

MAY/NEWS

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hurting a community effort to re-open the popular ski hill, organizers said.

Mt. Holiday officials discovered the damage last week, including smashed windows, kicked-in doors in the ski lift houses, switches and knobs broken off lift equipment and spray-painted graffiti.

Mt. Holiday Inc., a non-profit group, bought the ski area in September from the family of long-time operator Warren Brosch, who died in 1999 in an accident while working on the ski hill. It was a popular ski and snowboarding facility, especially for young people.

The Mt. Holiday group bought the 45-acre ski hill and lodge for \$700,000, and is trying to raise \$1.5 million to have sufficient funding available to operate the facility without incurring debt. The facility was last open in March of 2001.

MAY 7

Stream stained orange

HONOR — The Department of Environmental Quality is investigating an orange, odorous substance that has clouded the waters of a stream that runs near M-31 and Platte Road.

DEQ officials are calling the matter a criminal investigation. An agency representative would not comment on the length of the investigation, any possible causes or potential health hazards.

Don Nugent, president and general manager of Graceland Fruit in Frankfort, said he believes he knows the cause.

"A hauler we hired to dispose of some blueberry juice placed it in a gravel pit at the headwaters of this stream," said Nugent, declining to name the hauler.

Nugent said his company has arranged for the removal of the juice in the gravel pit, including any gravel and dirt that may have been exposed. A chemical reaction is believed to have turned the blueberry juice orange.

MAY 8

911 proposal voted down

TRAVERSE CITY — Only 18 percent of registered Grand Traverse County voters turned out for Tuesday's special election, but they were enough to defeat a proposed new 911 emergency services radio system.

Unofficial totals received by the county clerk's office showed that 5,893 votes were cast against a proposal to fund the system by increasing monthly telephone surcharges from 80 cents to \$4 a month. In contrast, only 4,117 votes were cast in favor of the plan.

County board chairman Pete Strom said he was extremely surprised by the vote, and suspected voters were alarmed at the dramatic increase that was being requested.

The increase would have raised an additional \$2.4 million a year. The county had intended to use that money for a new \$9 million police, fire and ambulance radio system. The funds also would have financed the operation of the central dispatch center, which has a \$1.2 million budget — about half of which is allocated from the county's general fund.

MAY 8

Stained stream a mystery

HONOR — Although state environmental officials won't say what has clouded a stream near U.S. 31 and Platte Road, they did say Wednesday the substance posed "no public health threat."

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality began what it said is a criminal investigation after an orange substance appeared in the unnamed stream, along with a strong odor.

In its first comments on the nature of the substance, a DEQ official said more testing is needed.

"There are significant environmental consequences, but based on the testing to date there is no public health

threat," said Brian Myers, an investigator with the DEQ's water quality division.

The issue surfaced this week when people living near the stream said they noticed the orange substance and a strong sulfur-like odor.

MAY 9

City to annex farm land

CADILLAC — The city of Cadillac has cleared the way to annex 102 acres of farm land in Haring Township for possible future development.

The city council approved the annexation request from Don Boersma. Part of Boersma's farm is already in city limits. In fact, he owns the only farm still operating in the city.

The city and township approved the annexation under Public Act 425, which allows Haring to continue collecting the 2 mills of property taxes Boersma was already paying them for the next 50 years, city manager Pete Stalker said. The township will stand to collect more money when the property is developed, he added.

The city benefits because it has long been concerned about maintaining and expanding its residential base and has little land available for development.

MAY 10

Library board to study law

TRAVERSE CITY — A local library board is investigating the federal Patriot Act in hopes of getting a better grasp of how the sweeping homeland security law will impact library patrons and operations.

The Traverse Area District Library Board named a committee to review the comprehensive federal statute, which was passed by Congress following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The legislation has raised concerns from library organizations across the country, as library records are among the areas where federal authorities are expanding their surveillance powers under the provisions of the

Patriot Act.

The board hasn't taken a formal position on the Patriot Act, with members saying they need more time to evaluate the law.

MAY 9

Ransom Lake project ends

LAKE ANN — The shores of Ransom Lake and 220 surrounding acres of forest land will remain free of development, following the completion of a two-year, \$1.16 million effort.

"This has been a long dream," said Heather Rigney, land preservation specialist with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, which worked on the project with Almira Citizens for Preservation and Almira Township.

The conservancy considers the land to be one of the most ecologically important properties in the township because of its size and the completely undeveloped Ransom Lake located at the south east end.

"Almira Township is the fastest growing township in Benzie County," said Supervisor Steve Puchovan, "and it's important that we preserve this open space for our grandchildren and our great grandchildren."

The project began just over two years ago when the township and the conservancy began to look at the land for a nature preserve.

MAY 12

City may cut lifeguards

TRAVERSE CITY — A proposal to eliminate summer lifeguard patrols at city beaches to save upward of \$60,000 in a tight budget year is being floated by the city commission.

But some residents and city officials are questioning the idea, saying the lifeguards make the city's popular beaches both safer and more inviting for locals and visitors.

"I understand budget problems, but I wish they'd look somewhere else to make cuts," said resident Pam

Yeager. She runs a preschool and daycare center on 14th Street and faces the prospect of having to hire her own lifeguard to take her youngsters to the beach.

"It's a great concern to me as a daycare provider," Yeager said. "And I don't think it sends a very good message to our citizens or the tourists who come here."

City manager Richard Lewis recommended cutting the lifeguard program in the \$12.3 million general fund budget plan he presented to the city commission last week.

The proposed budget is up just 1.5 percent from last year. Lewis said flat city revenues have forced staff to "re-evaluate" programs like the lifeguard patrols, and scale back on some capital improvement projects.

MAY 13

Stations sold to Va. firm

TRAVERSE CITY — A Virginia media company has reached a deal with Scanlan Communications Group to buy WGTQ-TV in Traverse City and WGTQ-TV in Sault Ste. Marie.

The deal for ABC-affiliate TV 29&8 is expected to close this fall, pending approval by the Federal Communications Commission.

TV 29&8 is facing an Oct. 18 deadline to have a high-definition digital broadcast signal in operation. Max Media LLC of Virginia Beach, Va., was created in part to buy up small- and middle-market stations from owners facing the conversion who do not want the work and costs involved, said Max Media chief executive officer Gene Loving.

TV 29&8 employs 23. Loving said there will be no changes in staff. Todd Ruonavaara, 29&8 general manager, said the staff has known for some time that there would be a sale but did not know until Monday who the buyers would be.

TV 29&8 went on the air in 1971 and since 1988 has been

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