

THE ELBERTA ALERT ^{*free!}

vol. 100 no. 10

A Community News Organ

Fri., Dec. 23, 2011



The Mayfair's own Josh Piersma captured this typical north pier moment on October 15. The pierdrestrian made it back to the beach wet but otherwise OK. PHOTO COURTESY AND © JOSHUA PIER SMA; JPIERSMA@GMAIL.COM

FUTURESCAPES: PUBLIC HEARING ON MASTER PLAN SET FOR JAN. 3

ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, at 7 pm at the Community Building, the Planning Commission, Council, and Master Plan Committee will hold an open forum for public input on the Master Plan. If all goes well, the plan will be adopted that same night. The Alert spoke with Sarah Lucas, the coordinator from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments who greatly helped along the Master Plan process, and with Village resident Kelli Stapleton, a member of both the P&Z and Master Plan Committees.

1. How does the new Master Plan take the Village in a new direction, if at all?

Sarah Lucas: [The plan] looks to preserve the Village's unique assets while leveraging them to drive future changes, for instance by capitalizing on Elberta's charm, its natural beauty, and recreation opportunities to encourage more investment, visitors, and activity in the community. The Plan also provides a foundation for form-based zoning changes that would allow for new development that is consistent with existing neighborhood character and lot dimensions. This would provide more opportunities for property owners and could result in additional housing choices such as accessory dwelling units (granny flats) or apartments, while ensuring the Village's unique historic character is preserved.

Kelli Stapleton: We took community input to develop a plan that fit what residents want now but that will be flexible enough to allow for changes in the future. With the confusion in the state currently about issues like medicalized marijuana and wind power, it's hard to predict the problems of the future; the general feeling was that we probably don't want medical marijuana shops or say, porn shops, but otherwise we really want to make it easy for people to develop businesses here.

2. When will any changes take effect?

SL: The timeline for implementation will depend on the types of recommendations. Some will be fairly short term, others will be years out into the future, and yet others will depend on factors like the demand for new development, funding opportunities, or community involvement. Changes to development patterns might not be seen until zoning is updated and new projects are proposed. On the other hand, smaller-scale changes could occur in the near future. For instance, in discussions on the Elberta Dunes South Natural Area, there have been suggestions to link the Natural Area with the Betsie Valley Trail through signage, bicycle routes, or wayfinding. This would meet some of the plan's goals of bringing more visitors to the downtown area.

3. What was the most controversial or exciting part of developing the plan?

SL: Perhaps the biggest questions we addressed were relative to the future land use districts, in particular the waterfront area, which has a preliminary plan in place but is expected to be developed over time. The questions were, how to plan for the redevelopment of that area while ensuring both a strong public input process and the flexibility that will be needed to encourage successful development. There are a few options that would strike this balance—for instance, a sub-area plan, changes to the planned unit development ordinance, or a different zoning approach (i.e., overlay zoning or form-based zoning), within the context of the vision that the public has already identified for the district. The draft plan recommends additional planning for the waterfront area to consider these options as part of a public process specific to the Waterfront District.

KS: The exciting part was imagining a revitalized Frankfort Avenue, and thinking about the possibilities for expanding the commercial areas, say with cottage-industry along Furnace Avenue and by extending the commercial area south on 22, with the new "mixed-use" district we created around the old Bay Valley Inn. The process got controversial once it got more specific. For example, I re-

Welcome Back, Neighbor

By Art Melendez

"HOW YA DOIN'?" was the first welcome-wagon type greeting I received from my neighbor Jerry Little as my wife and I settled into our new home in Elberta. This was more than five years ago. Over that time I've learned that Jerry and I have much in common.

Jerry Little is an Elberta "homeboy," born and raised here. Growing up, he ran with other village knuckleheads of his age. He was an athlete in high school, and showed much artistic talent. He served in the Navy as a Communications Specialist on the USS Denver



during the Vietnam War. Like many veterans returning from a war zone, Jerry wasn't the same when he came back home. But in spite of some health issues, Jerry worked at the Maples for 21 years.

The Jerry Little that I know has survived much adversity in his life. Despite a recent health crisis, he is now doing very well. He and his cat, Kitty, have moved into their new home, which was in the works from March to November. Welcome back, neighbor... friend. PHOTO BY ART MELENDEZ

Public Forum on Dunes Park, January 16

The Village of Elberta is developing a management plan for the Elberta Dunes South Natural Area, to provide guidance for future activities and improvements at the natural area. The public is invited to a forum on Monday, January 16 at 6 pm in the Elberta Community Building on First Street. This event will be an opportunity to learn about and discuss the park, the management plan, and future activities. Come out and voice your vision!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sarah Lucas, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, at 231-929-5000, or via email at sarahlucas@nwm.cog.mi.us.

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Where the Short Grass Grows

By Emily Votruba

November 17, 2011—The two-hour meeting began with a public hearing was on the proposed lawn maintenance ordinance. Resident Amanda Rommell said the Village should foster pride through free community cleanup initiatives rather than rather than pass more ordinances they can't enforce. "I've heard Frankfort and Leland tossed around as places we'd like to emulate, but they offer services we've never dreamed of." She added that her family chose to buy a house here because they wanted a little more freedom.

Emily Votruba pointed out that the public hearing was taking place without the proposed ordinance being before the public. Reg Manville said Council had the Frankfort ordinance before them and that Linda's suggested change from the previous meeting, to include the parkways as areas to be maintained by residents, would be added to it. During the regular meeting, Reg read aloud the proposed lawn ordinance, with a few minor wording changes,

requiring that all grass and growth apart from trees, gardens, and other landscaping, be kept at a height of no more than 8 inches, including on the Village right of way, and that property be free of debris and rubbish. The agents of enforcement are the DPW and the Village Office. If owners fail to comply, the work will be done by the Village at the owner's expense. The ordinance was passed with one nay vote, from Bill Soper.

The financials for the month of October were: Receipts: \$24,010.96. Accounting expenses: \$28,163.0. Payroll: \$9,318.01, Parks & Rec: \$1,570.78 (the bulk of this was resurfacing down at the Waterfront Park Pavilion to prevent slips and falls). Expenditures total: \$39,051.80.

Ken Bonney will plant 40 trees donated by the Milarch Archangel Project. Council agreed that the Lifesaving Station should be shut down for the season. Jinx asked the Buildings Committee to look into the costs of winterization. Bill O'Dwyer of Washington Ave. was accepted for membership to Parks and Rec.

Funding will be sought for signage, guardrails, and other measures to help the sheriff's department and DNR enforce the law against driving on Elberta Beach.

The Employee Committee will meet with the employees and then bring their

recommendation before the Council for a decision on the employee health care package at the end of the policy year, in August, and determine our compliance with the state mandated \$5,500 average per-employee cap. Reg reported that we've paid our debt to attorney Joe Quandt and to Flies and Vandenbrink. Council discussed the Village's deficit elimination plan, which we submit to the state every year. Several members of Council were uncomfortable with signing off on the proposed plan, which anticipates revenue from asset sales and taxes in 2012 that are unrealistic. Sharyn said the plan we submitted in August was rejected because it didn't completely eliminate the \$500,000 deficit: "[The state is] pushing people into a corner where they have to lie." The issue was tabled till the December meeting.

ELHC will remove the old ferry docs this spring. Parts may be salvaged by interested parties. Scott Gest said nothing of historical value is left to preserve because of deterioration and several groups he contacted weren't interested. He said the Betsie Valley trail will likely get funding next year through grants he is working on. The public trail would eventually extend through the development all along the waterfront. Benzie County Park and Rec may acquire sections of the rails-to-trails corridor that could ultimately link Elberta to Traverse City.

Matt remarked that he would like to improve his own and the council's attitude toward public participation in meetings. He referred to Ruth Nanni's unfortunate reception at her last-ever council meeting.

Chipping Away

By Emily Votruba

December 12, 2011—Art Melendez brought cookies.

Frankfort mayor Bob Johnson asked for volunteers to serve on the subcommittee of the Frankfort Tree Board dealing with the new nursery on the BLUA property. Meetings are every third Tuesday, 1 pm, at City Hall.

Marcia Stobie reported that the Commission on Aging is considering a millage increase proposal, looking at types of services provided by the Council on Aging. Rolland Halliday made a motion to sell the Maples community, seconded by Commissioner Kelly, citing ongoing allegations of mismanagement. The Commission is working on an alternative energy resolution that will attempt to give due consideration to all side of the windpower issue.

Financials for the month of November were: Receipts, \$21,659.16. Expenditures: Accounting/monthly bills, \$24,527.92; Payroll, \$8,845.72; Parks & Rec: \$1,201.03. Total expenditures: \$34,574.67.

Our water use is up about 8, 9 thousand gallons over normal for the past six months, said Ken Holmes, and he's not sure why. The pumping is the same.

Meg Louwsma will continue as market master this year and has presented a job description and budget. Aubrey Ann Parker visited the Park and Rec meeting and asked for the Village's involvement in the April Water Festival. The Solstice committee will present its budget to Council at the January meeting. Smitty's donated their time to put up the Village's holiday decorations.

Treasurer Laura Manville spoke with Frederick Heiden, a state official, concerning our deficit elimination plan, explaining that there's no way we can become debt free in five years. He said that our plan failure simply means we can't borrow money, and that our situation would be reevaluated at the end of fiscal year 2012, when we would have to resubmit a revised 5-year plan. He acknowledged we have made progress and are doing our best. Reg said Council should consider selling off assets or doing other fundraising in addition to chipping away as we have been doing. Laura said there are five criteria for emergency manager intervention and that even before we cut a big chunk of our deficit last year we only met three, so we are on our way out of the watch status. Laura has a list of cost-cutting ideas, including switching to quarterly water bills. Laura pointed out that in three years Village employees have voluntarily saved the Village \$25,057 in health costs by adopting a different insurance plan. Ken Holmes pointed out that we can't discuss employee issues in an open meeting. Sharyn Bower said that was true but that all decisions must be made in a public meeting.

Ken Holmes said the Fire Department hasn't had a community meeting in six months.

Committee appointments: Reg will take over the position of Park and Rec liaison from Linda, with vague reference to bad relations within the commission. Bill Soper and Linda agreed there's a conflict of interest with Reg being on the Employee Relations Committee because his wife, Laura, is an employee. The Employee Relations committee appointment will be revisited at the next meeting.

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Remember When ... With Ken

★ Portrait by Art Melendez



From fish food to Phish Food? The corner of Sheridan, M-168, and Frankfort Avenue has spawned many and varied enterprises. Ken Holmes reeled in this image at the tail end of the '80s, and it's surely a keeper.



From left we see the Harbor Dairy Bar (now S-Cargo), an antiques store (in the former Brian Johnson law office, recently adopted by cyber-entrepreneur Clark Harner and Cadence Productions Digital Media), and the old Elberta Sports Shop, which sold bait and other necessities of fishing, such as ice and brews. This photo was taken in the mid-'80s. The Sports Shop was owned and operated by Robert Rommell Sr. He moved there from across the street (where Bayshore Tire and Auto stands today) in about 1974, taking the place of the Village Green restaurant. According to Robert Rommell Jr., the Sport Shop business began about 1970, with the first big run of mature Coho. Floyd Ikens later bought the building, selling it in 1999 or early 2000 to the O'Connells, who continued to run the bait shop for a time. According to Michele Cannaert, Ikens also had a carpet store in the left side, where the Conundrum Cafe now has seating. Rob and Michele Cannaert bought the building in December 2005 and did extensive renovations, opening for bike and kayak rentals in the summer of 2006. The cafe portion opened in 2008, and ever since then, you can catch yourself some tuna fish or some peachy-keen Elberta ice cream, and yep, you can still get some cold ones for waiting on the nibbles and bites. PHOTO BY KEN HOLMES

LIGHTS, VOLUNTEERS, ACTION!

THE PARKS AND RECREATION Commission's first Christmas tree sale was a success! We more than doubled our original investment in the trees. The profit made on the sale of these trees will go back into the Village of Elberta Parks and Recreation fund. Once more this event was a collaborative effort by the following people: Russ Mix for the use of his lot, DPW Ken Bonney for assembling tree lot, Laura Manville for brainstorming and financial advice, Jennifer Wilkins for signage and sales shifts, Connie Manke for sales shifts (she sold 5 trees on a single shift!), Bill ODwyer for setup and sales shift, Emily Votruba for sales shifts, Christine Walkons for sales shifts, and the Old Guy, me ... a little bit



of everything. Thank you all!—*Art Melendez*

CALL FOR SOLSTICE VOLUNTEERS...

The Elberta Solstice Festival committee is looking for volunteers to help coordinate the best one yet! Solstice turns 10 this year, and if the trend continues, it'll be even bigger than the blowout extravaganza we held last June. Can you take a few hours over the next few months to help us get the "to do" list completed by May? There are volunteer jobs for every taste and ability level. The tasks are broken into categories, and each category is assigned a Coordinator position. Each coordinator is responsible for completing the entire



list of tasks, either on their own or with the help of volunteers. You can volunteer to be a coordinator or a team member in a certain category. Categories include: Coordinating and helping vendors (companies and organizations that promote themselves or sell products at the festi-

FAR LEFT: The Elberta Park and Rec Christmas tree sale offered Scotch pines and Fraser firs for \$25 and \$35, respectively and sold all but three trees. The remaining trees were donated to families in the Village. The sale's blinking colored lights served another purpose, "sprucing" up the holiday atmosphere on Frankfort Avenue. LEFT: Art Melendez designed and Ken Bonney fabricated the star that adorns a tree in the Waterfront Park. Think of it as the Village's holiday gift to Frankfort! PHOTOS BY EMILY VOTRUBA

val, such as food or souvenirs); Services/Contracts, which involves scheduling deliveries and acquiring necessary licenses and permits having to do with Porta Potties, tables/chairs/tents, garbage, insurance, alcohol, Lifesaving Station rental, etc.; soliciting Sponsors and making sure they're recognized with promotions; Promoting the festival itself in all media; dealing with physical Signage; managing the Kids' Events; and much more! For more information, see the Solstice website at www.elbertasolsticefestival.com/. To volunteer, contact Connie Manke at wasoper@gmail.com.—*Josh Stoltz*

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The new lighthouse at the end of the North Side Pier is completed and was put into commission last Thursday, according to Light Keeper McKinnon.
—*The Elberta Alert*, January 26, 1912

Date	Event	Details	Location	Time
25	CHRISTMAS MORNING SERVICE AT EUMC	Sing and celebrate Christmas morning with your neighbors at Elberta's best church, Elberta United Methodist.	555 Lincoln Ave.	9 am
Dec. 27, Jan. 24	GILMORE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING	Regular meeting of the Township planning commission.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (fourth Tuesdays)
31	CHAMPAGNE DINNER AT THE MAYFAIR TAVERN	Celebrate the New Year with a prix fixe feast. Watch Tom Stoltmann drop the (high)ball.	515 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9136	6 pm on
	2012 DANCE PARTY AT THE CABBAGE SHED	"Maya I Have This (Last) Dance?" One night. One Shed. Two, possibly four DJs. Scotchies that can vote.	198 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9843	9 pm on
3	PARK AND REC MEETING	Regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission.	Village Community Bld., 401 First St.	7 pm (first Tuesdays)
	ELBERTA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION	Regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (first Tuesdays)
5	REFLECTIONS BY THE BAY	"E-Bird: How to Boost Your Birding Using the Internet," with Dr. Brian Allen	Benzie Shores Library, 630 Main St., Ffort	7 pm
7, 14, 21, 28	INDOOR FARMERS' MARKET	Farmers and other vendors extend the growing in the Betsie Bay Inn back room.	231 Main Street, Frankfort	9 am-1 pm
8	ELBERTA ALERT EDITORIAL MEETING	Now once a month! So you think you're a writer? Come to the library and hand in a story, submit a correction, make a suggestion, scoop the competition, or just shoot the shinola.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	1 pm-2 pm (second Sundays)
9	BOOK DISCUSSION AT ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH	Book discussion with special guest, Elberta's own Christine Walkons, and Jim Wallis on "Rediscovering Values." Bring a sack lunch.	785 Beulah Highway (US 31), Beulah	12 pm-1 pm
10	GILMORE TOWNSHIP MEETING	Regular meeting of the board of Gilmore Township.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (second Tuesdays)
12	BENZONIA ACADEMY LECTURE	Topic to be announced!	Benzie Area Historical Museum, 6941 Traverse Ave.	4 pm
13	FIBER AND FURNITURE ART SHOW OPENING	Artist reception on the 13th at the Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts; show runs through February 29	Former US Coast Guard Station, Frankfort	7 pm-9 pm; Mon.-Sat. 10 am-5 pm
15	COMMUNITY DINNER AT ELBERTA'S BEST CHURCH	Free dinner and fellowship at Elberta United Methodist Church.	555 Lincoln Ave.	4 pm-6 pm (third Saturdays)
16	PUBLIC FORUM ON DUNE PARK/VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING	A public meeting to discuss the management plan for the new 58-acre Natural Area, followed by the regular meeting of the Village Board of Trustees. Agenda available at the Village Office.	Village Community Bld., 401 First St.	6 pm / 7 pm
20-22	PREMIERE OF DOGMAN!	Rich Brauer himself will be in attendance Friday at the Frankfort-Elberta opening night of <i>Dogman</i> , much of which was filmed right here in Gilmore Twp and Benzonias.	The Garden Theater Frankfort	Times TBA
28	MUSIC AT THE CABBAGE SHED	Oz harmonicist Harper and a backing band provide oral gratification.	198 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9843	9 pm on; possible cover

FOGHORN • LOCAL ITEMS LOUD AND CLEAR



Isabelle Stapleton (6th grade), **Korin Smeltzer** (5th grade), and **Ainsley Stapleton** (5th grade).

★★★★★★★★★★
In numerology, 11 is what's known as a master number, a twinning of the same numeral. Some say this lends it double those powers associated with the number 1. For **Morgan Bankston** of Washington and Lincoln, 11 holds a more personal significance: she turned 11 years old on November 11 of this year, 2011!

★★★★★★★★★★
 Invasive species educator and activist, frog and toad enthusiast, potluck cinéaste, terpsichorean muse, and general reason for living **Ms. Liz Padalino**, of

Frankfort, departs soon for the Detroit area to pursue a degree in physical therapy. We are asking Santa to bring her back to us for New Year's Eve.

★★★★
Not your grandmother's knitting group...

"Well, thank you ladies very much for the company and for letting me crash your party," **Greg Kindig** (51)

told **Jen Mackey** (29) and **Eliza Forrest** (30), as he finished the dregs of his cranberry cider. "I'd like to think that I'm in touch with my feminine side."

Kindig had stopped by Northern Naturals Winery to fill his growler, and was surprised to step into a room littered with glitter, feathers, and glue: the fallout from

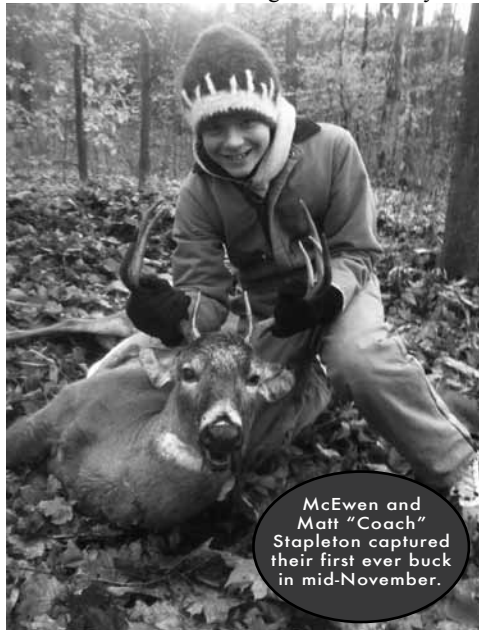
a roaming "bring your own craft" night held somewhere in Benzie County every week, from the edge of downtown Frankfort to the backwoods of Lake Ann, to this popular Benzonia winery.

Women of all ages (and a few good men) have convened for camaraderie, concepts, conversation, and, of course, crafts, which have included lighting fixtures, decoupage holiday cards, and bunny styling (performed on a three-month-old German Angora who was conveyed to the gathering in a picnic basket.)

Interested Benzie County residents are encouraged to join the ABCDE Projects group on Facebook and/or host a craft night. Call Aubrey Ann Parker at 231-649-3988. — *Aubrey Ann Parker*

★★★★
 As long as you've gone down the rabbit hole into Facebook, check out a great new group: **You know you are from Elberta when...**

The group was created by **Mary Spinner-Henderson** and has 16 members who share wonderful photos and memories together.



McEwen and Matt "Coach" Stapleton captured their first ever buck in mid-November.

★★★★★★★★★★
The Eagle Scout project has landed.

After about a year and a half of work, **William Richardson**, 16, of Trillium Trail, has completed a lovely map stand, located at the head of the bike path on M-22 across from the Marina Park. Richardson worked with a routing firm and with family friend **Chuck Anderson** to create this addition to one of the Village's nicest assets. Thanks, William!

★★★★★★★★★★
Mabel Little is back from visiting her daughter in Illinois. Welcome home, Mabel!

★★★★★★★★★★

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★★★★★★★★★★
Getting fixed when you're broke. Sometime in early spring, the **Animal Welfare League of Benzie County** will be handing out coupons for spaying and neutering cats, just as they did for dogs this fall. Watch these pages and elberta-alert.org for the drop date, or call Animal Control at (231) 882-9505.

★★★★★★★★★★
A very hippy birthday... **Pudd Ness** celebrated his 50th at the Cabbage Shed on December 17. It takes a special kind of mom to hire a bellydancer for her kid's party. **Carolee**, will you throw the *Alert's* next bash?

★★★★★★★★★★
Support deeply local media (and get famous)! The *Alert* is seeking reporters, photographers, and editors to cover beats such as law and order, sports, business, politics, energy issues—you name it. No experience necessary! Come to the meeting on January 8, 1 pm, at the Library.

★★★★★★★★★★
HAVE A NEWS ITEM YOU WANT BLASTED? Call or text 231-399-0098, send to Elberta Alert Foghorn, PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628, or write to elberta.alert@gmail.com, subject line "Foghorn."

New business. **Cadence Digital**, a.k.a. **Clark Harner**, moved to Elberta in the middle of September. "I had been working out of my house near Traverse City when the opportunity to have a storefront came about. I didn't necessarily pick Elberta, it just kind of happened. I fell in love with this area as soon as I moved here!" If you see Clark in his office window next to the Conundrum, give a wave. You might also find him out and about with a beaut of a canine named Picabo (pronounced peek-a-boo). She's an accomplished dock jumper.

★★★★★★★★★★
December 7—Have you forgotten?

Seventy years ago, **Ed Robinson** was just a kid at Arcadia High. He remembers the attack on Pearl Harbor chiefly because he knew a soldier who was stationed there, **Si Hughes** (Si got back all right). Years later, in 1975, Ed and his wife, **Donnetta**, traveled to Hawaii and witnessed Japanese people solemnly placing flowers at the *Arizona* memorial. "Hundreds of beautiful flowers, every day. You could have heard a pin drop in there."

Ed graduated in June of 1942 and spent his 19th, 20th, and 21st birthdays in Europe, ultimately as an Army tank commander. (He celebrated his 88th birthday on December 12, here in Elberta.) "I enlisted, actually, I wasn't drafted. My number was 16087473. Roosevelt said the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—tell me about it! The order was "Go that way." Ed pointed toward the horizon. "And it was fair game, anybody that was in front of us. Yeah. Well..." A long pause. "That's a deep hole with a handle on it, isn't it?"

"How about going 68 miles an hour in a tank?" That's crazy, I said. "You just said the magic word, *crazy*." You don't seem crazy now, I said. "About this close to the edge," Ed said, smiling. "Right on the edge." We agreed that's the best place to be. —*Emily Votruba*

★★★★★★★★★★

Honor Roll! The following Elberta kids made the Frankfort-Elberta schools honor roll this year: **Hannah Holmes** (10th grade), **Shayla Soto** (9th grade), **Merren Garber** (9th grade), **McEwen Stapleton** (8th grade), **Levi Hubbard** (8th grade), **Zachary Ness** (8th grade), **Jackson Confer** (7th grade), **Lorynn Bankston** (7th grade), **Sasha Holtrey** (7th grade), **Austin Soto** (7th grade),

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Small Package, Very Good Thing

By Diane (Jinx) Jenks

ELBERTA—A JEWEL of a place, a rare gem indeed, beautiful by nature—sparkling with its vast water-golden sunsets, truly a treasure to visitors and those fortunate enough to call Elberta home.

As interesting as the topography, even more interesting, are the “villagers.” An eclectic group gathered here together for many reasons. Long ago the lumbering community thrived, then the railroad and car ferries kept the village viable. Why are we here? Some Elbertians were born

here, some are here because of employment and some through no choice of their own. Many transplants have sacrificed good jobs and elite lifestyles to enjoy the simple life in a simple town. Even though things aren’t always simple in any town. For whatever reason we are all here, we are now neighbors—friends and family coexisting in this quaint little village we now call home.

Elbertians, the village people, villagers—whatever you want to call us, we are a rare combination of humans. A combo of brain, brawn, and free spirit.

Elberta is a village small in land mass as well as tax base, running on a budget smaller than some households. Always robbing Peter to pay Paul and hoping Mary doesn’t find out. Doing the best we can with what we got, and honey, we ain’t got much.

What we do got is CARE—we care for

one another—we care if our neighbor cuts his grass, we care if the business community paints their building, if the parking at the restaurant blocks the view of the other streets. We care about whether unutilized cars are “junking up” some yards. We care if the developer is going to build condos that will block “our” view. We care not because we are bad people but because WE CARE.

We also care if Jerry gets a decent house, when Amanda’s kids are sick, if the little old ladies feel safe when they close their eyes at night. We want a dog park that is not only neighborhood friendly but spacious enough for the dogs to have fun. We care that Petey the Peacock is getting fed. We all worried when Laura was sick; that some might be hungry; that businesses might not make it through the winter. We care enough to call Mr. Robinson when his drapes are still closed at 10

AM. Not because we are bad people but because we are “Villagers” and it takes a village. Elberta, population 372, all live together in a teenie little town. Because we care about quality of life.

A community this size needs to work together as a community. We have the opportunity to make Elberta an even greater place. The talent, imagination and ambition of this town, “the mouse that roared,” will long be remembered after we’re all gone and new Elbertians are reinventing the old wheel. They will make their mark on the great history of this town just like we are. South Frankfort, Elberta, Heaven, or whatever this rare gem of a place is then will remain a gem because WE CARE.

Thanks for caring neighbors and remember the golden rule and LOVE THY NEIGHBOR—you may not have them tomorrow.



...Letters...

Growing Up on the Other Side of the Bay

Growing up in Elberta had its own special meaning attached to it. Elberta was said to be a lawless village by those living on the other side of the bay. Sometimes the residents were described with less than endearing terms. Being an Elberta kid was difficult, especially after completing 2nd grade. After that, the rest of the school years had to be completed in Frankfort.

Gone was after-school and social activities with classmates. The isolation felt by some of the Elberta kids was palpable at times, but we made do. Those that did not reside in our village would say, “you have: no recreation center, no A&W, no deli, no pizza shop, no theater, no bowling alley, no tennis courts, no dance studio, no scout meetings, no football, no parking meters, and just two stores.” At that time, there was also no bike path or safe walking path to get back and forth to Frankfort. Any kid took his/her life in his/her hands to make that bike ride around the bay.

I often wanted to tell these outsiders, “You are correct, we did not have any of those things, but we had a few things you never had: the Elberta Beach, the

hills and tons of wildlife just outside our doors, the railroad bridge and pier to fish from, the old ski jump, canoeing, hang gliding, horses living in town, the huge cross on the hill, neighbors that were neighborly, storekeepers that knew us by name, the car ferries (and railroad), our own history, and a Santa Claus that arrived by fire truck each year. In addition, we had a store that you could walk into and purchase just one slice of cheese or lunch meat or order a special box of cereal. We had a plumbing shop that would order a red toilet, because that is what someone wanted. We had people that would cook and bake for any and every occasion. We had people that volunteered time to help kids catch up on their studies during the summer, by providing free workbooks and tutoring, as needed. We had ice cream socials and free shows. We could have a fire pit in our own yard. Elberta kids could have a mini bike or go cart and no one complained about the sound or the ruts it made in the yard. We had neighbors with chickens and rabbits in their back yards. We had one house that was known for homemade popcorn balls and another for full sized candy bars as Halloween treats. Elberta also had its own living Christmas tree decorated with

SUNSET

We Will Miss...

CHRIS, LINDA, and CHRISTOPHER LUEDTKE

We’d like to express our heartfelt sympathies to the families of Chris, Linda, and Christopher Luedtke. Chris will be forever remembered and appreciated for the many projects he completed for villagers of Elberta.

JEANNETTE HANSON

(March 21, 1932–December 6, 2011)

Gilmore Township resident Jeannette Hanson passed away in December after a long battle with cancer. She is survived by her brother Russell Baatz and many other friends and relatives. Jeannette is fondly remembered for her years of employment at Baker’s Bar. Her announcements of “Last call for alcohol!” or “Take it outside!” when an argument became ugly attracted everyone’s attention.

lights. We did not have a bunch of zoning regulations that told people when to mow their yards or when to shovel snow, or how high a privacy fence could be. We did not have rules that told villagers if they could have a clothesline or not and when to do laundry. We did not have rules about what color your house had to be, or what constituted a garden or yard art. We also did not care if someone had an old truck or two in their back yard or a fish shanty in the front yard. We worried more about being neighborly and less about being nosy. We respected others’

property, as they respected ours.

So, no, we were not Frankfort. We were Elberta, a quiet little village without “big city rules and big city ideas.” Elberta was just the way we liked it and for many still is.

Let’s keep it that way! For those of you that would like Elberta to be more like Frankfort or somewhere else, perhaps you should consider moving there. I, for one, liked the old Elberta.

—Name withheld

THE ALERT WELCOMES LETTERS FROM OUR READERS!
Call or text 231-399-0098, send mail to Elberta Alert Letters, PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628, or write to elberta.alert@gmail.com, subject line “Letter to the Editor.” Letters may be edited for length. Profanity will be indicated but not repeated.

MASTER PLAN, cont’d

ally want curbs and sidewalks, but Russ Mix thinks it’s important for families to have enough space to park vehicles. If it were up to me I’d say let’s have no more trailers, let’s just ban them, but allow for very small homes to be built. But this is a free country.

4. Once the different districts have been adopted by the public/council after the hearing, will there be any opportunity for changes? For example, if 10 years down the road we decide we want commercial or light industry in Residential 1, along Furnace Avenue, by what means might this different use be allowed, or would it be ruled out forever with the adoption of this plan?

continues on page 6

A tongue-in-beak take on the news



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BLAST From the FUTURE!

Local history, topics, and interviews by Elberta teens

Snow

By Merren Garber

As silent as the velvety darkness, you fall to the damp ground beneath my feet.
Creating a powdery soft blanket for everything you blindly and aimlessly fall upon.
And like a safe cocoon, you cover all of your surroundings.
Gently nestling them to your fold, placing them in winter's care.

Some days you are brutal and harsh with your powerful storms,
like that of someone loved being touched by death.
Other days you are so gentle and fragile like the way you land on my
tongue and then quickly melt away.

I could never get enough of you.
The way you crunch beneath my boots or the way you fall upon
my nose making it sting with the bitter excitement that you've finally arrived.
I look forward to this time of year because it is the time you come back to play.

Alert editor Merren Garber is a freshman at Frankfort-Elberta High School.



A ladder on the Elberta pier, captured around this time last year. PHOTO BY JENNIFER WILKINS

MASTER PLAN, cont'd

SL: Both the zoning ordinance and master plan can be changed or amended through a public process. In fact, the state planning act requires that plans be reviewed every five years to determine if updates or amendments are needed.

That said, the plan itself doesn't "rule out" any types of development. The plan is a long-range guide that speaks to general development types and uses. The zoning ordinance, however, regulates specific uses and development. If the

zoning needs to be changed to accommodate a use or development, then the plan comes into play: the Village will consider zoning changes in light of the plan's goals and how districts are designated in the plan's future land use map.

KS: It weighs kind of heavily on me to imagine the challenges those who are at the helm in the future will face. For example, right now we agree we don't want industry in our waterfront, and I'm pretty sure the law doesn't allow it to be used as a deepwater port now, but if the price of fuel and food goes up enough it

might suddenly make sense to ship over the Great Lakes again.

5. Frankfort's planning commission was recently recognized at the state level for its progressive approach to planning for small-scale urban farming and livestock. Did the Master Plan committee discuss this possibility?

KS: I personally would not be pleased to have goats as neighbors, but that's something the Planning Commission should probably discuss in detail. If more and more families are growing their own food and trying to be self-sufficient, the

zoning will have to deal with that and maybe spell out the sorts of activities that are acceptable and where to draw the line. Rabbits seem fine to me, but who knows, they may be offensive to some people.

Eric Pyne
Contractor

(231) 651-0425
ericpyne.com
license no. 2101193724

BEACH REPORT

By Sue Oseland

Well, here it is the middle of December, a few flakes of snow here and there, and you are finally reading a beach report!

I grew up by Lake Michigan, in Ludington. The solace I found in the lake always drew me back somewhere along the coast — to walk, to swim, to play, and just to sit in the sand. A few years ago, Elberta Beach drew me back again — this time to stay put.

I believe a love for place brings with it a sense of stewardship — a way of living where you take care of what you love. It is a belief many parents, educators, and others hope and try to leave with the young. As an educator working with young adults for the past three years in Benzie and Manistee counties through a program called YouthBuild, I endeavor to teach that sense of stewardship through projects and works of civic service. I asked our students to each contribute 100 hours of civic service this past year. Some of this work was done with Bill Soper at Grow Benzie; some was done with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy at Arcadia Dunes, and some was done with the Village of Elberta.

Ross Thorsen, Beach Committee Chairperson for the Village, asked if the YouthBuild students could clean Elberta Beach every month during the summer. The students worked at the beach the months of April, May, June, and July. In total, we collected approximately 250 pounds of debris. We also raked up dead alewives and gobies in June when they took over the beach, and picked up charcoal and burnt wood left over from bonfires. This work at the beach was in addition to the beach cleanups done twice a year (April and

September), coordinated by Suz McLaughlin with Friends of Betsie Bay and the Betsie Valley Trail volunteers.

One fun cleanup occurred the day after the 4th of July. We arrived at the beach with about 12 students all ready to start the cleanup of fireworks debris and whatever else beachgoers had left behind from the long holiday weekend. We were met in the beach parking lot by a lively group of area women, the "Tuesday Trekkers," who had decided their Tuesday walk for that week would be the Elberta beach, and they brought their garbage bags! What a great surprise! We joined forces with the Trekkers and walked the dirt road picking up trash and empty beer bottles, and then headed out to the beach further south. The YouthBuild group took the area between the pier and the stub, and then headed south from the pier to meet up with the Trekkers.

What we had thought could probably take all day turned out to only take half a day, thanks to all the volunteers (27 total!). One huge reward for the YouthBuild students that day was the extra time for a good, long swim and a cookout! Many of the YouthBuild students had never spent a day at Lake Michigan. They experienced the beauty

of this resource and learned it takes work to keep a place pristine and beautiful.

Thanks to Ross for asking YouthBuild to participate in beach cleanups this year. Also a big thank you to Ken Bonney and Duane Wallace for providing bags and the back of the Village pickup truck!

In November, the YouthBuild program ended in Benzie and Manistee counties. This coming year the only beach cleanups officially scheduled with volunteers are in April (Earth Day) and September. I believe beach cleanups are also really needed in June (just before visitors start arriving) and in July, right after the 4th of July weekend.

Please consider spending a few hours at your beach next spring or summer. Let a Village Council member know if you would like to help provide stewardship for this backyard gem by being part of the Elberta Beach Pickers next summer.

PHOTO OF VOLUNTEERS BY SUE OSELAND



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Editorial and Website Consultant: Jordan Bates

www.elberta-alert.org

ADVERTISING SALES Sue Oseland
(616) 403-4971 • sueoseland@gmail.com

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