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Route AC in Stoddard County Closed for Culvert Replacement

JULY 21ST 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Route AC in Stoddard County Closed for Culvert Replacement

Route AC in Stoddard County Closed for Culvert Replacement

Route AC in Stoddard County will be closed as Missouri Department of Transportation crews replace a culvert under the roadway.

This section of roadway is located from County Road 227 and County Road 232 near Bloomfield, Missouri.

Weather permitting, work will take place Monday, July 22 from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The work zone will be marked with signs. Motorists are urged to use extreme caution while traveling near the area.

For additional information, contact MoDOT's Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-888-ASK-MODO

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[Route 114 in Stoddard County Will be Reduced to One Lane](#)

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Stoddard County Commission Meeting - July 15, 2024

JULY 18TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Stoddard County Commission Meeting - July 15, 2024](#)

Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis opened the weekly meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer for our community, former President Donald Trump and the family of Corey Comperatore, who was killed at the rally.

Katelyn Lambert, Bootheel Regional Planning Commission

Lambert updated the spreadsheet for the ARPA Funds. The interest is not up to date on this spreadsheet; however it is up to date as of June 30, 2024. The Interest from the

ARPA funds totals \$249,257.73.

"I am going to ask Beau Bishop to come in next week to see if there are any federal funds coming down from the Governor," commented Mathis.

Dudley Special Road District received three bids for gravel. They had requested approximately \$40,000 Lambert told the Commission.

The bid process has started for the Bernie Water Basin with regards to ARPA and they will not be using prevailing wages. There was a final rule to not use prevailing wages if it is sole source funding

Tuesday, Annual Foundation Board Meeting for the IDA

Peter Coutavas, Director spoke to the Commissioners about the IDA

There will be the Annual Foundation Board Meeting for the IDA.

"I established a Special Allocation Fund two years ago," commented Peter Coutavas, Director of the IDA. "It is a special fund of \$40,000 to give to businesses at my discretion. This year I have only spent \$11,000."

This Special Allocation Fund is in its second year and has been very successful. Monies distributed to help businesses in the form of signage, A/C repairs, replacing rotted vent pipe, furnace repairs, support art club, washing machine, bakers mixer, BBQ BASH sponsor for a city park, theatre support, food truck, ARC Christmas party sponsor Dexter Mother's Day lunch, Puxico Weekly Press office improvements, gravel and drain pipe, Eagle Days, and Fire Dept Tanks. These monies go to supplement items that are needed by businesses.

"If I can help in a ny way with giving a little money then I have the power to give a few hundred dollars here and there," Coutavas said. "It really does help a struggling business or bringing in a new business, or even a charity trying to raise money. Each city has a \$5,000 fund I can use at my discretion and it is working. This year I only spent \$11,000."

"Our landfill receipts for this fiscal year have been received," commented Coutavas.

Totals for the year are 1st Quarter - \$85,060.98, 2nd Quarter - \$79,904.01, 3rd Quarter - \$74,836.46 totaling \$239,801.45 thus far with 4th Quarter still to be received.

The 1/2 million dollar grant fund has been distributed this fiscal year have been sent to Dudley \$ \$31,857.50Puxico \$50,000, Bernie \$45,000, Bloomfield \$50,000 and Puxico \$18,585 which goes to their Improvement Corporations to help struggling or new

businesses inter communities.

Income comes from the landfill, \$1.50 for every ton that goes into the landfill....it is a tipping fee per Mathis.

"We are also assisting with the hotel fund with the sewer and water fund for \$750,000 to the city of Dexter," continued Coutavas.

Mathis asked if there was an Enhanced Enterprise Zone Committee? No one was for sure there was a board for that. More investigation into the committee will be performed prior to the next Commission meeting.

Air Conditioning Issues in the IDA Building and the Wildflower Boutique

Motion to seek bids to replace the HVAC and Heating unit in the IDA Building made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

SB190 Senior Citizens Tax Credit Application by Josh Speakman, County Collector/Treasurer

"I don't want to make it a hinderance this year, but want to make sure it is the person applying for it and not someone else," commented Speakman.

Motion to authorizes Speakman to adopt the Tax Credit Application to use the last 4 digits of the social security and to have the document notarized was made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

"This is something new and a key point you made earlier is that we may have to make some changes in the future to this document," stated Mathis.

The Collector/Treasurer's office will have employees who can Notarize the documents. Application process will begin September 1, 2024.

Update on the Clean-Out of Drainage Ditches #13-33 and #14

Commissioner C.D. Stewart has looked at the drainage areas that need to be cleaned out per their previous bid. This was not in the original bid process, but really needs to be completed. The ditches nor of Highway 25 will cost an addition \$800 and the ditch along Highway C will cost an additional \$6,000 and other areas will cost an additional \$7,950 totally \$14,750.

Motion to extend the clean-out of ditch clearing and clean out on ditch #13.33 north of Hwy 25 in the amount of \$8,750.00 made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

"We have the money to do this and will be taken out of general revenue because they don't have the money," stated Mathis. "This is a 25 year clean-out and I am not going to let \$15,000 keep us from doing this. We have the money in general revenue."

Motion to extend the clean-out of ditch clearing and clean-out on Ditch 14 extending to County Road 208 in the amount of \$6,000.00 made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion regarding Change Order #1 and Change Order #2 Stoddard County Commissioner authorizes to use General Revenue Funds if funds are not available in those Ditch accounts made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded Commission Carol Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Scenic Byway

"I think we need to get a meeting together to let folks know," stated Commissioner C.D. Stewart.

The Commissioner decided to make August 5th a date that citizens can attend the Commission meeting and discuss the Scenic Byway.

Board of Equalization Closure

On Tuesday, July 16th the Board of Equalization will close at 10 a.m. As of today no one has made an appointment. The Board of Appeals will open at that time.

Johnson Grass Board

The Dept of Agriculture usually sends a letter out. Mathis has a letter from April 2024 and needs to update the three board members. Their term expired in December 2023.

Mathis and Stewart will get with those three board members to see if they want to serve another 3 year term. The Commission decided at this time not to advertise the positions.

Carl Hefner, Stoddard County Sheriff's Department

A deputy wrecked a car and the insurance will be paying, but they haven't heard if the vehicle is totaled yet, but sure looks to be totaled. Sheriff Hefner is requesting to go ahead and replace the car with a truck.

"Our trucks seem to be holding up so much better than the SUVs we have currently," stated Hefner. "The radio equipment was salvageable and that's about all."

The Sheriff's department already had a state bid available from Lou Fusz, an authorized dealer in St. Louis.

"We have 8 vehicles and they all have 200,000+ miles on them," stated Hefner. "We got a little behind trading them out."

"The deputy was injured and so with the canine officer," but not too bad," continued Hefner.

Motion to order the new vehicle for the Stoddard County Sheriff's Dept to replace the wrecked vehicle in the amount of \$51,400 F150 Truck Super Crew with police package made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Other Business

Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from July 8, 2024 made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to approve the Bid Opening Meeting minutes from July 8, 2024 made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to end the meeting at noon made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

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Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, July 8, 2024

JULY 11TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, July 8, 2024](#)

Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis opened the regularly scheduled Commission meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer over the 1221st Transportation Unit who lost one of their own, Mr. Landewee, his family, the county employees and emergency management and first responders.

Josh Speakman, Stoddard County Collector, Agreement with Puxico Tax Collections

"The City of Puxico reached out to me a few weeks ago" commented Speakman.

"Bloomfield, Essex and Bernie have already done so and I presented to them the ability to collect taxes for the city.

"The governing body of both the city and the county have to bless this agreement before I can move forward," continued Speakman. "The city of Puxico voted yes at their last meeting and now I am asking the Commission to agree to the arrangement."

This is an agreement between Josh Speakman, acting as Collector and the City. He would receive a 1099 at the end of the year and the County receives 1% to go to general revenue.

Motion Stoddard County Commission accepts the agreement between the Collector and the city of Puxico made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Drainage District with Clean-up on #13-33 and Ditch 14

"We are asking that MoDOT divert or consider diverting the water from the swamp low lying area down the north side of Hwy 25 going southwest to ditch 13-33 and 14. The highway ditch is already established, but would need excavated deeper to make this happen," stated Speakman.

"This area of issue, along Hwy 25 has been an existing issue for some time now, with water levels consistent and on the edge of the road that seems to remain and higher than normal levels of longer than normal periods of time."

Stoddard County has invested nearly \$100,000 dollars on the ditch cleanup project on the north end of the county.

Speakman is spearheading this request. This would be in Little River Drainage system. No motion was made today.

SB190 Tax Credit for the Elderly

"I had two questions about the application," commented Speakman. "One is whether or not to put the Social Security number on the application and if it has to be notarized or not. The ball is in your court (referring to the Commission) as to the decision on these two matters."

Mathis stated they would look at the application and decide next week.

Cecil Weeks, Stoddard County Clerk - Election Update

Only 11 people have voted in the office thus far for the Primary in August. Absentee voting began on June 25th.

"In the last Presidential election the turnout was low for the August primary," commented Weeks. "Only 7,032 people voted in Stoddard County, that's only 36% turnout."

July 24th is the last day to request an Absentee Ballot by mail. You can come up to the government building in Bloomfield and get an Absentee Ballot.

The Saturday prior to the Primary the County Clerk's office will be open all day and on Monday, August 5th will be open until 5 p.m. so people can come in and vote.

Johnson Grass in Liberty Township

Mr. Mathis had received a call from a citizen regarding Johnson Grass in Liberty Township. He contacted someone on the board and they stated that they had already sprayed once and have some additional chemicals on order. They are behind due to picking up the limbs from the storm damage in May.

Dee Loflin, owner of the ShowMe Times asked about the Johnson Grass Board. There are three members on the board and their terms expired in December of 2023. The Commission appoints the board members and typically the Dept of Agriculture sends a reminder letter. No further action was taken at this time.

Scenic Byway Update

All Commissioners have looked over the information and letter received. Mathis said they can possibly get a public meeting set for July 19th.

Peter Coutavas, City of Puxico Alderman, stated that the city will discuss at their regular meeting next week on Thursday, July 18th at 6 p.m. He will discuss the byway coming through Puxico.

Air Conditioner at the IDA Building, owned by the County

Presiding Commissioner Mathis said that the IDA paid \$900 to put freon in and there is still a slow leak. He has spoken to Alisha Trammell, Treasurer and Peter Coutavas, Director of the IDA. During the Commission meeting he stated that he has spoken to William Dowdy, Maintenance, who will get some specs on the unit. This will need to be bid out since it will be over \$12,000.

The Community Center in Bloomfield, Missouri Grand Opening

Kerri Standley attend the meeting on behalf of the city of Bloomfield and invited everyone to attend a ribbon cutting. The city of Bloomfield received a \$2 million dollar CDB Grant to building the new Community Center next to the city park.

On Friday, July 12th there will be a ribbon Cutting at 5 p.m. and then an open house from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. The Center is located at 808 S. Prairie St. Refreshments will be served.

10:00 a.m. Bid Opening for Transport Van Insert

Motion to enter into Bid Opening at 10:22 a.m. by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Then only bid that was presented was from Public Safety Upfitters in the amount of \$19,224.00 out of Fenton, Missouri for the vent adapter and insert of the transport van.

This does not include installation of the insert. Mr. Andy Holden of the Sheriff's Dept stated that their maintenance or Battles Communications would do the installation of the insert. This would be in a separate invoice.

Motion to accept the bid in the amount of \$19,224.00 from Public Safety Upfitters made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell and second by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to close the bid opening meeting at 10:39 a.m. made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

SB40 Board Appointments

"We have two spots on the board available," commented Mathis. "It was placed in the paper with a deadline of June 28th for anyone to submit a resume."

There are three applications and one request for the board member position: Ray McLane wanted to be reappointed, Danny Griffin wanted to be reappointed, Patricia Holloway from Puxico. Herman Morse's name had also been submitted by Wayne Jean. Josh Hester, resigned, and needs to be replaced.

Motion to reappoint Ray McLane and Danny Griffin to the SB40 Board made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed. His appointment will be June 30, 2024 - June 30, 2027.

Motion to reappoint Danny Griffin to the SB40 Board made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed. His appointment will be June 30, 2024 - June 30, 2027.

Motion to replace Josh Hester with Patricia Holloway of Puxico made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Other Business:

Motion to approve the June 2024 Ads and Abates from Josh Speakman, Stoddard County Collector/Treasure made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Castor Township County Road 468 needs some attention. A section of that road is one lane and one side is washed out and has a deep drop off. Commissioner Carol Jarrell will contact Dale Moreland with regards to this matter as it is in her district.

Motion to pay GoSEMO Fiber \$660,799.68 of their \$1 million dollars in ARPA Funds made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to accept the meeting minutes from July 1, 2024 made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Greg Mathis. Both voted yes and Jarrell abstained due to her leaving early at the meeting last week.

Motion to accept the closed session meeting minutes from July 1, 2024 made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Greg Mathis. Both voted yes and motion passed. Jarrell abstained due to her leaving early and was not in attendance for the closed session meeting.

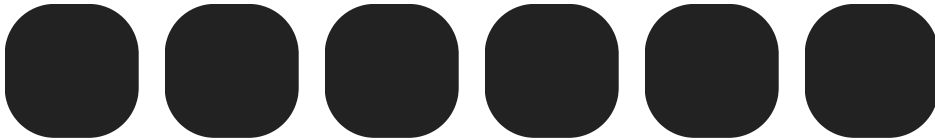
Motion to accept the minutes from the Board of Equalization made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Greg Mathis. Both voted yes and motion passed. Jarrell abstained due to her absence. It was Tuesday, July 2nd at 10 a.m. Mary Worley and Mike Bollinger were in attendance and they are both on the Board of Equalization. No one attend the meeting to discuss any issues. It will close on Tuesday, July 16, 2024 at 10 a.m.

Motion to adjourn at 12:06 p.m. by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

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Stoddard County Commission Meeting - July 1, 2024

JULY 08TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer for the family of Darren Dixon, those that are serving in Poland with the 1221st Transportation unit out of Dexter, and for the office holders and the decisions they will make this week. Also for the cooler weather today and those candidates that are out campaigning.

Advance Ditch Digging

Mr. C.D. Stewart, Commissioner told the group that the southeast and going up to 25 highway has already been done. The main ditch was stopped off the trees as well. These are ditch cleanups of Ditch #1333 and #14. "Looks like they are getting the job done," commented Stewart.

SB190 Senior Tax Credit on Personal Property Taxes in Stoddard County, Missouri

There was much discussion about the application process and how to implement to the citizens of Stoddard County for the Senior Citizen Tax Credit. "It is up to the Commission as to ask these questions of citizens," commented Josh Speakman, County Collector/Treasurer. "You have to decide as to whether or not you want to ask for social security numbers, if you want their signature notarized, if you only except the applications in-house or mailed in via USPS, etc."

"It's really up to the Commission what records do you want the collector to have on file to do the proper research on each applicant," Speakman stated. "We will scan all applications and have not just a paper file, but also an electronic copy as well."

"I think we should the application process from September 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025," continued Speakman.

Stoddard County Real Estate Tax Lien Auction

The Stoddard County Tax Auction will be held on the 4th Monday in August. The Collector's office has sent out certified letters to those people who owe money for Real Estate Taxes and have to be more than 2 years delinquent.

Personal and Real Estate Property Taxes

Speakman spoke at the City of Puxico alderman meeting about the benefits and cons of the Speakman assuming the responsibility of collecting the taxes on behalf of their city. Bell City also reached out to Speakman about the same service he can provide to their

city.

Essex Special Paving Project

Speakman noted that there is \$18,000 sitting in the Essex Special Paving Project account and has not been used. Mathis stated he will reach out to the current board members and let them know.

Speakman did stated that the Commission could use MO State Statute 50.020 to put the money back into general revenue if they choose not to use the monies.

"We have 8 or 9 total line items of about \$10,000 where we do not know the location of ditches. We can easily transfer that money into general revenue. These ditches were created in the early 1900s and there are no maps to speak of to figure out where this money is supposed to go and has just been sitting in that line item for as least three collectors," commented Speakman.

Prosecuting Attorney Sawyer Smith

Smith brought in some invoices from their case management system that have not been paid. Apparently the PA paid 2019 and 2022, but owes for 2020, 2021 and 2023. This year has also been paid.

The amount owed is \$2,800 total and invoices were given to the Commission. The invoices were 2020 for \$500, 2021 for \$500, 2023 for \$1,800.

Motion to pay these past due invoices made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion carried.

Carl Hefner, Stoddard County Sheriff's Department

Mr. Hefner stated he would like to use Stellar Services LLC for the inmate banking and commissary products. This would be a new contract with this service. The inmates can purchase items such as toiletries, shampoo, candy, clothing, etc online from this company and have it delivered to the Stoddard County Jail.

Motion to use Stellar Services, LLC beginning September 1, 2024 made by Stewart, seconded by Mathis. Both voted yes and motion carried. Mrs. Carol Jarrell had to leave the meeting early for another appointment.

Other Business

An invoice for the Juvenile Detention Maintenance renewal was presented. This is an annual cost of \$3,936 and a motion on floor by Jarrell, seconded by Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

An email was received from Jennifer Hall at MoDOT. This letter is to inform Stoddard County of a proposed Scenic Byway application submitted by the Ozark Run Scenic Byway Group. The 2024 Expansion includes 250 miles of Missouri roadways encompassing several counties including Stoddard. Missouri State Statute 226.797 requires the Missouri Department of Transportation to contact all affected communities to request zoning information for the area identified within the science application.

The byway will follow routes 172, W, KK, and T to pass around the Wappapello area. Turning north at Puxico, the sprint follows Rout 51, H, FF, and then 51 again to reach Marble Hill.

Points of interest in Puxico will be Casa Lopez Mexican Restaurant, Hunt Brothers Pizza, Puxico Bar, Southern Barrel Bar and Grill, Spoon & Spout, and the Midway.

Mathis gave a copy to Peter Coutavas who was in attendance. He is an alderman for the City of Puxico.

Many entities are against the scenic byway, Mr. Mathis said which included Farm Bureau and many land owners. A letter will have to go out possibly or at least in the newspapers to inform the public and a public forum will have to be announced at a future date.

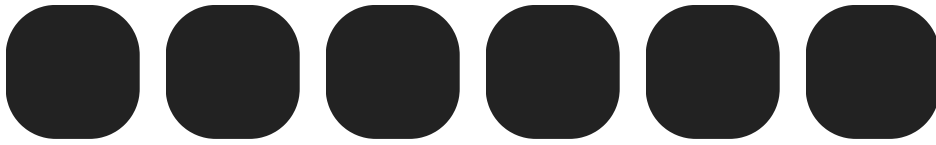
Motion to accept the Minutes for the regular session on June 24, 2024 made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Mathis. Both voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to adjourn at 11:11 a.m. and enter into a closed session regarding personnel made by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Mathis. Both voted yes and motion passed.

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Stoddard County Commissioner Meeting - Monday, June 10, 2024

Stoddard County Commission Discuss SB190 - Tax Credit for Seniors

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Two Children Taken by Older Brothers in Doniphan, Police Need Your Help Locating

JUNE 28TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Two Children Taken by Older Brothers in Doniphan, Police Need Your Help Locating](#)

At the time of posting there are no photos of the children available. ShowMe Times will update once they have a photo to share with the media.

The Ripley County Sheriff's Department has issued an Endangered Person Advisory for a brother and sister reportedly taken by their older brothers.

According to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, 7-year-old Raelyn Vargas and 5-year-old Ashton Vargas were forcibly taken by their two older brothers, ages 15 and 16, from their mother in Doniphan at 1:55 a.m. on Friday, June 28.

MSHP said deputies have been in contact with one of the brothers and they will not tell deputies where they are and would only say they are safe and will not bring the two younger children back.

Investigators say the missing children were last seen in a silver or tan Ford truck, with unknown registration, traveling westbound on Route K.

Raelyn Vargas is described as 4 feet inches tall, weighs 60 pounds, has brown hair and hazel eyes, and was last seen wearing a tie-dye Troll shirt, a white sweater, blue shorts and no shoes.

Ashton Vargas is described as 3 feet 5 inches tall, weighs 50 pounds, has brown hair and hazel eyes and was last seen wearing blue shorts and no shoes.

The 16-year-old suspect is described as 6 feet tall, weighs 200 pounds, has red hair, blues eyes and was last seen wearing blue camouflage shorts.

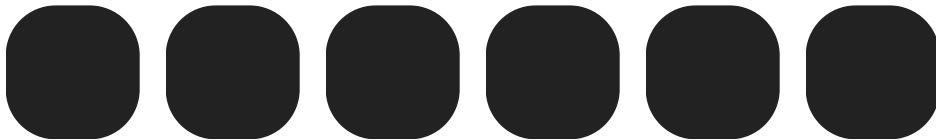
The 15-year-old suspect is described as 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighs 250 pounds, has brown hair and blue eyes and was last seen wearing blue camouflage shorts.

Anyone who has seen Raelyn and Ashton Vargas, the two teen suspects or the truck is urged to contact the Ripley County Sheriff's Department at 573-996-7123 or their local police department.

LAST UPDATED ON JUNE 28TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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