

Letters to The Editor

MDOT Insurance Purchase Statement Called Misleading

To the Editor:
 In reference to the statement that Leon Hank made in his letter published last week in *The St. Ignace News* stating the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) was paying \$10,000 too much for their auto insurance, it is false and misleading.

The policy provided by Cheeseman Insurance Agency and Michigan Insurance Company was awarded through a published bidding process for coverages specified by the MBA. This policy is much more extensive than the minimum statutory coverages promised by MDOT. I use the word "promise" rather than "insurance" because the premium MDOT is charging the MBA merely states that they "may pay" claims as presented. The chairman of the MBA said he was uncomfortable with "may pay" and requested the wording changed to "shall pay" and Mr. Hank refused.

MDOT has exposed the taxpayers of the State of Michigan for unlimited medical expenses for an infinite number of claims due to accidental Bodily Injury to their employees and certain other parties in an automobile accident. The difference in cost to the MBA between the two

proposals is approximately \$1,896 per year.

The MBA Insurance Committee and the MBA did not think it was a good decision to change their coverage from an insurance policy to a promise and voted to continue their insurance. This is arguably an irresponsible attempt by MDOT to reduce costs.

MDOT then told the MBA they did not have the authority to purchase insurance and ordered the MBA not to do so. MDOT further told the MBA that if the Board approved payment of this policy, the board would be held personally liable for the amount of the premiums.

Mr. Hank should realize that when presenting an insurance proposal the primary obligation to the client is to point out specific coverages that are not included and not just premium savings. There was no attempt by Mr. Hank to inform the MBA that his proposal was inferior to their present coverage. His inference that the MBA was remiss in their insurance purchasing policy is not correct.

Gregory R. Cheeseman
 Cheeseman Insurance Agency
 St. Ignace

Increasing Franchise Fees for Ferry Boat Lines a Mistake

To the Editor:
 The article in the September 3 issue of the *Mackinac Island Town Crier* regarding the ferry boat lines increasing their fares owing to the hurricane in the Gulf just contributes to my belief that the City of Mackinac Island made a definite mistake by increasing the ferry boat lines' franchise fees. Until our federal government can find a way to stop the oil refineries with their runaway profits, we all must "tighten our belts." It doesn't take a genius to understand that the ferry boat lines are

in business to make a profit, so any increase in their operating costs will be passed on to their customers, which includes the residents of Mackinac Island as well as the tourists. So it would seem to me that giving them more reason to increase their rates will just cause a further decline in our tourism, which is already suffering. If one takes the time to think about the cost to an average family of four to come to visit our island, that cost can be substantial.

Kent Weber
 Mackinac Island

Area Blood Drives in September

The American Red Cross will hold blood drives in Mackinaw City and Sault Ste. Marie Wednesday, September 21. A drive will be at the

Church of the Straits, at 307 North Huron Boulevard, in Mackinaw City from noon to 5:45 p.m., while the Faith Lutheran Church, at 1600 Park Street, will host the Red Cross drive in Sault Ste. Marie, also from noon to 5:45 p.m.

Town Crier Concludes Summer Schedule

This issue completes the *Town Crier's* summer publication schedule. Our next issue will be published October 8, and our winter editions will be printed in mid-December, mid-February, and mid-April. Weekly publication will resume in mid-May.

For those of you who buy their paper on the street and spend winters off the Island, be sure to reserve your winter mailed copies before you go, or subscribe to our online edition at www.mackinacislandtowncrier.com.

Michigan Politics

By
 George Weeks



Granholm, Stupak Champions For New Super Lock in Sault

Occasionally, a Michigan governor comes up with a grandiose scheme that really clicks, but comes to pass long after the governor leaves office.

So it was with Gov. Chase S. Osborn, who after leaving office in 1913, lobbied President Franklin D. Roosevelt to build a bridge linking Michigan's peninsulas. Gov. G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams took up the cause; heard it criticized as "Soapy's Folly;" and saw the magnificent span completed in 1957.

So it was with first Gov. Stevens T. Mason, who at age 25 led Michigan to statehood and was one of our most extraordinary political figures. President Andrew Jackson way back then called our feisty guy "Young Hotspur." (Mason once punched an editor who called him "the boy governor.")

Mason, several weeks before Michigan was admitted to the union in 1837, called for the U.S. government to build a ship canal around the rapids at Sault Ste. Marie to connect Lakes Huron and Superior.

Long political debate followed, with prominent Americans saying it couldn't and shouldn't be built. As *Michigan History Magazine* notes in its cover story on the 150th anniversary of the locks, 19th century statesman and orator Henry Clay of Kentucky contended such a project "contemplates work beyond the remotest settlement in the United States, if not the moon."

In 1853, Gov. Robert McClelland signed a bill creating a commission to implement the canal-lock project. The next governor, Andrew Parsons, shuffled some paperwork on the project, calling it "one of the best of the kind in the world." The next governor, Kinsley Bingham, formally accepted the completed proj-

ect, which in 1881 was transferred to the federal government, where it exists today.

Current Gov. Jennifer Granholm and U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, a champion of efforts to build the long-needed additional "super lock," were among the politicians scheduled to participate in last weekend's anniversary celebrations at Sault Ste. Marie, oldest city in Michigan and third oldest in the nation.

Building the locks was an historic engineering triumph and political struggle. But what about future? What are prospects for building the new \$341.7 million super lock to supplement the 32-year-old Poe Lock, largest in the Western Hemisphere and busiest lock in the world?

It's mighty slow going. Congress authorized the new super lock in 1986. Congressional folks said last week it could be completed in 2016 if there is "realistic funding."

Michigan and other states,

such as Illinois, are chipping in. Then-Gov. John Engler in 2001 signed legislation to create the Soo Locks Fund to meet Michigan's projected \$14.1 million share of the non-federal portion of the project.

Currently, the Poe Lock is the only one capable of handling the large freighters. One alone can deliver enough iron ore to build 60,000 cars.

Why the need for a twin of the Poe Lock, which handles two-thirds of all freight going through the Soo Locks?

Says Stupak: "If the Poe Lock were ever rendered unusable due to a terrorist attack or natural disaster, it would halt commerce on the Great Lakes and these industries would be helpless."

Asked Friday if anybody is dragging feet on getting a new lock, Stupak said: "Yeah, the Corps of Engineers."

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

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