

Transportation Is Focus in Town Meeting With Stupak

By Karen Gould

Winter transportation needs and progress on the proposed breakwall were local issues Mackinac Island residents addressed with U.S. Congressman Bart Stupak during a town hall meeting, Friday, April 21. Area residents filled the seats of the Community Hall on Market Street, asking questions about the national scene and ending the meeting seeking help from the congressman with winter boat transportation.

Congressman Stupak told Islanders during the hour-long meeting that he likes to keep up with what his constituents are thinking, and one way to do that has been to schedule town hall meetings throughout his district, which includes 30.5 counties that blanket 44 percent of the state's land. The remaining 56 percent of the state is covered by 14 other congressmen.

Traveling with him were his wife, Laurie, who is a Mackinac Island State Park commissioner, his district manager, Tom Baldini of Marquette, and his executive assistant, Anne Brewster-Stanski of Washington, D.C.

Island residents took advantage of the face-to-face meeting with the congressman to address the issue of a winter boat. Winter transportation became a concern this winter when warmer temperatures hampered the formation of an ice bridge between Mackinac Island and St. Ignace and bad weather limited air travel for several days at a time.

Alderman Frank Bloswick raised the issue and Mayor Margaret Doud supported his concern.

Congressman Stupak noted it also is a concern shared by Beaver Island residents, who now pay \$100 for a round trip air ticket, while Mackinac Islanders pay \$42.

"For four months out of the year, we need some help," said Mr. Bloswick, who noted that some islands had subsidized boat transportation.

"When the last boat stops (for the season), commerce ends. The only thing we have here is tourism," explained Mr. Bloswick.

He said he thought winter tourism would improve with available boat service because the Island offers quality cross country ski trails, but tourists need assured transportation to and from the Island that is not subject to weather conditions.

"I'm talking about sustain-

ing this community in the wintertime," he added. Congressman Stupak said the issue has been discussed by the Michigan Department of Transportation, including the use of a catamaran like the one being used in Muskegon. He also said talk of using a hovercraft has been addressed, though the weather and ice conditions continue to be a factor.

Regarding the breakwall for the Island, Congressman Stupak said that more money has been added to the budget and a feasibility study has been requested for 2007. He said the concern was to keep the funding in place because if a project is not underway, the funding tends to be moved to other projects. A breakwall extension would protect the harbor from southeast winds.

Congressman Stupak told residents that final language has been agreed on and he expects the bill that would send the retiring Coast Guard Cutter *Mackinaw* to Cheboygan to become a museum will pass the U.S. House of Representatives. He introduced bill HR 1448 in March 2005. The cutter is set to retire this June. He also said he was working to get a small cutter out of the New York area to replace the *Acacia* that is retiring in Charlevoix. This would help keep ice breaking capabilities available in northern Michigan, he said.

On the national level, he spoke briefly on immigration, gas prices, and the war in Iraq. He also focused on "cherry picking" practices of companies, who have been known to choose only the most profitable areas to provide Internet service and leave the rest unserved. Current law does not require a company to install Internet access throughout a community. He explained that proposed legislation, which he expects will become law, would turn questionable practices over to the Federal Communications Commission, which would have the authority to issue a \$500,000 fine to providers who are discriminating with cable service.

First elected to office in 1992, the seven-term congressman is up for re-election November 2. He sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which is considered an exclusive committee. An exclusive committee allows members to only serve on that committee. About 66 percent of all proposed legislation passes through this committee, he said.

New Gift Option Offered for Visitors

For visitors seeking a new way to give Mackinac-themed gifts, the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau is offering a GiftCard through MasterCard.

"We really needed some sort of gift certificate that would work for the entire Island," said Mary Maguire Slevin, director of the Tourism Bureau. She said that this new card, which has the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau logo on it, is a good way for visitors and residents to give a souvenir of the Island that is also flexible.

The card is essentially a pre-paid credit card and is redeemable at any location that

accepts MasterCard. Ms. Slevin said guests can use the cards to pay for everything from ferry tickets to hotel rooms to souvenirs, and its credit is not restricted to Mackinac Island.

The Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau is the first non-bank entity to use the pre-paid MasterCard. The Bureau charges a \$7.50 processing fee.

The Mackinac Island Gift Card is available in amounts from \$25 to \$500, and may be purchased in person at the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau or by phone at 877-847-0086. Each card comes with a visitors guide.



Six students have been participating in a School Emergency Response Training program, which prepares them for any disaster-related issues at school and home. Pictured are (back row, from left) Woody Beardsley, Robert Chambers, Tymon Horn; (front) Ariel Leeper, Paul Fisher, and Shelby Mosley.

Students Train for Disaster Preparedness

Six students from Mackinac Island Public School have been training to be certified in a School Emergency Response Training (SERT) seminar, which prepares them for catastrophic disaster or crisis.

Sophomore Woody Beardsley, freshmen Robert Chambers and Ariel Leeper, and eighth-graders Shelby Mosley, Paul Fisher, and Tymon Horn were trained from three local emergency response departments, Police Chief William Lenaghan, Fire Chief Dennis Bradley, and ambulance personnel Rick Linn, Kris

Roguska, and Sam Barnwell.

The group's 11 sessions covered disaster preparedness, fire safety, medical assistance, light search and rescue operations, disaster psychology, and terrorism.

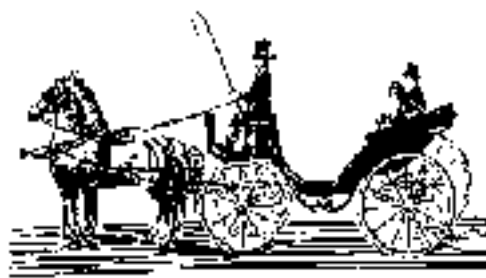
"It gives the students confidence and expertise in areas like first aid and emergency response for home and school," said Mr. Lenaghan. "It teaches how to handle themselves and others during an emergency."

Chief Lenaghan said a SERT program at the Island school is meant to assist teach-

ers and administrators during a crisis. He said the SERT program began in Michigan at Ypsilanti two years ago. The program is one of the volunteer opportunities offered to the public under the Citizen Corps, a national disaster-response volunteer group.

He said the city plans to continue the training program annually and hopes to expand it to include all community members.

The six SERT students will be presented with certificates at the school's award banquet May 23.



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