



Big hike in fees coming

Jump in water, power, car, other rate remain in final budget likely to be OK'd by council Tuesday

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Heating, water, vehicle and some recreation fees appear certain to increase significantly when Longyearbyen's municipal council meets Tuesday to approve the city's

budget for next year.

While the budget isn't officially final, residents with concerns shouldn't expect a lot of changes when the council meets at 7 p.m. in the Newtontoppen room of the Næringsbygget municipal building.

"I don't think a lot of tweaking with the numbers is possible because this is a fixed budget" reached by the council's three largest parties, said Christin Kristoffersen, head of the council that took office last month. She said

appeals explicitly detailing the use of funds may carry some weight, but those were generally debated in various budget subcommittee meetings.

The increases are part of what's expected to be a multiyear struggle to make ends meet, in large part due to major necessary upgrades of infrastructure such as the power and water treatment plants. They also come at a time when Longyearbyen's economy is facing

See MONEY, page 4



International flavor, but similar tastes, for foreigners at holiday

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

While certain parts of the world spend the season fighting a cultural war about saying "Merry Christmas" verses "Happy Holidays," in Longyearbyen nobody seems to mind there's at least 30 or 40 proper greetings.

See INTERNATIONAL, page 3



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Foreign residents of Longyearbyen perform a traditional Norwegian holiday dance during a gathering Monday at Svalbard Church where they shared experiences of the season from their homelands.

Toxin has trash plant seeing red



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

An unknown red/purple toxic substance covers the floor and equipment at Longyearbyen's waste management facility, forcing operations to be limited until it is analyzed and removed.

Powder from unknown source covers facility, posing harm to workers and limiting operations

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Longyearbyen's waste management plant is covered with red, but for workers there it reflects their mood and eye color rather than being a symbolism of the holiday season.

A large amount of a toxic powder concealed in trash dropped off by an unknown entity has forced the plant to reduce operations until the substance is analyzed and cleaned up.

See CONTAMINATE, page 4

Inside

Cannibal polar bears – EXPOSED!	Page 2
Headlines from Svalbardposten	
- Gov.: Satellite facility in Barentsburg is illegal	
- Airport offers free internet access via SMS	
- Lønnum may serve third term as UNIS leader	Page 3
Weather forecast	Page 3
Events calendar	Page 4
UNIS cartoon sings wonders of CO2	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.



JENNY E. ROSS

A polar bear eats a cub on an ice floe in Olgastretet in this 2010 photo now circulating widely on the internet. The photographer is co-author of a study claiming such behavior is increasing as warming is eliminating ice-covered seas where polar bears hunt for more traditional prey.

Briefly

Cannibal polar bear heats up internet, climate talk

A Svalbard photo depicting the drastic effects of climate change is again heating up the internet, with a polar bear in a once ice-covered hunting area forced to consume one of his own, possibly while the mother stood nearby.

The picture was taken in Olgastretet in July of 2010 by Jenny Ross, co-author of a just-published study in the scientific journal *Arctic*. While some level of cannibalism among species has always existed, she said warming is now denying bears their more common traditional prey such as seals.

"There are increasing numbers of observations of it occurring, particularly on land where polar bears are trapped ashore, completely food-deprived for extended periods of time due to the loss of sea ice as a result of climate change," she told BBC News.

Ross said there was another bear in the area and speculated that it might have been the mother of the dead juvenile.

Olgastretet is a waterway between Svalbard's two main islands. Historically, it stayed

ice-covered all year, but recently has seen open water appear for extended periods.

Surplus items at auction

Used items including a 1985 Mercedes wagon, two inflatable Zodiacs, outboard engines and ten bicycles will be auctioned off by the governor's office at 3 p.m. Saturday at its garage facility. Bidders may inspect the items beginning at 1 p.m.

More information is available by calling 7902 4310 or 7902 4372.

Polarjazz tickets on sale

Tickets are now available for the 15th annual Polarjazz festival, scheduled in 2012 from Feb. 1 to 5, online and at the Kulturhuset cafe.

Passes for all main shows Feb. 2 to 4 are 1,400 kroner and single-evening tickets 600 kroner. A Vorspiel featuring local artists on Feb. 1 and church concert Feb. 5 are not included in the three-day pass.

Online purchasing and detailed festival information are available at www.polarjazz.no.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Flying during the holidays is nightmare enough, so maybe it's best not to alert visitors enduring the long trip here about the terror awaiting when their plane tries to land at our little frozen airport. Svalbard Airport is again getting one of those "most extreme" awards, this time from *National Geographic*, with newspaper reports about the list being accompanied by tastefully worded teasers such as "KILLER PHOTOS!" The magazine's description is actually rather numbing: "Signposts at Svalbard Airport point to destinations around the world – all south of Norway's Svalbard is-

lands. The airport, near Longyearbyen, is the northernmost commercial airport in the world and home to all the typical weather hazards of life above the Arctic Circle." Maybe they just figure fear is enhanced by leaving details to the imagination ... One person being urged freeze travel plans is Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. The debut of a "spouting off" column in *Views and News From Norway* is headlined "Jens, stay home!" and says his frequent globetrotting "trying to save the world from climate change" just contributes to the problem with all those emissions. There's also a bitch about a conspiracy to keep shampoo prices high.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Baard Robert Gundersen, 3, wins a Norwegian troll doll in a gift drawing at a Christmas celebration for Longyearbyen's foreign residents hosted Monday by the Rotary Club at Svalbard Church.

Foreign traditions, native spirit

INTERNATIONAL, from page 1

Instead, embracing the wide diversity is the highlight of the holidays for many of the town's foreign residents, some of whom gathered to Monday at Svalbard Church to share stories and songs.

"Here you get to meet new people, see how they celebrate," said Marcela Fuentes, 18, of Concepcion, Chile.

Fuentes said in her homeland Christmas is typically spent with family. Here, although her family also lives in town, their celebrations take on a more communal spirit.

Languages and customs also are no barrier in the near-universal relief of escaping the mass commercialism that often dominates elsewhere. The usual calendars, stuffed polar bears and other Arctic-themed presents are sent to friends and loved ones back home, but here the novel spirit is enough of a gift.

"I think what I like is the feeling the dark gives," said Heidi Sevestne, 23, who recently moved to Longyearbyen to pursue her PhD in glaciology. "It's just a good excuse to cook big dinners, invite friends and stay in."

But while eating the simplest of Norwegian holiday dishes – sour-cream rice porridge known as rømmegrøt – those at the church discovered the feasts in their countries

are as diverse as the greetings.

"Normally you eat barbecue, but with my family it's more like turkey," Fuentes said.

Even when it's the same species some of her neighbors in Longyearbyen are eating, that doesn't mean it's the same dish.

Ingredients in a traditional turkey stuffing in Chile include cheese, corn and ham. The few opting for it in Norway go with a traditional mix of bread crumbs, celery and paprika – and then mix in the turkey's boiled entrails for that special flavor ("it's really good – it's like a meat pudding inside the turkey," a fan insisted). In the U.S., true to its tradition of absurd excess, deep frying or stuffing the bird with a chicken and a duck to make a "turducken" is increasingly popular.

Residents from the Philippines grill a whole pig back home. In Vietnam things are kept simple with chicken – which is also the choice from the gourmet heartland of France.

While many said they were looking forward to a traditional Norsk feast, they'll also dress it up with flavors from back home.

"I will try to buy some cheese and make my friends try it," Sevestne said. "Also some foie gras."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Satellite facility built illegally by Russians, governor says

A satellite facility the hills behind Barantsburg was built without permission by a Russian research institute and must be removed, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute (AANII) in St. Petersburg started work this summer despite several meetings with and clear directives from the governor's office that such work could not happen unless approved. An inspection in September revealed three antenna foundations about four feet in diameter, plus adjacent support structures and connecting cables. "What we are concerned about in this case is that the Russians understand clearly what is required to construct such a plant," said Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim. "We have spent much time with them, so it is sad that it's been this way." The facility is intended to boost Russia's scientific research in Svalbard.

Free internet by sending SMS available at Svalbard airport

Travelers can now get free internet access at Svalbard Airport and other Avinor facilities by sending an SMS message to get a username and password. Free internet access was introduced at Norway's airports in June, but travelers had to obtain a coupon with access codes at a customer service desk. More than 500,000 people have used the free internet since its introduction, but some facilities have run out of coupon codes due to high use, which the SMS system should avoid.

Lønnum may return for third term as director of UNIS

A familiar face may be returning to The University Centre in Svalbard as Lasse Lønnum is again being offered the director's job. "He has been contacted about it and we know that he will make an offer," said Tore Vorren, chair of the university's board, which considered ten applicants for the job. Lønnum was the university's director from 1998 to 2002 and again from 2002 to 2004. He became education director at the University of Tromsø in 2006. Lønnum, if he accepts the position, will replace current Director Gunnar Sand who is departing this month.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Some snow. NE winds to 22 km/h. High -10C (-18C wind chill), low -16C (-23C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Snow. NE winds to 29 km/h. High -8C (-17C wind chill), low -12C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Snow. NE winds to 18 km/h. High -10C (-17C wind chill), low -12C (-17C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Partly cloudy. N winds to 11 km/h. High 13C (-18C wind chill), low -14C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -13C (-18C), -15C (-19C), light 0:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -15C (-20C), -15C (-20C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -14C (-19C), -15C (-20C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -15C (-21C), -16C (-22C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			

Singing the joys of captivity



KAIROSTUDIO ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Animated carbon dioxide molecules sing the wonders of an underground facility designed to capture and store them now being tested and planned at The University Centre in Svalbard. The two-minute musical, "The Arctic Adventures of Dioxy," is a preview of what's promoted as a longer video to be released soon. The cartoon and (adult-oriented) details about the project are available at <http://co2-ccs.unis.no>.

Tough times = big fee hikes

MONEY, from page 1

considerable future uncertainty, such as Store Norske threatening a lull in coal mining operations and layoffs if the Norwegian government continues to delay approval of a new mine at Lunckeffjell.

Among the proposed fee increases:

- Hiking water fees more than 60 percent to pay for improvements related to the city's long-term water quality.
- A 21.4 percent rise in power rates to 1.42 kroner per kilowatt hours, up from 1.17 kroner.
- A 16.7 percent increase in vehicle registration fees, with a 617 percent increase for trucks weighing more than seven-and-a-half tons due to extra road wear.
- Numerous recreational activity fees at Svalbardhallen with the largest including

family swim and student training room passes that will rise 17.6 percent for six months and 20.5 percent for 12 months.

The council is seeking additional funds from the national government to help make ends meet in upcoming years. Some council members say reductions and adjustments in local services are also possible.

Some of the more drastic suggestions are coming from Jon Sandmo, one of two members of the Konsekvenslisten Party that is often the council's dissenting voice. In an e-mail to council members he suggests a two-year city hiring freeze and to "freeze all non-vital measures that are not economically self-supporting."

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

Toxic powder limits trash processing

CONTAMINATE, from page 1

The incident happened about three weeks ago when the container broke open going through a processing machine. A worker nearby suffered burning to the throat and pharynx, and the purplish powder quickly spread through the room, turning a reddish color in many places as it did so.

"We do not yet know what kind of chemical it is, or who have delivered this," said Hans Petter Lauritsen, the plant's operations manager.

The processing room has been essentially sealed off during daytime business hours. Lauritsen said he is operating the processing machine in the evening after other employees have left, sometimes working close to a double shift to keep up with the incoming garbage.

"When we produce the garbage all the machinery is working, the air will produce dust and in this dust you will find the powder," he

said. "When the dust is on the ground it is no problem."

Removal and cleanup of the substance can't occur until its contents are analyzed by a private company on the mainland to determine the proper means, Lauritsen said. He said the testing should be done in a matter of days.

As for locating the responsible party, "we haven't talked about that," he said. "First we will find out what it is. If it is serious (punishment) is not up to me."

Requests for an investigation would be sent to the governor's office. Håkan Eriksson, technical infrastructure manager for the agency overseeing the city's waste plant, said some kind of punishment seems appropriate.

"When it comes to fine or penalty, I think that the person responsible should pay for the extra costs," he wrote in an e-mail.

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

What's up

Dec. 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Footloose," U.S. drama/comedy/musical, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 8

6 p.m.: Christmas run hosted by Svalbard Turn. Registration starts at 5:30 p.m. Svalbardhallen.

Dec. 10

1 p.m.: Puppet show "Kaspar and Krokodillen" by Kjell Wernøe, followed at 2 p.m. by "Kaspar and Gullskatten" by Mette Wernøe. Each show is about 30 minutes. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Holiday trek from Nybyen to Trollsteinen. All forms of non-motorized transportation welcomed for the up and down tour. More details available at www.spitsbergenupanddown.no.

Dec. 11

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Leif Ove Andsnes, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the acclaimed pianist's debut. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 13

11 a.m.: St. Lucy's Day celebration with procession in dark for kindergarten students. Longyearbyen Library.

6 p.m.: St. Lucy's Day celebration with tree lighting. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Local Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Dec. 14

6 p.m.: Movie: "Friends With Benefits," U.S. comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 16

10 a.m.: Kindergarten worship service. Svalbard Church.

Dec. 18

5 p.m.: Christmas concert featuring various local performers. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Arthur Christmas" (3D), U.S. animated/family dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

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:

- *Nowhereisland man's occupancy starts*
- *2010 CO2 output makes record increase*
- *Gay penguin couple gets kid to raise*
- *Polar bear cannibal caught in the act*