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Baxter's buttonhook overpass approved if conditions are met



MnDOT renderings of the buttonhook at the highway 210 and 371 intersection in Baxter.

A \$58 million reconstruction of the highways 210 and 371 intersection in Baxter is bumpily moving forward.

The Baxter City Council recently passed approval of the design, in a backhanded way, to require conditions from MnDOT (See sidebar

for conditions). The extensive redesign includes two bridges and numerous roundabout exits to go to local access roads to businesses. City council meetings have been packed by citizens opposing the project.

"If MnDOT meets the sev-

en conditions, the project goes forward," said Trevor Walter, city of Baxter director of public works. "MnDOT has until Feb. 19 to respond to Baxter's proposed conditions. The city of Baxter expects a written answer from MnDOT by February 19, 2026," Wal-

ter said in an interview.

Eric Schiller of MnDOT, project manager, stressed (in a video recorded by MnDOT) that something must be done for that intersection, which suffers from a tremendously high number of accidents and has frequent traffic congestion and backups. "Traffic spikes to 60,000 vehicles per day in the summer months," said Schiller.

The design is expected to be finalized by 2027 with construction in 2028. Design Engineer Derek Schmidt of WSB, explained that the intersection rebuild is designed to provide both local access and keep traffic moving along the two major highways. Two bridges would be installed, at Excelsior Road and at Hwy. 371, with numerous ramps to access the local frontage roads.

Schmidt talked about how a shopper could travel from

Costco to Fleet Farm on local roads without having to access Hwys. 210 or 371. "Local traffic doesn't need to use 371 ever when going to local businesses. There are ways to get where you are going instead of interacting with the 40,000 vehicles on 371."

Another piece of this complicated project is they have to pass over a railroad track, which requires a high clearance for the 371 bridge.

In response to public feedback, MnDOT says it changed the design details before holding its November 3, 2025, public hearing.

"Thank you to everyone who provided feedback to us. We appreciate everything that you have told us," said MnDOT on its website.

"The project team considered community feedback and has made changes to

Continued on Page 4

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

January
31st - Justin Morneau Ice Fishing Classic 8 a.m - 1 p.m. Nitti's Hunters Point Resort on Mille Lacs Lake
31st - Brainerd Jaycees Ice Fishing Extravaganza at Hole in the Day Bay on Gull Lake. Over \$4.5 million donated to charity. A \$3 million annual economic impact on the Brainerd Lakes Area. Thousands of anglers. Endless excitement. Cash, trucks, top-tier gear, and unforgettable memories await.

February
2nd & 9th - Cribbage players wanted, 1 -2:30 p.m. at The Brainerd Center, 803 Kingwood St., Brainerd.
5th - 7th- Crosslake Winterfest Family Fun Zone - Three days of indoor and outdoor activities throughout Crosslake for all ages to enjoy!
7th - Palisade Super Sledders Snowmobile Club Open House, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., at the clubhouse.
7th - Palisade Mid-Winter Festival. Vendor Market, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Palisade Community Center. For more info call or text Debbie Weimer at 218-821-9985. Parade begins at noon.
9th - Lakes Area Unlimited Learning speakers Gary Griffin and Sandra Brueland, 1:30 p.m. at Heartwood Senior Living in Crosby. It's free for members and \$10.00 for non-members.
10th - Whitetails Cuyuna Range Whitetails Meeting, 6:30 p.m., at the Deerwood American Legion. For more info call Anne at 612-916-2459
12th - The Brainerd Lakes Area Parkinson's Disease Support Group meeting, 1 p.m. at Lord of Life Church, 6190 Fairview Drive, Baxter. Call (218) 829-4017 if you have questions.
12th - Bridges of Hope Hope on the Slopes at Mount Ski Gull. Admission for spectators is free. Team check-in begins at 3:30pm, with races starting at 6:00 p.m. Proceeds from the event will support Bridges of Hope's programs.
16th - Cribbage players wanted, 1 -2:30 p.m. at The Brainerd Center, 803 Kingwood St., Brainerd.
18th - Cascade Church Cascade United Methodist Church Free Come and Eat Supper, 5:30 p.m. Call 218-534-3507 for a reservation. Cascade is located between Deerwood and Crosby at 22781 Black Lake Road, Deerwood on Highway 6 and 210.
20th & 21st - Triple Fest Snow & Ice Drag Racing at Breezy Point Resort
Send your community events information to hopper@crosbyironton.net or send us a message via www.NewsHopper.net/contact/

Area Births, Open Houses, Engagements, Weddings & Community Events are published **FREE!**
Send your community events information to hopper@crosbyironton.net

AARP Taxaide free tax assistance

The AARP Taxaide program for low to moderate income taxpayers will open by appointment only at the Aitkin Public Library beginning Thursday, Feb. 12 and be open every Thursday until April 9 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

You must bring SS cards for taxpayers and dependents, picture ID, all tax return documents in printed form and last year's tax return. For married filing joint returns, both taxpayers must be present to sign the return. AARP Tax-Aide volunteers are not trained in all areas of income taxes. You may be advised to see a paid preparer if your return is out of scope or is too time consuming.

Facilitated self assistance (FSA), with a counselor to assist the taxpayer using our software and computers, is available on Thursdays beginning Feb. 12at 1:00 p.m. by appointment only. (limited to adjusted gross income of \$84,000).

We will also be available at the following locations and times:
Waukenabo Community Center: Wednesday, March 25 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
McGregor Library: Tuesday, March 31, Saturday, Mar. 28 and Saturday, April 4.
Beginning the last week of January, taxpayers may call (218)670-5588 for an appointment for all locations. Leave your name and phone number and you will be called for an appointment.

Ruttger's Rockin' Ice Bocce big prizes



Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort, located at 25039 Tame Fish Lake Road in Deerwood, is turning up the winter fun with its popular Rockin' Ice Bocce tournament on Saturday, February 14, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Games begin promptly at 9 a.m.

This high-energy event blends the strategy of bocce with the icy excitement of curling, creating a one-of-a-kind competition that's as fun to watch as it is to play. The tournament is open to co-ed teams of four, with no more than two males per team, and will be run as an elimination-style tournament.

Competitive spirit meets great rewards, as Ruttger's has announced an impressive prize list:

- 1st Place – \$500
 - 2nd Place – \$250
 - 3rd Place – \$100
 - PLUS additional prizes
- Adding to the excitement, the top three teams will also get to choose from exclusive Ruttger's experiences:
- Oktoberfest 2-night stay
 - 4-person round of golf
 - \$50 resort gift card
- First place gets first pick, second place chooses next, and third place still walks away a winner.
- Beyond the competition, Rockin' Ice Bocce promises

a full day of winter celebration, including ice games, bonfires, food and drinks, music, and plenty of laughs — making it a perfect outing for participants and spectators alike.

The team registration fee is \$100 per team. Teams can sign up online, and those with questions can call 218-678-4666 or email rob.rathsack@ruttgers.com.

You'll love our five course Sweetheart Supper

After a day on the ice, couples can cap off Valentine's Day with Ruttger's Sweetheart Supper, served from 5 to 8 p.m. at Ruby's on the Lake. Diners will be welcomed with a complimentary glass of champagne and treated to a gourmet, five-course experience.

The menu includes:
First Course (shared): Grilled lamb and shrimp with garlic-herb marinade and blueberry habanero reduction.
Second Course (select one): Winter berry & burrata salad or short rib French onion soup.
Third Course (shared): Dark honey molasses bread with honey cinnamon butter
Fourth Course: (select one) Firecracker shrimp, or coffee-chili rubbed ribeye, or a shared surf n' turf featuring ribeye and lobster tails.
Fifth Course (shared): Pistachio honey baklava cake with vanilla bean ice cream.
Reservations for the Sweetheart Supper are recommended and can be made by calling 218-678-4644.
Whether you're aiming for the top prize, enjoying the winter atmosphere, or finishing the day with a romantic dinner, Rockin' Ice Bocce at Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort promises a Valentine's Day to remember.

LEGAL NOTICES

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Jan. 31, Feb. 7 & 14, 2026)
LIBBY TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
The Libby Township Board will meet at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at the Palisade Community Center. Township supervisor Tom Anderson may attend remotely via phone or Zoom. The purpose of this meeting shall be to discuss and decide matters that may come before the board.





Dated this 22nd day of January, 2026
Jane Grimsbo Jewett, clerk
Libby Township
2.91

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Jan. 24 & 31, 2026)
SPENCER TOWNSHIP MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2026
The Board of Spencer Township will hold its: Regular March monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, Jan 13th, Feb 10th, March 8th (at 1 p.m. Sunday due to Annual Meeting on the second Tuesday, the 10th), April 14th, May 12th, June 9th, July 14th, Aug 11th, Sept 8th, Oct 13th, Nov 10th, and Dec 8th at Spencer Town Hall at 5:30 p.m.
The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10th at 6 p.m.

Any special meetings such as the Board of Appeal and Equalization will be posted a month ahead of the meeting and published at least two weeks before the meeting.
Dated January 13, 2026
Bonnie Ganz, Clerk
Spencer Township
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- Following completion of construction, MnDOT shall conduct a speed study and shall establish the posted speed limit in strict accordance with Minnesota Statute 169.14. The posted speed

- MnDOT will coordinate with affected businesses to implement wayfinding signage through the Minnesota Logo Sign Franchise Program. MnDOT shall ensure that signage is provided in locations, quantities and timeframes sufficient to minimize driver confusion and backtracking associated with the interchange, consistent with applicable MnDOT policies and state statutes.

- **Glory Road (west leg).** MnDOT shall collaborate with the city to advance a signal replacement project at the Highway 371/Glory Road intersection with specific attention to the west-erly leg, recognizing antic-

- Maintain the three-quarter intersection on Highway 210 at Golf Course Drive.

No injuries were reported during Monday's operation, and officials said the arrests were carried out peacefully.



Sweetheart Supper

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**Saturday,
February 14**

5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Treat your sweetheart to a gourmet meal at Ruby's on the Lake.

Menu includes:

Reservations recommended 218-678-4644

One complimentary glass of champagne per person.

1st Course (Shared) *Grilled Lamb & Shrimp*
Garlic-herb marinade and house-made blueberry habanero reduction.

2nd Course (Select Two) *Winter Berry & Burrata Salad*
Mixed greens, arugula, seasonal berries, toasted almonds, burrata cheese, mint vinaigrette and balsamic glaze.

-OR- *Short Rib French Onion Soup*

3rd Course (Shared) *Dark honey molasses bread*
served with honey cinnamon butter.

4th Course (Select Two or One Surf n' Turf) *Firecracker Shrimp*
Roasted red pepper risotto, wilted spinach, aged Parmesan and micro greens.

-OR- *Coffee-Chili Rubbed Ribeye*
16 oz. Braveheart Black Angus coffee-chili rubbed ribeye grilled to your liking, topped with garlic herb compound butter, grilled asparagus and au gratin potatoes

-OR- *Surf n' Turf* (Shared)
20 oz. Braveheart Black Angus coffee-chili rubbed ribeye grilled to your liking, topped with garlic herb compound butter. Two 4oz broiled lobster tails with citrus herb butter, au gratin potatoes and asparagus for two.

5th Course (Shared) *Pistachio Honey Baklava Cake*
Served with vanilla bean ice cream.

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