

North Pole athletes sign letters of intent

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A WORLD OF COLOR ONSTAGE

LATITUDE 65

School officials explain budget request to Borough Assembly

District seeking \$1.8M increase in local ed funding

By AMANDA BOHMAN
For the News-Miner

School district administrators, worried about a \$2.7 million drop in state funding, met with municipal leaders Thursday to defend a request for a \$1.8 million increase in local education funding.

Taxpayers in the Fairbanks North Star Borough contributed

INSIDE

Tourism, business officials make case to assembly for grant money. Page A5

\$47 million to public education for this school year, and the Borough Assembly approved a resolution agreeing next year's contribution will be at least that. The district wants \$48.8 million. The Borough Assembly votes on the budget next month.

"Given the reduction in state funding, I think the local contribution should be increased some,"

Assemblyman Van Lawrence said. "If we don't, we are just going to have bigger class sizes and fewer courses available."

Mike Fisher, chief financial officer for the district, and Pete Lewis, superintendent, went over the district's budget numbers with the assembly.

The district's operating budget this year is \$223 million, and its proposed budget for next year is \$227.6 million. Most of the money, about \$160 million, comes from the state. Almost 90 percent or \$200 million is spent on personnel, mainly teachers.

The budget increase for next

year is what the district needs to maintain programs as is, the chief financial officer said.

"We are under strain in terms of our budget just like you are," Lewis, the superintendent, said.

The last slide on a PowerPoint presentation showed cuts the district has made in recent years. Jobs eliminated last year include custodians, clerks, mechanics, teachers and principals. The district cut legal costs, maintenance and leadership development funding. Supplies, equipment and activities were also cut.

Please see BUDGET, Page A5

District dispels rumors of racial unrest

Sends messages out to parents of Lathrop students

By TIM MOWRY
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The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District sent an email and automated phone message to parents of Lathrop High School students Tuesday night to dispel rumors of a race war and violence at the school.

There have been multiple fights at the school during the past week, but they were not racial in nature, school district spokesman Bill Bailey said Thursday.

"There is no race war," he said. "These aren't racial fights, but there have been a lot of rumors on social media among students about why the fights started."

The email and phone message from Lathrop Principal Dave Dershin was sent out about 9 p.m. Tuesday after a story aired on KTVF Channel 11 about an unidentified Lathrop student being arrested in an incident involving a gun in the school parking lot Wednesday afternoon.

As it turned out, the person arrested was not a Lathrop student and he was not involved in the fights at the school, Bailey said. However, the sight of police cars swarming the school parking lot shortly after school let out and the report on TV exacerbated the rumors that had been circulating through the school, he said.

"That kind of brought all this to a boil," he said.

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LOOKING FOR A BITE TO EAT



Eric Engman/News-Miner

A bald eagle perches atop a power pole Thursday afternoon along Noyes Slough behind the Taco Bell on College Road.

Not isolated

Even in their desert retreat, monks feel Egypt's religious turmoil. Page B4



Sourdough Jack sez:

"I've tried sittin' behind restaurants in hopes of free food. Never worked for me for some reason."

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Group kicks off campaign to repeal tax cut for oil companies

By DAN JOLING
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE — Three former Alaska officials were announced Thursday as sponsors of a referendum to repeal a tax cut for oil companies operating in the state.

Former state Sen. Vic Fischer, former Alaska first lady Bella Hammond and former Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor Jim Whitaker were named referendum sponsors at a Vote Yes! Repeal the Giveaway press conference outside the Robert J. Atwood state office building.

Fischer, a Democrat from Anchorage, also was a delegate to the Alaska Constitutional Convention. He called the tax cut approved on the last day of the 2013 legislative session "unconstitutional and anti-constitutional" because it fails to manage the state's natural resources for the maximum benefit of its residents.

The constitution he helped write requires that the legislature manage resources for the maximum benefit of the people, he said.

"This means for maximum benefit of Alaskans, not oil companies, not other absentee owners," he said.

The measure approved by the Republican-dominated legislature and strongly endorsed by Gov. Sean Parnell is an over-



Mark Thiessen/The Associated Press

Vic Fischer, left, a part of the Alaska Constitutional Convention, is shown Thursday at a news conference in downtown Anchorage. On the right is Jane Anvik. They are members of Vote Yes! Repeal the Giveaway, a nonpartisan group seeking to repeal an oil tax passed Sunday by the Alaska Legislature. The group says the measure is a massive giveaway that will benefit major oil companies but hurt Alaskans.

haul of Alaska's oil tax structure aimed at getting more production and investment. Supporters consider it an investment in Alaska's future. The claimed they could not stand by as oil production diminished.

Opponents, however, attacked the bill because there was no guarantee of additional investment or production. They complained about the quality of information provided by propo-

nents and questioned whether its effects were understood.

Parnell pushed the bill unsuccessfully last year but pressed it through with new faces in both the House and the Senate. Of a possible referendum, he said Monday, "I think the referendum was last November."

Former Anchorage Mayor Jack Roderick, author of "Crude

Please see REPEAL, Page A5

Snow, wind force closure of Taylor Highway

Staff Report
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Severe weather has caused the closure of the Taylor Highway at American Summit, according to the Alaska Department of Transportation.

DOT crews are working to clear the road but do not expect to have it reopened until mid-morning today, a notice from the department's office in Tok said on Thursday.

The DOT notice states the highway is closed because of "snow, strong winds causing major drifting, reduced visibility and icy conditions."

American Summit is along a 12-mile stretch of the highway, running from 136 Mile to 148 Mile of the 160-mile route, which begins at Tetlin Junction and ends in Eagle at the Yukon River.

More information is available from the DOT's Tok office at 883-5129. Information also is available by telephoning 511 or going online to 511.alaska.gov.