



Budget: More, yet less

City gets extra money for power plant in 2013, but infrastructure, school, recreation funds lacking

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Once again there's not enough money, much like the rest of the world, so things like the backlog of essential building repairs are again

getting kicked down the road. But while Longyearbyen's leaders are hoping national politicians are eventually generous enough to pay for such things, residents will hardly suffer the hardships of places like Greece.

Delaying projects such as bridge maintenance and making cuts in recreational spending are part of the city's proposed budget for 2013. The budget seeks to maintain secondary education and adult vocational spending, and priori-

tize technical infrastructure projects such as safeguarding drinking water supplies and up-grading waste facilities.

"We continue an operation that is not so different from the one we had," City Manager Ivar Undheim told *Svalbardposten*. "There will be no dramatic changes ... (but) we cut some projects and have a smaller reserve."

The city requested 188.46 million kroner
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Street smarts

Virtual tourists can now 'walk' around Svalbard's pristine land and meet its blurry residents

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

News flash: Your face is apparently hideously deformed beyond all recognition if you live in Svalbard. Must be climate change, the ozone hole, or something.

Everything else such as the streets, mountains and landmark sites are virtually the same as the real thing in a walkthrough of the area offered by Google Street View, the northernmost area receiving 3D photographic treatment from the search engine giant.

The Svalbard tour, debuting this week along with numerous other areas including Arctic communities elsewhere, features a mix

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A crowd of pedestrians, above, navigates the streets of Longyearbyen in this Google Street Maps scene that allows computer users to "walk around" in 3D. Faces and other certain identifying features are deliberately blurred for privacy reasons. At left, snowmobilers converge on the *Noorderlicht* ice-bound hotel ship in Tempelfjorden in another Street View scene from Svalbard debuting this week.

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Spending big to save past, future

Ny-Ålesund museum, wildlife studies, ski slope among big winners of environmental grants

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Nice as it is to preserve our footprints of the past, maybe it's best not to leave quite so many in the future.

That philosophy guided officials awarding 28 projects a total of 5.863 million kroner from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund this month. The fund, which presents grants
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MARKÉTA ŠAMÁNKOVÁ / NPI

An Arctic fox approaches a Norwegian Polar Institute researcher in July at Prins Karls Forland. NPI is receiving a 500,000 kroner grant to study the impacts of hunting and fishing in Svalbard.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Holiday mall madness, Svalbard style



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Shoppers peruse homemade clothing, household items, art, food and other wares sold by about 30 vendors Saturday during a holiday market on the upper floor of Lompensenteret. Another holiday event in the center is scheduled Sunday, Dec. 2, with a children's storytime at the library at 4:45 p.m. concluding an afternoon of activities celebrating the beginning of Advent. A holiday meal is scheduled at 2 p.m. at Huset, followed at 3 p.m. by a torchlight procession to the center of town that will pass by Santa's mailbox at the foot of Mine 2B so children can drop off letters to the Jolly Old Elf. The lighting of the town Christmas tree and traditional circular dance around it is scheduled at 4 p.m. in the town center, along with singing, food and drinks.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Not that you need to actually travel here any longer thanks to our economy-killing friends at Google Street View, but **Svalbard is getting another "best destinations" shout-out, this time at the top of CNN's "12 months, 12 trips, 12 ways to make your friends jealous" in 2013 list.** "Why: The chance to shorten your bucket list: specifically, to mark off the Northern Lights." Actually, Svalbard is listed both first and last in a way, since only Tromsø and Kirkenes are plugged in the headline. You have to read a couple paragraphs into the text to get to "although the aurora borealis can be spotted anywhere between latitudes 65 and 72 degrees, Norwegian towns such as Kirkenes, Tromsø, Alta and Svalbard offer ringside seats, especially in the winter ... If snowmobiling and dog sledding under shimmering green curtains of solar particles colliding with atmospheric gases isn't on your bucket list, you just need better gloves." Still, they concede the area isn't for "anyone dead-set on maintaining a year-round suntan" ... Of course, those dim, instant-gratification tourists will be getting their visual thrills merely looking at the sky and/or capturing the moment on an old-fashioned (a.k.a digital) camera. They'll be missing **the delight of seeing the Northern Lights in their true glory via a 41-channel hyperspectral camera that captures the entire sky in over the entire range of visible light with every shot.** The NORUSCA II is a Norway/Russian gizmo developed in 2009, with plans to install one at the Kjell Henriksen



KJELL HENRIKSEN OBSERVATORY

Your lyin' eyes: This is the best photo ever of the Northern Lights, according to science.

Observatory and one in Barentsburg. For those trying to impress *Mental Floss* types at parties, here's the scientific verbiage: "Unlike conventional cameras that converge all wavelengths of incoming light into a single image (or specific wavelengths with the help of filters), the NORUSCA II camera captures 41 discrete optical bands that spans the entire visible spectrum from 400-720nm wavelengths in just over two milliseconds, many times faster than what a conventional camera can achieve" ... For those whose brains flamed out trying to read that, we invite you to enlighten yourselves with the latest from **Glenn Beck who, certain of Armageddon due to the reelection of that Racist Black Socialist, is touting "Crisis Garden" seeds sold by the Survival Seed Bank.** The company claims "non-hybrid seeds could become more valuable than even silver or gold." We call that a win for seed banks, especially since a lot of Beck regulars lost their savings to a gold-investment scam he endorses since currency, of course, is also doomed.



KINGS BAY

Tourists examine exhibits in Ny-Alesund's information center, which is scheduled to be expanded by 2014 after receiving a 1.1 million kroner grant from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund.

Ny-Ålesund, NPI, ski lift win grants

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twice annually, awarded a larger-than-normal 13.2 million kroner to 70 projects during 2012, the fund's fifth year of existence.

The biggest single recipient of this fall's grants is Kings Bay, which received 1.1 million kroner of a requested 2.2 million kroner for new visitor center exhibitions and a mining museum.

The project, expected to cost a total of 2.7 million kroner, "will be built up in chronological order from its establishment at Kongsfjorden, to the mining era, the accidents and the transition to a modern research community," according to a statement from the Svalbard governor's office, which appoints the board that administers the fund. "The existing information center will be a natural conclusion to the exhibition, along with updated information about ongoing research."

Kings Bay, which hosts 30,000 tourists a year, hopes to finish the expansion by 2014. It will also feature a separate area for a 1962 mining disaster that is Norway's largest and a second floor dedicated to the area's aviation history.

The biggest overall grant winner is the Norwegian Polar Institute, receiving 900,000 kroner to study the seabirds of Adventdeltaet, 600,000 to map habitats for polar bears, 200,000 kroner to test an electronic polar bear warning system, and 500,000 kroner to study the impacts of hunting and fishing.

A major award that might not seem geared toward the fund's goal of environmental awareness and preservation is 750,000 kroner to the city of Longyearbyen for a ski lift at Gruedalen. But the governor's office, in its statement, noted the national government "asked the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund to prioritize outdoor activities as part of preventive health care ... the local plan for non-motorized outdoor activities is therefore a very positive development."

Among the private entities receiving grants are Basecamp Spitsbergen, which received 60,000 kroner for a glacier training class for youths, and the Svalbard Business Association, which received 100,000 kroner "to project aimed at sharing knowledge and experience between businesses on Svalbard."

"The Environment Fund has approved many positive single projects, but the board believes we have come to where we need to think bigger and more superior in terms of environmentally friendly industrial and social development," the governor's statement notes.

The list of this fall's winners and information about the fund is at www.sysselmannen.no/Svalbards-miljovernfond. The next application deadline is Feb. 1, 2013.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Parents of kindergarteners block hospital when parking

Parents are creating a chaotic and dangerous situation when they drive their kids to Kullungen kindergarten, according to officials at Longyearbyen Hospital. The entry to the hospital and the pedestrian path are frequently blocked by parked vehicles, and many parents are using the hospital's parking lot when they drop off children. "Cars are parked so that it is difficult for an ambulance to get to the ambulance entrance," wrote Aksel Bilicz, the hospital's department leader, in a letter to the city. There is also "a danger of hitting children suddenly moving in front of cars and cars that stand idle while are children collected/delivered in front of the hospital entrance." City officials are urging parents park in the lot between the youth club and post office, and say an effort to expand parking there is underway.

Tour operators upset Coast Guard scaring off wildlife

Operators of cruise tours in Svalbard are complaining about wildlife being scared away by Coast Guard pilots flying overhead, who say they're protecting tourists from animals they may not know are approaching. Adam Rheborg, a Swedish tour guide, complained about the patrols in an e-mail to Svalbard's governor after a plane flew over about 50 tourists in five rubber boats July 11 because there was a polar bear nearby the group didn't initially know about. Officials with the Coast Guard and governor's office said they're not just concerned about tourists being caught unaware, but also about tour boats deliberately encroaching on wildlife.

Institute of Marine Research joins with UNIS at new office

Norway's Institute of Marine Research is opening an office this week at The University Centre in Svalbard. "They study oceanography, marine biology and fisheries biology, fields that are also important to us," said IMR Research Director Harald Loeng. "Our office will make it easier for scientists from IMR to help in teaching. Also, it will facilitate collaboration on research projects and make it easier to exchange data."

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High -7C (-13C wind chill), low -10C (-16C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. N winds to 35 km/h. High -7C (-13C wind chill), low -8C (-14C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High -7C (-13C wind chill), low -9C (-15C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Cloudy. SE winds to 32 km/h. High -3C (-8C wind chill), low -8C (-14C wind chill). 24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, clear, -3C (-8C), -6C (-10C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -6C (-10C), -11C (-16C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -5C (-11C), -11C (-17C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -5C (-11C), -7C (-13C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			

In memory of Mork



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Mourners light candles for Kjell Mork, a community, educational and political leader in Longyearbyen for more than 30 years, during a memorial service Wednesday (Nov. 28) at Svalbard Church. Mork, 64, who stepped down as head of Longyearbyen's municipal council a year ago, died Nov. 21 in Kristiansand following a brief illness. Scores of family members, friends and others packed the church during the service, where numerous leaders and longtime acquaintances recalled a multitude of sometimes legendary stories about Mork's involvement in nearly every aspect of Longyearbyen's community. "Most were even true," said Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, who presided over the service.

City: Offset school cuts elsewhere

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from the Norwegian government, but received 146.03 million kroner. While that allocation is an increase from the 127.5 million allocated for 2012, nearly all of the extra is for mandatory upgrades to Longyearbyen's power plant.

The city, which also released its general spending plan for 2013-16 this week, notes the remaining allocation of about 116.5 million kroner for 2013 is projected to remain the same through 2016.

For 2013, the city received 21.6 million kroner less than sought for infrastructure, 16.7 million less for schools and kindergartens, and

four million less for the power plant.

While city budget planners are proposing to again delay some infrastructure maintenance and inspections, making significant cuts that affect education is not envisioned.

"That we were not increased grants to schools and kindergartens is solved by a reallocation from other departments ... and the lower number of children expected," the proposed budget states.

The budget is scheduled for approval by the municipal council at 7 p.m. Dec. 11.

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

Svalbard gets Street View treatment

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of everyday sights such as the tourist-clogged streets of Longyearbyen's center and landmarks in the wild such as the *Noorderlicht* ship stuck in the ice in Tempelfjorden.

But while landscapes and inanimate objects appear as real as is feasible on a computer screen, desktop travelers will have a hard time identifying with the locals. Faces and other potentially identifying features are deliberately blurred to ensure their privacy, at least from folks who don't know them well enough to recognize them by their clothes or whatnot.

The Street View scenes of Svalbard are linked to Google's other multimedia depictions of the area, including still photos at numerous sites and zoomable maps of the landscape. It's also possible to "fly" over the area in 3D using Google Earth, although details of objects on the ground are comparatively vague.

Details of when and how Google's gurus captured the local Street View scenes weren't immediately available, but a blog narrative and video of how they produced similar scenes in the Arctic community of Cambridge Bay, Canada, are at <http://google-latlong.blogspot.com.au/012/11/get-ready-for-winter-mapping-canadian.html>.

The update also brings the full polar region spectrum to Street View, as the South Pole was added earlier this year.

Still, it's hardly the most thorough virtual tour of Norway's Arctic available free online. That almost certainly belongs to NRK's "Hurtigruten - Minute By Minute" at www.nrk.no/hurtigruten/?lang=en, which streams a video of the entire 134-hour ferry ride from Bergen to Kirkenes.

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

What's up

Nov. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Mesterkokken," French comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 29

Friskliv program to improve health behavior begins. More information at www.lokalstyre.no/friskliv.

7:30 p.m.: Christmas concert featuring soloist Torstein Sødal and band leader Kjetil Bjerkestrand. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 30

6 p.m.: Movie premier and presentation, "Wannabe Freeride and Ruff Riders 8." Discussion by participants in the snowmobiling movie afterward. Free for youths 18 and under. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 2

11 a.m.: Family Mass for First Sunday of Advent. Svalbard Church.

2-5 p.m.: Advent celebration, beginning with a traditional meal at Huset. A torchlight procession to the town center will begin at 3 p.m. with children able to put letters in Santa's mailbox at Mine 2 along the way. The lighting of the town's Christmas tree and traditional dance around it is at 4 p.m., followed by a children's storytime at the library.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rise of the Guardians" (3D), U.S. animated/fantasy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 2," U.S. drama/thriller, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 3

6:30-9 p.m.: Christmas party for Longyearbyen's international residents. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Trivia Quiz. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rise of the Guardians" (3D), U.S. animated/fantasy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 6

8 p.m.: Holiday concert by Vintermåne featuring Aasmund Nordstoga.

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:

- *Third climate summit sees hot tempers*
- *Finns join Norway's Arctic war games*
- *True gem of goal mining: giant snakes*
- *Review: Shackleton's whisky 'peaty'*