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## Allegations about mayor dismissed by councilor

Each agree to mediation in effort to improve ability to resolve conflicts

BY LAUREL BEAGER

Editor

Allegations made about International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson were dismissed by Councilor Gail Rognerud Monday in a statement read at Monday's council meeting.

Rognerud said in her statement she had met with Anderson and accepts his agreement



Bob Anderson



Gail Rognerud

to work with the International Falls Economic Development Authority in the future to further economic development in the city.

"In consideration of his actions, I dismiss my allegations and look forward to working

with Mayor Anderson and the rest of the council in the best interests of the city of International Falls," Rognerud said.

Anderson also read a statement that said he had met with Rognerud in response to her allegations "and categorically deny I have done anything improper during my tenure as mayor." In addition, Anderson pledged in the statement to work with the Falls EDA to further economic development.

The statements were read in response to allegations made by Rognerud at an Aug. 4 council meeting, when Rognerud said employees were being impacted by actions and statements made

that violate the council's code of ethics, of which members of the council are expected to adhere. Rognerud didn't specify who she was accusing at the meeting, but the next day told The Journal her statements were made about Anderson.

Statements read by Anderson and Rognerud each said they would join in requesting the Sand Creek Group perform a training session for the council and city employees and also mediate between the two "to improve our ability to resolve conflicts."

Councilors Paul Eklund, Pete Kalar and Jaksa, later in the meeting, thanked Anderson and

Rognerud for their leadership and their effort to resolve the issue and move forward. Kalar added he believed the citizens of the community will also appreciate their actions and efforts to resolve the issue.

The city contracted earlier with the Sand Creek Group for employee services, city Administrator Ken Anderson said. He said he would discuss with the group, which is scheduled to provide an employee session for Koochiching County Oct. 30, about coordinating sessions for the city at the same time to save expenses for the county and city.

Council to A1 ►

## FBI investigates threatening letter

BY LAUREL BEAGER

Editor

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is following leads in a threatening letter containing a white powder received in the mail Friday by a Koochiching County resident.

Sheriff Brian Jespersen said the FBI is involved because the letter was sent through the United States Postal Service.

While Jespersen said the contents of the envelop "was nothing harmful" and tested negative for anything harmful, it will take about one week to positively identify the substance.

"It could be baking powder, baking soda, or sugar," he said.

Jespersen said the letter was sent to Trella Opp, owner of Island View Lodge.

Opp told The Journal Tuesday the envelope looked like a regular letter, addressed with her name, Island View Lodge and its address, and attention Trella, "so it was specifically for me."

Opp said she's tried to think of who might have had reason to send her a threatening letter, but has no clues.

"I've been trying to think is it a disgruntled employee I fired, someone who came here and wasn't happy? I can't think of anybody," she said. "It was a lot of money spent; if it was a joke it was a stupid joke."

Opp said she wants the sender located. "I hope they find the person that did it — negative or joke or not — it was not funny, it was very scary. You keep looking over your shoulder and wonder who wants you that bad... I hope they find them so they never do it again. It is a dreadful feeling."

The sender may not understand they violated federal law by sending threats through the mail, she said.

Jespersen said the incident is likely "a sick hoax by someone, but obviously, we had to take it seriously and all standard protocols were followed."

Letter to A7 ►

### FALLS SCHOOL BOARD

## Defining bullying; educating the public

Speaker draws from personal experiences

BY EMILY GEDDE

Staff Writer

A community-wide education effort against bullying is set for this week by a speaker who has spread his message to thousands of teachers, students and parents.

Falls School Board members Monday were invited by Falls Elementary Principal Melissa Tate to a program by Jim Jelinke at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Backus Community Center. Jelinke is a speaker on the topic of preventing bullying and harassment.

"Jim Jelinke spoke to staff during in service days and was spectacular," Tate said. "He is truly a must see. His presentation or message on anti-bullying comes from personal experience with his son."

According to a release, Jelinke believes when everyone associated with a school — parents, students, teachers, community members — have the same information on what constitutes bullying and the steps to prevent bullying behavior, they can establish a foundation where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. During the one-hour program, Jelinke will provide schools with a researched look at the factors that cause bullying, the effects of bullying and strategies and techniques that can be used when dealing with bullying.

"I think he will also work to really define bullying/emotional abuse and or harassment," Tate said, adding he will also be speaking to students during school hours this week.

Bullying to A7 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

A pile of bricks was all that was left Sept. 9 of a building located at 409 Third Avenue. The former Century 21 building was torn down by its current owner, Larry Keep, who is pictured operating the backhoe.

## Razing history

BY EMILY GEDDE

Staff Writer

One of the older buildings in International Falls was torn down last week, leaving a new hole along Highway 53.

The building, the former Century 21 Town & Country Realty office, which has been vacant since 2013, was demolished Sept. 9 by the current owner, Larry Keep. Keep did not return calls to The Journal to confirm why the building was torn down. He also owns the gas station adjacent to the now empty lot.

News of the razing didn't go over well with some of The Journal's Facebook followers who expressed frustration over the loss of a piece of the community's history.

"That was such a neat little building," Kelly Granrud wrote. "It had so much character. Sad to see it go."

Trena Martinez wrote, "Do we not keep anything historical in this town?"



PHOTO COURTESY OF KOOCHICHING COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

An early shot of Henry Hanson's home on Third Avenue.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Century 21 Town & Country Realty office, owned by John and Jan Carlson, is decorated for the holiday season.

History to A7 ►