

LOCALNEWS

L-BF to seek public input on transportation services

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

Public input on how the Littlefork-Big Falls School District should handle transportation of students to and from the school will be gathered during a 7 p.m. meeting Tuesday in the commons area of the school. The meeting follows on the heels of the July resignation of Dan Wimmer as the district's transportation director. The vacant position was advertised, however, L-BF Superintendent Fred

Seybert reports that the board is considering outsourcing transportation services to other providers. "The board asked for quotes to outsource transportation and there are two interested firms," Seybert said. "It is my understanding the board will look for bids next." Seybert said that bus



Fred Seybert

driver Russ Spaker asked Wednesday, during the board's regular meeting in Big Falls, for the opportunity to publicly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of transporting students by the district versus the outsourcing of those services. "No decisions have been made yet," Seybert said. "The board looks forward to public input Tuesday night when deciding what direction to move forward in." In other business Wednesday, the board took no action on implementing a \$300 per pupil operating levy on local

taxpayers. Minnesota lawmakers granted the authority to impose, without votere referendums, the \$300 levy last session – a move Seybert said just a few school districts appear to be taking. Had L-BF board members approved the levy, an additional \$105,000 would have gained by the school district. "I'm glad the board didn't (pass the levy)," Seybert said. "The district is in good financial standings, and from what I'm hearing, our enrollment is going up,

which is a good thing, too." Seybert said board members agreed. Although the Legislature put the levy authority in place, the group decided the financial health of the district didn't require an added burden on taxpayers. The board Wednesday also approved a new iPad policy for students in grades 2, 3, 4, 10, 11 and 12. According to Frank Hand, the school's technology director, the policy states that elementary-aged students using iPads will be required to leave the device

at school, but high school iPad users will be allowed to bring them home. The policy also includes language on how to handle and care for iPads as well as what steps to take if the device is lost, stolen or damaged. "It is an exciting opportunity," Hand said of students who will be using iPads. "It is going to be a learning process for everyone involved." The board hired Cindy Hasbargen as the junior high volleyball coach and John Larson as the special education teacher.

LITTLEFORK CITY COUNCIL

Council considers purchase of new emergency siren

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

The city of Littlefork is exploring the purchase of a new emergency siren. City Administrator Mike Fairchild reported this week that the Littlefork City Council discussed at its meeting last week the possibility of gaining grants that could be used toward the purchase of a new siren or purchasing it outright regardless of grant opportunities. The city now has two emergency sirens, one at the Littlefork Fire Hall and the other located between the Littlefork-Big Falls School and the Littlefork Medical Center. The latter has been repaired, but has not worked properly for about one year, he said. Councilors are concerned that should an emergency occur, the siren at the Fire Hall may not be heard by staff and students inside the

school and staff and clients inside the medical center. "We want to make sure our school children, people at the medical center and staff at both are safe, so there is a priority to make sure both works," Fairchild said. In other business, the council continued talks about a proposal to expand the Littlefork Liquor Store building's off-sale offerings. Fairchild said a public hearing will be scheduled and announced later to allow all residents to comment on the proposal. He said the council is also considering remodeling its on-sale area and the bathrooms at the liquor store and are obtaining cost estimates that would be presented to the public at the hearing. The council continues to seek money to improve infrastructure in the city. Fairchild said much of the discussion at the Aug. 15

council meeting involved the need to improve water and sewer lines and replace park equipment. Grants to do the work are being considered, he said. City officials also continue to consider whether the city will be impacted the federal Affordable Care Act, which requires all U.S. residents to carry health insurance. The city owns the Littlefork Medical Center and may be impacted by how the act will regulate insurance offerings by employers. Fairchild said the city is compiling data about the effect to the city, and he said a deadline for reporting may have been delayed giving the city more time to consider the act. "Fifty employees was considered a large employer and it makes a big difference on how an employer will have to contribute toward employee health insurance," he said.

Councilors heard that the city will receive an additional \$20,000 in local government aid from the state in 2014. Fairchild said the city has received about \$214,000 LGA for each of the past three or four years. The additional money will be figured into the 2014 budget and the amount the city proposes to seek in the form of a levy from property owners in 2014. He said the city's proposed 2014 levy must be reported to the county in September. The city may reduce the proposed amount, but not increase it, when it must certify the official levy to the county in December. Councilors agreed to formally request the Koochiching County Sheriff's Office have more of a presence at and around the Littlefork Municipal Liquor Store. "We just want more presence to make people feel at ease and deter anything," he said.

The council heard that the city-owned Filla building, located between the Littlefork Community Building and the liquor store, has been demolished and the material removed from the area, which has since been filled with dirt and seeded with grass. Now, he said, the community must decide how to use the soon-to-be green space, which Fairchild joked is now "hay bale space." The council hired Roger Keep as the new caretaker of Lofgren Park after the previous caretaker, Jeff Anderson, died, said Fairchild. The city purchased as a residence for the caretaker, a trailer house, propane and tank and garage from Jerry Anderson at a cost of \$6,500. "The city never owned the caretaker residence in the past and thought the time was right we have control over it," he said, adding that it was difficult

to hire caretakers without the residence. The council heard that it appears Andy Timmer has met requirements of obtaining a conditional use permit to place a trailer house at the junction of McPherson Street and 10th Avenue. Fairchild said the Planning Commission placed conditions on providing the CUP, which appear to have been met. The Planning Commission is expected to recommend the council approve the CUP. The council approved providing the same compensation to members of the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment that councilors receive for special meetings — \$20 for in-town meetings and \$50 plus mileage for meetings held outside Littlefork. He said residents serving on the commission and board have never received compensation.



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