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# DICKINSON COUNTY NEWS

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## Decker dismisses her own appeal in Lake Park murder



Allison Marie Decker was sentenced to life in prison after a hearing in December of 2022. She was convicted earlier that year of murdering Angel Bannman of Lake Park in December of 2020. (File photo)

**Defense preparing to seek new trial for convicted client**

Beth Boyce  
News Editor

A woman convicted in June of murdering a Lake Park resident is no longer seeking an appeal, but will be requesting a new trial, court documents show. 28-year-old Allison Marie Decker voluntarily dismissed her own appeal in the case, and the court has instructed that her life sentence be carried out as originally ordered. Decker's current attorney, R. Ben Stone of the Des Moines firm Parish Knutson, said the decision to dismiss the appeal was made in preparation of an application for post conviction relief — a separate action in which a defendant raises issues in a case after the judgment has been entered.

"We intend to demonstrate that she is entitled to a new trial due to numerous important mistakes by her defense lawyer," Stone said Friday.

Decker was one of two people charged in the December 2020 murder of 25-year-old Angel Bannman. The other individual, 26-year-old Justice Ray Berrison, pleaded guilty in December of 2021 to a lesser charge of attempted murder in exchange for truthful testimony in Decker's case — he was sentenced to 25 years in prison and will be required to serve 17.5 of them before he is eligible for parole or work release. Decker's case was heard during a five-day bench trial in May of 2022.

Decker and Berrison were both initially charged with first-degree murder and sixth-degree crimes after Bannman's family

Decker Update  
continued on 10A

## H-LP MOVING FORWARD WITH ELEMENTARY ADDITION PLAN

**\$17.1 million bond referendum vote expected on Sept. 12**

Beth Boyce  
News Editor  
news@dkcnews.com

The Harris-Lake Park School Board voted unanimously Monday to pursue a \$17.1 million bond referendum this fall, which would fund the creation of an elementary addition on the east side of the middle school/high school facility. Board members said an addition made the most fiscal sense for the district, as opposed to renovating and remodeling the current elementary school. The bond referendum will appear on the ballot Sept. 12 and will require 60 percent support from the public in order to pass.

"Long term, it's the best for our community, it's the best for our kids, it's the best for our teachers and, financially, it just makes the most sense," said school board member Ebony Rabe. "I don't know why we would want to put a hand out on the elementary and, in 10 years, we may be spending more money there. So I think it's the right thing to do, and hopefully the voters agree in September when it goes to a vote."

The bond would add a \$4.05 levy per \$1,000 in assessed value for residents in the H-LP District. The school's current levy rate is \$8.55, according to Superintendent Les Douma — he listed the Okoboji School District's levy at \$9 and the Spirit Lake School

H-LP School Board  
continued on 8B



Harris-Lake Park School Board member Ebony Rabe (right) said she felt the community largely came to a consensus regarding the district's facility needs ahead of this month's informational meetings. Rabe motioned for the board to pursue a \$17.1 million bond to create a new elementary building attached to the east side of the district's current middle school/high school building.



H-LP Superintendent Les Douma spoke during an informational session Thursday morning in the high school auditorium. (Photos by Beth Boyce)



School officials held a total of five informational presentations in Lake Park as well as Harris earlier this month in order to explain the three options. The Harris-Lake School Board would consider at Monday's vote.

## Dry compost believed to have sparked 200-acre blaze

Beth Boyce  
News Editor

A smoky haze wafted through town nearly 2 miles away Wednesday, after a grass fire was reported in the 2400 block of 190th Street east of Anolds Park.

Midford Fire Chief Jim Carpenter said the initial call came in around 3:30 p.m. that day, and firefighters found a fire approaching some buildings, plastic packing bins and a major load of plastic flowing dock components.

"We extinguished that quickly," Carpenter said. "The grass continued to burn out. We had high winds to deal with and also terrain out there is really challenging. It's all grass and with lots of moisture and lots of water running because of the time of the year and lots of slash area to deal with."

Carpenter said a dry compost pile full of leaves and grass is believed to have been heated by the dry sun — and he said high winds likely helped ignite a flame which then spread to the nearby grassland. The blaze consumed an estimated 200 acres — pasture, farmland and conservation ground.

No injuries were reported, but Carpenter wasn't entirely sure if the property owners discovered



A grass fire on Wednesday in the 2400 block of 190th Street east of Anolds Park, consumed 200 acres. (Photo by Beth Boyce)

**Wildfire burned 200 acres in Clay County on Tuesday**

Randy M. Costello  
& Felix Becker  
Special Reporter

Fire crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Spencer, Dickens, Spencer, Ruben and Webb fire departments battled a wildfire in southeast Clay County Tuesday afternoon which eventually burned an estimated 200 acres of public and private land. Staff with the Iowa DNR were onsite again Wednesday to prevent hotspots from re-igniting.

The fire began on a dead-end road on the 1,500-acre Hawk Valley Wildlife Area and burned northeast to US Highway 18, causing the temporary closure of the highway east of Spencer due to smoke.

Clay County Fire  
continued on 10A

## Highway 71 work on track as first phase nears its midpoint



Contractors have removed concrete near a number of intersections in Okoboji and Anolds Park as part of a major project to repave about 2.5 miles of Highway 71. (Photo by Beth Boyce)

Matt Heintzel  
Special Editor

Contractors repaving the Lakes Area's main thoroughfare are nearing the midpoint of the project's first phase. The Iowa Department of Transportation has undertaken a multi-phase construction program along about 2.5 miles of Highway 71, and DOT officials say the work is coming along well.

Highway 71 Work  
continued on 2A

to complete the portion of the program work they anticipated and are on schedule for spring 2023," DOT Planner Dallas Schulte said. The region has seen a wide swing in temperatures since work began — from accumulating snow to near summer-like heat — but Schulte said construction crews have persevered.

Highway 71 Work  
continued on 2A