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Springport, MI
49284

Dec. 8
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Council eyes

Water, sewer rate increase likely in '81

Cass City residents better be prepared for a 20 percent increase in the water and sewer rate and no major improvements in village streets.

As a consolation, there probably won't be an increase in the village tax rate of 14 mills for general operations.

The village council Monday evening got its first look at the proposed 1981 budget, prepared by village Supt. Lou LaPonsie.

It was, village President Lambert Althaver explained, "rougher than usual," because the budget is being prepared earlier than in past years and it still isn't known whether federal revenue sharing funds will be continued and the amount of state aid is still tentative.

The House of Representatives in Washington has approved continuation of revenue sharing, which was being considered by the Senate this week.

LaPonsie based his revenue sharing estimate on the same rate as last year, which would give the village \$39,400. That would be a decline, because it is based on a census count of 2,250 residents, despite the village's protest. The 1977 special census, on which revenue sharing had been based, counted 2,435 residents. This year, the village will receive about \$44,000 from Washington.

Based on Gov. Milliken's proposed budget cuts and estimates of the Michigan Municipal League, various state revenues are projected at a total of \$193,700, down from an estimated \$114,750 this year, not all of which has been received yet.

The biggest single source of revenue is property taxes, with revenue estimated at \$234,500. That's based on an estimated 7 percent increase in valuations and continuation of the 14 mills. Property tax revenue this year totaled \$219,200.

Total general fund revenue is estimated at \$514,000, up from \$442,500 this year. Total expenditures are budgeted at \$514,000, up from \$437,880 this year.

Of the increase, however, \$62,000 comes from the estimated \$115,000 surplus when the current year ends. The village will have to get by to a large degree on the carry-over, until property tax revenue starts coming in next summer.

For planning purposes, LaPonsie estimated wage increases at 10 percent. The exact amount will be decided by the council Dec. 29. There will also be a public hearing then on the proposed budget, starting at 8 p.m. The meeting starts at 7.

The council won't be setting wages for policemen. The village has been notified by the state that the four officers in a Michigan Employment Relations Commission supervised election, voted to be represented by the Fraternal Order of Police. Other village employees are non-union. It will be up to the FOP to contact the village concerning the start of negotiations.

EXPENDITURES
One of the few significant expenditures in 1981 will be a new police car for \$7,500, the first with a six-cylinder engine. In a budget cutting move, it will be purchased mid-year, with an effort made from then on to make them last 2 1/2 years, instead of the present two-year cycle.

Another big ticket item is an estimated \$20,000, but probably less, to repair the leaky village hall roof.

The budget still includes \$30,000 for new tennis courts. The council will have to decide Dec. 29 whether it can afford to proceed with the project, for which the village is receiving an equal amount in federal funds. The village share is to be defrayed by contributions, which presently stand at an estimated \$2,500. (No one was sure at the meeting.)

WATER, SEWER

The council voted to hire Willard Morley, 48, as wastewater treatment plant superintendent at a salary of \$21,000 a year. He presently holds an equivalent position in Gladstone, which has a sewage treatment plant similar to what Cass City will have when its new facility is completed. Three persons applied, of whom two were interviewed by the council's personnel committee.

If he accepts, which isn't definite, he has said it will be 60 days before he can start.

Because he will be an addition to the staff, necessary because of the more complicated and larger plant now under construction, plus projected increases in wages and other costs, such as chemicals, it will mean a proposed 20 percent increase in the combined water and sewerage treatment fees. The council will decide Dec. 29.

The average household bill now, according to village Treasurer Joyce LaRoche, is \$27-30 per quarter (three months), so the increase would be \$5-40-60.

The water and sewerage fees pay operating expenses. For the past two years, 2.5 mills have been levied to pay for the construction bonds to pay the village's share for the sewage treatment plant project.

The council will vote in the spring whether to continue or change the levy, as well as on the 14 mills for general operations, or whether it should be some other amount.

STREETS
In contrast to the last few years, no major street improvement projects are planned in 1981. There is \$20,000 budgeted for repairs on Seeger and some other streets, up from \$11,800 for major street maintenance this year.

State gas and weight tax revenue is expected to decline from \$53,650 this year to \$51,000 in 1981.

To finance paving of four streets this year, \$35,650 was contributed from the general fund to the major street fund. Next year, the contribution will be zero.

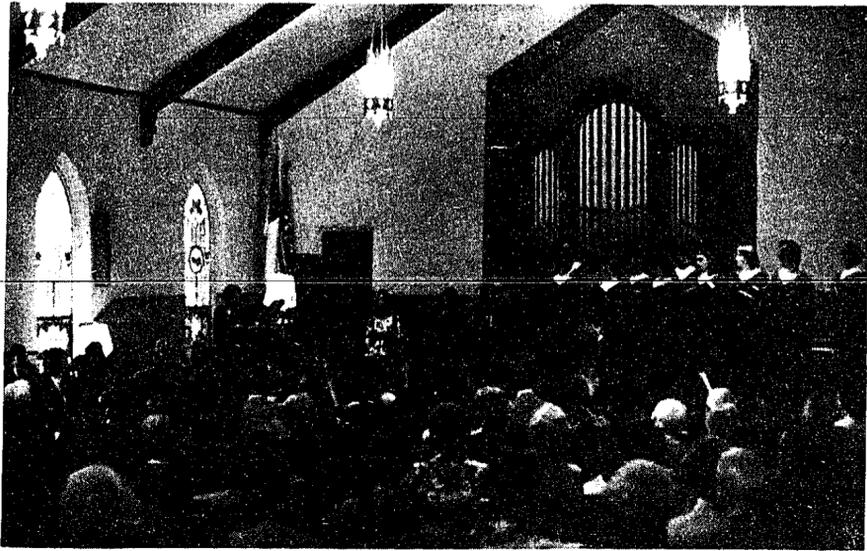
The local street fund will be augmented with \$8,000 from the general fund.

Snow removal is budgeted at \$12,600 (up from \$10,200), plus \$3,000 from the state for the same purpose on Main Street (M-81).

OTHER ITEMS
In a reversal of action taken last month, the council approved the request of the Chamber of Commerce to allow bingo in the village park during the July 4th festival.

Several chamber members were present to protest the original denial, with spokesman Mike Weaver saying bingo was necessary in order to avoid another deficit. "We frankly have to come up with a way to make some dollars."

The first two festivals were money losers, which had to be subsidized by the village.



SOUND OF MUSIC -- The combination of the 28-piece Village Bach Festival orchestra and the 12-member Canzona di Musica choral group more than filled the First Presbyterian church with the sound of Bach Sunday afternoon.

Bach musicians and fans applaud Cass City festival

Another Village Bach Festival has come and gone and all indications are there will be a third annual event next year.

"I think it went very well," was the summation of festival chairman Holly Althaver.

"Wow. What a festival," said harpsichordist Doris Ornstein.

"It's even better," was the comment of violinist Norman Paula, in comparing the event to last year, in which he also performed.

"There's such a remarkable spirit about the whole thing."

The general attitude of the musicians to whom the question was asked by the Chronicle was that they are looking forward to being back next year.

Will there be a next year? All the bills haven't been paid and all the receipts added up, but the educated

guess of Mrs. Althaver and festival treasurer Bill Lovejoy is that the event broke even financially.

That would not have happened, she pointed out, without the patrons who bought the high price tickets, and other donors. "People were very generous."

There were 700 tickets sold for the three concerts, 194 for Friday's performance, 271 Saturday and 235 Sunday.

Turnout last year totaled 659, with the biggest turnout, 275, on Sunday.

The Michigan Council for the Arts, which is state funded, gave a grant of \$5,100. In attendance at the Saturday evening program was its executive director, E. Ray Scott.

Mrs. Althaver expressed confidence that should the council have funds available next year, in light of the state's severe financial troubles, the Bach festival

will receive some.

If state funds aren't available, "If we have to look for other sources, we'll go look for it if we have to."

THE OFFICIAL DECISION whether there will be a 1981 festival, according to the chairman, will probably be made when the committee meets sometime this week to review this year's event.

The experience of having organized the first festival, Mrs. Althaver said, made it a little easier for the committee this year, but, "It is very, very hard work."

"These are dedicated people," she said of the townspeople involved.

Because of the work done locally, that relieved music director and conductor Don Jaeger of having to worry about little details and the performers from having to be concerned with getting a place to stay or finding a

place to eat.

Jaeger has told Mrs. Althaver he is willing to return next year. They have discussed varying the program then with some pieces by composers other than Johann Sebastian Bach, in much the same way that some plays performed at the Shakespearean festival at Stratford, Ont., are by playwrights other than Shakespeare.

THE DESIRE TO RETURN seemed universal among the musicians.

"I can't wait to come back. I hope I'm asked," said Tom Brown, who played the more than century-old tracker organ in the First Presbyterian church at both the first and second festivals. He is the organist at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in New York City.

"Absolutely fabulous,"

Please turn to page 16.

Students delayed in Cass City, as storm wreaks havoc on highways

There wasn't that much snow, but what there was, created havoc for motorists Tuesday afternoon.

One result of the snow storm was that students in the three schools in Cass City who ride buses home were kept at the high school.

According to high school Assistant Principal Roland Pakonen, there were about 600 students who stayed after school.

Six buses, which headed south or east, left about 5:30 and all their passengers got home safely. Shortly after

they departed, word came from police the buses should be kept at the school, but by then it was too late.

Arrangements were made by the school for about 100 children to spend the night with townspeople and others made arrangements on their own.

Bus drivers who weren't able to leave earlier did leave about 10 p.m., after the winds had died down, and dropped off some youngsters who lived along the way to their homes, Pakonen said.

One casualty of the early

winter snow storm was the Rotary Club Christmas party for newcomers and senior citizens. The food didn't go to waste, however, as those students still at the high school ate it.

Buses did depart on schedule Tuesday from Evergreen and Deford elementary schools, and all children got home, according to the building principals.

Cass City, Ubyly and Owendale-Gagetown schools were closed Wednesday. Schools were open in Kingstons.

Buses did depart at the regular time Tuesday at Owen-Gage, Kingston and Ubyly, and all students made it home except for about eight in the Owen-Gage district, who spent the night with families in Owendale.

Not that much snow fell, but high winds made it impossible at times for motorists to see. The Cass City wastewater treatment plant measured only 2.5 inches of snow Wednesday morning.

The result of the sometimes zero visibility, combined with slippery roads, was many cars in the ditch, although the Tuscola County Sheriff's Department reported only a couple of accidents resulted in injuries.

The department recorded about 25 accidents during the worst of the storm, and Caro state police, 13, but many of those involved more than one vehicle.

Tuscola County Road Commission Clerk Jim Miklovic said road crews went home at their regular time, 3:30, Tuesday afternoon, as the minimal visibility and strong winds made plowing impractical.

Crews returned at 10:30 and worked all night clearing state highways and primary roads. They started working on secondary roads about 7 a.m. Wednesday.

Miklovic thought all county roads would probably be passable, though perhaps not all plowed, by Wednesday night.

Since there wasn't that much snow and ditches were still empty, so snow could blow in them, he said, there probably weren't that many

places where roads were blocked. The main problem was visibility.

One of the worst stretches was M-81 from Cass City west about four miles to the big curve.

Tuscola County Extension Director Bill Bortel, on his way from Ubyly to Caro about 3:30, found police were not letting cars leave Cass City onto that stretch of highway.

He spent the evening in the Cass City area and finally left for home after 10 p.m.

Between Cass City and the M-81 Cass City Road curve, he counted more than 20 vehicles off the road, all cars

or small trucks except for one semi-trailer.

Someone else told him there were 35 off the road at one point.

Bortel sometimes observed 6-8 vehicles off the road together. He speculated that the lead car turned off the road to avoid hitting an oncoming car and the ones behind followed the lead driver right into the ditch.

Vehicles were still being removed Wednesday morning from that stretch.

Past the big curve, according to the extension director, there were few cars off the road.

Christner pleads guilty to murder

On the day selection of a jury was to start for the trial of Glen A. Christner, he pleaded guilty to second degree murder in the March 5 shooting death of his wife.

The guilty plea Tuesday came as a surprise to Prosecutor Artis Noel, who was prepared for what was expected to be a 10-day trial.

Christner's plea was accepted by Circuit Judge Patrick R. Joslyn, who remanded the defendant to the county jail to await sentencing Feb. 2. He can receive a sentence of any number of years up to life in prison.

Christner, 31, was charged with shooting his wife to death in their home on M-46, south of Caro. He was taken into custody at his home after his sister called the sheriff's department, said

she had talked to her brother and that he sounded disturbed, and asked that officers go to the home. There, they found the body.

The couple had two children.

Noel said after the guilty plea was made that he had previously suggested to Christner's attorneys that they have their client plead guilty to second degree murder, but they declined in favor of a "not guilty by reason of insanity" defense.

The attorneys, James Woodworth of Bad Axe and James Brisbois of Saginaw, proposed before the scheduled start of proceedings Tuesday that their client plead guilty.

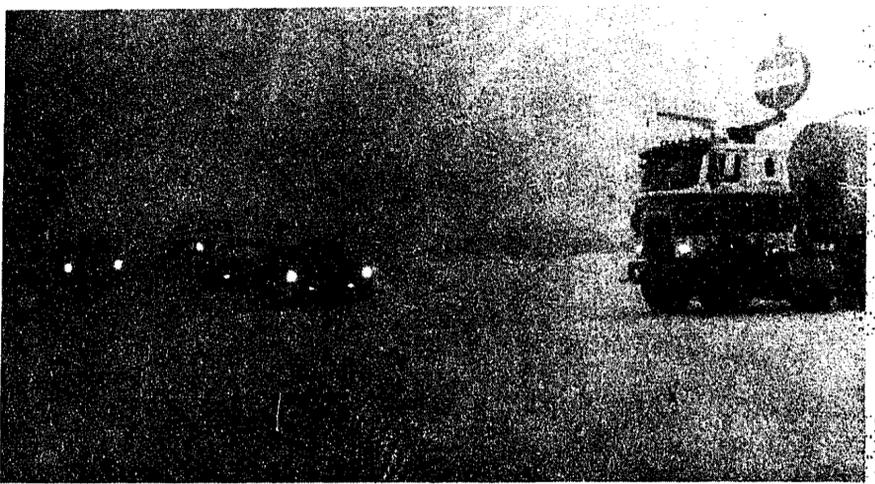
Noel was satisfied. "My position was that he face the rest of his life in prison."

In admitting his guilt, the prosecutor explained, Christner had to say that he intentionally and knowingly murdered his wife.

He was to have been tried on an open charge of murder. Had the jury found him guilty, it then would have had to decide whether it was first degree, second degree or manslaughter.

Its other options would have been to find him innocent, not guilty by reason of insanity or guilty but mentally ill.

A requirement of both first and second degree murder is that the act be intentional, as opposed to accidental. The difference, Noel explained, is that in first degree, the act must be premeditated, whereas in second degree, it is not planned in advance.



VISIBILITY in Cass City was near zero at the height of the snow storm Tuesday afternoon. Outside of town, it was even worse, with the combination of blowing snow, icy roads and zero visibility putting many cars into the ditch. Photo was taken about 4 p.m.