

West Traverse Township

PO Box 528
Harbor Springs, MI 49740



**West Traverse
Township**
(Established 1897)

West Traverse Township - 2013 Newsletter

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(231) 526-7361 Fax: (231) 526-0028 E-Mail: secretary@westtraversetownship.com
www.westtraversetownship.com

Summer Greetings from your West Traverse Township Board!

This mailing represents a slight change from the past. Previously, the Township newsletter was published twice a year and included with the June and December tax bills. The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve newsletter was also included with the June bill. Now, both newsletters will be mailed together once a year in June. Hopefully, these newsletters include something you find useful. They are also available on the Township's website. Feel free to convey your thoughts regarding these newsletters to any Township Board member.

Township Mailing Address

Please note the Township's mailing address is now **PO BOX 528**.

Township Website

The Township website (www.westtraversetownship.com) is a great resource for information about the Township, including contacts, Board minutes, Planning Commission minutes, the Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Permit Application Form & Fee Schedule, Recreation Plan, Township '80' Park maps, and more. Please let us know if you have suggestions for other items to place there.

Library Services

This is just a reminder that the Township has an agreement with the Alanson Area Public Library to provide library services to all township residents. Stop by to get your free library card. You can also find out more about the Alanson Library at www.alansonlibrary.michlibrary.org or by calling (231) 548-5465.

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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
Neil Ahrens
Cynthia Fisher
Kristi Hollingsworth
Paul Repasky
Pete Wallin
Ann Wilderom

Board of Review

Jim Frang - Chair
Bill Borglin
Curt Regentin
Joretta Bethke

Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee

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

Planner/Zoning Administrator

Randy Frykberg
Noon - 4:00 pm Tuesday
8:00 am - Noon Thursday

Assessor

Brian Grimm
9:00 am - 1 pm Thursday

Administrative Assistant

Sue Matsko

Township Hall Office Hours

9:00 am - 1:00 pm Daily
9:00 am - 4:00 pm Tuesday

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

** IMPORTANT TAXPAYER INFORMATION **

Tax bills are mailed twice a year – summer is mailed at the end of June and is due September 16th, 2013 and winter is mailed at the end of November and is due February 14th, 2014. If you do not receive your tax bill in a timely manner, please contact the Township office at (231) 526-7361 to request a copy of your tax bill and to verify that we have the correct mailing address. We are not responsible for taxes mailed to the incorrect address so please ensure that we have your most current mailing information.

When mailing your tax payments, please mail them to our **NEW PO BOX 528**. If taxes are mailed to an incorrect address and are delayed or late, interest will be added. The Township is not responsible for lost or late payments. Please make your checks payable to West Traverse Township. Cash will be accepted ONLY for the exact amount owing. Please note that we are not able to make change nor will overpayments be accepted.

Postmarks will be accepted for the due dates (September 16th and February 14th) only. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Any payments not received by the due date will incur interest at a rate of 1% per month. After March 1st, 2014 all unpaid taxes will be turned over to the Emmet County Treasurer at which time additional interest and penalties will be added.

As always, please review your tax bill carefully for proper Principal Residence Exemption (PRE), Taxable Value and Assessed Values. If you have any questions concerning these, you may contact the West Traverse Township Assessor. All other tax bill questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the West Traverse Township Treasurer.

Greetings from the Clerk

There are currently no elections scheduled for 2013 but with the next election that is held, West Traverse Township will enter the 21st Century! We will begin using what is known as the *e-pollbook*. This electronic pollbook consists of a laptop computer and software that allow the Clerk to download the State Qualified Voter File for the Township prior to each election. This laptop computer was obtained by a grant from the Federal Government through the Help America Vote Act at no cost to the Township.

When you arrive at the Township to vote, the Election Inspectors will now scan your driver's license or type your name into the e-pollbook and have instant access to your voter registration record, be able to confirm your registration is correct, and assign a ballot to you. We will know immediately if you are a qualified voter in our Township. Once you have a ballot, the voting process will be the same as in the past. You, the voter, will not notice much difference except perhaps less time in line!

When the poll closes, the Election Inspectors will generate an official precinct record report and update voter history in the Qualified Voter File (that you voted, not how you voted). **If security is a concern, please be assured that the e-pollbook is heavily password protected to insure the voter's privacy!**

One of the most beneficial changes for many voters will be the implementation of a Permanent Absentee Voter List. Many of you have asked about this in the past and now it is available. You must request to be on this list. Please send me an e-mail at cjbrd@charter.net or call the Township Office at 526-7361 to make your request. Once you are on the list, whenever there is an election, you will automatically receive the application for the Absentee Ballot as soon as they are available.

Planner / Zoning Administrator

Randy Frykberg, who has served the Township as Planner since 2002 and Zoning Administrator since 2005, has submitted his resignation, effective July 31, 2013. Randy has provided invaluable service that will be difficult to replace, and we all wish him well. The Township Board has appointed a search committee to identify and recommend a successor to the Township Board for approval.

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Township Finances

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, revenues and expenses for the Township's governmental funds were essentially the same at about \$670,000, resulting in no change in the total fund balance of about \$1.8 million. The summarized expenses for the governmental funds are:

Expense	\$ Amount	Description
Road Improvements	283,292	Lower Shore Drive (134,635), Various (148,657)
Township Government	79,269	Elected Officials, Deputies, Township Board General Expenses
Thorne Swift	70,098	Staff (57,249), Maintenance (12,195), Other (878)
Fire Protection	48,819	Equipment Fund (16,187), Operations (32,632)
Township Office	44,496	Information Technology, Supplies, Secretary
Assessing & BOR	34,424	Assessing (31,549), Board of Review (2,875)
Planning & Zoning	32,704	Planning Commission, Contract Planner/Zoning Administrator
Recreation	19,897	Use of City Facilities (11,044), Hoyt Road Trail (8,387), Other (466)
Township Hall	15,240	Utilities, Maintenance
Elections	9,728	May, August, November
Airport Authority	7,609	Harbor-Petoskey Area Airport Authority
Insurance	7,321	Property, Liability, Workers' Compensation
Rental House	4,874	Maintenance, Property Taxes
Library Services	4,818	Alanson Area Public Library, \$3 per capita
Accounting & Legal	4,672	Accounting (1,242), Legal (3,430) Fees
Other	2,462	Landfill well monitoring (1,821)
Total	\$ 669,723	

Revenues for the Township's utility (water and sewer) funds exceeded expenses by about \$35,000, with all of the excess in the water fund as the Township continues to build-up the water fund balance.

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, the Township Board adopted Township millage rates that remain unchanged in total from the past several years at 1.60 mills: 0.70 mills for general operations, 0.65 mills for road improvements, and 0.25 mills for Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. This reflects a decrease of 0.05 mills for road improvements and a corresponding increase of 0.05 mills for the Nature Preserve to help with funding the replacement of the dune observation platform. In addition, the administrative fee has been further reduced from 0.50% to 0.30% of the total property tax bill.

Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee

The Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee has concentrated on making the Township '80' park on Ridge and Griffen Roads more user-friendly this year, on considering possible recreation uses for the Cook property on Lake Road across from the Township Hall, and on working with John Riggs, manager of Thorne Swift Nature Preserve, to facilitate his education and maintenance programs.

Trail maps are located on 12 trail intersections on the Township '80' park; the trails were used for skiing and snow shoeing last winter and are in shape for walking and mountain biking this summer. Location and trail maps are available on the Township's website.

The Committee has begun to review and update the 5-year Township Recreation Plan. An up-to-date Plan that meets State Recommendations is necessary to compete for State grant money for recreation projects. The plan will prioritize the Township's recreation 'wish list'. The Committee would appreciate input from Township residents.

The Hoyt Road Non-Motorized Trail from Lake Street to Forest Way, just north of Quick Road, is completed and in use. The trail was financed primarily through the federal Safe Routes to School program, with additional contributions from West Traverse Township, Little Traverse Township, the City of Harbor Springs, and local donors. It is a safe pedestrian and bike connector between the schools, Skate Park, baseball fields, soccer fields, and several neighborhoods on Quick and Hoyt Roads.

Thorne Swift Dune Observation Platform

Re-construction of the dune observation platform is underway. Funding has been obtained with donations of \$20,000 through the Little Traverse Conservancy, a grant of \$7,500 from the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation, and the increase of the Thorne Swift millage. While the wet spring weather has hampered the reconstruction, it will hopefully still be completed by July 1.

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Road Improvement Projects

For the third year in a row, West Traverse Township has the highest rated paved roads in Emmet County. A rating of 7 or above (on a scale of 0 to 10) is considered a good road, and 80% of the Township's 27.45 miles of paved roads are at or above that level. Since 2005, the township has spent about \$1.85 million on road improvement projects, the majority of that coming from the extra-voted road millage. The Township has also benefitted from some federal funding including through the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.

The 2013 road improvement projects, all of which are nearing completion, are:

- Quick Road - crack sealing from Lightfoot Road to State Road
- Quick Road - asphalt overlay from Lightfoot west
- Hughston Road - asphalt overlay from Griffen Road south for 0.63 miles
- Lower Shore Drive - asphalt overlay from Thorne Swift Nature Preserve to Friendship Township

Projects anticipated for 2014 include paving Lightfoot Road from Middle Road to Heynig Road, asphalt overlay on Middle Road from State Road to Hughston Road (west), and other smaller projects that will be determined by the Township Board in conjunction with the County Road Commission in February 2014.

Fireworks Ordinance

The Michigan Fireworks Safety Act, approved in 2011, specifically allows the use of consumer-grade fireworks on the days before, the days of, and the days after ten national holidays, for a total of 30 days. On the other 335 days of the year, a municipality may enact an ordinance to regulate the use of consumer fireworks. A few nearby municipalities have enacted ordinances totally banning the use of consumer fireworks on those 335 days. Late last summer, the Township Board received requests to enact its own ordinance as a result of consumer fireworks being set off late at night. In addition to the obvious disturbances this caused, projectiles from the fireworks were found up to ½ mile away and last summer was particularly dry posing a high fire danger. The Board tabled any action on the requests due to rumors that the Michigan legislature was considering amending the Fireworks Act. It now appears that an amendment to allow municipalities to prohibit the use of consumer fireworks from midnight to 8 am, even on those 30 days, is gaining traction and may be enacted by mid-June. To aid the Board in deciding what to do about a fireworks ordinance, we would appreciate your input. Please contact a Board member or attend the next Board meeting on July 9.

Zoning Permits

West Traverse is one of four townships (out of 16) in Emmet County that has its own Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 1972. The Zoning Ordinance specifies that a zoning permit is required prior to any excavation, any construction, moving or alteration of a structure, and any change in the type of use or type of occupancy of any land in the Township. A zoning permit is basically a land use permit which is intended to protect the values of Township properties.

The most common zoning permits are for remodeling or expanding an existing structure and for construction of a new structure. Buildings, walls, and permanent signs are classified as structures by the Township's Zoning Ordinance. A zoning permit is needed for any size structure, even if a building permit is not required by the County, such as for an accessory building that is less than 200 square feet in size.

To apply for a zoning permit, it is necessary to contact the Zoning Administrator. The Township's website includes a zoning permit application and fee schedule, and they are also available at the Township Office.

Temporary Signs

The warmer weather finally reaching our Township brings with it the annual increase in temporary signs advertising yard sales, real estate for sale, community or special events, contractors, farm products for sale, etc. While permits are 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 may not be affixed to trees, shrubs, rocks or other natural features.
- They are not allowed on public property, such as around the Township Hall.
- They shall have a maximum surface area of twelve (12) square feet.
- They shall be removed within 7 days following the activity to which they pertain.
- Real estate advertising signs must be placed on the premises being advertised.

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. Removed signs will be stored at the Township Hall and any that have not been retrieved after 30 days will be subject to disposal.