

1101 **Announcements - Events**

**ST. AGNES CHURCH**  
416 Walker St., Fr. John Fischer: St. Agnes Church and Parish Office, tele. 624-4478. St. Agnes Rectory, 505 Catalina, tele. 624-1995. Mass schedule: 5 p.m. Saturday, 8:00 a.m. and 10:30a.m. Sunday, Weekday Masses - consult weekly bulletin; Sacrament of Penance, Saturday 4-4:45p.m.

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
31903 475th Ave, Elk Point, SD 57025, Sunday Service 10:30 am, 9am Sunday School Pastor David Bentz.

**ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
corner of Main and Linden. Sunday: nursery available. 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist. 11:00 a.m. coffee hour. Call 624-3379 for more information.

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**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL**  
Highway 12 Newcastle, NE. Worship: 5:00 p.m. Saturday. Pastor Gary Kimm. Come join us!

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
816 E Clark Street, Vermillion. Join us for Worship Saturday evening: 5:30PM and Sunday morning: 10:00AM Sunday mornings: 9:00AM --Coffee fellowship, Adult Choir, Sunday School Radio broadcast: Sunday morning at 10AM on KVTK Radio, AM 1570 Holy Communion celebrated each Saturday evening and the 1st and 3rd and 5th Sundays each month. Wednesday, 12/24, Christmas Eve Worship: 4 pm, 7 pm, 10 pm Pastor Robert D Hansen Facebook: Trinity Lutheran - Vermillion, SD www.trinityvermillion.org

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**  
"The Uncommon Denomination." Services are the first and third Sunday of each month at 7 p.m. in the basement of the United Church of Christ, 226 E. Main. Child care services and refreshments provided. All welcome. For more information www.unitarianvermillion.blogspot.com

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL**, 226 E. Main St., Pastor Steve Miller. 10:30a.m. Worship Service. No Longer Strangers www.uccvermillion.org

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# Wheel tax's importance emphasized by county commissioners

By Alan Dale  
alan.dale@plaintalk.net

With a county wheel tax having been voted in, Clay County residents now have until Feb. 5 to take measures that would ultimately change that.

A first reading of the new ordinance came last week and an adoption of Ordinance #2014-04 would come that same day, Dec. 30, as the next reading.

It would be put into publication on Jan. 8-9 and 15-16 before finally going into motion on Feb. 5.

A total of 421 registered, county, voters (5 percent) must sign a petition to ask for a referendum for a vote on the ordinance by Feb. 5.

The wheel tax means a \$4 tax per each wheel and up to four wheels per vehicle.

What does this all mean for Clay County? Why has it been voted out the last two times it was proposed - 1994 and 2007? Why are the roads in such a state of disrepair?

These are just some of the items that county commissioners Leo Powell and Phyllis Packard took the time to address recently. Commissioners Travis Mockler, Dusty Passick, and Les Kephart were invited to also get involved in the discussion, but were either unavailable

or declined to comment.

Over the next two weeks, The Plain Talk delves into this subject to see what works best for Clay County if the tax would be allowed to go through on Feb. 5 or if the people will once again vote it out.

Is the wheel tax considered a "rural" issue?

Driving along the city of Vermillion's roads, one may not see a lot of wear and tear.

But if someone were to drive a bit further out of the city and toward, say, Burbank, it could easily be ascertained that the county roads in places do indeed need repair.

But does that make this only a rural road issue?

"The thought that raising funds to help bring our county and township roads and bridges up to safety and quality standards is a "rural" issue is a little naive," Packard said. "If one lives outside of Vermillion proper, I believe the need for additional road and bridge funds is obvious. If you live in Vermillion and drive to the Missouri River, the Vermillion Landfill, Spirit Mound or Sioux City you most likely have driven on federal, state, county, and township roads. Our USA road network was built

through share responsibility. Now the cost of repair and upkeep needs to be shared.

"It is imperative to improve the roads and bridges outside of Vermillion to a standard that decreases tire and windshield damage. During the federal financial meltdown the counties were asked for 'Shovel Ready Projects' proposals. Clay County submitted approximately \$4.4 million in "shovel ready projects". The County was awarded approximately \$87,000. Shortly after the 'award' the state reversed the award due to their needs elsewhere and Clay County received nothing."

If a wheel tax is allowed to move toward and past Feb. 5, that would mean that the county would be eligible to receive additional funding from the state that will come to it via other tax measures over the next few years. It has been implied in recent state bill literature and in discussions with people

like Powell, that if a county chooses not to keep or vote in a wheel tax they would become only eligible for the monies already allotted to them. This mean no additional funding would come via the new revenue, a loss of monies that could seriously devastate the Clay County commissioners' hopes of taking care of their roads.

"In the words of Senator Mike Vehle who has been quoted several times, 'if you produced it, a road moved it - not much is airlifted out.'" Powell said. "If you got it a road brought it - not much is parachuted in."

"The counties have not been funded to the extent they were years ago. The state legislature wisely gave each county an opportunity to raise some funds on their own. They did not mandate a wheel tax. They gave each county the right to assess, at first a \$2 a wheel tax on no more than four wheels. In 1995 the option was to go up to \$4 wheel not to exceed four wheels."

Due to a lack of a wheel tax over the past two decades, Clay County has not received any additional funding it could have had. Now, they will be potentially shorted even more.

"Clay County has been shorting itself for over 20 years by not paying a wheel tax," Powell said. "The commissioners enacted the tax and the people voted it down at least twice. The state will not give us money we have refused to pay ourselves."

"Senator Vehle stated to me after my suggestion to raise funding, 'you are a commissioner from Clay County and you are asking the state for fund and your county has repeatedly refused to pay its fair share?' I knew he was right."

Powell added that Clay County has avoided paying this tax for too long now and that in itself is a harbinger for potentially more bad news for the county's efforts to improve

■ WHEEL, Page 08

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