

FUNDS

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for building rehabilitation and infrastructure projects.

“The Small Cities Development Program is having an impact in every region of the state, from Roosevelt in the northwest to Harmony in the southeast,” said DEED Deputy Commissioner Kevin McKinnon. “Thanks to this program, many residents of Greater Minnesota will have access to improved housing and better economic opportunities.”

“This is good news for the community,” said Falls City Councilor Cynthia Jaksa of the city’s award. “I think it’s good news for renters and landlords and the downtown area, too.”

City Administrator Ken Anderson also said the award is great news.

“I feel fortunate we were funded and funded at 100 percent of the application,” he said. “I am overjoyed.”

The city has 30 months to use the money, but Anderson said details of the ap-

plication process and when the clock starts ticking is not yet known. The city was notified of the award Monday.

Jaksa was involved in the application. She credited city staff, including Fire Chief Adam Mannausau, Building Inspector Kelly Meyers and Economic Development Authority Director Shawn Mason.

“They really carried the ball,” Jaksa said. “They worked very hard getting the information needed, such as statistical data for one thing, and contacting landlords was a big piece of this.”

The award and subsequent projects will bring money into the community and put people to work, she said.

“There is no one who would disagree with the need to spruce up main street,” Jaksa said of the commercial component of the funding. “This will really help move the ball down the court. It’s all positive.”

A key element of the project is the grant allows for other money to be leveraged, said Anderson, who esti-

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Cynthia Jaksa
Falls City Councilor



mates a total of \$1.1 million will flow into the community with the projects.

Anderson said at least two of the local bands have offered to provide eligible property owners low-interest loans to fund the property owner portion of the cost.

“That’s what really makes this application so competitive,” Anderson said. “We have the need, this will benefit low- and moderate-income people, and eliminate slums and blight. We met the standards.”

To be eligible for Small Cities funding, a project must meet one of three objectives: benefit people of low and moderate incomes, eliminate slum and blight conditions, or eliminate an urgent threat to public health or safety, according

to DEED.

The city’s funding will be awarded to eligible applicants in the form of grants, which may be forgiven provided certain criteria is met, Jaksa said.

The projects will require property owners to provide a portion of the project costs themselves, she said.

“So there is a significant cost reduction for them,” said Jaksa of the property owners who will receive the funding.

Property owners who provided letters of interest to assist the city in its application for the state funding will still need to officially apply for the funding. And Jaksa stressed property owners who did not submit letters of interest may still apply for the funds.

The time for property

owners to apply will follow the city’s formal acceptance of the award, and completion of agreements with the state. At that time, details of when the funds will be available will be known, Anderson said.

Anderson said the money was sought for projects at 13 single family rental units, four duplex rentals, and eight commercial buildings in the city’s downtown historic district.

The idea behind seeking the award for the downtown district is an effort to develop a mixed-use living environment, with a combination of rental and housing units on the upper levels of the downtown retail buildings.

“We’d like to create a market (for living in the area) a walking distance from needed services and products,” he said, pointing to places like St. Louis Park, which has successfully rehabilitated a mixed-use area.

KOOTASCA will be key in administrating the grant for the city, Anderson said.

He pointed to KOOTASCA’s Dana Herschbach and Isaac Meyer who have “a

wealth of experience and offer a lot of professional input.”

Cities and townships with populations under 50,000 and counties with populations under 200,000 are eligible for grants under the program. Projects must be completed within 30 months, depending on size and scope.

A breakdown of this year’s funding showed the following:

- 47 percent was for rehabilitating owner-occupied housing
- 14 percent was for rehabilitating commercial buildings
- 15 percent was for public facilities
- 14 percent was for rehabilitating rental housing
- 10 percent was for general administration

DEED is the state’s principal economic development agency, promoting business recruitment, expansion and retention, workforce development, international trade and community development. For more details about the agency and its services, visit <http://mn.gov/deed/>.

DEGREE

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while still in high school is attractive to students and their parents. PSEO courses aren’t associated with a tuition fee and books are distributed to students at no cost. With college tuition costs increasing, the option relieves pressure on the check book.

On the flip side, it creates a burden on high schools. With fewer students in high school desks, state funding is decreased. Two years ago, nearly half the FHS senior class was attending RRCC, leaving administrators struggling to offset costs and consider areas to make necessary cuts.

“We knew we had to do something,” Everson said.

An effort by administration, staff and the Falls School Board, established concurrent enrollment classes that took off this year.

“They were well received,” Falls Superintendent Kevin Grover said of the courses. He continued only about 20 percent of this year’s senior class chose to take advantage of PSEO.

But administrators were still looking to retain more students.

“By keeping some of our leaders in the high school, it creates a better atmosphere,” Everson said. “We wanted to figure out ways to keep them here.”

More information

Administrators will host a informational meeting for parents about the new associate degree program at 7 p.m. today in the cafeteria at Falls High School.

So secondary teachers went back to school to earn a master’s degree, course schedules were developed and rearranged, and a lot of time and effort from many people was consumed by bringing the AA option to the high school.

“I think it’ll all be worth it,” Everson said.

College freedoms

Tuition fees aside, there is also the issue of freedoms students gain by attending college.

“We’re going to make our schedule mirror that of one at Rainy River,” Everson said. “Or very similar to it.”

Many classes will be taught in the morning and, depending on their credit value, all of them won’t meet Monday through Friday.

“Students still have an open lunch, they will have the lounge and other open periods,” Everson said. “We’ll give them a college feel with their schedules.”

Grover added that by staying at the high school, students will continue to be surrounded by age-appropriate peers and have the

support from high school faculty and staff.

“We will tailor a schedule to fit what they want to do beyond high school,” he said.

Everson agreed.

“We will have more individualized plans for students,” he said. “Instead of giving them a one-size-fits-all AA, we will offer more guidance.”

That goes for parents, too.

“Our grades will still be available for viewing by parents,” Grover said. “They can call and talk to any teacher... they can’t do that if their child is in college. We see that as a big piece. Parents still have their fingertips on any information they want.”

Not for everyone

While Grover said the new opportunity is exciting, he stressed it won’t be for everyone.

“We’re not counseling every junior to get on this AA path,” he said. “You’re walking out of here at 18 years old as a college junior and some kids aren’t ready for that... There will be kids who do it and succeed, but it’s just not going to be for everyone... The last thing I want is three years from now having a kid out in the community having regrets.”

Still, there are options available. Students can earn the full AA degree, take a mixture of high school and

college courses, or take advantage of the 40-credit Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, which is a package of general education courses accepted for transfer to other state colleges and universities.

“We want to stress, too, if students aren’t doing well in a college class, we can withdraw them,” Everson said. “They will still have a withdraw on their college transcript, but we can roll them right into a high school level class and they can still get credit for the semester.”

Key experience

Both men said they are hopeful those who could take advantage of the program will, but noted the positive working relationship between the high school and RRCC.

“We are happy to have a college in our community,” Everson said. “We want our students to attend Rainy after they graduate... It’s great to have that campus here. We plan to continue a good working relationship with them.”

Still, as a high school administrator, Everson gave priority to the once-in-a-lifetime experience high school offers.

“You only get your high school experience once,” he said. “I can put on blue jeans and a T-shirt and go back to college in the fall. I can never go back to high school.”

FARM

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The idea for the first Farm Day started with Manny Herzig, who was principal of Falls Elementary School in the early 1980s. He thought bringing youngsters out to his friend’s farm would be a great experience for everyone involved.

After a little planning and help from others, Farm Day was born.

“Three of the original Farm Day founders were there Friday,” Pearson said. “They stayed in the background, but they were there.”

Meyers, however, was right in the mix of the chaos.

As young animal lovers gathered along a gated pasture of Scottish highlander cattle, Meyers grabbed a piece of bread to lure the long-horned animal toward extended hands.

“Her name is Charlotte,” Meyers said as youngsters stroked the animal’s forehead. “She’s going to have a calf soon.”

It will be different next spring as new animals are born on the farm and throngs of children aren’t there to welcome them.

“We have a lot of fun with this day,” Pearson said, not-


ing he would continue the tradition, but he and his family are moving to central Minnesota. “We may start something similar to this down there... We’ll see.”

When recapping memories of Farm Day, Pearson said what stands out to him is the overall experience thousands of children have received because of the Meyers.

“Kids these days are overwhelmed with technology,” he said. “With their smart phones, they are connected all the time. But when you come out to the farm and can hold a 2-week old bunny, pet a small kitten or grab a fresh egg from under a hen, that’s something technology can’t duplicate.”

So, hopefully, Pearson said, another local farm family will organize an event to continue the experience.


“I’ve told a few people I’d come up and help,” Pearson said. “Friday was emotional. It was bittersweet. We literally took down panels and let some of the animals loose in the pasture. It’s over. It’s hard to believe. We owe a lot of thanks to Wayne and Sharon. What a wonderful couple to give so many people so many memories over the years. Hats off to them.”



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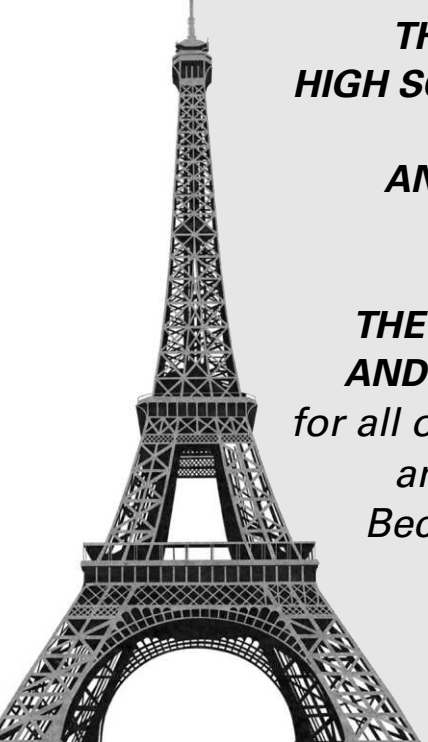
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Public Notice

Loman Riverside Cemetery

Cleanup and Annual Meeting

1pm Wednesday May 20th