

# McDowell Gives Citizens Update at Town Hall Meeting

## Representative Calls for Public Ideas

By Mark Tower

State Representative Gary McDowell held a sparsely attended town hall meeting Thursday, August 20, at the Mackinac County Annex Building in St. Ignace to discuss Michigan's economy with his constituents. Mr. McDowell said he wanted to visit with citizens in his district, which includes Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, and parts of Cheboygan counties, update them on the state of the Michigan economy, and get ideas from them about what budget priorities are most important.

The visit to St. Ignace was the sixth in a series and followed visits to Cedarville, Rudyard, and Sault Ste. Marie. Mr. McDowell planned similar meetings in Pellston and Indian River Friday, August 21.

Although only four people attended the meeting in St. Ignace, discussion ranged from state budgetary concerns to state tax policy and job training for displaced workers.

To give people an idea of the state of Michigan's economy and what its government has to work with, Mr. McDowell, a Democrat from Rudyard, summarized this year's tax revenues, comparing them to years past and predicting what will happen to Michigan's budget in the next two years.

The state's general fund, which is one of its three main funding sources along with the school aid fund and the transportation fund, has seen a 42.5% decrease in revenue since 2000, which puts revenue in actual dollars close to what it was in the early 1980s. General fund revenue was about \$9.3 billion in 2008, and projections show it will be less than \$7 billion in 2010.

Right now, the draft of the 2009-2010 state budget, which state legislators still need to approve, expects a \$587 million deficit, which, according to pres-

ent predictions, would increase to a \$1.8 billion deficit for the 2010-2011 budget.

Mr. McDowell gave those present an insider's perspective on possible cuts resulting from this year's huge budget losses. As chair of the Community Health Committee, he said health care cuts including preventive medicine programs like blood pressure check-ups, cancer screenings, and smoking cessation, the state's poison control center, and state-funded mental health would all be likely candidates for reduction or elimination in next year's budget.

Another area facing cuts is education, he said, especially early childhood education funding for children up to age three, which is eliminated completely in the Michigan Senate's version of next year's budget.

According to Mr. McDowell, another program in danger of being cut is the Michigan Agricultural Surplus, which has been providing a small percentage of farmers' surplus crops to state food banks and shelters since 1990.

"I don't think people realize how serious, how dire, it really is," he said. "There are so many cuts, I can't rationalize them all."

Last fall, state revenue dropped 26% in one year, a drop that Mr. McDowell said probably is more extreme than even those seen during the Great Depression.

### McDowell Suggests Restructuring Tax Policy

One solution Mr. McDowell suggested could help fix the state's deficit would be a re-thinking of state tax policy.

In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, taxpayers received \$6.3 billion more in tax credits and exemptions than the state received in total revenue. For comparison, 10 years earlier in 1998, the relationship between these two numbers was

flipped, with state revenue outperforming tax exemptions and credits by \$6.8 billion.

This negative relationship between what the state of Michigan collects and what it pays back to taxpayers makes balancing a budget difficult, and reevaluating those tax credits and incentives is a possible solution, according to Mr. McDowell.

"It really hampers our ability to fund state programs," he said. "We need to look each of them [tax breaks] and see if there is value in them."

He said many of these tax "loopholes" are never reviewed after being put into effect, which he believes should be looked into.

"We need to take a look at how we are taking," Mr. McDowell said. "We can't just continue what we're doing and keep cutting and cutting. We need to look at the possibility of a low, broad-based tax."

He said he did not anticipate a statewide governmental shutdown like the one seen at Michigan's governmental budget 11th hour in 2007.

"Right now we are at a standstill," he said of the process to approve a final state budget. "I don't think anybody wants to go through what we went through two years ago."

### Calls for Funding of Tourism Advertising

In June, Mr. McDowell introduced a package of bills that would establish the Michigan Promotion Fund, a permanent fund for tourism-related expenses such as the "Pure Michigan" campaign.

If the bills are approved, the fund would draw a \$2.50 fee on airport rental cars temporarily, and sales tax codes at tourism-related businesses would wind up funding the program permanently.

"This program has just been so wonderful, people all over are seeing it," Mr. McDowell said of Pure Michigan. "But it's like any adver-

tising campaign, you have to keep it up."

According to research by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), every dollar invested in out-of-state advertising generates more than \$40 in sales for Michigan businesses and nearly \$3 in revenue for the state.

"It is so important to get this done," Mr. McDowell said. "It puts people to work."

### Supports Job Re-Training Program

Another way Mr. McDowell said the state could encourage economic recovery is through retraining people for new jobs as manufacturing leaves the state as the largest industry. In May, he voted in favor of a bill that would use \$138 million in stimulus funds to extend unemployment benefits to displaced workers enrolled in a job retraining program to pursue a high-demand career.

Under the plan, unemployed workers who are enrolled in a vocational or skill retraining program qualify for an additional 26 weeks of unemployment benefits.

"This plan will help get our displaced workers back on the job by giving them the skills they need to break into the growing fields like health care, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing," McDowell said.

The bills supporting this program are currently held up in the state Senate, Mr. McDowell said.

Some at the town hall meeting Thursday agreed with Mr. McDowell that change and restructuring the Michigan economy may be the solution to getting back on track. The representative for northern Michigan and the Eastern U.P. said he wanted to spark conversation among his constituents and get fresh ideas.

"We need to have an intelligent, rational dialogue about it," Mr. McDowell said. "I'm just looking for solutions, looking for answers."

# Clark Twp: Don't OK Variances Based on Ordinance – Yet

By Jonathan Eppley

The Clark Township Planning Commission is asking that the township Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) not approve building variances based on the new township zoning ordinance, which is not yet approved. The commission doesn't want residents constructing or developing beyond what is legal under the current zoning ordinance while the new ordinance is under final review.

The request comes on the heels of a variance approved by the ZBA Tuesday, August 4, for James and Debra White on Island No. 8 to extend the height of their garage. The Whites plan to live in the extended space above the garage while their home on Forrest Lane is

reconstructed.

"A lot of the decision-making is based on the fact that, under the new ordinance, that would be a legal situation," said commissioner Joe Eger, who is also the commission liaison to the ZBA. "I think we ought to let the ZBA know they're really in violation by doing that. They're giving a variance, but it would have been otherwise shot down."

Commissioner Eger is concerned that too much time will pass before the new ordinance is finally approved and he doesn't want a multitude of variances approved based on that document in the meantime.

The new zoning ordinance has been under review by the Clark

Township Board of Trustees since March. The township board is reviewing the 23 articles of the ordinance in increments and passing along their notes and recommendations to the planning commission as completed. The new ordinance is already approved by the township planning commission and the Mackinac County Planning Commission.

The ZBA approved a similar request by Steven and Kathy Fountain to extend the height of their garage to 24.5 feet in March, anticipating the approval of the new ordinance. The current zoning ordinance allows garages to be 18 feet in height, and the new ordinance, when approved, will allow such structures to be up to 25 feet in height.

In other news, the planning commission tabled its review of zoning ordinance articles seven, nine, and 10 at its Tuesday, August 11, meeting owing to not enough commissioners present. The commission wants to have more of the commis-

sioners who helped write the new ordinance on hand when reviewing the township board's recommendations.

"We should really have more people involved here that were involved in the original time put into this," said Commissioner Steve Honnila. "I really think that we should, in order to make the right decisions, we should probably take these home to read them closer."

Commissioners Honnila, Eger, Vaughn Rye, Gary Wellnitz, Mike Freel, and John Grenier attended last week's meeting, and commissioners Jeff Davis, Pam Thompson, and Paul Smith were absent. Commissioners Freel, Grenier, Honnila, Eger, Davis, and Smith helped pen the new ordinance, which was started in May 2007, and completed in December 2008.

The commission expects to review the recommendations to those three articles during its Tuesday, September 22, meeting as well as subsequent articles approved by the township board.

## 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.

### Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at [stignaceneews.com](http://stignaceneews.com).

### Contact:

The St. Ignace News  
359 Reagon Street  
PO Box 277  
Saint Ignace, MI 49781  
(906) 643-9150 (phone)  
(906) 643-9122 (fax)  
e-mail: [news@stignaceneews.com](mailto:news@stignaceneews.com)

## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



## A Sheriff at Your Kitchen Table?

Early in election campaigns -- before the position papers, debates, and TV ads -- non-incumbent candidates strive to gain name ID by speaking out on news of the day and, sometimes, performing publicity gigs.

Consider actions last week by 2010 GOP gubernatorial contenders:

- Representative Pete Hoekstra of Holland, ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, threatened to block reprogramming of Defense Department intelligence funding that would be used for moving suspected terrorist detainees to the state's to-be-closed Standish prison if the Obama administration makes that decision.

As for publicity stunts, he's started, including in Detroit and the Traverse City area, on his quest to perform brief stints in 100 different jobs. He also is continuing stretches of the bicycle journeys he has done since he upset an incumbent in the 9th District 1992 GOP primary.

- State Senator Tom George, a Kalamazoo area medical doctor who is a well-qualified but relatively obscure and under-reported candidate for governor, cycled 213 miles this month in the Upper Peninsula, ending up in Ontonagon County. That brought to 623 the number of miles he has cycled since starting in June.

Said George: "This stage of our Fix Michigan bicycle tour was a big success because I met with a number of individuals who are concerned about the future of our state and they are also paying attention to the governor's race."

- Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard, whose office, like Hoekstra's, provides a certain cachet in dealing with the Standish issue, said last week: "The question should not be what should we do when it is empty, but why are we emptying it in the first place."

"Why would anyone want to push thousands of prisoners out into Michigan communities? We lead the nation in unemployment and we will be sending parolees into an environment where they will not find jobs. These folks will just continue to commit more crimes."

I focus particularly here today on Bouchard because I chatted with him by phone after his visit to the Upper Peninsula State Fair in Escanaba last week, and before his visit this week to Traverse City (where he will be endorsed by ex-Senator George McManus, who remains influential in agricultural and other circles).

Bouchard's campaign gig, complete with some follow-up online videos, are "Kitchen Table Tours," meeting with folks in their homes. He calls it an "outgrowth" of what he did in walking neighborhoods in his local campaigns.

He said he hears "more common sense" in his kitchen table talks than he does from politicians in Lansing or Washington.

### A GOP Stretch

Increasingly, Republicans tag woes facing term-limited Governor Jennifer Granholm on Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, who increasingly looms as the Democratic nominee in 2010.

In an August 20 release on "failed leadership" on prisons, Bouchard referred to "the Granholm/Cherry administration."

A day earlier, Republican State Chairman Ron Weiser, in a press release about taxes, flat out said, "the Cherry Administration once again has developed a plan to pick your pockets to protect big government."

### More Than a Mitten

While in the Upper Peninsula, Bouchard applauded House passage last week of a bill by Representative Mike Lahti (D-Hancock) to require all official depictions of the state of Michigan to include both the Upper and Lower peninsulas.

Said Bouchard: "As I've always said: two peninsulask one state."

### Good Way To Go

In a welcome display of bipartisan and bicameral cooperation, Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), chairman of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee, and Representative Ed Clemente (D-Lincoln Park), chairman of the House New Economy and Quality of Life Committee, on Friday in Traverse City held their second session to get testimony from a variety of businesses on how best to promote job growth. The first was earlier in Detroit.

Among those testifying was Ray Pleva of Cerise Nutraceuticals, whose cherry-based products are creating quite a stir in university and other research circles.

Pleva's presentation impressed Representative Marty Knollenberg, an Oakland County Republican who said, "I always thought cherries were something you [only] ate."

*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.*

## Golfers To Raise Funds for Moses Dialysis Unit and Island Clinic

Golfers will begin teeing off at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, August 27, for the eighth annual The Jewel at Mackinac golf tournament at Grand Hotel and Wawashkamo golf courses on Mackinac Island.

The tournament, organized by Mackinac Straits Health System, will raise money for the Moses Dialysis Unit at the St. Ignace hospital and the Mackinac Island Medical Center.

These funds are raised through a \$300 per golfer entry fee, \$1,200 team sponsorships, and other sponsorships that range from \$50 to \$25,000.

The first tee-off of the morning will be at 10:30 at Grand Hotel's Woods 9, followed by tee-offs at 11 a.m. on the Grand 9, and 11:30 at the Wawashkamo course. Play is an 18-hole, four-person team scramble.

The \$300 entry fee for golfers includes tournament registration, round-trip ferry service from Mackinaw City or St. Ignace, taxi service to and from the docks, a box lunch, refreshments during the tournament, a cocktail reception at 5 p.m., and an awards dinner to follow.

Both the dialysis unit and the Island's medical center need the funds since they don't generate a lot of revenue, said Shannon Doran, hospital administrative assistant.

"It's more of a service for the community so they don't have to go somewhere else," she said of the dialysis unit at the hospital. "The Island [medical center] has to do a lot of fundraising to stay afloat, too."

In the event of inclement weather, golfers will receive a rain check for a round of golf, but the cocktail reception and dinner will continue on the evening of August 27.

The tournament is limited to 168 golfers, and those interested in registering or providing sponsorship may contact Mrs. Doran at 643-0456.

## Child Car Seat Checks Offered Sept. 9

A child safety seat check will be offered Wednesday, September 9, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace. Certified safety seat technicians St. Ignace Police Officer Allen Mitchell and Mackinac County Sheriff's Deputy Dustin Stempki will conduct the checks.

Parents, grandparents, and caregivers who regularly transport children 12 and younger are encouraged to attend.

For questions about child safety seats, contact Officer Mitchell or Deputy Stempki at 643-1911.

## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

359 Reagon Street, PO Box 277, Saint Ignace, MI 49781

Telephone (906) 643-9150 • Facsimile (906) 643-9122

[www.SaintIgnaceNews.com](http://www.SaintIgnaceNews.com)

USPS Periodical Publication Number - 462-380

ESTABLISHED 1878

Published each Thursday at Saint Ignace, Mackinac County, Michigan

Entered in Saint Ignace, Michigan Post Office as Periodical Mail Matter, Act of March 3, 1879

Periodical Postage Paid at Saint Ignace, MI • Additional Postage Paid at Gaylord, MI

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Ignace News, PO Box 277, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Volume 130, Number 21 Thursday, August 27, 2009

**Publisher/Editor**  
Wesley H. Maurer, Jr.  
**Associate Publisher**  
Mary R. Maurer  
**Publisher 1975-1995**  
Wesley H. Maurer, Sr. (1897-1995)

### Editor

Ellen Paquin, [news@saintignaceneews.com](mailto:news@saintignaceneews.com)

### Staff Writers

Karen Gould, [karen@saintignaceneews.com](mailto:karen@saintignaceneews.com)

Jonathan Eppley, [jon@saintignaceneews.com](mailto:jon@saintignaceneews.com)

Mark Tower, [mark@stignaceneews.com](mailto:mark@stignaceneews.com)

Michael Ayala, [mike@stignaceneews.com](mailto:mike@stignaceneews.com)

### Advertising Department

Tammy Matson, David Moyalson

[ads@saintignaceneews.com](mailto:ads@saintignaceneews.com)

### Print Shop Manager

Sherry Cece

### Circulation Manager

Wendy Colegrove



### Subscriptions:

\$42 in Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, Luce, and Cheboygan counties.

\$52 elsewhere in the United States and military post offices.

\$35 for the Web edition at [www.saintignaceneews.com](http://www.saintignaceneews.com)

We take Visa, MasterCard, and Discover