

Les Cheneaux School District Wants To Replace Computers, Create New Tech Lab

Will Ask Voters for 0.5 Mills in May Election

By Amy Polk

It became obvious to the school board during discussion about a proposed school bond issue that updating Les Cheneaux Community Schools' aging computers is the most pressing issue facing the district. So the board elected at a meeting Monday, February 18, to ask voters for 0.5 mills to replace more than 100 computers and establish a new computer lab.

The district would sell bonds to raise an estimated \$470,000 for equipment and building improvements.

Many of the district's classroom

Charges Are Dropped in Paquin Case

Simple assault charges against Fred Paquin of St. Ignace were dismissed by the Chippewa County 91st District Court Monday, February 25, under a six-month deferred prosecution agreement. The court order stipulates that Mr. Paquin, a board member and suspended chief of police for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is to have no contact with the alleged victim, Traci Swan, a tribal employee, he cannot express any assaultive or threatening behavior, and he must seek counseling and follow recommendations of the counseling concerning the issues that resulted in the charges filed.

Speaking with *The St. Ignace News* Tuesday, February 26, Mr. Paquin said he is seeking reinstatement both as the tribe's chief of police and as Greektown Casino board chairman. He has continued to serve on the tribal board.

Mr. Paquin, 50, had been on suspension from his chief of police position since September, shortly after he was named chairman of the tribe's Greektown board, displacing tribal Chairman Aaron Payment from the position in an August board vote.

He later resigned from the Greektown board in response to the assault charges. Tom Miller of Cooks, the tribe's Unit IV representative, replaced him on the Greektown board.

Robert Marchand of the Sault Tribal Police is the interim chief.

Mr. Paquin's attorney, Joe Kwiatkowski of Cheboygan, said information he provided to the Michigan State Police, who are investigating the matter, documented that Mr. Paquin was defending himself and was not being aggressive in the assault matter.

The agreement was made to dismiss the case without prejudice, which means the state can bring a new suit on the same claim in the future.

Mr. Kwiatkowski said polygraph and other evidence submitted was professionally verified. He said he and Mr. Paquin are pleased with the outcome.

Water Levels

Clark Twp. Represented on Harbor Coalition

By Amy Polk

Ice now chokes vast areas of the Great Lakes, but low water levels remain on the minds of lake shore residents and municipalities as they look toward the upcoming boating season.

Clark Township now holds one of the nine seats on the Michigan Shallow Draft Harbor Coalition Steering Committee, following a Wednesday, February 6, formative meeting of the organization in Lansing. The committee was developed to represent the interests of people who use and manage shallow draft harbors, so called because they have less draft than commercial shipping harbors, typically around eight feet. Deep water ports already have their own organization that lobbies for commercial shipping interests and maintains a fund

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computers are 10 years old, and teachers are requesting newer educational tools, such as computer screens connected to large, touch-sensitive whiteboards and capabilities to produce and send digitized video and audio information.

The district should explain to voters the connection between technology and academic performance when presenting millage

information to the public, trustee Ronda McGreevy suggested.

Between a special Board of Education meeting Monday, February 4, and the February 18 regular meeting, school staff and administrators identified some of the district needs and costs of items targeted for replacement.

Trustees briefly discussed proposed replacement of high school windows and roof sections that

would be funded by half the millage, and Superintendent Rod Goehmann later said he estimates window repairs will come to about \$10,000. He does not yet have an estimate to repair leaking sections of the school's flat roof.

The district would like to replace more than 100 computers and establish a new middle school and high school computer lab. The purchase would put new laptop

computers in the hands of 23 teachers and install 15 new desktop computers in the Michigan Virtual High School room, 10 new desktops in the library, 20 in the computers and technology classroom, 30 in the elementary school lab, and 30 in the new middle and high school lab. District technology coordinator Janet Haske estimates 100 new desktops and laptops with four-year or five-year warranties will cost between \$116,000 and \$120,000. It will cost \$50,000 to supply and furnish a new computer lab. She said the district could save about \$5,000 by purchasing computers with other Eastern Upper Peninsula districts through the intermediate school district.

After replacing computers, the rest of nearly \$235,000 earmarked for technology could be spent on fulfilling some of the staff's requests, Mrs. Haske said.

The top four classroom requests submitted by 25 teachers were for printers, projectors, professional development, and video players. Other requests include a whiteboard, camera, scanner, software, and a digitized overhead projector.

Some of the money would also buy new headphones and other devices for the classroom where students take Michigan Virtual High School courses.

Since technology is evolving so

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Michigan State Police Trooper Mike Poliski from the St. Ignace post explains to Jane and John Kopecky of Gulliver that the Mackinac Bridge was temporarily closed Friday, February 22, as ice fell from the suspension cables and towers onto the bridge deck. The couple was heading to a seminar in the Lower Peninsula.

Falling Ice Closes Mackinac Bridge

Ice falling from the cables closed the Mackinac Bridge for more than two hours Friday, February 22. No injuries or damage to vehicles were reported as the ice sheets hit the road deck. During the closure, traffic was backed up for a quarter-mile along US-2 in St. Ignace, and many motorists waited at restaurants in Mackinaw City and St. Ignace.

Friday's sunshine melted ice that had accumulated on the cables and towers during an ice storm February 17, said Bob Sweeney, executive secretary of the Mackinac Bridge Authority. Winds remained calm on the bridge Friday, he said, and

were not a factor in the closure.

Mr. Sweeney said the bridge staff had been monitoring the ice since the storm.

"We knew it eventually would start to fall," he said.

Police and bridge staff diverted traffic from I-75 at both ends of the bridge.

The bridge was closed at 10:15 a.m. and reopened at 12:40 p.m., then vehicles were escorted for 30 minutes, as ice remained on the lower cables. Vibrations created by escorted vehicles freed the remaining ice, which fell to the Straits.

The last falling ice closure was April 18, 2003.

Mackinaw Delays Development Director Hire

By Paul Gingras

Mackinaw City's community development director position will not be filled this year, village employees will receive 3% raises, and the village has allocated funds for sidewalks, electrical system upgrades, and street pavement projects. All of this is reflected in Mackinaw City's 2008/2009 budget, which was approved by the village council Thursday, February 22, following a public hearing at village hall.

The budget projects \$4,656,579 in revenue and expenditures for the year, \$737,441 less than last year's \$5,394,020 budget.

Last year's numbers are higher because the 2007/2008 budget included about \$700,000 for infrastructure improvements, explained Village Manager Jeff Lawson.

Despite Michigan's troubled economy, the village is in a good financial position, and all municipal services will be retained, Mr. Lawson told *The St. Ignace News*. When the village receives its audit this summer, the budget approved by Council Thursday may be altered somewhat, he added.

Cases pending before the Michigan Tax Tribunal, which involve potential reductions in the taxable value of properties, could decrease the village tax base by about \$60,000, Mr. Lawson said, leading him to forgo allocating money to replace former Community Development Director Steve Schnell, who resigned last summer, and leading the village to set aside money for legal fees.

Planning Commission Chairman Robert Most, who attended the public hearing, applauded Mr. Lawson's decision, calling it fiscally responsible, but noted that having a community development director was a major benefit to Mackinaw City. Mr. Most encouraged the council to fill the position as soon as possible.

The community development director prepares and presents reports to the council, works with the planning commission, and helps with zoning and land-use projects,

in addition to taking part in village development activities. Mr. Lawson has taken on these responsibilities.

The 2008/2009 general fund is \$1,515,630. Primarily generated by property taxes, it is used to support and improve village infrastructure and to pay for government services, including wages and benefits. Money from the general fund supports parks and recreation facilities, promotes community events, and pays for buildings and grounds.

The village plans to transfer \$150,316 out of the general fund, \$53,756 more than last year. The largest portion is the transfer of \$66,516 into the reserve account.

The reason Mackinaw City is reserving this money is for potential legal fees for cases pending before the Michigan Tax Tribunal. If the cases are dropped, the reserved funds may be used for capital expenditures, such as village equipment or construction projects, Mr. Lawson said.

The second largest transfer from

St. Ignace DDA Will Apply Again for Grant To Develop Railroad Dock

The St. Ignace Downtown Development Authority (DDA) will apply again for a \$134,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund to develop the former railroad dock into a public park. The City Council approved the application at its meeting February 18 at the Little Bear East conference center.

The application is due at the end of March, with a decision expected in 12 months. If approved, work would begin in 2009.

DDA Director Deb Evashevski, during the public hearing held just before the council meeting, spoke mostly about the DDA's plans to emphasize handicap accessibility (now being called universal accessibility) in park design plans. She has asked John Miller, Phyllis Chan, and Mike Grogan to assist her in the planning.

John Lechner, a contractor from Dafter, asked Council during public

the general fund is \$14,000 to pay a bond taken out for the Louvigny Street project in 2007.

Since the duties of the former community development director are being handled by Mr. Lawson, no funds were allocated to pay salary and benefits for the position, accounting for most of the \$64,500 decrease in this area of the budget.

The village allocated \$158,544 for parks and recreation, \$17,611 less than last year. Most of the decrease amounts to a lower bond payment for ice equipment at the Mackinaw City Recreation Center. It was the final payment on the bond, Mr. Lawson said.

The largest construction projects planned in the village are as follows:

The village will spend \$150,000 to begin reconstructing the damaged electrical system along East Central Avenue. It has budgeted \$50,000 to build a new sidewalk along West

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comment to either adhere to its city charter or change it, to avoid violating it. He spoke specifically on bid processes, stating that the lowest, qualified bidders for projects should never be passed up without a legitimate reason. He recalled a situation in which he inappropriately lost a bid to build the stone breakwall at the city marina in 2001, a point he later proved in court when he won a case against United Design Associates, another bidder.

Council is in the process of reviewing and updating its charter, which was adopted in 1970.

Council held its meeting at Little Bear as part of its attempt to promote some areas within the city. Council already held a meeting at the St. Ignace Public Library and will hold an afternoon meeting at LaSalle High School at 1 p.m. Monday, March 17.

Council meets the first and third Monday of each month at 8 p.m.

On Moran Bay in St. Ignace

Golfers To Take To Ice Saturday

The 14th Annual Ice Chip Golf Scramble will take place at Moran Bay in St. Ignace Saturday, March 1. Two-person teams will assemble at Mackinac Grille Restaurant on State Street to begin the competition. Participants will play 18 holes of golf on the ice, from 9 a.m. until about 7 p.m.

Registration is \$30 per player. The cost includes lunch and dinner. Participants can register at the St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce

or at the Mackinac Grille until game day. Final registration ends at 9 a.m. at the restaurant Saturday.

Teams will tee off every 10 minutes, starting at 9 a.m. After each team completes the first nine holes, organizers will determine who they are playing against, said organizer Mark Spósito.

Teams that take first, second, and third places in each flight will receive prizes.

City Police Issue Warning About Pair Making Door-to-door Calls

Reports of two men going door to door in St. Ignace claiming to sell cleaning products have prompted city police to advise residents to dial 911 if approached by the pair. Police are seeking more information about the men.

The men, who may be driving a light-colored van, or light-colored car, approached several homes in the city last week, knocked on doors, and told resi-

dents they were plan to sell cleaning products, or to open a store in town to sell the products. In some cases, the men responded vaguely to questions and seemed more interested in obtaining information from residents. They did not demonstrate or show products.

One is described as in his 50s, with graying hair, while the other man appears to be younger. Reports were made from February 19 to February 21.

County Seeks Interim Treasurer

Mackinac County is seeking an interim treasurer following the announcement last month that Jane Hampton will retire May 1 from the post she has held since January 1, 1987.

An appointment committee meeting February 14 agreed to seek applications for the position through Friday, March 7, at 4 p.m. The committee will review applications March 11 at 1 p.m. in the county annex building.

Serving on the committee, which is specified by state law, are County Clerk Mary Kay Tamlyn, Probate Judge Clayton Graham, and Prosecutor Fred Feleppa.

The interim treasurer will

serve until January 1, 2008, at which time the candidate elected in the November 4 general election will assume the office.

Candidates for the partisan, elected office can file for the November election until May 13, at 4 p.m. If more than one Democrat or Republican runs for the office, they will square off in the August 5 primary.

With an annual salary of \$43,254, the treasurer is responsible for receiving, disbursing, and maintaining county funds and the general ledger. Responsibilities also include managing the investment of county money and collecting and distributing delinquent property taxes.

Bridge Fare Increase Is Saturday

Mackinac Bridge tolls rise to \$3 for automobiles Saturday, March 1, a 50¢ increase. Motor home tolls will jump from \$2 per axle to \$3.50 and truck tolls will rise from \$3 to \$3.50 per axle. The toll for a vehicle pulling a trailer will be \$1.50 per axle, up 25¢.

Commuters entering or leaving

the Upper Peninsula will pay \$1.60, a 10¢ increase.

Under a plan adopted in December, the state will increase tolls every two years until 2014, when car fare will reach \$4.50, motor home and truck tolls climb to \$6 per axle, and car/trailer tolls will reach \$2.25 per axle.

Shelter Will Benefit From Bake Sale



Ginger Valentine (right) director of the Mackinac County Animal Shelter in St. Ignace, poses with Jo Ford of the Mackinac County Animal Aid Association Thursday, February 14, at Glen's Market in St. Ignace. The two are conducting a bake sale to help pay expenses at the animal shelter. Animal Aid holds two bake sales a year, one during Valentine's Day, the other during Antiques on the Bay. More than 20 volunteers provided baked goods for the sale.