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Council to investigate two city employees, police complaint

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Cloquet city councilors took the first steps Tuesday toward an outside investigation of complaints filed by former Cloquet police chief Wade Lamirande.

Lamirande emailed Cloquet city officials, councilors and local media a list of complaints about Cloquet city councilor Steve Langley and current police chief Jeff Palmer on Feb. 6; he also included allegations against city administrator Aaron Reeves and human resources director James Barclay within the complaints.

After going in and out of closed meet-

ings Tuesday, councilors voted to hire an outside, third-party investigator to look into the allegations against both Reeves and Barclay. They also stated publicly that there is a complaint against a Cloquet police officer and that the city will "follow appropriate policies and procedures," possibly including investigation of the complaint. They did not name the police officer.

At the same time, the city denied a request by councilor Langley that a possible investigation of him be added to that evening's agenda.

In response to Langley's request, city administrator Reeves explained that the

city attorney requested the council wait until its March 19 meeting to discuss any possible investigation of Langley, because the attorney who will be reviewing the complaint would be present. Then he explained that the legal issues are different with a complaint about city staff versus a city councilor.

Lamirande attended the meeting, as did a roomful of other Cloquet citizens, including numerous police officers and former mayor Dave Hallback. Lamirande said he hadn't been contacted by anyone from the city other than receiving confirmation that his emailed complaints had been received.

He was pleased to see the council act, however.

"I think an independent investigation will provide some clarity to the issues that have been going on," Lamirande said in an interview with the Pine Knot News. "And I pretty much feel my complaint speaks for itself, although I'd be happy to answer any questions the investigator may have."

Other than voting to approve most of the bids on future City Hall renovations, the meeting was dominated by discussions about how to handle the allegations against city staff.

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Derailed!

FDL board says railroad not working with tribe

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Kevin Dupuis didn't mince words Tuesday when talking about the BNSF Railways' response to a derailment of 40 cars carrying coal Saturday on Fond du Lac Reservation land.

He was not happy.

"We have jurisdiction; it's within our lands," said the chairman of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior or Chippewa. "We are the lead agency and we should have been contacted. There should have been collaboration to ensure the cleanup is done the right way within the eyes of the band, so we take the precautions that are needed with the environment and, most importantly, the safety issues."

According to BNSF press releases, 40 cars out of 121 loaded coal cars derailed at approximately 11:30 a.m. Saturday. Several of the derailed cars were on their sides near or partially in the frozen St. Louis River, near Pine Island about four miles west of Cloquet. No injuries were reported and the cause

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This aerial view of the site where 40 railcars carrying coal derailed Saturday shows the damage and how much progress BNSF employees and contractors have made in clearing up the site, which is located on the Fond du Lac Reservation about four miles west of Cloquet. FDL officials say railroad officials have done an extremely poor job of working with the band on the cleanup and emergency response efforts on Reservation land. *Photo courtesy of Bill Stone / www.VentureNorthAviation.com*

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