



LAKETOWN NEWS

Fall 2011
Volume 24, No. 4

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

Laketown Calendar

November

- 2 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 2 - Planning Commission
- 9 - Township Board
- 16 - Parks and Recreation
- 16 - DDA, 5:30 p.m.
- 24 & 25 - Office Closed for Thanksgiving
- 28 - ZBA

December

- 7 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 7 - Planning Commission
- 14 - Township Board
- 13 - Board of Review
- 23 & 26 - Office Closed for Christmas

January

- 2 - Office Closed for New Year
- 4 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 4 - Planning Commission
- 11 - Township Board
- 18 - Parks and Recreation
- 25 - ZBA
- 30 - DDA

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

Charter Township Options

In July of this year, following the release of census data, Laketown Township (along with every Michigan township with a population of 2,000 or more residents) received a notice from the State of Michigan advising us that we were eligible to be incorporated as a Charter Township. State law in the Charter Township Act of 1947, requires that we publish a notice (which we have done) advising township residents that we are eligible to incorporate as a Charter Township. Following publication, the township board has the following options to consider:

1. adopt, by a majority vote, a resolution opposed to incorporation as a Charter Township
2. adopt, by a majority vote, a resolution of intent to approve incorporation as a Charter Township
3. adopt, by a majority vote, a resolution to place before the electorate at the next regular or special township election the question of incorporation as a Charter Township

Each of the options before the board deserves a bit of clarification and I would like to discuss them and how they would affect township residents now and in the future. Under option number one, things would essentially remain the same. Our board would still consist of five members and our millage rate would remain the same.

Under option number two, the township board would increase to seven members and our millage rate would remain the same. If this option were adopted, the citizens of the township have the right to file a "Right to Referendum Petition".

Under option number three, the question of Charter Township status would be determined by the citizens of the township at an election. If approved, the township board would be increased to seven members and our levied millage could be increased to five mills.



Although Charter Township status has been generally discussed, the township board has not formally brought it to a vote. It is my recommendation to the board that before any formal action is taken that we schedule a public hearing to receive comments from residents regarding the possibility of any change in our current status. Please feel free to contact any board member regarding this matter.

As I am writing this in mid-October, I am reminded how beautiful our township is at this time of the year. The weather is beautiful and the colors are simply amazing! Everyone should be out enjoying nature and enjoying our many parks and waterfront.



If you have not already done so, please consider a drive to the Felt Mansion and take a look at the "Gibson Church" in its new setting. It fits in well in the mansion grounds and I am positive that it will be well used and enjoyed.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to each person who donated not only to its move, but also to each person and company who donated time, materials and labor to make this a successful project. Volunteers are needed and necessary in this day and age and I, with the township board, wish to thank each and every one of our many volunteers for keeping Laketown Township and its many parks and open spaces beautiful. Thank You!

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

My Missing Right Arm Metaphorically speaking, I have lost my right arm. In reality, I've never even broken my right arm, but if I had, my life would be somewhat difficult, trying and struggling to manage life without my predominant arm. I've tried it, brushing my teeth, eating and writing. It is somewhat awkward, frustrating, and even amusing, and it never feels quite "right" so to speak!



Well this is what "work-wise" has happened. I have lost my right-arm (person). Mary Geurink, my deputy clerk and friend has taken a new job after 23 years of service to Laketown Township. I say "hats off to her" for trying something new, for stepping out there to check off a new adventure. But I

also say "hey I really will miss my old right arm!" We will truly miss her and wish her every blessing in her new venture!

Election Update November 8 is Election Day for those living in the Saugatuck School district. They alone will be voting on school board members to fill two positions. Polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 p.m.

Make sure if you are in the Saugatuck School district that you vote either at the Township Hall the day of the election, or by Absentee Ballot. Absentee Ballots are available by calling or visiting the Township Hall during regular working hours Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. The last day to register is October 11.

You can view a sample ballot by going to our web site www.laketowntwp.org.

Cemetery Update We are pleased to welcome Art Philippus as our new cemetery sexton. We are grateful that Art has already dedicated time to making repairs on the utility building and sprucing up the grounds. If you have seasonal or artificial flowers and memorabilia that is faded and spent, we ask that you remove them by the end of October, so we can prepare the cemetery for the winter season. Thank you!

New Right Arm As I've said earlier, losing your right arm can be dis"arming"! But gaining a skilled new one can be exciting! Jenny French has accepted the position of Deputy Clerk. She has extensive experience with elections and exhibits impeccable skills in all areas of the election process.

We welcome you, Jenny. I sincerely look forward to our new working relationship!

A SMART MOVE FOR FARMERS ... Mary Fales, Macatawa Watershed Coordinator

Are you a farmer that is interested in keeping your soil and nutrients on your farm? Okay, dumb question. Seems like something every farmer would want to do right? If you aren't using cover crops already, you should seriously consider it. The list of benefits from cover crops is lengthy but here are a few examples: increases soil organic matter, increases infiltration of water into the soil, reduces soil compaction, increases nutrient availability to the crop, supplies nitrogen to the following year crop, attracts beneficial insects like pollinators, and suppresses soil born diseases and nematodes.

A recent edition of *Farm Futures* ran a compelling article about cover crops that chronicled the story of an Indiana corn and soy bean grower whose clay soils have been transformed by just 5 years of cover crops use. He is up to planting 1000 acres of winter wheat, rye, clovers and radishes. He said that "using cover crops has never delayed me from planting".

If you are interested in experimenting with cover crops but don't know where to start- DON'T LET THAT STOP YOU. There is a lot of technical assistance available. You first want to start with contacting Christina Curell with Michigan State University Extension who is a cover crops expert at (231) 592-0792 or email at curellc@anr.msu.edu.

Cover crops, as well as buffer strips, no-till and grassed waterways are often eligible practices for cost-share through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Contact Bruce Van Den Bosch with the Allegan County NRCS office at (269)673-8903 ext 110.

If you would like a copy of the *Farm Futures* article referenced above please call Mary Fales at the Macatawa Watershed Project at (616) 395-2688 or email mfales@the-macc.org.

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

The Allegan County Commissioners met in October regarding the 2012 budget. The County will be prepared to approve the final budget soon.

Last week, County and local officials met to discuss issues with Sheriff's Departments Road Patrol. It has been increasingly impossible for Sheriff's officers to seek reliable back-up in a dangerous situation, because of the lack of officers that are in a position to assist. The breakout session lasted well over four hours, and culminated with ideas on possible funding and collaboration of services solutions.

State representative Bob Genetski had his annual local Officials Conference recently. The budgets cuts at the State level were again the hot-topic for discussion.

The financial position in Allegan County is very good, and that is based on good financial decisions by our administration and our County Board. The County has been able to save money on a yearly basis, and stabilize our general fund.

The Allegan County jail issue should be resolved soon. Issuing bonds had no challenge from the citizenry, which gives the County the money to implement the

restructuring of the Hawthorn plant in the City of Allegan for a County Correctional facility. Bids should go out in November.



Sobriety Court is coming along really well. The funding for that comes from liquor taxes within the county and block grants that are made available through the state.

From The Assessor ... by Paul Smith

Again this year the state tax commission has ordered that a one year sales study be used for most jurisdictions for 2012 (rather than the traditional two year study) in an attempt to more accurately reflect the current state of the housing market. The dates for the one year study will include all arms-length sales that occur between October 1, 2010 and September 30,

and we have had more "good" sales this year than last.

The following are some examples from our database so that you can better understand the process that adjusts assessments up or down.

Analysis: For 2011 we had raised assessments about 5% in the 4170

and may need to drop them a bit more for 2012.

This process of comparing sale prices to our assessments is an ongoing process and is what determines your assessed value and whether it increases or decreases each year.

Sales prices seem to have stabilized

2011. This will be our 4th year of using the shorter, one year sales period. These one year periods reduce the amount of data (sales) that we can use, and can have the unintended effect of producing a wider fluctuation

Neighborhood	Sales Date	Sale Price	*TCV When Sold	% Difference
4310	9/09/11	\$223,500	\$224,000	+0.22%
Heritage Meadows	7/15/11	\$205,000	\$180,000	-12.20%
	6/20/11	\$215,000	\$262,400	-22.05%
4170	4/23/10	\$295,000	\$227,800	+22.78%
North/Center	4/30/10	\$285,000	\$277,400	+2.67%
Of Twp	5/28/10	\$121,600	\$119,400	+1.80%
4100	9/16/11	\$425,000	\$399,200	+6.07%
Hidden Hollow	7/14/11	\$292,500	\$268,800	+8.10%
	5/18/11	\$285,000	\$275,600	+3.30%

* TCV = True Cash Value in our database

overall. Foreclosure activity has slackened and we actually have people calling and coming into the office researching properties for sale which is encouraging. Keep in mind that this entire discussion pertains to

in assessed values. As an example, if you were to graph the stock market from 1950 to the present, the trend line would gradually slope up. If you graphed the stock market for last month it would look like a roller coaster.

Assessments move up or down based on sale prices compared to our assessments. The more sales, the better of course (more data is always a good thing)

neighborhood and about 10% in the Hidden Hollow neighborhood. We had a fair number of folks calling wondering if we had lost our marbles raising assessments in this market. From the above data you can see that the most recent sales show assessments are fairly accurate if a bit low. In the Heritage Meadows neighborhood we had dropped assessments about 10% for 2011

your assessed value. Your taxable value is locked in and adjusts based on the CPI (Consumers Price Index) each year as determined on a statewide basis by the State Tax Commission. The only exceptions to this are new construction or when the property sells or if the assessed value drops below the calculated taxable value, then you would pay on the lower amount.

Public Hearing Planned

The Laketown Township Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing on the proposed zoning ordinance changes for the Blue Star Highway Corridor at 7 p.m. on Wednesday,

December 7, 2011 at the township hall. The Planning Commission has been working on this amendment for over two years. Copies of the complete text are available at the township hall and the township website at www.laketowntwp.org.

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

Keep The Township Bike Path Beautiful.

Pick Up After Your Pet !

Remember - no horses are allowed on the bike path!

Treasurer's Trove

... by Laketown Township Treasurer, Gary Dewey



Days, weeks, months, and years fly by so quickly and I ask God to slow me down. A way that I slow down somewhat is when I take my Sunday bike or car ride through the township. I marvel at what a beautiful township we have and I feel so blessed by our residents because of the positive attitude and friendliness they have. When I collect taxes, our residents are so positive and comment often about the blessing of freedom we have. God bless the USA, but let us never forget to be a blessing to others!

We are always thankful for the prompt payment of taxes so we can distribute funds to the state, county, schools, the library, the pool, etc. so they can provide the services that we expect and enjoy. Summer taxes have been collected, but if you still owe them, a late fee of 1 % is added on September 15th and then again on the first of each month. Partial payments are accepted and interest is added only to the unpaid balance.

We will mail winter tax bills the first week of December and they will be due on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2012. Remember that postmarks are not honored. A 3% penalty is added to any unpaid balance on February 15th.

All unpaid taxes as of March 1st will be forwarded to the Allegan County Treasurer for collection and they will add additional interest and penalties at that time. February 29th is the last day to pay taxes at the township office.

Tax deferment requests must be filed for each of the winter and summer tax seasons. Forms are available at the township office, the township website, or the county website. Hardship exemptions are granted by the Board of Review and will be reviewed again at the December meeting. Applicants for these exemptions must indicate honest income status and may be prosecuted if invalid information is provided.

A reminder, tax payments are accepted by cash, check, credit card or electronic check. All credit card payments must be made by phone or internet, and electronic check payments may also be made by internet. The township office accepts payments by cash or check only. Please check the associated fees with all electronic payments. A confirmation number and receipt is generated upon successful completion of your transaction. Additional information is available by visiting www.laketowntwp.org and follow the "on-line payments" link.

If you have questions, please call Gary Dewey or Charlene Fields at the township office at (616) 335-3050.

See You In The Parks

... by Linda Howell

Over this past summer our parks provided Laketown residents and friends with incredible sunsets over the lake, plentiful blueberries, miles of hiking trails, outdoor activities like disc golf and mountain biking, along with miles of bike and walking paths. Various studies, including some by Michigan State University's Land Policy Institute, show both that people value their surroundings and that parks like ours increase property values. MSU documented that people want to live in an area where parks and experiences like those found in Laketown exist. MSU found that talented people are mobile and will go to or settle in locations that have amenities like parks and recreation which add to the quality of life.

In order to keep up with existing (and expected future) use and to preserve the experiences that our parks provide, the Parks Commission is in the process of updating the Five Year Community Recreation Plan. The current Plan can be viewed on the Township's website under

the Parks tab. The Plan is a tool used to prioritize projects and to support grant applications.

The current Plan reflects what residents have told the Parks Commission are desired and should be priorities. Residents told the Parks Commission they enjoy Wolters Woods Park so we went after the grant to acquire the adjacent parcel (we were awarded that grant and are just waiting for the State to finish its part of the paperwork). Residents indicated they wanted a place for more active recreation like ball diamonds and basketball courts so we are currently pursuing a grant to put in some of those items behind the Township Hall on Beeline Rd. in the center of the Township. We should hear if we will receive this grant sometime this fall.

The current Plan actually expires in April 2012 so we will finish the update this winter. One of the key updates will address the status of the beach stairs. The blizzard of February 2, 2011, along with the general

winter winds, put over 4 feet of sand on the section of the stairs that is positioned in a north-south direction. In some areas, the winter sand was well over 4 feet deep. The existing stairs are almost 20 years old.

Replacement, reconstruction or relocation of the stairs will be a high priority project in the updated Plan and we will be pursuing grant money in an attempt to remedy this annual problem.

Other projects to be prioritized in the update include the further development of Huyser Farm Park including the reinstallation of the historic orchard as a compliment to the blueberry fields, development of the hiking trails, and the potential addition of a fishing dock at the



(Continued on page 6)

From the Fire Department

... by Fire Chief, Cal Haverdink

As West Michigan weather turns colder and local fire departments emphasize fire prevention I thought it would be good to review facts about smoke detectors and also inform the residents of some of the changes available in smoke detectors.

Before discussing fire safety, I want township residents to know that the Graafschap Fire Department introduced a change to burn permits. During the summer months we will not issue permits on "Clean Air Action Days" formerly known as Ozone Action Days. These are the hot, humid days when there is little air movement and any smoke generated tends to stay near ground level where it may cause problems for those with breathing difficulties, as well as increase the potential for being a nuisance to the area. Please remember this, and plan your burn days accordingly.

In regards to smoke detectors, most of the following is a review, but there have been some advances in smoke detector capabilities. One of the questions frequently asked is, where should a smoke detector be located? The best answer for that is a detector should be installed on every level of your home, outside of sleeping areas, and inside each bedroom.



Please remember to change your smoke detector batteries when you change your clocks. One advancement in technology does limit this change. Lithium battery smoke detectors are new in the market. These batteries have a 10 year life expectancy, so changing them each year is not necessary. When the battery begins to fail it signals it is time to replace the smoke detector. Also you cannot remove these batteries. That means it is difficult to disable the alarm. If you choose to replace older detectors with new ones, I would encourage you to replace them with the new Lithium battery detectors.

A fact not expressed often enough is that any smoke detector that is 10 years old or older should be replaced with a new one. It is still essential to test smoke detectors each month to insure they are working properly.

When installing smoke detectors you should not install them too close to kitchen appliances or a fireplace, as this may result in nuisance alarms. Also installing a detector near a bathroom where steam from a shower could enter the detector is not advised. Ceiling fans can also affect a smoke detector, as the air movement could interrupt the normal path that smoke would take.

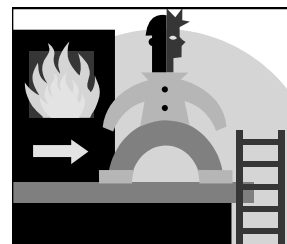
Another advance in smoke detector technology is the introduction of inter-connected detectors. With wireless technology being used more and more some of the smoke detector manufacturers have introduced systems that allow every detector to sound if one is activated. (First Alert has this product available) That means if a detector in your basement is activated every detector in your home would sound. This early alarm would add precious time for your family to escape if a fire were to occur.

Remember there are two primary types of fire: One is a fast moving flaming fire, and the other would be a slow moving smoldering fire. In either type of fire, an early warning and rapid escape could help prevent injury or death to yourself or a family member.

In addition to having smoke alarms, Graafschap Fire Department encourages every family to have an escape plan in place. If you need assistance in developing an escape plan contact the Fire Department and we can provide assistance.

When developing a fire escape plan for yourself and your family:

- * Practice escaping from every room in your home.
- * The best plans have two ways out of each room. If the primary escape route is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out.



- * Practice the escape plan with your family during the day and at night. Children, older adults, and the hearing-impaired may sleep through a fire alarm or may need assistance in escaping.

- * Designate a meeting location away from the home, but not necessarily across the street. For example, meet under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk to make sure everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe.

- * Designate one person to go to a neighbor's home to phone the Fire Department. (911)

- * Practice your fire escape plan at least twice a year.

Remember Fire Prevention Week should be a year round activity for all residents!

The SNOW is Coming...

Please remember, depositing snow from snow plowing onto the bike path is illegal.



The Felt Estate will continue its holiday tradition of decking the historic 1920s mansion. Be sure to visit during the upcoming holiday season.

Visit www.feltmansion.org for tour and event information.

See You In The Parks continued...

pond. All these items were included in the master plan for the park that was drafted some years ago. The Huyser Farm Park master plan also is available on the Township website under the Parks tab.

There will be a public hearing on the Five Year Community Recreation Plan update; the exact date and time of the hearing will be posted as soon as the update draft is ready. We anticipate the hearing will be in January or February 2012. We would like your input. Written comments, questions or suggestions which can be sent to the Township Office or you are welcome to present your suggestions or concerns at the Parks Commission's meetings held on the third Wednesday of each month at the Township Hall at 7:00 p.m. Please note there usually is no meeting in December.

Deputy Round-Up ... Mark Lytle

Fall is here and the change of season brings increased deer movement. Please be aware of the deer as you are driving and use extra caution. As the hunting season begins, the deer are chased out of their normal habits and are running more wildly. Remember, deer don't usually look both ways before they cross the road!

Also for all you fair weather friends who don't wish to brave the Winter and usually head south, remember that you can leave contact information with the township hall to have your property checked while you are gone.

With the Fall also comes Halloween, and yes, we will be handing out the glow necklaces again this year. You can either pick these up for your children at the township hall or I will be out handing them out during the night of trick or treating.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by leaving a message with the township hall staff. Thanks and enjoy the fall!!!



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, Jennifer French, Charlene Fields, Diane Vbarr, 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 En-ergy 800.477.5050 or email at customer@consumers.energy.com