

★ THE ELBERTA ALERT ★

*free!

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A Community News Organ

Fri., Mar. 25, 2011

DESIGNS ON THE FUTURE: A P&Z ROUNDUP

Elberta is revising its 1994 master plan and amending its zoning ordinance to match it. The master plan process is expected to take nine months. Here's a look at some recent P&Z meetings.

MASTER PLAN PUBLIC FORUM FEBRUARY 21

About 30 people turned up at the Life-saving Station to brainstorm about the future. A lot has changed in the Village since 1994, when the current master plan was created, and some of those changes were outlined in a presentation made by NMCoG facilitator Sarah Lucas at the beginning of the evening.

Flash back to 1994. The community was eager to develop the derelict Ann Arbor Railroad property for public use. We were eager for new housing, because our population was expected to double by 2004. Partnering with developers to make infrastructure improvements was a priority. Elbertians dreamed of providing for public transportation and beautifying Frankfort Avenue.

In fact, our population not only didn't double, it shrank, from 478 people in

1990 to 434 people in 2009. The poverty rate in Benzie County went from 9.4% in 1997 to 13.3% in 2009. And the promise of a huge new tax base from the Elberta Landholding Co. waterfront development is as yet unfulfilled. The time is ripe for a new vision.

Once complete, the Village Council will release the master plan for review and comment, then a public hearing will be held on its adoption. The master plan is the legal basis for the zoning ordinance, and the zoning ordinance is the means through which the plan's vision is enforced; an adopted plan is required in order for the Village to apply for grants to make improvements.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING MARCH 1

The original zoning ordinance was adopted in August 2009. The new planning commission is Christeen Kibby-Crawford, Ken Holmes, Kelli Stapleton, Russ Mix, and Marcia Stobie. Carl Noffsinger is the zoning administrator, and the zoning board of appeals is the Village Council. The committee

will devise a couple of amendments each month. Ken and Russ will work together on lot sizes, which are seen as way too large at 12,000 square feet. The current height restriction of 35 feet on the waterfront may be raised to encourage development. The problem of blight and property abandonment is ongoing because of lack of enforcement rather than lack of ordinances; only the county can condemn a property. New ordinances are expected for medical marijuana, and possibly wind power; the Village already restricts wind generators to parcels of 5 acres or more. *The P&Z Commission meets first Tuesdays at 7 pm.*

The committee consists of Sarah Lucas (facilitator), Marcia Stobie, Connie Manke, Ken Holmes, Kelli Stapleton, and Reg Manville. The first meeting was spent going over a synopsis of assets, liabilities, and visions identified at the master plan public forum.

Liabilities: Lack of enforcement of ordinances, especially on the beach; blighted and abandoned housing; rising housing costs relative to wages; lack of beach amenities (toilets, picnic tables); drain on community from residents needing to seek work far away; lack of basic commerce such as a local grocery store; lack of curb appeal downtown; lack of lodging for visitors; lack of tax revenue.

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING MARCH 4

continues on page 2

LOGBOOK: ELBERTA AND THE BENZIE BUS

HOW AND WHERE TO GET ON Call the dispatcher at 231-325-3000, 24 hours in advance for door-to-door service. Or just wait at the express location stops (see map) for the next bus. From Glen's it's every hour from 7 am to 4 pm, with three trips to Traverse at 5:45 am, 9:45 am, and 3:45 pm.

HOW MUCH IT'LL COST—\$3 MAX ONE WAY, INCLUDING TO TRAVERSE CITY

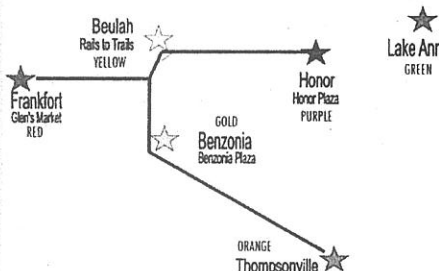
REGULAR FARE = \$3; 12-punch card = \$30
REDUCED FARE Children 12 and under, Seniors (60+), and the Disabled = \$1.50; 12-punch card = \$15.

WHO CAN RIDE Any human being or service animal. All buses are wheelchair ready. Between October 2007 and March 2011, Gilmore Township riders numbered 161, making a total of 10,433 trips, or about 8



trips per day. Frankforters made 42,186, or 33 trips per day. The Benzie Transportation Authority hopes to add more stops and routes.

"I use it all the time for shopping and to visit my son. The bus drivers are very good; if they know you're having trouble walking they'll help you in and out, and they'll even carry your groceries up to the house for you. Where are you going to get a bus system that can do that? I see more and more people riding. Gas is getting so expensive that people are riding the bus to work. A lot of schoolkids ride—sometimes the bus is full of them. They say 24 hours, but if you call that day they can sometimes get you on. Everybody should ride the Benzie Bus!"—Ruth Nanni



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BUSH THERAPY

The skills and thrills of Fuzz Brown

By Emily Votruba

LIKE MANY ELBERTIANS, Robert "Fuzz" Brown had some unusual talents and a few good secrets. Born in Norwalk, Fuzz spent most of his life in Benzie County, except for a few years in the service and a stint on the railroad in Owosso. During that life, which ended October 6 when he was 70, Fuzz mastered the art of wildcrafting, seeking out the treasures our woodlands have to offer.

"Fuzz represented the old guard of Benzie County," says Suz McLaughlin, who met him when they were both working at Benzie-Manistee Community Mental Health. "They're resourceful, they never waste anything—an amazing work ethic, and an amazing play ethic, too. Every time I saw him he had a huge grin on his face."

Suz recalls Fuzz piling into his truck with a group of mental health clients and taking them for what he called bush therapy: into the woods to his favorite blackberry picking spot. There they would likely see the resident bear, with whom Fuzz said he had, "an understanding."

A day in the woods with Fuzz was a

privilege afforded to few, and few acquire his ability to spot black and white morels, or match the care he took in harvesting wild leeks, grapes, and blackberries. Sustainability came naturally to him, and animals seemed to take note. His wife Dorothy recalls that a doe he often saw looked unusually nervous one day; Fuzz looked down and saw that he was about to step on her fawn. "He talked to her—he was a good talker—and she didn't snort or charge. He patted the fawn and stepped away."

Fuzz's fastidiousness was legendary among family and friends. Not a leaf, stray piece of dirt or bear hair would be found in the bounty he took from the woods—even the wild leeks, so painstaking to clean. For nearly 15 years, Fuzz was the main supplier of wild blackberries for Food for Thought's Wild Blackberry Shiraz jam. "Just about anything that grows in the wild I could ask him for," say the company's president, Timothy Young. "And when he brought it, it'd be practically ready to package—not so much as a partially ripe berry. I'd say, Fuzz I need 50 pounds of mushrooms, and he'd say, When do you need them? and I'd say, Tomorrow, and he'd say OK."

Occasionally Fuzz's production was slowed by people trailing him to learn his spots. "What really honored me," says Young, "more than any other accolade this company has received, was one day when he looked at me and said,



Fuzz Brown with wild leeks and morels. Photo by Brian Confer

'I'm not going to be able to do this forever,' and he took me out and showed me his places. I'm probably going to have to put that map in a safety deposit box."

A carpenter and a poet, Fuzz also once co-ran Frankfort's garbage hauling service with Jim Rice. He worked at Putney's nursery, was a 32nd degree Mason, and

wore other hats in town when he wasn't in the woods.

Fuzz started skipping school to hunt rabbits alone while still a kid in Arcadia. In his later years his yen for collection extended to cans and spent cartridges. "Matzinger Road—that was his road," says his brother Jack Brown. "He had to be the first person down there in the spring to get the cans left by the snowmobilers. We'd go fishing in March—he'd be standing in the stream, his hands all purple. He just loved being out there."

Being out there that much, Fuzz saw a side of the woods few do. "Seems like anytime something weird happened in the woods, Fuzz was there..." says his sister-in-law Pat Brown.

"You know, I really don't believe he had secret spots," Dorothy claims. "It was just his ability to see things when other people couldn't. You think you know what you're looking for, but you don't. He'd come through and find it." Ψ

P&Z ROUNDUP, cont'd

Assets: Recent improvements along 168; high-quality, high capacity water and sewer service; high-quality year-round recreation with the bike trail, conservancy land, deep water port and pier, views, sunset-peeping, incredible beach, boating, sport fishing, and skiing; rich history, the Solstice Festival, the farmers market (one of the best in the region), and new initiatives like the Winter Whine and the Arts Council.

Visions: Use volunteers for improvements and ordinance enforcement as well as revenue generators like beach concessions; create more activity downtown to deter crime and draw business; establish dog-friendly parks; allow for small-scale housing, agriculture, home-based business, and alternative energy; improve access to childcare and public transit; encourage pedestrian and bike traffic; a microbrewery on the waterfront; bring back free movies and the Shakespeare players; bring in broadband and Village-wide Wi-Fi; move utilities underground; create community gardens, small business, and art along M-168; celebrate our history. *The Master Plan Committee meets the first Friday of the month at 8 am.*

OOPS: The council meeting report in the Feb. 25 issue misquoted Marcia Stobie. Property values in Benzie County have gone down .8%, not 8% as written. We apologize for the error!

Remember When ... With Ken

★ Portrait by Art Melendez

Each issue, Kenneth Holmes brings us a snapshot of Elberta's past. This month he looks at the site of Mix's Barbershop



The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was still Benzie State Park when this photo was taken, sometime during the midterm elections—note the signs for Senators Phil Hart and Robert Griffin (misspelled!) and local candidates on "Dutch" Bigley's poolhall building. The broken windows may reflect the poolhall's mostly Democrat leanings. The building needed a lot of repairs, and was torn down in the summer of '66, making that Chrysler in the foreground a pretty new car. Not many people know that Villager Ted Carlin Sr. worked with Senator Hart to make the Bear Dunes a national lakeshore. The stone building on the right, Fitzhugh Gas & Oil, used to be Lockhart's meat market. It was torn down too, though not until after the Mix building was built; that's why Mix's is shaped the way it is.

Photo by Kenneth Holmes



START YOUR BIDDING

TO GET ADDED TO the meeting agenda, President Reg Manville said that people can go straight to him or to Sharyn Bower at the Village Office. If it's a controversial matter, the person should come before the whole council first for a decision.

During her county commissioner's report, Marcia Stobie said that the Lake Express will be in Frankfort harbor on May 8 offering rides on Lake Michigan; a similar event will be held in Manitowoc. Stobie announced that a Waterfront Smart Growth Assessment meeting will be held for property owners on March 28 with a representative from MSU Extension. Stobie said Pt. Betsie Lighthouse wants to rent out a 2-

bedroom apartment to raise funds. The question is whether that would affect their tax status as a nonprofit.

Chris Sullivan of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy said the Cooperative Weed Management Association wants to train local volunteers so that the Conservancy's work to eradicate garlic mustard and other invasive plants can continue once the Village acquires the property; this ongoing work should also be part of the management plan for the property, Sullivan said. GTLRC has raised the money for developing the management plan, which must be done with public input; Sarah Lucas of NM-CoG will facilitate, then NMCoG will bill the Village the \$3,780. The Village must sign a memorandum of understanding attesting to the timing and necessity of the management plan, for funding purposes.

The bills for February, totalling \$33,542.81 (\$10,907.81 payroll) were approved for payment. Linda Manville requested an earnings history report detail each month. Ken Holmes said this would involve a lot of extra paperwork. There was no motion on the request.

Ken Holmes said new revenue will now flow into BLUA from septic tank service within a 25-mile radius of the facility.

Parks and Rec reported that the

Winter Whine festival cleared about \$500 for the Village. Linda Manville requested that a Village credit card be made available to P&R (currently P&R makes purchases with a two-signature check). The request was approved and Bill Soper will be the cardholder, with statements going to the Village Office. Several vendors have already signed on for the farmers' market season, suggesting a continuing growth trend.

Ross Thorsen said some summer beach cleanup work could be done by kids in the Manistee Youth Build program. Reg mentioned the idea of a dog beach and tackling some of the ordinance violations on the beach, such as abuse of the road. Reg said there is no regular schedule for dedicated cleanups but cited formal and informal volunteers. Ken Bonney said he goes down to the beach every day once the road opens April 1 to empty the trash cans.

Reg said the agreement on adding the \$10K owed to the Village onto the loan the Village has with the Elberta Landholding Company is with Scott Gest for his approval. A resolution in the case of Fleis & Vandenbrink, whom Gest claims overcharged for sewer work in the development area, is still pending.

The 2011/12 budget was approved with some amendments to the budget preliminarily approved at the

last meeting. The budget has been cut by \$115,340 from last year. One full-time position has been eliminated, from the garage, pay is frozen for all Village employees, and the spousal insurance benefit has been eliminated. Ken Bonney, now the sole full-time DPW worker, got a promotion and raise. The council approved Ken's request to hire part-time help at a retainer rate of two days' minimum per week (\$10 per hour), to ensure he has help on hand into the summer and next winter. Some projects, especially water and sewer related, require two people.

A Village rule states that payouts over \$2,500 require a bid. It was decided after much discussion to initiate a thorough job description and bid process for cleaning the Lifesaving Station between rentals. At the rate of \$175 per cleaning (raised two years ago from \$100), which renters pay as part of the deposit, the limit would be hit at 14 cleanings. Diane Jenks said there were 20 rentals in 2009. Ken Holmes said everyone is happy with the job Chris Bower has been doing, and stressed the importance of Bower's consistency and reliability, in some cases on short notice. He said the \$2,500 limit pertained to purchasing agreements and not to labor. Reg said he wants to make sure the council follows its

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A P R I L	Date	Event	Details	Location	Time
	1, 4	MASTER PLAN MEETING/ PLANNING AND ZONING MEETING	Master Plan Committee regular meeting with Sarah Lucas of NMCoG; Planning and Zoning Committee regular meeting	Elberta Library, Frankfort Ave.	8 am (first Fridays) 7 pm (first Tuesdays)
3, 10, 17, 24	ALERT EDITORIAL OFFICE HOURS	Submit a story, calendar item, ad, or image, discuss content, policy, or just drop by for the heck of it.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	1 pm - 2 pm (Sundays)	
6	PARKS & REC MEETING	Regular meeting of the Village Parks and Recreation Committee	Village Community Bld.	7 pm (first Wednesdays)	
8	ROTTEN TOMATO FILM FESTIVAL	First annual film fest. <i>Attack of the Killer Tomatoes 1 and 2</i> , intermission entertainment by Hanna Beal; tomato snacks and cash bar; proceeds go to Benzie Chamber of Commerce. \$15.	Garden Theater and Betsie Bay Inn, Frankfort	6 pm first film; intermission 7:30; 8:30 second film	
12	GROW BENZIE WORKSHOP: EXTENDING THE GROWING SEASON GILMORE TOWNSHIP MEETING	"Transplanting Seeds," presented by Craig Schaaf. The careful transition of small plants to soil, plus watering and pruning tips \$7 suggested donation for individuals, \$10 for family/couple.	5885 M-115 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia	6:30 pm - 9 pm 231-882-9801; growbenzie@gmail.com	
16	COMMUNITY DINNER	Regular meeting of the board of Gilmore Township.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (second Tuesdays)	
21	VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING	Community Dinner at Elberta's best church, Elberta United Methodist. Good free food and fellowship.	555 Lincoln Ave.	4 pm-6 pm (third Saturdays)	
23	BENZIE COUNTY WATER COUNCIL EARTH DAY EVENTS	Regular meeting of the Village Council	Village Community Bld.	7 pm (third Thursdays)	
28	WINE AND THEMED DINNERS AT THE MAYFAIR PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE	12th ANNUAL BEACH-TO-BEACH CLEAN UP. Bring gloves and friends; trash bags provided GETTING TO KNOW BETSIE. A guided floating tour of Betsie River and Bay; includes lunch at the pavilion. Bring a canoe or kayak (some extra watercraft will be available). \$20.	Elberta Marina/Farm Market Park Adams Rd. launch	9 am - 10:30 am 11 am - 2 pm	
		Jewish-themed progressive dinner for Passover	The Mayfair Tavern, 515 Frankfort Ave.	6:30 pm. Call 231-360-8292 to reserve.	
		Open meeting with Sheriff Rory Heckmann to discuss county security issues. At the Benzie County Sheriff's Office.	505 S. Michigan Ave., Beulah	6 pm (fourth Thursdays)	

"A Pretty Baby Show was held at the Elberta Methodist Church [including] Mildred Raymond, Helen Freeman, Paul Vincent, Don Dawson, Ralph La Rue, Wm. Stubbs, and Charles Edwards. All the babies were so beautiful that the judges couldn't decide on a winner, so a name was drawn out of a hat."
(Elberta Alert, April 26, 1912)

BLAST From the FUTURE!

The Weight of the Past

By Merren Garber

GROWING UP HERE in Elberta, I've always wondered what those two docklike structures were on the bay. I became curious and started to research information about them. Finally I found out that those structures are pieces of the old car ferry aprons that were built at the end of the 1800s.

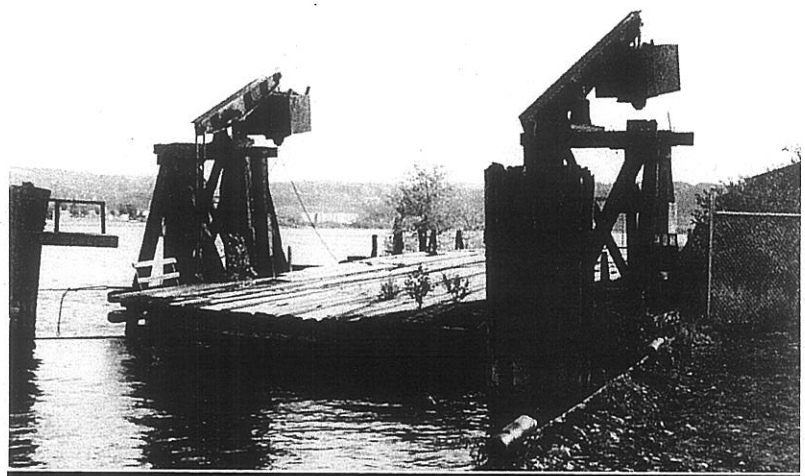
The car ferries would haul rail cars and people across the lake year-round. But their most important cargo was the railcars. To get the railcars onto the ship a special apron had to be designed that could latch onto the ship, move up, down, sideways, and twist with the movement of the ship as railcars were loaded and unloaded. The first slip was designed by Augustus Torrey and was later built by Henry E. Riggs in April of 1892. The second of the slips was originally built in Northport in 1899 and was used

by the *Manistique-Marquette & Northern Number 1*. In 1908 the Ann Arbor Railroad bought the second slip from a company that had gone out of business and moved it to Elberta. When the second slip came it was known as the East Slip.

These two aprons were unique; they were different from any other docking system because they had to be able to move both vertically and horizontally. Also they had to carry loaded boxcars and these aprons had to be able to support the ferries plus the loaded boxcars. So the aprons had to twist and move up and down. That's why they were made of wood. The wood made it possible for these aprons to do this kind of work.

While I was researching all of this a friend had told me that some people wanted to destroy the remains of the aprons. But my question is: Why would you want to destroy a piece of the history in Elberta? This is something that has crumbled down in other places except ours and is the last one in the world. Why would you not want to save it? Most of the historical structures in Elberta have been built on to make it look more futuristic, but these aprons are the only thing that still has its original glory from the 1800s to 1900s. But I just want people to understand the history on this so they know how important these aprons are to Elberta, so they don't destroy them. Ψ

Alert editor Merren Garber attends Frankfort-Elberta High School.



A view of the old car ferry apron by the deepwater port. Photo by Jennifer Wilkins

COUNCIL MEETING, cont'd

policies and that any hint of nepotism should be nipped in the bud. A contractor selection will be made at the May council meeting.


Some bids were reviewed for Porta-Jon servicing. A number of complaints had led the council to request these bids. Reg asked if the bid had been open long enough for the council to make a selection. Sharyn said she hadn't advertised but had called around to a few companies. Bill Soper said Parks and Rec have been very happy with Williams and Bay. Matt asked how often the work had to be done and whether this work was considered a service and not labor. Ken Holmes

affirmed that yes, the Porta-Jon maintenance is a contract service. The council approved a motion to contract with Williams and Bay Portable Restrooms.

The meeting dates for 2011/12 were approved after discussion of moving the meetings to Monday to accommodate Matt Stapleton's schedule at the high school. Ken Holmes said that would cut him out of the meetings. Matt said he will do his best to show up when he can. Ψ

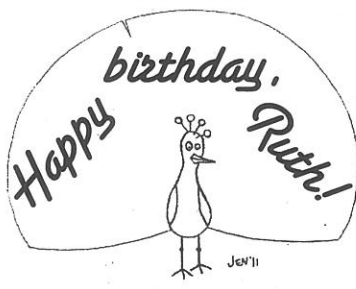
Longer meeting reports appear on the Alert blog (elberta.alert.wordpress.com). Official agendas and minutes for Village Council meetings are available at the Village Office and www.villageofelberta.org.

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PRINCE PETEY'S PUBLIC NOTICE



On April 2, Ruth Nanni, resident of Elberta since 1952, turns 90, making her the second eldest of our Village elders. Ruth has served our community as one of our first librarians, as a founder of the Kitchen Kats kitchen band, through her dance teaching and work at the senior center, and by throwing outrageous all-ages parties. We salute you, Ruth!

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