

LOCALNEWS

County board approves veterans transportation rate changes

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday approved rate changes for county transportation for veterans to state Veteran's Affairs centers.

County Veteran Service Officer Candance Ritch addressed the board regarding the travel fees charged to veterans who use county transportation to travel to VA centers in Minneapolis, Hibbing, and the Twin Ports.

Ritch said the VA will be increasing the rate charged to veterans who qualify for travel pay, and increasing the fee charged for the Hibbing trip to \$50. If a veteran doesn't qualify for travel pay, she said it won't affect them at all.

"It's only going to affect the five categories of veter-

ans that receive travel pay," Ritch said. "It's costing the veterans not a penny more, it's just going to cost the VA."

The county also doesn't charge an additional fee for a caregiver to accompany a veteran on these trips, which is important, county Commissioner Wade Pavleck said.

Ritch said there are about three spouses that accompany their husbands for the trips, due to medical needs.

In other business, the board approved a request to participate in the 2015 Toward Zero Deaths Enforcement grant, regarding greater enforcement of speed limits and seatbelt laws.



Candance Ritch

Undersheriff Jon Froemke said the Sheriff's Office was contacted by the program coordinators to join the program, and was approached by the Virginia Police Department to partner in the program. The grant provides funding to pay for more shifts, Froemke said, so there can be greater enforcement.

The October emphasis is seatbelt use, Froemke said, and November focuses on driving while intoxicated. The Sheriff's Office has part-time and full-time deputies who can work those extra shifts, he said.

"All of these shifts are covered by the grant money, so we're going to be reimbursed 100 percent for this stuff," Froemke said.

In other business, the board approved a request by county Environmental Services Director Dale Olson to

donate \$300 to the Littlefork Fire Department as a thank-you for removing a mobile home on County Road 77, which had been deemed a public health nuisance. The donation will come out of the public health nuisance fund in Olson's department budget, he said.

Olson also updated the board on the demolition of the Ray Bank building in Ray, which is falling apart and has become a hazard for a next-door neighbor. Olson said he worked with the owner to remove the building, but when that didn't work, he went through the proper channels to have it declared a public health nuisance.

The county sought bids for removal, Olson said, and only received one bid. The bid was higher than he thought it would be, he said, but he was able to negotiate

the bid down to \$15,600. With only \$2,700 in the public health nuisance fund, the board approved a motion to cover the cost of the remaining \$12,900.

"I thought it would come in a lot lower, I really did," Olson said.

Olson provided to the board information on the sandbag removal operation going on throughout the county. In mid-September, the county advertised an authorization form to allow county staff to enter private property to remove sandbags. After two rounds of advertising, Olson said his department had about six to eight signatures.

Olson said he visited eight sites this week, five for which he had authorization form signatures. The board approved a motion to seek separate bids for sandbag removal in the Rainy Lake

area, at Pelland Junction, and in Loman.

The board Tuesday reviewed a response from the Minnesota Historical Society about the closed Grand Mound Historic Site.

The site has been closed since 2003 due to a lack of revenue generated by attendance. Recently, the Koochiching County Board, along with the city of International Falls, reached out to the MHS to determine if it would be feasible to reopen the site.

A response to the county board from D. Stephen Elliot, director and CEO of the MHS, said the society has started considering the options for the site's future and talking with community stakeholders.

Board Chairman Rob Ecklund said the county would coordinate with MHS to find a date to meet on the issue.

DISTRICT COURT

The following people have been sentenced for aggravated misdemeanor or felony crimes in Koochiching County District Court. The information is provided to The Journal by court staff.

Hiram A. Langston, 37, International Falls, was sentenced Sept. 29 for felony first-degree assault — great bodily harm.

He was sentenced to 36 months at the Minnesota Correctional Facility, St. Cloud, which was stayed, and he was placed on four years supervised probation. He was ordered to pay \$200 fine and fees and to follow the recommendations of an assessment and evaluation. He may not use or possess

firearms or dangerous weapons and may not use drugs or alcohol or enter places where it is being used or sold. He must submit to random searches and tests.

Andrew D. Lind, 34, Prior Lake, was sentenced Sept. 29 for felony fifth-degree possession of drugs.

He was given a stay of adjudication and placed on two years probation to the court. He was ordered to pay \$2,000 restitution and to serve 40 hours community work service. He was ordered to follow the recommendations of an assessment and not to use drugs. He must submit to random tests.

Nathan D. Spotts, 25, International Falls, was sen-

tenced Sept. 29 to felony fifth-degree possession of drugs.

He was given a stay of imposition of sentence and placed on five years supervised probation. He was ordered to pay \$425 fine and fees and serve 40 hours with the Sentence to Serve program. He was ordered not to use drugs or alcohol or enter places where it is being sold or used. He must submit to random tests and searches and must follow and complete a chemical assessment.

Brandon G. Howard Sr., 34, address unavailable, was sentenced Sept. 29 for felony second-degree burglary — dwelling.

He was sentenced to 28 months at the Minnesota

Correctional Facility, St. Cloud, which was stayed, and he was placed on 10 years supervised probation. He was ordered to serve 90 days jail and pay \$425 fine and fees and \$500 restitution. He was ordered to follow the recommendations of an assessment and may not use drugs and alcohol or enter places where it is being sold or used. He must submit to random tests and searches and may not use or possess firearms or dangerous weapons.

Holly B. Johnson, 30, Red Lake, was sentenced Sept. 29 for felony second-degree burglary — dwelling and felony theft — take, use transfer movable prop-

erty without consent.

On the burglary, she was sentenced to 18 months at the Minnesota Correctional Facility, Shakopee, which was stayed, and placed on 10 years supervised probation. She was ordered to serve 90 days jail and pay \$350 fine and fees and \$500 restitution. She was ordered to follow the recommendations of an assessment and may not use alcohol or enter places where it is being sold. She must submit to random tests and searches.

On the theft, she was sentenced to one year and one day at the Minnesota Correctional Facility, Shakopee. The sentence is to be served concurrent with the

previous sentence.

Meagan E. Helmer, 29, International Falls, was sentenced Sept. 29 for gross misdemeanor liquor — purchase, sell, barter, furnish, give to person less than 21.

She was sentenced to one year jail and \$3,100 fine and fees. The jail time and all but \$2,950 were stayed on court conditions and she was placed on three years supervised probation. She was ordered to follow the recommendations of a treatment plan and may not use alcohol or drugs and may not enter places where it is sold or used. She must submit to random tests and searches and serve 32 hours with the Sentence to Serve program.

“After we bought our first STIHL, we were pretty much sold on it.”

BROOKE AND MATT WIBBENMEYER
HOMEOWNERS

REAL PEOPLE. STIHL PEOPLE.

BUILT IN USA

STIHL
Easy2Start

BG 56 C-E
HANDHELD
BLOWER

★★★★★

“The total ease of operating this equipment is far superior from any others I’ve owned in the past.” – user jack65

Check out these reviews and others on the product pages at [STIHLDealers.com](#)

BUILT IN USA

Indicates products that are built in the United States from domestic and foreign parts and components.

SAVE \$20

STIHL
Easy2Start

MS 251 C-BE CHAIN SAW

NOW JUST \$379.95 WAS \$399.95 MWS-SRP

Offer valid through 10/30/14 at participating dealers while supplies last.

★★★★★ 18" bar

“It starts easy, is light enough to use for long periods of time.” – user HFred

JOIN US. #RealSTIHL

All prices are MWS-SRP. Available at participating dealers while supplies last. *The actual listed guide bar length can vary from the effective cutting length based on which powerhead it is installed on. © 2014 STIHL MWS14-941-115224-6

All Season Equipment, Inc.
2200 Second Avenue
International Falls
218-373-0373

STIHLdealers.com

Re-Elect Rob Ecklund
for District 4 County Commissioner

On Nov. 4th at Aquinas Hall

- Proven Leadership
- Focused
- Compassionate
- Concerned

Paid for by the Committee to elect Rob Ecklund for County Commissioner, Dave Peterson, Treasurer, International Falls, MN.

MANAGE YOUR ARTHRITIS PAIN
WITH RAINY LAKE MEDICAL CENTER

RLMC is offering another way to cope with arthritis pain:

The Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program

This program was developed to:

- Increase flexibility
- Improve range of motion
- Help decrease arthritis pain
- Relieve stiffness

Suitable for all fitness levels!

ARTHRTIS FOUNDATION
Take Control. We Can Help.™

To register or for more information, contact:
Meghann Cassibo at 218-283-5420

Next Session:
October 14 - December 9
Tuesdays & Thursdays
10:00 - 10:45 am
Location: Hospital Classroom (Lower Level)
Cost: \$35 per person
(every 8 weeks a new session starts)