

DEED OKs grant for Pine River business

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WALKER — Cass County has received notice from Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) that DEED has approved a \$107,500 grant to be used as a business loan for the Ice Castle manufacturing business planning to expand into Pine River.

Jeffrey Drexler and David Handeland, owners of Northern Sales and Manufacturing, plan to expand their manufacturing business at Marshall to a second facility in the former Chrysler dealership building on the south end of Pine River on Highway 371.

The funds will be transferred to Cass County, then to Cass County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC). CCEDC then will loan the money to Northern Sales and Manufacturing.

As the loan is repaid, CCEDC will retain 20 percent, to be used to develop a revolving business loan fund to be available to other future businesses. The remaining 80 percent will be repaid to the state.

Cass County commissioners Tuesday referred back to the planning commission proposed changes to the county Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance.

This followed receipt of a letter from the Greater Lakes Association of Realtors objecting to portions of the ordinance covering a requirement of escrow accounts when a failing private sewer system cannot be updated at the time a property changes ownership.

Cass has that requirement in its current ordinance. Chief Financial Officer Larry Wolfe said there currently are about a dozen such escrow accounts being held at this time. Most are required when a property sells in winter when a system cannot immediately be installed.

Part of the Realtors' objection is that the requirement singles out properties having ownership transfer, but overlooks properties in long ownership that also have failing systems.

Cass currently also requires systems to be checked and, if needed, updated whenever a property owner applies for a zoning permit.

Health Human and Veterans Services Director Reno Wells obtained board approval to eliminate the full-time welfare fraud prevention employee in his department and to contract with the sheriff's office to provide fraud prevention services.

Sheriff Tom Burch will be allowed to hire a new full-time deputy to conduct the investigations. The contract will reimburse the sheriff for up to \$80,000 per year.

Cass Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) obtained board approval to extend that agency's lease of office space with automatic annual renewal until such time as either party gives a two-year notice to cancel the agreement.

The county board also voted to turn into HHVS office space an area the HRA had used to store records.

Administrator Robert Yochum said county staff will work with HRA to either digitize its records or find alternate paper storage space.

Staff also will work with HRA to schedule use of a conference room for all agencies using that room at the land department building in Backus.