

Marina Stability Crucial to Downtown District, Evashevski Says

DDA: From page 1

the DDA director's salary, an increase from \$32,370 in 2009 to \$33,340 in 2010, although Mrs. Evashevski is given the same raise or pay cut given to other department heads. She works 30 hours a week.

The City of St. Ignace is awaiting the end of employee contract negotiations scheduled in December before it approves any final salaries and wages for the upcoming year. According to the city's charter, a budget for 2010 must be in place by December 31, 2009. In the last contract, employees received 3% raises annually.

Budget Revised
DDA members approved a transfer of \$10,000 to the city's marina in 2009 instead of 2010, but further insight into the marina's end-of-the-year finances have proved that transfer unnecessary.

During the meeting, members approved the elimination of \$10,000 budgeted in 2010 for transfer to help the city's marina pay off its current debt of \$795,000. Instead, the DDA decided to give the money to the marina before the end of the year, at the marina director's request.

Mr. Elmer asked that the DDA transfer \$10,000 to the marina before the end of 2009, which he said will assure that the marina ends the year in the black, a requirement the marina must meet before it can be considered for refinancing its bonds.

The current interest rate, which is set at about 6%, could be as low as 4% if the debt is refinanced now, Mr. Elmer said.

"I feel that I'll be in the black at the end of the year, but I'm not certain," Mr. Elmer said November 13. "We are exploring the possibility of re-bonding at a lower interest rate. You can't start the re-bonding process if you are in the red."

Mayor Paul Grondin initially questioned drawing from the DDA's cash balance for the marina, and reminded board members that the city's financial situation may actually be worse in 2011. He asked Mrs. Evashevski how much cash balance the DDA has historically held.

In the past, this balance has hovered around \$50,000, Mrs. Evashevski said, although the \$31,730 at the end of 2010 would be nearly 15% of the total budget.

In October 2008, the DDA agreed to contribute \$30,000 to

help pay the marina's debt over the next three years. After a total of \$20,000 is transferred to the marina in 2009, the DDA plans to transfer no money in 2010, and transfer the remaining \$10,000 to the marina in 2011. This remaining \$10,000 transfer would need to be approved by the DDA in 2011.

2009 Transfer Unnecessary
After looking more closely at end-of-the-year bills, Mr. Elmer told The St. Ignace News Monday, November 30, he will likely have about \$10,000 extra at the end of the year, assuming the transfer of \$10,000 from the DDA budget is not made before the end of the year.

The first \$10,000 transfer was made at the beginning of 2009, which means without that assistance the marina would have ended 2009 very close to breaking even. The marina was recently required to file a deficit elimination plan with the State of Michigan, in which the marina plans to eliminate its yearly deficit by 2013.

If the marina does end the year in the black, the DDA will not need to transfer the \$10,000 in 2009, and will instead pay the amount out to the marina in next

year's budget. After the final payment of \$10,000 in 2011, the full \$30,000 the DDA promised the marina in 2008 will have been paid, and board members will decide if the DDA will provide any further support to the marina.

Mrs. Evashevski said the marina is crucial to downtown St. Ignace, and acknowledged that the financial stability of the marina is a primary concern to the DDA.

"Obviously, the marina is very important to our downtown district," she said. "We have other commitments, ourselves, but it's definitely something the DDA is interested in, making sure it is operational and continues drawing boaters to our community."

The largest determinants of the marina's financial success in the 2010 season, Mr. Elmer said, will be the cost of fuel and the weather, both of which can strongly affect the number of boaters who visit St. Ignace.

The St. Ignace DDA meets at 8 a.m. on the second Friday of each month, and its meetings are open to the public. The next scheduled meeting is at 8 a.m. Friday, December 11. All meetings are in City Council chambers in St. Ignace City Hall.

Sports Weekends Will Be Promoted as 'Winter Fest'

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the city," he said. "So far, these four events have pretty much funded themselves through entry fees."

Local Volunteers Needed
A need for the winter festival, organizers said, and indeed for all community events year-around, is a stronger volunteer base. Mr. Sposito said they need both workers and leaders, but he thinks some who could help don't realize that much of what needs to be done takes little or no special skills or training.

"Most of the volunteers we have right now are really maxed out," Mr. Sposito said. "I think there are maybe a lot of people who could help but are afraid or don't know what they can offer."

Volunteers who would be willing to take charge of one event, like the snow softball tournament or the ice chip golf cart contest, would be particularly appreciated, organizers said. The Special Events Committee is also considering assigning one of its members the task of tracking down and signing up such volunteers.

Anyone who wants to contribute time or ideas is welcome to join the Special Events Committee for its monthly meetings and may join the committee simply by volunteering, Mr. Sposito said.

"We are always interested in anybody's ideas," he said. "The more we can get involved in this, the merrier."

The Special Events Committee generally meets at 4 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the Mackinac Grille restaurant, and anyone interested in attending may call Mark Sposito at 643-7482, the Chamber of Commerce at

643-8717, or the Visitors Bureau at 643-6950 to confirm the meeting times or to get more information.

Promotional Campaign
The Special Events Committee is considering doing away with asking businesses to sponsor individual events this year, hoping they will use that money instead to invest in a television campaign, Mr. Sposito said.

The local television advertising campaign, similar to one purchased for summer events this year, will promote the events in the six to eight weeks leading up to the final activity, the golf scramble on the ice of Moran Bay March 6. This July and August, the St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce paid \$475 for 248, 30-second ads spread over two months. The ads consisted of pictures and text promoting local events and attractions.

For winter advertising, the group plans a standard beginning and end for the ads that will promote a visit to St. Ignace, and insert specific information about events and businesses in between.

The Special Events Committee is asking local businesses to buy into the campaign and advertise their own business and any specials they may offer during the events.

"We are looking for the businesses to be part of this and to grow with the events," said Mr. Sposito.

Mrs. Peterson said the group would like to start running the advertisements the first week of January, although some work still needs to be done to finalize the campaign and coordinate with businesses.

Parade, Lighthouse Tours To Be Featured in Mackinaw City

Tinsel Town: From page 1

be awarded for the "most tacky" decorated entries after the parade.

At 5:15 p.m. a community blessing with Santa Claus will begin at the community Christmas tree, at the corner of Nicolet Street and Central Avenue. Carols will be sung.

At 5:30 p.m. Mackinaw Outfitters will offer cookies, cof-

fee, and hot chocolate. Children can make crafts, and prizes will be awarded for the parade.

McGulpin Point Lighthouse will open for tours Saturday, December 5, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, December 6, from noon to 4 p.m. Admission for the tours is free.

Several other community events in Mackinaw City are planned in December. Mackinaw

City Public Schools will host a Christmas concert at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, December 10.

The Community Cantata Choir, comprised of singers from churches in Mackinaw City, will perform at the Church of the Straits on North Huron Avenue Sunday, December 13, at 2 p.m. The program will begin with songs from the Northmen Gospel Singers. The singers will perform several songs, including "Star of Glory," "Bring a Torch," "Villancio," and "On Christmas Night All Christians Sing." The cantata will follow.

Judy Churchill, church secretary, said the program is a series of songs telling the Christmas story of Jesus Christ. The performance is free and open to the public.

The Mackinaw City Bible Church will offer its annual Christmas program Sunday, December 20, at 6 p.m. The Reverend Reid Nelson said the theme of the program will be "The Light of the World," and will feature Christmas carols, poems, and scripture. Refreshments will be served. The program is free and open to the public.

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129 Thanksgiving Food Baskets Packed

Families of volunteers met across the Eastern Upper Peninsula Saturday, November 21, for United Way's Family Volunteer Day. The groups in St. Ignace, Newberry, and Sault Ste. Marie together packed 129 food baskets for needy families in the region.

About 75 volunteers took part in the volunteer day across the EUP, and food donations were col-

lected from residents in the three communities. Volunteers stood outside local supermarkets with lists of needed donations, and shoppers donated by picking up items on that list along with their regular groceries.

The food baskets were given to local families in need of a meal this Thanksgiving and included a gift card to purchase a turkey.

Dinner Will Benefit Cedarville Band

The Cedarville High School Band will have a spaghetti dinner Friday, December 11, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the school in Cedarville to

raise funds for the band's trip to New York in the summer of 2010. The cost is \$6 for adults, and \$3 for children ages 10 and younger.

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