



Arts Dockside Gives a Little Ground as Some Spots Reserved for Boaters

Marina Parking Reconfigured



The proposed parking plan for next year's Arts Dockside includes a barrier running from the driveway island to the north corner of the marina building, blocking off 13 paved parking spots and the nearby grass and gravel lot for registered boater use only. A marina employee will be stationed at this entrance during special events to give boaters information and let them in and out of the lot. Overflow parking will be offered at the city's lot on Spring Street across from the Bell office complex. Parking spaces marked here as "red spaces" will be painted red before summer next year, and will be reserved outside of special events for registered boaters and their guests, who will be given a red sticker or tag. (Photograph by Dave Kunze)

By Mark Tower

The St. Ignace City Marina will be changing its parking configuration and communication efforts to boaters during special events in response to several complaints the city received about a lack of parking for marina guests.

"The boaters were sick and tired of being pushed out of their parking spaces for the fifth time this year," said Donna Pope, one of the Arts Dockside organizers during the Tuesday, September 8, City Council meeting. Arts Dockside on Labor Day weekend was the most recent of several festivals and events to take place on or near the marina grounds this summer.

Marina Director Gene Elmer and Harbor Master Jeff Davenport both dealt with eight complaints after Labor Day weekend, and Mr. Davenport said there has been some unhappiness about parking during special events from boaters for many years.

"It just escalated over the years and came to a peak," he said. "These people just had enough. A couple of them said they were not going to be coming back because of it."

Five seasonal boaters who threatened to leave the marina and never come back have changed their minds, Mr. Elmer said, after he assured them there would no longer be a problem with parking and dock access for marina guests. Losing this handful of boaters would cost the marina about \$10,000 each year, he said, something the city entity cannot afford as it struggles with a budget deficit and repaying its construction debt.

Mr. Elmer said he received one complaint the weekend of Arts Dockside from a boater who had also lost his parking spot during the St. Ignace Car Show. During the car

show, he was told to move to the city's back-up lot on Spring Street, where a state trooper told him he couldn't park there, either.

Mr. Elmer has since given his cell phone number to that boater and others who complained, telling them to call him if anyone tells them they can't park in that lot.

"That will never happen again," he said.

The reason boaters are so upset that events have blocked them out of the lot is because many of the marina's seasonal guests live on their boats for the summer and see their boats and the marina as a home away from home, Mr. Davenport said.

"It's almost like someone rented your driveway out," he said. "They feel like they're being put out. They were very upset."

A compromise was reached with Arts Dockside organizers during the Tuesday, September 15, Harbor Authority meeting, during which it was decided to hold 13 parking spots and the gravel and grass lot belonging to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at the northwest corner of the marina exclusively for boaters during the annual event. A fence will be run from the landscape island separating the in and out driveways to the marina building and a marina employee will be placed at this entrance to allow only those with the marina parking sticker into the blocked-off portion of the lot.

About 20 boaters' vehicles can be fit into the gravel and grass lot between the marina and Ace Hardware, Mr. Elmer said, and there will still be room there for trucks to load and unload the privately owned ferry Polaris, which moors on the north side of the marina's main dock.

Mr. Elmer said holding this blocked-off area for marina use will also enhance safety, since it will provide a clear lane in case an emergency vehicle needs to drive onto the dock, something that would not have been possible if festival booths were placed in this area.

Losing this real estate at the northwest area of the marina will be a challenge for the Arts Dockside event, Mrs. Pope said. Eight booths are usually positioned in the zone the marina plans to take for boaters, and vendors park in the DNR lot that will also be reserved for boaters, Mrs. Pope said.

"We don't know how that's going to work for us," she said. "That would put a little cramp in our style."

Mrs. Pope said the Arts Dockside organizers will meet before the end of the month to discuss the new parking plan and evaluate its feasibility.

Going into the meeting, Mr. Elmer was asking for 35 of the regular parking spots, which would stretch almost halfway across the lot. The compromise will give marina guests 33 spots in the lot and in the gravel and grassy area next to it, and extra parking will be available at the city's Spring Street lot.

The marina parking lot is used wholly or partially for six events each summer, the Yooper Motorcycle Show in May, Antiques on the Bay and the St. Ignace Auto Show in June, Fish Feast in July, Bayside Music Festival in August, and Arts Dockside in September. Two of these events had not impacted parking there previously, as the marina was a new location for the motorcycle show this year and the music festival is a new event. The Fish Feast is in only its second year.

Parking changes for the other

yearly events have not been made yet, Mr. Elmer said.

Mr. Davenport said issues with parking at these other events will be dealt with one by one prior to the date of the event next year.

Owing to a suggestion from Mr. Davenport, when the parking lot is re-sealed for next summer, 35 spots at the northwest end of the marina will be painted red and reserved for registered boaters, who will receive a red tag or sticker when they arrive. These parking spaces will be for their use outside of special events.

A big part of the problem, according to council member Paul Fullerton, is that there was a lack of communication between the marina staff and boaters about what their parking and loading options were during special events.

"The biggest complaint I heard was that no one had provided them with alternatives," Mr. Fullerton said. "The boaters don't know because nobody told them."

To combat this problem, Mr. Elmer said a marina staff member will be placed at the north driveway during special events, allowing those with red stickers and tags to park there and instructing boaters on where they can load, unload, and park their vehicles.

Mr. Davenport said boaters could be updated on the changes in parking policy in the newsletter sent out with contracts for seasonal boaters each spring.

"I am sure Gene will put that in there," he said.

Boaters don't have a problem with the events themselves, Mr. Davenport said, but it is important to keep these city customers happy by giving them a place to park and, most importantly, a way to load and unload close to the marina dock.

Road Commission Considers Bike Trail Grant Application

Commissioners considered the request of Lynn Brown of the Les Cheneaux Bike Path Committee to apply for a Michigan Department of Transportation grant to help fund the proposed Les Cheneaux bicycle path. Most bike paths are funded through transportation enhancement money, Mrs. Brown told The St. Ignace News, and a funding recipient such as the road commission is required to apply for the money. The trail would be a boon to

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Tribal Health To Move in 2010

By Mark Tower

The nearly 20-year-old Lambert Tribal Health Center in St. Ignace, which serves area Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians members, will move its health services to its Tribal Health Center in the new Mackinac Straits Hospital when the facility opens its doors in the spring of 2010.

Lambert Health Center opened in 1990 as a one-room clinic on St. Ignace tribal lands. It has been expanded since then to accommodate growing needs of the tribal population.

The current tribal health center in St. Ignace serves about 8,500 people, providing about 16,500 patient care services and 33,000 prescriptions last year alone.

Patient services have expanded beyond the capacity of the existing facility, and tribal health officials said the new center is crucial to accommodate the existing services and leave room for expansion.

"The new facility is going to match the quality of care we are already providing to tribal members," said Bonnie Culfa, the health division director for the tribe.

Tribal day care, Head Start, and some other services at the Lambert Center will remain there, although medical, traditional medicine, dental, pharmacy, optical, nutrition, mental health, counseling, and health education services will all be moved to the new hospital on North State Street near the county airport.

The tribe has not yet decided how the rest of the space being vacated will be used, although the tribe plans to make use of that space in some way.

The health center provides its services without charge to tribal members and to any member of a federally recognized tribe who provides proof of enrollment.

Tribal employees and non-native spouses of tribal members can also receive treatment at both the current and new facilities, although they are billed, either directly or through an insurance provider.

Spouses of tribal members received free health care through the tribal health care budget until about two years ago, when the tribe restructured, put cost-containment measures in place, and opted to discontinue those spousal benefits.

"Financially, some of those things are not what we are here to do," Ms. Culfa said. "The mission is to serve Native Americans."

Since only about 40% of the tribal health care need is funded by the federal government, tribal leaders had to make decisions about funding that ended the free ride for tribal members' spouses.

"The federal government is not funding us to the level of need that we need as a tribe," Ms. Culfa said. "There is a problem with providing services to non-tribal members when it's difficult to even do it for tribal members."

The Tribal Health Center section of the new hospital will be leased from Mackinac Straits Hospital by the tribe. The money will come out of its health services budget and requires approval by the tribal board.

Several elements of the health center in St. Ignace will be expanded along with the move to the new hospital, or shortly thereafter.

"There is a definite need for expansion of dental services," said Marlene Glaesman, rural health director for the tribe.

In response to this need, her office is planning to add one dentist and two support staff positions to the dental program, which currently has one dentist and four support staff workers.

In the medical center, the tribe hopes to add an additional medical provider, more nursing staff, and possibly a third pharmacist.

The expansion means more space for tribal health services. The tribal health center will be moving from an 8,600-square-foot facility at the Lambert Health Center on Wa Seh Drive to a 15,000-square-foot facility on the north end of the hospital's second floor.

Expansion of space for all of the units in the new tribal health center will result in more examination and treatment rooms, more clinical area, and space that is more appropriate for its purpose, according to Ms. Culfa.

Serious planning went into designing the new facility, she said, and ease of use and natural flow were big considerations.

"They are going to have a nicer space to enjoy while they are being seen," Ms. Culfa said of patients. "We will continue to give the warmth and closeness we provide at all of our sites."

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is the largest tribe in Michigan, with an enrollment of 32,000, 15,000 of whom live in the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

To serve this community in the EUP, as well as visiting tribal members from elsewhere in Michigan and out of state, the tribal health department staffs four large ambulatory centers, one in Sault Ste. Marie, one in St. Ignace, one in Manistique, and one in Munising.

There are also two satellite, community nursing clinics in Hessel and Newberry. The department also has partnerships with War Memorial Hospital in Sault Ste. Marie for a community clinic and a partnership with Mackinac Straits Hospital in St. Ignace for the Moses Dialysis Unit.

This partnership to provide dialysis to tribal and non-tribal residents alike was the beginning of a relationship with Mackinac Straits Hospital that would result in the donation of land for the new hospital on North State Street in St. Ignace and the establishment of the new Tribal Health Center and Mackinac Straits Hospital under the same roof at this new facility.

Ms. Culfa said the tribe's expansive resources over the years have allowed it to be instrumental in making improvements to communities that surround tribal members, and the donation of the land is part of this trend.

"The tribe has always been looking for ways to improve the health care of the communities tribal members are in," she said.

The tribe has come a long way in the past 20 years, when the tribe had only one ambulatory care center in Kincheloe, Ms. Glaesman said. There is now a strategic health plan in place for the next 20 years, targeting five key problem areas the tribe wants to solve.

"The tribe is very committed to health care services for its tribal members," Ms. Glaesman said. "We've been very lucky to have a tribal board with such support for the health care division."

New Speed Signs To Be Installed on Portage Road

By Michael Ayala

New 25-mile-per-hour speed advisory signs will be posted along Portage Street owing to complaints made by residents about vehicles speeding past the campus of St. Ignace Area Schools. The Mackinac County Road Commission decided Tuesday, September 15, to install four speed limit signs on existing school and curve signs.

Several of the signs will be added along eastbound Portage Street near the schools. Speed signage is heavy while heading west-

bound toward the school, but very little exists while going east, road commission manager Dirk Heckman said.

Commissioner Tom Doty, who works for the Mackinac County Sheriff's Department, has heard complaints about vehicles driving eastward toward the school at 50 miles per hour. Children often play around the area when school is not in session, as well.

"I think whatever we can do to slow it down, we should do it," Mr. Doty said.

A study to evaluate the speed

limits along Portage Street should be conducted, Mr. Doty said, but would be difficult to arrange. The study must be conducted by the state police and will only be performed if certain criteria are met. The street must have a history of accidents, he said, with some of the accidents resulting in debilitating injuries. No accidents have occurred on Portage Street.

Signs along the street will be posted during the week of September 21, Mr. Heckman said. No action was taken concerning a speed study.