

SCHOOL BOARD

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“Basically you’ve made up the \$150,000 as far as looking at further reductions,” Nelson said Monday of Falls High keeping PSEO students. “Those numbers of students staying will create that revenue of approximately \$180,000.”

Retaining so many students could be thanks to an effort by school officials to offer concurrent enrollment classes at Falls High next year. The classes would be worth both college and high school credits.

“We will offer over 70 concurrent enrollment credits next year,” said FHS Principal Tim Everson, who was recognized Monday by the board for his efforts in establishing the college-in-the-high-school classes. “It’s going to be worth it.”

As a result of the savings, board members agreed to:

Keep the yearbook as an in-house class instead of contracting the publication out elsewhere. Projected

savings was \$8,600.

Keep the half-time secretary position in the Community Education office, which will stay in its location at the east end of Falls High School. Projected savings was \$18,000.

Keep remedial seventh and eighth classes. Projected savings was \$42,000.

The board agreed — for now — on the non-renewal of Alex Ringhofer’s contract, which was also on the reduction list.

“Through registration, it shows only a need for two hours of her time,” Nelson said of Ringhofer, who teaches secondary math. “At this time, we need to non-renew the entire position and hire her back at a later date.”

The superintendent said situations may change where Ringhofer is needed for more time, but for now, the district will save \$43,214 by not renewing her contract.

In addition, board members on a 5-1 vote agreed to table action on delaying the phy-ed/health curriculum



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Newly-tenured Falls and West End elementary teachers show off plaques Monday following the Falls School Board meeting. Pictured from left are Beth Shermoen, Katie Winkel, Heather Ebel and Terry Mason.

cycle one year. Board Chairman Gordy Dault voted against the motion.

Each year an allotted amount of money is set aside for the curriculum cycle to update equipment and supplies in different subject areas.

“This is a one year delay, but it would also delay all the other subject areas,” Nelson said. “It’s basically

the board to reconsider.

“Our health books are falling apart,” he said. “In ninth grade, we have class sizes of 35 kids and 25 books. It becomes very difficult to utilize the information out of there.”

Koenig continued other departments have used curriculum cycle money to gain access to technology that could eliminate the use of textbooks.

In addition, Koenig said in the nine years he’s been in the district, weight lifting and fitness classes have gone from two sections to zero.

“I think part of the reason is the way kids do fitness now has changed,” he said. “If you walk into our weight room, it has weights in it. That’s not conducive for all of our students to do fitness-type activities.”

Still, Nelson expressed concern the amount of money set aside for Koenig’s department might be a too spendy.

“The full \$75,000 is quite a sum to address when we don’t know where student

numbers are,” he said.

Board member Darrell “Boxer” Wagner said the board should look at taking any action in June to see how much money it would need to spend on the phy-ed/health program for the 2014-2015 school year.

Other business

In other action Monday, the board:

- Adopted resolutions granting tenure to to Heather Ebel, Terry Mason, Beth Shermoen and Katie Winkel.
- Accepted the resignation of Nick Schoenecker as a secondary social studies teacher effective May 30.
- Accepted the resignation of Carol Jaksa as National Honor Society advisor effective May 30.
- Accepted the resignation due to retirement of Pam Jenson as head cook effective May 30.
- Accepted the resignation due to retirement of Bernadine Reirson as assistant cook effective May 30.
- Accepted the resignation due to retirement of June Henrickson as cafeteria helper effective May 29.

KEDA

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“That’s \$11 million in outside dollars coming in to help us with these projects.”

Maintaining clean water in the areas around Minnesota’s only national park provides environmental benefits, Pavleck said.

“It’s not something you can just walk away from,” Pavleck said of sewage. “If you don’t do sewer in these areas, you have to come to solutions.”

The personal sewage solutions some residents have used for many years probably don’t meet state requirements, Pavleck said. Providing sewer service makes sure everyone meets the requirements and makes the land more valuable, he said.

Many lots on the lake are also platted, Pavleck said, and they now have access to sewer, which will make them more attractive to potential buyers.

“The entire county benefits from that, certainly International Falls and Rainier,” Pavleck said. “I’m very grateful that we were able to get this funding.”

Providing sewer service for properties on Rainy Lake is critical for long-term development of the area, Nevanen said. The airport is also a critical asset for the community, he said, and it’s important to keep it up to date.

KEDA member Bob Anderson, who also serves as chairman of the airport commission, said the funding comes at an excellent time.

“This will certainly go a long way toward being able to take and construct a new terminal building, which certainly is needed to keep us in pace with other airports in the state and the nation,” Anderson said.

The Falls International Airport has to keep pace with airports in Brainerd and Bemidji, Anderson said. If it does not, he said, it will fall behind, and there’s no way to catch up.

The airport also has to keep pace with changing Transportation Security

Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection requirements, Nevanen said.

“Some of the need for expansion or more room, or a different layout is due in part to the agencies,” Nevanen said.

Pavleck said in addition to meeting these new requirements, along with creating a ramp where passengers can walk out and board the plane without having to use the stairs, meant building a new terminal was more feasible.

“When we looked at all those things and considered the cost, this was the best route to go,” Pavleck said, a member of the commission.

In talks Pavleck and Anderson have had with major employers in the area, Pavleck said they’ve pointed to the airport as one of, if not the biggest, reasons they decided to locate here.

KEDA Board Chairman Alan Rasmussen said one of the major reasons United Healthcare decided to locate a facility in International Falls was the presence of the airport.

“We cannot afford to lose this airport,” Pavleck said. “To make sure we don’t lose it, we have to modernize it, to bring it up to standards.”

In other business, at the beginning of his director’s report, Nevanen clarified that the projects he touched on during the meeting aren’t the only ones he’s working on. When a project is in the early stages of development, or if the other involved parties don’t want to make the project public yet, Nevanen said he won’t go into detail on it.

“There’s a lot of time and energy that’s not reflected in this (report) that’s going on out there,” Nevanen said. “Just know that we’re working on a number of things.”

He also wants to manage public expectation, Nevanen said, which means not promoting projects that might not come to fruition.

“We’ve learned painful mistakes in the past about getting out in front a little bit too much,” Nevanen said. “So we want to be conservative on that.”

CITY

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payments, totaling about \$90,000, are a part of a 2009 agreement with the Donahue Family Trust that provided the property to the city in exchange for brokerage fees paid annually over six years to Matt Donahue’s brokerage firm.

The annual payments are based on 5 percent of a \$1.8 million property appraisal, which was conducted by Frank Bigelow, Bigelow Appraisals, Hibbing.

Mayor Anderson told the council there are a lot of questions about the current appraisal. At various meetings over the past few years, some people have questioned the accuracy of the appraisal and wondered why it was conducted by an appraiser located outside the community. Prior to the city’s ownership of the property, it was taxed at a value of about \$376,000, with property taxes paid to Koochiching County, because it is outside the city limits.

Anderson’s recommendation said if the value of the property is found to be less than \$1.8 million, the council ask Donahue to renegotiate the remaining payments and provisions of the contract.

City Attorney Steve Shermoen said the city could ask Donahue to renegotiate the contract based on a new appraisal amount, however, he said there is no requirement he do that.

“It never hurts to ask,” he added.

Later in the meeting, Councilor Gail Rognerud asked about an appointment to a committee to consider the process of annexing the Donahue property. She said the committee needs to provide information about the

process to the community, as misinformation is being circulated.

Anderson had attempted to appoint Councilor Pete Kalar earlier this month, but the council asked him to consider appointing Councilor Cynthia Jaksa instead. She represents the West Ward and chairs the city’s Land Use and Legislation Committee.

The council must approve Anderson’s appointment. Anderson said he wanted to discuss the make up of the committee with Koochiching County Commissioners Wade Pavleck and Rob Ecklund, who are also members of the committee.

Rognerud said she disagreed with Anderson’s plan to get input from the county commissioners. “They didn’t ask us to approve who they appointed,” she said.

In other business, Eric Johnson reviewed the process to nominate items for placement on an online interactive map and guide of the Heart of the Continent region being created in a partnership with the Heart of the Continent Partnership and National Geographic Society.

Johnson, a member of the design team planning and implementing the effort, told the council geotourism, as defined by National Geographic, is tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well being of its residents.

The map of the region will include businesses, historic sites, festivals and events, and local attractions — the kinds of things a resident would recommend a visitor coming to the area see, visit and experience.

The National Geographic Society will make the final determination on wording and site location. Nominations may be submitted at www.traveltheheart.org.

Johnson told the council that six months ago he believed a byproduct of the map effort would be a better working relationship with groups in the region. Now, he said he sees that another byproduct will be an inventory of regional tourism assets never before listed together.

More business

On a 3-1 vote, the council approved a committee recommendation to provide a credit of sanitary sewer fees for the initial filling of swimming pools by city residents. Each resident would be allowed a credit annually.

Anderson voted no; Councilor Paul Eklund was absent.

Councilor Rognerud said the credit is allowed because the pool water does not go into the sewer treatment facility and she said staff are not able to estimate the sewer fees to be deducted.

Anderson questioned providing the credit for people with pools, when credit is not given to people who regularly water gardens or wash vehicles.

Councilor Kalar said the recommendation is more equitable than past practice when credits were provided more than once each year for filling pools.

Administrator Anderson said the policy allows residents the option to install a separate meter for using water for other purposes, such as gardens or lawns.

But the mayor pointed out that adding another meter and plumbing would cost city residents more than \$250.

During a public comment period, Mike Rud said the

city should charge more for a water reconnection fee than \$25. During the consent agenda, the council approved the reconnect fee of \$25.

He said shutting water off and on costs more in city staff time.

Councilors said there is no charge to reconnect now. And, they said, the policy could be revisited annually.

The council also agreed on a 3-1 vote to set compensation for Fire Chief Adam Mannausau at 90 percent the rate of the current chief, Jerry Jensen, who retires next week.

Mayor Anderson voted no after asking how the Human Resources Committee came to the recommendation of 90 percent. He said the city does not have a system to determine at what rate of the current salary to start a position. “There ought to be a mechanism” that considers college degrees and years of experience in determining the rate, he said.

Rognerud said the policy allows for someone to start a position at range of 70 percent to the full amount of the current position. The committee considers experience and education, and understands every position starts on an upward learning curve.

Jaksa said the committee is exploring a point system, but does not yet have one in place.

The council approved the description of a new position, administration support specialist, posting it for union members to consider, and adopting a memorandum of understanding with the union.

Administrator Anderson said a city water clerk position will not be filled and the new position would handle some of the clerk duties.

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CORRECTION

In the Saturday 5/17/14 Journal, The Sha Sha Ad was printed with Wing Night Starts May 22nd.

Wing Night Starts

Wednesday May 21st.

Sorry for the Inconvenience

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