

# Cost of Charter Revisions, Use of Tribal Casino Money Draw Debate at City Council Meeting

City: From page 1

that some requirements are not being met.

Councilwoman Susan Tamlyn-Massaway said she doesn't think a consultant is needed and that the city can make any revisions on its own.

Any changes to the charter will require a public hearing and a public vote, and Mr. Fullerton noted that those, plus printing a new document, will be at city expense.

Councilman Tom Della-Moretta asked to be reminded of the four conflicts that had been discovered while reviewing the document, which was last discussed in August, although no one could remember all four.

City Manager Eric Dodson said one conflict was having the next year's budget prepared and presented to Council by October, which did happen this year.

A second requirement, he said, is to publish the city's audit in the local newspaper. Publishing the approximate 60-page document would be expensive, said council members.

The other two conflicts that council could not remember Monday evening are the meeting time of the board of review and the due date of taxes. The Board of Review is required under the charter to meet during the fourth week



**Girl Scout cookie sales got underway in St. Ignace with delivery of a box of a new caramel cookies named Dulce de Leche to city leaders Monday, January 5. The annual cookie sale begins Friday, January 16, and runs through Sunday, February 1. A box of cookies is \$3.50 this year, the first increase in the popular morsels in more than 10 years. St. Ignace senior level Girl Scouts from troop 5340 making the presentation at city hall are (from left) Andrea Perry, Annemarie Horn, and Girl Scout ambassador Dana Perry. Accepting the cookies are Mayor Paul Grondin (left) and City Manager Eric Dodson.**

in March, but that does not give the county equalization department enough time to complete state reports. The board, therefore, has been meeting during the third week.

Delinquent tax penalty payments were recognized as an issue during

the charter review process, because the charter is not clear on the subject. The city begins charging a penalty for unpaid taxes September 1, the day they are due, but it is not clear if the penalty should revert to July 1, when the tax bills are issued.

Another debated topic at Monday's meeting was the distribution of casino compact money from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Under the state compact signed in 1993, the tribe has agreed to distribute 2% of its slot machine revenue to surrounding communities.

Following deliberation concerning \$45,000 received from the Tribe, Council approved a disbursement plan submitted by Mr. Dodson. The money will be distributed as follows: \$5,000 to Fort de Buade, \$1,500 to the St. Ignace Moose Lodge 999 for Christmas food baskets, \$3,500 to the St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce, \$5,000 for St. Ignace community events, \$5,000 to the Fireworks Committee, \$12,500 to the Ojibwa Museum, and \$12,500 to Little Bear East.

St. Ignace resident Donna Pope said she objected to the distribution. She thought the 2% money was for the city to fund infrastructure projects, including street repair.

"The city, itself, is getting less and less," she said.

In other business, Mr. Dodson gave Council a review of projects planned for the coming year. (See story in January 1 issue).

"While the economic times have been tough for Michigan and St. Ignace," Mr. Dodson told Council Monday before reviewing the projects, "we are still very fortunate to have a pretty proactive staff that has

worked to pull some projects together to make things happen for 2009, and we have other community groups working to make St. Ignace a better place."

The city also is working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to change the I-75 exit signs at 344A to include the city of St. Ignace, said Mr. Dodson. The signs now indicate Escanaba and Manistique to the west, but not St. Ignace to the east.

"The problem with St. Ignace for so many tourists is you get off 344A and you don't know we're here," he said.

The city is negotiating a contract to plow the Mackinac County Airport, which had been done by the Mackinac County Road Commission.

Recreation Director Scott Marshall provided an update for his plans for 2009, including his desire to bring more hockey, wrestling, and dodgeball tournaments to the city.

A new open skate program at Little Bear East, named Fab Friday, is proving successful, he said. For \$5, people receive skate rental, two pieces of pizza, and a soft drink. The program has helped contribute to the \$700 earned from open skate last week, which is about twice the revenue of the entire season last year.

Roller hockey will be played at the arena this year and will be open to teams, residents, and visitors. For baseball and soccer, he plans to recruit and train more umpires and referees and establish a traveling team for each sport. New divisions are planned for flag football and he is working to bring back men's softball.

Mr. Marshall said he plans to aggressively market the conference rooms at Little Bear East and is working on setting up a Web site for the recreation department.

City Council next meets Monday, January 19, at 8 p.m. in the St. Ignace Public Library.

## Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



## Elevator To Be Added to Catholic Church

By Karen Gould

St. Ignatius Loyola Church has received a variance to install an elevator on the corner of Church and Spring Streets, making the church barrier free. A variance needed to allow the enclosure, which will encroach on a 30-foot setback, was granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) at a hearing Monday evening, January 5.

A last minute modification to the addition, zoning board members said, allowed the project, which will extend to 12 feet from the sidewalk.

The variance stipulates that no parking be allowed from the new addition entrance to the west curb of Church Street. The area will be posted a passenger drop-off zone. From the new entry west will be angle parking designated handicap only.

The church is zoned R-2 and fronts Church Street. The entryway for the proposed elevator addition will face Spring Street.

The church sought the variance after a building permit was denied, based on the 30-foot setback

requirement. At that time, the addition would have extended five feet, eight inches from the edge of the sidewalk. The new plan brings the edge of the addition 12 feet from the sidewalk, which city police said would not block the view of the intersection for motorists.

Spring Street resident John Elliott cautioned that, unless the area outside the elevator entrance is marked "no parking" to allow for drop-off access, double-parking there could cause traffic con-

gestion on Spring Street.

His suggestion resulted in creation of the no parking zone.

Dave Walker and Dave Schmidt represented the church at the meeting and said future plans include making the parking angled and designating it for handicap parking. The church hopes to construct two or three handicap parking places, depending on the space.

The ZBA gave the church one year to build the addition. Mr. Walker said the church hopes to begin work in the spring.

## Fiber Optic Cable, Tools Are Stolen

Fiber optic cable was stolen from Drummond Island sometime between October 18 and November 15. More than \$50,000 worth of cable was reported stolen from a building near the Drummond Island Resort on Maxton Road.

Police are also investigating a breaking and entering and theft of tools that took place during the first two weeks of October from a residence on West H-40 in

Rudyard. Items stolen include a Campbell Hausfeld five horsepower air compressor, a DeWalt Sawzall, and a DeWalt cordless drill valued at almost \$500.

Michigan State Police are asking people to contact Crime Stoppers at (800) 465-7867 with information regarding this or any other crime. Calls can be anonymous and may earn rewards up to \$1,000.

## \$5.8 Million County Budget Adopted

By Karen Gould

In a special meeting Monday, December 29, Mackinac County Commissioners adopted the 2009 budget, reviewed bids for the county's audit, and approved extending employment of the tax clerk.

The county's 2009 budget of \$5.8 million is about 9%, or \$483,198.66, more than last year. The increase is attributed to wages and about a 7% hike in health

insurance and retirement costs.

The commission estimates that \$6 million in revenue will exceed expenses by about \$190,000.

During the meeting, commissioners opened three bids for the county audit next year, and expressed concern that some firms use newly hired accountants rather than more experienced auditors. A decision was expected to be made

Turn to page 10: Budget

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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.

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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.

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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.

Last week, I wrote that Census Bureau estimates "show Michigan losing more people last year - 46,368, or 5% of the population - than any other state, continuing a three-year slump." It should be 0.5% of the population. Thanks to eagle-eye reader Frank Wheeler, who reads more carefully than I wrote.

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*.