



## DRUG DROP OFF



**ORGANIZING:** Kim Livingston, Scott Lombard and Big Rapids Department of Public Safety Officer Erik Little sort through bags of prescription medications and needles that were dropped off during Thursday's collection event at Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital. (Pioneer photos/Emily Grove)

### Prescriptions, needles taken back during event at Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital

By EMILY GROVE  
PIONEER SENIOR STAFF WRITER

BIG RAPIDS — Not even finished with the first hour of Thursday's medication and needle take-back event, organizers were already looking for more storage containers to hold what was being turned in.

With a table in Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital's main lobby, Scott Lombard, Kim Livingston and Big Rapids Department of Public Safety Officer Erik Little collected several pounds of leftover prescription

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## Discussion continues on future for Clay Cliffs

By MEGHAN HAAS  
PIONEER STAFF WRITER

BIG RAPIDS TWP. — To hear public questions and comments about the Clay Cliffs Nature Area property being incorporated into the city limits, Big Rapids Township hosted a public hearing Thursday.

City Mayor Mark Warba and City Manager Mark Gifford attended the meeting to provide answers and tell community members the city's plans for the nature area.

Township Supervisor Bill Stanek opened the public hearing explaining the city first came to the Big Rapids Township Board of Trustees about Clay Cliffs in September of 2016.

"I was against it at first," Stanek said. "I was concerned about it. I called our attorney and talked to him about a 425 Agreement. My biggest concern was for the future, if that was ever turned into anything besides a park, I wanted protection on it. The city did offer a deed agreement for as long as it stayed public park space. That met my concern. I would have rather had a 425, but I am satisfied with what we have now."

An Act 425 Agreement would allow two government entities to share tax revenue generated by the potential future development of an area. However, Warba said this type of agreement would not work.

"The development of a parcel of land as a public park for recreational purposes is not an economic development project under Act 425," he said. "There is no tax revenue to be generated from Clay Cliffs. Legally, we can't do it. The city is not going to do that."

Warba said the nature area was purchased at different times. The portion recently purchased from Barbara Borth is approximately 22 acres and resides in the township's boundaries. Warba said bringing the entire Clay Cliffs Nature Area into city limits would clear up any confusion on what jurisdiction the area is in and who takes responsibility for it.

Part of the initial acquisition of the Clay Cliffs property was made through grant funds, Warba said. He

**"It is a unique parcel. It's a gem. It needs to be protected."**

**MARK WARBA**  
CITY MAYOR

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**UNUSED:** Bottles of full prescription medication are sorted and placed in garbage bags during Thursday's medication and needle take-back event at Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital.

## American Cancer Society seeks driving volunteers

### Road to Recovery program takes cancer patients to treatments

By CANDY ALLAN  
PIONEER ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MECOSTA COUNTY — A cancer diagnosis often means a series of treatments lies ahead for the patient, but not everyone is able to get to and from the appointments they need to overcome the disease.

Volunteer drivers with the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program provide free transportation to and from treatment for patients.

"Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to cancer patients getting to treatment appointments," said Mindy Klein, program manager for the ACS. "Especially for some-

one getting radiation, they may need to go to treatment every single day. Even if someone has the means to transport themselves or has loved ones who want to help, it can be hard to do it every single day.

"It might be the patient doesn't feel well enough to take themselves or their family members want to help, but can't get off work every day. If they can't get to their appointments, their chances of surviving cancer are greatly reduced."

An estimated 57,600 Michigan residents will learn they have cancer this year, according to an ACS press release. The Road

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**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** The American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program needs about 10 volunteer drivers located in Mecosta or Osceola county to help local cancer patients get to their treatment appointments. (Courtesy photo)



#### TODAY'S WEATHER

A little morning rain today. Cloudy later in the day with lows in the 30s and highs in the 40s.

#### THURSDAY'S LOTTERIES

**Midday Daily 3:** 1-3-8 **Fantasy 5:** 7-18-30-35-36  
**Midday Daily 4:** 1-7-0-1 **Keno:** 3-6-10-16-24-28-40  
**Daily 3:** 2-8-4 43-44-54-55-58-59-62  
**Daily 4:** 0-7-6-1 63-65-68-70-75-76-79-80

#### OBITUARIES

Julie Ann Norton  
Alex Cool Villegas

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# DRUGS

CONTINUED FROM 1

medications and needles. The medication take-back events are the result of a partnership between Spectrum Health Big Rapids and Reed City Hospitals, Ten16 Recovery Network and local law enforcement.

"The coordination works great," said Livingston, prevention coordinator with Ten16 Recovery Network. "Legally, police are allowed to take the medication and dispose of it at the incinerator and legally the hospital is able to take care of the needles and dispose of them properly."

Throughout Thursday's event, Scott Lombard, director of community health for Spectrum Health Big Rapids and Reed City hospitals, would weigh the bins and bags once full, keeping a running total of what was collected.

Within the first hour, 57 pounds of medication had been collected. At a similar event on Tuesday at Spectrum Health Reed City Family Practice, a total of 36 people dropped off 68 pounds of medication and 45 pounds of needles.

"The educational awareness and resource these events provide are why it's important we do them," Lombard said.

Prescription medications and diabetic needles are the main things dropped off at these events,

but inhalers, liquid medications, pet medications and ointments also were accepted.

People previously would throw these items in the trash or flush them down the toilet, which is not good for the environment, Livingston said.

"It's important to keep medication out of the landfills, but it's also important to keep it out of the hands of teenagers and others who might abuse them," she added.

While there are medication drop boxes throughout the area at local law enforcement agencies, these do not accept needles. Without these collection events, there are limited opportunities for people to properly get rid of their used needles, Livingston said.

"One of the main things people utilize is the household hazardous waste event, but that's only a few hours once a year," she said. "This gives people more chances."

Over the last year, the program has served 221 people, collecting 359.9 pounds of medication and 287.7 pounds of needles, not counting the two most recent events.

Upcoming medication and needle take-back events will be from 3 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, in the main lobby of Reed City Family Practice, located at 300 N. Patterson Road, Reed City; and from 3 to 6 p.m. Thursday, July 27, at the Big Rapids Hospital Main Lobby, located at 605 Oak St., Big Rapids.



**DISPOSAL:** Old needles kept in water bottles were among the items dropped off during Thursday's medication and needle take-back event at Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital. (Pioneer photos/Emily Grove)



**HEARING HISTORY:** Big Rapids Township Board of Trustees members listen as Big Rapids City Mayor Mark Warba explains the history behind the city acquiring Clay Cliffs Nature Area. (Pioneer photo/Meghan Haas)

# CLAY CLIFFS

CONTINUED FROM 1

pointed out the city revisited and adopted its Master Plan for 2017 through 2021.

"In our master plan, I think it is important to point out what the city sees in terms of the future for Clay Cliffs," he said. "Some of the money that was used in the initial acquisition was through grant funding. There are restrictions surrounding the grant funding. We recognize that in our master plan."

"The complexion of Clay Cliffs is not going to change with the city's ownership. We can impose a deed restriction on Clay Cliffs, including the second parcel we acquired, providing that it shall be maintained in public outdoor recreation use and perpetuity. The deed restriction is something we can do and would be willing to do."

Warba and Gifford brought a tentative plan for the Clay Cliffs Nature Area, which includes a parking lot.

"My main concerns are the property line dispute right now, as well as I don't want to look out my backyard and see a parking lot," said Stacey Griswold, who

resides in the township. "I want my kids to be able to play in the backyard without worrying about who may be watching them from the parking lot. I'm worried about the safety of my children."

Stank assured Griswold people living in the township boundaries near Clay Cliffs will remain township residents, while Warba said the plan for a parking lot is not set in stone.

Another community member living near the nature area asked why changes may be made, such as a parking lot or potentially creating trails.

"I grew up here," said Mark Dunn. "I was born and raised here. Clay Cliffs has been a nature area. As a kid, I was back there all the time. It's good as it is. The more you are developing it, you are developing it. Everybody wants to change it; leave it as it is."

Warba said anything added to the area will help make it enjoyable for others as well as Dunn.

"The development is not going to diminish from what you enjoyed growing up, it is going to enhance it and make it available for other people to have the same use and enjoyment as you had," he said. "It is a unique parcel. It's a gem. It needs to be protected."

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