

Annual Audit Notes Gaps in City Cash Reserves

By Ryan Schlehner
St. Ignace City Council received some good news and bad news during its annual audit for

fiscal year 2005 by its financial advising firm, Rehmann Robson, during its regular meeting Monday, May 1. As expected, the city's

water and sewer rates, raised last July to erase a \$775,000 budget deficit, were not lowered. Annette Eustice of Rehmann

Robson highlighted the city's 2005 fiscal year, pointing out that its water and sewer cash reserve requirements relating to bond offerings for water and sewer system repair and replacements are under-reserved by \$278,607 and \$172,035, respectively.

She reported that the city will

enjoy an increase of \$27,410 in its fund balance, however, the state is seeking reimbursement of over-captured Downtown Development Authority tax amounts of \$270,000 over an 11-year period. The city contends it owes only \$206,105 and has set aside approximately \$170,000 in anticipation of the

state's claim, reported Ms. Eustice. As of December 31, 2005, Ms. Eustice reported that Silver Mountain Ski Area Fund and the Community Center Fund had deficit fund balances of \$1,397 and \$4,262, respectively.

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Good Deed for Scouts



Clayton Meyers (from left) and Micah Lindberg are part of a group of 16 Cedarville and Hessel scouts who helped clean up Cedar Cemetery in Cedarville last week. Boy Scout Troop 140 of Les Cheneaux participated in the clean-up as a community service project. Others working Tuesday, April 25, include Thomas Beukema, Peter and Patrick Duman, Brent Heerspink, Matt Hill, Jordan Huff, Daniel and Nathaniel Landreville, Charlie McConkey, Matt Nelson, Aaron and Jeremy Sherlund, Taylor Smith, and Jacob Strait. The scouts are led by Dale Striechert, who expects at least two of the scouts to return to the cemetery to work on repairing its split rail fence as an Eagle Scout project. Under the sponsorship of the Les Cheneaux Lions Club, Troop 140 has produced 24 Eagle Scouts so far, Mr. Striechert said.

Thomas Beukema and Jordan Huff, members of Les Cheneaux Boy Scouts Troop 140, pile up leaf litter and pine needles while raking the lawn at Cedar Cemetery on Four-Mile Block Road in Cedarville. The cemetery is owned and maintained by Clark Township.

Mackinac Island Students Enjoy Surprise Visit by Congressman

By Karen Gould

By the time the ferry boat docked on Mackinac Island, passenger Bart Stupak's schedule already was being modified to include a stop at the school. Congressman Stupak took up an offer made by Island school board member Leanne Brodeur, who happened to be on the same boat, to visit with Island students following his planned town hall meeting, Friday, April 21.

After talking with Island residents, Congressman Stupak walked from the Community Hall on Market Street and then headed north on Cadotte Avenue toward the Island's 82-student school.

As students in grades two through 12 found seats on the gymnasium's bleachers, Congressman Stupak's wireless e-mail system, which he is required to carry, began alerting him to incoming messages. He told students that the last-minute addition to his schedule that included visiting with them had not been updated on his itinerary yet, so people in Washington were e-mailing him messages.

He told students the tiny handheld device, which includes a global positioning system, was issued to all congressmen following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He said at that time, about six members of Congress could not be located, and he was one of them. He happened to be in Detroit and about to get on a flight, he told them.

"They worked everywhere in the world, except northern Michigan," he said, when he first got the device. Since then, technology has



Congressman Bart Stupak of Menominee, who represents Michigan's First Congressional District, made his second visit to Mackinac Island Public School, answering students' questions ranging from regional to national in scope.

improved, and so has the reception. The communication system now works in northern Michigan, he added, holding up the unit for students to see.

He told students that a congressman's district is based on population and that his district represents 662,563 people. It is 600 miles long, stretching from the Keweenaw Peninsula in the Upper Peninsula to Bay City.

"I have the largest Congressional District of those states that have more than one member of Congress," he said.

Congressional districts are delineated very carefully based on population, and his district is a good example, he said. In Williams Township outside Bay City, one side of the street of a

trailer park is in his district, and the other side of the street is in the Fifth Congressional District.

Making his second visit to the school, Congressman Stupak, whose father was a school superintendent, invited students to ask him questions, and they did, on topics ranging from national to local issues. Student queried the congressman about job outsourcing, the environment, President Bush, high gas prices, and the Great Lakes.

Students also wanted to know what he liked about his job, what he considers his greatest accomplishment, and Michigan's future.

"Probably the biggest satisfaction I get (from my job) is helping

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State's Interest Soars in Wind Power Potential

Turbines at Mackinaw City Power 600 Homes, Developer Considers Adding Three More Towers

By Paul Gingras

As the prices of fossil fuels reach unprecedented levels, a host of Michigan residents, legislators, and businesses have increased their interest in renewable energy, sources of power that will not dry up, run out, or increase the state's dependence on foreign resources. Wind turbines have taken the lead in this quest for independence and cheaper energy, represented locally by the success of Mackinaw City's wind farm, and a legislative push to build more wind generating facilities throughout Michigan.

The stock value of wind turbines is increasing, said Rich Vander Veen, president of Mackinaw Power, the company that built the towers on the wind-rich Straits of Mackinac. The company retains permits to build three more in Mackinaw City, and Mr. Vander Veen said that he is considering doing so. With state support, wind farms have the potential to create thousands of new jobs in an energy field that produces virtually no pollution, he said.

Village Manager Jeff Lawson said the local turbines generate approximately two million kilowatts of electricity each year, enough to power 600 households, and for several years Mackinaw City was the sole supplier of the Green Generation Pilot Program, hosted by Consumers Energy. The turbines allowed any Consumers customer to support alternative energy production in Michigan. All 11 million kilowatts produced in Mackinaw City were sold, said Steve Stubleski, project manager for the Green Generation program.

Wind power is more expensive than tradition-

al power sources like coal or natural gas because most of the plants that produce traditional power have been operating for decades, and their facilities are largely paid off, Mr. Stubleski explained. In order to qualify for the Green Generation program, however, alternative energy plants must be new, and the companies that produce wind power are still paying off their facilities. To do so, they must add surcharges

"It was a pilot program. We wanted the eight million people who cross the Mackinac Bridge each year to see what power production will look like in the 21st century."

— Rich Vander Veen,
president of Mackinaw Power

Green Generation customers pay 1.667 cents more per kilowatt hour for power, Mr. Stubleski said. Traditional power costs approximately nine cents per kilowatt hour. Supporters of wind power pay more than 10 cents per kilowatt hour. The costs for traditional and green power are kept separate, he added, so customers who do not choose to support the Green Generation program do not have to pay higher bills.

There are two ways residential customers can go about participating in the program. They can buy 100 percent of their power through the Green Generation program, raising their electric bill by an average of \$12 per month, or they can opt to buy a portion of their power through the Green Generation program. If they buy a portion of their power this way, customers purchase what Consumers Energy calls "green blocks." Each "block" represents 150 kilowatts of power and costs \$2.50 per month, a surcharge added to the regular rate. High-use residential customers and businesses get a better rate. They pay \$2 per green block, as long as they buy at least 100 blocks per month.

Although supporters of alternative energy might wish otherwise, no one can buy wind power directly from the turbines that produce it. Energy produced by all manner of sources flows together into the electrical grid, whether it comes from wind turbines, coal plants, hydroelectric plants, or nuclear generators. However, more electricity flowing into the grid from Green Generation sources means companies like Consumers can back away from traditional power sources, allowing Michigan to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, Mr. Stubleski said.

The wind farm in Mackinaw City was not designed to serve the village alone, Mr. Lawson said. Its power can be purchased by any Consumers customer, but the turbines have been good for the local economy, he added. The village makes \$1,800 each month by leasing land for the towers, and receives an additional \$9,249.16 a year in taxes. Each year, this amounts to \$30,449.16 in revenue for the village.

"This is not a small addition to our general fund budget," he added. "We wouldn't want to

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Wind turbines have taken the lead in the quest for independence and cheaper energy, represented locally by the success of Mackinaw City's wind farm. One of the three towers is pictured here at sunset.