

# Three of Five Businesses To Reopen Soon After Mackinaw City Fire

By Paul Gingras

Fire damage has been repaired at some stores in Mackinaw City following a June 23 fire at the former Stimpson House hotel, but at least one shop will remain closed for some time.

"My store is basically totaled for the season," said Rob Bynoe of Mackinac Island, owner of Oak Tree Gifts.

Mr. Bynoe does not expect to reopen this season. At this point, his main concern is how long it will take to rebuild his portion of the structure. He is working with insurance companies to assess the damage and determine compensation, both for his store as well as apartment, office, and storage space upstairs. His car was damaged by a wall that fell during the blaze, also, he told *The St. Ignace News* Monday, June 30.

He was working when the blaze began in one of the village's oldest buildings, which spans a block along East Central Avenue.

At first, he saw small amounts of smoke coming from eaves troughs. Soon, smoke was billowing from the back of the building. He exited the store, moved his mother's car away from the block, but was unable to return to move his own when firefighters moved in to battle the blaze. The wall damaged the windshield and the car's top.

To contain the blaze, firefighters had to break through a wall inside his portion of the building.

Some of the merchandise can be replaced easily, but some of it cannot be replaced this year, he added. The store sold gifts and T-shirts.

The blaze also destroyed a new, un-named T-shirt shop. The remaining businesses, Shirt Tales, The Popcorn Factory, Joanne's Fudge, and Twisted Crystal, had been assessed, cleaned, some had been re-stocked, and all were ready to open, or nearly ready, Saturday, June 28, said Mackinaw City Fire Chief Fred Thompson.

Joanne's and Shirt Tales have



Part of the former Stimpson House Hotel, one of Mackinaw City's oldest buildings, lies in rubble Thursday, June 26. A fire Monday, June 23, affected Joanne's Fudge, Oak Tree Gifts, Shirt Tales, The Popcorn Factory, and a new, unnamed T-shirt shop. All but Oak Tree and the T-shirt shop are open or are shortly to reopen.

sister stores on Mackinac Island.

For Joanne's, "It could have been a lot worse," said owner Frank Nephew. Joanne's was closed from Monday through Friday, while Mr. Nephew awaited clearance to

reopen from the health department.

He learned of the fire Monday at 2:45 p.m., shortly after it started. By 3 p.m., he was on a boat from the Island to Mackinaw City, where he watched fire crews battle the blaze.



Firefighters from St. Ignace, Mackinaw City, Mackinac Island, and several northern Lower Michigan departments managed to prevent the spread of a blaze on East Central Avenue in Mackinaw City Monday, June 23. It destroyed a T-shirt shop, led to heavy damage at Oak Tree Gifts, and caused minor damage to three businesses on the block.

The fire began in a new addition at the back of the T-shirt store, which will have to come down, he said.

"It's rubble back there," he told

*The St. Ignace News.*

Upon arrival, he saw copious smoke with flames showing through, billowing from the back of the building.

Repeatedly, firefighters brought the flames down, only to have them surge again.

"It was a tough fight for them," he said.

Mr. Nephew said the efforts of the Mackinaw City Fire Department

and other area fire departments were effective at minimizing the damage to his business.

Joanne's, a one-story structure, is connected to the main building, but is not part of the original Stimpson House. It was built later and had a cement wall between it and the T-shirt shop. The other businesses are part of the original two-

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## New Flagpole Installed at City Hall



A new flagpole, delivered to St. Ignace City Hall on State Street, is lifted from the truck bed by members of the Department of Public Works, working with Maverick Construction and using a 60-foot crane. The 50-foot pole was set in place Tuesday morning, June 24. The pole was



anchored in a base near the city's old pole, which was bent and is visible in the photograph just left of City Hall. A flag already was flying on the new pole by afternoon. The pole, which came from the former North Bay Inn property, was donated to the city by First National Bank.

At left: The city's new flagpole is carefully maneuvered into its base at City Hall. The base is more than five feet deep and surrounded by about five yards of concrete. When the pole was level, spacers were added to the hole, which then was packed with sand. Pictured are (from left) Rob Fraser, owner of Maverick Construction of St. Ignace, and St. Ignace City employees Clifford Belonga, Dave Giacherio, and Gary Bigelow.

## Oversize Garages, Porch Approved at Clark Twp.

By Amy Polk

Clark Township Zoning Board of Appeals unanimously approved four variances Tuesday night, June 24, one for a porch extension and three for oversized storage structures.

Kara and Greg Guertin, Marquette residents who recently bought a home on Hodeck Street in Cedarville, will build an 8-foot by 24-foot covered porch on the front of the house. The porch is non-conforming because it will be 26 feet from the front lot line, instead of the 35 feet required by the ordinance.

There were no objections from neighbors, and board member Mike Lofdahl moved to grant a variance, because doing so would allow substantial improvements to the building, and would not hinder the use of properties around the house. The Guertins have told the township they plan to remodel the entire exterior of the building this summer.

Rex and Virginia Wisner of

Cedarville received a variance for a 24-foot by 40-foot addition to their 36-foot by 40-foot garage. Building the addition would have exceeded the maximum allowable square footage of 1,200 square feet (or 10% of the lot) for an accessory building. The 12-foot-high addition will hide automobiles and snowmobiles from view, Mrs. Wisner said.

No complaints were received.

The zoning board of appeals reversed a 2006 decision to allow a storage building as a principal structure on Chuck Albright's commercial lot on Island View Road in Hessel. Mr. Albright and Lea Brunson now want to build a home with an attached garage and tear down a smaller garage. The 28-foot by 42-foot chalet-style home will be a mainland residence for the couple, who have a cottage on Marquette Island. He had planned to park a fifth-wheel trailer there, but Clark

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## Venetian Boat Parade, Costume Party Starts at Hessel Saturday

The third annual Venetian-style Lighted Boat Parade and Costume Party will be Saturday, July 5, at 9 p.m. Parade participants will start at the Hessel Marina and travel to Cedarville Bay.

Everyone is welcome, and lighted boats and costumes are not necessary to participate. For those who want to decorate, lights and decorations of all types are encouraged and will be judged. Residents are also encouraged to decorate their boathouses and docks for the event. Awards will be given for the best costumes, decorated and lighted boats, and lighted docks and boathouses.

Cedarville resident Joe Eger and other volunteers and businesses started the event last year to encourage Les Cheneaux Islands residents to light their boathouses and docks to create a festive atmosphere during the summer and make the area more inviting for visitors. Many prizes have been donated, and will be awarded for best costumes, displays, decorations, or other categories named by judges participating in the event.

Call Joe Eger at 484-2511 or send e-mail to egerbeaver@centurytel.net to register or get more information about the contest.

## Minimum Wage Goes Up to \$7.40

Michigan's minimum wage increased by 25¢ Tuesday, July 1, when it climbed to \$7.40 an hour for most workers.

The increase is the last of three increases approved in 2006 by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm. The minimum wage increased to \$6.95 October 1, 2006, from \$5.15, and then to \$7.15 July 1, 2007.

Along with the minimum wage change, the sub-minimum wage for young workers also increased, rising to \$6.29 an hour from its current rate of \$6.08. The rate will then move to \$6.55 an hour July 24, when the federal minimum wage increases and these younger workers become covered by the higher federal rate. The sub-minimum wage is for those younger than 18, and equals 85% of the adult minimum wage.

The minimum wage for tipped employees, such as food servers, will not increase July 1. Employers, however, must ensure that these employees earn \$7.40 an hour through a combination of tips and the minimum wage rate of \$2.65 for tipped workers. In addition, agricultural workers will continue to be covered, and by law, they must be paid the equivalent of Michigan's minimum wage for their work, whether paid at a piecework rate or an hourly rate.

The Wage and Hour Division Web site offers information about the minimum wage and is available to anyone who has questions about the increase or other provisions of the minimum wage and overtime law at [www.michigan.gov/wagehour](http://www.michigan.gov/wagehour). Those without Internet access can call the Division and speak with staff by dialing (517) 335-0400 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Most Michigan workers will not be affected by the forthcoming increases in the federal minimum wage, as the state's minimum wage rate will remain above the federal rate. The federal minimum hourly wage is currently \$5.85 and increases to \$6.55 July 24 and to \$7.25 July 24, 2009.

## Auditors Find Mackinac County in Good Shape Predict Tougher Times May Lie Ahead

By Karen Gould

Auditors say Mackinac County is in good financial shape and ended 2007 in the black, however, they caution commissioners that tougher days may be ahead as limitations on revenue growth are likely, owing to a number of factors. The county ended 2007 with a general fund balance of \$3,305,740, up \$918,191 over the 2006 general fund ending balance of \$2,387,549.

County Commissioners adopted the 2007 audit report at their Thursday, June 19 meeting. The report was presented by accountant Ken Talsma of Anderson, Tackman and Company.

Increasing health care costs and rising liability insurance rates, along with a cap on the growth rate under the Headlee Amendment, and the reluctance of voters to approve a tax increase, say auditors, will continue to impact the

county's financial picture. Further state and federal cuts, predict auditors, are likely. Auditors suggested commissioners keep this in mind when planning next year's budget.

In 2007, auditors reported a drop in revenue for the county, which did not receive \$109,960 in federal revenues that were budgeted.

"Having the highest unemployment rate in the United States also impacts the county's economic future," states the report.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Michigan had the highest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the country, at 8.5%, for May.

In April, Mackinac County had a 15.3% unemployment rate, Jay Caldwell, Mackinac County coordinator of Michigan Works! in St. Ignace told *The St. Ignace News*. May and June numbers, he said, which have not been released, will

## in Good Shape

be an important indicator on how the county is doing. Typically, for those months, he said, the county's unemployment rate is approximately 5%, as seasonal tourism-related jobs become available.

Business foreclosures, said Mr. Caldwell, have reduced the number of jobs available in the county, although the limited number of foreign workers able to obtain a work visa this year has helped make more jobs available to local workers.

"I haven't seen as many locals looking for jobs," he said, "as I would."

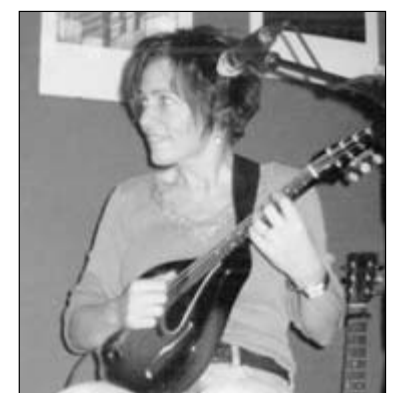
Right now, he said, the construction work is "way down" in the county and he continues to see workers filing for unemployment benefits.

"The unfortunate part of Mackinac County," said Mr. Caldwell, "is we have no manufacturing."

Auditors also suggest the board

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## St. Ignace Bayside Live, Locals on the Bay Bishop, Snell To Give Concerts



MJ Bishop

MJ Bishop will be featured in a Locals on the Bay concert Wednesday, July 9, at 7 p.m. at the St. Ignace Marina. Ms. Bishop was born and grew up in St. Ignace, and has been writing and performing around her home in Seattle, Washington, for years. Ms. Bishop performs her own style of folk, country, and blues music.



Michael Snell

Also at the marina, Michael Snell will perform for Bayside Live! Thursday, July 10, at 7 p.m. Mr. Snell is a singer/songwriter from the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, playing folk music with a easy listening country influence.

The outdoor concerts are free of charge. Audience members may bring lawn chairs, and bleacher seating is also available.