



West Traverse Township - 2010 Fall Newsletter

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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

Neil Ahrens
Kristi Hollingsworth
Paul Repasky
Larry Rychlick
Nancy Sarowski
Pete Wallin
Ann Wilderom

Zoning Board of Appeals

Neil Ahrens
Sam DeCamp
Chris Baiardi
Jim Bartlett
Tim Hayner

Board of Review

Bill Borglin
Jim Frang
Curt Regentin
Joretta Bethke - *Alternate*

Planner/Zoning Administrator

Randy Frykberg

Assessors

Tim Grimm
Brian 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

A complete list of committees and appointees is maintained on the Township website.

From the Treasurer

Please review your enclosed tax bill carefully for correct address, taxable value and principal residence exemption (PRE). Taxes are mailed to the address on record, so promptly report all address changes or changes of ownership to the treasurer.

- Payments on taxes MUST be received by the due date specified on the tax bill.
- Postmarks are accepted and there are NO exceptions for late payments.
- Any payments that are not correct or signed will be returned as unpaid and may result in additional interest charges.
- Cash is accepted in the office only and must be for the exact amount due.
- Receipts for payments will not be sent unless you request one.
- Please confirm that your check has cleared the bank to ensure that the township has received your payment. **The Township is not responsible for lost mail.**

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 Monday February 14. Beginning February 15, 2011 a 3% penalty will be added to all unpaid taxes. The Township Office will also be open on February 28 from 9 am to 5 pm to receive tax payments before they are turned over to the Emmet County Treasurer as delinquent on March 1, 2011.

If you have any questions regarding payment of your taxes, please do not hesitate to contact the Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer at the Township Office daily from 9 am to 1 pm.

Property Taxes

The Township taxes included in your property tax bill total 1.60 mills for 2010: the general and road fund millages remain unchanged at 0.70 mills each; the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve fund millage increased from 0.15 mills in 2009 to 0.20 mills to provide additional funds for maintenance projects. The property tax administration fee (PTAF) remains unchanged at 0.60%. Taking both the millages and PTAF into account, West Traverse has the second lowest tax rate of all the municipalities in Emmet County for non-homestead properties and the third lowest for homestead properties.

Based on the change in the federal government's consumer price index for the period from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010, the state mandated multiplier for taxable values for 2011 will be 1.017, which means a 1.7% increase in taxable values for properties that remain essentially unchanged (i.e. same ownership and no improvements during 2010). The multiplier in 2010 was 0.997, or a decrease of 0.3%. Although not final, it appears that the Township's average assessed value will be going down slightly. However, because assessed values are influenced by the sales history within a given neighborhood, the change in assessed values will not be uniform throughout the township - some will increase, some will decrease, and some will stay the same. The notices of changes in assessed and taxable values for 2011 will be mailed out by the end of February. The Board of Review meetings at which all property owners may protest their assessments are scheduled for the week of March 14, 2011. The specific days and times will be referenced in the notices sent out in February and on the Township's website.

From the Clerk

Thank you to all the West Traverse Township voters for participating in the three elections in 2010. The turnout in West Traverse for the November General Election was 63.52 percent with 949 ballots cast out of 1494 registered voters, versus 51.59 percent for all of Emmet County. Complete county and state election results are available at the following websites, www.emmetcounty.org and www.michigan.gov/sos, respectively.

A profound thank you to Joretta Bethke (election chair), Carolyn Sandford (deputy clerk), Sue Matsko (secretary), Barb O'Neill, Sandra Lauer, Jane Keller, Carol Tippet, Rosanne Lokker, Kathy Ellis, Sarah Tippet, Marty Amlin, and Kristi Hollingsworth (election inspectors) for all their hard work and dedication. Thank you to Amy and John Peters for all your help preparing and breaking down the hall for the elections.

In closing, I would like to wish each Township resident and family a safe and wonderful holiday season. May the New Year bring you good health and prosperity!

Remember to check out the Township website at www.westtraversetownship.com

Planning and Zoning Activities

The Outdoor Wood Furnaces amendment to the Township Zoning Ordinance drafted by the Planning Commission was reviewed and approved by the Township Board in August. Intended to protect the health, safety and welfare of our residents, this amendment provides regulations covering the installation and use of outdoor wood furnaces, including setbacks, chimney heights, fuels, and where, by zoning district, they can be installed. A zoning permit is required prior to installation. Further information and a complete copy of the regulations is available at the Township Office or on the Township website.

Thus far in 2010, the Township has issued the following zoning permits:

- 4 new dwellings (compared to 1 last year)
- 4 major additions {over 300 square feet} or remodels (9 last year)
- 4 minor additions or minor remodels (8 last year)
- 4 new accessory buildings (6 last year)
- 2 other - 1 home occupation, 1 wind energy system

After serving on the Planning Commission for six years, including two years as chair, Paul Mooradian resigned in October. The energy and dedication that Paul brought to the Planning Commission was very much appreciated. Neil Ahrens was appointed to serve the remainder of Paul's term.

Road Projects

2010: All of the road projects listed in the previous newsletter were completed at a total cost of about \$300,000 to the Township. Most of the Township funds came from the extra voted millage for road projects, with the remainder coming from the Township general fund. The Township also thanks the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians (LTTBOI) for the work on State Road and the Emmet County Road Commission for securing federal stimulus funds for resurfacing Lake Road.

2011: The list of potential projects which the Township Board will consider for funding includes Franklin Street, Lightfoot Road (from Middle Road to Heynig Road), Lower Shore Drive (from M-119 to Thorne Swift Nature Preserve), Marion Drive, 7 Mile Point Ridge Drive, and any others identified by the Road Commission. In addition, there is a good chance that the LTTBOI will secure funding for reconstructing Hoyt Road north from Quick Road to Welsheimer Road. The Township Board will decide which projects to fund at its meeting on February 8, 2011 and would welcome your input on them by telephone, mail, e-mail, or in person.

Thorne Swift/Recreation Committee Update

Thorne Swift had another successful summer season with 6,395 registered visitors. The total attendance at our workshops, hikes, night programs, and children's programs was 225, with our children's programs averaging 18 per session! Major improvements accomplished by John Riggs and his crew included new interpretive signs on the trails, flood proofing sections of trails, and replacing the 365 feet of boardwalk on the Beach Trail, with assistance from members of the Harbor Springs Honor Society. Our 2,200 feet of original boardwalk is over 25 years old and will be replaced over 7 years, before major problems occur. You can show your additional support for Thorne Swift by helping to rebuild the boardwalks. The cost per foot is about \$12, and you are invited to "donate" any number of feet in your name, in honor of someone, or in memory of a loved one. All donations will be recognized with a plaque placed near the trailhead.

The Committee has decided to ask the Township Board to budget money in 2011 to improve the trails on the Township Park (aka Township 80 acres) on Ridge and Griffen roads. (A map of the trails is included on the Township website.) If approved, the money will be from funds previously designated for recreation and will not require a tax increase. The improvements envisioned will include more trail clearing and signage, with grading to fill-in the low spots on the Hunters Trail. It will remain essentially a rustic walking and skiing trail system.

Library Services

The Township has remained active in working with 4 other townships and the City of Harbor Springs to draft an agreement for a Harbor Springs Area District Library. Two drafts have been submitted to the State Librarian, both of which were returned for more specific details. A third draft will be submitted by December 1, which will hopefully be acceptable. When an agreement is approved, then a District Library Board will be formed consisting of representatives from each of the townships and the City. One of the responsibilities of the Library Board will be to place a millage request on a ballot in 2012 for voters to decide whether or not to provide the funds for operating the Library.

In the meantime, the Township Board renewed the annual agreement with the Petoskey Public Library for July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011, allowing Township residents full access to the Petoskey Library at no additional cost. In addition to assigning its penal fines, the Township also paid \$20 per card for the 232 library cards used by Township residents in 2009.