

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Apathy Continues Toward City Hall, and City Depends on It

To the Editor:

I started this letter last Monday, January 28, before the January 31 newspaper came out, so it will be in two parts; one part angry, and the second part livid.

Today I requested from City Hall information using the "Freedom of Information Act" (FOIA) regarding the 2007 income received by Paul Sved, St. Ignace part-time building inspector. I also requested from the State of Michigan, (FOIA) his income and benefits he receives from the state. As of this date, I have not received the figure from the state.

In this week's newspaper, it was reported that Paul Sved earned \$24,148.80, but the figure I received from City Hall through the Freedom of Information Act was \$36,062.42, which is roughly one-third more than reported in the newspaper. The average family income in Mackinac County, according to a Mackinac County Web page in 2005, was \$34,381. Please understand Paul Sved's income of \$36,062 is for a part-time job in a county that has approximately 25% unemployment. There are people that are unemployed in Mackinac County that are qualified for this job, and these people do not receive retirement benefits of approximately \$50,000 from the State of Michigan.

How many times have I heard this year that our youth do not stay in our community? They can't stay, because there are no jobs.

Now, my initial letter was written to chastise the citizens of St. Ignace for allowing City Hall to sit on their hands while businesses are struggling and others are closing their doors. Week after week, I waited for letters, demanding a response from City Hall, but none are written. The apathy goes on, while City Hall depends on it. Since the newspaper came out, my impatience with the city and City Hall has turned to anger. My feelings with City Hall of ineptitude have changed to irresponsibility. They have proven the "Peter Principle" was dead-on, and City Hall has reached its level of incompetence, all at one time. Do they realize that eight businesses closed last year, and two more in the downtown district have closed this year for good? Do they realize the position of building inspector is not a necessary city position (but yet the building inspector received an 8.5% pay raise), when the state would do inspections at no charge to the city, as the state inspector currently does in Brevort Township? This would save the city \$36,062.42. Maybe it is just that they need a fourth for euchre during their long coffee breaks. (Sorry, guys).

Why is it that when we drive to Petoskey, the cities along the way have new businesses, new malls, etc.? Could it be to the competence of their local government, or the incompetence of our City Hall?

I truly hope that this letter will anger many people, for apathy is going to be the death of the "Jewel of the North," if things do not change. Who will be left to turn off the lights?

Joe Durn  
St. Ignace

### Transportation Museum Would Require Taxpayer Investment

To the Editor:

The above-the-fold headlines have recently highlighted the latest work in progress masterminded by the select few at City Hall, and particularly at the Downtown Development Authority.

The "transportation museum" which folks smarter than I want to locate in the former food pantry/former bus depot has enjoyed scant consideration by few outside the "inner circle."

To widen that discussion, I would like to share some interesting facts I learned about this undertaking. To learn more, go to [www.michigan.gov/tea](http://www.michigan.gov/tea) on the computer, or call (517) 335-1069; you'll want to inquire about the "transportation enhancements" programs from MDOT.

The money starts in your wallets, goes to Washington, D.C., then returns to MDOT in Lansing. And it gets back here not as a traditional grant; it is a reimbursement program!

This process requires at least a 20% "hard" match; that's cash or donation of real estate. Over-match is encouraged, as the projects awarded to date have a 32% average match.

This cost will come from Saint Ignace taxpayers.

Further, federal law requires that an asset created using federal funding

shall be operated and maintained for its original purpose throughout the design life of that structure.

That cost of labor, benefits, and maintenance will again be borne by Saint Ignace taxpayers, forever.

And, what about parking? Nobody's mentioned where the hordes of visitors will stow their "magic carpets" while touring this proposed museum.

Yes, this land, too, must come off the tax rolls, so there'll be another increase levied on all Saint Ignace property owners.

The owner (DDA? City? Another Entity Yet To Be Named?) will be required to execute and record an historic preservation easement to protect the federal funding investment and to define maintenance responsibilities

Where is the groundswell of citizens desiring this project? Not anywhere to be found!

When I researched this question on the surveys submitted for the compilation of the Master Plan for the City, one reply possibly suggested something along the line of this project.

Now, that's a gamble! Perhaps a million plus of local dollars being planned to be spent on an idea whose support comes from one person, who most likely is an employee of the City.

Is this simply a "make-work" activity for the mayor's public relations, or to keep some people on the payroll now who properly need to be put on a "reduction of force" layoff, as there is no other grant writing to be done?

This cost and effort will create something to protect a 101-foot model of the Mighty Mac as a centerpiece; the donation of the one derelict aft engine of the *Chief Wawatam* may be stored somewhere close by.

Do you want to fund this project with \$1 million or more of your local tax money?

Are we going to own an elaborate possession, entailing great and continuing expense, which is out of proportion to the usefulness it may provide?

In competition with the proposed Saint Ignace display, there already exists in the Wisconsin Maritime Museum of Manitowoc, a 60,000-square-foot facility which houses the actual 65-ton displacement, triple expansion steam engine which powered the Chief from 1911. This one actually works!

How cool is that!

If your family had a limited amount of vacation money and an interest in auto ferry history on the Great Lakes, would there even be a serious consideration of Saint Ignace vs. Manitowoc as your family's vacation destination?

The city manager tells us the aft engine is "pretty sad to see ..."

And, I do love to hear a man in touch with his feelings, but I want to get in touch with some rigging and an oxy/acetylene cutting torch.

That may just be the first impulse of a skilled woman with an eye to the bottom line.

Mary Elizabeth Nichols  
St. Ignace

### Let's Give Referees a Break

To the Editor:

As a passionate fan of the game of basketball, I've always looked forward to high school basketball season. I've attended many games this season, both girls and boys, home and away, and have noticed a particular trend that is not very becoming to our area. There seems to be a constant belittling of the referees by the fans and the parents.

In my humble opinion, this is a twofold problem:

First, the belittlement and abuse these refs take is a total lack of respect for their position and themselves as people. Often the refs are people we work alongside or do business with through the week. We would never think about treating these people in those arenas as we do when they are out on the court. Do we get a free pass to be insulting and derogatory when we buy our \$4 game ticket?

Ever since the girls and boys basketball seasons have become one, a fear athletic directors have had is a lack of referees. I'm not surprised. Why would anyone subject themselves to that type of scrutiny? These referees are just people who love the game of basketball and want to (a) allow our children to enjoy it, too, and (b) stay a part of the game they love.

They are not trying to cheat your child out of a glory game. They are not helping the other team win. They are human beings, making quick judgment calls in front of a hostile audience. Do they make mistakes? You betcha! Just like you and I would, given the same situation. But in the end, 99.9 times out of 100, the best teams win, because they are simply the best team on that particular night, not because the officiating was bad.

The second fold of this problem has to do with what it teaches our young athletes. When we, as parents and fans, critique the decisions of the refs, we teach our young people that what went on out on the court is not their responsibility, that someone else was in control of the outcome of the game. We release them from looking at their own mistakes and instead, let them concentrate on the mistakes of others. We allow them to have an excuse for each time they lose or fail, instead of having an answer for the errors that they made. This cripples our athletes, it does not empower them. And I, for one, want my children to be empowered, not crippled. I want my children to persevere through the unfairness of life, to move forward, and to know that their destiny is in their hands, not in the hands of an official who might make a bad call or two on a particular night.

So, the next time you're at a high school basketball game, take the time

### 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 \$32.80.

#### Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at [stignacenews.com](http://stignacenews.com).

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to thank the official for his or her time and energy. (Believe me, he's not getting rich at this!) Keep your emotions in check, remembering that it is the coach's job to protect his team and his players, and consider that your actions could be empowering or crippling the youth in our communities.

Debbie DeWyse  
Engadine

### Do Not Let Politicians Ignore the Needs of the Poor

To the Editor:

To the citizens of Mackinac County, I want to share both a goodbye and some information they should possess. This pertains almost exclusively to customers of the Department of Human Services.

For those who have received food assistance, Medicaid, or emergency services from DHS/FIA, you were served by an assistance payments (AP) worker. Once upon a time, there were four such workers, then three, and then in February 2007, there were only two. Not only did the local agency become shorthanded with AP workers, but the office also saw a reduction in clerical staff, down to only one!

Despite the downsizing, valiant efforts have been made to continue serving the citizens of Mackinac County. It has not been easy. The downsizing of any agency often comes to some as a "victory" of sorts, however, in the long run, a shortage of workers serves no one. People assume that downsizing helps the state's budget. Maybe that's true. But what they don't talk about is the effect on the community.

They don't talk about the longer waits for needed processing of Medicaid, food assistance, and/or emergency assistance. They don't talk about the longer waits to have your Medicaid deductibles processed so you can obtain your needed prescriptions. They don't talk about the longer waits to have your case adjusted when your incomes decrease, or ceases completely.

I chose to walk away. To those I've assisted over the past 11 years, let me tell you, it was a privilege to serve you. The struggles you face in these horrible economic times were well understood. You could say "I've been there, done that."

The second item: Did you know that Michigan was the only state in the nation without an estate recovery plan? What is this? When persons with

*\*Please turn to page 14*

### What Are Veterans and the Working Class Entitled to?

To the Editor:

Somehow I was able to watch all of President Bush's State of the Union message. Once again he called for a review of "entitlements" like Social Security. These entitlements for the common good drive supposed free market fundamentalists like Bush crazy.

I would like to get rid of some entitlements too. A huge entitlement that should go is the massive tax subsidies to the oil industry and agribusiness. When Bush took office gasoline averaged \$1.46 a gallon. Now it is at least double that in most places. Yet, we give the oil industry massive tax breaks and subsidies amounting to billions! Come on right wingers, where is your mythical free markets? You really get mad about helping American kids with health care or the idea of poor people getting food stamps, come on, and get angry about this socialism for oil companies.

Then we have agribusiness. Farm subsidies were started during the depression to ensure that the American farmer could keep on producing and feed

America. I have no problem for giving the smaller family farmer a tax break. What our government does do is give huge tax breaks and subsidies to massive agribusiness enterprises, corporations disguised as farmers. The effect that this has all over the world is that poor people can't compete with the heavily subsidized, highly mechanized American corporate farming operation. A specific right now, is our corporate farmers are flooding Mexico with corns and beans that your tax dollars subsidized. They put the Mexican farmer out of business, and they go to the U.S. so they can work and eat. Many of the undocumented workers that come from Mexico and other third world country would much rather be back home, on their farms, and not here. Hey right wingers, do you want to help stop the unending flow of undocumented workers in to the U.S.? Demand that your government stop giving your tax dollars to agribusi-

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## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



### Great Lakes Guardians Keep Dogging Prez Hopefuls

It's an uphill struggle, but Great Lakes governors and lawmakers are accelerating efforts to get the dwindling band of presidential candidates to commit to funding restoration of the lakes and outlawing diversion of water.

It was a mighty feeble effort during last month's Michigan primary because the Democratic contenders declined to campaign here, fearing national party threats over Michigan moving up the primary in defiance of crazy-quilt national rules for the nominating process.

Senator Carl Levin, who for three election cycles has been fighting the stranglehold that Iowa and New Hampshire have on the process, and Governor Jennifer Granholm early on pressed Democratic contenders to commit to the lakes.

The two leading Republican contenders, Arizona Senator John McCain and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, said the right things about the lakes, but the economy was the dominant issue in the Michigan primary, won by native son Romney.

Last week, the bipartisan Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, whose members include those from states representing more than a quarter of the delegates at stake in this week's Super Tuesday, sent letters to the candidates urging support for the lakes, including the Great Lakes Compact that is awaiting approval of state legislatures and Congress.

Senator Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck), who chairs the caucus, said in a statement distributed by the Ann Arbor-based Great Lakes Office of the National Wildlife Federation:

"For state legislators who are on the front lines in the battle to restore and protect the lakes, we have one question for each presidential candidate: 'Will you use your leadership as President to pass Great Lakes restoration legislation and to outlaw water diversions?' We're looking for presidential candidates who will not turn their backs on the lakes, because every day we wait, the problems get worse and the solutions get more costly."

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## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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