

## APRIL/NEWS

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little more than \$17 million from various state and federal agencies for the project and more than \$4 million for the widening of Three Mile Road. But it remains about \$18 million short of the estimated \$39 million cost.

Opponents of the bridge plan, who say it will further sprawl south of Traverse City and impact the ecology of the Boardman River Valley, say it's "irresponsible" for the county to start the project without all of the funds to complete it.

County road officials, who say the route has solid public support and is needed to accommodate growth, remain confident they will receive whatever funding is necessary.

**APRIL 14****Developer may face fines**

TRAVERSE CITY — Developer Bill Clous paid a \$500 fine last fall after officials said he moved earth on property he owns in the Mitchell Creek watershed without a permit.

Since then, Clous has kept on bulldozing.

Depending on whom you ask, up to 90 acres of wooded wetlands may have been disrupted. Clous may face civil sanctions from the attorney general and stiff fines from Grand Traverse County.

Clous maintains that he has been the victim of a misunderstanding. Although as president of Eastwood Custom Homes he is one of the county's most active developers, Clous says he is also a farmer and a naturalist who has planted more trees than he has chopped down.

Clous said the property — more than 300 acres between Townline, Hammond and Three Mile roads — is being cleared of trees so it can be farmed. His attorney, Matthew Vermetten, says Clous can do so legally under agricultural exemptions in the law.

**APRIL 14****Residents vote for rentals**

KEWADIN — By a 541-408 vote, residents of Antrim County's Milton Township have agreed not to ban vacation home rentals in allowed in residential areas around Torch Lake.

Capping more than three years of sometimes bitter debate, township residents endorsed a zoning amendment that allows people to rent out homes in single-family residential zones for at least a week. The amendment was previously approved by the township board in September, but a citizens group opposed to the measure was able to gather enough signatures to place it on the ballot.

Saturday's election marked the first major defeat for that group, the Milton Township Neighborhood Project, which won on similar zoning issues twice last year. Project member Hal Jackson said he was disappointed by the results, but said his group would continue to work against what he called the "commercialization" of the lakeshore neighborhoods.

**APRIL 15****Retirees search for shuttle**

KALKASKA — As the effort to find pieces of the space shuttle Columbia winds down in Texas, Jim Gray of Kalkaska is helping provide fax machines, cell phones, rental cars, hotel rooms and anything else the search crews need.

Gray is one of four area men who are retired from the Department of Natural Resources who are in Texas as paid volunteers, helping the effort to find pieces of the shuttle. He flew back there Friday after serving for 33 days and having three days off.

"There are good things found every day — critical pieces," Gray said. "Last week, they found a helmet and a glove. They're looking heavily for tiles and wing debris. They also found the last black box."

The black boxes are the recording devices that may

tell the story of the last few seconds before the disaster. The crews have found some 53,000 pieces of the ship, nearly a third of it.

Other area volunteers are Denny Vitton of Traverse City, who is doing work similar to Gray at the same post in Lufkin; Harold Kibbe of Manton, a division supervisor at Palestine Camp; and Don Hennig of Kalkaska, an equipment manager at Palestine.

**APRIL 15****Wind fuels area wildfires**

TRAVERSE CITY — Forest and grass fires blazed across the region all day Monday, causing fire departments and the Department of Natural Resources to issue "red flag" alerts and extreme danger warnings.

Dry conditions combined with warm temperatures and strong winds made for a busy day for firefighters throughout the region.

The largest of the fires included a 150-acre blaze in Grand Traverse County on Charmin Road, which Grand Traverse Fire Department officials are still investigating. The blaze started an hour after firefighters were dispatched to a wildfire near Kingsley at M-113 and Center Road.

**APRIL 16****Second body recovered**

TRAVERSE CITY — After a warm and windy spring day, Sheriff Scott Fewins had a hunch that a tragedy that has haunted a Traverse City family for more than three months could soon be brought to a close.

Fewins found the body of snowmobiler David L. Swanson on Monday evening. He had been missing but presumed dead since the night of Jan. 9, when he and a companion unknowingly drove their snowmobiles into open water on Long Lake.

The Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department was ready to resume searching for Swanson's body on Tuesday morning as the ice

cover on Long Lake was quickly dissipating with the warm, windy conditions. But the sheriff, who suspected the body would surface as soon as the ice broke up, borrowed a pair of fishing waders from a neighbor and walked part of the northeast shore of the lake for more than two hours Monday evening.

Fewins discovered the body at about 8:20 p.m.

"It's kind of bittersweet," said Swanson's wife, Tina. "We were expecting they would find him, but it's still kind of a shock when it happens."

**APRIL 17****TCSF students sentenced**

TRAVERSE CITY — A judge had harsh words for four St. Francis High School students sentenced Wednesday for taking part in a brawl last October, but he had even harsher words for their school.

District Judge Michael Haley said he wondered why St. Francis officials didn't punish the four football players until after football season, even though one of the students gave a full account of what happened within 18 hours of the fight with Traverse City Central High School students.

"I realize that the school has responded, eventually, after football season was over with," Haley said. "What is the priority over there? Is it championships? Or is it personal responsibility?"

Mike Buell, superintendent of Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools, said Haley has his facts wrong. He said school officials did not know who was involved until they received a police report in January — after football season.

"During football season there was no police report, none of the kids had been identified to us by police," Buell said.

**APRIL 18****Jury convicts killer**

BELLAIRE — An Antrim

County man faces life in prison after he was found guilty Thursday of shooting his wife of less than a month at their Lakes of the North home last fall.

Dennis L. Payne, 61, was convicted of second-degree murder in the Nov. 20 shotgun slaying of 71-year-old Johann Marie Payne, following more than four hours of deliberations by a seven-man, five-woman jury. The victim's family exchanged hugs and fought back tears following the verdict, while Payne sat expressionless and then quietly left the courtroom, back to the county jail to await a June 9 sentencing by Circuit Judge Philip Rodgers.

**APRIL 18****Otsego hires administrator**

GAYLORD — Otsego County on Thursday gained an administrator officials hope will assume a larger role in the day-to-day operations of the county.

Wexford County officials, meanwhile, learned that they'll have to initiate their seventh administrative search since 1994.

Denise Koning, who has been Wexford County administrator for just over a year and a half, was offered and accepted the administrator's job for Otsego County Thursday. Koning will be paid a \$62,000 salary.

**APRIL 18****Phone surcharge going up**

BEULAH — The cost of providing 911 emergency telephone services is on the rise and the Benzie County Commission has decided to pass some of the expense on to residents.

The commission voted unanimously to raise the surcharge rate by 29 cents to \$2.37 per month for each telephone line in the county. The increase could appear on phone bills as early as May.

County Administrator Chuck Clarke said the increased rate would lessen the burden the cost of operat-

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