

# LOCALNEWS

## The heat is on at Fort Frances mill

## County board to adopt budget, levy

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

After local officials put the heat on the provincial government and the facility's owner, Resolute Forest Products has announced it will heat the closed Fort Frances pulp mill over the winter.

Fort Frances Mayor Roy Avis said he was "very satisfied" to hear the news the mill would be heated, as it protects the asset for a possible future sale. He said Resolute hadn't provided the details on the mill going into "asset protection" mode, and wasn't sure what it entailed.

Ensuring the mill would be heated over the winter was the biggest hurdle in the search to finding a buyer for the mill, Avis said.

"What this does is it gives us the opportunity to keep searching for a buyer," Avis said. "Did we accomplish something? Yes. Will we be stopping now? No."

The next step toward finding a buyer for the mill involves ensuring an adequate wood supply at a reasonable price is available for the owner, Avis said.

"We have to move forward from the heating situation to getting involved in finding a buyer," Avis said. "We just need to get the pieces of the puzzle put together."

Unifor, the union that represented many of the mill's former workers, announced through a press release discussions with Resolute, Unifor, and the

provincial government had resulted in Resolute committing to heat the mill over the winter.

"We're very pleased that a short-term solution has been found," Jerry Dias, Unifor National President, said in a release. "Protecting this mill while we determine its future was an essential first step."

The pulp mill in Fort Frances has been shuttered for more than a year, as local officials and community leaders have explored options for the mill's future.

"The reality is that the forestry industry is in recovery – but will only reach its potential if there is government action to establish a fair and economical way to manage our forestry resources and develop a strategy for this vital sector which is rich with potential," Dias said in a release.

Earlier this month, Unifor called on Bill Mauro, Ontario minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, to establish a multi-stakeholder taskforce to make recommendations regarding forestry licensing and resource management.

"At this time, we would like to thank Resolute, a leader in the industry, for their commitment to protecting the mill and its equipment and for their cooperation in ongoing efforts to find a buyer for the mill. We are also grateful to the provincial government for the important role it is playing to secure a future for the mill," Dias said in a release.

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday held a public hearing on the proposed 2015 county budget and tax levy, with the board set to adopt the budget and levy at its next meeting.

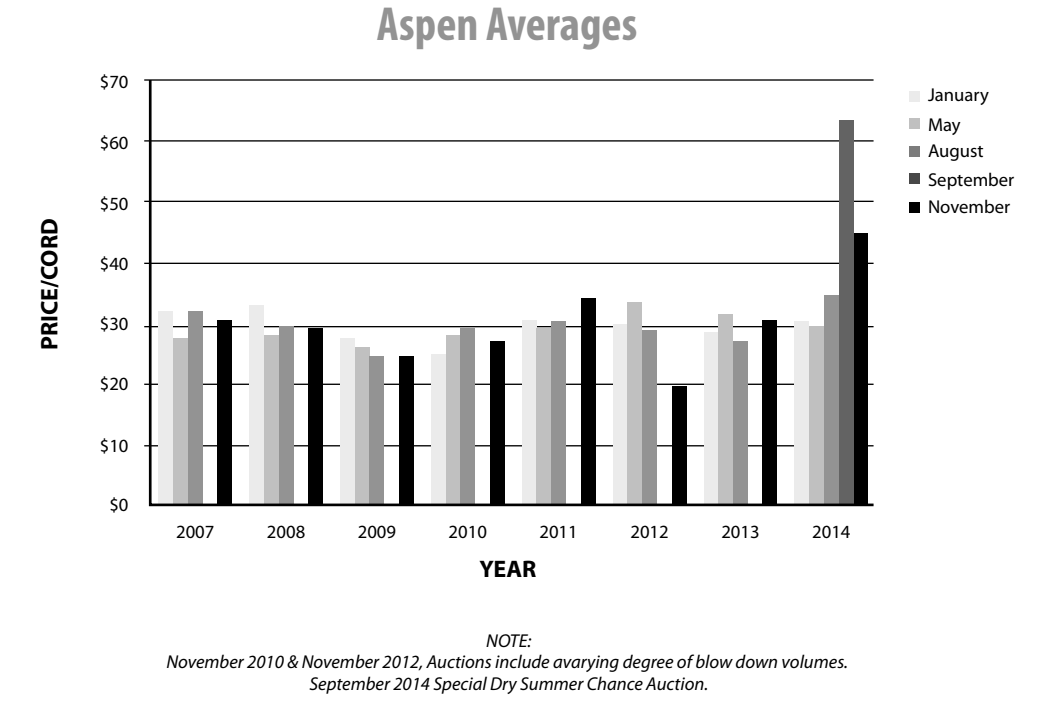
County Administration Director Teresa Briggs said attendees had comments on tax increases or valuations, but no comment on the levy itself. The board is expected to adopt the proposed 2015 budget of \$27.93 million, and 2015 levy of \$3.95 million at its Dec. 16 meeting.

According to the budget outline, due to an increase in the county's tax base, the levy will result in a slight decrease in tax from 2014, unless there was a change in the value or classification of an individual property.

In other business, the county reviewed a draft of its 2015 legislative list, which Briggs said will be reviewed with local state representatives, Rep. David Dill and Sen. Tom Bakk.

In compiling the list, Briggs said she reviews issues of concern from the previous year. As issues arise or are resolved, the list is revised.

Now, the list contains



items including funding for the Island View sewer project and the Renewable Energy Clean Air Project, as well as the shortage of nursing home and assisted living beds in the county.

County Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitzsch also reviewed with the board the results of a Nov. 19 timber auction held at Rainy River Community College.

Hummitzsch said half the tracts sold as appraised, and 25 percent were bid "extremely high."

The intermediate and regular auctions resulted in the sale of 20,917 cords for a total auction sale value of \$772,480.

Hummitzsch reported the price for aspen ranged from \$19 per cord to \$90.20 per cord; the total per cord aspen average sale price was \$43.93; and the sale of all species averaged \$34.54 per cord.

A review of the county seasonal recreational cabin lease fees was pushed to 2016, Hummitzsch said. Any changes made in the

fees in 2016 will go into effect 2017, he said. The lease systems are fairly common in northern Minnesota, and allow a leaser to put a cabin on a parcel of land up to an acre, with the county still owning the land, Hummitzsch said.

The lease program's intent is to allow people to recreate in rural areas without the county having to sell a lot of land, and while maintaining the land for public use and forest management, Hummitzsch said.

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## EXPORT RoundTable-CANADA

**Date:** Tuesday, December 9, 2014  
**Time:** 8:30 am-11:30 am  
**Workshop Free** \*Optional Networking Lunch \$10 at 11:30 am  
**Location:** AmericInn-International Falls  
1500 Hwy 71 International Falls, MN 56649

### Presentations & Panel Discussions:

- Minnesota Export Overview: Barb Mattson, Minnesota Trade Office
- Basics of Importing into Canada: Officers from Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)
- Role of a Customs Broker and Assistance: Don Bodnarchuk, Cole International
- Immigration, Work Visas, and Dual Citizenship: Lawrence G. Phillips, Canadian Lawyer

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