

Ten Mackinaw City Candidates on Ballot Tuesday

Election: From page 1

The development of Mackinaw City Historic Village, The Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw Museum, and the reorganization of the local senior center made possible by the Mackinaw City Lions Club and Wawatam Area Seniors are examples Mr. Wallin cites. The efforts made by the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau to promote the village's events are impressive, he said.



Ronald Wallin

Jeff Hingston
An owner of the Candy Corner for 28 years, Jeff Hingston believes his experience in successfully running his business will aid him as president. With his son, Frank, managing the family shop, Mr. Hingston feels he can now devote the time necessary to lead the village. He is currently serving a term as village trustee.



Jeff Hingston

Mr. Hingston is an active member of the village community as a member of the Church of the Straits and Lions Club for 27 years. In addition to his current term as village trustee, he has served in village government in a variety of areas, including the planning commission, chamber of commerce, downtown development authority, and village president pro tem. He is pleased with the roles he has played within the community and village government.

The continuous updating of ordinances is important to Mr. Hingston. Many ordinances are old and need to be reviewed to ensure they are relevant today, he said. In addition to updates, more avenues should be explored to properly enforce them.

Mr. Hingston believes that the property tax levels should be examined and other resources explored to bring tax relief to the taxpayers. He plans to address this if he is elected president.

A proactive approach to the challenges of Mackinaw City is necessary, he said. Solving potential problems before they start is one of Mr. Hingston's goals. He wants to bring residents and business owners together and open a dialogue to discuss ways to improve the village.

As a lifelong resident of Mackinaw City, Mr. Hingston is pleased with its small-town charm and natural beauty. He finds the residents' desire to volunteer and share their opinions energizing. The efforts senior citizens and retirees

have made for the benefit of the village is remarkable, he said.

Village Trustee Candidates James Alford

A village trustee since 1999 and a retired teacher, James Alford is running for reelection because he enjoys the challenge of resolving the issues Mackinaw City faces.



James Alford

He believes the greatest challenges facing Mackinaw City are providing year-around employment to residents and upgrading infrastructure while maintaining a low tax millage. Yearly employment is an issue shared by many tourism communities, he said, and remains one of the most difficult to resolve in Mackinaw City. He plans to address employment should he be reelected.

Maintaining the infrastructure of Mackinaw City is especially important, he said.

"It's like a car. If it breaks down, then it's going to cost a lot more to fix," Mr. Alford said.

Infrastructure is essential to better serve the many tourists who pass through Mackinaw City, he said, and he points to the ambulance hall near Dairy Queen as an example. The building houses ambulances, serves as living quarters for EMTs and paramedics, and contains public restrooms.

"When you have 25,000 to 30,000 people roaming around, you need to have facilities for them," he said.

Mr. Alford is proud of the village improvements he has supported. He has backed the new sidewalks on the east and west side of Mackinaw City High School, the improvements made to the smaller parks dotting the village, and the updates at the marina.

A new fire station must be built to house the fire engines, Mr. Alford said, and he plans to continue working toward that goal. It is an ongoing project, he said, and he cautions that it will take awhile to complete. Money is the major factor, he said, as well as securing the appropriate permits and land.

Mr. Alford notes nothing in the village can be accomplished without the combined effort of everyone on the council, staff, the planning commission, and the input and aid of residents.

Mr. Alford is the father of two children, Nicholas, 25, and Sara, 25. A resident of Mackinaw City for 15 years, he works part time at Mancino's restaurant while serving as a trustee.

Janelle Bancroft

Serving on the village council has been one of the many ways Janelle Bancroft stayed involved in

Mackinaw City's community. While her children Alyssa and Ian were young, Mrs. Bancroft served as a Girl Scout leader, a Sunday school teacher, or in any other position where she could be involved in her children's activities. She also helped establish the preschool program offered at Church of the Straits and served on its founding board.

By serving on the village council, Mrs. Bancroft has learned even more about the village, she said. Taking part in managing ordinances, participating in property purchase discussions, and being an active member of the facilities committee has enabled her to see the inner workings of the village and play a part in what transpires.

While on the council, Mrs. Bancroft has supported actions in sidewalk replacement near the Mackinaw City school and improvements to the historic village. Credit for these accomplishments extend to all trustees, she said.

Mackinaw City is in need of year-around employment, she said. Attracting new business is important, but retaining the small-town essence of Mackinaw City is crucial, as well. It is a difficult situation, she said, and the best approach is still being researched.

A lifelong resident of Mackinaw City, Mrs. Bancroft enjoys the sense of community shared by the residents. In times of disaster, she said, the villagers have always helped each other recover.

Mrs. Bancroft declined to have a photograph taken.

Rosada Mann

As a member of the Mackinaw City Planning Commission, Rpsada Mann says she understands what is attractive about Mackinaw City to visitors.

"People come here because they can hike, walk, and swim," she said. "We're a family-oriented place."

To that end, maintenance of the village's walkability and water are among her concerns. Ensuring the waters around Mackinaw City are properly maintained is important, as it is a major draw for visitors, she said.

Mrs. Mann helped improve bicycle trails in Mackinaw City with the other members of Trail Committee. The committee would like to connect the village trails with trails in other areas of the county, like Petoskey and Harbor Springs, to provide an even better experience for cyclers and hikers.

Frequently attending the Mackinaw City Village Council meetings has helped her learn about the council and the issues Mackinaw City faces.

She often sees residents state their concerns at meetings and then leave, and would like to encourage them to stay for the entire meeting. She also wants to encourage more people to attend village meetings.

"We don't know it if they don't show up," she said of how residents feel about the issues.

Year-around employment is another challenge Mackinaw City faces, Mrs. Mann said. Efforts need to be made to create more jobs to keep younger residents from leaving Mackinaw City, she said.

Mrs. Mann has lived in Mackinaw City for more than 20 years with her husband. She has four children and 12 grandchildren.

Mrs. Mann declined to have a photograph taken.

Steven Celez

After graduation from Mackinaw City High School, Steven Celez has set his sights on serving the residents of Mackinaw City. He believes further growth should be encouraged to develop more jobs.



Steven Celez

People leave Mackinaw City seeking year-around employment, Mr. Celez said. With the cost of living relatively high, stable employment is especially important. Stimulating the growth of the village through lower taxes may help achieve that end, he said.

A member of the National Honor Society in high school, Mr. Celez also served on the Straits Area

Community Foundation's Youth Advisory Council, which provides grants to benefit area youth. Mr. Celez aided in the decision to grant money to a children's reading program as well as allocate funds to Inverness Elementary School in Cheboygan for the purchase of a Nintendo Wii game console during his two years on the council. He believes his work on the council will aid him as a Mackinaw City trustee.

For Mr. Celez, Mackinaw City's small community is appealing. He enjoys being able to talk to people and receive their insights on topics and issues.

Mr. Celez is manager for the Starlite Budget Inn. He plans to attend North Central Michigan College in Petoskey in the fall to study business management.

Village Clerk Candidates Elizabeth Clemens

Incumbent Elizabeth Clemens earned an associate's degree in office administration at Lake Superior State University, and worked as a receptionist in Mackinaw City from 1992 to 1997. She served briefly as the village treasurer in 1996 before moving to Cheboygan, where she served for eight years as city treasurer and another two years in the Cheboygan County Equalization Department.



Elizabeth Clemens

She returned to Mackinaw City and became its clerk in 2007.

Mrs. Clemens believes her combined experience as a public servant has greatly aided her in serving residents of Mackinaw City as their clerk. She cites her experience with property appraisal and the skills

Turn to page 7: Election

Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Cox Seeks Disclosure; Leads by Example

Michigan, still leading the nation in the jobless rate, is not only an economic basket case. It also, according to Attorney General (AG) Mike Cox, leads in hiding financial information about public officials under a bushel.

"Michigan is currently ranked dead-last among the 50 states because it does not require reporting of personal financial interests by its public officials," asserts a new AG's Web site that lays out assorted disclosures.

It cannot be said that Michigan is the very worst across the board. In one category, for example, the nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity puts Michigan in a trio with Vermont and Idaho in last place, lacking laws requiring personal financial disclosures for state legislators.

But cheers to Cox for putting his money where his mouth is about financial disclosure by voluntarily posting online some personal financial details, as well as office expenditures on his departments frequently-updated Trac Your Taxes Web page.

As summarized by the Associated Press, Cox and his wife, Wayne County Commissioner Laura Cox, had combined salaries of more than \$193,000 last year; their home is worth about \$250,000 and they owe about \$209,000 on the mortgage; savings and stock holdings in Exxon, Ford, and General Electric are worth nearly \$27,000. Individual retirement accounts, 401(k)s, and deferred compensation were worth more than \$400,000.

Cox's personal disclosure last week followed his proposal for ethics reform legislation that would require the annual reporting of personal financial information by elected state officials, directors of state departments, many local elected officials, candidates for these offices, and the immediate family members of officials and candidates. It also calls for the annual reporting of gifts from lobbyists, as well as information on what boards they serve.

His flurry as a Mr. Sunshine comes, not so incidentally, as Cox accelerates his campaign for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

But Cox is neither new nor alone in the welcome push for more transparency and openness in government.

Diverse groups outside government have agitated for more disclosure, none more doggedly than the Lansing-based Michigan Campaign Finance Network (MCFN), which has been particularly vocal on "issue ads" paid by stealth contributors. MCFN Executive Director Rich Robinson said these donors are "not disclosed anywhere in the States campaign finance reporting system."

The conservative Midland-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy has been a champion of disclosure of public payroll details.

The Centers sprightly Michigan Capitol Confidential publication recently praised state lawmakers (including House Minority Leader Kevin Elsenheimer, R-Kewadin) who post the names and salaries of their staffers.

The last issue of Capitol Confidential, lamenting barriers to public disclosure in Lansing, headlined: "Cronyism easier to conceal in state capital than in Washington or Detroit."

Wherever Michiganders are on the political spectrum, they need the bright light of public scrutiny to blaze in Lansing.

Among other activities last week by gubernatorial contenders:

Republican Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard, who in 1995 was one of a few state senators to vote against creation of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, used the Mackinac Centers latest criticism of MEDCs incentives to lure business to reiterate his contention that "when government gets into the business of picking winners and losers in the marketplace, we all lose. This study proves I was right then and I'm right now."

During a visit to the Upper Peninsula, U.S. Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland) displayed a thick copy of the 1,000-page federal health care bill being debated in Congress. According to the Marquette Mining Journal, he said:

"I think everybody, in general, is in agreement that we need to have some type of reform. What I sense and learned to date, what people are saying is we need reform, but we don't want a 1,000 page bill."

He said his concerns about the bill include unclear representation of abortion coverage and a health care commissioner's control over specifics of the plan.

The paper said people with signs saying "Tort reform, not government health" and "Oppose Socialism" stood in the back of the packed Great Lakes Rooms at Northern Michigan University.

As Governor Jennifer Granholm and legislative leaders continued closed-door budget negotiations, Ann Arbor businessman Rick Synder took this shot:

"Fiscal responsibility is a foreign concept to this administration and its time that they learn what it means. Make the necessary cuts, efficiencies, and structural fixes so that we can begin the process of reinventing Michigan. Every day that they delay, the states budget gaps, liabilities, and long-term fiscal problems grow worse."

"The Granholm/Cherry administration has overseen the shutdown of state government once before; it would be inexcusable for them to allow that to happen again. The citizens of this state deserve much better than what our career politicians have offered us."

(The Michigan GOP had more press releases attacking Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, leading contender for the 2010 Democratic nomination to replace term-limited Granholm. In addition to continued GOP references to the "Cherry Administration," state Chairman Ron Weiser, in a fundraising pitch that referenced Cherry comments on the states role in health care, said:

"Whatever they call it -- ObamaCare or CherryCare -- it will harm Michiganders hard-working families."

A positive sleeper issue for Cherry is all that is being done for Great Lakes restoration despite budget woes in Washington and Lansing. As chairman of the Great Lakes Commission, he lobbied for substantial funding, which has been slow in coming.

The Obama administration has been more responsive and has proposed boosting funding up to \$1 billion in the next fiscal year for such projects as deterring invasive species and cleaning up polluted sites. Pledges of congressional support made headlines last week.

Also last week, in her endorsement of Cherry, Granholm cited, among other things, "his devotion to protecting our Great Lakes."

Equity for Northern Schools
A new wave of northern lawmakers seeks to get Lansing to address decades of inequities in school funding, which was one of the causes of ex-Representative Howard Walker (R- Traverse City) and current Representative Gary McDowell (D-Rudyard).

McDowell and freshmen Representatives Dan Scripps (D-Leland) and Wayne Schmidt (R- Traverse City) are among co-chairs of the House School Equity Caucus. It had its first meeting last week, co-chaired by Scripps, who said:

"This bipartisan panel's mission is to work across the aisle and find solutions to the funding disparities that cheat too many Michigan students out of the best possible education. Providing our children the best education possible is the goal of every school district, teacher, and parent, and as leaders it's our responsibility to provide every student with an equal opportunity to learn and succeed."

He noted that as schools around Michigan prepare for another school year, funding levels for school districts continue to vary wildly. Many districts, including the Grand Traverse region, receive the minimum state allowance of \$7,316 per pupil, while a select few districts, especially Oakland County, receive far more -- up to \$12,443 per pupil.

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.

The St. Ignace News

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

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

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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

Staff Writers

Karen Gould, karen@saintignaceneews.com

Jonathan Eppley, jon@saintignaceneews.com

Mark Tower, mark@stignaceneews.com

Michael Ayala, mike@stignaceneews.com

Advertising Department

Tammy Matson, David Moyalson

ads@saintignaceneews.com

Print Shop Manager

Sherry Cece

Circulation Manager

Wendy Colegrove



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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