

Express yourself

Letters must bear the writer's address and phone number and must not be longer than 350 words. Letters can be mailed, dropped off or e-mailed to aerickson@parkrapidsenterprise.com. The Enterprise reserves the right to edit all correspondence to meet space requirements, add clarity or avoid obscenity, libel or invasion of privacy.



EDITORIAL

Housing market trends contain good news

Time for some good news:
The housing market continues to show signs of improvement.
According to the Minnesota Association of Realtors, housing trends have been heating up since July and homes are “flying off the market.” Granted, the group has a vested interest in being optimistic, but the numbers back up the assessment.
Statewide, homes are selling in 70 days or less. In our area, west central Minnesota, the average number of days a home stays on the market until it’s sold has dropped 10.5 percent. Through July of last year, it took 143 days for a home to sell. This year, the average is 128 days.
Another positive sign: Closed sales have seen a jump of 13.4 percent statewide while pending sales are racing closely behind with an 8.3 percent increase. Closed sales in our area have also surged, increasing by 22 percent this July compared to last July.
The demand has pushed up prices. Statewide, the median sales price has increased 13.3 percent from \$162,000 from last July to \$183,500, with sellers receiving 96.1 percent of the original price. Home prices in west central Minnesota have slipped a bit, dropping from \$158,500 to \$154,950 but they are still higher than the mid to upper \$130,000 figures that were common in 2009 and 2010. Homeowners are also selling their homes for prices that are closer to their asking price, coming within 91.2 percent of their original list price, which is 2 percent better than last year.

“July is a peak summer sales month for Minnesota,” said Jim Cormier, president of the association. “We tend to see buyers and sellers with families wanting to get settled before the school year starts. This July report reflects people making that commitment to homeownership and communities.”
Meanwhile, the number of foreclosures is continuing to decline across the state, according to the Minnesota Homeownership Center. The organization reported that there were only 6,795 foreclosure sales during the first half of this year, a decline of 29 percent compared to the same period in 2012.
These foreclosure levels are at the lowest since 2006.
While the housing recovery in outstate Minnesota may be not as strong, the fact remains that outstate foreclosure sales have declined 23 percent as well.
Positive factors in helping the housing recovery statewide are low interest rates, an improving economy and job growth.
Housing demand is beginning to stabilize or increase housing values, which helps improve home equity levels.
An improving housing market is a good deal for both buyers and sellers.

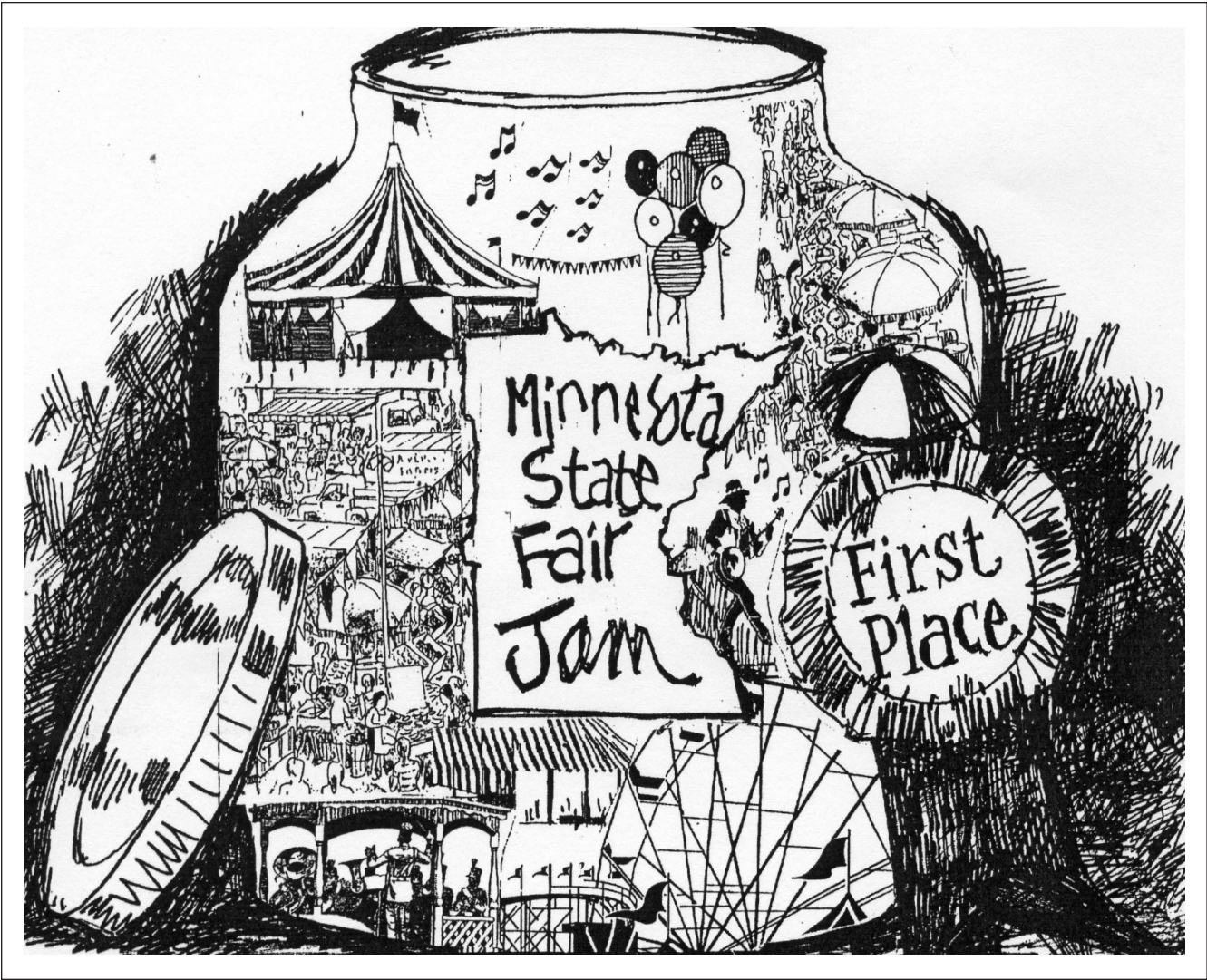
FORUM NEWS SERVICE

MEETING

Hubbard County Board of Commissioners

The Hubbard County Board of Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 3. The board has been meet-

ing in the basement of the Law Enforcement Center due to construction in the courthouse.
The agenda includes an Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force report and Hubbard County Museum report.



LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

More details needed about pipeline

The article in Saturday’s Enterprise about the proposed oil pipeline from North Dakota to Wisconsin spoke glowingly about its economic benefits. However, there are details we still need to know.
Will the pipeline be for crude or tar sands oil? There’s a big difference in environmental impact. Crude oil spills are horrendous enough, but tar sands oil cannot be cleaned up. It sinks to the bottom. Google “tar sand spills” and you’ll be horrified. In Alberta, Canada, a spill is killing everything over a wide area: trees, vegetation, birds, beaver, frogs, etc.
The oil companies will tell you the pipelines are safe today. Really? The Alberta pipe was only five years old. What happens when the pipe is 20 years old? 30? There are hundreds of spills every year.
The article touts jobs created. However, these can only be minimal locally as the pipeline company has its own crews. Workers will stay at motels? If these are “local jobs,” why do they need a motel?
The article didn’t mention how close the pipeline will come to Itasca Park. The temporary jobs created pale in comparison to the half million visitors to Itasca EVERY YEAR. You can kiss those visitors and their real economic benefit to the area goodbye if there’s a spill.

Where is it going to cross the Mississippi? Damage downstream of spills is incalculable.
We are selling the value of our environment in the US to private oil companies. The Keystone pipeline isn’t going to make us “independent of foreign oil.” It’s shockingly going across some of the most valuable water resource areas in our country, to be loaded on ships going overseas to foreign markets. This Enbridge proposed pipeline will connect with Canadian refineries. It brings nothing to Minnesota except potential for great harm.
I’d appreciate it if the Enterprise will do a follow up article. Detail the type of oil. Detail Enbridge’s poor safety record. Detail exactly how many jobs will be created in Hubbard County. Provide a close up map of Hubbard County showing exactly where the pipeline will go.

Lorelei Kraft
Park Rapids

Recent tax increases discourage business

During the last Minnesota election campaign the Democratic candidates promised to balance the budget; increase state aid for education, counties and cities; decrease real estate taxes and increase income taxes on the rich.
The people believed them and gave them control of both houses of state government and the governorship. They have fulfilled their promises and they also did a few things they didn’t promise. They increased spending, increased taxes and fees and approved same sex marriage, which I doubt the majority of people expected or wanted.
Here is how they fulfilled their promise and stuck it to the rich. Cigarette taxes were increased \$1.60 per pack; a fourth tier income tax that affects small businesses; expanded sales tax to Internet purchases, DirectTV and Dish Network; new tax on health insurance; new tax on farm, mining and logging equipment repairs; new estate taxes; increased tax on rental cars; driver’s license fee increase; motor vehicle sales

tax increase on certain vehicles; new gift taxes; new warehousing tax on businesses; new wheelage tax, which enables counties to tax citizens an extra tax on every family vehicle.
Who do you suppose is going to pay the bulk of these tax and fee increases?
Rep. Roger Erickson had a radio ad for several weeks talking about what a wonderful job he and Gov. Dayton had done for Minnesota. Our Sen. Skoe is chairman of the tax committee. Ask them to explain the rationale and logic of their actions. Ask them to explain how the rich are being punished and the rest of us are benefiting from their actions.
The state government does not collect real estate taxes. They are levied and collected by local agencies such as schools, cities, townships and counties who are all getting state aid increases in the recently approved budget. The Democratic rationale is that these agencies will decrease real estate taxes because of the state aid increases. There may be a few exceptions but real estate taxes will decrease when coffee and bananas are grown locally, which may not be too far away, according to climate change advocates.
Legislators and the governor increased state spending and income by about \$2 billion, resulting in about a \$3.8 billion new state budget. Minnesota is among the highest per capita taxing state in the nation and the most business unfriendly. Ask your legislators why they don’t concentrate on cutting rather than increasing spending with each new budget.
The recent increase in taxes and fees will discourage new business coming to the state and accelerate existing businesses and money leaving the state.

Arnold Leshovsky
Nevis

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Send address changes to: Park Rapids Enterprise Circulation Dept. P.O. Box 111 Park Rapids, MN 56470

OFFICE HOURS

The Park Rapids Enterprise front office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

CONTACT US

Administration
Rory Palm, Publisher
rpalm@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Kathy Bope, Business Mgr.
kbope@dlnewspapers.com
Karen Holtan, Officer Mgr.
kholtan@parkrapidsenterprise.com

Editorial Staff
Anna Erickson, Editor
aerickson@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Vance Carlson, Sports Editor
vcarlson@parkrapidsenterprise.com

Advertising
Candy Parks, Advertising Mgr.
cparks@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Linda Warmbold, Advertising Rep.
lwarmbold@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Betty Norlin, Advertising Rep.
bnorlin@parkrapidsenterprise.com

Classifieds
Cathy Hensel, Classifieds
chensel@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Kathy Dennis, Classifieds
kdennis@parkrapidsenterprise.com



(218) 732-3364 ■ Fax: (218) 732-8757
www.parkrapidsenterprise.com

Your State Elected Officials

Sen. Rod Skoe,
Dist. 2
651-296-4196
sen.rod.skoe@senate.mn



Rep. Steve Green, Dist. 2B
651-296-9918
rep.steve.green@house.mn



Rep. John Persell, Dist. 5A
651-296-5516
rep.john.persell@house.mn



Rep. Roger Erickson, Dist. 2A
651-296-4265
rep.roger.erickson@house.mn



Park Rapids Enterprise

a division of Forum Communications Company

Publisher, Rory Palmrpalm@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Editor, Anna Erickson.....aerickson@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Office Manager, Karen Holtan.....kholtan@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Business Manager, Kathy Bope.....kbope@dlnewspapers.com
Reporter/photographer, Jean Ruzicka..jruzicka@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Reporter/photographer, Sarah Smith ssmith@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Sports Editor, Vance Carlson.....vcarlson@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Advertising Manager, Candy Parks...cparks@parkrapidsenterprise.com

Advertising, Linda Warmbold.....lwarmbold@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Advertising, Betty Norlin.....bnorlin@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Telesales, Jayne Merila.....jmerila@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Telesales, Hildie Niemala.....hniemela@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Circulation/Classified, Kathy Dennis..kdennis@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Production Manager, Sally Peterson.speterson@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Production/Classified, Cathy Hensel.chensel@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Production, Shannon Geisen.....sgeisen@parkrapidsenterprise.com
Layout Artist, Russell Zinke.....rzinke@parkrapidsenterprise.com

(218) 732-3364 ■ Fax: (218) 732-8757 ■ www.parkrapidsenterprise.com