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City to discontinue, relaunch city admin search

Council agrees to hire consultant for up to \$14,000 to find new city administrator

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The International Falls City Council Monday agreed to discontinue the current search for a new city administrator and relaunch the effort with a consultant taking the lead.

The council agreed on a 3-2 vote to hire Springsted Incorporated, a public sector advisor, for up to \$14,000 for the effort. Mayor Bob Anderson and Councilor Pete Kalar voted against the motion.

The administrator position was left vacant in March with the resignation of Rod Otterness, who left to take a city manager job at Union Gap, Wash. Annual pay for the Falls administrator position ranges from \$61,000 to \$85,000. Betty Bergstrom has been serving as interim administrator with a related pay increase while she serves in the position.

In May, Anderson and Kalar voted against advertising the city administrator position, with Anderson recommending the council delay the process to fill the job until the full impact of the termination of 265 jobs at the Boise Inc. paper mill in the city is understood.

At that time, other councilors said they felt filling the position could take time and believed it was important to begin right away.

Councilor Paul Eklund, chairman of the city's human resources committee, recommended the council hire Springsted saying the current process is not yielding the results expected. He said applications for the position were reviewed at a July 8 committee meeting and members found it difficult to decide who to interview.

He said Springsted's costs are flexible, with the firm providing a detail of cost for each activity in the hiring process it provides. Eklund said the first three activities, which end with a position analysis and profile development at a cost of \$2,000, appear to be the most important for the city.

He, and other councilors, said no applicants seeking the position are now working as city administrators. And, he noted, Bergstrom supports hiring Springsted and reminded him that the council had budgeted fully for a city administrator in 2013. Eklund said that money could be used to pay Springsted.

Councilor Gail Rognerud acknowledged the cost to hire Springsted is "pricey," but said it is appropriate to find the right candidates for a job that requires wide-ranging skills.

Anderson wondered why three local people he recommended who have backgrounds in human resources have not been tapped to assist the city. But Eklund said Springsted has more experience



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Libby Fulton, left, and her fiancée, Caseylynn Evans, look forward to spending their lives together as a married couple. As of Thursday, the couple can legally wed in their home state of Minnesota.

Local same-sex couple makes plans to wed

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Thursday was a special day for Caseylynn Evans and her fiancée, Libby Fulton. The day marked the freedom to marry one another in Minnesota.

"It was never a matter of if we'd get married, it was a matter of when," Fulton said. "It makes it more special that we're able to do it in our home state."

Like many same-sex couples in Minnesota, Evans, 19, and Fulton, 21, will officially be united in marriage this month.

"We are planning on having a big ceremony next summer, but we want to make it official sooner than that," Evans said.

Unlike others in the state who married at 12:01 a.m. Thursday – just a minute after same-sex marriage became legal in Minnesota – they say their turn isn't far away.

"I can't wait to marry her," Evans said while giving Fulton a loving nudge.

Gov. Mark Dayton proclaimed Aug. 1 "Freedom to Marry Day" in Minnesota. News sources reported the governor was on hand at Minneapolis City Hall for the ceremonies starting at midnight, when Mayor R.T. Rybak performed 42 marriages before 6 a.m.

"It is just exciting," Fulton said. "Our state has come a long way."

A long way is right. Just nine months ago, 52.6 percent of Minnesota voters rejected a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. In a quick turn of events, the Minnesota Legislature passed a same-sex marriage bill in May, which Dayton signed on May 14. Minnesota is the second state in the Midwest, 12th in the country, to legalize marriage between same-sex couples.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

The fairytale between Evans and Fulton developed just two days after Evans moved to International Falls from St. Cloud to attend school at Rainy River Community College last year.

"As soon as our eyes met, there was an immediate connection and we both knew there was an interest," Evans said of meeting Fulton who was working at Holiday gas station.

Evans started making frequent trips to Holiday and a friendship was easily established between the couple and eventually they started dating.

"We've only been dating four months," Evans said. "And we got engaged June 29."

Both women are comfortable with who they are and say they aren't ashamed of their sexual orientation.

"I just brush people off," Fulton said of those who are

judgmental. "They're not going to change their minds about me, so I can't let it bother me."

On the same note, Fulton admits there are those close to her who have struggled with her relationship.

"This isn't a phase, it's not going away," Fulton said of being gay. "There are people who just don't understand."

And both say they've "heard it all."

"We understand we're young, we know a marriage isn't about being this happy all the time, we get it," Evans said. "Still, we know what we want. We are not giving up everything and anything to be together."

PLANNING A LIFE TOGETHER

In April, Fulton enlisted as an infantry mechanic with the U.S. Army and will relocate to

Marriage to A7 ►

City moves forward with annexation of district

No action taken on shovel-ready certification of district

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

International Falls City Council unanimously agreed Monday to seek annexation of about 52

acres of a multimodal district into the city limits.

The Falls City Council is expected to request the Koochiching County Board Tuesday enter a joint orderly annexation agreement with the city

to include the property in the Falls city limits. The property is located east of the existing



Gail Rognerud

city limits and is owned by the city's Economic Development Authority.

The council took no action on a proposal to seek through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development shovel-ready certification for the district. The certification would allow the property to be marketed to buyers across the state.

Despite a motion made and then later withdrawn by Councilor Gail Rognerud, who serves

as the president of the EDA, it appeared that all members of the council support seeking the shovel-ready certification.

The EDA Commission, made up of city councilors, last month agreed to explore the details of the certification.

On Monday, Falls Mayor Bob Anderson urged the council to seek certification and said he was prepared to lead the effort.

Rognerud said she was pleased

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