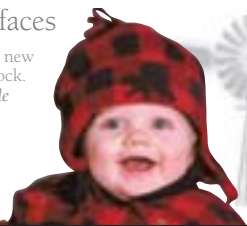
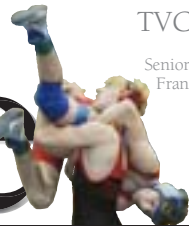


See who's new on the block. Inside



Hastings Tribune



Senior's return carries Franklin to title. Page C1

36 pages <http://www.hastingstribune.com>

Friday, Jan. 20, 2006

Home delivered 28 cents Newsstands 50 cents

Japan halts U.S. beef imports

JOHANN'S SENDING TEAM TO INVESTIGATE SHIPMENT IN QUESTION

LIBBY QAUID
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said Friday the U.S. government is investigating a shipment of American beef to Japan that

may have contained material considered at risk for mad cow disease, a discovery that prompted Japan to announce another halt to beef imports. Johanns ordered several actions intended to reassure the Japanese. "We take this matter very seriously," the secretary said in a statement. "We are in communication with Japanese officials and we will continue that dialogue to assure them that we take this matter very seriously and we are acting

swiftly and firmly." Johanns said the plant that exported the meat in question is now barred from shipping more beef to Japan. He also said the government inspector who cleared the shipment may be disciplined, and that Agriculture Department investigators are being dispatched to Japan. He also is sending extra inspectors to every plant that exports meat to Japan and has ordered unannounced inspec-

tions, Johanns said. "While this is not a food safety issue, this is an unacceptable failure on our part to meet the requirements of our agreement with Japan," he told reporters at Agriculture Department headquarters. Johanns said the tissue Japan found — spinal column from veal — is not prohibited in the American food supply but is prohibited under the agreement with Japan. Department officials said Japan

will hold U.S. beef at Japanese ports until they learn more from the U.S. Japan will decide later whether to impose a ban. Johanns commented just hours after Japan's prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, said in Tokyo that his country will block imports of American beef after a recent shipment was found that may contain material considered at risk for mad cow disease.

Garett not guilty

JUDGE UPHOLDS LOCAL MAN'S INSANITY DEFENSE

WILL VRASPIR
Hastings Tribune

Adams County District Judge Terri Harder ruled Thursday that a 28-year-old Hastings man accused of breaking into a home while nude and murdering a Hastings man was not guilty by reason of insanity. Jayson D. Garett, who's imprisoned in Lincoln, had a



Garett

Please see GARETT/page B2

Race for tires

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The race is on to approve a legislative bill that would benefit a new Hastings race track. Sen. Carroll Burling of Kenesaw received unanimous approval from the Legislature's Natural Resources Committee Thursday for a bill that would allow using tires as safety barriers.



Burling



Burling

Please see TIRES/page B2

Blueprint for growth

New housing market in Hastings bucks national trend for 2006



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AMY ROH/Tribune

Joaquin Torres (front) and Jon Kuhlman with Ben Engel Construction apply a base coat for stucco on a new house under construction Friday along Lakepark Lane.

The housing market in Hastings will remain strong in 2006, despite national reports that the building trend is on the decline.

The National Association of Home Builders reported recently that home sales and housing production would be on the decline for 2006, after three years of strong growth. "I think everybody's worried probably that the market will eventually exhaust itself, and the prices will go down," said Linda Addison, executive director of the Housing Development Corp. in Hastings.

Though Addison has her worries and the NAHB has its predictions, information from the Hastings Development Services Department indicates a positive outlook.

Building permit records over the past six years show the number of new homes in Hastings was consistent in 2005 after increasing by 20 in 2004. The number of additions and remodeled homes has remained the same over the same six-year period.

The number of single-home lots available in the city, and those soon to be available, are high and serve as another sign of a strong housing market, officials said.

In 2005, a total of 88 single-home plots were finalized with the Development Services Department and were ready for sale. In 2006, there are more than 300 single-home lots that could soon be finalized to be ready for sale, according to the department's records.

Those involved in the housing market say they, too, are seeing signs of continued growth for 2006.

Mike Engelhardt, president of the Hastings Board of Realtors Inc., said the market has been strong recently and he doesn't foresee any change in the near future.

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Weather

Lo: Partly cloudy tonight.
20s Mostly sunny
Hi: Saturday.
40s



Art by Payton Loucks, 10, Alcott School

Nation

HELPING THE NATION FINDLAY, Ohio — A woman who died at age 98 bequeathed her \$1.1 million estate to the federal government, requesting that it be used to help pay down the \$8.1 trillion national debt. The gift from Margaret Elizabeth

Taylor, who died Nov. 9, may be the largest ever to the Treasury Department, spokesman Stephen Meyerhardt said Thursday. "It's the biggest in at least the last 15 years, and most likely the largest," he said. "Needless to say, most donations are much, much

smaller." Attorney Tom Drake, the executor of Taylor's estate, said Taylor made it very clear that her fortune was to be handed over to the government. Her will was filed recently probate court. The Associated Press

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AMY ROH/
Tribune

Joaquin Torres with Ben Engel Construction mixes a stucco base coat for the exterior of a house under construction on Lakepark Lane.

Building: Things looking good in Hastings

Continued from page A1

Many places elsewhere are overbuilt with housing, leading to an overabundance of homes with no interested buyers, he said.

Engelhardt said adding new jobs and having steady, low interest rates will be key to keeping a good housing market in Hastings.

"We need to have continued growth in the job market to have our housing market grow," he said. "And we are seeing some new jobs coming in, so that helps."

Along with low interest rates, a program based on a person's credit also is encouraging residents to buy new homes in Hastings.

Engelhardt said some financial institutions in Hastings are allowing buyers to purchase a home without making a down payment if they have good credit.

"That has opened up the market to a whole new realm of peo-

ple," he said. "It's good for the people buying a home, and it's good for the area."

Many Hastings residents and people moving to Hastings are looking to build new homes, Engelhardt said. That means many older homes are opening up for a different market of buyers, he said.

Bob Finnismier, general manager at Johnson Imperial Home Co., said he has seen an increased number of people looking into building homes.

Based on the number of houses the company is building now and scheduled to build later this year, Finnismier said 2006 is shaping up to be a good year for the local housing market.

Johnson Imperial Home Co. is building now in two developments — Lochland Meadows and Imperial Village.

"Those are the two primary areas that we're building in right now," he said. "But, we will build in the rural area if some-

one has their own lot or something or even a farm site."

In addition to people building more new homes, interest in remodeling and home additions also is on the rise, said Bill Hamburger, an independent contractor and owner of Bill Hamburger Remodeling. He said remodeling and additions are up from last year — likely the result of the May 11, 2005, hailstorm.

Hamburger said many homes in Hastings hadn't undergone any significant improvements in more than 20 years. But when people started fixing up the exterior of their homes after the storm, getting new roofs and siding, people began feeling better about their homes and neighborhoods. That led to an influx of people wanting to improve the interior of their homes, as well.

"We're looking at people redoing their basements, adding bedrooms, redoing kitchens," he said. "Some people are just doing general changing while others

are modernizing."

Plus, Hamburger said many residents have the funds now to improve the interior of their homes, because insurance money covered the exterior updates that otherwise would have come from their pocketbooks.

Hamburger said many people opt for remodeling or building an addition instead of buying a new home because of the cost.

When a young couple starts out, they buy a smaller home because that is all they can afford, he said. Then, as they get older and have children, some families decide to expand their current home rather than buy a different house.

Like the new housing market, Hamburger said the remodeling market will continue to stay strong over the next several years, as long as the interest rates continue to stay down.

"If somebody's going to do something, this is a good time to check into it," he said.

Garett: Local man found not guilty by reason of insanity

Continued from page A1

bench trial before Harder Jan. 12, instead of a jury trial, which he waived his right to Nov. 2, 2005. Harder took the case under advisement to review the information presented and determine whether Garett was insane at the time of the incident.

In her decision, Harder wrote the defense had met the burden of proof with respect to the insanity defense, based on reports from two psychiatrists, Y. Scott Moore for the prosecution and William Logan for the defense. Reports indicated that Garett suffers from a bipolar disorder and was in a manic phase during the incident.

Garett faced five felony charges, including second-degree murder, for the death of 45-year-old Daryl Peed. He also faced charges of burglary, use of a weapon to commit a felony, criminal mischief and third-degree assault on a peace officer for injuring Hastings police

officer John Schakat.

Garett pleaded not guilty to the charges Aug. 12, 2004, and not guilty by reason of insanity Jan. 12.

Garett never testified in the case.

Adams County Attorney Donna Fegler Daiss said a probable cause hearing will be held to determine whether Garett is still a threat to society and should be sent to Lincoln Regional Center for monitoring.

Both Fegler Daiss and Garett's attorney, public defender Art Toogood, agreed on the facts of the case during Garett's bench trial. However, Toogood argued that Garett was not responsible because of his mental condition.

Garett murdered Peed, who lived at 609 Lexington Ave., while he was sleeping at his home March 27, 2004. Garett walked across town naked, which he believed made him invisible, then broke into Peed's home and stabbed Peed 45 times — mostly with a 3.5-inch serrated steak knife. Peed lived alone and was asleep

on his couch wearing 1-inch earplugs.

After stabbing Peed, Garett went to sleep in Peed's bed. When he woke up a few hours later, he reportedly put on Peed's clothes and left the house.

Police officers, seeking Garett on suspicion of burglary and criminal mischief for a prior incident, arrested Garett later that day after spotting him walking down the street in bloody clothes. Peed's body was found the next day. Investigators said the two men were strangers.

Second-degree murder is a Class 1B felony punishable by up to life in prison. Burglary and use of a weapon to commit a felony are Class 3 felonies punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine. Criminal mischief over \$1,500 is a Class 4 felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Third-degree assault of a peace officer is a Class 3A felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Tires: Legislation would help local race track

Continued from page A1

The bill, LB 818, would specifically benefit Hastings businessman George Anderson, who is in the process of building a track near the intersection of U.S. Highway 6 and Showboat Boulevard.

Motorsport Park Hastings held its first major event in October 2005 when the first-ever national sports Car Club of America RallyCross event came to Hastings.

While that event was on dirt, Anderson is working to build a paved track that would need tire barriers.

Anderson said the barriers would be on corners and serve as a buffer

in case a driver loses control. The tires would be bolted together and then attached to a guardrail.

Anderson said he needs between 20,000 and 30,000 tires for the barriers. Under current law, that many tires aren't permitted in the same location for the use of a race track.

Anderson called upon Burling to assist him with getting the law changed to include race tracks as a beneficial use for a large number of tires. Under LB 818, tires can be "used as safety barriers for race courses for motorized vehicles, on the condition that the tires are bolted together and properly

wrapped, and not in loose, compressed, or baled form."

The bill was presented before the Natural Resources Committee Thursday, its first day to hear bills.

After its presentation, Anderson and representatives from the Porsche Club of America and the Sports Car Club of America testified on the necessity of the tire barriers.

Sen. Ed Schrock of Elm Creek, chairman for the committee, said he would put an emergency clause on the bill so after legislative approval, it could immediately go to the governor for his signature.

Normally, there is a 90-day wait-

ing period on a bill after it is approved, resulting in delays in Anderson's project. Anderson said he would need about 100 days to assemble all of the tires and put them on the track, and that would have to be done prior to some of the track preparations.

Burling said he is worried that with the current speed issues are being dealt by Legislature that this bill could be stalled. He said that is why he is working to piggyback the bill onto another one to ensure it will be heard in the next 47 days of the 60-day session. The last day of this session is April 12.

Meth group looks ahead

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Billboards soon will be going up on the north and south ends of Hastings promoting the city's drug abuse hotline, an action initiated by the Hastings Meth Coalition.

Participants in the coalition, formerly called the Mayor's Meth Coalition, discussed the billboards and the coalition's future during a steering committee meeting Thursday at the Hastings Public Library.

They discussed funding for the coalition and its impact, rearranging the vertical domain and steering committee schedule, and creating a television program about meth.

As a way to promote the drug abuse hotline, the meth coalition decided to purchase two billboards advertising the hotline number, 461-DRUG (3784). One billboard will be placed on the north part of U.S. Highway 281 and stay up for one month; another will be displayed on the south part of U.S. 281 for two months.

Another way to get information out about meth addiction will be through a TV program that will be aired on the Hastings Public Access Channel.

Meth coalition moderator John Ferrone said the program now being planned would reach 40 percent of homes in Hastings.

"All we need to do is come in and make the video," Ferrone said. "They will take the tape and run it."

Although airing the program would be up to HPAC planners, Ferrone hopes it will be run by the end of January or beginning of February.

To be able to continue to find new ways to educate the public, the Hastings Meth Coalition recently received a \$10,000 grant from the South Heartland District Health Department.

Ferrone said the department and the coalition were hoping eventually to expand to cover a four-county region served by the health department.

State Sen. Carroll Burling of Kenesaw also introduced a bill in the Legislature Wednesday that would provide \$200,000 for meth prevention and education.

If Burling's bill passes, the Hastings Meth Coalition will be able to apply for part of that grant money, Ferrone said.

Ferrone also said coalition members spoke with representatives from the office of U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., about federal legislation to fight meth.

Any federal legislation should include funding for technical assistance, which is crucial for coordinating local efforts against meth abuse, Ferrone said.

Along with funding, the steering committee also discussed the impact the coalition has had in its seven-month existence. Mayor Matt Rossen launched the coalition in an effort to educate the public about meth and to gather community leaders to help conquer the city's meth problem.

Different agencies and groups, termed "vertical domains," have met regularly through the coalition to discuss meth.

Ferrone said the meth coalition was a catalyst for Burling to propose legislation for meth prevention and education. He also said it has brought awareness in schools about meth addiction through speeches by the Adams County office of University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension.

Another item that has derived from the coalition meetings is a prayer session at the Crossroads Center from 8-8:30 a.m. every Thursday.

Dan Rutt, men's program director at Crossroads, said the prayer group started soon after the faith-based vertical domain first met and has grown steadily since.

"We believe that's where it starts," Rutt said.

The steering committee also decided to change meeting times for all vertical domains and the steering committee to the third Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Formerly, the steering committee and vertical domains met separately.

Osborn: Treasurer candidate says state spending doesn't add up

Continued from page A5

He doesn't feel he has to bank solely on his military record to win voter approval, he said.

Currently serving as account executive for the Silverstone Group of Omaha in its Aviation Risk Services Department, his education includes a bachelor of science degree in actuarial science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"I can definitely understand numbers well," he said. "I have been tutoring mathematics since I was in the fourth grade."

If elected, his objective will be to "get this state

back on track" by helping to create an atmosphere that encourages more frugal spending by government officials.

As one who co-owned a sun room additions business in Norfolk with his mother, Diana, Osborn said he understands how burdensome Nebraska's current tax structure is on the small business community. It's an atmosphere he feels has driven many entrepreneurs to set up shop out of state in Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota and Wyoming.

"Right now we're not on a course that's going to keep this state booming," he said. "We're behind. All the states that circle us have better tax

climates for business, and, unless we improve it, brain drain questions can't be solved until we make it economically feasible to start a new business."

Just how far he'll be able to push the envelope to first-hand change is something he hopes to find out firsthand.

"I don't want Nebraska to try and catch up," he said. "I want us to lead, and I think we can. That's definitely outside the scope of the treasurer's office, but I'm not the kind of person that reads the manual and says, 'What are the minimum duties I can perform and get a check in the box at the end of the day?'"

A husband and father of two, Osborn said he views the upcoming race against incumbent Ron Ross as a job interview to be conducted by the people of Nebraska. Ross was appointed to office in January 2003 to replace embattled treasurer Lorelee Byrd, who resigned the position during an investigation over checks she had written and later voided.

"I don't look at it as me trying to pick out something I see as deficient in my opponent," Osborn said. "I think the people of Nebraska are going to make an informed decision who they see fit to be in this office. I know what I bring to the table: leadership, honor and integrity."