



Big rent hike for city staff

Council unanimously approves 63 percent increase over three years to deal with maintenance backlog

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Living in Longyearbyen is getting a lot more expensive for many as a 63 percent hike in rents for city government workers has been approved, following a significant hike in utility and other fees just enacted.

All of the increases are seen as necessary to fund mandatory facilities and updates being shortchanged, according to Longyearbyen Municipal Council members who unanimously approved the rent hike today.

More government dirt:
Governor OKs changes at Lunckefjell as Store Norske starts work at site. **Page 3**

The increase will be take place over a three-year period starting in November, rather than an alternative that implemented it entirely then.

Higher rents, which the council has put off for two years, were called necessary to pay for a huge backlog of maintenance. Jørn Dybdahl, one of the council's two Konsekvenslista members speaking mostly strongly about the hike, said employees complaining about it are paying well below market rates and need to take responsibility

See HOUSING, page 3



RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Russian workers at Murmansk's airport load cargo destined for the Barneo ice camp at approximately 89 degrees north. More than 50 tons of supplies are scheduled for delivery to the camp, which provides support and shelter for expeditions to the North Pole.

Not hot and bothered

Season of extended excursions to Svalbard, North Pole called normal despite warm winter

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It seems like winter barely happened, but with the arrival of spring comes a new season of frigid extended excursions that organizers say is largely normal so far.

Russian workers are preparing the Barneo ice camp at roughly 89 degrees north for North Pole expeditions, with one already on

its way, albeit via the long route over the top of the world from Canada. Svalbard tour and support companies are also preparing for multi-day expeditions to the north and in the archipelago, stating participation appears consistent with past years and arrangement shouldn't be seriously affected despite high temperatures and low snow accumulation.

"It looks like a normal year," said Terje Aunevik, managing directing for Pole Position, which provides logistical support for many North Pole expeditions.

See TRIPS, page 4

'Ice Balloon' a riviting tale of doom

Review: Account of ill-fated 1897 expedition to North Pole succeeds most with trip itself

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Stuck at the hotel or exhausted after a long day of slow progress across unstable ice? Reading this in your bed or sleeping bag won't change that, but it will be a reminder of past times when three-fourths of

See REVIEW, page 4



KNOPH

An 1897 North Pole expedition led by by Swedish explorer S.A. Andrée comes to a crashing end in "The ice Balloon."

Inside

'Frozen Planet' gets hot U.S. debut
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Paraglider injured in crash faces charges
- Painter of Galleri Svalbard's first works dies
- Man gets jail, fine, loses license for DUI theft
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople

Vei 210 -2- 13

Longyearbyen, Svalbard

9170

Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38

U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

Corrections policy

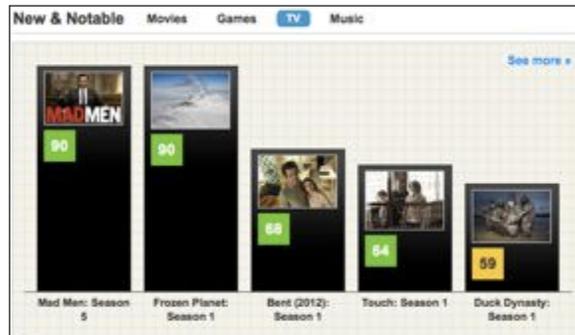
When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.



DISCOVERY CHANNEL



METACRITIC



DISCOVERY CHANNEL

'Frozen Planet' gets hot U.S. debut

Critics rave and 27 million watch first part of BBC series featuring Svalbard; skeptics also thrive

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The narrator is now Alec Baldwin because apparently a familiar famous actor is necessary to keep audiences from avoiding some Brit who doesn't speak "real" English.

Also, only 47 percent of that potential audience in the United States believes man-made climate change is occurring (although that's up from 38 percent in 2008).

Toss in the anti-education, anti-elite attitude raging among those typically watching the most TV and one might think a series about environmental happenings in the polar regions would be an icy disaster.

Whoa.

The BBC series "Frozen Planet," in which Svalbard plays a big role on-screen and behind the camera, is in a two-way tie for the highest-rated current show at Metacritic, a website compiling reviews by professional critics.

The reviews and a heavy publicity campaign also paid off in ratings, as 27 million people watched at least one minute of the first part of the seven-part series, according to the Discovery Channel, which simulcast the show

on seven affiliate cable channels. The total is higher than typically seen for top-rated shows such as "American Idol," but as separate channels would not qualify for that distinction in the official U.S. Nielsen ratings.

Numerous internet commenters grumbled about Baldwin replacing British narrator David Attenborough for most of the series. But Mike Hale, in a *New York Times* review, argued "it makes commercial sense."

"The mass audience will buy strangeness, whether it's wild animals on the tundra or the Jersey shore, as long as it's in a familiar package," Hale wrote. "And the occasional deluxe series probably subsidizes many other smaller, grittier projects."

The series has been cited by five scientific papers since it debuted on the BBC last fall.

Most reviews used lines like "the ultimate reality show" due to new camera techniques and technologies capturing changes to the environment in the polar regions. Some did question if all the technology and cut-and-paste work might somehow be altering that reality.

Of course, plenty dismissed the program as rubbish, such as a headline in *The Blaze* declaring "Entertainment 'Frozen Planet' Premieres in U.S. With 'Amazing Natural Drama' – Climate Change Rhetoric to Follow."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Just a tiny bit of room this week – and those reviews/numbers for "Frozen Planet" are a healthy dose of weirdness anyhow – so we'll just note Svalbard has one of world's ten best sunrises, along with historic locations such as

Stonehedge and Mount Siani, according to cheapflights.co.uk. An impressive detail, intentional or not, is their noting the first sunrise after polar winter "holds an almost magical appeal for visitors," since many locals consider the dark season the best time of the year.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jørn Dybdahl, left, a Konsekvenslista member of Longyearbyen's Municipal Council, explains why "it's about time" rents are significantly increased for city workers at the council's meeting today.

Council's rent hike debate gets testy

HOUSING, from page 1

for more of the actual cost of their homes.

"Forty-five kroner per square meter is not something to whine over," Dybdahl said. The current rate is 28.41 cents per square meter and, even after the increase, the rate will still be below what many residents pay.

At least a dozen city employees and their family members were packed into the few rows of audience seats in the room, and many were visibly unhappy at the blunt remarks. Other council members, while agreeing the increase is necessary, objected to Dybdahl's tone.

"A rent increase will bring major changes

for many," said Christin Kristoffersen, chairwoman of the Labor Party-led council.

The increase will not apply to a small number of school employees with a separate lease agreement with more than two years remaining, Kristoffersen said.

The rent increase comes after the council voted in December to increase water rates by more than 60 percent, power rates 21.4 percent, most vehicle registration fees 16.7 percent and recreation center pass fees by 17 to 20 percent.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Store Norske starts work at Lunckefjell

Governor OKs permit changes company seeks for new mine

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Store Norske, which three months ago threatened to halt many of its operations due to delays in the approval of a new coal mine at Lunckefjell, took major steps forward Monday as it began work at the site while Svalbard's

governor recommended more favorable permit terms sought by the company.

The company is clearing snow and ice for the road to the site, where they hope to begin mining next year. The permit changes, dealing with issues such as access routes, must still be approved by Norway's Environmental Ministry.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Paraglider injured in crash lacks license, faces charges

A Longyearbyen man severely injured in a paragliding accident last week may face criminal charges because he didn't have a license or training for the activity, a Norwegian Civil Aviation Authority official said. Two men in their 30s made several jumps from Platåberget ending after dusk May 13, although the Aviation Act forbids paragliding after sunset. The first man made his final landing safely, but the second man crashed into the mountainside and was hospitalized in Tromsø with serious, but not life-threatening injuries. Sources told *Svalbardposten* the injured man has long been warned by the association to stop the illegal flights.

Kåre Tveter, 90, painter of gallery's first collection, dies

Kåre Tveter, 90, whose 40 paintings and sketches provided the initial and an ongoing fundamental foundation of the collection at Galleri Svalbard, has died after a long illness. Tveter's collection of paintings featuring mostly subjects from the area was unveiled when the gallery opened in 1995. He was a frequent visitor to Svalbard beginning in 1982, but was unable to paint after suffering a stroke in 1998. A bust of him was unveiled at the gallery in 2010 in a ceremony hosted by then Norwegian Minister of Justice Knut Storberget. "There is no doubt that (Tveter's) interpretation of light on Svalbard has reached the furthest distances and gained the highest reputation among the public," said Jan Martin Berg, the gallery's manager.

Man gets jail, fine and loses license for DUI in stolen car

A man in his 30s who stole a car and drove it briefly while intoxicated has been sentenced to 30 days in jail, a 28,000-kroner fine and the loss of his driver's license for two years. The man swiped the car from the center of Longyearbyen last December and drove it to Huset. The car's owner saw the theft and followed him in a taxi, calling police when he left the vehicle.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 22 km/h. High -9C (-14C wind chill), low -11C (-17C wind chill). Sunrise 5:41a; sunset 6:32p	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 35 km/h. High -5C (-11C wind chill), low -9C (-18C wind chill). Sunrise 5:33a; sunset 6:39p	Snow. S winds to 11 km/h. High -8C (-13C wind chill), low -12C (-18C wind chill). Sunrise 5:25a; sunset 6:47p	Snow. Variable winds at 11 km/h. High -10C (-16C wind chill), low -14C (-20C wind chill). Sunrise 5:17a; sunset 6:54p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -12C (-18C), -16C (-21C), light 13:53h; Monday, snow, -7C (-13C), -12C (-18C), light 14:08h; Tuesday, snow, -7C (-13C), -8C (-15C), light 14:24h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-17C), -13C (-20C), light 14:40h			
Data provided by yr.no			

Spring forward: Daylight Savings Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday. Set clocks ahead one hour.



RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Air-dropped cargo descends to this year's site for the Barneo ice camp. The camp's blog is reporting relatively normal progress and conditions, but notes there is some open water at the North Pole.

Normal North Pole season expected

TRIPS, from page 1

The company handled about 200 participants last year and this year "they say it will be more or less the same," Aunevik said. As for terrain conditions, the reports from Barneo are "it's still like winter conditions at this time on the ice."

Barneo's official blog (www.barneo.ru/2012.htm), which reports things such as work progress and weather conditions daily, notes today that helicopter observers above the Pole saw "a little open water (and) little 'rivers,'" but in general conditions suggest "we can hope for a strong selection of ice under Borneo."

Starting this week toward the Pole, and ultimately the Barneo base for pickup, is the Norwegian team of Mads Agerup and Rune Midtgaard. They begin their expedition Sunday at Cape Discovery and their initial reports indicated tough going due to rough and deteriorating ice conditions.

Day excursions and other winter activities

'Ice Balloon' reminds of hard times

REVIEW, from page 1

those "heroic" explorers trying to reach the North Pole were killed.

"The Ice Balloon," a new book by Alec Wilkinson receiving widespread attention, recounts the 1897 effort by Swedish explorer S.A. Andrée to reach the North Pole in a hydrogen balloon. But all three men in the expedition were killed, with their bodies recovered 33 years later.

Much as the accounts of Ernest Shackleton's ill-fated attempt to reach the South Pole aboard the *Endurance* proved a more engaging story than Roald Amundsen's successful conquest, "The Ice Balloon" is a standout North Pole narrative due to the danger and boldness of the trip. Previous attempts to reach the Pole were mostly by ship, dogsled or

in Svalbard were severely curtailed by temperatures that, according to *Svalbardposten*, were 11 degrees Celsius above normal for the first 80 days of the year. The heat was also accompanied by occasional periods of record rainfall.

But extended expeditions in the area are about to begin at Basecamp Spitsbergen and Stein Tore, the company's expedition leader, said they expect a normal level of activity – although how long it lasts is unknown. He said the last day of excursions in 2006 was April 21, while the following year they lasted until June 22.

Even the winter season went well, despite making only one trip to the *Noorderlicht* vessel instead of the normal 15 to 20, Tore said. Tore appeared satisfied with alternative destinations such as Isfjord Radio and because employees "have a lot of knowledge they have become experts on improvisation."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

on foot, so the poor odds of Andrée's novel excursion were made greatly more uncertain.

Wilkinson offers an extensive look at the history of North Pole expeditions, which may or may not appeal to those wanting to read about the trip itself.

He also offers plenty of details about Andrée, including his love life, as well as his two companions. The political and widely publicized aspects of the expedition are also recounted.

The pacing and interest level picks up when Wilkinson is narrating the trip itself. The balloon crashed after only two days and the explorers, inadequately clothed and prepared, failed to make the return trek across the ice.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

March 21

6 p.m.: Movie: "John Carter" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 24-25

11 a.m.-5 p.m.: Open cabin at Fredheim trapper's cabin hosted by governor. Snacks, warm drinks and historical stories will be offered. Also, an outdoor Mass will take place at noon March 25.

March 25

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Lorax" (3D), U.S. animated dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Devil Inside," U.S. thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 27

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

March 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Hunger Games," U.S. action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 31

Dogsledding classes for various experience levels, offered at varying times. Details available at www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no.

Meter reading Q1 due.

Deadline to submit nominations for Tyfus statuette and Youth Culture Grant. Details about the awards available at www.lokalstyre.no.

April 1

6 p.m.: Movie: "Mirror Mirror," U.S. drama/family, no age limit specified, Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hugo Cabret" (3D), U.S. drama/family, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 10

7 p.m.: Concert: Neva-Volga, a capella ensemble from St. Petersburg, featuring works from Russian monastic tradition and Russian classical composers.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Five skiers killed in avalanche in Troms*
- *Damage to oceans to reach \$2B a year*
- *Viking mice invaded other Arctic lands*
- *Capsizing icebergs pack power of nuke*