

# LOCALNEWS

## Falls to consider synthetic drug ordinance

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

International Falls will likely follow the ranks of cities with an ordinance regulating the sale of synthetic drugs within the city limits.

Regulation of synthetic drugs has been difficult. The city of Duluth made headlines in the last several months with the federal prosecution of a Duluth head shop owner who sold synthetic drugs. Last Place on Earth owner Jim Carlson was convicted on 51 of 55 counts.

In October, several Minnesota House committees held a joint meeting, including a special panel set up to address the spread of synthetics. Medical and

law enforcement officials said the problem is statewide, and can be found in both cities and rural areas.

City Attorney Steve Shermoen Monday told the International Falls City Council he and Falls Police Chief Mike Musich have been following the news on synthetic drugs.

“It’s not a problem here yet, but it seems to be moving our direction,” Shermoen said.

He said he and Musich would discuss the issue and review ordinances



Steve Shermoen

Duluth recently adopted prohibiting the sale of synthetic drugs.

In June, the Duluth City Council approved two ordinances designed to clamp down on the sale and use of synthetic drugs. One would require retailers to obtain a license to sell synthetic drugs, and the other would make it illegal to smoke, ingest, inject or snort any product with a label that says it is not for human consumption.

In October, the Hibbing City Council passed its own ordinance, similar to Duluth, that requires businesses to get a license from the city in order to sell synthetics. Under the new ordinance, synthetics cannot be sold to anyone under the age of 21. Syn-

thetics shops also cannot be within 500 feet of parks, daycare facilities or schools. Anyone selling the drugs cannot be open between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. The ordinance went into effect Oct. 1.

A recommended ordinance for International Falls is expected to be brought by Shermoen and Musich for consideration at the next council meeting.

Synthetic drugs are considered synthetic marijuana, bath salts or other non-herbal narcotics doctors say have drastically worse effects than traditional marijuana. Experts say a major problem regulating such drugs is an ever-shifting set of ingredients that go into

them. Many of those components are sold online, making it more difficult for Minnesota law enforcement to monitor.

Minnesota lawmakers are aiming for legislation to regulate sales as much as possible. They’re also considering new prevention and education programs, according to news reports.

Also Monday, the council agreed to spend \$2,500 to establish a website for use by members of the emergency response teams established to address the needs of the community with the loss of 265 jobs at the local paper mill.

The money is part of \$138,000 earmarked as a match for a federal grant the community is seeking

to assist in recovery of the job loss.

The council also approved expenses for Councilor Cynthia Jaksa to attend the Midwest Economic Development Association annual conference Dec. 8-10 in Chicago. Jaksa estimated the cost at \$1,600.

Jaksa said she agreed with concerns voiced earlier by Mayor Bob Anderson about a conference in Washington D.C. Jaksa said the Chicago conference is more focused on siting development, while the Washington conference involved more about foreign investment.

She said she would take notes and offer a slide show of the Chicago conference.

## KEDA to discuss foreign trade zone in Koochiching County

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority’s November meeting is set for noon Wednesday at the cold weather testing facility near the Falls International Airport.

On the agenda for the meeting is a discussion concerning the foreign trade zone in Koochiching County. The board is considering using alternative site

framework to expand the borders of the zone to include the entirety of Koochiching County, KEDA Director Paul Nevanen said. They don’t currently have a tenant for the zone, and he said the board hopes expanding the zone’s boundaries will



Paul Nevanen

make it more appealing to potential tenants.

The FTZ is jointly owned by the city of International Falls and Koochiching County and managed by KEDA.

The board is working with a consulting firm, Point Trade Services Inc., based in Florida. The firm worked recently with Duluth with its FTZ, Nevanen said, so they have experience in the area, as well as nationwide. Right now, he

said, the price is right to expand the boundaries, so the board will discuss the benefits of making use of the alternative site framework at this point. Expanding the borders of the FTZ to include the whole county will help market the county as a whole, he added.

Also on Wednesday’s agenda is a discussion with Heather Rand, the northeast representative from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic

Development. Based in the Duluth area, Nevanen said Rand services the arrowhead region of Minnesota. As a member of the emergency response team formed in the wake of the recent Boise Inc. International Falls paper mill layoffs, Rand will discuss DEED programs for economic development. She will also talk about various state programs that may be available to help stir economic growth and recovery, he said.

The board will also clarify an ownership issue with the Falls business park. Several years ago, Nevanen said, a business planned on opening a fish processing plant in the park, and KEDA board members said they’d provide the land. The business failed to open, so KEDA has been in the process of regaining land ownership. The board is trying to correct an administrative oversight, he said, and fix it so it can move forward.

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