

Townships To Share in Road Costs Up Front; Commission Hires Two Foremen

Roads: From page 1

there and get it hashed out right now."

Hudson Township Supervisor Al Garavaglia said now that old billing issues have been rectified, he doesn't anticipate a problem with the new up-front payment requirement. In recent years, townships have complained that road commission estimates and bills did not itemize costs, making it impossible to monitor projects.

"I'd like to just address it as someone with a township perspective," Mr. Garavaglia said. "We're probably going to battle over nuts and bolts. I think trust has probably been a problem. If we can work together, I think that will go a long way."

Mark Spencer, a trustee for Moran Township, disagreed.

"Coming to these meetings for the last four years, I understand you're going to get a lot of flack over that," said Mr. Spencer to commissioners.

He did agree with Mr. Garavaglia that previous invoices lacked specifics that township officials needed, such as listing ditching, but not explaining whether ditches would be dug or just cleaned out.

Road commission clerk Theresa

McPherson said the board had discussed adding details to billings earlier this year, although no formal action was taken. Since then, townships have required different levels of billing information, she said, which she has been providing.

Mr. Heckman reminded township representatives that all project details are available in the Road Commission office on State Street in St. Ignace.

Mr. Livermore suggested if a township had trouble meeting the 50% requirement, it could address the situation with the board to see if any payment arrangements could be agreed upon.

Employees Hugh Bigelow and Terry Cece named new garage foremen Tuesday, November 25. Mr. Bigelow will oversee operations at the West District garage in Engadine, replacing retiring foreman Bill Wagner. Mr. Cece will manage operations at the East District garage in Marquette Township, replacing Dale Williams, whose contract was not renewed.

The one-year agreements do not contain a longevity clause that is in the union contract, and Mr. Livermore wondered why.

Union employees receive an annual longevity payment near the end of each year. The benefit applies



Just as winter arrives in the Straits area, Hugh Bigelow (left) and Terry Cece begin their new roles as Mackinac County Road Commission foremen. They are pictured at the State Street office in St. Ignace Wednesday, December 3.

to full-time employees who have worked at least 1,200 hours during the year, are still employed at the time the benefit check is issued, and have been employed by the commission for a minimum of two years. Workers are paid \$50 for each year of service up to a maximum of 20 years. A worker, who this year has 10 years of service with the road commission, would receive a check for \$500 December 20.

Mr. Livermore said that in October, the board agreed to have management contracts mirror the union contract, which contains a longevity benefit for the employees.

"When we make a motion here, whatever that motion is, needs to happen," said Mr. Livermore.

Commissioner Frank Luepnitz said the board had discussed removing longevity from management contracts.

"I want this contract to be a management contract and have its own language," he said.

Mr. Livermore said he has no problems with the contract, but that it did not reflect board action, reply-

ing. "That's not what the motion said, Frank. What you want after the meeting's over doesn't really matter. What matters is the motion we approve at this board table. That's what we have to do."

Commissioners agreed to advertise for a mechanic to fill the position Mr. Bigelow is vacating at Engadine. The board accepted Mr. Heckman's recommendation that the position be filled by a certified diesel mechanic. The knowledge required to be a mechanic has changed through the years, said Mr. Heckman, and now includes the ability to operate computer diagnostic equipment.

The commission hopes to fill the position at the beginning of January.

Mr. Spencer said he had received some complaints from residents about winter plowing. Plowing was not complete enough, leaving intersections narrow, he reported to the board. Of most concern, said Mr. Spencer, is Schoolhouse Road where it meets US-2. He also said not all hills were being sanded and more was needed on Schoolhouse

Road.

"Schoolhouse Road is a bad road," said Mr. Spencer, "because it dumps you into either US-2 or Worth Road and there are semis going 60 miles per hour on that road either way."

Winter weather and heavy snow arrived early this year, Mr. Heckman said, and not all trucks were outfitted with sanders.

Commissioners approved the final payment on the new salt shed at the East District garage for \$45,257.26. The total cost was \$557,920.20, with the state paying 89% and the county paying 11%.

The 2009 meeting schedule was approved by commissioners. Meet-

ing will continue every other Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. except for two Monday meetings for February 16 and March 2, with conflicts on the following Tuesdays. Also four nightly meetings at 7 p.m. are scheduled for March 17, June 23, September 15, and December 8.

The commission next meets Tuesday, December 16, at 1:30 p.m. at the Road Commission building on North State Street. Commissioners also will hold a public hearing at that time for discussion on the five-year transportation improvement plan for federal- and state-funded projects. The plan is available for review at the Road Commission office.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bridge Commuters Are Customers Crossing for Varied Reasons

To the Editor:

The way Mr. Sweeney is portraying commuters to the general public and his board of directors at the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA), you would think we are all criminals cheating him out of tolls and not repeat customers.

1. There are 11,000 [Mackinac Bridge] commuters; this sounds like a lot, but not really when you consider we are only part of the 3,730,000 vehicle crossings a year.

2. Who are the commuters? Some work on the other side of the bridge, some travel the bridge because of ferry schedules in the spring, fall, and winter for work on the island, some commute to school, some commute to larger downstate hospitals for weekly treatments not available locally, some to visit or baby-sit their grandchildren, some own businesses on both sides, and the list could go on. But the most important reason is that they need to cross the bridge more often in a year than most others and the commuter rate helps their budget.

3. Mackinac Bridge Authority Executive Secretary Bob Sweeney has pointed out that most commuters are located within 50 miles of the bridge, and is quick to make it appear that those who have permanent residences in Utah, Colorado, Florida, and other states are cheating the system. I know some of these people; they work or own businesses locally for the tourist season. We are a seasonal tourist area, and then they go back to those other states for their winter jobs at ski resorts, ocean resorts, Disney, and other employers.

4. Mr. Sweeney and his board are now talking about changing the expiration time on commuter cards. Current commuter cards do carry an expiration date, per the rules sheet handed to me by the bridge. The card must be used at least once annually to remain active, or all money will be forfeited. I can live with that. However, now he wants to change it to one

month or three months. At \$80 minimum additions to a commuter card, or even the old rate of \$40, some commuters will forfeit money because they are only here part of the year working, needing to take the ferry from the other side, their school schedule changed, their medical treatments change, etc. That is, not all commuters fit in one box. Unless the object is to reduce the number of commuters using the card at the commuter rate, which seems to be the case being mounted against commuters.

It seems very one sided that this is to be decided at the December 12 Mackinac Bridge Authority meeting, when many commuters are gone or laid off for the winter. The other thing I have found interesting is that these meetings, raising the minimum from \$40 to \$80 in July and changing the expiration time on commuter cards, seem to not have public comment forums, when it affects 11,000 customers. I am also surprised that the cities (mayor, city commissioners, and city managers) of St. Ignace, Mackinaw City, Mackinac Island, Cheboygan, Petoskey, and Sault Ste. Marie aren't more concerned about their voters and taxpayers and that employers, store owners, and landlords aren't more concerned. This could affect their income.

I encourage you to contact the Mackinac Bridge Authority or our Michigan House Representative, Gary McDowell.

You can express your opinion to: www.mackinacbridge.org, Contact us page, Comments page, to electronically respond. You can write to: Mackinac Bridge Authority, 333 I-75, St. Ignace, Michigan 49781; or Gary McDowell P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514, or contact Representative McDowell online at www.107.house.dems.com.

Richard Rathke
St. Ignace

State Roads in Bad Shape Put Us at Risk

To the Editor:

It is no secret that Michigan roads are in terrible shape, just ask the Michigan citizens who have to replace flat tires, bent rims, and busted tie rods. With every pothole, crater, and crack, the safety of our families is put at risk. But with a new plan put before the Legislature to fix and repair Michigan's infrastructure, our commutes could be a lot smoother and our economy significantly stronger, since better roads will attract more businesses to Michigan. This means jobs at a time when we desperately need them.

This refers to the package of bills being debated in the Michigan Senate Transportation Committee last week asking for the legislature to increase Michigan Department of Education funding to fix our impending transportation crisis. The Governor's report outlines a variety of ways that this can be done and it is vital to the future of our state's infrastructure.

Our leaders in Lansing must stop the political games and pass the infrastructure bills now!

Cory TenEyck
Rudyard

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 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.

'Unified Ask' Campaign Begins

The Les Cheneaux Community Foundation mailed out letters asking for donations for nine area nonprofits, as well as for the foundation itself, in its third annual Unified Ask campaign.

The annual fundraiser replenishes the foundation's funds that can be granted for those nonprofit organizations, said Foundation Vice Chair Diane Patrick. Those who receive letters asking for donations can choose which group receives funding through the Community Foundation.

Some donation request letters were mailed just after Thanksgiving, and Mrs. Patrick expects

the remainder to be mailed before Christmas.

The organizations for which the foundation is asking for donations are: Clark Township Bike Path, Clark Township Recreation Park, Great Lakes Boat Building School, Les Cheneaux Ambulance Auxiliary, Les Cheneaux Arts Council, Les Cheneaux Historical Society, Les Cheneaux Watershed Council, Les Cheneaux Community Library, and Les Cheneaux Education Foundation.

For more information about donating, contact Mrs. Patrick at 484-4114.

Holiday Giving Opportunities in Our Community

Several opportunities are available for donating to needy families in the community during the holiday season, including the following:

- **Mackinac County Children's Toy Drive:** Cash canisters are available in St. Ignace at McGregor Shell, Autore Shell, Truck Stop station, the Holiday, Pines Trading Post, Timmy Lee's Pub, the Hope Chest, Bentley's B-n-L Cafe, and Big Boy restaurant. Boxes to collect new, unwrapped toys, electronics, and clothing are available at The St. Ignace News office, Moose Lodge 999, Bentley's B-n-L Cafe, the Pavillion, all locations of First National Bank, Glen's Markets, the Gold Mine, True Value, and U.P. State Credit Union. Donations may also be mailed to Mackinac County Children's Toy Drive in care of Wendy Colegrove, 152 Bertrand Street, St. Ignace Michigan 49781 or The St. Ignace News, P.O. Box 277, St. Ignace.

- **Santa's Elves:** Toys can be donated through December 15 at First National Bank in Cedarville. Gift requests can be selected from a Christmas tree at the bank and wrapped gifts can be dropped off there with the request tag attached. Clothing is not a sug-

gested donation. Cash donations can be made all year to Santa's Elves in care of Kate Ter Haar, 803 Islington Road, Cedarville Michigan 49719. More information is available from Mrs. Ter Haar at 484-3610 or Pat O'Brien at 484-3520.

- **Moose Lodge 999 Christmas Food Basket Drive:** Baskets containing the ingredients for a Christmas dinner will be distributed to needy families by lodge members and members of the U.S. Coast Guard December 20. Monetary donations can be sent to Moose Lodge 999, P.O. Box 305, St. Ignace Michigan 49781. Make checks payable to Moose Lodge and indicate Christmas basket fund. More information is available from the lodge at 643-8785.

- **Mitten Tree, First National Bank:** A Christmas tree at the main office of First National Bank in St. Ignace is decorated with hooks, awaiting the donation of mittens, scarves, and hats that can be hung on the tree for needy children and families. They will be distributed before Christmas with Mackinac County Children's Toy Drive donations.

- **Hope Chest and St. Ignace Food Pantry:** The Hope Chest building on Ferry Lane houses the

resale store and the St. Ignace Food Pantry. Donations of resale items are accepted at the Hope Chest store Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The food pantry is open for donations and for those who need food Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For emergency needs, call the St. Ignace Area Hope hotline for assistance at 643-6780. Monetary donations are accepted for either program. More information is available by calling the store at 643-7360.

- **Cedar Post Thrift Store and Food Pantry:** Donations are accepted every day except Sunday at the store in Cedarville, from noon to 4 p.m. Monetary donations can be dedicated to the food pantry specifically. Right now, the pantry is in particular need of cereal, soup, canned tomatoes, and tomato sauces.

- **West Mackinac County Food Pantry:** The pantry in Engadine is accepting food and monetary donations. To make arrangements, call 477-6388.

To list a local holiday charity drive in this space at no charge, call 643-9150.