

Remembering Ted Wolff

This week we recall the life of a much beloved community leader. First, in the box below we have a profile from Jim Puppe's thick book *Dakota Attitude*, which records an interview with someone representing virtually every town in North Dakota. Then we have Ted's own account of the founding of the people's store, published in the *Leader* in July, 2021.

Ted has long been known and loved in the local area. He earned notoriety both here and around the region for his work with the People's Store and the famous sausage that he and his workers produced faithfully since the 1970s. After Ted's death a number of grateful tributes poured in.

"The Forbes community will be

forever grateful for Ted's sharing and caring," said a friend on social media. "He was a very kind man. Very kind family," said another, who added that they "used to get milk from Ted and Karen's farm, me and my one-year old, and went to church with them."

Another, recalling days long past, said "I remember Ted from that old country school. Ted was a truly nice man. Wonderful memories. He will be missed by all of us." Joan Hoff-man, who worked with Ted and many others to build the Country Life Monument in Forbes, gave this tribute: "Ted's legacy," she said, "is one of love . . . commitment of time, labor and promotion . . .summed up in 'community pride.'"



These 2015 NDSU Public History Field School students spent nearly two weeks working at the Coleman Museum in Ellendale. Interspersed with their work were several field trips, including a visit to the Couteau Hills Historical Association Museum in Forbes. While in Forbes, the students also learned about the People's Store, and posed for a photo in front of the old sign. (tripod timer photo by Ken Smith)

Dakota Attitude

Ted Wolff
Interview: June 2, 2011
County: Dickey
City: Forbes

The People's Store

Ted Wolff was born in 1934, one of three sons. "I lost my dad when I was three years old," Ted says. "He died of cancer, so mother raised us three boys. My mother remarried when I was 11. We moved to about one mile east of here. We kept our same church and went to school here in Forbes, so I never left the community. Mother lived to be 95."

In 1975, Ted became involved with the operation of People's Store in Forbes, a nonprofit organization, staffed with mostly volunteers. Few on the payroll. As you first enter the store, you will notice a lunch counter with nine stools where fresh coffee is 25 cents and refills are free. "Normally there are donuts there," Ted says. "Someone will buy them to have with your coffee, or someone will bring in cookies or brownies. It is a normal thing."

The store has a well-equipped meat department where they make home-made sausage. Ted is the chairman of the board and is also in charge of the sausage processing. They have summer sausage, fry sausage, ring bologna, and liver sausage. It is known extensively throughout the area. Customers are from all the surrounding communities, plus they receive orders. "We ship the sausage by priority mail. It gets there quick. Last week I shipped sausage to Texas." I asked Ted what makes the sausage so popular. "We don't over-season it, and we use good meat. Once they taste it, they like it. And they come back."

In addition to sausage sales, People's Store is sustained by loyal customers—customers who shop elsewhere but return to Forbes for their groceries. "My brother, Christ, comes in and helps me, part time. He is 88, but he will help pack or help make the rings. Then my wife, of course, is my big helper. She is here when I am. Also, my two granddaughters come in here to help." Unless he is busy at the farm, Ted is at the store every day.

The history of the Forbes People's Store By Ted Wolff

This all started July 22, 1974. That was the day that our local AAL (Aid Association of Lutherans) branch received a letter from the Home Office in Appleton, Wisconsin. "Your branch," said the letter, "is one of the ten outstanding branches in the United States that is being invited to consider 'Project Care.'"

We had been invited to go to Appleton, WI October 17, 1974 to meet with them. And so we, the members of local branch #2730, discussed the invitation and we decided to go. I (Ted Wolff) was the chairman. Arlena Heinrich was the secretary. Allen Guenther was the Vice President.

So we went, with our spouses, not knowing what to expect. We were pleased when the AAL board of directors approved us for what they called a "People Helping People" project. The idea was that it would benefit Forbes by providing a center for a variety of human needs. Primarily, it would be a non-profit grocery store operated by a volunteer board of directors. We had lost our grocery store here, and people felt we needed a store.

The project received enthusiastic support, with pledges of money and volunteer labor. More than 100 people and several businesses quickly committed their support.

The People's Store received its certificate of incorporation as a nonprofit corporation

from the North Dakota Secretary of State on May 22, 1975, the first board of directors was comprised of Ted Wolff, President, Allen Guenther, V-President, Michael Martin, Sec., Marvin Jerke, Director and Harold Heinrich, Director.

To finance the building, fixtures, and stock inventory of the store, we contacted the people in the community, and a total of \$6,000 was raised. A grant was also received from the Aid Association for Lutherans Insurance Co. for \$40,834.00. With this large amount, we were on the way with our project.

The United Building Center (UBC) of Ellendale was the contractor. Erroll Lilleboe was hired as the main carpenter. About ninety percent of the labor was donated. The building was originally 80 feet long and 32 feet wide.

Later, we added another twenty feet to the length of the store. The day of the formal dedication was October 18, 1975. More than 250 people came out for the program.

Dr. Oswald Hoffman was the special guest speaker. Dr. Hoffman was a great preacher who for decades was the voice of a popular radio program called "The Lutheran Hour." His name and his voice were famous here and around the world. Dr. Hoffman had served on the AAL board that approved the People's Store project, so he had a special interest in helping it succeed.

For 45 years we were in business. Between then and now many things took place. Some of these things were good, many not

so good. Some days we wondered if it was all worth it, but I think it was. I enjoyed every minute of it. During the first years we had problems arranging proper management.

During this time, we built a smoke house attached to the store and started making sausage. Unfortunately, our store bank account didn't increase much, and in 1983-1984, we were considering ways to close the store. The people working in the store received either very minimum wages or volunteered.

But after we got going in the sausage business and taking over management, our financial problems were over. We earned a reputation for good sausage.

Forbes sausage started selling over a wide area. We began to ship a great deal of Forbes sausage to other states, and still do.

I and my wife Karen and my brother Christ and his wife Leana worked with the sausage for many years. The key to making good sausage is the meat. We always use the best of meat. One of our regular customers used to say "it's the German touch, that good old German touch" that makes it special.

We would make the sausage when we had time during the day or when it was raining and we couldn't help our son on the farm. In later years, as age crept up, we spent less time at the store, and other volunteers stepped forward.

Some people used to ask me, "What are we going to do if you ever stop making sausage?" I would tell them, "Well, I guess you are going to have to quit eating sausage." But some claim they can't live without it.

Minutes Of Ellendale Public School Board Meetings

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following paragraphs contain the text of official documents voted and approved by the the Ellendale Public School Board They concern the February 18 special bond election and the issuance of bonds and reimbursement of certain expenditures

BUSINESS MANAGER'S CERTIFICATE AS TO POSTING OF NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION AND SAMPLE BALLOT

I, the undersigned Business Manager of Ellendale Public School District No. 40, Dickey County, North Dakota (the "School District"), state that the School Board of the School District, by resolution, called a special election on February 18, 2025, for the purpose of submitting to the qualified voters of the School District the question of whether the Initial Resolution for \$5,355,000 General Obligation School Building Bonds should be approved. I hereby certify that I caused a copy of the Notice of Special Election and a Sample Ballot to be posted on the website of the School District on November 19, 2024, and the Notice of Special Election and Sample Ballot remained on the website until the day of the election.

WITNESS my hand this February 18, 2025.

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
Lana Norton
Business Manager

BUSINESS MANAGER'S ELECTION CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned, being the duly qualified and acting Business Manager of Ellendale Public School District No. 40 of Dickey County, North Dakota, hereby certify that:

- As required by North Dakota Century Code Section 21-03-12, I caused the Notice of Special Election to be published in the official newspaper of the School District once each week for two successive weeks as evidenced by the Affidavit of Publication.
- As required by North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-36-08, I caused the Notice of Special Election to be posted on the School District's website prior to the date of the election as evidenced by my Certificate as to Posting of Notice of Special Election and Sample Ballot.
- As such official, I have the legal custody of the original official returns of election for the School District from

which the attached copy was transcribed.

- I have carefully compared the attached copy with the original election returns.
- I find the attached copy to be a true, correct, and complete copy of the official returns of the election officials for the special election held in the School District on February 18, 2025.
- The form of ballot attached to the copy of the election returns is a true and correct copy of the form of ballot which I caused to be prepared for and delivered to the election officials for use at the election.

WITNESS my hand as such Business Manager this February 18, 2025.

Lana Norton
Business Manager

OFFICIAL RETURNS OF JUDGES AND CLERKS OF SPECIAL ELECTION
Ellendale Public School

We, the undersigned, being the Judges and Clerks duly appointed for the special election held in and for the Ellendale Public School District No. 40 of Dickey County, North Dakota (the "School District"), on February 18, 2025, hereby certify that we attended at the polling place for the School District, to-wit: Ellendale Public School in the City of Ellendale, N011h Dakota, on the date of the election, that the polls for the election were duly opened at 9:00 A.M., CT, and remained open continuously until 7:00 P.M., CT, on said day, and no longer; that the election was in all respects conducted according to law, and all qualified voters residing in the School District who desired to vote thereat were permitted to do so; that, to the best of our knowledge, information, and belief, each person who voted at the election was a duly qualified voter residing in the School District and entitled to vote thereat; that each person who voted thereat was furnished by us with an official ballot in form identical with the one hereto attached; that forthwith upon the closing of the polls we proceeded to count the votes cast at said polling place on the questions stated in the ballot, and thereupon found and determined, and do hereby certify and declare, that the vote was as follows:

QUESTION #1

Votes YES: 223
Votes NO: 89
Spoiled or Blank Ballots: 0
Total Vote: 312

WITNESS our hands as such election officers this February 18, 2025.

Judge: Betty Martin
Judge: Arlene Steiger
Clerk: Kelly Krege
Clerk: Bernice Thielges

TEXT OF OFFICIAL BALLOT
February 18, 2025
ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
DICKEY COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

QUESTION#1

Shall Ellendale Public School District No. 40 of Dickey County, North Dakota, issue its general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$5,355,000 maturing within a maximum of 20 years, resulting in an estimated additional millage of 14.56 mills, equal to \$14.56 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation for the first taxable year, for the purpose of providing funds, together with any other funds available, to construct an addition to the existing facility, and to otherwise improve, renovate, remodel, construct and equip school property and make site improvements to school property.

Yes ☐
No ☐

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS:

Voters desiring to vote in favor of the foregoing propositions should mark a cross (X) in the space opposite the word "Yes." Voters desiring to vote against such propositions should mark a cross (X) in the space opposite the word "No."

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
DICKEY COUNTY
NORTH DAKOTA
RESOLUTION CANVASSING RETURNS AND DECLARING RESULT OF BOND ELECTION

WHEREAS, the School Board of the Ellendale Public School District No. 40, of Dickey County, North Dakota (the "District") adopted an Initial Resolution for the Issuance of General Obligation School Building Bonds (the "Resolution") on November 11, 2024, calling for the issuance of general obligation bonds of the District in a maximum amount of \$5,355,000 (the "Bonds"); and

WHEREAS, the question was submitted to the qualified electors of the District at an election held February 18, 2025; and

WHEREAS, it appearing to the satisfaction of the School Board that the required notice of bond election was given in the manner prescribed by law and that the election was legally held, and upon this School Board's examination and canvassing of the returns of said election, it being determined that:

(i) 223 votes were lawfully cast in favor of approving the Resolution and issuing the Bonds, 89 votes were lawfully cast against approving the Reso-

lution and issuing the Bonds; and that it is hereby declared that 71.47% of all the qualified voters of the District voting upon the question were in favor of issuing the Bonds, and that the issuance of the Bonds has been approved.

Dated: March 3, 2025.

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
Michele Thorpe
President, Board of Education
Attest:
Lana Norton
Business Manager

The School Board of the District acted on the foregoing resolution at a properly noticed meeting held in Ellendale, North Dakota, on March 3, 2025, with the motion for adoption made by Val Wagner and seconded by Cresta Miller, and the roll call vote on the motion was as follows:

"Aye": Val Wagner, Cresta Miller, Jeff Goehring, Kristi Gilbert, Michele Thorpe
"Nay":
Absent:_____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION LOAN APPLICATION

WHEREAS, Section 15.1-36-08 of the North Dakota Century Code ("N.D.C.C.") establishes a fund for school construction loans and requires that a completed loan application be submitted to the Department of Public Instruction; and

WHEREAS, a special election was held in the Ellendale Public School District No. 40, Dickey County, North Dakota (the "School District") on February 18, 2025 for the purpose of submitting to the voters of the School District the question as to whether or not the School District should issue general obligation bonds in the aggregate amount of \$5,355,000 for school building construction purposes (the "Project"); and

WHEREAS, at the special election on February 18, 2025 the voters approved the issuance of general obligation bonds in the aggregate amount of \$5,355,000 to provide funds for the Project by more than the required 60% majority; and

WHEREAS, the School Board finds it is in the best interest of the School District to submit a School Construction Loan Application to the Department of Public Instruction to finance in part the Project with the proceeds of a state school construction fund loan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. The School District, pursuant to N.D.C.C. Section 15.1-36-08, shall apply for a state school construction fund loan to provide funds to help finance the Project and hereby authorizes the President of the School Board to execute the School Construction Loan Application,

in the form attached hereto, with such changes and modifications as may be required and approved by the President, on behalf of the School District.

2. The School Board hereby authorizes the Business Manager of the School District to submit to the Department of Public Instruction the School Construction Loan Application signed by the President of the School Board together with all other documentation and information required by the Department of Public Instruction for the loan application.

Dated: March 3, 2025.

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
Michele Thorpe
President, Board of Education
Attest:
Lana Norton
Business Manager

The governing body of the District acted on the foregoing resolution at a properly noticed meeting held in Ellendale, North Dakota, on March 3, 2025, with the motion for adoption made by Val Wagner and seconded by Kristi Gilbert and the roll call vote on the motion was as follows:

"Aye": Cresta Miller, Jeff Goehring, Kristi Gilbert, Michele Thorpe, Val Wagner
"Nay":
Absent:_____

ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40
RESOLUTION RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND THE REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN EXPENDITURES

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Ellendale Public School District No. 40, Dickey County, North Dakota (the "School District"), as follows:

SECTION 1. RECITALS.

A. Treasury Regulation Section 1.1502-2 (the "Regulations") restricts the use of tax-exempt bond proceeds to reimburse the School District for project expenditures made by the School District prior to the date of issuance of such bonds.

B. The Regulations generally require that (i) the School District declare its official intent to reimburse itself for prior expenditures from the proceeds of a subsequent issue of tax exempt bonds no later than 60 days after making such expenditures, (ii) the bonds be issued within 18 months after making an expenditure or within 18 months after the project is placed in service, but in no event more than three years after the date the

original expenditure was made, and (iii) the expenditure be either a capital expenditure or a cost of issuance of the bonds.

C. The School District intends to undertake construction of an addition to the existing facility, and to otherwise improve, renovate, remodel, construct and equip school property and make site improvements to school property (the "Project"). The School District desires to comply with the Regulations in order to preserve the option for the School District to be reimbursed for certain expenditures from the proceeds of tax-exempt bonds. The total cost of the Project, to be paid by the School District, is estimated to be approximately \$5,355,000. The School District . currently expects to pay a portion of the cost from funds on hand until the School District can be reimbursed for such expenditures from the proceeds of bonds.

SECTION 2. OFFICIAL INTENT DECLARATION. The School District reasonably expects to be reimbursed for all or part of the expenditures made for the construction of the Project from the proceeds of tax-exempt bonds to be issued, in one or more series, by the School District. The maximum principal amount of such bonds or other obligations expected to be issued for such purpose is approximately \$5,355,000.

Dated: March 3, 2025.

Michele Thorpe
President, of the School Board
Attest:
Lana Norton
Business Manager

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly made by Member Cresta Miller, seconded by Member Jeff Goehring, and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor: Jeff Goehring, Kristi Gilbert, Michele Thorpe, Val Wagner, Cresta Miller

the following voted against the same: _____
and the following were absent: _____

whereupon the resolution was declared duly passed and adopted and was signed by the President and attested by the Business Manager.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 a.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager
Formally Approved by the Board

(published April 10, 2025)