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Christine Mallory, Editor

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Preliminary Tax Levy Adopted by Lake County Board

By Kitty Mayo

A preliminary net property tax levy amount of \$11.1 million dollars was approved for 2020's budget at the Lake County meeting of the board commissioners on Tuesday, September 24th. The increase adds up to about a 6 percent increase over last year.

Discussion by the commissioners regarding the increase referred to the recent announcement by the U.S. Forest Service that could have a major impact on Lake County's budget.

The USFS has indicated that it plans to reduce the Thye-Blatnik Act-authorized payments in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) based on a recent reappraisal of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The proposed reduction of 53 percent would mean a loss of \$1.3 million in PILT revenue for Lake County.

While the commissioners generally agreed that they were somewhat reluctant to increase the levy by as much as 6 percent, they also

expressed concern that if the USFS follows through with the marked decrease in PILT revenue, the county will need to levy increase to keep a balanced budget.

Further discussion indicated an intent to continue meeting with the USFS to request that the PILT payments not be reduced so drastically, and the hope that a 6 percent increase in the tax levy would not be ultimately necessary.

It was reported that the county's net tax capacity has gone up by 4.4 percent, thereby reducing the overall tax burden somewhat.

Preliminary net property tax levies were adopted for Unorganized Territory 1, remaining stable at \$32,000, and for \$341,000 for Unorganized Territory 2.

The Truth in Taxation meeting was scheduled for December 3rd at 6:00 pm at the Lake County Highway Building.

Nature-Based Childcare Takes Play and Learning Outside

By Kitty Mayo

Nature-based, outdoor, or forest childcare, call it what you will, but it all boils down to the same thing: letting kids learn, get fresh air and exercise outside.

Elli King, of Finland, says that a recent survey of folks in the Finland area shows that type of child care is supported by interested families. The survey, funded by a Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation grant, has been completed to explore the feasibility of opening a child care center in Finland, given the high demand.

"Nature based programming is a movement across America, where a lot of time is spent outside, and an outdoor play area has things made of natural materials for imaginative play with things not specific to one purpose," said King.

King says a residential setting is being considered for the child care, since no commercial space is yet available. However, a commercial space would be considered if something should become available.

Another grant has been recently received and will be used to develop programming for the child care center. King says that will build around a quality and safe child care setting, with three other additional programs to be potentially implemented as the program grows.

"We will invite Wolf Ridge graduate students to pursue Early Childhood Education and that would enable us to do additional programming," said King.

That additional programming could include following a forest preschool model, like taking walks in the woods, using free open play in natural spaces, and following the interests of children to guide further learning.

"Care providers watch as interest arises for each child, then help pursue those interests to learn more. It is called child-inspired learning with care provider guidance," said King.

A second possibility is a summer program for school age children, perhaps a couple days a week using a summer forest programming model. A third initiative that has come out of the community survey is the idea of eventually developing an intergenerational care center, providing care for both children and elders in a joint initiative.

A community presentation is being held on Sunday, October 13th at the Clair Nelson Center in Finland at 3:00 pm. Child care will be provided during the meeting, caramel apples will be served, plus a "woody surprise gift" for the attending children.

King wants to get the message out that all community members are wanted and welcome, not just families with children looking for child care options.

Topics that will be covered will include: how community members can help, how close opening a child care center is, as well as looking at a draft playscape and a list of envisioned seasonal activities.

For more information or questions you can call Elli King at (218)220-8997.

2019 Fire Prevention Week: Time to Check Smoke Alarms

By Kitty Mayo

Seven people die in home fires each day of the year, and of those a disproportionate number are children and elders, say statistics from the American Red Cross. National Fire Prevention Week, October 6th through October 12th, is a time to highlight the best ways you can prevent fires in your own home, and how to escape a fire safely should it happen.

According to the National Fire Prevention Association, having working smoke alarms in place can cut your risk of dying in a home fire in half. Designed to detect a fire in early stages, smoke alarms are especially important in alerting sleeping residents.

Smoke alarms in working order should be in every room where someone sleeps, outside of each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. The best place to install a smoke alarm is on the ceiling, but if they are wall-mounted, they should be no more than 12 inches from the ceiling. Test smoke alarms at least once a month, and replace batteries. Smoke alarms should be replaced every ten years.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends that everybody has a specific fire escape plan and practices fire drills in their home. Here are a few tips from the NFPA:

- Identify two ways out of each room
- Designate who will help children, older adults, and people with disabilities wake up and get out
- Teach children how to escape on their own in case you cannot help them
- Establish a meeting place outside and away from the home where everyone will meet
- Having properly installed and maintained smoke alarms
- Make sure children (and adults) understand to never going back for pets, or

things

The number one most common cause of fire in homes, and the leading cause of fire injuries is cooking, most commonly because something was left unattended on the stove. Thanksgiving is the leading day for fires involving cooking equipment.

Here are specific ways to reduce cooking fire risk:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food
- When simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly and stay in the home.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop

Heating equipment is another top case of fires in winter months, with space heaters being the most common culprits. Keep these tips in mind for safety during the cold months:

- All heaters need space. Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Have a 3-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Use only portable space heaters listed by a qualified testing laboratory.
- Have a qualified professional install heating equipment.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional at least once a year.

If you need fire alarms, or help installing them, the Red Cross has a campaign called Sound the Alarm, and will come to your home to put in up to three free alarms. Sign up for a free alarm and installation at getfreealarm.org. Specialized bedside alarms are available for those who are deaf, or hard of hearing, as well.

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