REVIEW

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■ Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson reverses decision to resign from position.

MAY

■ Boise Inc. paper mill in International Falls announces shutdown of three machines and loss of 265 jobs, effective Oct. 1.

■ Community officials work quickly with Congressman Rick Nolan, Minnesota Rep. David Dill, and U.S. Sens Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken to respond to the Boise Inc. job loss announcement.

■ Littlefork-Big Falls High School is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top schools in the nation.

■ Criminal prosecution is sought after carbon monoxide issues at AmericInn.

■ The Falls High School boys and girls golf coach is suspended after giving someone a ride while transporting students in a school vehicle.

■ A former International Falls resident shares her experience of the Moore, Okla. tornado.

JUNE

■ A study shows detailed economic impact of 265 lost jobs from local Boise Inc. paper mill.

■ Vietnam veteran Wade Pavleck helps a deceased comrade get posthumous recognition.

■ The Little Free Library program promotes love of reading in International Falls and Ranier.

■ A Bikeable Community Workshop teaches how to create a bicycle-friendly community.

■ Rainy Lake Medical Center and Essentia Health continue to negotiate integration.

JULY

■ An International Falls native spends first Fourth of July home after four years in ROTC.

■ Ride Across Minnesota bicyclists ride through International Falls during charity ride for multiple sclerosis.

■ The third annual Riverfest concert event draws nearly 1,000 attendees at the Irvin N. Anderson Amphitheater.

■ The Journal welcomes a new staff writer.

■ The Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championship crowns winning pair of Jeff Gustafson and John Peterson.

AUGUST

■ A local same-sex couple makes plans to wed after same-sex marriage becomes legal in Minnesota.

■ Rainy Lake Medical Center and Essentia Health end integration negotiations and terminate affiliation.

■ The Falls High School boys and girls golf coach Bill Mason resigns, prompting the district to seek a new golf coach.

■ Emo, Ont., team of Nathan Brigham and Brett Meyers take home the ninth annual International Falls Bass Championship crown.

SEPTEMBER

■ Littlefork-Big Falls school district sees enrollment increase, thanks to a good academic reputation and a strong anti-bullying environment.

■ The loss of 52 students in the International Falls School District means a loss of $300,000 in state funding.

■ Meetings to identify a use for the 122 acres of land west of International Falls known as the Donahue property begin.

■ Packaging Corporation of America purchases Boise Inc. and its facilities, including the International Falls paper mill, in cash deal valued at nearly $2 billion.

■ Minnesota Power discusses the Great Northern Transmission Line route alternatives with residents in Littlefork.

OCTOBER

■ Thirty-five Voyaguers National Park employees are sent home during the 16-day federal government shutdown.

■ Boise Inc. paper mill in International Falls shuts down three machines, and the layoff of 265 employees takes effect.

■ Good Samaritan Society-International Falls welcomes residents into the new facility on Keenan Drive.

■ City and county officials working to find a tenant for the vacant Northome Health Care Center.

■ St. Paul Lutheran Church celebrates 100 years of existence in the International Falls community.

■ International Falls Fire and Ambulance Chief Jerry Jensen is recognized as Fire Officer of the Year by the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association.

NOVEMBER

■ Falls School Board starts considering spending adjustments to offset the loss of about $425,000 in state funding. Reducing staff and eliminating two non-revenue sports are among the proposed options.

■ Falls School Board begins search for a superintendent after Nordy Nelson announces his plan to step down after his contract expires June 30, 2014.

■ Ranier City Councilor Fred Woods resigns effective Dec. 31, 2013, after taking a job in North Dakota.

■ Local homeless advocacy group Servants of Shelter signs a lease for an apartment so it be better serve the community's needs.

■ Ray and Lolita Moone spread holiday cheer through wreath-making business.

DECEMBER

■ Koochiching Economic Development Authority moves forward with expanding the foreign trade zone borders to include all of Koochiching County.

■ State budget surplus will pay back money borrowed from Minnesota's schools, but won't bring in additional funds to the cash-strapped Falls School District.

■ International Falls City Council accepts a $200,000 federal grant to help the community in recovery from the loss of 265 jobs at the local paper mill.

■ More than a foot and a half of snow and subzero temperatures make for difficult conditions, but area loggers continue to adapt.

■ Renewable Energy Clean Air Project, a waste-to-energy plasma gasification facility, nears the halfway point of planning process.

LAWS

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and Sen. Katie Sieben, DFL-Newport, requires the state emergency response center to notify a local 911 emergency dispatch center within 24 hours of the notification, unless "the situation requires an immediate response or the area is unknown to the center." Then, the state emergency response center shall direct the caller to contact local authorities.

The new law was approved as written in House File 814.

Another new law requires home sellers to disclose whether the house has been tested for radon.

A requirement for home sellers to disclose radon testing is one of the major provisions contained in the omnibus health policy law sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Laine, DFL-Columbia Heights, and Sen. John Marty, DFL-Roseville.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, and one in three Minnesota homes pose a risk from the odorless, tasteless gas, said Laine.

The law does not mandate testing or mitigation; instead, a Minnesota Department of Health radon awareness brochure will be given to the 40,000 annual homebuyers across the state at the point of sale.

If the seller has knowledge of radon in the home, that information must be disclosed to the buyer. The so-called "Radon Awareness Act" also requires the seller to hand over records pertaining to radon testing or mitigation of the residence, if available.

There are some exclusions to the disclosure requirement, such as property transferred due to divorce, foreclosure, death of a family member or when no money is transferred.

The law was approved as written in Senate File 887.

Other new laws that take effect Wednesday include:

'Ban the Box' law expanded to private employers — Since 2009, state law has banned a public employer from inquiring whether a job applicant has a criminal record or criminal history at the time a person applies for a job.

Rep. Tim Mahoney, DFL-St. Paul, and Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, DFL-Mpls, sponsored the so-called "Ban the Box" law, which will add private employers to those who must wait until an applicant is selected for an interview to ask the question.

The law will remove the question that asks job applicants to check a box about whether they have ever been convicted of a felony or gross misdemeanor. For jobs that don't include an interview, employers cannot ask about criminal issues until there is a conditional offer of employment.

Employers who violate the new law within the first year will be subject to a written warning after their first offense, followed by cash penalties for any subsequent violations.

The law was approved as written in Senate File 523.

Medical Assistance expands to cover more Minnesotans — an estimated 40,000 additional low-wage earners and their families may qualify for Medical Assistance coverage as a result of a new law that extends coverage to those making up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, including a standard 5 percent income disregard, or about $15,000 per year.

Rep. Thomas Huntley, DFL-Duluth, and Sen. Kathy Sheran, DFL-Mankato, sponsored the law that allows the state to exercise its option under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to expand Medical Assistance.

The federal government will pay all of the cost for adults without children who qualify through 2016. Beginning in 2017, the federal government will gradually reduce that support to 90 percent of the cost for 2020 and subsequent years.

In addition to the newly eligible, thousands of people currently enrolled in the state-offered MinnesotaCare health insurance program are expected to shift to the expanded Medical Assistance program. The law transfers about $63.6 million from the Health Care Access Fund to the General Fund in the 2014-15 biennium to cover the cost of insuring some MinnesotaCare enrollees who are not eligible for the full federal funding under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

The law as approved as written in House File 9.

Access to some juvenile court records will be restricted — many juvenile court records and proceedings are already closed to the public. A new law affects records stemming from hearings in which a 16- or 17-year-old has been charged with a felony. Those records are currently public even if an initial felony charge is later reduced or dismissed.

The new law limits access only to electronic court records. It will not affect public access to hearings or paper records. The law also makes exceptions that maintain public access to electronic records in certain cases involving serious offenses, unless the prosecutor agrees otherwise.

The law was approved as written in House File 392.

New regulations placed on estate sales operators — estate sale operators will be required to guarantee their clients at least $20,000 prior to agreeing to conduct an estate sale.

The new law is the first to regulate estate sales by requiring operators to offer a surety bond. Certified public accountants and licensed attorneys, however, are exempt.

The law was approved as written in House File 131.

Surveillance cameras required at scrap yards — the law aims to expand licensing and regulatory provisions as they relate to scrap metal and scrapped vehicle purchases.

While Aug. 1, 2013, was the effective date for much of a larger law to prevent stolen cars from quickly becoming scrap metal, scrap vehicle operators must install and maintain video surveillance cameras at their operations, effective Wednesday.

Additionally, still digital cameras or similar devices must be positioned to clearly photograph the face of each seller of a scrap vehicle who enters the location. The scrap vehicle operator shall also photograph the seller's vehicle, including license plate. Any video must be shown to law enforcement, upon request.

The law was approved as written in House File 1214.

WETLAND

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Earlier, Serrano estimated the retail value at $15,000 per credit, with actual costs at $4,500 to $5,200 to gain each credit. He estimated the total value of the 45 credits at $675,000.

Meanwhile, in November, Serrano provided details of the status of the EDA's 24.5 wetland bank credits: 10 credits were provided at no cost for the Good Samaritan Society-International Falls facility; 0.95 for Choice Properties expansion; 4.42 for Menards expansion; 0.47 provided at no cost for the animal holding facility; 0.71 to be held for five years as required by the state; 2 for Friends Garbage expansion.

Serrano said 2.5 credits have been proposed for use at the multimodal district rail spur and ditch improvement, leaving 3.45 credits that have not been assigned use.

State and federal policies require no net loss of wetland for both private and public construction projects. Anyone who destroys a wetland has to replace a wetland either through physical mitigation or the purchase of wetland mitigation credits.

Regulatory agencies prefer the wetland loss be mitigated in the same watershed, but because of the vast amounts of presettlement wetlands still intact in northeastern Minnesota, there aren't a lot of areas where wetlands can created or restored.

Ideally, the restoration and creation of wetlands will be of the same type and be located in the same watershed where the disturbance occurred, but that's often not possible. Instead, different ratios are determined to offset the losses, so depending on the type of wetland that is created or restored and depending where it is located, the ratio could be 1.5 acre to 1 acre or 2 to 1.

A lot of projects in northern Minnesota end up creating or restoring more acres of wetlands than were disturbed or destroyed by the project.

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