

**Like a fine wine**  
Enthusiasts celebrate vintage snowmobiles with ride Saturday

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Rep. David Dill outlines propane shortage issues

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## Refinancing bonds saves big money

Bonds were sold to finance cost of construction of the VNP HQ

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

Bonds sold to pay for the construction of Voyageurs National Park headquarters were refinanced Monday resulting in more than \$640,000 savings for the city.

Shawn Mason, director of the International Falls Economic Development Authority, reported Monday to the Falls City Council the bonds sold out rapidly that morning.

She called the results good news. A special EDA Commission meeting Tuesday featured a presentation by Steven J. Mattson, executive vice president and co-founder of Northland Securities, to provide information on the process and details on the savings.

The bonds secured in 2010 for the construction of the Voyageurs National Park headquarters building have 18 years left to mature at a current interest rate of 6.17 percent.

Financing for the more than \$8 million VNP project sitting on Rainy River on land owned by the city, came in the form of municipal revenue bonds to avoid costing taxpayers any money. The federal government pays the city \$108,000 in

monthly lease fees for the VNP facility. From that amount, the city keeps just less than \$20,000 each month for maintenance. In addition, the city keeps money for operation expenses of the buildings and to fund permanent improvements.

In September, it was estimated International Falls taxpayers could save more than \$400,000 with the successful refinancing of the bonds.

In October, the International Falls Economic Development Commission took the advice of its bond counsel and took no action to refinance the bond, feeling locally the repercussions of a 16-day partial federal government shutdown that ended two weeks earlier.

Just hours before the October EDA Commission meeting was set to consider the sale, Mattson said in an email its bond salesmen contacted dozens of buyers of these types of bonds and have been told "at the moment they will not look to purchase these refunding bonds due to the credit of the federal government. The country just went through a shutdown and the scars have not healed as of yet."

Bonds to A7 ➤

## City moves to hire for administrator position

Start date expected to be March 3

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

An employment agreement with the top candidate for the International Falls city administrator position was unanimously approved by the Falls City Council Monday.

Kenneth R. Anderson was offered the administrator position at an annual salary of \$83,000. He is expected to begin serving in the position March 3.

Anderson served from 2003 to September 2013 as the community development director of the city of Crosslake, Minn. He worked under the same title for the city of Columbia Heights from 2001 to 2003. The candidate profile on Anderson provided to The Journal listed various positions, including acting city administrator, from 1989 to 1996 with the city of Belle Plaine, Minn. He holds a bachelor of arts in public administration and master of arts in urban and regional studies.

Councilor Paul Eklund, who serves as the chairman of the city's Human Resources Committee, said the recommendation to approve the employment agreement comes with a transition plan that includes initial goals, as well as six month and one year objectives.

He said after each time period in the plan, an evaluation would

be conducted to consider whether goals and objectives have been met.

In addition, Eklund said he's pleased with the selection of Anderson for the administrator position.

"I was pleased with the field of applicants," Eklund said Monday. "It was a tough decision, but I feel we did get the best of the (top) three (candidates)."

In other business Monday, the council took no action on a proposal by Mayor Bob Anderson to advertise vacancies on the North Koochiching Sanitary Sewer Board.

The issue is expected to be revisited at the next regular council meeting. In the meantime, the council will review the bylaws of the sewer board and the make up of its members to be sure of member requirements.

Anderson said a check of the city's charter shows no appointed board or commission member shall be an employee of the city, except those who are members by virtue of their office.

Now serving on the sewer board are Shawn Mason, city Economic Development Authority director, and Falls Building Inspector Kelly Meyers, both city employees.

Council to A7 ➤



Bob Anderson



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

Rowland Hamly shows off one of his telescopes in the observatory he built at his home. The observatory cuts down on set-up time for when he wants to do some stargazing, Hamly said.

## Seeing stars

Falls man has his own observatory

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

It's not the stars in Hollywood that interest Rowland Hamly.

Instead, it's the stars in the night sky that led the International Falls man to outfit his house to provide a better view. Hamly has constructed an observatory in the space between his detached garage and his house.

"I need to come up with a name for it," Hamly joked. "I'm going to get some of those blow-up aliens, and put a couple of them out front when I'm observing, just for the fun of it."

The observatory was con-

structed from a kit from Sky Shed Pod, an Ontario-based company, Hamly said. The structure is comprised of seven pieces: five of which make up the walls, and two make the top.

The observatory sits on a raised wooden platform, about four feet off the ground. The platform was built by Larry Foss Construction, Hamly said. The observatory kit was supposed to arrive in August, but was delayed, so construction didn't start until October, he said. Because of the late start and the bitter cold winter, he said he's yet to use the observatory.

"If you lived in Arizona, it's year-round and you're going

to see great things," Hamly said. "But it's just been too cold. I'll do spring, summer, and fall."

Hamly decided to erect his own observatory to save time. It takes an hour to set up a telescope, Hamly said, so to look through a telescope is at least an hour commitment. With an observatory, however, he can leave his telescopes up, and can go for a quick look without having to set them up every time.

"This way the telescope will be permanent in there, already set up, and I can go out for 15 minutes if I wanted to," Hamly said.

Stars to A7 ➤