

City To Seek 'Deconstruction' of Webster Island Home in Hubbard's Annex

By Ryan Schlehner

Mackinac Island City Council will seek a court order to "deconstruct" Len and Sue Webster's partially built home in Hubbard's Annex after it learned at its meeting Wednesday, March 12, that the May deadline to finish the project will not be met.

After closing the public meeting to discuss litigation options with its attorney, Tom Evashevski, Council agreed to direct Mr. Evashevski to seek a court order from 11th Circuit Court in Mackinac County to require the Websters to remove any construction material from the property, refill the land, and pay fines for not meeting the May 15, 2008, deadline.

Only the foundation of a two-story home has been constructed over a nine-year period. The court order required the Websters to have a framed and erected home near completion by the deadline.

Council, as well as Annex residents, have charged the unfinished project is a blight and hazardous to public safety. The Websters have already been fined \$500 for not meeting construction deadlines, said Mr. Evashevski, after the meeting.

"The premise was that the court gave the Websters one more chance to finish the project," Mr. Evashevski told *The St. Ignace News* Friday, March 14. "Now we're at the end of the road, and we know that's not going to happen, so we are ready to go back to the court and determine what degree of deconstruction needs to be done to remedy the blight."

Seven permits for temporary use of a tractor to deliver building material to the Webster property were withdrawn by the couple's builder, Weiss Builders of St. Ignace, prior to the council meeting.

Council was presented a proposed \$2.18 million operations budget from Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Bruce Zimmerman for the 2008 fiscal year. Council may decide on it at its next meeting Wednesday, March 26.

The proposed budget is \$611,114 less than the current budget that expires April 1, however, the new budget would include a 3.5% increase for water and sewer rates and continue a one mill levy that will raise \$187,500 this year. The rate increase is part of a 10-year, \$9.8 million expansion project of the city's wastewater treatment plant, which is close to capacity.

Mr. Zimmerman estimates DPW should be \$180,000 ahead by the end of the next fiscal year, under the proposed budget.

Residents would see the commodity rate for water increase from \$3.52 per 1,000 gallons to \$3.64, and the sewer rate would

increase from \$6.33 to \$6.55. Flat rates, monthly charges for readiness to serve, would increase from \$9.60 to \$9.94 for water and \$15.75 to \$16.30 for sewer.

DPW is planning to replace pumps at its water station. One is being replaced with a new pump

this year and the other will be rebuilt in 2009. This year's project is estimated to cost \$150,000, Mr. Zimmerman told Council.

Also, \$40,000 has been budgeted for a matching retirement plan for DPW employees.

Seasonal users of water and

sewer would see a 10% increase in reconnection fees. Costs vary depending on the size of meters, said Mr. Zimmerman.

Mr. Zimmerman said his DPW board will review the numbers annually and make fair adjustments. **Please turn to page 14*

Birge Is One of Several Preserves Open in Area

A proposed new hiking trail at the Birge Preserve represents Little Traverse Conservancy's growing involvement in Clark Township, where it has protected almost 2,400 acres of land from development through preserves and conservation easements. Approximately 2,200 of the acreage is in preserves that are open to the public. Another 200 acres are in conservation easements that remain privately owned.

The Birge Preserve is one of the largest preserves in the Les Cheneaux Islands.

The others include the Seiberling-Stewart, Aldo Leopold, and Sheppard-Hardy preserves on Marquette Island, Mackinac Bay Preserve in Hessel, and Derby Preserve in Cedarville. Conservation easements on several private properties permanently restrict or prevent development on those properties.

The public is allowed on the preserves, but not the private easements. Recreational, educational, and scientific use of the preserves is encouraged, as long as it does not interfere with the preservation and protection of the land.

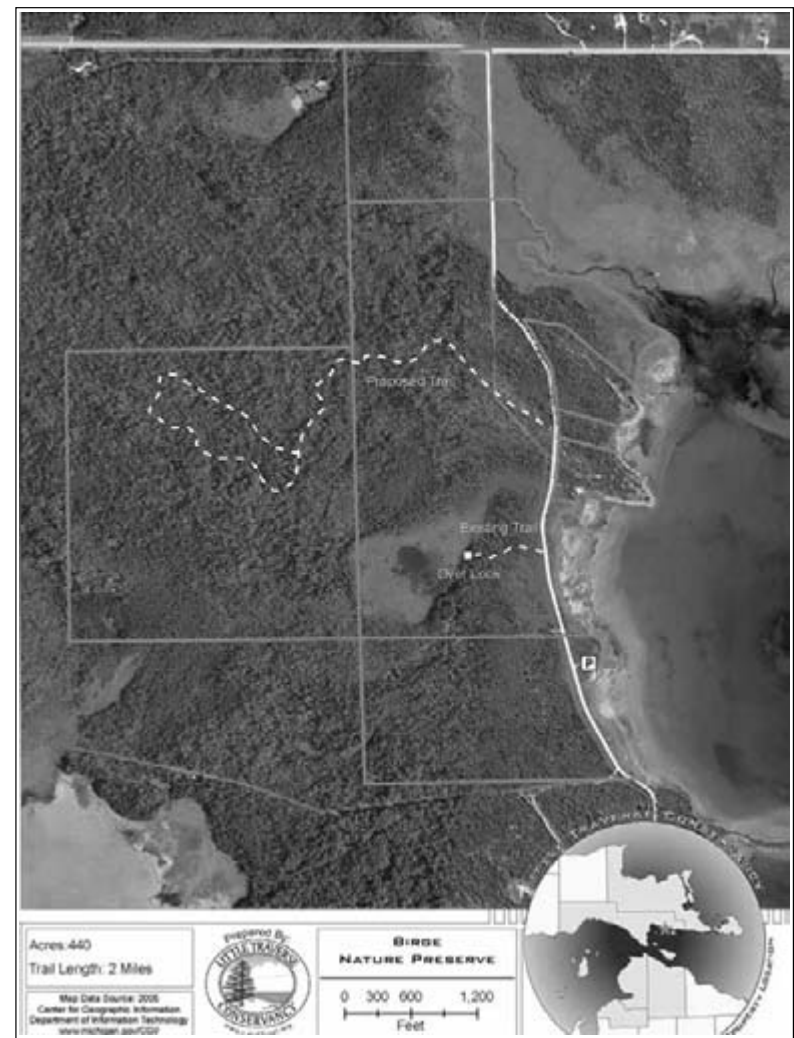
Activities like hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and fishing are allowed on the preserves. Hunting is allowed only on designated preserves and only with written permission. The designated preserves in Clark Township are the Birge, Aldo Leopold, Seiberling-Stewart, and Sheppard-Hardy.

Snowmobiling, camping, making fires, dumping or littering, removing plants, and driving off-road vehicles on the preserves are not allowed. All dogs must be on a leash.

Coyote, deer, snowshoe hare, fox, grouse, red squirrel, and bobcats roam the Birge Preserve and approximately 250 bird species have been

sighted over the years. Observers have documented a pair of bald eagles nesting in or near the Birge Preserve from 1995 to 2006, during which 15 young were produced. No nests were counted in 2007. Surveys are in winter or early spring, when eagles are nesting.

The 435-acre preserve is comprised of large parcels Little Traverse Conservancy purchased from the Mertaugh, Nye, and Wallace families, which have been added to 92 acres donated by Edna and Oliver Birge in 1992. The preserve includes 3.5-acre Loon Lake.



An aerial image of the Birge Preserve on Point Brulee shows a proposed trail route through the property. The trail would start on Point Brulee Road, about one mile north of the existing trail and Birge Preserve sign. The new section will head west and wind through the woods, then make a rectangular loop to lead users back to the east/west trail. The conservancy plotted a portion of the trail along the "Old Wheel Road," the route of the first road into the area. (Little Traverse Conservancy image)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clark Township Needs To 'Get on Board' With *Canim* Project

To the Editor,

I have attended the hearings on the proposed Hessel Bay Boat Works boathouse on Hessel Bay and listened as the Clark Township Planning Commission has heard arguments for and against the development.

It baffles me how one of its most vocal opponents, Greg Malcho, treasurer of our Great Lakes Boat Building School, can attend these meetings and object to the proposed *Canim* boathouse and boat-related project. Your cause neither represents shorefront property rights nor respective riparian rights. If you want these rights, buy shorefront.

Other opponents like Mr. Malcho's brother, Chuck, and Loreli Inc. owner Dave Wallace say they favor development, but it seems only when it's more far

removed and monetarily benefiting.

Mr. Wallace's business of selling cabins within one taxable property seems like some lawyer's fancy way of skirting respective property taxes on each individual unit. There is only one tax bill on the property east of the proposed boathouse, not several, as it might be when there are multiple owners of each unit.

To those concerned about noise created at the proposed boathouse or with increased commercial activity, Mr. Wallace has several rental cabins on Hillcrest Lane that adjoin laughter and music at the bar across the street. Who's to say whether those or the shorefront renters and "weekend warriors" won't be boozed up, yelling, and revving ATVs far louder than the activity created by the boathouse

and adjoining boat works business?

Last month Loreli Inc. said it operates as time-share cabins and characterized itself as a beach baby daycare.

At the February 12 Planning Commission meeting, Loreli wanted to convert its shore strip lot to commercial, now claiming it's a marina and service facility (without a state license). Interesting. What flavor of ice cream will it be next month?

Dave Wallace and Greg Malcho forget our village's boathouse-lined shores of an earlier era. Can they even remember the Mertaugh boathouse that withstood the winds of time near the lot where the boathouse is proposed?

The majority of the voting public, along with seasonal residents, favor the proposed *Canim* boathouse, and several jobs created by this project. It's time to allow our local government to shelter this vessel and sail upwind.

I support traditional wooden boats and boathouses.

Bob Dunn
Cedarville

News' Coverage of Trojans Basketball Is Appreciated

To the Editor:

Wow! What an honor it was to have our own sportswriter, David Latva's, article that he has previously written for *The St. Ignace News* and the *Weekly Wave* printed on page 2 of the 2008 Boys Basketball Michigan High School Athletics Association program! Mr. Latva's reporting on athletics in the Eastern U.P. is fantastic. We're so fortunate to have such a dedicated and caring person like him encouraging our young athletes! Hurray for Dave Latva.

Bob and Sharon Smith
Cedarville

Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Web Site Ranking Lists Power Players in Congress

Over the decades, northern Michigan has had some powerful voices on Capitol Hill.

Robert P. Griffin (R-Traverse City) had notable legislation during his 1957-68 U.S. House service. As minority whip in the Senate, he came within one caucus vote of becoming the top Republican. He also had a key role in convincing Richard Nixon it was time to vacate the White House.

Victor Knox (R-Sault Ste.

Marie), the 1947-52 House speaker in Lansing, was a force in Washington on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee from 1954 to 1964.

Eight-term Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) has just been dubbed No. 3 by www.Congress.org in its "power ratings" of the 15-member Michigan House delegation, behind House Dean John Dingell (D-Dearborn), now in his 26th term and chairman of the Commerce and Energy Committee, and 22-term Rep. John Conyers (D-Detroit), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

Stupak, who chairs the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of Dingell's Commerce and Energy Committee, is a congressional point man on food safety, gas prices, and other front burner commerce issues of the day.

(Popular term-limited state Rep. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), who won his marginally-Democratic seat in 2002 against Menominee Mayor Laurie Stupak, Bart's wife, planned this week to announce his uphill bid for the congressional district that includes nearly half of all of Michigan, the entire Upper Peninsula and 16 counties below the bridge.)

Although their party is in the minority, northern Michigan's two Republican congressmen have high-profile roles.

The top Republican, at No. 7, on the delegation power rating, is Rep. Dave Camp (R-Midland), who has a good shot at becoming the ranking Republican on Ways and Means.

Beyond the fact that he already has a lead position on the committee's health subcommittee, and is a deputy whip within the GOP caucus, Camp is a huge fundraiser for House Republicans, raising at least

\$110,000 for the recent President's Dinner that helps fund GOP congressional campaigns.

The caucus leaders who dub the ranking Republican on committees look kindly on top fundraisers. Camp is among them. Add what he's contributed from his campaign committee (which doesn't have to spend much in his solidly Republican district), and Camp emerges as a Half-Million-Dollar-Way-Plus popper.)

Eight-term Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), former chairman and now ranking minority member of the House Intelligence Committee, was named No. 9 in the power rating of the Michigan delegation.

Congress.org and others have slippery and subjective scales in power ratings. While Hoekstra is No. 9 overall in Michigan's House delegation, he is second to none on intelligence matters relating to Iraq and terrorism.

In the Capitol Hill power ratings, Sen. Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and Michigan's longest-serving senator, ranked high at 13 among all the nation's senators.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, who was No. 42 in 2007, was ranked 57th this year.

Late in 2004, Stabenow won the position as Secretary of the Democratic Conference, the No. 3 position in her party's Senate leadership. The 2008 Almanac of American Politics opines, "her performance was limited."

Stabenow no longer has the leadership role, but is on the coveted Senate Finance Committee.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

Post Office Is Gathering Place in Hessel

To the Editor:

We in Hessel feel that Bernie Huyck deserves praise for his many years as postmaster. He was such a gentleman; he knew his job and treated us all with kindness and humor. The post office is here, as in many rural areas, a gathering place, a "place to come to" for advice, friendship, laughter, news, and, yes, mail. We shall miss him, but we also feel very fortunate that Pennie Clymer is now acting chief. The transition seems seamless. Pennie is also professional, knowledgeable of the community, and friendly.

Our village of Hessel is a such a wonderful collection of disparate types of people, each of whom brings something different and worthwhile to the table. Our post office brings us together, and my dog, Fox, even knows the words, "Let's go get the mail."

Elizabeth Fels
Hessel

The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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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.

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.

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