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Council considers different type of garden

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The 'community garden' concept may be expanded to allow Falls Hunger Coalition patrons to help themselves to fresh produce.

The idea was brought to the International Falls City Council Monday by Daniel McGonigle, Community Education director, who said Falls Hunger Coalition Director Ashley Hall and he had discussed the idea. They would seek a grant for expansion of the concept to create a garden where those in need could harvest the vegetables.

Mayor Harley Droba was quick to support the idea, and is expected to bring the idea to the city's next Land Use and Legislation Committee and to city department heads for input on locations and other details.

Droba said the committee will come up with a recommendation to the council about what site makes sense for the garden at the next council meeting.

The original Community Garden on Third Street was created in 2013 through the AGE to age organization, involved in crossing generational boundaries between the elder community and younger community.

Community Garden plots are rented and maintained by their respective renters. The flowers and produce grown in the gardens is not intended to be free to anyone; those who rent the plots expect to reap the fruits of their labor.

McGonigle said people have been helping themselves now and then because of a need that a different kind of garden could help address.

The garden would be similar to that on Third Street with raised beds, and would need access to water.

Other business

The council agreed on a 3-1 vote to purchase property at 801 Third Ave., the former Stock Tire location, at a negotiated price of \$136,000.

Councilor Leon Ditsch voted no, and Councilor Walt Buller was absent.

The structure will be used to consolidate the Public Works Department, eventually onto one property, thereby making the department more efficient and freeing up storage space with the move.

Droba, acknowledging some public criticism of the plan, and asked Public Works Director Ted Brokaw to explain the motivation.

Brokaw said equipment is now in the middle of a residential neighborhood,

Council to A10 >

Border roundtable airs impact, frustrations

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Frustration caused by the extended closure of the Canadian border to Americans was expressed before, during and after a roundtable held here Tuesday by U.S. Reps. Pete Stauber and Michelle Fischbach.

The border was closed due to COVID-19 to all but essential traffic in mid-March, with Canada Border Services Agency announcing extensions to the closure month after month. The latest extension by the Canadian government to the closure said the border will remain closed until at least April 21.

Fischbach and Stauber, representing Minnesota's 7th and 8th congressional districts, said they would take what they heard Tuesday back to Washington. Stauber is a member of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group, created prior to the pandemic to exchange information and promote better understanding between U.S. and Canadian legislators on common programs and concerns. Stauber was appointed because a variety of industries within Minnesota, and Minnesota's 8th Congressional District, rely heavily on traffic between Canada and the U.S.

Stories about the impact of the closure on businesses, families, economies and life



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

U.S. Reps. Pete Stauber and Michelle Fischbach met Tuesday in International Falls to talk about impacts of the closure of the Canada border for the past 13 months.

in general along the border abounded on stage at Backus Community Center as well as in an audience of about 45 people.

On stage with the lawmakers were 10 people representing the impact of the closure along the border, with as far west as Roseau and far east as Grand Portage.

Canadian view

Attending virtually were members of Canadian Parliament Marcus Powlowski, who represents Thunderbay-Rainy River, and Dan Mazier, who represents western Man-

itoba areas.

They said Canadians and their communities are experiencing the same losses and hardships as a result of the closure. Mazier said he believed the restrictions to travel would be loosened and eventually lifted as more Americans and Canadians are vaccinated.

"I encourage Minnesota to encourage Biden to send more vaccines to Canada to speed up reopening the border with Canada," Mazier said, noting the American vaccination rollout is outpac-

ing Canada's.

He also encouraged a developing a coordinated plan between the two nations to safely and gradually reopen the border.

Powlowski said, for Canada, the answer is going to be proof of vaccination.

"We are rapidly vaccinating vulnerable Canadians and a good deal of the population," he said. "When we have Americans showing they are vaccinated with the vaccine, which greatly decreases the

Roundtable to A10 >

Drought relief on its way

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

To say the weather has been strange in Borderland would be an understatement.

Along with having a relatively mild winter, the end of the season and introduction to spring has been dry, with little in the way of snow or rainfall.

The Falls had experienced some drought in March, only getting .36 inches of precipitation the entire month.

Such an arid climate has meant International Falls and the surrounding area had been at increased risk of fire hazards.

Meteorologist Patrick Ayd of the National Weather Service in Duluth said while such a dry climate isn't common in northern Minnesota, it's not unheard of either.



STAFF PHOTO BY COLTON JEFFRIES

The shoreline along the Littlefork River.

"Something like this has certainly happened before," he said. "Usually at this time we have a bit more snowpack, but there have been several times where we

lose it earlier."

The lack of snow on the ground, Ayd said, is what has been largely fueling the dry weather and the fire hazard warnings Koochich-

ing County has been under, though it's never easy to nail down a specific cause.

"That's really what has been driving our concerns with the fire hazards," he said. "If we look back into the last month or so, it's largely driven by pressure patterns over the Arctic, so it's hard to say why any one period can be this dry, but the biggest thing was the loss of the snowpack."

However, relief is just around the corner.

"We're actually starting to get into a more wet period," meteorologist Karen Eagle said. Forecasts now call for substantial rainfall into the end of the week.

While getting some rain on the ground will help ease the risk of fire, Ayd said it takes several factors to determine

Weather to A10 >

