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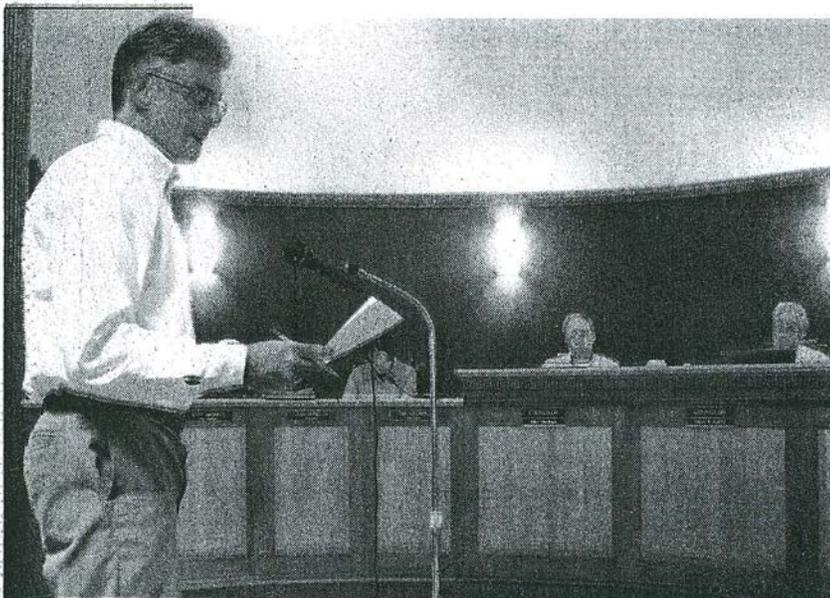
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SCATTERED SHOWERS 84/66

Thursday, August 23, 2012

Council takes stand against smoking Houghton bans tobacco use in city-owned parks, beaches



"We think that would reinforce the public health message that smoking is not the norm in our community."

-RAYSHARP COMMUNITY
PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS
MANAGER, WESTERN U.P HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

By GARRETT NEESE
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HOUGHTON — The Houghton City Council approved four ordinances to amend city codes at its meeting Wednesday.

Ordinance 2012-248 amends the city code to make it a municipal civil infraction to defy a sign prohibiting riding a bicycle, skateboard or in-line skates on a sidewalk, public place or private property. The violation carries a \$50 fine for the first offense.

Garrett Neese/Daily Mining Gazette
Ray Sharp, Community Planning and Preparedness Manager of the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department, speaks in support of a proposed Houghton city ordinance to ban the use of tobacco products at almost all parks and beaches besides the city RV Park. The Houghton City Council approved the ordinance and several others at Wednesday night's meeting;

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SMOKING/Ordinances passed

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"Right now, we have no way of (enforcing violations) on the sidewalk downtown," said City Manager Scott Macinnes.

Currently, a warning is posted downtown against bicycling. The council approved posting the full notice at Veterans Park.

Donnelly also asked the council to think about later posting the sign at the Houghton Rotary Pavilion of the Ray Kestner Waterfront Park and at the East Houghton Park.

Ideally, Donnelly said, skateboarders would find a spot downtown to develop for a park. The Tony Hawk Foundation has said it would be interested in funding a project, but would provide the second \$50,000 rather than the first, Donnelly said.

"We'll support them in what they want to do, but they need to take initiative to build a spot," he said.

Ordinance 2012-250 amended the city code to make the use of tobacco products in all city-owned parks and beaches a municipal civil infraction, except in the city RV Park. People may still use the products in their vehicles if they are legally parked in a parking lot.

Ray Sharp, community planning and preparedness manager of the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department, said such ordinances are a priority for the state health department.

"We think that would reinforce the public health message that smoking is not the norm in our community," he said. "Especially in a public space like a park or playground, where children are some of the users of the area, we think it sets a good cultural norm that we'd like to reinforce."

It also reduces litter in parks, as well as being a potential source of toxic substances for children, Sharp said.

Sharp said the health department had budgeted \$750 to help with signage. Ironwood is expected to pass a similar ordinance, he said.

Mayor Rro Tern Robert Megowen voted against the ordinance, saying he preferred simply to see a sign asking smokers to respect other people's rights.

Council member Craig Kurtz said while he was worried about a slippery slope with regulating behavior, he would vote for the ordinance because of the likelihood of reducing litter.

Ordinance 2012-247, which amends city policy on open fires, added the requirement that "recreational fires, using only untreated lumber, are only permitted if they are in a fire pit that is at least 4 inches above ground, not

more than 3 feet across in any direction, contained on all sides, has a screen top, and is at least 15 feet away from the lot line of any structure."

Ordinance 2012-249 amended the city definition of peddler to include providing a service.

In other action, the council:

- approved a union contract for the three police patrol officers. The three-year contract includes a 2-percent raise and wage reopeners for 2013 and 2014. The first year, officers would be capped at 100 hours of compensation time, 75 hours for the second year and 50 hours for the third. The exception is the day shift officer, who will stay at 100 hours. The city will also shorten the schedule for officers to reach maximum pay. Officers would get a 4-percent raise after one year, then another 4-percent raise after five years, then receive full salary.

- heard a report from Public Works Supervisor Mark Zenner. The grass at the East Houghton Pavilion is being refertilized. The running trail has been curbed to redirect water onto the hard surface to avoid ruts. stormsewer catchbasin cleaning has begun; it is 100 percent covered by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Lakeshore Drive has been shut to traffic under the parking deck because of the potential danger of falling debris. The parking deck work is about 80 percent complete. Work should be complete in a couple of weeks. Work has also begun on the water-sewer project.

- heard a report from Police Chief John Donnelly. Since the previous meeting, the department has responded to 140 complaints, made seven misdemeanor arrests, noted 22 civil infractions and issued two city tickets. The department has been participating in seat belt enforcement zones; because of the high visibility of the zones, few people have needed to be ticketed. Family Fun Day will be from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Houghton City Center Aug. 31.

- approved a resolution supporting the removal of parcels of land from the Superfund list.

- approved a resolution accepting a federal bonus of \$15,592 for the Houghton Transit Department.

- set a public hearing of the Rental Housing Board on Sept. 12 for 907 Ruby St.

- approved a block party request for Clark Street.

- set a public hearing on the Zoning Board of Appeals on Sept. 12 for 404 E. Houghton Ave.

- set a Sept. 12 public hearing for 707 W. Calverley Ave.