

Mackinaw City Announces Plan to Create Affordable Housing

By Paul Gingras

The original Mackinaw Bridge Museum and Gift Shop and MaMa Mia's Pizzeria and Restaurant are scheduled to reopen by July 1, fully rebuilt, after being destroyed by fire August 28, 2005. With help from the communities of St. Ignace and Mackinaw City, historical memorabilia related to the construction of the Mackinac Bridge will once again adorn the

museum, said owner J.C. Stilwell, who also plans to create a "memories of Mackinaw City" theme by displaying antiques related to the village.

Reconstructing the museum, establishing Mackinaw City as a leader in energy efficiency, and providing affordable housing in the community occupied the Mackinaw City Village Council when it met Thursday, March 2.

Established in 1958, the Mackinaw Bridge Museum contained memorabilia like hard hats, lunch pails, rivets, and bridge documents.

"We lost everything from toothpicks to diamonds in the fire," said Mr. Stilwell, who was an ironworker on the bridge from 1954 to 1957, where he said he met men from all over the world.

To recreate the museum, Mr.

Stilwell is seeking historical items that relate both to the bridge and Mackinaw City in general.

"It's a challenge," he said, "but I like challenges."

He is asking anyone with historical objects to donate to contact him at (231) 436-5937.

Once again, MaMa Mia's and the museum will be housed under one roof, and in an effort to make the building as much like the original as possible, the Zoning Board of Appeals approved a variance Thursday, March 2, authorizing Mr. Stilwell to recreate an old-style roof that will extend over the sidewalk.

"Fire is not usually a reason to grant a variance," said Village President Robert Heilman, but it played a key role in this case, given the importance of the historic landmark.

In other business, the Mackinaw City Village Council announced that an energy conference will take place May 18 and May 19. The discussion will provide government and school officials information concerning new ways to save energy, Community Director Steve Schnell said. The conference will address both small improvements and large-scale innovations like solar power, wind power, bio-diesel, and energy produced by burning corn and other agricultural byproducts.

To make energy savings a village-wide endeavor, the Village Council will be experimenting with a host of techniques and technologies, such as timing equipment for thermostats, more efficient lighting, and motion sensors. Council will provide information to the public concerning how well each project works, Mr. Schnell

added, and residents can try some of them for themselves.

Small technological changes can make a huge difference, he said. For instance, old T12 fluorescent tubes will soon be obsolete, but new lights are available that use only a fraction of the power. Two of them are called T8s and T5s. They start up quicker and run more efficiently, Mr. Schnell said. "There are also 'compact fluorescent lights,'" he added. They screw into fixtures that serve traditional light bulbs but use only one-third as much power.

The village has already begun experimenting with high-tech lighting by replacing the Christmas-style lamps that adorn trees throughout the businesses district with Light Emitting Diodes (LED).

"They cost five times as much, but use one-tenth the power of older lights," Mr. Schnell said. "Over 10 years, we estimate this will save the village over \$30,000."

Following an energy audit done on public and school buildings, Council has installed electric timers in its facilities, Mr. Schnell said. These timers save energy by turning the heat down automatically at night and raising it in the morning.

The village is also using motion sensitive light switches in its buildings, eliminating the tendency to keep areas like hallways lit when no-one is around, Mr. Schnell said.

In other business, the village has begun the process of bringing affordable housing to residents in need of apartments but who make incomes below the area average. Providing low-rent apartments

would ease the burden on a number of residents, make it possible to bring in a larger work force, and help parents who want their children placed in the Mackinaw City school system, Mr. Schnell said.

The village is working with Jerry Haan, an individual investor, and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

The project was initiated after Council received the results of a housing study revealing that, out of Mackinaw City's approximately 800 residents, roughly 26 needed more affordable apartments. The rent in the area is pricey, Mr. Schnell said, but in affordable housing projects, rent may be adjusted according to a resident's income.

With low-income rentals available, the area workforce could be increased, Mr. Schnell said, and keeping a strong workforce in the village has been a problem, owing to the cost of living. Further, more families translates to more students in the school system, and that means an increase in state funding for schools, he added.

Creating affordable housing will be a long process, partly because there are three entities involved, Mr. Schnell said. The village must determine which property would be suitable for the project, whether to sell land at a discount, whether to offer a tax abatement, and whether utilities will be provided at a discount.

"We have made initial contact with all the entities involved," Mr. Schnell told *The St. Ignace News*. "All parties are interested in pursuing this." Now the village, Mr. Haan, and the state, will determine the costs and figure out who pays for which aspects of the project.

Upper Peninsula Forests...

Jack Pine Uniquely Adapts to Wildfire

By Bill Cook

Upper Peninsula
Extension Forester

Forest management practices vary considerably across forest types, site conditions, market availability, and many other factors. There simply is not any single way or best way to manage all forests, or even a particular kind of forest. While nature is a dynamic system that defies simple categorization, there remains a body of knowledge and experience that can be effectively applied.

Jack pine is one of our most common northern forest types, especially on sandy, well-drained soils. It's also one of our more interesting types, especially because of its adaptation to wildfire. Like many Lake States forest types, jack pine regeneration requires full sunlight to grow. This is true throughout the life of jack pine. Even moderate shade will significantly reduce tree vigor, adding to stress and increasing vulnerability to insects and diseases.

Historically, wildfires were the primary agent of jack pine reproduction. A major jack pine conflagration is an awesome sight to behold, and frightening. As stands would burn, the heat would cause sealed cones to open over the subsequent few days. The seed would fall on mineral soil, laid mostly bare by the fire. These are the ideal conditions to secure jack pine regeneration. With full sunlight, jack pine grows very rapidly.

Today, forest managers work to prevent jack pine fires, which tend to run hot and fast. They're usually very difficult to control. However, most jack pine cones still need heat to release the protected seeds. Forest management uses clearcutting to create the needed environmental conditions.

Summer temperatures within a few inches of the sandy soils get high enough to cause jack pine cones to open. So, following a clearcut, leftover tops, called slash, are chopped to get the cones close to the ground. In this way, most jack pine stands regenerate naturally. When this sort of technique fails, a landowner can resort to planting.

Not all jack pine cones are "glued" shut. In mature trees, about 25 percent may open without the aid of high temperatures. In younger trees, this percentage is higher. Not all jack pine stands burned regularly, so the species employed a back-up strategy where some cones open without heat. Jack pine also produces cones at a young age, just in case that fire returned sooner than the average.

Jack pine budworm is another neatly fitting piece of jack pine ecology. When trees reach around 50 years old, budworm populations begin to build. Given the right conditions, populations will reach epidemic proportions and will eventually feed even on the younger trees. Large portions of stands can be killed. The dead and dying timber creates a flammable situation. Of course, this feeds right into the regeneration strategy of the species.

Insect epidemics and wildfire do not fit well with human habitation. Natural is not always desirable. People who live in or near jack pine forests should be aware of the natural hazards. Dead trees should be removed. The forest should be set back at least 100 feet from any structures. The "Firewise" program has suggestions to help reduce the risk of fire damage to homes.

Using clearcutting to create a patchwork of age classes across a jack pine landscape is a good strategy to minimize the risk of fire and insect outbreaks. Even if a fire

does happen, when it reaches younger trees, then firefighters have a chance to control the fire. In larger timber, if crowns begin to burn, there is little that humans can do except get out of the way.

The mix of age classes is also the recovery strategy for one of the finest success stories of bringing an endangered species back from the brink of extinction. The Kirtland's warbler breeds in Michigan jack pine, and has fairly exacting requirements. The bulk of the Kirtland's warbler management has been in the northern Lower Peninsula. Warbler populations have reached their recovery

LMAS: Exposure to Secondhand Smoke Changes Properties of Blood

Exposure to secondhand smoke can increase a person's risk of coronary heart disease by 50 to 60 percent, reported Dr. James Therrian of the Luce-Mackinac-Alger-Schoolcraft (LMAS) Health Department.

"Studies show that even 30 minutes spent in a smoke-filled indoor environment results in biological changes that increase an individual's risk for heart attack," Dr. Therrian said.

Noting that changes occur in the characteristics of clotting properties of the blood within 20 minutes of exposure to cigarette smoke in an enclosed indoor area, the Centers for Disease Control cautions people to avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.

These changes in properties of the blood contribute to increased risk for heart attack, Dr. Therrian said.

Studies conducted in Helena, Montana, and Pueblo, Colorado, found that requiring smoke-free worksites, bars, and restaurants in these cities resulted in a reduction of heart attack admissions to the area hospitals by 40 percent,

goals and breeding pairs have recently been sighted in Upper Peninsula jack pine stands.

Jack pine is an excellent example of where forest management has helped maintain a valuable forest type, reduced risks to people, and has played a critical wildlife recovery role. Jack pine timber is valued in making high quality paper, oriented-strand board, and new technologies that produce dimensional lumber. Together, these benefits serve to illustrate the advantages of managing a renewable and sustainable natural resource. Forest management, in many ways, is a key to our future.

according to LMAS Health Department.

Quitting smoking and eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke can immediately reduce the risk of heart attacks and stroke. For help in quitting smoking, call a health care provider or the Michigan Tobacco Quit Line at (800) 480-7848. For information on the health effects of secondhand smoke for children and adults, call LMAS Health Department at 643-1112.

Veterans Officer Holds Hours Thurs.

Rick Stewart, veterans service officer for the American Legion, Department of Michigan, will be available for visits from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Sault Ste. Marie Thursday, March 16.

Veterans and widows who need assistance, such as for veterans administration, claims with the administration, agent orange, or grave markers, may set up a visit with Mr. Stewart at the Sault Ste. Marie American Legion Post.

For a scheduled visit, call (906) 630-2646.

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