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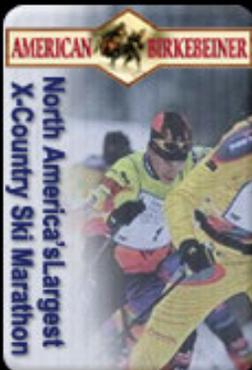
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Board OKs Round Lake lawsuit settlement

Terrell Boettcher
 Sawyer County Record

Wednesday, July 27th, 2005 02:34:56 PM

At its July 21 meeting, the Sawyer County Board voted 12-2 to take \$430,000 from timber sales revenue to help pay a \$580,000 out-of-court settlement with a Round Lake shoreowner who sued the county, alleging it was responsible for high water that damaged his shoreline.

County Clerk Kris Mayberry said the difference between the settlement amount (\$580,000) and the amount to be taken from the Resource Development Fund (\$430,000) will come from the initial insurance payment made by the county's liability insurer, Wisconsin County Mutual.

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In its settlement with James Hausman, the county denies any responsibility for the problem.

The settlement with Hausman was approved on an 8-5 vote by the board at a June 27 closed meeting. According to the minutes of the meeting, those

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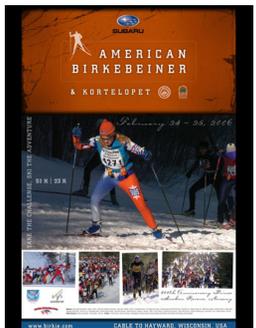
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voting in favor of the settlement were Mel Olson, Frank Romnes, Kathy McCoy, Shirley Suhsen, Bruce Miller, Hal Helwig, Jim Bassett and Ron Kinsley. Those voting against were Robert Vitcenda, Pat Aderman, Shirley Riedmann, Arlene Mizerka and Nate DeLong. Supervisor Bill Voight was absent.

Last Thursday, two board members, Riedmann and Kinsley, voted against taking the \$430,000 from the Resource Development Fund. Mizerka was absent.

McCoy said another source for the money could be the unaudited general fund surplus from 2004. Mayberry said the board usually doesn't allocate its prior-year surplus until its November budget meeting, when the audited total is known.

"We are committed to paying this money. There's no other place to get it" than timber sales revenue, DeLong said. The consensus was to take the money from Resource Development, which could be reimbursed at the end of the year, McCoy indicated.

The \$430,000 check was written by the county on July 11 and received by Hausman on July 12.

EMT bonuses approved

A bonus pay plan to help retain and compensate emergency medical technicians was approved unanimously by the Sawyer County Board at its July 21 meeting.

The board allocated \$50,000 for total bonus pay for June 1-Nov. 30, 2005. Ambulance service administrator Brian Cody said the plan takes into account call time, ambulance runs, training and education, restocking inventory, and community volunteer activities — such as the Chequamegon Fat Tire race, the American Birkebeiner, health fairs and school presentations. Many of those activities are non-paid.

"We can set a minimum number of training hours to determine whether an EMT is active or not," Cody said.

Board chairman Hal Helwig commended Cody, Shirley Suhsen and human resources manager Carol Larson for their work with the EMTs to develop the bonus plan. He noted that the county's ambulance service recently received a favorable state review and "You should be real proud of that service you're overseeing," he told Cody.

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Columnists

Power line bill opposed

Although Governor Doyle earlier in the day signed a bill to give electric utilities the power to condemn public lands for state-approved transmission line routes, the county board voted 13-1 to express its opposition to the measure. Nate DeLong was the only member to oppose the resolution; Arlene Mizerka was absent.

Supervisor Bruce Miller said the bill, AB 437, “would severely limit the ability of local governments to negotiate with private utility companies for easements over county lands and would open the door to the construction of massive utility projects such as the Arrowhead-Weston Transmission Line through our county forests and surrounding lakes and wetlands without local input or decision-making.

“I’m concerned that it’s overbroad and overreaching and will impact more public lands in Sawyer County,” Miller said. “We have a vast wealth of public resources in this county and there are a variety of utility corridors that go through or might be proposed.

“This is the reverse of eminent domain,” in which governments can condemn private lands for public purposes, Miller added. “In this bill, private industries can condemn and take public lands.”

Jail progressing

County maintenance supervisor Dennis Erickson reported that construction on the jail addition and law enforcement center renovation is “well ahead of schedule and they (contractors) are doing a very good job. No corners are being cut anywhere.”

The \$3 million project is slated for completion next April 24.

Airport project

Miller said there has been progress toward the installation of an instrument landing system (ILS) at the Sawyer County Airport in the town of Hayward.

A number of environmental agencies raised concerns and the county has been working with its consultant — Cooper Engineering of Rice Lake — and the Department of Transportation to answer those, Miller said.

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A meeting was set for July 27 to review the project one more time and then it will move toward a final environmental assessment, Miller said. "We should be able to get a financial agreement with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) in August and the full project should be signed off and sealed by the end of the year. Installation would be next year. That's our best hope."

Economic summit

Bill Voight reported that the LCO Casino is the tentative site for the Sept. 9 Sawyer County Economic Summit. There will be an all-day presentation, with a noon lunch.

UW-Extension community resource agent David Berard is sending invitations to 175-200 representatives to attend the summit.

"If this works out well, it could be a model for other counties to help drive their economies," Voight said.

Other actions

The board also:

- Approved an agreement with Anderson, Hager and Moe to audit the county's financial statements for 2004 at an overall average maximum rate of \$62.50 per hour;
- Approved fee increases for the purchase and installation of property address signs — it will cost \$100 for a new number and sign, \$75 for a replacement sign and \$100 for a requested summary sign.

Land records director Robyn Thake said property owners can't go out and buy their own sign. Signs must meet uniform criteria and they are placed according to GPS coordinates.

If someone moves the sign, "it can throw the sheriff's department and services off," said Miller. "Right now, we're missing a large number of signs in the county, for one reason or another."

- Approved a process for developing the 2006 county budget. Treasurer Dianne Ince reported that the county has received \$473,858 from its 0.5 percent sales tax through June this year, which is \$18,000 more than at the same time last year.

- Named new county board member Tom Lacapa to the property and airport committee, courthouse committee and long-term support committee. Also, he is an alternate on the zoning committee.

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