

LOCALNEWS

L-BF finds bus solution

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Littlefork-Big Falls School District is moving towards a transportation solution for its students. The school board Wednesday directed Superintendent Fred Seybert to continue to work with the district's attorney to establish a transportation contract between I.S.D #362 and Reinke Bus Company from International Falls. The contract process is still in the preliminary stages, Seybert said. The attorney is drafting a contract, which will be presented to the school board and Reinke Bus Company for approval.

Reinke Bus Company would provide the buses and the drivers under the contract, he said. However, these wouldn't be brand-new buses and drivers. Reinke Bus Company would purchase the district's existing buses, according to the proposal. "They would hire the best drivers we have right now, that have worked for the district," he said. "They don't go out and hire new bus drivers, it's the existing drivers." The advantages of outsourcing transportation, Seybert said, is saving money for the district. As a "ball-park figure," he said the district should save about

\$140,000 per year under the five-year quote Reinke Bus Company proposed. There wasn't a single factor that led the district toward outsourcing transportation, he said, but containing transportation costs was one of the bigger factors. The company would provide daily transportation to and from school, as well as for any bands or other extracurricular activities, like sporting events, Seybert said. The contract would begin as soon as it's drafted and approved, Seybert said. However, he said student's wouldn't notice a difference in their busing when the contract begins.

VEEDER RECOGNIZED



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson, left, recognizes district Safety Director Jeff Veeder Monday for his efforts in renovation projects at all three of the district's schools. Nelson said the work done by Veeder "prolongs the use of the district's buildings."

Local farmers may be eligible for disaster assistance

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Koochiching County has been included in a natural disaster designation by the United States Department of Agriculture. A letter sent Wednesday by USDA Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack to Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton said Koochiching is listed among five other

counties in designation No. 1 of disaster designation for the combined effects of severe freezing and excessive snow followed by excessive rainfall and flooding that occurred from Jan. 1 through Aug. 2. Lake of the Woods County is also included in the No. 1 designation of primary counties along with Dodge, Freeborn, Mower, Olmsted

and Steele counties. The information about the declaration was forwarded to The Journal by 8th District Congressman Rick Nolan's office. The action was taken following a request on Aug. 26 and 27 by the Minnesota State Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency, USDA, for primary county disaster

designations for eight Minnesota counties, due to losses caused by several disasters that have occurred in 2013. USDA reviewed the loss assessment reports and determined that there were sufficient production losses to warrant a secretarial natural disaster designation. A secretarial disaster designation makes farm op-

erators in primary counties and those counties to such primary counties eligible to be considered for certain assistance from FSA, provided eligibility requirements are met. This assistance includes FSA emergency loans. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of a secretarial di-

saster declaration to apply for emergency loans. FSA considers each emergency loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of production losses on the farm, and the security and repayment ability of the operator. Local FSA offices can provide affected farmers with further information.

When it comes to gas prices, everybody's asking: 'How low can they go?'

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Experts are saying that gas prices could be 20-25 cents less as soon as Halloween. "While past performance is never an absolute indicator of future price positions, a review of recent history gives us good reason to ex-

pect prices to fall between now and Halloween, by between 20-to-25 cents per gallon," says Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst, GasBuddy. "When we looked at prices from 9/19 through Oct. 31 — for a five-year period — it became clear that the numbers were skewed be-

cause of the extraordinary plunge gas prices took in 2008 when they moved from the record peak, \$4.12, in July to the record low, \$1.61, by year's end. In 2008, the price from Sept. 19 to Oct. 31 plummeted by \$1.28 per gallon. We're expecting a much tamer decrease this year," he said.

From Sept 19 to Halloween, the U.S. average price has fallen by an average of 28 cents per gallon over the past five years. "But we're leaning closer to the 10-year average, which is 23 cents per gallon," DeHaan noted. "Retail gas prices during this period actually increased in 4 of the past

10 years, but barring a hurricane or sudden turbulence in the Middle East, we're confident that most metro markets across the U.S. will see their prices fall in this 20-to-25 cent range," said Gregg Laskoski, another GasBuddy senior petroleum analyst. GasBuddy operates more

than 250 similar websites that track gasoline prices at more than 140,000 gasoline stations in the United States and Canada. In addition, GasBuddy offers a free smartphone app which has been downloaded over 25 million times to help motorists find the lowest gasoline prices in their area.

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