

Opinion & Politics

Letters

Concerned about proposed gun club

Dear Editor:
As a resident of the Winterset area and operator of a registered preschool/daycare nearby, I am concerned about a proposed gun club project near the Middle River. While I respect private property rights, I believe careful consideration of environmental and community impacts is essential before moving forward.
The southern portion of the proposed site appears to lie within the 100-year floodplain on FEMA flood maps, even

though the application states it is not. County ordinance does not allow excavation, structures, or other alterations in floodplains. Any construction of berms or modifications to the land may involve excavation in the floodplain, raising important questions about whether the site can legally or safely accommodate this project. I respectfully request explicit findings on floodplain involvement and site feasibility, including verification of any mapping discrepancies.

Given the proximity of nearby homes, farms, and natural resources, this proposal raises significant community and environmental concerns. Of particular concern is whether a 1,000-yard shooting range can safely fit on the site, given that the Middle River meanders through the property and is frequently used for recreation. Without clear information on the location of the range and any berms, it is difficult to assess whether the project can be conducted safely for neigh-

bors, river users, and surrounding wildlife.
Of particular concern is the presence of known bald eagles in the area. Bald eagles are federally protected, and disturbance of nesting or hunting activity is prohibited. I request that the Conservation Department's review include a thorough evaluation of potential impacts from noise and human activity, and recommend safeguards to avoid harm to these birds.
The proposed facility represents a large-scale gun training operation. Whether the applicant seeks a commercial

zoning change or attempts to qualify under an agricultural exemption, I respectfully request that the county carefully review whether the project is compatible with surrounding agricultural and residential uses, and ensure that any approval aligns with Madison County's Comprehensive Plan and long-term land-use goals.
Residents and wildlife deserve a site that is safe, legal, and compatible with the surrounding community. In this case, this project may be better suited elsewhere.
—Abbi Grace, Winterset

Opposed to proposed outdoor shooting range

Editor's note: the following letter was sent to the Madison County Zoning Commission regarding a proposed shooting range/gun club application for "The Vanguard". The author elected to share the letter with Madisonian readers as well.

Dear Members of the Madison County Zoning Commission,
I am writing to formally express my opposition to the proposed outdoor shooting range and gun club known as "The Vanguard," proposed for property off Rustic Lane in Madison County.
While our home at 2614 Quail Ridge Trail is newly built, my connection to Madison County is lifelong. I am a lifetime resident of this county. My husband and I raised our children here, we own businesses here, and my husband works for the Winterset Community School District. This is the community where we live, work, shop, pay taxes and vote.
Our home sits within close proximity of the proposed range, meaning the impacts of this development would be experienced daily by our family and our nearest neighbors.
Based on available mapping and the application materials, numerous homes, farms, and rural businesses exist throughout the surrounding area. This is not a remote location. It is an established rural residential and agricultural community.
For the following reasons, we respectfully

ask the Commission to deny this application.
• Impact on Residential Property Values
Homes in rural Madison County derive much of their value from the quiet landscape, natural surroundings, and agricultural character of the area. The introduction of a high-volume commercial gun range producing repeated impulse noise could significantly reduce the desirability and market value of nearby homes. For residents who have invested heavily in building homes here, this represents a serious financial concern.
• Environmental Considerations and the Middle River
The proposed property lies near the Middle River watershed. The Middle River is used by the public for canoeing and recreational floating and is an important natural resource for our community. Outdoor shooting ranges can accumulate significant amounts of lead and other contaminants over time, and without strict environmental safeguards there is potential for contamination of soil, groundwater, and nearby waterways.
• Bald Eagle Nest and Wildlife Protection
Residents have also observed an active bald eagle nest near the southern portion of the property along the bend of the Middle River. Bald eagles are protected under federal law, and disturbance to active nests can have serious legal

LETTER: DAWSON
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Water quality worries

Dear Editor:
"Why is the carpet all wet, Todd?" "I don't know, Margo." These are lines from the classic movie "Christmas Vacation". Their neighbor had shot a gutter full of ice through the window and exploded Margo and Todd's stereo system (ask your grandparents what a stereo is).
These are questions currently being asked by Iowans: Why is there a swimming advisory at the local state park? Why is there a consumption advisory for fish for the Des Moines River? Why is there a lawn watering ban?
We can deliver science-based answers to these questions with robust water quality monitoring.
That's why we must urge our legislators to restore the funding for the Iowa Water

Quality Monitoring Systems (IWQIS). Ideally, by budgeting \$600,000 annually with an additional \$500,000 one-time payment to upgrade equipment.
SF2269 was introduced this year and would authorize a one-time spend of \$500,000 to IWQIS. It's a step in the right direction, but we need more.
In prior years, the funding for IWQIS was funded annually, meaning we were guaranteed transparent, reliable data about levels of nitrates and phosphorus. The program was de-funded in 2023 when the money was reallocated through appropriations bill S558, sponsored by Iowa State Senator Dan Zumbach.
If the bill does not make it out of committee it will be another year before funding for

the IWQIS will be addressed. Another year of degradation to the existing system that was paid for by Iowa tax dollars. Re-funding IWQIS is a small amount of money compared to other budget initiatives under consideration this session.
A small price compared to the money spent by Des Moines to upgrade the most robust and largest nitrate removal system on the planet. Maybe Iowa water has no relevance to increasing cancer rates, low birth rates, blue green algae blooms - but maybe it does. If we don't agree to monitor our rivers and lakes, we will not have science-based evidence to make future policy decisions.
If we don't fund robust water quality monitoring, we'll be left with the same old answer. "I don't know, Margo."
—Gary DePond, Adel

Relatively Minor

Vicki Minor, Editor
editor@wintersetmadisonian.com

Laughter does not have to come from a major source. It could indeed be ... relatively minor.

...

A Penny For My Thoughts, While They Last

I believe I have good common sense and practical, intuitive judgment, which help me make sound decisions in daily life. This includes simple actions like looking both ways before crossing the street to avoid being hit by a vehicle, rather than assuming cars will stop. Unfortunately, as evidenced by local squirrels lying motionless in the road, they haven't quite grasped this concept yet. It also means carrying an umbrella when the forecast calls for rain, although in Iowa, the weather can change in just five minutes, so you might as well bring along a snow shovel, too. Except on a windy day, like many we've had recently, and then who knows what the weather will be like in Kansas? Better bring your little dog, Toto, too.
By the way, the U.S. Treasury stopped producing pennies in late 2025 and into early 2026, which, in my book, doesn't make any "cents." Without new production, pennies will gradually disappear from circulation, and cash transactions will be rounded to the nearest five cents. It also looks like I won't be sharing my opinion anytime soon if I can't give my "two cents' worth." And I certainly won't be offering much encouragement if I can't give someone a "penny for their thoughts", which, these days, might cost a pretty penny but still be worth every cent. After all, a penny saved is a penny earned.
With an estimated 114 to 250 billion pennies already in circulation, it may take more than a day or two before we never see a penny again. Still, it must be some kind of mathematical miracle to make purchases using exact change. I also worry about the mental well-being of piggy banks everywhere, whose sole purpose in life is to house the loose change we collect from our purchases. Sure, we can hoard our nickels, dimes, and quarters, but life just won't make any "cents" without the penny, Honest Abe!

Correction

incorrectly stated that Ben Seibert was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award.
This should have stated that the recipient was Bill Seibert.

On page 3B of the March 11, 2026, edition of the *Madisonian*, the caption of a photo attached to "Seibert receives Distinguished Service Award"

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Letters must be signed by the author. Guidelines below.

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Winterset Madisonian

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The Winterset Madisonian (USPS 687-260) is published weekly on Wednesdays by MadCoMedia Group, Inc. Periodical Postage paid at Winterset, Iowa 50273. Entered as Periodical at the Post Office at Winterset, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

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Half-year subscriptions also available. Temporary Changes of Address \$2.
Postmaster: Send all changes of address to:
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