

KOOTASCA Community Action appoints Tardy as executive director

KOOTASCA COMMUNITY ACTION REPORT

KOOTASCA Community Action has announced the appointment of Harlan Tardy as its new executive director.

Tardy joins KOOTASCA Community Action with over 30 years of experience in community Action and as the current director of the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency.

“Speaking on behalf of the board, we are very excited to welcome Harlan to KOOTASCA Commu-

nity Action and to further deepen our relationship with AEOA,” said Colleen Nardone, chair of the board of KOOTASCA Community Action. “We look forward to Harlan’s leadership, the insight he will bring, and the new opportunities this relationship will create. I would also like to commend Jim Woehrle, who is retiring, for his 13 years of service here at KOOTASCA and the difference he has made to our communities.”

Tardy, a life-long resident of Nashauk, perhaps

best known locally for his 33 years as a school board member for the Nashauk-Keewatin School District, remarked on his appointment noting, “KOOTASCA has a strong reputation for the advocacy they do and their connection to the communities they serve. I am truly looking forward to working with KOOTASCA to better serve our area’s needs and to build upon KOOTASCA’s decades of service by expanding capacity, developing new and much needed programs, and exploring new oppor-

tunities with KOOTASCA’s many community partners.”

KOOTASCA Community Action, a private nonprofit human services agency, has been serving low-income people and fighting to reduce poverty in Koochiching and Itasca counties for 47 years. In 2012 alone, KOOTASCA served more than 9,300 low-income residents and provided over \$6 million in programming to fight poverty through education, direct assistance, housing, and community engagement.

COUNCIL

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use in development by the city.

Councilors Pete Kalar and Paul Eklund supported Anderson’s recommendation, saying the information would be valuable to the city.

Kalar said money used to pay Arro to gather the information could be recouped should district property be purchased to site RECAP.

Eklund said the information would put the city ahead of the game as it prepares to develop any of the property.

But Eklund and Kalar pulled their support back just a bit when they realized that Coronal was seeking the information in cooperation with the KDA, which is governed by a board made up of county commissioners, not the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, which is a joint effort between the county and cities, and governed by a board that has equal representation from the county board and city council.

Kalar, who withdrew his motion to pay \$2,000 to \$3,000 for information to be gathered on the three requested parcels as well as the other sites suggested by Serrano.

He said regardless of where RECAP is sited, the city would benefit by the jobs and increased tax base. He said he didn’t want to get involved in “territorial fighting,” but understood Jaksa’s principal.

Instead, Kalar moved to pay for the study on just the three sites identified in the

Coronal request.

Jaksa said her opposition is in principle. She said she is willing to pay the cost for the city property, but did not believe it right to use the city’s economic development money for a KDA project. She suggested the city seek funding from the KDA for the other parcels.

In other business Monday, the council heard from Eklund, who serves as chairman of the city’s Human Resources Committee, that six candidates for the position of city administrator were interviewed earlier in the day.

The city administrator position has been vacant since April 8 when former administrator Rod Otterness resigned to take a position in Union Gap, Wash. Betty Bergstrom has served as interim administrator.

Meanwhile Eklund said three finalists will be selected this week.

Eklund said all six people interviewed were good candidates and selecting a top candidate will be difficult.

The council also appointed and reappointed members to boards and commissions.

Jaksa noted that she and other members of the community will travel to Silver Bay Jan. 15 to tour a hydroponic farm. Jaksa said the farm has been four years in the making and is now ready to move to the investor stage.

Jaksa said she hopes to get a sense of whether a similar project is feasible here and told the council that representatives of Stewart’s Super One indicated an interest in having locally grown vegetables available year around.

Upkeep costs a sore point for schools

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Some Minnesota school districts say they are at a disadvantage in paying for basic maintenance because the state allows only a small number of them to raise taxes without voter approval.

A special committee will make recommendations to the Legislature in February on how and whether the system should be changed, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported Sunday.

About \$1.3 billion is des-

ignated statewide each year for school facilities. A recent report by the Minnesota Department of Education showed that half of that money comes from voter-approved levies and the rest comes from district or state funds.

Just 25 Minnesota districts can raise taxes for facilities without voter approval because they have a certain mix of student enrollment, building square-footage and facility age. Those districts

receive nearly 22 percent more funding, per pupil, for capital expenditures than districts not in the program, state figures show.

Forest Lake isn’t one of them. District leaders hope voters will approve a \$176 million tax request in May to repair a crumbling running track, antiquated heating and cooling systems, outdated classrooms and other building problems.

“We have not had the money to keep up with mainte-

nance as well as we should have,” said Superintendent Linda Madsen. “It has built up over the years and we have to make some decisions.”

In 2010, voters in Forest Lake defeated a request for \$24 million in capital funds. School officials pressed Minnesota lawmakers to create a committee to study ways to make school facilities funding more equitable. That group is wrapping up its report.

BIRCHDALE

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off the roof and into the building. The bell now stands outside the church and is rung on Sundays to mark the end of services, he said. The building’s entrance was also redone in 2005 to make it handicapped accessible.

Tschudy is the current pastor at the church, and also for the Rainy River Regional Parish of the United Church of Christ, of which the Birchdale church is a member. He started his ministry in Birchdale in July 2011, after moving to the area from Wisconsin, he said.

The church plays an important role in the area, by providing a place where people can gather and also provides sanctuary to those who need it, Tschudy said.

“The church is always open as a sanctuary,” he said. “It’s a place where



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The original church building constructed in 1913 featured a belfry, which was removed during renovation in the 1930s.

people can get in out of the cold, and find a place to get warm, and have some water.”

Having a part of the community remain for more than 100 years pro-

vides a sense of consistency for people, he said.

“This is one of the areas that almost lost its post office,” he said. “The church has remained consistent, and that’s very important

for those people.”

The celebratory service is 11:45 a.m. Sunday at the Birchdale UCC. The church service will be followed by a potluck, and all are welcome to attend.

BAKK

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Teresa Briggs outlined issues of county concern, including retaining veterans transportation funding and a continued reduction in funding to counties for vulnerable children and adult services.

Commissioners discussed the need to retain nursing home and assisted living beds in the county. Retention of the Littlefork Medical Center and its nursing and drug treatment services are important to community because of the economic impact and jobs it provides, they said, but at the same time, the facility needs upgrades.

While Bakk said it’s late in the game to seek bond-

ing money for LMC, he said he would consider whether state planning money is available. He said he needed more information about the costs of the upgrades to move forward and Briggs said she would forward them onto him.

Former Commissioner Mike Hanson, representing North Star Electric Cooperative, urged Bakk to limit impacts to electric rates.

“People are sincerely struggling to pay their electric bills,” he said. “I ask you to hold co-ops harmless if possible.”

Bakk said he believes the session will be very short and not include a lot of new policy issues.

“You have a sensitive ear in many of our rural senators,” he told Hanson.



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