Life in Laketown.

Since I became Supervisor, I have had many people ask me “what does the Township do?” I believe this question arises out of a simple fact: Laketown Township is an effective governing body that is the most local form of government in our state. It quietly and efficiently provides families with a number of services in a low-cost way and is the unit of government most accessible to its residents. I believe it is important for everyone to understand how your tax dollars are used.

Where Your $31 Goes.

That’s approximately what Laketown Township general government costs each of our 5,505 residents per year - $31. The Township’s tax rate is 0.56 mills or $0.56 for each $1,000 of taxable value of property. According to our budget, the general operating tax levy of 0.56 mills generates $239,000 per year. Our tax base, taxable value (TV) of property is about $420 million. Of that, about $301 million receives the Principal Residence Exemption (PRE). Those are our residents, about 71% of the TV. Since everyone pays for township operating costs ($239,000) the residents pay 71% or $170,000. Divide $170,000 by the population of residents (in 2010) and you get about $31 per resident per year.

If you look at the two tax bills you receive each year, you will see the majority of it pays for our schools and the County’s operation. In fact, none of your summer taxes levied go to the Township. The 0.56 mills levied on your winter bill pays for all the general services the Township provides including the assessing, elections, parks, and general administration. By contrast, while there is a significant difference in the number and amount of services provided, the City of Holland’s general millage rate is 13.7706 or 24.5 times higher. Park Township’s general operating millage rate is 0.9439, while Holland Township’s is 4.86 mills. Yes, we have some other sources of revenue. Revenue is generated by construction permit fees, fines, revenue sharing from the State and, importantly, special millages approved by Laketown voters to specifically pay for the Fire Department, cleaning and repairing major drains such as the Kelly Drain that goes through Sanctuary Woods Park, and to pay for 2.5 -3 miles of road repair per year. Laketown keeps costs down by vigilant oversight of expenses and because people like you volunteer your time to staff our fire department and help run elections.

-Continued on page 3, see Howell
**Treasurer’s Trove** by Gary Dewey, Treasurer

Wow! What a strange spring and my plants and wildlife counts are way down. I feel so sorry for the farmers that have had difficulty getting seeds planted. I hope God provides dry and warm weather to get things growing!

Summer taxes were mailed the first week of July and are due on or before September 16, 2019. We appreciate prompt payment, remember that postmarks are not accepted as a payment date. As requested by Hamilton Public Schools, taxes for that district are only collected for the winter tax cycle.

Some residents may be eligible for deferment of taxes or qualify for a hardship exemption. Applications for deferment are needed for each tax bill, summer and winter. Hardship exemptions are granted by the Board of Review and must be applied for annually. Applications are available at the township office.

As a part of our commitment to provide citizens with efficient and convenient services, we offer debit/credit payment of taxes through the internet and in the office. American Express, Discover, Master Card and Visa credit/debit cards and electronic checks are accepted through “Point and Pay,” our service provider, which charges a 3% convenience fee with a minimum charge of $2 for processing. There is a $3 flat fee for electronic transactions up to $10,000 and $10 for transactions over $10,000. Both winter and summer tax payments may be made through the last day of February before it goes delinquent to Allegan County. Interest accrues monthly.

Our family moved to Laketown in 1974 from South Holland, Illinois and we love our township. I have been blessed to serve our residents on the township board since 1992. My passion for being a public servant continues strong and I love listening to your concerns and attempt to find a solution to each issue. Please feel free to contact me anytime and anywhere about your concerns.

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**From the Assessor** by Heather Jahr

I hope this summer season finds you well and with plenty of opportunity to enjoy all Laketown has to offer. Be that a walk on the beach, a bike ride, or an afternoon in the sun with a book! Throughout the summer I will be working to complete a land value study, review classification and categorization of all parcels, keep up with building permit applications, and complete the state recommended annual review of 20% of each class of property (Agricultural, Commercial, Residential, Industrial) within the township. This annual review is done to ensure our record cards reflect what is physically present on a parcel.

The market here in Laketown is a desirable one. Sale prices, in general, are continuing an upward trend, and most vacant land sales are quickly followed with building permits for new homes to be constructed. I wanted to take this opportunity to identify the difference between the two values, Taxable Value and Assessed Value, associated with any parcel.

The Assessed Value is meant to give an indication of half a property’s market value and can be adjusted annually without limit, however if the Assessed Value were to drop below the Taxable Value, the Taxable Value will drop with it.

The Taxable Value has the millage rate applied to it to calculate the tax. The Taxable Value of a parcel is limited (“capped”) in the amount it can increase annually to the rate of inflation, as set by the State of Michigan, or 5% whichever is less. This limitation does not apply to value added to a parcel due to the construction, or discovery of improvements that have never before been identified on the assessment roll.

The Taxable Value is affected by the sale of a parcel. The year following a non-exempt transfer of ownership the Taxable Value is “un-capped” and raised to equal the Assessed Value. The year following the “un-capping” the Taxable Value is once again “capped”.

**Note:** **July Board of Review is July 16th at 9am.** This meeting is held to correct qualified errors and mutual mistakes of fact. A reminder to any veterans who may qualify for the Disabled Veterans Exemption to get your applications in prior to that meeting date. You may still apply for the exemption at the December Board of Review. Feel free to contact me if you have questions.
Howell, continued from front page.

New Developments in Laketown:

1) In part due to people ignoring the “no parking” signs at the beach, parking fines were recently increased. The fines had not been adjusted in years. A complete list of all the fines is on our website under Ordinance #194.

2) Residents who receive their water from the Holland Board of Public Works will see a slight increase in costs based on their water usage. This surcharge is specifically dedicated to pay for the maintenance of the section of the BPW’s water distribution system that serves the northern portion of our township. The obligation to pay for this maintenance is part of the contract between Laketown and the BPW under which Laketown residents can be served by the BPW for water.

3) A new audio/visual system is being installed in the Board room which will allow the recording and streaming of meetings, improve sound, and projection documents being discussed to the audience.

The Master Plan.

Over the past year the Planning Commission has spent many meetings and many, many hours discussing, contemplating, and debating the Township Master Plan. A Master Plan is a document intended to describe how the Township will look in the future: where there will be more development, where development will be resisted, what public amenities will be prioritized, what attributes will be allowed to fade. In the summer of 2018, several meetings were held to encourage residents to give their opinions. All those opinions were recorded and reviewed by the Planning Commission in proposing changes to the current Master Plan. The draft Master Plan is nearing completion and the Planning Commission will submit its proposal to the Township Board for review. A public hearing will be held, and a final vote will be taken. Once the Plan is finalized, the Planning Commission will go back to work to consider and propose changes to our zoning ordinances to make them consistent with the updated Master Plan.

Thank you to everyone that participated in this important project, especially our Planning Commissioners for all the hours they devoted to this task. It is our future.

A warm welcome to Jim Johnson (pictured right) who was recently appointed as a Township Board Trustee and to the Planning Commission.

Thank you to Davenport University - Holland Campus staff who volunteered this spring making improvements at the cemetery which included groundswork, planting flowers, and moving the sign.

Board Changes and Appointments

Due to the retirement of Township Supervisor Terry Hoffmeyer this past winter, and the rule that an elected official cannot hold more than one elected office (Parks Commission and Township Board), there have been several changes and appointments to Boards over the winter and spring as follows:

* Linda Howell appointed Township Supervisor and vacated the Planning Commission and a Board Trustee position.

*Michelle Sall appointed as Township Clerk and vacated Parks Commission.

* Jim Johnson appointed as a Board Trustee and to the Planning Commission, vacated the Parks Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

*Dick Becker appointed to the Parks Commission.

*Ellen Fitch appointed to the Parks Commission.

*Kathleen Dearborn appointed to the Parks Commission.

*Jim Delaney appointed to Zoning Board of Appeals.

*Chad Nienhuis appointed to Zoning Board of Appeals (Alternate).

On behalf of the State of Michigan, Mary Whiteford (MI House of State Reps.) recently recognized former Township Supervisor Terry Hoffmeyer for his many years of public service. Terry retired from the Board February 2019.
Parks Activity by Tom Shuff, Chair

Summer has arrived in the township... it feels like we missed spring, yet with all the moisture our parks should be over grown in beauty. Each year the Parks Commission supports a partnership with the Outdoor Discovery Center (ODC) to provide free recreational activities in our parks throughout the year. Following are the upcoming events:

Thursday 7/18, 11 – 12 pm “Blueberry Fields Forever” Huyser Farm; Tuesday 8/20, 4 - 5:30 pm “Knee Deep in Wetlands” Fairview; Tuesday 9/17, 4 - 5:00 pm “Explore with Your Senses” Shore Acres; Friday 10/4, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Night Hike” Huyser Farm.

We recently completed the demolition of the small green house at 142nd and 64th streets, which will enable us to relocate the old township hall to this location. This facility will provide a future community meeting place and Huyser Farm Educational Center.

Regarding the 2017 Michigan Natural Resource Grant, as previously reported, several parcels have been purchased and we are continuing to negotiate on an additional purchase.

We have entered into an agreement with Ottawa County and Holland Hospital to include our parks in the Parks Rx program, a medical initiative where wellness is enhanced by being outdoors.

Several changes have transpired recently on Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC). We thank Michelle Sall for her many years of service as chair of the PRC, Michelle has been appointed as Township Clerk. Jim Johnson has left the PRC and appointed as a Board Trustee and a position on the Planning Commission. Thank you Jim for your service on the PRC. Kathleen Dearborn, a nine year resident of the township, has recently joined the PRC. She enjoys walking the parks and is looking forward to finding ways to improve them. Ellen Fitch has joined the PRC. She is a twenty five year resident of the township and has been interested and active in local government. Ellen wants to continue the beautification of our parks to continue enriching our community. We are delighted to have both of these women on the PRC. Dick Becker, a long time resident of the township and member of the Planning Commission, has recently joined the PRC in addition to his other responsibilities.

Things I would like to accomplish; beautification of our parks with shrubs and flowers and the addition of signage, using the design of our current sign at the Township Hall. This is a work in progress. I would like to explore permanent restroom options for all our parks and well as look into developing a dog park. Improve park surveillance and security via fiber option installations at all locations; and upon the relocation of the old township hall have a ribbon cutting ceremony to memorialize this event.

Thank you to the Outdoor Discovery Center and Saugatuck Brewing Company for sponsoring a cleanup at Shore Acres Park and Saugatuck Dunes State Park on April 11. Volunteers armed with trash bags and trail maps covered the grounds collecting trash uncovered after the snow melt. Also, thank you to the Holland Christian High School Senior class of 2019 for choosing Sanctuary Woods for their annual “Senior Serve Day” in May to remove invasive Garlic Mustard plants from Sanctuary Woods.
Fire Department News by Fire Chief Doug DenBleyker

I would like to recognize two of our members who recently completed some major milestones. Joe Mapes recently completed and passed the Allegan County Fire Academy. Joe spent over 260 hours between January and May training to meet the State requirements for a Fire Fighter in the State of Michigan. Joe will now spend the next 9 months to a year as a probationary Fire Fighter practicing and honing the skills he learned.

Riley Capel recently completed his probationary Fire Fighter requirements and completed an EMT class at the Tech Center while still in high school. He graduated from high school and enrolled in Great Lakes EMS Academy, where for the next 18 months he will be studying to be a Paramedic. We would like to congratulate Joe and Riley on a job well done, and for making a commitment to serve the citizens of Fillmore and Laketown as a Fire Fighter with Graafschap FD.

Thank you to everyone that came out for our annual 4th of July pancake breakfast. We appreciate the communities support and look forward to building relationships each year. We served a total of 1,450 which was down 55 from our all-time high last year.

We are still in the process of adding equipment to our Heavy Rescue vehicle. The Heavy Rescue carries items that are not commonly carried on a fire engine. This project is a collaboration with the Saugatuck and Hamilton Fire Departments and is a great way to reduce the cost to communities by sharing ownership of vehicles or equipment that are utilized infrequently. We recently added high lift air bags; these bags lift significantly more weight and a greater distance than the ones we previously used.

Have a great summer and grill safely.

Felt Mansion News by Patty Meyer

At last summer arrived, and so did our annual summer concert series, Thursdays at the Felt. Food service begins at 6:00 p.m. and music begins promptly at 7:00. Concerts typically last 1.5 - 2 hours. Admission and parking are free.

We have a great line-up of performers this year. July 25 is Great Scott! This band plays the greatest songs from the 1950s to the new hits of today. With line-up options varying from solo keyboard to a full 6-piece band featuring keyboards, guitars, bass, drums, and saxophone, Great Scott! plays the greatest songs from the 1950’s to the new hits of today and can entertain in intimate settings, as well as large venues capable of hosting hundreds of guests. August 1 is Delilah DeWylde. Delilah is a crowd favorite and never disappoints with her exciting brand of rockabilly.

Also this year we have two food vendors at each concert. This should alleviate problems with long lines. Our new vendors include Parliament Pizza, YoChef, D&D Gluten Free, Salt of the Earth, Crepes by the Lakes, and Silver Star Cafe.

Thank you to our corporate sponsors who make our concert series possible. They include: Comcast, Fenn Valley Vineyards, New Holland Brewing Company, Dickinson Wright, Chemical Bank, Global Concepts, and IHS Distributing.

Self-guided tours are available at the Felt Mansion through Labor Day. These are (most) Sundays - Wednesdays from 1-5 p.m. Occasionally, a tour is cancelled due to a rental event. Always check the online calendar at www.feltmansion.org/events. We hope to see you at the Felt!
The Outdoor Discovery Center is working with the Township to treat Oriental Bittersweet in our parks. They provided the following information:

Oriental Bittersweet is a highly invasive vine native to Eastern Asia. The leaves are alternate, finely toothed, and are often rounded with pointed tips and the plant produces red and orange berries along its stems. The twining vines grow rapidly into a tree’s canopy and can girdle and kill trees and shrubs. If you find this plant on your property, the best course of action is to cut the vine at its base, which will stop nutrient and water uptake to the plant and prevent large vines from destroying trees. Re-sprouts will likely form from the cut vine which can then be targeted with foliar herbicide applications while the plants are small to maximize the effectiveness of the treatment. If you are interested in bittersweet control on your property, you may contact the ODC at 616-393-9453 to schedule a consultation.

This young buck is becoming well known in the area. For your safety as well as his we ask that you please do not approach or feed him.

https://outdoordiscovery.org/