

County Asks Solid Waste Committee To Add New Landfill to Plan

By Paul Gingras

To rectify a situation in which a trash removal company has a monopoly in the county, because it owns the only county-approved landfills, Mackinac County is pushing the Eastern Upper Peninsula Solid Waste Committee to allow a new landfill into the solid waste plan for Mackinac, Chippewa, and Luce counties. Doing so would allow Ohio-based Republic Waste Services and other trash haulers to compete with Waste Management, which dominates trash disposal services in the region. Some township and county representatives believe that creating competition will improve services, reduce costs for solid waste disposal in parts of Mackinac County, and add a handful of jobs to the area. But Republic has not made pricing information available and Waste Management contends competition would actually force a price increase, because the sparsely populated Eastern Upper Peninsula cannot support another landfill.

Trash disposal in Mackinac County is governed by a solid waste plan, which is overseen by the EUP Regional Planning and Development Commission. The plan specifies which landfills can be used for dumping tri-county trash. The primary site, at Dafer, is owned by Waste Management, so to be competitive, Republic Waste wants the solid waste plan to include a landfill in Presque Isle County that is owned by Republic, said Aaron Hopper, chairman of Regional Planning's 16-member Solid Waste Committee.

The Mackinac County Board of Commissioners supports the initiative to allow a second trash hauler to operate in the area. In the past year, the board has sent letters to Regional Planning asking it to add Republic Waste's facility to the solid waste plan, but the proposal has been voted down three times by the Solid Waste Committee. It was defeated most recently Tuesday, December 12, sparking protests by the Moran Township Board of Trustees, which spearheaded the initiative to bring a competing trash hauler to the area.

John Campbell, director of Regional Planning, said he believes making more companies involved in solid waste disposal would be a good strategic and economic move for the county. But he and Moran Township Supervisor Jim Durm and Mackinac County Commission Chair Dawn Nelson contend that the Solid Waste Committee includes Waste Management employees, who vote against changes that would allow competition.

The Department of Environmental Quality requires that four committee members be in the waste disposal industry, but the industry representatives do not have to be employees of Waste Management. For all recent votes on this matter, three of the four industry representatives were Waste Management employees and all three voted against including another company's landfill, said Jeff Hagen of Regional Planning.

At the December meeting, 11 members were present. Four voted to add the Republic landfill while five voted against it, including Chairman Hopper, who told *The St.*

Ignace News that members of the committee felt a representative from Mackinac County was needed to "shore up the effort." Two other members of the committee abstained from the vote. One was a representative from Chippewa County, Bernie LaJoie, who did not realize he had

been appointed to the committee and was expected to vote, "which was unfortunate," Mr. Hagen said. The other was a representative from Curtis, Mike Soder, who said he didn't feel he had enough information from either side of the issue to make a decision and said his one vote

wouldn't have been enough to change the outcome, anyway. Mr. Soder said he thinks the committee should meet more often to deliberate such proposals.

His abstention from the vote, however, was disappointing to the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners, Mrs. Nelson said.

He should have voted and done his duty for the EUP, she added; "He was our man."

"It should have passed easily," Mr. Hopper said, adding that seldom do all board members attend meetings and vote.

In response to the vote, Mr. Campbell discussed changes to the

solid waste plan at the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners meeting Thursday, January 11, where he said the county has two options.

First, Mackinac County could recommend new members for appointment to the Solid Waste Committee. Regional Development, the entity that appoints the committee's members, would decide whether to accept the recommendations, Mr. Hagen said. It is a good time to do so, he added, because terms for 14 of the members have expired.

Mackinac County could also choose to withdraw from the tri-

county plan and form a solid waste plan of its own. Either way, Waste Management will continue to play a major role in trash disposal in the county, Mr. Campbell explained. Representatives from Mackinac County on the Solid Waste Committee include Messrs. Campbell, Durm, and Soder and Bruce Zimmerman of St. Ignace, who is director of the Mackinac Island DPW.

Some committee members wanted a member of the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners there to discuss the county's position

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'Just Doing My Job'

Skippy, a young corgi, barks in an attempt to coax the snow shovel maneuvered by Jeff Meyers Saturday morning, January 27, at their home next to the Cedarville Post Office. Corgis were bred to work on farms, and have a strong protective and herding instinct. Skippy's "herding" of the snow shovel is a regular occurrence when the snow falls and the driveway needs clearing, Mr. Meyers said.

New Marketing Approach...

Mackinaw City Promoting Attractions as Package Deal

The Mackinaw Area Visitors Bureau in Mackinaw City has developed package pricing to promote six area attractions, it announced February 1. The "Mackinaw Infinity Package" allows patrons to pay one price to visit six of the area's tourist sites, as many times as they would like, within a three-day period.

Sites included in the package are Thunderfalls Family Waterpark, Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island, Historic Mill Creek, Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac

Point Lighthouse, and ferry boat rides to Mackinac Island, which can all be visited an unlimited number of times during three days.

To get the package, patrons must reserve rooms for two nights at a participating Mackinaw City lodging facility. Room costs are not included in the package.

The Infinity Package costs \$54.95 for children ages five through 12; \$69.95 for children ages 13 through 17; and \$79.95 for adults, and is sold through the Visitors Bureau.

St. Ignace To Be Site of Firefighters Grant Workshop Wed., February 21

St. Ignace will be the site of one of three workshops to assist fire departments and emergency medical service agencies in applying for grants through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The St. Ignace workshop is planned for Wednesday, February 21, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Little Bear East

Arena.

Workshops are also planned in Marquette Tuesday, February 20, and Escanaba Thursday, February 22. They are sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security to explain changes in the grant program this year. No pre-registration is required.

Grant To Help Identify Needs of EUP Children

Great Start Collaborative To Seek Ideas From Parents, Educators, Communities

To help the state evaluate how it is serving its youngest children through health, human services, and education programs, a \$120,000 grant has been given in the Eastern Upper Peninsula to identify local needs of children from birth up to five years. One of 21 awarded in the state, the grant will be used to pool the efforts and ideas of local agencies, businesses, and parents to form the EUP Great Start Collaborative, said coordinator Gary Davis in announcing the grant January 24.

A main focus of the program will be to better prepare children for

kindergarten and lifetime learning, to ultimately boost Michigan's educated workforce.

"We will work together to look at the services and programs available to young children in the EUP, and make decisions about strengths and weaknesses," said Mr. Davis. "The state recognizes that the first few years are the most important in a child's life, and can make a difference in that child's eventual place in life."

In its first year, the program will send surveys to health and human service agencies and gather informa-

tion from businesses, faith organizations, and parent groups to identify needs of young children in the area. The program will consider physical health care, social and emotional health care, parent education and family support, early care and education, and economic security and child safety. Research will be conducted by Mr. Davis from his office at the EUP Intermediate School District, which participated in securing the state grant.

"We'll take a look at things like what percentage of children attend preschool, and what percentage are ready to start kindergarten with full

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Researchers Say Promoting Craft Industry Could Boost Michigan's Tourism, Economy

Building up and promoting Michigan's underdeveloped craft industry is a viable way to enhance tourism and strengthen economic development in communities, according to a report released January 23 by the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL) and Michigan State University Museum. Bringing in nearly \$2 billion per year in the state, the craft industry includes craft fairs and festivals, home-based cottage industries, craft tool production businesses, craft supply and retail operations, galleries, and craft schools and institutes.

From quilters and rug weavers to boat builders and stained-glass makers, the craft industry is an untapped resource with the potential to pump more money into Michigan's economy and draw thousands of tourists to the state, researchers said in the report. The industry is now fragmented across the state, lacking a well-developed infrastructure to support it, and the report's authors call upon leadership and investment from state government and private investors to support the industry as a tool for regional economic development.

"CraftWORKS! Michigan: A Report on Traditional Crafts and Economic Development in Michigan" lays the strategy for marketing Michigan's crafts industry in ways that will: boost a region's appeal by collectively promoting its unique heritage, personality, and crafting businesses; and offer a new tourism product. The full report is available online at www.craft-works-michigan.org.

"The research and report have really opened our eyes to the potential power of a strategically planned and managed craft industry for Michigan," said Dr. William Anderson, director of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries. "We've seen it work in other states, as with North Carolina's 'HandMade in America,' an initiative that has realized as much as a \$120 million economic impact from the crafts sector. With thousands of crafters and artisans making uniquely Michigan products, Michigan can enjoy those same entrepreneurial and economic rewards."

Information about North Carolina's project, which has developed craft "trails" as automobile routes mapped for tourists to include stops at galleries, workshops, farms, gardens, and wineries, is available online at www.handmadeinamerica.org. Glove-box sized booklets are printed to offer tourists descriptions and maps about art and craft sites throughout the region.

In Michigan, arts and cultural activities already generate nearly \$2 billion a year, according to the recent W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research report, "Economic Benefits of Michigan's Arts and Cultural Activities." Nationwide, the craft industry

has a \$13.8 billion annual economic impact, only slightly smaller than the retail floral market, as reported by the Craft Organization Development Association in 2001.

The Craft WORKS! report was written by a team at the MSU Museum, home to the Michigan Traditional Arts Program, the state's center for researching, documenting, preserving, and sharing the traditional arts.

"Craft and design in Michigan have a strong and long-standing presence that is shaped by the richness of our natural resources, the diversity of our people, and the way we work and live," explained Dr. Marsha MacDowell, MSU Museum curator of folk arts and one of the report's lead authors. "More and more regions in the country are recognizing the relationship among craft production, cultural heritage, and community economic prosperity."

Dr. Anderson said that with information about the traditional craft sector as well as culture-based tourism trails, the report outlines a series of recommendations about next steps that can be taken to grow the state's economy, as well as examples of successful approaches

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Walk for Warmth:

Fifteen walkers braved near-zero temperatures Saturday, February 3, for the Second Annual Walk for Warmth sponsored by Community Action in St. Ignace. Those pictured include (from left) Mayor Paul Grondin, Kay Langstaff, Elizabeth Colegrove, Cheryl St. Louis, Rhonda Engle, Jean Huskey, Jason Alexander, Marianne Huskey, Diane Peterson, Ashly Peterson, Ryan Bird, Don Wright, Samantha Wright, Robert Robach, and Al Stempki. The event raises funds for home heating assistance.