

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It's Hard To Give Up Trust
Developed With Negaunee Dispatch

To the Editor:

I am writing to inform you that the article about the switch of 911 Dispatch Services from Negaunee Regional to Chippewa County left out some information that may be helpful to the people of Mackinac County.

First, I will let you know that as a police officer, I would like to stay with Negaunee, as do most of the law enforcement officers working in Mackinac County. Just ask them. I have only attended the last two 911 board meetings and learned of misleading information as to why there is a need for the change. Most of the officers know that money is what is always used to affect change, but none of us were asked if the current dispatch needed replacement. As for asking the personnel that are dispatched 80% of the time to answer calls for service, no one really has.

Second, as for the money to pay for the service, I believe that Mackinac County has been paying about \$85,000 per year for the last 10 years, with no or not much of an increase. I know it's tough times, and the state is cutting funding. However, the information given in the article, cost to Chippewa County will be \$120,000 per year for the next five years. Are we not heading for the same problem five years from now, when the taxpayers of Chippewa County do not feel that they can subsidize the people of Mackinac County, and raise the rate? As for Negaunee's costs, they have given the amounts for each year for the next five years as: 2009: \$104,999; 2010: \$126,073; 2011: \$148,292; 2012: \$171,704; 2013: \$196,363. If you use the \$40,000, plus \$120,000 for the cost over the next three years at Chippewa County, the amounts are even. But do we know if there will be any cost increases from Chippewa County? I think that Negaunee should be allowed the next three years to get their costs in line, because they were there for us when we first started up a Central Dispatch Center 10 years ago.

Third, as for the contract, Chippewa County wishes a five-year deal. Negaunee projected their amounts out for the five years, but the contract is renewable each year, and you can leave at any time. While at the Mackinac County 911 board meeting April 8, the board was informed that the county's attorney was satisfied with the language of Chippewa's contract. I was informed that this was not the case, and confirmed it with him. You may need to ask him what his concerns are. I am not aware of any problems with the contract from Negaunee.

Finally, if you ask most law enforcement officers, they would like to see Negaunee stay as their dispatch center. I have asked several EMT's and firefighters from around the county if they would like to see a change. Most have stated that they would like to stay where they're at. I know that many people understand trust, because when you're working late at night, with few or no other officers around, that person on the other end of your radio is your partner. So, after 10 years of trust, it's hard to give Negaunee up without a fight.

Merlin Doran, Police Officer
St. Ignace

New Hospital Will Have Benefits
For County Residents

To the Editor:

I am the Emergency Room Medical Director at Mackinac Straits Hospital and wanted to share a couple of my thoughts with the residents of Mackinac County about the proposed new hospital for Mackinac County residents.

First of all, I am excited to know that the U.P. is finally able to get the federal government to return some of our tax dollars back to the U.P. in the form of \$37 million to build a very needed, state-of-the-art new hospital. When I think back to all the times in the past decades a county in the U.P. has asked for disaster assistance for floods or snow removal help, etc., the government has said that "not enough residents are adversely effected." I think that we finally have a chance to get some of our tax money back, in a new hospital.

I am also happy to know that a new hospital will allow us to have the capability to bring new modalities, as well as room for much needed equipment, to aid in treating and stabilizing patients who present to the emergency room. As a tertiary hospital, a new facility will allow us the ability to be better organized and prepared for all levels of trauma and/or illness presenting to the emergency room. This is vital, as we are the only

hospital within a 30- to 40-mile radius that would be able to give treatment to the severely injured during the so-called "golden hour" that is so crucial to the long-term prognosis for trauma patients. The ability to improve patient outcomes and long-term survivability is why we chose to enter the medical field.

I would also like to point out that the new hospital will greatly improve patient confidentiality, as well as allow our nursing staff to be located centrally within the new emergency room, instead of 50 to 60 feet down the hall. This allows more accessibility for the nurses and the doctors, and subsequently improved patient care.

I could continue to write about many other pluses I see for you in a new hospital, but if you have been a patient at Mackinac Straits Hospital, you can understand the critical need for a new facility.

I strongly encourage all of the voters of the four townships and cities to approve the hospital ballot proposal, and to understand your vote is for all the residents of Mackinac County. For those residents in the county not allowed to vote, they are looking to you to bring our tax dollars back home in a new hospital.

Jonathon N. Schumaker, M.D.
Gladstone
and 10 other employees

New Hospital Is an Opportunity
We Can't Pass Up

To the Editor:

To the voters eligible to vote in the hospital election: On May 6, the voters of Moran Township, St. Ignace Township, Brevort Township, and the City of St. Ignace will have the opportunity to make their voice heard regarding the new hospital.

Obviously, I strongly encourage a "yes" vote.

Our current hospital has served this community well, but it's time to bring to our area some much needed improvements in health care.

A "yes" vote will start construction this summer. It will include a new hospital with 15 private, acute care rooms, modern emergency rooms, a tribal health clinic to replace the Lambert Center, improve existing services, and allow expansion of other needed services. It will also include a 60-bed long term care facility with emphasis on a more "homelike setting," as opposed to our current institutional setting. All of this comes with no added taxes, and no liability for county residents.

A "no" vote will be followed by a millage levy and an election among the current hospital authority members to raise funds for a multi-million dollar improvement project to the current hospital. This will be required to meet current hospital codes. We will still be left with an "old" building, and the taxpayers will then be liable for all debts.

The building of a new hospital, with the funding we have been able to procure, is an opportunity we cannot afford to pass up. It will be a boon to this area, and allow us to maintain 200-plus jobs with good wages and great benefits.

As with any endeavor, there will be detractors, but anyone advocating a no vote on this issue is doing a terrible disservice to the residents of our community.

If you have any questions, or require clarification of any issue, please call me at (906) 478-7333, or CEO Rod Nelson at 643-0455.

Ronald R. Mitchell
St. Ignace Township
Board chairman, Mackinac Straits Hospital

MSHP To Add Five-Story Viewing
Tower at Mill Creek Discovery Park

Two more new features now under construction at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park near Mackinaw City are a 40-foot climbing wall and a 50-foot tower that will offer a view of the Straits of Mackinac and Mackinac Island. These elements have been added to other new natural history features currently under construction at the park, Mackinac State Historic Parks announced April 11.

The Nature Trail Climbing Wall will become the third experience in an "Adventure Tour" package, which will include a trek through the treetops on the new Forest Canopy Bridge and an aerial cable ride on the Eagle's Flight Zip Line. The tour costs \$5 in addition to park admission.

The climbing wall, attached to the side of the 50-foot tower, will contain interactive panels that will include sounds and sights of forest

creatures.

Set on the park's eastern bluff, the five-story Treetop Discovery Tower is now being constructed. At ground level, visitors can learn about the dynamic habitat between the forest floor and the top of the trees. At the top of the tower, they will find out about the recovery of the American bald eagle.

The Forest Canopy Bridge and Eagle's Flight Zip Line are nearly complete and set to open to the public May 5. A playground and a children's interactive display of 18th-century water wheel replicas are scheduled for completion before opening day.

Features that have long been in place at the park include an 18th-century water-powered sawmill with demonstrations, a sawpit with demonstrations, a nature program, and 3.5 miles of nature trails.

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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Michigan
PoliticsBy
George Weeks

'Yooperwood'

Sixty years ago, Republican Kim Sigler, a dandy dresser who was a flamboyant corruption fighter before his brief but colorful two years as governor, was known as "Hollywood Kim."

Now into her sixth year as governor, Democrat Jennifer Granholm could be dubbed "Hollywood Jen," not for show-boating or because she once had acting ambitions, but rather for having touted and just signed into law what she calls "the most aggressive film incentive program in the nation, which will result in more films being shot on location in Michigan."

It undoubtedly will lure film and TV productions. They can get whopping tax rebates worth up to 42% of production costs in Michigan.

It's no wonder that the Michigan Film Office, which averages six scripts from companies interested in filming here, had nearly 80 scripts under review as the program advanced in the Legislature.

Critics of the program brand it as a taxpayer subsidy for Hollywood moguls. The Senate Fiscal Agency, a straight-arrow outfit that offers independent analysis regardless of who controls the chamber (Republicans do now) says the net effect of the incentives could result in a decline in tax revenues.

But Granholm and a bipartisan band of legislative supporters, including Republicans from northern Michigan, argue convincingly that there is long-term economic benefit, including promoting the state's tourist attractions. As she said in a statewide radio address:

"The film industry is a strategic growth industry for Michigan. It is the second largest high-tech, high-paying, non-polluting industry in the world. It generates over \$50 billion in direct domestic economic activity each year."

(Ever the cheerleader, Granholm said Friday in signing a \$60 million bipartisan Michigan Promotion Program: "We are putting into place the most aggressive marketing of Michigan we have ever seen.")

This unprecedented investment will allow us to promote our state in new markets and trumpet to a whole new audience what we already know, that Michigan is a great vacation destination and a great place to do business."

Granholm noted that Louisiana's film incentives grew film industry spending from \$7 million to almost \$350 million there, supporting nearly 19,000 jobs. New Mexico went from \$1.5 million to \$476 million in two years.

"Michigan," she said, "is no stranger to movie-making." She cited such films as the 1992 "Hoffa" and the 1980 "Somewhere in Time," starring Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour (filmed on Mackinac Island, as was the 1947 "This Time for Keeps," starring Esther Williams and Jimmy Durante).

In 1959, the year of Granholm's birth, there was release of "Anatomy of a Murder," filmed in the Upper Peninsula and based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Ishpeming author John Voelker (a 1957-59 justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, who quit the bench because "I cannot serve two masters" — law and literature).

Having covered, as a rookie UPI reporter, filming of the movie, which starred Jimmy Stewart, George C. Scott, and Lee Remick, I can attest as a consumer that such productions spur spending in inns, eateries, and bars.

A far more authoritative source on the economic impact is Traverse City-based filmmaker Rich Brauer, who has been in the business for 31 years and has directed five feature films. As film director for the 2000 production of Michigan actor Jeff Daniels' "Escanaba in da Moonlight," Brauer estimated that up to 80 local folks were employed in the project.

Last year, Brauer filmed "Mr. Art Critic" on Mackinac Island,

which is growing as a mecca for moviemakers.

Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), whose district includes the island, and Representative Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) say that movies made in northern Michigan help spur Up North tourism.

Not all filming has been, or will be, flattering to Michigan. Consider the 1984 "Beverly Hills Cop" comedy that had scenes of the dregs of Detroit.

Casperson, vice-chair of the House Tourism-Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Committee, said "significant activity" by filmmakers is contemplated in the Upper Peninsula. Yooperwood.

Allen, chairman of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee and champion of the film package, sponsored one of the bills in the tourism/business package signed by Granholm, as did Senator Tony Stamas (R-Midland).

"For every dollar we invest in this sensible approach, industry advocates say the state receives \$2 to \$3 in return," said Allen, who notes at least 75% of the funding goes directly to tourism promotion.

Last week, amid all the hype, a report by Michigan State University researchers brought a sober note. It estimated that the number of travelers will drop by 2% this year and spending likely will be flat. Revenue projections were down 5% for the Upper Peninsula and 4% for the Northern Lower.

Denise Gurnack of the Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau told the *Mining Journal* it usually projects about a 5% annual increase. But, "with gas prices and the economy the way it is," it is projecting the same revenues as last year.

Congressional Trails

Democrats have targeted the seats of U.S. Representatives Tim Walberg (R-Tipton) and Joe Knollenberg (R-Bloomfield Hills). The principal Democratic challengers are extremely competitive in fundraising in the latest reporting period, gathering \$894,726 against freshman Walberg and \$750,162 against eight-term Knollenberg.

Not so in GOP targeting of eight-term Bart Stupak (D-Menominee), who has raised \$750,539, while state Representative Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) raised an anemic \$53,345. (That, however, at this early stage is about \$40,000 more than the entire amount GOP nominees raised against Stupak in four of his reelection races.)

Republican State Chairman Saul Anuzis says Stupak is vulnerable and Casperson, who defeated Stupak's wife, Laurie, to win the state House seat in 2002, has a good shot if he can become better known in the sprawling 31-county congressional district.

"It falls on me...to get it done on the ground," said Casperson, who said he is getting commitments from some individual lawmakers in Washington but has to convince the National Republican Congressional Committee "I can make a race out of this."

In that pursuit, he said, "I put 1,400 miles on my car (a 2000 Chrysler 300M showing about 153,000 miles) in one week below the bridge."

Casperson, owner of a trucking business, acknowledges that the NRCC's Michigan priority is to keep the Knollenberg and Walberg seats. He said: "There's no guarantee it will cut me a check. ...I'm not expecting much."

Stupak, meanwhile, had to curtail travel because of scheduled surgery Friday to clean out a deteriorating knee joint. He said he planned to preside at an Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing Tuesday "and plan to resume a district travel schedule next weekend."

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.

The St. Ignace News
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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.