

# Roads Top Agenda as Luepnitz Challenges Duncan for Commission Seat

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time and part-time road commission employees serve 11 townships.

The Road Commission does not receive any operational money from local property taxes. Some townships have road millages that generate money for road improvements and construction, and those townships contract with Mackinac County Road Commission for the work.



**John Duncan**

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John Duncan, 63, is a resident of Cedarville with his wife, Carol, and is a retired Les Cheneaux Community Schools administrator. The couple has three children and 10 grandchildren.

Mr. Duncan taught biology and chemistry for four years, then worked another 29 years as the Cedarville High School Principal before retiring in 1997. He has a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry and a master's degree in school administration. He served on the Clark Township board of trustees and helped establish Clark Township's road committee, which determines how money from the township's road millage is spent.

"I enjoy being a part of the operation of the County Road Commission," he said. "It's exciting and it's fun when positive things are accomplished that the people request. It also has a lot of challenges, and I feel over the last six years, we've come a long way."

Of his service to constituents, he said, "I have never believed in red tape or stone-walling someone. I believe if people have problems, you should get to the bottom of them and get the answers," he said. "I try to bring to the table my experience and common sense."

Mr. Duncan said a good road commissioner has "to have an open mind about the future." He said he has a view of the future needs of county roads and how to "spend money in a way that will allow the Mackinac County Road Commission to do more for Mackinac County."

He would like to see all gravel roads in Mackinac County finished with a hard surface, "because then the annual maintenance costs would be so much less," he said.

"We have to set goals. We need to funnel some of the money from construction back into maintenance, now that we have good equipment," he said. "The Road Commission also saves money by having its own engineer, rather than hiring an engineer for each project."

He also lauded the county-wide match program that provides \$30,000 to each participating township for road improvements and gravel.

"For \$10,000, the township gets

\$30,000," Mr. Duncan said. "I think it's probably one of the more important programs in place for townships."

The Road Commission has also been able to secure grants for projects communities otherwise couldn't afford, like the Borgstrom Road project, which is now complete, he said.

"If you lose state money, you have to go and find it somewhere else, and that's one of the things the Road Commission has been successful at," he said. "We just learned that the Mackinac County Road Commission will receive \$3.27 million in federal funds for the north portion of Mackinac Trail, from M-134 to the county line, with construction beginning in 2007."

He believes the Road Commission can best serve the county by being "in tune with the townships to know what their needs are. Each township has unique local needs."

"We need to hear more from the townships," he said. "We have an annual meeting for all the township supervisors, and I would like to see participation from all the supervisors as the projects are approved each year."

Communication is key, he said, to improving and maintaining county roads, and "the Road Commission needs to communicate better with the townships and people, whether it be from us going to them, or them coming to us."

"We need to do what we can to have our townships keep us informed about what they perceive as problems," Mr. Duncan said. "We need to keep them informed as to what we have as programs and what is available to them. I will certainly always be available to listen and help, and I always have been available to them. The ultimate goal is for better roads for the county."

**Frank Luepnitz**

With 21 years as an employee of the Mackinac County Road Commission as a heavy equipment operator, Mr. Luepnitz said he is



**John Luepnitz**

acquainted with the needs of county roads.

Mr. Luepnitz and his wife, Anne Marie, a Mackinac Straits Hospital employee, have three children. Mr. Luepnitz was a former Brevort Township firefighter and served on the Brevort Township board for eight years. He is 53 years old and has lived in the county his entire life. He previously worked as a Mackinac County jail corrections officer.

He is a LaSalle High School graduate and is a licensed builder.

Mr. Luepnitz said if he is elected, he will continue working as a self-employed builder. If he loses the election, he plans to return to work at the Road Commission. He is on an unpaid leave of absence from his job while campaigning because the Road Commission does not allow its employees to campaign for any county office while on the payroll. Mr. Luepnitz disagrees with the Road Commission's practice of forbidding employees to run for any county office while on the payroll, and said he doesn't think any other county branch has such a policy.

"It's wrong for the commission to use their power to do that, and I feel it was an abuse of their position. They're narrowing down people's choices by about 40 people," he said, referring to Road Commission employees.

Mr. Luepnitz believes the Road Commission can best serve the public by "keeping the roads as safe as possible." He also thinks the Road Commission needs someone with road experience on the board, and he said his experience will help guide employees in choosing the right equipment for each job.

"I know for the most part, we've done a good job, and I know there's a budget, and there's only so much we can do," he said. "I feel that us taxpayers aren't really getting what we ask for."

He believes the Road Commission should have more interest in improving safety at intersections, and he believes roads

could be better maintained for clearer vision. He said some of the county's intersections should be redesigned, and that it is difficult for some trucks to maneuver around some of the corners. The Road Commission is too focused on building roads, he said, and should spend more effort maintaining them.

"The roads haven't been brushed back properly for years," he said. "We need to find a way to do more brushing somewhere within the budget, or by making room for it in the budget."

He would also like to see Road Commission Engineer Craig Kelso spend more time engineering the smaller, local roads, rather than concentrating on the primary roads.

"Engineering has mostly been on the big roads, and I don't think we're getting much engineering work for the other, outlying townships," Mr. Luepnitz said.

Mr. Luepnitz said a good road commissioner "is someone who can listen to the concerns of people, and there has got to be a simpler and faster way to get things done."

He said people have told him the roads need more maintenance, and more ditches should be cleaned out. Signs should be fixed, and some have not been replaced in years, he said. He also suggests posting signs to mark the various township borders. The signs could benefit motorists, emergency services, and road employees, he said.

As a road commission employee, Mr. Luepnitz has enjoyed his work, especially the time he spent working on signs when the Road Commission made and painted its own signs. He enjoyed working in the Rexton area and in the many other areas he was assigned to. He describes himself as someone who enjoys meeting people and hearing their concerns. He encourages people and road commission workers to come forward to the Road Commission and express their ideas. He would like to see the Road Commission reward employees with good ideas.

Mr. Luepnitz would like to see road plans made available to the public so they can see what money is being spent on projects, "especially what money is being spent on township projects."

He lists good facilities and garages among the Road Commission's successes, but said, "The garages aren't necessarily meeting the needs of the townships."

"No matter where you put the garage, someone's going to be last," Mr. Luepnitz said, noting that he believes facilities and salt sheds be located where they are most beneficial to townships and operators.

# Local Communities Announce Upcoming Halloween Events

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prizes. The event is open to parents.

## Portage Township

Curtis Elementary School students will march through town at 12:15 p.m. Tuesday, October 31. The parade begins at the Curtis Post Office.

The Curtis Ladies Aid Society will host its annual costume party for children and teenagers at the Curtis Community Building Tuesday, October 31. From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., the Society will provide cider, doughnuts, a cake walk, and games, and for \$3 participants can have photographs taken in costume.

## Newton Township

The Newton Township Fire Department will host a party for the young residents of the township at the town hall in Gould City Tuesday, October 31, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$1 per person. There will be a spooky room, games, prizes, pizza, and juice.

## DeTour Village

DeTour Area Schools and the Parent Volunteer Committee will host a Halloween Carnival Sunday, October 29, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the school. The event is open to everyone, and tickets will be sold for admission to games and activities. The DeTour National Honor Society will host a haunted house. Other activities will include a bungee run, cake walk, bounce house, fortune teller, the Pocket Lady, a sucker tree, and a Scary Hair Salon.

Proceeds from the carnival will go toward student and classroom activities.

The event will also feature a pumpkin contest, and everyone is invited to bring their carved or painted pumpkins in for judging and prizes.

Classroom Halloween parties at DeTour Elementary will take place Tuesday, October 31.

# Taxi To Offer Free Rides to Polls

Straits Taxi of St. Ignace will offer free rides to the polls on election day Tuesday, November 7, said owner Mike Gustafson. The offer will be extended to those who need transportation in the city

of St. Ignace, Evergreen Shores, and Gros Cap, Mr. Gustafson said.

Reservations made in advance would be appreciated, he said, and may be arranged by calling 643-6909.

# Bake Sale To Benefit Walk for Warmth

Old Mission Bank will host a bake sale Friday, October 27, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the main

branch office in Sault Ste. Marie. Proceeds benefit Walk for Warmth.

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'03 Chevrolet Venture Mini Van 24,000 miles, white	\$10,500
'01 Chevrolet Blazer 4x4 107,000 miles, green	\$4,800
'00 Dodge Stratus 4 dr., 85,000 miles, tan	\$4,800
'99 Jeep Cherokee 4 dr. 4x4 88,000 miles, red	\$7,500
'99 Mercury Sable 4 dr. 86,000 miles, tan	\$4,500
'97 Mercury Mountaineer 4 dr., 4x4, 84,000, green	\$5,500
'97 Dodge Ram Truck 4x4, 90,000 miles, black	\$4,500
'96 Cadillac DeVille loaded up, clean, nice, 131,000 miles	\$4,900
'96 Chevrolet Corsica 4 dr., 126,000 miles, purple	\$2,600
'95 Dodge Spirit 4 dr., 138,000 miles, green	\$1,500
'95 Subaru Leagacy AWD 4 dr., stick, green, 79,000 miles	\$3,500
'95 Nissan Pathfinder 4x4, 137,000 miles, runs, drives and looks good	Make Offer
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