



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Aiston Kossov writes the number 15 on the class white board. Falls Elementary Principal Melissa Tate says some students who enroll in kindergarten without having attended preschool can be fall behind their peers academically and socially.

PRESCHOOL

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Preschool teacher Misy Walls agreed. Many children who enroll in kindergarten without having attended preschool easily fall behind their peers – and it’s hard to catch up, she told The Journal. “Every year gets a little harder,” she said. “Preschool really is the new kindergarten.”

CHA-CHING

Tuesday’s decision doesn’t come cheap for the district. Currently, quarterly tuition paid by parents covers preschool teachers’ salaries. Parents paid from \$30,000-\$50,000 for the program — a cost the district will need to pick up. “It wasn’t a cheap or easy decision to come to,” Tate said. “The board is saying they’ll absorb those costs because of the importance of investing early. We appreciate their willingness to do this.” The benefits will likely be worth it, she said.

Offering the added sections could draw an additional 40-50 preschool students, during a time district plans to make cost adjustments to offset about \$500,000 in state funding lost from the decline of about 70 students this school year. Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson said the opportunity is an exciting one for the district. “It really added to what we can do here locally with the preschool program,” he said. “We really look forward to the district stepping out and making the effort to pull more students in within the district...I think it’s something that will sell the district.” As far as the cost, Nelson said tuition fees for preschool students creates inequities for some school districts. “It’s against charter school legislation for public schools,” he said. Tate is hopeful Monday’s open house will attract more families. “It’s really exciting to know we’re investing in kids that young,” she said. “We know it’s going to pay off.”

COUNCIL

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appointed. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gail Rognerud. But Anderson called the motion out of order, saying it does not keep with the spirit or intent of the ordinance, which is to have citizens serve. He said other elected officials serving on the board have been appointed as citizens and not representatives of government. Jaksa argued it makes sense for the council to have a member on the board to ensure the sewer board’s activities align with the city’s desires. She handed out information about the sewer district stating, “If sewer was breaking even, we may not have to keep increasing water rates. Water rates have doubled since 2006 while sewer rates have just about tripled.” In addition, she pointed at other groups, including the local airport commission and Koochiching Economic Development Authority,

which she said are made up of elected officials representing their governments. Rognerud and Councilor Paul Eklund said they supported Jaksa’s idea a council member be appointed to the sewer board. They said the sewer board’s action impacts city residents and a councilor serving on the board would allow for better communication between the two governing entities. But Anderson said the airport commission’s joint powers agreement calls for elected representatives, as does the state legislation that created the KEDA Board. Anderson said the appointment to the sewer board has nothing to do with water rates. He said the city’s resident representatives on the sewer board could be asked to report regularly to the council to improve communication. He said he will provide an outline of discussion points for an upcoming council meeting to Tim “Chopper” McBride, executive director of the district, who has

agreed to attend. “There is no reason not to have citizens serve, as the ordinance points out,” Anderson said. Anderson said, as mayor, he could make the appointments himself without coming to the council. Councilor Pete Kalar agreed the city’s charter must be followed and said anyone can attend sewer board meetings, including members of the council. He said he believed residents understand the impact of sewer rates on the public and would represent the city well. Eklund said he agreed with Kalar’s views and said the city must follow the charter and the sewer board’s bylaws. He encouraged the council to move forward to fill the vacancies with city residents.

OTHER BUSINESS

In other business, the council will meet in committee Monday to discuss how to fund radios compatible with the the state’s public safety radio system

known as ARMER — Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response — for police vehicles and officers. The cost is estimated at \$75,000. Earlier in the meeting, the council approved the purchase, at an estimated cost of \$41,000, of radios for the Falls Fire Department’s dispatch center which handles ambulance and fire calls. Koochiching County Sheriff’s Office has moved forward to come in line with the ARMER system. Falls Police Chief Mike Musich said he had received mixed messages about the system. He said he believed the police officers would be included in the proposal by the sheriff’s office for the system, but are not. He said he would have budgeted for the expense, but did not believe it was needed. Now, he said grant funds once available are no longer an option. “I feel like the rug has been pulled out from under us,” he told the council. “We had the opportunity for grants a few years ago.”

RANIER

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The pianos would be decorated by local artists and placed in three locations in Ranier, with a volunteer responsible for each one, to make sure it’s covered in case of rain or other inclement weather, Hagen said. The club is also seeking a storage space for the pianos during the winter, as they can’t sit out in the snow during the winter months. The proposed locations for the pianos, all on public property, are Ranier Park, the Spruce Street Landing Dock, and the City Beach Pavilion. The council unanimously approved a motion allowing the pianos to be placed on public property, which allows the club to move forward with the grant application, presented Thursday to the Koochiching Community

Development Authority. “It’s a great way to get the arts out in the community for kids that don’t get it,” Hagen said. One of the pianos will be donated by Councilor Tony Cole, while the other two pianos will be purchased for Keys 4/4 Kids, a nonprofit organization that restores and sells donated pianos, according to information in the presentation. The two pianos will cost \$1,200, and the Northland Art Society has been contacted about turning these pianos into works of art. With no cost to the city, the project is a good idea, Cole said. “There’s no money out of our pocket. I think it’s great to have pianos around where people can play them,” Cole said. Resident Arden Barnes voiced concern that people would play the pianos at late hours. If late-hour noise

became an issue, Mayor Dennis Wagner said the city would consider passing an ordinance regarding hours the pianos could be played. In addition to the free use of the pianos, the club will provide “Mommy & Me” music and movement classes from a licensed music teacher during the summer. The club will cover the cost of the teacher, so the classes will be free to the public, Hagen said. The classes introduce infants, toddlers, and small children to music, as well as help develop language, social, and emotional skills, according to information in the presentation. The council unanimously approved a motion allowing the club to conduct the music and movement classes during the summer. Hagen also provided an update on the adult outdoor exercise equipment program the club purchased in

2013 with a grant from the Koochiching Community Development Authority. Two pieces of equipment from Exerskys, an outdoor fitness equipment company, which will be shipped in the spring, Hagen said. The club is working with Ashley Wade and Erin Nagurski, of EvolveU Fitness, who are interested in providing free equipment instruction during the summer. They would provide free biweekly instruction on how to safely use the equipment from June to August, according to information in the presentation. Instructors would carry their own liability insurance as well, so the city or club wouldn’t be liable for any accidents or injuries, Hagen said. The council unanimously approved allowing EvolveU Fitness to conduct free instruction on the outdoor exercise equipment during the summer.

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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

OF THE INTERNATIONAL FALLS CABLE COMMISSION FOR RENEWAL OF THE CITY CABLE TV FRANCHISE

The International Falls Cable Commission will hold a public hearing on Thursday, February 27, 2014 at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Chambers located on the third floor of City Hall located at 600 4th Street, International Falls, Mn for the purpose of receiving public comment on renewing the Cable Franchise Agreement with Midcontinent Communications Cable Company for cable TV Services for area residents living within the city limits of International Falls. Included at the meeting will be a consideration of the quality and quantity of services provided by the present Cable Franchise, the need for improving the amount or quality of cable TV programming and services currently being provided and any additional provisions which should be considered by the International Falls Cable Commission in the renewed franchise: including requirements of channel capacity, high definition channels, two way cable drops to public buildings for live broadcasts, presence or lack of a staffed office, equipment and services to be provided for the residents of the International Falls Cable Commission. Anyone having questions, comments or suggestions about cable TV services and equipment provided to the International Falls Cable Commission on any of the items set forth in this notice should attend this meeting where they will have an opportunity to be heard. Written comments may be submitted to the City Administrator, 600 4th Street. International Falls, MN 56649. Deadline for submitting written comment is Friday, February 28th, 2014. By Order of the International Falls Cable Commission Board: Betty Bergstrom International Falls Acting Administrator

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