

\$1.50



Rib Lake Homecoming
 Page 9 Second Section



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

Firefighters from the Medford Area Fire Department responded to a fire call at the KFC/Taco Bell building in Medford at 3:11 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon. With gusty winds and the proximity of other buildings, the Stetsonville Fire Department also was called out for mutual aid. Firefighters checked over the structure including HVAC equipment on the roof and cleared from the scene.



Mining ahead?

GreenLight files intent to drill at Bend deposit location in county

BY BRIAN WILSON
 NEWS EDITOR

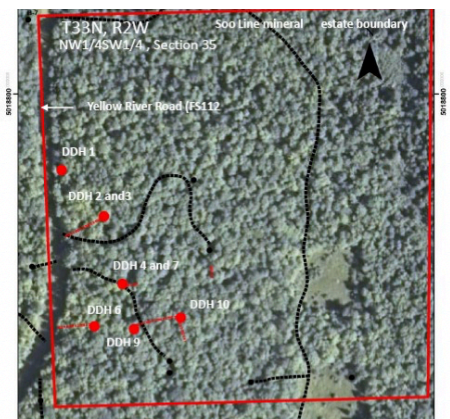
After years of sitting idle, a potential gold and silver mine site in western Taylor County will see activity this winter.

GreenLight Wisconsin, LLC. (GLW), whose parent company is based in Vancouver, British Columbia and which has offices in Toronto, Ontario and Madison has announced plans to do exploration drilling in Taylor County this winter after the ground has frozen. GreenLight's parent company purchased both the "Bend" site in Taylor County and the "Reef" site in Marathon County in May 2021 for an estimated \$7 million.

The 40-acre site is located in north central Taylor County in the town of Westboro along Yellow River Road. The north fork of the Yellow River runs through the parcel. While it is in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest the Soo Line Railroad d/b/a Canadian Pacific Railway (Soo Line) has the mineral rights to the 40-acre parcel.

GreenLight has filed a notice of intent for six new drill test holes at the site for

See GREENLIGHT on page 20



Planned drill and road locations

Forestry staff fights back over planned cut

Forestry department staff says county revenues will suffer with staffing cut

BY BRIAN WILSON
 NEWS EDITOR

A proposal to eliminate a full-time position from the Taylor County Forestry Department as part of a budget-cutting effort was met with questions and concern by members of the forestry committee and staff at their Oct. 7 meeting.

At the October 4 finance and personnel committee budget review session, there was a 3-2 vote with two members absent to approve cutting a position from the department to bring it down to one person. In making that motion supervisor Lester Lewis stated he felt the department was overstaffed given the size of the Taylor County forest. It was estimated that with salary and benefits the cut would reduce the county budget by about \$100,000.

No forestry staff were at the meeting where the cut was discussed having presented the department budget at the first

review session held in mid-September.

At Friday's meeting county forest administrator Jake Walcisak warned that cutting down to one person in the department would have "major repercussions" to the programs, logging revenue and ability for county groups to access state recreational grant funds.

Walcisak cited state statistics showing that forestry-related professions are the number one employer in Taylor County and that logging related industries have the largest economic impact in the county.

See FORESTRY on page 4

Page 11: Holy Rosary celebrates 50 years in current church building



SPORTS: Medford swimmers head into final stretch of season



INDEX

OPINION	6A	SPORTS	1B
PUBLIC NOTICES	15A	LIVING	12B
OBITUARIES	19A	CLASSIFIEDS	13B



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Forestry staff says personnel cut will have a negative impact on county

Continued from page 1

Walcisak also noted that of all the county departments, the forestry department is the only one to generate revenues far in excess of its operating costs.

"For every \$0.24 in expenses, the forestry department generated \$1 in revenue," Walcisak said. He said in 2021, the forest department generated \$700,000 in revenue from logging with \$68,900 going to the towns of Rib Lake, and Westboro and \$430,000 going into the general fund.

According to Walcisak, just maintaining the amount of forest output, which the county is required to do under the state county forest laws, would take 1.35 FTEs.

"This change would result in an immediate reduction in forestry related work accomplishments by at least 25%," Walcisak said. Putting this into numbers, he estimated it would be a loss of timber sale revenue of \$113,000 to \$315,000 while also significantly impacting local loggers and truck drivers as they would have to travel further for work.

"The projected loss in timber revenue alone far exceeds any potential cost savings in cutting the Taylor County Forest to one staff and would significantly impact the county general fund," Walcisak said.

Beyond the potential loss in logging revenues, he said reducing the staff in the office would eliminate being able to work with ATV, snowmobile and other groups to secure grants. He noted the department currently has 25 active grants totaling \$950,000. He said in 2021, the office closed out \$464,000 in recreation-related grants.

Walcisak also addressed the statement that the office was over-staffed given the comparative small size of the county forest in relation to others in the state. He said between himself and assistant forest administrator Jordan Lutz, they manage 11,550 acres per FTE based on state statistics. "This is higher than average of all counties managing between 1,940 and 80,000 acres. Taylor County is not overstaffed," Walcisak said.

Walcisak also noted that the department recently

"I think it is short sighted and irresponsible."

— County Board member Mike Bub



won the Wisconsin Forest Productivity Award making it the fifth year in a row the county has won the award. He noted that while Vilas County has won it four times, Taylor County is the only one to have won it this many times consecutively.

"Attempting to make the most productive forest in the state more productive by implementing an unproven business model places undue risk on Taylor County and the taxpayers," Walcisak said refuting the suggestion that the county could get the work done by hiring a consulting forester.

Lutz noted that he helped Walcisak prepare the multi-page report on the department's activities and impact that Walcisak read at the meeting. He said that while he understands the financial needs of the county, he said it would impact his livelihood and his children. "It is hard not to take that stuff personally," he said.

In addition to the committee members, several other county board members and audience members were at the meeting. Committee chairman Scott Mildbrand opened the floor for comments reminding everyone to remain civil. "Budget is an extremely tough time of the year," he said, noting that tempers can flair, but asking everyone to remain respectful.

County board member Greg Knight questioned the rationale for cutting the department from two people to one person. He noted that while he is new to the county board, he spent 38 years working in natural resources. He praised the county's forestry staff for their professionalism and reputation within the industry.

"I think there are serious, damaging repercussions to the department," Knight said of the proposed cuts and again noted that the department has been a consistent money-maker for the county. He also noted that the mixed-hardwood make-up of the county forest requires more work to manage than other forest types. He said it takes a skill to learn how to manage a forest of this type that comes with experience. "You are throwing away that experience," Knight said.

DNR Forest Team Leader Jill Nemick also spoke in support of the current staff. She noted that she had no jurisdiction in how the county structures the department, but said it was important to remember not to violate forest operations laid out in Chapter 28 of the state statutes.

"This is your guiding document on how county forests are run," she said. She noted that administration and paperwork can keep the administrator office-bound and there is a need to have someone out in the field. She said hiring a consultant as needed risks losing continuity of a person who knows the forest.

County board member Mike Bub also questioned the need to cut a position. He said when he first got on the county board he was placed on the forestry committee and that his knowledge of trees was that some had leaves and some were evergreens.


However, he said what he did find out was how much the county relies on forest revenue to balance the budget. "Do you want to put our finances at risk?" he asked.

Bub also noted that in addition to managing the forest for today, the staff is looking out for the county's future, citing the recent planting of a red pine plantation. "They are planning, not for today, not for tomorrow, but for 30 years from now," Bub said, urging caution that they will hurt the county in the long term.


Bub suggested there were other places in the budget where cuts could be made noting that according to the Wisconsin County's Association, the county is in the top 35% of spending in human services while the population is in the bottom 30% with similar statistics for the highway department.

"Let's look at highway, let's look at human services,


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From the Attorney's Desk

by Jason Krautkramer, J.D.
Eckert & Krautkramer, LLC
630 N 4th St.
Wausau, WI 54403
715-842-0907 jason@eckertlawllc.com

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What is an S Corporation?

S corporations are corporations that elect to pass corporate income, losses, deductions, and credits through to their shareholders for federal tax purposes. The election is allowed under subchapter S of the tax code, which is where they get their name.

Unlike a C corporation, which is first taxed on profits when earned and then taxed again to the shareholders when those profits are distributed, an S corporation offers the tax advantage of passing income to the shareholders without first being taxed at the corporate level. The shareholders report their share of the profits and losses on their individual tax returns and are assessed tax at their individual income tax rates.

Only specific types of trusts may be S corporation shareholders, so it is important to seek the guidance of an experienced estate planning attorney and tax advisor when planning for an S corporation owner's death.

we are way overspending compared to forestry,” Bub said, questioning why the county was singling out the forestry department over others that were much larger.

“I think it is short sighted and irresponsible,” Bub said, praising the department and noting that Taylor County has been one of very few to get bids for all their logging sales in recent years.

“You guys better take another look at this,” said committee member Gary Beadles. He said he agreed with Bub’s comments and that he looks at the forest as a logger. He said there is significant value in the red oak and hard maple in the forest and praised the management efforts of the staff to maximize that value. “This crew is top notch, I just wish you would find other ways to come up with the money you need to balance the budget,” Beadles said.

Committee member Rollie Thums, who was one of the three finance and personnel committee members to vote to cut the position, noted the county is looking at other places to cut and that it was them being \$400,000 in the hole in the budget that prompted the cut.

“We need to look with open eyes where dollars are spent,” Thums said. He said the county needed to start somewhere in making cuts and that they needed to put personalities and personal judgements aside. He said they also have to look out for the residents of the county. “Their taxes are too damn high now,” he said.

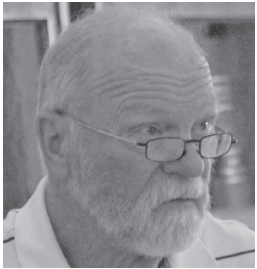
“If you don’t save the pennies, the dollars aren’t going to come,” Thums said.

He said the county needs to go into this with open eyes. “Quit with the tears and start thinking about serious stuff,” he said.

“We are trying to balance the budget and we are looking to balance the budget wherever we can,” he said.

Knight disagreed noting that because they are cutting staff and that cutting staff to meet budget in any organization sends a message to the rest of the staff. “For any employees, why would you stay here?” he said, noting it sends a terrible message to staff about how the county makes budget decisions.

He also questioned why it came so late



“If you don’t save the pennies, the dollars aren’t going to come”
— County Board member Rollie Thums

in the process to make such a significant change.

Knight noted that Taylor County already runs as a lean county and questioned the assumption that the county has too many employees or that the only way is to make cuts. “When you cut, you do less with less, you are not doing more with less,” he said, describing the county’s issues as being on the revenue rather than the spending side and pointing the finger at state-imposed revenue caps on the county.

Board member Lester Lewis spoke in defense of his proposal to cut a staff member from the department citing Mildbrand’s goal of eliminating five positions in the next year. “I don’t know if that is a realistic goal,” he said.

However he said he felt cuts needed to be made. “I do believe we need to make ourselves leaner,” he said.

He noted that while the county is currently seeing high revenues from logging in the forest he cited Walcisak’s ongoing warnings to expect that at some point logging revenues will go down.

As far as cuts in other departments, he noted that at one time there were 70 people in the highway department and that number is far lower now. He also noted that the tax rate used to jump all over the place and the state caps have helped in that regard.

He said one of the tools they have is to borrow funds, but said he cannot face taxpayers about borrowing if they don’t have cuts too. “We have to manage with what we’ve got,” Lewis said, noting this was not the only cut that was proposed.

As far as the timing of waiting until the end of the budget process to bring the proposed cuts forward, Lewis said that he had waited to do so because he said Mildbrand had asked him to wait until

the end to see what was needed.

“When a budget cut is being proposed I believe it was a violation of trust to not include the department head that is impacted on the front end,” Walcisak said.

The cuts proposed as part of the 2023 budget will be reviewed and acted on by the full county board on October 26. At that time, any county board member can make a motion to make changes in any portion of the budget before it is passed.

In other business, committee members:

★ Reviewed and approved closing out timber sales 682, 697, 699 and 701 with

sale 701 pending final hauling. The sales total about \$230,000 in timber sale revenue. Walcisak said the county is pushing over \$600,000 year to date. He noted that both Taylor and Rusk County have been setting revenue records while other counties have been down since the closure of the Verso mill in Wisconsin Rapids. Lutz said the quality of the road system in the forest and the staff are cited by loggers as reasons they prefer to work in Taylor County.

★ Received the annual work plan to be reviewed and approved by the full county board at the October 26 meeting. This is an annual requirement showing the work planned for the forest in the coming year and is drawn from the county’s 15-year work plan. Walcisak noted it has to be approved prior to November 1. Mildbrand asked for time to review the work plan and set a meeting for 8:15 a.m. the morning of the county board session to formally approve it before sending it to the full county board.

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BETH WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

The Family Movie and Book Day featuring “Lyle Lyle, Crocodile” and his Halloween Party had more than 260 children and families in attendance. Everyone watched the movie, got a book, free toothbrush, and CARES resources. Organizer Joseph Greget praised Dave Fleegel and Anne Fleegel of Broadway Theatre for hosting, Barb Noeldner for growing the GREAT Pumpkins, the Drug Free Communities Grant Leadership of Hilary Thums, Amanda Peterson, and Michelle Deml, Autumn B, Kathy Schumacher from the Taylor County Literacy Council for all of the Lyle Lyle Books and First Impressions and Northwoods Dentistry for the toothbrushes.



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