

# New Platform To Store Construction Debris in Winter at Public Works

**By Leslie Rott**

The Mackinac Island Board of Public Works hopes a new cement pad at the Solid Waste Handling Facility, on which to store construction debris during the winter months, will forestall a state threat to close the facility. News of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) concern over improper storage of the debris came at the DPW's August 5 meeting.

Department of Public Works Director Bruce Zimmerman said the current city practice of

storing construction and building demolition materials directly on the ground is illegal, and, when freight boats are laid up during the winters, shipping the debris off the Island to a mainland landfill is not possible.

Mr. Zimmerman said the cement pad would store construction debris from late October through mid-April. The plan presented to the board also includes placing additional dumpsters at the facility.

According to Rob Schmeling, Upper Peninsula district supervisor of the Waste and Hazardous Materials Division of the DEQ, the City must address the storage of demolition material on the Island before construction season starts. It needs to be in compliance with Part 115 of Public Act 451, which was adopted by the state in 1994 and dictates how Solid Waste Handling facilities should be operated.

Mr. Schmeling said that the DPW was sent a letter of warning and if it does not comply, it will face a penalty, although he said he doesn't know what the penalty might be.

Mr. Zimmerman told the board it could include closing

the facility.

"We are scrambling to find a way to uphold the law," he said.

Board Chairman R.D. Musser said he wants the staff to propose a solution that will satisfy the DEQ and that will meet with City Council approval.

"We must come up with a comprehensive program we can sell to Council," Mr. Musser said.

Board member Jim Pettit suggested shipping construction debris off the Island via helicopter during the winter months, but Mr. Musser said costs for such an operation would be prohibitive.

In another matter, the Board of Public Works agreed to offer a resolution to a summer-long dispute with cottagers

Elliot and Rita Sue Cohen over ownership and repair of a water line, which the Cohen's contend belongs to the city and the city says is a private line.

The Cohens had asked the city to pay costs to repair the line when it froze last winter and broke in several places. The line froze, the Cohens charge, because of a faulty valve the city should have kept in order. The line transverses the Cohen property to the Miller-Berke property and feeds both cottages.

Another issue brought up at the meeting was the wages of DPW workers. Mr. Pettit suggested that the board conduct a wage survey, comparing the salaries of Mackinac Island DPW workers to those of DPW workers across the Upper Peninsula. He noted

that the Mackinac Island DPW does not participate in a 401K program.

"We should be paying more because it costs more to live on Mackinac Island," Mr. Pettit said. "These DPW jobs should be the ultimate jobs. People should be lined up around the block for them." He contended that the DPW is the largest year-around employer on the Island.

Chairman Musser assured Mr. Pettit that the wage issue is not just a DPW one, however, he agreed that a wage survey would be a good way to see how this DPW compares with others.

The next meeting of the Board of Public Works will be Tuesday, August 30, at 10 a.m. at Community Hall.

## Council Denies Variance for Rental Building

**By Karen Gould**

City Council members voted Wednesday, August 17, against a zoning variance request that would have provided rented storage for lawn mowers, snowmobiles, and other implements.

Richard Coates asked that his property on Greenshed Lane, zoned hotel/boarding house, be granted a variance for commercial use. He planned to convert the existing building on the property into rental storage space with an attached apartment. His plans included creating 10 storage bays, 12 feet by 14 feet.

Aldermen Frank Blowski and Jason St. Onge voted for the variance, while Mike Hart, Smi Horn, and Armin Porter voted against. Alderman Dan Wightman was absent.

"I don't deny the need for storage on Mackinac Island," said Mr. Hart. "I think we need to do it in a manner that controls growth."

His concerns were the same as the other aldermen in that approving this variance would allow all businesses zoned hotel/boarding house on the Island with storage buildings to request a variance change and the precedent would have been set by approving Mr. Coates' request. The building for which Mr. Coates was seeking a variance change used to be a storage building for Stonecliff hotel.

"It's a needed project, there are just so many ifs right now," said Mr. Horn.

Conditions on which Council can grant a zoning

variance are spelled out in the city ordinance.

City Attorney Tom Evashevski said Council should consider whether conditions on the parcel are unique or distinct from other properties in the zoning district and whether not granting the variance would pose a significant hardship on the owner. If that is not the case, then this variance change, if granted, would make it difficult to say no to similar requests in the future, he said.

Mr. Porter agreed. "It's not a bad plan, but if we grant it to Dick, then anyone zoned hotel/boarding house could make the same request, and we would have a tough time not granting them."

Mr. Blowski, who supported the project, said, "There is a need for storage. We just have to try to figure out how to meet it. This issue will be revisited, I'm sure of it."



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