

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Worrisome Questions Remain With New Hospital Plans

To the Editor:

It's wonderful news that the \$37.4 million USDA loan for the new Mackinac Straits Hospital and Health Center has been secured, thanks to the sustained effort of hospital CEO Rod Nelson, the board, the Chippewa Tribe, Congressman Stupak, Senators Stabenow and Levin, along with many dedicated others working behind the scenes.

Despite, at long last, to have this affirmative response to unmet health needs of the Straits area, shadows of doubt remain whether the proposed design of the new facility measures up to the level of excellence that should be expected for our "center of the fresh water world" uniqueness, identity, and spirit of place.

On the basis of what has so far been revealed of the project's planning and design, worrisome questions must be asked.

Why don't the rooms for recovering, long term care, and assisted living patients have views of our unique waterscape? Most hotel and motel guests at the casino and other waterfront locations enjoy this view, why are patients to be deprived, placed in

barrack-like spaces in back?

Under much the same budget constraints, new hospitals in urban areas like Petoskey or even smaller cities like Cheboygan are all multi-floor, designed for efficiencies of compactness, energy conservation (solar, etc.), direct interior service circulation, as well as for greater amounts of natural light and views.

A smaller site footprint than the one proposed also permits better organization of vehicle access, parking, service areas, and landscape conservation.

The proposed sprawling, army barrack-like plan disregards these advantages, resulting in a hodge-podge of building masses, roof lines, and awkward intersections.

On the proposed building's front facade, adding a few gestures like bits of stone (real or fake) and pseudo rustic touches here and there does not mask the "cookie-cutter" sameness of so much fast-track mediocrity of building now spreading across the country, especially in rural and economically depressed areas.

In my 70 years of experience as an architect of a number of public institutions, I have seen a

marked diminishing of local client input, authority, and chances for architectural review, especially in areas like ours that are so dependent on government "Big Brother" bureaucracy control in collusion with big, out-of-town contracting firms (like Haliburton?).

This situation has sadly carried with it a growing reluctance on the part of local communities to speak up, for fear of losing their much needed project entirely.

According to the recent news report, design development of the new hospital complex has yet to be completed, so it is still theoretically possible to accomplish wonders of planning and architectural changes leading to the pace-setting, unique, and beautiful outcome that our community deserves, expects, and can be proud of, even though we'll no doubt again be told by the Big Brother system that nothing can now be done.

I can't help contrasting the wonderful enthusiasm, cooperation, local financial support, patience, and architectural appreciation of the community in building the new St. Ignace Public

Library, with the current situation of the same community's alienation in affecting beneficially the design of a new hospital costing almost 30 times more.

Can't we persuade the powers that be, our hospital boards, county and regional leadership, Congressman, and Senators to go to bat once more, this time insisting on highest quality planning and architecture most appropriate to its time and place?

A. Richard Williams, FAA
St. Ignace
Design architect for the
St. Ignace Public Library

Council Members Should Explain Reasoning for Vote

To the Editor:

After reading Mr. Wagner's letter to the editor, I felt compelled to write another letter concerning a decision the city council made a few weeks ago - the decision to pay a part-time employee for unused vacation time when he takes at least four weeks of vacation a year and receives \$100 per month not to take insurance coverage from the city taxpayers.

He receives full insurance through his retirement. I hope the city council members who voted for that read Mr. Wagner's letter,

and the employee who receives those benefits reads it also, because Mr. Wagner is not alone in his predicament. All you have to do is drive through town and look at the closed businesses.

Now what I would like to see are the council members who voted for that decision write a letter to the editor giving the reason for their vote, and the person receiving the benefits, why he felt he deserved them, since we are having to pay this bill, including a lot of other people like Mr. Wagner.

Joe Durm
St. Ignace

City Tax Dollars Should Be Replaced

To the Editor:

The article in last week's paper, "City to Seek Appraisals on Waterfront Property," states that I agree with Councilman LaLonde that the City should drop the issue of purchasing the Star Line property on Main Street.

I do not propose to speak for Mr. LaLonde on this matter, but I agree with him in as far as the discussion was going at the time, however, that is not my complete view on the matter of the City purchasing taxable property in the City.

I stated my view when the City was in the process of purchasing the Fort de Buade property, and my view has not changed.

I believe that when a proposal [is made] to purchase a piece of property such as this, that proposal should include a plan for development that will replace the tax dollars lost to all the citizens. That was my view on the purchase of the Fort de Buade property, and it is the same on this proposal.

When the City purchases a piece of property in the City, it is taken off the tax rolls. Since all

tax dollars must be budgeted, it stands to reason that this shortfall must be replaced by raising taxes, cutting wages, or by making cuts in services.

I find it hard to believe that everyone is in favor of raising taxes any more than they are, especially for a parcel of property that brings in the amount tax dollars involved here, and the added cost of maintenance.

I can't imagine cutting wages, although cutting administrative salaries sounds good. So, as usual, services are the ones that get cut, and road maintenance and repair would probably be the first to get the ax.

It has been my experience, sitting in at council meetings, that the mayor and majority council tend to say of the few people (compared to the total number of voters in the city) who show up at meetings, "The people have spoken."

Most of those people are the ones in favor of spending your tax dollars the way they see fit, and I do not believe that they are the majority.

Dean Baker
St. Ignace

Editor's Note: Mr. Baker is a candidate for City Council in the November 6 election.

Send Message Again: No EUPISD Millage

To the Editor:

On November 6, 2007, the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District (EUPISD) will be asking again for a millage increase in order to "enhance" their operations. This same request has been made in the past and was greeted with a resounding defeat by the voters within the district.

With our economy in such dire condition, high unemployment, the State of Michigan on the brink of shutting down at midnight September 30, untold numbers of foreclosures appearing in the newspapers, businesses closing, vacant business buildings throughout the entire U.P., what makes the EUPISD think that the voters can afford such a millage request?

On September 13, there were two Letters to the Editor that appeared in your paper, both of which addressed this same issue. Both letters were well written and brought out excellent reasons why such a millage should be soundly defeated again.

I think that the EUPISD needs to have an alternate plan in place in case current funding does not meet their budget requirements. It

is unclear exactly why there is a need for this millage, and to date, I have seen no response from the EUPISD justifying their millage increase request. In private business, concessions have to be made in order to survive the economic climate, and the same should hold true for the school districts. The voters have to do this all the time with their own personal budgets, so why can't the EUPISD do the same?

The number one concern should be for providing a good education for our children. The wages of the administrators and teachers are very much in line, and in such difficult economic times, I do not think wage and benefit increases should be their number

one priority. It may be necessary for all employees to make wage and benefit concessions in order to keep their jobs, that is what the private sector has to do. There are too many unanswered questions to justify the voters to "blindly" approve a millage increase.

I urge all voters within the EUPISD to be sure and get out and vote November 6. If you are not registered, do so now. If you will be absent, obtain an absentee ballot, now, and send yet another message to the EUPISD: "No Millage Increase!"

Vote "No" to the EUPISD millage increase request.

James Bishop
St. Ignace

New State Tax Exemption Policy in Effect

Members of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians eligible for sales tax exemptions must now request a tax exemption certificate prior to making a purchase, rather than paying sales tax and recovering it after the sale, the tribe announced.

Effective September 1, all enrolled members residing in the

tax agreement area, and thus eligible to receive tax refunds under the state-tribe tax agreement, must now request a certificate prior to initiating a significant transaction or purchase that would entitle the tribal member to a Michigan sales tax refund or exemption.

The tax refund policy has changed to an exemption, which has resulted in the replacement of tax form 3996 with tax exemption form 3998.

The refund system previously required tribal members to pay taxes up front, submit a tax form, and then wait several months to receive a refund on the sales tax. Under the new exemption policy, tribal members will no longer be required to pay Michigan sales taxes on tax exempt items at the time of purchase.

This new policy specifically

applies to the sales and use tax for purchases of a vehicle, modular/mobile homes, building materials/home improvements, treaty commercial fishing expenses, and taxes paid on tangible personal property acquired within tribal and trust lands for commercial use. All other provisions of the current tax agreement will remain in effect.

Tribal members are still required to submit the 4013 tax form when filing their income taxes if they wish to obtain the annual sales and use tax refund.

The new exemption policy now in effect requires tribal members to obtain and complete a Tribal Certificate of Exemption for Sales and Use Tax (Form 3998) prior to a tax exempt purchase. Following the submission of a completed

* Please turn to page 5

St. Ignace News Policies

Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at stignacenews.com.

Contact:

The St. Ignace News
359 Reagon Street
PO Box 277
Saint Ignace, MI 49781
(906) 643-9150 (phone)
(906) 643-9122 (fax)
e-mail: news@stignacenews.com

The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

359 Reagon Street, PO Box 277, Saint Ignace, MI 49781

Telephone (906) 643-9150 • Facsimile (906) 643-9122

Hessel Office: 138 Pickford Avenue (906) 484-2268

www.SaintIgnaceNews.com

USPS Periodical Publication Number - 462-380

ESTABLISHED 1878

Published each Thursday at Saint Ignace, Mackinac County, Michigan

Entered in Saint Ignace, Michigan Post Office as Periodical Mail Matter, Act of March 3, 1879

Periodical Postage Paid at Saint Ignace, MI • Additional Postage Paid at Gaylord, MI

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Ignace News, PO Box 277, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Volume 128, Number 25 Thursday, September 27, 2007

Publisher/Editor

Wesley H. Maurer, Jr.

Associate Publisher

Mary R. Maurer

Publisher 1975-1995

Wesley H. Maurer, Sr. (1897-1995)

Editor

Ellen Paquin, news@saintignacenews.com

Staff Writers

Amy Polk, amy@saintignacenews.com

Ryan Schlehner, ryan@saintignacenews.com

Karen Gould, karen@saintignacenews.com

Paul Gingras, paul@saintignacenews.com

Advertising Department

Tammy Matson, David Moyalson

ads@saintignacenews.com

Print Shop Manager

Sherry Cece

Circulation Manager

Wendy Colegrove



Subscriptions:

\$35 in Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, Luce, and Cheboygan counties.

\$42 elsewhere in the United States and military post offices.

\$30 for the Web edition at www.saintignacenews.com

We take Visa, MasterCard, and Discover

The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Polls Show Ex-Navy Pilot McCain in Tailspin

On the eve of the weekend gathering of seven Republican 2008 presidential contenders on Mackinac Island, Arizona Senator John McCain's campaign cited four national polls in asserting, "We are making large gains." He, indeed, made some gains.

But the two latest statewide Michigan polls put the decorated Navy pilot and Vietnam POW in a tailspin in the state where he beat George W. Bush in the 2000 primary.

While he can pull out of it, Mr. McCain came to Michigan as a wounded warrior because of his fundraising and organizational problems, including the devastating blow of Attorney General Mike Cox quitting as his Michigan chairman.

Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group, in releasing its September 13 to 19 survey of 600 likely Michigan Republican voters, said Thursday the Arizona senator had "collapsed," falling to six points from 24 points in its April poll. Ex-New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani was at 27, and ex-Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson and ex-Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney at 13.

The next day, Mitchell Interactive, an East Lansing online polling firm, released these results of a September 14 to 19 survey of 441 likely primary voters: Romney, 21; Giuliani, 19; Thompson, 18; McCain 10. Both polls had all other contenders in single digits.

Polls, as ex-Governor Jim Blanchard used to say, "are like yo-yos," not crystal balls. Snapshots, not forecasts.

But, like it or not, they impact what the first President Bush called "the Big Mo," and therefore fundraising, endorsements, and recruiting of grassroots activists.

Pollster Ed Sarpolus of Lansing-based EPIC/MRA, who in August had Mr. McCain trailing the same top three of the September polls, said Friday: "McCain has more than collapsed. He barely has a heartbeat. His life is hanging by a thread."

U.S. Representative Candice Miller of Macomb County, who chairs Giuliani's Michigan campaign, contends Mr. McCain's campaign "is sort of imploding in Michigan."

Michigan Democratic Chairman Mark Brewer, in a press release that posed awkward questions for all White House hopefuls on Mackinac, asked Mr. McCain, in the wake of Cox's defection, "who's left" among his Michigan supporters.

As announced by Mr. McCain last week, his Michigan co-chairs are U.S. Representative Fred Upton of St. Joseph, Republican National Committeeman Chuck Yob, and Republican National Committeewoman Holly Hughes. His vice-chairs include Senator Michelle McManus of Lake Leelanau and Representative Kevin Elsenheimer of Kewadin.

I focus here on Mr. McCain among the Mackinac attendees because he won the last GOP contested primary here in 2000; was the early 2008 frontrunner across the land; has now been written off by some national commentators, and abandoned by Cox, Michigan's most politically aggressive Republican elected official.

Mr. Blanchard and President Bill Clinton, upon rebounding in campaigns, each called himself "the Comeback Kid."

Will the "collapsed/imploded" Mr. McCain, 71, be the presidential primary's Comeback Geezer? (It's his own term. Mr. McCain, when I once joined him in the backseat of a campaign limo, welcomed "a fellow geezer.")

Why did Mr. Cox defect? In his own convoluted words:

"Senator John McCain has been and will always remain a personal hero. In fact, as a young Marine in Okinawa, I followed his first election campaign in 1982. He is one of the most important American figures of our time.

However, as you know, I disagree with him on the direction of his presidential campaign. I still believe, if elected, that Senator McCain would make a great President. However, after long thought and consideration, I can no longer endorse his candidacy and I am withdrawing as his Michigan State Chairman."

George Weeks retired last year after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.