

## Grand Forks to move ahead on property purchase

BY MATTHEW VOIGT  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS – Grand Forks is planning to move ahead to set closing dates for two properties after the City Council authorized the Jobs Development Authority to take over the purchase agreement.

The two properties – 575 and 579 S. Washington St. – are located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Washington Street and DeMers Avenue, adjacent to Fire Station No. 1. The

properties include an office and garage that the city is planning to use to house the fire marshal's office. The City Council had approved moving forward with sales negotiations back in February; however, an impasse on negotiations about the property easements leased by Newman Signs has delayed a closing.

Newman Signs has three billboards on the properties, which have 50-year leases. The issue came when the city wanted to amend the terms of the easement and lease.

The council and JDA discussed the matter at their meetings on June 2.

"The way it sets up is that one, there can't be any signs on those three areas, which isn't an issue, but the terms of the easements also provide that there can't be a sign within 600 feet of those billboards that are up there," City Attorney Dan Gaustad told the council June 2.

Newman Signs said that it would have issues with any signage infringing on the 600-foot provision, including road

signage. Potentially, that would lead to issues on city rights of way as well, Gaustad told the council.

A proposal from Gaustad to lower the lease payments in exchange for less restrictive sign rules was deemed by Newman Signs' legal counsel as unacceptable.

"I'll just say that it's kind of disheartening that it doesn't appear that Newman wants to work with the city a whole lot," Council Vice President Danny Weigel said at the



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

A fire engine leaves Central Fire Station at DeMers Avenue and Washington Street on Thursday.

PROPERTIES on A4

## 24th Avenue project begins today

BY MATTHEW VOIGT  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS – Traffic impacts on 24th Avenue South between South Columbia Road and South 34th Street will begin Monday, June 9, as a reconstruction project gets underway.

Work and traffic impacts are expected to last through mid-October, the city said in a release. Work will begin in three phases, with the first affecting left turns on the street. Subsequent phases will include closure of west-bound traffic and, later, closure of east-bound traffic, with detour signs posted.

The city is spending \$1.5 million to reconstruct 24th Avenue South, which will include a complete reconstruction of portions of the street, replacing damaged concrete panels, and grinding pavement. The project will be funded with special assessments to properties near 24th Avenue South, including Columbia Mall, and dollars from the street and infrastructure fund, generated by sales tax revenue.

The city also will be building a sidewalk along the north side of the street that currently doesn't exist. Improvements to the bike facilities and stormwater management will be made at that time as well.

According to engineering reports presented to the Grand Forks City Council, parts of 24th



A bird's-eye view of demolition at the old Altru Hospital on Tuesday.

Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

## Altru demolition on track and on schedule

494,000-square-foot former hospital building is roughly 50% demolished

BY KORRIE WENZEL  
Grand Forks Herald

### GRAND FORKS

Demolition continues on the former Altru Health System hospital, with about 50% of the above-ground portion of the Grand Forks structure down as of late last week.

The approximately 90-day process began May 27. Removing the basement and taking away

debris will continue after the visible portion of the building comes down.

And so far, so good, according to Annie Bonzer, Altru Health System's director of strategy and communications.

"It's going well so far," she said. "The weather has been friendly and there really have been no hiccups so far."

In January, Altru opened its new hospital and adjacent behavioral health center, marking

the end of a years-long process that started with an announcement in 2017 that the system will move into a new facility and demolish its existing building, which was nearly 50 years old. Overall, the project became a \$500 million undertaking.

But as Altru employees and the community celebrated the new building, the old structure — and the work associated with bringing it down — remained.

On April 30, Altru hosted its "Grateful Goodbye" event for the former building, at which Altru staff members and attendees from the community penned messages of thanks on the old structure. The event was held to recognize the facility's impact on Greater Grand Forks and the region since its opening in 1976.

The excitement of the new building had outshone the reality of

bringing down the old building, Bonzer said, and the realization of its demise proved to be "more emotional than you might think it would be."

"A lot of people worked in that building a long time or had significant moments there," she said. "... There were some emotions when it became reality that we would have to take it down."

ALTRU on A2

## Grand Forks Public Health gets behind Quit Week '25

STAFF REPORTS  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — It's Quit Week in North Dakota, and Grand Forks Public Health and statewide partners are encouraging residents to take steps to quit vapes, smoking, chew or nicotine pouches.

Through the week of June 8-14, people are recommended to set a "quit

date," the release said, and access the available resources to help them quit. NDQuits, local health care providers, pharmacists and GFPH were listed as available support resources. Those who qualify also have access to personalized coaching, quit planning and free nicotine replacement therapy, which can include patches, gums or

lozenges. "Every quit attempt is a step toward better health," said Sarah Odegard, a registered nurse and tobacco treatment specialist at GFPH. "Quit Week is a reminder that no matter where you are in your journey, support is available. Deciding to quit isn't easy, but it's one of the most powerful decisions you can make

for yourself. We're here to stand with you and connect you to the tools you need to succeed."

It's the sixth year for Quit Week, according to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services website. Tobacco Free North Dakota collaborates with partners of HHS to promote the week and make available treatment

resources. One such resource, NDQuits, provides personalized coaching and nicotine replacement medication, the website said.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in North Dakota, the GFPH release said, and contributes to about 1,000 deaths each year. It also drives more than \$379 million in health

care costs. Quitting nicotine products can reduce the risk of cancer, heart attack and stroke and can increase lung function, it said.

Those interested in finding resources to quit or who want to quit tobacco or nicotine usage can visit NDQuits.org or call Odegard at (701) 787-8140. They can also call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.