

The St. Ignace News

St. Ignace Firefighters Practice Skills on Live Burn at Spring Street House

St. Ignace Fire Department got a rare opportunity to conduct a live-fire training exercise Wednesday evening, May 17, in a Spring Street building that was being demolished.

The entire volunteer department of about 30 firefighters took turns entering the building and extinguishing small fires set inside the former rental house across the street from the St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church, which owns the property. The church is planning to use the property to expand its parking lot.

"It helped us train for interior fire attack operations and to understand how fires react in compact areas," said Bryce Tracey, the department's sergeant. "We don't get that many opportunities to use a house for fire training very often."

Mr. Tracey said firefighters practiced different techniques in extinguishing fires. They also had the opportunity to use the department's new thermal imaging equipment, which helps firefighters determine where hot spots are in dark or smoky areas.



Firefighter John Krentz displays how tough firefighting can be inside a building as his helmet, mask, and uniform are covered in debris, ash, and water just after he exits the scene.



The cross on St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church peeks out from behind the plume of smoke from a St. Ignace Fire Department training exercise Wednesday evening, May 17.

Johnson Must Give Up Board Seat at Garfield Twp.

By Paul Gingras

By winning a seat on the school board at Engadine Consolidated Schools, Ivan Johnson of Garfield Township will have to give up his position on the local board of review, owing to the Michigan Incompatibility of Public Offices Act, which states that no one can be a part of two units of government when one can exert financial influence over the other.

Mackinac County Prosecutor Clayton Graham explained that, in this case, the problem lies in how schools are financed. Schools receive some of their funding from property taxes, he said, and school board members are responsible to that entity. On the other hand, the township board of review "has the ability to increase or decrease property tax valuations," he added. "Thus, a board of review member would have at least some ability to impact the amount of revenue the

school district receives."

In his explanation to the school board, Mr. Graham emphasized that he had no intention of passing judgment on any particular board member or attempt to speculate on how they may use their judgment, but after reviewing statements made by past Michigan attorneys general, Mr. Graham said Mr. Johnson could not legally hold both positions.

The state does allow residents within the same unit of government to hold positions on multiple boards, however. In areas with less than 25,000 people, for example, someone may be on the county road commission and work for the sheriff at the same time. In this case, both positions are part of one unit of government: Mackinac County. Mr. Johnson's conflict of interest arose because school districts are considered legally distinct from township boards and counties.

In other business, Township

Clerk Linda Bennett will submit an application for a federal grant to obtain voting machines designed to serve the special needs of handicapped, hearing impaired, and blind residents. The machines should be in place by the August 8 primary, she said.

This initiative is part of the Help America Vote Act, and the devices are called "optical scan accessible voting systems." Mrs. Bennett said she does not know how many machines the township will receive. There will be no cost to the township.

Garfield Township residents and business owners are in need of high speed Internet service, she added, and members of the Garfield Township board will attend a forum on the matter, hosted by the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) Tuesday, June 20, at the

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Boathouse Museum Restored at Les Cheneaux

By Amy Polk

Perhaps the best thing about the Les Cheneaux Maritime Museum is the fact that it's built around a boathouse. While not a particularly fancy structure, compared to some of its local cousins designed to resemble stately summer cottages on the water, the former O.M. Reif boathouse does have a storied past that made saving its weathered wood all the more important to local historians.

The boathouse now resides on M-129 in Cedarville, where it has served the community as a maritime museum for more than a decade. A large addition was built in 1992 to provide more space and opportunities for the museum, which was gathering a growing collection of boats, maritime paraphernalia, books, and other items crucial to telling the story of the Les Cheneaux Islands' boating past. Before the 1940s, when a highway system started serving the community, the main access to the islands and waterfront communities of Hessel and Cedarville was by water. Whether by canoe, ferry, or pleasure boat, many got their first glimpse of the Les Cheneaux Islands looking over the bow of a boat.

That is why planners decided the idea of saving an old boathouse to make it a new house of local history was so important, and why the Les Cheneaux Historical Association has been trying so hard to find the means to maintain the failing structure. Undaunted by its failure to secure grants to renovate the structure, the Historical Association continued with its



Michael Miller and Lyle Nordquist of the Les Cheneaux Historical Association survey the extensive renovations, including new pine siding, that brighten the outside of the Les Cheneaux Maritime Museum in Cedarville. The front door of the historic boathouse was corn blasted to reveal the bright, clean wood underneath its weathered exterior.



The Les Cheneaux Maritime Museum in Cedarville was dingy looking and sagging before more than \$60,000 in improvements strengthened and improved the aging structure.

plans to repair, until help came in the form of \$12,000 in donations. The renovation project will cost approximately \$65,000 by the time

it's finished. Improvements included a new

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DDA Hopes To Settle Tax Dispute With State in 2006

By Karen Gould

The St. Ignace Downtown Development Authority will negotiate a settlement with the Michigan Treasury Department for money it owes for school taxes. Since 1994, the state has not allowed DDAs to capture school tax money and the St. Ignace agency has \$203,000 in an escrow account to return to Lansing. The state says it owes \$230,000.

The only person in Lansing connected with the program retired, however, said DDA Director Deb Evashevski at a DDA meeting May 12, and DDAs were told to keep the money until it was able to continue the collection process. St. Ignace Treasurer Gene Elmer said the previous state auditor had requested additional paperwork, which Mr. Elmer provided more than three years ago. The new auditor, who has just been hired, was recently able to locate the three-year-old documents, which were still in the original unopened envelope mailed by Mr. Elmer.

"We hope we can clear this up in 2006, that's my goal," said Mr. Elmer.

In other business, Shirley Sorrels, director of the Museum of Ojibway Culture, told the authority that the museum store so far has



Sales of educational resource materials are climbing at the Museum of Ojibway Culture's store, said Shirley Sorrels, director of the museum, who holds one of the State Street store's offerings.

sold \$6,000 more than it had last year at this time, primarily through book sales. The store offers Native American crafts and books. The museum offers educational materials on the Native American culture, which are popular with schools, she said. The depleted book inventory needs to be restocked in preparation for the National Congress of American Indians, which will be in Sault Ste. Marie June 18 through 21, she told DDA members. The museum will

have a booth at the conference and trade show.

More than 1,500 people from across the country, representing 250 tribes, are expected to attend the four-day event, she said.

The DDA contributes \$40,000 annually to the museum and oversees museum operations. Museum funds are tracked in a separate account from the DDA.

Mrs. Evashevski said the Department of Natural Resources has given the go-ahead for engineering on the boardwalk addition at the old railroad dock, which will lead to the new lighthouse. Construction funding is still tied up in the state legislature and politicians, including former State Senator Walter North, have been recruited to pry it loose.

Paving the parking lot behind downtown stores began Monday, May 15, under a \$47,881 contract with Norris Construction. The project is expected to take two weeks, said Mrs. Evashevski. Plans originally had called for trees to be placed on an island in the lot, though planners now realize the trees would have interfered with snow plowing. She said the members are considering placing large planters in the space during the summer months.

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“MAY U B MINE?”

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