

Mackinac County Planners Gather Public Input for New Master Plan

East Mackinac County

Natural Resources, Job Creation Are Top Issues

By Amy Polk

Residents of Clark and Marquette townships value natural resources and rural living most of all, but worry that area conditions are not conducive to a healthy economy or jobs creation.

Most of the nine residents at the second of three meetings to gather opinion for the new Mackinac County Master Plan cited natural resources at the top of their list of county assets and strengths worth protecting. Poor work ethic and poor business practices were the top two threats or weaknesses, and were mentioned along with state and national laws that are making it harder to do business in northern Michigan, some business owners said.

Participants were asked by coordinators Fran Brink and Michelle Walk to list what they think are the area's greatest assets and weaknesses (or threats) for two lists that will be used to generate a county-wide master plan to guide future development. Ms. Brink is a planner from Wade Trim of Gaylord and Michelle Walk is chairs the Mackinac County Planning Commission and is director for the Mackinac County MSU Extension office.

Residents cited the number of local business closures, young people migrating away, and a poor work ethic as an indication that the area is not supporting the kinds of businesses or jobs that attract people to communities. The reasons for the area's economic conditions ranged from the kinds of courses taught in school to poor worker attitudes. Employment laws are designed to protect workers more than business owners, a few participants said, and unemployment insurance is too easy to collect.

Former Cedarville business owner Tony Autore said some employees come to work without a sense of responsibility to their jobs. John Kronemeyer, Marquette Township dairy farmer and township supervisor, said people think "we work in the summer and not in the winter, or we only work four days a week," but explained that many local business owners learned the ropes of management on their own, and often accept poor behavior, particularly in an area with a limited workforce.

"Some of us started in the business without the knowledge of how to manage employees, and so we let a lot of stuff go," he added.

Everyone agreed that the area has a lot to offer, with abundant natural resources, caring communities, clean roadsides, beautiful scenery,

and good schools. A few cited the wish to keep young people here so they can enjoy the things the older population likes about the area. Business owner Mike McMaken of Cedarville blamed a culture that encourages making a lot of money, and the emphasis on technology-based jobs, for youth's migration out of the area.

"People want to leave. They don't want to stay. They think you're not going to make much money here, and that you have to work hard to make a living," Mr. McMaken said.

Mackinac County Planning Commissioner Julia Kronemeyer of Marquette Township echoed the concern, suggesting the state's new high school curriculum requirements, which put a greater emphasis on mathematics, computers, and science, are pushing the future workforce further away from the area to find the kinds of computer-related jobs that aren't yet available in the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

Other concerns included getting human and social services to the people who need them. Mr. Autore said there are many great programs available to people in Mackinac County, but few people know they are available.

Clark Township Supervisor Linda Hudson said daytime volunteer emergency service staffing is becoming a problem in Clark Township because so many people are working full-time outside of the area. Others said state and federal licensing requirements are another deterrent to volunteer service.

Participants recognized that many of the things residents like about small town life can sometimes be a detriment. Small population, for instance, made it on both lists because residents like living in small towns, but realize that a small population cannot support many businesses.

Some participants said they see blight and cluttered highways, others see "people doing the best they can," and well-kept lawns and gardens. A few participants suggested architectural design policies, preservation of historic structures, and better zoning enforcement as ways to make communities look better.

Some see the area's growing population of retired people as a threat, while others see it as a benefit. As more people retire to the area, they generate construction, landscaping, and other jobs, while fueling the economy during the months they are here. Several leave in the winter months, however, causing a decline in the population that affects

local business.

Clark Township Planning Commission Chair Dave Dunning questioned how the county's master plan will be a benefit to the community, and how it will be used or implemented.

"The main thing the county will use this for is as a guide to make recommendations for planning and zoning," Ms. Brink said. "They (the County Planning Commission) may struggle with how to use it for awhile."

She added that it will be an important tool for the County Planning Commission to use when reviewing township master plans and zoning ordinances, as required by law. Mrs. Kronemeyer said she has participated in at least three reviews, and that a county master plan should help guide decisions to reflect what the county wants.

"I guess we all know what happens when there's no plan, and at least this is a plan," Mrs. Kronemeyer said.

It may also help them consider the impacts of each township's actions on surrounding communities, Michelle Walk said, and may possibly give the county some influence over state or federal policies.

"It will help us as we look at projects that cross borders and it will help bring people together more," Ms. Walk said. "On a county level, this may give us more leverage if we all decide we do or don't want something."

Public meetings were also held in Engadine and St. Ignace.

The lists generated by eastern Mackinac County residents are provided here:

Assets, Strengths Identified by Clark and Marquette Townships

Residents: Lake Huron, protected waters, boating heritage, woods and open space, wild flowers and trails, logging industry and woods, agriculture (\$10-\$15 million industry in county), small population, very good schools, historic sites and buildings, large number of artisans, cottage industry (home business), engaged and caring communities, good quality of life, roads and infrastructure, seasonal residents (multi-generational), relatively low crime rates, Community Action's Head Start program, excellent volunteer emergency medical services in Clark and Marquette (Pickford) townships, cleanliness along the roadsides, adequate housing options, assisted living and senior citizen apartments, wildlife and rare species, heritage industries like fishing, logging, agriculture, boat build-

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West Mackinac County

Preserving Family Character of Community Is Key

By Paul Gingras

Conserving natural resources, the needs of developing small businesses, and retaining the "family-oriented" character of communities topped the list of concerns for 16 residents of Mackinac County's western townships at a meeting in Engadine Tuesday, September 12. They met to offer the initial round of public input concerning Mackinac County's first master plan and spoke with members of the Mackinac County Planning Commission, Mackinac County's Michigan State University Extension office, and Wade Trim of Gaylord, a private consulting firm.

Using public input and elements of township master plans, the three entities will design a comprehensive master plan detailing how county residents view their communities and surrounding landscapes. This plan amounts to a guidance document detailing how areas of the county should be developed. In part, it is intended to help the county and townships coordinate land use and zoning.

Protecting the county's cherished Lake Michigan shoreline from excessive development was discussed in general terms, and residents also discussed the disappearance of large areas of farmland, said Michelle Walk, Extension director and chairperson of the Mackinac County Planning Commission.

As farmers have retired, some have split their farmland into residential lots or subdivisions, as is happening throughout the state, and this has caused public concern that western Mackinac County could lose the potential to redevelop sizable farms, Ms. Walk said.

Another issue discussed is the selling of large tracts of land formerly held by lumber companies, a phenomenon occurring throughout the Upper Peninsula. As lumber companies sell off acreage, which is mostly held under the Commercial Forest Act, the public loses access to the land for hunting, fishing, and other recreation.

There are 37,467 acres of Mackinac County land enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act, (CFA), said Department of Natural Resources forester Richard Stevenson, who approves harvesting plans for commercial forests. CFA gives landowners tax breaks while forest trees grow to a harvestable size, and, in turn, requires public access.

A third issue, the maintenance of roads in relation to the environment, is a development concern throughout the county, Ms. Walk added. For example, the draining of excess water from US-2 and maintaining the road in general was discussed at the Engadine meeting.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) must consider nearby fragile ecosystems when maintaining or developing US-2, which runs through the county.

Dune landscapes, rare, threatened and endangered plants, and wetlands are environmental concerns that can contrast with development projects, but the pristine nature of the area is generally considered a benefit for recreation and tourism, Ms. Walk said.

Caring for sensitive areas "affects development across the board," said John Batchelder, transportation service center manager for MDOT.

To mitigate environmental damage, MDOT works with the

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on issues as small as the development of ditches and driveways and as large as the construction of buildings, and some areas simply can't be disturbed, he said. Even creating a new driveway requires MDOT or builders to consult a list of protected species and to address wetland concerns.

Often, wetland issues have to be worked out with the DEQ, such as when MDOT built a new wetland to replace land damaged when passing lanes and rest areas were constructed near Naubinway, Mr. Batchelder said. To compensate, MDOT created a new wetland 200 feet away from the road.

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A Trick Up Scarecrow's Sleeve



Two cucumbers from Ed (pictured) and Phyllis Massey's garden in St. Ignace took a peculiar route when sprouting, growing up the scarecrow's pant-leg and then up through the shirt. A large and small cucumber now dangle from one of the shirt sleeves.

Animal Control Officer Seeks Information on Missing Cats

Phone Calls Continue To Come In Through EUP

Investigation is continuing this week into a rash of reports about missing cats in the St. Ignace, Cedarville, Hessel, and DeTour areas, County Animal Control Officer Wendy Frosland told *The St. Ignace News* Monday, September 18. Approximately 30 cats had been reported missing over a four- to six-week period ending Friday, September 8, as reported in the September 14 issue of *The St. Ignace News*, and 18 more reports have been called in since then. One report a week would be typical, Mrs. Frosland said.

Anyone with information can call her at (906) 298-1670.

No dogs have been reported missing, and there have been no reports of missing pet cats in the western portion of the county.

There have been no unusual incidents in nearby Mackinaw City, said Mary Talaske, the animal control officer for Cheboygan County, and Sheriff Pete Wallin of Emmet County. The village lies in both counties. While she is not aware of cats missing in higher numbers than usual around Mackinaw City, Ms. Talaske said her department usually gets more calls about cats than about dogs.

"Cats often take the brunt of animal cruelty cases, as well as fall prey to hawks, owls, or coyotes," Ms. Talaske said, noting they are territorial animals that can be driven from their territory by other animals. She advises people to keep cats as indoor pets.

Barb Groover of Pickford Veterinary Hospital said she is advising her clients in the area to keep pet cats indoors.

September Blood Drives Held in Mackinaw City, Sault Ste. Marie

The American Red Cross will host a blood drive in Mackinaw

City and two in Sault Ste. Marie this month.

The Mackinaw City drive will be Wednesday, September 20, at Cedarbrook Village assisted living center at 450 South Nicolet Street, from noon to 5:45 p.m.

The first Sault Ste. Marie drive will be Wednesday, September 20, at the Faith Lutheran Church at 1600 Park Street, from noon to 5:45 p.m. The second will be Friday, September 29, at the Tribal Health Center Auditorium at 2864 Ashmun Street, from 11 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Hospital Offers Book Sale Sept. 25-26

The Mackinac Straits Hospital Auxiliary will sponsor a book sale Monday, September 25, and Tuesday, September 26, in room 213 in the Long Term Care Unit at Mackinac Straits Hospital.

The book sale will feature new books, including many children's books and gift items. The sale will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

COOL NIGHTS & WARM HEARTS

Mackinac County Animal Shelter
980 Cheeseman Road, St. Ignace • 906-643-7646
Open Mon.-Sat. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
or Call for an appointment
www.petfinder.com

 <p>Mr. Louie</p> <p>Happy 8th Birthday Sarah B. Yoder Les Cheneaux Comm. Schools</p>	 <p>Mr. Howie</p> <p>M.P. GAMBLE CONSTRUCTION MACKINAC ISLAND</p>	 <p>Fancy</p> <p>Sponsored by Victorian Village St. Ignace</p>
 <p>Ms. Lori</p> <p>An Animal Lover</p>	 <p>Mr. Jed</p> <p>In memory of Dana Haswell</p>	<p>We are smiling today because someone did something very special for all of us. Sarah B. Yoder from Cedarville celebrated her 8th birthday last Friday and asked her guests to bring donations for us instead of gifts for her. Thank you Sarah for your kindness. The Cats & Dogs at the Mackinac County Animal Shelter</p>

Mackinac Animal Aid Association • 906-292-0046 • The Only Group Supporting the Shelter.