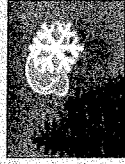


VIRGINIA KNOCKS OFF GIANTS — B1

WEDNESDAY
December 21, 2011

WEATHER



High: 35
Low: 12
Up North
5 day
forecast

MESABI DAILY NEWS

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County Board backs nonferrous Resolution passes by 4-3 vote; dozens speak

By CHARLES RAMSAY
Regional Editor

ELY — The St. Louis County Board is on record in support of nonferrous mining, after narrowly approving a resolution for it Tuesday on a 4-3 vote.

But it took a lot of talking to get there. Commissioners heard from dozens of speakers, both for and against nonferrous mining, in a packed Morse Town Hall that had many persons standing outside in the cold waiting to speak.

Four commissioners supported the resolution — Chris Dahlberg of Duluth, Steve Raukar of Hibbing, Keith Nelson of Foyal Township and Mike Forsman of Ely. Three commissioners voting against were from the Duluth area — Steve O'Neil, Frank Jewell and Peg Sweeney. Changes to the resolution included a clause added on environmental cleanup for mine closure, and that the County Board supports existing environmental review and permitting process in place, and that the board supports the success of nonferrous mining initiatives currently planned, upon approval of all permits necessary.

The UMD School of Economics' assertion that nonferrous mining would result in many construction and permanent jobs as well as economic benefits to the region also was made part of the modified resolution.

PolyMet, which is seeking to start up the first nonferrous mining operation in Minnesota, has been working with regulatory agencies in the environmental review process for a number of years. It is seeking to mine and process copper.

Please see COUNTY A8

TAX CUT STALEMATE | November

County from A1 Mining measure backed

nickel and precious metals like platinum and palladium. Several other companies, including Twin Metals, are doing exploratory drilling.

During the public hearing on the resolution, speakers generally lined up for clean water and against sulfide mining, or for jobs and economic development with mining.

A bus from Hibbing brought in about 25 mining supporters, starting off with Mayor Rick Canotta. He told the audience that both issues got support.

People "are for clean water. We do care about the environment. And we do need jobs," he said.

Becky Rom of Ely spoke out against sulfide mining, questioning if facts for mining were accurate. "We're going to lose jobs with this," she said.

Tony Sene of Hibbing said he had lived in California for decades and that state has problems with abandoned copper mines. This time in Minnesota, nonferrous mining will be done right, he said, adding that the economy would likely crash, and "we need to create some wealth" in the area.

Lori Fedo of Hibbing's Chamber of Commerce spoke for nonferrous mining, as "we believe this is our future."

Deborah Kleese said there was uncertainty with such mining, and that numbers of closed nonferrous mines also became "Superfund" sites for cleanup.

John Grahek of a building trades union spoke in favor of the nonferrous mining projects, while Pamela Thompson of Brimson said that as many jobs in tourism and resorts would be lost as any new mining jobs added.

Ray Jensen of the Hibbing Community College and Babbitt Mayor Glenn Anderson spoke in favor, Anderson noting that mining pioneer Peter Mitchell, "when he came up here, wasn't on a tourism trip."

Margaret Hodnik of Minnesota Power also spoke in favor of nonferrous, that mining helps communities do well with jobs, schools and infrastructure.

Rod Iteola of Hibbing said he is a geophysicist and that pollution cited as a problem with mines such as the one at Ladysmith, Wis., had similar pollution levels before a mine started there.

Jane Koschak of Ely spoke against

mining, which she said would be tearing up lands and wearing on highways with vehicles.

"I don't think anyone would want this in their backyard," she said.

Brad Boos, who runs an electrical contracting business, told listeners that there has been more than 30 percent unemployment in trades for a number of years.

"We need these jobs and we can do this right," he said.

State Rep. Tom Rukavina, DFL-Virginia, said he was "proud of our culture of mining, and that taconite production taxes provide 12 percent of local property taxes paid on the Range. "Tourism doesn't generate" funds for local projects as mining does, he added.

He acknowledged that he has spoken out against nonferrous mining in the 1970s, but innovations had improved that a lot.

"We are a county built on mining, and we need the support" of Duluth and Range commissioners for nonferrous, Rukavina said.

Julie Richard, an Ely-area resident, said that the technology in nonferrous was still experimental and when a big business such as a mining company moved into the area, some of residents' local control was lost.

Gina DeBreta of Virginia said that sulfide mining "technology has not been proven in field tests."

Marci Wood of Duluth urged commissioners to visit the Sudbury, Ontario area to see sulfide mining effects, which "is other-worldly," she said.

Bill Travis of IDEA Drilling of Virginia said that the nonferrous projects would help provide jobs to the area.

Virginia Councilor Charles Baribeau was one of several officials speaking in support. He noted the Virginia council had passed a resolution in 2008 supporting PolyMet, and that as a pharmacist, "some of the chemistry put forward [by speakers] was inaccurate."

Ely Councilor Heidi Omerza said that the mining projects would benefit towns and schools.

"We need jobs up here," she said, "so this can stay up here."

Tax cut from A1 Stalemate between

January. The \$33 billion in cost for two months would be backfilled by an increase in loan fees charged by federal mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. In addition, it would extend jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed and stop a 27 percent cut in Medicare payments to doctors from being implemented.

The House measure would expand the tax cut for a year, with spending cuts, which Democrats oppose, to pay for it. And while the House bill also extends the jobless benefits, it does so by tightening rules, which again Democrats do not like.

The House bill was approved on a 229-193 vote that was solidly along party lines. The Senate measure, however, was passed by an overwhelming 89-10 margin.

So why the seeming lack of communication between Republican Senate and House leadership?

Cravaack said Senate GOP leaders on this issue were opponents of the House Republicans more so than the Democrats. "We expected that from them (Democrats). The Senate created a reckless bill. It's inexcusable not to extend it for another year," he said.

Cravaack said the Senate measure is a "bad bill for business, American

Military may get airport screening

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of the military on official travel, and their families, would move through airport security quicker next year under legislation sent to the president on Tuesday.

The House gave final congressional approval by voice vote.

If signed into law, the expedited screening would not take place immediately. The Homeland Security Department would have six months to devise a preference system for the armed forces. Some of the earliest beneficiaries likely would be troops returning from Afghanistan next year, and their family members.

The bill says military travelers must be in uniform and present their orders to get the expedited screening.

"An expedited, risk-based TSA screening process is the least we can do for our men and women in uniform and their families who sacrifice so much," said chief sponsor Rep. Chip Cravaack.

Romney begins making his closing argument to voters

BEDFORD, N.H. (AP) — Sharpening

the failures of this president. We are big-