

Hotel Plans Out, Employee Housing Remains at Maple View

By Karen Gould

Ira Green's Maple View housing will remain a dormitory for employees, the Mackinac Island Planning Commission decided following an hour-long public hearing Tuesday, April 11, to consider Mr. Green's request to turn it into a hotel. The proposed change of use would increase the non-conformity of the structure by making it more commercial, said the five commissioners who voted against the change.

Debated was whether the change would improve the property and whether its new use would be more, or less, compatible with the single family residential zone in which it is sitting.

"We have to make a tough decision based on as many facts as we can gather," said Commissioner Mary Dufina before the vote.

Mr. Green has owned Maple View since 1992 and it already is grandfathered as a non-conforming use in the R-1 zone. Both the current use of the building and the proposed use are non-conforming.

The three commissioners who favored the conversion did so because it would reduce housing density and create a safer structure. Housing density has been discussed as the city revises its Master Plan.



Maple View housing will remain a dormitory for employees, the Mackinac Island Planning Commission decided.

Maple View sits on the Lake Huron side at the eastern end of Main Street near Mission Point Resort and is home to approximately 100 summer employees, who live in 36 rooms.

Commissioners had turned down a previous request, in January, to convert the structure to a 26-room hotel. At that time, Mr. Green had requested a change of use and variances for building alternations. Commissioners based their decision then on public concerns that area traffic would be increased and their hesitancy to set a precedent for allowing hotels in

residential areas.

In February, Mr. Green told planners he wanted to turn the building into a 20-room hotel.

During the April 11 public hearing, Chairman Bob Brown read letters for and against the use change, and six of the 27 residents in attendance also voiced opinions. Opinions against the project echoed January concerns over increased traffic because of daily turnover of guests, who are more transient than workers, who remain throughout the season. They also thought housing long-term employees is more

compatible with a residential area than overnight guests.

Mr. Green defended his plan to make the building a hotel. He noted that the number of people there would be reduced by one-third, the structural changes would increase property values in the neighborhood, the building would be safer by meeting current building codes, and guests would use the same taxi that Mission Point visitors use, so traffic would not be impacted.

Residents in favor of the project said the change would make the building safer and more attractive and noted that employees entering and exiting the dormitory at all hours of the night has been disruptive.

Mr. Green now could take the issue to the board of appeals, but told the *Town Crier* he had no plans to do so.

Voting against the use change were Bob Brown, Rosemary Lounsbury, Kay Hoppenrath, Lee Finkel, and Bruce LaPine, while Franc Doud, Margaret Horn, and Mary Dufina were in favor.

In other business, commissioners approved a request for a seasonal tent at Stonecliffe Properties. The tent has been used in past summers and, with weekends booked for weddings, owner Mike Beacon requested it remain up throughout the summer. The 40-foot by 60-foot tent is similar to the one used by Grand Hotel at the Jockey Club and would be erected on the water side of

Stonecliffe mansion.

Commissioners also approved the renovation of condominiums at Summer House Suites at Stonecliffe. The plan calls for three suites to be converted into two suites. The approval is based on the condition the master deed is recorded with the change and a copy is given to the planning commission.

New construction of a single family residence owned by Charles Hager was approved. The modular home will be placed at Stonecliffe Manor One, lot 26.

Mission Point Resort received the commission's approval for placement of roof top air conditioning compressors. It was noted they would not be visible from the street.

Commissioners also gave permission to Brian Schoenborn to construct an accessory building in Harrisonville on the corner of Hoban and 5th Street. Building Inspector Dennis Dombroski said the planned structure met all height, lot coverage, and setback requirements.

The next planning commission meeting will be at 4 p.m. Tuesday, May 9, on the second floor of Community Hall.

Planning commissioners include Chairman Bob Brown, Franc Doud, Rosemary Lounsbury, Kay Hoppenrath, Lee Finkel, Margaret Horn, Bruce LaPine, Mary Dufina, and Ed Chambers.

Bill To Aid Park Commission Sale of Property

By Karen Gould

Legislation now before the Michigan Senate will allow the Mackinac Island State Park Commission to sell the reconstructed sloop *Welcome* to a Traverse City preservation group and sell Mackinaw City property on Central Avenue that once held park offices. SB 1044 will also allow the commission to accept gifts, grants, and donations, setting the stage for another tourist bicycle license fee to be charged through ferry boat companies. Boatlines, since 1998, have collected a 50¢ city bicycle license fee from tourists bringing their own bikes to the Mackinac Island.

The original sloop *Welcome* was used to move the British fort from the mainland to Mackinac Island during the American Revolution. The State Park Commission reconstructed the sloop in the 1970s as a tourist demonstration project, but when the boat began rotting, the commission leased it to a Traverse City historical group, the Maritime Heritage Alliance, for \$1 a year. Maritime Heritage Alliance has

restored the vessel, but current state law prohibits the Mackinac Island State Park Commission from selling the boat outright.

State Senator Jason Allen of the 37th District drafted the legislation, which will allow the commission to deduct the Alliance's time and materials in the restoration from the selling price.

The commission's Mackinaw City office has been moved from the Central Avenue location to the Petersen Center on Sinclair Street, across from Fort Michilimackinac and the Central Avenue property is no longer needed.

The legislation also addresses the commission's legal authority to receive revenue from outside sources. During their January meeting, commissioners approved accepting a donation of 50¢ for each bicycle transported to the Island.

The commission estimates the donation could generate revenue of around \$35,000 and would assist in funding maintenance of park trails and land

used by bicyclists.

Such a move was suggested last year when Governor Jennifer Granholm threatened to cut the annual state appropriation to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission. State funding was eventually restored, but Lansing continues to warn that the commission needs to become self-supporting by raising its user fees. The state is proposing a \$200,000 budget cut for fiscal year 2006-007, which begins in October.



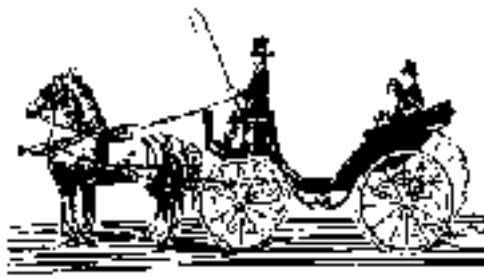
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On behalf of the senior citizens here on the Island I would like to extend a very warm THANK YOU to all of the wonderful people involved in providing the Meals on Snowmobiles program.

To all of the individuals and businesses who provide the delicious food, to Jennifer and The Community Foundation, to St. Anne's Church for the use of their kitchen and facilities, and to the courteous, always smiling young women, Kathi, Trish, Jules who prepare and deliver the meals.

Your efforts are really appreciated and may God bless you all.

Kent Weber
Mackinac Island