

SCHOOLS – from Page 1

Board frustrated by city offer for land swap

High School in Eden Valley.

In Other Business...

•With their recurring goal of running the district on a lean but effective budget, the board performed a regular evaluation of their spending and projects, finding few causes for concern.

“We’ve been very efficient in the last few years and not carrying any excess. If we were to cut anything, it would dig into the core of our program,” Messman said, suggesting only minor staffing changes as potential budget reductions for 2020-21.

Board members expressed their frustration over ongoing negotiations with the City of Eden Valley for a mutually beneficial land swap agreement. “In the past, we’ve really worked well with the city,” said board member Bob Stenger. “For them to come back and offer to sell the land is frustrating,” Stenger said.

The district entered negotiations with the city expecting to trade equal parcels of land without any exchange of cash. “It’s double the cost for taxpayers,” Stenger said.

“I felt we were very accomodating,” said board member Jay Brovold. “I just hope in the future for better working relations with the City of Eden Valley,” Brovold said.

FOOD SHELF – from Page 1

Food shelf to open on Wednesday, April 1

served 13 families – not more than normal, according to Arnold.

With Arnold and other volunteers extra conscientious about the health and safety of recipients in light of the coronavirus pandemic, the food selection process was, however, more stringent than usual. “We took a lot of precautions,” Arnold said.

Those precautions included prohibiting food shelf recipients from waiting their turn inside the building and from signing forms. “We didn’t let people wait in the waiting room. They had to wait in their cars,” Arnold said.

That procedure is similar to what hospital and clinics are doing in their waiting rooms.

Food shelf volunteers also prohibited recipients from touching food/other products and shelving. Recipients told volunteers what products they wanted, and volunteers retrieved them.

Surfaces, including doors, were santizied, too. “We had plenty of disinfectant,” Arnold said.

If the pandemic worsens and the food shelf closes on Wednesday, April 1, volunteers will do their best to notify recipients in advance.

LEGISLATURE 2020

Legislature recesses until Tuesday, April 14

Hiatus extends the normal week-long Easter break to four weeks

By Peter Callaghan
MinnPost

Just hours after it recessed until Tuesday, April 14, or whenever, the Minnesota State Legislature was closed up tight Tuesday, March 17.

Had the session not abruptly ended due to COVID-19, the day would have been packed with committee meetings and the rotunda and halls filled with citizen-lobbyists as well as the compensated kind. Instead, it was mostly empty.

In announcing what was termed a hiatus, legislative leaders insisted that they were still working and still open to constituents. But it will be mostly by phone, by email, and by text. In-person meetings are by appointment only.

The resolution adopted in the early morning Tuesday, March 17, said the legislature would reconvene Tuesday, April 14, the day it normally would have returned from its Easter/Passover break. What is different this year is that the break is almost four weeks instead of one.

The legislature will be on-call, meaning House and Senate leaders can agree to call back members if something comes up needing passage.

And as became apparent Tuesday morning, what was previously deemed an adequate appropriation for state and local health departments just one week ago has become inadequate. The \$21 million infusion signed Tuesday, March 10, has been followed up by a \$50 million appropriation on Tuesday, March 17.

That same bill created a health care grant fund of \$150 million: money that can be tapped by hospitals, clinics, long-term care centers, pharmacies, and ambulance services to pay for expenditures such as the expansion of hospital space or the purchase of ventilators and protective gear. It can also go for staff overtime and training, though

institutions that receive money must care for the uninsured without charge and must charge in-network fees even to out-of-network insureds.

The bill passed unanimously. Gov. Tim Walz signed it in private on Tuesday afternoon, forgoing the signing ceremony that would be typical for a bill of this magnitude.

On Monday evening, Walz’s powers under his declaration of emergency were extended by a little-known body called the executive council, made up of Walz and the other four statewide elected officials.

Under state law, the council must approve the declaration within five days. Once done – Monday’s vote was unanimous – Walz’s powers extend for another 30 days, subject to being rescinded by the legislature. The council also approved the five executive orders Walz has signed, including the closure of schools and public gathering places such as bars and restaurants.

Lawmakers might work one-on-one on issues that remain unresolved, though no formal hearings are scheduled. Tuesday’s calendar was rife with cancellations and few legislators were present. Members also are realizing that many of the issues that had dominated the first month of the 2020 session will not be taken up by either house when they return.

Leaders have limited the future agenda to COVID-19 bills; “mission-critical” measures such as the bonding bill and supplemental budget; and bills with broad agreement. Whether the latter includes the emergency insulin measure that passed the Senate unanimously last week is undetermined.

The visitors office was open last week, but tours have been called off for now. The Minnesota History Center is closed until Monday, March 30, as are all Minnesota Historical Society sites across the state.

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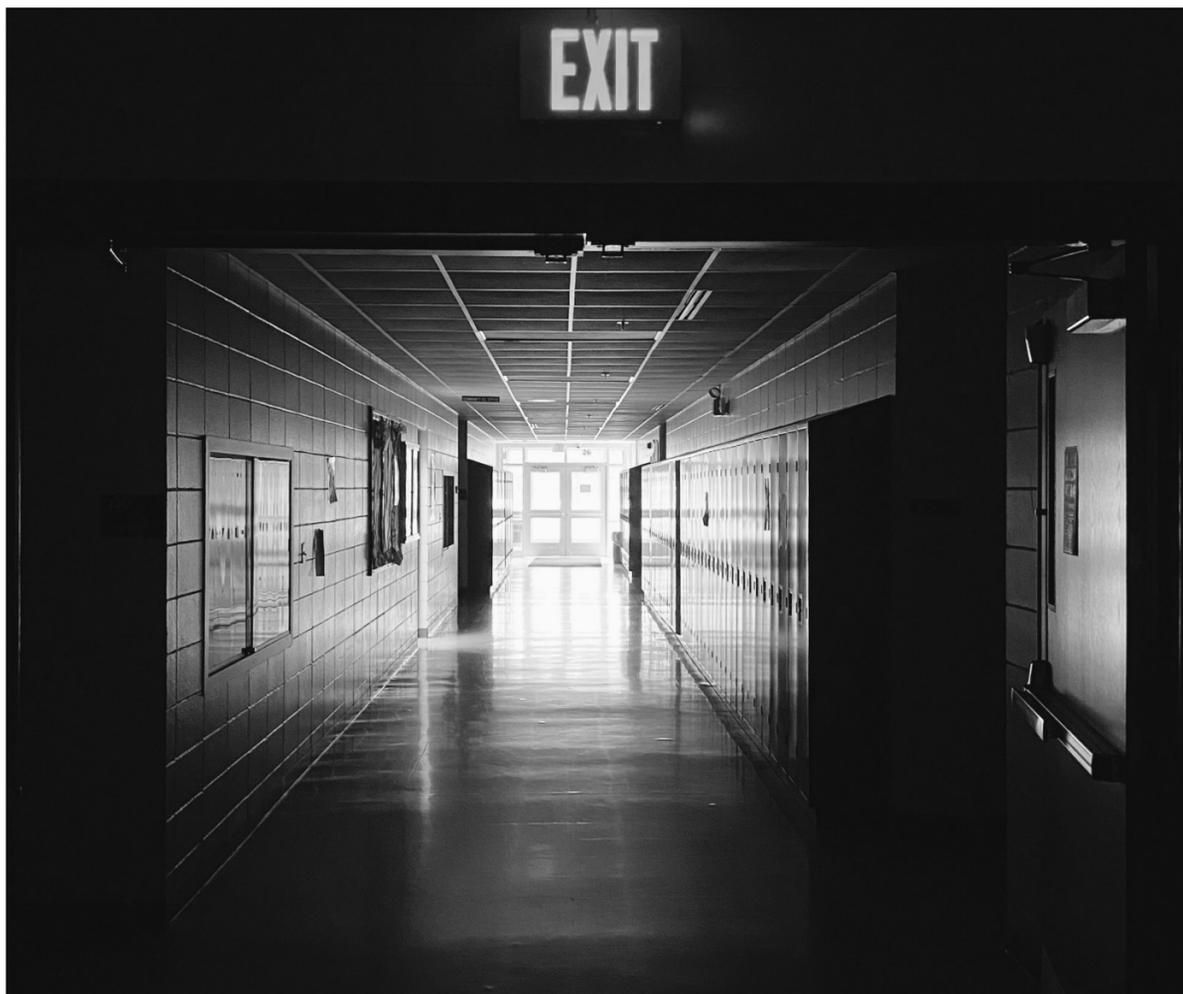
COVID-19

Photo by Cory Zimmerman

The hallways of EV-W High School looked eerily empty last week without students. Staff are preparing distance learning plans.

Gov. Walz enters self-quarantine after contact with COVID-19

Monday, March 23: Gov. Tim Walz announced on Monday, March 23, he will self-quarantine for a period of 14 days after learning he had contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. The governor was informed of the contact early on Monday morning and has not left his home since.

“The most important thing Minnesotans can do to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to stay home,” said Walz. “I’m using this as an opportunity to lead by example. Though I’m feeling healthy and not showing any symptoms, I’m going to work from home and model the protocol we are asking all Minnesotans to follow.”

A member of the Governor’s security detail tested positive for COVID-19 late on Sunday, March 22. The governor was in close proximity to this individual late last week. While the governor is not showing any symptoms, he will begin his self-quarantine on Monday, March 23, until Monday, April 6.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that individuals who have a known contact with COVID-19 self-quarantine for a period of 14 days as a precautionary measure to avoid accidentally spreading the virus. The Minnesota Department of Health recently recommended that all Minnesotans work remotely when possible. “Because our state must maintain essential services, not every Minnesotan is able to stay home,” continued Walz. “Those of us who are able to work from home must do so out of respect to our health care professionals, first responders, pharmacists, grocers, childcare providers, and all Minnesotans who are working to keep us safe during this crisis.”

The governor will continue to oversee the State of Minnesota’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “I’m grateful for the State of Minnesota’s sophisticated emergency management operation that allows me to govern and respond to crises from the Minnesota Governor’s Residence,” continued Walz. “We will continue to communicate with Minnesotans about our quick and aggressive work to combat the spread of COVID-19.”

Walz orders suspension of eviction proceedings

Monday, March 23: Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Orders 20-14, 20-15, 20-16, and 20-17 to further strengthen Minnesota’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These executive orders suspend evictions during the peacetime emergency, establish Peacetime Emergency Loans for small businesses, direct non-hospital entities to conduct an inventory of personal protective equipment, and clarifies that Executive Order 20-09 on elective surgeries and procedures applies to veterinarians.

Providing housing stability for Minnesota families at a time of financial uncertainty, Walz signed Executive Order 20-14 to suspend eviction proceedings during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. Loss of housing is catastrophic at any time, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, this loss endangers the health and well-being of all Minnesotans. While this order clarifies that tenants who can continue to pay rent during the peacetime emergency should continue to do so, landlords and financial institutions cannot begin eviction proceedings that would remove tenants from stable housing.

Executive Order 20-15 authorizes the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to establish a Small Business Emergency Loan program for small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota’s small businesses and independent contractors are amongst the worst hit by the pandemic. DEED’s emergency loan program will help Minnesota small business owners who need immediate assistance during COVID-19 closures.

As hospitals and health care providers report shortages of personal protective equipment, Governor Walz signed Executive Order 20-16 directing all non-hospital entities to conduct an inventory of their personal protective equipment, ventilators, respirators, and anesthesia machines, report the result to the state, and either donate such equipment to a local coordinating entity or preserve it. On Saturday, Walz directed the National Guard to transport personal protective equipment from storage at Camp Ripley to the Department of Health.

Also on Monday, March 23, the governor announced a revised supplemental budget, allocating an additional \$356 million toward the state’s COVID-19 response.

Stearns County cancels jail visitation for the 30 days

Friday, March 13: The Stearns County Jail has cancelled all public inmate visitation for the next 30 days to aid in the prevention of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). “We are working with our phone provider to give each inmate one free phone call up to 20 minutes in length a week to communicate with friends and family while visitation is suspended.”

Income tax now due July 15, instead of April 15, per IRS

Saturday, March 21: The Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service announced on Saturday, March 21, that the federal income tax filing due date is automatically extended from April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020.

Taxpayers can also defer federal income tax payments due on April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020, without penalties and interest, regardless of the amount owed. This deferment applies to all taxpayers, including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations, and other non-corporate tax filers, as well as those who pay self-employment tax.

Taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms or call the IRS to qualify for this automatic federal tax filing and payment relief. Individual taxpayers who need additional time to file beyond the July 15 deadline can request a filing extension by filing Form 4868 through their tax professional, tax software, or using the “Free File” link on www.irs.gov. Businesses who need additional time must file Form 7004.

The IRS urges taxpayers who are due a refund to file as soon as possible. Most tax refunds are being issued within 21 days.

“Even with the filing deadline extended, we urge taxpayers who are owed refunds to file as soon as possible and file electronically,” said IRS commissioner Chuck Rettig. “Filing electronically with direct deposit is the quickest way to get refunds. Although we are curtailing some operations during this period, the IRS is continuing with mission-critical operations to support the nation, and that includes accepting tax returns and sending refunds. As a federal agency vital to the overall operations of our country, we ask for your personal support, your understanding – and your patience. I’m incredibly proud of our employees as we navigate through numerous different challenges in this very rapidly changing environment.”

The IRS will continue to monitor issues related to the COVID-19 virus, and updated information will be posted on a special coronavirus page on www.irs.gov.

This announcement comes following the president’s emergency declaration last week pursuant to the Stafford Act. The Stafford Act is a federal law designed to bring an orderly and systematic means of federal natural disaster and emergency assistance for state and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens. It was enacted in 1988.

Minnesota matches IRS’ July 15 deadline for 2019 income taxes

Monday March 23: In line with the state’s continued peacetime emergency response to COVID-19, the Minnesota Department of Revenue has announced that taxpayers filing their annual Minnesota individual income tax return for 2019 now have until Wednesday, July 15, 2020, to file and make their payments without any penalties or interest.

When must I file and pay my 2019 income taxes?

Both the IRS and the Minnesota Department of Revenue will accept individual income tax returns through July 15, 2020, without assessing penalties or interest.

Why is the Department of Revenue offering more time?

As Minnesota responds to the COVID-19 situation, the State of Minnesota is providing this filing and payment grace period for 2019 to those who need it. We encourage Minnesotans who expect refunds to file as soon as they are ready.

We also encourage Minnesotans who do not need extra time to pay, to file and pay as soon as possible to do your part in providing ongoing support to COVID-19 response across the state.

Are 2020 estimated state income tax payments included?

This grace period does not include estimated state tax payments for individual income taxes due April 15, 2020, for the 2020 tax year.

Are Minnesota’s corporate tax payments included?

While the Minnesota due date of April 15, 2020, has not changed, under current Minnesota law corporations receive an automatic extension to file their state return to the later date of Nov. 15, 2020, or the date of any federal extension to file.

Have partnership and S-corporation deadlines changed?

While the Minnesota due date of April 15, 2020, has not changed, under current Minnesota law, partnerships, fiduciaries, and S-corporations receive an automatic extension to file their state return to the date of any federal extension to file.

What if I cannot file or pay by July 15, 2020?

You may request relief from other late-file or late-pay penalties, additional tax charges, or interests, for reasonable cause or the state of emergency declarations by the president and governor due to COVID-19. You may request relief after being notified of a penalty.

What if I have other questions?

If you have questions about this new income tax payment deadline, please contact us: via phone at 1-800-652-9094 (toll-free) or via email at individual.incometax@state.mn.us.