Laketown News

Terry Hofmeyer, Laketown Township Supervisor

Proud and Not So Proud

Recently, I had the opportunity to show off a few of our township’s parks and recreation areas to some newcomers to Holland. They were impressed! We should also be impressed! In my opinion, we have a lot to be proud of what we have available to us to both use and enjoy in Laketown Township!

But, I then wondered if they would have been impressed attending our Annual Meeting and public hearing on our proposed 2018-2019 budget held this past March. At this informational meeting township residents felt free to interrupt one another, talk down to and belittle neighbors and fellow residents. I understand that people can be passionate about budgets, programs and projects but, I also fully expect that residents should respect other people’s views as well as their own.

All township meetings are business meetings and are conducted under Robert’s Rules of Order. Following these rules of conduct insures that meetings are conducted in a proper and civil manner and that all persons have the opportunity to be heard and voice their viewpoints on the business being conducted.

As I look around our township I see an area of not only beauty, but of opportunity to participate in the running of our township. We cannot however reach that goal if we cannot remain civil toward one another. We should collectively demand that those who disrupt meetings with uncalled for or personal attacks towards audience members or meeting officials will not be tolerated. I like and enjoy our meetings and I look forward to each of them but, we do have to follow common rules of conduct and remain civil toward everyone - regardless of differing viewpoints.

On a brighter note - for over fifteen years the township has had a small and dedicated group of residents who have "adopted" a section of street(s) for the clean-up of trash and/or debris. If you would like to volunteer (Laketown Township supplies the bags and coordinates the clean-up dates) please give the office a call and you will be assigned a street or section of a street for clean-up. Thanks for considering this volunteer opportunity to keep our streets trash free. I’d be proud to welcome you as a volunteer and you'll be proud to be a partner in keeping Laketown Township the great community that it is!

Treasurer’s Trove

Laketown Township Treasurer, Gary Dewey

I love living in Laketown and being involved in township issues. Our township is growing with many new houses and condos being built and this introduces many interesting issues that often produce strong opinions for everyone. Civil discussion and attempting to do what is best for the township is not easy for our boards. Personal attacks are totally wrong but have happened in some recent meetings. Please be involved in a positive way of voicing your opinion in our awesome township, state, and nation.

The 2018 tax season is officially over. All tax dollars received have been distributed and our final settlement with the Allegan County Treasurer was on March 20, 2018. Our delinquency rate was the lowest that I recall, about 2%. All unpaid taxes as of March 1, 2018 were turned over to the County for collection. Please contact the Allegan County Treasurer at (269) 673-0260 for current payoff amounts and mailing address.

Hardship exemptions are granted by the Board of Review and must be applied for each year. Tax deferments must be applied for both summer and winter season, and each year. Applications are available at the township office or online at www.laketowntwp.org.

Summer tax bills will be mailed the first week of July and will be due by September 14, 2018. Please remember that postmarks are not honored as payment date. All payments must be received by the due date to be considered on time.

I’m a scientist and nature lover and observe that plants and animals are all becoming more active as they move into spring mode. I heard barred owls this morning, have been observing three or four active bald eagles, had two sandhill cranes in the back yard and have seen many turkey and deer.

Laketown Awesome.
The Parks meetings have been well attended as of late and we appreciate the feedback and input from residents with concerns on park development. We are awaiting news of an acquisition grant submitted last year to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase property at the beach, specifically the section of land in the center of the dune (a.k.a. the sand bowl) as well as lots near the stair entrance. Receiving this grant would aid in future development such as picnic areas, restrooms and improved accessibility issues and dune preservation efforts.

Enclosed in the newsletter please find a Parks and Pathways map. This document was an item requested in the 2016 resident survey and is a nice annual reminder of the many recreational opportunities available in our beautiful township.

A spring clean-up date has been set at Huyser Farm Park for Saturday, May 19 at 9 am. Led by caretaker Sherry Rubino, please consider joining volunteers in cleaning out the farm house, painting and grounds work. Parking is available at the gazebo and a foot bridge at the south west section of the blueberry field will take you on a path through the woods to the historic buildings. The Rubino’s monitor the park regularly with a focus on preserving the property in a natural state. Please bring work gloves and gardening tools. The activity will be canceled in the event of inclement weather.

Watch for a “Meat and Greet” event this summer. Last year the Parks Commission hosted a free hot dogs ‘n fixings meal at the township hall as an opportunity for residents to meet the commissioners and review the five-year master plan for input. Time, date and location to be announced soon.

Planning a spring graduation party, summer family reunion or park outing? If you would like to reserve a picnic pavilion or use of the softball field, a free parks reservation form is available on-line at www.laketowntwp.org.

The Parks Commission meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 7 pm at the township hall and we welcome your attendance and feedback.

From the Fire Department
Fire Chief Doug Den Bleyker & Deputy Chief Sarah Bushee

Over the last several months Graafschap Fire Department (GFD) has been busy with numerous projects and trainings. Because of the hard work and leadership of Captain Todd Achterhof, we were awarded $5,508 through a AAA insurance grant request. This money will be used to purchase Paratech Stabilization Struts. These struts are used to stabilize cars, trucks and anything else that has the potential to move while we work under or around it. An example would be a car on its side with patients inside that need to be extricated.

Deputy Chief Sarah Bushee recently completed all the requirements for her Technician Certification as part of NHTSA’s National Standardized Child Passenger Safety Training Program. We are proud of her accomplishments and the 100% written and practical test scores she received. Watch our Facebook page and future newsletters for dates and times when you will be able to ensure your child’s car seats are safe and installed correctly.

In the next few weeks we will be taking delivery of our new Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA’s). If you remember last year we were awarded $141,715 towards the purchase of this valuable equipment, which is required to be replaced every 15 years. We will also be starting construction this spring of a Live Fire Training Facility (LFTF). The LFTF will be located in Saugatuck Township and is the collaborative effort of seven fire departments. This collaborative resourcing happens quite often in the fire service and is a good way to build solid relationships while minimizing the financial impact on taxpayers.

Call volume for the GFD increased 30% for the year 2017, with a total of 604 calls for service. There is not one specific area where we see a large increase, although traffic accidents are still near the top of the list, with distracted driving being a leading cause.

As part of our Community Risk Reduction Program, we are still offering smoke and carbon monoxide alarm installs, along with Home Safety Surveys where we will do an audit of your home looking for potential problems and offer suggestions for improved safety. Call 616-396-4060 to schedule a time.
Clerk’s Corner

May 8, Special Election
There will be an election on Tuesday, May 8th for those Laketown residents that are in Precinct 1 (Holland Public School District) and Precinct 3 (Saugatuck Public School District).


Precinct 2: NO ELECTION

Precinct 3: Saugatuck Public Schools: I. Bonding Proposal and II. Sinking Fund Millage Proposal

Please remember to vote May 8th at the Township Hall, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. You can obtain an absentee ballot application prior to the election on-line or from the Township Hall during regular business hours.

Gibson Cemetery
If you would like to place a flag over the Memorial Day weekend on the grave site of a veteran who is buried in the Gibson Cemetery, there are flags available at the township hall. You may pick one up during regular office hours. The township will remove the flags on the Tuesday following Memorial Day. We wish to honor all veterans, so if you are unable to place a flag yourself, our sexton will place the flag for you upon request to the township.

The Township is responsible for periodic mowing; however, this is not a fully manicured cemetery. We wish to show respect to each family, and ask that you help us care for our country cemetery by limiting and removing personal items in a timely manner. Spring is a great time to do this.

Ballot Language

Precinct 1
Holland Community Swimming Pool Millage Proposition – Renewal/Additional Authorization (This millage would renew the previously authorized 1.0 mill levy, which expires on December 31, 2018, for the operation of the Holland Community Aquatic Center.) Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property (both homestead and non-homestead) in the Holland Area Community Swimming Pool Authority (whose geographic boundaries are coterminous with those of the Holland School District) be increased by and exceed .50 mill ($0.50 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of five (5) years, 2019 through 2023, inclusive, to provide funds to enable the Authority to own, operate, and maintain a community swimming pool and shall the Authority be authorized to levy said tax? If this millage is approved and levied, it is estimated that it will result in a revenue of $1,285,072 being collected by the Authority in the 2019 calendar year.

I. SAUGATUCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BONDING PROPOSAL
Shall Saugatuck Public Schools, Allegan County, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed Fifty Million Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars ($50,700,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, in one or more series, for the purpose of: erecting, furnishing and equipping additions to school buildings; partially remodeling, furnishing and refurbishing, and equipping and re-equipping school buildings; erecting, furnishing and equipping a transportation facility; acquiring, installing and equipping school buildings with instructional technology; purchasing school buses; preparing, developing, improving and equipping athletic fields, athletic facilities, and playgrounds; and acquiring, developing and improving sites? The following is for informational purposes only:

The estimated net increase in millage in 2018, over the prior year’s levy, is 1.17 mills ($1.17 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation). The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2018 is 1.39 mills ($1.39 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation). The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is twenty-six (26) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 3.88 mills ($3.88 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation). (Pursuant to State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited, and the proceeds cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs, teacher, administrator or employee salaries, or other operating expenses.)

II. SAUGATUCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SINKING FUND MILLAGE PROPOSAL
Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property in Saugatuck Public Schools, Allegan County, Michigan, be increased by and exceed .50 mill ($0.50 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 5 years, 2018 to 2022, inclusive, to create a sinking fund for the purchase of real estate for sites, for the construction or repair of school buildings, for school security improvements, for the acquisition or upgrading of technology and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2018 is approximately $300,058

Congratulations Glenn Heavener!!!
Volunteer Award Recipient 2018
Summer self-guided Tours at the Felt Estate

Summer self-guided tours at the Felt Estate begin Memorial Day weekend and end Labor Day weekend, May 27 - Sept. 3. Tours are Sundays through Wednesdays from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. Tours may be cancelled in the event of a private wedding or other rental event. Always check the online calendar at http://www.feltmansion.org/events/self-guided-tours/

All tours are self-guided.

Prices: $15 for adults / $12 for students and seniors 62+ // Mondays only are free for seniors 62+ // Children 12 & under are free.

For a private, guided mansion tour for your group, please call Patty at 616-335-8982 or email patty@feltmansion.org

THURSDAY CONCERTS RETURN

We hope to see you at our summer concert series, Thursdays at the Felt. All concerts are free. Food service begins at 6:00 p.m. and music begins at 7:00 p.m.

- June 21 - Delilah DeWylde - Rockabilly
- June 28 - May Erlewine Trio - Folk, Bluegrass
- July 5 - Mary & the Rad Pack - Jazz
- July 12 - Brenna - Classic rock cover band
- July 19 - Schultz Creek - Bluegrass
- July 26 - Zion Lion - reggae

This year we will have a different food vendor at each concert – and we will announce those on the website www.feltmansion.org Enjoy Springtime, and we’ll see you this summer at the Felt!

Herrick Public Library Upcoming Events

Beginning Genealogy classes at Herrick

Two beginning genealogy classes will cover how to begin your search, including filling out a pedigree chart. It will cover the materials available at Herrick District Library, the databases available, will introduce some helpful genealogy websites and will conclude with a tour of the genealogy department. Class will last approximately one hour. The first class is 2 p.m. and the second, identical class is 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 17. HDL is located at 300 S. River Ave.

HDL to go green again

Join HDL staff and participate in the 11th annual Green Commute Week Challenge from the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC). Green Commute Week is May 13-19. Sign up at either Herrick location to get a pin, then walk, ride a bike, carpool, or take the Max Bus (for free!). It’s good for your health, budget, and the environment. Pin wearers will receive discounts around the community. Friends of HDL will be offering buy one get one free items at the Book Nook used book store in the main library lower level. Joe2Go’s library cafe location will offer 15% off any menu item. HDL is located at 300 S. River Ave. Go to www.themacc.org/greencommute/for complete details.

HerrickFest returns!

HerrickFest will again celebrate the library and the community in all its forms this summer. Herrick District Library and partners will bring free food and ice cream (as supplies last), and henna tattoos, a photo booth, petting zoo, dunk tank, cosplay characters, alligators and more to Kollen Park in Holland 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 23. A free book giveaway, barrel rides, therapy dogs, a rock-out storyline and the HDL Book Bike will also be there. For details, visit herrickdl.org.

Swimming Lessons at HCAC!

HCAC Swim School offers a full range of water adjustment and learn-to-swim classes. All classes are lead by trained and certified instructors who cumulatively teach 5,000 children annually.

Class size is limited and will be filled on a first come, first serve basis. Registration deadlines vary for each session. Register online or at the front desk at the Holland Community Aquatic Center ($5 admin fee applies to any registrations done in house).

The Holland Community Aquatic Center teaches the SwimAmerica swim program. The goal of Little Swimmers (4-5 year olds) is to teach the lifesaving skills of falling in, rolling on their back, and the ability to kick to an exit point. Once children master this skill, instructors will begin introducing youth skills. The Youth (6-12 year olds) sessions consist of 7 stations. Each station builds on the prior station. Once your child is beyond station 7 please contact Coach Diana (dsimmons@hollandaquaticcenter.org) to learn more about our competitive swimming options.

Register online at hcac.recdesk.com
At the annual meeting, during citizen’s comments, a resident asked the representative from the county to lower their tax levy. A brief look of confusion passed over the representative’s features as he tried to formulate an answer. The question was confusing because it showed a basic misunderstanding of how property taxes work. So, as an example, let's look at the individual millage rates paid by folks in the Hamilton School district:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Date of Election</th>
<th>Original Millage</th>
<th>2017 Millage Levied</th>
<th>Expiration Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>1995 – Prop A</td>
<td>6.0000</td>
<td>6.0000</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocated</td>
<td>Operating – County</td>
<td>11/21/1965</td>
<td>5.7000</td>
<td>4.5985</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Roads – County</td>
<td>08/07/2012</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>0.9916</td>
<td>12/31/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Senior Services - County</td>
<td>08/05/2014</td>
<td>0.4360</td>
<td>0.4323</td>
<td>12/31/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Operating - Non PRE (*)</td>
<td>11/08/2016</td>
<td>18.000</td>
<td>18.000</td>
<td>12/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Debt - School</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4.5000</td>
<td>4.5000</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocated</td>
<td>Twp Operating</td>
<td>11/02/1965</td>
<td>1.0700</td>
<td>0.5656</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Fire, Rds, Bike Path &amp; Drains</td>
<td>08/02/2016</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>1.9900</td>
<td>12/31/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>0.9950</td>
<td>12/31/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>Library - Herrick</td>
<td>08/02/2016</td>
<td>1.5000</td>
<td>1.4853</td>
<td>12/31/2030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“SET” refers to the State Education Tax. This was established as one source of stable funding for the schools as part of Proposal A in 1995. This millage rate is set (pun intended) and is not rolled back due to the “Headlee”(**) Millage Reduction Fraction and has no expiration date.

“Allocated” millages are voted on by the people and, as you can see, do not expire. They do float down each year due to the “Headlee Reduction”. The Allocated millage for Laketown Township has never been renewed so has floated down to just over half its original value since it passed in 1965.

“Voted” millages are all passed by a vote of the people for a specific time period and for a specific purpose. Bonds (Debt) run until the Bond is paid off. Like any loan, bonds can be renegotiated for a better interest rate, so they are not affected by the “Headlee Reduction” and do not have a set period of time before they expire. Once it’s payed off obviously the millage that supports that payment falls off the tax bill.

Your property tax bill represents the costs to provide the services that the majority of voters have deemed worthy of supporting. As each of the “Voted” millages expire the voters can re-evaluate and decide whether to continue to pay for the service or not. If the millage is voted down the associated service is terminated.

Local officials, whether Township, County, School, Library or Pool are all charged with administrating the funds and running the programs the local electorate has put in place to enhance their lives and safety.

(*) The Non-PRE is the 18 mils of school tax that non-residents and businesses pay to support the local school district. You are exempt from this tax if you claim the Principal Residence Exemption.

(**) Limits the annual growth in property tax revenue due to increases in taxable value (excluding new construction and improvements) to the rate of inflation in the prior year. Under the “Headlee rollback”, if the increase in taxable value would cause the tax revenue to grow by more than the rate of inflation, then the millage rate must be reduced to a level that results in revenue growth of not more than the rate of inflation.

Congratulations on your retirement, Paul!
Paul Smith, our township assessor since 1995, retires this June. It has been a great working with you! Thank you for your service to our residents!
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Office Hours:
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Streets Lights – contact Consumers Energy (800) 477-5050 or email at customer@consumers.energ.com
State Representative - Mary Whiteford (517) 373-0836
State Senator Tonya - Schuitmaker (517) 373-0793
U.S. Congressman - Fred Upton – (269) 982-1986