



# West Traverse Township - 2011 Summer Newsletter

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## West Traverse Township (Est.1897)

### Township Board

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

### Planning Commission

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

### Zoning Board of Appeals

Neil Ahrens  
Sam DeCamp  
Chris Baiardi  
Jim Bartlett  
Eva Lauer

### Board of Review

Jim Frang - *Chair*  
Bill Borglin  
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

With the summer tax season upon us, please review your 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. The date the check was written or on-line payment issued is **not** considered a postmark.
- 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.**

Both the Township Treasurer and the Deputy Treasurer are in the township office daily from 9 am to 1 pm to receive your property tax payments. The office will also be open from 9 am to 5 pm on Wednesday September 14, 2011.

As always, if you have any questions regarding your tax bill or payment of your taxes, please do not hesitate to contact the treasurer or deputy treasurer at the contact numbers listed at the top of this newsletter.

## From the Clerk

Do not forget to add Thorne Swift Nature Preserve to your list of summer destinations. John Riggs is celebrating 15 years as the Manager. John and his amazing staff have been hard at work the past few years making several improvements to the Preserve. Be sure to visit the new exhibits at the Nature Center before you hit the trails to experience the true sights and sounds of Northern Michigan. Do not be surprised to spot a wide array of birds and wildlife as you make your way to the dune observation platform to take in the breathtaking views of Lake Michigan. West Traverse Township is extremely fortunate to have this "crown jewel" in its own backyard and we look forward to having you enjoy it this summer!

## Recreation / Thorne Swift-Nature Preserve Committee

The Committee has placed location maps on several trail intersections on the Township '80' and the maps are available on the Township website. The Thorne Swift employees will be able to help clear and identify the trails early this summer, and they encourage the trail use to the Thorne Swift visitors. A parking area off Griffen Road is being considered. Garlic mustard, an invasive plant species has been noticed on the '80', and volunteer groups have been formed to help eradicate it before it spreads.

Walking trails on the former Cook property will be mowed this summer, starting at the Cook Barn. The barn will remain because of its scenic value, but is closed to the public for safety reasons.

The Committee has encouraged the development of the Hoyt Road non-motorized trail, which has been funded primarily by grants and donations and is in the design stage. The schedule calls for a ground breaking this fall. The trail will extend from Forest Ridge just north of Quick Road to Lake Road, on the west side of Hoyt Road. All necessary easements and grading permits have been granted by adjoining property owners.

Thorne Swift Nature Center has a creative new display, and John Riggs and crew continue to replace the old boardwalks. Thorne Swift tee shirts will be for sale this summer.

## From the Planner / Zoning Administrator

The Planning Commission recommended the following changes to the zoning regulations, which were subsequently adopted by the township board and are now in effect:

- Signs: Removed the requirement for a 10' setback from the road right-of-way for temporary signs. Added a section that allows township officials to remove unauthorized signs placed on public property or within the road right-of-way.
- Non-use variances: Brought this section into conformance with the new State Zoning Enabling Act.
- Wind Energy Systems: amended this section to allow a camouflaged color in addition to white or galvanized.

The PC is currently working on regulations to allow day care, business schools, and private schools in the commercial district; to allow home based businesses in residential areas and to clarify differences between home offices, home occupations, and home based businesses; and to offer incentives for farmland and open space preservation.

## **State of the Township**

The Township Board is pleased to report that for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, the Township's governmental funds finished with a surplus of revenues minus expenses of about \$73,000. This surplus was achieved despite significant decreases in revenues over the past three years. The resulting fund balance for these funds is about \$1.6 million, with \$230,000 set aside for road improvements and \$106,000 set aside for Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. The remainder is in the township's General Fund. A complete audit of this past fiscal year will be posted on the township website later this summer.

For the next fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, the budget for the Township's government funds shows revenues again decreasing by about \$39,000 and expenses increasing by about \$50,000 resulting in a deficit of about \$15,000, which would be covered by the fund balance. However, with the recent decision by the Township Board to defer spending most of what was budgeted for road repairs (see 2011 Road Projects), revenues will again exceed expenses. Some of the budgeted increases include the Township's share of the engineering for the Hoyt Road Trail, an increased allocation to the Fire Authority equipment fund, and improvements at Thorne Swift. Compensation remains unchanged for most township employees, including elected officials, contract employees, contractors, and township appointees. In addition, the Township millage rates also remain unchanged at 0.70 mills for general operations, 0.70 mills for road improvements, and 0.20 mills for Thorne Swift, maintaining the Township's position as having the second/third lowest tax rate for non-homestead/homestead properties, respectively.

As for the utility funds, the sewer fund and water funds showed surpluses of about \$5,000 and \$17,000, respectively for 2010-11. The budget for 2011-12 also has those funds showing surpluses of about \$2,000 and \$4,000, respectively. The decrease in the water fund is due to improvements being made on fire hydrants and replacement of some older water meters.

## **2011 Road Improvement Projects**

The road improvement projects approved by the Township Board for 2011 are:

- Five Mile Creek Road – crack sealing from M-119 to Friendship Township.
- Cemetery Road – asphalt overlay from Lake Road to Cottontail Lane.
- Franklin Street – concrete curbing at State Road; pulverize, grade and repave from State Road to the corner by MacGregor's; asphalt overlay the remainder of the street.
- Ann Street – resurface from Perry Street north to the top of the hill, in conjunction with the City of Harbor Springs
- Lower Shore Drive – participate with the County Road Commission and MDOT on an engineering study of the east end of Lower Shore Drive where the slope failed in 2004 and continues to move.

The cost of these projects is about \$98,000 against a budget of \$263,000. The Township Board has decided not to commit to any additional road improvement projects until the engineering study on Lower Shore Drive provides a basis for estimating the cost of stabilizing the slope and reconstructing the road surface.

The latest information from the County Road Commission is that the reconstruction of Hoyt Road from Quick Road north to Heynig Road is still planned for this fall, with funding provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## **Temporary Signs**

In case you aren't aware, the Township has a sign ordinance that also pertains to temporary signs, such as contractor signs, real estate advertising signs, election campaign signs, community or special event signs, garage sales, and farm product advertising signs.

While a permit is not required, the following regulations apply to the display of all temporary signs:

- They are not allowed within the road right-of-way. In most of the township, the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the centerline of the road.
- They are not allowed on public property, such as around the Township Hall.
- All signs on a single property shall have a maximum combined surface area of twelve (12) square feet.
- They may not be affixed to trees, shrubs, rocks, or other natural features.
- They shall be removed within 7 days following the activity to which they pertain.

Any unauthorized sign that is placed on public property or within the road right-of-way is subject to removal by any elected Township official or the Zoning Administrator. If it can be easily determined, the township will contact the party responsible for the sign and provide an opportunity to retrieve it. Any sign that has not been retrieved within 30 days following removal is subject to disposal. The Township is not responsible for any loss or damage incurred in connection with the removal or temporary storage of any unauthorized sign.

## **Library Services**

The Agreement for establishing a Harbor Springs Area District Library (HSADL) was approved by the State Librarian in December 2010. Subsequently, a HSADL Board has also been established consisting of representatives from each of the six participating municipalities. Meanwhile, the Friends of the HSADL, a non-profit organization separate from the Library Board, is embarking on a capital campaign to raise the \$3-4 million dollars that will be needed to build and equip the proposed library. The Harbor Springs City Council has approved the use of City property for the proposed library, on the site across from Bay Bluffs and adjacent to Reynolds Field. The Library Board and the Friends have been working with a local architect to design a library building that is both functional and similar to other local municipal buildings. Per the Agreement, proceeding with the proposed District Library is contingent upon the passage of an operating millage by the voters of the library district by December 2012.