

International Falls Journal

Thursday, February 18, 2021



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City puts demo program on hold

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The city of International Falls has put its demolition program on hold.

The Falls Council Tuesday approved a moratorium on building demolition applications until it can consider and adopt a property maintenance code.

In November, the city agreed to close its demolition site, following a recommendation from the city's Public Works Director Ted Brokaw. Brokaw told the council it would be a challenging application process for a 10-year permit, and the long-term financial ramifications of a site are just too great for the city.

Mayor Harley Droba said Tuesday a council committee agreed to recommend the council adopt a property maintenance code, which outlines how to establish demo policies.

"We want to remove the city's demo policy and use the International Building Codes demolition policy, with ordinance changes," he said.

Meanwhile, the council denied on a 4-1 vote a building demolition application from owners Teri Hart and Lisa and Ben Mortenson on non-homesteaded property at 1418 Main Ave.

Droba noted the city does not have the capability of placing any demolition in a city site.

Councilor Joe Krause voted no, after question whether the owners would need to resubmit an application following adoption of a new demo policy.

Councilor Walt Buller said he did not favor the application because it involved non-homesteaded property, with Droba adding that the request would have come to a council decision regardless of whether a program was in place because of the non-homestead factor.

Other business

Also Tuesday, the council agreed to increase rates for water and sewer service. The new rates are in effect after publication, and for the water use starting March 20 and billed on April 20.

The resident water base is now at \$21.25, and will increase to \$21.68. Each additional 1,000 gallons, up to 2,000 gallons, is now \$1.12, and will increase to \$1.14.

Nonresident water base is now \$25.50, and will increase to \$26.01. Each additional 1,000 gallons, up to 2,000 gallons, is now \$1.34 and will increase to \$1.37.

The last increase was in

Council to A10 >

Board approves new activity

One Act Play will be offered during the 2021-2022 school year

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Falls High School students next year will have the opportunity to compete in One Act Play after action taken by the Falls School Board Tuesday.

The board unanimously

agreed to allow the activity for the 2021-2022 school year, after a group of students expressed interest in the offering.

Mitchell Erickson, a freshman at FHS, said he wasn't an athlete, but loved fine arts and urged the board to consider more options for students in similar situations to his.

"It's an opportunity to get involved in the school, in the community," he said.

Erickson's classmate, Evie Conat, agreed.

"(Fine arts) help people

feel like they belong," she said. "This is going to give kids who aren't basketball stars or football stars a chance to belong somewhere."

In addition to the freshmen, Community Education Director Dan McGonigle said he would be interested in advising the group, noting he had experience in the community where he lived before moving to International Falls.

"I think our team would have a strong, solid base of talent," he said. "There

would be a pretty competitive square right from the start."

As an activity under the Minnesota State High School League, Falls High School will join Section 7A and compete against schools in the region including Littlefork-Big Falls, Mountain Iron, and others.

Costs will be minimal, said Superintendent Kevin Grover, who voiced support for the action.

The cost for the adviser,

School to A10 >



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Even the wilder population of Borderland appeared to take advantage of Tuesday's above-zero temperatures.

Challenge accepted

Cold streak snaps after nine consecutive days

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

After what seemed like an endless streak of sub-zero temperatures, Borderland embraced some warmer air this week.

Monday's high of 5 de-

grees snapped a nine-day streak of below-zero high temperatures.

The prolonged cold resulted in a friendly Facebook challenge for reporter Emily Gedde to find out what the record is for the number of consecutive days with below-zero temps.

Two of Gedde's former teachers - they know who

Weather to A10 >



An angler tries his luck fishing Tuesday near Black Bay on Rainy Lake. Tuesday's temperatures allowed Borderland to finally spend some time outdoors, and fairly comfortably after becoming strangely accustomed to the below zero temps.

Local flag stir discussed, resolved

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

International Falls resident Sal Diquinzio said he agreed to take down a flag on his property, when asked nicely by a local police officer.

The flag included a word considered profane in the English language, and offensive by many people.

Diquinzio told The Journal he didn't want to make a big deal about the request, but he said there may be principals, such as the constitutional right to free speech, at stake that are larger than the flag that described his feelings about President Joe Biden.

He said he understood that some people might not want

their kids to see the word on the flag, but wondered where it would stop, because what's offensive to one person may not be to another.

International Falls Police Capt. Mike Kostiuk said a concerned citizen who drove by Diquinzio's residence on Third Avenue East complained about the flag,

prompting the police to discuss it with Diquinzio.

"We are obviously cognizant of First Amendment rights and Sal was generous enough to agree to take it down," Kostiuk said, adding no citations were issued.

Kostiuk said the situa-

Flag to A10 >



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