

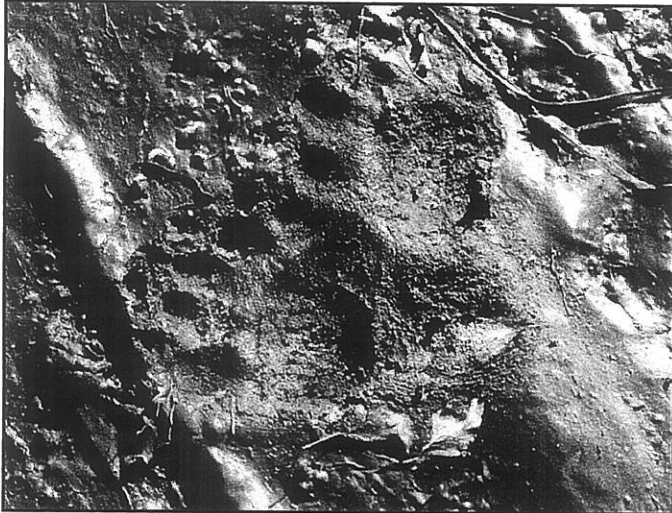
★ THE ELBERTA ALERT ★

*free!

vol. 101 no. 2

A Community News Organ

Mon., Apr. 16, 2012



Crystal Cicansky Smeltzer sent us this haunting photo of bear tracks in her yard. "We have a bear in town, so everybody needs to keep their garbage put up," said Ken Bonney at the March council meeting. "People have called wanting to shoot it with

PUBLIC HEARING ON PUTNEY WORKER HOUSING PLAN WILL BE HELD APRIL 25, 7 PM

THE BAY VALLEY INN PURCHASE by Loy Putney became a topic of widespread discussion after Putney filed suit against the council and four Village officials on March 28, alleging improper procedure and civil rights violations. The story was picked up by Interlochen Public Radio news on April 4 and on April 9 by TV 7&4. The coverage was entirely one-sided; the lawsuit had effectively put a gag order on members of council and office staff, and other members of the community either declined to comment or were not approached.

The public hearing on the 25th, at the Community Building on First St., will be held by the Village Council acting as zoning board of appeals, and pertains to the very first application Putney submitted, for a regular land-use permit. According to cor-

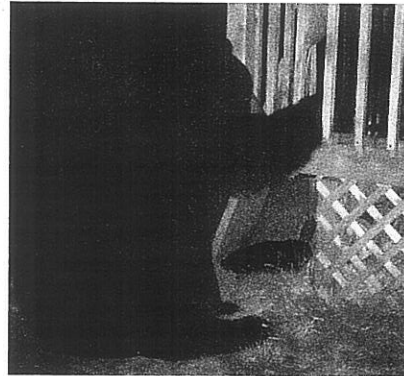
respondence obtained from the County Clerk, Putney filed for a permit and a "change of zoning" on December 12, 2011. The form describes the use as "Labor housing." Putney received a letter from zoning administrator Carl Noffsinger acknowledging receipt of the application and denying the land use permit because the proposed use did not fit our zoning. Noffsinger advised Putney to go through the special use permit procedure outlined in our ordinance.

Putney now owns the property, according to Paula Eberhart at the Register of Deeds office. The fact that he did not own the property at the time was the reason Noffsinger gave when denying him his first special use permit application. Putney subsequently resubmitted the application with an affidavit from the then owner, Firstbank Mt. Pleasant.—Emily Votruba

Calling Artists, Car Ferry Nerds, Rail Buffs, and Others: The Elberta Historical Preservation Committee Wants You!

THE MARCH council meeting formally established the Elberta Historical Preservation Committee and council granted the group permission to store salvaged parts of the former Ann Arbor car ferry apron loading docks in the Roundhouse area. The group will meet with Luedtke engineering, who won the bid for the demolition, this week to discuss logistics; at least one historian, likely Tom Stoltmann, will be on hand to make determinations as items are recovered from the site, but most of what's deemed worthy of saving is now known: all of the East Slip and some portions of the West Slip, including the scale house and winch houses. Ken Bonney will use metering equipment to check parts for contamination before stor-

age. Once the demolition/salvage (expected to begin before the end of April) is complete, the Committee will seek design and display ideas from the community. All plans will be presented to council for approval as well. Items such as rail spikes and signage will be auctioned or sold to raise funds. Donations may be made to the Village of Elberta (memo: Historical Preservation Committee), PO Box 8, Elberta, MI 49628. Almost all the labor and equipment will be donated. So far the most popular plan is for "gateways" to the Waterfront Park made from the counterweight structures. But the committee is open to all ideas! Send yours to the above address, call 231-399-0098, or e-mail elberta.alert@gmail.com.—Emily Votruba



rubber bullets. That would p— it off, just like you would be if someone shot you with a rubber bullet. Keep your garbage picked up and the bear will go away," Ken advised. The DNR says other bear necessities include: emptying bird feeders, carrying pepper spray, and *not* playing dead or running if you encounter our ursine neighbors. These astonishing images of Elberta him/herself were captured on March 12 and sent to us by Shelley and Mary Kidder. Let's everybody stay clear of these guys and stay safe.



THORSENIZED!
"I've gotta give Ross a pat on the back. Everything is personal to him so it's gotta be perfect," said Ken Holmes at the March council meeting, and so it is. With help from Jen Wilkins, who made the letter stencils, and Sue Oseland, Ross has crafted a new marquee for the LSS. New siding, fresh paint, and storm windows are also in the works.
PHOTO: EMILY VOTRUBA

Stairway to Heaven

The Gilmore Township Board, with a grant secured by treasurer Laura Manville, is making the dream of a stairway from Grace Rd. down to the beach a reality this summer; work has already begun. The design is by architect Marcia Stobie and much of the labor and equipment will be donated by locals. Updates at the next Gilmore meeting. One big part of the job: clearing the prodigious poison ivy.

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2012 DECADE ANNIVERSARY SATURDAY JUNE 23rd STARTING AT NOON

The Elberta Solstice Committee is seeking Arts and Crafts, Farmers Market and Food Vendors for the 2012 Summer Solstice Festival. Please email Jen Wilkins at smiljen10@yahoo.com with your address and an application and information will be sent to you. The Solstice Committee would like to thank past and future Sponsors, Vendors and Volunteers for making The Solstice Festival an unforgettable event!

Signed, the Management

By Emily Votruba

IT WAS AN ACTION-PACKED two-hour meeting.

Probate Judge Candidate During initial public comment, district court magistrate John Mead presented his qualifications as a candidate for probate judge; a vacancy has opened on the bench with the coming retirement of district court judge Nancy Kida. Mead has 8 years' experience in judicial hearings, mostly in family court proceedings. He is 41, born and bred in Benzie. He said we have not had a native Benzie person on the bench since 1966 and that he would possibly be the first-ever Benzie Central grad on the bench. He's a 16-year resident of Frankfort. He has a BS in criminal justice, a master's in public administration and a master's in agricultural law in addition to his juris doctor degree. He was with the circuit court for 10 years and the Benzie sheriff's office for 10 years.

Putney Bay Valley Inn Permit Matter Also during public comment, Bradley Putney, attorney for Loy Putney, addressed the board: "We'd like to inquire why the Village is not considering and processing the special use permit

application Loy Putney has submitted and paid for."

Reg said: "Carl Noffsinger is in charge of that, and—"

"Yes," said Putney, interrupting, "he's denied a land use permit, but there is also a special use permit that was applied for and paid and the process has not been followed by the Village, and that application has not been noticed for hearing, comment, or any type of procedure by this board, by the zoning board of appeals, and I would like to know why."

Zoning administrator Carl Noffsinger said, "I just recently received an affidavit from the owner of the property [the Cadillac-based bank Firstbank-Mt. Pleasant]. Mr. Putney was prior trying to zone it without owning it. [If he's not the owner of the property] I can't address it. I just received it, I'm going through the procedure. The first application is for a land use permit, which the zoning administrator is allowed to interpret and decide. I have done that, I have made that decision—[which was a denial on the basis of our zoning]. Now he can formally go forward, as the owner of the property—"

Carl made several attempts to continue speaking as the attorney interrupted. Atty: "The owner resubmitted that from the original one. On February 22, the special use permit was resubmitted from the original one [the land use permit submitted] three months ago."

Carl: "You weren't the owner, agent,

or delegate at the time. End of story."

Ken Holmes: "In our zoning, under hotel, motel, and transient—understand transient?—Commercial buildings such as hotels and motels, including resort hotels and motels operated by membership organizations and open to the general public, primarily engaged in providing lodging, or lodging and meals, for the general public, however not including bed and breakfast establishments—this means transient. Period. That is our zoning. That was designed that way. We didn't want just any rhubarb coming in there and making a trash house out of that place." [Editor's note: "Rhubarb," according to born and bred Elbertian Katy denHeeten, is a term she often heard growing up in the Village. She says it means something similar to "any Tom, Dick, or Harry."]

Atty, writing: "OK. I'll quote that on you there. "Trash house.""

Ken Holmes: "As far as I'm concerned—"

Atty: "As to the special use permit that was submitted—the application, is that going to be processed?"

Carl: "The denial was the zoning administrator's decision. Now it's going through the appeal process—"

Atty: "Sir, on the application for special use permit—"

Carl: "I cannot—it's not up to me. Read the zoning laws."

Atty: "If the board—"

Carl: "It's not up to me."

Atty: "Someone has to—"

Carl: "You submitted [the special use application] when you were not the owner or agent."

Ken Holmes: "And now you're talking about having a regular operation there for regular lodging of migrant workers, and that's not in our plan. It's not in the zoning, never has been."

Reg Manville: "Is your question answered?"

Atty: "Yes, the question has been answered. I believe the board has made it clear they're going to circumvent acting on the special use permit that has been applied for with an affidavit that has been supplied per request. You have all the materials to act on the special use permit including the fee."

Reg: "We're going to wait for a ruling from Carl. After he makes his ruling he will present it to the council. Then we will issue the permit or dismiss it. Not until then."

Atty: "So I understand you are going to act on the special use permit."

Carl: "You're going to resubmit it?"

Atty: "It has been submitted."

Carl: "It was submitted prior to [your] having the [status of] agent—"

Atty: "It's been resubmitted with that affidavit."

Carl: "You cannot have two permits on the pile addressed at one time."

Commissioner's Report Marcia Stobie, our County Commissioner and a member of the Village Planning Commission then gave her commissioner's report. During the report the Putney team were talking disruptively in the back. Reg asked for order. A few minutes after that the two men left the meeting. Marcia said the commissioners were to hold a hearing on a proposed ORV ordinance the following Tuesday (March 20). They were also to meet on the county's audit report. A special meeting had been held that Wednesday to work out an amended agreement with the Council on Aging. "They've had some issues that we're trying to work through with them so that we can continue to offer services for seniors without any interruption," said Stobie.

Correspondence Reg directed council's attention to some correspondence they'd received on the Putney matter. "Does everyone understand how we're going to handle this? We're going to let Carl make a decision, he'll bring the decision to us, and we can go on his findings." There was also a letter from Art Melendez on his retirement from Parks and Rec and the Solstice committee.

Financial Report The February bills were approved. Receipts: \$24,282.89. Expenditures: Accounts payable, \$4,067.77; payroll, 9,313.71. Total expenditures: \$13,381.48.

DPW Ken Bonney, DPW, reported on the progress at the Life Saving Station and thanked Ross Thorsen (see page 1). First and Robarge streets have been updated to be more drivable. These improvements may allow for Act 51 funding for future upkeep. Two curbs on M-22 in front of businesses will be redone. Linda thanked Kenny for all of his efforts during and after the storm, and we all burst into applause.

Water & Sewer Ken Holmes said no one has yet been hired for the engineer job at BLUA. The plant is 21 years old and one of its original motors had burned out the week before. The recent rain had sent sewer volume up significantly.

Beach Ross said as warm as it's been beach cleanups should start in April.

Zoning Carl said if anyone needed clarification he'd be willing to answer questions. Other zoning questions are before him. The parties who purchased and tore down a house on Crapo Street are seeking permits for building. Regarding the Putney matter, Carl said he'd just handed them a disapproval of their application for land use, on the basis of the hotels and motels section of our ordinance. Having been denied the regular land use permit they were required to submit a special use application, which they did, but without owning the property, hence the second denial. "They'll have to apply for an appeal of my decision now. Then it will go before [council]. You can instruct me to issue a land use permit, or deny it completely. They didn't have the right to even apply before. It's like me trying to apply for zoning on your house."

Linda Manville referred to the affidavit in the correspondence received. "So if the owner [is the one who] has to apply, this [new special use application with the affidavit] is acceptable?"

Carl: "That's the first time I've had the chance to look at it. I was being nice and trying to answer questions and now he's got his attorney threatening me" [in conversation prior to the council meeting].

Scott Gest: "Since they're now going for a special use permit, that has to go through the planning commission, not the board, correct?"

Carl: "The planning commission are just an advisory board if it ends up before the zoning board of appeals."

Marcia Stobie asked whether Putney had presented a site plan yet.

Carl: "[Putney] has a whole bunch of stuff, but I just denied the land use permit, so I can't act on something else even though he's flooded me with information."

President's Report Reg said, "I'd like to address again a problem with some of our



Sue Oseland

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Remember When... With Ken

★ Portrait by Art Melendez



Smaller, people-only ferries used to run regularly between the two Frankforts. Meet one of the captains and his craft. If you have any family stories of these Ur-ferry days, ring us, won't you?



The Bell Ferry Hazel was operated by Medard "Pete" Rommell from the Crapo Street docks to the car ferry docks and from there to North Frankfort. Here we see Captain Rommell and his wife, Mary (née Hoys). They were both born in Belgium—Pete in 1862 and Mary in 1859. Pete arrived in New York on the *Noordland* in March of 1891, when he was 28. According to Blacklock's history of Elberta, Pete was the last to run the Crapo Street ferry. Other captains were C. Slyfield, Fred Frederickson, Garland Gilbert and Stollie Kittleson. Pete and Mary Rommell are both at rest in Gilmore Cemetery. PHOTO AND INFORMATION COURTESY OF EVELYN ROMMELL

More Fun(d) raisers in the Works By Emily Votruba

AT THEIR APRIL MEETING, the Parks and Recreation Commission had two new council-approved members (Jerry Little and Emily Votruba) and a new subcommittee, the Elberta Historical Preservation Committee, which Grace Bankston will formally join as of the April 19 council meeting. Connie Manke was elected president of Park and Rec and Jennifer Wilkins was elected vice president (she'll remain as secretary as well). Jen has recently finished staining the Marina Park kids' train in bright colors, with help from Merren Garber and Michele Cannert. The train, originally brown, was purchased in 1999 by Parks and Rec, and had become weather- and kid-beaten over the years. Jen presented some images of outdoor exercise equipment for placement in Anderson Park, and there was a long and inspiring discussion of possibilities for a black locust viewing platform for the new Elberta Dunes South Park.

Farmers' Market Vendor application packets were sent out April 6; a market master

will be hired from among four applicants at the April 19 council meeting. At the March council meeting, Laura Manville reported that the Market had a profit of \$1,699 last year. Council decided to give the market master position a slight raise, from \$80 to \$90 a week during the 22-week "on" season. Since the Village (Laura) will be maintaining the market finances, those duties are no longer part of the market master job description; as an official Village position, the market master job will now also be paid weekly, rather than merely when market funds become available. All agree that Meg Louwsma did a heroic job as market master and she'll be very much missed. The market has grown each year, according to Connie, who is also a vendor there.

The commission discussed new picnic tables for the pavilion. The tables are heavily used by market vendors. They discussed buying wooden tables and raising funds for them by routing names into them, as was

done with the beach boardwalk. Speaking for the commission at the March council meeting, Connie expressed an interest in having input in the market master hiring decision. In a break from tradition, Reg Manville said the employee committee, not Parks and Rec, would be making a recommendation to council, citing the fact

that Parks and Rec is no longer in control of its finances.

Solstice A second fundraiser, this time for the kids' tent activities, will be held Memorial Day weekend. It'll be a preview of the types of hilarity at the Solstice itself, with hot dogs, games and music.

Elberta Dunes South Park Sarah Lucas presented, and council approved, the updated management plan. Work will be begun soon on a 20 car parking lot. Provisions for bike access/locking, signage, trail improvements and temporary restroom facilities are other priorities. Sarah suggested continued cooperation with Conservancy members who have taken a strong interest in the park and have already done a lot of volunteer maintenance work. The plan is available online at <http://wp.me/p1bgEv-em>.



Saturday May 26th Starting at Noon
Childrens Tent Fundraiser and Life Saving Station Open House

To volunteer for this event, call the Village Office at 352-7201

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Lou Stall bought L.C. Day's motorboat; Willis F. Cornell, founder of the Frankfort Express, in 1870, died in Eaton Rapids; New Elberta School kindergarteners include Caroline Vigland and Allen Gaines; little Rena Setterbo is in school in Grace. —*The Elberta Alert*, April 19, 1912

Date	Event	Details	Location	Time
18	REGULAR MONTHLY BEACH CLEANUP	Meet Sue Oseland down at the Elberta Beach Parking Lot. Apparently there's already a lot of crazy junk down there!	Elberta Beach Parking Lot	10 am
	BENZIE COUNTY RECYCLING SPECIAL COLLECTION	Clean out your files! Take up to three bags or boxes of shreddables to the Benzie Community Resource Center. The shredded material goes to Benzie Organic Solutions for use as worm bedding.	6051 Frankfort Hwy.	10 am-2 pm
	REFLECTIONS BY THE BAY	Lou Yock speaks on the history of Benzonia College at Benzie Shores District Library	630 Main St., Frankfort	7 pm
	ARCADIA LUTHERAN WOMEN'S GROUP TALK	Grant Brown, author of <i>Ninety Years Crossing Lake Michigan</i> , speaks on the history of the Ann Arbor Car Ferries	Trinity Lutheran, 17191 3rd St., Arcadia	7 pm
19	VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING	Diane Jenks presides (Reg is on vacation). On the agenda: hiring a new Farmers' Market Master, approving zoning changes.	Village Community Bld. 401 First St.	7 pm
20	PERIWINKLE GARDEN CLUB	Mike Jones of the Benzie Conservation District speaks on the emerald ash borer, beech bark disease, and other changes in the Michigan landscape. Sponsored by the Periwinkle Garden Club.	Trinity Lutheran Church, 955 James St., Frankfort	12 noon
21	BENZIE COUNTY RECYCLING SPECIAL COLLECTION	Electronics. Basically anything with a cord. Free at Betsie Valley Elementary School in Thompsonville.	17936 Cadillac Hwy.	10 am-2 pm
	FRIENDS OF BETSIE BAY BEACH-TO-BEACH CLEANUP	Clean both beaches and the Trail for Earth Day.	Elberta Farmers Market Pavilion	9 am
	COMMUNITY DINNER AT ELBERTA'S BEST CHURCH	Free ham, scalloped potatoes, ice cream sundaes, and fellowship at Elberta United Methodist.	555 Lincoln Ave.	4 pm-6 pm (third Saturdays)
25	E-DRINKS AT THE CABBAGE SHED	An open gathering to discuss a new era of local entrepreneurship, incubate some ideas, and imagine local economic possibilities.	198 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9843	5 pm-6:30 pm
	PUBLIC HEARING ON LAND USE PERMIT DENIAL	The Village Council, as zoning board of appeals, hosts discussion on the land use for the Putney/Bay Valley Inn property.	Village Community Bld. 401 First St.	7 pm
26	PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING	Open meeting with Sheriff Rory Heckmann to discuss county security issues.	Sheriff's Office, 505 S. Michigan Ave., Beulah	6 pm (fourth Thursdays)
27	TOGA DANCE PARTY	Get yourself one sheet to the wind at the Cabbage Shed and dance to tracks tweaked by Elberta's Pied Piper of Partying, Josh Herren.	198 Frankfort Ave.	10 pm
28	FRANKFORT-ELBERTA SCHOOLS SPRING FLING	Silent and live auction. Your \$25 at the door pays for educational events and programs (\$20 in advance at the schools or Corner Drug). Bid online at www.frankfort.k12.mi.us/springfling.html	Oliver Art Center, 132 East Coast Guard Rd., FFort	7 pm-10 pm
29	ZONTA JOB FAIR	Learn about local employment opportunities, hand out some résumés, and get to know your future boss in a festival setting.	231-882-4193, Mills Community House	12 noon-4 pm
2	PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING	Regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission; note new meeting day and place, and new president, Connie Manke	Elberta Library 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (first Wednesdays)
5	PLANT HERITAGE WEEK TALK/GARLIC MUSTARD LUNCH	A Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy talk about how our backyard landscapes affect birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Then: Eat a delicious invasive species prepared by Suz McLaughlin.	Trinity Lutheran Church, 955 James St., Frankfort	10 am (talk) 12 noon (lunch)
8	SPECIAL LIBRARY MILLAGE ELECTION	Vote for the millage allowing Gilmore to join the board of the Benzie Shores District Library and the millage actually goes down!	Elberta Library 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 am-8 pm
8	GILMORE TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING	Regular meeting of the board of Gilmore Township; note: moved from the Library because of the special election.	Village Community Building, 401 First St.	7 pm (second Tuesdays)

FOGHORN • LOCAL ITEMS LOUD AND CLEAR



wrangler for his brother-in-laws' State Lumber Company in Platte Township."

★★★☆☆☆☆
Bank Shot Three cheers for **Tami Banktson**, a senior at Frankfort-Elberta High School, whom the *Detroit Free Press* has named second team all state honors class D in basketball. We asked Grace Banktson if Tami is perhaps a relation of hers. "She's my second cousin. Her dad, Jeff, is my first cousin and the son of my uncle Jim, my dad's brother. My **great uncle Gus** was Tami's great great uncle! We all live on the original farm property. Pretty cool :)"

★★★☆☆☆☆
Michael Murphy is in Naperville, Ill., practicing the art of timber framing on a historic farm building, but he makes a point of following Village doings. "Speaking of our favorite town, did you see where that little lot next to the post office went up on the market? I think that's just a luscious lot. I think it's really sublime." **Russ Mix's** house on Washington, the lot, and the service station are all up for sale. Reached by phone, Russ said as far as he knows the lot has always been empty. "The two previous owners just kind of held onto it. I'm getting to retirement age and all, and I didn't want to tie it up any longer." He said he'd like to see a business move in there. Listed at \$24,600, and with much more reasonable commercial lot sizes in the works (down to 2,500 from 5,000 sq. feet, with a maximum lot coverage of 90 percent for C1 commercial), a person could put in a small shop or two or three. Might we suggest a grocery-bookstore?

★★★☆☆☆☆
Library Millage Special Election Janet Buck, who was part of the original movement to get the Village into the Benzie Shores Library, urges us all to come out to vote for the new library millage on **May 8**. She shared a list of facts at the April *Alert* meeting: Gilmore Township, including the Village of Elberta, has had a library services contract with the Benzie Shores District Library since September 2005. The current contract expires in 2013, and this election is necessary to continue our library services. The May 8 ballot proposal seeks to make Gilmore a member of the Library, with board representation. This is not a new tax; Gilmore residents have been paying a millage of .75 mill for library services since 2009. The May ballot proposal is for the same amount, but the library board has agreed to cap the millage at .6 mill for the foreseeable future. A yes vote makes the library funding permanent at a lower rate, along with a say for us in library board decisions. Remember the successful November 8, 2011, election that brought Lake township into the fold? By joining forces, we all get greater services for less money. New services have included the digitizing of the local newspaper

Visual Learners The *Alert* loves it when a correction comes with an awesome photo. **Grace Banktson** gently advised us on the error of our statement, based on reporter ear failure at a loud party, that her **great uncle Gus** would have been in his twenties in 1912. "Here's a pic of Gus taken in front of the old farmhouse on the Banktson property on M-22 (Stratton Hill). I don't know exactly how old he is there, but it was taken in the '50s and he



died 1958 at 93. He was such a cool guy." We can't argue with that math!

★★★☆☆☆☆
"Rhubarb Pie: My oh my!" commented **Pat Moyna** recently on the *Alert* Facebook page. "It's good. And curiously, rhubarb grows very well in Elberta. Ma (Fern) always said that the secret was to grow it in heavy shade for it to be the tenderest and least fibrous when ripe. Ma grew hers under her arbor of Concord grapes in the side yard of our house at 826 Frankfort Ave. Ma's pie was sweeter and less acidic than most because she put fresh-squeezed lemon juice in the filling, which she cooked before putting it in the shell. I think she added a touch of fruit pectin to the brew as her rhubarb pie always had a consistency that suggested a preserve. The recipe was her father, **Bill O'Leary's**. He was camp baker and horse

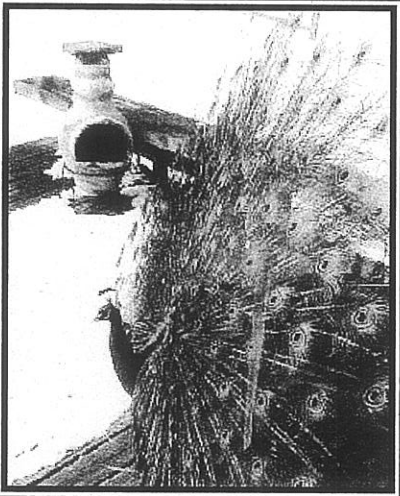
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Euterpe personified, has been awarded a full scholarship for this summer's session at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, after receiving the highest marking at the state level for high school flute performance. She played "Ballet of the Shepherds" by Gluck.

★★★☆☆☆☆
Petey the Peacock (also called Seamus) never did make it downstate for his date with the peahen. The procurer, **Josh Bedell**, of Johnson Rd., didn't get around to it. But Bedell did send along this photo in early March, in which we see Petey desperately courting a shapely chiminea, quite out of season. **Sandhill cranes** and **spring peepers** could be heard in similar pursuits as early as St. Patrick's Day this year.



★★★☆☆☆☆
Mulch Appreciated The abominable snow that laid waste to Benzie County March 2-4 was no match for **Ken Bonney** and his DPW teammates, **Charlie Hendershott** and **Mike Holtrey**. After literally plowing up a storm, they then spent a couple of weeks dealing with downed tree limbs in temperatures that rose to 80 degrees. We thank them for keeping us safe and now for keeping us in free wood chips for the foreseeable. Stop by the Garage for a load and give the fellows your regards.

★★★☆☆☆☆
Baby Ballerinas On May 12 at 1 pm at the Frankfort-Elberta High School auditorium, a recital shall be held of baby ballet, pre-ballet, and junior tap classes, according to **Kelli Stapleton**, prime mover behind the Betsie Valley Dance School. The BVDS will again sell flower crowns at the Solstice Festival to help cover the cost of classes, shoes, and costumes, as will your \$5 at the door for this unmissable performance. "I can't promise much in this lousy world," said Kelli, "but I can promise that watching baby ballerinas is the nearly cutest thing you will ever see."

★★★☆☆☆☆
The writing on the wall... Postmaster Tim Flynn assumed an air of resolve when alerted one early April morning to the remarks handwritten in black ballpoint-pen on two separate unrelated fliers pinned up on the post office bulletin board. The com-



231.352.4440
Downtown Frankfort

ments were by turns positive, negative, and indeterminate: "Vote R-----!" and "No M-----!" and "I-----!" It's post office policy not to allow business solicitations or political posterage on the premises, and defacement of other public notices is not countenanced. So Tim took out his black felt-tip pen and grimly did his redactatory duty. Seems the Village could really use an official graffiti wall.

★★★☆☆☆☆
Stan Otto, currently residing at the LaRue House, performed with the Cherry Capital Men's Chorus barbershop group at a benefit for Benzie Habitat for Humanity on April 15.

★★★☆☆☆☆
Jennifer Wilkins proudly announces the engagement of her son **Corben Wilkins** to the lovely **Nicole Aubol** of Greeley Colorado. Corben is a 2008 graduate of Frankfort-Elberta High School and Nicole is a 2008 graduate of Greeley West High School. Both are attending college in Greeley, where Corben is studying film directing and Nicole is studying graphic design. The two will wed on August 17, 2013, in Greeley.

★★★☆☆☆☆
Marcy and Stewart Grudzien held an open house April 7 for **Limey**, their weekly rental on Furnace Avenue. Marcy is the proprietress of Mecca, in Benzonia. Guests feasted on Polish delicacies and checked out the renovation of the house, in whose walls the Grudzien found newspaper from the 1870s. They managed to preserve the original hemlock flooring in the living room. See some of what Marcy's done with the place below. We think it's peachy!



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Fracking in Michigan: Friend or Foe?

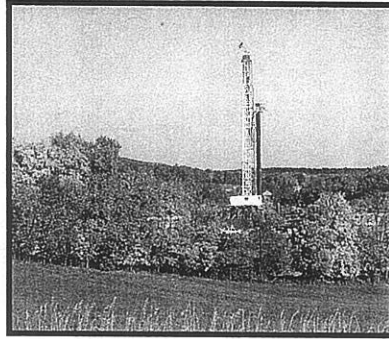
By Ann Sinclair

IT WAS STANDING ROOM ONLY at a recent panel discussion on horizontal hydraulic fracturing hosted in Traverse City by the League of Women Voters. The crowd was eager to learn of the state's recent increased activity in this relatively new process, which targets deep underground shale beds in the northern part of lower Michigan, the so-called Collingwood and Utica shales.

Horizontal hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking, is a method of extracting natural gas from dense shale rock formations deep underground, at times up to 12,000 feet. Although natural gas drilling in shallower deposits has occurred in Michigan since the 1960s, this new type of deep well drilling, where a hole is drilled straight down, and then sideways up to 8,000 feet into gas-filled shale, has only been in use for the last two years. According to Bob Versical of the Michi-

gan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in 2011 the state auctioned off 120,000 acres of public land specifically for hydraulic fracturing to utility companies seeking to increase their share of the natural gas market. At least two unconventional (deep-shale) fracking wells have been drilled in Michigan, in Cheboygan and Missaukee counties. However, Ellis Beal of Ban Michigan Fracking stated that there have been no new permits issued in the state for horizontal wells since late last summer, possibly because of trouble experienced at horizontal fracking sites in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas. The Sierra Club of Michigan and the group Michigan Clean Water action have both called for delays on all hydrofracking operations in the state until regulatory safeguards are in place.

Concern about environmental and property damage is mounting in communities around the country that have allowed horizontal fracking to commence through landowner sale of "mineral rights" to utilities. Underground rights leases allow companies to extract resources from beneath a landowner's property through this horizontal drill-



ing, without disturbing the property's surface. But collateral damage from the drilling includes earthquakes, which the state of Ohio has directly linked with horizontal fracking activity, as well as groundwater contamination from chemicals used in the process. Ground and well water has been poisoned in Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania, according to Mike Berkowitz of the Michigan Sierra Club. The process also requires tremendous amounts of freshwater, which is then chemically treated, mixed with millions of pounds of sand, and pumped at high pressure to push the natural gas out of the tiny cracks in the shale. According to Versical of the DEQ, it's not uncommon for 8 million gallons of water to be used per "frack." The fracking company must then dispose of all the contaminated water, which cannot be used again for any known purpose. It is still unclear how legislation affecting companies' use of local water will be handled in this situation, with industry interests gunning for unrestricted use of water resources.

According to an investigation by the nonprofit news organization ProPublica, fracking has poisoned streams, killing fish and other animals who drink the contaminated water. Methane has leaked into groundwater and nearby residential wells, in at least one case making tap water flammable, and has caused an explosion that leveled a house.

The growing awareness of the dangers of horizontal fracking has led experts to advise that if a company representative seeks to gain "mineral rights" to your property, you should seek competent legal advice before signing anything that exposes you or nearby resources to unknown risks and the possibility of permanent damage.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING WELL TOWER, NORTHERN LOWER MICHIGAN. HTTP://IS.GD/P9PH0N

COUNCIL REPORT, cont'd

council members. One member in particular has e-mailed our office six times this week requesting personal attention. When our employees have to drop their day-to-day duties to attend to these types of disruptions, productivity is decreased. From now on, all communications that entail our employees doing extra work will go through me first. I'm not going to stand for any more micro-managing. This month I communicated to several council members that I was available to meet with them concerning our employees. I did not receive any response. If anybody has a problem with this procedure I'm willing to listen."

Reason for Water Bill Rate Increase Linda: "The president in his report is obviously referring to me. I thought I had sent four e-mails to which I thought I could get a quick response and not have to go into the office and spend their time. My question was in regard to the rise in the ready-to-serve water fee. I did meet with [Village treasurer] Laura Manville yesterday. I said it would take 10 or 15 minutes, which we did. And she explained to me that it was a USDA grant loan that we had received in 2005, and because of that we had to comply with the utility rate—"

Laura Manville: "I feel I should explain this. When we got this loan from USDA to redo the sewer in 2005 we were required to do a utility rate study. It's done over a period of years. It's a very long process. They take all our accounts, all our records—expendi-

tures, revenues... At that time, the council agreed, [per the recommendation of the head of USDA in Traverse City] to stick to that utility rate study. Over the years those rates have been raised minuscule amounts according to the rate of inflation. I sent in every year an annual report. The agent became concerned with some of the numbers. We contacted Raycap, who was doing [the water rate study]. They're very expensive to do but they were doing it for us for free. I met with one of their representatives who was very concerned about our water fund. Our sewer fund is doing marvelous but our water fund is not, because we do not charge enough money to support it;

in fact right now it's in a deficit balance. The state requires us to have 10% in our RRI reserve fund [a capital improvement fund]—10% of the capital value we show at our audit. We should in that fund have \$55,000 for any repairs. We have a very old water system. And we have zero. We're also supposed to have an emergency reserve fund only used for emergencies. We should have at least \$5,000 in there, and we have zero. So, it's to correct this that the USDA rep required me to raise the ready-to-serve fee on the water—it was at \$3.10. Bear in mind this has been two years in the making. So had this been done when it should have

our rates would have been raised then little by little. But they haven't been. His recommendation to us was \$7.25 for the ready-to-serve fee. I told him I didn't feel like we could do that right now, that we should gradually increase it.

OOPS! CORRECTIONS

In February's council meeting report, Emily Votruba incorrectly implied that our Village tax revenue has gone down because our State Equalized Value (SEV) rate has gone down. In fact, tax revenues are based on taxable value, not SEV, and our taxable values have gone down. • Also in the council meeting report: the \$3,000 overcharge (now corrected thanks to Laura Manville) was not just for Elberta's share in first responder service but for fire department and first responder service combined. And the fire department got a 25-cent per hour raise, not a \$25 raise. Thanks, Laura, for setting EV straight. • Ross Thorsen did not handcraft the frames for the historic photos now hanging in the LSS; the framing and matting was donated, along with the photos, by Deryl Holmes. • Steve Campbell, not Steve Tebo, donated the Harbor Lights-stay prize for the Solstice chili cookoff fundraiser. See the Foghorn section, p. 4, for a correction with imagery.

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[The USDA] would like to see the rate at \$6 dollars this year, then \$7 next year then \$8 in 2014 to try to build those reserves up. I didn't have any calls about the change in the rate. This was a big jump, by \$2.90 a month, and they're going to go up from there. Nobody wants to do it, but when your water system breaks because it's very old and you have no money in your reserve fund to repair it, where are you going to be? We're talking some big money and you've gotta be prepared for the future."

Linda: "If I could just finish my comment. I did meet with Laura yesterday and she explained that to me. What I was going to say today is that I understand that we are in deficit and there is a need to raise it. I don't have a problem with that. My suggestion is that I would like to have residents notified in advance of a raise of some kind. 28.8% of our residents are 60 or older. Many of them are on fixed incomes. And it's only \$2.90, but just as a matter of courtesy, if we could just say to them 30 days in advance, This is coming. That's all I'm asking for."

The means of notifying the public was discussed, whether it could be added as the message on the water bill, posted in the office window, an ad in the paper, or simply posted in the post office.

Matt Stapleton: "I don't understand why we spent 10 minutes talking

continues on page 6

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BLAST From the FUTURE!

Local history, topics, and interviews by an Elberta teen

A Learning Experience

By Merren Garber

ON FEBRUARY 21, 2012, Martin Lowenberg, a Holocaust survivor, came to speak at Frankfort High School. When he spoke to us, Mr. Lowenberg made me feel very scared for him and emotional. The way Mr. Lowenberg told his story made me feel like we were all there experiencing it with him. We all witnessed his pain and how it affected him as he described all the memories that haunt him.

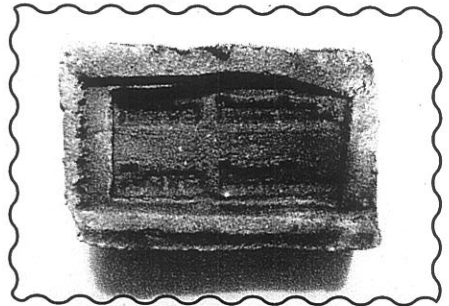
One could learn so much from this man that it's overwhelming trying to comprehend it all. Here are a few things that one may not know just by reading about it: The Jews were treated worse

than dogs. The dogs at Auschwitz had been treated better than any of the Jewish people combined. The dogs were given meat whereas each of the Jews was given a small bowl of soup and a thin piece of bread. They were stuffed into boxcars being smushed against one another for transportation to the camps or simply out of torture. It was painful to hear.

One thing that resonated with me is that Martin Lowenberg had younger twin brothers named Fritz and Kurt. He did not know what happened to them but his words were: "My only hope is that they went to the Gas Chambers instead of having to go to Dr. Mengele." This is something that shocked me. All throughout Mr. Lowenberg's story my thoughts drifted back to that. The Gas Chambers was a slow twelve minute death, where one person after another was left gasping for air. While I was thinking this over, I wondered, was Dr. Mengele really that

bad? For not knowing anything about him, someone may have said no. But as Mr. Lowenberg continued to describe Dr. Mengele it was clear that he was in fact the dreaded "Angel of Death." I started picturing him doing the tests on young children that Martin talked about. Injecting them with needles or putting strange dyes in their eyes to see if they would turn another color. It makes you feel like you're being stabbed in the stomach to think that a person could do that to another human. Those kids were led away into the clutches of a monster, not ever knowing what was going to happen.

This tragic experience was one that I will certainly not forget. Any of us can read about it in books to get the feel of what was happening, but it sinks into one's heart when one is hearing it from a survivor of the event. I'm very grateful



A token of wisdom handed out by Martin Lowenberg and passed on to the Alert by a friend. PHOTO BY EMILY VOTRUBA

for being able to hear Mr. Lowenberg's story. His demeanor was so kind and gentle and, despite how devastating it must be to have to relive what happened each time he retells his story, his only hope is that justice was served. ♣

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

COUNCIL REPORT, cont'd

about that. Matt said the matter could have been resolved before the meeting with an agreement to post notice. "Obviously [Linda]'s OK with the rate increase, I'm OK with it, it's something that we have to do." Laura said she thought it was good for people to understand why.

Fire & Safety Ken Holmes said no meetings had yet been scheduled for the fire department board. "The paperwork I have here says for fire and rescue \$3,136.28 ... and the other one is \$13,902. Next year it'll be down \$1,000. Haven't figured that one out." Laura asked when the new contract starts for first responders and fire. Diane Jenks said she would find out.

Planning and Zoning Linda has been attending planning commission meetings as part of the master plan liaison job. Changes were adopted in minimum lot sizes, structure setbacks and coverage by structures. Changes were also adopted for automobile service stations, gasoline service stations, and junkyards. A public hearing on these changes was set for April 3. Emily Votruba asked if the specifics of the zoning changes would be available ahead of the public hearing. Marcia Stobie said they would be posted. Sharyn said she had been told to put an ad in the paper. Emily asked if the ad would describe

what the changes were. Marcia said she thought the information should be available before the hearing but that she would check. No description of the proposed changes was posted in the paper or elsewhere, though at the time of the April 3 meeting planning chairperson Russ Mix said the information had been available in the Village office for a month.

The council approved amendments to the Village's budget.

Water System Reliability Study Ken Bonney has received bids from contractors to perform a water reliability study required by Act 399. Fleis and VandenBrink Engineering came in lowest. Ken said Fleis explained their bid was low because they had already done some of the work as part of the sewer updating done for the Waterfront Development. This was the work that the Village finished paying for earlier this year, but for which we don't have any evidence that the water study part of the job was completed. When you factor in that \$5,000 of earlier fees, the Fleis bid was actually higher than the others, Ken said. The study includes a complete hydraulic module which establishes pressures at all the hydrants and amount of flow and will include a map of the entire network of pipes with their dimensions, which will help in future if something breaks. On Ken's recommendation the council awarded the bid to

Gourdie-Fraser. It was suggested they be invited to the next council meeting and that perhaps they would be willing to work with the Village on their fee. Ken said he had been advised by Gourdie-Fraser about grants we may apply for.

The bid by the website contractor Jonathan Mauve was chosen for the project of updating and expanding the Village's website. The project includes the purchase of a new domain name, villageofelberta.com. VillageofElberta.org is owned by the former site contractor, Lou Gear. According to Sharyn, Lou was paid \$1,400, for the three quarters of the contracted work that he completed. Mauve's bid was approximately \$1,700.

During final public comment Linda asked for clarification on the chain of command. Reg said, "This is part of the management policy. If you need to have something done, with our employees, you come to me first. I'm not going to have micromanaging anymore."

Diane: "Well, that's micromanagement at its very worst, as far as I'm concerned. Maybe we ought to take that stand with Parks and Rec. We micromanage them like there's no tomorrow."

Reg: "Well that's all going to be solved. If you have something you want

[the employees] to do, come to me first." ♣

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