

» FIRE

FROM PAGE A1

“He even had to go to one apartment and get the tenant out of the shower,” Ladwig said. “We are very, very proud of officer Novak.”

Both the firefighter and officer were treated for their injuries at Memorial Medical Center and released. Several cats were killed in the blaze, authorities said.

Ladwig said Monday morning that police were investigating the cause and circumstances of the fire, and that initial reports that eight residents lived in the apartment building were incorrect; at least 14 people lived there, he said.

“The process is still fairly early on,” he said. “We are trying to determine how many people actually lived in in each apartment, and to try and get them the resources to try and find housing, getting hold of the Red Cross.”

As of Saturday, CORE Community Resources, an agency that normally aids seniors and runs a second-hand store, the Bayfield Inn and Windseeker Rentals were helping residents with clothing, food and temporary shelter.

Crews from Bayfield, Red Cliff and Washburn fire departments fought the blazes until after 6 p.m. Saturday. Boutin said the fire in the apartment building was so advanced by the time crews arrived that there was nothing they could do to save it. It collapsed in an inferno of sparks, flames and smoke not long after crews were at the scene.

He said once crews determined that the apartment was a loss, they focused their efforts on saving the real estate office next door, which sustained heavy damage.

“These guys got in here right away and they did a great job,” he said. “They assessed the situation and they knew where to put the water.”

At the height of the fire, burning embers were carried across Broad Street by strong winds, but no other fires were caused.

“We got lucky; the wind was blowing in just the right direction so the fire didn’t go too far,” Boutin said.

On Monday, Suzie



(Contributed photo by Ed Metelica)



(Contributed photo by Joseph Newago Jr.)

Arn and her partners at Broad Street Brokers still were reeling from the calamity and trying to figure out what will happen with their new business. They were remodeling the office and planned to open June 1.

“I was there all day when it was burning and when they boarded it up,” Arn said. “I couldn’t even hold my coffee, my hands were shaking so bad from the stress or shock or whatever. We have lots of water damage, lots of smoke damage, and they had to cut a hole in the wall to let the air

escape. So we’ll have to get contractors in to get an idea of what needs to be done.”

Even as firefighters were working to save the office, downtown neighbors approached Arn with offers of help.

“People came up and said, ‘Hey, if you need office space, you can move in with us,’” she said. “Somewhere along the lines we’ll have a place to park. We just have to figure it all out.”

And while she and her partners try to figure it out, they all are grateful because it could have turned out much worse. “Our lives are upside



down, but at least we still have a roof over our heads,” Arn said. “These people who lived next door have no place to live now. They’re in hotels and I don’t know where they will go. I knew some of the people who lived there, and they’re good, hard-working people. There just aren’t apartments available for them here. People can’t afford over \$1,000 a month in rent. I just feel bad for them.”

County records show the apartment building was owned by the Neil J. and Donna M Schultz revocable trust and was valued at \$109,700.

- Reporter Peter J. Wasson contributed to this report.



Amy Trimbo works on a piece of fabric at her business, AdventureUs site. She is moving into the old Big Top offices with her husband’s business. (Rick Olivo/Staff Photo)

» COFFEE

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Her business was proving to be a success, but they needed additional space for fabric-cutting and more sewing stations to meet increased demand. The several small rooms at the building they owned at 324 W. Bayfield St. simply were inadequate.

Jared and Amy knew there was room aplenty at the old Big Top offices, which originally served as a Masonic lodge, so they decided to take the chance and see if they could combine their operations at the new location. Thus was the creation of Full Keel Coffee and the move of AdventureUs to the more spacious location.

“I started talking with John Wheeler at Blue Water Realty and he started talking with the owners and we were able to come to a great agreement,” Jared said. “We were happy and they were happy to see something come in to benefit the community.”

Jared was also able to find an investor to help with the purchase of a \$50,000 commercial coffee roaster, and the process of converting the building to fit their needs now up and running, Jared is breaking it in, running test batches of beans through it.

He plans to market his products wholesale to local businesses and to retail online and at the roasting facility itself.

Meanwhile, Amy is

making plans of her own to move her sewing machines, work tables, finished merchandise and all to the new location, even as work crews prepare to lay down a new floor and repaint the interior.

“We are breathing new life into this place,” Jared said.

Amy said the move to the new location would help her meet the needs for her growing enterprise.

“We need more retail space, and we need more room to sew,” she said. “We are also excited that the new space has opportunities to have classes.”

Amy said the move will allow her to expand her staff to cope with the new products she is adding to the AdventureUs lineup.

It also will allow the couple to be together every day.

“We’ve worked together before, and this new space is going to allow him to follow his passion,” she said.

Amy credited the support of the community for the success AdventureUs has had.

“They have really rallied behind us. We are getting more and more repairs every day,” she said. “We are starting a new line, using National Park Service fabric to make wall hangings, pillows and throws.”

Amy said that the move and new coffee-roasting business are risky, but worth the chance.

“You just have to have a little bit of faith and be smart about it,” she said.

» EPANSION

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Another thing that distinguishes their product is its quality of their products.

“With products coming in from overseas, it can cause some significant problems. If it has to be remade, and then it gets put on a boat and these days it gets stuck at a port, and they can’t get replacement parts for who knows how long,” Pearson said.

All those factors combined have led to such success that the company needs to expand. Pearson plans to add a 13,000-square-foot building, which represents a 25% increase in space.

“That is the cornerstone for a lot of further investment,” he said. “In the long run we will be putting in a larger furnace, actually two of them, probably about twice the size of what we have now.”

The new furnaces will



Washburn Iron Works co-owner Taylor Pearson with a load of steel to be used in a \$1 million addition that will allow the company to expand production and add jobs. (Rick Olivo/Staff photo)

be the keystones for a reorganization aimed at increasing efficiency, allowing the business to increase production by 50% to 100%.

For the project to take place, the city will have to relocate a 15-inch sewer

main that is squarely in the middle of where the new addition will be built.

Washburn City Administrator Scott Kluger said the sewer line serves most of the east side of the city, and is made of clay tile pipes that have been in

place for over a century.

“It’s a bad idea to have a major sewer line underneath a facility like that,” he said. “I can’t tell you exactly when it was put in, but I can tell you it is in bad shape. We weren’t even able to get the camera all the way through it.”

Kluger said it will cost about \$300,000 to move the line, which will be covered by Washburn Iron Works, the city and Bayfield County, each contributing one-third. The funding from the city and county will come from American Recovery Act money, and the Iron Works contribution will be reimbursed through the use of tax-increment financing. A TIF District already exists in the area, Kluger said.

Kluger said the project is precisely what the

Recovery Act money is intended for.

“One of the things we can use those funds for is water and sewer projects, and the intention here is to use some of these dollars to improve our infrastructure, and in the end it helps the city in the long term because it will help the tax base. It is a win-win for the community,” he said.

Kluger said the sewer work will take place this spring, allowing construction to begin in the summer.

The additions will mean new jobs for Washburn Iron Works as well as continued growth, Pearson said — and it will be the beginning of major investments the company is making.

“There is a lot of demand out there for

our product. People are having a hard time finding foundries,” he said. “The demand is there and we see it, and this expansion is part of being here for the long term, being here for our employees, being here for our customers. This expansion is a critical component of us continuing to be successful.”

Kluger said the investments will pay off for the company and the city.

“We are always looking to have employment opportunities within the city,” he said. “The Iron Works has been a long-term employer within the city. They are a significant portion of the tax base within the city and they are looking to expand and improve that. We see it as a win for the community and for them.”

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