

KEDA

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Nevanen said, including KEDA, Rainy Lake Oil, Bergstrom Wood Products, Wagner Construction, and MD & W Railway. The motions approved Friday will allow Nevanen to work to secure an easement for the project, an agreement to lay the track, and to work with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to secure any and all eligible grants for the project.

Rod Bergstrom said the project will allow them to re-evaluate their costs, and be able to be more competitive and grow their business.

“We think it’s a good project, we feel it’s really key to helping us grow our business,” Bergstrom said.

KEDA member Brian McBride said the public-private partnership aspect of the project shows these different groups can come together and accomplish something substantial.

“It shows the local government units are willing to work together to bring new business, or to enhance existing businesses,” McBride said. “I think it just makes us look better, and there’s opportunities in this whole area for businesses.”

The idea for the project came about in October 2013, Nevanen said, when an out-of-state business owner contacted KEDA member Bob

Anderson about locating in the upper Midwest. Anderson referred the owner to Nevanen, who began working with him, and figuring out what the owner’s needs were.

“During one of the conversations we mentioned that we had some other industries here, wood products industries, including Bergstrom Wood Products,” Nevanen said.

The owner mentioned he had done business with Bergstrom Wood Products before, Nevanen said, and had ties with other people in the region as well. That brought Bergstrom Wood Products into the conversations, as well as MD & W Railway.

“This gentleman was a little nervous about dealing with the short line versus CN,” Nevanen said. “Darwin (Joslyn of MD & W) went a long way to dispel that notion, and that MD & W could be seen as a real good partner in this and provide some value.”

They began exploring the possibility of running a rail line from the MD & W line to Bergstrom Wood Products, Nevanen said, and piqued the interest of Rainy Lake Oil, which is next to Bergstrom Wood Products on Highway 332.



Paul Nevanen



Brian McBride



Pete Kalar

“Rainy Lake Oil came into the picture because they actually had looked at running rail in several years ago, and all of a sudden we had another potential user of this rail,” Nevanen said.

The project now had public and private partners, Nevanen said, and Koochiching County Engineer Joe Sutherland contacted the Minnesota Department of Transportation about the rail crossing Highway 332. The rail would run through property owned by Wagner Construction, and they were open to working with the project and making it happen.

The rail spur ran into a delay earlier this summer, Nevanen said, when they had to work with Minnesota Power to find a solution to a problem that had arisen. The rail would run under high-voltage power lines, and the lines need to be a certain height above the rail. They’ll have to raise the lines, he said, and Minnesota Power quoted them a cost estimate of \$195,000 for raising the lines.



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

Rod, Gary, and Darren Bergstrom joke during a Koochiching Economic Development Authority meeting Friday, during the unveiling of a project that will benefit their business, Bergstrom Wood Products, and others.

The rail construction cost estimate is \$336,000, Nevanen said, and the rail crossing warning equipment will cost \$150,000. The easement cost from Wagner Construction is to be determined, as is the cost of preparing the land for rail construction.

“If you look at this globally and pull back a little bit, you see that we’re developing an industrial rail-served corridor along here that will serve basically from here to

the CN line,” Nevanen said.

The rail spur will be owned by KEDA, MD & W, Rainy Lake Oil, and Bergstrom Wood Products in various locations, Nevanen said, but routine maintenance will be done by MD & W.

“We would perform the normal, routine general maintenance as a part of the business,” Joslyn said.

Minnesota Power won’t be able to raise the power lines until early 2015, Nev-

anen said, which gives them plenty of time to pursue funding and grants for the project.

KEDA member Pete Kalar said the project sends the message that with all the local economy has been through in the past two years, things are looking up.

“There is still confidence, and there is hope,” Kalar said. “This is very positive, and it’s a message that needs to be said.”

SPRAYING

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the plants don’t absorb the herbicide as well,” he said. “We try to give the public the best bump for the dollar.”

The herbicide used is very specific to the area and to the noxious weed being eradicated, he said.

Health concerns about the herbicide are “extraordinarily minimal,” he said.

“Once the herbicide is dried on the plant, it is not a concern,” he said of the safety of the herbicide. “We try to minimize the times we have with pedestrians and folks with dogs. We’re especially careful along Highway 11 east, where we see a lot of bike traffic.”

As a beekeeper, Cheney said he’s very sensitive to health concerns about the used of herbicide or insecticide.

He said in the height of summer days, the chemical would be more volatile, while at this time of the season it’s more easily absorbed by the target plant.

“Once the surface is dry, the chemical is ineffective

to anything else,” he added.

He said the herbicide is not an insecticide, which is cumulative and insects take back to their colony.

The use of insecticides is suspected to be the cause of bee colony collapses in Minnesota.

“So it’s critical we are careful,” he said.

His interest in what and how herbicides and insecticides are used in the state is what lead him to become a licensed applicator.

“And I want the folks I am supervising to be aware of the issues, not just for beekeepers, but recreational users and people walking,” he said.

“We live in the most beautiful part of the world,” he said, and invasive plant species “changes the environmental structure, takes over native wetlands, and replaces native plants like cattails.”

In areas too sensitive to use herbicide to fight the invasive, he said biological controls, such as a certain kind of beetle, are released to maintain a population of loosestrife, but not eradicate it.

Koochiching County



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Walking into this field of wild parsnip in International Falls could be the stuff of nightmares. Skin in contact with sap from this invasive species and then exposed to light can react with deep blisters that leave scars.

Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitchsch, who also serves as county agriculture inspector, said he was pleased to hear the state was spraying for the invasive species.

He said parsnip and loose-

strife are on the state’s noxious weed control list, which requires the owner of land on which the weeds are found to contain or control them from spreading, and spraying is one way to do that.

Hummitchsch said herbicides, unlike insecticides, are very safe and have a low toxicity rate.

Cheney said the state is also conscious of the spread of the invasive plants as a result of mowing. He said drivers may wonder why one part of a ditch is mowed when another part is not.

“We don’t want to mow loosestrife because when the stalk stem is cut, it can reseed and get on the mower deck and then we bring it down the road and spread it,” he said. “Operators pick up the power deck, shake or brush it off, so we don’t spread our problem. Sometimes for some things, not mowing is the best and then we hit it with herbicide.”

A lot of the time, invasives are first noticed along the road right of way because it is spread more easily in that area.

“We are only targeting invasive and targeted species,” he said of spraying. “In upper New York and in Michigan, loosestrife has

become the dominate species in wetlands, which are the habitat for cattails, muskrat to ducks. It’s critical we try to control it with spraying.”

Meanwhile, Hummitchsch urged private landowners to also control the invasive species and said certain herbicides are very safe and effective when used at the right time.

He said parsnip lives for two years and in the second year may die with a control of seed production.

However, Hummitchsch and Cheney urged people to protect themselves from the plant, which is phototoxic. People should avoid skin contact with the toxic sap of the plant tissue by wearing gloves, long sleeves and long pants. The juice of wild parsnip in contact with skin in the presence of sunlight can cause a rash and blistering and discoloration of the skin.

Hummitchsch cautioned people never to use a weed trimmer on wild parsnip because of its phototoxicity.



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