



### Terry Hofmeyer, Laketown Township Supervisor

#### Bob Cook – We’re Going to Miss You!

At our last Board of Trustees meeting we accepted, with regret, the resignation of Bob Cook from the Planning Commission. I’ve been your township Supervisor for the past ten years and before that served as the Chairman of the Board of Review. Bob Cook was already on the Planning Commission when I arrived on the scene and over these many years he has served with dignity on behalf of our township and its residents. Serving as Chairman of the Planning Commission is not an easy task. In many instances emotions run high and not everyone remains polite or reasonable. I have personally seen Bob Cook remain calm during highly charged meetings while keeping audience members on an even keel and allowing all points of view to be expressed and considered. It has been an honor to have worked with him and we all owe him a very sincere “Thank You” for everything he has done in fairly representing each of us on the Planning Commission. He will be missed, but we wish him well as he enjoys his much deserved retirement.

Volunteers such as Bob are always needed to fill current and future vacancies on our many boards and commissions and I urge you to consider serving the township by submitting your name to the township board to be considered for a future appointment.

The township’s Annual Meeting will be held at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at the township hall. This meeting remains an excellent source for you to receive current information on each of our boards and commissions as well as the direction of your Board of Trustees. March 8<sup>th</sup> is also the night that we will review and adopt our annual budget for the coming year. I urge you to attend and become an informed resident.

I look forward to 2017 and remain confident that we will continue to grow and progress. I am of the opinion that the Board of Trustees remains committed to finding an equitable solution to providing adequate internet access to each and every resident. It appears that the State of Michigan as well as many on the federal level are seeing the importance of this

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#### Laketown Meeting Calendar

##### FEBRUARY

- 1 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 1 - Planning Commission
- 8 - Township Board
- 14 - Winter Taxes Due
- 15 - Parks and Recreation
- 22 - ZBA

##### MARCH

- 1 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 1 - Planning Commission
- 8 - Township Board
- 8 - Annual Meeting
- 15 - Parks and Recreation
- 22 - ZBA

##### APRIL

- 5 - Board Workshop, 4:00 p.m.
- 5 - Planning Commission
- 12 - Township Board
- 19 - Parks and Recreation
- 26 - ZBA

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

### See You in The Parks

*Michelle Sall*

The calendar change to 2017 marks the start of four-year terms for the Parks and Recreation commissioners. Those elected include myself, Ryan Bosscher, Jim Johnson, Jan Lozon, and Karen Simmons. We say goodbye to Bill Synder, whom did not seek reelection. We extend our thanks and gratitude for his many years of dedicated service.

Once again, we have partnered with the Outdoor Discovery Center to offer recreational opportunities throughout the year. Upcoming events are as follows:

- Fri. Feb. 3, 5 pm. Sanctuary Woods (Owl Prowl). No fee, registration required.
- Sat. Feb. 11, 10 am. Farview (Adult hike). No fee, registration required.
- Sat. March 11, 11 am. Huyser Farm (Search for Snow fleas). \$4 fee, registration required.
- Fri. April 21 7:30 pm. Farview (Knee deep in a wetland). No fee, registration required.

For additional information and a complete list, please see the flier enclosed in the newsletter.

There are many things we would like to accomplish and offer to residents. Several projects under consideration include: updating the five-year recreation plan, investigating restroom options, pursuing an opportunity for a dog park, potentially relocating and repurposing the historic township hall, maintenance of the beach stairs and improving security at Huyser Farm.

With a very limited budget, we rely heavily on grant funding and volunteers. We have an “Adopt a Park” program which would be a great fit for Eagle Scout projects, youth groups, companies, or families wishing to spend a little time outdoors making improvements in the parks. We also have needs for individuals with professional expertise.



**2017 Taxable Values Established**

The State Treasury has issued the inflation rate to be used to calculate your 2017 Taxable Value. Your taxable value (excluding any new construction) may increase by 0.9%. Just to compare; last year the inflation rate was 0.3%. So, not surprisingly, very tame inflation. Remember that taxes are based on Taxable Value, not the State Equalized Value (SEV).

As far as assessments (SEV) for 2017 go, sales activity has increased significantly and the overall trend is showing our property values are increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Interest rates have inched up but are still very low at about 4% for a 30-year mortgage. Some areas, condos in particular, which were hit the hardest during the real estate downturn are showing a significant rebound.

In late February, you will be receiving your 2017, "Valuation Change Notice". Check the numbers and if you have any questions, please call and we can go over them.

**Disabled Veteran's Exemption**

These exemption requests need to be applied for each year. Affidavits with the proper documentation will be processed at the March, July and December Boards of Review for that year. Applying in March allows us to start the year on the right foot and avoids mid-year changes so this is preferable if possible.

This exemption will eliminate property taxes but does not eliminate special assessments.

We have the forms and requirements here at the office or you can search the internet for: "5107STC Affidavit".

**Eligible Personal Property Tax Exemption**

If you are a business owner and the total value of all personal property in the township has a True Cash Value of less than \$80,000 and you file the form 5076 each year by the filing deadline, your personal property will be exempt from taxation.



We included the form along with the annual Personal Property State-ments that we mailed out in early December. If you qualify and file the 5076 form then you do not need to file the Personal Property Statement.

**Principal Residence Exemptions**

If you have purchased a home or built a new home in our township over the last year and will be using it as your principal residence, please be sure that you have filed the affidavit to receive the Principal Residence Exemption. Since you can only have one "Principal Residence", be sure that you've also rescinded any similar exemptions on previous homes.

**The Felt Estate Solar Gardens Soak Up the Sunshine**

Winter may seem cloudy and gray, but that doesn't stop our solar array! The solar array soaks up every bit of sunshine during the entire year including the intermittent sun during the winter. We installed our solar array in December of 2015 – so December of 2016 marked our one year anniversary.

In the first year, we generated 123,932kWh of electricity. Consumers Energy pays us 19.9 cents/kWh, so the array generated \$24,662. Our lease payments for the array are \$1,627.92/month (or \$19,535/year). Therefore, our array generated a net revenue for the Felt of \$5,127 for the year.

The building of the array required no capital outlay from the Township or the Felt Estate. Instead, Community Green Energy funds the project and CGE sells "subscriptions" to the array to interested participants. So, residents who cannot have solar on their home site can still participate in this renewable energy source by purchasing a subscription in the project from CGE.

Also, for those residents who are interested in solar for their own homes, Community Green Energy also has cost savings options for private homeowners. For more information on these programs, contact David Thurnau: [dthurnau@communitygreenenergy.com](mailto:dthurnau@communitygreenenergy.com)

This unique project represents a partnership between two private businesses, a local unit of government, a public utility, and a non-profit organization. That is no small feat, and we are very proud to be a part of this cooperative project. The Felt Estate Solar Garden is anticipated to have a life-span of 40+ years, and is virtually maintenance-free.



**Annual Meeting / March 8 at 7 PM**  
**Township Hall**

# Treasurer's Trove

Laketown Township Treasurer, Gary Dewey

What a blessing to live in and be involved as a public servant in Laketown Township! We have the most beautiful township along the lakeshore and I urge you to stay involved or be involved in township government. You, our residents, assist in creating policy for what happens in the future for the township.

Tax bills were sent out in early December for winter taxes and we have received many payments. Winter taxes are due on Feb.14, 2017. Interest will be added to payments received after this date. Postmarks are not honored in determining prompt payment. The last date to pay taxes for 2016 in the township office is Feb. 28, 2017. All delinquent taxes as of March 1, 2017 will be sent to the Allegan County Treasurer for collection. Additional interest and penalty will be added at that time. For payoff amount after March 1<sup>st</sup>, please contact the Allegan County Treasurer at (269) 673-0260.

Payment can be made by check or cash in the township office. Credit card and electronic check payments

can be made by phone/internet only. Additional fees are applied by the serving agent to all electronic payments. Please visit our township website at [www.laketowntwp.org](http://www.laketowntwp.org) for additional information on electronic payments and follow the "online payments" link.



Hamilton School District continues to have the policy of only collecting on the winter tax bill so Hamilton residents have a larger winter tax bill.

Hardship exemption requests need to be filed for each tax cycle/season and tax deferment requests fit the same legal requirement by tax law. Forms are available at the township office or on the township website.

I love observing wildlife during my Sunday drives through the township and sharing those observations. Several eagles, deer, coyote, fox, raccoon, opossum, and late season bluebirds are some of my observations. What are some of yours? Contact me at my township email or at [deweygary@gmail.com](mailto:deweygary@gmail.com).



# From the Fire Department

Fire Chief Doug Den Bleyker

I would like to start this newsletter with a few statistics from the year 2016. This past year saw another record year in calls for service with a 2.87% increase over 2015 with a total of 466 fire, medical and rescue calls. The call volume increase over the last two years is 7.13%. Estimated fire losses for the Graafschap Fire service area in 2016 is estimated to be \$313,100.

Graafschap Fire Dept. started installing smoke alarms in March of 2014 as a participant in the MI SAFE pilot program. In 2016, with the help of Operation Save-A-Life, we also began installing carbon monoxide (CO) alarms.

Since 2014, 303 homes were serviced, with 1706 smoke alarms and 99 CO alarms installed.

Of these:

40 homes had no working smoke alarms (13 %)

228 homes had smoke alarms that were over 10 years old (75 %)

45 homes had children living in the home (15 %)  
29 homes had children under the age of 10 living in the home (10 %)  
200 homes had adults over the age of 65 living in the home (66 %)

If you remember in previous newsletters I discussed numerous lighting changes at the Fire Station and the following is a recap of what was completed in 2016. We participated in the Holland BPW Energy Smart Program and replaced the night lights in the apparatus bay and the parking lot lights with LED lighting. The total cost for the LED lights and labor was \$1,952.97 and the rebates we received from the BPW were \$1,627.47, for a total out of pocket cost \$325.00. The annual estimated energy cost savings per year is \$1,341. Our goal in the next year is to replace the wall paks that are adjacent to the apparatus bay doors. These units are more expensive because the entire fixture needs to be replaced, not just the

bulb like the upgrades that were completed this past year.

When you get in your vehicle to travel this winter season,

**please remember to turn your headlights on.** Most newer vehicles headlights will automatically turn on when it is dark outside, but during the day, even if it is snowing it is not dark enough to trigger the sensor that turns on the headlights, so you need to manually turn on your headlights. We have already had a few close calls while working accidents scenes this winter. Also, if you have a fire hydrant near your home, please help us by keeping the snow cleared for three feet around the hydrant. This will ensure we can find and access the hydrant in a timely manner if needed.



## ICE SAFETY TIPS from the Michigan DNR

### Things to consider before you go out:

- \*Ice conditions vary from lake to lake. Find a good local source - a bait shop or fishing guide - that is knowledgeable about ice conditions on the lake you want to fish on.
- \*Purchase a pair of ice picks or ice claws, which are available at most sporting goods stores.
- \*Tell a responsible adult where you are going and what time to expect you back. Relaying your plan can help save your life if something does happen to you on the ice.

### What to know about ice:

- \*You can't always tell the strength of ice simply by its look, its thickness, the temperature or whether or not it is covered with snow.
- \*Clear ice that has a bluish tint is the strongest. Ice formed by melted and refrozen snow appears milky, and is very porous and weak.
- \*Ice covered by snow always should be presumed unsafe. Snow acts like an insulating blanket and slows the freezing process. Ice under the snow will be thinner and weaker. A snowfall also can warm up and melt existing ice.
- \*If there is slush on the ice, stay off. Slush ice is only about half as strong as clear ice and indicates the ice is no longer freezing from the bottom.
- \*Be especially cautious in areas where air temperatures have fluctuated. A warm spell may take several days to weaken the ice; however, when temperatures vary widely, causing the ice to thaw during the day and refreeze at night, the result is a weak, "spongy" or honeycombed ice that is unsafe.
- \*The DNR does not recommend the standard "inch-thickness" guide used by many anglers and snowmobilers to determine ice safety. A minimum of four inches of clear ice is required to support an average person's weight on the ice, but since ice seldom forms at a uniform rate it is important to check ice thickness with a spud and ruler every few steps.



### Venturing out on the ice:

- \*The DNR does not recommend taking a car or truck out onto the ice at any time.
- \*If you are walking out onto a frozen body of water with a group, avoid crossing ice in a single file.
- \*Never venture out alone without telling a responsible adult on shore your plans.
- \*Test ice thickness with an ice spud before you settle on a spot.
- \*If you are with a group, avoid standing together in a spot. Spread out.
- \*Wear a life jacket and bright colored clothing.
- \*Take a cell phone for emergency use.
- \*Look for large cracks or depressions in the ice and avoid those areas.
- \*Remember ice does not form with uniform thickness on any body of water. Underwater springs and currents can wear thin spots on the ice.



### If you fall through:

- \*Try to remain calm.
- \*Don't remove your winter clothing. Heavy clothes won't drag you down, but instead can trap air to provide warmth and flotation. This is especially true with a snowmobile suit.
- \*Turn in the water toward the direction you came from - that is probably the strongest ice.
- \*If you have them, dig the points of the ice picks into the ice and, while vigorously kicking your feet, pull yourself onto the surface by sliding forward on the ice.
- \*Roll away from the area of weak ice. Rolling on the ice will distribute your weight to help avoid breaking through again.
- \*Get to shelter, heat, dry clothing and warm, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks.
- \*Call 911 and seek medical attention if you feel disoriented, have uncontrollable shivering, or have any other ill effects that may be symptoms of hypothermia (the life-threatening drop in the body's core temperature).

### *Continued from Page 1...*

need and are willing to look at options which may be available to provide internet access to "Rural America". We'll continue to keep you posted on our progress.

If you're like me you very likely spent part of your holiday catching up on projects around your home. I made my stop at Graafschap Hardware for a few items and found myself in a conversation about energy conservation, particularly light bulbs. LED light bulbs now offer high energy efficiency, excellent light levels at economic prices – whether you're buying them at your local hardware store or at a nearby "big box" store. Both the Holland Board of Public

Works and Consumers offer energy saving programs and information as well as, on occasion, free bulbs. It's a small first step, but you WILL save money. I've started utilizing LED bulbs and I encourage you to do so as well. I'll thank you and so will the environment!

As I write this article for the newsletter, the Detroit Lions are out of the play-offs and Clemson has just defeated Alabama for the National Championship. For the immediate future, I'm looking forward to the first week of February as my mother (a Laketown Township resident) turns 97! Happy Birthday Mom!

## Winter Fun at Herrick District Library

Any tried-and-true Michigander knows that the stretch between New Year's and Valentine's Day can be a boring, sluggish marathon of mental endurance. With seasonal retail shops closing, friends leaving for warmer climates, and bitter weather keeping everyone cooped up inside, finding joy in this cold season proves almost impossible.

But, lo! What light through yonder window breaks? Is it a bird? A plane? No, it's Herrick District Library with an amazing announcement: the Main Library will now be open on Sundays from 1:00pm to 6:00pm! Thanks to the support of the greater Holland community's passing of the August Millage Levy, the Herrick District Library is now able to extend its services to the community every Sunday. Dispel that winter chill by stopping in for a book or a movie or a fun conversation with one of our many, friendly librarians.

Did school get cancelled, but the roads aren't too dangerous to head out for a fun adventure? Come to the Main Library for pop-up events to keep you smiling. We'll



have events for both kids and teens. After the snow day is announced, be sure to check our website ([herrickdl.org/events](http://herrickdl.org/events)) for more information about the specific activities being offered.

Looking for something engaging and thought-provoking? Herrick District Library is partnering up with Grand Valley State University to bring you the Community Reading Project 2017. This year, we'll be reading "The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas" by Anand Giridharadas. Copies of the book are available for checkout at the Herrick District Library. The Community Reading Project will kick-off with a discussion lead by author and professor Dr. Kelly James Clark at the Herrick District Library Main Library on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. A fascinating series of discussions will take place in the following weeks, all leading up to an evening with the author, Anand Giridharadas, on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Main Library. For more information about the Community Reading Project and events, please visit [www.gvsu.org](http://www.gvsu.org) or [herrickdl.org/events](http://herrickdl.org/events).

We know winter can challenge even the strongest constitutions, but with Sunday hours, snow day programming, and stimulating community discussions, Herrick District Library is here to say, "bring it on, winter... bring it on."



## Felt Estate Soars as Popular Event and Concert Venue

Many thanks once again to the residents of Laketown Township who supported the Felt Estate in 2016. We had another great year!

Our recent holidays tour numbers were down a little bit from last year (but still an increase over the previous years). The dip was due mostly to the calendar. We are closed on Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Eve – and all of these holidays fell on the weekend this year. Weekends are our busiest tour times, so it meant fewer visitors than the previous years. This will improve each year as the holidays get closer again to mid-week.

The popularity of the Felt Estate as a rental venue continues. If you are interested in renting the Felt Estate for a private event this year, contact [staci@laketowntwp.org](mailto:staci@laketowntwp.org) or call the office at 616-335-3050.

In 2017, we look forward, once again, to our summer concerts: Thursdays at the Felt. Here is the list of dates and performers:

June 15 – Delilah DeWylde

June 22 – Kari Lynch (recent winner at Art Prize for Music Video)

June 29 – Orquesta Tradicion

July 6 – Out of Favor Boys

July 13 – Brena

July 20 – Zion Lion

We will give more details about these groups as the concerts near. All concerts are free admission and begin at 7:00 p.m. with food and drink available from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All proceeds of the beverage sales benefit the Friends of the Felt Estate. Food at five of the concerts will be provided by JK Bakehouse. At the other concert, food will be provided by Spectator's Sports Bar and Grill. So, save the dates and plan to attend for fabulous music at the Felt Estate.

The Felt Mansion is on the National Register of Historic Places and the Michigan Register of Historic Sites. The preservation project has won awards at the local, state, and national level – including LEED-EB Gold Certification for its green initiatives. To become a member of the Friends of the Felt Estate, please go to the website [www.feltmansion.org](http://www.feltmansion.org) and click on the "shop" item on the menu.



Thank you again for your wonderful support of the Felt Estate.

Laketown Township  
4338 Beeline Road  
Holland, Michigan 49423  
Phone: (616) 335-3050  
Fax: (616) 335-5459  
www.laketowntwp.org

**Office Hours:**

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

**Laketown Township Board**

Township Office - (616) 335-3050

Supervisor - Terry Hofmeyer

Treasurer - Gary Dewey

Clerk - Wendy Van Huis

Trustee - Linda Howell

Trustee - Ed Stielstra

Planning Commission Chair - Bob Slikkers

Zoning Board of Appeals Chair - David Weishaar

Parks and Recreation Chair - Michelle Sall

**Township Staff**

Manager - Al Meshkin

Assessor - Paul Smith

Administrative Assistants: Kathy Stoike, Charlene Fields, Jenifer French, Diane Ybarra, Staci Veldt

Facilities Operations - Dan Williams

Graafschap Fire Department - (616) 396-4060

Building Inspector - Al Ellingsen - (269) 214-2382

Mechanical Inspector & Plumbing Inspector -  
Bob Modreske (616) 477-4940

Electrical Inspector - Gordon Bosch - (616) 396-1448

**Allegan County Directory**

County Commissioner -

Dean Kapenga - (616) 218-2599

Animal Control - (269) 673-0519

Central Dispatch - (269) 673-3899

County 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 & Veterans Services - 877-673-5333

County Treasurer - (269) 673-0260

Streets Lights - contact Consumers Energy 800- 477-5050 or email at [customer@consumers.engery.com](mailto:customer@consumers.engery.com)

State Representative - Mary Whiteford (517) 373-0836

State Senator Tonya Schuitmaker (517) 373-0793

U.S. Congressman - Fred Upton - (269) 982-1986