

State Proposes New Program To Offer Long-Term Leases of Rustic Campgrounds

Garnet Lake Site May Be One That Will Benefit From Future Improvement Grants

By Paul Gingras

The forest of Hudson Township is home to a rustic, state-owned campground on the southern rim of Garnet Lake, one of several that may see improvements to simple camping facilities like fire rings, camp sites, and picnic tables. A new program proposed by the State of Michigan allows townships, counties, villages, and cities to obtain long-term leases to state forest campgrounds.

Intended to keep low-use campgrounds open, the program will allow municipalities to invest in improvements to valued local spots and promote tourism. The leases do not apply to campgrounds in established state parks.

Ten year to 15 year leases will be offered next year and will replace one-year renewable special use permits the DNR has granted since the 1980s. The old land use permits allowed townships to maintain cherished state forest campgrounds and day-use areas, but it did not enable them to apply for grants, because long-term control was not assured. If Hudson Township chooses a long-term lease for Garnet Lake campground, it could apply for funding to redesign and improve camping conditions for the fishermen, hunters, and off-road vehicle rid-

ers who use it. Without the new program, the future of Garnet Lake State Forest Campground and others in the region is uncertain, in part because some remote sites provide little revenue, and DNR maintenance resources are stretched thin, said Dan Moore, the DNR's Eastern Upper Peninsula (EUP) recreation supervisor, who inspects the 40 state-owned campgrounds in the EUP.

Although rustic and remote state forest sites are poor revenue producers, they are inexpensive for campers and provide access to

some of the state's best outdoor resources. The simple facility at Garnet, for example, allows campers to look north across the tree-rimmed lake, which is home to loons, bass, pike, and perch and lies adjacent to "a wonderful habitat for turtles, salamanders, and other small wildlife," said Hudson Township Supervisor Al Garavaglia.

Pulling campers into the campground is simple, but getting them back out is another matter, he added, so Hudson hopes to use the grant privileges provided by the new leasing program to improve access. The township also would like to clean up camp sites and possibly build a floating dock.

"This is for the residents," he added. "Many would be ecstatic" if the township approves a long term lease.

Dave Spalding, land use program leader for the Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management Division of the DNR, reviews the applications for leases on state land, including campgrounds. He makes recommendations regarding which areas to lease and under what conditions.

The state plans to charge municipalities nothing, or very little, for long-term leases on state forest facilities because the rustic campground system is not designed for profit, Mr. Moore said. Long-term authority, as

opposed to yearly permits, will allow townships and counties to apply for grants from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund or the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund, which provides money for community recreation projects. Local municipalities that apply for Trust Fund grants to take over and improve state campgrounds are likely to be approved, Mr. Spalding speculated.

Certain funding programs require municipal governments to contribute 10 to 20 percent of the total cost of a project, Mr. Garavaglia said, and, in some cases, in-kind services, such as labor, are acceptable matches.

Local municipalities also collect the user fees of \$5 to \$10 per site, but must keep the campgrounds rustic and can't provide modern conveniences, such as electricity.

The long-term lease agreements will require municipalities

to replace outhouses, keep gravel on roads, maintain wells, and otherwise maintain the sites to state standards. As now foreseen, the leases will allow townships who find they cannot afford the upkeep to quit the lease, and allow the state to terminate a lease if the campgrounds are mismanaged.

The first state-owned recreation areas likely to be granted long-term leases, if local municipalities want them, include Mead Creek and Merwin Creek state forest campgrounds in Schoolcraft County, Garnet Lake campground in Hudson Township, Strouble Lake day use area and the Karst Conservancy cave access area in Hendricks Township, and Scots Point Park in Newton Township. There are two or three campgrounds in the northern Lower Peninsula with potential agreements. So far, the only formal lease the DNR has offered is for a campground in Osceola County.

Lawsuit Filed To Enforce Island Blight Ordinance

By Karen Gould

A lawsuit to enforce the Mackinac Island blight ordinance will be filed against Len and Sue Webster, who are unable to come up with a \$300,000 bond the city required before the couple could continue construction of their Hubbard's Annex home. The decision was made at the Wednesday, October 11, City Council meeting and came at the recommendation of the Ordinance Committee, which convened before the council meeting.

The bond was designed to protect the city in case the Websters again did not complete construction of their home. The funding would provide the city with needed cash to finish the outside of the house.

The bond was made a requirement in July and came after three building permits had expired, following years of assurances by the Websters that construction would continue. The Websters dug a foundation on the property more than six years ago and then stopped work. Since then, nearby property owners have complained that the site is a safety and health hazard, with water accumulating in the open foundation. The Websters have fenced the area at the city's request.

In July, the Websters promised to begin work by October.

City Attorney Tom Evashevski told the ordinance committee the city has two legal options, which would result in the same solution, although one would be faster and would result in lower legal fees.

That option, which the committee adopted, would require the city to file a lawsuit to enforce the blight ordinance and also make an offer to the Websters for a consent judgment. The city would ask the Websters to consent to have the bond requirement by spring. If they are unable to get the bond then, they would agree to the blight determination and the case would proceed to a judge, who would advise the Websters of the steps required to abate the situation.

The other option would be to file the lawsuit without the consent agreement. This process could take a few months to a year before a judge would make an abatement recommendation, explained Mr. Evashevski.

Mayor Margaret Doud said she is concerned about the problems posed by the open foundation.

Added alerman and committee member Jason St. Onge, "On the one hand, I want to work with the guy [Mr. Webster], and on the other, I want to work with the neighbors who complain day after day about this."



Veterans Honored for 50 Years of Membership

The St. Ignace American Legion honored veterans with at least 50 years membership in local Post 62 during its annual banquet Thursday, October 12, at the Galley Restaurant, with Mike Lehto as master of ceremonies. Posing here are 50-year members (back row, from left) Louie Leveille, John Rex Hooper, Art Pechta, and Wesley Pechta; (front) Dr. Don McKinnon, Marvin Winkelman (a 60-year member), and Dell Ahlich. Other veterans with at least 50 years of membership are Roy Dunn, Dr. Herbert Hamel, D. K. McEachern, and Jack Ryerse.

Teachers, School Negotiations Continue

St. Ignace School Board Sets New Calendar

By Paul Gingras

Teachers and administrators at St. Ignace Area Schools have not agreed on a new contract, which has stalled development of a full-year calendar and prompted the school board to implement a three-month calendar. The new calendar details school operations from Wednesday, November 1, through Monday, January 1. It was adopted by the school board Wednesday, October 18, ending a monthly calendar published in September and October.

Development of the calendar has been stalled because it reflects working conditions that teachers may be negotiating, including the number of days school will be in session, the length of those days, the number of days the district allows for holiday vacations, and if holidays such as Easter will have days off at all, Superintendent Mike Springsteen told *The St. Ignace News*.

The board rejected a calendar proposed by the St. Ignace Education Association (SEA), which represents the teachers.

The state requires schools to provide 1,089 hours of instruction

a year, but it is up to school boards and teachers in each district to determine how that is done.

In St. Ignace, teachers have traditionally worked 182 days a year with five-day work weeks, but there are districts in Michigan that hold classes four days per week and stay in session longer.

Neither the teachers or administrators will say what in the contract is still being negotiated, but Mr. Springsteen said he doesn't believe a contract settlement will affect the three-month schedule.

Negotiations for teachers' contracts in St. Ignace are ongoing, despite the involvement of a mediator to resolve differences between the school board and the SEA.

The issues on the table "all involve working conditions," Mr. Springsteen told *The St. Ignace News*. Beyond issues tied up in the calendar, negotiable working conditions for teachers can include salaries, the details of insurance benefits, the number of sick days and personal days allowed each year, and the maximum number of students in a class.

At St. Ignace Area Schools, the suggested number students in aca-

demic classes is 25, Mr. Springsteen said, although some classes have more.

The teachers union, which represents 46 people, has been negotiating with the school board since June.

Nancy Cline, spokesperson for the SEA, said, "The teachers hope [these matters] will be settled soon, and they fully intend to keep doing their jobs while negotiations are going on."

Ed Eppert, the mediator provided by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Bureau of Employment Relations, agreed to schedule a second mediation session. Mrs. Cline said the meeting will probably take place in November and added that Employment Relations will not charge the school district or the union for its services.

Tahquamenon Area Schools is the only other district in the Eastern Upper Peninsula still negotiating a contract with its teachers.

The three-month calendar can be found on the district's Web site, and copies were to be sent home to parents.

Younge, Phillips Race for Bois Blanc School Board Seat

Island School Has Two Students This Year

Sandra Younge is seeking a fourth four-year term on the Bois Blanc Township Board of Education and is being challenged by Lorrain "Larry" Phillips in the general election Tuesday, November 7.

Ms. Younge, originally from the Flint area, has lived on Bois Blanc Island for 30 years. She has three children. She enjoys her retirement on Bois Blanc, but continues to travel to Almont to work for H&R Block each winter. She is seeking re-election, she said, because she feels it is her duty to continue what she started years ago.

Her concerns for the school, which traditionally enrolls one to two students in the one-room schoolhouse each year, are shared by her opponent, Mr. Phillips. Both

candidates stress the importance of drawing more year-around families to the Island, increasing student enrollment.

Mr. Phillips and his wife, Melissa, have lived on Bois Blanc since April, 2005. He is originally from South Lyon but has visited the Island each year for the past 20 years. He owns and operates Hawk's Landing store.

Mr. Phillips said he seeks the seat on the school board to be more involved with his community.

This year, the school has two students, who are brothers. George Spray, 8, is in the second grade and Grant, 6, is in first grade.

The two boys are taught by their mother, Wendy Spray, granddaughter of Ray Plaunt, whose father founded Plaunt Transportation,

which still operates ferries to and from Bois Blanc Island today. The boys' father is Ted Spray, who works in construction on the Island.

The school board is chaired by Marsha Gibbons and Cindy Riker, Dale Hoffman, and Ms. Younge serve as trustees. The board meets the first Tuesday of every month.

Pickford Exercise Class Offered Now

Consolidated Community School Services in Pickford will sponsor a body ball, step aerobics, and strength training exercise class Monday and Thursday evenings from 5:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. at Pickford Methodist Church. For more information, call Diane at (906) 647-7403.

Banquet Guests Learn About 'Creating a Climate for Life'

Right to Life Event Draws 150+ to Little Bear

By Karen Gould

The ninth annual Right to Life banquet drew more than 150 area residents to Little Bear East Community Center in St. Ignace Monday, October 16. It also drew many local and state political candidates, including Congressman Bart Stupak, who gave a brief address. Pamela Sherstad, who is the director of public information for Right to Life of Michigan, was the keynote speaker.

"Yes. I am a single issue voter," she told the crowd.

With only three weeks before the general election, Mrs. Sherstad told attendees that pro-life is her first consideration when voting. Choosing pro-life candidates, she said, is one of many opportunities available to promote life values and to establish a climate for life.

Mrs. Sherstad lives in Hudsonville, has twin 12 year old boys, and began working for Right to Life of Michigan in 1993.

She said pro-life supporters can find planned and unplanned opportunities to discuss life issues and they should be prepared for the occasions.

"How are you going to respond when someone says, 'I'm pregnant and don't know what to do?'" she asked the crowd.

Everyone has a "sphere of influence" and within that circle of friends and neighbors are those

who fit into state abortion statistics. Abortions are most common in women between 18 years old and 24 years old and more than 86 percent of women who have abortions are not married, she said.

"We need to be ready to know how to answer questions," she said.

Right to Life of Michigan works in three primary areas, she said: Education through advertising and literature, legislation, and political action.

Randy Royston, development coordinator for Right to Life of Michigan, told those attending that a statewide television advertising campaign promoting life had just begun.

MariAn Huhn is president of the St. Ignace chapter, which sponsored the dinner. Gladys Tamlyn of St. Ignace was the banquet chair for the fifth year, Patricia Serwach of Moran was the mistress of ceremonies, and Jessica Bentley, an eighth grade student at St. Ignace Middle School, sang, "I Can Only Imagine."

Father Jim Williams of St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church in St. Ignace and Immaculate Conception Church in Moran offered the invocation, and retired Pastor Wayne Foote from the Glen Memorial Baptist Church of St. Ignace performed the benediction.



"Creating a Climate for Life" was the keynote address given by Pamela Sherstad (left) of Right to Life of Michigan at the St. Ignace Right to Life banquet. MariAn Huhn (center) is president of the local organization and Patricia Serwach served as the mistress of ceremonies.

Chamber Reschedules Meeting to Nov. 1

The St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce board meeting has been rescheduled from Wednesday, November 8, to Wednesday, November 1, at 7:30 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce office. It is open to the public.

An individual membership category has been added, said Director Janet Peterson. The \$50

fee entitles individuals to receive newsletters, invitations to Business After Hours and other Chamber events, and be listed in the office.

The individual membership has appealed to former business owners in the town, she said, who want to support the Chamber and stay informed about its programs.

Winter Coat Drive Begins at St. Ignace

A winter coat drive, sponsored by Little Bear East Arena with donations to support "Project Hope" in St. Ignace, began Monday, October 23, and will

continue until Friday, November 10.

Coats can be dropped off at Little Bear East Arena from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.