

NOVEMBER/NEWS

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year trend heaving more to a lopsided, west-leaning district.

A giant disparity between West and East side schools is in the making at all grade levels. Without redistricting, it will only get worse.

The district is taking a "long hard look at the data" said superintendent James Pavelka. He will convene a panel of parents and teachers next fall to study enrollment and make recommendations in the spring of 2005. Any changes would happen by the start of the 2005 school year, he said.

NOV. 18

Parking fees to increase

TRAVERSE CITY — The city will increase parking fees for the new parking deck and other city lots, but will hold off on hiking the parking meter fees downtown.

The city commission approved new parking fees Monday night increasing the costs for the Larry C. Hardy parking deck by \$5 a month to \$35. Quarterly fees will go up \$15 to \$80, while annual fees for the new \$8 million parking deck will be \$300 which is up \$50 a year.

The costs for parking in surface lots will increase by \$10 a year to \$260, to \$75 per quarter which is a \$10 increase while the monthly cost will be unchanged at \$30. The increases were approved in a 5-1 vote, with commissioner Anne Melichar opposed.

But the city's Downtown Development Authority decided against seeking an increase in the parking meter fees downtown, which had drawn complaints from some downtown merchants.

NOV. 19

Sheriff pays out \$1.29M

BEULAH — Lawsuits against the Benzie Sheriff's Department over the past three years cost more than \$529,000 to defend and another \$760,000 to settle.

The Michigan Municipal



Record-Eagle file photo/John L. Russell

The Larry C. Hardy parking deck was opened for business.

Risk Management Authority shared the expense, but allegations of harassment and sexual assault in the department have taken a big bite out of the county budget.

The spate of lawsuits date to October 2001, when the county settled a suit filed by deputy Thomas Whale for \$350,000 after spending \$153,402 on legal fees. Whale claimed he was harassed by his superiors in the sheriff's department. He returned to the department last week from medical leave.

Other suits include:

■ In March 2002, the county settled a suit filed by Melanie Herren for \$125,000 after spending \$125,000 on legal fees.

■ In April, the county settled a suit filed by Russ Townsend for \$60,000 after spending \$145,610 on legal fees.

■ In August, the county settled a suit filed by "Jane Doe" for \$225,000 after spending more than \$105,000 on legal fees.

NOV. 20

Attorney pleads guilty

GAYLORD — A Gaylord attorney who attempted to bribe a police officer to hide his alcohol use pleaded guilty to two one-year misdemeanor charges.

Murray L. Blum, 53, pleaded guilty this week to a count of attempted resisting and obstructing a police officer in Otsego District Court Tuesday, the latest in a string

of legal problems for the local criminal defense attorney.

Blum was accused of bribing Otsego County Sheriff's Deputy John Gunsell, who was ordered by district Judge Patricia Morse to give the attorney a Breathalyzer test on Feb. 27 while the attorney was in court representing clients.

Blum is on probation for a December 2001 drunken driving conviction and had been ordered not to consume alcohol.

Blum faces one year in the Otsego County Jail when he is sentenced in January by Roscommon County District Judge Daniel Sutton. Sutton was assigned to hear the case by the State Court Administrator's Office because Morse oversees Blum's probation.

NOV. 21

AG: TC stuck with agency

TRAVERSE CITY — The city housing commission is part of city government and not an independent agency, the state Attorney General's office said.

The AG's opinion, sought by housing commission vice-chairman Christine Blackledge, appears to conflict with earlier attempts by some city officials to distance themselves and city government from the troubled housing commission.

The agency fired its former director last year after the agency's auditors raised sev-

eral financial questions.

NOV. 22

Alliance worries some

TRAVERSE CITY — Events promoters and performance groups are mostly pleased about Interlochen Center for the Arts taking over the State Theatre performing arts center project, but some have questions.

Interlochen and State Theatre Group Inc. officials recently said they hope to raise \$6.5 million over the next three years to renovate the 750-seat downtown theater and adjacent building next door.

After that, Interlochen would take ownership, oversee renovation and run the center.

Interlochen spokesman Paul Heaton said he spoke Thursday with Roger Jacobi, president of Interlochen then. Jacobi told him it was unclear how the auditorium would be used and that was unfortunate because concern exists 30 years later.

That concern is one reason community access to the downtown auditorium is part of the agreement with the State Theatre Group, Heaton said. Local groups will be able to use the auditorium for a reasonable fee.

NOV. 23

Docks may get new use

TRAVERSE CITY — A maritime education center could grace the shoreline at Light and Power's old coal dock along M-22 in Greilickville.

The Maritime Heritage Alliance unveiled its preliminary plans this month to the Light and Power board, which this fall granted the non-profit group a 20-year cost-free lease for part of the coal dock property.

The plans call for building an approximately 3,000 square-foot wood-panel structure west of the old coal pile site. It will be an "interpretive center" for the region's maritime history and will include a small museum, a workshop for public view-

ing of volunteers working on historic water craft and a classroom for educational events.

Brauer said the facility is based on other maritime museums and centers that alliance members have visited around the country.

NOV. 24

Teen charged as adult

BELLAIRE — A 15-year-old is being charged as an adult — and could face a lengthy prison sentence if convicted — in an armed robbery case in Antrim County.

Adam Patrick Lockwood, 15, of Traverse City, is charged with armed robbery, felonious assault and two charges of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. The most serious charge, armed robbery, carries a penalty of life or any number of years in prison.

Antrim Prosecutor Charles Koop said the charges stem from two incidents Oct. 20 in Elk Rapids. Lockwood allegedly was in the process of purchasing marijuana from another man when he pulled out a .22 Ruger handgun, threatened the man and took the marijuana.

Lockwood was bound over to circuit court on the felony charges earlier this month. No trial date has been set. Lockwood is currently lodged in the Muskegon River Youth Home without bond.

NOV. 25

Weather causes fatalities

TRAVERSE CITY — Police in Wexford and Missaukee counties each investigated fatal accidents Monday afternoon as slick roads caused crashes and tie-ups throughout the region.

Lawaine Horne-Davidsen, 61, of Cadillac, was killed in a head-on crash that occurred about 2 p.m. in near white-out conditions as she was driving on the U.S. 131 business route near Boon Road in Haring Township north of Cadillac.

Missaukee officials investigated a crash that took place

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