



# Ishpeming City Newsletter

## FROM THE MANAGER'S DESK

Happy New Year! I'm looking forward to 2012 - it's shaping up to be a very busy year for the City of Ishpeming. I see a lot of positive momentum in Upper Michigan and across the state and nation. I think 2012 will be a year we look back on as a turning point in the recent economic downturn. Michigan's economy is looking up and that includes the UP. There is much to be excited about.

I also understand that the City's utility customers are *not* excited about changes to their rates, again. The City Council increased water and sewer rates in 2011 to help proactively address repair and maintenance. The fact is that is that both water and sewer utilities have operated at a loss in recent years. That rate change was actually improvised to ensure that the City met its budget revenue projections. Part of the City Council's discussion at that time was the necessity of having a formal, professional study to determine an adequate, reasonable, and justifiable rate structure.

Enter the Michigan Rural Water Association. MRWA is a professional trade organization dedicated to providing resources, education, and networking to all its members. For the City's \$425 annual membership fee, we receive access to a range of valuable resources, including technical support and rate studies. In mid-2011, MRWA performed a rate study at no cost, as part of our membership, to determine an appropriate rate structure for the City of Ishpeming's utilities.

The City Council recently amended the water and sewer utility ordinances to incorporate MRWA's recommended rate structure. The new rate structure includes a base rate, which is established based on the cost of providing infrastructure necessary to provide the first gallon of water used. In addition, there is a usage rate for each thousand gallons used. The new rates are as follows:

	<u>Base Rate</u>	<u>Per 1,000 Gallons</u>
Water	\$10.00	\$6.28
Sewer		\$6.70

The following table presents a breakdown of old and new rate structures for selected usage:

Usage (gal.)	Water		Sewer		Garbage	Total		Difference + / (-)
	Old	New	Old	New		Old	New	
500	\$17.90	\$13.14	\$16.40	\$13.35	\$16.20	\$50.50	\$42.69	(\$7.81)
1,100	\$17.90	\$16.91	\$16.40	\$17.37	\$16.20	\$50.50	\$50.48	(\$0.02)
1,500	\$17.90	\$19.42	\$16.40	\$20.05	\$16.20	\$50.50	\$55.67	\$5.17
2,000	\$17.90	\$22.56	\$16.40	\$23.40	\$16.20	\$50.50	\$62.16	\$11.66
3,500	\$31.33	\$31.98	\$28.70	\$33.45	\$16.20	\$76.23	\$81.63	\$5.40
5,000	\$44.75	\$41.40	\$41.00	\$43.50	\$16.20	\$101.95	\$101.10	(\$0.85)
7,000	\$62.65	\$53.93	\$57.40	\$56.90	\$16.20	\$136.25	\$127.06	(\$9.19)

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As you can see, some users may see a decrease in their overall bill while others may see an increase. It depends entirely on usage. MRWA, city staff, and the City Council did not recommend or establish the new rate structure to benefit or harm an individual user group. Rather the MRWA and city staff recommended, - and the City Council adopted - a rate structure that is logical, consistent with industry standards, and legally defensible.

In fact, one of the most compelling reasons for adopting such a rate structure is that it is accepted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development, which is the single best source of loan and grant funding for municipal water and sewer improvements. The City of Ishpeming would not be eligible for such funding with the previous rate structure.

Keep in mind that the new rate structure does not address the creation of a sinking fund for capital improvement in either the Water or Sewer Funds. Given the age and condition of the City's systems, it is imperative to address long-term infrastructure needs. The City of Negaunee's sewer extension and tie-in to the Ishpeming Area Joint Waste Water Treatment Facility should lower the cost of sewer services for City of Ishpeming customers and that may allow the savings to be placed into a sinking fund. The Water Fund does not have that option.

In addition, the City transfers approximately 25% of its water and sewer revenue to the General Fund through interfund transfers and payments in lieu of taxes. While this is a generally accepted accounting principal and not uncommon, 25% is a relatively high figure. The Water and Sewer Funds essentially subsidize General Fund operations, including administration, DPW, and police services. This obviously creates a dilemma when strategizing ways to create a sinking fund or lower rates: the cost is decreased General Fund services.

In closing, I will quote from the January 2011 newsletter: *"I encourage you to consider what kind of utility services you value and how much they cost. Ultimately, I believe maintaining the status quo will cost more in the long run."*

## AL QUAAAL TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

This year, \$50,000 of remaining donation funds (from Cliffs Natural Resources) for trail improvements were budgeted to improve recreational and competition use of the ski trails at Al Quaal. Early in the year, a feasibility study was performed for the homologation of our trail system that recommended widening and improvements to the Teal Lake Trail. This work was primarily completed with donated forces from Holli Forest Products and final grading by using City staff. As a result, 95% of the Teal Lake Trail was widened to international standards and two new climbs were created for competitive skiers. More importantly, we were able to create three interconnected loops of varying difficulty. A new sign at the trail head and colored arrow signs were installed to help users navigate the 1.5 km "easy" loop, 4 km "more difficult" loop or 3.75 km "most difficult" loop. The 4 km loop is the original Teal Lake Trail. The "most difficult" loop uses 75% Teal Lake Trail and 25% new trail. The "easy" loop uses 75% Teal Lake Trail and 25% flat terrain between lower parts of the Teal Lake Trail. We hope to map and publish the new color-coded loops in the very near future.

**Reminders:** Snowmobiles and ATV's are not permitted at any time at Al Quaal. Both types of machines have been damaging ski trails and the Tube Slide this winter. Also, walkers and pets are limited to the Baby Lake Snow Shoe Trail only. Snow shoes are permitted on all ski trails, but a trail pass is required and activities should be limited to the far left side of the trails to minimize impacts to skiers.

### Cross Country Trail Rates

Daily Rate: \$7 - All Ages

Seasonal Rates: Family: \$80  
 Adult: \$35  
 Student: \$25



Daily and seasonal trail passes available at City Hall, DPW Office, Wilderness Sports, and the Ski Hall

## THE LAKE BANCROFT PROJECT

Lake Bancroft is located in downtown Ishpeming, with a city park and gazebo at its western end. One of Ishpeming's jewels, it has been undergoing progressive eutrophication – the enrichment of bodies of fresh water by inorganic plant nutrients – for over thirty years. Eutrophication typically promotes excessive growth of algae due to high levels of phosphates and nitrates. As the algae die and decompose, high levels of organic matter and the decomposing organisms deplete the water of available oxygen, causing the death of other organisms, such as fish. If this condition is not reversed, the lake will literally fill in with sediment and become a swamp. The Lake Bancroft Project aims to reverse the eutrophication process and reoxygenate the water, restoring and maintaining proper ecological health so that Lake Bancroft can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The Ishpeming City Council appointed the Lake Bancroft Committee in August 2011 to begin the important work of cleaning up Lake Bancroft. The City Council also created a special fund to administer the cleanup efforts.

The Lake Bancroft Project's engineered solution involves dissolving a food-grade polymer into the lake. The polymer binds to floating solids in the water, which then drop to the bottom of the lake resulting in clear water that reoxygenates.

A lake with healthy ecology will have oxygen-rich water several feet deep and a deficiency of oxygen at the lake bottom. In contrast, Lake Bancroft shows oxygen deficiency at a depth of only two feet. A current sample of Lake Bancroft shows suspended, floating solids, but if these solids were collapsed, the water would clear and reoxygenate.

Turbidity reduction is a chemical equation:

$$\text{Food-grade polymer} + \text{suspended material} = \text{clear water} + \text{sediment dropped to the bottom}$$

When the food-grade polymer binds to nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous, it removes them from the water. Without nutrients to support it, vegetative overgrowth shuts down and cloudy water becomes clear. The project aims to establish an aerobic zone of six to eight feet in depth which will perpetuate itself with minimal maintenance.

In the initial phase, the Lake Bancroft Project will pump 500 gallons of lake water per minute through 10"-diameter geotextile tubes. Pumps will be housed in a small, unobtrusive building at the end of the lake. The water will flow over and through polymer "logs" which will gradually disintegrate. The initial phase will be followed by a maintenance phase, in which the lake's ecology will be monitored yearly and polymer logs will be refreshed as needed.

Limited funds mean that the Lake Bancroft Project is wholly dependent on tax-deductible contributions from local businesses and individuals. All donated funds are administered by the City of Ishpeming and must be used for the Lake Bancroft Project. Please contact City Hall for more information.

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## WATER SYSTEM / METER IMPROVEMENTS

In 2011, the DPW made the first significant steps towards integration of the new Sensus iPerl water meters for residential customers. These meters are considered more accurate than the old Badger meters (guaranteed to 20 years), tamper-proof and more user friendly. The new meters will eventually allow the City to perform meter reading using "Advanced Metering Infrastructure" which

significantly reduces staff time relating to meter reading. To date, we have installed 100 +/- of the new iPerl meters, but we plan to ramp up installation frequency in 2012. We will focus meter replacements by billing zone, starting with the zone containing the oldest meters. Statistics are currently being evaluated to determine the first zone scheduled for meter replacement.

## FROM THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK

Hello, Everyone!

As the new director of the Carnegie Public Library, I wanted to express how excited I am to come to Ishpeming and get to work. Since attending college at Northern Michigan University, I have known that the Upper Peninsula was a special place. It felt like home to me then and I'm glad that I am finally back.

I have been working in the public library world for over a decade now, but I've been visiting libraries ever since I was a small child. My mother introduced me to reading and books before I could walk or talk. Living in a small town where the closest "corner" store was miles away, selecting books from the library gave me the opportunity to explore ideas and discover new things that I wouldn't have otherwise known existed. It was a way to connect to a much larger world. Since that time in my life, technology has changed the way we communicate and in some ways it has brought us closer together, but in other ways, as we bury our heads in our computer monitors and have entire conversations via text, it has pushed us farther apart and made us more isolated. That is probably why I have always felt that the library serves a crucial function in every community. Not only is it a place where the entire family can come to find something to stimulate the intellect or inspire the imagination, but it's also an ideal place for friends and neighbors to reconnect. I believe an ideal library should continue to remember its history and honor its traditions but also keep up with the changing times. It should be open to everyone and its resources must be accessible to all. Especially during these difficult economic times, it is an institution that is needed more than ever.

It is my goal as a director to help make sure that the Carnegie Public Library embraces the things that ensure that our library is always relevant but continues to be the same wonderful place that generations have come to know and love with services that continue to be reliable and friendly. So on that note, if you get a moment, please drop by the library and say "hello", it would be great to meet you.

John McNaughton

Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library  
906-486-4381  
[www.uproc.lib.mi.us/ish](http://www.uproc.lib.mi.us/ish)

### DATES OF INTEREST

- Thursday, January 26th—Torch Trek Cross Country Ski Event for kids of all ages. Downtown Ishpeming from 6pm to 8pm. Free XC ski rental from Wilderness Sports (this event only). Refreshments!
- Saturday, January 28th—Rubbish Collection at Compost Site from 9am to 2pm
- Wednesday, February 8th—City Council Meeting at 7pm at Ishpeming Senior Center
- Wednesday, February 8th—125th Annual Ski Jumping Tournament. Trials rounds begin at 6pm. Bon Fire and Fireworks after the Tournament
- Tuesday, February 14th—Winter Tax Bills are due. Penalties apply starting February 15th. Call City Treasurer at 485-1091 for more information.
- Saturday, February 25th—Rubbish Collection at Compost Site from 9am to 2pm
- Tuesday, February 28th—Presidential Primary. Polls open at 7am and close at 8pm.
- Wednesday, March 7th—City Council Meeting at 7pm at Ishpeming Senior Center
- Saturday, March 31st—Rubbish Collection at Compost Site from 9am to 2pm

#### Al Quaal Tube Slide

Saturdays and Sundays — Weather permitting  
Noon to 5:00 p.m.  
\$8 per person

### Adopt a Hydrant

**In the event of a fire during the winter, could firefighters easily find the fire hydrant near your home? Does it get buried under a pile of snow? For many years, the Fire Department has encouraged residents to "adopt-a-fire hydrant" near their home and keep it clear from snow during the winter season. This will ensure hydrants are visible and will greatly speed the response time in case of a fire. Please don't let your neighborhood hydrant remain "under cover". There is no need to notify the Fire Department about a hydrant you have adopted, as this is an informal volunteer program.**

