

HAHAHAHAHA
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>> GET YOUR LAUGHS THIS WEEKEND at the Whole Art, the Laughing Post and the State

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE



Thursday, September 20, 2007

50 CENTS

Gravel mine deal may not bring peace

Alamo Township settles suit but may face another battle

By Chris Killian
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ALAMO — By agreeing to a deal that will allow gravel mining in Alamo Township, the Alamo Township Board avoided a potentially expensive and pro-

tracted fight with a large, multinational corporation. But now the board may be headed into another fight, this time with local officials, residents and their representatives. At a special meeting Tuesday, with an audience of six

citizens, the five-member board voted unanimously to settle with Aggregate Industries, which had sued the township in late July to operate a gravel mine on 165 residentially zoned acres near the intersection of 10th Street and G Avenue.

The project had drawn heavy opposition from residents of both Alamo and Oshtemo townships since the first meeting on the proposal in January, and up until Tuesday, the project had been thwarted and a permit denied. The decision to settle came as

a surprise to some residents. But with a \$10 million lawsuit potentially hanging over their heads for years, negotiating a settlement agreement with Aggregate Industries seemed the most logical option for the board, which oversees an annual budget of about \$400,000. Please see **GRAVEL MINE**, A2

A QUICK LOOK
Size: 165 acres.
When mining will start: Spring 2008.
Hours/Days of operation: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays to Fridays.
Total acres given to Alamo Township by Aggregate Industries: 60.
Funds township will receive from Aggregate annually: \$10,000.

NOW YOU KNOW



PETA honors surfing dog rescuers

Two Grand Haven surfers involved in the Sept. 11 rescue of a dog swept off Grand Haven's south pier by a big wave will receive an award from an animal-rights group. Matt Smolenski, 25, and his friend, Joe Riopelle, 24, each will receive a Compassionate Citizen Award from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. "Thanks to these two men's bravery and quick thinking, a dog will live to bark at the waves another day," said PETA Director Daphna Nachminovitch. "Hopefully, their compassionate action will inspire others to intervene when they see an animal in distress." — Gazette News Service

Mass celebrates blue — and red and white, too



JONATHON GRUENKE / GAZETTE

Portage firefighters, from left, Jamie Madison, John Yuhas and David Carroll, exit the Cathedral Church of St. Augustine Wednesday at the conclusion of the Diocese of Kalamazoo's sixth annual Blue Mass, which honors police, fire, emergency and military personnel. At right: Members of color guards from the Portage Fire Department and the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety participate in the Blue Mass.



Another top city official off the job

Human-resources director on unpaid leave; status uncertain

By Kathy Jessup
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Kalamazoo's director of human resources has been on unpaid administrative leave since Sept. 1, and city officials won't say why.

City Manager Kenneth Collard said Wednesday that Doreen Brinson, chief of human resources since 1997, was relieved of her duties nearly three weeks ago.



Doreen Brinson

Collard declined to comment on the reason for the leave or Brinson's future employment status.

It's unclear whether the move is related to a probe of the city's Freedom of Information Act practices or a federal investigation of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety's handling of a 2003 prostitution investigation.

Please see **ANOTHER**, A2

Pollution not likely cause of fish die-off, officials say

By Rosemary Parker
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Fisheries experts will monitor reports of dead fish in the Kalamazoo River in Allegan County, but so far there's no need for much worry, a fisheries manager said.

Scientists say they don't think there's been any discharge of toxic chemicals because the die-off seems to be confined to a single species — golden redbreast suckers — that makes up about 20 percent of the biomass in the river, said Jay Wesley, fisheries unit manager for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources field office in Plainwell.

The dead fish have been found between Otsego and the Trowbridge Dam.

"We got a report late yesterday and we went to Trowbridge Dam and saw 10 to 20 dead fish; today we only saw five or six," Wesley said Wednesday. "Earlier in the day some kayakers thought they saw thousands."

The fish, shaped like a small carp, are bottom feeders that grow to 12 to 18 inches in length. Wesley said the fish have some sort of bacterial or viral infection that became fatal when they were stressed by the recent fluctuation in temperature.

Please see **POLLUTION**, A2

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Dale Earnhardt Jr. has a new number on his race car.

SPORTS/B2



Are you ready for some football?

Scott DeCamp shares his predictions for Friday's high school football games.

SPORTS/B5

FUEL PRICES

A sampling of prices as of 6 a.m.:

Regular unleaded		Diesel
Citgo — \$2.83 ⁹	Super Duper — \$2.84 ⁹	Admiral — \$2.95 ⁹
Sprinkle Road, Portage	West Main Street, Kalamazoo	South Westnedge Avenue, Portage
Quick Stop — \$2.84 ⁹	Shell — \$2.93 ⁹	Speeway — \$3.15 ⁹
West Centre Avenue, Portage	Phoenix Road, South Haven	Gull Road, Kalamazoo



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TICKET ALERT

Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band
ON SALE: 10 a.m., Friday.
CONCERT: 7:30 p.m., Nov. 5, Palace of Auburn Hills.
PRICE: \$57.50, \$91.50.
BUY: (269) 373-7000 or www.ticketmaster.com.



"Cats" (Broadway musical)
ON SALE: 10 a.m., Friday.
PERFORMANCES: Nov. 2-3, Miller Auditorium, Western Michigan University.
BUY: www.millerauditorium.com or (269) 387-2300.
MORE INFORMATION: Today's "Ticket" section, Page 6.

ONLINE SPOTLIGHT

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Have an engagement, wedding or anniversary to share with the world? Go to "COMMUNITY NEWS" and click on "Celebrations" for directions.
www.mlive.com/kzgzette



State inching toward budget

HAPPENING TODAY

LANSING — Both the House and Senate were to return to session as the Oct. 1 deadline to resolve the state's \$1.75 billion budget shortfall nears. The future rate of Michigan's income tax remains a key sticking point in negotiations.

The ongoing dispute has even held up a proposal to adopt a temporary, 30-day budget extension that might buy lawmakers more time to deal with the budget mess.

WEDNESDAY'S ACTIONS

On Wednesday, lawmakers appeared to be making some progress toward balancing the state budget and avoiding a partial government shutdown that could occur if no budget deal is in place by the end of the month. But they continued to disagree over how much of the projected deficit should be resolved through tax increases, and how much should be erased through spending cuts.

INCOME-TAX RATE

Michigan's income-tax rate has changed several times since 1983

1983	6.35 percent (hits an all-time high)
1984-85	6.35 percent
1986-93	4.6 percent
1994-99	4.4 percent
2000	4.3 percent
2001	4.2 percent
2002	4.1 percent
2003	4.0 percent
2004-07	3.9 percent

— Associated Press

■ A state lawmaker takes a break from budget talks for a Russian hunting trip three years in the making, **Page A3**.