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Whirlwind visit for Klobuchar as Franken is declared winner

Jane Howard

On Tuesday, June 30, 2009, shortly after the Minnesota Supreme Court declared Al Franken the winner over Norm Coleman in the long-contested race for U.S. Senate, Minnesota's heretofore sole senator, Amy Klobuchar, met with citizens at Blue Water Café.

Klobuchar talked about her work in Washington on numerous issues pertinent to Minnesota before taking questions from the group assembled in the Upper Deck. As she talked, she kept glancing at one of her aides, finally saying that she appeared distracted because she was expecting a call from either Franken or Coleman. She had already spoken to Coleman earlier in the day.

Many people did not know about the visit very far in advance. Some last-minute phone calls were made, leading to an assembly made up largely of local business representatives, non-profit leaders, and two Grand Marais city councilors.

Klobuchar addressed numerous issues related to the economy. She said Las Vegas has had 400 conventions cancel reservations for August. At the same time, she said, the convention business has increased in Duluth.

"The economy is in difficult times," Klobuchar said. "I'm hopeful we're going to come out of this." She commented on the government bailout of U.S. banks, saying that the country's financial services industry has been driving down the road in a Ferrari while the government's financial regulatory system has been driving a Model T. Klobuchar believes banking and government oversight are responding positively to the crisis, however.

Many states have invested in attracting tourists from around the world, Klobuchar said, but Minnesota has not yet followed suit. She mentioned a bill coming to the Senate that would impose a \$10 charge on visas for foreigners coming to the U.S. that would be used to attract international visitors.

"Healthcare reform is the major work we're doing in the Senate right now," Klobuchar said. The owners of Granite Gear, a Two Harbors business that manufactures outdoor gear, told Klobuchar that the biggest challenge to their business right now is paying for health insurance.

Granite Gear has landed a \$36,000,000



Staff photo/Jane Howard
U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, standing here with Grand Marais City Councilor Tim Kennedy, made a quick visit to Grand Marais Tuesday, June 30, 2009.

contract with the U.S. government to make lightweight, specially designed backpacks for the Special Forces. Klobuchar said the company won a bid for the work. The government is starting to do more of its purchasing through bids in order to keep costs down, she said.

Starbucks is another company that struggles to provide health insurance for its employees. Klobuchar said Starbucks pays more in employee health insurance than it does on coffee.

Minnesota has a reputation for spending its public health care dollars very efficiently, Klobuchar said. A lot of money for programs like

Medicare is being spent inefficiently in other states, however. The Mayo Clinic is a model for efficient care in the last four years of patients' lives, she said, partly because of coordination

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Photo by Erik W. L. Anderson, BoundaryWatersCanoeArea.com
Summer at last! Autumn Anderson, 9, of Lakeville, MN gets in a little summer splash at the McFarland Lake swimming beach.

Revised noise ordinance passes first reading

Bill Neil

Even as Grand Marais City Council moved toward adoption of a revised noise ordinance, members expressed hope that the problems created by outdoor music may have already been solved.

"It's a tough one...and I believe everyone," said Mayor Sue Hakes following a 75-minute public hearing June 24 during which about a dozen residents and business owners gave their opinions on the matter. Some spoke in favor of the proposed change to the city's noise nuisance statute to limit hours during which amplified music may be performed; some argued that a more fair way to enforce the regulation would be to measure sound levels with a decibel meter; and some others said they believed recent changes made to venues from which the music originates have practically taken care of the problem already.

"There's a lot of give and take here, and we don't want trouble with the community."

As approved unanimously by council on first reading, the new ordinance allows amplified music (either inside or outside) as long as the sound cannot be heard above the level of conversational speech beyond 100 feet from the place of

origin at any time. However, music may be played at any volume level during the excepted times of noon to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; noon to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, the Sundays before Labor Day and Memorial Day, and over the Independence Day holiday (if applicable); or by permit for community festivals during the specified hours listed on the approved street and sidewalk use application.

Hakes and others said they were pleased with the spirit of cooperation and consideration exhibited during the hearing, and the mayor said she "wouldn't be surprised" if those complaining about the loud music and those creating it were able to work out the problems amongst themselves. "Keeping them involved in a solution is the key," she said.

One of the key speakers during the

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Community garden springing up at WTIP

Jane Howard

What was previously the edge of WTIP Community Radio's parking lot will sometime this summer become a food source for local residents.

As the nation moves toward greater energy efficiency in tough economic times, some Cook County residents have been thinking about the possibility of growing more food locally instead of importing it. Thanks to a \$9,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Center for Community Engagement, WTIP and the Northwoods Food Project, another non-profit, have joined forces to turn that possibility into a reality.

WTIP's grant was awarded to radio stations around the country that were interested in investigating local economic issues. It will help pay for a year-long series called "Living on the Edge: Exploring Economic Reality in Cook County," which includes a look at local hunger and nutrition issues. It will also be used to help solve a problem for several people who wanted to grow some of their own food but had no garden space of their own.

Two years ago, a group of 45 people met to discuss the topic of increasing local food production. The Northwoods Food Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was formed. One of its goals is to match would-be gardeners



Photo by Jan Attridge
Members of the Northwoods Food Project get ready to break ground for the community garden at WTIP. Pictured, from left, are Melinda Spinler, Joan Farnam, Julie Kean, Jeanne Wright, Jim Zunker, Amy Demmer, WTIP Station Manager Deb Benedict, and David Demmer.

with people who have extra garden space.

WTIP's grant helped pay Edwin E. Thoreson, Inc. to excavate a 20x100' rectangle. The space was then filled with composted sawdust from Hedstrom Lumber Company and divided into five plots. WTIP

Station Manager Deb Benedict said local businesses that have heard of the project have offered parts and labor. Jon and Mary Ofjord donated a truckload of composted horse manure, and Sawtooth Lumber supplied corner posts for the fencing. The Art

Colony and local artists will be making stepping stones and hanging artwork designed to keep wildlife away.

Four rain barrels will collect water from WTIP's roof. Any extra water needed will come from WTIP but will be metered separately by a device donated by the City of Grand Marais that will keep the usual corresponding sewer charges off the bill. "Season extenders" made partly from products found at the Gunflint transfer station and the Recycling Center—plastic encased around loops—will make the short growing season last a little longer. Melinda Spinler of the Northwoods Food Project hopes to someday have a more elaborate watering system with a holding tank.

The people who had been on the top of Northwoods Food Project's list of gardening hopefuls were given first dibs on the space. Each garden will be a little different.

Kristine Bottorff and Jan Attridge, known in the Northwoods Food Project as "the squash ladies," will be growing several varieties of squash. A wide variety of other vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and kohlrabi, will be grown by the other gardeners, Amy and David Demmer, Kate Roberts, Jim Zunker, Deb Benedict, and kids from Cooperation Station's

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