1 named to North Dakota Ethics Commission, other 2 seats still in limbo

BY MARY STEURER
North Dakota Monitor

Jacob Orledge / North Dakota Monitor

North Dakota Sen. Kathy Hogan, from left, Gov. Kelly Armstrong and Sen. David Hogue hold an Ethics Commission selection committee meeting Sept. 23 at the state Capitol in Bismarck.

BISMARCK — State officials have tapped former Office of Management and Budget Director Pam Sharp to fill one of the three open seats on the North Dakota Ethics Commission, but remain divided on the reappointment of one commissioner.

Sharp

"I think Pam Sharp has more knowledge about what goes on in this place than just about anybody else," Gov. Kelly Armstrong said in a Friday morning meeting with Senate Majority Leader David Hogue, R-Minot, and Senate Minority Leader Kathy Hogan, D-Fargo.

Sharp will succeed Ward Koeser, one of the original five members of the commission, and will serve a four-year term.

She led the Office of Management and Budget from 2003 to 2018 and is currently retired.

In her interview with the selection committee, Sharp said her background gives her an extensive understanding of how the executive branch works.

"I do feel I can bring value that perhaps not everyone has," she said.

She said she would advocate for the Ethics Commission to be "very transparent" and "say everything they can say."

Sharp also expressed support for the commission providing public education on how to navigate ethical issues.

"I do think the Ethics Commission is the place to give that advice," she said. "How can you go wrong with education?"

On Friday, Armstrong, Hogue and Hogan remained at odds over who to pick for the remaining two open positions. The three state leaders indicated they would reconvene early next week to resume discussions.

The selection committee must appoint commissioners by a consensus vote. They have been meeting since August to select the commission's next members.

The committee is at a standstill over whether to appoint Commissioner Murray Sagsveen, a Bismarck attorney, to another term. Sagsveen joined the commission in late 2024 after former chair Paul Richard announced his retirement.

Hogan and Hogue have both identified Sagsveen as a favorite, though Armstrong has said he is unwilling to vote for him.

Armstrong, in a previous meeting, expressed a desire to replace Sagsveen because of the Ethics Commission's tenuous relationship with the executive branch, which Armstrong said warrants a "general reset" of the board's culture.

Sagsveen also expressed during the selection process that he feels the state Legislature has passed unconstitutional laws that limit the commission's authority, which Armstrong said he disagrees with.

Hogue and Hogan both said Friday that their support for Sagsveen hasn't changed.

"I think Mr. Sagsveen is the best, and I'm in the habit of hiring the best," Hogue said.

Sagsveen is seeking a four-year term after his seat expired Aug. 31. The other open position was left by former chair Dave Anderson, who died in May. Anderson's term expires Aug. 31, 2026.

Last week, selection committee members also identified Jared Huibregtse, a project manager for a Mandan engineering firm, and Mark Western, a Fargo attorney, as top picks. The state received 39 applicants for the open positions.

The Ethics Commission was created through a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2018. The amendment tasks it with regulating ethical behavior in areas relating to elections, lobbying, corruption and transparency.

Commissioners' duties include adopting ethics rules, investigating alleged violations and issuing advisory opinions to help public officials navigate ethical issues. They are paid a stipend for every day they meet, plus reimbursement for travel.

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DEMUTH

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Spring, started in public office as a ROCORI school board write-in candidate in 2007. She recalled that when she saw two spots unfilled for the local school board, she told her husband, "Hey, you're going to need to run for the school board." He told her, "I wouldn't know how to do that. You do it."

She was elected to the House in 2018. She became House minority leader in 2022 and, most recently, was elected speaker of the House in 2025.

Demuth said that, for her, it's never been about "climbing a political ladder," but about a "willingness to serve."

She touted the $5 billion reduction in spending leaders passed in the 2025 session and a repeal of MinnesotaCare for undocumented immigrant adults. She said her track record of working across party lines in the 2025 session also sets her apart.

"That is also what has driven me to this point in the decision to run for governor," she said.

"I have proved that I can pull people together. Because of the tie, former Speaker (Melissa) Hortman and I needed to navigate that," Demuth added, recalling that Hortman referred to their partnership as "team House." "But I've already had that proven track record, and that's why I know Minnesota is ready for me to be governor."

Eye on history

Demuth and Walz enter the race with something in common — both are attempting to make history. Democrat Walz is hoping for a rare third term and the title of Minnesota's longest-serving governor. Demuth would not only be Minnesota's first female governor but also Minnesota's first person of color and Black woman to serve in the role.

"The role that I am in as speaker, also leading my caucus, the work that I've done, it is because I have been qualified to do that job," she said. "I would be the first female governor for the state of Minnesota. I would be the first Black woman or even person of color to be governor of the state of Minnesota. And those would both be historic things for our state. That is not why I'm doing this, though."

Minnesota also hasn't elected a Republican to statewide office in two decades. Tim Pawlenty was elected governor in 2002 and won reelection in 2006.

Demuth thinks the state is ready.

"In 2024, Minnesotans sent a tie to the House of Representatives, and they were saying, 'Enough with the one-party, Democrat control. We want something different.' And so I believe Minnesota is ready for a change in the leadership that we've seen," she said.

Demuth said Minnesotans can't keep funding fraud. She also wants to address a "ballooned" state budget, an "unsustainable" amount of state employees, and lowering taxes.

"Under the current administration over the last seven years, I don't feel that Minnesota is in a better place, and I want to get us back on the right track," she said.

The primary election will be held Aug. 11, 2026. The general election will be Nov. 3, 2026.

Forum News Service reporter Mary Murphy can be reached at mmurphy@forumcomm.com.

FargoPark DISTRICT

THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF FARGO WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2025, AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE BOARD ROOM AT THE FARGO PARKS SPORTS CENTER AT 6100 38TH STREET SOUTH, FARGO, WITH PRESIDENT VICKI DAWSON, PRESIDING. Please note: This is an in person event.

A. Call to Order

B. Board to Approve Order of Agenda

Consent Agenda – approve the following:

a. Minutes – 10/07/2025

b. Approval to Bid 2026 Park District Projects

c. Approval to Bid 2026 Park District Maintenance Equipment

Regular Agenda

1. Recognition of Audience/Public Comments
2. Director's Report
3. Fargo Park District Special Assessment Review Committee; Broc Lietz, presenter
4. Consideration and approval of snow removal services for the Sports Center; Kali Mork, presenter
5. Governance Committee Update, Commissioner Rostad, presenter
6. Planning Committee Update, Commissioner Dawson, presenter
7. Adjourn

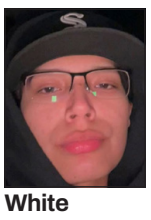
Individuals who wish to attend Park Board meetings but need special arrangements or would like to address the Board, please contact the Fargo Park District office at 499-6060 by noon on the Monday before the Board Meeting.

BRIEFS

Bureau of Indian Affairs asks for help finding missing ND woman

FORT TOTTEN, N.D. — The Bureau of Indian Affairs is seeking public assistance in locating a 20-year-old Devils Lake woman.

According to a feather alert from the North Dakota Highway Patrol and Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Danica Taylor White was last seen at 6 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 1, near Fort Totten.



White

White is Native American, 5 feet, 6 inches tall, and weighs 125 pounds, the alert said. She has brown hair and brown eyes.

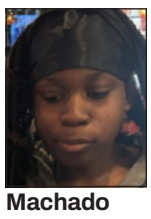
White was last seen wearing jeans, a black hoodie with pink and purple jellyfish designs, a gray ball cap, and gray Nike shoes. She has a tattoo of the number 31 on her left forearm, the alert said.

Those with information regarding White's location are asked to call the Bureau of Indian Affairs at 701-766-4231.

Fargo police ask for help finding 3 missing children

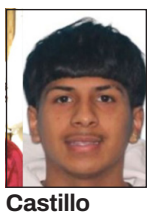
FARGO — The Fargo Police Department is asking for public assistance finding three children who were last seen Friday, Oct. 31.

According to social media posts from police, Kenslei Johnson, Makiesse Machado and Dominick Castillo were last seen Friday evening.



Machado

Johnson



Castillo

Johnson, 11, is described as five feet tall, 116 pounds with black hair and brown eyes. Machado, 15, is said to be five feet, five inches tall, 135 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes. Castillo, 17, is five feet, two inches tall, 130 pounds with black hair and brown eyes.

Johnson was last seen at 4:13 p.m. Friday in north Fargo. Machado was last seen at 4:55 p.m. in south Fargo. Castillo was last seen at 7 a.m. in south Fargo. All are described as runaway children.

Those with information about any of the children's locations are asked to call the Red River Regional Dispatch Center at 701-451-7660 or submit an anonymous tip by texting FARGOPD to 847411.

Fergus Falls police ask for help finding teen, vehicle possibly seen in Fargo area

FARGO — The Fergus Falls Police Department called for public assistance locating a missing teen whose vehicle was possibly seen in the Fargo area.

According to an alert from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Naveah Taylor Vogel, 15, was last seen at her home in Fergus Falls at 9:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 1.

Vogel

Vogel is believed to have left Fergus Falls in her mother's black 2021 Dodge Durango, Minnesota license plate number 1RE912. The vehicle was possibly seen in the Fargo area at 9:20 a.m. Sunday, the alert said.

Vogel is a Native American girl with brown hair and brown eyes. She is five feet, eight inches tall, and weighs 135 pounds.

Those with information about Vogel are asked to call the Otter Tail County Dispatch at 218-998-8555.

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