



# LAKETOWN NEWS

Winter 2012  
Volume 25, No. 1

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

## Laketown Calendar

### February

- 1 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 1 - Planning Commission
- 8 - Township Board
- 14 - Winter Tax Payments Due^
- 15 - Parks and Recreation
- 15 - Winter Deferment Due
- 22 - DDA
- 27 - ZBA
- 28 - Primary Election

### March

- 7 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 7 - Planning Commission
- 14 - Township Board / Annual Meeting^
- 21 - Parks and Recreation
- 26 - ZBA
- 28 - DDA

### April

- 4 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 4 - Planning Commission
- 11 - Township Board
- 18 - Parks and Recreation
- 25 - DDA
- 30 - ZBA

all meetings at 7:00 p.m. at the township hall unless otherwise noted

^see article for details

From the desk of.....

Terry Hofmeyer, Laketown Township Supervisor



A couple of weeks ago, as I was driving up north, I saw a sign which read "The future belongs to those who attend the meetings". I began thinking about this as I was planning for our township's Annual Meeting scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup>. In addition to

our usual review of the budget and reports from our various boards and commissions, I plan to reserve time for input from township residents on the subject of the township board's consideration of the feasibility of Charter Township status. We as your elected board wish to receive your comments regarding this important decision prior to taking any action. If you find that you cannot attend the Annual Meeting and want to voice your opinion on this matter, please feel free to contact any board member or you can contact me by telephone (616) 335-3061 or e-mail me at [terry@laketowntwp.org](mailto:terry@laketowntwp.org).

We've had a lot of good news recently regarding state grants for our recreational areas. One grant allowed the township to acquire additional property adjacent to the Wolters Woods Park on 147<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Another grant will provide for improvements at the township office site for a ball field, soccer field and shelter building. Each project is included in our long-range parks plan and will be welcome additions to the township for your enjoyment.

As we continue to work on our annual budget, we as a board have several goals which we wish to achieve, including the following:

- Continue to maintain our current millage level
- Continue to maintain a modest fund balance for emergencies and cash flow
- Continue to seek out cost savings and improvements thru cooperative projects with our neighboring governments
- Continue to foster an environment that encourages development in our residential and commercial areas
- Continue to seek out grants and gifts to improve our open space and recreational activities

Doing all of that is a huge task, but we have achieved it in the past and I am confident that with our present staff, our boards and commissions and the many residents who give of their time and talents as volunteers, we will continue to grow and thrive as a premier place to live and enjoy life.

If you did not have the opportunity to visit the Felt Mansion this past December, you missed a glorious opportunity to see a beautiful sight. The grounds were outstanding with the lighting and decorations. The addition of the recently moved "Gibson Church" really sets off the entire property. I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to each of you who contributed to the move or volunteered to make the church and the mansion a quality place that we can all be proud of and enjoy.

It's a joy to serve as your Supervisor and I thank each of you for supporting and encouraging quality township government. Working together, we can and will achieve great things. I'll plan to see you at the Annual Meeting.

## Wanted: Township Photographs

Attention all shutterbugs! This year we will precede the Annual Meeting on March 14, 2012 with a Power-Point presentation of photos of Laketown Township. If you have beautiful photos of our township and you would like to see them included in our presen-



View of Lake Michigan from Laketown Beach

tation or used on the township website, please send your photos electronically to Patty at [patmeyer@patmeyerrestoration.com](mailto:patmeyer@patmeyerrestoration.com).

In return, Patty will send you a copy of the book, *The Felt Mansion: A Story of Restoration*.

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.

## Clerk's Corner ... Wendy Van Huis, Clerk and Jenifer French, Deputy Clerk

### Presidential Primary – February 28, 2012 (sample ballot enclosed)

The year 2012 will offer lots of opportunity to exercise your right to vote, starting soon! Michigan's Presidential Primary will be held on February 28 and will be a closed primary. There are no proposals on Laketown's ballot, therefore, there is not an option to select a "proposal only" ballot; registered voters must select one of two ballot types: either Republican or Democratic.

The party participation formula determines eligible political parties that can participate in this primary. Only the Republican and Democratic parties are eligible to participate in Michigan's 2012 Presidential Primary. A political party that received less than five percent of the total vote cast nationwide for the office of president in the last Presidential Election is ineligible to participate in the primary.

Along with the legislation for the closed primary, a new citizen verification question has been added to both the Application to Vote and the Absent Voter Ballot Application forms. The question, "Are you a U.S. Citizen?" will appear on these forms permanently, starting with this election.

We would also like to remind you to bring your photo ID. This State law took effect in November of 2007 and requires every

voter to show a photo ID. If no ID is present at the time of voting, you will be asked to sign an affidavit in order to be allowed to vote.

Absentee ballots can be obtained at the Township Hall during regular business hours.

Polls will be open on Tuesday, February 28 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Registered Laketown Township voters who reside in:

**Precinct 1** (Holland School District) - vote at the Laketown Township Hall

**Precinct 2** (Hamilton School District) - vote at the Graafschap Fire Station

**Precinct 3** (Saugatuck School District) - vote at the Laketown Township Hall

A web site to learn more about Michigan's Presidential Primary as well as other valuable information about elections and voting is [www.michigan.gov/elections](http://www.michigan.gov/elections). We encourage you to look at this site!

Sample ballots for the February 28, 2012 Election will be posted at the Township Hall. If you have any questions, please contact the Clerk's office at (616) 335-3050.

**If you are not registered, note that the last day to register for the Presidential Primary is January 30th.**



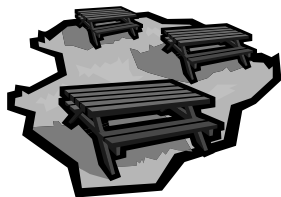
## See You In The Parks

... by Linda Howell

### A Busy Winter for the Parks Commission

Over the last couple of years gas prices have been painfully high. Those high prices encouraged more companies to look for oil and gas in Michigan. The more companies that want to drill or mine in Michigan, the more money goes into the Natural Resources Trust Fund. The Trust Fund was established in 1976 by Michigan residents who wanted to set aside a portion of the money the State receives when it sells the right to drill or mine on State land to private companies. The Trust Fund is used for public recreation and parks through grants to townships like Laketown for parks and recreation projects.

Last year we received a grant to expand Wolters Woods Park. That process is complete. This year we received a grant to take the rich soil we received for free from the Holland Board of Public Works and turn the area behind the Township Hall into an area for a picnic shelter and picnic area, a baseball diamond and a soccer field. The



Parks Commission discussed the plan for this area in January. As soon as the update to the plan is completed, it will be on the Township's website.

Although we haven't had too much snow yet this winter, it's not too early to think about summer and the beach. We have a new arrangement to maintain the beach stairs and parking area. Hopefully, the winter winds will not bury the stairs too deep and the new contractor can get them free of sand and ready for spring well before Memorial Day.

The Park Commission is updating the Township's Community Parks and Recreation Plan. This plan details the available recreational opportunities in the Township and surrounding areas and sets out the goals for the next five years. The Plan must be updated every five years and 2012 is the year in which we will submit the update to the State. The current and proposed plans are on the Township website. If you have any comments or suggestions, please let us know. We plan on

finalizing the plan and submitting it to the State in March after a public hearing.

Finally, we heard from Michigan State University last fall regarding the Huyser Farm blueberry field. They have been using the Huyser blueberry field as a study area for the past couple of years. One of the goals was to see which insects are present in our field since we have not applied pesticides. The presentation was very interesting, especially when the scientists confirmed the insects that like our blueberries are not dangerous to either our bushes or us; just a nuisance. MSU plans to continue its studies and we hope to expand the partnership with MSU as we consider replanting the original Huyser orchard so that Laketown residents can enjoy the apples, peaches, pears and other tree fruits that Mr. and Mrs. Huyser once produced on the farm.



**From The Assessor ... by Paul Smith**

The State Treasury has issued the inflation rate to be used to calculate your 2012 Taxable Value. Your taxable value (excluding any new construction) may increase by 2.7%. Just to compare; last year the inflation rate was 1.7% and the year before that it came in at 0.997 (deflation). So, not surprisingly, this is very tame inflation. Remember that taxes are based on Taxable Value, not the State Equalized Value (SEV). The taxable value cannot rise above the SEV so in many cases, your taxable value will not go up at all or may rise a smaller percentage than the 2.7%

This chart is a good snapshot of where we were last year and the overall changes to the township values for this year by property class. Lots of data here for you number crunchers.

Let's look at the Residential column. We can see that 60.33% of the parcels have the same Taxable Value as the SEV. So, in these cases, their taxable value will not be going up with the inflation rate. Note that in 2011 that percentage was 49.40% so there is a significant jump in those parcels. Note that in the row titled, "% of Pcls where SEV Decreased" we see that over 74% of the Residential parcels decreased for

2012 compared to just over 42% last year. You can also see that in over 44% of cases the inflation rate will not apply because the taxable value went down for 2012 vs. just under 30% last year.

A common critique of Proposal "A" was that the spread between the Taxable and SEV would continue to grow larger ad infinitum. Well, the current state of our real estate market has rendered that critique a moot point. Having said this

though, the market is stabilizing. We have increased inquiries with people calling and stopping in to research homes for sale. Things are turning around.... or at least not continuing to degrade.

In late February you will be receiving your 2012, "Valuation Change Notice". Check the numbers and if you have any questions, please call and we can go over them.

2011	AGRICULTURAL	COMMERCIAL	INDUSTRIAL	RESIDENTIAL	DEVELOPMENTAL
# of Parcels where TV=SEV	12	28	7	1492	1
% Parcels where TV=SEV	27.27	70.00	70.00	49.40	8.33
\$ of Parcels where TV=SEV	2,363,700	6,637,700	721,800	131,349,800	155,700
% Gap between TV and SEV	28.91	5.99	0.36	26.22	67.66
Dollar value of SEV-TV	2,462,560	457,252	2,644	107,631,643	2,288,529
% of Pcls where SEV Decreased	86.36	85.00	20.00	42.25	100.00
% of Pcls where TV Decreased	15.91	57.50	20.00	29.87	8.33

2012	AGRICULTURAL	COMMERCIAL	INDUSTRIAL	RESIDENTIAL	DEVELOPMENTAL
# Parcels where TV=SEV	14	10	7	1822	1
% Parcels where TV=SEV	31.82	25.00	70.00	60.33	8.33
\$ of Parcels where TV=SEV	4,102,700	855,200	891,300	167,209,500	154,100
% Gap between TV and SEV	24.65	12.08	0.27	21.35	62.27
Dollar Value of SEV-TV	1,967,340	1,009,941	2,435	81,217,118	1,677,100
% of Pcls where SEV Decreased	93.18	15.00	0.00	74.14	91.67
% of Pcls where TV Decreased	25.00	12.50	0.00	44.44	8.33
Taxable Value of all Pcls	6,014,660	7,347,659	899,265	299,218,882	1,016,100

**County Commissioner Report ... Terry Burns, Allegan County Commissioner**

The final quarter of 2011 was slow for me, and for the County. County officials are trying to save money so regular meetings have been placed on the calendar on a monthly basis. I am not in favor of this decision. I believe that important business is delayed which then needs to be taken up at a later date, which does cost money. The County has only had four regular meetings since October. However, the committees that I serve on do not meet on a regular basis.

Here's a quick round-up of some recent on-goings.

Allegan County and Ottawa County Mental Health (CMH) are suing the State of Michigan for not providing disability arrangements for a series of meetings regarding Medicare and Medicaid assistance eligibility. The CMH Board felt that not providing barrier free and handicap accessible seating was wrong and complained to the State. The State of Michigan refused to acknowledge the complaint. Allegan and Ottawa County Mental Health are seeking relief through the Federal Government. This will take some time. Both counties have appropriated \$20,000 for the effort.

in Allegan, Berrien, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties. It administers federal and state substance use disorder treatment and prevention programs.

Money from the State liquor tax stays within each perspective County, and is allocated to fund treatment and prevention programs such as Drug Court, Meth Diversion Program, and other programs such as detox at Allegan Community Hospital. A portion of money is also allocated to Allegan County for Meth cleanup. Each cleanup of Methamphetamine costs the County about three thousand dollars.



The Lakeshore Coordinating Council (LCC) continues to play an important role

The Allegan County Jail project continues to move forward. The bids for construction are being evaluated.

**Keep The Township Bike Path Beautiful.**

**Pick Up After Your Pet !**

**Remember - no horses or snowmobiles allowed on the bike path!**

## Treasurer's Trove

... by Laketown Township Treasurer, Gary Dewey

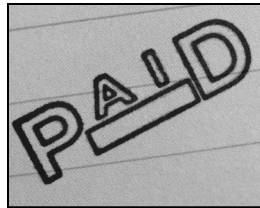


I feel blessed to be a resident of Laketown and your public servant. Every Sunday afternoon I go for a bike ride or drive through the township and after being a resident of the township since 1975, I still discover new places and new natural jewels in the township. We have been blessed with one of the best natural areas in West Michigan. Walk, ride, or drive through the township and enjoy God's creation!

I often repeat things in my article because they are traditional issues and you will find some usual repetitive comments in the next few paragraphs.

Taxes are due on Tuesday, February 14, 2012 and we look forward to seeing many of our residents on or before that date. Hamilton School District residents have a higher winter tax bill because the school district opts out of collecting summer taxes. Payment for taxes must be received at the township office on or before February 14.

Postmarks are not honored in determining prompt payment and interest will be added to unpaid bills beginning February 15. Residents may pay by cash or check at the township office. The township also provides the option of



paying by credit card or electronic check. If you use either credit card or electronic check the servicing agent does charge a fee. More information about these options is available at the township website at [www.laketowntwp.org](http://www.laketowntwp.org) and clicking on the link "Online Tax Payments". For credit card payments by phone use the number 1- 800-272-9829. If residents use the telephone or online option, an exact tax amount needs to be known **before starting**. Residents should call the township office at (616) 335-3050 to get the current pay-off amount. Credit card payments are not accepted at the township office.

Hardship exemptions must be filed each year. Deferment requests must be filed for each tax season of each year. Visit the township website or office to receive those forms.

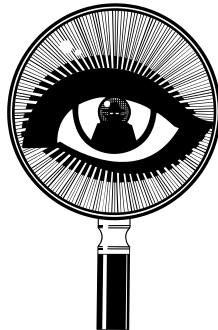
As I write this after the Christmas season, my mind quickly thinks of the concept of gifts. We give physical gifts to family and friends, but equally as important are the natural and relational gifts we give. Whatever our religious or philosophical ideologies are, we give thanks for family, friends, and natural beauty. Personally, I am a committed Christian, but family, friends, and natural beauty are great gifts regardless of our religious or philosophical views. Celebrate the gifts of family, friends, and nature.

## Deputy Round-Up ... Mark Lytle

Greetings and Happy New Year! While the snow for this winter was late to reach us, I think the inevitable is here. Please remember to use extra caution driving on the roads as they become wet and snow covered. Remember to use extra stopping distance when approaching intersections and as always please, use your seatbelts.

Remember to look out for your neighbors this winter. This is the time of the year that the *bad guys* try to take advantage of the people who head south for the winter. Please feel free to report any and all suspicious activity you observe. This is key in helping catch the crooks! In my 14 years of law enforcement experience it is truly amazing to me the amount of times we catch thieves due to simple tips from you. If you are faced with something you seem to think is out of the ordinary don't hesitate to call 911. This is a service you all pay taxes for. Remember to try to be as descriptive as possible. Try to get license plate numbers off the vehicle in question, a direction of travel, vehicle description, and the clothing they were wearing. Remember to never endanger yourself. Any and all tips are always appreciated.

Take care and feel free to call if you are in need of anything.



## Wet Paint!

The Chapel at Shore Acres (formerly historic Gibson Church) found a new home in Shore Acres Park in 2011. Pictured are volunteers from Zeeland Community Hospital who painted the chapel inside and outside on United Way's Day of Caring this past fall.

The Chapel at Shore Acres will be available for rental beginning May 1, 2012. Contact Charlene at (616) 335-3050 for more information.



Be sure to visit the Laketown Township website. Updates are currently in progress. The site is home to useful information and links about living, working and playing in Laketown Township.

[www.laketowntwp.org](http://www.laketowntwp.org)



## From the Fire Department

.... by Fire Chief, Cal Haverdink

As we begin a new year, I want to give a brief re-cap of 2011 activity for Graafschap Fire Department as well as go even further back in history with a historical recap of the history of Graafschap Fire Department written by Mr. Don Blauw.

For the year 2011 Graafschap Fire/Rescue responded to a total of 323 calls. Of those calls, 67 were in Fillmore Township; 246 in Laketown Township, and 10 assists to other Departments. This compares with 303 calls in 2010 and 285 calls in 2009.

Some of the residents in this area may remember Don Blauw - he was a life-time area resident. He served Graafschap Fire Department from it's inception in 1942 until his retirement in 1987. He also was a Laketown Township Board member for many years. The following information is presented exactly as written by Don in 1988:

"In the year 1942, the village of Graafschap, in Allegan County, Michigan, was a place quite similar to what it is at this writing(1988); a quiet village in a rural setting.

In 1942, however, the difference between city and rural area was quite pronounced, and everyone seemed content that it should stay that way.

One of the very obvious services which many rural areas did not have, was a volunteer fire department. This was true of Graafschap and the surrounding area in 1942, which was also the time of World War II.

When, in the early morning of December 3, 1942, a fire broke out in a large, two family frame house, we who lived near to the fire scene discovered how frightening this lack of fire protection could be. As it turned out, our homes and property were spared, but the two families who lived in the house destroyed by fire, lost practically all of their possessions, including their clothes.

The men of our village talked about this on that wintry night, and we got

busy very soon, in organizing a "Graafschap Fire Protection Association". The word went out to the surrounding community, and we had three (3) meetings before the end of December, 1942.

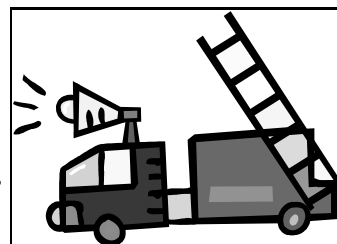
A decision was made to have a Volunteer Fire Department, made up of men who lived in our village, and to provide fire protection to all in the surrounding area who joined the association. The fee for "joining up" was \$10.00, and annual dues were \$10.00 per family.

By raising money in this way, funds were available to buy several buckets for a start, and then to seek and find a truck, a pump, a tank, suitable tires, fire hoses, and nozzles. This may seem strange in the year 1988, but at that time a great deal of seeking, sorting, and evaluating were necessary, to get what we needed. This was the time of World War II, and all of the items needed were hard to come by. The Committees and officers were very diligent, and skilled volunteer workmen were ready to help. In this way it was only a matter of a few months before we had a truck ready to go, and a building to house the truck.

Our officers set up procedures, and we trained as best we could. Our "answering service" was the Clarence Mulder family who owned the local hardware store and were also the local funeral directors. Since they always had someone at home to receive telephone calls, the Mulder family agreed to be responsible also to receive fire calls. One of their family would then engage the siren switch in front of their store, and we who were volunteer firemen would come, get our directions from the man or woman at the siren switch, and go to the fire scene at once. It really worked!

We went to fight a fire whenever or wherever we were called in the surrounding country-side, and those who were not members usually signed up and paid their fee when they realized the fire department was able to do some good in fighting and quenching fires. We also tried to give advice and counsel with regard to fire safety and especially fire prevention. This proved use-

ful and helpful too, and was completely voluntary, unpaid service in those early years.



Water is and always was the essential material for quenching fires. The Graafschap Christian Reformed Church Consistory saw this need, and soon a large cistern was installed West of the church structure, in the parking area. This cistern was kept full of water from the roof run-off, through underground pipes, and also from the deep well at the church. This cistern is always full of water. The cistern has often been used to replenish the supply at a fire, and has often been used for fire drills and for testing pumps and other new equipment. It is a very good stand-by water supply for the church, and is a great help for the entire area. There are occasions also when the cistern is filled from the fire department's tank truck, to make sure the full supply is there when or if needed. Our officers and all volunteer firemen also checked out streams, ponds, and other cisterns, to determine availability of water as needed. Our trucks are able to pump from any and all sources of available water, and with the use of our auxiliary pumps, water can be moved from one source to another point, including two large portable holding tanks. We now have access to fire hydrants, on the Holland City System, which makes availability of water less of a problem. This is progress!

As time went on, the costs of operating the volunteer department increased, and it became more difficult to buy and maintain dependable equipment with a voluntary "donation and dues" arrangement, especially after World War II came to an end, and the close-knit community feelings underwent some changes too.

Our Fire Board began having discussions with the Township Boards of the two townships involved in our area.

...Continued on Page 6

Fire Department History Continued...

Those were the Townships of Laketown, lying West of Graafschap Road, and Fillmore, lying East of Graafschap Road. The Township Boards reacted favorably, and in the summer of 1949 a special election was called. It was at that election the decision was approved by the electors of the two Townships to "take over" the Graafschap Volunteer Department, purchase a new fire truck, and authorize the Township Boards to provide necessary funds to see to the proper operation of the Department.

The Department has seen many changes since that time. We worked with several answering systems, from local volunteers "taking their turn", to Horne's answering service, along with CB radios, and finally to a county wide (Allegan) answering service, and a monitor for each active volunteer fireman. These calls are taken at the Allegan County Sheriff's office, and dispatching is done from there. We also have special crews made up of volunteer firemen who are trained as "first responders" in the event of medical emergencies which require immediate

response. This system provides preliminary help to those who may require assistance, before the regular ambulance and the paramedics can reach the scene.

The "volunteer" fire department of a decade ago continues to be a "volunteer" department, but today there is some remuneration for service rendered; insurance is required and maintained, and mutual assistance agreements among all of the departments, including Holland City, is an established fact. Fires are dreaded catastrophes as always, but the Graafschap Fire Department takes its place as a willing, well trained, properly equipped department, ready to serve in a variety of emergency situations, primarily the control and extinguishing of fires in our area.

A footnote can be added. Since its beginning, the Graafschap Fire Department has had four men who served as Fire Chief. At this writing these men are all living in this area. Their names are Gerald Mannes, Dave Schripsema, Clarence Elders, and Dave DenBleyker, our present Chief."

POSTAL PATRON

PRSRRT STLD  
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 Weishaar
- Parks and Recreation Chair - Linda Howell
- Township Staff
- Manager - Al Meshkin
- Assessor - Paul Smith
- Administrative Assistants: Kathy Stoike, Charlene Fields, Jennifer French, Diane Ybarra, Staci Veldt
- 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