



LAKETOWN NEWS

Spring 2011
Volume 24, No. 2

www.laketowntwp.org
Published Quarterly for the residents of Laketown Township

Laketown Calendar

April

- 20 - Parks and Recreation*
- 25 - ZBA*
- 27 - DDA*
- 29 - ODC Program at Farview Park^

May

- 4 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 4 - Planning Commission*
- 11 - Township Board Meeting*
- 18 - Parks and Recreation*
- 25 - DDA*
- 30 - Memorial Day - office closed

June

- 1 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 1 - Planning Commission*
- 8 - Township Board Meeting*
- 14 - Boater Safety Class^
- 15 - Parks and Recreation*
- 22 - ZBA*
- 27 - DDA

July

- 4 - Fourth of July - office closed
- 6 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 6 - Planning Commission*
- 13 - Township Board Meeting*
- 20 - Parks and Recreation*
- 25 - ZBA*
- 27 - DDA

Laketown Township
Office
4338 Beeline Road
Holland, Michigan 49423
Phone: 616-335-3050
Fax: 616-335-5459

Office hours:
Monday - Friday
7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

From the desk of.....

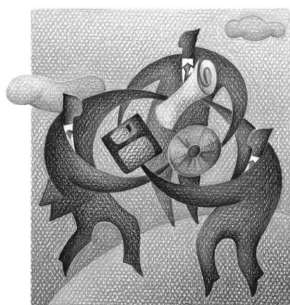
Terry Hofmeyer, Laketown Township Supervisor

Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow

It was just a few weeks ago that the first figures from the 2010 Census became available and there were a few surprises! The first was that our state was the only one to lose population over the past ten years. The second was (to our surprise) that Laketown Township also lost about fifty persons! Our collective task is to come up with the successful

combination of incentives, taxes and/or tax cuts to encourage the creation of new jobs in Michigan and, perhaps more importantly, create productive jobs that will keep our children and grandchildren in Michigan and in the greater Holland area!

Earlier this month, about ninety persons, representing townships, cities, school districts, local businesses and non-profit organizations met for



three days of intensive sessions to discuss the future of the greater Holland/Zeeland area and ways that we may further cooperate in the delivery of public services,

job creation, health services, area planning and diversity. The meetings were held at Haworth's corporate offices and I was amazed at how much we all had in common and at the many ways we all, including Laketown Township, presently cooperate in the delivery of services to other governmental/educational units around our township. Meetings will continue in the future to both plan and make the greater Holland/Zeeland area a state leader for high value in local

government, education and job creation to retain and improve the overall quality of life that we each love and enjoy. For those of you interested in more detailed information on this event, you can access this information at: www.modelcomm.org.



I am energized as I look forward to the coming year! This will be our first full summer with our new non-motorized "bicycle" path in place for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Seniors, adults, teens and children will be riding, hiking and walking on the paths and I want to encourage you to remain extra cautious and vigilant as you are on and near the bike paths this Summer!

It looks like the moving date for the old Gibson Church to Shore Acres Park will be on April 27. I anticipate that many of you may want to see and photograph the building as it moves along its route to the park grounds. As with many of our township projects, we will need volunteers willing to share of their time and skills to make the renovated church building another quality asset to Laketown Township. Please accept my very sincere "Thank You" for all that you do for our township!!

Congratulations Clair
De Mull
Volunteer of the Year
2010

Rachael Geurink



Clerk's Corner ... Wendy Van Huis, Clerk and Mary Geurink, Deputy Clerk

Election News - May 3rd School Election

The May 3rd school election will only encompass the Holland Public School district and the Hamilton Public School district. The Saugatuck School District has opted to hold their election in November.

For those voters in the Holland School District you will be voting for Board members and two millage proposals, both renewals.

The first proposal is the Holland Community Swimming Pool Millage Proposition. This millage would renew the previous .85 mill levy, which expired in 2010, for the operation of the Holland Community Aquatic Center.

The second proposal is the Operating Millage Renewal Proposal. This proposal will allow the school district to continue to levy the statutory rate of 18 mills on all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, required for the school district to receive its revenue per pupil foundation allowance.

For those voters in the Hamilton School District you will be voting for Board members and one millage proposal which is a renewal.

The proposal is the Operating Millage Renewal Proposal. This proposal will allow the school district to continue to levy the statutory rate of 18 mills on all property, except principal residence, qualified agricultural property and other property exempted by law, required for the school district to receive its revenue per pupil foundation allowance.

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that we will be incorporating some new technology – an electronic poll book - in our voting process. As of now we are still waiting on the State to provide us with the equipment. Hopefully by the November election (Saugatuck School election) we will have the equipment and the necessary training completed.

Gibson Cemetery News - Veteran's Day Cemetery Markers

If you have a Veteran buried in the Gibson Cemetery and you wish to honor them with a Veteran's marker with flag on Memorial Day, the Township has the U.S. Veteran's markers available. They can be picked up from the Township Hall the week of May 23 -27 to be placed on the grave site. Township staff will assume the responsibility of removing the markers on Tuesday, May 31st.

See You At The Pool... Lisa Phillips, Executive Director

Holland Community Aquatic Center has some exciting things happening! Come on by and try one of our new fitness classes, swim some laps, or attend one of our upcoming special events. The Red Cross Blood Drive is on June 30, and our next Float-In Movie Night is July 23, so come watch Yogi Bear!

The other big event coming up that affects the Holland Community Aquatic Center is the Millage Renewal Election on May 3rd. We are asking for a renewal of the millage at no increase to you, the taxpayer. Your vote on May 3rd will allow us to continue providing free swim lessons to over 3,500 children through the five school districts in our area, Holland Public, Holland Christian, Calvary, Vanderbilt, and Black River. With all of the lakes in our area, this is a crucial program to prevent drowning! Another 200 teenagers compete for Holland Public and Holland Christian High School and Middle School swim teams, and over 300 athletes swim competitively for Michigan Lakeshore Aquatics. Over 250,000 people a year visit the Holland Community Aquatic Center!

Holland Community Aquatic Center appreciates the support of its residents, and we invite you to enjoy our Resident Appreciation Days on the 2nd Sunday of each month! We'll be sure to tell all our residents thank you as we let you in free! Residents also get discounts on all classes and programs offered at the center, so check out our new "Splash" magazine that arrived in your mail this past week. If you did not get a "Splash" magazine, please stop by our center and pick one up to find out all the fun and exciting things going on! Bring your family and friends and come visit the pool!



**Holland
Community
Aquatic Center**

From The Assessor ... by Paul Smith

This year's March Board of Review is over and the assessing roll for 2011 has been sent to the Allegan County Equalization Department for their review. Our Board of Review members: Don VanHuis (chair), Warren Rasmussen (secretary) and Bob Jaskulski along with Township Supervisor, Terry Hofmeyer addressed the concerns of 65 taxpayers that came in or sent written appeals. Thank you all for your work in reviewing citizen concerns.

This year was more active in terms of appeals than last. There were some areas that saw their assessments rise and many folks from those areas came in. If we had multiple sales in an area that showed we had dropped the assessments a bit too far over the last few years then we needed to raise them to where the market is. Many areas of the township simply didn't have any sales. Those areas stayed pretty much the same. We need data (sales) to prove the assessments are too high or too low in a given area.

Many people came in or called during last year with bank appraisals that were done for refinancing purposes. These bank appraisals are generally low. In some cases absurdly low and reflect the bank's aversion to risk as much as market values of the homes in question. If you have one of these appraisals, take a look at the comparables and the adjustments made to reflect the differences between the comparable properties and the subject property (your home). You would like to see adjustments total no more than 15% to 20%. I've seen adjustments as high as 70%. These typically would not be considered good comparables. In all fairness though, there simply aren't a lot of sales to use. The appraisers have to use the data available in the market.

Assessments always lag the market and are generally based on sales that occurred within the previous two years. For 2011, we used a one-year time period (from September, 2009 to October, 2010) to try and reflect more accurately the current state of the market.

Continued on page 6

Felt Mansion and Laketown Township Win Three State Awards

The Michigan State Historic Preservation Network (MHPN) will award seven annual awards at its spring conference to be held this year in Saugatuck. Three of those awards will go to the Felt Mansion and Laketown Township.

The Preservation Gem Award recognizes an outstanding preservation project *element* of a building or site. Patty Hoezee Meyer, Executive Director of the Friends of the Felt Estate, nominated the restoration of the Dorothy Reed Water Garden at the Felt Estate. "The water garden is a unique feature of the estate," commented Meyer, "and I am very gratified to see that MHPN is going to recognize it with the Preservation Gem Award. Everyone involved in the project worked very hard to save the historic integrity of the pond while making it safe and beautiful for a public facility."

Laketown Township will receive MHPN's Community Award. This award is presented to a community that has engaged in a comprehensive plan for historic preservation related projects. In February, Laketown passed a resolution adopting a plan for

identification of and preservation of historic sites within Laketown Township.

MHPN is also recognizing the governing body of Laketown Township with the Government/Institution Award. This is an award presented to agencies, cities and/or institutions who by their actions have accomplished significant positive changes in the historic preservation climate and activity in the State of Michigan.

Congratulations to the Friends of the Felt Estate, to the community of Laketown, and to the board members of Laketown Township who continue their commitment to preserving the character and heritage of Laketown Township through their outstanding preservation efforts.



Deputy Round Up ... Deputy Mark Lytle

Spring has sprung! Enjoy the warmer temperatures. With the warmer temperatures many more people are out and about enjoying the fresh air and getting their exercise. Please remember that with the warmer weather comes the influx of bike and motorcycle riding. Be sure to check your blind spots when driving and be courteous to those around you so that we may all enjoy the Spring/Summer season.

Also just a friendly reminder that when you are driving you are responsible for having the correct up to date paperwork for your vehicle as well as wearing your seatbelt. I have noticed on several occasions that people forget to keep an updated proof of insurance and registration in their vehicles. Forgetting to do this could be a costly mistake. All in all let's work together to make this an enjoyable season.

Suddenly In Command - Register Now For Boater Safety Course...

Dan Groenendyk, FSO - Public Education, US Coast Guard Auxiliary

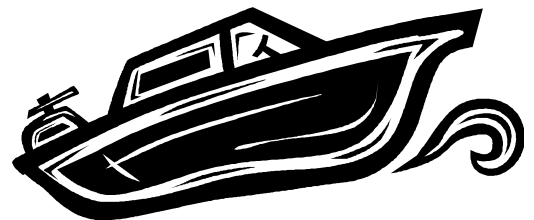
It was the kind of beautiful evening out on Lake Michigan that we all remember and enjoy. A couple had invited a friend from Chicago to go out for a boat ride to Saugatuck. On the way back home, and as the boat came up on plane, suddenly the husband staggered, took two steps back and collapsed into unconsciousness. The boat continued forward with no one in control and two passengers who suddenly realized that they had an emergency. They were suddenly in command; would they know what to do?

These situations happen in real life and can come on unexpectedly. It is important when you come aboard someone's vessel that you ask some basic questions of the operator. The most important questions to ask is about the location of the life jackets, and then physically try one on and make sure it fits. When a real life emergency happens, it happens all too quickly, especially out on the water. That is why the US Coast Guard and the US Coast Guard Auxiliary want you to wear your life jacket at all times while out on your boat. Familiarize yourself as to whether the vessel has a radio and if it works. Be prepared to identify the type of vessel you are in and most importantly, the location of where you might be going.

Ask about how to turn the motor off in an emergency, and always keep an eye on the weather. You never know when you might find yourself suddenly in command!

If you don't know much about boat safety, take a local class. You will find the information useful and interesting. A boat safety class will provide you with the confidence you need to handle on-the-water emergencies and improve your boating skills. The US Coast Guard Auxiliary, as well as the Sherriff Department, offer classes that you can take to help you should you find yourself suddenly in command. US Coast Guard Auxiliary boat safety classes held May 7, May 21, June 7 & 9, and June 14 & 16. Please call Dan Groenendyk, Public Education Officer, at (616) 510-5567 for more details.

**Have Fun;
Boat Safe.**



Treasurer's Trove

... by Laketown Township Treasurer, Gary Dewey



Thank you for your prompt payment of winter taxes. Now we look forward to summer 2011 taxes. I do not like to pay taxes anymore than you do, but I am so thankful that I can pay taxes to all government units in the USA! We are blessed to live in the greatest country in the world and I am so thankful for the freedoms we have!

We settled our tax collection with Allegan County and as usual we balanced to the penny. If there are delinquent taxes, Allegan County assumes those and adds interest and penalties. Please call the Allegan County Treasurer's office at 269-673-0260 to obtain payoff amounts on delinquent taxes.

Hamilton School district continues to opt out of summer tax collection so summer tax bills for residents in the Hamilton

Public School district will include only the State Education Tax and the Allegan County Operating Tax. Hamilton will be getting a new finance director and when that hire takes place we will review the present tax arrangement.

Please remember that hardship exemptions for taxes and tax deferral requests need to be applied for each year and forms may be obtained from the township office or online at www.laketowntwp.org

I am really excited to see spring flowers blooming, spring trees flowering and getting leaves, and the return of many birds and animals. Spring is so exciting after the winter, but we give God the glory for all seasons.

See You In The Parks

... by Linda Howell

This spring brings good news and an annual challenge.

First the good news: As we announced last winter, we received a grant from the State of Michigan to purchase the 2.5 acres of property immediately to the west of Wolters Woods on 147th Ave. This extra property will bring the stream that previously was on the boundary of the park into the park and allow more access to the stream, including the popular wildlife programs done with our partner, the Outdoor Discover Center. The final step in the funding of the grant was finished by the State in March. We look forward to completing the acquisition process as soon as possible, and barring any unforeseen problems, hope to finish the process this summer.

Several people have asked about the source of the grant money. The grant money comes from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The Trust Fund was established in 1976. It is funded by money paid to the State by companies that want to mine/drill and remove non-renewable resources (oil and gas primarily) from State owned, public land including the Allegan State Game Area. Between 1976 and 1984, the Trust Fund was raided several times when Lansing needed money for various projects. As a result, Michigan voters made the Trust Fund a part of the Michigan Constitution in 1984 and limited the use of the Trust Fund money for public recreation projects and the funding of an endowment for the State Parks only and for no other purpose. The Trust Fund has been the source of grants received by Laketown over the years, including the original grant to buy Wolters Woods almost 20 years ago and purchase Sanctuary Woods about 10 years ago.

Good news continues with our renewed partnership with the Outdoor Discovery Center. ODC will be developing and offering about a dozen programs throughout the year at our parks. The first program of the season will be "Knee-Deep in a Wetland" and will be at Farview Park on Friday, April 29, 2011 from 7 – 9

p.m. A naturalist will lead the group to discover what is in that wetland – frogs, toads and salamanders promise to lead the chorus. All collection equipment will be furnished, but come prepared to get wet. All the ODC's Laketown programs are free to Laketown residents. Please check the ODC's website, www.outdoordiscoverycenter.org, to confirm the schedule as the dates get closer, and for other programs that might interest you.

Also on the good news side, Michigan State University is excited to work with us on the Huyser Farm Park's blueberry fields. This new partnership should help us manage the blueberries to increase berry production while providing students and scientists valuable information on a pesticide-free berry field. MSU is providing Township employees with valuable information about blueberry cultivation, pruning and irrigation. In the past, we have used the Allegan County Sheriff's community service work crews to actually do a lot of the pruning and field clean-up work. Now we will have better information on the best way to do that work so the bushes thrive.



Our challenge comes every year when the winter wind leaves us an abundance of sand on the beach stairs. The winter winds move the dune a bit every year. This year the winds left the top 40 – 50 feet of the stairs buried. Having made the trek up and over, I can tell you it is possible. I also can tell you it's a real work out. We are scheduling community service work crews through the Sheriff's Office to shovel the sand and hope to have the stairs cleared soon. We also are looking into a potential grant that will allow the stairs to be raised 10 – 20 feet so that the winter winds will pass under the stairs and there should not be as much spring shoveling required. Our stairs were originally installed about 18 years ago through a Coastal Zone Management Grant. These grants are usually limited to once every 20 years, so we may need to wait a couple of more years.

Here are some general rules of etiquette and other safety tips to consider when using a shared-use path. The golden rule is to share the facility with all users: including cyclists, walkers, joggers, parents with strollers, people with dogs, skateboarders, roller skaters, and so on.

Share the Path: Shared-use paths are exactly that – paths intended for multiple users. This could lead to potential conflicts among the users, especially on popular paths or in congested areas. Regardless of whether you are bicycling, walking, jogging, or skating, if you follow the same set of rules as everyone else your trip will be safer and more enjoyable.

Be Courteous: All path users should respect other users on the facility regardless of their mode, speed or level of skill. This is also a good lesson in life, the greater shared-use path.

Keep Right: Stay as near to the right side of the trail as is safe, except when passing another user.

Be Predictable: Bicyclists should travel in a consistent and predictable manner. Always look behind before changing

position on the path. Bicyclists, skaters and skateboarders should approach pedestrians with caution and slow down when there is limited vision.

Don't Block the Path: When in a group, use no more than half the path, so as not to block the flow of other users.

Yield to slower traffic: Bicyclists, skaters and skateboarders must always yield right of way to pedestrians.

Yield When Entering and Crossing the Path: When entering or crossing a trail at uncontrolled points, yield to traffic on the trail.

Give Audible Signal When Passing: Give a clear warning signal before passing. Signal may be produced by voice, bell, or horn. A typical bicyclist may yell, "On your left" before passing.

Pass On the Left: Pass others going in your direction on their left. Look ahead and back to make sure the lane is clear before you pull out. Pass with ample separation. Do not move back to the right until safely past.

Don't Speed: Bicyclists will typically be the fastest traffic on a trail. If a bicyclist's speed endangers other trail users, the biker

should check for alternative routes or consider riding on the road - Selecting the appropriate location for your ride is safer and more enjoyable for all concerned.

Be Safe: Because off-road paths may be somewhat secluded, it's good to consider traveling with a companion and only using them in daylight hours.

Wear a Helmet: For safety, children under 16 must wear a bike helmet when on any public road or path, including greenways. It's also smart for adults to wear them, too.

Control your dog: Dogs (and other animals) should be on a leash, and dog-owners must pick up doggy-doo.

Be Respectful: The shared-use path goes through the right-of-way of our roads and the property of Laketown residents. Please be respectful of their property. Do not litter. Use appropriate language. Be safe.

Using common sense and courtesy will make the shared-use path a benefit to the health and safety of the community. Let's use it wisely!



Keep The Township Bike Path Beautiful. Pick Up After Your Pet !

From the Fire Department

.... by Fire Chief, Cal Haverdink

Since Spring has arrived I thought it would be appropriate to review some of the rules and regulations regarding outdoor burning and obtaining burn permits. Laketown Township residents can obtain a burn permit by calling the Township Office during business hours at (616) 335-3050 or by contacting the Fire Chief or a Fire Officer. The following numbers can be used:

Chief cell phone: (616) 836-5779

Assistant Chief: (616) 836-7331

Captain: (616) 218-3227

Lieutenant: (616) 886-7928

Fire Station: (616) 396-4060



Burn permits are issued on a day to day basis. There is no charge for a burn permit and they are issued either over the telephone, or by personal request before burning please consider mulching or another means of disposal as we all wish to keep our air as clean as possible. If burning is your only alternative there are several rules you must follow:

- The fire must be attended at all times by a responsible person.
- You must have a garden hose or other means of extinguishment readily available.

- Burn only between sunrise and sunset.
- Smoke should not be a nuisance to your neighbors.
- Persons living in subdivisions or higher density population areas can only obtain permits for odd numbered days.
- Only brush, grass, leaves, papers can be burned. It is illegal to burn garbage, building materials, plastics, tires, household furnishings etc.
- The area of Laketown Township West of 66th St. to Lake Michigan must have all outdoor fires contained in an approved burn device.
- Your fire must be COMPLETELY OUT before leaving it unattended.
- The fire should not be with-in 15' of the property line, public or private. Also fire should not be with-in 15' of any structure.

The State Department of Natural Resources reminds all citizens that you are responsible for any damages or costs of confinement that are caused by a fire you ignited.

Continued from page 2...

The trickiest part during this current market is simply the lack of sales. Whether you are an assessor, an appraiser, or a realtor, it is hard to get a good handle on values when data is scarce.

One other item: If you have just built a new home or recently purchased an existing home, please check to be sure you have applied for the Principal Residence Exemption. Also, if you've moved from a home that was your Principal Residence and that home is on the market and not rented, you can apply for a Conditional Rescind and still get the tax break for up to three years. The Conditional Rescind needs to be applied for each year that you wish to claim it. The deadline to apply is May 1st. The Principal Residence Exemption form is located on the Forms page of the Laketown website, www.laketowntwp.org or, of course, is available at the township office.

POSTAL PATRON

PRSR.T STD
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 153
HOLLAND, MI

Laketown Township Directory
Township Office - 616.335.3050
Township Board
Supervisor - Terry Hofmeyer
Treasurer - Gary Dewey
Clerk - Wendy Van Huis
Trustee - Bob Scanlan
Trustee - Ed Stelstra
Planning Commission Chair - Bob Cook
Zoning Board of Appeals Chair - David Weishar
Parks and Recreation Chair - Linda Howell
Township Staff
Manager - Al Meshkin
Assessor - Paul Smith
Administrative Assistants: Kathy Stoike, Mary Geurink, Charlene Fields, Diane Vbarra
Building Inspector - Al Ellingsen - 269.236.5788 or 616.395.1152
Mechanical Inspector - Bob Modreske 616.477.4940
Electrical Inspector - Gordon Bosch - 616.396.1448
Plumbing Inspector - Gary Raak - 616.399.6924
County Commissioner - Terry Burns - 616.335.2525
State Representative - Rep. Bob Gencski - 517.373.0836
State Senator - Sen. Rick Jones - 517.373.3447
U.S. Congressman - Bill Huizenga - 616.748.1234
Allegan County Directory
Animal Control - 269. 673.0519
Central Dispatch - 269. 673.3899
Clerk - 269. 673.0450
Drain Commissioner - 269. 673.0440
Health Department - 269. 673.5411
Register of Deeds - 269. 673.0390
Road Commission - 269. 673.2184
Senior Services & Veterans Services - 877. 673.5333
Treasurer - 269. 673.0260
Streets Lights - contact Consumers Energy 800. 477.5050 or email at customer@consumers.energy.com