

Parks Department

Restoring a Piece of
Oshtemo History



Restoring the historic Drake Farmstead cupola was more than a construction project. It was a community effort to preserve an important piece of Oshtemo’s history.



Originally removed from the Farmstead barn before its demolition in 2014, the cupola sat untouched for several years and continued to deteriorate. Oshtemo resident Roman Pawlowski undertook the painstaking restoration, preserving as much original material as possible while rebuilding sections that could not be saved.

With support from Township staff, the Oshtemo Historical Society, and community partners, the restored cupola once again reflects its historic appearance and craftsmanship.

The project demonstrates the power of community collaboration and a shared commitment to preserving local history. Township officials are exploring options to permanently display the cupola at Drake

Farmstead, allowing visitors to enjoy this restored piece of local history for years to come. Future plans also include installing a restored weathervane as part of the project’s final phase.

The restored cupola gives this piece of Oshtemo history a new future and highlights what community collaboration can accomplish.

Thank You to Our Park Volunteers

From trail maintenance and habitat restoration to community cleanups and special events, volunteers played an important role in caring for Oshtemo’s parks, trails, and natural areas this year.



At Drake Farmstead Park, Oshtemo Township Park, Flesher Field, and the new Fruit Belt Rail Trail, volunteers contributed hundreds of hours to projects including invasive species removal, trail maintenance, brush clearing, planting, signage installation, habitat improvements, and community cleanups.

These efforts improved accessibility, enhanced natural areas, and helped create welcoming outdoor spaces for residents of all ages to enjoy. Volunteers also supported community events, including National Public Lands Day activities.

Every trail cleared, invasive plant removed, and habitat improved helps make Oshtemo’s parks more welcoming today and preserves them for future generations. Thank you to every volunteer who contributed their time and talents this year.

Enjoy Oshtemo Parks All Year

Winter doesn’t have to be spent indoors. Oshtemo’s parks remain open year-round, offering residents plenty of ways to stay active and enjoy the outdoors.



To help residents stay active during the winter months, the Township will clear snow from paved paths at Oshtemo Township Park and Flesher Field, providing convenient locations for walking and exercise. The Fruit Belt Rail Trail will not be cleared of snow, offering a scenic setting for winter activities such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

While park restrooms will be closed for the season, portable restrooms will remain available at Township Park and Flesher Field.

Bundle up and enjoy a winter walk, a trail adventure, or simply some fresh air close to home.

Infrastructure News



Sewer Connections:
What Property Owners Need to Know

Property owners have **up to two years after receiving official notice** that sewer service is available to complete their connection. Public Works staff is here to help residents understand timelines, costs, permitting requirements, and available financial assistance.

Connection costs vary based on factors such as distance to the sewer lead, site conditions, driveways, landscaping, and existing plumbing. Because every property is different, costs can vary significantly. However, many connection projects have come in lower than originally estimated.

Township staff can provide information about contractors experienced with sewer connections and local permitting requirements. While the Township cannot

recommend specific companies, we encourage residents to obtain multiple quotes and contact us if an estimate appears unusually high.

Depending on eligibility, financial assistance may be available through the township hardship program, an installment payment agreement, and USDA loan and grant programs.



Residents are encouraged to contact Township staff early in the process to learn more about available resources and connection requirements.

Sewer Expansion and Public Health

Oshtemo’s sewer expansion project is already helping address failing septic systems and

protect groundwater. Five affected properties were connected during Phase 1, and eight additional failing or failed systems have been identified during Phase 2, including one requiring pumping every three weeks. Connecting these properties to sanitary sewer helps protect groundwater, improve public health, and provide long-term reliability for homeowners.

Residents should also remember that septic tanks must be properly abandoned when connecting to public sewer. Under updated **Ordinance 232**, septic tanks must be fully pumped before being taken out of service, and crushing or filling is highly recommended when feasible.

The Township is using several construction efficiencies to help manage costs and keep work moving efficiently, including local staging areas for strategic material storage, and remains focused on delivering reliable infrastructure that protects public health and serves the community for generations to come.

At Your Service From Supervisor Cheri Bell



A Year of Progress

Dear Neighbors,

Over the past year, our township has worked to develop thoughtful, science-based regulations for potential energy storage systems. This work reflects a commitment shared by Township officials, staff, and residents to protect public safety while ensuring that future decisions are guided by facts, transparency, and community input.

From the beginning, we recognized that this issue deserved careful study and meaningful public engagement. Township officials and staff have invested considerable time researching best practices, consulting independent scientific and technical experts, reviewing state policy developments, and listening to residents’ questions and

concerns. During this time, our goal has been to ensure that decisions are informed by credible information and supported by a transparent public process.

Community involvement has been an important part of this work. Residents have attended Township Board and Planning Commission meetings, participated in Community Conversations and Open Office Hours, submitted comments, and shared a wide range of perspectives. That participation has strengthened the ordinance development process and helped ensure that community voices are heard.

Throughout this process, the township has been navigating the implementation of PA 233, which introduced limitations for local governments across the state. At the same time, misinformation has sometimes made it difficult for residents to distinguish fact from speculation. We understand that people care deeply about the future of our community, and we remain committed to

providing accurate information and creating opportunities for respectful dialogue.

As we continue this work, residents can expect the same approach that has guided us from the beginning. Decisions will remain grounded in science, public safety considerations, and expert guidance. Residents will continue to have opportunities to review information, ask questions, and provide feedback. The township will continue to communicate openly through public meetings, agendas, meeting minutes, the township website, and social media. Should a proposal be submitted in the future, it will be evaluated through a transparent, site-specific public process.

Thank you to our residents for your continued participation, thoughtful questions, and engagement throughout this process. I also extend my appreciation to township staff for their professionalism, dedication, and countless hours supporting this work. Together, these contributions help keep our township informed, welcoming, and strong.

The Future of Oshtemo

Planning for Growth, Sustainability, and Community Values



Oshtemo Township is continuing several initiatives designed to protect natural resources, address emerging technologies, and ensure future development reflects the community’s vision for the years ahead.

Protecting Natural Resources

One major initiative would strengthen protections for water resources, trees, natural features, and other environmental assets throughout the Township.

Over the past year, staff have reviewed existing regulations related to stormwater management, groundwater protection, tree preservation, natural features, land clearing, and soil erosion control. The proposed updates would bring these standards together into a single Environmental Protection chapter, making requirements easier to understand and administer.

The Township is also exploring ways to expand protections for natural features such as steep slopes, tree canopy, and water resources using current best practices and expert guidance. The goal is to preserve the natural character that residents value while accommodating future development.

Preparing for Renewable Energy

As renewable energy technologies continue to evolve, Oshtemo is developing updated standards for solar, wind, and battery

storage systems.

The new regulations will address both large-scale energy facilities and smaller systems used by homes and businesses. Township staff are working with subject matter experts to ensure the standards meet or exceed state requirements while reflecting the community’s priorities.

By consolidating renewable energy regulations into a single ordinance section, the Township aims to provide clear expectations for property owners, developers, and residents.

Aligning Regulations with the Community’s Vision

In addition to these efforts, Progressive Companies recently completed a review of the Township’s Zoning Ordinance against the goals of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

That review identified opportunities to update zoning regulations so they better support the community’s vision for future land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

The Planning Commission will continue reviewing potential ordinance amendments in the coming months. Residents will have opportunities to review draft language, attend public meetings, and provide feedback before any changes are considered by the Township Board.

Together, these initiatives represent an important step toward ensuring Oshtemo remains a vibrant, sustainable, and well-planned community for current and future residents.

Growth Happens. Let’s Decide How!



Featured Events in Oshtemo

Fire Prevention Day

Join the Oshtemo Fire Department for our fourth annual Fire Prevention Day! This free, family-friendly event combines hands-on safety activities with plenty of fun for all ages. Enjoy a complimentary pancake breakfast, meet your local firefighters, explore fire apparatus, and learn simple ways to help keep your family safe at home.



**Saturday, October 10
9 a.m. to noon
7275 W. Main Street**

Fall Comes to the Forest

Our last Guided Nature Walk is **Saturday, October 17 at 1 p.m.** at Oshtemo Township Park. The changing colors of fall are just one of the many ways the forest prepares for colder, darker days ahead. Join us on a guided walk to discover what other changes are underway this time of year.



Discover the Legacy of Peter the Great

An Oshtemo Historical Society Program
Discover the remarkable story of a local champion **Sunday, October 25, at 2 p.m.** at Oshtemo Township Hall. Author and historian Terry Motycka will discuss her book, *The Life and Legacy of Peter the Great: Famous Trotting Sire from Kalamazoo*, and explore the lasting legacy of one of the most celebrated Standardbred horses and sires of all time.



From Treasurer
Clare Buszka

Understanding Millages
and Special Assessments



Residents often have questions about the charges listed on their property tax bill. Two terms that often cause confusion are millages and special assessments. While both help fund public services, they work in different ways.

What Is a Millage?

A millage is a property tax based on a property’s taxable value and is used to fund services that benefit the community as a whole. One mill equals \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of taxable value.

Millages help fund services such as Township operations, county services, and local schools. Under Michigan law, new or increased millages generally require voter approval.



Public Safety Special Assessments

Oshtemo Township funds police and fire protection through special assessments designed specifically for public safety services.

Although these assessments are legally different from a millage, they are calculated using millage-style rates based on a property’s taxable value because the level of protection provided is tied to the property being served.

Current Fire Protection assessment rates:

- » 3.75 mills for residential properties
- » 5.75 mills for commercial properties

Infrastructure Special Assessments

Oshtemo also uses special assessments to fund localized infrastructure improvements, such as sewer connections and water main extensions.

Unlike public safety assessments, these charges are not based on taxable value. Instead, they may be calculated using methods such as:

- » A flat rate per parcel.
- » Street frontage.
- » Land area formulas.

These assessments apply only to properties that receive a direct benefit from the improvement.

Understanding the Difference

The easiest way to remember the difference is:

- » Millages fund community-wide services and require voter approval.
- » Public Safety Special Assessments fund police and fire services using taxable value-based rates.
- » Infrastructure Special Assessments fund specific improvements and are charged only to properties that directly benefit.

Understanding these distinctions can help you better interpret your tax bill and see how local services and infrastructure are funded within the community.

A Message
from Fire Chief
Greg McComb

Please Give Us Room to Work

When an emergency happens, every second matters. The actions drivers and homeowners take before we arrive can help firefighters and paramedics reach those in need more quickly and safely.

Pull Right and Stop

When you see flashing lights from a fire engine, ambulance, or police vehicle, pull to the right and stop. Stay clear of intersections and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed.

Avoid stopping in the middle of the road, making sudden turns, or trying to beat emergency vehicles through an intersection. Those few seconds can make a difference for someone waiting for help.

Make Sure We Can Find You

When you call 911, responders should never have to search for your address. Take a moment to check that your house numbers are:

- » Clearly visible from the road.
- » Easy to read at night.
- » Contrasted against the background.
- » Free of snow, landscaping, or other obstructions.

If your home sits back from the road, consider installing an additional address marker near your driveway entrance.

Reflective address signs are available through the Township Fire Department at: bit.ly/OFD-address-signs

Keep Access Routes Clear

Fire engines and ambulances need space to operate. Narrow driveways, low-hanging branches, parked vehicles, gates, and snowbanks can delay emergency access.

Ask yourself: Could a fire truck reach my home today?

Help Protect Your Neighborhood

If there’s a fire hydrant near your property, help keep it visible and accessible. Avoid parking nearby, placing debris around it, or allowing landscaping to block access. In winter, clearing snow around hydrants can save valuable time.

When passing an emergency scene, slow down and give responders room to work. Firefighters, paramedics, and police officers are often operating just feet from moving traffic.

Small Actions Matter

Pull right for emergency vehicles, make sure your address is visible, keep driveways accessible, and give responders room to work. These simple actions can save valuable time on someone’s worst day.

Thank you for helping us serve the community safely.

SepticSmart

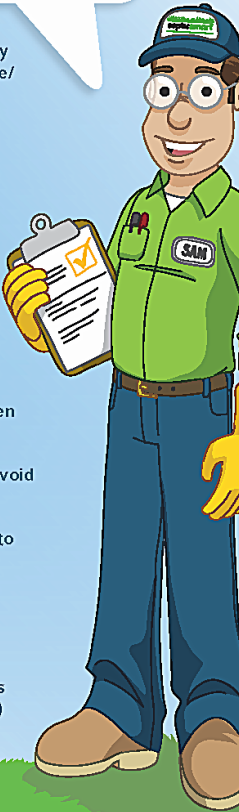
For residents outside the sanitary sewer service area, maintaining your septic is as important as ever. SepticSmart offers tips on caring for and maintaining septic systems.

Scan the QR code for reliable resources like videos and brochures to help protect your system.



Top 10 Ways to Be
a Good Septic Owner

- ✓ Have your system inspected every three years by a qualified professional or according to your state/ local health department’s recommendations
- ✓ Have your septic tank pumped, when necessary, generally every three to five years
- ✓ Avoid pouring harsh products (e.g., oils, grease, chemicals, paint, medications) down the drain
- ✓ Discard non-degradable products in the trash (e.g., floss, disposable wipes, cat litter) instead of flushing them
- ✓ Keep cars and heavy vehicles parked away from the drainfield and tank
- ✓ Follow the system manufacturer’s directions when using septic tank cleaners and additives
- ✓ Repair leaks and use water efficient fixtures to avoid overloading the system
- ✓ Maintain plants and vegetation near the system to ensure roots do not block drains
- ✓ Use soaps and detergents that are low-suds, biodegradable, and low- or phosphate-free
- ✓ Prevent system freezing during cold weather by inspecting and insulating vulnerable system parts (e.g., the inspection pipe and soil treatment area)



Fall Smoke Detector
Maintenance

Fall is a great time to check your smoke detectors and replace the batteries. While doing so, take a moment to check the age of each unit as well. Most smoke detectors have a manufacturer-recommended service life of 10 years, although some sensors can begin to lose effectiveness after 7 years.

If you replace the batteries and your detector continues to emit an occasional chirp, it may be signaling that the unit has reached the end of its service life and needs to be replaced.

Remember, expiration guidelines apply to both battery-operated and hard-wired smoke detectors. If your detector is hard-wired, consider contacting a qualified electrician for replacement and installation.



Get Connected to
Alerts & Updates
from RCKC

kalamazoocountyroads.com
269-381-3171
info@kalamazoocountyroads.com



Follow Us On Social Media!

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- @OshtemoTownship

Protect Your Drinking Water

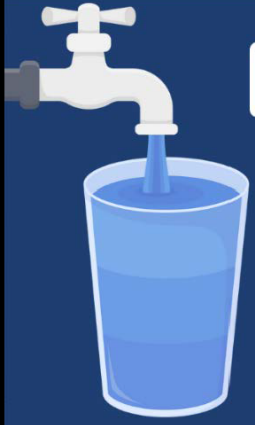
Private well owners are encouraged to test their drinking water annually for coliform bacteria and nitrates, or anytime you notice a change in your water’s color, taste, or odor.

Water should also be tested for bacteria whenever:

- » Repairs or work are performed on your well or plumbing system.
- » A water softener or filtration system is installed.
- » An underground sprinkler system is installed.
- » Flooding occurs near the well.

Well water test kits are available at Oshtemo Township Hall. Samples can be delivered to the Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Division Laboratory (311 East Alcott Street) for analysis Monday through Thursday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. The cost is \$22 per sample when dropped off at the lab.

WELL WATER TESTING REMINDER





Test your well water every year for **Coliform Bacteria & Nitrates**. Testing bottles can be obtained at our lab. Drop off your water samples **Monday-Thursday, 8am-4pm**



269-373-5360



311 E. Alcott St,
Kalamazoo MI



KALAMAZOO
COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Health & Community Services Department

Scan the QR code to learn more about sampling your drinking water supply.



Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Programs



The Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Voucher programs will end on November 30 this year. Vouchers may be requested online or in-person at our office.

Vouchers can be redeemed at the WasteNot Recycling facility at the southeast corner of Ravine Road and Nichols Road. For more information about WasteNot Recycling, visit their website at wastenotofmi.com

Scan the QR code to learn more about these programs.





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Township Board

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OSHTEMO NEWSLETTER

FALL 2026 EDITION



Important Dates

Holiday Office Closures

Offices will be closed November 11, 26, and 27, as well as December 24 and 25. Offices will also be closed until 9 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month for staff meetings.

Bulk Trash & Yard Waste Programs

The 2026 programs end November 30. Visit oshtemo.org/Officials/Office-of-the-Supervisor for details.

Board Meetings

Visit the Boards & Committees page on our website for current schedule information:
oshtemo.org/Boards-Committees

Midterm General Election

The November general election will take place on Tuesday, **November 3, 2026**. Voters will have the opportunity to select representatives for various federal, state, and local offices.