



Cut, but so what?

Svalbard gets less in first budget from Conservatives, but extra funds this year a primary reason

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

An art museum made out, a Japanese research station and satellite observatory didn't,

and the power plant is again scraping by without quite enough money for another year.

Those are the essentials for anyone in Svalbard not wanting to read the proposed national budget for 2015, the first crafted by the Conservative-led coalition elected to power in 2013. Svalbard's allocation of 417.8 million kroner, detailed in 59 pages of dense text and spreadsheets, is 37.5 million less than 2014, but the

text notes the archipelago received significant one-time funding this year for things such as the governor's new service vessel and helicopter.

Local political, research, cultural and other leaders generally expressed satisfaction with next year's proposal, and there was little to suggest the former Labor Party government would

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Bear visits town

Governor closes Adventdalen, flies animal far away after two days of visits to Longyearbyen

By MARK SABBATINI
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A multitude of visits by polar bears to settlements in recent months reached Longyearbyen this week as a bear roamed past homes

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE



SYSSELMANNEN



SVALBARD VILLMARKSSENTER

Longyearbyen residents, at top, gather on the shore next to the bird observatory Thursday (Oct. 16) in the hope of glimpsing a polar bear across the channel despite a heavy snowstorm. At bottom left, a map shows the track of possibly the same bear, at bottom right, that visited town Wednesday.

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Rocked by government's collapse

Longyearbyen's plans to cash in on mining boom in Greenland uncertain after leaders ousted

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It was just an obscure item to mention briefly at the end this week's Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. But the fact it wasn't could potentially have a huge negative impact on the city's economic future.

Hopes of cashing in on an expected boom in Greenland's mining industry are now far from

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MEDIAPLANET.COM

A planned expansion of Longyearbyen Harbor, depicted in this illustration, seeks to lure mining ships from Greenland that will use it as a service port on the way to mainland Europe.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

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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.

We shun watermarks, but this is totally worth it



OMID ABOLHASANI / SO NICE HIS NAME APPEARS TWICE

A mysterious object leaves a streak of light in the sky northwest of Longyearbyen at 8:31 p.m. Sunday, resulting in considerable speculation among locals about what it might be. Many looking at a photo of the incident posted by Omid Abolhasani on his Facebook page guessed it was an airplane or meteor. But Steinar Midtskogen, who was with Abolhasani in Adventdalen to take photos of the Northern Lights, wrote in a post at the Norwegian Meteor Network website (norskmeteornettverk.no/wordpress/?p=1820), it was almost certainly the Cosmos 1154 Soviet rocket, launched Jan. 30, 1980, reentering and burning up the Earth's atmosphere. The rocket, which hovered about Earth as space junk for 35 years, was expected to re-enter the atmosphere at 8:44 p.m. above Mongolia or China, but instead appeared 13 minutes earlier over Norway.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Here's one of those great ethical head-scratchers: **Is it acceptable to use unpaid child labor in one of the richest first-world countries to help provide clean water and sanitation facilities that will likely save lives in developing nations?** The Governor of Svalbard apparently is fine with it, as the tyke in the picture at the right was among those who helped raised about 15,000 kroner during the governor's annual car wash last Sunday to benefit the NRK telethon. Youths will continue slaving away from 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Longyearbyen School, where they'll sell crafts and reindeer stew (from their hunting trip last month). They'll also be going door-to-door to beg for alms this Sunday afternoon. After all that, the least you can do as a parent is buy



ANNE LISE SANDVIK

Their little hands are great for gaps in wheels. The tykes are lousy at windows, but it's probably not fair to punish them since they're not paid.

them one of the many wonderful things at the local auction at 6 p.m. that night at the Radisson. If you're feeling really generous, you can bid big bucks to ship them away to the north coast for a few days of picking up garbage without pay ... **India is the latest country seeking to beef up its Arctic creds, despite being one of the most insufferably hot places on Earth, with President Pranab Mukherjee becoming the country's first head of state to cross the Arctic Circle during a five-day visit to the region this week.** His itinerary included the "official hometown of Santa Claus," but we think the heat is getting to his flunkys who sent him to someplace in Finland that's a long way from the jolly man's workshop at Mine 2B (our world's-largest "Santa Claus Town" mailbox might have also been a clue). He did teleconference his countryfolk at the Himadri station in Ny-Ålesund, who were probably wise if they held their tongues.



INDIAN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
He didn't get to see Santa after all ... but quality time with the King Harald V is probably a sufficiently jolly experience considering what's on the president of India's wish list.



BJARTE BENBERG / SYSSELMANNEN

Polar bear footprints are spotted Wednesday morning by a nature management advisor for The Governor of Svalbard in a dense residential area of Longyearbyen. Numerous residents said they observed the animal at a distance or from their windows, but no confrontations were reported.

Bear's visit to town earns free flight

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and businesses Wednesday (Oct. 15, reflecting a delayed presstime), with possibly the same animal lingering near town Thursday before officials drugged and flew it far from town by helicopter.

Numerous residents and visitors took photos of the bear and its tracks beginning around 7 a.m. Wednesday as it approached structures including residences along Vei 238, Svalbard Snøscooterutleie, The University Centre in Svalbard and Svalbard Villmarkssenter's dog kennels.

More sightings were reported at about 7:35 a.m. Thursday of a bear on the beach across the channel from the same area, prompting more onlookers to go out to the shore next to Svalbard Snøscooterutleie in the hope of seeing the animal despite a thick snowstorm. The Governor of Svalbard subsequently limited access to Adventdalen by blocking the road beyond the snowmobile dealership, preventing sightseers and the bear from being able to get closer to each other uninhibited by water.

"The governor and the Norwegian Polar Institute will make an attempt to stun and move the bear if weather conditions permit," an announcement issued by the governor stated. "The governor urges everyone to stay away from the area until further notice."

Officials shot two tranquilizers into the



PER ANDREASSEN / SYSSELMANNEN

A polar bear seen Thursday near Longyearbyen is removed by helicopter after being sedated.

bear at about 12:15 p.m. It moved a short distance further into Adventdalen before falling asleep at the old auroral observatory. Researchers weighed, measured and tagged the bear before it was loaded onto one of the governor's service helicopters at about 2 p.m. The governor's office stated the bear will be flown north to a destination the weather permits.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Expert: Russia sees science, not coal as future in Svalbard

Russia appears likely to shift its primary interest in Svalbard from coal mining to research, according to Jørgen Holten Jørgensen, an expert specializing in Russian politics at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute. The government approved a permanent research center based in Barentsburg that will employ up to 100 people, while at the same time it is deliberately operating its mine at a low level of production. "Previously, operations there were scheduled until 2015," Jørgensen said. "Now it's 2030. When mining ceases, there also ceases to exist the Mining Code and the Mining Code provides the basis for the Russian presence as it is today." He said Russia may also be considering the establishment of a cargo port for ships using the Northeast Passage, or a terminal in connection with oil and gas exploration.

Longyearbyen council may see lots of new faces in '15

Next year's community council race in Longyearbyen could be wide open as none of current leaders say they know if they will seek reelection. Sounding near certain to step aside is Geir Hekne, a Conservative Party member and the council's deputy chairman, who said due to the time commitment "it might be healthy that someone else takes over." Mayor Christin Kristoffersen, a Labor Party member who has mentioned as a possible candidate for Parliament, isn't hinting at whether she will notify the party she intends to run for the council again by the Nov. 1 deadline. Bipartisan Party leader Kristin Furu Grøtting and Svalbard Lista leader Jørn Dybdahl also said they are unsure about their plans.

Political crisis doesn't halt Russian interest in UNIS

The climate between Russia and the West is icy right now due to the Ukraine crisis, but that isn't putting a chill on the increasing enrollment of Russian students in university programs in Svalbard. Fifteen of the 60 students in the Arctic Offshore Engineering are Russian and interest in UNIS has been rising since students in that country started taking notice of the university in 2008.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 22 km/h. High -8C (-13C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill). Sunrise 9:29a; sunset 3:56p	Snow. E winds to 39 km/h. High -4C (-10C wind chill), low -8C (-13C wind chill). Sunrise 9:39a; sunset 3:46p	Partly cloudy. E winds to 39 km/h. High -5C (-12C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill). Sunrise 9:49a; sunset 3:35p	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 18 km/h. High -9C (-13C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill). Sunrise 10a; sunset 3:24p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -9C (-14C), -11C (-16C), light 5:02h; Monday, p. cloudy, -10C (-14C), -12C (-17C), light 4:38h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-14C), -13C (-18C), light 4:12h; Wednesday, cloudy, -9C (-15C), -13C (-18C), light 3:44h			

Data provided by storm.no



NORTHERN NORWEGIAN ART MUSEUM



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POLAR RESEARCH



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Winners and losers: Knut Ljøgodt, left, director of the Northern Norwegian Art Museum, savors being one of the beneficiaries of the proposed national budget for 2015, which includes funds for a new branch in Longyearbyen. At top right, an aging station in Ny-Ålesund will remain the center for Japanese researchers after requested funds for a new facility were denied. At bottom right, Longyearbyen Deputy Mayor Geir Hekne and Mayor Christin Kristoffersen – members of the opposing Conservative and Labor parties, respectively – talk after a Community Council meeting Tuesday where the budget was reviewed. Both council members agreed the city fared reasonably well, although more funds for government-mandated upgrades to the power plant were sought.

Art wins, space loses in '15 budget

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have taken a drastically different path.

"It's not a big difference," said Geir Hekne, a Conservative Party member who is deputy chairman of the Longyearbyen Community Council. The biggest concern voiced by council members is a 13.3-million-kroner allocation for ongoing mandatory power plant upgrades only covers two-thirds of the expected cost, but he noted that has been a recurring struggle each year that is likely to continue.

Still, previous shortfalls in upgrade funds have forced the city to hike electricity rates and even though Mayor Christin Kristoffersen said that isn't likely this time she is still disappointed at the lack of full support.

"We have an industrial and societal development that is going to require more energy and we have utilities from 1982 – it is the only coal-fired power station in Norway," said Kristoffersen, a Labor Party member, in an interview with NRK. "It becomes harder and harder to get parts, and they become more and more expensive."

Greenland's turmoil may shake Svalbard

OVERTHROWN, from page 1

certain after the collapse of that country's government and other major setbacks including, of all things, the recent outbreak of Ebola in Africa. Longyearbyen officials are hoping the city can be a stopover port for ships carrying iron ore and other material to Europe, while LNS Spitsbergen earlier this year entered an agreement with a Canadian company to developing a gem mine in southwest Greenland.

Mayor Christin Kristoffersen, who canceled the update about a partnership agreement with officials in Nuuk, Greenland, as well as a scheduled visit to the country later this year, said at this point there's little to do except monitor the political crisis and industry reaction.

"At this point it's a wait-and-see situation,"

Among the most notable winners in the budget is the Northern Norwegian Art Museum, which received 2.3 million kroner to establish a branch in Longyearbyen that is scheduled to open next year. Knut Ljøgodt, the museum's director, said in a prepared statement the branch will be located in vacant space at Svalbard, and feature high-level contemporary art from Norway and other countries.

The proposed funding for scientific research will allow the Norwegian Polar Institute to continue its work at current levels, according to Director Jan-Gunnar Winther. But officials in Ny-Ålesund expressed concern about the denial of funds for a new research station for Japan to replace an existing facility that is aging and considered inadequate.

Also expressing concern were officials at Kongsberg Satellite Services, whose facilities including the Svalbard Satellite Station, due to a large-scale rejection of space agency funding that will impair competing for future projects.

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

she said.

Greenland's government overturned a ban on uranium mining in October of 2013 and record-size agreements were reached with the industry with foreign buyers. But the coalition government collapsed and new elections have been set for Nov. 28 following an expenses scandal involving Prime Minister Aleqa Hammond and other top leaders.

Ore prices have also plummeted recently and the Ebola crisis is causing serious hardships for a London company that has the largest contract to perform mining work because it was forced to cease virtually all of its operations in Sierra Leone.

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

What's up

Oct. 14

6 p.m.: Presentation on Svalbard Global Seed Vault at Svalbard Museum. Also includes free admission to the museum.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Oct. 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Skumringslandet," Norwegian drama/adventure, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 16

4-8 p.m.: Sales of food and crafts, plus a lottery drawing by local students to raise funds for the annual NRK telethon. Longyearbyen School.

8 p.m.: Theater performance: "Æ Har Rett," starring Trine Lise Olsen and focusing on growing up in an orphanage during the 1980s. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 18

12:30-3 p.m.: Open house at The Governor of Svalbard's residence to raise money for the NRK telethon.

Oct. 19

11 a.m.: Mass w/ Interim Priest Dag Aakre. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Bjørnøya," preview and discussion with the three brothers who made the documentary about surfing on the south Svalbard island. Kulturhuset.

6 p.m.: Auction to benefit annual NRK telethon. Radisson.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Harem," Norwegian action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 20

7 p.m.: Concert by Cutta Boys, bass/violin classical duo. Proceeds benefit annual NRK telethon. Kulturhuset Cafe.

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

Oct. 21

3 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

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:

- *Canada's plans likely to damage Arctic*
- *Russia: Our plans won't damage Arctic*
- *Seabirds to blame for pollution in Arctic*
- *Island full of land mines a hit w/ penguins*