

BOISE

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ILL., PCA is the fourth largest producer of container board and corrugated packaging products in the United States with sales of \$2.8 billion in 2012. PCA operates four paper mills and 71 corrugated product plants in 26 states.

Boise manufactures a wide variety of packaging and paper products, ranging from linerboard and corrugating medium to protective packaging products. Its paper products including copy paper for the office and home, printing and converting papers, and papers used in packaging, such as label and release papers.

Just a few days before the announcement of the sale of Boise, International Paper Co. said it plans to close its largest U.S. paper mill, in Courtland, Ala., eliminating 1,100 jobs.

The closure of the IP mill may bode well for the future of the paper mill in International Falls, some have said. IP officials cited shrinking demand for paper in an increasingly digital world.

LOCAL OPTIMISM

International Falls Mayor

Bob Anderson said there's been a great deal of speculation about the sale of the assets of Boise paper and the Falls mill.

Anderson brings insight to the transaction as mayor and as paper mill employee for more than 50 years.

“Certainly Packaging Corporation of America is a paper company, so that is a very good move for our mill,” he said Monday. “They know paper and they understand the paper industry. I feel fairly confident in this announcement.”

In May, Boise said it would cut 265 positions at the Falls paper mill, and another 30 in the corporation, shut down two paper machines and a coating machine, in an effort to be more competitive and stabilize the remaining 580 jobs at the mill. Anderson serves on an economic response team developed to consider ways to address community needs created by the job loss.

Anderson said the purchase by PCA could add stability to the operations here. “Certainly, we need to as a community do everything we can to support the 580 jobs that are here.”

Community officials are considering ways to do that and are working with mill

officials now on wetland issues that he said could be helpful to the company.

Koochiching County Commissioner Rob Ecklund, also a member of the economic response team and mill worker, said he did a little homework on PCA before commenting to The Journal.

“What I found about PCA that makes me feel somewhat better is that it has a terrific record for dealing with organized labor,” he said Tuesday morning. “They are fair and quickly negotiate labor contracts.”

In addition, he said he's found that PCA is a “big company with better assets than what Boise had. Boise being owned by bankers, more or less on paper and PCA being fairly large with assets across the country.”

What is a little concerning for Ecklund, he said, is that PCA is not much of a player in the uncoated free sheet market.

“So it will be interesting to see how they plan to integrate the white paper Boise has,” he said. “According to the announcement they are going to do that, but I guess two out of three (of my concerns) ain't bad.”

Ecklund said the time between Monday's announce-

ment and the close of the deal gives the company time to figure out “if they are looking at doing something different with these mills.”

Bob Walls, business agent for the International Associations Of Machinists And Aerospace Workers 33, said Monday morning it was too early to comment about the purchase and how it might impact local workers.

Minnesota Rep. David Dill said the purchase of Boise is not unusual to business in the nation and the wood products industry, but said “when it comes to your hometown, it makes people stop, think, take a deep breath and wonder what's next.”

Dill, DFL-Crane Lake, said he's praying PCA understands and knows the value of the Falls paper mill, it's workers, and extending to the suppliers, and wood harvesting industry — all the things and people needed to make a mill operated. And he said, he is hoping PCA seeks to improve or add value to the products made in International Falls.

Dill called The Journal Tuesday morning as he waited to cross the bridge from Fort Frances into In-

ternational Falls. He said he was watching the logging trucks passing by, symbolizing the value of the wood products industry to the region.

Sen. Tom Bakk, DFL-Tower, could not be reached for comment, and Dill said he was moose hunting in Canada. But Dill pledged that he and Bakk would do all they could at the state level to keep workers compensation rates as low as possible for all, keep the cost of operation low, and continue programs like the Sustainable Forestry Incentive act “and do that by having adequate amount of county program aid, which lowers taxes, and PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) to counties to lower taxes and local government aid, which goes to cities to reduce taxes.”

“Those are the things we can do to help at the least and we welcome suggestions for more ways that we can help,” said Dill.

Dill acknowledged the uncertain feelings of the community after Monday's announcement and the anticipated job loss at the mill. But he said recalled “the shaking of the Earth” the day Boise announced the shut down Insulite in the

early 1980s. Since then, he said, the industry diversified somewhat, other plants started up in the area “and the world kept turning.”

A good thing, he said is that PCA is no stranger to the type of products Boise has made.

“We will meet with them and be stressing the quality and integrity of the work force and the vast resources we have in northern Minnesota to feed the paper mill and tell them that we're committed to do everything possible to keep the costs of business competitive with other states and countries,” said Dill.

U.S. Sen. Al Franken told The Journal he would “reach out to the Packaging Corporation of America and will monitor the progress of the acquisition, and any effects it may have on employees in Minnesota.”

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar said in a statement to The Journal that the Falls paper mill is incredibly important to the community.

“I have been in contact with Boise's CEO and the Packaging Corp. of America and my office is working to help ensure that workers and the community have the support they need moving forward,” she said.

GRANT

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Ecklund and Wade Pavleck.

On Monday, Anderson said the primary focus of grant money, should it be awarded, would be used to analyze and assess the community's needs and noted that the items included in the grant application were suggested by members of the three teams. The grant application was drafted by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission from information provided by The Northspan Group, which is facilitating the team meetings.

Documents accompanying the grant application drew anger from Councilor Cynthia Jaksa, who said she was dismayed at the lack of timeliness of the document. She said she was reluctant to commit \$139,000 with so little information.

In addition, she raised concerns about the document not including the city's multimodal district, located west of the city limits, and the lack of representation on the economic response team of the city's Economic Development Authority Director Shawn Mason and the Koochiching Economic Development Director Paul Nevanen.

Jaksa said Randy Lasky, president of Northspan, assured her that the district would be included in the document. Later in the meeting, Mason also said the district should be included in an analysis and an attempt to target

companies that may use the district.

And Jaksa ruffled some council feathers when she said the only reason she would vote in favor of the application was because “Ecklund said he has faith in Randy Lasky and I have faith in Rob Ecklund.”

She later apologized to Kalar, who questioned her lack of faith in he and the other members of the team. Kalar said he has faith in the community members on the teams, and said he had no problem including Nevanen and Mason on the leader team.

Anderson wondered if it were he and Pavleck for whom she was dismayed. He said the two directors were not included as members of the team because they are considered resources for members of the other teams, which may bring them into any and all meetings they choose.

He said the team he serves on is not involved in the planning and serves in an organizational role for the other teams. In addition, he said he believed the two directors have their own day-to-day work to do and the teams are attempting to make progress in a way that has been different than previous attempts.

“It's not an issue of who I have faith in,” said Jaksa.

Councilor Paul Eklund said he has faith in the system now in place “that we will make progress.” He said that while he's unable to participate in the teams, “We need jobs and we need everybody we can get to be

working on this.”

An amended motion to include Nevanen and Mason on the team was approved 3-1 with Anderson voting no. Councilor Gail Rognrud was absent from Monday's meeting. The motion to adopt a resolution seeking the grant was approved unanimously. The council is expected to determine at its Oct. 7 meeting which city fund will be tapped for the matching money.

In related action Monday, the council approved splitting the cost of services from The Northspan Group from Aug. 1 to Dec. 31 with Koochiching County. County commissioners took similar action last week that calls for the city and county each to provide up to \$12,500 for Northspan's services.

The Northspan Group, which has assisted other communities in their recovery from significant job loss and plant shut downs, donated its services in June and July, following the May announcement by Boise to reconfigure the mill.

In other business Monday, the council heard from police Chief Mike Musich that he provided letters of recognition to Officers Mitch Lessard and Justin Franz and county Deputies Charlie Saari and Jim Kennedy for recent actions in making arrests downtown.

Musich said the officers caught suspects as they tried to steal chairs from outside the Coffee Landing Cafe and a trailer from outside the Sears building.

Musich also told the

council that school officials have been told to consider an alternate route for a Falls High School homecoming parade planned for Friday. He said a state permit needed to take the parade downtown has not yet been received and he has reminded school officials to contact him earlier for such requests.

The council met in special session Thursday when it certified the preliminary 2014 levy at \$2.1 million, the same amount collected from city property owners this year and in 2012.

Anderson said as the council develops the 2014 budget, it will face challenges.

“There are a lot of needs in the community,” he said pointing to work needed on streets and sidewalks. “We need to be very judicious as we develop the budget.”

In addition, Anderson said he plans to discuss how much money to provide to outside organizations, including the local cemetery association, which has received no increase from the city in about 30 years.

He also said he wants to consider the health reimbursement accounts designated for the mayor and council. The HRAs were established for the council in September 2006. At that time, health insurance coverage was discontinued for all council members and instead a \$500 per-month HRA effective January 2007 was established.

In recent years, HRAs were offered to union groups and a post-employment group.

BASKETBALL

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garding the number of times teachers are absent from the classroom to coach

Boyle, who is a math teacher at Falls High School, has been coaching all three seasons during the school year as the head football coach, assistant girls basketball coach and an assistant track and field coach.

A committee made up of three board members and school administrators was formed to look into the concern about teachers being out of the classroom to coach and substitutes having to fill in for them.

Board members voted in June to rehire Shawn Gilbert as the head girls basketball coach when they held off making a decision on the assistant coaching position, which was then posted for anyone to apply.

During open forum, Tammy Sullivan spoke in support of rehiring Boyle, although she never mentioned him by name.

“I'm disappointed it has been taken off the agenda,” Sullivan said of the board's action.

Sullivan said “the junior varsity coach” showed dedication and love of the sport

and “during the off season, spends hundreds of hours of his own time in the gym, practicing and teaching these girls to compete at the next level.”

“He travels twice a week... taking our kids to improve their game and their unity as a team,” she said. “I believe this coach is dedicated and is tough...if you ask his girls, they want to play for him, my daughter included.”

Kayla Gilbert agreed.

Also during open forum, she said there wasn't a lot of interest in the coaching position, and that several factors may contribute to why some people are unable to coach.

“I understand the problem with teachers being out of the classroom,” she continued. “I know of at least of a handful of teachers who coached every season available.”

As a teacher, Gilbert said one of the first questions she was asked when being interviewed was if she was willing to be a coach.

“Jay has a willingness to volunteer on his own time and own pay,” she said. “A teacher doesn't just teach... but he has the technology and the know how to record himself teaching first hour and a substitute can just push a button and it'll be like he's giving the lecture.”



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