

The St. Ignace News

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and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

Vol. 130, No. 35 www.stignaceneews.com Published Weekly News of the EUP and the Straits of Mackinac Thursday, December 3, 2009

Santa Coming to Town Friday

Ceremony, Open House in Downtown St. Ignace

All around St. Ignace, people are pulling Christmas decorations out of their attics and mustering their yule-tide spirit for the approaching

holidays. That spirit may come in the form of a donation drive, the traditional downtown tree lighting, caroling, or the festively colored

lights along the cables of the Mackinac Bridge welcoming all to the Upper Peninsula.

Beginning holiday festivities

Friday, December 4, will be the city's Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the public marina at 6 p.m. Santa Claus will ride on a St. Ignace fire truck from City Hall to the

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Mackinaw City Events Begin Friday

Tinsel Town Parade Will Light Village

By Michael Ayala

Festive lights, tacky tinsel cars, and winter lighthouse tours are among some of the activities offered during Christmas in Mackinaw City Friday, December 4, and Saturday, December 5. New to Christmas in Mackinaw this year are McGulpin Point Lighthouse tours.

A procession for the annual tree lighting and Tacky Tinsel Town parade, beginning from the Mackinaw City marina parking lot to Indian Pathways Park, will be Friday, December 4, at 5 p.m. The parade will travel down Central Avenue and end at the corner of Nicolet Street and Central Avenue. Any vehicles except snowmobiles may participate, and those interested can sign up at the marina parking lot before 4:45 p.m. Prizes will

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Holiday Packages Roll In

At the Post Office, It's Beginning To Look a Lot Like Christmas

Loading carts with holiday mail and heading to their delivery vehicles early Tuesday morning, December 1, are St. Ignace carriers (from left) John Woiderski, Norm Ball, and Preston Allers. The volume of holiday packages already is increasing, said Andy Valentine, officer in charge at the local mail center. Mr. Valentine suggests people plan an extra day or so for packages to be delivered at this busy time of year. The deadline for Christmas packages to reach their destination is nearing, he said. Military packages and letters take about three weeks and should be sent by Friday, December 4. Domestic priority mail should be sent by December 19, and domestic express mail can arrive by Christmas if sent Thursday, December 24.



Bridge Authorities To Meet This Week

The Mackinac Bridge Authority will meet Friday, December 4, at the Mackinac Bridge Authority office on I-75 in St. Ignace, and is considering a joint meeting Thursday, December 3, with the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge Authority, which oversees management of the International Bridge in Sault Ste. Marie.

The planned joint meeting of the two bridge governing boards, the first of its kind, is tentatively planned for 1 p.m. Thursday, December 3, at Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace. It is scheduled just after the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge Authority's meeting Thursday morning.

A finance committee meeting for the Mackinac Bridge Authority will be at 9 a.m. Friday, in which committee members plan to discuss amendments to the 2009 budget, the status of assigning the state's Auditor General to do the authority's annual audit, and information about the ranges in traffic and revenue the bridge foresees for the upcoming year. An update on the state's budgetary and economic data and predictions will be presented by Chief Deputy Treasurer Mark Haas.

The main meeting is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Friday at Little Bear East Arena, where authority members plan to discuss the findings and recommendations of the finance committee, several ongoing and past bridge maintenance projects, the free toll day in November, possible federal stimulus funding for a painting project, will set a 2010 meeting schedule, and will discuss the status of the bridge deck study currently underway. This study is anticipated to be done in August 2010, and will report on the condition of the current bridge deck, make recommendations on a schedule of replacement, and will report estimated costs of the replacement and repair projects.

All Mackinac Bridge Authority meetings are open to the public and allow a portion of time for public comment.

31 People Seek Police Chief Job

Thirty-one people have so far applied for the position of St. Ignace police chief and the city council will decide how the hiring process will proceed at its meeting Monday, December 7.

Council expects to hire a new police chief before the end of the year to replace Tim Matelski, who will retire January 1.

The deadline for applications was Wednesday, December 2, and City Manager Eric Dodson said the city received 31 applications as of Tuesday, December 1.

Council members will decide which of the applicants will be asked for an interview, where and when interviews will take place, and if multiple rounds of interviews will be necessary. The hiring of any city department head is up to the governing body of the city, and discussion and decisions on the hire must be made in public meetings.

Mr. Dodson said the city is looking both inside and outside the police department for a candidate, has three applicants from within the department, and will be looking for someone who is a good manager, highly organized, proficient in public relations, and who has training and experience necessary to manage a police department.

City Council meetings are open to the public the first and third Monday of each month at St. Ignace City Hall. The next meeting is 8 p.m. Monday, December 7.

DDA To Tighten Spending Next Year

OKs Early Transfer of \$10,000 To Marina – But Move Not Needed, After All

By Mark Tower

Downtown property tax revenues are falling, taking a bite out of the St. Ignace Downtown Development Authority's pocketbook for next year. With this in mind, and with fewer one-time improvement expenses anticipated next year, the DDA decided it can tighten spending for the upcoming year to fundamental maintenance levels.

After approving changes to both the 2009 and 2010 budgets aimed at helping the city's marina renew its bonds at a lower interest rate, the DDA approved an operating budget for 2010 at its meeting Friday, November 13.

Property taxes in the downtown

district are expected to raise \$211,260 of the \$226,660 budgeted for 2010. Interest earnings are expected to add \$400 to the DDA's revenue, and the remaining \$15,000 gap will be drawn out of the DDA's cash balance for improvements and maintenance, which is expected to contain \$31,730 at the end of 2010.

The main source of revenue for the DDA, downtown property taxes, has fallen from \$230,270 in 2008 to an estimated \$211,260 for the 2010 budget, a reduction of 9% in two years.

"This is the first time we have ever had a hit like that," said DDA Director Deb Evashevski. Falling property values in the area, like

those across the state, are mostly to blame for this decrease, said DDA chairman Gene Elmer, who is also the city assessor, city treasurer, and marina director.

The taxable value of downtown properties is determined by Mr. Elmer. Property owners are taxed on the property value from 1981, when the downtown district was established, to pay for general city, county, and school operating taxes, while taxes they pay on property improvements or value increases over the 1981 level go directly to the DDA.

Changes from the DDA's 2008 budget include \$15,000 less budgeted for contracted services, \$2,500 less for printing and publishing, and

\$13,000 more to help fund major purchases like more downtown benches and the replacement of U.S. Flags on the light poles along State Street, to replace those damaged in high winds this year.

The decrease in contracted services, Mrs. Evashevski said, reflects a lot of one-time costs in 2009, like the purchase of signs, banners, and landscaping work. This will be reduced to only normal maintenance to lights, flowers, and landscaping in the downtown area.

"We had a lot of one-time shots in 2009 that we won't have this year," she said.

A 3% increase is budgeted for

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DeTour Will Host Village Christmas

DeTour Village's sixth annual Village Christmas, "A Walk Back in Time," will take place Saturday, December 5, and Sunday, December 6.

Saturday events feature specials and raffle drawings at downtown shops and restaurants, beginning with "Breakfast with Santa," sponsored by the DeTour Passage Historical Society, at Fisher's Restaurant from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. The Union Presbyterian Church bazaar, offering cookies by the pound, fresh wreaths, and a variety of hand-made items, also begins at

9 a.m. and continues until 4 p.m. The bazaar's soup, bread, and dessert luncheon opens at 11 a.m. and continues to 2 p.m. The artists, crafters, and vendors show and sale will take place at the DeTour school from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. New at the school this year will be the Field Trip Café sponsored by the DeTour Elementary School Parents Group. The café will feature cinnamon rolls to eat in or take home by the half dozen. Juice, hot chocolate, and coffee will also be available. Proceeds from the café support the purchase of supplies and field trips

for DeTour Elementary School. Also at the school will be the Friends of the Library "Santa's Workshop" featuring crafts and activities, including story-time with Mrs. Claus, in the library from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Chamber of Commerce sleigh ride trolley will be available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and carolers from the EUP Fine Arts Council Community Choir will be entertaining throughout the village. Door prizes will be awarded at businesses.

On Sunday, December 6, the DeTour Passage Historical Society

will offer a pancake breakfast at the DeTour Village Hall from 8 a.m. to noon. The breakfast will cost \$5 for adults and \$3 for children younger than 12. Proceeds will support the activities of the DeTour Passage Historical Museum, including the repair and maintenance of the Fresnel lens on display in the museum.

The holiday celebration is sponsored by the EUP Fine Arts Council, DeTour Area Chamber of Commerce, Friends of the Library, and DeTour Passage Historical Society.

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