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A look at The Grain



Photo courtesy of Hendricks Commercial Properties

The Grain, a retail and office space in downtown Delafield and Hendricks Commercial Properties' first mass timber development, is now completed.

>> See story, Page 3

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**KM grad on
Broadway
with George
Clooney**

>> Page 4

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Revised Arrowhead referendum fails

TOWN OF MERTON — The Arrowhead Union High School District’s \$136.2 million referendum did not pass in the April 1 election. The proposal sought to renovate and expand the North Building while removing the aging South Building. The district had presented this plan as a scaled-back alternative to the \$261 million referendum that voters rejected in November.

According to the Waukesha County election results website, there were 11,888 “no” votes and 6,852 “yes” votes.

In January, School Board President Kim Schubert commented on the scaled-down referendum.

“Our board listened to our community. We have developed a revised plan to address our facilities’ needs,” Schubert had said. “By renovating and expanding the North Campus, we are demonstrating our responsiveness to the community.”

District leadership had hoped the scaled-down project would enhance safety, update instructional spaces and improve efficiency. A chief feature of the proposed project included demolishing the 1955 South Building and expanding around the North Building, including a preliminary plan of two stories of classrooms, as well as renovating existing space.

The district estimated the tax impact, if the referendum would have passed, would have been at \$1.02 per \$1,000 of equalized property value per year or \$102 per \$100,000 of valuation. For a \$500,000 home that would have been \$510. The district includes all or parts of the villages of Hartland, Chenequa, Lisbon, Merton, and Nashotah as well as the towns of Merton, Delafield, Oconomowoc, and the city of Delafield.

Arrowhead Superintendent Conrad Farnher emphasized that while the proposal was

different, the core issue remains the same that Arrowhead’s facilities are aging and in need of significant investment.

“Only the community can decide what the schools will look like. We respect the decision of the voters,” Farnher said.

Looking ahead without approval for the proposed improvements, the district will continue maintaining its current facilities, though officials have noted that significant facilities needs remain unresolved. “We remain committed to providing the best possible learning environment for our students at Arrowhead,” Schubert had said. “The referendum results inform us as we continue to determine the best path forward to address our long-range facility needs.”

Spring 2025 and fall 2024 referendums are the target of a lawsuit filed last month by citizens group Arrowhead No. It accuses the district of misrepresenting the financial

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Lake Country School District rejects \$800,000 operating referendum

District now looking to cut \$300,000 by next school year

By Dan Muckelbauer
dmuck@conleynet.com
262513-2626

HARTLAND — Within hours of voters defeating by a nearly 3-2 margin a second referendum for expenses in five months, the Lake Country School District announced on April 2 that it will need to take immediate steps to adjust its budget to operate within the existing revenue limit and is looking to cut \$300,000 by the next school year.

“The District will begin evaluating options, including reductions in all areas of the operating budget,” the school district said in a news release. “The Board of Education will meet in the coming weeks to discuss next steps and determine a revised budget plan for the 2025-26 school year.”

The referendum sought to exceed the state revenue limit by \$800,000 per year for five years, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and ending with the 2029-2030 school year. The money

would have been used to maintain curriculum programs and services, and rebuild the fund balance.

“We are disappointed in the outcome of the referendum, as the additional funding was critical to maintaining the high-quality education and programming that our community expects,” District Administrator Chad Schraufnagel said in the news release. “We want to thank all of our families, staff, and community members, however, who took the time to learn about the referendum and who made it out to cast their vote.”

Of the 2,278 votes cast in the April 1 referendum, yes received 41.1%, or 937 votes, and no got 58.9%, or 1,341 votes. The outcome is unofficial until the votes are canvassed but 100% of the votes were counted in the 11 municipalities that are at least partially in the district.

In the fall, voters approved by a 54% to 46% vote a \$9.5 million referendum for facility improvements including roofing, heating

and ventilation, a new card access system, and cameras for security, information technology and other infrastructure. At the same time, voters rejected a referendum by 53.9% to 46.1% to meet operational expenses for seven years, starting at \$450,000 for the 2024-2025 school year and gradually increasing to \$1.6 million for the 2030-2031 school year.

The district said on April 2 that over the past two years, it has already implemented cost-saving measures, including staffing adjustments, sunsetting post-employment benefits, and reevaluating staff benefits, saving \$800,000 annually.

The 4K-through-eighth-grade district is one of seven school districts that feeds into Arrowhead Union High School. Voters there rejected by a 63.4% to 36.5% margin a \$136.2 million referendum on April 1.

With the defeat of its referendum, the Lake Country district also faces a possible reduction in its bond rating due to a fund balance that is 5% of the budget while the district has said a desired level is 20-25%. Among other impacts, it could raise the cost of any borrowing by the district, Schraufnagel previously said.

Hartland Veterans Memorial Scholarship Fund seeks applicants

HARTLAND — The Hartland Veterans Memorial Scholarship Fund, a joint program of Hartland’s American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, will award a total of \$2,500 in scholarships. These scholarships will range from \$500 to \$2,500 based on the quality and content of the essay. The number of scholarships awarded will be determined solely at the discretion of the Hartland Veterans Scholarship Committee. Applicants must submit a typed essay of no more than 500 words addressing the following topic: “Should ‘Birthright’ citizenship under the 14th Amendment be ‘revisited’?” Entries must be postmarked no later than May 10 and should be sent to Hartland Veterans Memorial Scholarship, P.O. Box 401, Hartland WI 53029.

To be eligible, applicants must reside in the Lake Country area and be either a veteran, or a child or grandchild of a veteran. Applicants must also be currently attending or planning to attend a post-secondary school in the fall. In addition to the essay, applicants must include a cover page listing their name, address, phone number, name of school attending in the fall, and the name and address of the veteran to whom they are related. For additional information, call Ken Zilisch at 262-420-7746 or Mike Steger at 414-550-7715, or email American Legion at 294finance@gmail.com.

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‘It’s being embraced,’ Delafield mayor says of The Grain

City’s first mass timber development

By Karen Pilarski
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262-513-2657

DELAFIELD — The Grain is now open in downtown Delafield. Hendricks Commercial Properties’ first mass timber development, at 705 Genesee St., features a combination of retail and office space. “It’s being embraced,” said Delafield Mayor Tim Aicher. Aicher says the development is beneficial for residents of Delafield.

“The increase in tax base is an obvious plus but, as importantly, The Grain is a substantial investment in the community that enhances the city in several other ways. It brings several new businesses, shops, boutiques and restaurants that complement the other similar offerings in historic downtown Delafield. Increasing choices for shoppers and diners makes the area even more of a destination to park, walk, shop, eat and pamper yourself. All businesses should benefit as a result,” Aicher said.

The new buildings also bring more diversity in architecture to downtown. “Great care was taken to style the buildings in a timeless manner that fit in with existing architecture without mimicking or overdoing the thoughtful, historic and beautiful developments that preceded it,” he said.

The Grain used a state-of-the-art construction method known as mass timber that combines solid wood panels and beams to create a strong and versatile structure. The method is environmentally friendly and a low-carbon alternative to concrete and steel.

The Grain features two buildings with 60,000 square feet of office space, 18,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space and 125 parking spots including underground parking options. The cost of the development was \$25 million.

“The development is now completed. We did some buildouts for tenants as we were completing construction, so we are now to the point where we have some vacant spaces through the building,” said Hendricks Senior Vice President of Development Troy Anderson.

The west building, 525 Main St., lists tenants such as Velvet & Tulle, Midwest Insurance Group, NONA and RBC Wealth Management’s Delafield branch. The east building, 705 Genesee St., lists tenants such as Brunch It Up, Voodoo Brewing Co. and RAIC Labs, according to The Grain’s website.

Anderson added many of the buildouts are complete and businesses are open and operating. Construction on the development began in early 2022. The original property had a gas station on it, which was razed. Hendricks Commercial Properties wanted to take inspiration from area buildings with historic value and create two buildings on the property that would enhance the historic value of the city, said Anderson.

The developers went through many different concepts and decided on office/retail due to how the community interacts with it.

“The two buildings that were placed on there really work well for the upper floors as office and we put retail on the bottom floors that could be restaurants,” Anderson said.

The Grain development has 125 parking spots between an underground structure and onsite parking. During normal work hours, those spots benefit employees of The Grain tenants and the community after hours.

“With the project complete, hopefully it’s going to bring about 625 jobs to the area. With that, of course, we need parking in areas for people to commute to,” Anderson said last April.

Going against the grain

Anderson joined the company in January 2023, a year into the construction of The Grain. He said his job is to take capital projects and make them a reality.

He said a challenge of the project was building something that they had never built before.

“We built a mass timber structure on top of a parking deck and that was a little challenging for us as we never have done that. It is one of the few mass timber buildings in Wisconsin. By doing that, it added a lot of things back to the environment with carbon footprint and things like that,” Anderson said.

Other benefits of mass timber are that it is lighter than a steel or concrete structure. Second, the carbon storage and sustainability of timber is a renewable source. Perhaps counter-intuitively, he said the mass timber structure is also very fire-resistant.

“With steel, once it heats up, it retains heat and it gets distorted and has less heat resistance to it than mass timber,” he said. “If it does (burn) at some point, it only burns to a certain point where the core stays intact for

By the numbers

The Grain, 705 Genesee St., Delafield, features:

- 2 buildings
- 60,000 square feet of office space
- 18,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space
- 125 parking spots including underground parking options
- \$25 million: The cost of the development



Photos courtesy of Hendricks Commercial Properties

An aerial view of The Grain (foreground, center) which features two buildings with 60,000 square feet of office space, 18,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space and 125 parking spots.



The Grain, 705 Genesee St., features office and retail spaces such as restaurants.



The Grain, 705 Genesee St., is a mixed-use development that features office and retail space.



The Grain, 705 Genesee St., provides an interesting space for tenants as it showcases the wood structure.

the structural stability of the building. So, the fire resistance is huge,” Anderson previously said.

It also provides an interesting space for tenants as it showcases the wood structure.

The rewarding aspect of the project for Anderson has been the impression on the tenants and the people who go into the building.

“It is something you haven’t seen. It gives a positive impact and warm feeling of being in the building. Adding these buildings for the community added a whole new level of architecture into the city that is already very historic,” Anderson said.

Anderson predicts more similar developments on the horizon in Wisconsin. ‘

“It gives a sense of community for people living there or wanting to work there. It gives you your own little world

to live in. People are finding more of a value in the projects that we do like that,” he said.

Aicher added that there are a limited number of properties that can develop in a similar fashion to The Grain but there are several projects nearby and other areas of the city that are in varying stages of proposal and development.

“Currently, there are several housing developments city-wide: Hawthorn Farms, Nagawicka Heights, Beacon Hill, St. John’s Estates and Delafield Parkway. There is also a new Aldi’s and eco-friendly car wash underway near Highway 83 and I-94 along with gradual additions of new businesses and renovations occurring on an ongoing basis. The city itself is always investing in projects to maintain and improve its beautiful parks, walking trails and lake quality,” Aicher said.



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Ashley was born and raised in Wisconsin. She acquired her Bachelor's degree from UW-Parkside in 2017. Prior to veterinary school, she worked at Hallett Veterinary Hospital as a veterinary assistant and continued to work here during veterinary school breaks. She obtained her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from UW Madison School of Veterinary Medicine in 2025.

In her free time, Ashley likes to horseback ride, read and spend time with her husband, daughter, and their 2 dogs (Kevin and Karl).



Courtesy of Sergio Villarini

Kettle Moraine High School alum Sophia Tzougros is starting with George Clooney and the ensemble of “Good Night, and Good Luck.” Pictured is the cast of “Good Night, and Good Luck.” Tzougros is pictured in the back, third from right, behind Clooney.

KM grad on Broadway with George Clooney

Sophia Tzougros performs in ‘Good Night, and Good Luck’

By Karen Pilarski
kpilarski@conleynet.com

WALEs — Creativity has always fueled Sophia Tzougros, even as a youngster in music classes in the Kettle Moraine School District. Tzougros, a Kettle Moraine High School alum, made her Broadway debut in the play “Good Night, and Good Luck,” which also stars Academy Award winner George Clooney, April 3. “Tune in to the golden age of broadcast journalism and Edward R. Murrow’s (Clooney) legendary, history-altering, on-air showdown with Senator Joseph McCarthy. As McCarthyism casts a shadow over America, Murrow and his news team choose to confront the growing tide of paranoia and propaganda, even if it means turning the federal government and a worried nation against them,” the play’s website said.

In a New York minute

In middle school is when performing pulsed in her veins and grew stronger as she attended Kettle Moraine High School. “Sophia made a lasting impact during her time at KM Perform as a dedicated theater and music student. She was well known for her passion, talent and hard work, and not only excelled in performances, but also earned recognition through prestigious awards, such as the Jerry Awards (formerly known as the Tommy Awards). Her time at KM Perform was marked by outstanding contributions to the arts, inspiring both peers and mentors alike. Her achievements serve as a testament to her dedication and artistic excellence,” KM teacher Teresa Catania said. Tzougros was active in choir, drama club and performed in plays and musicals.

“Art gives you a lot of agency as a kid. It gives you confidence. It was a place and an opportunity where I could feel confident, creative and explore,” Tzougros said.

The Wales native credits the support of the Lake Country community and her high school for sharing the excitement of creating and collaboration.

In high school, Tzougros was a finalist at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Performance from Wagner College in New York. What she loved was having the opportunity to go to museums and catch shows in the city.

“I got to explore the arts while also getting a semi-traditional college experience,” she said.

During college, she spent a semester training in London and a summer teaching in Italy. Tzougros recently graduated with her MFA from the NYU Tisch Graduate Acting Program.

She spoke about the auditioning process and how it has changed since the pandemic. Before, she would go to a space and audition in front of people or go to an open call.

“COVID changed it a lot and is still changing it,” Tzougros said.

Now actors may send in taped auditions or do it via Zoom calls. This adds more expenses for actors as they have to buy special equipment to record an audi-

tion. Luckily, Tzougros said, the old way is starting to come back. No matter if it is in person or by Zoom, it is still a complicated process. Actors must prepare their material and work with their nerves as it feels like a job interview.

She had only been auditioning since May when she nabbed her role in the ensemble for “Good Night, and Good Luck.” She sent in a video of herself to the casting director who she was already acquainted with.

“This was very much a surprise. It’s been a lot of peaks and valleys this year,” she said.

By George

Tzougros gravitated to the play “Good Night, and Good Luck” due to it being about history and based on real people. She admired how it was about journalism and focused on fairness and having good morals.

“The subject matter was really interesting, and I love New York history in that time period,” she said.

Tzougros also spoke highly of director David Cromer, who she said was one of her favorite directors in New York.

The play was in previews and opened on April 3 on Broadway. Tzougros said previews are a time when the play is still being adjusted or fixed. On April 3, the play “stopped changing” and was set in stone.

As part of the ensemble, Tzougros is in the show quite a bit but her nerves are not bad.



Courtesy of Corinne Louie

Kettle Moraine High School alum Sophia Tzougros made her Broadway debut in the play “Good Night, and Good Luck,” which also stars Academy Award winner George Clooney.

“I don’t have a lot of lines, but we are all doing stuff. Because I don’t have too much pressure, the pressure was on George (Clooney). He is the one who has to deal with that stuff. I just got to have a lot of fun. That is the fun way to have a Broadway debut,” she said.

Tzougros did have a big case of nerves on the first day as she was entering into an unknown. Quickly the cast acted sup-

portive and friendly to each other.

“For a lot of them and even George, it is his first play. Everyone was equally nervous and had new things going on for them,” she said.

It has been a wonderful learning experience for her as she has an opportunity to hear stories about being a working actor from everyone.

“I look up to everyone,” Tzougros said.

“I don’t have a lot of lines, but we are all doing stuff. Because I don’t have too much pressure, the pressure was on George (Clooney). He is the one who has to deal with that stuff. I just got to have a lot of fun. That is the fun way to have a Broadway debut.”

— Sophia Tzougros
Kettle Moraine High School alum



Courtesy of Ella Bromblin

Kettle Moraine High School alum Sophia Tzougros performing in a play for the NYU Grad Acting Productions.