LOCALNEWS

Special meeting seeks public input

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

After a round of special meetings where the Falls School Board heard presentations about areas of potential budget cuts, the public has a chance to weigh in at a special meeting Wednesday.

The meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. Wednesday at the Falls High School cafeteria, and will feature an open forum of discussion among board members and the public.

At issue is the cost adjustments the board is considering in order to offset the roughly $500,000 the district is losing in state funding with the loss of about 70 students since last spring.

At a Jan. 29 special meeting, the school board heard nine different presentations led by different Falls district employees about the cuts the board is considering. These nine presentations will be discussed at Wednesday's meeting.

At the previous meeting, FHS Principal Tim Everson stressed the need for clarity of short- and long-term goals, as well as the idea that spending a few extra dollars now might be necessary to improve the district's fiscal position in the future.

Falls and West End Elementary Principal Melissa Tate implored the district to focus on investing in younger grades to ensure future student success. Adding a section of preschool, she said, and lowering the cost of the program would make it more attractive for families.

Moving the Community Education office from the east end of FHS to the building's main offices and eliminating a secretarial position would save about $35,000, Superintendent Nordy Nelson said in November.

In a letter read at the Jan. 29 meeting, Community Education Director Rachel Amdahl opposed the move, and said in the letter Community Education generates about $120,000 in revenue each year.

Transportation Director Jeff Veeder at the Jan. 29 meeting proposed adding door-to-door bus service, instead of regional stops. But the change would come with added cost. Veeder also requested board members replace a bus, which could cost about $100,000.

Nelson's November cost adjustment proposal said elementary and secondary level staff reductioins could save, on the steep side, about $370,000. At the Jan. 29 meeting, all K-2 teachers urged the board to keep the four sections of each of the three grades. Kindergarten teacher Mary Kay Hardwig said smaller class sizes benefit the district by saving money in the long run.

Nelson previously said if assignments of educational support professionals are reconfigured, the district could save $125,000. At the Jan. 29 meeting, Janet Underdahl, president of the educational support professionals union, said students, teachers and parents rely on para professionals to make sure students are safe and successful at school.

In November, Nelson said the one hour of English as a second language taught by Rosa Christianson carries a cost of $8,600, and he doesn't see the need for it. At the Jan. 29 meeting, Christianson defended the program, and said the program is self-funded and receives $14,000 from the state.

Previously, special education educator Shawn Johnson also touted the necessity of para professionals, and said they're "vital to her job."

The board could also pursue early retirement incentives for members of Local 510, which is the secretary and custodian union. Local 510 President Josie Toninato said at the Jan. 29 meeting the union is requesting an incentive package for early retirement be offered to union members without reopening negotiations on the contract.

After Wednesday's meeting, the board will meet again at 5 p.m. March 11, when they will further discuss the proposals and adjust the potential reduction list.

Peace pull drawing point for 'medical NAFTA' forum

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

This summer's peace pull is expected to draw together government officials and others for what's being called a medical NAFTA conference.

Set for July 2, the Pulling for Peace: International Tug of War, also known as the peace pull, will provide a forum to discuss free trade for medical services between the United States and Canada.

International Falls City Councilor Cynthia Jaksa said she expects federal, state and provincial leaders to gather following the peace pull, along with medical leaders from Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, to discuss how to allow residents on both sides of the international border to use one another's medical resources. She coined the phrase medical NAFTA in reference to the North American Free Trade Agreement signed in 1994 between the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Jaksa said the conference will focus on developing agreements that would allow American citizens to use dialysis services in Fort Frances and Canadians to use MRI services in International Falls.

The sharing of these services would be a humanitarian move, she said, when considering the isolated areas and sometimes severe weather people must travel in to get to the services outside the communities.

Now, Borderland residents must travel about 100 miles for dialysis, and Fort Frances residents must travel about 200 miles to Thunder Bay for MRIs.

"The State Department policies embraced by both nations, Beyond the Border initiative, said they want to do this and if they mean what they say this should be able to happen," Jaksa said.

> "It's turned into something more substantive than just a celebration."
>
> **Cynthia Jaksa**
> International Falls City Council

She pointed at other services that would benefit residents from both nations, but said the MRI and dialysis services will be the first focus. Sharing pharmaceuticals is another area Jaksa said she'd like to explore. She said a prescription that costs $800 in the U.S. costs just $45 in Canada.

Meanwhile, Jaksa said she expects attendance at the conference by Dr. John Popovich, president and chief executive officer of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, and his counterpart David Musyj, CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital. Services are now being shared by the two cross-border hospitals under contracts and she hopes a similar plan can be developed locally.

"It would be nice to merge access, but in reality we really just want some small wins," she said.

In addition, Jaksa said plans are being made for Jamshed Merchant, Canada's consul general to the United States, to attend, as well as federal and state officials that represent Borderland.

A visit by Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Gary Doer is expected June 26 and will also involve discussions about the effort to share medical resources.

Jaksa said she will invite other leaders of border communities facing the same medical challenges as Borderland.

"If we work together, we get more done," she said.

Jaksa said she's been told by Popovich the effort will need to jump more hurdles on the Ontario side of the border than on the U.S. side.

The unique annual tug of war between Fort Frances and International Falls across the Rainy River is an interesting way to draw people to serious discussions, she said.

"It's turned into something more substantive than just a celebration," she said.

Meanwhile, Jaksa said she's found through her efforts Medicare will pay for client services in Canada if they are unavailable locally.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services website said Medicare covers health care services in a foreign hospital if the foreign hospital is closer to your home than the nearest U.S. hospital that can treat your medical condition, regardless of whether it's an emergency, among other situations listed.

However, Jaksa said, it may be difficult to meet all the requirements.

"I am looking into it further," she said. "What you read and what the facts on the ground are are sometimes different," she said.

The arrangement for Medicare to pay for services across the river may need some adjustment, she said.

"It's a huge piece," she said. "But not everybody will fit it. We start here. If it's not working well, we fix it."

PUBLIC NOTICE
CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY
2013/2014 AMBO Contractor Training Seminar

When: February 17, 2014 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Where: Backus Community Center
900 Fifth Street, International Falls, MN 56649
Registration: 7:00 a.m.

BACKUS Community Center
(218) 285-7225 | 900 5th Street | Int'l Falls MN
www.backusab.org | Facebook:Backus AB

COURSE SCHEDULED

2012 IRC: Administration, Framing & Finish Applications
One hour of Energy will be presented after the regular session

This seminar will discuss administrative provisions of the State Building Code the contractor needs to understand to minimize project delays, cost overruns, and establishing an effective relationship with the local building department.
Part II of the seminar will investigate details of framing in accordance with the IRC. Topics to include, but not limited to, floor systems; cantilevers; roof trusses; building envelope, wall coverings, windows and roofing. The session will close with a discussion on interior finish requirements.

This seminar has been approved for 7 hours CEU by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Residential contractors, Building inspectors, Building officials, and Architects and designers are encouraged to attend.

INSTRUCTOR
Greg Karow. C.B.O.

FEES AND REGISTRATION

The fee of $100.00 includes instructions, course materials, lunch and breaks. Make check payable to Backus Community Center in the amount of $100.00 if submitted by January 31, 2014. Registration after this date is $110.00 and will be accepted up to one week before the seminar (February 17, 2014). Walk-in registration will be accepted on a space available basis, with a registration fee of $120.00

Registration can also be made by calling 218-285-7225 or registration forms may be picked up at Backus Community Center Office, Northern Lumber, and Falls Lumber. Or can be found at www.backusab.org Please return registration forms to Backus Community Center, 900 Fifth Street, International Falls, MN 56649. Please call 218-285-7225 for questions. Credit Card accepted.

Refund Policy: If you find that you must cancel, please notify us with a written notice one week in advance. A refund minus $25.00 cancellation fee will be issued. Refunds will not be given to no shows.

This ad is sponsored by the City of International Falls Building/Safety Department.

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION
INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MINNESOTA
IN OBSERVANCE OF TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH
FEBRUARY 2014

WHEREAS, females between the ages 16-24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, experiencing abuse at a rate almost triple the national average; and

WHEREAS, one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth; and

WHEREAS, high school students who experience physical violence in a dating relationship are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, are at greater risk of suicide and are much more likely to carry patterns of abuse into future relationships; and

WHEREAS, young people victimized by a dating partner are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior and unhealthy dieting behaviors and the experience may disrupt normal development of self-esteem and body image; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of teens who experience dating violence report that incidents of abuse took place in a school building or on school grounds; and

WHEREAS, only 33% of teens who are in an abusive relationship ever tell anyone about the abuse, and 81% of parents surveyed either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they do not know if it is one; and

WHEREAS, by providing young people with education about healthy relationships and relationship skills and by changing attitudes that support violence, we recognize that dating violence can be prevented; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to raise community awareness and to provide training for teachers, counselors and school staff so that they may recognize when youth are exhibiting signs of dating violence; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month will benefit young people, their families, schools and communities regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity; and

WHEREAS, everyone has the right to a safe and healthy relationship and to be free from abuse.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert Anderson as Mayor of International Falls, MN do hereby proclaim February 2014, Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. I urge all community members to work toward ending teen dating violence by empowering young people to develop healthier relationships, assisting victims in accessing the information and supportive services they need from Friends Against Abuse, creating better and more resources for young people in need, instituting effective intervention and prevention policies in schools and engaging in discussions with family members and peers to promote awareness and prevention of the quiet epidemic of teen dating violence.

Robert W. Anderson

Robert W. Anderson, Mayor