

LOCALNEWS

SET FOR SCHOOL



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Falls Elementary paraprofessional Heather Nevalainen, right, spends time with Mandi Baron's incoming preschool students during an open house Wednesday night. The group spent the evening meeting teachers and getting to know their new classmates.

Bridge replacements will prompt road closures

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Bridge replacements that are expected to cause road closures around the Ray and Northome areas had Koochiching County commissioners concerned that access to recreational land could be restricted during hunting season.

The board Tuesday agreed to accept a bid of \$350,019 from Gladen Construction Inc. to replace bridges on County State Aid Highway 6 – the Pinetop Road – near Northome, and Town Road 11 – the Finn Road – near Ray.

County Engineer Joe Sutherland said while the details on exact dates of road closures will be determined during a pre-construction meeting, he estimates the work will begin in October

with a Nov. 1 end date.

“We think the contractor will have to close a portion of CSAH 6 for five working days, and it will require a 15-16-mile detour to Highway 71,” Sutherland told commissioners.

Commissioner Wayne Skoe said he thought about four landowners – not necessarily residents – would be impacted by a possible detour.

On Town Road 11, which is west of Ray and on the north side of Highway 217, Sutherland said the bridge replacement wouldn't require a detour, but simply a road closure.

“There are no homes back there, just recreational property,” he said. “Nonetheless, we'll certainly advertise and make property owners aware of what is happening.”

A portion of the project's price tag, according to Sutherland, comes from “considerable funding from the state.”

He said state bonding covers \$225,000 of the cost, \$129,000 will draw from the county's CSAH account and the remaining \$10,000 will come through a local levy.

Commissioner Brian McBride said he realized replacing the bridges is necessary, but expressed concern about the time of year construction would take place.

“I do have concerns about October being hunting season,” he said. “The sooner the better with getting this done.”

Sutherland assured commissioners that keeping construction projects away from hunting season would be considered in the future.

Increase in fees loom as waste volumes rise

Board will notify business owners of potential fees

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

With the volumes of solid waste generated by several area businesses on the rise, commercial service fees could increase by as much as 432 percent by 2015.

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday agreed that the same billing levels would be continued next year, however, moving forward, future fees would be implemented based on volume data.

County Environmental Services Director Dale Olson said after reviewing the 2013 commercial solid waste service fee billing which is based on 2012 volume data, the fees need to be changed.

“There are a few significant increases,” Olson said of certain businesses. “And there are some that had a reduction in volume.”

Olson explained the 2012 billing charges were based on data that was five years old. The 2013 billing charges based on updated volume data would considerably change the fee to commercial business with several businesses seeing an increase in cost.

He outlined a recom-

mendation for a new billing process in a series of steps:

- Charge all new businesses for the volume collected in 2012. Olson said there are 53 businesses that were either not reported before or didn't previously have garbage service. Some of these are new businesses and others are existing businesses that moved to a different location.
- Raise the fee for all businesses that had an increase in garbage volume by no more than 5 yards or 5 percent, whichever is greater. Olson said many businesses had significant increases in volumes while a lot of others increased only slightly. There is also a mixture, he said, of large, medium and small businesses.
- All businesses that had a reduction in waste are rewarded in reduced fees, he said.

“Several businesses have gotten by with paying the minimum (\$60) fee for several years,” Olson said.

With one business listed as possibly seeing a \$2,500 fee increase, Commissioner Wade Pavleck said because of the 265 layoffs at Boise Inc.'s local paper mill by Oct. 1, he couldn't justify

placing “such a financial burden” on businesses.

“If we're going to do this it should be implemented over a period of time...to allow (business owners) time to prepare,” he said. “We need to protect these businesses. I can't support this.”

Other commissioners agreed. They said if an increase was necessary, a letter urging businesses to reduce their waste volume was needed.

In other business Tuesday, the board agreed to spend up to \$8,000 for the installation of a fiber optic network and re-cabling in the law enforcement center. The cable provides connectivity for the Next Generation 911 equipment. Next Generation 911 is an initiative that has established the foundation for public emergency communications services in a wireless mobile society.

The board also agreed to hold a public meeting and site tour in Birchdale to consider a parking situation during spring walleye fishing on Rainy River.

The board agreed that other concerns and comments by Birchdale-area residents could be addressed during the meeting, for which a date has not yet been set.

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