

## N. Kato council to stay with Institute

By Mark Fischenich

[mfischenich@mankatofreepress.com](mailto:mfischenich@mankatofreepress.com)

**NORTH MANKATO** — North Mankato's one-year experiment to handle certain convention and visitors bureau activity internally, with the help of a local sports firm, was a success and will continue for another year, the City Council decided Monday night.

Previously, marketing of the city's Caswell Park softball complex was done through the Greater Mankato Convention and Visitors Bureau with room taxes from North Mankato's only hotel going to the CVB. Concerned that it wasn't getting its money's worth, the council terminated its agreement with the organization and used a portion of that dedicated hotel funding — which was about \$40,000 in 2009 — to hire the Sports Institute, owned by Shane Bowyer.

“ We're quite happy with the work that's been done by the Sports Institute,” said City Administrator Wendell Sande. “ We've had a very successful year ... .”

The council unanimously agreed to renew the contract for another year at \$18,000, the same amount as the first year.

Along with recruiting softball tournaments for

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### Park tournaments

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Caswell, the Sports Institute will be tasked with developing a plan for recruiting soccer tournaments to a soccer complex being designed for land adjacent to a future elementary school near Dakota Meadows Middle School.

The institute also helps with operations at tournaments and its performance has been praised by teams that have played at Caswell, said Mayor Gary Zellmer.

“ We've had nothing but glowing reports from the people who've been at the tournaments about the staff,” Zellmer said, noting a letter he'd received from one team. “... They just raved about the facility and the staff.”

The city's decision to withdraw from the unified convention and marketing efforts offered by the Greater Mankato CVB was somewhat controversial.

A consulting firm hired by the CVB released a report earlier this summer that identified the lack of coordination between the two cities as one of the weaknesses the region should correct in order to more effectively attract sporting events.

Zellmer and Sande on Monday night said Bowyer and his staff have expertise and contacts that can greatly benefit the marketing of the cities' sports facilities, citing connections to area colleges that could lead to more intercollegiate tournaments.

“ They can be the group that pulls this thing all together,” Zellmer said.

And the institute, by using college students as interns, can do it efficiently while giving sports management majors some good real-world experience.

“ Showing what it really means to be out working rather than sitting behind a desk reading a book,” Zellmer said.

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