

Mackinac Island Ferry Lines Agree To Drop Ticket Prices \$1

Ferry: From page 1

only a few weeks before the season began, makes it difficult for his business, which already had finalized its 2009 budget and marketing plans. The request from the city, he said, should have come in January.

"We are now in the red," said Mr. Shepler. "We're operating in the red. Things now have to get cut."

Arnold Transit had decided to consider a ticket reduction last fall, if fuel prices stabilized and did not climb after the winter, Mr. Brown said.

"If it spiked through the roof this spring," he said of fuel costs, "we would have been prepared for it. Now that it's steady, we were able to drop it back a dollar."

The city, which collects 2% of

the gross ticket sales as a franchise fee, did not offer to reduce that fee, nor did the boat lines suggest the city consider a fee cut.

The ferry companies say a minimum wage hike, the expense to meet homeland security requirements, rising health insurance costs, and a decline in ticket sales are squeezing their budgets.

This spring, Star Line is running with an average of eight passengers per trip, and needs 40 to break even, Mr. Pfeiffelmann said.

With the 2009 budget based on a \$25 adult fare, Mr. Shepler said his company now is looking to find ways to replace lost revenue and may have to cut staff, projects, and VIP passes. The company operates with about 180 employees, most hourly workers. The company already had

made cuts in its 2009 budget, reducing billboard advertising and other marketing programs to balance the budget. Now, they may have to be cut more, he said.

About 20% of Island travelers pay the full fare, said Mr. Shepler. Many travelers purchase tickets online at a reduced price, purchase travel packages that include boat tickets, or receive a group rate.

"I'm not sure one dollar will bring more people to Mackinac Island," he said. "I sure hope I'm

wrong. If I am, I'll be the first to admit it."

With an agreement reached, a special meeting planned for Wednesday, May 13, to discuss the matter now will not take place.

The city is pleased with the ticket price reduction offered by the boat lines, said Mayor Margaret Doud.

"Oh, we're very grateful and appreciative of their efforts," she said. "It's the spirit of working together for the benefit of the whole Island community."

Help Available for Homeowners

Foreclosure: From page 1

including forbearance, loan modification, and even bankruptcy.

Even after the Sheriff Sale, Mrs. Pieri said there are options to get the property back and possibly set up an affordable monthly payment.

"It is still worth making the phone call," she said. "Every case is different."

Most of the government-funded programs offering help require that it be a first mortgage and that a letter of explanation be sent to the lender, however, Mrs. Pieri said anyone facing difficulties in paying their mortgage should seek assistance before it's too late.

Mrs. Pieri can be contacted in St. Ignace at 643-6239 or at home@lighthouse.net.

Although HOME works mainly with people with an income between \$15,000 and \$55,000, Mrs. Pieri said she could point others toward programs like HOPE NOW, which offers alternative remedies to those whose income exceeds \$55,000.

HOPE NOW defines itself as "an alliance between counselors, mortgage companies, investors and other mortgage market participants." These members include counselors like ACORN Housing, mortgage companies like Citigroup, trade associations like Consumer Bankers Association, investors like Fannie Mae, and mortgage insurance companies like Mortgage Guaranty Insurance Corporation.

Nationally, HOPE NOW has grown from 175,000 homeowners who entered repayment with modified loans in January 2008 to 249,000 in March 2009.

Assistance through the HOPE NOW program can be reached through the HOPE Hotline at 1-888-995-4673 or www.hopenow.com.

The Michigan State University Extension, through its

community and economic development program, provides resources to HOME, including Web sites and published material. The Extension also provides counseling for those ready to declare bankruptcy and simple budgeting help.

Local help is also available for those considering a home purchase.

Home Purchase Workshop

The Extension will offer a Home Buyer Pre-Purchase Workshop from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 7, at the St. Ignace Public Library. At this workshop, interested home buyers will get information on assessing readiness to buy a home, working with real estate agents, the home inspection and purchase process, financing, budgeting and credit, and basic home and financial maintenance.

Advance registration for the workshop is requested by phone at 643-7307.

Members of the Sault Ste. Tribe of Chippewa Indians can take advantage of programs like the tribe's Individual Development Account, in which every dollar saved toward the purchase of a home is matched with \$.25 by the program.

For more information on this and other programs for tribe members, contact Ryan Madigan or Dana Patrick with the Sault Tribe Housing Authority at (906) 495-1450.

Community Calendar

- Calendar:** From page 7
- matinees at 2 p.m., at the Guild Theatre. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$8 for students.
- Thursday, May 14: **Friends of the Library Gently Used Book Sale**, all day, Bayliss Public Library.
 - Wednesday, May 20: **American Red Cross Blood Drive**, 10:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., Faith Lutheran Church.
 - Thursday, May 21: **Chippewa-Mackinac Chapter of the Michigan Association of Retired School personnel annual area meeting**, 9:30 a.m., Presbyterian Church. Reservations are required and may be made by calling (906) 478-6841.
 - Wednesday, May 27: **American Red Cross Blood Drive**, 10 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., American Legion Post #3.
 - Sundays: **Alcoholics Anonymous Shewadin Group Meetings**, noon, Shewadin Building, 2154 Shunk Road.
 - Mondays and Tuesdays: **Alcoholics Anonymous Central Group Meetings**, 7:30 p.m., Community of Christ Church, Room 101.
 - Tuesdays: **Sault Parent Group**, 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., Algonquin Methodist Church.
 - Wednesdays: **Preschool Story Time**, 10 a.m., for children ages three to five, Bayliss Public

- Library.
- Thursdays: **Preschool Story Time**, 1 p.m., for children ages three to five, Bayliss Public Library.
 - Saturdays: **Alcoholics Anonymous Lock City Group Meetings**, 7 p.m., Presbyterian Church, 555 Bingham Avenue.
- Cheboygan**
- Wednesday, May 6: **"Cooking for Cancer Prevention" with Deanna House**, 7 p.m., Commons at Cheboygan Middle School. Cost is \$5. Sponsored by Cheboygan Memorial Hospital's Development Council.
 - Saturday, May 9: **Spring Fling Craft Show**, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Cheboygan Eagles Hall. Sponsored by the Cheboygan Eagles Auxiliary.
 - Friday, May 15: **Chippewa County Humane Society Spring Fling**, 6 p.m., VFW Hall. Cost is \$15. The evening will include dinner, entertainment, raffles, silent auction, and door prizes. Proceeds will benefit the Humane Society.
 - Friday, May 22: **American Red Cross Blood Drive**, 9 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Tendercare Health Center.

Paul Bunyan Marks Half Century

Paul: From page 3

A fence was added in the 1980s for safety after people started climbing on the statue, even standing on Paul's hat.

Castle Rock has been owned by the Eby family for more than 80 years.

An earlier version of Paul and Babe were once at the site. An early wood museum building from the 1930s or 1940s that sat at Castle Rock eventually was torn down when it began to deteriorate. A wooden Paul and Babe sat on its

roof. When the building was demolished, Mr. Eby's grandfather asked his uncle to construct a new Paul Bunyan and Babe.

Mr. Eby's grandfather purchased Castle Rock in the 1920s and he also owned the Indian Village. In the late 1950s, after the Mackinac Bridge was constructed, he built two souvenir stores on west US-2.

Castle Rock, which stands about 200 feet tall, offering a sweeping view of forest lands to the north and Lake Huron and Mackinac Island to the east, is scheduled to open in mid-May.

Lock Not on Stimulus Fund List

Locks: From page 3

and State Representative Gary McDowell said they were pleased to see funding provided to these four northern Michigan projects, they also said they are concerned with a lack of economic recovery funds for construction of a new Soo Lock to replace the aging Sabin and Davis locks.

Construction of the new Soo Lock would be the largest public works navigation project on the Great Lakes in a generation, Mr. Stupak pointed out, and would generate nearly \$500 million annually in economic activity. The Corps of Engineers estimates that full funding for the project would create at least 15,000 jobs.

Congress first authorized the expansion of the locks in 1986, and since then, \$20 million has been appropriated for studies, Mr. McDowell pointed out.

"Ultimately the Corps of Engineers has decided to spend its money where it believes it will have the greatest economic impact," Mr. Stupak said. "I conveyed my concern to the White

House that the full impact of the new Soo Lock might not have been considered."

Despite this, \$17 million was recently appropriated and signed into law through the Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act to begin building the coffer dams necessary to construct the replacement lock, and that work will continue on schedule, Mr. Stupak said.

Another locally sought project that was not included on the Corps' work list for use of federal stimulus funds is proposed dredging of the channels at the Les Cheneaux Islands.



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