



West Traverse Township 2009 Fall Newsletter

8001 M-119, PO Box 353, Harbor Springs, MI 49740
(231) 526-7361 Fax: (231) 526-0028 E-mail: secretary@westtraversetownship.com
www.westtraversetownship.com

West Traverse Township (Est.1897)

Township Board

Bob Sandford - *Supervisor*
Cynthia Fisher - *Clerk*
Kristi Hollingsworth - *Treasurer*
John Baker - *Trustee*
Jim Bartlett - *Trustee*

Planning Commission

Paul Mooradian - *Chair*
Joey Arbaugh - *Secretary*
Kristi Hollingsworth
Paul Repasky
Nancy Sarowski
Pete Wallin
Ann Wilderom

Zoning Board of Appeals

Chris Baiardi
Jim Bartlett
Tim Hayner
Paul Mooradian
Ken Parada

Board of Review

Joretta Bethke - *Recording Secretary*
Jim Frang - *Chair*
Bill Borglin
Curt Regentin

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Committee

Sally Stebbins - *Chair*
Joey Arbaugh
John Baker
Sam DeCamp
Carolyn Sandford

Recreation Committee

John Baker - *Chair*
Laurie Ford
Paul Repasky
John Riggs
Bob Sandford

Water Committee

Bob Sandford - *Chair*
Jim Bartlett
Wayne Chellis
Sam DeCamp

Planning/Zoning Administrator

Randy Frykberg

Assessor

Tim Grimm

Secretary

Sue Matsko

Office Hours

9:00 am - 1:00 pm daily

Township Board Meetings

2nd Tuesdays - 7:00 pm

Planning Commission Meetings

2nd Wednesdays - 7:00 pm

From the Treasurer

The Township office is open daily from 9 am to 1 pm to receive property tax payments and will also be open from 9 am to 5 pm on the following dates:

Monday, December 28, 2009

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Monday, March 1, 2010

Payment MUST be received by the due date specified on the tax bill. Postmarks are honored and there are no exceptions for late payments. Please confirm that your check is signed and that it matches the total amount due on the tax bill. Cash is accepted in the office only and must be for the exact amount due. Any payments that are not correct or signed will be returned as unpaid and may result in additional interest charges.

As always, please review your tax bill carefully for correct address, taxable value, and principal residence exemption (PRE). Promptly report address changes or changes of ownership to the Treasurer. Failure to receive tax statements does not exempt taxes from penalties.

From the Clerk

There are 3 elections scheduled for 2010:

May 4th - School Election

August 3rd - Primary Election

November 2nd - General Election.

If you are not a registered voter, you may register at the Township Hall during office hours or with the County Clerk as well. I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and wonderful winter season.

Property Taxes

In the property tax bills accompanying this letter, you will see that the combined taxes levied by the township (TWP Alloc '08 - 1.40 mills and TWP Prsv '08 - 0.15 mills) are well below the voter-authorized maximum total of 2.25 mills. The TWP Alloc is split evenly between the township's general and road funds, and the TWP Prsv is for the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. Note also that the property tax administration fee has been reduced from 1% to 0.60%.

Regarding property taxes for 2010, as a reflection of the decrease in the consumer price index, the state's multiplier for taxable values is 0.997, which means a 0.3% decrease in taxable value for properties that remain essentially unchanged (same ownership and no improvements) from 2009. In addition, it is anticipated that there will be a decrease in the total assessed value for the township, which means that **some** properties, especially those where the 2009 assessed and taxable values are close, may also realize an additional decrease in taxable value. The notices of changes in assessed and taxable values for 2010 will be mailed out by the end of February.

Thanks, Joey!

Many of the activities required of township governments depend upon the willingness of residents to volunteer their time and energy. This is true even for many of the paid positions, because the minimal compensation is never commensurate with the effort they put into those positions. Since 1992, Joey Arbaugh has served on the township's Planning Commission, where she has helped to manage growth within the township while maintaining the rural atmosphere that we all enjoy. For that, we offer our thanks and appreciation to Joey. While Joey is giving up her seat on the Planning Commission, she remains active in four volunteer positions for the township.

www.westtraversetownship.com

Don't forget to check out all the information available on the township website. Let us know if there is other information you'd like to have added.

Curbside Recycling

In the 2009 summer newsletter, the township board asked for your help in making a decision about whether or not to implement curbside recycling within the township. A questionnaire was included with the newsletter asking the extent to which households would use the service and if there was support for a higher tax levy to pay for it. The township board thanks the 341 of you who returned the questionnaires. 64% indicated they would not use the service at all, 22% indicated they would use it throughout the year, and 14% said they would use it seasonally. Only 18% said they would support a higher tax levy. These results influenced the township board to table curbside recycling indefinitely, until such time that the township's households evidence a higher level of usage.

Recreation Committee

The Recreation Committee has focused on ways to offer more uses of the Township '80' on Ridge and Griffen roads and will begin consideration of the same for the property across Lake Road from the Township Hall next.

Nine volunteers from Child and Family Services met at the '80' early this fall as part of the United Way Day of Caring and spent half a day helping clear hiking and skiing trails. These are marked by orange flagging, and will be marked by painted arrows on trees soon. The Little Traverse Conservancy created maps of the '80' and the trails from GPS information Doug Fuller provided, and the maps are available on the Township website.

We hope more residents will enjoy the use of these new trails.

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve

Congratulations to John Riggs and his fine staff for another successful season. There was a significant increase in the number of visitors over last year – 6,337 versus 5,034. A combined total of 34 programs with 547 participants were conducted by the Little Traverse Conservancy and the Nature Preserve staff.

Major improvements included: paving the road down to the stop sign by the Nature Center (partly funded by the township and partly funded by a generous donation); revamped self-guiding trail signs; fencing between the road and the manager's residence; planting of a sweet grass garden; and a new bench and tables for the beach.

Planning Commission

An amendment to the existing commercial district, separating it into a C1-Commercial and an I-1Light Industrial-Commercial district has been completed and sent to the township board for final action. The Planning Commission is also in the process of reviewing possible outdoor wood burner regulations.

Zoning permits issued thru October 29 were for:

- 1 new dwelling
- 9 major additions or remodels;
- 8 minor additions or minor remodels;
- 6 new accessory buildings; and
- 2 other (signs)

Water System Update

Thanks to all water system customers for complying with the lawn watering restrictions that were imposed because of the City's water system deficiencies.

Activities since the previous newsletter include: painting the 45 operational fire hydrants and installing flags to make them more visible; landscaping and paving the access road at the reservoir site; and rebuilding the roof on the Cemetery Road pumping station.

Invasive Phragmites

No, this doesn't mean the township is being invaded by tiny creatures from the planet "Phrag" from a galaxy far, far away. Actually, the township's Lake Michigan shoreline is being invaded by an aggressive form of common reed that is becoming widespread in wetland areas throughout the Great Lakes in general, including Michigan. Other local areas affected by invasive phragmites include Beaver Island and Lake Charlevoix. The problems associated with invasive phragmites include: displacement of desirable native vegetation; obstruction of shoreline views and impeded access to the shore due to the tall, dense stands; and, in extreme cases, reduction of property values. A comprehensive article on invasive phragmites is available on the township website.

This summer, the township commissioned one of the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve workers trained in identifying invasive phragmites, to survey the township's shoreline. He identified 37 distinct "communities", ranging in size from a few square feet with low density up to 5,000 square feet with high density. A map showing the approximate location of these "communities" is also available on the township website.

Controlling invasive phragmites generally requires the use of professionals because of the process involved and the safety factors and permit requirements that must followed. On Beaver Island and around Lake Charlevoix, the property owners used a cooperative approach to address the problem. More information on specifically what was done may be obtained through Internet searches on "Beaver Island phragmites" and "Lake Charlevoix phragmites".

The township has entered into discussions with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and Emmet County regarding ways to establish a cooperative approach here in Emmet County. With late August to early September being the best time to undertake a control program, it is hoped that a plan will be in place to begin in 2010.

If any Lake Michigan property owners or associations would like to discuss this further or would like more information, please contact the township supervisor.