

City Council Seeks Advice on Four Charter Conflicts

By Karen Gould

Four conflicts remain between the St. Ignace City Charter and city operations and now city leaders are seeking advice from the Michigan Municipal League on how to proceed. Stumbling blocks include the required due date of taxes, the requirement to publish the city's audit in the local newspaper, the meeting time of the board of review, and having the next year's budget prepared and presented to Council by October.

Council members have been meeting as the Charter Committee since January to review the 42-page charter booklet, the fundamental law directing city's operations.

Before any changes can be made to the charter, a public hearing must be held, followed by a public referendum.

The committee wants further investigation on late tax payment penalties, as the charter is not clear. Taxes are due September 1 and the city has been charging a penalty from that date, although the charter is not clear if the penalty should revert to July 1, when the tax bills are issued.

The charter clearly states the city's audit report must be published in the local paper, a requirement, contend committee members, that would be costly and is impractical. The annual financial report is more than 60 pages. At least for the last 15 years, the audit has been available for public viewing at the city clerk's office and copies also have been made available to those who have asked for it.

The charter requires the Board

of Review meet on the fourth week of March, although it has been meeting on the third week. A letter from Mackinac County Equalization Director Jim Fenlon said that meeting on the fourth week is not enough time for his office to prepare state reports. The committee noted that other municipalities meet on the second week in March.

Having a budget prepared by October is too early, said City Manager Eric Dodson, although it is a requirement of the charter. The budget recommendation for the coming year has been presented to Council in November. Preparing the budget by October would mean the city would have only seven months of expense figures for the current year and little tax revenue, since taxes aren't due until September 1. The city, said Mr. Dodson, needs more time to prepare the budget.

Some outdated requirements in the charter, like election dates, do not need to be addressed because they have been superseded by state law.

The committee has reconciled two discrepancies between the charter and city operations which don't require a referendum. The city clerk had appointed the election inspectors until the committee noted the charter requires Council to make the appointments. Also, Council minutes were published in *The St. Ignace News* after they were approved, which was later than the 10-day publishing requirement in the charter. Now, draft minutes are published to meet the charter deadline.

Three Lakes Lay Academy Offers Classes at Zion Lutheran Church

Classes will be offered for Christian adults this fall at Zion Lutheran Church in St. Ignace.

The Three Lakes Lay Academy, a cooperative Lutheran and Presbyterian ministry, will host two new classes for Christian adults seeking to deepen their faith and knowledge of the Bible and the church. Classes will be Thursday nights from September 11 through November 13 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Each class is 1.5 hours in length and will include a meal and devotions between the classes. Courses are \$10 each plus the cost of the book. Scholarships are available.

The first class, entitled "An

Introduction to Theology," will explore the building blocks of the theological language, and influential figures in Christianity.

The second class, "An Introduction to the Bible," will be an overview that seeks to explore the historical and literary contexts.

A free will offering will be collected for the fellowship meal.

Pre register at stahar950@sbcglobal.net before Monday, September 1, to ensure a book at the first class. Participants may also register at the door.

For more information, contact Pastor Tari Stage-Harvey at 643-7870 or Bill Bennett at (231) 436-7600.

DNR Adopts New Plan to Manage Wolf Population

Twenty years ago, it was a rare occasion when a wolf wandered the woods of the Upper Peninsula. The large canines were thought to have been extirpated from the state by the 1960s. But wolves can be grand travelers and occasionally, animals from Canada or from an established population in Minnesota found their way here.

That all changed in 1989, when a small pack of gray wolves established a territory in the central U.P. They quickly made themselves at home, reproduced, and additional packs spread across the region. Now, the Department of Natural Resources estimates the U.P. is home to more than 500 wolves, based on last winter's survey.

Even more significantly, Michigan's wolves have been removed from the federal Endangered and Threatened Species List, setting the stage for a new chapter in wolf management in the state.

At the July meeting of the Natural Resources Commission in Munising, DNR Director Rebecca Humphries approved a new Wolf Management Plan for Michigan.

The new plan replaces the old plan adopted in 1997, when the state was still largely in a protect-and-allow-to-expand mode, with a strategy that focuses on the coexistence of humans with a viable wolf population.

The wolf management plan was developed through an extensive public input process that began in 2005 and included public meetings, focus group meetings, and a public attitude study and input from the Wolf Management Roundtable, a diverse group of Michigan citizens with varying interests in wolves.

"Our focus has shifted from recovery of an endangered species to active management of a more widespread and abundant species," Ms. Humphries said. "We've done extensive work to revise our wolf management plan to ensure we address both the biological and social aspects of managing this species."

In August of last year, the draft plan was available for public review for 90 days and after DNR staffers reviewed public



Outdoor Matters

A column from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Wolves dispersing from Canada, Minnesota, and Wisconsin occasionally were present in the Upper Peninsula during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Reestablishment of a resident population began in 1989, when three animals established a territory in the central U.P. Since then, the population has grown to more than 500 animals, according to last winter's wolf census. (DNR photograph by David Kenyon)

comments and revised the plan appropriately, it was submitted to the Natural Resources Commission this spring for additional review.

The new wolf management plan outlines four principal goals:

- Maintain a viable Michigan wolf population above a level that would warrant its classification as threatened or endangered,
- Facilitate wolf-related benefits,
- Minimize wolf-related conflict and
- Conduct science-based wolf management that is socially acceptable.

Among the first actions for the DNR is to remove the wolf from the state Endangered and Threatened Species List. That process is underway, said Pat Lederle, the supervisor for DNR Wildlife Division's research section.

One of the unique characteristics of the plan is that unlike other management plans – for white-tailed deer, for instance, or Canada geese – there are no numerical population goals asso-

ciated with wolves.

"Our approach for wolf management is to focus on managing impacts," Mr. Lederle said.

The DNR's response to issues, he said, depends on the severity and frequency of those impacts.

"If there's a livestock depredation problem that can be dealt with non-lethally, we'll do that," Mr. Lederle said. "If we feel it's a problem that should be dealt with by reducing the number of wolves in an area, we'll do that. If we think that we need to reduce the population of wolves in a region, we'll do that."

"A numerical goal suggests we should automatically take action based on the number of wolves. But the frequency of impacts is rarely dependent on the size of the population."

The hope, Mr. Lederle said, is that hunters and trappers will be

able to help the DNR with some of the population management efforts if they become necessary.

"There are groups that would like to have wolves designated as a game species, but that's a legal process," Mr. Lederle explained. "The legislature has to designate them as a game species and the legislature has to authorize the first season before the NRC decides on the method and manner of take."

The DNR has begun a study in the U.P. to help evaluate the impacts of all large predators – wolves, coyotes, bears – on white-tailed deer populations. Although wolves are capable of using a lot of deer, they are opportunistic creatures.

In harsh winters – like last winter in the U.P., when a lot of deer died – wolves take advantage of that natural mortality, Mr. Lederle said.

Although the wolf population expanded rapidly after the animals first became established in 1989, the rate of increase has slowed substantially.

"We believe the most suitable habitat is being occupied," Mr. Lederle said. "One of the highest mortality factors is wolves killing other wolves in territorial disputes."

The multi-faceted Wolf Management Plan includes sections on information and education, research, regulatory protection, wolf prey and habitat, diseases, human safety, depredation of domestic animals, public harvest, and wolf-dog hybrids.

Despite state adoption of the new management plan, the last word on wolves has not been written. The federal government's decision to delist gray wolves as an endangered or threatened species in the Great Lakes region is being challenged in court. The ruling in that court case could have an impact on Michigan's plan.

To read the new Michigan Wolf Management Plan, view it online at www.michigan.gov/dnrwildlife.

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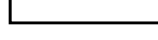
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