the lucky ones around here. But we are. Nearly everyone else has gotten more. Even with over a foot of snow on the ground, we have a little less than those to the south and further north by Fargo and Moorhead.

When the foul weather began in mid December, the area was situated in a small pocket of some rain just to the north with a snow in Rothsay.

Later in the week our luck changed. Like everyone else, we got snow. It was wet, sloppy, heavy snow and it continued to come down. The worst of it was very poor visibility as the snow increased in volume and the winds picked up. It was never really blizzard conditions but it will do until a real blizzard comes along.

Driving conditions became so poor that eventually the interstate between Fergus Falls and Moorhead was temporarily closed. If you were westbound it really didn't make much difference. I-94 from Fargo as far west as Dickinson was closed. That stretch of highway was particularly hard hit as snow



Don't know how long all of this beauty lasted, but it sure makes you appreciate Mother Nature and Jack Frost in all their glory.

depths across North Dakota were measured in feet. I-94 across North Dakota was basically shut down for four days.

Over the third weekend of December conditions improved as far as accumulating snow. We got a few more inches of snow so light it didn't amount to much in the frigid air.

If there's anything good about 20-below temperatures it's that fact that the snow is usually very light and fluffy. That's the good news. The bad news is that light snow blows around. A lot. When the winds pick up that snow moves. And move it did in the middle of last week.

Many Christmas plans got changed by weather over that weekend. Road conditions were horrible. Visibility was limited by blowing snow and it got cold. Very cold.

Everyone around the region had readings somewhere in the 20 below zero area just before the holiday. The daytime "highs" if you can call them that, never got above double digits below zero throughout the day for most of us.

And then we got blessed with a little more snow. We had one