



What: Longyearbyen municipal council. All 15 members, four-year terms.
When: 2-6 p.m. Oct. 9; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Oct. 10.
Where: Lompensenteret.
Who: Norwegian/Nordic citizens 16 or older who are Svalbard residents for at least four weeks and other foreigners who are additionally registered as residents in Norway for at least three years.
How: All eligible voters should receive polling cards, which should be brought along with a photo ID.
Tally: 8 p.m. Oct. 10, Kroa.

Previous coverage:
 Sept. 20: Konsekvenslista
 Sept. 27: Progress Party



It's election time

Nonpartisan: Hoping focus on education, health, local ties allow party to regain lead spot

By MARK SABBATINI
 Editor

With most local parties agreeing on most issues it's sensible having a leader without an allegiance to any of them.

That argument, plus an agenda highlighting school and health care upgrades, are what

See **NONPARTISAN**, page 4

Labor: Largest party cites achievements, says political ties will help sway Parliament

By MARK SABBATINI
 Editor

The problem with being in power is everyone else is trying to say why you shouldn't. So Christin Kristoffersen isn't sure people know and appreciate the accomplishments of her Labor Party on the local council

See **LABOR**, page 4

Conservative: Less oversight to boost opportunities, better school building sought by party

By MARK SABBATINI
 Editor

An aggressive agenda promoting mining, new residences and businesses, and access to open space is to be expected from Conservative Party candidates for the local council.

But areas where government should be
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Film fest an Arctic reality show

Debut CinemArctic set back by rabies and snow, but encore already in planners' spotlight

By MARK SABBATINI
 Editor

One quirk about a film festival near the North Pole is real-life drama can rival what's happening on the screen.

A rabies outbreak kept many kids away. An election campaign kept adults otherwise occupied. A blizzard barely a week after the official end of summer trapped visitors in Barentsburg.

Even the one urbane thing amidst all the ruggedness was a show stopper, as a new digital theater system couldn't play a featured film and other hoped-for titles because they were



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The Matti Bye Ensemble performs live music Friday for "Nanook of the North" during the official opening of CinemArctic at Kulturhuset.

only available on old-style reels.

But the phrase "next year" is repeatedly
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 - Hermansen gets two years in jail, 4M kr. fine
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Rabies cases up to 10
 Drastic steps to quell outbreak expand. Page 3

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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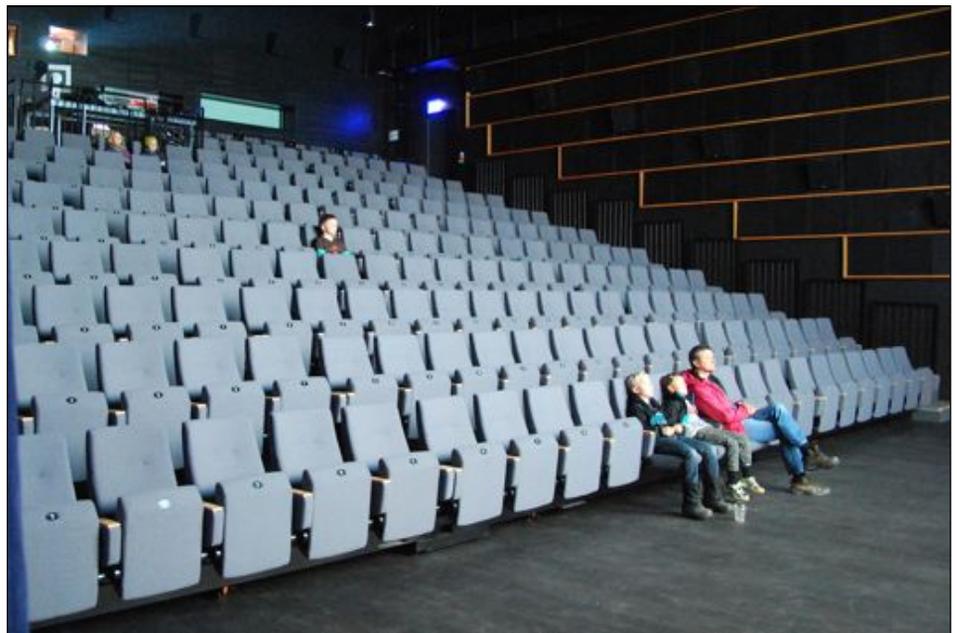
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Submitting material

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.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A sparse midday audience takes in a trio of children's short films Saturday at CinemArctic.

Lack of crowd doesn't dim hopes

MOVIES, from page 1

and enthusiastically being voiced by Martha Otte, project manager for the inaugural CinemArctic festival. The three-day event that ended Sunday came after two years of tumultuous planning by different organizers, but she said plans – and some funds – are already pointed toward the future.

"The feeling is not crisis, it's the way people received us, which was hospitality," she said, adding there's a "let's do it" attitude about future festivals.

Kulturhuset's 245-seat theater was maybe a third full for the official opening Friday, featuring the Matti Bye Ensemble performing live music for the classic documentary "Nanook of the North." The early evening show was planned with local youths in mind, but started an hour late and without many in the younger crowd who were getting vaccinations in the wake of a rabies outbreak in area wildlife.

Other mishaps culminated Saturday night

when some of the 18 guests visiting Barentsburg were trapped by a snowstorm that kept their boat from returning to Longyearbyen until 3 a.m. Sunday. Still, they were invited to a birthday bash for one of the Russian community's residents, so there's little doubt they were in fine spirits.

A "surprise" feature film Saturday night in Longyearbyen had to be cancelled because it was not available in digital format. Instead the scheduled closing film, "How I Ended This Summer," received a second screening. Like the party, that wasn't entirely a curse as the film was among the lineup's strongest and was making its Norwegian debut at the festival.

Otte said she hopes next year's festival will occur a couple of weeks earlier to avoid problems with weather and conflicting events, and feature more interactive activities such as workshops.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We've referred to Svalbard as potentially Ground Zero for the next world war but, wow, an armed shootout on the high seas between Russian fishermen and the Norwegian Coast Guard vessels in the near future isn't what we had in mind. But arming trawlers and allowing them to fire at the "European Somali" pirates of Norway is being proposed by Vladimir Zhirionvsky, leader of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, after yet another fishing vessel was detained Sept. 28 in a fishery protection zone near Svalbard. Coast Guard officials say the vessel was illegally dumping fish, a frequent accusation against Russian trawlers, but Zhirionvsky says his countrymen were fishing legally in international waters. "It's time to put the Norwegians in place," he said. We'd be putting this on page one except for elections –

the local one and the one in Russia that gave his party eight percent of the vote. Still, the detainment issue is getting serious debate, so look for something about the stink in our fish-wrapper soon ... This week's "we're lousy journalists" tidbit is election related since the top Google result for the local ruling party is a Facebook page declaring "Svalbard Arbeiderpartiet is a fictional Social-Democratic political party in the fictional Republic of Svalbard." Clicking on it takes you to Facebook's main site since the page has been snuffed. But a cached copy as of Aug. 25 features a minimal page with that description and a rose logo differing from the allegedly "real" one. It has 15 "likes," but no names or anything offering a clue who posted it. That's all the investigating we did, so it's possible by next week the town will have vanquished itself into surreality.

Reidar Hjermann, right, discusses a pilot program he initiated allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote with Longyearbyen youths Thursday at Ungdomsklubben. The city is one of 20 in Norway selected for the program.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM
SVALBARDPOSTEN
VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Upgrade to curb pollution at power plant tops 2012 budget

Spending 14.6 million kroner to purify exhaust gas at Longyearbyen's power plant as part of 73.1 million kroner upgrade to reduce the facility's environmental impact is to the top local priority in the proposed 2012 national budget. The overall proposed budget for Svalbard is 293.5 million kroner, a 26.6 million kroner increase from 2011. "It is important that the coal-fired power plant meets all environmental requirements," said Justice Minister Knut Storberget of the ruling Labor Party. The full upgrade, scheduled for completion in 2014, will eliminate the visible emissions coming from the plant by the removing the sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and dust particles.

Hermansen gets two years in jail, four million kroner fine

A sentence of two years in prison and a four million kroner fine has been imposed on Robert Hermansen, 72, after he was convicted of gross corruption as the administrative director of Store Norske from 1999 to 2008. The Nord-Troms district court ruling states while Hermansen was not a public servant, he did lead a state-owned company playing a key role in Norway and Svalbard policy. The conviction results from a four million kroner loan he received from a subcontractor, one of a series of improprieties revealed in audits showing he awarded above-market contracts in exchange for personal gain. The penalty is eight months shorter than sought by prosecutors.

Bonfire at Hiorthhamn draws emergency response, rebuke

Police and fire officials responded to what turned out to be a large bonfire Thursday night at Hirothhamn. The fire was so large several Longyearbyen residents told officials they thought a cabin across the bay was on fire, prompting the response. The fire was nearly burned out by the time officials arrived, but Sidsel Svarstad, first lieutenant for the governor, said the owner of the cottage where the fire took place faces an investigation for failing to notify authorities about the blaze.

Schools, land use top party goals

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stronger are the party's top priorities this year.

"The most important thing is we have to work for the school building," said Heinrich Eggenfellner, head of the local party. In addition to better facilities, the party also wants to enhance offerings such as vocational training.



HEINRICH EGGENFELLNER

Eggenfellner is not a candidate for the party, which won three council seats in 2007 with 17 percent of the vote. The top-ranked candidates are Geir Hekne, Stig Onarheim, Trond Erik Johansen and Roger Eriksen.

More local control, a common goal among most other parties, is getting extra emphasis by the Conservative Party as it proposes major changes to address concerns.

"Conservatives will propose changes to the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act that increase the local board's real power in Longyearbyen's land-use plan," a party statement pledges. "In too many cases the governor has the last word, which we believe undermines our democracy."

The party also wants more local responsibility for Longyearbyen's energy supply, stating prices are too high and the need for investment is more than the city's population can currently afford.

Like other parties, Conservatives are also expressing concerns about the governor's proposal to restrict access to East Svalbard. While "a reasonable protection policy that protects the environment" is desirable, so is ensuring continued access that's vital to activities such as tourism, research and mining. The party is also seeking more open space for housing.

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

Rabies cases at 10; protections expand

By MARK SABBATINI Editor

Officials are increasing already drastic measures to fight an outbreak of rabies in Svalbard as the number of confirmed animal infections has risen to ten, up from three a week ago.

Helicopter patrols for animals showing symptoms will be expanded beyond Longyearbyen to Barentsburg and Svea three times a week, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

Also, in addition to multiple traps deployed around Longyearbyen to catch and kill as many foxes as possible, the governor has received permission to use a reindeer carcass as enhanced bait. Only one fox has been

caught to date, which is being analyzed in Oslo to determine if it is infected.

Eight reindeer and two foxes have been diagnosed with rabies. The disease, frequently spread by bites and other contact with infected animals, is generally fatal to humans if not treated after symptoms appear.

Hundreds of hunters, dog owners and other residents have received vaccines as a safeguard. Also, dogs must be on leashes and under constant human supervision when outside.

Information in English about the location of the traps, infected animals and new regulations is at www.sysselmannen.no/hoved.aspx?m=44365.

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

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sunny. NE winds to 28 km/h. High -4C (-12C wind chill), low -7C (-13C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 15 km/h. High -9C (-14C wind chill), low -11C (-15C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds at 7 km/h. High -11C (-16C wind chill), low -12C (-18C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds at 7 km/h. High -13C (-17C wind chill), low -14C (-18C wind chill).
Sunrise 7:59a; sunset 5:29p	Sunrise 8:07a; sunset 5:21p	Sunrise 8:15a; sunset 5:13p	Sunrise 8:22a; sunset 5:05p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -14C (-20C), -15C (-21C), light 8:26h; Monday, p. cloudy, -15C (-21C), -16C (-22C), light 8:09h; Tuesday, cloudy, -13C (-19C), -15C (-21C), light 7:52h; Wednesday, cloudy, -12C (-18C), -14C (-20C), light 7:35h			
Data provided by yr.no			

Lead party: Much done, much to do

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during the past four years.

"I think we have not been very good at saying what we have done," said Kristoffersen who, as the party's lead candidate, is positioned to lead the council.

Those achievements include infrastructure upgrades such as a backup power at the electricity plant, with the party also highlighting that a 73.1-million-kroner upgrade to control pollution at the facility is the top local priority in the proposed upcoming national budget.

Labor won a plurality of seven seats on the 15-member council in 2007 after receiving 45 percent of the vote. Candidates ranked after Kristoffersen this year are Dag Hekne, Anita Paula Johansen and Viljar Johansen. The latter is Kristoffersen's 18-year-old son who is scheduled to return to Longyearbyen Oct. 19 after suffering critical gunshot injuries in this summer's shooting at the Utøya youth camp.

Having local leaders who are seen favorably by those in power at the national level is a point of emphasis for Labor Party candidates, but they emphasize they aren't always in lockstep with their colleagues to the south.

Local members, for instance, agree with most other parties the council needs more authority "to show what local democracy is worth," Kristoffersen said. They also support Store Norske's proposed new mine at Lunkefjellet despite environmental concerns from some higher-level officials, and have objections to a proposal by the governor greatly re-



SVALBARD ARBEIDERPARTI

Labor Party candidates Anita Johansen, left, and Christin Kristoffersen pass out roses and fliers in front of Svalbardbutikken in an effort to retain the largest presence on the local council.

stricting access to East Svalbard.

"Svalbard needs to be a knowledge base," she said. "This knowledge is enabled by being able to go places. We need to see them. We have cultural memories that by definition won't be that if we close them off."

Convincing national politicians to cede power to local officials for issues where there are differences isn't easy, Kristoffersen said, but she believes her party has the best chance.

"I don't think we will get a leading role nationally, but we should have a strong voice," she said. "It doesn't have to be one or the other, but we can fusion and find in-between solutions."

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

School, health seen as practical goals

NONPARTISAN, from page 1

Nonpartisan Party candidates are hoping will allow them to regain the lead position it has held at times on the local council. The party finished second in 2007, winning four of the 15 seats with 27 percent of the vote.

"We think we have better politicians and better solutions," said Kristin Grøtting, the party's lead candidate. "A lot of us have lived here for a long time."

Top-ranked Nonpartisan candidates after Grøtting are Lene Villumsen, Håvar Fjerdin-gøy and Gunnhild Antonsen.

Grøtting readily acknowledges the similarities of most local parties on issues and openly credit others' achievements, such as a former Conservative Party member who led a tax-rate reduction four years ago. At the same time, she said those who think party status affects the receptiveness of national leaders are mistaken.

"We can talk to them, but when they leave in the plane they forget us," she said.

Improving the local power plant could easily be the Nonpartisan Party's top priority on merit, but "we can decide much easier on education and health than on electricity," Grøtting said. While the Labor Party is touting a major upgrade in the proposed 2012 national budget, it "has already been promised for a long time" regardless of who has the most council seats.

Improving schools, even if more funds can't be obtained, tops the local Nonpartisan Party agenda, Grøtting said. Classrooms, for instance, could be assigned by the number of



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kristin Grøtting explains this week how working 15 years as a physical therapist at Longyearbyen Hospital offers a heightened sense of what is needed to improve local health care.

students rather than the current method of keeping ages groups in set parts of the building. Also temporary facilities should be ensured when construction causing debris or other impediments is occurring.

Bringing a psychologist back to Longyearbyen is among the main goals for improving health care. Grøtting said residents currently endure long waits and multi-day trips to Tromsø for a single session, making it largely impractical for those needing it. Increasing preventative efforts on substance abuse is another priority.

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

What's up

Oct. 6

8 a.m.-5 p.m.: Activity day to raise funds for telethon. Polarflokken barnehage

5 p.m.: Furniture auction to raise money for telethon. Statsbyggarsjen.

Oct. 7

4-8 p.m.: Submission of items for flea market at UNIS to raise telethon funds.

Oct. 8-9

Flea market. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Oct. 8, noon-4 p.m. Oct. 9. UNIS.

Oct. 9

6 p.m.: Movie: "Den Kjempestore Bjørnen," Danish animated/family, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Babycall," Norwegian thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 10

Deadline for submitting nominees for Board of Leisure and Culture Enterprises election Oct. 18. Contact rogerzoe@lokalstyre.no for details.

Oct. 10-11

Free legal assistance for Longyearbyen residents, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 10 at UNIS and 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Oct. 11 at Longyearbyen Library. Calls are also being accepted from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Oct. 10-13 at 7764 4559.

Oct. 12

6 p.m.: Movie: "Johnny English Reborn," British comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 13-15

Celebration of Huset's 60th anniversary.

Oct. 13

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3. Newtontoppen room.

Oct. 14

9 a.m.: Board of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 3. Newtontoppen room.

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:

- *WWF: Norway's two-faced in Svalbard*
- *Russia may cancel N. Pole sub tours*
- *How long can Greenland's ice cap last?*
- *Arkhangelsk bans gay events in public*