

Down Memory Lane

10 YEARS AGO • AUG. 23, 1999

The winds of change in Cook County seem to be bringing a larger commitment to summer school next year. This year, only a few courses were offered in the district and those primarily for students who did not pass the basic math and reading tests that require a pass for graduation.

Mark Sandbo, district middle and high school principal, said an expanded summer school is inevitable.

"We need to make a complete range of courses available and perhaps require summer school for advancement of 'at-risk' students," Sandbo told the school board Aug. 16. This is only the second year summer school was offered in the district.

According to the general manager of WDSE-TV (Public Television in Duluth), a new translator tower is still scheduled to be built in Grand Marais sometime this fall.

The new tower will hold equipment for WDSE, KBJR, KDLH, the U.S. Coast Guard and eventually, news and music services from Minnesota Public Radio.

The old tower, which is on the hillside behind the city, was deemed unsafe almost a year ago. Studies showed that it was rusted and critical weaknesses were present.

20 YEARS AGO • AUG. 21, 1989

Lightning-caused fires may once again be allowed to burn within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in accordance with a revised Fire Plan.

Dave Filius, supervisor of the Superior National Forest, indicated that Superior's Fire Plan was revised to reflect national policy guidelines developed after the extensive 1988 Yellowstone fires. All national fire plans were delayed for the 1989 season pending new direction.

"The Superior's plan as it relates to the BWCW is the first in the nation to come back on line," said Filius.

Jim Oberstar, 8th District U.S. Congressman, visited Grand Marais during Fisherman's Picnic.

He flew in to Grand Marais at 11 a.m., having left Washington, D.C. at 1:30 a.m.

Oberstar visited several friends, appeared on the Picnic platform, and then went on to a DFL reception in the trailer park recreation hall. Over 50 people greeted him.

50 YEARS AGO • AUG. 20, 1959

Good news from the eastern end of the county: the reefers are hitting.

Good catches have been reported at Grand Portage and near Big Bay, Hovland. The trout are not large, but they're good eaters, and it proves the lampreys haven't gobbled them all.

An estimated 450 people came out to see the Big Storm slides and movies shown last Thursday night at the school auditorium. From all reports they enjoyed the pictures.

Mrs. Ray Sjoberg Jr. was in charge of the unusual attraction, which was offered gratis to visitors. Mrs. Sjoberg narrated the slides which had been taken by herself, Dr. W.R. Smith, Howard Joynes and Jim Pedersen.

Mrs. Edwin Thoreson showed the 8 mm movies taken by herself, Merlin Zimmerman and Ade Toftey. Ev Bushman Jr. showed his 16 mm movies.

This was the second showing of the storm of Nov. 18, 1958.

Why don't they put metal tips on shoelaces any more?

Is there anything more aggravating than trying to thread a walked-on, muddy, tipless shoelace through an equally muddy, stiff shoe eyelet? Especially when the school bus is due in less than five minutes.

90 YEARS AGO • AUG. 20, 1919

A party of about 30 young people enjoyed a marshmallow and wiener roast on the rocks Monday evening. It was a most beautiful night and the wonderful display of northern lights made the evening one long to be remembered.

Frank Shaw is going to fish from his old place on Pigeon Point this fall.

A lecture on the life of Theodore Roosevelt will be given in the Congregational Church Thursday evening by Rev. W.H. Ripon. Special music. Everybody invited.



Planning Commission recommends rezoning for Thompson Performance

Rhonda Silence

Nearly 30 people turned out for the Cook County Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Wednesday, August 12 to ask questions or show support for a zoning change for Thompson Performance on the outskirts of Grand Marais.

The hearing started with Planning & Zoning Administrator Bill Lane explaining that the request for rezoning from residential (R1) to commercial (GC) is the culmination of 21 years of back and forth between Office of Planning and Zoning (OPZ) and Brad Thompson. Lane said the historical use of the 1.4 acre property at 1316 E. Highway 61 has been primarily commercial. The property was zoned as R-1 by Cook County Zoning Ordinance in 1984. Thompson purchased the property in 1988 and began doing business as Thompson Tooling & Tire. Since then, Lane said, OPZ has periodically had conflicts with Thompson regarding home occupation, junk or salvage, and screening issues. Thompson applied for rezoning of his property to General Commercial in 1996, but was denied. In 2009, OPZ referred the matter to County Attorney Tim Scannell for enforcement. Thompson entered a conditional not guilty plea on July 8 and Scannell recommended giving him time to work things out with OPZ.

If the matter is not resolved, Thompson faces potential punishment for a number of land use violations—a petty misdemeanor charge for parking, storing, repairing, or disassembling a vehicle in a residential road within sight of a road; and four misdemeanor charges for operating a business on the same property as the owner's home that is incompatible with surrounding neighborhood, conducting a non-residential use within a dwelling or accessory building, storing three or more motor vehicles in non-operable condition, and failing to use fence and screening in the form of permanent plantings. Potential punishment ranges from a \$300 fine to confinement in state prison.

Lane stressed that with or without a zoning change, Thompson will be required to remove the numerous vehicles on his property. "General commercial allows service and repair facilities as conditional uses—but it does not allow junk or salvage operations," he said.

Lane said OPZ had received 13 letters on the matter, all in favor of the rezoning request.

The public was given the chance to speak and nine people, including business competitors Craig Horak, owner of Tire & Auto



Staff photo/Hal Kettunen

Even if his property is re-zoned as general commercial, Brad Thompson, of Thompson Performance, will have to remove the majority of the vehicles on his Grand Marais property.

Lodge and Gene and Jason Lashinski, owners of Grand Marais Motors, spoke in favor of the rezoning. Horak said Thompson is making a "serious effort" to clean up the vehicles on his property.

Jason Lashinski also spoke as a neighbor, stating, "I live across from Brad on County Road 7. With the exception of Stan Bautch, I have the best view of Thompson Performance of anyone. It doesn't bother me. I am surrounded by similar commercial properties—Bautch's, Eliassen's. It isn't always pretty, but it's the nature of the business."

Four people spoke, not in opposition to the rezoning, but expressing concern that Thompson will not fulfill his promise to remove vehicles from his property and that he will expand his outside operations under commercial zoning. Concerns were raised on whether the requirements for screening, set-back guidelines, and removal of vehicles would be enforced. JoAnn Johnson summed up the concerns of her Old Shore Road neighbors when she said, "It seems confusing to me that one would comply and clean up under a more lenient zoning than they have under a more restrictive one."

Grand Marais resident Gary Croft gave an impassioned plea in support of the rezoning. "I've lived here 57 years. The thing I'm most proud of is how everybody respects each other and helps each other out. If we don't help Brad out; if we don't help this longtime, legitimate business owner, I'm not proud of our county anymore."

After public comment, Planning Commission members shared their thoughts. Lloyd Speck said he didn't understand why this matter had been going on for 21 years. He said he believed a mistake

had been made in 1984 when the property was rezoned. John Barton also questioned why the commercial use hadn't been "grandfathered" when the zoning change was made. Planning Director Tim Nelson noted that the property was operated as an antique store at the time of the zoning change. "We don't have any records of why that particular parcel was rezoned," he said.

Barton said, "I'm very disappointed that this has gone on for 20-plus years and the county can't justify why the change was made. We have to fix this."

However, Barton said to Thompson, "The salvage business is gone? As hard as it is for you, you're going to get rid of all those vehicles?"

Thompson nodded, "I'm moving them out to the junkyard. That makes me sad, but I understand that I have to make it look better in other people's eyes. The cars gotta go."

Planning Commission member Richard Olson asked Thompson how many cars were on his property. Thompson said about 25. Olson said, "I think your past refusal to move these cars was maybe what got you into this situation. I think the charges will be dropped if you bring your property into compliance."

Dave Tuttle also spoke to Thompson. "This week I've been driving around and around your property. I'm in favor of this re-zoning, but I'm sympathetic to your Old Shore Road property owners. I'm a bit skeptical that you will do what you need to do—if you do

though, everyone will be okay with this."

Planning Commission Chair Sam Parker noted that a number of the people that commented referred to Thompson as a hard-working businessman and a really nice guy. "Whether or not the applicant is a good guy or not has nothing to do with this," said Parker. "We're changing an ordinance and that is what we have to decide. I believe this ordinance change is reasonable."

There was considerable discussion of how restrictions could be applied to the property rezoning, with Planning Director Tim Nelson explaining that an ordinance change does not allow conditions. However, he said the planning commission and the county commissioners could send a letter to the court with recommendations. A unanimous motion was passed to recommend approval of the rezoning. It was also agreed to send the county board a letter with suggestions to be included in a letter to the court. Recommendations were to require screening on the sides and back of the property; setting a timeline of November 30 for removal of vehicles; and that Thompson remain in compliance with all the rules of general commercial zoning.

Thompson is scheduled to return to court on September 9, 2009 to update the judge on progress toward resolution of the zoning issues. The county board will consider the rezoning request on Tuesday, September 8.

We wire your Low Voltage Needs.

VIDEO • PHONE • AUDIO • COMPUTER NETWORK • ALARM SYSTEM • HOME AUTOMATION

Mark D Consulting LLC
218-663-7149
License # TS01653
Licensed Bonded Insured

SPECIALIZING IN MEDICARE PLANS
As a licensed agent, I can help you learn about Medicare plans including:

- Medicare Part D
- Medicare Cost Plans
- Medigap/Medicare Supplement Plans
- Medicare Advantage Plans

GARY ZINTER
69 Nelson Drive - Silver Bay MN
218.226.3442 or 800.777.4533

Call me today!

BEN FRANKLIN

JOY-ZUS DEPT STORE

20% OFF
SOUVENIR T-SHIRTS AND SWEATSHIRTS

Hurry! Discount ends Saturday, August 29th

P.O. Box 430, 105 Wisconsin St.
Grand Marais, MN 55604
(218) 387-2233