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LOCALNEWS

Local levies, hearings set

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

As December nears, local governments prepare to hold Truth-in-Taxation hearings to provide citizens an opportunity to learn of and comment on proposed tax levels.

Governments were required to set their preliminary levies by Sept. 15.

Locally, levies have been proposed and hearings scheduled as follows:

■ Koochiching County's hearing is scheduled for 6:15 p.m. Dec. 3. County officials have proposed to collect a \$3.9 million levy in 2014, which represents no increase from the amount collected in 2013.

■ International Falls' hearing is set for 6 p.m. Dec. 16. The city has proposed to collect a \$2.9 million levy in 2014, which represents no increase in the amount collected this year.

■ Ranier's hearing on the preliminary tax levy for 2014 is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Dec. 16. The proposed levy is set at \$150,000 — \$10,000 more than the 2013 levy.

■ Littlefork's hearing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Dec. 19. The proposed levy is \$114,645, which represents no increase from the amount collected in 2013.

After input from citizens, local governments can set final levies lower but not higher than preliminary levies. Local governments must set final levies by Dec. 27, for the 2014 property tax levies.

The overall property tax picture for 2014 will not be known until February when the department will release final property tax levy information. Revised estimates based on final levies for the Homestead Credit Refund and the Renters' Property Tax Refund will be available after the February forecast (both programs were increased for 2014).

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has re-



Commissioner Myron Frans

leased a list of the preliminary maximum property tax levies that have been reported by local governments and have been passed by local school referenda.

■ Cities — The 2014 preliminary property tax levies for cities will total approximately \$1.967 billion compared with \$1.927 billion in 2013, a 2.1 percent increase.

■ Counties — The 2014 preliminary property tax levies for counties will total approximately \$2.745 billion compared with \$2.704 billion in 2013, a 1.5 percent increase.

■ Townships — The 2014 preliminary property tax levies for townships will total approximately \$234 million compared with \$229 million in 2013, a 2.1 percent increase.

■ Schools — The 2014 preliminary property tax levies for schools will total approximately \$2.377 billion compared with \$2.317 billion in 2013, a 2.6 percent increase. School levies were set to decline by \$59 million. Voters approved \$119 million in new and renewed referenda, for a net increase of \$60 million in 2014.

■ Special taxing districts — The 2014 preliminary property tax levies for special taxing districts will total approximately \$328 million compared with \$321 million in 2013, a 2.3 percent increase.

"Since 2002, state and local property taxes have risen by 86 percent," said Minnesota Department of Revenue Commissioner Myron Frans on preliminary property tax levies for 2014. "Property taxes are regressive, disproportionately affecting middle-class Minnesotans, and are levied without taking into account

a taxpayer's income or ability to pay the tax. State and local leaders are working together to stop this decade-long trend."

During the 2013 legislative session, Gov. Mark Dayton and the legislature restored the state and local fiscal relationship by providing needed tools to lower property taxes, said Frans. "Together they increased in 2014 the Homestead Credit Refund and Renter's Credit; eliminated the sales tax for cities and counties totaling \$129 million; increased aid to cities, counties and townships by \$130 million; and increased aid to schools."

Preliminary levy amounts are used by counties to compute parcel-specific property tax estimates for 2014, which are mailed to property owners in November in the form of Truth-in-Taxation notices. Truth-in-Taxation notices also list Truth-in-Taxation meeting times and locations for residents. These meetings typically address how much jurisdictions are taxing their residents and how they are proposing to spend tax dollars. These meetings are required for cities with populations over 500, counties, school districts, regional library authorities, and metropolitan taxing districts.

Information not included on Truth-in-Taxation notices is the result of levy referenda for operations or capital projects by 76 of Minnesota's school districts, many to renew existing levies that are scheduled to expire. The results of these referenda are included in the data summarized here. Statewide, 68 of the 76 referenda at least partially passed.

The preliminary property tax levy information for local governments and schools is available on the Department of Revenue Property Tax Reports and Data website.

Film explores addiction recovery from new angle

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

If no one talks publicly about their own recovery from addiction, how will others understand recovery and help form public policy to create lasting solutions?

That's the premise behind "The Anonymous People," a documentary film that will be offered to the community at 1 p.m. Dec. 14 at Cine 5.

Cost of a ticket is \$10 and will help defray the costs of bringing the documentary film to the community. The showing is sponsored by the Koochiching County Substance Abuse Court and Rainy River Recovery. Tickets must be pre-purchased from Lisa Sante, problem solving court coordinator, 283-1118, or Gus Christianson, Rainy River Recovery, 285-7028.

"The Anonymous People," was created by filmmaker Greg Williams, 30, a person in long-term recovery since age 17.

This is not the traditional addiction documentary, states Williams in a press

release. "There are no needles hanging out of people's arms, pictures of the brain, or fried eggs in a pan. We set out to find the answer to one very fundamental question: Why do we treat addiction and people with addiction in this country so dramatically differently than people with any other health issue?"

The documentary focuses on what Williams calls the "public health crisis of addiction to alcohol and other drugs and the meteoric rise of the New Addiction Recovery Advocacy Movement."

"Just like women with breast cancer, or people with HIV/AIDS, courageous addiction recovery advocates are coming out of the shadows to share the truth and reality of recovery," states the release.

"The Anonymous People" explores how deeply entrenched social stigma and discrimination have kept recovery voices silent and faces hidden for decades.

The story of "The Anonymous People" is told through

citizens, leaders, volunteers, corporate executives, public figures, and celebrities "who are laying it all on the line to save the lives of others just like them. This passionate new public recovery movement aims to transform public opinion, engage communities and elected officials, and finally shift problematic policy toward lasting solutions," adds the release.

"To shape the future of recovery, we must end the silence, stand up, organize and speak out for equity and the right to recover for all Americans," said Pat Taylor, executive director of Faces and Voices of Recovery. "Only then will we end disparities such as the fact that we invest only one-third of the amount of money on addiction research as we do on cancer research, despite the fact that addiction costs us two-thirds more in health-related costs."

To view "The Anonymous People" film trailer, visit manyfaces1voice.org/#the-film.



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