

PLAYING THE FAVORITES



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT
Jessie Laurion, on keyboard, joins Margarete Kostiuk and Wayne Sampson in providing traditional Oktoberfest music Friday at the International Falls Chamber of Commerce-sponsored event.

LOGGERS

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10-12 hour days, six and seven days per week, in 20-30 degrees below zero weather,” Scott said in the statement. “The least these hardworking loggers and truckers should be able to expect is to make a living.” Current wood shortages at mills are not simply a result of the weather, but instead the result of forest management policy by public land managers and agencies and wood procurement practices of some mills, according to a story in the fall edition of ACLT’s magazine, “Update.”

It said PCA cut the price paid to loggers for wood shortly after purchasing Boise. In addition to the price cut, it said PCA reduced the amount of timber stockpiled and eliminated stockpiling compensation for some loggers. “Now, they have reinstated the price cut (after loggers lost thousands during the winter harvest season) and they seem to be able to pay three times (more on occasion) the appraised value of timber at auction,” the magazine said. Scott said he would attempt to connect The Journal with a logger or trucker who would take part in the delivery interruption this

week, however that attempt failed in time for this publication. “The mills have relied on a culture of intimidation and threats for 100 years to keep loggers in line,” he responded. “In fact, Boise reps have been to logging sites recently warning loggers not to participate in any demonstration and that there would be consequences if they did. They’ve threatened to replace them, but unlike the past, there are not loggers to replace them with. Interestingly, the settlement of the 1937 loggers strike ‘prohibited retaliation,’ and that intimidation issue still remains.”

Renewal costs may surprise MNsure customers

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesotans who bought policies on the state’s health insurance exchange are starting to get their first renewal notices, and many could be in for a jolt. Premiums for most of the more than 55,000 individuals signed up for private insurance plans via MNsure are going up. For the nearly 33,000 who have coverage from PreferredOne, most who want to keep those poli-

cies next year will have to pay over 60 percent more, according to officials with the Minnesota Association of Health Underwriters who’ve seen the company’s rate data. Tom Beckfeld, a self-employed snowplower and window cleaner from Big Lake, acknowledged he’s worried about getting a big rate increase notice from PreferredOne. But he said he has saved so much money

thanks to the Affordable Care Act’s ban on excluding patients with preexisting conditions that he’ll still be better off. Beckfeld, 56, has diabetes and high blood pressure. The only insurance he could get before MNsure cost about \$750 a month. PreferredOne charges him \$421 a month and covers much more, including drugs. He put the savings at about \$12,000 this year.

EDA

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having that information would benefit the organization going forward. “What we do not have is refreshed, current information on that, and additional information on what types of housing is needed,” Mason said. Mason said EDA officials have spoken with potential developers who are interested in a housing development project, and can’t answer questions they have about housing data for the area. “I think a comprehensive housing study should be something the EDA should think about, whether or not you’d like to do that,” Mason said. The Arrowhead Region Development Commission can help find someone to conduct a housing study, Mason said. Areas in the region like Cook County, the city of Duluth, and several cities on the Iron Range are in the process of or have just completed housing studies. The EDA approved a motion to have Mason compile information on housing studies from the region, and to determine the scope of the

studies, how much the studies cost and who performed the studies. The EDA can then review the information to determine the feasibility of a local housing study. “We know that economic development is based upon a lot of things, but it’s really based upon having good, current data,” Mason said. “And that’s one area where we don’t have it.” Anderson said he sees the housing study as one part of a more ideal solution, which would be a comprehensive plan for the area. The city is only part of the housing picture, he said, which also includes Koochiching County and Ranier. “We’ve had virtually none or very little housing construction here in the city in the past years,” Anderson. “So I think we really need to be looking beyond just the city limits here.” In other business, the board discussed a grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, which provides grants for improvements to eligible commercial buildings and landlord-owned single family dwellings. Mason said a variety of groups were involved in

preparing a grant application, including KOOTASCA Community Action. The Small Cities Development grant is available for cities and townships with populations under 50,000 and counties with populations under 200,000. The total grant request will be between \$600,000-\$650,000, Mason said. Combined with contributions from eligible building owners, that would bring total community investment to \$1 million. “The thing that will happen here will be that we’ll have some improvement in our businesses, and some improvement in our rental property, which we very much need,” EDA President Gail Rognerud said. “It’s a win-win for everybody.” Mason also informed the board an entity behind a proposed east riverfront hospitality project has moved forward with a wetland application. The proposed location is next to the Voyageurs National Park headquarters on Highway 11 east. “We are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to share more information with the public once we get the green light to do so,” Mason said.

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