

## LAND: Board authorizes County Road 12 land buy

Continued from Page A1

the area, and Forsberg is thinking the County Road 12 extension should probably be built in 2016 and 2017.

County commissioners agree that time is running out.

"I think all of us here know we have to get County Road 12 completed," Commissioner Vance Stuehnenberg said last week. "We have to have a place where Blue Earth County and the city of Mankato can expand, as well as taking traffic off of Highway 22."

County Road 12, which runs from the Mankato Regional Airport to County Road 17 (Old Highway 14), has been upgraded in recent years with a new interchange

at Highway 14. When the extension is completed, the road will aim to serve development as Mankato grows east and also serve as an eastern bypass of the increasingly congested Highway 22 corridor.

The extension will run south from County Road 17, which is Madison Avenue within Mankato city limits, for nearly two miles to Highway 83 on the city's far southeast side. Forsberg, given time, expected to be able to cobble together state and federal funds to cover much of the cost.

More than \$1.1 million in federal funds have been approved for 2017, but other applications via the federal TIGER grant program have been rejected. While the

board authorized an application for state funding through the Local Road Improvement Program, the number of applications from around Minnesota will greatly exceed the available funds and the grants are limited to \$750,000 or less.

"They're better than the TIGER grant, but they're still pretty slim," Forsberg said of the odds.

Forsberg tried to provide one ray of hope among the gloomy skies of transportation funding. There's so much demand for so little funding that more and more cities and counties are deciding that it's not worth the labor to put together the complex grant applications.

"The more discouraged other people get, the better

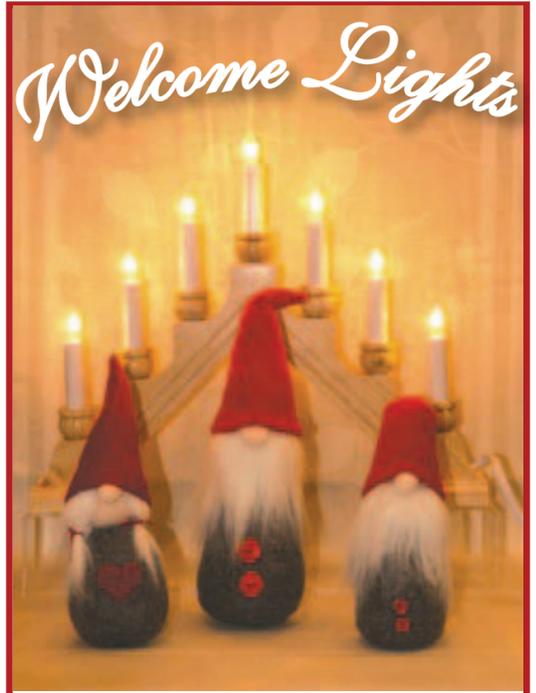
our chances are," he said.

"That's one way to look at it," Commissioner Mark Piepho said.

The board has had very preliminary discussions of imposing up to a half-percent local sales tax to fund transportation projects but most recently talked of using county budget reserves to finance at least the land acquisition and other initial expenses of the County Road 12 extension.

"I think we're all in agreement we're going to move forward with some sort of general fund expenditure," Commissioner Kip Bruender said.

"In the meantime," Piepho said, "you have to get the ball rolling."



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## STRIDE: Mankato Family YMCA program hits its Stride

Continued from Page A1

Vanderwerf ran the entire time with his friend, Riston Wojcik, filling up his note card with dozens of marks. He completed 36 laps in all and said it was his fastest time yet.

Vanderwerf said he likes the new friends he's made through the STRIDE program as well as his four coaches.

"They're always cheering on for us, and if there's a problem, they're doing the best they can to work things

out," he said.

Reed and coach Evan Broughton are with the boys every Monday and Wednesday. Two other assistants come on Wednesdays.

Reed, an automotive engineering student at Minnesota State University, is president of the school's running club. His passion for running began in high school, when he took a half-marathon training class.

"I thought it'd be a great way to share my passion with younger kids," he said of coaching STRIDE.

Since the program is new,

Reed and the coaches have had to adjust as the weeks have passed. He said the kids have taken more of a liking to running since the coaches started incorporating more games into the program.

"They've really come together as a team," he said. "The first couple of lessons, there were kind of the groups that were segregating, but we've got them working together really well now."

Reed appeared confident that all the boys would be able to finish the 5K, despite their different fitness levels. At least one volun-

teer, YMCA staff member or parent will run with each participant during the race, he said.

Andy Schmalzriedt, the YMCA's STRIDE director, said he's hopeful the program will continue to grow in the spring, noting plans to add at least one extra site, if not two. He said registration for the spring session will begin Jan. 5, with the classes starting Feb. 9.

"Because it did fill up this fall in a way we didn't expect, there will be some awareness in a good way," he said.

## SMOKE: Westminster could become the country's first smoke-free town

Continued from Page A1

"The tobacco companies are really promoting products to hook young people," she said, pointing to 69-cent bubblegum-flavored cigars, electronic cigarettes and a new form of dissolv-

able smokeless tobacco that resembles Tic Tac candies. "The board was getting frustrated trying to keep up with this."

Citing a report from the U.S. surgeon general, Swedberg said that if tobacco use continues unabated, 5.6

million American children who are younger than 18 today will die prematurely because of smoking. Change, she said, "has to start somewhere."

So many people have called Town Hall about the proposal, the Board of

Health — whose meetings about septic system updates and mosquito control rarely attract an audience — will hold Wednesday's public hearing in an elementary school cafeteria rather than in its usual second-floor conference room.



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