

Straits Area Promotion, Maples Among Topics for Park Commission

Triangle: From page 9

Resources, which Mr. Porter said will give the group "an objective outside comment" on the issue.

Park Commission's Budget \$38,000 Less for 2009

Mackinac State Historic Parks' budget for 2009 will be \$6,361,648. The amount is \$38,000 less than last year's budget. Its state appropriated general fund remained at \$1.59 million.

Mr. Porter explained that the difference in the budget from last year is mainly owing to funds pooled for the construction of the new Discovery Park at Historic Mill Creek outside Mackinaw City.

Subtracting that funding, this year's budget is comparable to last year's, said Mr. Porter, "which is tight, as usual."

Other than the revamped Historic Mill Creek, which now includes several interactive elements, such as an aerial cable ride, a nature trail, a climbing wall, and look-out tower, Mackinac State Historic Parks' other sites have taken a hit in attendance. While Historic Mill Creek Discovery Parks' attendance has improved by 31% from last year, Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island is down 4.5%, Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City is down 9.5%, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, also in Mackinaw City, is down 12.7%.

To compensate, the Park Commission raised admission rates for next year.

A 25¢ increase in youth rates and a 50¢ increase in adult rates at both forts and Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park was approved by the Park Commission.

Also, a \$2 increase (from \$5 to \$7) for the Discovery Park Adventure Tour was approved because of unexpected increase in staff and supplies needed to accommodate public demand at the site, said Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter, at Commissioner Williams' request, was given permission by the Commission to decrease ticket prices as he sees fit.

Twenty-five percent of the State Parks' budget is derived from state appropriations. Other revenue is drawn from grants, interest from its trust fund, and funding from Mackinac Associates, a local non-profit organization that supports park programs.

Mackinac Associates' budget of \$212,800 will also help fund a new "Otter Slide" at Historic Mill Creek, geared toward younger children who cannot participate in the cable ride.

Mr. Porter informed the Park Commission that his agency has been able to secure enough money through its own resources and Mackinac Associates to reestablish a Native American interpretive program and create a new Kids Rendezvous playground at Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City.

The Kids Rendezvous will provide a learning playground that focuses on the fur trading history for younger children. It will be between the fort and the Visitors Center.

Island resident Lorna Straus interjected a suggestion, during the presentation, for Mr. Porter to recognize his mother, Lornie Porter, who she said was the person who came up with the idea of creating Mackinac Associates. Mrs. Porter received a round of applause from the audience and commissioners.

Indian Dormitory To Reopen as Art Center

With a donation of a little more than \$800,000 from the Jane and Richard Manoogian Foundation, the largest donation the Mackinac Island State Park Commission has received, the Indian Dormitory, which has been closed since 2002, will be restored and become a center for local historic and modern art.

The Indian Dormitory in Marquette Park, a victim of budget cuts in 2002, was built in 1838

under the 1836 Treaty of Washington, in which Indians sold 15 million acres to the federal government in exchange for money over the course of 20 years. The dormitory served as the center for these transactions, and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft served as an Indian agent.

It was operated as the Thomas W. Ferry School from the 1860s to 1962, holding classes from kindergarten to eighth grade. In 1966, the dormitory was restored and opened as a park museum.

Thomas W. Ferry was a U.S. Congressman and Senator in the mid-1800s and was born at the Mission House on Mackinac Island to Presbyterian missionaries, Thomas M. and Amanda Ferry.

Mackinac State Historic Parks plans to open the Indian Dormitory art center in the spring of 2010.

The building needs an almost complete overhaul, including a new fire and security system, a new roof, restoration of its cracked foundation, and a drainage system to divert water flowing down from the steep hill of Fort Mackinac, directly behind the dormitory. It will also need a complete interior overhaul, which will include a handicap-accessible elevator.

Once the project is done, the Indian Dormitory will serve as a center for local professional and amateur artists to learn about and enjoy art, said Mr. Porter.

"The theme will be how Mackinac Island inspires artistic creation," said Mr. Porter.

Commissioner Williams also encouraged Mr. Porter to find a way to incorporate the literary arts of the Island, if not at the Indian Dormitory, then somewhere else. Mr. Porter suggested perhaps Mission Church, although no concrete recommendations were presented at the meeting.

The new center will give Mackinac State Historic Parks a place to display many art collections that it has never been able to display before. Also, in the basement, workshops can be held to allow visitors to participate in art.

Small social gatherings and receptions could also be held in the basement, which could generate even more revenue for the Park

Commission, added Mr. Porter.

The restoration and interior redesign meets the national historic preservation standards, said Mr. Porter.

Increase in Airport Runway Project

After attending a meeting with the Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics in Lansing September 11, Mr. Porter said plans to rehabilitate the Island's airport runway may need to be done in phases, as he learned the project will cost in the range of \$6 million instead of the expected \$2.5 million.

The Park Commission's efforts in the project concerned three safety issues:

- Remove a large hump in the middle of the runway that impairs pilots' visibility from one end of the runway to the other;
- Remove sinkholes that have riddled the runway in recent years;
- Move the runway far enough away from the fence on the west end to meet Federal Aviation Administration standards.

The Park Commission's plan was to complete all three projects during the fall and early winter, closing the runway for six to eight weeks. This is no longer possible, as \$6 million is not available at this time.

"The decision was made to go back to the drawing plan," said Mr. Porter. "Something will happen, but I don't think it's likely anything will happen this spring."

"We know what the problems are, we just need to know what we have and what we can do," said Mr. Porter. "We'll get information on when the runway will close and what kind of an impact it will have ahead of time."

Planes are, at times, the only mode of transportation on and off the Island during the winter months. Ferry transportation is usually stopped at the end of January. The only other way of getting to and from the Island is snowmobiling across the ice, which is not sanctioned by any law enforcement authority.

Once a plan of construction is approved, the city and park must determine a safe area for medical helicopters to land for emergency evacuations, as well.

Severance Takes 4-point Buck



Taylor Severance, 12, of St. Ignace shot her first deer, a four-point buck, September 29 in Ionia County during the youth hunt. She is the daughter of Ray and Vickie Severance. (Severance family photograph)

Vaccinated Dogs Protected Against Parvo, St. Ignace Veterinarian Says

While several local pet owners have been concerned about a strain of canine parvovirus found in dogs in Michigan this year, St. Ignace veterinarian Dr. Mary Alban wants to reassure people that all dogs that are up to date with vaccinations are already protected against this illness.

"This particular strain of parvo has been around for a little while, but there's no reason to panic," Dr. Alban told *The St. Ignace News* Wednesday, October 1. "Just

remember to keep vaccinations up to date, and remember all puppies need to start vaccinations at eight weeks of age."

Dr. Alban has seen some local cases of parvo in unvaccinated puppies, she said, but has not tested to determine which strain of the illness was present.

The contagious virus affects unvaccinated dogs and causes severe diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration; in some cases, it can be fatal.

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