

FEBRUARY/NEWS

FEB. 1

Pavelka against closing

TRAVERSE CITY — Despite a potential \$4.2 million budget shortfall next year, no Traverse City elementary schools will close this fall so long as the school board heeds the superintendent's recommendation.

James Pavelka said he would not recommend the board of Traverse City Area Public Schools close its second elementary school in as many years. Instead, Pavelka said the board should focus on other areas to absorb the potential cuts.

FEB. 1

Alpine theme plan freezes

GAYLORD — The long and winding road in the effort to mandate Gaylord's Alpine theme adopted by the community nearly 40 years ago appears to have run into another roadblock.

Efforts to mandate the theme are at a stalemate following split votes by the Gaylord City Council.

City council members rejected a proposal to mandate the theme in the immediate downtown area. A second proposal to force the theme in the Downtown Development District and in a one block area on each side of Main Street also suffered the same fate.

Critics of the proposals say a mandate smacks of government heavy-handedness, and given the success of the existing voluntary method, is unnecessary.

FEB. 2

Tragedy hits close to home

TRAVERSE CITY — Shock waves of the Columbia disaster reverberated throughout northwestern Lower Michigan Saturday, perhaps impacting hardest on two residents with close ties to the shuttle program.

Astronaut Jerry Linenger of Suttons Bay and Bea Steadman of Traverse City, who nearly became one of the first women astronauts early

in the U.S. space program, were stunned and saddened by the shuttle tragedy.

Columbia's loss also affected the employees at the Cone Drive & Textron Power Transmission plant in Traverse City. The plant is involved in the shuttle program's parts supply chain.

FEB. 2

McManus turns to issues

LANSING — The new state senator from the 35th District looks at a 10-year-old picture on her office wall and laughs a bit at a twenty-something freshman lawmaker wearing big glasses and big hair to give her an older, more mature look.

But Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, doesn't have to try for the older look anymore. After six years in the state House, a blowout Congressional loss four years ago — which convinced some she was headed for the political scrap heap — followed by a highly successful state Senate campaign, she's experienced a rollercoaster political career worthy of a grizzled old politician.

Now 36, married and the mother of two daughters, McManus acknowledges having a different outlook on life — and politics — from the young, rigid ideologue who first came to the state Capitol a decade ago.

"I think with the time I've had to experience other things, I have other priorities now that I want to stand for," McManus said.

FEB. 4

GT asks BATA to hold off

TRAVERSE CITY — County commissioners have asked the Bay Area Transportation Authority to hold off on another public busing millage request until after the county's 911 surcharge vote in early May.

The BATA board will meet to discuss whether to put a millage proposal on the ballot in Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties sometime this year. Voters in the two counties rejected a 0.35-mill

levy in November.

Grand Traverse County has scheduled a special election on May 6 to ask voters to increase the 911 monthly surcharge on their telephone bills to \$3.20 a month. That's about four times the present fee. County officials say they need the money to replace an aging emergency service radio system.

FEB. 4

Shulick case starts

CHARLEVOIX — Charlevoix County Prosecutor Mary Beth Kur and defense attorney Daniel Harris agree on at least one thing: On Sept. 23, 2002, the barrel of a shotgun held by John Joseph Shulick struck Sheriff George T. Lasater in the mouth, causing significant damage.

But the two have widely different versions of the events leading up to that incident.

As Shulick's trial on three felony counts began Monday

in circuit court, Kur portrayed Shulick as a violent man who vowed to stop police from removing him from his former home.

Harris portrayed his client as a man defending his home in near-darkness against intruders who never identified themselves as police.

FEB. 5

Snow, wind close schools

TRAVERSE CITY — Winds gusting up to 45 mph in northwest Lower Michigan Monday night and Tuesday brought blizzard-like conditions but not a lot of snow.

Monday the National Weather Service office in Gaylord forecast three to five inches of snow for areas along Lake Michigan and one to three inches inland and, "that pretty much held out," said Corey Chaskelson, a weather service meteorologist intern.

The positive side of the storm was even with low visi-

bility and slick road conditions, no major accidents or highway injuries were reported as of Tuesday afternoon. There were, however, a lot of fender-benders and slides off the roads, police said.

FEB. 5

TC official receives note

TRAVERSE CITY — City police are investigating a rambling, threatening letter left at the home of the city's deputy mayor late last week.

The letter was left at the east-side home of commissioner Ann Rogers, the city's mayor pro tem, sometime between Thursday night and Friday morning.

In the six-paragraph, type-written note, the author calls himself "the Stalker ... the very one which terrorizes you today. And is training others to do the same."

While it does not refer to

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