

LOCALNEWS

INTERNATIONAL FALLS CITY COUNCIL

Council recognizes parting members

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

In the last regular meeting of 2014, the International Falls City Council recognized parting members Councilors Gail Rognerud and Paul Eklund.

Both will end their council service on Dec. 31. Rognerud has served on the Falls City Council three months short of 30 years, beginning April 1984; Eklund has served 10 years beginning January 2005.

An open house is planned for their last day of service from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the council chambers at the Falls Municipal Building. A brief ceremony is scheduled for 1:20 p.m.

Their service was recognized by council and staff Dec. 15. Councilor Cynthia Jaksa was absent from the meeting.

City Administrator Ken Anderson thanked the two councilors for their commitment to the community and their support of city staff.

City Attorney Steve Sherman called Eklund and Rognerud remarkable public servants. "The community is fortunate to have people of your quality perform a thankless job," he said. "The city should be proud of your service."

Falls Police Chief Mike Musich said the two councilors have always treated him and his officers with respect.

Meanwhile, their fellow councilors also recognized their service. Councilor Pete Kalar said the two have provided him with support, encouragement and knowledge as he learned the duties of councilor.

“Respect the past and build for the future.”

Gail Rognerud
Falls Councilor



“I am not going away. I will be back in some way, shape or form.”

Paul Eklund
Falls Councilor



Mayor Bob Anderson said he appreciated the service Rognerud and Eklund have provided to the community and noted he had worked with both of them on their election campaigns.

Eklund said serving as a councilor has been a privilege and honor, and he thanked his East Ward constituents for electing him four times. He noted when he first joined the council it was made up of nine members, forcing him to take part in two elections.

He said the city is lead by an amazing team of people.

"I am not going away," he said. "I will be back in some way, shape or form."

Rognerud said she was proud and thankful to be a part of the special people who work for the city and listed a number of activities, accomplishments and even controversies during her tenure.

The camaraderie of fellow councilors and city staff has been an important part of the last 30 years, she said.

And, she had some advice for the new council: "Respect

the past and build for the future."

In other business last week, the council approved the 2015 budget and levy. The \$2.1 million levy represents a 2 percent increase, or \$42,000, over the 2014 levy.

Mayor Anderson said he voted to approve the budget and levy with reservations, reiterating he opposed a 2 percent increase, favoring instead a 1.5 percent increase, which would collect about \$31,000 more in 2015 than this year. He also said he had reservations about some of the spending items.

The council also approved a renewal of a loan for Citizens for Backus/AB which was originated in 2009. The current principal of the loan is about \$22,300 at 3 percent interest.

The council met in special session Dec. 18 to wrap up year-end issues involving job changes and other human resources issues.

Administrator Anderson told The Journal the council approved a reorganization

and shift of duties to three different positions as a result of the resignation of Rich Christie as water commissioner in September.

Part of the water commissioner duties were assigned to Public Works Director Gary Skallman with an increase of \$1.50 per hour effective Jan. 1 to cover the additional duties.

The street and water commissioner titles were combined, and will be performed by Street Commission Dennis Jonson, with a \$3 per-hour increase to cover the additional duties he will assume, reported Anderson.

A working foreman job description was created and must be approved by the 49ers labor union. The hourly wage is recommended at \$29.50. If approved by the union, the job will be posted internally. This position will assume some of the day-to-day duties the water commissioner had previously performed, said Anderson.

An increase in the part-time patrol officer hourly rate was approved, said Anderson. That rate has been \$21.49 per hour since before 2006, and was increased to \$22.58 per hour effective Jan. 1.

The city administrator salary was increased by 2 percent effective Jan. 1, a \$1,660 increase for the year, said Anderson.

A 1.5 percent increase for the economic development position, held by Shawn Mason, had been approved earlier this year, said Anderson. However, an incorrect base salary had been used at that time. The base salary the increase is based on is \$50,875, the annual salary she received effective Jan. 1, 2014.

Littlefork City Council joins state program

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The Littlefork City Council Thursday approved a motion to host fingerprint scanning services for state employees in the area, as part of a program to speed up background checks for employees.

In order to cut down on the time it takes to complete a background check, the Minnesota Department of Human Services in 2015 will require applicants to submit to a fingerprinting and photo ID service.

Littlefork will serve as the site in Koochiching County for these services, city Administrator Sonja Pelland said. 3M Cogent is providing all the fingerprint scanning equipment, maintenance, and support, she said, and the city will receive a fee for each scan completed.

"It's good for us, and great for the Littlefork Medical Center right there," Pelland said. "It'll also bring people to town."

The technology from 3M Cogent will allow the DHS to complete about 90 percent of the background checks within a few hours, according to 3M. The system will be rolled out in January, and is expected to be fully operational in April.

In other business, the council approved its 2015 tax levy and budget in a

Truth in Taxation hearing, which took place before the regular council meeting. The tax levy of \$106,000 didn't change from last year, Pelland said. The general fund budget of \$425,583 is slightly down from last year's budget of \$427,984, she said.

The budget decrease is because of a decrease in the parks and recreation budget, Pelland said. They had budgeted for improvements in Lofgren Park last year, and aren't doing them in 2015.

In other business, the council approved a proposal from Clifton Larson Allen for auditing services for the city. The LMC has used them for auditing for years, Pelland said, which really helped sell them to the council.

"The LMC has been happy with CLA, so we're kind of going on their recommendation," Pelland said. "They weren't the highest or lowest price, but the price is guaranteed for three years."

The city's previous auditing firm was Miller McDonald Inc. from Bemidji.

The council also awarded a bid for cleaning and televising sewer lines to Ritter & Ritter Inc. of Aitkin, for a total of \$35,972. The project will start this winter, Pelland said, and hopes to be completed before April.

Entertaining for the Holidays?

We can help with our gourmet, easy mixes!



Cheeseball Mixes

- White Cheddar & Chive
- Parmesan Pesto
- Crab Rangoon
- What a Bloomin' Onion
- Cranberry Pecan
- Dill of a Ranch

Party Starter Mixes

- Spinach Herb
- Asiago Parmesan
- Smoky BBQ
- Dragon's Breath
- Zesty Mexican
- Garlic Tomato Basil
- Wood Fired Pizza
- Roasted Garlic & Red Pepper

Stonewall Kitchen

- Black Bean Salsa
- Mango Lime Salsa

Ready to Serve Dips

- Raspberry Chipotle
- Roasted Pineapple & Habanero
- Roasted Red Pepper & Onion
- Buffalo Bleu Cheese

Lakeside Jams

- Raspberry Roasted Red Pepper
- Wild Blueberry Jalapeño

Pour over cream cheese & serve with crackers!

Makes A Great Hostess Gift!

City Drug

www.citydrugstore.com

314 3rd St., I. Falls 283-3061

Mon. – Sat. 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

County Market LIQUOR



Miller Lite
24 Pack
BIG 16 OZ. CANS

\$18⁹⁷



Keystone Light
24 Pack Cans

\$12⁹⁷



Michelob Golden Light
24 Pack Bottles

\$22⁹⁷



Samuel Adams
12 Pack Bottles

\$12⁹⁷



Bud Light
Lime-a-ritas
12 Pack 8 Oz. Cans

\$10⁹⁷



Heineken & Heineken Light
12 Pack Bottles

\$14⁹⁷



Petri Brandy
1.75 Liter

\$10⁹⁷



Karkov Vodka
1.75 Liter

\$9⁹⁷



Captain Morgan Spiced Rum
1.75 Liter

\$19⁹⁷



Korbel California Champagne
750 ml

\$8⁹⁸



Kendall Jackson Vintners Chardonnay
750 ml

\$9⁹⁷



Sterling Vintners Wines
750 ml

\$8⁹⁸

County Market LIQUOR



Monday – Saturday • 8a.m. – 10p.m.
Sunday - CLOSED

1907 Valley Pine Circle • Int'l Falls, MN 56649
Right next to County Market • 218-283-6163

Prices good thru Friday, December 26, 2014

Come for the SERVICE.....Leave with the SAVINGS!