

FEBRUARY/NEWS

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Rogers by name, the letter includes general threats against her family, possible damage to her home and car and even to her drinking water.

FEB. 6

Teen tries to pin pot on twin

TRAVERSE CITY — A defendant charged with possession of marijuana tried to turn his case into one of mistaken identity when he gave authorities his twin brother's name instead of his own.

Stephen N. Ralston, 17, told District Judge Michael Haley Wednesday that his name was Christopher W. Ralston, the name of his twin brother.

Haley had been alerted to the name change by Traverse City police Sgt. Joe McCarthy, who arrested Stephen Ralston in a purse-snatching case last October and recognized him.

FEB. 6

Deputies take stand

CHARLEVOIX — Charlevoix County Undersheriff Don Schneider testified Wednesday that he saw John Joseph Shulick intentionally ram a shotgun barrel into Sheriff George T. Lasater's face.

Schneider and two deputies — George R. Lasater, the sheriff's son, and Brian Van Meeder — recounted in circuit court the events of Sept. 23 when they went to serve Shulick with a court-ordered eviction notice.

Shulick is charged with a host of felonies, including assault with intent to commit great bodily harm less than murder, after striking the sheriff.

Shulick's defense attorney, Daniel Harris, claims Shulick acted in self-defense.

FEB. 7

Waste deal could aid Loaf

LELAND — Leelanau County officials believe they may have found a way to dispose of septage waste and at

the same time resolve a legal tangle that threatens to keep the Sugar Loaf ski resort in Cedar closed.

On Tuesday, the county board agreed to pay \$8,750 for a six-month option to buy the waste water treatment plant that serves the resort and more than 90 residences in Cleveland and Centerville townships.

The option gives the county the right to buy the treatment facility for \$875,000 from Sugar Loaf Service Co.

The deal would include the plant, its seven-acre site adjacent to the resort plus another 14 acres that would form a buffer, said county administrator David Gill. The plant can serve the resort and current customers and still have plenty of capacity for septage treatment, Gill said.

FEB. 7

Shulick testifies in case

CHARLEVOIX — John Joseph Shulick testified that although he knew the Charlevoix County Sheriff's Department was looking for him for some reason, he had no idea it was Sheriff George T. Lasater and other deputies in his home the morning of Sept. 23.

The 44-year-old Shulick is on trial for three felonies after allegedly ramming the barrel of a shotgun into Lasater's mouth that morning as the sheriff attempted to serve him with a court-ordered eviction notice.

Shulick had remained living in a home on Korthase Road in Wilson Township despite his divorce months before from his wife, Barbara. In an August court hearing, Shulick refused to accept a check for half of the home's equity from Barbara Shulick's attorney after she'd been awarded the home.

Shulick claimed on the stand that while Barbara Shulick apparently was working behind the scenes to have him evicted, she was acting like a wife to him in their everyday life.

FEB. 9

S. Fox judgment nears

TRAVERSE CITY — The attorney general's office appears close to making a decision on the controversial South Fox Island land swap, and groups that oppose the exchange are calling on northern Michigan legislators and their constituents to help stop it.

In a public forum held Saturday at the Grand Traverse Heritage Center, The Michigan Land Use Institute and five other groups opposed to the proposed swap urged area residents to press legislators for their position on the plan and to ask lawmakers to intervene to help stop the exchange.

FEB. 9

Subdivision to come to vote

CADILLAC — In a showdown that is becoming more common across northern Michigan, developers and neighbors of the proposed Haring Hills subdivision will face off at a March 25 referendum.

Neighbors who oppose the proposed 144-home subdivision say the traffic, multiple wells and septic systems will transform the woods east of their homes in fast-growing Haring Township.

Developers Gardner Klaasen and Brent Walton of Traverse City argue that area residents could end up with something worse if they vote down their request for a planned unit development designation for 240 acres. The property is now zoned either agricultural, residential or forestry-recreational.

The land long has been used for horse-riding and hiking, neighbors said. The proposed subdivision area also forms a natural buffer to busy M-55 to the south.

FEB. 10

Joint park authority to form

TRAVERSE CITY — Possible formation of a joint park authority that could

pump public money into recreational land at the Grand Traverse Commons campus is being studied by the city and Garfield Township.

Local officials are optimistic about the idea, saying such a move could infuse some much-needed public funding into the recreational properties in and around the former state hospital grounds. There have been a wide range of ideas offered for recreational use of those public lands, but never accompanied by the needed financial resources.

FEB. 11

Shulick found guilty

CHARLEVOIX — John Joseph Shulick will go to prison for ramming a shotgun barrel into the face of Charlevoix County Sheriff George T. Lasater, a jury determined Monday.



Lasater

Shulick, 44, was accused of deliberately shoving a shotgun barrel into the face of Lasater, as the sheriff attempted to serve him an eviction

notice at his former Wilson Township home. The court-ordered eviction notice was to force Shulick to leave the house awarded to his ex-wife, Barbara, following their divorce months earlier.

Lasater suffered five lost teeth, broken upper and lower jaws and a cut lip requiring many stitches.

Shulick's defense throughout his weeklong trial was that he did not know it was Lasater in his stairway in those pre-dawn hours of Sept. 23.

But the prosecution presented numerous witness accounts and pieces of circumstantial evidence indicating Shulick had deliberately avoided being served with court papers, and that he knew it was the police arriving at the house that

morning.

FEB. 11

Board to close school

GRAYLING — Michelle Stanley and other Frederic Elementary parents said they fear the repercussions the Crawford AuSable School District will face after the school board voted to close the elementary building Monday.

"It's a big loss and it's a big loss for the community — but they made their choice," Stanley said after the school board voted 6-1 to mothball the school next year because of budget woes.

School administrators recommend closing the school because the district is facing a \$220,000 budget deficit for the current school year. The shortfall could balloon to \$1.5 million next year if a projected 11 percent drop in state funding holds true, said Crawford AuSable School Superintendent Milli Haug.

The district is anticipating its student numbers to drop from the current student count of 2,077 to as low as 2,023 for the 2003-04 school year. Haug said the district is down 15 students from its count last month due to a high transition of families in the district.

FEB. 12

Gas prices spike on fears

TRAVERSE CITY — Traverse City-area drivers were numbed — not just by the below-zero cold — but by having to pay \$1.79 and sometimes even more for a gallon of regular gasoline this week.

Statewide gasoline prices are up for the third consecutive week to the highest level since September 2001, AAA Michigan said Monday.

The statewide average price for a gallon of self-serve regular rose to about \$1.67, up 9.5 cents from last week. The average is 54.5 cents a gallon more than it cost during this week a year ago.

Over the past three weeks,

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