

# The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

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## Record Number of Votes Cast in Primary Election

OMAHA-Nebraska's 2020 primary not only broke the state's election records - it shattered them. More than 471,000 voters cast ballots in the history-making election, easily eclipsing the previous record of 413,015 voters set during the 1972 primary. But the number of ballots cast didn't mark the only first for Nebraska elections. It was also the first time election officials used their new voting system by Election Systems & Software (ES&S).

In January, Nebraska chose to replace the state's aging voting system in all 93 counties, implementing new ES&S DS450® and DS850® high-throughput central scanners and tabulators in larger jurisdictions, while performing vote tabulation in smaller jurisdictions with new DS200® scanners and tabulators. Implementation and training for all election officials and poll workers took place in the four months leading up to the election.

“The logistics of this election did not just happen,” said Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen. “My thanks to the election officials, poll workers, and the people of ES&S for their support in the rollout of new equipment statewide in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.”

These new scanners helped the state manage a high volume of early voting ballots. In light of the pandemic, the state sent early voting request forms to all



Photo/Debbie Connolly

Poll workers Amanda Koubek Wehnes and Melody Jennings sign in Arnold voter Dee Hall at the May 12 Primary Election at the Legion Hall. Due to COVID-19, voters kept their pens and masks and sanitizers were made available. Poll workers were not required to wear masks. Brad Atkins was the first voter, Bobbie Smith was right behind him as the oldest voter and Eugene Walker, who was on his way to work, was the youngest. Genevieve Collier was the first to try out the new voting machine, which enables the voter to enlarge the text. Custer County Election Commissioner Conni Gracey reports that voter turnout was 46 percent in Arnold and 41 percent county-wide. Eighty-seven percent were early voters - setting a record. “We sent out early voting applications to every household and people used them. We encouraged it this year,” said Gracey. Please turn to page 2 for county election results.

registered voters. That action likely contributed to the high rate of early voting, with about 80 percent of Nebraska voters casting their ballots by mail. With increased safety protections at the polls - including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and social distancing - another nearly 65,000 voters opted to cast their ballots in person on Election Day.

“Nebraska voters refused to allow the terrible pandemic in our midst to stop them from exercising their right to vote,” Secretary Evnen said. “I am very grateful to the 4,000 poll workers who stepped up to open Nebraska’s polls on time and with the proper number of poll workers present. I am very proud to be a Nebraskan every day, and especially so at this moment.”

Every polling place in Nebraska also deployed new ExpressVote® universal voting machines, and transitioned to Electionware® election management software, allowing jurisdictions of all sizes to easily manage their elections. As a result, Election Day results were posted to the State well before midnight.

## School Board Sets Date of June 1 for Graduation

Decisions still to be made on how ceremony will look.

By Janet Larreau

At their regular meeting held on May 12, the Arnold School Board set a date of Monday, June 1, at 7:00 p.m., for commencement exercises for the Class of 2020.

Interim Superintendent Mark Sievering said there has been a lot of talk about graduations across the state, with some schools already holding graduation, and others that will wait until July or even into August due to COVID-19.

“The directed health measure runs through May 31, so we decided we could go for June 1. There are some extenuating circumstances for this class, so we decided to hold graduation sooner than later. It is in our students’ best interest,” he said.

“One of the things that spurred this is that June 1 is the date that things will open up for baseball and softball practices. We felt we could meet those similar guideline and have a safe graduation and let the kids finish their senior year with graduation.”

One of the things Arnold has going for it is the small class of nine students, which is less than the 10 person directed health measure. Social distancing will still be observed and it won’t be the usual crowd with at least immediate families allowed to attend. The first plan is that the ceremony will be held outside. People may be sitting in their cars.

“Mr. Morgan has been pretty emphatic that it will be limited as far as attendance and that it will be live-streamed. A photographer will be on hand, as

well,” said Mr. Sievering, who mentioned that Arnold will definitely be among the first schools in the state to hold graduation.

With the school still considering what graduation will look like, details will be provided to the seniors as more information becomes available.

### Teacher Contract

Board members approved a contract for Katie Berglund to fill the open art position.

“Katie has been an art teacher in North Platte for the last few years, so she has a little bit of experience. We are glad to get her on board. She is excited and will be a good fit for the school,” said Mr. Sievering.

### Summer School

As a result of a law that was passed by the unicameral last year, schools are required to have a summer reading pro-

gram and some extra instruction for students up to 3rd grade who meet certain criteria. Board members approved the action item, but with all the issues, they are not 100 percent sure how the summer program will work. If possible, it will be in person and if not, it will be offered on-line.

### Superintendent and Principal Reports

Mr. Morgan informed board members about the student material drop-off process for getting things turned back in. Mr. Sievering talked about the situation with the pandemic and new Title 9 regulations that the federal government has just released. Training will be needed.

### Non-Action Items

Discussion was held on the re-

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## Village Board Votes to Open Things Back Up

### Residents will once again have access to rec areas.

By Janet Larreau

Residents are ready to get out, exercise and have some fun and for the most part, that means opening things back up. At the May 11 village board meeting, Clerk Patricia Lambert said that she has had several calls from residents who want to resume walking at the community center. After some discussion on COVID-19 and the Directed Health Measure, Board members granted the wish of the people by voting to open up the center. A sign will be posted on the door, letting people know that the center is not cleaned daily, to enter at your own risk, and to follow COVID-19 guidelines.

Allowing camping at the Arnold Recreation Area and opening up the bathrooms and

showers was also approved. Signs will be posted on the bathrooms and showers stating that they are not cleaned daily and use at your own risk.

Kids and parents will be happy to hear that the city park will also be opened back up. Signs will be made stating that the playground equipment is not sanitized and to follow COVID-19 guidelines.

After hearing reports, members also approved opening the pool.

Clerk Patricia Lambert said that according to a recent legislative bulletin, many municipalities have already decided not to open their pools this summer; others are waiting for further guidance or a DHM from Governor Ricketts. The Governor stated several times during the briefings that he does not recommend opening swimming pools before July 15. Although it is not a DHM, the

Governor said he will issue further guidance by the middle of May.

Utilities Superintendent Doug De Laune said with sandblasting and painting yet to be done, and the curing process, the earliest opening date would be June 15. Pool manager Shavonne Schacher talked about CPR requirements, extensions and on-line courses that have been made available.

After discussion, members approved opening the pool as soon as it is ready, provided the Governor or a DHM mandates that it be closed.

### Electric Rates

Utility employee Donnell DeLosh told board members that a business owner approached him regarding electric rates. Several businesses had contacted the person to be the spokesperson about the high rates. Discussion was held on the Annual Electric, Water &

Sewer Rate Survey conducted by the NMPP. One-hundred-forty-four towns of all sizes responded. Arnold is above average on electric rates and well below average on water and sewer. There will be one more phase of the Voltage Conversion & Rebuild Project to be completed at a cost of \$250,000.00-plus. Board members decided to wait until after the phase is completed before considering lowering the electric rates.

### In other business:

Recycling cardboard is saving money. The clerk reported that the village received \$25.90 from Lexington Area Solid Waste Agency for 5.18 tons of cardboard. This also saved the village \$165.76 in tipping fees.

De Laune told board members that the new campsites at the ARA are almost completed.

## Sandhills Motors Plans Move to Broken Bow

On Tuesday May 12, the Custer County Board of Supervisors approved a CDBG loan for Sandhills Motors that will save seven jobs and add, at minimum, two additional jobs in Custer County allowing Sandhills Motors the opportunity to keep its doors open.

“When we purchased the franchise nearly three years ago, we really had to fight to be allowed to keep the Chrysler Dodge Ram dealership in Arnold. However, after three years of giving it our best shot, we are at a crossroads where we either have to follow FCA suggestion, or close our doors,” says Thomas McCaslin, dealer principal.

While the final relocation date and location is still to be determined, the move to Broken Bow is slated to take place by the end of 2020. The move will include the new car dealership, parts and service departments as well as retaining all current employees.

“We are so grateful for those Arnold area residents who have supported us. We hope to continue to provide you with quality service now and in the future,” states Chad Garcia, general manager.

## Early Deadline

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the deadline for the May 28 issue of The Sentinel will be Friday, May 22, at noon. All copy and advertising submitted after the deadline will be published in the June 4 issue.

## Arnold Receives Post Marker for Great Parks Pursuit

### AEDC Director Gives Monthly Update

AEDC Director Cheryl Carson presented her monthly update at the May 11 Village Board meeting.

She reported that the post marker for the Great Park Pursuit (GPP) was delivered on April 1 for Arnold. The GPP website is live and updated with the 2020 stops. Although the original start date was May 1, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing a postponement this year and a new start date has yet to be established.

Any impressions made of GPP posts and submitted at this time will not be counted. Similarly, anything submitted via the mobile app is invalid. Information will be updated on the app, website ([negpp.org](http://negpp.org)) and the GPP Facebook page as it is available. The new start date will be announced as soon as state leaders and public health officials have given the okay to start state-wide travel.

For the time being, participants are encouraged to take part in the GPP Backyard Challenge. Information on that can be found at <https://negpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Backyard-Challenge-Activity-Sheet.pdf>.

BrewBakers is listed on the Nebraska Passport Stops for 2020. You can stop in at BrewBakers to get the passport book for the 2020 season or go to Nebraska Passport to order one and get started.

The Tractor Ride Across Nebraska was scheduled to stop and stay overnight in Arnold on June 9. The event has been cancelled for the 2020 year, but they plan to stay in Arnold next year during the 2021 ride.

Carson said that she has completed the paperwork for businesses who accepted the offer of COVID-19 payment deferral of LB840 loans.

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