

LOCALNEWS

Finale of Donahue property planning process Thursday

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

The results of a public input process for potential uses of 122-acres called the Donahue property will be presented 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Falls Municipal Building.

Andy Hubley, a planner with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, will present a summary of the results of four input meetings conducted in September and October.

Hubley said he will present several scenarios discussed at the final meeting that have been refined based on comments received.

The summary, Hubley said, will be provided to the city's EDA. "They can do what they please," he said. "If they want to work with us further on something, otherwise we have given the tasks they could be doing. The site is fine and will sit there and they can sort out what they want to do with it."

Shawn Mason, International Falls Economic Development Authority director, said the EDA's approved strategic plan for 2013-14 includes

analyzing options with key stakeholders for the 122 acres of land along the Rainy River and Falls Country Club and creating a shared vision for the property.

"Certainly, our key stakeholders are our citizens and those who are within that neighborhood," Mason said. "We were impressed with the amount of input received during the four visioning process meetings and input submitted via the public comment form on our website. We look forward to hearing the facilitator's report and working together to develop a direction for the property."

She recognized ARDC's role in facilitating the process and noted those services were paid for by a grant from the Blandin Foundation.

Meanwhile, Hubley outlined some of the scenarios he will present Thursday, including recommendations of minimum actions that should be taken.

"We know according to the agreement when the property was acquired that there needs to have a trail and monument," he told The Journal Thursday. "I



FILE PHOTO

**Falls EDA Vice President Cynthia Jaksa works with a group in September to identify potential uses for the Donahue property. Jaksa has said the property is a benefit to the city even with the \$90,000 in brokerage fees paid by the city.**

will discuss different ways that could get done. And I will recommend the monument be constructed so it is moveable if the property use changes."

The minimum actions will also include securing the property and a discussion of the possibility of the city annexing the site—even though it's owned by the city, it's not part of the city, he said.

After discussing the minimum actions that could be taken, Hubley said he will discuss other options, including some "maybe" scenarios, one of which is to maximize recreation opportunities at the site by adding trails.

Among those scenarios, he said, is creating mountain bike trails and what would need to be done to achieve that, should the community

decide that is the direction it desires.

Another scenario, he said, involves immediate economic enhancement. One of those options include selling the property or exploring the financial impact to the community of establishing a communication tower on the site. Another way to provide "fairly immediate cash" that could be explored is the establishment of a wetland bank on the site, he said.

Using the property for education and sustainability purposes will also be discussed. He said options include using the property as an outdoor classroom for grades K-12 and Rainy River Community College, or for a public-private renewable energy project, such as a sustainable green house.

Newspaper: Borderland bobcat doing well

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

It was just a simple sentence in the Dec. 30 weekly Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officer report.

Below the heading for the District 5, Eveleth, report, submitted by International Falls CO Darrin Kittelson: "An orphaned bobcat kit was cared for and was eventually transported to Garrison Animal Hospital for care and recovery."

The Mille Lacs Messenger reported this week the bobcat is gaining weight on a steady diet of mice and kitty chow at the animal hospital. The newspaper report said the bobcat was healthy enough on Jan. 2 to be moved to the Wild and Free compound, a wildlife rehabilitation center located a half mile west of Garrison.

The Messenger story said the cat was freezing and on the verge of starvation when it was found by the side of the road.

"It's pretty small for this

time of year so it must have been born late," Dr. Katie Baratto told the newspaper. "We're assuming a lost momma, but we can't be sure. It was in pretty poor shape."

The hospital and the rehabilitation center are both overseen by Dr. Deb Eskedahl, notes the story. Baratto told the newspaper the bobcat's weight was low, but the blood work came back normal.


The newspaper story continued that among the many challenges of treating wild animals is making sure they do not become acclimated to people.

"For the most part, the staff at the Garrison Animal Hospital leaves the bobcat alone," the story said. "He's a mean one, and we want to keep him that way," Baratto said. "He should do fine when we release him back into the wild."

The Garrison Animal Hospital and Wild and Free care for, on average, two or three bobcats a year, the story said.



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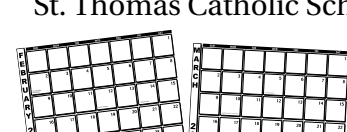
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