



January 2012

Vermillion man pleads guilty to bank robbery

FORDYCE, Neb. — A Vermillion man who robbed a Fordyce, Neb., bank more than a year ago has pleaded guilty in federal court in Sioux City.

The announcement of the plea came Tuesday afternoon, Jan. 3, 2012, in a press release from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

At the Dec. 28 court appearance, 23-year-old Karlis Baisden admitted to robbing the Cedar Security Bank in Fordyce on Dec. 14, 2010.

With his guilty plea, Baisden was convicted of bank robbery, according to the United States Attorney's office for the District of Northern Iowa.

Baisden's plea has brought a measure of relief at Cedar Security Bank, said branch manager Duane Schieffer.

U.S. Attorney spokesman Tim Duax said in a phone interview that he couldn't comment on whether there were other suspects in the Fordyce robbery.



Alderman approve 2.75 pay increase for city employees

A wage freeze — a practice that levels of local government from the Vermillion School District to the University of South Dakota has had to administer because of budget constraints — will not be experienced by employees of the city of Vermillion.

The pay received by Mayor Jack Powell and aldermen who serve on the city council will remain at 2011 levels, however.

The Vermillion City Council approved its 2012 payroll resolution at its regular meeting Tuesday night, Jan. 3, 2012. City employees who are members of the AFSCME and Teamster unions will get a 2.75 percent cost of living pay increase this year. The pay increase is part of a three-year agreement forged between the city and the unions that became effective Jan. 1, 2010.

The resolution approved Tuesday night also includes a 2.75 percent pay increase for non-union, professional and management employees of the city.

Study supports small conference center

While it would not be feasible financially to

build a hotel headquarters facility in Vermillion to host events for more than 250 people, there does appear to be support for a smaller conference center.

Those are the findings of a recent study performed by Conventions, Sports & Leisure, a Minneapolis advisory firm.

"The study (showed) that there was a significant need for local banquet, reception and meeting space," said Steve Howe, executive director of the Vermillion Area Chamber & Development Company, which commissioned the study. "It was estimated that we were missing out on about 50 percent of that business."

New manufacturing growth spells success for Vermillion

The mood among media and local executives who gathered inside the front lobby of the Builders Choice, Inc. manufacturing plant in Vermillion was positive Tuesday morning, Jan. 10, 2012, and it wasn't solely due to the warm sunshine streaming through the room's large windows.

Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) had just arrived in his hometown to tour the latest addition to the community's manufacturing sector. The senator, accompanied by his wife, Barb, was greeted

warmly by Mark Larson, president of Builders Choice, Greg Stirn, the manager of the Vermillion plant, and Steve Howe, executive director of the Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce and Development Company (VCDC).

Larson and Stirn led the Johnsons on an exclusive tour of the plant building, located on Norbeck Street. The relative calm of the front lobby was replaced by the din on the production floor. The source of the noise is dozens of workers using power tools and other equipment to construct modular buildings.

Christopherson, survivor of Pearl Harbor, dies

Darrel Christopherson, one of the last of the "Greatest Generation" in South Dakota and a survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor, died at his home in Vermillion Sunday, Jan. 29. He was 87.

Christopherson, who joined the U.S. Navy when he was 17, was a crew member aboard the USS Vestal, a repair ship that was moored to the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese attacked U.S. Naval forces on Dec. 7, 1941.

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February 2012

Coyote Village bomb search leads to New Jersey arrest

A student with an alleged connection to the Tuesday night partial evacuation of Coyote Village on the University of South Dakota campus has been arrested.

Elan Haba, 19, a sophomore on the Rutgers-Newark campus in Newark, N.J., was arrested Tuesday night and faces charges including theft, and possession of fireworks and a prohibited weapon.

A resident of North Caldwell, N.J., Haba was brought to the attention of the authorities by officials from the University of South Dakota after a room check at Coyote Village uncovered items USD's manager of media relations described as being "possibly considered explosive in nature."

According to the Associated Press, the USD authorities said that Haba had an alleged connection to the student in question.

Education dominant topic at meeting with legislators

The governor's education plan was a major topic of discussion in Vermillion.

And already, the governor and leadership in both houses of the state Legislature are proposing new changes to that plan.

Rep. Jamie Boomgard, a Republican from Chancellor, Rep. Tom Jones, a Democrat from Viborg, and Sen. Eldon Nygaard, a Democrat from Vermillion, offered their opinions last Saturday on what they knew at the time. They answered questions and listened to input from a strong audience of local citizens that turned out for last week's Cracker Barrel meeting held in Vermillion's city hall.

The governor proposed at the start of this year's legislative session that the top 20 percent of teachers in each school district should receive a \$5,000 bonus, and that all math and science teachers should each receive a \$3,500 bonus.

But a revised plan, announced late Tuesday, Feb. 7, would give new math and science and teachers \$8,000 annual bonuses for their first five years of teaching, as long as they teach at a South Dakota public school.

Yankton firm awarded bid for library expansion

City council members moved to award the bid for the Vermillion Pub-