

Parks Department

Fruit Belt Trail Development

Consumers Energy is currently working on a gas pipeline upgrade project along the Fruit Belt Trail in Oshtemo. The first phase of the project will involve the removal of trees and brush along the trail. During this time, the trail will be closed to the public to ensure their safety. Closures will typically be between the hours of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday although some Saturday closures may be possible.



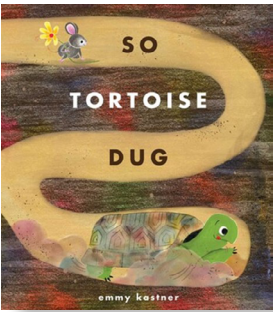
Once the utility work is complete, construction will begin on the development of the Fruit Belt Trail. This scenic two-mile path formerly housed the Fruit Belt Rail Line that operated on and off between 1852 and 1924, carrying fruit from South Haven to Kalamazoo. This corridor will be developed into a 10-foot-wide crushed limestone non-motorized trail with trailhead parking areas, benches, a bike repair station, wayfinding signs, and distance markers. We will continue to provide updates on the trail development as it continues.

For more information about this project, please visit:
oshtemo.org/Fruit-Belt-Trail-Development

StoryWalk at Oshtemo Township Park

Created in 2007 by Anne Ferguson and Rachel Senechal, a StoryWalk promotes literacy, movement, and time together in nature by displaying pages of children’s books along a walking path. You may recall a temporary installation that was launched in 2020.

We are pleased to announce that through a partnership between Oshtemo Charter Township, Oshtemo Friends of the Parks, and the Kalamazoo Public Library, a permanent StoryWalk is coming to the Township Park. As soon as weather permits, Township staff will start installing upgraded steels signs designed to hold laminated book pages for display while keeping them protected from the elements. Township staff will maintain the signs, while staff from the Kalamazoo Public Library next door will select books and update the displays with ever-changing titles throughout the year.



The first StoryWalk will feature Kalamazoo author Emmy Kastner’s 2025 picture book, *So Tortoise Dug*. Keep an eye on our social media to know when to join us for a kick-off event, or swing by the park and check out the path! While supplies last, young visitors to the StoryWalk can stop at the KPL Oshtemo Branch for a gift.

Spring and Summer Fun Planned In Oshtemo Township Parks

If you’re looking for something to do this spring/summer, here are a few great options:

Soccer Shots

Introductory soccer experience for children ages 2-8, held at Flesher Field on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings, starting in April. Fee required. Visit soccershots.org/Kalamazoo for more information.

Wiffle Ball League

Kalamazoo Wiffle League plays at Flesher Field and Oshtemo Township Park on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from May through August. Fee required. For more information, visit kzoowiffleball.com or find them on all social media platforms @kzoowiffleball.

Scottish Dancing

The Kalamazoo Scottish Festival Association holds Scottish dancing every Monday evening from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Grange Hall (3234 N. Third St.). All are welcome to attend. No partner is necessary, but soft-soled shoes are recommended. Please visit www.kalamazooscottishfest.org for more information.

More Options

Check out the Featured Events section on Page 2 for even more events happening in our parks, including the Music in the Park summer concert series, Yoga in the Park, and a wildflower hike at Drake Farmstead.

Infrastructure News

Sanitary Sewer Expansion Project Updates

Phase 1 (Fairgrove Street, Wildemere Street, Strathmore Street, Mansfield Street, Skyridge Avenue, Westview Street, Mandalay Drive, Crimson Lane, Driftwood Ave, Beech Ave): Bids for construction were scheduled to be opened on March 27. The bids are currently being reviewed, and contracts will be awarded in early April. Construction will begin as early as May. Exact dates to be determined based on selected contractor’s schedule. Community meetings will be organized once the scheduling information is finalized.

Seventh Street / West Main Street: Scheduled to be active in April. Residents will be notified when they are able to start the connection process and will have up to two years from the notice date to complete the connection.

Stormwater Becomes Drinking Water — Reminders

Anything entering the storm sewer system will work its way into our groundwater, which is the source of all drinking water in Kalamazoo County. Be mindful of what you allow to enter storm drains near you. Please be sure to clear any storm grates in front of your property



from leaves, grass, and debris from the winter to help them function as well as possible. Catch basins that are backed up, damaged, or failing can be reported to the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) via their service request page: kalamazoocondroads.com/contact.php

Road Projects

Annual Preventative Maintenance (“PAR”) Projects: Oshtemo partners with RCKC to combine funds for “PAR” projects every year. Visit this link to learn more about the work scheduled for 2025: oshtemo.org/2025-PAR-Map



MDOT Projects & US-131 Construction: MDOT has many projects scheduled this year that will improve driver and pedestrian safety. Other benefits will include improved traffic signal timing and flow, access management, and additional routes. US-131 will have several areas of construction between Stadium Drive and the Business Loops at the north end of the Township. Expect delays and exercise caution in construction zones.

Road Construction Map Coming Soon

An interactive map for tracking road construction projects and detours in and around Oshtemo is coming soon. Stay tuned!

At Your Service

From Supervisor Cheri Bell

In partnership with the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), Oshtemo Charter Township is proud to introduce one of our two new Community Policing Officers (CPOs). Deputy Roger White is part of our ongoing efforts to keep our community safe.

A lifelong Mattawan resident, Deputy White began his law enforcement career in the fall of 2012 after serving in the Army Reserves, working as a volunteer firefighter for Mattawan FD, and working in commercial flooring. He completed the Corrections Academy in 2013 and joined the KCSO as a corrections deputy. He worked in



the jails for nine years, before entering the Police Academy at KVCC and transitioning into the KCSO road patrol unit in 2022, where he was assigned to Oshtemo Township. When the Township budgeted for Community Policing Officers, KCSO asked for volunteers. Deputy White volunteered for the new role and has been working within the Sheriff's Office and with CPOs from neighboring municipalities to help define the role, which is the first of its kind for the KCSO. Deputy White believes that community policing requires a proactive approach, and spends much of his time on duty building community connections, using those connections to intervene before a situation becomes a crisis, and working to break down barriers between the members of the community and police to enhance cooperative behavior and be a positive presence in the community.

Outside of work, he and his wife are kept busy by their three children and their various sporting events, and he also enjoys fishing and camping.

Animal Carcasses & Roadkill Removal

Who is Responsible?

It's not a pleasant topic, but it's a question we receive quite often: "Someone hit a deer on the road in front of my house. Can you come pick it up?"

The Township does not have the staff or resources to properly dispose of animal carcasses in compliance with state law.

The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (or the Michigan Department of Transportation, depending on who owns the road) may be called to have a carcass removed from the road, but they will typically only move it out of the way of traffic and leave it in the public right-of-way for nature to take its course. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the property owner to pay for removal by a private contractor, if removal is desired.

Community & Conversation over Coffee

Stop by for Open Office Hours with Supervisor Cheri Bell

If you have questions or concerns that you'd like to discuss with Township Supervisor Cheri Bell, then stop by the Township Hall during open office hours and say hello!

When:

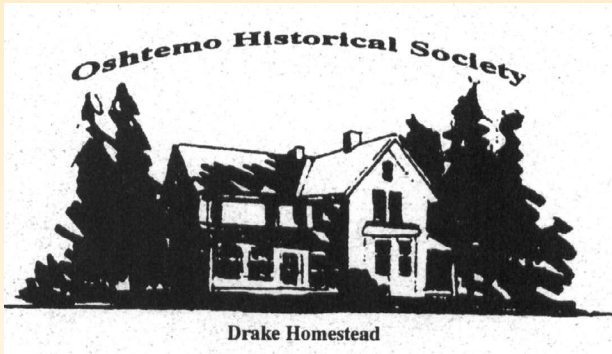
First and third Tuesdays of each month from noon to 1 p.m.

Where:

Public Meeting Room
Oshtemo Township Hall
7275 W. Main St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

If you can't make it in person, you can always reach out via email:
cbell@oshtemo.org

Oshtemo Historical Society News



Free Monthly Programs at the Oshtemo Township Hall, March to November

Programs are held at the Oshtemo Township Hall (7275 West Main Street), and start at 2 p.m.

- **April 27** - Rob Redman, *#10 Oshtemo School Restoration*
- **May 25** - Sally Redinger, *Gun Powder Girls*
- **June 22** - Gary Gibson, *Kalamazoo County and the Civil War*

Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Programs



The Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Voucher Programs are back for 2025. 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 here: wastenotofmi.com

Learn more about these programs here:

oshtemo.org/Bulk-Trash
oshtemo.org/Yard-Waste

Featured Events in Oshtemo

Music In The Park Summer Concert Series

Join us at the Flesher Field Gazebo this summer for free, family-friendly concerts. Picnics are welcome, and water and popcorn will be available for purchase. Concerts are from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.



Dates and Performers:

- June 22 - Moonshot
- July 27 - Tomás Esparza Blues Band
- August 24 - Kitten and the Tonics

Yoga In The Park

Yoga in the park returns to Flesher Field for another summer. Outdoor yoga classes will be offered on the lawn in front of the Gazebo. One-hour vinyasa practices will be held starting at 6 p.m. on the following Sundays:

- May 4, 11
- June 1, 8, 15, 29
- August 3, 10, 17
- September 7, 14, 21, 28

Classes will be led by a rotating instructor from KP fitness. Please bring your own yoga mat or blanket. Sign up on the *Mindbody* app. Drop-in fee is \$10 per class; a portion of proceeds supports the parks! Questions? Email info@kpeacefitness.com.

Wildflower Hike

At Drake Farmstead Park

Join us Saturday, April 26 at 10 a.m. for a one hour walk through the Drake Farmstead Park. Led by



Tom Noland (an experienced wildflower gardener), you will learn to identify wildflowers and about the importance of native plants. Walking or hiking shoes are recommended.

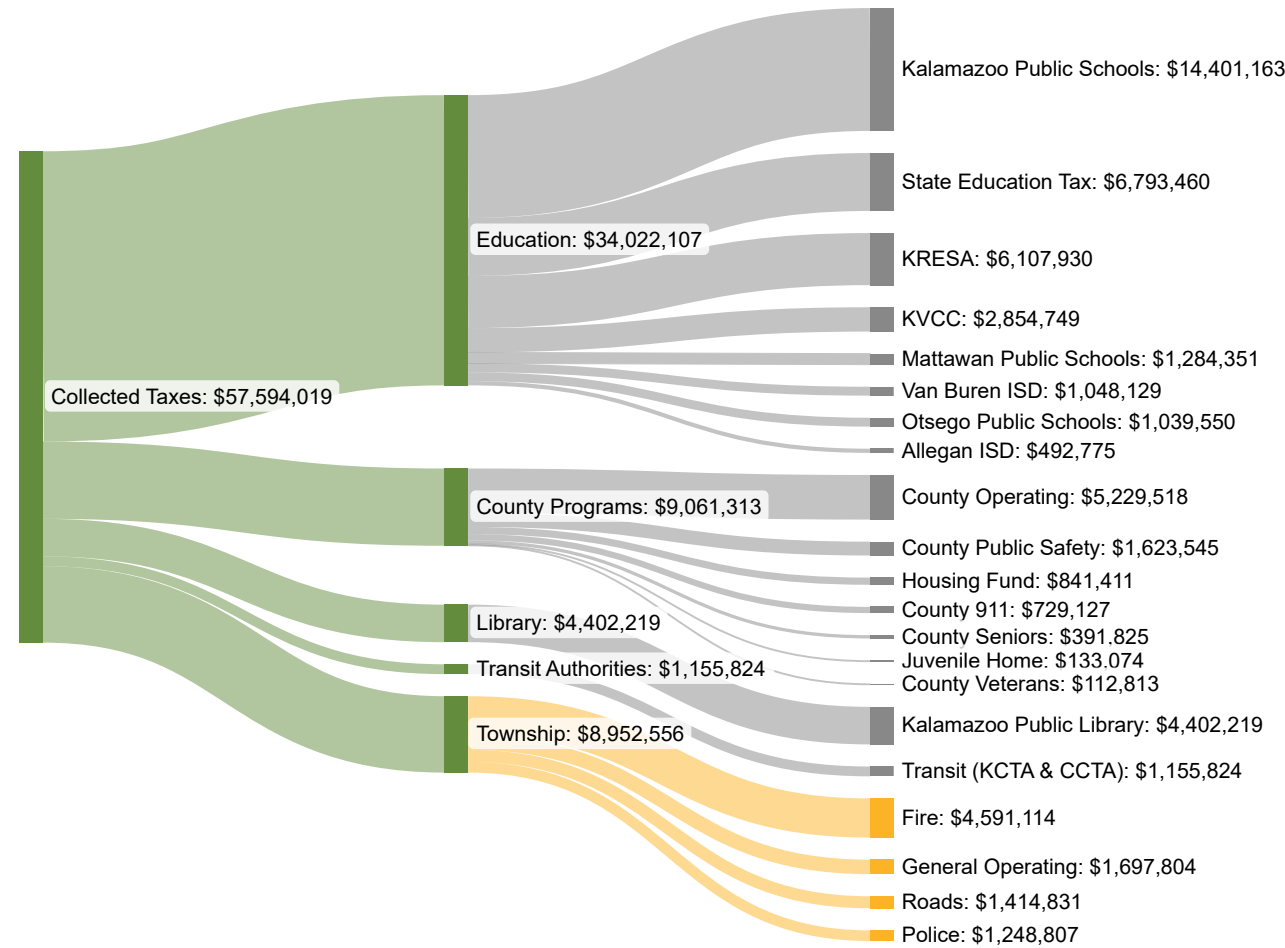
Where Do Your Taxes Go?

From Treasurer
Clare Buszka



The Treasurer’s office collected more than \$57 million dollars in tax revenue for the 2024 tax year. One of the most common questions our office gets is what the Township is doing with all that money?

The truth is, most of the tax money we collect does not stay in the Township’s coffers. This year, \$34 million went to education. \$9 million went to Kalamazoo County / County-administered programs. \$4 million went to the Kalamazoo Public Library, and \$1 million went to public transit authorities. Of the \$8.9 million retained by the Township, \$4.5 million went to the Fire Department, \$1.6 million went to the general operating fund, \$1.4 million went to the road fund, and \$1.2 million went to the police fund.



Plant Growth Control Ordinance

If you own, occupy, or control land in Oshtemo Charter Township, you are required to maintain lawn areas below a height of 10 inches. If you don’t, the Township will have the property mowed and assess the cost to the property. You may also receive a civil infraction and fines. Please, do your part and keep your lawn areas maintained. To learn more about this ordinance, look up Ord. No. 595, Part 211 in the Compilation of General Ordinances.

Contact Us!

We’d love to hear from you.

Scan this QR code to view contact information for elected officials and staff, or reach out via phone at 269-375-4260 or via email at oshtemo@oshtemo.org.

The Future of Oshtemo



Comprehensive Master Plan

After more than 18 months of public engagement, data gathering, and analysis, the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan is nearing completion and will soon be ready for public review. Since the last master plan update in 2017, Oshtemo has experienced significant growth and changes, creating new opportunities and challenges that this Comprehensive Master Plan seeks to address. This plan can only reflect the needs and wants of the community if as many residents as possible participate in the remaining public input opportunities; follow the Township on social media to stay in the loop!

Accessory Dwelling Units and Parking Under Review

The Planning Department and Planning Commission are considering changes that would allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in residential and agricultural districts. Also under review are parking space minimums / maximums, with the goal being to reduce the size of over-built parking lots. Smaller parking lots can have a positive environmental impact by reducing stormwater runoff and the urban heat island effect. A final draft of the proposed updates will be presented to the Township Board in late spring.

Growth Happens. Let’s Decide How!

Safety News

OFD Welcomes a New Fire Engine



The Oshtemo Fire Department is pleased to be welcoming a brand new fire engine into service. This critical investment in public safety enhances our ability to protect and serve the community by equipping our firefighters with modern technology and firefighting tools, improving efficiency and response times.

The new engine is in the final stages of construction, and we look forward to taking delivery of it soon. If you would like to track its progress and view build pictures, scan this QR code!



Last year, we exceeded 3,400 calls for service. Our call volume continues to rise year over year. Having reliable, up-to-date equipment ensures that we can meet the needs of residents effectively.

Beyond emergency response, OFD also remains focused on fire prevention and community risk reduction. We encourage everyone to check your smoke detectors, practice home fire escape plans, and ensure that address numbers are clearly visible for emergency responders (address signs can be ordered from our office for a cost of \$15, visit oshtemo.org/address-numbers to learn more).

Building Permits for Spring Projects

Starting a home renovation project can be exciting, but it is important to make sure that you’re following local regulations before you begin. A major item to consider is whether your project requires a permit. Permits and inspections ensure that construction meets safety standards, protecting you and your property.

Even small projects, like putting up a fence or a shed may require a permit.

Before starting work, contact the building department to see if a permit is required: visit oshtemo.org/Building or call (269) 585-4150.

Follow Us On Social Media!

@OshtemoCharterTownship
 @OshtemoTownship

Get Connected to Alerts & Updates from RCKC

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



New Hire Bios

December 27, 2024: Trent Wolfe — Resident Intern Firefighter

Trent hails from Portage, and is very excited to serve Oshtemo as the resident intern firefighter in 2025.

We're hiring!

Are you interested in working with our team? Keep an eye on our website, new job postings will be available soon!
oshtemo.org/Careers



Scan the QR code to view our current job postings.



7275 W Main Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49009
oshtemo.org | 269-375-4260

Township Board

Supervisor Cheri Bell
269-216-5258 | cbell@oshtemo.org
Clerk Dusty Farmer
269-216-5224 | dfarmer@oshtemo.org
Treasurer Clare Buszka
269-216-5221 | cbuszka@oshtemo.org
Trustee Zak Ford
269-271-5513 | zford@oshtemo.org
Trustee Kristin Cole
269-375-4260 | kcole@oshtemo.org
Trustee Neil Sikora
269-760-6769 | nsikora@oshtemo.org
Trustee Michael Chapman
810-730-9576 | mchapman@oshtemo.org

OSHTEMO NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025 EDITION



Important Dates

Holiday Office Closures

Offices will be closed May 26, June 19, and July 4. Offices will also be closed until 9 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month for staff meetings.

Shred Days

April 26 and September 13 from 10 a.m. to noon
Visit oshtemo.org/Events for details.

Board Meetings

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

Otsego Public Schools Special Election

A special election will be held on May 6 for voters who live in the Otsego Public Schools District. In Oshtemo, only voters registered in Precinct 1 are eligible to vote.