



Saint Louis County

Administration • 100 North Fifth Avenue West, Room 202 • Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: (218) 726-2450 • Fax: (218) 726-2469 • www.stlouiscountymn.gov

Kevin Z. Gray
County Administrator

NEWS RELEASE

December 18, 2012

CONTACT: Dana Kazel, Communications Manager
218-725-5049 (office) • 218-591-2219 (cell)

For immediate release:

St. Louis County Board votes on multiple newsworthy issues

The St. Louis County Board cast several key votes today at its final meeting of the year, which was held in the Morse Town Hall, near Ely. Among the resolutions unanimously passed are:

- The County Board approved a \$10.8 million contract with Hammerlund Construction, Inc., of Grand Rapids to rebuild and improve the flood-damaged Haines Road, also known as County State Aid Highway 91, connecting West Duluth to Hermantown. The winning bid came in more than \$2.2 million less than had been projected. Prep work is expected to begin in January, with the goal of re-opening the road by late fall of 2013. It is the largest single project undertaken by the County's Public Works department. Commissioners praised all who have worked on this complex project for the efficiency with which they've moved it forward, as well as for putting together unique sources of funding to help pay for it. Approximately 90 percent of the project will be covered by federal funds and state flood bonds.

- Commissioners voted to purchase the St. Louis County Service Center in Ely for \$795,000. The County has been renting the building from Irresistible Ink Properties for the last two years, and uses the space to offer the services of the following departments/divisions: Assessor, Veterans Service, Public Health and Human Services and Environmental Services, as well as the office of the fourth district commissioner. Sixteen St. Louis County employees work at the facility. Commissioners praised the purchase for securing those services and jobs in this part of the County. The purchase is in keeping with the Board's long term facilities strategy of consolidating all County services into County-owned buildings.

- The Board approved transferring 19.5 acres of fee-owned land in Hibbing, which includes the Hibbing Race Track, to the City of Hibbing. Additionally, as part of the deal, which is still subject to approval by the Hibbing City Council and the state of Minnesota, the County would transfer \$250,000 in economic development funds to Hibbing for use at the site. Commissioner Steve Raukar, whose district includes this land, says this deal fits with the Board’s priority of divesting itself of non-core functions.

- Commissioners approved a resolution that shows their support of a measure to eliminate sex trafficking of children in Minnesota. The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), at its recent statewide convention, highlighted this issue as a priority and asked county leaders to take on more of a leadership role. Key points brought forward by the AMC is to recognize the children who are caught up in sex trafficking as victims, rather than as juvenile offenders; and to put more effort into prosecuting the adults who pay for prostitution. St. Louis County, through the work of County Attorney Mark Rubin, has long been recognized for its work to protect children from this crime.

Additionally, the Board voted 5-1 (Commissioner Frank Jewell opposed, Commissioner Steve O’Neil was not present) to voice their support of a land exchange between the state and federal government. Earlier this year, the Minnesota legislature passed into law provisions calling for the exchange of 86,000 acres of State School Trust Fund land within the BWCAW. Similar legislation would need to be approved at the federal level in order for the measure to pass, and so the County was asked to go on record in support of this effort. Representatives David Dill and Tom Rukavina attended the meeting and urged Commissioners to vote in favor of the resolution.

For more information about St. Louis County and its Board of Commissioners, call (218) 726-2450 or visit www.stlouiscountymn.gov.

###