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STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Tina Boham, center, holds up a 58-inch sturgeon caught by Joe Theis of Baudette. The fish tied for second place during Saturday's North American Sturgeon Championship on Rainy River in Birchdale. Theis' fish fell just short of the winning sturgeon which measured 59-1/2 inches long.

Longville man nets sturgeon, cash

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Ray Engel had luck on his side Saturday when he reeled in a 59-1/2 inch sturgeon during the North American Sturgeon Championship on Rainy River in Birchdale.

The fish was the longest sturgeon caught, measured and released during the four-hour event and Engel of Longville took home the first-place prize of \$2,085.

"The contest went very well and the day was beautiful," said Mike Hanson, one of the organizers of the 21st annual event.

According to Hanson, this year attracted more anglers than years past and many people were lucky enough to catch a sturgeon or see their neighboring boat catch one. He said 291 people took to the water in hopes of netting the illusive river monster.

And, Hanson added, 42 of the contest entrants were chil-



Brent Arnold appears to be enjoying a day full of sunshine and fishing during Saturday's sturgeon contest.

dren, which made for a record number of youth participating in the event. Ben Burgess provided each young angler with a prize to take home.

"For the most part, things went very smoothly with all the volunteers including the folks from the Koochiching County drug court," he said, noting those representing the drug court helped with added safety for the event.

The tournament is strictly



One of the contest's younger anglers smiles after announcing he plans on catching the winning fish.

catch-and-release and is arranged as a fundraiser for the Birchdale Community Building. The community building association relies on the tournament to pay for utilities and other costs and members really appreciate all the support from the people who fish and enjoy the day with friends and family, Hanson said.

"It's a fellowship event," he said. "It is much appreciated by those who benefit from the

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community center and the town of Birchdale."

Hanson said aside from Engel's winning sturgeon, second place went to a tie between two 58-inch fish caught by Cyndi Hiebert of International Falls and Joe Theis of Baudette.

Mason resigns, district to seek new golf coach

Board offers Tom Vollom half-time teaching position

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Following Monday's Falls School Board meeting, the district will be in search of a new golf coach for the 2014 season.

Bill Mason, the former boys and girls head golf coach, submitted to the board, a letter of resignation for the position following a delay in action by the board after a June hearing.

"It has been an honor and privilege to coach so many fine students during my (18-year) career as golf coach," Mason wrote in a letter read during the meeting by board member Mike Holden. Mason did not attend Monday's school board meeting.

In May, a resolution adopted by the board placed Mason on paid suspension for the remainder of the 2013 golf season following a school-administered investigation. The same resolution stated Mason's coaching position would not be renewed for the 2014 season.

The investigation conducted by Superintendent Nurdy Nelson revealed Mason allowed a stranger to ride in the school van while five of the boys on the golf team were in the van returning from an out-of-town golf meet.

In his resignation letter, Mason apologized for "the mistake I made transporting a gentleman in need of a ride."

The letter continued he has "always strived to put the interests and safety of my golfers first and regret this unfortunate lapse in judgment."

"He chose to go this route and I give him credit," Holden said of Mason's decision. "You all know how I felt about this. I'm extremely saddened."

In his letter, Mason offered to reimburse the district and taxpayers for the days he did not work. The board, however, did not accept the offer.

The board will now seek applicants for the coaching position and said there is the possibility to have two separate coaches for the boys and the girls' golf teams because of scheduling and supervision issues.

"We can't operate with one

Mason to A7 ➤

Council creates special project fund to track grant

Fund to monitor revenues and expenditures of a \$657,000 grant to be used for multimodal district

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The International Falls City Council Monday established a special project fund to track revenues and expenditures of a \$657,000 state grant intended to help install utilities to the multimodal district east of the city.

The council unanimously agreed to establish the fund

which will also track the use of a required match of \$300,000 by the city.

The fund was established after concerns were raised by Mayor Bob Anderson about keeping separate money spent by the city and the city's Economic Development Authority toward the project. Despite being governed by and representing the same people,

the two entities are considered separate legal authorities with separate funds, he earlier told the council.

He told the council Monday that the city's auditor recommended creating a special fund to track the more than \$1 million infrastructure project.

Officials with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, which oversees the Transportation Economic Development grant provided last year to the city, agree that \$185,000 already spent by the city's EDA to remove a collection line from the district property located along County Highway

155 can be used toward the city's match, said Anderson.

Anderson had earlier rejected signing documents that would allow the city to access the state grant funds saying he was concerned that he was not privy to information sent to the state by other city officials regarding changes in the plans for the district. In addition, he said grant funds should be placed in the city's accounts, not the EDA accounts because the grant was provided to the city. And, he said the city did not formally accept the grant extension provided recently by the state.

Following a motion by Coun-

cil Cynthia Jaksa to create the fund, Councilor Gail Rognerud, who serves as president of the EDA Commission, asked Anderson if he would sign the grant documents should the motion be approved. He said he would.

In related action, Rognerud asked that action on the agenda to consider seeking shovel-ready certification from DEED for the district be put on hold as she believed it was more appropriate to bring to the EDA Commission's regular meeting. Anderson has indicated he would like to take the lead on the shovel-ready certification.

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