

Clark Twp. Never Fell Short in Sewer Debt Fund, Until Now

To the Editor:

I am responding to an article on page 25 of the March 16 edition of *The St. Ignace News* regarding the report of the actions of a Clark Township Board meeting. Supervisor Hudson is quoted as saying, "One of the reasons this board has had so much work is because previous officials didn't spend more time at the job," explaining a statement she made February 23, "the sewer fund has a \$215,000 shortfall." She further stated, "previous supervisors have miscalculated the amount of revenue that needed to be collected."

Clark Township never has been short of payments to the Sewer Debt Fund until now. Further, supervisors should have little to do with collection of calculations of tax bills. The township treasurer sets the amount needed for payments in a particular year, and notifies the assessor, who then calculates the proper percentages to be collected.

Clark Township taxpayers may notice that on their 2004 tax bill, the previous administration correctly collected the sewer debt totals at .4825 mill. When the previous administration left office, all bills were paid and sewer accounts were current. The present administration dropped the amount to .2513 mill. This error naturally will cause a substantial shortfall that now cannot be corrected for this taxable year. If Clark Township cannot make the full sewer debt payments for this year, guess who is on the hook to make up the balance? Mackinac County.

One would think a board that has championed service to the community would not continually be wrangling about a pay raise when the gloom of running short of money hangs over their heads.

Robert Allen Smith
Cedarville

Editor's Note: Mr. Smith is a former Clark Township supervisor.

Talented Students Made Program Special at 'Evening of Jazz'

To the Editor:

Just how to say this is hard to express with words that would do justice for what I feel I would like to say. I am speaking about the program "Evening of Jazz" that was put on by the LaSalle, Charlevoix, and Roscommon high school music departments Saturday, March 11. The students did a wonderful job in making the gymnasium into a very elegant place for the dinner and concert, with table centerpieces and lighting overhead. The program was so full of talent that the evening went by before one knew. Dancing, singing, skits, and the variety of musical groups made for a much-diversified evening of students and even community putting on the show.

I cannot express how well each and every one did as we had so many talented students who showed us what they like and how much they enjoyed playing for us. The meal was good and I cannot think of where one could have gone for a dinner and that much entertainment for the cost of only \$10. No one should say they did not get their money's worth that evening.

The music teachers showed much interest in the students. They had done a marvelous job with their groups. The whole evening was great and I look forward to next year. I only wish more people could have taken part to support them, and would have stayed to the end. The evening was a great way to support the fine musical programs we have in our school systems.

Dennis L. Wenzel
Hessel

Editor's Note: The concert was sold out well in advance and people who wanted to buy tickets at the door were turned away.

Musicians Treated 'Jazz Night' Audience to Wonderful Evening

To the Editor:

This letter is in reference to the Jazz Night recently held at LaSalle High School, featuring Charlevoix, Roscommon, and LaSalle High School Jazz bands, as well as Roscommon's and LaSalle's steel drum bands. We were treated to over four hours of music by these wonderful musicians. The night was a wonderful one, with the music and the food and the atmosphere, it all made for a fun-filled evening.

Being a former band student, I truly appreciated all the hard work that went into making the evening such a success. I have since talked to many people who attended the concert, and everyone I have talked to has had nothing but praise for all the people who were involved.

To the Big Boy which catered the event, the band boosters who worked so hard to pull off such a great time, and Mr. Jason Byrna and his

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

hard-working students, along with the other schools that attended, you all brightened a long winter with a night of music that will carry us into the spring. Congratulations on such a great success. You are all tops in my book. Keep up the great work.

Kim Latva
St. Ignace

High Praise for St. Ignace Middle School Volleyball Team

To The Editor:

I'd like to start this letter out to express high praise and recognition to the young ladies playing, and coaches and parents involved in middle school volleyball for St. Ignace.

I am writing in regard to a volleyball tournament held in Petoskey on Saturday, March 11. My daughter plays for Rudyard and competed against the St. Ignace team as well as many others in attendance. The other teams were a great bunch of girls as well, however, the enthusiasm that came across from the St. Ignace girls was contagious.

The St. Ignace team supported their own players as well as spent plenty of their day cheering on others, being sure to shake a hand at the end of each match, win or lose. This is a great example of team sportsmanship and support for all involved. This was so nice to see. I encourage your community to go and see both seventh and eighth grade teams in action. Their cheers, smiles, and laughter will brighten your day.

All of you girls made our day in Petoskey a pleasant one and shared such high spirit with everyone. Players, coaches, and parents alike were touched by your team. It made the day very enjoyable. We play St. Ignace today in Rudyard and I look forward to seeing your team once again.

The sportsmanship award you received in Petoskey was well deserved.

Proud parent of Rudyard seventh grade, number eight,
Susan M. Bawks
Kincheloe

Concerned About Health Care? Attend Hospital Board Meeting

To the Editor:

To the patients of Mackinac Straits Hospital: This is a follow-up to my original Letter to the Editor regarding the laying off of Doctors Gunnell and Dyer. I was heartened to see other letters from individuals also saddened by this decision. If you are concerned by the direction health care is taking in our hometown, I urge everyone to attend the next hospital Board of Directors meeting, scheduled for Monday, March 27, at 4 p.m. at the Mackinac County Airport conference room.

I've had many friends, co-workers, and strangers come up to me and tell me they also were angry to lose such good doctors. My wife and I were happy to sign a petition concerning this issue. While many people may not choose to write a letter, a good way to show your support for our doctors is to take a little of your time and attend the next meeting. Voice your concerns, raise questions, look for answers, bring your husbands, wives, children, parents, grandparents, and let the board see the faces of the individuals affected by this decision.

For those who think it won't make a difference, I offer the example of the recent decision to sell the operation of some U.S. ports to an Arab-owned company. This deal was derailed when 70 percent of the American public let it be known they didn't support it, and were prepared to hold their elected officials accountable at the ballot box.

Please come and support our doctors at this board meeting. Do not allow this to happen without showing our support. Hope to see you there.
Martin Hoyt
St. Ignace

Business or Health Care: Are We Just a Number?

To the Editor:

Big business or quality health care: Are we just a number?

This letter is being directed toward Mr. Nelson, Mackinac Straits Hospital CEO, and the hospital board. Are you concerned with big business or quality health care? My family, as well as others in the community, have read your reasons for letting Doctors Gunnell and Dyer go due to lower than "desired" patient numbers and income. Dr. Gunnell is our family physician and if all goes well he'll stay our physician. We have spoken with many of his patients in the community and they feel the same way. If we understand correctly, this community desires to build up its health care facilities, not tear them down! By eliminating these doctors, you are doing just that.

We moved to this area six years ago. We were just a number to our doctors in our previous community. We were just a dollar sign, and were treated as such by many physicians. This tends to happen when physicians get overburdened with patients. When we first came to this community, we were told that Dr. Hawkins was not able to take on a larger patient load, so we were referred to Dr. Gunnell. Has this changed? We had not met either of these doctors, but assumed both were very capable physicians. When we first went to Dr. Gunnell for a respiratory infection, he took time to get to know who we were. This has built a good doctor/patient relationship over the years that we have doctored with him. We feel free to discuss matters with him and he has our trust. When we have had a need for a doctor visit, we feel we are getting quality care, as he is concerned about us as his patients, not just another way to put a dollar bill in his pocket. He has chosen the profession he has because of his care for people, as many other doctors have.

By laying off Dr. Gunnell, you are telling us that you no longer care about quality health care by those you employ. The bottom line is your main interest! How can we trust a hospital with this kind of attitude? My family, for one, and there are many others, will consider going elsewhere for a hospital and treatment, as we feel that you do not have our best interests in mind as patients. We are now "customers," as in the sales field. No thank you! You mentioned that Dr. Hawkins and others would probably pick up the patient load. No so, as many patients will go elsewhere because of your attitude.

These doctors have given this community and the hospital health care facility their best. What have you given them in return? A slap in the face and a kick in the pants! That is not the way to treat people who are "needed" in the community.

Is this hospital in such bad shape financially that they need to increase their bottom line to survive? I don't think so. Why, then, decrease quality health care because Medicare doesn't like your patient quotas? Please reconsider this decision and build health care and trust in this community, instead of destroying it.

Lewis and Debra Hewlett
Moran

Kids Do Not Get Sick 'Part Time'

To the Editor:

I am very disappointed to hear of the layoff of Dr. Dyer. I, too, have been bringing both of my children to her for about 1.5 years. I have never seen a doctor who cares as much about kids as she does. She treats them like they are her own. She gets down on their level to talk to them, lets them play with her stethoscope, she hugs and kisses them, and has the patience of a saint. Dr. Dyer is never in a hurry and very thorough in her evaluations. We need a pediatrician who cares about our kids as much as we do.

I do not understand the reasoning of keeping a part-time pediatrician and letting a full-time pediatrician go. Kids do not get sick part time.

If it means that we travel to see her, then so be it, but it is Mackinac Straits' loss. Maybe it is time to analyze the impact if Dr. Dyer takes her patients with her because it seems to me that the administration thinks we would be transferred to other doctors.

If Mackinac Straits is one of the few hospitals with a pediatrician on staff, then Mackinac Straits should be promoting such an advantage, not running off an asset as great as Dr. Karen Dyer.

Dr. Dyer loves what she does and the kids she treats.

Bridgett Sorenson
St. Ignace

Help Give Deer Herd Management Authority to NRC

To the Editor:

I write to you as President of Afton Deer Management, a growing group of concerned citizens in this area whose purpose is the cultivation and maintenance of a healthy and well managed deer herd. This year our group tilled approximately 60 acres of public lands for deer feed, plus private lands, and members prune trees on state land, and plant fruit trees for feed each year. Our group has established routes for regular surveillance of deer to aid the DNR in obtaining an accurate deer count and we are working on a winter feeding program.

Members regularly attend meetings of the Natural Resource Commission (NRC). A study of surveys and revenues for the DNR shows that there has been a decline for the last five years at the rate of about four percent per year. We are concerned that our area is losing considerable revenue over the years due to our decreasing deer population. Number of licenses issued is decreasing also. We have written to our senators and representatives requesting that they transfer control and give full charge of management of the deer herd to the NRC. Right now there is a separation, in that control over licensing and legal size of the deer taken is legislative. Currently, the NRC can only control the number of doe permits issued.

I would request that every interested person recognize the importance of this issue and write to your local representatives to request a bill that will give the NRC this power. It is a working tool they can't do without in their efforts to manage Michigan's deer herd.

John L. Ormsbee
Cheboygan

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Gun Lakes Tribe Gaming: Fair Is Fair

In its long quest for equal treatment in Lansing on gaming, the Kalamazoo-area Gun Lake Tribe, smallest of the state's 12 federally recognized tribes, has faced opposing firepower from some top guns of the Michigan GOP.

Among them: presumptive gubernatorial nominee Dick DeVos, who earlier signed on as an opponent but is not currently trumpeting the issue, and assorted GOP congressmen and senatorial hopefuls.

Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm, wavering, as she tends to do on some controversial issues, reserves judgment on whether she'll sign a legislatively approved Gun Lake compact for a casino that Republican Governor John Engler (citing a personal conflict because some of his buddies were pushing it) declined to sign as he had for the other tribes.

Formally, the Gun Lake Tribe is the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, named after a 1700s Great Lakes regional chief/war lord. His name meant a feared, powerful bird — although he was dubbed "bad bird" by the feds for fighting their ill-advised removal efforts to relocate his people out west, the Trail of Tears.

(Though many sources spell the name of similar tribes "Potawatomi," Gun Lake uses the spelling "Pottawatomi.")

Gun Lake Chairman D.K. Sprague, a 62-year-old retired railroad worker who steered the 305-member tribe to federal recognition, is hardly a powerful bird in the 21st century political process. Big bucks are against him.

But Sprague, in his low key way, is slogging around the state talking to newspaper editorial boards and others who will hear his pitch to counter arguments of such groups as "23 Is Enough" — dubbed to reflect combined number of Michigan's Indian and Detroit casinos.

Says Sprague, whom I interviewed last week at the Grand Traverse Resort near Traverse City (owned by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa

Indians): "Although 23 Is Enough is used to getting their way in west Michigan, they will not succeed in denying the tribe its sovereign rights which are protected by federal law and are not dependent on political contributions."

He's right. Facts are, as Granholm and ex-Engler administration officials say privately, under terms of federal recognition and gaming regulations, the horse is out of the barn; one way or another Gun Lakers will have a casino; and it makes sense for the state to negotiate a compact that produces revenue for the state and communities surrounding the casino, as existing casinos do, big time.

This is far from the biggest issue pending in Lansing. But it's worthy of note in the aftermath of the Washington scandal involving disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff, whose ripped-off clients included the Mount Pleasant-based Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe that paid him a reported \$14 million to use his levers in Congress and the Bush Administration to, among other things, fight the Gun Lake bid.

According to Sprague, the Saginaw tribe under current leadership, as well as other Michigan tribes with casinos, now support Gun Lake's bid.

As Chairman Frank Ettawageshik of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians told me Friday, there should be "a level playing field" in Lansing for Gun Lake, whose bid for a state compact is strongly endorsed by Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Among vocal opponents of Gun Lake casino is U.S. Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), who in 1993 succeeded in getting the "just and equitable treatment" that he said the Manistee-based Little River Band of Ottawa Indians deserved for federal recognition.

In 2002, Hoekstra told the *Grand Rapids Press* "we need to put up roadblocks" to Gun Lake's casino bid.

As of this writing, Hoekstra's

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.