

## West Traverse Township

PO Box 528  
Harbor Springs, MI 49740



**West Traverse Township**  
(Established 1897)

## West Traverse Township - 2014 Newsletter

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### Summer Greetings from your West Traverse Township Board!

After a challenging winter for those of us who stayed here, it's time to enjoy everything that summer has to offer in West Traverse Township! Again this year, there will be only this one Township newsletter, which also includes the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve newsletter. Hopefully, these newsletters include something you find useful. They are also available on the Township's website. If you want more information about anything in the newsletters, please let us know. Also, feel free to suggest how the newsletters might be changed to better meet your needs.

In previous newsletters, the lead article has always been "From the Treasurer", providing detailed instructions on how to pay the summer and winter property tax bills. That information will now be included with each of the tax bills mailed to property owners. If you don't receive your summer tax bill by July 1 or your winter tax bill by December 1, please call the Township Office.

### Township Website

The Township website ([www.westtraversetownship.com](http://www.westtraversetownship.com)) received a new look last summer. It remains a great resource for information about the Township, including contacts, Board minutes, Planning Commission minutes, the Master Plan and Recreation Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Permit Application Form & Fee Schedules, Township '80' Park maps, and more. Please let us know if you have suggestions for other items to place there.

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### West Traverse Township

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#### Township Board

Bob Sandford - Supervisor  
Cindy Baiardi - Clerk  
Kristi Hollingsworth - Treasurer  
John Baker - Trustee  
Jim Bartlett - Trustee

#### Planning Commission

Nancy Sarowski - Chair  
Cindy Baiardi  
Cynthia Fisher  
Dan Gorman  
Paul Repasky  
Pete Wallin  
Ann Wilderom

#### Zoning Board of Appeals

Sam DeCamp - Chair  
Chris Baiardi  
Jim Bartlett  
Eva Lauer  
Nancy Sarowski  
Pete Wallin - Alternate

#### Board of Review

Jim Frang - Chair  
Bill Borglin  
Curt Regentin

#### Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee

John Baker - Chair  
Darrell Amlin  
Joey Arbaugh  
Cynthia Fisher  
Sam DeCamp  
Laurie Ford  
John Riggs  
Carolyn Sandford

#### Zoning Administrator

Bob Sandford  
Most Thursdays : 9:00 am - 11:30 am  
Other times by appointment

#### Planner

Mary Campbell  
By Appointment

#### Assessor

Brian Grimm  
9:00 am - 1 pm Thursday

#### Administrative Assistant

Sue Matsko

#### Township Hall Office Hours

9:00 am - 1:00 pm Daily

#### Township Board Meetings

2nd Tuesdays - 7:00 pm

#### Planning Commission Meetings

3rd Wednesdays - 7:00 pm

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

### From the Clerk

The May 6<sup>th</sup> election was the first election the Township held utilizing the electronic pollbook and the process went smoothly. There were 135 voters, which was disappointing, but typical as the school and ISD elections are not huge draws for the voters. It was a good election for getting everyone acquainted with the new equipment!

We will have two more elections this year: the Primary Election on August 5 and General Election on November 4. If you would like to be on the permanent absentee voter list and have not signed up yet, you may do so at any time. Please contact me at 526-7361 or e-mail at [cjbrd@charter.net](mailto:cjbrd@charter.net). I will send you a form to fill out and return. For each election you will automatically receive an application to have a ballot sent. Around 100 people have already signed up and hopefully everyone that voted Absentee was pleased with how the process worked. Any feedback you would like to offer is appreciated.

The last day to register for the August primary is July 7, 2014 and the last day to register for the November general election is October 6, 2014. If you are new to the Township, please make sure that you have changed your address and registered to vote. This can be done at the Secretary of State Office and also at the Township Hall by contacting the Clerk. Hope to see you at the polls this fall!

### 2014 Road Improvement Projects

For avid readers of past newsletters it probably sounds like a broken record, but West Traverse continues to have the highest rated paved local roads in Emmet County, due in large part to the funds provided by the extra-voted road millage. The total amount spent by the Township since 2007 will now exceed \$2.2 million with completion of the 2014 projects. Those projects, some of which are already completed, are:

- Lightfoot Road - pave from Middle Road to Heynig Road
- Middle Road - asphalt overlay from State Road to west Hughston Road
- Lightfoot Road - asphalt overlay north from the City Limit to Hughston Road
- Several roads - crack seal 3.73 miles

In addition, the Township Board agreed to share in the cost with the City of Harbor Springs for re-constructing Lake Street from Ann Street west to the City Limit.

### Recreation / Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Committee

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve had a very successful season last year and is ready for another, as reflected by the 2014 version of its Swift Current newsletter enclosed.

The Recreation Committee has been overseeing the trail maintenance on the Township '80' park off Ridge and Griffen Roads and has placed maps and forest conditions bulletins at 10 trail intersections. The trails are suitable for hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and mountain biking. The trail map is also available on the Township website. We encourage stewardship by all trail users; please notify the Township Hall if you find any problems on the trails.

The Hoyt Road trail between Quick Road and Lake Street is in active use. Snow mobile usage south of Bester Road is permitted only when there is adequate snow cover to protect the pavement. The trail easements north of Bester Road were granted only for non-motorized use.

### Birchwood Medical First Responders

Thanks are again in order to the Birchwood Farms Security & Emergency Medical Services for voluntarily providing medical first responder services throughout the Township. Of the total of 159 medical runs in 2013, 108, or 68%, were off Birchwood property. The Township is fortunate to have this capability close by. The only cost to the Township is its share of consumable supplies, which was \$476. **REMEMBER, IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.** The 911 dispatch center will send out the nearest available ambulance as well as the Birchwood first responders.

## West Traverse Township - 2014 Newsletter

### Township Finances

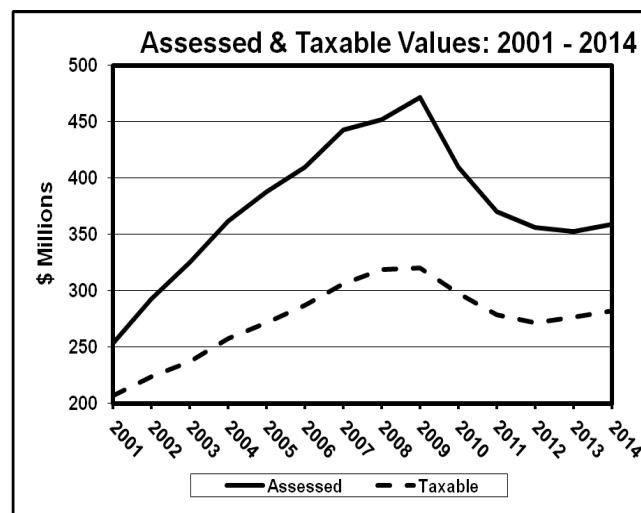
The Township Board is pleased to report that the Township's finances remain in great shape. The Township has no debt, no legacy liabilities, and a record high fund balance (i.e. cash reserves) in its governmental funds. For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, revenues for the governmental funds exceeded expenses by \$87,904, resulting in a total fund balance of \$1.93 million. The budget approved for the next fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, shows that expenses will exceed revenues by \$274,039, thus decreasing the total fund balance to about \$1.66 million. The main reasons for this decrease are a lower Township property tax millage rate, elimination of the property tax administration fee (PTAF), and increased spending on road improvement projects.

Revenues for the Township's utility (sewer and water) funds exceeded expenses by about \$16,000.

Revenues	3/31/14	3/31/15	Detail 3/31/14 Actual
Property Taxes	509,858	386,295	Includes Administration Fee, Interest, & Penalty
State Shared Revenue	120,467	120,000	
Donations	52,113	1,500	Road Fund (22,200) Thorne Swift (29,913)
All Other	33,878	28,036	Rent, Zoning Fees, Interest, Thorne Swift Fees, METRO Act
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>716,316</b>	<b>535,831</b>	
Expenses	3/31/14	3/31/15	Detail 3/31/14 Actual
Road Improvements	196,074	408,000	Lower Shore Drive, Hughston Road, Quick Road, TS Court
Thorne Swift	130,078	70,650	Staff (52,827), Operations (7,141), Observation Deck (70,110)
Township Government	79,976	84,000	Elected Officials, Deputies, Township Board Expenses
Fire Protection	50,044	56,000	Equipment Fund (17,637), Operations (32,407)
Assessing & BOR	34,509	36,000	Assessing (32,613), Board of Review (1,896)
Township Hall	33,487	35,000	Utilities, Maintenance, Improvements (landscaping, flagpole)
Township Office	30,538	33,000	Information Technology, Supplies, Secretary
Planning & Zoning	22,789	25,000	Planning Commission, Planner, & Zoning Administrator
Recreation	14,745	17,000	City Facilities ( 10,690), Hoyt Road Trail (1,324), Other (2,731)
Services	13,236	14,000	Airport (7,737), Library (4,818), Miss Dig (206), Other (476)
Auditing & Legal	11,959	9,500	Auditing (5,707), Legal (6252) Fees
Insurance	5,419	6,500	Property, Liability, Workers' Compensation
Rental House	4,326	7,220	Maintenance, Property Taxes
Other	878	2,000	Landfill well monitoring (878)
Elections	354	6,000	Supplies, No elections in 2013
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>628,412</b>	<b>809,870</b>	
<b>Revenues - Expenses</b>	<b>87,904</b>	<b>-274,039</b>	
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>1,930,367</b>	<b>1,656,328</b>	

The Township property tax millage rate initially adopted by the Township Board for 2014 was 1.60 mills, unchanged from 2013. In light of the increase in the total fund balance, the Board decreased the rate to 1.25 mills: 0.70 mills for general operations; 0.30 mills for road improvements; and 0.25 mills for Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. This lower rate reflects a savings of \$35 per \$100,000 of taxable value. Whether the millage remains at this lower rate depends largely upon the funds needed for road improvements and any increase in revenues, mainly property taxes and state shared revenue.

The chart shows the Township's total assessed (SEV) and taxable values between 2001 and 2014. With the amount of new construction (see Zoning & Planning) and uncapping of taxable values due to increased sales, the total taxable value should continue on an upward trend.



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### Zoning and Planning

You may (or may not) remember from last year's newsletter that the Township Board had appointed a search committee to identify and recommend a replacement for Randy Frykberg, who resigned as Planner and Zoning Administrator last summer. The search committee's recommendations adopted by the Board were:

- Enter into an agreement to use the Emmet County Office of Planning, Zoning, and Construction Resources for reviewing zoning permit applications and issuing zoning permits for residential uses and structures in cases where what is being proposed clearly complies with the Township's Zoning Ordinance. This includes new construction, additions to existing structures, and accessory buildings.
- Hire Bob Sandford as Zoning Administrator to address all zoning permit applications which cannot be processed by Emmet County for the Township. This includes those cases that require a site plan review, a special use permit, a variance, or some other special review, as well as commercial properties, signs, home occupations, and home-based businesses.
- Hire Bob Sandford as Zoning Enforcement Officer.
- Contract with M. C. Planning and Design (Mary Campbell) to provide planning services to the Township on an 'as-needed' basis.

It probably comes as no surprise that zoning permit activity for 2013 showed a considerable increase over previous years, with a total of 39 permits: new residential construction - 9; residential additions - 18; residential accessory buildings - 6; signs - 2; and other - 4.

The primary activity of the Planning Commission over the past year has been to update the Township's Master Plan. By July 1, the updated Plan will be sent to neighboring municipalities and the County for their mandatory reviews, which can take up to 63 days. During this time, the updated Plan will also be available for general viewing on the Township website and at the Township Office. Then the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the update, make any necessary revisions, and forward it to the Township Board for final approval.

### Fireworks Ordinance Discussed, No Action Taken

In August, 2012, the Township Board was approached by a Township resident regarding the possibility of the Township adopting an ordinance regulating the use of consumer-grade fireworks. Over the course of the next 15 months covering 6 meetings, the Board investigated and learned that recent legislative changes by the State would not help local units of government regulate fireworks, the Emmet County Sheriff's Office would not enforce a township fireworks ordinance due to a myriad of reasons, and the Michigan State Police was unable to guarantee consistent enforcement due to their time constraints.

The Board therefore did not pass a fireworks ordinance due primarily to the lack of dependable enforcement. However, the Board takes this opportunity to remind everyone in the Township to use common sense when enjoying these sometimes dangerous devices and to be respectful of their neighbor's privacy and property rights.

### Library Services

The Township renewed its two-year agreement with the Alanson Area Public Library to provide library services at no cost to all Township residents. The annual cost to the Township is a fee of \$3 per capita and assignment of the Township's penal fines. The Library is open Monday through Saturday with various hours. For more information, please call (231) 548-5465 or access the Library's website at [www.alansonlibrary.michlibrary.org](http://www.alansonlibrary.michlibrary.org).

### Temporary Signs

Surprisingly, despite numerous newsletter articles and newspaper advertisements, some folks continue to improperly place temporary signs, detracting from the attractiveness, and in some case the safety, of the Township. These temporary signs are primarily those advertising yard sales, real estate for sale, and community or special events. While permits aren't needed for temporary signs, the Township's Zoning Ordinance states that they are not allowed in the road right-of-way or on public property, and may not be affixed to trees or other natural features. For all but a very short stretch of M-119 (Carpenter Lane to Lake Road), the road right-of-way on every public road in the Township extends 33 feet from the centerline of the road. Please note that the Zoning Ordinance also grants elected Township officials and the Zoning Administrator the authority to remove improperly placed signs.

Thanks to all of you who read through the entire newsletter. Hopefully you found it useful. Send me an e-mail if you have any comments, suggestions, or questions. Sincerely, Bob Sandford — [supervisor@westtraversetownship.com](mailto:supervisor@westtraversetownship.com)