

LOCALNEWS

KOOCHICHING COUNTY

County prohibits creation of wetland banks

Moratorium intended to protect highland

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

In an effort to preserve the little high, dry land in Koochiching County, a moratorium on establishing wetland banks has been put in place by the county board.

The moratorium is expected to be lifted after county officials establish a policy that ensures a public benefit to creating the banks.

Commissioners have voiced concern about the loss of the small amount of highlands in the county driven by the high sale value of wetland credits pushing the creation of for-profit wetland banks. Commissioners have said they fear wetland bank owners may stop paying taxes on the land after the credits are used, resulting in a loss of the county's tax base and the creation of more unneeded wetlands in the wetland rich county.

Commissioners have urged the state to take over the business of wetland

banks, creating a one-stop shop for people requiring credits to mitigate development of wetlands. The board has also supported mitigating a wetland disturbance in the area of the state it would be of greatest value, rather than the current system of replacing wetland loss with credits within the same watershed.

Commissioners have argued that it makes no sense to create more wetlands in Koochiching County where development is prohibited because of the vast amounts of untouched wetlands.

A public hearing on a proposal to implement a moratorium on wetland banks in the county was held May 13 and generated a few comments.

Bruce Hasbargen, who is attempting to establish a second wetland bank, told the board wetland banks support development and the only highland that could be considered for a bank is farmland that was created by earlier draining of the



Brian McBride

"I don't like to stand in the way of a commercial venture,"

Brian McBride
Koochiching County commissioner

property. Commissioners and county staff said his project would be stopped with the moratorium.

Dennis Wagner, Ranier mayor and Wagner Construction Inc. owner, told the board the moratorium will hurt development because it will cost people who need credits to seek them elsewhere at a high cost.

County Assessor Len Peterson said classifications and values set on land used as wetland banks should be changed to reflect the increased value of the for-profit business venture. Until then, he said no more wetland banks should be established in Koochiching County.

Wagner said state rules should be changed to put a true value on the property.

Commissioner Brian McBride said good points were made against the moratorium, but concerns about the loss of dry land need to be addressed.

"I don't like to stand in

the way of a commercial venture," he said. But he added the expansion of mining in the state is expected to see an increase in the purchase of cheap land. And some of that land may be in Koochiching County.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck said wetlands are already prohibiting development in the county.

County Environmental Service Director Dale Olson told the board three applications to establish wetland banks on farmlands are now open, but other people have also recently purchased farmlands, which he suspects are for the creation of banks.

Olson said the county must have controls in place for deciding the establishment of the banks, and could lift a moratorium when that has been completed.

Commissioners said establishment of the banks must have a benefit to the public now and in the future.

Some businesses to pay higher SW fee

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

It will cost some commercial properties more money to dispose of their garbage.

The Koochiching County Board last month agreed to limit a fee increase to 5 percent in the 2014 billing and another 5 percent for the 2015 billings to businesses that haven't been charged the full cost to handle their waste due to the lack of volume reports.

The increase in commercial solid waste service fees is a result of an increase in volume by many commercial properties and are based on new volume data collected by the county, said county Environmental Services Director Dale Olson.

Volume data for the 2012 billing was four years old, he told the board.

Businesses are expected to receive a letter explaining the increase with their billing.

Olson said the increase is needed to cover the county's costs and should generate about \$100,000. Now, he said just \$93,000 is generated.

Information on how the properties would be impacted at increases of 10 percent, 15 percent and 20 percent were provided to the board.

Olson suggested using the updated volume data for the 2014 billing and providing reductions where waste volume decreased and limiting the

increase in fee to 10 percent for 2014, charging the full cost in increments over time.

He said using this method would encourage businesses to reduce their volume and thereby their costs.

Under Olson's scenario, about 140 businesses would see increases, some of which he called good sized. The largest increase, he said, would be by about \$500 to a local school district. About 25 businesses would see a little reduction, he noted.

Olson said the increase is an opportunity for businesses to reduce their volume significantly, which several businesses have done in recent years.

Commissioners said spreading the 10 percent increase over two years would provide more time for businesses to reduce volumes and costs.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck said his main concern is overburdening businesses while at the same time generating enough money for the county to operate the program.

Board Chairman Rob Ecklund said the money to operate the program would be taken from general revenue without an increase in the fee.



Rob Ecklund

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

RURAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION INC.

P.O. BOX 218

INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MINNESOTA 56649

JUNE 11, 2014
TIME-6:00 p.m.
BUSINESS

1. Minutes of the February 13, 2013 meeting
2. Financial Statement for 2013
3. Election of three (3) Directors
4. Any business concerning the R.F.P.A. Inc.

JUNE'S REGULAR MEETING TO FOLLOW

R.F.P.A. INC. WEB SITE (WWW.RFPA.US) TO KEEP INFORMED

What advances in technology have been made in hearing aids?

The most recent advance is the introduction of hearing aids that are compatible with selected smart phones. These hearing aids allow the user to hear the sound from the phone directly in the hearing aids. There is an app for altering the sound characteristics of the hearing aids for specific locations and automatically returning to the settings the next time you are in that location.

Most hearing aids now exchange data from ear to ear. If the wind is buffeting one side, the microphone could be turned off and the hearing aid can get sound input from the non-buffed side. A phone can be answered and sound can also be sent to the ear on the other side. The hearing aids can use the 4 microphones to determine the direction of the speech signal and both hearing aids can be coordinated to enhance the reception of the targeted speech.

Hearing aids do not have to be bulky beige chunks in the ear. There are small instruments that have a thin tubes to deliver the sound into the ears. We also have a wide range of colors to either blend into the hair or to make a fashion statement.

We are here to provide the hearing solutions that will help you live a fuller and more enjoyable life. I have over 30 years of experience in helping people get more out of life through better hearing. Call to schedule your hearing evaluation and to start down the road to a fuller life.

Thursdays,
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Join us June 7, 2014 as we

Celebrate our
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Ed & Joan Baron

at the Elks Lounge 4-8pm.

ORDINANCE No: 12, 5th Series

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MINNESOTA AMENDING CHAPTER 13 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES AND GRANTING A FRANCHISE TO MIDCONTINENT COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE OPERATION OF A CABLE SYSTEM

This is an official summary of an ordinance amendment the purpose of which is to repeal Chapter 13, Cable Television Systems, of the Code of Ordinances for the City of International Falls, Minnesota, which shall be amended to insert certain new sections and text by the City Council, having determined that the financial, legal and technical ability of Midcontinent Communications Investor, LLC, a South Dakota limited liability company, is reasonably sufficient to provide services, facilities and equipment necessary to meet the future cable-related needs of the community. The ordinance generally revises the renewal terms from 10 years to 5 years with advance written notice, shall dedicate two channels for Public, Educational, and Government Access (PEG) to provide free, two-way activated live or recorded cable-cast of programming to prescribed sites, and authorizes franchise fees.

A complete copy of the ordinance amendment is available for public inspection and review at the Office of the City Administrator, Municipal Building, 600 4th St., International Falls, MN 56649, during normal business hours. The amendments to Chapter 13, Cable Televisions Systems, shall be effective upon publication in the official newspaper.

Passed and adopted this 19th day of May, 2014.

Attest:

Robert W. Anderson, Mayor Kenneth R. Anderson, City Administrator