

Mackinaw City Council Challenges Williams Appointment to MISPC

By Paul Gingras

The appointment of Jim Williams to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission is being challenged by several people in Mackinaw City, who say he is not familiar enough with their village or involved enough in the community to represent it. The Mackinaw City Village Council, led by President Robert Heilman and prodded by resident and former park commissioner Ken Teysen, voiced its opposition Thursday, August 3, resolving to seek a reversal of the appointment by writing letters to politicians, area media, and the new commissioner.

The issue is not personal, residents say, and no one disputes Father Williams' popularity among his parishioners.

Father Williams, a Catholic priest in St. Ignace and Moran but a resident of Mackinaw City, says he hopes to convince village residents that he can be an effective and conscientious representative.

He was appointed to replace Audrey Jaggi on the commission by Governor Jennifer Granholm Thursday, July 20. The Senate has 60 days from then to disapprove the appointment.

The Mackinac Island State Park

Commission has seven members who oversee Mackinac State Historic Parks, which include Fort Mackinac and the Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island and Colonial Michilimackinac, Historic Mill Creek, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in and around Mackinaw City.

Father Williams, an Independent, replaces Mrs. Jaggi, a Republican,

as the Mackinaw City Resident Commissioner, a designation established in 1958 to ensure local representation on the politically-desirable board. There is also a resident commissioner for Mackinac Island, that position currently held by Lansing lobbyist Dennis Cawthorne, who has a home and several business interests on the Island.

Mr. Heilman charges that no one

in the village was consulted regarding the commission appointment, and that Governor Granholm's office should have sought recommendations from Mackinaw City residents with a stake in the community, as he said former governor John Engler had done when he appointed Mrs. Jaggi in 1997.

"Mackinaw City does not want to tell the Governor what to do," he

said. "We just want to be consulted."

He pointed out that he considers Father Williams a good person, but he insisted at his meeting that the process by which appointments are made to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission is flawed, leading to what he called "a slap in the face of the community."

Council voted to send letters to *The St. Ignace News*, the *Cheboygan Daily Tribune*, the *Petoskey News-Review*, and possibly the *Traverse City Record Eagle* voicing its complaint that Mackinaw City is not being properly represented on the park commission. Whether the letters are sent depends on how they turn out, Mr. Heilman later told *The St. Ignace News*.

Council also plans to send a letter to Father Williams requesting that he "withdraw his name from the nomination," Mr. Heilman said.

Mr. Heilman added that he will contact State Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) to discuss the matter and possibly push to amend Public Act Number 51 of 1958, which states "One commissioner shall be a resident of the village of Mackinaw City." He suggested that one way to ensure proper representation would be to add language stating that the mayors of Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island must be consulted prior to the governor's appointments to the commission.

The Mackinac Island resident commissioner position was engineered in 1941 by the late W.F. Doyle to gain reappointment to the board. Mr. Doyle owned a summer cottage on Mackinac Island's East Bluff and, for awhile, but not recently, the resident commissioner was nominated by the Mackinac Island mayor.

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Moran Twp. Eyes Rezoning, Sparking Citizen Concerns

By Paul Gingras

The potential rezoning of platted neighborhoods at Shaeffer Point on Brevort Lake and Pointe Aux Chenes on Lake Michigan was referred to the planning commission following a sometimes-heated discussion between citizens and the Moran Township Board of Trustees Wednesday, August 2. The idea to liberalize development was introduced at the end of the last planning commission meeting Wednesday, July 12, as a topic for September discussion, but concerned citizens brought the matter to the township board first, insisting that rezoning the areas would allow undesirable development in their neighborhoods.

Zoning guidelines mandated under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act of 2004 have prompted administrators to analyze their jurisdictions and led Moran Township zoning administrator Mark Spencer to add the item to the next set of planning commission discussions.

He did so, he said, because the Shaeffer Point and Pointe Aux Chenes subdivisions are designated "secondary coastal growth" areas, but few lots are large enough to fit the zoning requirements for this designation. Mr. Spencer suggested the planning commission discuss changing both neighborhoods to "primary coastal growth," which allows for smaller lots with more development.

Secondary coastal growth zones require a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres. Primary coastal growth zones allow lots as small as one acre. Since few lots in either subdivision are 2.5 acres or larger, they fall under the status of non-conforming lots.

This creates a hardship for residents, Mr. Spencer said, because in secondary coastal growth areas, property owners cannot build on more than five percent of their land. In primary coastal growth zones,

however, residents can develop up to 20 percent of their land. This includes houses, garages, and driveways, he added.

The intent of the proposed September planning commission discussion was largely to determine if making a zoning change would be a desirable way for residents to expand their houses or add structures, said Trustee Lonnie Heuer. As matters stand, to build on more than five percent of their land, residents on non-conforming lots have to apply for a variance, but the township's attorney, Harry Golsky, strongly discouraged the board from granting variances. To restrict development by zoning, but then routinely allow it by variance, could compromise the legality of the zoning ordinance. Residents or developers could then turn to the courts, which could potentially rule against the interests of the public and the wishes of the township, Mr. Spencer said, by opening up the neighborhoods to high-density or commercial development.

Not all residents are interested in increased development. One concern expressed at the meeting is that a primary coastal growth zone allows more houses in smaller areas. This could lead to higher population densities, which would require more elaborate sewer and septic systems than the area can support. These systems could also increase pollution, one resident said. Further, the change could open the door to businesses such as golf courses, which residents at the meeting said they don't want.

Following the July planning commission meeting, Brevort Lake resident Jo Ford polled her neighbors and said 22 of 24 residents opposed a zoning change, owing to the potential for increased development.

"We are not gaining anything by going to primary zoning," she said.

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Blacksmiths Gather at Mackinac Island

As Tonya Grupp of St. Louis, Michigan, applies water to cool down the heated area of the iron picket, and Steve Manning of Ossineke holds it in place in the vise, Steve Neumann (right) of Saginaw carefully twists the picket to give it a design. The picket is one of 80, along with 10 posts, that were made during the 16th annual Blacksmith Convention held on Mackinac Island Saturday, August 5. The group, which consists of blacksmith hobbyists from across the state, completed the first stage in creating a wrought iron fence that will encircle the city's war veterans memorial on Market Street. Next year, the group will make stringers and loops to complete the project. It will then be sand blasted, primed, and painted before being installed at the park in the fall of 2007.

DNR Ponders Changing Marina Fee Structure

By Paul Gingras

"They're finally opening their eyes and listening to us," said Garfield Township Clerk Linda Bennett, regarding a proposal by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to change fee structures at state owned and grant-in-aid marinas to better reflect the needs and services of individual facilities.

Slip rates for seasonal boaters are based on defined "rate areas," regardless of the level of development and services various marinas have to offer.

Garfield Township lies in Rate Area Three, and the board believes, for example, that the cost for a 30-foot slip in Naubinway is too high because the facility offers fewer

amenities than other marinas in the same rate area, such as those in St. Ignace and Menominee.

Owing to the rustic nature of its facility, the board is concerned that the Naubinway Marina is being underutilized both by seasonal and transient boaters. This costs the township potential revenue each year, said Duncan MacArthur, a township trustee.

Seasonal boaters rent slips for the summer, and to standardize fees, the DNR has established four rigid "rate areas" and one "premium rate." The premium rate applies only to Mackinac Island and marinas who apply for temporary variances.

Area One includes the southern Lake Michigan shoreline and a portion of the Lake Huron shoreline. Area Two includes the mid-to northern stretch of the Lake Huron shoreline. Area Three includes marinas along the northern shoreline of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and Area Four spans the length of Lake Superior.

A seasonal slip for a 30-foot boat, for instance, would be \$1,941 in Area One, \$1,374 in Area Two, \$1,205 in Area Three, \$990 in Area Four, and \$2,310 on Mackinac Island. The geographical districts pose a problem because they don't allow each marina to set rates commensurate with services, say members of the Michigan Waterways Commission, and this problem generates about 15 requests a year from communities that want to change the rates at their marinas.

Usually, they want their rates increased, said Harold Herta, resource management chief for the Parks and Recreation Division of the DNR, which works in association with the Waterways Commission. At some marinas, the Commission has granted the right to charge the premium rate for a limited amount of time, said Jason Fleming, department analyst for the Parks and Recreation Division, but in December, 2005, the Garfield

Township board asked the Waterways Commission to change the Naubinway Marina to Rate Area Four status, which has lower fees. The request was denied.

On one hand, marina costs based on geographical areas has made it easy for boaters, Mr. Herta said. They know how much to expect to pay at each facility. On the other hand, marinas like Naubinway's could, indeed, be bypassed, and Mr. Herta said Garfield Township's request, and others like it, has had a significant impact on the commission's thinking.

Over the past year or so, commissioners and members of the Parks and Recreation Division have been thinking about ways to help anomalies like the marinas at Naubinway and Alpena, which lack facilities or are more difficult to access than others.

"It was partly a realization on our part," Mr. Herta said, "partly a result of requests made to the Waterways Commission," and partly a change in philosophy based on changes in commission membership.

There are a number of possible solutions, he added. One would be to eliminate having established rate areas with rigid fee structures. Another would be to have more than four rate areas, perhaps eight, each with different fees. Marinas could also be assessed according to specific criteria which could allow them to be exempted from established fees in their rate areas. For example, a facility in Rate Area Three that doesn't offer fuel may automatically be allowed to charge 10 percent less, Mr. Herta said.

The Parks and Recreation Division plans to submit new fee proposals to the Waterways Commission by its Friday, October 13, meeting, but Mr. Herta said he could not speculate on potential fees at this point, "because we don't know where we'll end up yet."

Unlike charges for seasonal

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Local Schools To Get More State Funding

Mackinac County schools will receive an additional \$396,961 in state funding this year under a School Aid budget that provides more per-pupil funding and additional money for lower funded districts, mathematics and science programs, and schools with declining enrollment.

All schools will receive \$210 more in per-pupil funding and all middle schools will receive an additional \$54 per pupil to bolster mathematics and science programs. For St. Ignace, the per pupil funding will increase from \$6,875 per student to \$7,085.

Geographically isolated school districts with less than 250 students will continue to receive isolated school funding at the same level as 2005. In this area, DeTour Area Schools will continue to receive \$198,822, Whitefish Schools will get \$215,872, and Mackinac Island Public School will be given \$84,546.



The School Aid budget is \$13.1 billion, \$400 million more than last year. The funding increase will bring \$192,205 more to the St. Ignace Area Schools budget, while Bois Blanc Pines School (with three students) will gain \$630, Les Cheneaux Community Schools \$85,591, Engadine Consolidated Schools \$59,567, Moran Township School District \$20,552, and Mackinac Island Public School \$17,864.

State Representative Gary McDowell of Rudyard made the announcement of increased funding Wednesday, July 26.

"This is a huge victory for our public schools," he said. "The best way to keep moving northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula forward is to provide our students with a high-quality education so they can compete for the jobs of the future and so we can create a well-trained workforce."

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