

OPINION

FIRST AMENDMENT “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Jaksa will work for families, jobs

To the editor,

As a member of the demographic of young families in International Falls, I want to endorse Cynthia Jaksa for City Council because she is willing to invest in our future and is working hard for a bright future for all of us. We need to have faith in our future and hold to the philosophy of progress and growth.

For young people to stay in our community and raise families, we need living wage jobs and leaders who have enough faith in our future to make strategic investments. Investing in a shovel-ready site was a forward-looking decision and shows faith in our future to grow and expand as a city. Keeping the park headquarters here in International Falls by supporting the investment in the east riverfront was one of the most substantial job retention moves that our public leaders have accomplished in the last 10 years. Cynthia is an active part of the long term visioning and strategy team formed by the county and city to find the best economic strategic fit for diversifying our economy.

I worked with Cynthia at KOOTASCA Community Action and knew her as a passionate advocate for people who were struggling to make it on low pay. When a client was struggling with a particular issue, she

would go above and beyond to find the resources that could help resolve the situation. Her work was involved in grant writing, community engagement and housing. During her tenure, she worked with others to establish Koochiching Aging Options, she led focus groups and subsequently authored the 2009 Koochiching County Health and Human Service Needs Assessment, a team of people emerged from the Housing Issues Advisory Committee to form Servants of Shelter, and a shower was installed at the KOOTASCA site for those who were homeless and utilizing Servants of Shelter. She continues to be involved with KOOTASCA as a member of the Housing Issues Advisory Committee and has consulted with them on the need for rental inspections by the city.

Her roots are buried deep in the working class of northern Minnesota and she knows how important jobs are to solving many of our social ills. When children’s parents have a decent job and family time, then crime, illness and community disrepair are reduced and healthy families and communities emerge.

For a truly great public servant, re-elect Cynthia Jaksa on Nov. 4 and let’s move forward.

Amy Mortenson
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Hedlund would lead in a positive direction

To the editor,

I am writing a letter in support of Perryn Hedlund for sheriff of Koochiching County.

I have known Perryn since he started for the city of International Falls Police Department. Perryn was my patrolman for almost two years while I was his supervising Sergeant for International Falls Police Department.

Throughout Perryn’s career with International Falls Police Department, he has shown his many skills from investigating burglaries, successful DWI convictions, to complicated rape investigations along with successful drug prosecutions.

Perryn is a family man with a supportive wife and three wonderful children. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Bemidji State University.

From the first time I met Perryn I realized he was very dedicated and committed to his job as a law enforcement officer. Immediately he showed his skills as an excellent communicator with both his peers at work along with the people he would come in contact with on the street. He is very level-headed and would treat all individuals with the utmost respect. Perryn is very well respected by all his peers whom he works with including International Falls Police Department, the Koochiching County Sheriff’s Department, and

the Koochiching County Attorney’s Office.

Perryn has what it takes to lead law enforcement in a more positive direction going into the future for everyone in Koochiching County.

I have to raise a couple points of interest regarding appointed Sheriff Jespersen’s role. I believe a sheriff needs to know the entire county of Koochiching, not just Rainy Lake. As far as working with the elderly and introducing a new program/TRIAD, the sheriff should be involved with and attending the local Adult Protection Team meetings as that has been established for years. I am a bit confused on the overtime during the flooding this past spring/summer. Is not one of the sheriff’s roles to lead during a time of crisis, no matter how many hours are compiled ... the position of sheriff is a salaried position where overtime is generally not paid.

Vote for Perryn Hedlund as he has shown he can lead by example with the respect of all his co-workers from all agencies in the area.

If you have the opportunity to speak with any current law enforcement officer, ask he or she who their vote is for on Nov. 4.

Terry Wood
Retired International Falls Police Department sergeant
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Jespersen should continue as sheriff

To the editor,

I would like to tell you why I support Brian Jespersen for sheriff. I have great respect for him. He is a very hard worker who is impartial in making hard decisions. A couple of decisions he made were not popular decisions, and have become topics used against him in this election:

1. He appointed an outsider as undersheriff. Sheriff Jespersen first offered this position to a deputy sergeant who would have done a great job. This deputy turned down the position.

Another deputy told Sheriff Jespersen he was interested in the position but listed job responsibilities that he said he was not willing to do. State Patrol Jon Froemke told Sheriff Jespersen that he was

interested in the position and was willing to do whatever responsibilities were given to him. Sheriff Jespersen made the right decision and hired Jon Froemke. Undersheriff Froemke has been doing a great job. Some of the deputies are very upset because they felt the sheriff should have hired from within. Sheriff Jespersen made the right decision and hired the best person for the job.

2. Sheriff Jespersen hired his son as a full-time corrections officer. There were only two people who applied for this job. One person had a degree in law enforcement, had a deputy POST license, and had experience. The other person had very little experience, having just been hired as a part-time corrections officer and no other pertinent training, other than being married

to an International Falls police officer. The sheriff made the obvious decision and hired his son.

In addition, the public should be aware that the county hiring procedures are spelled out in Employment and Hiring Resolution 92, updated and approved by the county board in September 2007. When the sheriff’s son was initially an applicant, the sheriff removed himself from the three-person hiring panel.

Sheriff Jespersen is not the first sheriff to hire a family member. Other sheriff’s office leaders who have done so are William Elliott, Duane Nelson, and John Mastin. Young men admire their family leaders and aspire to follow in their foot steps.

Sheriff Jespersen keeps current on the latest technology. Under his leadership there have

been many technological advancements including, but not limited to:

- Armer Digital 800 mhz radio system
- Everbridge mass notification system
- Updated 911 Next Generation System
- Guardian Inmate Management System
- E charging electronic charging system
- Koochiching County Sheriff’s Facebook page
- New Jail electronic mug shot system

Currently in the planning is a new telehealth inmate mental health system.

I strongly believe that the best thing for this county is for Sheriff Brian Jespersen to continue in his current role of leadership

Florence Hervey
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Jaksa has accomplished much on council

To the editor,

Cynthia Jaksa has accomplished a lot as the representative of the West Ward.

She has lobbied to keep our LGA at a sustainable level to help keep property taxes down and has a close relationship with our legislators and keeps I.F.’s issues in front of them.

She summarizes and explains the costs and status of water and sewer funds and has been searching for ways to keep rates down. The water fund is an enterprise fund

and by state statute must pay for itself with rates.

Cynthia worked with the city administrator to establish an investment policy to benefit the taxpayers of International Falls.

She prepares fund balance forecasts for the council when acting as budget and finance chairman and explains the effect of dollar levy on levy rates. She works to make the budget understandable to staff and council. She digs into the details of city

government finances and presents the status of funds.

Cynthia worked with Mike Katrin on the VNP lease to analyze whether to keep or sell the lease. Their conclusion was that keeping the lease was beneficial to the long term viability of the city.

She works with administration to improve the accounting process and meets annually with the auditors to review finances. She has financial expertise and

has used it to benefit the city taxpayers. She has made me a better informed and more effective councilor with her information.

Cynthia is the hardest working city councilor I have worked with in the 29 ½ years I have served the citizens of the city. Please consider these facts when you cast your vote.

Gail Rognerud
Center Ward councilor
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Schwartz works to make for a better place

To the editor,

To the voters of the Center Ward of International Falls,

For the last 10 years I have been working with Joe Schwartz on the Recreation Commission. Joe has been a member of the Rec Commission for 15 years and is currently the chair of the Rec Commission. Joe works to keep our kids involved in sports and other activities that help them become well rounded individuals. The Rec Commission has always had a lean budget and Joe always works hard to make sure the rec programs will be there year after year for our kids. Not so long ago that was very difficult to do.

International Falls had

to pay more than anywhere else in the state to play in sports or join in other activities. Joe’s worked very hard along with other rec board members to come up with different plans to try to lower fees. We were finally were given the opportunity to do just that by asking the voters in our school district to pass a referendum just for the kids and recreation. The voters recognized the need to help but also recognized the diligence of the Rec Commission and the way they protected and wisely spent your tax dollars. Joe’s leadership and experience while serving that commission was instrumental in helping that referendum pass and those fees were

reduced by 50 percent. As a rec commissioner Joe has always put the kids and their families first.

As a city councilor Joe would put the residents of the Center Ward first. Joe is the kind of neighbor that will do something to help without being asked. I know this because I have known Joe for more and 20 years and he has shown up at my door more than once to help us out when we have needed help. That is the kind of city councilor he would be.

He has quietly worked for International Falls over the years as a coach, a member of the International Falls Charter Commission, a member of the “Save Backus Committee”, one

of the Labor Day Picnic organizers just to mention a few. He does all these things because he wants our community to be a better place to live, work and grow. He is not looking for a pat on the back, he just wants our community to prosper. Most recently, has committed to becoming a steward for the “Voyage Forward” movement. They are working hard so that all of Koochiching County has better days ahead.

Joe is making an impact. Help Joe move us forward. When you go vote on Nov. 4, please vote for Joe for Center Ward councilor.

Paul Ecklund
East Ward city councilor
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Ecklund protects interests of county residents

To the editor,

We live in the rural part of the International Falls community with no access to city water. As with many rural residents, our well is our source of water. Living without running water is a tough life. A couple of years ago I tried to help our neighbor get her well water running again. I called a local plumbing shop and was told they couldn’t pull out the broken submersible pump. What had changed since they installed the pump? We learned that an association of well-drillers successfully lobbied to prevent plumbers from working on submersible pumps in water wells. I called the nearest well-driller, over 50 miles away, to hear that a visit from

them would cost hundreds of dollars extra since they charged travel time to drive to International Falls. That just didn’t seem right when local, licensed plumbers could do the work just as well as well drillers.

Enter Rob Ecklund. Being without running water is no small problem so I asked Rob to help. Rob listened. Rob asked me questions. Rob talked with licensed plumbers. Rob understood the problem. Rob knew how to fix the problem. Rob rallied key state legislators, including Sen. Tom Bakke, Rep. David Dill, Rep. Tom Anzlec, Sen. Tom Saxhaug, Sen. David Tomassoni and Sen. Tony Lourey. Rob testified at the Minnesota Legislature. Rob got the 2014 Legislature to

pass a new law allowing local, licensed plumbers to do the work. His leadership saves hundreds of dollars for rural residents with well problems.

A one time deal. Not so. For the many years that I have worked with Rob on various projects, he has been a natural leader. That is a rare gift. Rob is a guy who can work with people at all levels of government. Rob can easily talk with our federal and state representatives as demonstrated by his leadership with the national Pulp and Paper Resource Council and the Minnesota Wood Fiber Council. Rob was an organizer and on-going leader of Timber Talk at Boise. Timber Talk

is an employee group, dedicated to the education of local students about the sustainability of our nearby forests. Year after year, Rob and other Boise employees from foresters to papermakers would go into the classrooms of the Falls, Littlefork and Indus schools to work with the kids.

Rob takes his county commissioner service seriously, responding to large and small requests, and is truly working in our best interests. Rob is doing a great job and, I believe, will do even a better job in his next term. He is a keeper. If you live in Koochiching County Commissioner District 4, please vote for Rob.

Steve Earley
International Falls, MN