

SEPTEMBER/NEWS

FROM PAGE 44

will be taken and if he will be allowed to return to work. Blank expects it to take a week or two.

SEPT. 12

EPA opposes bridge

TRAVERSE CITY — Federal regulators dealt a potentially devastating blow to the county's Hartman-Hammond bridge plans by telling the state to reject the project's wetland permits.

The letter, from the EPA's regional wetlands branch in Chicago, says the county's current proposal "will result in significant adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem" of the Boardman River valley and asks the DEQ to reject wetland construction permits for the project.

The EPA joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state Department of Natural Resources in recommending the DEQ reject wetland permits.

SEPT. 12

Judge drops accountant

TRAVERSE CITY — An accountant who criticized the financial operations of the Traverse City Housing Commission has been dropped from a defamation suit filed by the agency's former director.

Ryan Vieth and his Wisconsin company, Housing Authority Accounting Specialists Inc., were dismissed from a suit in a ruling handed down Monday by 13th Circuit Judge Philip Rodgers Jr.

The suit filed last fall by former public housing director Lorri Burtt alleged that Vieth and his firm defamed Burtt in a Sept. 13 letter to the housing commission. In that letter, Vieth outlined several continuing problems he saw with the agency's financial operations. The letter led to follow-up audits as well as personnel and procedural changes — including Burtt's dismissal in early November.

SEPT. 13

Judge pleads no contest

TRAVERSE CITY — An Upper Peninsula judge promised to resign when he pleaded no contest to charges he pinned a courthouse employee against a wall, tried to kiss her and then groped her breasts and buttocks.

Steven E. Ford, 54, of Newberry, faces up to a year in jail on a lesser charge of misdemeanor aggravated assault when he is sentenced in St. Ignace on Oct. 24.

Grand Traverse County Circuit Judge Philip Rodgers accepted the plea. Rodgers was appointed to hear the case because Upper Peninsula judges recused themselves.

In a plea bargain, the Michigan Attorney General will recommend Ford be placed on probation rather than put in jail.

Ford agreed to resign by Nov. 1 as 92nd District Judge for Mackinac and Luce counties. Gov. Jennifer Granholm will appoint a replacement to serve out the remainder of Ford's term.

SEPT. 14

Gilbert to resume duties

TRAVERSE CITY — District Judge Thomas Gilbert will resume the duties of a district judge in October, including hearing cases that involve marijuana and alcohol abuse.

Gilbert, whose duties were restricted last year after he admitted he took two puffs from a marijuana cigarette at a Rolling Stones concert in Detroit, is slated to take on a full docket beginning Oct. 1.

The decision comes amid frustration by local judges over the state Supreme Court's delay in making a decision in a judicial misconduct case against Gilbert.

The judicial misconduct case has been pending before the Supreme Court since June when the Judicial Tenure Commission sent a recommendation to the Court.



Record-Eagle file photo

Judge Thomas Gilbert returned to the bench in September.

The contents of the recommendation, which could include anything from a private admonishment to a suspension to removal from office, have not been released to the public.

SEPT. 15

Officials seek another site

GLEN ARBOR — Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore officials want to work with a neighboring resort to find a new location for its septic wastewater.

In an effort to save eight acres of forest, the park and The Homestead could swap land the resort uses to discharge wastewater.

The Homestead acquired a 4 acre and an 8 acre easement in 1972 before the park was created. It has discharged treated septic wastewater there ever since.

Park officials would like to relocate the easement to a 12 acre meadow area just north of the resort.

New regulations have changed the way the wastewater, which totaled 14 million gallons last year, is disposed.

SEPT. 16

Activist explores unborn

TRAVERSE CITY — Right-to-Life activist Scott Klusendorf, the guest speaker at the 16th annual Focus on Life benefit dinner of the Grand Traverse Right to Life held Monday night at the Grand Traverse Resort, told almost 1,000 area residents that anti-abortion forces can prevail both on both scientific and moral grounds on the often-divisive abortion issue.

Klusendorf, of Los Angeles, is recognized as a leading speaker and instructor in the U.S. and Canada on the pro-life position.

A lecturer in bioethics — which deals with the ethical implications of biological research — he's written three training manuals on how to

advocate for the cause and a workbook on raising money for pro-life activities, and participated in numerous abortion debates at the college and graduate level.

SEPT. 17

Man reports cougar

TRAVERSE CITY — Eric Brown turned north on Garfield Road Monday night and slowed his truck as he approached two specks of light along the road.

It was a pair of eyes — big, glowing cat eyes.

"As soon as I saw it, I thought 'holy smoke, I know what that is — it's a cougar,'" said Brown, who reported seeing the big cat around 9:30 p.m. near River Road at the south end of East Bay Township.

State wildlife officials say they're still looking for proof that cougars do indeed roam northern Michigan, but other researchers are convinced the big cats — once considered extinct in the state — are living in isolated spots around the state.

There have been several cougar reports around the Arbutus Lake, Lake Ann and Kalkaska areas in recent years, he said, and more from around the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

SEPT. 18

Judge waives filing fee

HORTON BAY — Hope for a peaceful solution to a Bay Township property dispute continued despite landowner Lyle Barkley's continued threat to meet with force any attempt to remove manufactured homes from his property.

Barkley said late Wednesday that the Charlevoix County Circuit Court had agreed to allow him to appeal a district judge's ruling that the structures be removed from his four acres on Camp Daggett Road.

The court earlier required a \$7,800 appeal bond from Barkley in order to hear the case — which he said he

PLEASE SEE PAGE 47