

East Tawas News

Issue #5

"A slice of small town middle America"

by Michael Gilfix

The Goal of my Tawas News is to educate and amuse you about my home town, East Tawas, Michigan. It is to remind you that small towns still thrive in America, that they are sometimes struggling, often vibrant. It is based on my hometown weekly newspaper, personal memories, and occasional, very personal observations.

The Inspiration: The inspiration was Garrison Keillor's "News from Lake Wobegon" on his NPR show, Prairie Home Companion. Lake Wobegon was fictional, quietly poignant and lol enjoyable.

Tawas is not fictional; it is very real. It is similar to Lake Wobegon in many ways – the farmers, the pastors, the community where everybody knows everybody's business.

The town of East Tawas is located on Lake Huron on the lower peninsula about 70 miles north of Flint, Michigan. The population is around 2,723. It hasn't grown much from my childhood in the 50's and 60's. The adjacent town of Tawas City has a population of about 1,726. Why 2 separate towns? Don't ask.

So, enjoy, and let me know what you think. Share it with friends and family. I am happy to add anyone to the mailing list, so send me names.

Canoe Marathon Tops in the Nation

The Au Sable River Canoe Marathon took place on Sunday, July 24. The winners were a couple of guys from Quebec. This is a big deal because this marathon is part of the Triple Crown of Canoe Racing. The other two races take place in Cooperstown, New York, and Quebec, Canada. Of the races, the Au Sable River Race is considered the toughest. It is one of the many highlights the area has to offer.

When you visit Tawas, stop off at the "High Banks." It offers a splendid view of the river – and was (is?) the site of countless beer parties in my youth.

Iosco County News Herald August 10, 2022

The good news from Tawas is that the summer is full of family events. Tourists simply love it. Here is a sampling:

*The Sand Lake Summer Family Festival – in its 54th year. Sand Lake is a few miles inland from Tawas. The slogan for the festival is "A Community Working Together Family Festival." At a happy hour in the beer tent, each brew will cost \$1.50.

*The 2022 Tawas Uncork'd Wine, Ale and Food Festival. This is the 13th annual. For this tiny town, it is remarkable that over 30 wineries and breweries participated.

*The Michigan Mud Jam is in its 9th year. They expect hundreds of trucks from across the nation. Events include the Tuff Truck event and the Mega Truck Freestyle event.

The Ms. Mud Jam Mudathon will feature a *bikini contest*. Can you imagine that in California's Bay Area? The theme for the finale is "Freedom Day." Everyone is encouraged to wear "their best red, white, and blue."

A published notice to attendees reminds everyone that "*weapons will be confiscated* with a \$50 fee and ammo will not be returned"

*The Oscoda Rockfest was a hit. It featured "a guy who nails his tongue to objects."

Housing Affordability

The city counsel is worried about state legislation that may strip local governments from prohibiting short term rentals. A few years ago, I was surprised to see that a number of houses on or close to Lake Heron have been purchased primarily as investments "in a nightmare scenario, housing prices will get so high 'that workers won't be able to afford in the area.'"

Sound familiar? Yes, even in Tawas!

Letters to the Editor

Jane R. worries that the American people are "being duped" by the current administration "destroying our precious America." A letter from Karen B. references the January 6 hearings and worries that there will again be efforts to overturn elections. "It's never been more important to exercise our freedom to vote while we still have it."

US Gypsum Open House

For over 120 years, USG has quarried gypsum just outside of Tawas. I would not mention this, but for the fact that I had a summer job with USG. I had the night-shift, hourly taking samples from the conveyer belt to make sure that quality was being maintained. My hours were approximately 10pm until 7am.

Worker shortages are a problem in many ways. A house on Main Street has to be demolished but no one submitted a bid for the work. They are looking for "anyone willing to take on the project."

Significant Election Result

In the last edition of the Tawas News, I made note of a candidate for the District Commissioner who was "Pro God, Pro Life, Pro Gun, Committed to Liberty." I was not really surprised that he captured almost 60% of the votes, beating the incumbent. This is important because the commission has responsibility for election oversight.

You should not be surprised about this election result in a small town in the Midwest. Folks are more conservative and are not comfortable with what so many progressive inhabitants of the east and west coasts routinely talk about. The vast majority of individuals who have this concern in the Tawas area are good people. They are palpably concerned about perceived left-wing agendas. At the same time, I believe that many of these voters are supportive of liberal, more middle of the road policies. Lets avoid stereotyping and elevate respectful discussion.

Southern Lapwing Sighted in Oscoda

This is a bird that thrives in South America and is virtually never seen this far north. Bird watchers are ecstatic!

A large newspaper ad encourages shopping local. It includes these bullet points

- Know the people behind the product
- Keep your community unique
- *Internet shopping does not sponsor your child's sports team*

Lets hear it for local businesses Klenow's Market and Marion's Dairy Bar!

Trailer Spaces

Stay on the Lake Huron Beach for \$45 a night?

Unique is the East Tawas City Park that has 182 spots for mobile homes, many of which are not at all mobile. They sit there year round.

This park is just across US 23 from tiny downtown East Tawas. It is about two blocks from where I grew up. It sits on some prime real estate, right on the lake. In the summertime, the prime lots along the lake are \$50 per day. Others are in the area of perhaps \$40 per day. In the winter time, between October 15 and May 1, the cost is a pittance.

If you have a mobile home and want to stay there, don't hold your breath. There is a perpetual and long waiting list for any of the 182 spots that become available.

Notes from the Author:

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