

# Group Respite is back at Immanuel Lutheran Church

## PRESS RELEASE

EDITOR@PINECITYMN.COM

Lakes and Pines Community Action Council is bringing back the in-person Respite Program for adults.

Respite is a short term, temporary relief to support caregivers who are caring for loved ones. Respite allows caregivers to step away from their duties to refresh and recharge, which benefits both the caregiver and care receiver. Offering respite is giving a gift of time!

Lakes and Pines is offering this gift of time to caregivers at respite sessions twice a month in each community; North Branch, Pine City and a newly formed session in Mora. They will also continue to offer virtual respite sessions as long as there is interest.

A typical respite session includes conversation, coffee and a light snack, brain-stimulating activities, an art project or craft and possibly

light exercise like chair stretches or pool noodle volleyball, and plenty of socialization. There is one volunteer for each participant at the in-person sessions as well as staff.

Volunteers are essential for service. The number of respite participants is limited to the number of volunteers. There must be one volunteer for each care receiver. If you enjoy visiting with people, helping out with arts and crafts and are available for a three-hour block of time once or twice a month please volunteer.

Contact Lakes and Pines for more information or to enroll in respite or become a volunteer. Select Option 4 when calling 320-679-1800 or 800-832-6082, or email lap@lakesandpines.org. This services are funded in part under contract with Central Minnesota Council on Aging as part of the Older Americans Act Program.

## Buy Local

BY T.A. LEBRUN  
EDITOR@PINECITYMN.COM

Though organizers and supporters of the Northern Lights Express (NLX) felt the project had been gaining steam, especially with President Biden's infrastructural financial backing, the project stalled in the Minnesota Senate last Monday, May 2.

The Minnesota Senate passed an amendment to the Senate Transportation omnibus bill prohibiting the Minnesota Department of Transportation from spending funds on the Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail project. The rail project would provide passenger rail service between Duluth and Minneapolis, with proposed stops in Hinckley, Cambridge, Coon Rapids, and Superior, Wisc.

Sen. Jason Rarick said in an interview with the News Tribune earlier in the month that he didn't see many people utilizing the train as it would take longer than a bus or any other form of transportation, adding that he doesn't see the cost being worth the usage.

"We have not had a successful rail project

# NLX voted down by Senate



in this state yet; they all operate off government subsidies, and this one will be no different," said Rarick to the Pine City Pioneer. "I would rather the money be invested in roads and bridges as that is the type of transportation Minnesotans use."

NLX public relations consultant, Jill Brown, stated in a press release that while the Senate's action is disappointing, the project is still very much in reach due to strong support in the Minnesota House and Governor's office.

"End of session negotiations this month between the House, Senate and Governor's Office will determine what happens next with NLX and if the state will be able to use the \$85

million appropriated in the House bill to unlock up to \$340 million in federal funds," stated Brown in the press release. "That's enough to have people riding the train within three to four years."

The federal funding is a game changer in this debate, which has been going on for years, according to Sandstone Mayor Peter Spartz. Spartz says with four round trips daily, NLX advocates hope to give people more choices in where to live, work, play, attend school, and access needed services such as healthcare. Timing is key.

"We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with the new federal dollars in the Infrastructure Bill," Spartz

said. "Billions of dollars will be invested to connect communities and economies with rail across the country. If we let another state's train project benefit from Minnesota's federal tax dollars, I'll be very disappointed. Those dollars should come back to Minnesota to help our veterans, our seniors, our business people, our students, and more."

The proposed trips for the NLX are to run four round trips per day between Target Field in Minneapolis and the Depot in Duluth, with stops at Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, and Superior. If funding was secured, people would start riding in about three years. Travel time between Minneapolis and Duluth is anticipated to be around two and a half hours.

Opponents of the project cite the overall cost that could be placed into the existing infrastructure, the \$30 for a one-way trip and the \$60 round trip cost per person which would be much more costly for a family to ride the train versus vehicle travel. They also note that transportation from the station to a destination would have to be accessed.

# SCHOOL: Pine City Schools parts ways with superintendent

FROM PAGE 1

that the agreement may not be construed as an admission of liability or wrongdoing by or on behalf of Foley, the District or any party identified in interest with the parties. Each party is responsible for its own costs and attorney fees associated with the agreement as well.

A similar separation agreement, with a much larger length of pay out, occurred between Foley and the St. Cloud School District prior to Foley coming to Pine City. As per that agreement, Foley was placed on administrative leave in April 2013 amid complaints about her leadership at Westwood Elementary School as principal. The agreement ended her tenure there two years early, and she was allowed to collect as much as \$271,497 in wages and benefits over the two years. There the school in a principal evaluation summary, which the Pioneer gained from a public record's request to St. Cloud Schools, said Foley caused division of staff members, caused distrust by disparaging staff to other members of the staff or to parents, and there were concerns about her honesty and integrity. A significant

number of teachers and staff, stated in the evaluation, experienced feelings of chaos, stress, fear and intimidation under Foley's leadership. Some sought medical help to deal with the negative climate that was created at Westwood under Ms. Foley, the evaluation stated.

## TUMULTUOUS YEAR IN PINE CITY SCHOOLS

Under Foley's tenure, which has been approximately 10 months, two school board members resigned; the high school principal, Troy Anderson, resigned; high school assistant principal, Beth Allen, resigned her position and took another job at the elementary; payroll specialist, Janel Murphy, resigned; long-time business manager, Jill Nolan, resigned; and all three of Foley's administrative assistants have resigned. Teachers, staff and community members filled the seventh grade commons area at a number of meetings to share concern over the unresolved teachers' contract and concern over the school climate and resignations. Concerns over a "general lack of respect and trust within the district" and the "continuous dismantling of the district

—morally, ethically, emotionally, and relationally" were some of the concerns noted during the public forum.

## FUTURE STEPS

School board chair, Dan Peterson, stated that an interim superintendent would need to be hired as the board is currently in the process of hiring a new school superintendent. This discussion will take place at a special meeting on Friday, May 6 at 5:30 p.m. in the Seventh Grade House.

Foley has recently been announced a top four finalist for the Superintendent position at Rocori Schools in Cold Spring, Minn.

## SPECIAL MEETING, MAY 6

The Pine City School boardroom was a full house during the special meeting on Friday, May 6, and the Pine County Sheriff Jeff Nelson was called in to maintain peace. At that meeting, the separation agreement with Foley was approved with board members Dan Peterson, Tim Geisler, Candice Ames, JacLynn Cavillin, and Lezlie Sauter voting in favor of the separation agreement and Becci Palmblade voting against the separation agreement.

## INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT APPROVED

Peterson stated that there is a staff member, Cindy Stolp, who is licensed to be a superintendent and is willing to step in on an interim basis. Palmade stated her concern because there wasn't any board discussion leading up to the appointment. Peterson stated that the decision needed to be made urgently and that these type of board decisions are part of the role of board chair.

Sauter questioned if Stolp is a candidate for the permanent school superintendent position and if she was, if there would be a conflict in respect to reviewing applications and attending meetings where candidates are discussed. Peterson responded that it is not uncommon to run into this type of situation and assured Sauter it could be worked around if she were a candidate. As of the Friday board meeting, Ray & Associates, the superintendent search firm, had not disclosed the applicant names to the school board.

"She's (Stolp) very familiar with the district," said Peterson. "I think she's well aware of the steps and with any job, there will be new things

to deal with and a learning curve."

Sauter and Palmblade questioned who would be training Stolp on the superintendent duties since there is currently no administrative assistant as the most recent one resigned.

Peterson stated that it is not the job of the school board to do the superintending. Ames explained that superintendents must be certified to do the job which includes an internship under another superintendent. "The people who have the certification here either interned here in Pine City or another local school," noted Ames. "This is not someone who will come to us with no academic education and will be knowledgeable in school law, finance and have a practical application of those policies ... any support we can give that individual is a positive thing."

Peterson added that the benefit of having someone internal is that they understand the goals of the district.

The appointment of Stolp as interim superintendent was approved unanimously.

# Local DNR CO reports

## PRESS RELEASE

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**CO Ben Karon (Pine City)** spent time this week checking anglers and hunters. Many nuisance and miscellaneous animal-related calls were taken care of. Patrol for illegal OHM (off-highway motorcycle) activity was conducted.

**CO Mike Krauel (Mora)** spent the week working a busy crappie bite. Anglers were finding a good bite on area lakes and numerous complaints of taking overlimits were investigated. Krauel also patrolled for ATV activity as numerous ATV riders were out enjoying the start of the warm weather. Enforcement action was taken for an overlimit of crappies, angling without a license, transporting water from a lake, illegal operation of an ATV, unregistered ATV, and speeding over 100 miles per hour in a 55 mile per hour zone.

**CO Scott Arntzen (Forest Lake)** spent the week working an enforcement detail focusing on boat and water safety. He also dealt with nuisance-bear calls, a trespassing complaint and fielded calls about accessing water bodies from the road right-of-way. Arntzen also spent time patrolling the area WMAs checking turkey hunters.