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JAMESTOWN, NORTH DAKOTA



Anna Paige / The Forum

The Prairie Public building at 207 Fifth St. N. in downtown Fargo.

Prairie Public eliminates 12 jobs after federal, state cuts

BY JOHN LAMB
The Forum

FARGO

Citing a loss of federal funding for public broadcasting and reduced funding from the state of North Dakota, Prairie Public has cut 12 positions.

Of the cuts, seven people were laid off and five open positions were cut.

In a Wednesday, Oct. 1, statement announcing the cuts, Prairie Public CEO and President John Harris said the loss of government funding led to a 25% loss in revenue for the nonprofit organization.

“Like most every public media organization in the country, we were forced to make hard

choices — that included the difficult decision to part with valued members of our staff,” he said.

The cuts amount to an 18% staff reduction.

“It’s sad. Somber. We lost a lot of good colleagues,” Harris, who is based in Fargo, told The Forum on Wednesday afternoon. “It’s a tough situation.”

The cuts were spread out across the operation, with three apiece on the TV and radio sides, two in administration and one each in the gaming, development, education and engineering departments.

The cuts now leave Prairie Public with a staff of 52.

As of late Wednesday

afternoon, two positions were listed as job opportunities on Prairie Public’s website, an education manager in Fargo and a broadcast maintenance engineer in Bismarck.

“This doesn’t by any means balance the budget,” he said. “We’ll still have a hole in the budget around \$1 million to make up.”

Prairie Public had been operating on an annual budget of about \$13 million, but the elimination of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting amounts to a \$2.1 million loss. The network also faces the loss of \$600,000 from the state of North Dakota.

Harris said next year’s budget will be approved

in early November.

He said Prairie Public leadership is still looking for ways to save expenses as well as add new revenue sources.

Membership revenue has increased over the last year, though he doesn’t know if that was a reaction to the loss of government funding or a sustainable growth. Similarly, financial aid from some foundations could help, but he didn’t know if that would be reliable in the long term.

While leadership is trying to figure out future finances, it shouldn’t affect viewers and listeners in the near future. PBS and NPR both lowered member dues so networks like Prairie Public can still air their content.

“People are not going to see or hear a difference for a year,” he said, adding that much programming for the foreseeable future is already in the can.

“We’re still running ‘Antiques Roadshow,’ ‘Nature,’ ‘Nova’ and ‘Masterpiece Theatre,’” he said, adding that he didn’t know if PBS would keep producing shows like that in the future. He said “Lawrence Welk” reunions will also remain on the air.

The network keeps transmitters across the region, allowing for broadcasting in North Dakota, northwestern Minnesota, eastern Montana and Canada.

Harris didn’t know if the budget concerns

would keep Prairie Public from helping bring popular acts and shows like “Antiques Roadshow,” Irish singer Daniel O’Donnell or the radio show “The Moth” to the area.

Locally he said Prairie Public leadership would be evaluating the feasibility of continuing to produce certain local shows like “Prairie Pulse” as well as some documentaries and specials.

“We have less boots on the ground but we want to continue to do as much as we can,” Harris said. “Our biggest expense and our biggest asset is our personnel and our programming. I’m disappointed. Prairie Public is not going away, but we’ve been weakened.”

Park Board approves agreement for Spiritwood Resort

BY MASAKI OVA
The Jamestown Sun

JAMESTOWN — The Stutsman County Park Board unanimously approved on Tuesday, Sept. 30, entering into a consent to collateral assignment of permit agreement with the American State Bank of

Grygla for Spiritwood Resort.

Rob and Leah Brooks are purchasing Spiritwood Resort.

The Stutsman County Park Board previously approved recommendations for a 20-year permit for the Brookses to operate Spiritwood Resort.

Stutsman County

State’s Attorney Fritz Fremgen previously said language in the consent to collateral assignment of permit agreement would transfer the permit to American State Bank of Grygla. He said the language says the bank would control the place but not have any obligation, duty or liability

under the permit.

Jessica Alonge, Stutsman County auditor/ chief operating officer, said Fremgen reviewed and approved the language sent from the new operators of Spiritwood Resort.

Alonge said the terms for the permit to operate Spiritwood Resort began

Wednesday, Oct. 1.

The new operators of the resort will pay an annual fee of \$10,000 for the permit. The \$10,000 annual fee for the permit will be waived for the first 36 months of operation. Following the 36-month period, the annual permit fee may be waived or reduced by

infrastructure upgrades made by the permittee, according to the permit.

The annual permit fee previously was \$1 per year.

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