Housing for workers needs state support

To the Editor:
As Minnesota’s economy grows stronger, working Minnesotans often lack the housing options they need. Based on my work with the SE MN Multi-County Housing Authority, unfortunately it comes as little surprise to me that a quarter of owners and 57% of renters in Wabasha County spend more on their housing than they can afford, given their incomes.

All throughout our service area, low rental vacancy rates are contributing to the problem. In some areas vacancy rates are as low as 1%. However, it has become difficult, if not impossible, to develop new rental housing to ease shortages in most of the places we serve.

The impact on people’s lives is unmistakable. One extended family in Plainview had moved to the area for a better life. Several of the family’s adults found work in a canning factory. But now over a dozen family members live in a single mobile home for lack of better options. Without openings in our agency’s affordable housing programs, we could only offer clothing and other resources inadequate for solving their housing problem.

In other cases, workers must travel far distances to work, sacrificing valuable time with family, when they cannot find housing near their workplaces. The incremental commuting costs position the family with even less disposable income for covering basic needs.

Governor Dayton and his Housing Finance Commissioner, Mary Tingerthal, recognize the challenges facing Southeast Minnesota. To their credit, they have proposed adding $10 million to state funding to the Governor’s Housing and Jobs Growth Initiative. We also encourage our state legislators to consider the proposed $39 million “Homes for All” legislative agenda for strategic investments in housing and services. Increased flexibility in existing financing options is another tool that would help supporting creating more needed housing.

Southeast Minnesota and other Greater Minnesota communities are well aware that ensuring that employees can live in decent homes within their budgets is key to our economic vitality. Ensuring that tools are available to create and preserve quality, affordable housing for all and at the same time help to recruit and maintain a strong workforce and quality of life is critical to the successes of our region.

Joe Wheeler
Executive Director
Southeast Minnesota Multicounty Housing and Redevelopment Authority

To the Editor:

Thanks for support of KC’s full

Road and Bridge Act Good News
for small towns in Southeastern Minnesota

With the bipartisan, Minnesota House approval of the Road and Bridge Act—the major component of a new approach to funding road and bridge needs in our state—the Minnesota House has shown it will listen to the needs of Greater Minnesota and act accordingly.

The overall plan would dedicate $7 billion to our road and bridge needs without raising taxes. Much of that comes from reallocating tax dollars that are already being collected for transportation related purposes and using that revenue to improve our infrastructure. Trunk highway and general obligation bonds, general funds, and the realignment of Minnesota Department of Transportation resources also would help fund our road and bridge needs.

Included in this bill is a provision which would provide state transportation funding for small cities in Minnesota. This idea was presented to me by the mayor of Elba and Minneapoliscan Falls: $1
West Concord: $3
Elgin: $3
Hammond: $15
Kellogg: $26
Mazeppa: $35
Medina: $15
Millville: $14
Plainview: $77
Wabasha: $68
Zumbro Falls: $1
St. Charles: $100
Elba: $19
Alveta: $20
Stockton: $29
Goodview: $92
Rollingstone: $27
Minnesota City: $4

Our plan also provides for county road money for township bridges.

Contrast our approach to elimination of the unpopularity of public transportation, which would increase taxes on Minnesotans by $2 billion, including a $1 billion cost of gasoline to rise by 15 cents.

The basic difference is in Governor Dayton’s plan to increase taxes on Minnesota drivers—$2 billion, the face of a project of the over-collection of taxes.

Rep. Steve Drazkowski

Take part in St. Jude Fishing Tournament. You don’t have to fish!

To the Editor:

The 17th annual Dick Hiley St. Jude Bass Fishing tournament will be held on Saturday, May 2nd and Sunday, May 3rd in Wabasha.

This event raises funds for the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and is attended by approximately 150 anglers from across the region. In addition to the fishing tournament there is a raffle and other offering opportunities to help raise funds for the organization. Saturday morning will feature a raffle drawing.

This year raffle tickets will be sold the day of the event for a Trail-Tamer 500 Coleman 4-wheeler. On Sunday, The Silver Star Saloon crew will be present serving burgers and refreshments. Not only is this a great event for Wabasha, but it is also a special opportunity to be part of a great cause.

When you are out and about this weekend, stop down to the Izak Walton boat launch to get a raffle ticket, buy a burger, and enjoy the day!