

# EUP School Districts Begin Brainstorming Ways To Cut Costs

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said Mr. Everson.

Collectively in Chippewa, Mackinac, and Luce counties, school districts spend about \$80 million a year.

The student population continues to decline, which impacts state revenue for most of the districts in the EUP. Those districts represent 80% of the student body.

Upper Peninsula schools face the additional challenges of rural environments, large distances between schools, and a migration of families to areas that offer better employment opportunities.

Of the 57 ISDs in the state, the EUP is the largest, geographically, although the smallest in per-pupil revenue. This is most evident with the cost of special education services, said Mr. Everson, which many regions cover entirely. Upper Peninsula students comprise less than 1% of all students in the state. That number is reflected in the U.P. population, which as a whole totals less than 4% of the state's population.

Statewide, Upper Peninsula schools have to fight to be heard, said Mr. Everson.

"Our influence," he said, "is pretty small."

He encouraged participants to contact state legislators to get the voice of the U.P. schools heard in Lansing.

The ISD anticipates no cuts in school funding for the 2009/2010 year as proposed by Governor Jennifer Granholm in the state's budget, said Mr. Everson, rather the funding will be covered by federal stimulus money. The funds, however, will come with restrictions requiring new programs to be put in place, which may not help school budgets overall.

"The reason I bring this up," he said, "is we had hoped this would bring some relief to our budgets. We don't anticipate it at this point."

Strings are attached to the money for Title One funding, which is for schools with a high percentage of low-income students. The funds are to be used for new, innovative programs, said Mr. Everson, and not for programs already in place, unless a district has documented proof it has had success with its programs. Once funding is approved for a district, it will receive half of the funds and must show successful use of them, before the remaining funds are released.

The stimulus money will help schools this year, he said, although it will likely only serve as a delay in a state aid cut for the coming years. Right now, he said, the state is grappling with a loss of between \$57



**About 45 school administrators, board members, and business staff from schools in the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District (ISD) gather in a music room at Rudyard Area Schools Thursday evening, April 9. Pete Everson (left), ISD superintendent, led the session of school leaders considering the possibility of sharing some of their resources.**

million and \$100 million per month and future cuts are likely to overcome the deficit spending.

In general, across the U.P., Title One funding already has been cut by 10%, compounded per year for the last six years. St. Ignace is losing about \$15,000 per year, said Superintendent Mike Springsteen. Sault Ste. Marie schools, which had been getting about \$900,000, now receive about \$450,000, said Superintendent Dan Reattoir.

Use of federal funds also is restricted for special education programs, requiring that they cannot be used for programs already funded by other means.

"The term supplement, and not supplant, is real clear within the federal guidelines in using federal money," said Mr. Everson. "In other words, you cannot spend the money on something you are using other dollars for already. You've got to do new programs with it."

"What might actually happen is we aren't going to be able to spend all of the money."

Some schools in the U.P. already have consolidated services to help reduce costs, including Les Cheneaux and DeTour, which are sharing a superintendent. Both Moran Township and Brimley schools have a part-time superintendent, and each district is employing fewer administrative staff. About five years ago, St. Ignace and Moran Township began a shared bus service, saving more than \$40,000 annually.

Sault Ste. Marie Area Schools employs mechanics and has a bus maintenance garage, said Superintendent Reattoir, who suggested his school district would be interested in taking on work from other schools. It already is working on

buses from Cedarville, DeTour, and Pickford. Tahquamenon Area Schools, said Superintendent Alice Walker, has privatized its bus service to save money.

Eric Feldhusen, director of technology at Rudyard, said he has talked to schools in Arizona that have eliminated textbooks, which now are available to students on computers. The downside to replacing textbooks with computers is keeping the technology up-to-date. The group discussed pooling textbook funds to purchase computers for all students. Textbooks would be on the computers.

The ISD contracts some business services and has established a technology consortium, which includes providing a computer file server and maintenance for the districts. It also has partnered with two other ISDs to access more computer storage capacity at a lower cost.

Participants discussed sharing some teachers, like those who teach advanced mathematics classes, physics, or a language. The courses could be offered like college classes, two or three days per week in different schools, or they could be offered by the semester. The plan, participants agreed, would help with some programs in the higher level classes.

"At the secondary level, because of the diversity of the programs that we want kids to go into," said Mr. Springsteen, "we're really struggling trying to keep those programs going for the kids."

Consolidating health care cover-

age would reduce costs, said Mr. Everson. One idea would have the schools participating in the state's health care plan.

"Can we do that?" he asked. "I think we can. Are we willing to do it?"

Another way districts could save money is to combine districts, offered Mr. Everson, and he asked participants to consider the advantages and disadvantages of combining districts by county. The combined district, he suggested, could include one school board with committees. The implications of millages and taxes would need to be considered.

Schools in the ISD include Bay Mills Ojibwe Charter School, Bois Blanc Pines School District, Brimley Area Schools, DeTour Area Schools, Engadine Consolidated Schools, Joseph K. Lumsden, Bahweting School, Les Cheneaux Community Schools, Mackinac Island Public School, Moran Township School District, Pickford Public Schools, Rudyard Area Schools, Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools, St. Ignace Area Schools, Tahquamenon Area Schools, and Whitefish Township Community Schools.

The group agreed to meet once a month for several months to continue discussing ways to save money, consolidate services, and provide desired programs for students. The next meeting will be Thursday, May 14, at 6 p.m. at Rudyard Area Schools. Meetings are open to the public.

## Trojans Celebration Will Be Sunday

A community celebration will be Sunday, April 19, at 7 p.m. in the Cedarville High School commons to honor the Cedarville High School boys basketball team and its recent trip to the Class D state finals.

The Trojans lost the state

championship game Saturday, March 28, in Lansing by one point to the Muskegon West Michigan Christian Warriors. It was the Trojans' fourth consecutive trip to the Class D final four. The Trojans won the state title in 2007.

## Job Fair Is Friday at St. Ignace

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Works! at 643-8158. Tables are free but registration is required to ensure adequate space.

The St. Ignace Job Fair is sponsored by the St. Ignace Chamber of

Commerce, Michigan Works!, MSU Extension in Mackinac County, St. Ignace Area Schools, St. Ignace Downtown Development Authority, and Consolidated Community Schools Services.

## 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.

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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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## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



## Green Thumb Politics

When he was flamboyant mayor of Detroit before becoming a forceful and highly unorthodox governor of Michigan in 1897, Hazen S. Pingree was known nationwide for "Pingree's Potato Patches," a relief program for Detroiters who got vacant city land and seeds.

Now sprouting: Granholm's Gardens.

As part of the Michigan Land Bank, Governor Jennifer Granholm, without the flair of Pingree, has established the Garden for Growth Program, "making state-owned properties available to those wishing to create urban gardens. This has helped to increase access to fresh, healthy, affordable food for our citizens."

So far, Granholm's program is a low-key undertaking. But steam might build with the urban garden idea that is gaining some traction in Detroit, where vacant lots are estimated to account for about 40 square miles.

Furthermore, First Lady Michelle Obama is setting an example by putting a 1,100-square-foot plot with 52 varieties of fruits and vegetables on the south lawn of the White House.

Granholm didn't include it in her address as delivered to the Legislature, but in the printed version of her 2009 State of the State Message, she said: "This year, the State Land Bank will partner with local governments to assemble publicly-owned property to create urban farms. By working with agriculture groups and schools, we will work together to educate our young citizens about the benefits of growing food for their families."

One proposal advanced by Detroit John Hantz would have wind turbines within the garden.

Wind and other alternative energy initiatives are high priority items in Granholm's economic development program.

Last week, in reporting that Global Wind Systems, a wind turbine assembly plant opening later this year in Novi, will provide 250 manufacturing jobs, the *Detroit News* said that more than two dozen companies have sprung up or diversified into wind parts manufacturing in Michigan.

The company received \$7.3 million in tax credits from the Michigan Economic Growth Authority.

Two years ago, in an interview over lunch at a Traverse City eatery, Granholm raved about the potential for Michigan being a leader among the states in generating electricity "from the W's such as wind, wave action, and wood.

The Greenholm administration?

### Campaign Watch

Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, frontrunner for the 2010 Democratic nomination to succeed term-limited Granholm, has a campaign organization (not-so-modestly called "A Whole Lot of People Supporting John Cherry") that periodically announces endorsements. Last week the Communications Workers of America joined the labor parade for Cherry.

Meanwhile, Cherry (as do Attorney General Mike Cox and Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land among GOP hopefuls for governor) milks media attention from official duties. This week, as announced by Granholm's office, Cherry is to travel to Flint, Detroit, Jackson, and Grand Rapids to announce jobs grants.

Cherry also is point man for the administration's promotion of a MI-Great Lakes Plan for protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and Michigan waterways and "jumpstart our recovery by investing in Michigan's blue water economy."

The administration's first floating of the "blue water economy" line was done by Cherry last year in Traverse City.

On the Republican trail, the big news (although not surprising) last week was the announcement by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson that he will not run for governor because it would take too much time from his county chores. In January, he said, "I know I can do better" as governor but candidly acknowledged he was merely putting his name "in the rumor mill."

Political writers will miss Brookisms.

Cox, who also has a southeast Michigan base and is well-known statewide, could be the big gainer from Patterson's decision.

Another likely GOP contender, Ann Arbor businessman Rick Snyder, said Tuesday he will visit the Upper Peninsula on the first segment of his "Statewide Listening Tour." He will be visiting Marquette, Escanaba, and Cheboygan April 21; Alpena, Gaylord, and Charlevoix April 22; and Traverse City April 23.

He said: "We are a large and diverse state which is why I am committed to traveling to every corner of this state to hear what the people have to say. So often, residents of the Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan are forgotten by our political leaders. This vital region of Michigan is the base of our tourism industry and is a critical component of our state's economic recovery."

Snyder is the co-founder, chairman and CEO of Ardesta, one of the nation's largest investment firms focused on micro and nanotechnology companies. He was also the former president and COO of Gateway, Inc.

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*.

## Home Show, Expo Begins Friday

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boats, all terrain vehicles, and cars in addition to home improvement products. Participants will be able to buy cooking supplies, jewelry, and food storage containers. Banks, real estate companies, and contractors

also will be among the exhibitors scheduled to be at the show.

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Mackinac County, the previous sponsor of the show, opted to put its fundraising efforts into a winter auction instead of the home show this year.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Recalls Working at Island Bicycle Shop

To the Editor:

As a long-ago employee of Nancy May Pfeiffelman on Mackinac Island, I felt compelled to write following a feature story about the shop's closing, published March 19. I worked for the bike shop from 1964 to 1968 and Nancy was my boss at the shop down by the Straits Dock. I lived in the Pfeiffelman home and later under the bike shop itself.

It was my first time away from home, and as others have written, I learned valuable life lessons under her direction. I later went on to work for Carriage Tours, but remembered my days as a "bike boy" fondly.

I have returned to the Island often since that time and, as the landscape has changed, some things have remained constant. The Grand sits atop the hill in all its splendor, and the fort and bluff homes greet you in any weather, but it was seeing Nancy, sitting in that booth renting bicycles, that really made me feel that I was home.

Now, too, that is gone, and it's kind of sad and at the same time, I'm excited for Nancy. A talented photographer, for the first time in more than 45 years, she has an opportunity to pursue other summertime endeavors. I appreciate all she meant to me in my formative years, and I hope she has a ball.

Bob Elmer  
St. Ignace

## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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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.