



Wizards win first NBA title B1

Duluth News Tribune

Monday, June 13, 2011

duluthnewstribune.com

More than 90,000 readers every weekday

75¢

Use of Duluth tourism tax under scrutiny

PETER PASSI
ppassi@duluthnews.com

A city task force assigned to cast a critical eye on how Duluth plans to spend nearly \$7.5 million in local tourism taxes this year is asking lots of questions, and its members expect answers.

Just ask Visit Duluth — the largest recipient of tourism taxes in the community.

Visit Duluth, an umbrella agency formed to promote tourism throughout the city, will rely on the tourism tax for nearly \$1.5 million in funding this year. Last year, it derived about 55 percent of its budget from tourism tax proceeds.



MATTSON: Wanted to present Visit Duluth information in person to task force reviewing use of Duluth's tourism tax money

Given how much the group depends on city tourism taxes, one might suspect Visit Duluth would have responded in a more timely fashion when the task force asked for information:

On May 16, Duluth City Attorney Gunnar Johnson sent Visit Duluth an information request on behalf of the task force, asking that it provide a written response by May 27.

On May 27, Visit Duluth President and CEO Terry Mattson informed Johnson that his organization had "yet to complete the extensive list of questions" and that he would like the opportunity to present any information to the task force in person.

Last Tuesday, June 7, at the direction of task force members, Johnson wrote Mattson again, asking for the requested information so that task force members could prepare themselves for a scheduled Friday meeting.

Mattson again begged off, saying: "I have scheduled my entire workweek around having the task force questions and a narrative ready for presentation at 2 p.m. Friday, as requested." Mattson explained that he had been traveling extensively since receiving the task force's information request.

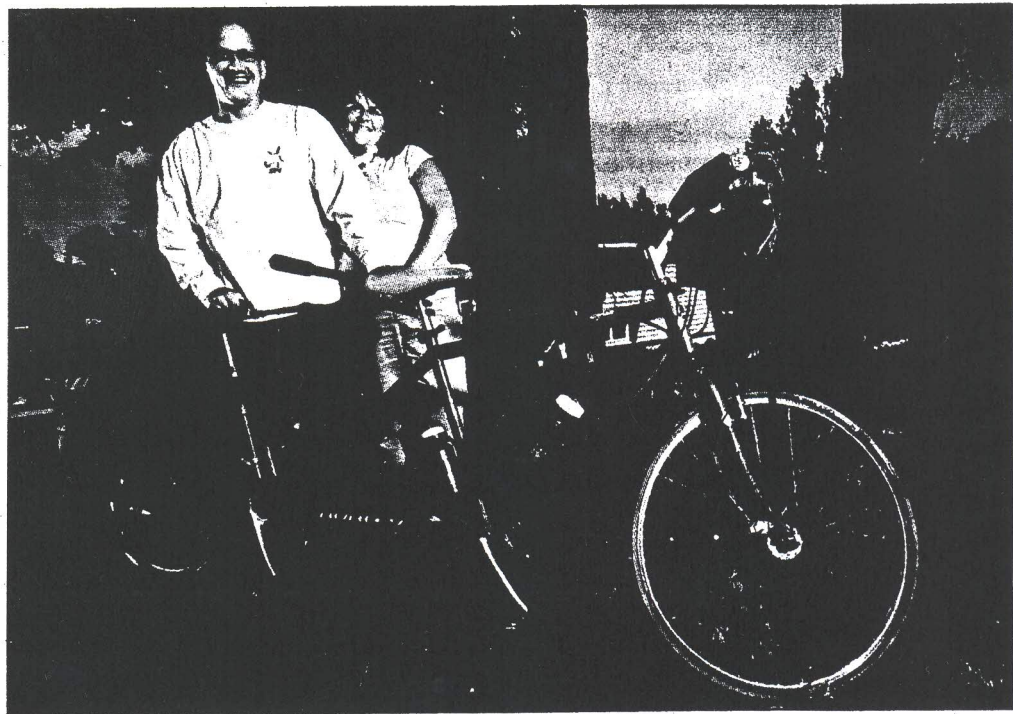
On Friday, Mattson and his crew provided a written response a full two weeks after the original deadline had passed.

Tony Bronson, chairman of Visit Duluth's board of directors, said he probably bears some of the blame for the delay, as he had directed Mattson to focus on a more general list of questions the task force sent to other organizations instead of the more tailored request originally sent to Visit Duluth.

After "a bit of a scramble," however, Bronson said Visit Duluth responded to both sets of questions in a 200-some page packet hand-delivered to task force members in a three-ring binder Friday afternoon.

See Tourism, Page A4

Plys powers through Lake Superior ride



Patrick Plys, a 16-year brain cancer survivor, has fulfilled his childhood dream of biking around Lake Superior. During his third brain surgery in 2010, Plys had a stroke. A week ago, Plys completed a tandem bike tour of Lake Superior on this bike. Patrick is standing with his wife, Laura. Clint Austin / caustin@duluthnews.com

Despite the aftereffects of cancer and a stroke, father of Olympian circles the big lake

JOE CADOTTE
For the News Tribune

Since Patrick Plys was young, he wanted to ride a bicycle around Lake Superior.

In the intervening years, the 47-year-old started a consulting business, raised five children with his high school sweetheart, was diagnosed with brain cancer and had a stroke during surgery.

Last year, he was also inducted into the Duluth Hall of Fame and his son Chris took part in the Winter Olympics as a curler for the U.S. team.

Eight days ago, Plys fulfilled his childhood dream of circling Lake Su-

perior, with the support of his family.

"It was one of those things that" were always on his bucket list. He was just too busy with running a business and raising five kids," Laura Plys said in an interview at their home in the Morley Heights neighborhood of Duluth. She and her husband spoke of the obstacles Plys overcame to take the Circle Tour.

Sixteen years ago, after experiencing numbness in various parts of his body, Plys was screened for cancer. Doctors found and removed a tumor from his brain.

"Doctors thought it was just one of those things from his childhood they

finally defected. It didn't have any fingers," said Laura Plys, referring to the tumor's apparent isolation.

Thirteen years went by without any further sign of cancer.

"The MRIs didn't show anything," Laura Plys said. Doctors scheduled his next MRI five years out.

"That's how confident they were he was clear," she said.

In December 2008, doctors found cancer forming in the scar from his first brain surgery. He went through intensive chemotherapy until the cancer was declared clear in June 2009.

See Plys, back page

2011 tourism tax*

Medical student's drive to help others leads to \$10,000 scholarship

