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## County votes to help city with pool costs

Jane Howard

Mayor Sue Hakes, along with city councilors Jan Sivertson and Tim Kennedy and city employees Mike Roth, Kim Dunsmoor, and Dave Tersteeg, went before the county board Tuesday, August 24, 2009 to request funding for the Grand Marais Municipal Pool.

Hakes reminded commissioners that they had told the city council March 4 they would consider helping with the pool's annual operating deficit, which is expected to be about \$210,000 this year.

Commissioner Fritz Sobanja referred to minutes from a county board meeting many years ago in which the county agreed to pay one-third of the pool's annual operating deficit, up to \$5,000. One-third of the operating deficit today would cost the county about \$70,000.

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## Proposed projects for 1% tax

Jane Howard

Nearly 70 people attended a public meeting Monday, August 24, 2009 to learn more about the seven projects considered for the proposed 1% countywide sales tax coming to a referendum this fall.

The legislature approved the final language of the legislation this spring. It was first requested in 2006 as an extension of the 1% sales tax that had paid for capital improvements to Cook County North Shore Hospital.

Consultant Mike Fischer of LHB Engineering estimated that between 50 and 80 percent of the tax would be generated from non-residents.

A committee comprised of elected officials from the county, City of Grand Marais, West End townships, and Grand Portage Reservation was formed last October and recommended seven projects that could benefit from the tax: improvements to outdoor recreational facilities at community centers in Grand Marais and Tofte, a multi-purpose community center

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Photos by Dewey Pihlman

By the time the Gunflint Trail Fire Department arrived on the scene, the Tony and Carol Feiock home was fully engulfed in flames. **Right:** Just a few days earlier, neighbor Dewey Pihlman took a photo of the reconstruction, overlooked by a rainbow.

## Feiock home burns—for second time

Rhonda Silence

A home at 239 Sag Lake Trail, belonging to Tony and Carol Feiock of Lake Quivira, KS, was burned in the 2007 Ham Lake wildfire. The cabin was being rebuilt this summer by Isak Hansen Construction. Tragedy struck again on Monday, August 24, 2009 and the nearly completed home was completely destroyed by fire.

Cook County Law Enforcement received a call at 10:41 p.m. from Dewey Pihlman reporting that a house on Sag Lake Trail was on fire. Pihlman's house is directly across Seagull River from the Feiock residence.

Reached by telephone, Pihlman said he was getting ready to go to bed when he heard a strange crackling sound. He looked across the river and saw what looked like a campfire. He knew the Feiocks were not at their cabin, so he took a closer look with his binoculars. Pihlman was horrified to see a small fire on the deck of the house. He called 911 and watched helplessly as the wind picked up and fed the flames. Pihlman's house is across Seagull River, up a cliff, so he knew he would never reach the home in time to save it.

"By 10:50, the entire house was

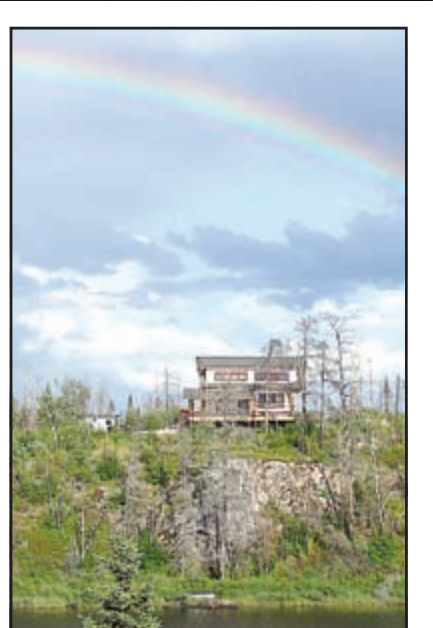
engulfed," said Pihlman. "I heard the windows exploding and the roof cracking."

The Gunflint Trail Ambulance, Gunflint Trail Fire Department, and a US Forest Service fire crew responded, with the first engine arriving at approximately 10:56 p.m. Gunflint Fire Chief Mike Prom said the fire department had four fire trucks at the scene.

Pihlman said by 11:05 p.m., the house had collapsed. He said there were sparks and burning material floating northward on the wind. "The fire department did a great job. They got on the scene as quickly as possible and got the big pumps set up to protect the other properties," said Pihlman. The adjacent properties are within approximately 250 - 300 feet of one another.

Fire Chief Prom was in Grand Marais when the call came out, so Bob Baker was the incident commander. Baker and the first firefighters had a difficult time reaching the Feiock home. "There were substantial wind gusts coming from the southwest and too much heat to get into the driveway," said Prom.

The firefighters entered the driveway south of the Feiock property and



set up there. The fire department loaded a portable pump by boat to attack the fire from the water. Prom said the fire was knocked down and completely under control by about 12:30. Trucks remained on the scene until 1:50 a.m., and two firefighters remained through the night to make sure the smoldering fire did not flare up again. At 9:09 a.m., all the Gunflint Trail firefighters were finally released from the scene.

Prom said the cause of the fire is under investigation by the insurance company, but he said there was no sign of arson or lightning strikes.

The Feiocks were unavailable for comment at press time, but Dewey Pihlman summed up the feeling of their Gunflint Trail neighbors. "I am sure they are devastated," he said, recalling that he had enjoyed watching the rebuilding of their home. "Just two days ago I took a wonderful picture of a rainbow over their house—now this. In two days, it was rainbows to ashes."

## Historic Birch Terrace damaged by fire

Rhonda Silence

A popular local restaurant, the Birch Terrace Supper Club, established in 1945, was damaged by fire on Monday, August 24, 2009 and an employee was taken to the Cook County North Shore Hospital to be treated for smoke inhalation.

Birch Terrace cook Ryan Keegan made the call to Cook County Law Enforcement at 6:50 p.m., reporting a chimney fire in the kitchen. The Cook County Ambulance and Grand Marais Fire Department responded and Keegan was transported to North Shore Hospital, where he was treated for smoke inhalation and released.

When the Grand Marais Fire Department arrived on the scene, flames were visible on the roof around the chimney. Firefighters were on the scene at 6:55 and 7:00 p.m. and immediately tackled the fire in the kitchen area.

The fire department was challenged by the fact that the historic restaurant consists of several additions to the original home, which was built in 1888. Grand Marais Fire Chief Ben Silence said it was necessary to cut a hole in the roof, to ensure that the fire had not spread between roofing layers. In fact, said Silence, the fire was somewhat contained in the kitchen area by the log walls of an older section of the structure. The fire was extinguished and the fire department was clear of the scene by 8:20 p.m.



David Larsen, who purchased the Birch Terrace in June 2007 with his brothers Brian and Don Larsen, expressed appreciation to the fire department for arriving as quickly as it did. "The fire department did a great job. If the fire had gotten into the roof, there would have been no stopping it."

However, there was significant damage to the kitchen, said Larsen the day after the fire. "We will have to get a new broiler, probably a new stove, and the roof and flooring will have to be torn out," he said.

Larsen said the kitchen will be closed for at least a few weeks. At press time

Staff photo/Hal Kettunen  
The Grand Marais Fire Department cut a hole in the roof over the Birch Terrace kitchen to completely extinguish the fire on August 24.

Photo courtesy of Cook County Law Enforcement  
**Inset:** The restaurant will need to replace its appliances—and a number of pots and pans.



Larsen was meeting with his insurance adjuster. He is hopeful that it won't take too long to proceed with repairs. "It's a terrible time for this—but there is never a good time for something like this," he said, noting that he had just turned away a group of 16 that wanted to come for dinner.

While waiting for repair, Larsen said limited food service will be available. The Birch Terrace lounge offers pizzas, and a grill has been set up on the patio, so the restaurant can serve hamburgers, brats, and chicken.