

Free Dinners Moved to Thursdays

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the second week. Like past years, restaurants will be taking turns providing the food and will be lending their kitchen staff to help with the dinners. Meals are served until the food is gone.

"It is a good way to give back to the community," said Patti Ann Moskwa, who is organizing the dinners this year. She, along with the Church Council made the decision to start the dinners earlier in the summer this year to help ease new workers into Island life. She said that many workers come with only enough money to get to the Island.

"It's the beginning of the season that's really hard," she added. "Everyone is pitching in to help everyone feel welcome."

The church basement is equipped with air hockey, foosball, pool, and ping pong tables,

along with a big screen television and a stereo. It provides workers with a place to socialize and get a home-cooked meal at the same time, Mrs. Moskwa said.

Mrs. Moskwa hopes that the dinners will run through July, when workers are settled and the season picks up for restaurants.

The dinners used to be held on Fridays and were a tradition started by Father Jim Williams more than 15 years ago, providing home-cooked meals to hundreds of employees.

The decision to move the dinners from Friday to Thursday was made because many employees were unable to attend Friday night owing to their work schedules, and many of the restaurants that would have donated meals were often too busy on Fridays to do so, said Mr. Leeper.

Apartment Eyed for Maplevue

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Point Resort, and is home to approximately 100 summer employees.

"He wants to convert a non-conforming employee housing building into another non-conforming use, which would be apartments, so from a legal standpoint, it's going in the right direction," said city attorney Tom Evashevski.

"This would eliminate employee housing in that neighborhood," said Commissioner Franc Doud.

In other business May 9, Planning Commission Secretary

Chris McCready submitted a letter of resignation to the board, which, said Commissioner Kay Hoppenrath, "is accepted with great regret."

Ms. McCready, who has held the position for six years, said she is resigning to attend to her mother, who is ill. Kelly Bean, the mayor's assistant, will replace Ms. McCready for the time being.

Tom Corrigan's request to build an accessory building at his summer home on Main Street, next the school, was approved. The property is zoned R-1.

Expiring Foreign Worker Policy May Impact Mackinac Island, Straits Business Next Year

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gone by the time they could apply.

So last year, Washington issued a temporary exemption for workers who had been in the country the year before, so businesses here were able to bring back a workforce to get through the summer.

The temporary exemption was thought to allow the federal government time to figure out if the cap needs to be adjusted, but it is set to expire before anything more permanent will be put in place, so Save Small Business is seeking to extend the policy until 2009.

Congress has until September 30 to renew the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act, which was passed last year as an amendment to a larger bill, called the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief.

This spring, U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) and U.S. Representative Charlie Bass (R-New Hampshire) introduced a three-year policy extension as Senate Bill 2284 and House Bill 4740, but these have been packaged with the unresolved immigration reform bill, as an amendment.

Hank Lavery, president of Save Small Business, said the group's mission is simply to gather enough support on Capitol Hill to renew the policy for another three years.

Though the immigration reform bill and the H2B visa renewal policy address different issues (the reform bill is aimed at illegal immigrants living in America on a permanent basis), Mr. Lavery said packaging the policy with the immigration reform bill will keep the issue before Capitol Hill.

"This isn't necessarily a way to get the policy passed on the fast track," he said. "This is more about keeping it as a top priority for politicians."

"Opposition of the policy is very minimal," he said of the cap exemption. "We had 96 senators support it last year. That's a phenomenal number. What has employers a little anxious is more about lawmakers' priorities."

"When it came down to it," said Anneke Myers, personnel manager for the Village Inn restaurants, "co-sponsors (for the two bills on the exemption) attached it to the immigration reform bill because that bill is on the move. It is the same strategy that was used last year."

Nevertheless, said Mr. Lavery, "It's going to take a lot of hard work."

Mackinac Island employs about 5,000 seasonal workers at the height of the season and about 1,200 of them are H 2B visa workers, said Patti Ann Moskwa of Horns's Bar and Yankee Rebel Tavern. Some businesses in St. Ignace and Mackinaw City also use H2B visa workers.

Last January, during the peak summer seasonal application process, visa applications were backed up because Homeland Security and the Department of Labor was moved to larger quarters, said Mrs. Moskwa. Another problem, she said, was in Jamaica, where many of this area's workers are from. The country suffered a shortage of paper and the government did not have enough paper for visa applications.

Yet another year, Mrs. Moskwa remembers, visa applications were delayed when federal visa application processors received new computers but did not know how to operate them, she was told.

"A new year, a new problem, that's what I always say," said Mrs. Moskwa. "It's always something."

Fallen Tree Causes Power Outage on Island

A power outage Thursday, May 11, was caused by a tree behind a house on the East Bluff that fell on the power line. The outage affected mainly East Bluff, but for a short period of time it also affected Harrisonville and Mission Point.

According to Craig Davidson, St. Ignace division

manager for Edison Sault Electric Company, there are now four circuits feeding electricity on Mackinac Island, two of them added this spring, so the additional circuits will hopefully minimize the number

of power outages that occur on the Island.

On Tuesday, May 16, a power outage briefly affected Harrisonville when an underground cable failed in two separate places, said Mr. Davidson.

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