

Les Cheneaux School Staff To Get Charge Cards for On-site Purchases

By Amy Polk

A district charge card system for Les Cheneaux Community Schools was unanimously approved by the school board Monday, April 17, which is expected to save money by allowing staff to make purchases for some supplies without prior approval, taking advantage of store sales. A policy for card use will be developed by June and the card should be available by July.

The program already is in place in Engadine, Les Cheneaux business manager Kris Hill said.

She said the system will be a much easier and less expensive way to facilitate district purchases. Michigan School Business Officials, Michigan Association of School Boards, and Michigan Association of School Administrators are leading the Michigan Purchase Card Consortium to provide the program to all school districts in the state. They have estimated a charge card for school purchases will save districts \$75 to \$120 on every transaction.

Charges are made to the district's card, and recorded on the bill, which will be paid automatically every month. The system would eliminate the need for the

business office to write checks every time an employee buys supplies, textbooks, equipment, uniforms, and, potentially, all school purchases.

"The efficiencies of it will save me and Beth (Rye) limitless amounts of time," Mrs. Hill said. "I think the teachers are going to like this, and it's something that will help them and help us."

The system, according to Mrs. Hill, will allow staff to take advantage of unexpected sales they see at stores while they are out shopping, but cannot because the current purchase system requires them to get a signed check from the school before they buy. Sometimes store sales have lower prices than school supply catalogs or buying in bulk, Superintendent Rod Goehmann added.

"It always seemed that we would find the greatest savings in large quantities, but we've been finding that's not the case," Mr. Goehmann said.

Mrs. Hill said controls and spending limits can prevent misuse and the cards cannot be used for cash advances or to purchase furniture and gasoline. All purchases must also be tax exempt, and it will be the purchaser's responsibility to make sure they are, Mrs. Hill said.

Spending can be monitored online, or card activity can be audited monthly.

The credit card system is being used at two other school districts in the Eastern Upper Peninsula, including Engadine, which Mrs. Hill said "really likes the system and how it's working now."

Trustees also approved \$500 annual raises for two years for administrators Kris Hill, Eric Cardwell, and Randy Schaedig.

Business Manager Kris Hill's annual salary was raised from \$45,000 in the 2004-2005 school year, to \$45,500 for 2005-2006 and \$46,000 for the 2006-2007.

Elementary School Principal Eric Cardwell's salary was raised from \$59,613 in 2004-2005, to \$60,113 for the 2005-2006 school year and \$60,613 for 2006-2007.

High School Principal Randy Schaedig's salary was raised from \$61,863 to \$62,363 for the 2005-2006 school year. His salary will be \$62,863 in 2006-2007.

Trustees adopted a set of guidelines for a Budget Advisory Committee to make recommendations for the 2006-2007 budget. It is expected to start working by the end of April or early May.

Membership will include three school board members, three

teachers selected by the teaching staff, three support staff members selected by the staff, three administrators picked by the superintendent, and three members of the public appointed by school board President Dan Burrows. The chair of the committee will also be a board member, appointed by Mr. Burrows.

The committee has been established in response to anticipated budget cuts in the wake of declining enrollment and increasing costs. Its purpose is to advise the board on reductions, funding options, and alternative spending.

Vice President Dave Murray suggested the committee's focus should extend beyond the next two years.

"I had thought the issue would be a lot broader than just coming up with a list of things to cut or not-to-cut," Mr. Murray said. "The issue, I think, for a committee of this size, needs to be a little broader and address a multi-year spending plan."

Mr. Burrows said the board's existing finance committee, comprising all school board members, should make long-range spending plans.

"As I look at the Finance Committee, it's a committee of the

whole, and I think it's a better use of people's time," Mr. Burrows said, adding that the Finance Committee does not have much of a workload at the moment.

He suggested Treasurer Marianne Coyne and trustees John Causley and Tony Hakola represent the board on the new Budget Advisory Committee, and he named Mrs. Coyne chair of the committee.

Mr. Murray asked how community members would be selected, and Mr. Burrows said he is taking suggestions, and he already has some people in mind. He further reminded the board that this committee can make suggestions, but by law, cannot make policies.

Trustees voted 6-1 in favor of how the committee would be set up, with Mr. Murray casting the

lone "no" vote.

Les Cheneaux Community Schools bus driver Dan Izzard and custodian Margaret Lamoreaux will retire at the end of the school year, and trustees accepted their resignations.

Mr. Izzard has been with the district for nearly 40 years, starting September 1, 1967, and drives regular school routes and for athletic events. He also has kept game statistics.

Mrs. Lamoreaux has worked 19 years for the district since she began June 17, 1987. A professional quilter, she has also lent her skills to the district's Artist in Residence program, a weekly artist demonstration series, bringing the school to her home, where she gave tours of her workshop and equipment demonstrations.

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Mackinaw City Recommits To Remaining a 'Tree City'

By Paul Gingras

At its regular meeting Thursday, April 20, the Mackinaw City Village Council took time to renew its commitment to remain an official "tree city," which means area residents can expect the village to continue its efforts to maintain and plant trees and provide landscaping on city property.

Mackinaw City has been a tree city since 1993, and to retain the title, the National Arbor Day Foundation requires the village to have a "tree board." The board has both Village Council members and civic-minded residents knowledgeable about trees and landscaping, said Village Manager Jeff Lawson. They report to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which in turn works with the United States Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

"Trees are important to the village," said Community Development Director Steve Schnell, and as part of its duties as a tree city, the village will host an Arbor Day celebration Friday, May 12. On that day, members of the Village Council will meet with area third grade students and plant pine trees at the Mackinaw Historic Village.

Mr. Lawson or President Pro Tempore Sandra Planisek will give the students a presentation concerning trees and environmental issues, and offer them a tour of the Historic Village. The event is open to the public, Mr. Lawson added.

As part of its tree city status, the DNR offers the village technical assistance with what Mr. Lawson called "urban forestry techniques." When necessary, the village treats its trees for leaf diseases, sprays them for insects, trims them, and provides a number of other services related to keep the trees green and healthy.

"Urban forestry is important aesthetically and economically," said Mr. Lawson. Without trees, the area would resemble an urban desert, he said, but when trees are planted it can transform a district into a pleasant environment. It is well documented that people appreciate towns that keep their trees healthy and provide other landscaping features, Mr. Lawson said.

Continuing the village's beautification efforts also helps keep the area attractive to tourists, and not only does their shade help keep shoppers comfortable during the summer, it also reduces cooling bills in homes and businesses. Further, during cooler seasons, trees help reduce heating bills by providing wind blocks, he added.

The Mackinaw City Tree Board includes Village President Pro Tempore Sandra Planisek, trustees James Alford and Lana Jaggi, and residents Nancy Campbell and

Betty Teysen.

In other business, the Village Council commended Ken Ford of Mackinaw City for providing assistance to a local man last winter. The man had passed out in a whirlpool in a local hotel and could have drowned had it not been for Mr. Ford's assistance, Mr. Schnell said. Mr. Ford received a framed declaration thanking him for his actions.

The village will conduct a village-wide yard sale Saturday, May 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To take

part, residents and business owners can register with the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce by Thursday, May 18, and be placed on a map detailing where all participants can be found.

The village approved a one-year contract with a three percent wage increase for all non-union employees, Mr. Schnell added.

This includes all department heads, receptionists, the waste water plant superintendent, and the head of public works.

DNR Warns Extra Care With Outdoor Fires Needed

Residents of Michigan should be extra careful with outdoor fires this month, reported officials at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Owing to a lack of moisture, fire danger has reached high levels throughout the state, just as spring activities such as camping are beginning to take place.

Lynne Boyd, chief of the DNR Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division, said, "The majority of wildfires we fight in our state are started because someone was careless with fire."

As of Thursday, April 27, DNR fire officers had responded to 140 wildfires that burned 574 acres, and more are expected

until the state receives more moisture and things begin to green up in the woods, officials said.

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