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HIT THE SLOPES!

Minnesota boasts numerous skiing options

By Bria Barton

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Minnesota is a little vertically challenged. Actually, it's a lot.

The state happens to be more horizontal than Kansas – whose land is often compared to a pancake – and, by overall elevation, it's also the fifth-flattest state in the nation.

So how can it be that such a place is a quintessential wintertime destination for Mid-America, luring in those who aren't looking to venture to the slopes of Aspen to get their fill of skiing and snowboarding – both of which require a bit of altitude to get the job done?

Of course, Minnesota isn't necessarily considered a downhill skiing mecca; but for what it's worth, there's a ski option within driving distance virtually anywhere you live in the state.

From the colossus that is Lutsen Mountains in the North Shore's Sawtooth Mountains to the quaint village that is Buena Vista nestled along the Continental Divide, there are some pretty notable ski resorts that take what's provided by the region and use it to their advantage.

When skiing emerged in the U.S. around the 20th Century, it only seemed logical that Minnesota would carve out a slice of the pie. Not only did the state have some of the longest winters around, it also had an enthusiastic Norwegian immigrant population that had brought the sport with it from the motherland.

Although Minnesota's landscape wasn't ideal for alpine skiing, its scattering of

hills could do the job. And if there were no hills, they could be man-made with a little innovation.

And what arose from those hills are some of the nation's skiing legends: Lindsey Vonn, one of the most accomplished alpine skiers of all time, and Cindy Nelson, Minnesota's first World Cup skier.

On top of that, throw in a few notable cross country skiers from Minnesota on USA teams – Jessie Diggins from the 2018 Olympics – and there's proof that what the state lacks in altitude, it makes up for in attitude to be the best in the sport.

SKIING: Page A9



ABOVE: Snow is made at Buena Vista Ski Area in November 2018.

RIGHT: Skiers take their time coming down the hill at Buena Vista Ski Area. Pioneer file photos



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

More than 100 people attended the Beltrami County Board meeting on Tuesday evening.

Beltrami Commissioners hear voices on all sides of refugee topic

By Matthew Liedke

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BEMIDJI — The Beltrami County Board meeting room was calmer and more organized Tuesday than it was two weeks ago when the subject of refugees came up, but it was no less passionate.

On Jan. 7, the Board of Commissioners voted 3-2 to opt out of the United States Refugee Resettlement Program. Commissioners Craig Gaasvig, Richard Anderson and Jim Lucachick voted in favor of the motion to do so, while Tim Sumner and Reed Olson were against.

The vote took place during a meeting where about 200 people showed up. However, none of those in attendance Jan. 7 were able to speak, as county meetings have open comment

periods for only subjects not on the agenda, and the refugee resettlement topic was an agenda item.

Authorized by an executive order by President Donald Trump, the vote gave states and counties the authority to opt in or out of the refugee resettlement program. To opt in, government units would have to formally vote. But for those not wanting to be involved in the program, officials could either take a formal vote like the one on Jan. 7, or take no action, which would be interpreted as declining.

Since the vote on Jan. 7, the action has become temporarily null after an injunction was issued in federal court halting President Trump's order.

REFUGEE: Page A7

Bemidji is 'financially healthy,' but challenges are ahead

Infrastructure needs, Sanford Center's future require attention

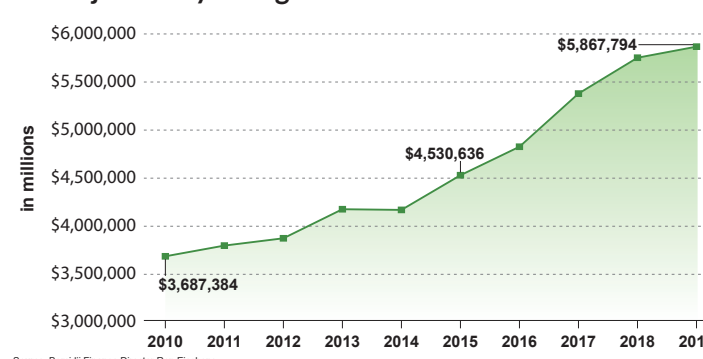
By Matthew Liedke

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BEMIDJI — As a growing city with new businesses and increasing population, Bemidji has made several investments in capital improvements the past decade, which has coincided with an average property tax levy increase of 5.3%.

In 2010, the city's property tax levy was \$3.68 million and for 2020, the levy was set at \$6.12 million. According to data from City Finance Director Ron Eischens, when extending the range to 17 years, 70% of the reason for property tax increases has been in response to

Bemidji tax levy changes from 2010 to 2019



Source: Bemidji Finance Director Ron Eischens

Becca Clemens / Forum Design Center

capital investments. "Our tax base has grown and our population has grown," Eischens said. "I think from a business perspective, we have seen business expansion and new businesses come to town when you look back 10 to 15 years. With that growth comes the need for new capital."

The capital referenced by Eischens includes the city's involvement in the Law

Enforcement Center shared with Beltrami County, the Public Works Department facility, investments in the Parks and Recreation Department and the Sanford Center.

"The economic boom that we've experienced in the last decade or so has been a great blessing for us," said Ward 5 Council member Nancy Erickson.

FINANCE: Page A9

Beard resigns from Ward 2 seat

By Matthew Liedke

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BEMIDJI — Bemidji City Council member Mike Beard announced his resignation on Thursday afternoon, citing health reasons as the main cause.

The representative of Ward 2 said, "It is with sadness that I am announcing my resignation effective

immediately from the Bemidji City Council," in an email to the Pioneer.

"Due to health reasons involving stress and a family history of heart disease, including my father having three heart attacks before age 65, I feel it would be prudent for me to end my tenure," Beard said.



Beard

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