

West Traverse Township – 2021 Newsletter

8001 M-119, PO Box 528, Harbor Springs, MI 49740

(231) 526-7361 Fax: (231) 526-0028 Email: secretary@westtraversetownship.com

www.westtraversetownship.com

Township Board

Jim Bartlett – Supervisor
Cindy Baiardi – Clerk
Kristi Hollingsworth – Treasurer
Dave Green – Trustee
Annie Mooradian – Trustee

Planning Commission

Paul Mooradian – Chair
David Uutinen – Vice Chair
Dawson Moore – Secretary
Cindy Baiardi – Board Rep.
Paul Repasky
Tom Varner
Pete Wallin

Zoning Board of Appeals

Sam DeCamp – Chair
Nancy Sarowski – Vice Chair/Alt.
Chris Baiardi – Secretary
Paul Mooradian – PC Rep.
Dave Green
Mike Loria
Dick Collie – Alternate

Board of Review

Jim Osetek – Chair
Elizabeth Ahrens
Jeanne Benjamin
Greg Voelker – Alternate

Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee

John Baker – Chair
Annie Mooradian – Board Rep.
Darrell Amlin
Joey Arbaugh
Sam DeCamp
Laurie Ford
John Riggs
Carolyn Sandford

Assessor

Joe Lavender
Mondays 8:00 am – noon
or by appointment
assessor@westtraversetownship.com

Planner

Denise Cline by appointment

Zoning Administrator

David White
Monday 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
or by appointment
zoning@westtraversetownship.com

Administrative Assistant

Tracy Beckley

Township Hall Office Hours

Monday – Friday, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Township Board Meetings

2nd Tuesday – 6:00 pm

Planning Commission Meetings

2nd Wednesday – 7:00 pm

Welcome to the latest West Traverse Township (WTT) newsletter. As we all emerge from an incredibly challenging year there is much good news to report as we move into a (hopefully) more normal summer. A big thank you goes out to your Board and the multitude of committees that helped get things done as we dealt with the demands of the pandemic.

From the Supervisor:

The November election was one of the busiest in recent history. Supervisor Bob Sandford and Trustee John Baker decided not to run and Trustee Eve Lauer was up for reelection. A large number of Township residents threw their hat into the ring making for a lively election. Jim Bartlett prevailed in the Supervisor race while Annie Mooradian and Dave Green won Trustee seats. A big thank you goes out to Sandford, Baker and Lauer for their years of service and a job well done.

Another big thank you goes out to Sue Matsko who retired after 18 years of service as the Township Administrative Assistant. The Township has been fortunate to hire Tracy Beckley as her replacement and we welcome Tracy to the team. I would also like to welcome new Board of Review members Jim Osetek, Liz Ahrens, Jeanne Benjamin and Greg Voelker and thank outgoing members Jim Frang and Curt Regentin for their contributions to the community.

Over 30 community members serve on various Township committees, donating their time and expertise to help keep this a great place to live. Thank you to them all. Please contact the Supervisor by emailing supervisor@westtraversetownship.com if you would like to volunteer your skills to the Planning Commission, ZBA, Board of Review, Recreation, Sewer, or Water committees.

Financially, the Township continues to be stable and in good shape thanks to prudent fiscal policies and conservative spending. Our most current financial statement is available on the Township website at <https://westtraversetownship.com/township-board>.

From the Treasurer:

Summer tax bills were mailed on June 30 and you can expect them to arrive in your mailbox in early July. If you do not receive your tax bill by mid-July, please contact the Township office at 231-526-7361 and request a copy. Taxes are due on September 14. Tax payments are processed as they are received; if your check has not cleared your bank account, it is a good indication that your check was not received at the Township office. The Treasurer does not hold checks for any reason. The Township is not responsible for any tax payments that may be lost or delayed due to the post office processing or mailing it to an incorrect address. The correct mailing address is listed clearly on the tax bill. You can mail your tax payments, or drop them off at the Township office Monday through Friday between the hours of 9 am-1pm. Winter tax bills will be mailed on November 30 and will arrive in your mailboxes in early December. Again, if you do not receive your tax bill, please contact the Township office to request a copy. Winter taxes are due February 14, 2022. As always, it is your responsibility to ensure that the Township has your correct mailing address. It is also your responsibility to ensure that your check clears your bank. Receipts will not be mailed unless requested. If you have any questions regarding your summer or winter tax bill, please feel free to contact the Township Treasurer at 231-526-7361, or treasurer@westtraversetownship.com. The Township Secretary is also available to answer any questions you may have or issue a receipt if requested.

Roads:

Local roads in WTT continue to be some of the best maintained in Emmet County thanks to your renewal of our road repair millage. Two major projects include work on Lake Road and Hughston Road and have already been completed. Crack sealing on Franklin, Golfside, Hughston, Lightfoot, Heynig, Pine Hill and Ridge Road is underway.

From the Planning Commission:

What is zoning and why do we have it? A Zoning Ordinance is the law that regulates Land Use and Buildings in a community. It defines allowable uses of land by establishing different standards for different Zoning Districts. The intent of zoning is to promote and protect the public health, safety and welfare of all citizens. The WTT Planning Commission encourages all residents of our community to be proactively involved with the Planning and Zoning process. This helps ensure future development reflects the priorities and goals of its citizens. Our Township website is a great resource to learn about our interactive Zoning Ordinance and to find forms and applications for zoning actions.

2020 was a busy year for this hard-working group with work being completed on an update of the Master Plan in early January followed by ordinance amendments and beginning the process of a total overhaul of the Zoning application forms to make them more user friendly and understandable. Several larger projects were dealt with, including the approval of a new condominium development in Birchwood and a continuing review of a Special Land Use application from Pond Hill Farms.

From the Recreation Committee:

Did you know that WTT contributes funds annually to assist in the operations of Zorn Park (City) Beach, SK8 Park, and Kiwanis Park? What you may not have known is that there are so many more places to explore right here in WTT. There is of course, Thorne Swift or the Township 80 on Ridge Road...but perhaps it's time to get out and explore the numerous other locations, like the Morris Family's 30 acre Nature Preserve on Hughston Road just outside the City limits, or the 120 acres at Five Mile Creek between Middle Road & Five Mile Creek Road or the recent addition of the 248 acre Wilson Working Forest Reserve near Hughston and Middle Road, with 2.5 miles of trails and onsite parking. More information can be found at westtraversetownship.com/recreation or on the Conservancy website landtrust.org. See you on the trails!

Water System:

As a result of the Flint water crisis the MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) has mandated inspection and documentation of water supply piping of every water system supplier in the state. This will be an expensive project for WTT as we are 100% financially responsible to meet these requirements. At least 20% of WTT water customers will need to have their lines inspected from the water main located in the road to the meter in their house for lead pipes or lead connections, at Township expense. While we don't believe any of the materials used in the WTT system contain lead, this must be proven to the State. We will be working with the City of Harbor Springs Water Department and Benchmark Engineering to satisfy this mandate over the next three years.

Annual mandatory water system cross contamination control inspections will begin soon for 2021. This work is contracted out by the Township to CCRA and those water customers who are chosen for inspection will receive a letter from the CCRA explaining the process. This requirement by the State helps protect our community water system from cross contamination due to improperly installed water piping connections.

Some notable happenings over the past year include:

- The Harbor Springs Area Fire Department answered 44 calls in West Traverse Township. Of these, 22 were false alarms. Please do your best to ensure your alarm system is operating correctly to minimize unproductive calls for these hard-working volunteers.
- 26 building permits were issued in 2020, nine for new homes, eight for additions or remodels and nine for accessory buildings. In addition, several blight enforcement cases are currently under investigation by the Zoning Administrator.
- The Township contracted with Benchmark Engineering to provide an Asset Management Plan for the projection of future costs of the water and sanitary sewer systems for West Traverse Township. The Township will use this to plan for the orderly management of these services.

Some notable happenings for the upcoming year not already mentioned above include:

- Township Assessor Joe Lavender and his crew will again be visiting about 20% of the properties with a building on them to verify and update the record card information in the assessing database per State requirements.
- A Federal Appeals Court has recently backed up a 2019 Lower Court ruling which concluded a 337 square mile section of land in Michigan's northern lower peninsula, including West Traverse Township, could not be considered a tribal reservation. WTT will continue to monitor this case as an appeal to the US Supreme Court is a possibility.

General Information:

- The Township now operates its own website at www.westtraversetownship.com. A significant amount of township information is available there at your fingertips 24/7. Please let us know if there is something you would like added to the site.
- Free library services continue to be available to Township residents at the Alanson Public Library (www.alansonlibrary.org) and the Harbor Springs Library (www.harborspringslibrary.org).