

Mud Run May Revitalize Unused Fairgrounds at Brevort Township

By Paul Gingras

The small, quiet town of Moran may become much louder, at least for one day, pending approval of a "mud run" tentatively scheduled for May, said Brevort Township Supervisor Ed Serwach.

The Mackinac County Sportsmen's Off-Road Vehicle Association (MCSORVA) approached the township board at its regular meeting Wednesday, February 7, and requested approval to use the long-dormant fairgrounds on Brevort Lake Road, once the site of the Mackinac County Fair. The Association wants to host two mud runs, one on May 20 and another on July 22. The prospective events would take place between noon and 6 p.m.

Association members Steve DuFresne and Lee Kanitz explained that a mud run is a timed event in which a 30-foot-wide, 200-foot-long pit is filled with mud for the purpose of having trucks and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) plow through, providing an opportunity for enthusiasts to test the wherewithal of their vehicles in a jovial display of splashing mud and revving engines.

There will be different designations based on tire size and vehicle size, said Mr. Kanitz.

A mud run would be a good way to encourage use of the prop-

erty, they said, and they promised the association would clean up the mess at the end of the day.

"The mud run will probably bring in 300 to 500 spectators and about 150 entries," Mr. Kanitz predicted.

Mr. Serwach said the township would need to be covered for liability and said the association would have to provide insurance and write a formal program detailing the hours of the event and the approximate number of participants. The board said the association will need to present insurance documentation to the township's insurance agent before the board will formally consider the mud run. The insurance plan must include set-up and tear-down.

"These are the times people get hurt," Mr. Serwach noted.

The MCSORVA representatives said they have obtained several insurance quotes and assurances that the coverage would be adequate.

"If the organization presents the necessary plan and insurance, and they are agreeable to the board, we will probably offer them one mud run on a probationary basis," Mr. Serwach said.

"If it works out, we will allow the July run, also, however, we are not issuing a blanket permit."

According to MCSORVA

member Boyd Bigger, members have measured the area necessary for the mud run and determined that it would not encroach on the baseball diamond.

Mr. DuFresne and Mr. Kanitz said they would request the loan of bleachers from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and they asked for assistance from the Brevort Township Fire Department.

Fire Chief Mark Peterson said he was all for the mud run, and Assistant Fire Chief Wayne

Peterson agreed.

"Anything for the township," he said.

The prospective mud runs are strategically planned to take place between others in Dafer, Canada, and downstate Michigan.

"We want ours to be the first of the season in northern Michigan," Mr. Kanitz said.

Mr. DuFresne and Mr. Kanitz emphasized that the event will not require electricity, but they would need township approval to make a significant amount of noise.

They also emphasized that the association is 100 members strong, so there will be no shortage of volunteers to organize and manage the event.

Art Huskey and Sons Excavating offered equipment to dig the pit, and the association is eager to line up sponsors for the event.

The fairgrounds are adjacent to Zion Lutheran Church of Allenville, but no one at the meeting anticipated a problem there because the mud run will be held

Saturday and be over by 6 p.m.

Eventually, the association representatives suggested, the site could be used for snowmobile events, tractor pulls, horse pulls, civic events, and possibly even another fair.

Mr. Serwach encouraged local involvement and was pleased that the association requested the help of the fire department.

The township board agreed to schedule a special meeting once the insurance papers and event plan are completed. That way, the association will not have to wait until the March township meeting.

Recycling Program Needs Volunteers

By Paul Gingras

The death of Ron Bloch last year has derailed a major recycling program and led members of Housing Opportunities Made Equal (H.O.M.E.) to seek help recreating the service. Mr. Bloch had organized and carried out the recycling effort, taking paper products to Manistique and donating any proceeds to H.O.M.E. After his death, a lack of volunteers and discontinuance of a travel allowance paid by the paper company forced the service to be canceled.

H.O.M.E. Director Lori Pieri, who worked closely with Mr. Bloch, said her organization will be happy to continue the program, but cannot afford to subsidize it at the expense of funding affordable housing in the county.

She said there are three ways the program could be saved.

The first would be to locate a dedicated volunteer with a good driving record to take over some of Mr. Bloch's duties. These would include collecting paper from established drop-off sites and hauling it in a trailer (owned and insured by H.O.M.E) to Manistique Papers, Inc. Such a volunteer would need his or her own vehicle, Mrs. Pieri said.

The H.O.M.E. board can provide money for food and 44.5¢ per mile for the drive to Manistique, but the organization cannot provide return mileage. The trip is 45 miles each way.

Mr. Bloch had an agreement with Manistique Papers to provide return mileage, and a new volunteer would have to negotiate a similar agreement, if possible.

"It would be a charitable contribution, for sure," Mrs. Pieri said. A passionate volunteer would break even on the cost, but he or she would need an entire day to get the job done.

The second option would be to establish a facility to store recyclable paper in St. Ignace, Mrs. Pieri said. In this case, H.O.M.E. would make monthly trips to Manistique, but the organization would need a machine and volunteers to bail the paper.

"This option could work very well," she said.

A third option would be for another non-profit organization, or government entity, to take over the recycling program entirely.

Recycling helps local businesses, Mrs. Pieri said. It decreases the volume of trash in dumpsters and lowers disposal fees.

"It would be a shame to let the recycling program go," she added. "There are many organizations with large amounts of paper to recycle."

"It is difficult for us to stop doing this," Mrs. Pieri said. "We want to continue the program." She noted that Mr. Bloch, who died September 17, 2005, was a committed and valued member of the organization's board.

The primary function of H.O.M.E., however, is to provide affordable housing for people of moderate and low incomes.

At its December board meeting, H.O.M.E. members assessed their budget and determined that the organization could no longer run the recycling program without losing money.

The last trip to Manistique was Saturday, February 4.

Bob Lofdahl and other volun-

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January Warmth Stalls Straits Ice Bridge

Looking out into the Straits of Mackinac toward the Mackinac Bridge and the St. Ignace Shore, one can see the area still is devoid of an ice bridge to Mackinac Island. The large openings in the ice remained as of Friday, February 10. With January ending a record-setting month for warm temperatures, thick ice has not been able to take hold. On January 27, Sault Ste., Marie set a record warm temperature of 44 degrees, and Traverse City's average January temperature of 31.9 degrees, tied with the 1932 temperatures, make it the warmest January on record, reported the National Weather Service. Colder days in February may make an ice bridge between St. Ignace and the Island still possible.

Garfield Twp. Hires Dale Nelson as Assessor

By Paul Gingras

Garfield Township has hired Dale Nelson as its new assessor and has agreed to retain former assessor Dawn Nelson as the data processor. The two will split the salary budgeted for the assessor, the board decided during a regular meeting January 16.

Dawn Nelson resigned as the assessor because of a state law that says a local assessor cannot serve as a county commissioner because the commission approves the township assessment roles. Mrs. Nelson was elected to the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners in 2004 and is serving her second term as chairperson.

The new assessor, Dale Nelson, is her husband and also the supervisor of St. Ignace Township.

"Dale worked right alongside Dawn when we first hired her and did our re-appraisal of the township," said Township Clerk Linda Bennett. "Dale had such close familiarity with the township that we didn't want to waste taxpayer's money by advertising for another assessor."

Also at the meeting, the Garfield Township board discussed beautification efforts in Naubinway and vandalism in remote areas of the township. New planning commission appointments and road improvements rounded out the agenda.

Visitors to Naubinway this year will be greeted with 14 bright blue banners lining each side of the street. Each banner will be adorned with a yellow sun, a green tree, and the silhouette of a fishing boat on the water, said Marcia Waters of the Beautification Committee, who solicited donations to pay for the banners.

The board will discuss at this month's meeting continued vandalism of a street light at the corner of H-40 and Naubinway Road. The light, according to Cloverland Electric, has been shot out six times in the past year, and the electric company has been replacing it until now.

The township board is asking anyone with information about the vandalism to call Mrs. Bennett at (906) 477-6481.

"If this continues to happen," she said, "the cost of replacing the light is going to add up for township residents."

The township board appointed Paul Fillman of Engadine and Brent Geske of Naubinway to the township planning commission. They will serve two-year terms.

"Paul's been very active in the community," Mrs. Bennett said. "He has a good head on his shoulders and he'll be learning the job as he goes along. He is currently on our zoning board of appeals.

"Brent is also very community oriented," she added, "and he is currently on the township road commission."

Trustees also reappointed Steve Lane to the ambulance corps and approved the purchase of 10 radios and batteries, at about \$400 for each radio, requested by Sue Taylor, who chairs the Fire and Ambulance Committee.

The radios will be paid for out of the township's general fund.

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Games, Races To Highlight Curtis Winter Carnival Sat.

Children's games, ice fishing for children and adults, bed races, mini snowmobile races for kids, and a dusk fireworks display over South Manistique Lake will highlight the 12th Annual Curtis Winter Carnival Saturday, February 18. Games and contests are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a snowmobile raffle at 4 p.m. and the fireworks display at approximately 6:30 p.m.

A \$2 carnival button includes

admission to the events, sponsored by the Curtis Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Curtis Fish Coop will be a highlight of the day, in which children and adults can angle through the ice for stocked fish. Other activities will include a chili cook off, children's pinata, cake walk, children's sack races, and penny scramble. A bake sale and other food booths will be available through the day.

Fishing Tournament Featured at DeTour This Weekend

The DeTour Hunt and Fish Club will hold its annual fishing tournament on Caribou Lake Saturday, February 18, and Sunday, February 19. The tourna-

ment starts Saturday at 7 a.m. and continues Sunday from 7 a.m. until noon. Registration will be at the South Caribou Lake Road public access.

DeTour Festival Set for Feb. 25

The 2006 DeTour Winterfest will be Saturday, February 25, in DeTour Village.

All festivities will be at the DeTour Village Hall on Dawson Street, beginning at 10 a.m.

A snowmobile and walking poker run, craft show, chili cook-off, food, and an auction will highlight the event.

Anyone who wants to enter the chili cook-off must have their creation to the Village Hall by 10 a.m. Judging will take place at 11 a.m.

A charity auction will start at 4 p.m. that day, and anyone who wants to donate items should call Candy Postula at (906) 297-5885 and make arrangements to deliver or have items picked up.

A snow sculpture contest with the theme "Great Lakes History" offers prizes to residents and to businesses. Participants should register in advance of judging by calling Candy Postula at (906) 297-5885 or Barb Buschbacher at (906) 297-8075.

Last Day of Ice Will Be March 15 at Little Bear

The ice in Little Bear East Arena will be removed Wednesday, March 15.

Members of the St. Ignace Recreation Advisory Committee, meeting Wednesday, February 8, agreed to keep the ice rink open until after the St. Ignace squirts hockey team's championship game in Southgate March 17 to 19. The team uses the arena for practice.

Ice was kept until April the last several years, said Recreation Director Phil Hinkson, to accommodate the Northern Michigan Black Bears. That team has moved to Sault Ste. Marie.

The facility has been struggling with high heating and utilities costs and low revenue each winter. The board created a task force last month to bring events and programs for the ice rink, though many members believe marketing the facility for summer and fall events can be successful enough to absorb the facility's high winter costs.

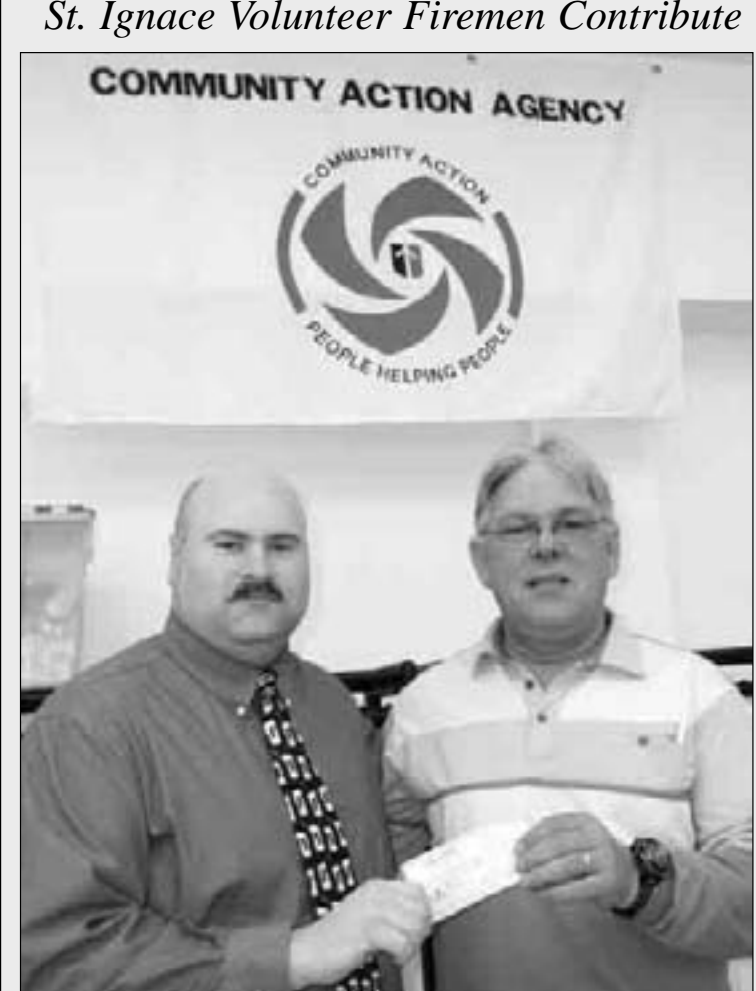
A small group of paintball buffs are interested in building a course at Doc Holle's Silver Mountain ski and tubing hill, recreation board member Jerry Fenlon told the board. He said the group is approaching Moran Township's planning commission to see if the plan is feasible at the facility, since the facility is in Moran Township.

Board member Marianne Huskey asked if the proposed paintball course would interfere with the new disc golf course at Silver Mountain. Mr. Fenlon said he was confident the situation could be worked out.

The board took no action on the issue.

Mr. Hinkson said Little Bear East's Web site revisions are 89 percent complete. He said the site's general recreation information page and its floor plan page are still under construction. Promotional brochures of the facility have also been printed and will be included in the facility's marketing packages.

Donations Coming in for Saturday's Walk for Warmth St. Ignace Volunteer Firemen Contribute



Matt Bowlby (left), president of the St. Ignace Volunteer Firemen Association, presents a \$340.25 check to Don Wright, site supervisor for Mackinac County Community Action Agency service center in St. Ignace for the Walk for Warmth Fund, Monday, February 13. The fund assists residents struggling to pay high heating bills and the walk is open to all. It will be Saturday, February 18, at 11 a.m. at Community Action Agency, at 368 Reagon Street. A chili meal immediately follows at Community Action Agency.