

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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South Bar Rising From The Ashes

By Janet Larreau

In the early morning hours of March 27, 2018, firefighters battled a blaze at Jim's Bar in Arnold. The fire was contained, and the building remained standing, but fire, smoke and water damage was extensive. Since that time, the building has sat idle, with many wondering if it would ever sell, or simply be bulldozed in.

The question was answered on October 4, 2018, when Jesse Halstead and Annie Vettel closed on the property with owner Lee Eastburn, renaming the business Grazers Bar & Grill.

“We had entertained the idea of purchasing the bar back in early spring, then the fire created a setback. The timing was not meant to be... yet. After Lee got everything settled recently, the opportunity was present again. Even with the fire damage, we felt compelled to go forward,” said Annie.

With substantial fire damage to the kitchen, which spread slightly into the bar area, and smoke and heat damage sustained in both the bar and restaurant sides, the new owners immediately began the process of gutting the entire building. Pretty much everything was taken out down to the studs, including walls, ceilings, coolers, bathrooms and floor coverings. A crew was hired to come in for the weekend to help with the demolition, but several people stopped by and rolled up their sleeves to help.

“The community support has been overwhelming. Jim's Bar has been an iconic landmark in this community for so long, and people are anxious to see it have new life. There's been so many who have stopped to check it out and express their anticipation for its grand re-



Courtesy photo

A big undertaking... Annie Vettel and Jesse Halstead, new owners of the former Jim's Bar building, are pictured in the aftermath of a fire that heavily damaged the building last March. The couple has since gutted the building, and are getting set to renovate. They will reopen the business as Grazers Bar & Grill in the coming months.

Couple purchases Jim's Bar with plans to renovate and re-open under new name

opening,” said Annie.

After demo, the couple took a little time to think about how the building could be reconfigured. Jesse suggested that they flip it, with the bar on the west side, which will open up into the beer garden, and the restaurant site on the east.

Jesse and Annie, who are full business partners, will be expanding the bar side slightly out the northwest corner, and

said they will probably start with just that side and finish the east side as they get a little farther down the road. The beer garden will also be undergoing some renovations. With this said, food will be available at the get-go.

And the seemingly undestructible retro “red table” will remain.

“We will have the red table front and center. Luckily, it survived,” said Annie. “Everyone I've talked to has a story

about the “red table” - even me. I met quite a few people sitting around that since I started coming around. It represents people's pasts and memories, and thankfully, even a fire can't destroy that. There wasn't too much else we could salvage.”

A Facebook page for Grazers will be set up so people can monitor the progress.

Jesse and Annie hope to open in the upcoming months.

Village Board hears update on improvements to recreation area

Vote to leave electrical rates the same

By Janet Larreau

At the October 8 village board meeting, Arnold Economic Development Director Cheryl Carson reported that grants for the Arnold Recreation Area (ARA) will be completed this month. A new sign has been designed for the entry to the park. The village board will be reviewing the last of the design concepts to make a final choice to the exact design.

Plans to expand the camping pad locations are currently underway. The additional locations will include electrical hookups for campers, gravel areas to park on and spot specific markers. Other upgrades will include water lines, electrical and culverts where needed, a new structure for a centralized check-in station, and bathhouse/restrooms on the south side of the lake.

Carson said money has been earmarked for these improvements, and the possibility of grant funds being awarded will be very beneficial in making the money go further to complete the project.

“The funds that have been collected and donated thus far will be used for the matching funds required in the grant process,” she said. “These improvements to the ARA will open up more opportunities to host campers, recreation enthusiasts, and events in our wonderful community of Arnold. This will also give us the opportunity to advertise our ‘little piece of heaven’ to the outside world as a fully equipped park with lots to offer.”

Carson also reported that she attended a grant writing class on October 6, and on October 24, she will be attending a “Improving Your Community” work-

shop. Topics covered will include LB840 legislative changes and updates, applying for federal grants, and community funding resources. On November 8 and 9, she will be attending a housing seminar.

Electrical Rates

And now for some more good news. An ordinance that was adopted on September 11, 2017, revised and raised electrical rates to be charged for service from the Village of Arnold. The ordinance became effective October 15, 2017. The ordinance stated that rates would again be revised and increased on October 15, 2018. At the meeting, board members voted to keep electrical rates the same as 2017.

Relocating Siren

After a request from Jesse Halstead, and hearing comments from Village Superintendent Doug De Laune, board members voted to move the siren from behind Jim's Bar to the northwest part of town. De Laune said that in addition to the new property owners' request, he has heard complaints from people in the northwest part of town that they cannot hear the siren, so moving the siren would benefit everyone.

Request to Purchase Property

Jesse Halstead also made a request to purchase 15 to 20 feet of property from the village to construct a mechanics room behind the kitchen of Jim's Bar. Chairman Glen Bowers mentioned selling additional property to Jesse so he would have the 15 to 20 feet that he is requesting, plus some. The matter will be discussed again at the November 12 board meeting.

In other business, board members granted Jesse permission to remove the concrete behind the bar that is on village property.

In other business, the board:

Accepted Red Fern Electric's proposal for motor savers for the wells and a pump panel for the northwest well.

Voted to renew the village's insurance with Arnold Insurance Agency. The premium for 2018-2019 is



Photo/Debbie Connelly

No one is quite sure how long it's been since the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission installed this familiar and now-weathered sign at the entrance to the Arnold Recreation Area, but we're picturing it here for posterity before it is replaced. About 10 years ago, the state deeded the rec area to the village, and covered the word “State” on the sign. The Game & Parks has since maintained and stocked the lake. “They still wanted a vested interest in it, and I think they are pretty grateful for how (the village) maintains the park. It's a good partnership,” said long-time village employee Harvey Foran. The village board is currently looking over the final design concepts to replace the sign.

\$63,314.00.

Approved a quote of \$3,165.00 from Tri City Sign Company for repairs on the community center sign, and to issue a check for \$1,582.50 for the down payment.

Accepted a quote from Truck Country of Wisconsin for a Western Star Chassis and Kann Trash Body with recommended adjustments in the amount

of \$197,852.00.

Voted to allow non-profit youth organizations to use the community center at no charge unless they are using it for a fundraiser. If it is a fundraiser, the 75 percent of the rental rate applies.

Passed a resolution to participate in the Central Nebraska Economic Development District through the execution of an intergovernmental agreement.