

Island State Park Commission Looks for Fund Restoration

Park Can Keep Revenue from Certain Fees

By Karen Gould

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission believes there will be strong support to restore some state funding for the agency's 2006 budget, when Legislators in Lansing work out the details of the state budget for the new fiscal year, which begins October 1. Chairman Dennis Cawthorne, who has been working with House leaders, told commissioners meeting Friday,

July 22, at Fort Mackinac, that he doesn't expect final budget approval until September, however.

The entire \$1.5 million allocated by the state to Mackinac State Historic Parks in 2005 was removed earlier this year in a proposal from Governor Jennifer Granholm, which suggested the money could be made up with unspecified new fees and funding. The House of Representatives passed a budget bill June 8 that did not include park funding, a Senate bill passed June 15 did include the appropriation. The House and the Senate now

must come to an agreement on the entire state budget, including the Park's funding.

The State Park's total budget this year is \$5.7 million.

Some good news, relayed by Director Phil Porter, is that the agency can retain some of the revenues it has been sending to the state treasury in Lansing, according to the commission's legal counsel, Assistant Attorney General James Riley. The Commission has always received that money back, but could never draw interest on it. Now, Mr. Porter said, except for airport and licensing fees, the

park can deposit operations income directly and reap the benefits of control and interest.

In another legal matter, Attorney Mark Matus of the State Attorney General's office, who attended the meeting, reported to commissioners that Mr. Riley is drafting legislation to allow the Mackinac Island State Park Commission to sell surplus property in its collections, as well as real estate.

"Oddly enough, said Mr. Cawthorne, "we have all sorts of powers of acquisition, but no powers of disposal. He said once the draft is prepared, commissioners would be asked to approve it before sending it to the state legislature.

"We have enormous collections and there probably are redundancies or other things in there that maybe aren't necessary. The flexibility would be nice to have and then we could use the proceeds to acquire new objects," said Commissioner Richard Manoogian.

"The statutory change that is being proposed is for surplus property and not to be confined to the lands," said Mr. Cawthorne. There is no intent to dispose of any land on Mackinac Island, he said.

Mr. Porter also advised commissioners that the soft tourism market this summer has affected overall attendance to all Mackinac State Historic Park sites, which are down by 3.09 percent. Helping to balance the negative figures was a increase in attendance income, which has seen a 3.41 percent increase. Attendance so far is up over last year at Fort Mackinac and Old

Mackinac Point Lighthouse, while Historic Mill Creek and Colonial Michilimackinac attendance is down. Museum store sales also are down, just under three percent from last year.

In other business, commissioners were advised on new museum programs, park operations, and marketing and development. Commissioners also thanked former Commissioner Bob Traxler and congratulated Mayor Margaret Doud on 30 years of service to the Island.

Park archaeologists at Colonial Michilimackinac continue their work on House Seven and, as with other excavations at Michilimackinac, the root cellar is providing artifacts like a butcher knife blade and a half penny dating from 1729 to 1754, which is the first coin found since 1979.

A \$135,000 grant is helping fund a new exhibit for Fort Mackinac. The project, "Military Medicine at Mackinac," is in the planning stages and will be in the 1828 Post Hospital at the Fort. The exhibit will compare and contrast 19th and 21st century medical practices. Common ailments and cures of Fort Mackinac soldiers will be a part of the exhibit, along with information about the Fort's surgeons.

Phase two of the restoration of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse is wrapping up with the completion of a fence and gates and the painting of the lighthouse barn.

Mackinac Island Airport is scheduled to have work done

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Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Republican Chairman Vows Changes

Republicans, after the 1991-2002 reign of Governor John Engler, currently control the Legislature and the Michigan Supreme Court. Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and Attorney General Mike Cox are well positioned for reelection.

But no Republican presidential nominee since 1988 has carried Michigan, and the state's political Big Three are Democrats - Governor Jennifer Granholm and U.S. Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow. We're deep blue on the national political map.

Republican National Chairman Ken Mehlman, at conclusion of his two-day Michigan cheerleading/fundraising blitz visit last week, vowed "seeds of success" have been planted to oust "the vulnerable" Granholm and Stabenow in 2006 and deliver Michigan for the 2008 presidential nominee.

That, of course, is the kind of spin that any visiting national party boss offers in any state to local scribes. I've heard it for two decades from the likes of Republican Haley Barbour and Democrat Terry McAuliffe, two of the better ones.

Mehlman, whose Washtenaw County fundraiser Thursday netted about \$250,000 for the Michigan GOP, told this scribe:

"The seeds for success have been planted over the last four years (including) the growth we saw in '04. They continue to be planted by the Michigan party's focus on grassroots, the focus on reaching out and growing the party, and commitment to candidates who are reformers, and who believe in ideas on how to improve people's lives in the state."

On Stabenow, he said polling indicates "voters clearly want change." Granholm's "biggest vulnerability is that Michigan is last in job creation."

Reacting to Mehlman Friday, pollster Ed Sarpolus of EPIC/MRA said Stabenow does "significantly better" than Republican Sen. Spencer Abraham, whom she defeated in 2002, did in polls at this stage of that election cycle. He said working in Granholm's favor is that her likely challenger, businessman Dick DeVos, is viewed as "quite polarizing--way to the right."

The polls and spin-meistering of 2005 are interesting fodder in the buildup, but not predictors of

what will happen in 2006.

Cars and Cherries

The more jobs Granholm attracts, better the chance of saving her own. The stated goal of her current nine-day mission to Japan is "to attract new business development and jobs to Michigan," with emphasis on forging stronger alliances with Japan's auto and new technology industries.

Wisely, she's also working in a pitch for Michigan's \$37 billion-dollar-a-year agriculture industry, with particular emphasis on products dispatched from the Lansing-based Cherry Marketing Institute for a Monday reception at the U.S. Pavilion at the World Expo in Aichi, Japan.

Among them were dried cherries from Cherry Central Cooperative in Traverse City and Graceland Fruit in Frankfort. Granholm's office said that "while tart cherries are not a traditional staple of the Japanese diet, the Japanese are very health conscious, and the health benefits of tart cherries are appealing."

Granholm's reception also was to feature wine from Leelanau County's Black Star Farms, which she has visited and from which the Governor's Residence in Lansing purchases wine-by-mail.

Black Star Farms is at the forefront of a mounting effort to block an anti-consumer protectionist bill pushed by wine wholesalers which would ban all direct sale wine shipments in the state and ban the sale of wine in the free-sample tasting rooms.

Granholm doesn't support the ban bill as drafted and vows to work for compromise that would allow some direct sales for personal consumption by an increasingly important Michigan industry.

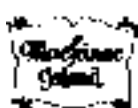
Last week, the Michigan Commission of Agriculture passed a resolution opposing the ban and noting, "the economic impact of Michigan's wine industry is estimated to exceed \$75 million annually, with over \$37 million of that coming from the sale of Michigan wines."

Two interesting allies pitted against the protectionist bill are state Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, and state Agriculture Director-designate Mitch Irwin, former Democratic senator from Sault Ste. Marie, who then had on his staff Republican McManus.

Irwin, who has been Granholm's director of the Department of Management and Budget, said that as "ag" director he will urge Granholm to hold firm for limited direct sales of wine to retail consumers for personal consumption "to maintain and grow Michigan's wine industry."

McManus, joined by Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City, is leading an effort for a package of bills to allow direct wine shipments. Co-sponsors of similar House bills include Reps. Kevin Elsenheimer, R-Bellaire, and David Palsrok, R-Manistee.

George Weeks is the political columnist for The Detroit News and is syndicated by Superior Features.



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