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valley

The news that's close to home.

UND to host panel on Charlie Hebdo

Panel will be held Jan. 29 in the Herald community room.

By Garrett Richie
Grand Forks Herald

UND's Center for Human Rights and Genocide Studies is hosting a panel Thursday in response to the Charlie Hebdo shooting.

The panel, which will take place at 7 p.m. in the Grand Forks Herald community room, is entitled "Charlie Hebdo: Religion, Race, and the Free Press," and will analyze these issues in the context of the 11 people killed by two gunmen at the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper recently.

UND English professor Rebecca Weaver-Hightower helped organize the panel with UND political science professor Brian Urlacher, who will moderate the panel. She said the panel is what they consider a "response," which arises after an event of either national or international significance.

"We're always trying to raise awareness for students in the community about international issues related to human rights and genocide studies," Weaver-Hightower said. "There are a lot of touchy issues out there and we can't not address them."

Three people will be speaking on the panel: UND history professor Caroline Campbell, who has a specialty in French history and human rights; UND English doctoral candidate Musab Bajaber, a former board member of the Grand Forks Islamic Center; and Mike

Jacobs, former editor and publisher of the Grand Forks Herald.

"I'm going to talk about how the idea of expression is different in France than the United States," Campbell said. "I think it's important for Americans to understand that other countries view the concept of free speech and free expression differently."

Jacobs, who will address the issue from the perspective of a journalist, said he's looking forward to hearing both Bajaber and Campbell speak.

"I'm thinking hard about it, but it's not an easy issue," Jacobs said. "I'm an absolutist about free speech, but I also think that we need to have some sensitivity about what we say about others and how we depict others. It's not an either-or issue. Obviously, we don't want people killing one another, but we also don't want people causing deliberate offense."

Weaver-Hightower said the main purpose of the forum is to spark meaningful discussion. "We're not looking to come to any conclusions, we're just wanting to have a conversation," she said. "There really are no conclusions to come to. We should just be aware of these international events."

In February, the center will host a panel on race and policing in a post-Ferguson era.

"We're sort of past the moment of crisis with that, but we're not past the need to discuss it," Weaver-Hightower said.

Call Richie at (701) 780-1134; (800) 477-6572, ext. 1134; or send email to grichie@gfherald.com.



Members of the Ragamala Dance Company perform Sunday at the North Dakota Museum of Art. Dancers include Ashwini Ramaswamy, (from left), Raneer Ramaswamy and Tamara Nadel.

Keeping up tradition

Ragamala Dance Company performs at North Dakota Museum of Art

Story & Photos | Wade Rupard



Ashwini Ramaswamy dances during the Ragamala Dance Company performance. The company has performed extensively both nationally and internationally.

The Ragamala Dance Company performed Sunday at the North Dakota Museum of Art.

Trained in the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam, Ragamala intertwining music and dance to explore the tension between the ancestral and the contemporary.

The company was founded in 1992 in Minneapolis and has toured extensively, both nationally and internationally.

Ragamala performed as part of the Sunday Concerts in the Galleries series at the North Dakota Museum of Art.

Call Rupard at (701) 780-1122; (800) 477-6572, ext. 1122; or send email to wrupard@gfherald.com.

digitaldose

Here is a list of the top read stories for the week of Jan 18 to Jan 24. There were 1,034,609 views.

1

THE EATBEAT: Greater Grand Forks McDonald's restaurants offer fun fast food
48,354 views

2

THE EATBEAT: Long-awaited Olive Garden receives warm welcome
30,622 views

3

Fresh water being trucked into Glendive, Mont., after almost 50,000 gallons of Bakken crude spills in Yellowstone River
19,033 views

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Lawmakers want new study of diversion alternative

F-M Diversion Authority fears existing studies will be duplicated, adding to costs.

By Tu-Uyen Tran
Forum News Service

FARGO — North Dakota lawmakers representing districts south and west of the city are pushing a bill to study the impact of the Fargo-Moorhead flood diversion and whether a diversion is even needed.

Millions in tax dollars have been spent on studies and several more are in progress, but Sen. Larry Luick, R-Fairmount, said he'd like another.

His reasons include what he feels is a lack of informa-

tion independent of project supporters, and unanswered questions.

He also has an idea for water retention in several areas, including in South Dakota and on drain-tiled farmland south of Fargo that would negate the need for a diversion.

Luick and several other sponsors of Senate Bill 2076 represent districts with land in the "staging area" behind a dam that would be used to store water to reduce the flow through the diversion and prevent harm to downstream communities.

Darrell Vanyo, chairman of the Fargo-Moorhead Flood Diversion Board of Authority, said the group has sent many studies produced by its consultants to Luick at the senator's request. "We're not all up in arms about this except

it seems to be duplication and can be very costly if you don't control it."

Luick denied that his bill is an attempt to blunt momentum for the \$1.8 billion project, which would protect Fargo-Moorhead against a once-every-500-year flood.

"I see a problem that needs to be fixed and that's why I'm involved in looking at it at all," Luick said. "I am protecting the people of my district, but above and beyond that there's an opportunity here for the entire Red River Basin to come out of this with a whole lot of benefit than what they're going to get by this staging area."

Other bill sponsors are Sens. Gary Lee, R-Casselton; Jim Dotzenrod, D-Wyndmere; and Bill Bowman, R-Bowman; along with Reps. Cynthia Schreiber Beck, R-Wahpeton, and Wesley Belter, R-Fargo. Belter, despite the address, represents a primarily rural district south and west of the city.

Unknown costs

Though the bill has been introduced in the state Senate, Luick said he's still gathering information and meeting with diversion officials to learn what studies already exist to avoid too much duplication. He hopes narrowing down requirements would also make it easier to get a cost estimate.

The State Water Commission, tasked with overseeing the study, said it doesn't have a cost estimate. "We do not have a history of contracting for this type of study and are unable to estimate its cost," the commission said in a fiscal note that explains the cost of the bill.

According to the Diversion Authority, at least \$31 million has already been spent on at least nine studies. This includes studies by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Red River Basin Commission, North Dakota State University and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is leading the diversion project.

Costs for some studies in which the authority was not involved were not immediately available.

Storing water

One study was released last month by the Minnesota DNR, which is part of a lawsuit to halt work on the diversion. The department ruled out water retention as an option, in part because of the difficulty of getting the large number of landowners to agree to let water sit on their land.

Luick is more optimistic about his retention ideas.

Asked if South Dakotans would resent storing water to protect North Dakota communities, he said the White Rock area that he has in mind is sparsely populated and landowners could be offered incentives to participate in retention.

Drain-tiling, which would drain soil in the fall to be ready to soak up snowmelt in the spring, would also result in better crop production, he said, and farmers are already

installing tiles on their own.

But Luick said he may take the requirement to study water retention out of the bill. The State Water Commission has told him the retention was what made estimating the cost of his bill difficult, he said.

Other questions

Another reason for requiring more studies, Luick said, is because most of the studies released so far are from groups affiliated with the project and he'd like the assurance of an independent review.

He gave the example of two neighboring homeowners, one of whom is getting significant work done that could affect the other's home. Would the affected homeowner really want to trust but not verify when the neighbor's contractor says there would be no impact?

In this scenario, the affected homeowner is the landowners behind the diversion dam. The contractor is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Luick's bill calls for a study that goes beyond areas the corps believes will be affected by the diversion project. The study would look at the diversion's effect on the property tax base in those areas, land rents to farmers, crop insurance rates, diking of churches and cemeteries, and access by emergency responders.

In particular, Luick wants to know who will pay for county and township roads washed out by high water caused by the diversion dam.

Vanyo said he believes the studies the Diversion Authority has will answer most of Luick's questions. He said a study of crop insurance and other farm issues is underway at NDSU.

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