

## Riding in style

Locals participate in state horse show

B7



## Rockin' for a Reason

Event set for Oct. 10

A4



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## Falls may move on sale of VNP bonds

### Move could save more than \$400,000 over the course of VNP lease

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

International Falls taxpayers could save more than \$400,000 if the city is successful in refinancing bonds held on Voyageurs National Park headquarters.

Shawn Mason, the city's economic and community development director, reported that the conditions of a commission directive have been met, prompting a group empowered by the commission to act on its behalf to move forward with the refinancing process.

She provided the information about the group's decision via email Wednesday to members of the Falls Economic Development Authority Commission, the EDA Advisory Board and the media.

The bonds secured in 2010 for the construction of the Voyageurs National Park headquarters building have 18 years left to mature at a current interest rate of 6.17 percent.

In May, the EDA Commission agreed to empower Mason, Mike Katrin, as chairman of the EDA Advisory Board, and two EDA

commissioners to make the decision to move forward with refinancing should an analysis and determination need to occur in between EDA Commission meetings. The commission is made up of members of the Falls City Council and meets next Oct. 28.

The May motion was contingent upon Northland Securities and bond counsel Briggs and Morgan providing the EDA with letters stating they will share in the risk of this action and will not bill the EDA for expenses incurred if the market condition proves to be

unfavorable for refinancing.

The next step, Mason said is securing a rating from Moody's, a company that provides credit ratings and other investment services, which will take about 30 days at a cost ranging from \$12,000 to \$14,000.

She said group will assess the interest rate on the date the rating is secured and determine whether to continue moving forward.

"If we were in the position to sell today, the cost savings to our taxpayers would be \$437,239.45," wrote Mason in the email, which

included a copy of the analysis. "While there is no guarantee where interest rates will be 30 days from now, experts have advised us it is not forecast to move drastically either way."

Mason added, "The empowered group believes a savings to the taxpayers of approximately \$437,000 over the course of the lease is significant and it is imperative to move forward."

In related business, the EDA Commission approved a motion

VNP to A7 ➤

## Focusing on spring walleye

### Con-Con Committee to host meeting on parks, accesses, and improvements

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

Koochiching County's Con-Con Committee will host a community meeting Monday in Birchdale to discuss with members of the public and the county board the county's parks and water accesses in the area.

The meeting is 7:30 p.m. at the Birchdale Community Building.

The Con-Con Committee helps guide the spending of money generated from the Consolidated Conservation lands, commonly referred to as Con-Con lands. The lands are state-owned property held in the public trust specifically for conservation purposes. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has the responsibility by law to manage these lands for the public. Koochiching County receives money, known as payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILT, from the state for the Con-Con lands within the county, as well as revenue from the sale of timber from the lands.

Monday's meeting is expected to include discussion about parking issues at county Rainy River accesses caused by the influx of many anglers fishing the early spring walleye season.

The early season on the river draws anglers from across the Midwest and represents the first open-water walleye fishing opportunity in Minnesota. Many anglers come to fish the river for a chance at catching, and releasing, a trophy walleye. The Rainy River walleye season opened last year March 1 and closed April 14. Anglers are allowed to keep just two walleye less than 19.5 inches. And fish measuring longer must be released immediately.

Last year, hundreds of pickups with empty boat trailers were parked along Minnesota Highway 11 east and west of Birchdale, with the parked vehicles lining the mile-long access road to Nelson Park.

The Con-Con Committee has

Meeting to A7 ➤



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Preschool students Carter Timberman and Cammie Cronin make a match out of a skull at Voyageurs National Park Wednesday. Preschool students in Mandi Baron and Missy Walls' classes visited the park this week for a nature walk and to learn about the five senses. Turn to B10 to see more photos.

## Field trip fun

Falls Elementary preschool students in Missy Walls and Mandi Baron's classes visited Voyageurs National Park this week. The visit allowed students the opportunity to enjoy the park and what it has to offer. In the case of this week's field trips, students were able to enjoy spending time outdoors together while learning about animal bones, their five senses and colors found in nature.



Aubrey Eide examines a moose skull held by Miranda Challeen, a VNP interpretive park ranger.



Sawyer Palmer holds up his favorite skull during a field trip to Voyageurs National Park.

## Sheriff attends national conference

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer



Sheriff Brian Jespersen

The hard rain Bob Dylan predicted fell in Colorado the second week of September, resulting in massive flooding and damage. This threw a wrench into the proceedings of the National Sheriffs' Institute, held Sept. 8-14 in Aurora, Colo.

Koochiching County Sheriff Brian Jespersen attended the NSI, and he said the rain started Monday, Sept. 9, and "didn't quit." Other than a power outage where he was staying, Jespersen said there weren't any major disruptions to the conference.

"Two of our instructors were from Boulder, they come down from the university up there," he said. "One of them, her house was being flooded, so she had to get back, cut her day short. The other guy was on higher ground, and he was late getting down because of some roads."

Boulder County was one of the hardest-hit areas of Colorado, setting multiple rainfall records during the flood. More than 16 inches of rain fell in Boulder County between Sept. 9-15, which is comparable to average annual precipitation of 20.7 inches, according to the National Climatic Data Center.

Despite all the devastation, Jespersen said he never feared for his safety, as they were south of the areas that were hit the hardest. They didn't do any assisting of local responders while they were there, he said, but they "would have if they needed help."

"They had it all under control as far as assistance," he said. "Their emergency management, along with their sheriff, started responding to the situation and they got things in order."

Seeing the impact of a disaster firsthand did make him think about the impact a flood could have in Koochiching County,

Sheriff to A7 ➤