A Quarterly Newsletter for the residents of Laketown Township

OFFICE PHONE: 616-335-3050
HOURS: M - F 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
WEB ADDRESS: www.laketowntwp.org

TOWNSHIP BOARD
Supervisor – Linda Howell
Treasurer - Gary Dewey
Clerk - Michelle Sall
Trustee – Jim Johnson
Trustee - Ed Stielstra

OTHER BOARDS
Planning Commission Chair – Jim Lorence
ZBA Chair – David Weishaar
Parks & Recreation Chair - Tom Shuff

STAFF
Manager - Al Meshkin
Assessor - Heather Jahr
Admin. Assistant/Finance - Kathy Stoike
Deputy Treasurer - Charlene Fields
Deputy Clerk - Jennifer French
Recording Secretary - Diane Ybarra
Maintenance/Facilities – Brett Grams

GRAAFSCHAP FIRE DEPARTMENT
Chief - Doug DenBleyker 616-396-4060

INSPECTORS
Building - Al Ellingsen 269-214-2382
Mech/Plumb - Bob Modreske 616-477-4940
Electrical - Gordon Bosch (616) 396-1448

ALLEGAN COUNTY
County Commissioner -
Dean Kapenga 616-218-2599
Animal Control 269-673-0519
Central Dispatch 269-673-3899
County Clerk 269-673-0450
County Treasurer 269-673-0260
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

A Message from the Supervisor
by Linda Howell

Fall is upon us. With it comes the delight in seeing the orange barrels of road construction season go into winter hibernation but dread at the pothole gremilin that soon will show up uninvited. As the State struggles with its budget and the goal (some would say fantasy) about fixing the roads, I thought I’d take this opportunity to make sure you – as Laketown residents and taxpayers – understand who pays for our roads.

The starting point is a State law from the 1930’s known as the McNitt Act. Under this law, townships were no longer responsible for, had no authority over, or received any money from the state (including any of the gas tax you pay at the pump) for roads. Roads are divided into three basic categories with different sources of money to construct, maintain/repave, and plow them. In Laketown, we have Federal roads (I-196 and US-31) that receive funds from the Federal Government and are under the jurisdiction of MDOT, and County roads (everything else that isn’t a private road like those found in Macatawa Hills). The third category is State roads and there are no State roads in Laketown. Most roads in Laketown are under the jurisdiction and budget of the Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC).

While townships and their boards have little road authority and do not receive transportation funding (Public Act 51 of 1951) from or through the state from the gasoline tax, over 95% of townships in Michigan do contribute money to the county road commission in which their township is located. Laketown does provide money for maintaining roads in the Township, during the past year approximately $440,000 was spent on roads. This is from our special millage for fire, roads, bike paths and drains that has been approved repeatedly by voters since the 1960’s. The millage rate is 2.0 mills or $2 for each $1,000 of taxable value. For the average home in Laketown with a taxable value of $125,000, that homeowner pays $250 per year for this.

Each year all Township roads are rated on a scale of 1 -10 using a van specially equipped with sensors and cameras that can detect cracks, bumps, failing pavement, and other problems. Using these ratings, the Board sets a priority list for road repairs. The amount of road construction is dependent on work needed, bids received (each project is put out for public bid by the ACRC), amount of funds received through the special millage, and if there are any unique projects that need immediate attention such as failing culverts. The Township can afford to pave approximately 2 - 3 miles per year.

The ACRC may also pave roads within the Township using Road Commission budget money. This year the ACRC paved part of 64th street. However, their budget is so tight that it is unlikely they will pave our less traveled roads without funds from the Township.

- Continued on page 5, see Howell
This summer the assessing desk was abuzz with inquiries regarding the division of property. With this in mind, I want to make the citizens of Laketown aware of some recent changes to the Land Division Act, the law that governs if and how property can be divided. House Bill 4055 was passed June 18, 2019 and became effective on September 16, 2019. House Bill 4055 requires:

“All property taxes and special assessments due on the parcel or tract subject to the proposed division for the 5 years preceding the date of the application have been paid, as established by a certificate from the county treasurer of the county in which the parcel or tract is located.”

The Allegan County Treasurer’s office has created a certificate to verify that the special assessments and property taxes for the five years preceding the date of application have been paid. The amendment to the Land Division Act also states:

“The county treasurer shall collect a fee for a certification under this subdivision in an amount equal to the fee payable under section 1(2) of 1895 PA 161, MCL 48.101, for a certificate relating to the payment of taxes under section 135 of the general property tax act, 1893 PA 206, MCL 211.135.”

The Allegan County Treasurer’s office has determined that this fee shall be $5.00.

I have included the Allegan County certificate with the Land Division Application, available at the Laketown Township Hall as well as on our website. A completed Allegan County certificate will be required as part of the land division application process.

Calendar Note: December Board of Review will be held on Tuesday, December 10 at 9am. This meeting is to correct qualified errors and mutual mistakes of fact. A reminder to any veterans who may qualify for the Disabled Veteran’s Exemption to turn in your application prior to that meeting date. If you have any questions regarding assessing, please feel free to give me a call.

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**Treasurer’s Trove** by Gary Dewey, Treasurer

What a blessing to serve you, our residents! I have served on the board and commissions since 1992 and still love being a public servant. Please consider being involved on one of our boards or commissions, or just volunteering!

We just completed summer tax collection and now prepare for winter tax collection. Winter tax bills will be mailed the first week of December and are due on February 14, 2020. If you wish to pay before the end of this calendar year, payment must be received by December 30, 2019. Please remember, postmarks are not honored in determining timely payment. Due to the last day of February falling on the weekend, the final date to make payment at the township office is March 2, 2020. All unpaid taxes will be sent to Allegan County on March 3, 2020 for collection. Interest and penalties will be added.

Due to the increase in post-dated checks, we will no longer be able to hold checks for a future date. The potential for lost/misplaced checks during this holding time creates additional responsibility/liability on our part that we can no longer assume. Moving forward, all checks will be deposited upon receipt. I apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your understanding.

Also, online credit card and electronic check tax payments must be completed by the taxpayer online. Credit card payments are also accepted in the office. Phone transactions are not available by the servicing agent or the township office.

Deferment applications must be applied for each season. Winter applications are due by February 14, 2020 to defer payment until April 30, 2020. Applications are available on the township website www.laketowntwp.org or in the office.

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**From the Assessor** by Heather Jahr

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**ALLEGAN COUNTY LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTER**

The Allegan County Legal Assistance Center (ACLAC) provides assistance in civil cases to self-represented litigants. ACLAC helps litigants understand legal processes and procedures, offering proper tools and assistance with paperwork, legal and access to web based information through Michigan Legal Help at michiganlegalhelp.org.

ACLAC welcomes individuals who have civil court cases and are representing themselves in court. Volunteers and staff cannot provide legal advice or represent anyone in court. They may explain a person’s legal options but will not tell them what to do.

ACLAC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization receiving financial and in kind support from the County of Allegan, the Allegan County Community Foundation, United Way, the Mignon Sherwood DeLano Foundation, and the Allegan County Bar Association. ACLAC also receives private donations and engages in fundraising activities.

ACLAC is open Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. ACLAC has assisted over 14,000 patrons since its inception. ACLAC is located in the lower level of the Allegan County Building, 113 Chestnut, Allegan MI.
Thank you to all of the residents of Laketown Township for another wonderful summer at the Felt Estate. Our summer concert series was remarkable. At our last concert featuring Delilah DeWylde, we had over 800 guests!

We’re excited to offer a new experience this fall—Hauntings, History, and Horror Nights at the Felt Estate! Join us for a night of ghost stories, legends, paranormal investigation and fright October 24, 25, and 26. Following are details:

**Hauntings & History Presentation**
Learn more about the history of the estate and hear about the paranormal occurrences from people who have experienced them first hand.

**Candle Light Tours***
Explore the mansion, carriage house, and grounds in the dark of night – guided only by candle light. This 50 minute self-guided tour includes areas normally restricted to the public and tour sizes will be limited. Looking to encounter an ancestor or two? Bring along an EMF detector and infrared thermometer and do a little paranormal investigating of your own.

**The Exorcist*** (Rated R)
Looking for more of a fright? Join our 6 & 8:30 pm events and watch the 1973 horror classic, The Exorcist, in the spirit-filled ballroom.

**Concessions and Alcoholic Beverages**
Concession, non-alcoholic beverages, as well as beer and wine will be available for purchase to enjoy during the presentation, mansion tour, and movie. Cash and credit cards accepted. Must be 21 or over to purchase alcohol. FAQ’s are available on the Evenbrite website for more information.

To purchase tickets, go to: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hauntings-history-horror-nights-tickets-68380127803](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hauntings-history-horror-nights-tickets-68380127803)

We will soon be preparing for the holidays and this year our theme is “The Midwest Riviera: Life along the Lake in the 1920s.” As many of you know, the mansion was built in 1928 at a time when wealthy industrialists like Dorr Felt made their way from Chicago to the coast of West Michigan for the summer season to enjoy the cool breezes off the lake. Our area was known as The Midwest Riviera. Visit the mansion during the holidays and see our beach-themed tree complete with a sandy beach base (instead of a tree skirt)!

As a thank you to residents for your continued support of the mansion project, **free passes** are available at the Township office. You’ll find tour dates and times on our website at [www.feltmansion.org/tours/](http://www.feltmansion.org/tours/) or on the calendar at the bottom of the page (be sure to advance to December). Free passes are good for any self-guided or guided holiday tour and are not valid for Horror Nights or the Taste & Tour event on December 13. Again, we appreciate your support and hope to see you this holiday season. Because of you, dreams come true.
**Parks Activity** by Tom Shuff, Chair

As nature begins the transition from summer into winter we enjoy the beautiful period of autumn, the time when the colors of nature are at their pinnacle of beauty. It is also the time to reflect on the many enjoyable moments and activities our parks have offered to our residents and guests...with thanks to Jason Schrotenboer and Brett Grams as well as the committee members for their efforts in maintaining the parks.

On September 19th the township was the location for the 19th annual Greater Ottawa County United Way “Day of Caring” volunteer day. We received over 75 volunteers with shovels, rakes, pruners, and wheel barrels, cleaning and improving our parks. Farview, Huys, Gibson Cemetery, and Sanctuary Woods were the locations attended to. The companies participating in Laketown were: Chemical Bank, Elzinga & Volkers, Spectrum Health Zeeland Hospital, Huntington Bank, Delong & Brower, P.C., and Tennant, and all receive a special thanks from the township for their support. Not the least is a very special thanks to Michelle Sall for her time and effort in organizing and administrating this “Day of Caring.”

We encourage your input regarding the types of recreational activities as well as improvements to the parks. Please feel free to attend a parks meeting held the third Wednesday of every month at 7pm at the township hall.

*Please see the new signage at Sanctuary Woods and Wolters Woods, eventually all our parks will have similar signage.*
Fire Department News by Fire Chief Doug DenBleyker

We are happy to announce Graafschap Fire Department was recently notified of having been awarded an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) through FEMA for $76,476.19. The total project cost is $80,300 of which $76,476.19 will be coming from the grant. These funds will purchase an exhaust removal system for the fire station that is a turnkey package to include the necessary equipment for 10 vehicles, mechanical installation, electrical high and low voltage wiring and the necessary tailpipe connections for system attachment. The exhaust removal system includes an EPA recognized filter box to filter the exhaust particulate before it is emitted to the atmosphere. The track and hose system will capture and remove virtually all exhaust emissions from the station as we enter and exit. We will also install a down draft table where gas powered equipment can be serviced. The exhaust removal system will help reduce exposure to cancer causing carcinogens for fire fighters and those that visit our fire station.

Next I would like to address Fire Department access and how you can assist us in keeping your fire trucks from being damaged should we need to access to your home for an emergency. Fire trucks and emergency vehicles require more room on a driveway than normal passenger vehicles, and to ensure that tree limbs, branches and any structures do not damage emergency lights, mirrors, paint and body of the trucks, the following dimensions are needed for safe and effective access: clear width of your home’s entrance should be 20 feet and the clear height should be 13 feet.

Please make sure your address is visible from the street, if we cannot see your house numbers, please consider purchasing a green reflective sign that would be installed at the road edge. If you have questions about access to your home or would like to purchase a green address sign you can email me chief@graafschapfire.org or call the station at 616-396-4060.

Hazardous Waste Collection Day 11/16/19

The Township Hazardous Waste Collection Day will be at Republic Services 4368 60th St., Holland on Saturday, Nov., 16, 2019 from 8 – 11:30 am.

In order to control the flow of vehicles and quantities of hazardous waste to be disposed, vouchers will be issued and required for this event. Vouchers may be picked up at the Republic Services Holland office before Nov. 16. Office hours are Mon – Fri., 8 am – 5 pm. You will need a valid ID and current account with Republic to receive a voucher.

- Vouchers are only valid for date noted.
- Voucher must be presented at drop off. - Vouchers will NOT be issued 11/16/19. - Limit of 200 lbs. of material per voucher.

Because of the legal chain of custody required on hazardous waste you will be required to sign a disposal form. Republic Services reserves the right to reject items.

Accepted Items:
- Aerosol cans
- Antifreeze
- Batteries
- Battery Acids
- Detergents
- Degreasers
- Drain Cleaners
- Fertilizers
- Gasoline
- Grease
- General waste cleaners
- Inks
- Light Bulbs
- Mercury products
- Oil
- Oil-based paints
- Paint thinner
- Pesticide
- Propane
- Solvents
- Thermometers

Items Not Accepted:
- Asbestos items
- Latex paint
- Lead paint items
- Tires
- Freon products
- General waste cleaners

Howell, continued from front page.

Without money from the Township, roads likely would not be maintained to a level acceptable to residents due to the lack of funding flowing from the State to the County. Some counties are returning roads to gravel because they cannot afford to repair the pavement. In fact, absent local money, if a needed road repair constitutes only an inconvenience to residents but not an unacceptable public safety hazard, some county road commissions simply close the road instead of repairing it.

Road funding and repair has been a continual issue in Michigan. I recently attended a meeting of the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council about this. The cost estimates provided for the repair and on-going maintenance of roads throughout the State were shocking. Counties alone need approximately $2 billion more than they receive now. MDOT needs an additional $2 billion for the State level highways. Local roads need a similar amount. The total number is way beyond the conversations that are happening now.

The lack of a comprehensive state-wide answer to road funding makes it more important that Laketown takes care of itself. We should be proud that we do just that with our special millage. It’s our money, and it stays in the Township to pave our roads and paths and clean our drains. We value our partners at the ACRC. Working together we can make our money stretch. If you have questions or issues related to local roads, they are best addressed by the Allegan County Road Commission, which has the authority and responsibility to handle these matters. You may contact that office at 269-673-2184.
**UNITED STATES CENSUS DAY**  
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2020**

The Federal Government will be mailing Census information to homes in March 2020. Why is the census important? Every time the Township or Fire Department seeks a grant or applies for funds, we have to report our population. Various State and Federal funds are allocated according to population size, so if you don’t complete the census, you will not be counted and funds that should come to Laketown will go elsewhere. The census also determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. Please complete your census.

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**GIBSON CEMETERY (Laketown Township Cemetery)**  
**Located at the corner of 138th & 65th**

Prices for grave sites are:
- $100 each plot for residents/taxpayer (up to two)
- $500 each plot for residents/taxpayer (after two)
- $600 each non-residents

Before the arrival of cold weather and snow, please remove all flower baskets and mementos from gravesites. Thank you!

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We Support:  
[Outdoor Discovery Center](https://outdoordiscovery.org/)

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**LAKE TOWNSHIP**  
4338 BEELINE RD  
HOLLAND, MI 49423