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As dust settles, former Boise workers take next step

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

After six months of preparing to lose her job at the local Boise Inc. paper mill, Kalsie Briggs spent Monday settling into her new routine as a stay-at-home mom.

It lasted one day.

That same afternoon, the Boise storeroom employee, who has been employed by the company for seven years, got called back to work for about seven weeks. It was something she knew was a possibility, but didn't think it would happen as fast as it did.

"I chose the straight layoff so I would have the option to be called back," she said. "But I didn't think the call would come as soon as it did."

While the cards are in her favor for another few weeks, the future is still unknown for the 30-year-old mother who is among the more than 250 people who were laid off from the mill last week.

On May 2, Boise announced it would permanently terminate 265 mill positions — both

salaried and hourly — in October. The termination represented one-third of the mill's workforce. The company last week shut down I2 and I4 paper machines and the off-machine coater because of the complexity the machines add to the mill.

"As you can imagine, it was a somber time as we permanently shut down I2 and I4 paper machines and the off-machine coater and said goodbye to our coworkers and friends," said Lori Lyman, Boise public affairs manager, this week.

The news of Boise's decision spread like wildfire on social media with many people voicing their concerns about who would be directly impacted by the cuts. In reality, local leaders said with that many jobs lost in a small community, the impact would trickle down and eventually affect everyone.

As Tuesday — Oct. 1 — came and went, the dust is settling as the layoff process comes to a close. Some employees and their families have already moved on while others are staying in



FILE PHOTO

The termination of one-third of the Boise Inc. paper mill's workforce was completed last week as the company shut down I2 and I4 paper machines and the off-machine coater.

town trying to make ends meet. Some are viewing the layoff as an opportunity, others are more bitter about their family's fate.

Jayne Steele is one of the employees who will use the layoff as a chance to earn another college degree and is finishing up paperwork to attend Bemidji State University this spring.

"I will be getting a bachelor's degree in business management with an emphasis in marketing," he said. "I am very excited to go back to school with a small amount of anxiety."

His decision to return to school is secure now, but it didn't necessarily come easy.

"The layoff process was a very hard, long, drawn-out process," said Steele, a finishing and shipping department employee who was hired in 2010. "It was a couple of weeks before we found out what each department would be losing for sure."

Steele recalls the day the announcement came and the silence that fell over the mill.

"It was like the life had been taken right out of everyone," he said. "The people who had been in the mill for a very long time (were) being quiet, and nervous for us younger people... Everyone was looking straight forward (with their) heads down,

mainly because you didn't know if you were going to be one of the 265 or not."

In the end, Steele was one of those on the termination list, but like Briggs, he willingly placed himself there.

Shortly after the announcement, each department was given a number of people it would need to lay off and the controlled layoff program, or CLP, began. According to Steele, the program presented options for people to volunteer to be laid off with a severance-type package.

"If you were to choose the

Boise to A7 ➤



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

The colder October weather signals changing leaves on Borderland trees. Throughout the area, trees are dotted with flashes of red, orange, and yellow.

Warm wind wings warm weather

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

A strong wind blew through Borderland Tuesday, and brought with it the last of the warmer temperatures the area experienced in September.

The max wind speed on Tuesday was 29 mph, which was the strongest wind Borderland had seen since August 24, according to the National Weather Service in Duluth. The warm, strong, south wind was caused by a jet-stream nearby pumping in warm temperatures, Kevin Kraujalis, meteorologist with the NWS in Duluth said.

The warm temperatures ac-

companied by the wind were familiar to residents, as September's average temperature was four degrees above normal, tying it for the eighth warmest September in International Falls history, Kraujalis said. The cause of these warm temperatures was again, a jet stream further north, which allowed warmer temperatures to invade most of Minnesota, he said.

The high temperature for September was 84 degrees on the 6th, while the low temperature for the month was 29 degrees on the 16th, according to the NWS.

Residents hoping these warm

Weather to A7 ➤

Case made for bonding money

Local projects vie with others across the state for nearly \$1 billion

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Local projects are being presented to Minnesota legislators in an effort to secure money from the state's sale of bonds.

Billions of dollars worth of capital investment projects across the state from flood mitigation to highway construction projects will be studied, toured and presented during a nine-week long bonding tour that began Tuesday.

It is estimated that the state will bond for just less than \$1 billion in the next session, expected to begin in March.

While no stops are planned in Borderland, area officials are taking their show on the road to present information to the committees at the tour locations.

In Borderland, bonding money is being requested for several projects.

International Falls is seeking \$3 million for the Falls International Airport. The airport is jointly owned by the city and Koochiching County.

Falls Mayor Bob Anderson said since county officials are seeking money for other projects, it made sense for the city to carry the airport request.

Anderson said the money would be used to renovate the administration building at the airport to accommodate larger

groups in a secure area, add bathrooms to that area and expand it for official inspections.

In August, Anderson sent a letter to Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton asking for support of the request and said Thursday that the city has asked Sen. Tom Bakk, DFL-Cook, and Rep. David Dill, DFL-Crane Lake, to introduce the bill on the city's behalf.

"Hopefully, they will help to bring attention to our need up here," said Anderson.

Koochiching County officials are seeking money for a sewer project involving communities adjacent to Voyageurs National Park and the Renewable Energy Clean Air Project.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck testified before the Senate bonding committee about the sewer project in Tower Tuesday and in Hibbing before the House committee as the chairman of a joint powers board including St. Louis County. The joint powers board is asking for \$8.5 million, with \$7.3 million for an extension of sewer service to Dove Island on Rainy Lake and the remainder for a sewer system in Crane Lake.

Koochiching County is also seeking \$12 million for RECAP, which brought testimony and presentations before the committees by Commissioner Rob Ecklund and John Howard and Steve Korstad of Coronal LLC, a

plasma gasification and consulting company that has partnered with the county on the project.

Pavleck said Paul Nevanen, director of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, also attended the presentations.

Sen. LeRoy Stumpf, DFL-Plummer, chairs the Capital Investment Committee and is leading the extensive tour throughout the state. The tour is divided into five sections by region beginning with northeast Minnesota.

"This tour gives me and other members on the Capital Investment Committee a chance to see projects in need up close and personal," said Stumpf in a statement. "We can ask questions, get tours and get a good feel for the various projects requesting money."

State senators will be involved throughout the nine-week tour to help highlight projects in their districts.

Subsequent tours will be carried out every other week throughout October and November, with the tour wrapping up in the first week of December.

For more information on tours, check out the bonding tour Facebook page at www.facebook.com/mnsenatebondingtour

Pavleck said great interest was shown by lawmakers about

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