

LOCALNEWS

Officials uncertain how continued shutdown will impact local resources

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

As the federal government shutdown continues, local impacts and uncertainties about it are being more fully understood.

A letter from Susan Baraton, secretary for the local airport commission, was distributed to members of the commission.

Baratono said in that letter written prior to the shutdown that a cash flow problem may arise should the shutdown occur.

She wrote that a Federal Aviation Administration grant received recently to fund 90 percent of an airport pavement rehabilitation project is scheduled to begin in the middle of this month.

Baratono wrote that the bid price for the work, which is expected to take about six days, is \$165,660 and payment to the contractor, minus a small amount of withholding, will be due approximately 30 days after completion of the project. There will be an additional \$18,000 in costs incurred for engineering.

She wrote that under normal circumstances, the 30-day window would allow enough time to approve payment for the work and then be reimbursed by the

FAA for the 90 percent federal share of the cost. In the event of a shutdown, however, that reimbursement might not be available by the time the payment to the contractor is due or perhaps for some unknown length of time after that.

“It is important that the work proceed as planned for a number of reasons, including maintaining airport pavement in a safe condition and following through on the obligations of a contract that has already been signed,” she wrote to commission members. “Postponing the work, if that were possible, would put us at risk for not getting it done before the cold weather sets in.”

In addition, a letter written by Minnesota Department of Human Services Commission Lucinda Jesson just one day prior to Tuesday’s shutdown details issues resulting by the shutdown. The letter was sent to Terry Murray, director of Koochiching County Community Services, and other county and tribal health and human services directors in the state.

Jesson wrote that should the shutdown occur, the department does not anticipate any effect on benefits to

clients for health care, cash, food and other human service programs for October.

“While FFY2014 appropriations for some programs would not be available during a shutdown, we either are currently still accessing federal funds from previous years’ awards, or have state funding to cover these programs in the short term.”

Jesson noted that MNsure and the Affordable Care Act implementation will not be impacted by the federal shutdown.

“We are uncertain at this point what will happen if the shutdown were to continue beyond October,” she wrote. “DHS staff are closely monitoring developments and receiving information from federal program representatives. If a shutdown continues, we will provide you with additional information on program funding and any plans for communications with clients as soon as possible.”

“We know a shutdown may cause uncertainty for both staff and clients, while the implementation of MNsure is resulting in additional work for many of you and your employees. We appreciate your patience and dedication to serving Minnesotans.”

Minnesota schools almost fully repaid

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Gov. Mark Dayton, Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk, House Speaker Paul Thissen, Management and Budget Commissioner Jim Schowalter, and Education Commissioner Brenda Casselli announced Monday that Minnesota schools were repaid an additional \$636 million at the end of the 2013 fiscal year.

Under the leadership of Dayton and the DFL legislature, Minnesota has now repaid nearly \$2.6 billion of the \$2.8 billion that was previously borrowed from our schools.

“Last spring, the DFL legislature and I passed the first responsible state budget in more than a decade,” said Dayton. “This additional repayment of the state’s debt to our schools marks another step toward a clean fiscal slate, from which we will build a better Minnesota.”

“Schools across Minnesota were put under enormous financial stress by the Republican school shift, and paying back every penny remains a priority in the Senate,” said Bakk,

who represents Borderland. “This repayment, along with the significant investments in education approved last session, further strengthens the state’s partnership with local school districts.”

“This good news for Minnesota kids and our state is the result of working together to put progress ahead of the gridlock of the past,” said Thissen. “From day one, we made it a priority to pay back the debt that was piled up on our kids and because of our decision to accelerate the payoff, our schools know with certainty they can take our commitment to the bank.”

“Paying back the school shift – in addition to funding for early childhood and all day K, investing in 3rd grade literacy, and raising standards and improving tests – is part of our overall commitment to creating a strong foundation so that all of Minnesota’s students and schools can thrive and succeed,” said Casselli.

A decade of cuts, shifts, and gimmicks caused Minnesota to lurch from one budget crisis to the next –

limiting the state’s ability to fund education and job creation. This year, the Governor and DFL legislature put an end to roller-coaster deficits with a fair and balanced budget that put Minnesota on sound fiscal footing and delivered key investments in education.

The new state budget signed into law this spring by Dayton is projected to begin the next biennium with a surplus. The budget also invested over \$600 million in Minnesota’s students – reversing a decade of disinvestment in education. This new funding is directed toward strategies proven to close the achievement gap, raise graduation rates, and improve student career and college readiness.

Monday’s announcement comes just after Minnesota added 12,200 jobs in August, pushing total jobs in the state over the pre-recession peak that was reached in February 2008, and less than a week after Minnesota was ranked eighth in the “Forbes 2013 List of the Best States for Business” rankings.

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