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## DFL straw poll picks Bakk

Jane Howard

Forty-seven democrats attended the 2010 Cook County Democratic-Farm-Labor (DFL) caucus and Cook County convention at the Arrowhead Center for the Arts Tuesday, February 2. The party platform was not debated, but the group spent some time discussing whom the delegates to the 8<sup>th</sup> District and state conventions would support for governor.

Cook County DFL chair Tim Kennedy read a letter from state DFL party chair Brian Melendez stating the party's intention to "take back the governorship" and advocate an "aggressive agenda" at the state and federal level.

The caucus broke up into precincts to cast ballots and draft resolutions that will be passed on to the 8<sup>th</sup> District level. In the Grand Marais east precinct group, Fritz Sobanja read a letter from Tom Bakk, in which he noted that the DFL has lost five gubernatorial elections in a row. "If we lose again," Bakk wrote, "leading to a continuation of the Pawlenty 'no new tax' pledge, the quality of life for Minnesotans will continue to erode and the Minnesota we know and love will be a different place." Bakk said his campaign theme is "jobs, jobs, jobs."

The county convention immediately followed the caucus. Tim Kennedy said he would not be run-



Staff photo/Jane Howard  
Bill Hansen holding up a sign for the Tofte precinct at the Cook County DFL caucus February 2 at the Arrowhead Center for the Arts.

ning again after six years as chair. "I did enjoy the six years I've done it," Kennedy said. "Thank you." Diane Parker and Bill Hansen were both nominated to take his place. Hansen said he was party chair for eight years and hoped someone else would want the position, although he was willing. "I'd very much like to give someone else the opportunity," he said.

Diane Parker said she was willing to be chair but asked if anyone else wanted the position. Denny Fitzpatrick was asked if he wanted the job, but he "respectfully" declined because of other commitments in his life right now. Hansen nominated Fitzpatrick for vice-chair.

Parker was voted in as chair, and Fitzpatrick, as vice-chair. Bev Denyes agreed to continue as secretary-treasurer after "30-plus" years and was voted in unanimously.

State Senator Tom Bakk won the straw poll for governor with 20 out of 47 votes. Margaret Anderson Kelliher came in second, with 11 votes.

Several people spoke up in support of various gubernatorial candidates. Bill Hansen said he thinks the party has a good chance of getting a Democrat into the governor's spot, especially since Norm Coleman dropped out of the race. He endorsed Margaret Anderson Kelliher, who supported him in his two runs for state representative.

Fritz Sobanja spoke up for Tom Bakk, with whom he has interacted through his position as county commissioner. "He has worked for us in Cook County," Sobanja said. "There's

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Staff photo/Rhonda Silence  
Nathan Schroeder of Chisholm at the start of the 27th John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon in Duluth on Sunday, January 31, 2010. Schroeder held the lead throughout the race and crossed the finish line at Billy's in Duluth at 10:04 a.m. on Wednesday, February 3. See more John Beargrease action on page A13.

## Republican caucus chooses Seifert for governor

Rhonda Silence

The Cook County Community Center was a busy place before and during the Republican Party Caucus on Tuesday, February 2, 2010. Local GOP party leaders had to wait for Tai Chi classes to end to set up chairs for the 22 citizens who came out to participate in grass roots government. Curlers in Tuesday night league went about their business as Cook County Republican Party Chair Mark Delamater called the caucus to order at 7:00 p.m.

After an invocation, the first order of business was the appointment of a secretary for the caucus. Rae Piepho of Lutsen was nominated and agreed to serve as secretary. The next matter was electing a chair for the caucus. Party Chair Delamater was quickly nominated and voted in to oversee the event.

Delamater said that although the party had considered holding both its precinct caucuses and the Cook County convention on the same evening, plans had changed. The Cook County Convention is now set to be held at the Grand Marais Senior Center at 7:00 p.m. on February 16.

Delamater explained the process leading toward the November election, including instructions for the evening. He asked citizens to form smaller groups based on their precinct numbers. People gathered around a map to see where they should go or joined their neighbors. Several precincts were unfortunately not represented. There was no one at the caucus from the Colvill, Grand Marais West, Grand Portage, or Tofte precincts.

Citizens were instructed to introduce any resolutions to introduce or changes to the Republican Party platform in their precinct groups. Delamater asked that every-



Staff photo/Rhonda Silence  
Carol and Nevin Holmberg of Hovland review Republican candidate literature at the GOP caucus at the Cook County Community Center on Feb. 2.

one review the party platform and reminded them, "If it's already in the platform, you don't need to make a resolution."

Although attendance was low, there was spirited discussion in the precinct groups. Items such as the

need for congressional term limits and the desire to see legislators included in any national health care plan adopted were considered and forwarded as resolutions or debated

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## Council clarifies sidewalk snow removal policy

Bill Neil

In an effort to maintain snow- and ice-free sidewalks, Grand Marais city councilors spent a good portion of their Jan. 13 meeting discussing the policies in place, and who (property owners or the city) is responsible for what. Although the discussion was prompted by complaints from downtown business owners at council's prior meeting, there was nobody in attendance to present those concerns when the topic was listed on the agenda.

Property Maintenance Supervisor Lenny Bloomquist distributed maps to councilors that showed both the sidewalks and streets the city crew clears in the business district, and in what pri-

ority. Bloomquist explained that the sidewalks are normally cleared first by pushing the snow onto the streets, and the streets are then plowed and the snow taken away to one of several stockpile areas to create clear and safe curbside parking spaces. The snow removal operation begins around 3 a.m. whenever there is 3 or more inches of snow; Bloomquist said his goal is to have the downtown cleared before anybody needs to go downtown and find a parking space.

In response to questions about why some areas are cleared better than others, Bloomquist said he is restricted by his equipment, which is primarily

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## EDA struggles, but housing program survives

Rhonda Silence

Although the Cook County - Grand Marais Economic Development Authority is struggling to fund its operations, the EDA board is unanimous in its support of the housing program created in 2007.

At the January 26, 2010 special meeting to discuss EDA finances, County Commissioner Bob Fenwick asked if the housing coordinator program is important and if it is self-sustaining. The board agreed it was very important, referring to the housing needs study completed by the EDA in 2006. "There is a need for affordable housing in this community that is not being met," said EDA Director Matt Geretschlaeger.

The EDA contracted with Nancy Grabko of

Community Fundraising Solutions (CFS) to seek funding for affordable housing projects and housing rehabilitation projects. The EDA contributes \$30,000 of its \$148,566 levy to the housing program.

EDA Board Chair Mike Littfin said Grabko "leverages" that \$30,000 into much more. "By not paying that \$30,000, we'd probably be losing \$200,000 or more," he said.

Littfin said for many years, Cook and Lake counties were not receiving funds for affordable housing development because there was no agency to apply for grants. Since she started as the housing coordinator, Grabko has garnered a \$235,000 Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grant to help eligible homeowners pay assessments for sewer extensions in Creechville and has obtained funding to rehabilitate 14 homes in Cook and Lake counties, with projects ranging from \$2,200 to \$30,000. Typical housing rehab projects include things such as replacement of windows, doors, installation of smoke alarms and stair rails, installation of sheet rock and taping of exposed fiberglass insulation, etc. The first step in these rehabilitations is testing the home to ensure that it does not contain lead.

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