

# St. Ignace City Planners Satisfied With New Mackinac Straits Hospital Site Plan

By Karen Gould

St. Ignace planning commissioners reviewed the new hospital site plan on 16.2 acres near the Mackinac County Airport during their Wednesday, March 27 meeting. While the commission is not required to approve site plans for the public building, the meeting was designed to keep commissioners informed and provided an opportunity to have any questions addressed. Commissioners say they were satisfied with the presentation given by project manager Greg Koenig and view the proposed hospital as a positive addition to the community.

Mr. Koenig, an architect with URS Corporation in Grand Rapids, was joined by hospital CEO Rod Nelson, who gave an overview of the hospital authority's plans for the election and its view on use of the \$1.3 million bond debt and the disposition of its Burdette Street hospital property.

The goal is to begin construction this summer, he said, with the project taking about 18 months. The hospital plans to open between January and April 2010.

"Some components may be finished before others," he said.

Meetings have been held with city leaders, including the city manager, fire chief, building inspector, and public works director to make sure all are comfortable with the hospital plans.

In planning the site, Mr. Koenig said, architects designed the facility to take advantage of views of Lake Huron, placing inpatient beds

near the front of the structure and hospital services toward the rear of the building.

The sloping site falls about 28 feet from rear to front, which allows long term care, a single story wood frame building, to be level with the second floor of the medical office building. The medical building, said Mr. Koenig, will be of steel and masonry construction. A connecting corridor between the two buildings will make it easy for long term care residents to visit physicians.

The site will offer 250 parking spaces, with patient parking near the front entrance and staff parking

and entrance at the back of the structure.

Ambulances will arrive using the State Street entrance. Alpine Street, which now is a dead end, runs behind the juvenile detention facility. Eventually, hospital planners hope the road will be finished and could be used as an ambulance entrance.

Commission Chair Art Underwood said that City Building Inspector Paul Sved, who did not attend the meeting, had indicated the hospital plans were in conformance with city requirements.

"Over the last six months or so," said Mr. Underwood of the new hospital. "I've come to appreciate the value of what we do have and to have a greater understanding of what this attention could mean to this community."

Upon reviewing the plan, Mr. Underwood expressed concern for truck deliveries with only one

main entrance off State Street.

Trucks can maneuver to the shipping and receiving doors in the rear of the building, said Mr. Koenig. The hospital is working with the county and the Federal Aviation Administration to secure an easement allowing access to the hospital along Airport Road.

Road improvements, said Mr. Underwood, would be required to handle truck traffic.

Spring frost laws, which create load restrictions, would be an additional issue for hospital planners to address, said Bill Fraser of the Department of Public Works.

"It's not in good shape," he said of the road.

Airport Manager Paul Fullerton agreed, and said planning to improve the deteriorated road should begin now.

The city will work with the hospital to look for grant money for the infrastructure improvements needed on the roadway, City Manager Eric Dodson said.

Over the last few weeks, Mr. Koenig said engineers have been studying traffic to determine if a left turn lane is needed for north-bound traffic. The Michigan Department of Transportation

(MDOT) already has indicated traffic volumes will be low enough not to require the lane, although a right turn lane will be constructed at the entrance.

A retention pond designed to border State Street raised concerns for commissioners. The primary purpose of the pond, said Mr. Koenig, is to collect storm runoff. URS is working with MDOT and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, he said, and should have more information in the next few weeks.

"It's not intended to be a pond that contains water year around," he said. "It's only intended to be a retention basin for storm events, and allow controlled discharge into the MDOT storm sewer system."

More room may be required for snow removal, planning commissioner Steve Paquin suggested. Mr. Koenig said removal zones have been established and architects are looking into clearing more land to provide more space for snow.

Mayor Paul Grondin asked Mr. Nelson to provide commissioners with an overview of hospital projects, including the May 6 election, which calls for a vote on the asset

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## Mackinac Bridge Work To Begin Soon

The east side of the Mackinac Bridge will be closed for more than two months when the concrete and bituminous portion of the deck is resurfaced. Two-way traffic will be maintained on the two west-side lanes, but passing will be prohibited. Speed limits will remain 45 miles per hour for passenger vehicles, but the 20-mile-per-hour speed limit for trucks, with no passing, will slow traffic.

The project is scheduled from April 14 to the end of June. Preliminary road work may begin as early as April 7, with temporary inside lane closures during daylight hours.

The primary contractor for the project is Payne and Dolan of Gladstone and Gaylord.

The \$3.2 million resurfacing includes repairs to steel joints and replacement of the concrete curb.

A similar project on the west side is scheduled for 2009.

The last time the deck was resurfaced was in 1993. This project should add another 10 years to the deck life, at which time a complete deck replacement, including the supporting beams under the roadway, is scheduled.

That \$190 million project will begin in 2017.

The bridge deck has three components, the concrete and bituminous surface, the open steel grate lanes, and the beams that support the deck. The bridge has 752 open grate sections, and crews replace about 12 of them annually in an ongoing project.

During the resurfacing project, wide loads will be restricted to crossing once a day during slower traffic periods.

## Trail Grooming Kept Up in U.P.

The state has extended snowmobile grooming contracts to Upper Peninsula snowmobile clubs through Sunday, April 6, enabling clubs to keep trails in riding condition one week longer than usual. The season normally ends March 31.

"Our trails are still in great condition," reported Neil Hill of the Straits Area Snowmobile Club at St. Ignace Friday, March 28.

Dense snowpacks, lingering cold conditions, and excellent trail maintenance by snowmobile clubs have kept trails in unusually good condition for this time of year, Ann Wilson of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) told *The St. Ignace News*.

"Go ahead and keep on riding," said Ms. Wilson.

Trails are especially good along Lake Superior and at the eastern and western ends of the U.P., she said, but there are a few areas in the middle-southern portions of the U.P. that are not in prime condition. Therefore, anyone interested in traveling a particular trail should contact the local chamber of commerce, the DNR, or snowmobile club and inquire about conditions there.

To ride on state land, snowmobilers must display a \$25 DNR sticker. The money generated from sticker sales is administered to snowmobile clubs that groom trails.



## Les Cheneaux Students Enjoy Dental Health Lesson

Liz Merchberger from the Pickford offices of dentists Richard Morrison and Denise Toner shows some of the tools she uses to teach dental health at Les Cheneaux Community Schools. She holds up a giant toothbrush, a mold of a mouth with teeth, some dental health accessories, and an educational booklet with pictures of common tooth and oral health problems Thursday, March 13, before presenting a dental health slide show to first grade students.

## Island's Cowell Brothers Recognized for Giving Aid



Lorne Cowell (second to left) and his brother, Gabe, both of Mackinac Island, were recognized at the Island City Council meeting Wednesday, March 26, for saving the life of John St. Onge March 8 on the ice bridge between Mackinac Island and St. Ignace. Mr. St. Onge was severely injured in a snowmobile crash. The brothers came upon his sled and, finding him nearby, called for emergency services. He was taken to a hospital, and is now recovering. Flanking the two brothers are Police Chief Jim Marks and Island Mayor Margaret Doud.

## Basketball Teams, Dredging, Mortgage Crisis Are Among Topics as Rep. Stupak Visits

### Congressman Speaks to Residents at Cedarville

By Amy Polk and Dave Latva  
United States Congressman Bart Stupak covered a lot of ground for a one-hour session, meeting with area residents in Cedarville Wednesday, March 26. Residents discussed false pharmaceutical advertising, cormorant control funding, appropriations, the War in Iraq, a new lock in Sault Ste. Marie, food safety, the national mortgage crisis, oil prices, dredging through the Les Cheneaux Islands, and diverting wastewater discharge from Cedarville Bay. Mr. Stupak had last hosted a local town hall meeting in St. Ignace a year ago.

Apologizing for the short notice of the Wednesday meeting, Mr. Stupak said his scheduled town hall meeting was originally set for Friday, March 28, but he moved it up in the week to catch the Cedarville High School boys and girls basketball teams before school closed for spring break. He presented a proclamation to commend each teams' Class D state semi-finalist status.

In the first season of girls and boys basketball playing concurrently in the Michigan High School Athletic Association, Cedarville was the first school to qualify both teams to the final four, in any class.

"We are here to honor the 21

community of Cedarville and the entire Upper Peninsula with pride."

The girls accomplished the school's first quarterfinal win and a 24-2 overall record. The boys recorded the third-longest winning streak in the Upper Peninsula, with 51 wins during the last three years, setting a 25-1 mark this season.

Both teams won the Eastern

Upper Peninsula Conference, district, regional, Upper Peninsula quarterfinals championships, and U.P. Teams of the Year.

Boys basketball Coach David Duncan was named Class D Coach of the Year, and girls Coach Sonja Duncan received the Class D Upper Peninsula Coach of the Year.

Mr. Stupak took questions from

the players.

"Never lose track of what really matters," he said to the players. "It does not matter how many points you earn, medals you win, or trophies you take home. What really matters is what kind of competitor you are, what kind of daughter or

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The Cedarville Trojans basketball teams were honored by Congressman Bart Stupak Wednesday, March 26, during a ceremony in the John Duncan Gymnasium at Cedarville. Pictured are (front, from left) Billie McLeod, Jessie Duncan, Jillian Collins, Rachelle Hansen, Ashley Sweeney, Mr. Stupak, Katie Bowlby, Caitlin Wright, Kacie Simpson, Brittany Lee, Stephanie Leach, Brittany Kelley; (middle row) Zach McFarlane, C.J. Paquin, Taylor Smith, Sheldon Tassier, Matt Nelson, Adam Dingman, Jason Duncan, Jordan Duncan, Andrew Jaroche, Joey Duncan; (back) Coach David Duncan, Cody Thompson, Scott McGreevy, James Mitchell, Jason Nam, Luke Murray, Alex McMaken, and Kevin Thompson.

## Help Is Available in Filling Out Economic Stimulus Tax Forms

People can get help with filling out tax forms to receive an economic stimulus check by calling the Michigan State University Extension office in St. Ignace at 643-7307. There is no charge for appointments.

People can also receive help from an online resource for filling out the forms at the AARP Web site, [www.aarp.org/stimulus](http://www.aarp.org/stimulus). The site allows users to print out a completed economic stimulus form after answering a few simple questions.

More than 130 million households will receive an economic stimulus check from the federal government, beginning in May. Individuals will receive between \$300 and \$600, and married couples will receive \$600 to \$1,200,

according to the Internal Revenue Service. Families with children will receive an additional \$300 per child younger than 17.

Those with a Social Security number and showing qualifying income of at least \$3,000 on a federal tax return are eligible for the payments. People who filed a 2007 income tax return, or will file one by October, do not need to do anything else to qualify for the payment.

Many people, such as those on Social Security, low income workers, and those on veterans' disability benefits, who normally do not file a tax return, are also eligible, and this year must sign and mail in tax form 1040A to receive their payment.

## Voter Registration Deadline Is April 7 for May 6 Election

Monday, April 7, is the last day to register to vote for the May 6 election, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land reminds residents.

To register, applicants must be at least 18 years old by election day and be U.S. citizens. Applicants must also be residents of Michigan and of the city or township in which they wish to register.

Voters may register in person or by mail. The mail-in form is on the Department of State Web site at [www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos). First-time voters who register by mail must

vote in person in their first election, unless they hand-deliver the application to their local clerk, are 60 years old or older, are disabled, or are overseas.

To check their registration status, residents may visit the Michigan Voter Information Center at [www.Michigan.gov/vote](http://www.Michigan.gov/vote). Residents can find information voting by absentee ballot, Michigan's voter identification requirement, using voting equipment, and contacting their local clerk. They will also find a map to their local polling place.