



# The Sturgis Wire

A NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY THE CITY OF STURGIS FOR ITS CITIZENS | 130 N. NOTTAWA STREET, STURGIS, MI 49091 | (269) 651-2321 | WWW.CI.STURGIS.MI.US

June 2009

www.ci.sturgis.mi.us

Volume 9, Issue 2

## FIRE DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES 150 YEARS

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Over 150 years the City’s Fire Department has undergone several changes, shifting from an all-volunteer service to professional service, from a single horse-drawn engine to multiple technologically equipped diesel powered service vehicles. Over time the company added duties such as first responder services, and saw many chiefs and

dedicated fire fighters come and go.



Today the department features 13 full-time staff, 10 paid volunteer fire fighters, and 6 dedicated vehicles, including a 95 foot aerial truck, pumper truck, and brand-new rescue pumper.

While equipment, personnel, and responsibilities may have changed over 150 years, the one thing that has not is a commitment by the Sturgis Fire Department to serve the community, its people, and its property, even at the risk of their lives.

In order to celebrate their sesquicentennial, the department is planning an open house for Saturday, June 20th. The open house will run from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and feature free hot dogs, chips and pop.

During the open house, visitors can view the current equipment and also some of the photos and

### WELCOME TO THE NEW STURGIS WIRE

This month you will see a noticeable change in the Sturgis Wire; mainly that we are now two pages shorter.

In an effort to reduce costs and at the same time continue to offer citizens regular information on City activities and events, we have reduced the size of our newsletter.

The reduced size will necessarily make articles in the Wire shorter, so to compensate we will be putting extended articles online at:

[www.ci.sturgis.mi.us/newsletter](http://www.ci.sturgis.mi.us/newsletter)

In some cases articles online will be a more extensive version of what is here on paper, in others they will be a full version of an article that was only partially printed due to limited space.

Additionally, we continue to offer our weekly e-mail newsletter, the Sturgis eWire, which provides more frequent information, articles, and updates. You can sign up for free at [www.ci.sturgis.mi.us/ewire\\_info](http://www.ci.sturgis.mi.us/ewire_info).

history of the entire 150 years of the department. The department is also planning on activities for kids and to have commemorative tee shirts and hats for sale as well. Please stop by on the 20th and help the department celebrate this special event.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER: HOW COMMUNITY PERCEPTION INFLUENCES ECONOMIC REALITY

I have often struggled to communicate the important role citizens play in a community’s economic development efforts. A recent article on The Center for Michigan’s website has, however, provided a perfect example for me to use.

The article, titled “The Waitress Who Brought Jobs to GR” is authored by Chris Andrews; the short version of the story is that the attitude and positive comments about Grand Rapids made by Carmen Gehring, a waitress at a downtown restaurant, helped convince consultants for travel website Priceline to locate a call center there.

nity, for good or bad. It should also give everyone an idea of how critical their role is in promoting their community. The strongest impression of a community comes from the people who live there.

I ask that each citizen remember the important role their words can play in development opportunities of all kinds. Please share with others the best of what Sturgis has to offer.

“The strongest impression of a community comes from the people who live there.”

The reality is that for people who are not familiar with a community, like a corporate site selector responsible for locating a business, small Midwest towns look a lot alike. It’s hard for communities to attract new businesses and every little bit of promotion can help.

Every community has its share of positive and negative qualities. Promoting Sturgis, or any other community, is not about glossing over issues and pretending we are perfect, but rather about staying positive and working together to make Sturgis the best it can be.

If a new or existing business is to invest money in a town, they must believe first that it’s a good idea. The residents of a community can go a long way toward impacting this belief.

Imagine if Ms. Gehring, instead of talking about the good things Grand Rapids offers, had spoken of mounting foreclosures, increasing crime, and job losses. Priceline might have moved on. A community’s citizens are its first and most powerful ambassadors. They help shape how the outside world sees their city.

You never know, the next person you talk to may be the one looking to bring jobs to Sturgis.

■ **Michael L. Hughes, City Manager**

### Sturgis City Commission

Meetings 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month  
7:30 p.m. at City Hall

John Carmichael, Mayor .....Precinct 1  
Barbara Fisher, Vice-Mayor .....Precinct 3  
Michael Gay, Commissioner .....At-Large  
Karl Littman, Commissioner .....Precinct 4  
Kenneth Malone, Commissioner ...Precinct 3  
Caralee Mayer, Commissioner .....Precinct 1  
Karen Stephens, Commissioner .....Precinct 2  
Ina Taulbee, Commissioner .....Precinct 2  
Suzanne Walters, Commissioner ....Precinct 4

#### CITY MISSION STATEMENT

- To deliver high-quality public services in a professional, efficient and nondiscriminatory manner to its residents and businesses;
- To continue to strengthen the economy and quality of life;
- To ensure that the expression of views by citizens are recognized and responded to by the City.

#### Contact The City of Sturgis

Address: City Hall  
130 N. Nottawa  
Sturgis, MI 49091

By Phone:  
City Hall ..... 651-2321  
DPS ..... 651-2879  
Police (non-emerg) 651-3231

On the web at:

[www.ci.sturgis.mi.us](http://www.ci.sturgis.mi.us)

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The Sturgis Wire

City of Sturgis  
130 N. Nottawa  
Sturgis, MI 49091

\*\*\* ECRWSS \*\*\*

POSTAL  
CUSTOMER

While reading the article, I recalled a story of my own. Before moving to Sturgis my wife happened to mention our upcoming move to a retail employee in another town. Upon hearing where we were moving to, she asked why, because in her words, “Sturgis is a dying town”. Unbelievably She gave this opinion despite never having been to Sturgis, only knowing someone who gave her that impression.

The point of both stories is that word of mouth is a powerful tool in forming the image of a commu-



## PD OFFERS PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS & VACATIONERS

### PROJECT LEADS TEST KITS

The Sturgis Police DARE program, in cooperation with the Sturgis Community Healing Center and Project LEADS is offering parents Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEADS) test kits.

Two kits are available, one a test for alcohol, the other a drug test that covers several street drugs as well as frequently abused prescription drugs.

The kits allow parents to test their children in the privacy of their own homes without the need for police involvement.

Individuals can obtain the kits from the Sturgis Police Department, the Sturgis High School

Counseling Department, or the Sturgis Middle School offices. Alcohol kits are \$5.00, drug kits \$17.00.

### VIP HOME CHECK SERVICE

The Sturgis VIP's (Volunteers in Policing) are offering a "Vacation Home Check" program. As part of this free program, VIPs will come and complete home checks each week. During the visit, they will check doors, windows and the exterior of the home to assure all is well. To request the service, just stop by the Sturgis Police Department or go online to the City's website.

For more information on either program, contact the Police Department at (269) 651-3231.

## SUMMER CODE ENFORCEMENT /CONSTRUCTION REMINDERS

The following is a brief rundown of some codes and regulations that may apply to activities during the summer season.

### POOL CONSTRUCTION & INSTALLATION

A pool is considered any structure intended for swimming or recreational bathing that can contain water over 2 feet deep (including inflatables). State and City codes place restrictions on pool placement and requirements for enclosure. Placement of a pool also requires a building permit with site plan.

### WEED AND GRASS ORDINANCE

The height of grass in a yard is not allowed to exceed 10 inches under City ordinance. If your grass exceeds this length, possible consequences

include a bill for a lawn service to cut your grass and in the case of multiple violations, fines.

### TRASH AND RUBBISH IN YARD

As per the City zoning ordinances, no residence is allowed to store or collect garbage or rubbish in their yard or in the terrace area, unless in a trash container and only for up to 24 hours. On the day of trash pickup only, garbage and rubbish may be stored in secure paper or plastic bags.

### JUNK AND ABANDONED VEHICLES

Motor vehicles which are inoperable or not currently licensed are considered rubbish, and can't be stored in any residential zone except within the confines of an enclosed building.

- [SEE THE ONLINE ARTICLE FOR MORE DETAILS](#) -

## CONSTRUCTION TO HIT NORTH CENTERVILLE THIS SUMMER

Be ready for construction on North Centerville Road. Sewer installation will be causing road closures in this area throughout the summer months.

The final leg of the 2008 SRF sewer construction project, work on North Centerville and Progress Street will be going on throughout the summer months. Watch for construction signage and detours for the area. Businesses in this area will be open and served via alternate entrances.

Final touches on construction in other areas of town, such as Fawn River Road, Surprise Street, West Congress, Broadus, Prairie Street and more will also cause more temporary road closures.

In order to stay up to date on construction on North Centerville and throughout town, the City website has a variety of information, including weekly and daily progress maps and an e-mail newsletter. Links to information are available on the City's homepage at [www.ci.sturgis.mi.us](http://www.ci.sturgis.mi.us)

# Events & Activities

### ONGOING THIS SUMMER

Farmer's Market: Every Saturday, 8 a.m. - noon. (DDA)

Fun Friday's: Every Friday evening June to August at Free Church Park; featuring free music. (DDA)

Free & Low Cost Health Screenings: Coming this summer, presented by Sturgis Hospital. Watch local media and [SturgisHospital.com](http://SturgisHospital.com) for dates, times, and more information.

### JUNE

Relay for Life: June 12th and 13th at Sturgis High School. Noon to noon.

Summer Tennis (3 Sessions): Ages 5 to HS. Final registration for the 1st session is June 15th. (Recreation)

Summer Adventure Club: Ages 6 to 12. Registration until June 16th. The program is free. (Recreation)

### JULY

Ribs on the Runway: Presented by the Exchange Club of Sturgis. Kirsch Municipal Airport, Friday July 3rd. 5 p.m. to midnight. Fireworks, BBQ ribs, kids events, and more! Free admission.

Art BOUNCE: July 17th; check with the Open Door Gallery for details.

Mighty Matt Keyser 3v3 Soccer Tournament: August 1st. Open to boys & girls ages 8-18, deadline to register is July 24th. 8 teams per age division; teams consist of 4 players. Proceeds of this tournament will benefit the Mighty Matt Keyser Fund, established in memory of Matt Keyser to support and enhance physical and spiritual health through outdoor activities.

Summer Songs & Sales: July 24th & 25th in downtown Sturgis. (DDA)

### AUGUST

Classic & Custom Car Show: August 2nd at the Doyle Community Center. Registration will be held at 8 a.m. on the day of the event.

US-12 Garage Sale: August 7th, 8th, & 9th (DDA).

Summer Suds: Root Beer tasting at the Open Door Gallery August 7th.

### QUESTIONS & MORE INFO

Doyle Center /Recreation: (269) 659-8110

Downtown Development Authority: (269) 651-1907

Sturges-Young Auditorium: (269) 659-8541

Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce: (269) 651-5758

## Local Business Spotlight

### BOB'S BAIT AND TACKLE

New to the Sturgis Community, Bob's Bait and Tackle offers a wide array of items, with a friendly staff and family type atmosphere. Run by owner Matt Milliman and his mother, Terrie they opened their doors in September of 2008 in honor of Matt's father Bob.



The store offers many different types of fishing supplies, from lures, to reels, to bobbers, and even shanties. They also sell fishing licenses, and offer several types of live bait. The store is also well located, close by the many lakes north of town at Northpoint Center on North Nottwa next to the Snappy BP Station.

The atmosphere is big part of the store, from Jake the dog to a wall of photos of patron's fish. The store also features coffee and a table for patrons to come by and socialize in the morning. Mr. Milliman loves his job and is open to conversation so great fishing stories are part of the experience.

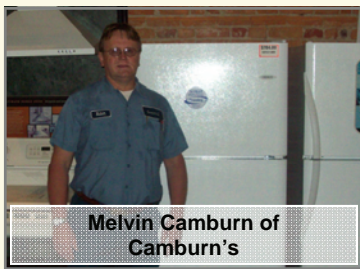
Open 7 days a week, Bob's Bait & Tackle is a great place for anyone to visit for all of their fishing needs. Local and family run, if you are going fishing, need some supplies, or are just looking for a place to tell some stories, Bob's Bait and Tackle is a great stop.

### CAMBURN'S

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The downtown store features a wide variety of appliances including kitchen accessories such as stoves and refrigerators, TVs and other home electronics, outdoor charcoal and gas grills, vacuums, and supplies such as vacuum cleaner bags.

Camburn's is also one of a select few businesses in the region that sells and installs central vacuum systems for homes and businesses.



Customer service is a key value of Camburn's; the business does home installation of appliances in addition to sales. The store welcomes customers not only with friendly staff, but also fun displays and free popcorn.

Camburn's is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 6 pm and Saturday's from 9 am to 1 pm; stop by for quality appliances and great service.

## WATER, SEWER RATES TO RISE

On April 22, 2009 the Sturgis City Commission approved a rate increase for both City water and sewer services. The increase will raise revenue for each fund by a total of 9.5%. The average residential customer's monthly water bill will increase between \$1.50 to \$2.00, and their monthly sewer bill will increase between \$2.00 to \$4.00.

Rate increases were necessitated by several factors including decreased consumption, fixed and increasing costs for the system, and the need to fund system repairs and upgrades. Both the water and sewer funds ran at an operating loss last year.

Increases this year are necessary for the health of the water and sewer funds in the future; further rate adjustments may also be needed in the future.

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## Fire Department Celebrates 150 Years

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During the open house, visitors can view the current equipment and also some of the photos and history of the entire 150 years of the department. The department is also planning on activities for kids and to have commemorative tee shirts and hats for sale as well. Please stop by on the 20th and help the department celebrate this special event.

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### How Community Perception Influences Economic Reality

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• **Michael L. Hughes, City Manager**

More Information: [Center for Michigan - "The Waitress Who Brought Jobs to Michigan"](#)

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### **Project LEADS Test Kits**

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For more information on either program, contact the Police Department at (269) 651-3231.

**More Information:** [LEADS Test Kit Flyer](#)

# Summer Code Enforcement / Construction Reminders

The following is a brief rundown of some codes and regulations that may apply to activities during the summer season.

## **Pool Construction & Installation**

A pool is defined by the State Building Code as any structure intended for swimming or recreational bathing that contains water over 2 feet deep. This includes in-ground, aboveground, and on-ground swimming pools, portable inflatable pools with a depth of 2 feet, hot tubs, spas, and any other structure meeting the above definition. The City of Sturgis Code of Ordinances, Zoning Code, and State of Michigan Building Code each place restrictions on pool placement. Minimum distances from electrical outlets and hookups, overhead or underground power lines, and lot lines are all specified.

Pools are also required to be fenced or otherwise have access restricted by a wall or building, which must be at least four (4) feet tall. Further requirements include latching gates or other methods of controlling access to the inside. Violations of the building or zoning code in regards to pools can result in a civil infraction.

Construction or placement of a pool of any type requires City of Sturgis residents to obtain a building permit from the Community Development Department. Residents looking to obtain a building permit are asked to prepare a site plan and present it with their building permit application. If you have any questions on pool construction or placement, please call the City of Sturgis Community Development Department at 269-659-7230.

## **Weed and Grass Ordinance**

According to the City's Code of Ordinances, property owners are required to cut or remove all grass and weeds in excess of ten inches. This includes all grasses, annual plants, and vegetation other than trees or shrubs, with the exceptions of cultivated flowers and gardens.

As per the code and the City's revised enforcement policy, properties that are not in compliance and do not come into compliance will be responsible for the cost of the City to cut the grass; fines are possible in cases of multiple violations.

## **Trash and Rubbish in Yard**

As per the City zoning ordinances, no residence is allowed to store or collect garbage or rubbish in their yard or in the terrace area unless in a covered and approved container and only for 24 hours.

An approved container is one which is leakproof with a close-fitting cover for the storage of garbage or rubbish. On collection day, garbage and rubbish may be stored in secure paper or plastic bags at an appropriate pickup location. Other types of materials too large or bulky to be conveniently placed in a container may be temporarily stored in an outdoor location for not more than 24 hours while awaiting pickup by a rubbish collector or hauler.

As with other ordinances, the City will work for compliance, but may issue citations or look for other remedies should voluntary compliance not be possible.

## **Junk and Abandoned Vehicles**

Motor vehicles which are inoperable or not currently licensed are considered rubbish and addressed under the same rules as indicated above. These vehicles cannot be stored in any residential zone except within the confines of an enclosed building.

For more information or clarifications on the City's Code of Ordinances, view the Code online with the link below or contact the City's Code Enforcement Officer at (269) 659-7264.

**More Information:** [City of Sturgis Code of Ordinances](#)

## Construction to Hit North Centerville this Summer

Be ready for construction on North Centerville Road. Sewer installation will be causing road closures in this area throughout the summer.

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**More Information:** [Update Website](#) – [SRF e-Newsletter](#) – [Daily Update Map](#) – [Weekly Update Map](#)

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On April 22, 2009 the Sturgis City Commission approved a rate increase for both City water and sewer services. The increase will raise revenue for each fund by a total of 9.5%. The average residential customer's monthly water bill will increase between \$1.50 to \$2.00, and their monthly sewer bill will increase between \$2.00 to \$4.00.

Rate increases were necessitated by several factors including decreased consumption, fixed and increasing costs for the system, and the need to fund system repairs and upgrades. Both the water and sewer funds ran at an operating loss last year.

Increases this year are necessary for the health of the water and sewer funds in the future; further rate adjustments may also be needed in the future.

## **FAQS**

### **Exactly how much are rates increasing?**

For an average residential customer in the City, water rates are expected to increase approximately \$1.50 to \$2.00 per month. Sewer rates for the same average residential customer in the City are expected to increase approximately \$2.00 to \$4.00 per month. These increases are designed to generate 9.5% more revenue than the current rates for the City's water fund and sewer fund over a 12 month period.

### **I have heard this 9.5% increase is on top of already planned increases for this year. Is this true?**

No. Rates will increase by only the 9.5%. In 2005 a rate study was completed for the City which recommended a rate increase this year of 8.5% for water and 4.5% for sewer; the Commission approved a general rate structure in 2006 that included this recommendation for 2009. However, based on an update this year of the projections made in that study, City staff recommended that *instead* of an 8.5% increase in water rates this year a 9.5% increase be made and *instead* of a 4.5% increase in sewer rates a 9.5% increase be made. These changes are what the Commission adopted Wednesday.

### **Why were these rate increases needed?**

Several things impacted the need for the increase, one being reduced water and sewer usage City-wide. Unfortunately many costs of providing water and sewer services do not change when usage is reduced, and overall costs have increased for the past several years. Over the same period revenue has not kept pace. Another factor impacting the rate increase is the necessary expenses to fund repair and replacement of the system and other capital improvements. Even if usage held stable, rate adjustments would be necessary to address these costs.

### **Why do you have to raise rates? Can't the City just cut back?**

The City has taken steps to "tighten the belt" throughout the organization, including reducing staff, cutting operational expenses, deferring capital purchases and reviewing other potential savings. As an example, in 2005 the City had 126 full-time employees and today there are 97 full-time employees. This year, several changes were made to employee benefits including cost sharing of health insurance premiums, increase in prescription and office co-pays and long-term changes to pension and retiree health insurance benefits. These changes were made to lessen the burden of employee costs on taxpayers/utility rate payers.

### **Will further adjustments be necessary next year, or is this it for a while?**

It is likely that further rate adjustments will be brought before the Commission in the coming years. Both the water and sewer funds ran at an operating loss last year and both funds are at a point where rate adjustments, today and in the future, are part of planning for the long term. Every year, the City will again look at the situation and, if necessary, similar adjustments will be made.



# LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

## BOB'S BAIT AND TACKLE



**Matt Milliman and his mother Terrie of  
Bob's Bait and Tackle**

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The store offers many different types of fishing supplies, from lures, to reels, to bobbers, and even shanties. They also sell fishing licenses, and offer several types of live bait. The store is also well located, close by the many lakes north of town at Northpoint Center on North Nottwa next to the Snappy BP Station.

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## CAMBURN'S



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# EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

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Summer Suds: Root Beer tasting at the Open Door Gallery August 7th.

## QUESTIONS AND MORE INFORMATION

Doyle Center /Recreation: (269) 659-8110 • [Web](#)

Downtown Development Authority: (269) 651-1907 • [Web](#)

Sturges-Young Auditorium: (269) 659-8541 • [Web](#)

Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce: (269) 651-5758 • [Web](#)