



charter township
oshtemo NEWSLETTER
est. 1839

December 2013

Oshtemo Township Officials

General Information 375-4260
Supervisor Libby Heiny-Cogswell 216-5220
Clerk Deb Everett 216-5224
Treasurer Nancy Culp 216-5221

Assessor Cathy Harrell 216-5225
Planning Director Greg Milliken 216-5223
Fire Chief Mark Barnes 375-0487
Ordinance Enforcement Officer Rick Suwarsky 216-5227



BLOOD DRIVE NEWS!!

Wednesday, December 18, 2013
11 a.m. to 7 p.m.



Come in for a hot bowl of soup & a chance to win a \$25 gift card!

First Blood Drive of 2014 will be **Wednesday, January 26, 2014**
11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The August and October gift card winners were Gale Evans and Marian Nelson!! Blood Drives are held at Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 West Main

2013 Winter Tax Information from the Treasurer's Office



Winter tax notices were mailed November 27th. If you received a tax bill but have an escrow with your mortgage company, you will need to remind them they must request the bill each taxing season; you should forward the tax bill to them. If your mortgage company has requested the tax bill, you will not receive a copy, but may contact us and we will be glad to send you one. You can verify taxes have been paid by contacting us or on our website (www.oshtemo.org) which is updated daily.

We are in the process of instituting a procedure to accept credit card payments at the Township Office. There will be a 3% fee for this service. We anticipate having this implemented by December 15th. Tax bills can also be paid on line; visit our web site at www.oshtemo.org for information on this option. As a reminder, if your tax bill has a note that says "**SUMMER TAX BILL DUE**" you will need to contact our office for the payoff amount as interest accrues monthly.

Please note the change in hours for the Township Office. We are open Monday thru Thursday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and Friday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. We do have a drop box in the parking lot, which is checked every day.

February 14th - Winter taxes due without penalty. Postmarks of February 14th will be accepted but **MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 18, 2014 WITH NO EXCEPTIONS!**

February 15th to February 28th - Winter taxes will be assessed a 3% late fee. If payments are received in our office between February 15th and February 28th without the interest included, we will receipt the taxes and send you a bill for the interest owed.

March 1st all unpaid summer and winter taxes will be turned over to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer's Office and must be paid there.

New Signs at Township Park

Three beautiful new park signs were recently installed in Township Park. Each sign features a map of the park created by OCBA Landscape Architects and hand-drawn illustrations by Amelia Hansen Illustration. The signs were funded by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Visitors who like to walk in the park will appreciate that mileage of the paved trails is noted on the maps.



Township Office Hours

Monday thru Thursday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Friday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
(1st Thurs each month open at 9 am)
Oshtemo Township will be **CLOSED**
December 24 & 25 —Christmas
January 1, 2014—New Years Day
January 20, 2014—Martin Luther King Day
February 17, 2014—Presidents Day



Newsletter News!?!?!?

The rising cost of printing/mailing this quarterly newsletter (\$22,000 per year average) has inspired the Clerk's Office to think outside the mailbox and inside the electronic box! The March 2014 newsletter will be the last "hardcopy" mailed to every address in the Township. The newsletter will still be published quarterly, and as always, posted and archived on our website. If you prefer to receive it either by postal mail or e-mail, we will be happy to put you on our subscription list. Details on how to subscribe will be provided in the March newsletter.

Breaking Ground and Pledging Support at Flesher Field

Look for construction to begin soon at Flesher Field on 9th Street just south of Stadium Drive. A new restroom building will be constructed over the winter. Work on a reconfigured parking lot and .17 mile paved loop trail is scheduled to begin when weather permits in Spring. The Oshtemo Rotary Club and Consumers Sunburst Run recently announced generous pledges to help fund these improvements to Flesher Field. The Rotary Club pledged \$20,000, their second major contribution to the Township's parks in recent years. Their donation will be used to replace the aging roof on the Rotary pavilion. The Consumers Sunburst Run pledged \$7,000, their fourth major contribution to Oshtemo Parks in as many years. Both donations will be used in conjunction with a \$300,000 grant awarded from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. To help offset the cost of the \$435,000 project, the Oshtemo Friends of the Parks is sponsoring a "Pave the Trail" campaign. For more information on the "Pave the Trail" campaign, go to www.oshtemofriends.org or contact Karen High, Oshtemo Township Parks Administrator.



From the Supervisor's Office.....

Sincere thanks to the citizens who serve on our various Boards and Committees. Particular thanks to citizens whose terms are ending in 2014 – Grace Borgfjord and Carol VanAntwerp (Friends of the Parks), Kitty Gelling (Planning Commission), Roger Taylor (ZBA). If you would be interested in serving your community in this capacity, applications are available at www.oshtemo.org under the Applications/General Applications link.

The 2014 Budget process has been completed, including four budget workshops held in August, September and October, with Public Hearing and adoption at the November 12th Township Board meeting. The budget is available online at www.oshtemo.org, or at the Township Office. Notable in the 2014 budget, the Administration fee is reduced to .1% (from 1% when adopted in 2010). The Board implemented the reduction due to fewer commercial tax appeals at the State Tax Tribunal. Police Special Assessment District's rates increased in order to fund a necessary increase in police protection. In 2014 the Township will work to negotiate a police contract which satisfies the Board directive for proactive and measurable accountability, while increasing service. Absent such accountability (response times, crime clearance rates, etc.) in the contract, no additional tax dollars will be expended over the cost of current deputies (7), and the Board will consider a reduction in police millage for 2015. The Board will continue to review this issue in 2014 to ensure proper level of public safety protection is in place, and adequate funding is being generated from the appropriate sources. For further explanation of the need to increase police protection, please visit our website to view the presentation from the November 12th public hearing. It is also available on the Public Media Network web site at <http://pmn.pegcentral.com>. You may also contact the Township Board and/or Police Committee at oshtemo@oshtemo.org.

Despite more and more responsibilities being passed to the local governments, only minor adjustments are being made to Township staff. Staffing level is 17 full time employees, and 7 part time, reflecting a reduction from 25 full time employees in 2008 as some positions were eliminated or moved to part time. The Fire Department paid-on-call roster remains at 30.

The retiree health benefit was shifted to a defined contribution plan in 2012, resulting in eliminating long term Township liability; therefore, the 2014 budget does not include any payment to the retiree health trust. The Trust will be used to fund current retirees' health benefit, and is fully funded.

Certainly the last several years have been challenging times for all economically. The Township approached these times conservatively, and embraced that time as an opportunity to plan for the future rather than continue to build. While other communities find themselves facing significant and well-documented budgetary challenges, Oshtemo Township has stored away the resources to not only survive these times but also now be in a position to implement those plans that were developed over the past several years. In the past several months, the Township has received grants or will be pursuing grants for parks, sewer, and non-motorized trail improvements based on these plans resulting in substantial quality of life improvements in the Township at major cost savings to the community. The Township's professional staff will continue to work on a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan to address the wide variety of services and quality of life needs of the community. The Board will work with staff to make decisions on strategic items, including funding. From the outset, the fund balance will help accomplish some of these needs, but certainly not all. The strategic work ahead will help understand that long term fiscal picture.



The **Kalamazoo Area Building Authority (KABA)** celebrated its first year of operation on October 1st. The success throughout has been a combined effort between the member jurisdictions, KABA staff, and customers.

Over the course of the past year, KABA has 1) merged the separate jurisdiction databases into a single database, 2) worked with the member jurisdictions to standardize the permit process, 3) been awarded the 2013 Catalyst Award in the area of governmental collaboration from Southwest Michigan First, 4) started accepting permit applications and inspection requests online and, 5) consolidated operations to a single location located in the Oshtemo Township Office at 7275 West Main Street.

KABA continues to implement technology as it strives to improve the level of service and customer satisfaction. For building permit applications go to www.kaba-mi.org or call 269-216-9643.

Visit www.oshtemo.org for information about everything **OSHTEMO!!**

Oshtemo Fire Department Receives National Safe Practices Award



The Oshtemo Fire and Rescue Department has received national recognition for their efforts to keep their members and the public safe during

emergent responses. The “*Emergency Vehicle Safe Operations Achievement*” award was designed and supported by a three way partnership between the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), their Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) and the award’s sponsor The Volunteer Firemen’s Insurance Services, Inc. (VFIS).

The award is targeted to support the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) and United States Fire Administration (USFA) initiatives to reduce firefighter injuries and deaths as a result of vehicular related accidents. It serves to recognize fire departments that have demonstrated a commitment to industry best practices by institutionalizing a successful vehicle safe operations program. Components must include relevant training and testing, stringent policies and historical positive outcomes including having experienced no accidents for the past year. Only one award is given each year.

As the sponsor, VFIS invited Chief Barnes to attend the VCOS conference in November where he was presented with the award by VFIS President Tony Markel and VFIS Executive Vice President Bill Jenaway. The award was then personally presented to the department by VFIS Regional Director Brian Timmer and sales representative Geoff Lansky at the Oshtemo Township Board meeting of November 12th.

Chief Barnes stated this is reflective of the department’s membership who takes safety seriously. “I can issue policies all day long, but if the firefighters fail to understand and support them, they are but pieces of paper. Credit goes to the current and past members of this organization.”

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

There have been several changes made concerning the taxation of personal property. Beginning December 31, 2013, **some personal property will be exempt from taxation.**

In order to be eligible personal property and qualify for the exemption, the personal property must meet **all** of the following conditions:

******The combined true cash value of all industrial personal property and commercial personal property owned by, leased by, or in the possession of the owner or a related entity claiming the exemption is less than \$80,000 in the local tax collecting unit, **and ****The property is not leased to or used by a person that previously owned the property or a person that, directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or under common control with the person that previously owned the property, **and ****The exemption **must** be properly claimed.

To claim the exemption, the owner must file an affidavit (Form 5076), with the Assessor’s office **NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 10th!** If the affidavit is filed, the owner is not required to file a personal property statement.

Oshtemo Fire and Rescue has become increasingly involved with the annual **Greater Kalamazoo Holiday Food Drive** program. 2013 marks the 21st year of this program with the projected support of over 1,500 local families.

Each year fire departments across Kalamazoo County post a truck and volunteer crews at various pre-determined stores to accept food donations from shoppers. On December 14th, Oshtemo FD will be at Wal-Mart on 9th St. while Kalamazoo Township FD will be at Aldi Food, 5355 W. Main.

Oshtemo’s Fire Station #2 has developed into the distribution point for all of western Kalamazoo County. Saturday December 21st our members will make personal deliveries to the homes of our disadvantaged neighbors. We will be joined by Texas Township FD, Mattawan FD, Army Reserve Unit 428th Military Police, Unit 415th Civil Affairs and local National Guard units.

If volunteering to help with collecting, sorting or packaging the food is of interest to you, more information on those tasks can be found on their website:

www.kalamazooholidayfooddrive.org/index.html

Oshtemo Fire wishes a happy holiday to you and your family as well as to those who are not as blessed.



Remember Oshtemo Parks With Your Memorial Gifts



Looking for a way to remember a loved one this holiday season? Consider a memorial gift to the Oshtemo Township Parks and Recreation Endowment Fund. All proceeds from the earnings of the Endowment Fund will be used to support Oshtemo Township Parks and Recreation forever.

To donate: Send a check payable to the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Include Oshtemo Parks and Recreation Endowment Fund in the check’s memo line and send to 151 S. Rose St. #332 Kalamazoo, MI 49007,

or Give online at www.kalfound.org (at Give Now choose “A Named Charitable Fund” and type Oshtemo Parks and Recreation Endowment Fund in the Search Funds field)

or Consider a planned gift. Contact a Donor Relations team member at 269-381-4416 to learn more.

OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

In July, we joined with our local 4-H groups to present a community event, entitled, "Farm Day with the 4-H". It was an opportunity for 4-H members to show their animals and projects. In addition, the community was able to tour the Drake House to view the progress of the restoration of this historic home.



As we look ahead to 2014 and our 10th Anniversary, we thank the community for their support and interest in the Oshtemo Historical Society and the progress made at the Drake Homestead.

There will many opportunities to join us in the coming year. Please make note of the following speakers we have planned in the next two months. The meetings are held at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 W. Main Street, starting at 7:00 p.m.

JANUARY 16th - "The Settling of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo County – Land Ownership Path to 1867 Corporation". Presented by Wes Freeland, Oshtemo resident and former Kalamazoo County Administrator.

FEBRUARY 14th – "Underground Railroad – Ramptown" (Vandalia, Cass County). Dr. Michael Nassaney, of the WMU Anthropology Department, will talk about their archeological dig and the African American history they discovered.

On March 20th, there will not be a meeting and speaker at the Township Hall. However, the group will visit the new **Zhang Legacy Collection Center**, 1650 Oakland Drive, where WMU's Archives and Regional History Collections are housed.

For more information about the Oshtemo Historical Society, please visit our website at: www.oshtemohistoricalsociety.org

Postal Customer

ECSRWSS

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