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WEDNESDAY
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Prison capacity may double

■ Possible increase from 1,127 prisoner beds to 2,280 would make MCF-Faribault the state's largest correctional facility

By MATTHEW COULSEY
Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — An expansion which would more than double the inmate roster at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Faribault (MCF-Faribault) has been proposed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) and Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The proposal, which would make Faribault home to the largest prison in the state, calls for the construction of three new 416-bed living units on the grounds of MCF-Faribault. With the addition, the Faribault prison could house 2,280 inmates, more than doubling the facility's current capacity, said DOC Deputy Commissioner Dennis Benson.

"Right now it's just a proposal. It still has to make it through the legislature, and we'll be looking for community input as well," said Benson. "We don't want to shove a pill down anyone's throat... We believe we have a good relationship with the Faribault community. Now there have been some issues which are typical around prisons, but we think the community will be willing to work with us."

The three proposed medium-security living units, which would cost around \$65 million to construct through capital bonding,

would have lock-down capabilities and toilets in each cell, said Benson. The current facilities at MCF-Faribault don't allow medium-security inmates to be locked in their cells throughout the night, are extremely outdated, and are poorly designed to serve as a medium-security prison, he said.

"Eventually most of those old buildings used to house inmates would no longer be used," said Benson.

But the three proposed 416-bed living units which would bring MCF-Faribault to a maximum capacity of 2,280 inmates is the first proposed phase in a two-phase process. Officials at the DOC also plan to include two more 416-bed living units as they phase out existing buildings, which served for decades as part of the Faribault Regional Center, a facility for the mentally impaired.

"By 2008, we would like to have a total of five new living units," said Benson. "Our goal is to phase out the existing buildings which are outdated. It would be a gradual process if it were to proceed. It wouldn't happen all at once."

Benson estimated that the additional 1,155 inmate beds would provide a minimum of 120 jobs at the prison. Those jobs include



Keith Finley, right, and Kevin Horsman attach wire razor ribbon to a fence at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Faribault during an expansion of a minimum-security area in 1998. The prison has proposed a new expansion. (File Photo / Daily News)

additional food service employees, health care staff, and correctional officers or guards at the prison. In addition, Benson said it's possible that the minimum-security inmate population would be downsized in Faribault.

"Right now we have the capacity to house 136 minimum-security inmates at the Faribault facility," said Benson. "We might not house that many in the future, but we still have a laundry to run and lots of land to maintain there."

Why Faribault?

Tuesday's announcement by the DOC marks the third, and by far the largest, proposed expansion

for MCF-Faribault. Benson said the Faribault prison is a prime target for expansion because of the large amount of land available, and the cost of maintaining the additional buildings there.

"Not only does Faribault have the room for expansion, but with new facilities we don't have the same problems there. The tunnels [remnants of the days of the Faribault Regional Center] can be filled in, and the buildings can be torn down," said Benson. "It just makes good business. It will be a much safer, secure facility."

PRISON
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Local facility has history of expansions, escapes

FARIBAULT — Approximately four years after breaking ground for MCF-Faribault in November 1989, the conversion of six former buildings of the Faribault Regional Center was under prison control. At that time, according to a 1990 press release issued by the DOC, the prison had a maximum capacity of 507 inmates.

In January 1994, a 300-bed expansion of the prison was proposed. On May 20, 1994, the expansion was approved by lawmakers after a deal was struck between DOC officials and members of the Faribault Regional Center Task Force.

By September of 1997, DOC officials announced plans to again expand the Faribault prison, making it the third-largest prison in the state. A 136-bed minimum-security expansion was proposed, which would allow certain inmates — those with no history of escaping or violent acts, DOC officials said — to work outside the prison fence.

The state Legislature approved funding for the minimum-security prison expansion, and by July 1998, the Faribault

Regional Center was officially closed. In November 1998, a fence for the new minimum-security section of the prison was erected, and Faribault's prison population grew to 1,017 inmates, with a staff of 465 workers.

Since then, four prisoners are known to have escaped from the prison:

■ Brent Alan Canfield, convicted of burglary, escaped on Jan. 9, 2000;

■ Martez Lavell Gibson, a minimum-security inmate, walked away from the facility on Jan. 24, 2001;

■ Scott Wayne Heggstuen, convicted of burglary and with a history of escapes, disappeared from his job assignment at approximately 5:30 a.m. on the morning of May 22, 2001; and,

■ John Blake, a drug offender with an escape history, walked away from MCF-Faribault while on work duty outside the fence on the morning of Jan. 6, 2003.

The Faribault prison's first escapee was Gregory Quamme, who walked away from his construction work assignment on May 30, 1990.

Proposal to allow wind towers scheduled for hearing in March

By PAULINE SCHREIBER
Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — A proposed zoning amendment to allow small-scale wind energy generation towers in Rice County will receive a public hearing before the Rice County Planning Commission in March.

On Tuesday, the Rice County Board of Commissioners reviewed a preliminary draft of the ordinance, then voted to forward it to the planning commission to receive public comment on the rules.

"These rules are for wind power generation facilities of 5,000 kilowatts or less. Larger facilities are governed and permitted by the state rather than the county," Rice County Zoning Administrator Trent McCorkell told county board members.

Towers and all related equipment for wind generation would be required to comply with state and federal regulatory standards, according to the proposed ordinance. They would have to be placed at least 750 feet from any

residence not owned by the generator's owner; 300 feet from a road right-of-way; and 200 feet from a property line.

One provision in the ordinance would allow for lattice-type towers to hold up equipment generating 40 kilowatts or less. Such wind towers, McCorkell explained, generate electricity mostly for the needs of an individual farm, business or residence.

Larger-scale generators would be required to be set atop monopole towers, which are self-supporting with a tubular base housing an enclosed ladder. They would be limited to 300 feet in height. Rotor blades on the 300-foot towers can not reach higher than 500 feet from the ground.

No lighting would be permitted on the towers other than what might be required by federal rules. All connecting power lines would be required to be buried underground. And, a final regulation requires all towers and facilities erected in the county to be "designed to minimize their visual impact."



Bob Bjorgum, left, Dr. Roy Anderson and Harry Peterson listen during the Protect Our Water rally held Tuesday in the Capitol rotunda in St. Paul. (Hans Madsen / Daily News)

Locals ask legislators to 'Protect Our Water'

By JON MINNICK
Staff Writer

ST. PAUL — Joining hundreds of other rally goers, four Faribault men headed to the state Capitol Tuesday to defend something that affects their community, their leisure, and their very existence — water.

Roy Anderson, Bob Bjorgum, Leo Charlton and Harry Peterson boarded a bus at the Days Inn Tuesday morning to join activists from across the state in a Protect Our Water rally in St. Paul.

Each man went for his own reasons, but all had the same goal — safe, healthy water to drink, play in, and promote wildlife.

Patrick Ganey, director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP), and other residents of the Northfield area joined the Faribaultians at a stop in Northfield to take on passengers.

"I'm glad to be putting my voice in as

one of the many at the Capitol today," Ganey said.

The rally was organized by the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) with three main goals: making dishwasher detergents sold in Minnesota phosphorous-free, fixing septic systems that contaminate water, and making clean water a budget priority.

Upon arriving in St. Paul, the local group met for a social gathering with other groups from around the state before being transported to the state Capitol rotunda for a rally. Speakers from the MEP and state legislators addressed the group, which extended from the ground level to spectators on the second and third levels, as well.

MEP Executive Director Ron Kroese spoke about the mutual desires that brought concerned citizens from across the state together.

"We share a concern that pollution is

affecting our drinking water, our rivers, our lakes, and our streams," Kroese said. Kroese said the MEP's goal of eliminating dishwasher detergents with phosphorous "is a small step to help keep our lakes blue in the summer, rather than green."

Phosphorous-containing laundry detergents were banned in the early 1970s because of the massive growth algae undergo when phosphorous is present. Dishwasher detergents still contain phosphorous, however, but a bill in the House seeks to reverse that.

Ganey, a board member of MEP, spoke at the rally, informing the group of the effects of phosphorous on an ecosystem. Ganey said in the Cannon River watershed alone, more than 10,000 kilograms of phosphorous enter the water each year.

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THURSDAY



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