

Mackinaw City Board Challenges Appointment of Father Jim Williams

By Paul Gingras

The appointment of Father Jim Williams to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission is being challenged by several people in Mackinaw City, who say he is not familiar enough with their village or involved enough in the community to represent it. The Mackinaw City Village Council, led by President Robert Heilman and prodded by resident and former

park commissioner Ken Teysen, voiced its opposition Thursday, August 3, resolving to seek a reversal of the appointment by writing letters to politicians, area media, and the new commissioner.

The issue is not personal, residents say, and no one disputes Father Williams' popularity among his parishioners.

Father Williams, a Catholic priest in St. Ignace and Moran,

but a resident of Mackinaw City, says he hopes to convince village residents that he can be an effective and conscientious representative.

He was appointed to replace Audrey Jaggi on the commission by Governor Jennifer Granholm Thursday, July 20. The Senate has 60 days from then to disapprove of the appointment.

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission has seven members who oversee Mackinac State Historic Parks, which include Fort Mackinac and the Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island and Colonial Michilimackinac, Historic Mill Creek, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in and around Mackinaw City.

Father Williams, an Independent, replaces Mrs. Jaggi, a Republican, as the Mackinaw City Resident Commissioner, a designation established in 1958 to ensure local representation on the politically-desirable board. There is also a resident commissioner for Mackinac Island, that position currently held by Lansing lobbyist Dennis Cawthorne, who has a home and several business interests on the Island.

Mr. Heilman charges that no one in the village was consulted regarding the commission appointment, and that Governor Granholm's office should have sought recommendations from Mackinaw City residents with a stake in the community, as he said former governor John Engler had

done when he appointed Mrs. Jaggi in 1997.

"Mackinaw City does not want to tell the Governor what to do," he said. "We just want to be consulted."

He pointed out that he considers Father Williams a good person, but he insisted at his meeting that the process by which appointments are made to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission is flawed, leading to what he called "a slap in the face of the community."

Council voted to send letters to *The St. Ignace News*, the *Cheboygan Daily Tribune*, the *Petoskey News-Review*, and possibly the *Traverse City Record Eagle* voicing its complaint that Mackinaw City is not being properly represented on the park commission. Whether the letters are sent depends on how they turn out, Mr. Heilman later told *The Town Crier*.

Council also plans to send a letter to Father Williams requesting that he "withdraw his name from the nomination," Mr. Heilman said.

Mr. Heilman added that he will contact State Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) to discuss the matter and possibly push to amend Public Act Number 51 of 1958, which states "One commissioner shall be a resident of the village of Mackinaw City." He suggested that one way to ensure proper representation would be to add language stating that the mayors of

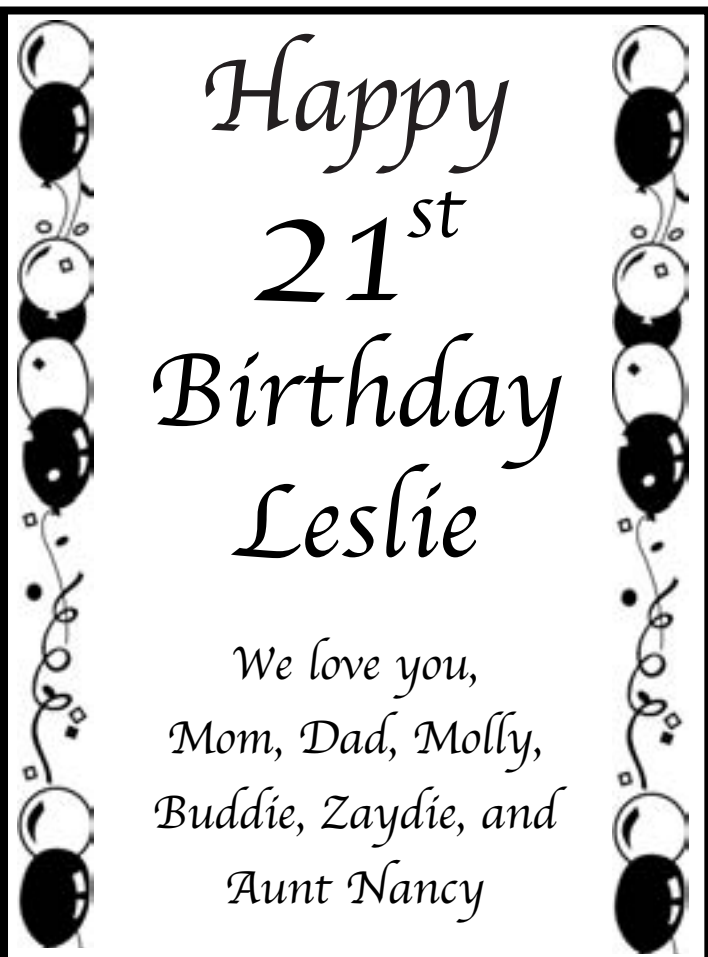
Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island must be consulted prior to the governor's appointments to the commission.

The Mackinac Island resident commissioner position was engineered in 1941 by the late W.F. Doyle to gain reappointment to the board. Mr. Doyle owned a summer cottage on Mackinac Island's East Bluff and, for awhile, but not recently, the resident commissioner was nominated by the Mackinac Island mayor.

At last week's village council meeting, Trustee Jeff Hingston said he had received "a handful of complaints" from residents upset by Father Williams' appointment, and the board discussed letters sent to the village and Governor Granholm by Kenneth Teysen. Mr. Teysen served as a Republican member of the bipartisan commission for 32 years and said he was instrumental in getting the 1958 amendment passed. He was the second commissioner to represent the village on the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, after a five-year stint by Neil Downing. Mrs. Jaggi was the third.

Mr. Teysen's letter to Governor Granholm stated, "I have known Father Williams and his parents for at least 25 years and think highly of them. Having said that, the following are the reasons I strongly object to his appointment to the com-

* Please turn to page 6



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 21st

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 Buddie, Zaydie, and

 Aunt Nancy

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