

Ely Echo Editorial

Ambulance needs vs. wants

Leaders from area governmental units got together Wednesday to help shape the future of our local ambulance service. They decided to focus on the operational end instead of forging ahead with a new building.

We liked the step back approach that was taken. A previous meeting of the ambulance joint powers board lacked information, perspective and forward thinking.

What came out of Wednesday's meeting was that it's more important to make sure you will have an ambulance service in the future versus spending \$1.4 million on a building that could need a tenant down the road.

In the past the ambulance was owned by the hospital. The feds changed the rules for Medicare payments and the hospital had to shed the ambulance to improve its bottom line.

The problem was the hospital also got rid of employing EMTs who in the past would work on the floor with patients and then clock out from the hospital and clock in as an ambulance worker.

This arrangement was a benefit to the ambulance service but something the hospital needed to change.

The non-profit that manages the ambulance service has struggled to retain EMTs who often work for minimum wage level pay while on call before jumping up to \$25 an hour while on a

run. It's not a great solution. But can the ambulance afford to pay people enough to live on and still survive financially in an area fraught with Medicare patients where the runs aren't fully paid for? Not without help.

Where that help will come from is still up for discussion. Could the hospital help this situation without causing red ink to flow to its bottom line? Should tax dollars be used to keep the ambulance afloat? Is there a better solution out there?

Ely is not the only small city struggling with these problems. We don't have a booming economy that will help make this problem go away. Quite the reverse of that.

But on Wednesday we saw a strong effort from the ambulance joint powers board to work with the hospital to find a solution and a path forward that everyone can live with.

It's likely at this point that taxpayers will be asked to help keep an ambulance service operating in Ely. And we were encouraged that this won't be an open checkbook.

Just like taxpayers, elected officials need to work to find what the needs are instead of the wants. At first glance a \$1.4 million building seems a bit excessive, especially if the most glaring need is making sure we have people to drive the ambulance in the first place.



Letters

...when the permitting system goes live

Letter to Editor:

Marine Corps veteran Gerald Tyler and U. S. Air Force veteran Steve Saari head an initiative to have the United States Forest Service reserve a number of day motorized boat permits for disabled veterans each week throughout the summer. Such a reservation system would allow disabled veterans to access Basswood Lake in the BWCA through Prairie Portage, utilizing an existing boat lift service.

In early November of last year, a Town Hall Meeting was held in Ely. It was attended by more than 50 Ely area veterans and their supporters. It was also attended by Congressman Stauber's Field Representative Spencer Igo from Chisholm, who at our request, intervened on behalf of Ely area veterans. Congressman Stauber recently met with Forest Service officials in Duluth and wrote USFS Chief Vicki Christiansen in Washington

asking her to establish "a program allowing motorized boat permits for disabled veterans as directed by Section 18(d) of the 1978 law." Congressman Stauber's letter is presented above.

As a result of discussions we held with USFS officials in Ely, Duluth and Washington earlier this week, we have learned that the decision to reserve such permits will be made in Washington. We have stressed the importance that if a favorable decision is to be made, it must take place before January 29, 2020, when the permitting system goes live and permits are made available for reservation.

If you would like to know how you can lend your support to see that our request to the USFS is honored, you may contact Tyler or Saari by calling our office in Ely at (218) 365-3324.

Gerald M. Tyler
Steven P. Saari

...contribute to keep advancing the tremendous momentum you have built

Letter to the Editor:

Ely's Historical State Theater Update.

Here are two pieces of good news about the State Theater from our non-profit board: First, you may know about the bridge loan of \$300,000 that the IRRRB made to the Ott family to help complete the historical restoration of the theater building. Just to clarify, our non-profit is a completely separate entity that is raising funds to equip and furnish the theater and to manage it once Alley A Realty, the Otts, have finished the reconstruction.

Secondly, with your donations, much has been accomplished over the holidays: the curtain and backdrops have been hung, the theatrical sound and lighting have been installed, and the new screen has been ordered to be installed immediately after the Quiltmaker's Gift production has closed. The

new popcorn popper was ordered this week, and we are just days (and a few dollars) away from ordering the new 4K Digital projector and the portable seating. That's very good news!!

Our next steps will be to raise the funds to put finishing touches on the State Theater, to equip the concessions area and prepare the second theater for movies in the Salerno Building.

We appreciate the tremendous support the theater has received from the Ely community, Ely visitors and friends so far. We will keep you posted about our progress, and we will ask all future movie-goers to contribute to keep advancing the tremendous momentum you have built. Thank you for helping to support fun, the arts and one more fabulous attraction in Ely!

David Wigdahl
EHST Board Chair

...Of course, the people do not want war

To the editor,
"Why, of course, the people don't want war. Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war ... That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along ... the people can always be

brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country." — Hermann Goring, at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

Of course, the people do not want war.

Mike Palecek
Saginaw, MN

...the biggest controversy is how the significant tax revenues should be spent

Dear Editor:

Burning oil, coal and natural gas creates 82% of U.S. greenhouse emissions. There appears to be a consensus that the best way to address this issue is the implementation of a carbon tax. Other supplemental measures include ending governmental subsidies to fuel producers, but establishing subsidies for solar, wind, hydropower and nuclear. Also, re-imposing energy efficiency standards for appliances and autos.

The fact that there is recognition of the benefits of a carbon tax, does not mean there is any consensus on the level of the taxation per ton of carbon emissions produced nor the amount of proposed annual tax increases.

The biggest controversy is how the significant tax revenues should be spent.

One recommendation is to distribute the revenue over the entire population on a monthly basis equally on a per person basis. Still another consideration is to use a portion of the tax revenue for earned income tax credit tax provisions. This proposal would be directed to help those people with low incomes that spend a disproportionate amount of their income on fossil fueled transportation to work and/or heating their home. Other recommendations are reducing the federal debt, fund health care, education, infrastructure, or restore forest and wetlands. These are just a few of many opinions.

The producers of fossil fuels are likely to increase their sale prices to off-set the cost of the carbon tax. The need and market for fossil

fuels is relatively inelastic, meaning people have to buy the product whether the price goes up or down.

The impact of a carbon tax is long term strategy and a means to alleviate climate change. The carbon tax will accelerate the use of transportation electrification and the use of solar, wind and nuclear for the generation of energy. The addition of the carbon tax to fossil products will make alternative energy sources more price competitive.

Carbon tax bills have been submitted to Congress, but none have been acted upon or openly discussed. Assuredly, the petroleum industry will lobby against a carbon tax.

The prime purposes for taxes are to raise revenue to finance public entities. A carbon tax, however, would

be used primarily to achieve a sustainable and healthy environment and the revenue is a by-product of this goal. This is an atypical use of the tax code for what might be termed societal engineering.

A MIT analysis indicates that starting with a \$50 per ton carbon tax and increasing it by 5% per year would lead to a 63% reduction in total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Unfortunately, the impact of man-made climate change is accelerating, and some detrimental changes are becoming irreversible. It is important for Congress to address the issue now because the scope of damage to our planet will become too massive to rectify.

Gerry Snyder
Ely



Hook and Bullet Club

by Nick Wognum

There's a logging operation taking place near Camp Cholesterol this winter. Evan and I have been out there to check it out and see what the "new" hunting grounds look like.

We agree there will definitely be opportunities for longer shots. Going to need to dial up the scopes.

After 20 years of hunting in that area we were ready for a change. A forest needs logging to renew periodically (and a lot better than fire).

When we started there was an area we called the "Christmas trees." It was a stand of planted Norway where the trees were maybe five feet tall. Now they are closer to 20 feet up.

There have been several logging operations and each has provided new opportunities. We've relocated deer stands and adapted to the changes.

Seeing the large cut this year closes a 20-year chapter and opens a

new one. Will the deer use this area as they did in the past? Only time will tell.

I took a trip out on Saturday with an ulterior motive of removing the snow from the roof on the shack and sauna.

The Roof Razor used to be made right here in Ely by the Katauskas family and I've used that tool at the shack for a number of years. But never in the first week of January.

The snow was crusty and over a foot deep, giving the Roof Razor a real run for its money. Just getting it started on the eave was the toughest part. Once it broke through the crust the wheels would ride up the roof and the snow would slide down the fabric shoot.

Now the key is to have enough aluminum pipe sections attached so the snow doesn't hit you in the face. Also,

that you don't stumble while walking through the two feet of snow on the ground.

I did take a few rounds of snow to the face while doing the sauna roof but survived the whole ordeal.

Megan and I tackled the roof on her house Sunday morning. The goal was to get it done before the wind picked up.

It would've been smart to start on the end of the roof where the power comes into the house from the pole. Nope, I hit that end when the wind picked up.

In big letters on the Roof Razor it warns against using it in high winds or near power lines.

With the winds starting to gust at 30 miles per hour, Megan and I decided to live and call it a day.

Be a shame to miss out on hunting season after being electrocuted.

once lived in that ethnic and racially mixed east side Illinois community.

In the Ely Echo for **January 14, 1980, 40 years ago**, the headlines were:

- Ely's Jimmy Grahek makes U.S. Olympic team.
- Ely getting geared up for Jan 19-20 sled dog races.
- Is Harris Lake the next wilderness?
- Ely council opens on negative note.



From the miscellaneous drawer

by Anne Swenson

When two schools were combined into one, the classroom of white students became racially mixed with one black child and two Mexican children from the town on the other side of the dividing railroad. The students bonded as differences were explored. A new best friend was a Mexican boy.

By the eighth grade the teenagers had created alliances with each other for the most part.

But when the teacher left the room, the son of a bar owner challenged with a big knife the black son of a convicted murderer.

And just then the teacher re-en-

tered the room.

The middle-aged woman stepped between the two and demanded she be given the knife.

The classroom students gasped, then sat in silence, wondering on the outcome and silently chose sides. Yet the knife was handed over without incident. What precipitated the confrontation was unknown.

That summer the white son of the bar owner was arrested for robbing the local post office.

In the town that housed the school, one student later moved to live in Minnesota and found that Huxley Pelkola, a Winton neighbor had

TRUE STORIES FROM THE EDGE

Ely

"True Stories from the Edge" will have two events in 2020. The first on January 16 (Theme: "To thine own self be true; or live life on your terms, not someone else's") and the second on Feb. 27 (Theme: "Falling in love with people or place"). All are invited to come to the Ely Senior Center from 6-8 pm to listen to stories by others or drop their name in the hat to tell a story. This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Donald G. Gardner Humanities Trust.

Donald G. Gardner
Humanities Trust