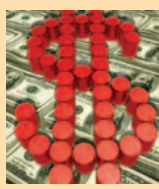


ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota finished its last budget year with \$150 million less in tax revenue than officials expected, mostly because of a poor performing income tax.



The revenue shortfall is detailed in a quarterly economic update released Friday by the Minnesota Management and Budget agency.

And it could still get worse. The report says the figures "could change materially" as people file amended tax returns to account for money they lost in Ponzi schemes. A final accounting is expected in October.

The report's authors say they expect the economy to show growth in the fall, but they're expecting job losses to stretch into next spring.

All told, Minnesota took in \$14.8 billion in taxes in fiscal year 2009, which ended June 30.

FLA. COUPLE WHO ADOPTED 12 CHILDREN FOUND SLAIN

BEULAH, Fla. (AP) — Authorities say a mother and father were shot to death in a home invasion in Florida while eight of their children slept.

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said Friday that three men are being sought for questioning in the deaths Thursday night. He says the men were driving a red van seen leaving the home of Byrd and Melanie Billings, the couple found shot to death in Beulah, west of Pensacola.

Authorities say the eight children living in the home were found safe. They say deputies had to wake some of the children who ranged from 8 to 14 years old.

The Billings had 16 children, 12 of them adopted. The Billings owned several businesses and were known for their generosity in adopting children with disabilities and from troubled backgrounds.

DEATHS

Bemidji
William Webb Sr.

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HCC students place well in SkillsUSA Championships

by Anna Kurth
Staff Writer

HIBBING — Standing in a spotlight in front of a crowd of thousands is a rush, according to a recent Hibbing Community College (HCC) graduate who took first place in a national skills competition this June.

Joe Graupman, of South St. Paul, graduated this spring from HCC's Major Appliances program and participated in the National SkillsUSA Championships this June in Kansas City, Mo.

The SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference is a competition for high school and college students studying in a career-oriented field.

Students compete in 91 hands-on occupational and leadership contests in programs such as robotics, criminal

justice, aviation maintenance and public speaking.

Top student winners receive gold, silver and bronze medallions.

Graupman won the gold medallion in the major appliance technology category.

Mikkail Montgomery placed fourth nationally in the computer maintenance technology category.

To get to the national competition, both students needed to take first place in the state in their category to advance.

All Minnesota competitors in major appliance technology came from the HCC program because it is the only major appliance program in the state, said Peter Stoddard, HCC refrigeration department instructor.

"We're the only game in town right

now," he said.

At the competition, Graupman needed to compete in 10 stations that included diagnosing problems with large appliances, customer service, two written tests and a mock job interview, Stoddard said.

At each appliance station, Graupman and the other competitors were given two minutes to consult with their "client" and 30 minutes to diagnose the problem.

Thirty minutes seems like a long time, but there's a lot that could be wrong with an appliance that must be considered, Graupman said.

Competitors were judged on their ability to figure out the problem, safety, handling of the product and customer service.

Stoddard said he was impressed by

Graupman's ability to work under pressure.

"It's one thing fixing a piece of equipment in a shop with no one bothering you," he said. "But to work with two judges watching you (is a) different story. Joe did a good job. He handled the pressure well.

Graupman said after competing he didn't think he did well because his competitors were very knowledgeable in the field.

He'd been hoping to place and said he was surprised to take the gold.

"When they said 'from Hibbing Minnesota' I couldn't even believe it," he said. "My heart was pounding 100 miles an hour."

Graupman said he was most

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Council approves Longyear cleanup

Keewatin city officials discuss Jarvi's Field

by Anna Kurth
Staff Writer

KEEWATIN — Soil cleaning operations at the Longyear building site are expected to get underway this August.

The Keewatin City Council Wednesday approved a contract for about \$209,000 for Rachel Contracting to conduct the work.

The project includes demolishing the building on-site and building a compost pile to naturally remove petroleum contamination from the soil, said Doug Fossell, of Northeast Technical Services, environmental consultant on the project.

The 7,500 cubic yards of contaminated dirt dug up from the site will be cleaned in a one-acre compost pile at the Longyear site, located in Keewatin north of town. The pile will be constructed up to 10 feet high with PVC piping placed every eight feet to aerate the dirt, which will be combined with wood chips

I would love to give them (Hibbing) a chance to say why they don't think it's (annexation request) good.

Chad Sterle
Keewatin City Attorney

year period, Fossell said.

After two years the city will be able to sell the dirt or spread and seed it with grass because it will be clean, he said.

The process is the last step recommended by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for the city to clean

the Longyear building property. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, which owns the land, has approved the city's request to apply to the MPCA for on-site cleanup. The MPCA needs to approve the permit before work can begin.

The city became responsible for cleanup at the Longyear building property after it leased the property in 1989, which had underground fuel storage tanks.

The city began work to clean up the site in the late '90s. It has removed underground tanks on the site that were once used to store fuel.

The city can be reimbursed by a petroleum cleanup program run by Minnesota Department of Commerce for the majority of the cleanup cost. A grant from Iron Range Resources will cover the remainder of the project's cost, Fossell said.

After acting on the Longyear bid, the council returned to an old concern for the city — Jarvi's Field.

Keewatin city officials plan to ask Hibbing councilors to reconsider a decision to deny Keewatin's request to annex a 48-acre parcel in Hibbing city limits.

Keewatin City Attorney Chad Sterle called Hibbing councilors' reasoning in turning down the annexation request weak.

They argued that the city doesn't want to promote competition with itself, but a strong economy and population in Nashwauk and Keewatin is good for Hibbing because residents there do business in Hibbing, he said.

Sterle said he thinks the Hibbing council did not take enough time to consider the request. He would like both cities to work together to determine ways to resolve Hibbing concerns about annexation.

"I would love to give them a second chance to say why they don't think it's good," he said.

If Hibbing turns down Keewatin's request again, the city could seek contested annexa-

tion, Sterle said.

Councilor Lon Sundsvold suggested Keewatin give Hibbing a second chance to prove that the city is a good neighbor to Keewatin.

In other business:

• Officials from Magnetation Corporation spoke with concerned citizens about efforts the company has taken to reduce dust problems. Citizens raised their concerns with the company about dust issues and asked that something be done to clean their homes from a dust storm this spring.

• Councilors also approved a purchasing policy for city employees to follow and a \$21,645 bid from Ranger GM for the city to purchase a 2010 Chevrolet Impala Police Squad car.

• Councilors also approved spending \$75,000 this summer to replace sidewalks throughout the city. Street Department

See **Council**, Page **A5**



BEACH FUN

Matt Nelson

Blaine, 5, and Leah, 3, have some fun on the beach of Carey Lake during a beautiful day. Blaine worked on "road construction" while Leah focused her attention on "mud pies."

County Board approves lower insurance rates for loggers

by Charles Ramsay
Mesabi Daily News

DULUTH — Independent loggers in St. Louis County received some welcome assistance Tuesday, as the County Board voted to keep insurance rates at a minimal \$1 million coverage per business for another year.

State legislation has raised minimal coverage to \$1.2 million last year, and to \$1.5 million as of July 1. The County Board voted last year to keep the amount at \$1 million, and commissioners voiced the hope Tuesday that legislation at the state Legislature next session can keep rates down.

"We really appreciate that," Scott Dane, executive director of the Associated Contract Loggers and Truckers group of northern Minnesota, said Thursday.

"St. Louis County has been very supportive in recognizing the value of the timber industry," he said. "This would be the worst time to add costs." He added the move could save ACLT members up to \$1 million a year in insurance costs.

The County Board also voted to approve an amendment to their capital improvements plan to shift some cost savings from the Duluth Courthouse sally port project to the improvements to the courthouse's windows upgrade and heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrade.

A resolution approving sale of 105 acres of county fee land leased for the South St. Louis County fairgrounds to the city of Proctor was tabled to the Aug. 14 meeting, after a long discussion on the future of racing events and the fair at the site.

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