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the Ely **TIMBERJAY**



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TIMBERJAY INVESTIGATION

IRRR hiring decision comes under fire

Agency accused of disregarding process, passing over more qualified candidate in rush to hire Radinovich

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL— For more than 20 years, Sandy Layman, of Grand Rapids, has worked to convince lawmakers in St. Paul that the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation is more than a revolving door of

political patronage for Iron Range DFLers. Layman, now a Republican House member, first served on the IRRR board in the 1990s and later became commissioner of the agency under Gov. Tim Pawlenty. "One of my goals has always been to depoliticize the agency," said Layman

during a recent interview with the *Timberjay*. "It has a highly partisan reputation in St. Paul." Which is why Layman says she is so frustrated with the agency's recent hiring of Joe Radinovich, the unsuccessful 2018 DFL candidate for the U.S. House in Minnesota's Eighth District. Radinovich

was hired in early March to a highly-paid, permanent position that IRRR officials appear to have created specifically for him. While political appointments are not unusual in state government, and are typically temporary, the kind of job

See...IRRR pg. 9



The Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation office is located in Eveleth. photo courtesy of state of Minnesota

TRANSPORTATION

PUT IT IN PARK

Morris Janssen retires after 60 years of driving school bus for Ely students

by KEITH VANDERVORT
 Ely Editor

ELY – An Ely school bus driver put his vehicle in park for the last time this spring, ending a career that spanned six full decades. Morris Janssen was honored at a reception last week for his time behind the wheel transporting Ely students to and from school.

School and transportation union officials, along with dozens of supporters and many current and former students, gathered for a

See...BUS pg. 10

Morris Janssen, gets a hug from Addyson Rivera at a retirement party last week. Ely students made "thank-you" posters for him. photos by K. Vandervort



BREAKING NEWS

Two resign from Tower City Council

by JODI SUMMIT
 Tower-Soudan Editor

TOWER— Two members of the Tower City Council unexpectedly announced their resignations this week. Kevin Fitton, who is designated as acting mayor, and Brooke Anderson— both elected in 2016— made their announcements within a day of each other.

This leaves newly-elected Mayor Orlyn Kringstad, and councilors Steve Abrahamson and Rachel Beldo on the five-member council.

Fitton told the *Timberjay* that his decision to resign was based on the time demands of the council position,

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ELY SCHOOLS

District considers enrollment, survey in school project

by KEITH VANDERVORT
 Ely Editor

ELY— The school board here, on Tuesday, agreed to conduct a survey of community attitudes on a number of possible renovations and additions to the Ely school campus. That decision came as the school facilities community task force wrapped up its work after struggling to reach a consensus on a final recommendation to the school board.

Options considered by the task force range from a basic infrastructure upgrade and secure entryway, costing \$5 million to \$6 million, to a much larger project that could cost as much as \$16.5 million.

The community task force met

See...ELY pg. 12

EDUCATION

Community art program available at Nett Lake

by MARCUS WHITE
 Cook/Orr Editor

NETT LAKE - The paint brushes were out at the school here last Monday for a community art program designed to bring more education to locals on various art and art techniques.

"There is no art program

Steve Premo teaches art at Nett Lake School. photo by M. White

at the Nett Lake School," said Bois Forte Legacy Coordinator Chaz Wagner, who organized the event. "When I put these events on, it shows how important art

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IRRR...Continued from page 1

created for Radinovich, known as a “permanent classified” position, is supposed to be nonpolitical and is subject to state hiring guidelines designed to ensure a fair and competitive process in which state workers are hired on merit rather than politics.

Yet an investigation by the *Timberjay* found substantial evidence that the IRRR’s process, in this instance, fell short of that goal, and that top agency officials sought from the beginning to offer Radinovich a plum new position, with a salary of \$100,000 per year in addition to the state’s handsome benefits package. In so doing, the agency sought exemption to sharply limit the posting of the position and appeared to pass over a female candidate for the position with far more relevant experience and education than Radinovich brings to the job.

Radinovich’s hiring comes on the heels of the appointment of Jason Metsa as the agency’s deputy commissioner, which is considered a political appointment and was not subject to the typical state hiring process. Metsa is an Iron Range DFLer who ran unsuccessfully for his party’s nomination for the Eighth District seat.

For Layman, it doesn’t pass the smell test.

“This just gives the agency a big black eye,” she said.

State Sen. Justin Eichorn, GOP-Grand Rapids, said he shares Layman’s concern. “I don’t know how they didn’t see how bad this would look.”

Republicans aren’t the only ones with concerns. In response to questions for this story, Teddy Tschann, press secretary for DFL Gov. Tim Walz, announced a change in administration policy to address issues with the hiring process raised in the *Timberjay*’s investigation.

“In an effort to further promote the Governor’s commitment to seeking a world-class workforce, we will be instituting an administration-wide policy requiring, rather than recommending, that all classified managerial positions of this kind be posted for at least 21 days,” stated Tschann. “Any exceptions will require direct approval by the Minnesota Management and Budget Commissioner (MMB) or his designee.”

Bringing Radinovich on board

IRRR Commissioner Mark Phillips acknowledges that he sought early on to hire Radinovich at his agency and initially considered hiring the Crosby native as deputy commissioner. “It really was down to Jason or Joe to be deputy,” he said. When the job went to Metsa, Phillips began exploring options to offer Radinovich a different position.

Back in 2015, after Radinovich lost his seat in



Joe Radinovich

the state House, Phillips had brought Radinovich on as a political appointee, with a title of “assistant commissioner.” In that position, Radinovich worked in strategic planning, headed up an inter-agency working group and served as the IRRR’s legislative liaison. But he left that job in less than a year and later told the *Brainerd Dispatch* he was “bored” in the position.

Radinovich then spent the next two years working on political campaigns, first as campaign manager for Congressman Rick Nolan. He later headed up the campaign and eventual transition team for Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, a position he left to mount his own bid for the Eighth District congressional seat in 2018.

Phillips said he made no secret of his desire to create a position at the agency for Radinovich.

“I supervised him and he did a terrific job in my estimation,” said Phillips. “I was talking openly about bringing him back on.”

After discussing the issue with some in the agency, Phillips said a board member suggested the agency could fill a vacancy left by the retirement of Steve Peterson, who had served in a business development director role for the agency until last year.

But that position was a regular state job, which ostensibly required a fair and open hiring process.

Fair hiring process?

While Phillips insists that the process was fair and competitive, emails and other documents obtained by the *Timberjay* through a public records request, suggest otherwise. Not only did IRRR officials take steps to limit the posting of the position to just one day, an organizational chart created by IRRR staff—produced nearly a week before the job was posted—showed Radinovich’s name already listed in the position.

The agency also obtained Radinovich’s resumé in advance of the job posting, suggesting that he was aware of the hiring process in advance.

State hiring is overseen by the Minnesota Management and Budget, or MMB, and that agency has taken steps in recent years to ensure that state employment is truly open to all qualified individuals.

An MMB policy, adopted in December



Mark Phillips

2015, encourages state agencies to advertise open positions for a minimum of 21 days and requires they be advertised for at least seven calendar days.

The Dayton administration adopted the policy in an effort to “promote transparency, open communication, and fairness in the hiring process,” according to the text of the policy, which is available online. “It supports our state affirmative action goals, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and efforts to ensure our workforce represents Minnesota workforce demographics.”

Gov. Tim Walz has signaled that his own administration is fully on board with those goals.

Indeed, the new governor’s first official act was signing an executive order creating the One Minnesota Council on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity, which will focus on continuing the push for diversity and fairness in state hiring.

Layman said the Radinovich hiring “just flies in the face of the Walz administration’s stated goals on this.”

Rather than post for the minimum of seven days, officials with the IRRR applied for and received an exemption allowing them to post the job for just 24 hours, citing a desire by the governor’s office to have the position filled quickly.

In outlining the agency’s rationale for the exemption, IRRR Human Resources Director Barbara Sanders wrote, “If the posting of this vacancy, for not more than 24 hours, is not approved, IRRR will not be able to fully comply with the direction and expectation of the Governor’s office.”

Sanders also stated that there “is an urgent need” to fill the position by March 4, 2019.

Phillips offered another motivation. He noted part of the position involved working with the Legislature and said he wanted someone on board quickly because he had vacation time planned in late March while the Legislature was in session. In the end, Radinovich was notified of his hiring on March 8 and assumed the position effective on Monday, March 11.

Walz’s press secretary Tschann dismissed any suggestion that the hiring process was abbreviated at the urging of the administration.

“The Governor’s office was not involved in any decision making

related to the expedited hiring process and did not direct the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation or Minnesota Management and Budget to vary from ordinary hiring procedures,” stated Tschann. “The Governor is committed to hiring the most qualified candidates and building an administration that reflects the diversity of Minnesota.”

Tschann continued, “Over two thirds, 67-percent, of the Governor’s staff is female and nearly half, 47-percent, of the Governor’s appointees to boards and commissions are people of color or indigenous Minnesotans.”

The state hiring policy does allow for such exemptions, yet they are rare.

According to MMB, the agency has received just 44 such requests since December 2015, or just over 12 per year in a state workforce totaling in the tens of thousands.

During that time, the agency granted just 33 of the requests, or about ten per year.

The job was posted at midnight on February 20, and was pulled from the state website the same day at 11:59 p.m., according to MMB. Officials with MMB conducted the initial screening of the 12 applications they did receive, determining that four people met the job qualifications. Of those four, two later declined an interview.

Only Radinovich and longtime Iron Range resident Lorrie Janatopoulus actually interviewed for the position.

Resumé mismatch

For Janatopoulus, the posting sparked renewed interest in working for an agency with which she was already familiar. She had maintained an office at the IRRR facility in Eveleth in 2016 and 2017 after she was selected for a prestigious Bush Foundation Fellowship in public leadership. During that time, she assisted the IRRR in strategic planning and also worked at Hibbing Community College in a program to help women achieve their educational and career goals.

Back in December, Janatopoulus was a semi-finalist for the IRRR Commissioner job, for which she interviewed, before the Governor opted to keep Phillips in the position.

Janatopoulus holds a master’s degree in public affairs from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and more recently completed a series of leadership training courses at Harvard as part of her Bush fellowship.

She also brings more than two decades of work experience in the nonprofit sector, having started in the mid-1990s as housing director at the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency in Virginia and later advancing to the role of the agency’s overall

planning director, a job she held for 16 years.

During that time, she was responsible for strategic planning, community assessments, grant writing, fund development, communications and development of community partnerships. She also was closely involved in agency hiring decisions, performance evaluations, as well as supervision and coaching of employees.

Janatopoulus has also been a longtime community activist in the region, serving on numerous nonprofit boards, including as chair.

Janatopoulus’s resumé appears to be a strong fit with the high-level position outlined in the job posting—70 percent of which involved supervision of four IRRR department heads, as well as strategic planning and inter-agency collaboration. Thirty-percent of the job involved working with the Legislature and the Governor’s office.

“When I looked at the job description, I was pretty excited,” said Janatopoulus, when contacted by the *Timberjay*. “During my time at AEOA, I worked on a number of legislative initiatives and I had good connections at the Legislature as well. I actually saw it as a really good fit for my education and experience.”

Radinovich’s resumé is light by comparison. He attended classes over three years at Macalester College in St. Paul, but never completed a degree. He served two years in the Minnesota House, representing parts of east-central Minnesota. When he lost his re-election bid, he spent just under a year at the IRRR before stepping back into electoral politics. He most recently served as chief-of-staff to Mayor Frey, a position Radinovich held for four months before coming to the IRRR.

The *Timberjay* reached out to Radinovich for comment and with questions for this story, but Radinovich referred comment to the IRRR Commissioner and did not respond to questions.

When asked about the seeming mismatch in both education and job experience, Phillips defended his agency’s process during an interview with the *Timberjay*. “We ran a fair, competitive

process,” he said, stating that the three people on the hiring committee—Jason Metsa, Chief Operating Officer Marianne Bouska, and Phillips—each scored Radinovich the highest.

At the same time, Phillips acknowledged that it was his intent to bring Radinovich back to the agency and he believes the hiring became controversial when he decided to make it a permanent classified position, which required a competitive process. “I think that’s where this thing got off the tracks a little,” he said.

Radinovich’s hiring was unusual, as well, because of Phillips’s role in the decision. He said it was the first employee interview he had sat in on as commissioner, since he normally leaves that decision-making to other senior agency staff.

The agency also appears to have taken steps to alter the qualifications for the senior-level position, a type of job that typically requires advanced education and significant related work experience. In this case, the job description ultimately posted for the position had no educational requirement and allowed “campaign” work to substitute for the more typical job experience normally required for such positions.

Phillips bristles at the suggestion that a more qualified woman was passed over for a male candidate. “One thing we’re very proud of, is that we have more female supervisors than many other state agencies,” he said. “It’s not all the good ol’ boys like some people believe.”

Questions raised

The Radinovich hiring is almost certain to come up for discussion at the IRRR board level. “As a legislator, I can’t let this stand,” said Layman. “We need to have full public disclosure of the process and a discussion about how we move forward. This is about a state agency charged with diversifying the economy, not about finding jobs for politicians.”

The hiring did catch many IRRR board members, and not just Republicans, by surprise.

Current board chair See... STAFF pg. 10

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STATE OF THE BAND

Chavers lays out priorities for Bois Forte

Focus on land, drug epidemic, workforce development

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
 Managing Editor

VERMILION RESERVATION— Bois Forte Tribal Chairwoman Cathy Chavers laid out land acquisition, workforce development, and addressing the impacts of the opioid epidemic as among her top priorities

for the coming years in her State of Band address last Thursday evening at Fortune Bay Resort Casino.

While the Nett Lake and Lake Vermilion reservations are sizable on paper, Chavers noted that the tribe does not own thousands of acres within the borders of its reservations. “Within the

Cathy Chavers, the Bois Forte Tribal Chairwoman, delivered her annual State of the Band address last week at Fortune Bay. photo by M. HelMBERGER

reservation boundaries it’s a checkerboard,” she said. “We don’t own a lot of the land within the boundaries.” She said the current tribal council hopes to change that, with a goal of eventually owning all

of the land within the borders of the reservation.

One of the biggest landowners within the reservation is Minnesota Chippewa

See...**BAND** pg. 10



IRON RANGE RESOURCES AND REHABILITATION

Lawmakers push for changes in state hiring

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL— The April 19 *Timberjay* investigation into questionable hiring practices at the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation now appears likely to lead to a change in state law. Rep. Rob Ecklund, DFL-International Falls, and Rep. Sandy Layman, R-Grand Rapids, added complementary amendments as part of ongoing work on the House State Government Finance Omnibus bill.

Ecklund’s initial amendment requires a commissioner of any state department or agency to ensure that all hiring for managerial positions is done through a fair and open process, where all qualified candidates are given full consideration. It also states that job requirements

See...**HIRING** pg. 9



Sandy Layman



Rob Ecklund



Gov. Walz reprimands IRRR’s Phillips over hiring Radinovich resigns after media furor

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
 & **MARCUS WHITE**
 Timberjay Editors

REGIONAL— Gov. Tim Walz has issued a letter of reprimand to Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Commissioner Mark Phillips in the wake of a hiring decision that prompted statewide media coverage.

The *Timberjay* broke the story of the agency’s hiring of the DFL’s unsuccessful Eighth Congressional District

nominee, Joe Radinovich, in its April 19 edition. The story raised serious questions about the fairness of the hiring process.

Radinovich announced on Thursday, April 25, that he was stepping down from the position.

Gov. Walz issued his letter of reprimand to Phillips the same day, telling the commissioner that his handling of the hiring



Mark Phillips

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ELY SCHOOLS

School board considers collaboration

by **KEITH VANDERVORT**
 Ely Editor

ELY — As school board members here consider facilities renovations that could cost as much as \$17 million, the ISD 696 school board, on Monday, discussed one possible source of funding to help pay for the improvements — the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation.

Gary Cerkvenik, a lobbyist for the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) who also works with the IRRR’s multi-school Iron Range School Collaboration project, outlined how the district might tap some of the limited funding still available to help school districts pursue facilities projects. Cerkvenik was joined by lobbyist Jeff Anderson, who works with Cerkvenik, as well as St. Louis County Commissioner Paul MacDonald.

Access to the IRRR funding stream requires that school districts engage in some kind of collaboration. Board chair Ray Marsnik said the district could seek a cooperative arrangement with the nearby St. Louis County School District, which operates schools in Babbitt and Tower.

Cerkvenik conceded that the IRRR collaborative fund account is quickly drying up because of ongoing collabora-

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LAKE VERMILION

Under new management

The Landing, Moosebirds open with a new vision

by **MARCUS WHITE**
 Cook/Orr Editor

COOK— Every owner has a vision for their restaurant. Matt and Mark Litherland and Sahand Elmtalab know where they want to take The Landing, which reopened for the season this week under their new

The new owners of the Landing, on Lake Vermilion, are, from left, Mark Litherland, Sahand Elmtalab and Matt Litherland. submitted photo

ownership and management. “People want to come out and have a beer and a burger and be able to look at a great view,” Matt Litherland said. “It’s about having fun and being able to enjoy life. I’m really excited.”

The family bought the Lake Vermilion restaurant earlier this year after the previous owners put it up for sale.

See... **VISION** pg. 12



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HIRING...Continued from page 1

cannot be altered to fit a particular candidate and that internal documents may not identify a particular candidate as the holder of the position prior to their official hiring. Layman then offered a friendly amendment to Ecklund's provision, which codifies a policy change announced last month by Gov. Tim Walz, into state law. The change would require that

vacant state positions be posted and applications accepted for a minimum of 21 days. Any deviations from this policy would require a waiver and public notice of the waiver to be published within 14 days in the State Register.

Both Layman's amendment and the underlying Ecklund amendment were adopted into the State Government Finance bill

on voice votes. The posting time proved one of several issues of concern raised in the *Timberjay's* story. Officials at the IRRR had sought a special exemption to post a newly-created position for just 24 hours. Current state policy recommends at least 21 days and sets a posting minimum of seven days, but agencies can seek

an exemption from that requirement. The new legislation would make such exemptions much more difficult to obtain and more transparent. "It's important that the Legislature makes these changes to help ensure an embarrassing hiring incident like this doesn't happen again," Layman said. "I believe this is a strong first step

in reforming and restoring the integrity of our state agency hiring practices. I will continue to look at other ways to repair these processes and make sure Minnesota is free of cronyism." The state Senate adopted similar hiring language last week that is now included in the Senate's own version of the state government finance bill.

The legislation will now head to a House-Senate conference committee to approve identical language. The passage of the measure by both the House and Senate significantly increases the likelihood that the new hiring language will be enacted into law.

WALZ...Continued from page 1

process "fell far short of my expectations." The letter stated Phillips failed to follow the state's "requirement that all classified positions be posted competitively for at least seven days and recommendation that such positions be posted for 21 days are designed to ensure inclusiveness, openness, and transparency in the hiring process for classified positions."

The governor has since moved to ensure that all state agencies follow a 21-day posting requirement for all state government positions. "As a matter of policy, I want to ensure that the state hiring process for classified positions is inclusive, competitive, open, and transparent to encourage people across Minnesota to consider state service," Walz stated in his letter to Phillips. "By following the new 21-day posting period, I am confident that we will receive well-qualified applicants from all corners

of Minnesota and with diverse and interesting backgrounds and experiences. The inclusiveness, openness, and transparency of this process is important to show the public our values as an Administration—to show Minnesotans that we are worthy of their trust."

Radinovich resignation

In a short resignation letter, Radinovich said the circumstances surrounding his hiring had taken the agency's focus off of its core mission. "It's my intent to refocus the public's attention on the important mission of the IRRR through my action today."

The story had generated extraordinary news coverage around the state since the *Timberjay* first published it online on April 17, including significant reporting of the issue in newspapers and on radio and television in the Twin Cities metro area, and even

nationally as the story hit the Associated Press wire service. The widespread coverage intensified the pressure on Gov. Walz as well as officials with the IRRR. GOP lawmakers, who took advantage of an opportunity to embarrass the new DFL governor, appeared eager to express their displeasure over the hiring.

That made Radinovich's decision something of a relief for officials at the IRRR. "We appreciate his concern for the agency and the region it serves," stated IRRR Communications Coordinator Sheryl Kochevar. "We accept his decision to step down."

Rep. Sandy Layman, R-Grand Rapids, lauded Radinovich's decision to leave. "This is an appropriate step that will help restore the credibility of the IRRR. I care deeply about improving and maintaining the integrity and reputation of the IRRR because it does critical work for the residents of

the Iron Range." DFL lawmakers agreed. "I think he (Radinovich) did the honorable thing," said Rep. Rob Ecklund, DFL-International Falls. "It's a mess that wasn't necessarily his fault. I think he got put in a tough spot." Radinovich's resignation likely won't be the last word on the subject. "This incident was embarrassing for the IRRR, and I have many questions that still need to be answered about the process and the involvement of the governor's office," said Layman.

Hiring at issue

Last month when the *Timberjay* broke the news that the IRRR had fast-tracked the hiring of Radinovich, passing over a potentially more qualified candidate, Phillips had acknowledged to the newspaper that he had intended to bring Radinovich on board at the agency after the Deputy Commissioner

position went to former DFL legislator Jason Metsa. Metsa had also run unsuccessfully for the Eighth District seat vacated last year by Rick Nolan. Unlike Metsa's position, which was a temporary political appointment, the job created for Radinovich was listed as a permanent state position, which required an open and competitive hiring process. Yet, as the *Timberjay* reported, officials at the agency sought special exemption to post the job for no more than 24 hours and claimed that the short posting was backed by the governor's office, something that Gov. Walz later denied and cited in his subsequent letter of reprimand. "It was inappropriate for you to seek to vary from MMB's [Minnesota Management and Budget] requirements in this case. It was also inappropriate to use my Office as your stated rationale for requesting an

exemption," wrote Walz. The *Timberjay* also revealed that officials at the agency had prepared an organizational chart for the new position, which had Radinovich's name written in nearly a week before the job was posted. What's more, the IRRR passed over a female candidate and long-time Iron Range resident, Lorrie Janatopoulos, who had far more relevant work experience, a master's degree in public affairs, and a recent Bush Fellowship which included leadership training at Harvard as well as strategic planning work at the IRRR. Radinovich attended classes at Macalaster College in St. Paul, but never completed a degree. Phillips still must be confirmed by the Republican-controlled State Senate in St. Paul. Requests for comment to Sen. Justin Eichorn, R-Grand Rapids, on that issue were not returned as of press time.

ELY...Continued from page 1

erative projects involving a number of other school districts on the Range. "If you look at the next 20 years, the cash flow in that account does not sustain much more than an additional \$2 million per year," he said. "And there is a three-year period where (cash flow) drops below one million. They are getting to the end of money they have available." Cerkvienik has been in the legislative lobbying and public relations business for 30-plus years. Anderson, an Ely native, joined Cerkvienik's firm, the Costin Group, Inc. earlier this year after working for Rep. Rick Nolan for six years. "We want to make sure, when we work with you, that we have alternative paths to work on so that we can creatively

help the Ely community to advance this large project and to lessen some of the property tax impact," Cerkvienik said. The IRRR's Iron Range Collaborative Fund, he said, "is a unique program designed to drive cooperation for better academic outcomes for students." The IRRR works with school administrations to design a funding program that will likely be unique in scope and impact, he added. "They want to see how (your project) improves academic performance, and how does it drive cooperation among school districts," Cerkvienik said. "They look at how you make smart use of resources, and address building needs. However, it is not just a building fund, and if you approach it that way,

you probably won't be successful. The (school) systems that have been successful in access to that money have had cooperative programs." He described the Mt. Iron-Buhl School District's collaboration model with ISD 2142. They integrated their transportation system, business office, implemented superintendent and curriculum director sharing, language arts teaching, and expanded the video teaching model. "It is only logical, because you don't have any other nearby school districts except the one (ISD 2142), to leap ahead and have that (collaboration) discussion with them," he said. He offered that programs such as sharing classes with Northeast

Range School could cut administrative costs and improve academic performance. "If you can put together a package that addresses a lot of those types of things, it then has some legs, rather than just concentrating on buildings," Cerkvienik said. Marsnik agreed that collaboration with the nearby school district is an important step for Ely and pushed to have a discussion with the ISD 2142 school board sooner rather than later about any options that could be considered. Cerkvienik told school board members that he greased the wheels with the ISD 2142 board about such a conversation. "Reggie (Engbritson, ISD 2142 superintendent) is open to such a discussion," he said. "She did talk with the

school board there and they are open to talking." He laid out a necessary process to implement a collaboration effort. "You need to develop a relationship and a memorandum of understanding to work on and present that to your voters, the IRRR leadership and legislators," Cerkvienik said. Marsnik made clear that ISD 696 is not advocating consolidation with ISD 2142. "We are not talking consolidation, but collaboration; there is a big difference." Cerkvienik noted that many areas of collaboration already exist on the Iron Range, "including the Arrowhead Consortium for health insurance, school supplies, computer services, financial advice and other things that are economically efficient."

He suggested that Ely school board members continue to try to access school collaboration funding from the IRRR. "It is set up to drive increased cooperation and to improve academic performance," he said. "When you cooperate administratively to save money, you can put that (savings) into the classroom, and offer more opportunities for your kids." Marsnik agreed. "It is worthwhile to look into this. We will have further discussion with our full board (two members were absent from the meeting) and see how we want to move forward. The next step should be to meet with the 2142 board. It doesn't hurt to talk," he said.

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 This benefit would not have been possible without the hard work of a team of volunteers, as well as these businesses and individuals who donated food and/or prizes for the event. If we have missed listing anyone, we apologize in advance!

Bent Paddle Brewing	Kinney Fire Dept.	Sheri Ann Oveson Trapper
Bergetta Indihar	Michaud Distributing	Superior National Golf Course
Carquest- Mt. Iron	Destination Massage	The Timberjay
Dubh Linns Irish Pub	Midwest Communications	Vertical Endeavors
Ebby Laulunen	Morgan Family of Crookston	The Wilderness Golf Course
Cook Lucky 7	Nemadji Golf Course	Tower Car Wash
Fortune Bay Resort Casino	Other Place Bar &	Zup's of Ely
Good Ol' Days	Grill-Duluth	Zup's of Tower
Grand Portage Casino	Pier B Resort	Zup North Realty
Grand Superior Lodge		ZMC Hotels

Thank you to everyone for your support!