

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Questions High Local Costs for Trash Disposal

To the Editor,

It was great to be back in St. Ignace to open up our cabin for the season last weekend. We haven't started our garbage service yet, so we had to throw one bag and two broken plastic lawn chairs away at the transfer station Monday on our way out of town.

First, it's a surprise that there are no weekend hours. Second, why must they weigh the entire car for one bag and two almost weightless chairs, when the scale is only good to the nearest 20 pounds?

Then came the final surprise: \$10 minimum charge plus \$3 "environmental fee" plus \$2.07 "fuel surcharge." Yes, that's \$15.07 for a bag of garbage!

\$15 a bag simply means they are encouraging people to stuff their garbage into business dumpsters or into the woods, a practice common 50 years ago but sure to see a comeback at these prices. The county back roads will once again be home to piles of garbage.

We have a transfer station and dumpster like St. Ignace where I live, and they figure they can put in 1,200 bags on average. That's about \$18,000 per dumpster in revenue for Waste Management. \$3,600 is for the environment and \$2,400 is for the fuel surcharge. A truck getting five miles per gallon to the Sault, round trip, needs about 20 gallons of diesel, or about \$92 for the round trip. Where is the rest of the \$2,300 going?

In Mackinaw City, you can buy a bag for \$2 that is picked up by a private carrier, not Waste Management. That's 750% less than St. Ignace. As they say, "wassup?"

Who can afford \$15 a bag? We had no choice, but the citizens of Mackinac County aren't at the top of the scale in income in this state. The median income in Michigan is \$44,667, while the median income in Mackinac County is only \$33,356, that's 25% less than the Michigan average. Do you think most people have a spare \$15 for garbage? That \$15 is going for groceries and heat before it goes to Waste Management.

And where is the recycling? Waste Management has an expensive national advertising campaign of environmental stewardship, but you don't see any recycling in St. Ignace. If we had recycling, we could take about 40% of our garbage out of our bags and out of the landfill stream.

Paper, cardboard, plastic, metal, glass - these all pay for themselves and turn a profit for the company - but no such services are offered in St. Ignace. Recycling can reduce waste by 40%, but that also means 40% less revenue for Waste Management, since we're paying by the pound.

Mackinaw City just started a great recycling center that's open 24 hours for paper, cardboard, aluminum, steel, glass, and plastic. It is operated by Emmet County Recycling.

So, come on, Waste Management, if you really value the environment and your customers, you'll be fair with St. Ignace. Fair prices, fair hours, and offer recycling.

James Walker
St. Ignace
Franconia, New Hampshire

Editor's Note: We asked Lynn Morgan, a representative of the Waste Management company, to provide a response to Mr. Walker's concerns. Here is her reply:

To the Editor:

I wish we'd had a chance to chat with the writer before his visit, so we could have helped him make the most of it.

He'll be glad to know that recycling is thriving here. For more than five years, area residents have been using the free recycling drop-off box at our transfer station to give new life to discarded household paper, cardboard, cans, and plastic bottles.

Waste Management also collects recyclables from City of St. Ignace homes twice a month, a service that city officials and residents have embraced for more than 10 years.

Last year alone, folks here recycled an estimated 200 tons of material through our curbside and drop-off services.

Waste Management is North America's largest recycler, and our company shares this community's commitment to improving the environment through recycling. In fact, we're working to triple the eight million tons of recyclables we now manage by 2020.

The writer also wondered about fees for disposing of garbage at the

transfer station. The \$10 minimum charge pays for up to 200 pounds of waste. As he painfully discovered, that's not cost effective when you only have a bag or two to get rid of.

Instead, many residents purchase pre-paid "budget bags" for \$2.75 each, sold in packs of 10 for \$27.50 at the St. Ignace Transfer Station.

Lynn Morgan
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Office Should Find Time To Prosecute Animal Abusers

To the Editor:

In regard to Mackinac County's Prosecuting Attorney Fred Feleppa's response letter (*The St. Ignace News*, May 22) concerning the animal abuse case, he is apparently under the assumption it is all right to let other people pay for the care of Larry Rooney's animals. Mr. Rooney was unable, unwilling, or just didn't provide proper care, like food, water, shelter, and medical. All are required under the law for him to do so. No one who cares about living things ever thought or believed these poor animals would have been returned to their abuser for more punishment. The appeal sent to animal lovers was to assure their foster and medical care would be provided until their placement in a new home was possible, and not to get them, literally, on their feet again to be returned to Mr. Rooney. Since the two lawyers were in agreement to return as many animals as they did, it was also their responsibility to see that Mr. Rooney paid for the animals' care and medical expenses while under the jurisdiction of the county. If he was unable to afford this cost, then he was also unable to afford their continued care.

I sent the letter to the generous people who gave the money (some said they really didn't have it to give, but their love for these animals was more important than their own needs) to help this county save these animals from further abuse. I explained in this letter many of the animals were going to be returned, and if this is not how they expected their money to be used, they were entitled to a refund. Mr. Feleppa was not the one who took their phone calls or read their letters expressing their reasons for sending money. It was not blackmail against Mr. Feleppa, but assuring the county was not committing fraud. We did not return the money to punish the county or the prosecutor, but to be honest with the people who gave the money. We know they gave this money and it wasn't to help Mr. Rooney get these animals back.

Mr. Feleppa made his decision to negate the importance of this animal abuse case well before the animals' rights people got involved. These were "just animals" and according to his response, he still feels this way. Michigan just updated and made stricter animal abuse/cruelty laws effective April of 2008 mainly because of the seriousness and more occurrences of animal hoarders. Allowing Mr. Rooney seven dogs and 17 birds was probably a mistake this county will revisit again at the taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Feleppa states he learned a lot from this case, but will keep them in perspective with the other demands of his office. Too many experts have drawn the direct connection between child, spouse, and animal abuse to ignore the animal abuse cases. The family pet is being included on the restraining orders in many states, because the abuse of pets is used to threaten or punish the human victim. If he cares so much about the children, then he will give animal abuse cases their proper respect.

If the prosecuting attorney's office expects this county's animal control officer to be effective in upholding the laws this state and county has set forth to provide animals the right to have proper food, water, shelter, and medical care, then the prosecuting office had better find the time to prosecute the offenders breaking these laws. In the long run, he may just save a child from further abuse.

Jo Ford
Moran

County Gives \$10,000 to Fund Bus

Bus: *From page 1*

"I've been with Community Action 23 years," said Mr. Wright. "When I first started, we were serving about 70 meals and our home-bounds were at 10. Now, it's just reversed."

The bus, he said, would also be used to deliver Meal on Wheels to clients in the Moran area. County-wide, the agency serves 160 home-bound clients.

The agency, he said, has enough funding to operate the bus, although not enough for the driver's wages of \$9.90 per hour. The

agency is planning to run the bus 15 hours a week.

The Take Five program, which is administered by Community Action, averages about 15 clients and offers several hours of relief for caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's or memory loss.

Mr. Wright also told commissioners the agency is out of funding raised by Walk for Warmth volunteers, and the agency has no funding remaining for emergency services.

"It's working people," he said of the agency's clients, "that are just having a tough 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 \$35.00.

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The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at stignacenews.com.

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Mackinac Bridge Project To Be Finished Soon

Paving Complete; 2 Lanes Closed

The two lanes on the east side of the Mackinac Bridge will remain closed for at least another week as crews finish touch-up work, including cleaning joint areas. Paving work was completed Monday, June 2.

If the weather cooperates, said

Bob Sweeney, executive secretary of the Mackinac Bridge Authority, the bridge could be open to all four lanes of traffic by the second week of June. The contractor for the project, Payne and Dolan, has until Wednesday, June 18 to complete the work.

MICHIGAN POLITICS

By George Weeks



Term Limits, National Coattails Energize State House Races

In the battle for control of the state House, northern Michigan has three toss-up races, two of them GOP seats along shores of Lake Michigan, and some spirited primaries.

Odds are against Republicans ending Democratic control, and they face a strong challenge in at least one of their long-held northern seats.

In the four-county 101st District seat held by term-limited Representative David Palsrok (R-Manistee), *Inside Michigan Politics* (IMP) newsletter aptly opines: "Democrats have a terrific chance to capture this seemingly safe Republican seat with attorney Dan Scripps of Northport, who almost won it two years ago."

Scripps, a policy guru for the Leelanau Conservancy, has no primary opposition. The leading GOP contender is prominent educator Mike McManus of Lake Leelanau, father of Senator Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau) and brother of ex-Senator George McManus (R-Traverse City). (Downstate, sons and other relatives running to replace term-limited lawmakers abound.)

IMP says McManus "enjoys a Leelanau County address in the GOP all by himself while his three opponents hack each other up in their Manistee County home base" - Gregory Ferguson of Manistee, Ray Franz of Onkama, and Janice McCraner of Arcadia.

Across Lake Michigan to the northwest, is the three-county 108th District seat held by term-limited Representative Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), a marginally Democratic district that Casperson won by defeating Menominee Mayor Laurie Stupak, wife of U.S. Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee), whose seat Casperson now seeks.

In January, IMP put the district in the "Lean Dem" column and now hedges by calling it a toss-up. (IMP is published by Bill Ballenger, a former state senator and state and federal government executive who also was Michigan's racing commissioner, and does a pretty good job of handicapping derby and political races.)

"Now," says IMP, "the GOP thinks it's found a Casperson clone, Northern Michigan University aide Mike Falcon of Gladstone. Four Democrats are running, including Judy Nerat, Menominee County road commissioner who ran and lost two years ago, and Menominee city attorney Janis Burgess."

The other Democrats are David Polzin of Menominee and Dennis Baldinelli of Kingsford.

Also rated a toss-up is the six-county 106th District seat held by term-limited Representative Matt

Gillard (D-Alpena). Among the five contenders, leading contestants appear to be ex-Representative Andy Neumann (D-Alpena), who's eligible for one more term, and Presque Isle Township Supervisor Peter Pettalia, an Alpena businessman, running against two others in the Republican primary.

Other northern districts of note:

- 104th: Like Casperson in the 108th, term-limited Representative Howard Walker (R-Traverse City) was active on natural resources issues and made a positive impact in Lansing. The district was dubbed "Solid GOP" by IMP in January, although its nearly 60% base is not as robust as it was six years ago, and as of late May, was downgraded to "Likely GOP."

Grand Traverse County Commissioner Wayne Schmidt, a sportsman activist who works at a haberdashery owned by Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), and his father, looks on track to win the GOP nomination over Tony Hefner of Rapid City and the seat over Democrat Roman Grucz of Traverse City.

- 105th: At one point, this shaped up as a real northern doozy, when second-term Representative Kevin Elsenheimer said he would go run for the Michigan Court of Appeals. Eight other Republicans, including media headliner John Ramsey, quickly filed for this solid GOP district.

But, as he told me, Elsenheimer "took one" for the party and stepped aside in the court race for a party legal disciple and agreed to run again for the House. Ramsey, et al, withdrew.

Democrat Connie Saltonstall of Charlevoix is still hanging in there.

- 107th: The district of second-term Representative Gary McDowell (D-Rudyard) is dubbed "Likely Dem."

It's "most" likely that McDowell, a retired UPS driver who has had numerous local government posts, will prevail over Republican Alex Strobehn of Sault Ste. Marie.

But face it. There are forces beyond the dynamics within the districts that will impact the outcome.

As noted by IMP, there is this factor in the fragile House GOP strategy to regain House majority:

"The party's presumptive presidential nominee, John McCain, must keep things close at the top of the ticket and perhaps even provide some coattails for down-ballot Republican candidates in suburban and rural areas."

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.

Kids Will Fish for Prizes Saturday

Fishing: *From page 1*

Saturday's event is a catch and release program, he said, set up as a fun day for kids and families, and a way to stock the Castle Rock Ponds for year-long fishing. Once caught by the anglers, the trout are transported from the holding tank to one of the area's ponds, where they are released.

About 100 prizes donated by area businesses and residents will be given out throughout the day to participants. Free hot dogs and drinks also will be available.

All youth are welcome and

some fishing gear and bait will be available to use, although supplies are limited. If possible, families are encouraged to bring their own bait, tackle, and fishing poles.

This year, the event is sponsored by the Hiawatha National Forest, the Straits Area Sportsmen's Club, Kiwanis Club, and the chairman of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Castle Rock Ponds is two miles west of I-75 on Castle Rock Road. To get there, take the Castle Rock exit from I-75, north of St. Ignace, and follow signs to the event.

Ostomy Association To Meet Sunday

The Straits Area Ostomy Association will meet Sunday, June 8, at 2 p.m. at Northern Michigan Regional Hospital in Petoskey.

For more information, call 643-8536.

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.