

TALK OF THE TOWNSHIP

News You Can Use from Port Huron Township

Fall/Winter 2013

www.PortHuronTownship.org

Volume 15 Issue 1



TOWNSHIP OFFICE

3800 Lapeer Road
Port Huron, MI 48060
(810) 987-6600
Fax: 987-6712
Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

BOARD MEETINGS

Public Welcome

Township Board
1st & 3rd Monday 7:00 p.m.

Park Commission
1st Wednesday 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission
1st Thursday 7:00 p.m.

TOWNSHIP OFFICERS

Robert G. Lewandowski, Jr.
Supervisor

Benita E. Davis
Clerk

Nancy G. Collins
Treasurer

Trustees
Donald Dudas
William E. Livingston
Steve Riehl
Peter Shonka

SUPERVISOR'S MESSAGE

Well, winter is coming, and I hope everyone had a wonderful summer.

As many of you know, Menards is open. If you haven't been over there, try to go and check out the store. They will be a great asset to the township.

Other new businesses that have opened in our township include Jimmy Johns at 24th Street and Howard and Flagship Credit Union next to the Township Fire Department on Lapeer Road. Also of note, Tim Hortons and cold Stone Creamery are going to revamp the old Dunkin Donuts Building on 24th Street.

Now for some good news and some bad news. First the good news: The new overpass is open over the train tracks on Michigan Road. Also, Michigan Road south of the new bridge to Dove has been rebuilt. And then the bad news: As many of you are probably aware, MDOT has closed Michigan Road between Lapeer and Griswold for the bridge replacements. The road will be closed for two years.

In other road news, 32nd Street between Dove and Ravenswood is being reconstructed, including drainage, and should be mostly complete by mid November. Water Street between I-94, I-69 and West Water/Strawberry Lane will be rebuilt next summer. Along with that, the Township has applied for a grant to help construct a bike path on the river side of Water Street. We were awarded the grant which will cover 70% of the estimated \$187,000 cost. I know it isn't a long stretch of bike path, but it is a start. Our hopes are to extend the path as funds become available.

MDOT has another project scheduled which impacts our Township. The new Welcome Center construction will begin in the spring with completion anticipated before the Memorial Day holiday in 2015. It will be located just west of the Lapeer Connector on the north side of the expressway at the curve.

As I have said before, it is an honor to serve the residents and businesses of Port Huron Township as your Supervisor. Please feel free to contact me with your questions, concerns or ideas by either stopping in, by phone call or via email.

Robert G. Lewandowski, Jr.

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS

It is required by ordinance that every business open to the public get a business license annually. Licenses expire on December 31st every year, regardless of application or date of receipt. Although the township sends renewal notices out in advance, it is the responsibility of the business to renew their business license each year. Return the signed invoice along with payment to complete the renewal process. Sometimes renewal forms are not delivered due to mail delivery issues or lack of accurate address info in our database. If you own a business and you notice that you have not received your new license, or invoice for your new license, contact Port Huron Township at 810-987-6600 and ask to speak to Anthony. This will help prevent you from incurring late fines. You are to keep the license and display it in your business.

Mark December 31st on your calendar, as this is a yearly occurrence. All licenses must be paid for by January 1st to avoid late fines.

CLERK'S OFFICE

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

FEBRUARY 25, 2014 (RESA)
MAY 6, 2014 (SCHOOL) possible
AUGUST 5, 2014 PRIMARY
NOVEMBER 4, 2014 GENERAL



BUSINESS LICENSE NEWS:

ALL BUSINESSES MUST RENEW THEIR LICENSE FOR 2014 BY JANUARY 3, 2014. IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR RENEWAL IN THE MAIL BY NOVEMBER 30, 2013, PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

If you've ever wondered how to become more active in government, there are plenty of opportunities for you that do not involve running for elected office.

RECREATION BOARD:

The Recreation Board consists of nine members. This Board is responsible for recreational programs within the Township. They currently maintain the Michigamme Summer Recreation program which is a 6- week day camp that is staffed daily and has up to 200 registered participants. They have also sponsored yearly Easter Egg Hunts, Holiday Decorating Contests, a Family Fall Festival, and the Fishing Clinic in years past. The Township Board makes appointments to this Board. The Recreation Board meets on the second Monday of each month. Members are currently paid \$40 per meeting.

MUSEUM BOARD:

The Museum Board consists of five Board Members and relies on the help of volunteers who have an interest in history. The Township acquired the old Malane Schoolhouse which was moved to Township property behind the Township Offices. They have many historical items that have been donated by township residents, as well as a Grand Trunk Caboose, a Steam Engine, and a Threshing Machine. These are all part of the Township's history. This Board depends on many volunteers and is always open to new members. The Board members' meeting stipend is currently pending

ELECTION WORKERS:

We are always looking for dedicated individuals wishing to serve as election inspectors. Applications are available in the Clerk's office. To qualify you must be a registered voter. You need not live in Port Huron Township to serve as an Election Inspector in the Township. Individuals must attend a certification class every two years. Once certified you are placed on a list and notified of upcoming elections. If you are available to work an election a typical day is from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Based on availability of workers, we also offer half days for those who prefer. The Township Election Commission appoints the Election Inspectors. Members are currently paid \$110.00 per day and \$25.00 for certification.

CEMETERY HISTORIAN SOCIETY:

This Society has yet to be established. It is the intent of the Cemetery Board to develop a group of individuals with interest in genealogy to form this historical society. We envision that this group will work with the Cemetery Board and the Museum Board to develop and expand on the historical interests of Woodland Cemetery and recognize the historical accomplishments of many of the individuals buried here. If you have an interest in any of these areas or would like to discuss the commitment required in more detail please call Benita Davis, Clerk at (810) 987-6600.

A WATER QUALITY TIP FROM THE NORTHEASTERN WATERSHEDS GROUP

Yes, we can keep our rivers healthy in the winter too! Shovel snow and ice early and often to limit your use of sand, salt and deicing chemicals. When safety requires it, try an alternative to salt. Magnesium chloride has fewer adverse environmental impacts and is not as corrosive. Check labels to choose a deicer that fits your conditions and apply it early and sparingly. Let the sun do its work and only salt areas in the shade. When you practice this Water Quality Tip you help protect the Northeastern Watersheds. What are the Northeastern Watersheds? They are all the land, creeks and streams that drain into Lake Huron, the Black River and St. Clair River. They include wetlands, groundwater and your neighborhood storm drains, ditches and creeks. Charter Township of Port Huron is a proud partner of the Northeastern Watersheds group. Learn more at www.sccwater.org.

WATER OFFICE

WINTER REMINDERS:

- If you are a snowbird, don't forget to apply for your refuse suspension. If you will be absent from your home for a period of 3 consecutive months between November 1, 2013 and May 1, 2014, you may qualify for the suspension of one quarterly refuse charge (\$37.75). Forms may be obtained on the utilities page of our website: www.porthurontownship.org or by stopping in at the Township administration office.
- Protect your water meter! Take a few extra minutes to be sure your crawl space is air tight and your meter is insulated to help prevent freezing. A few extra minutes now could save you a \$200 frozen/broken meter fee later.

DPW

PROTECT UNOCCUPIED PROPERTIES:

Now that the cold weather is setting in, water leaks in unoccupied properties will become more prevalent. If you live next to or near an unoccupied property, please report suspected water leaks to the Water Office at (810) 987-6600 x 21 [after hours call (810) 982-3543]. Any suspicious activity should be reported to the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department @ (810) 985-8115 or 911.

CLEARING OF SNOW:

Although there is some debate as to how much snow we will get this year, one thing is for certain-we will get snow. For everyone's safety, please be mindful of pedestrians and drivers when plowing snow and remember that blocking the sidewalks and plowing snow into or across the street is prohibited.

Don't forget to clear the snow from around hydrants in your yard. In the event of an emergency, precious time can be saved if the DPW and fire department have clear access.

If possible, assist your elderly, homebound or disabled neighbors by clearing snow and ice from their sidewalks, driveways and fire hydrants. Freezing weather and immobility pose special problems for many Township residents during the winter months. Residents are encouraged to check on the welfare of their neighbors.

PORT HURON TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Have you had a chance to visit Menards yet? As most of you know, they are open and fully operational...and quite busy too! If you haven't visited yet, take a moment to do so. You won't be disappointed.



Jimmy Johns is up and running too with their freaky fast delivery!



Tim Hortons / Coldstone Creamery are currently in the process of renovating the former Dunkin Donuts/ Baskin Robbins building. Watch for their grand opening soon!



Flagship Credit Union recently opened a branch on Lapeer Road just east of Michigan Road. This location is very convenient for our township residents and businesses alike.

The climate in Port Huron Township is so good for new business. We continue to collaborate with neighboring communities to bring new opportunities to the area. It is such an exciting time to be a part of this growth. We will continue to keep you informed regarding new development. If you have any questions, please drop in at my office anytime, Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. I'll be glad to talk to you.

Paul Maxwell, DDA Director

OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

ASSESSMENT CHANGE NOTICES:

Property owners will soon be receiving the Notice of Assessment, Taxable Valuation, and Property Classification, otherwise known as the "Assessment Change Notice".

The Notice indicates what the Assessor is proposing the value of your property to be for the upcoming taxing year. By law, values are based on the condition of the property on December 31st of the previous year – i.e., the 2014 value is based on the condition of your property on December 31, 2013.

The Notices are mailed annually at the end of February. If your mailing address has changed, please contact the Assessor's Office at 810-987-6600, extension 20 to confirm that we have the correct address in our records.

If you disagree with the proposed value of your property, you must appeal to the Board of Review, which consists of three Township residents. The Board of Review hears appeals by either appointment or letter. The meeting dates and times are listed on the Change Notice. You can schedule an appointment by contacting the Assessor's Office. If you must appeal by letter, it must be received in the office by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on the Tuesday prior to the final meeting date.

When you arrive for your appointment, you will be given a petition form to complete. Most successful appellants present documentation to support their claim that the property is over-assessed. The highest and best documentation to provide is an independent appraisal, however, this is not mandatory. Board of Review appointments are scheduled for 10 minutes for each property being appealed.

FALL NEWSLETTER QUESTION:

"Why were Equalization staff members measuring my home and taking pictures?" In order to comply with the State of Michigan's recommendation that 20% of township parcels be physically inspected annually, staff members from St. Clair County Equalization are visiting properties throughout the year (weather permitting) to update information.

The Assessor's office maintains a property record card for every parcel in the Township which typically includes a sketch and pictures of all structures. Staff members are measuring structures and updating pictures to ensure that information is accurate and current. 20% of Township parcels are inspected annually – if they didn't visit your property this year, they will in the future.

If you have questions regarding the Assessment Change Notice, appearing before the Board of Review, or the re-appraisal process, please call the Charter Township of Port Huron Assessing Office at 810-987-6600.

BUILDING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS

While this is the time of year when building generally slows down, there are concerns that the building and code enforcement departments still have to deal with. For example, according to the State laws regulating building, whenever a building contractor does any work valued at over \$600.00, he is required to have a "Builders License", all the necessary insurance, and is also required to apply for and receive a permit for the work. A conscientious builder will never ask the homeowner to apply for the permit and will make sure that they receive it and display it to the homeowner and on the property prior to starting work.

By having them submit the permit, it also makes sure that they are held responsible to make corrections for any deficiencies or problems that are discovered by the inspectors. If the homeowner applies for and receives the permit, we do not have the authority to legally force the builder to make the corrections, since the homeowner signed the application stating that they are taking responsibility for the work.

As the building department, we make sure that all the contractors submit copies of their licenses and insurance before we issue a permit. It is also mandated under State law that the work they do for you is guaranteed for a minimum of 18 months from the date of completion or issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, no matter what you are told the guarantee is. Also, please be aware that you have the right to submit a request for an inspection to our department if you have a complaint. The complaint is registered with the State and we do the inspections. If the case is not resolved quickly, it will go to the State Builders License Bureau for arbitration by the State and an attorney is not necessary. Please feel free to call the Building Department and ask for the building department staff and we will be glad to help you.

2013 ROAD BRIDGE REPORT

As has been reported in the news media, there has been discussion in Lansing regarding road funding. The St. Clair County Road Commission encourages residents to participate in this discussion, and offers the following information:

The St. Clair County Road Commission uses PASER Ratings (a nationally recognized format for road rating) to evaluate every road under its jurisdiction. This allows the Road Commission to determine the best and most cost-effective method for each road’s condition. PASER Ratings run from Grade 1 (Failed) to Grade 10 (Excellent). Using 2012 PASER ratings, the following investment would be required to bring the 611.61 miles of paved roads in St. Clair County to Excellent (Grade 9-10) condition:

1.93 miles of road at Grade 1 (Failed) – complete reconstruction	\$ 1,933,031
24.50 miles at Grade 2 – complete reconstruction	\$18,373,283
93.64 miles at Grade 3 – complete reconstruction	\$70,233,633
126.37 miles at Grade 4 – mill & resurface	\$18,954,900
52.69 miles at Grade 5 – mill & resurface	\$ 7,903,613
95.99 miles at Grade 6 – crack seal and chipseal	\$ 3,839,429
106.94 miles at Grade 7 – crack seal and chipseal	\$ 4,277,558
61.10 miles at Grade 8 – crack seal	\$ 305,510
Total cost to complete repairs	\$125,820,958

(As these numbers show, it is much less expensive to maintain the condition of a road that is already in fair to good condition than it is to completely reconstruct a road that has deteriorated.)

Of St. Clair County’s 226 bridges, currently 24 local bridges and 13 primary bridges are posted with weight limits. To replace or repair all 37 currently posted bridges within St. Clair County would cost \$31 million. (The average cost for a bridge on the local system is \$704,125; on the primary system, \$1,089,077.)

The St. Clair County Road Commission has developed a report on the status of the roads and bridges throughout the county. This report is limited to work that would be bid by private contractors and performed to federal and state required specifications. It does not include such things as routine maintenance, snow removal or equipment replacement costs for the Road Commission. We encourage you to visit the Road Commission’s web-site at: www.sccrc-roads.org/PDFminutes/RdBridgeRpt.pdf to view the full report and then contact your legislators to voice your opinion on road & bridge funding.

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

WINTER SAFETY TIPS FROM THE PORT HURON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

THE WINTER FIRE SAFETY “HONEY DO LIST”

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Change the Smoke Detector Batteries | 6. Check the fire extinguishers - be sure they are charged |
| 2. Test and change the battery in the Carbon Monoxide Detector | 7. Store the snow blower gas in a safe container in the shed or garage |
| 3. Be sure the furnace has been inspected and maintained | 8. Inspect those Christmas lights for frayed wires and bad cords |
| 4. Clean out the wood burner and have the chimney cleaned | 9. Do a fire drill with the family |
| 5. New batteries in the flashlight by the bed | 10. Be alert when cooking...No.1 cause for fires in the home! |

CAN WE SEE YOUR NUMBERS?

Many of us with the address signs on the mailbox post have them positioned ...well...a bit low to the ground. This is fine during the summer, but with the snow all we can see is 2 or 3 numbers! Take a look at your green address sign. Is it high enough to work in the snow?

KITCHEN SAFETY:

During the holiday seasons with lots going on in the kitchen, remember to be safe. Turn pot handles inward to avoid a spill. Keep loose or long sleeve clothing away from stovetops or flames that could ignite clothes. Avoid cooking if you are tired, on medications that make you drowsy or if you have been partaking of a little alcohol during the festive seasons. Often we have fires that occur when someone puts food on to cook and falls asleep.

Never use flour or sugar on a fire on the stove. A pan of oil on fire is best extinguished with a tight fitting lid, baking soda, or a fire extinguisher. Never move the pan and never pour it down the sink. Many folks have been injured trying to carry a pan outside only to spill the burning contents. Call 911, even if you can get the fire out. The fire department will respond and check that the fire has not extended into the home.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Halloween Party was held on October 26th this year. Although cold and rainy seems to be part of the annual theme, that didn't dampen anyone's spirits. Over 40 kids turned out to enjoy the festivities. Event organizer Mary Harris only has two rules for the kids: 1. Have Fun and 2. Make a Mess! The kids had a blast adhering to those rules. The hayride was very popular, along with the pumpkin carving, witches hat cookies and other various treats and activities. Special thanks go out to Steve Peterson for conducting the hayride and also to Cooky Kuchen for donating all of the pumpkins this year as well as every year of the event.

WOODLAND CEMETERY SEXTON NEWS

It would be appreciated if individuals that maintain gravesites in Woodland Cemetery would please follow these general guidelines with regard to gravesite decorations:

- 1. Have all summer flowers, pots, shepherd hooks, baskets, etc. removed by October 15th of each year.
- 2. Have all winter wreaths, flowers, grave blankets, baskets, etc. removed by March 15th of each year.

COMMON ISSUES:

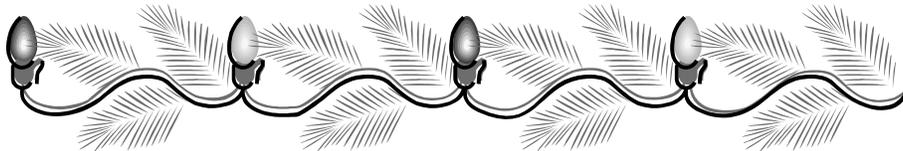
- 1. Certain ornaments are prohibited, yet each season we get many complaints of missing items from gravesites. Please refrain from placing boxes, shells, toys, metal design ornaments, chairs, settees, benches, vases, glass, wood, or iron cases, and similar articles on the gravesites. We are not responsible for such items and if they are left, there is a chance they could come up missing. Once items that are left become unsightly it is at the Township's discretion to remove such items.
- 2. Benches, trees, shrubs, or thorn bearing plants are not allowed to be placed in the cemetery. Just because there may be other gravesites with these items does not mean it's currently allowed. Benches are documented and any new placements will be removed.

SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAM

The Summer Recreation program located at the Beach Road park closed out a very successful season on August 2nd. The program continues to be very popular. Plans are underway to extend the program an additional 2 weeks in 2014. Watch for further information in the Township's spring newsletter or on the web at www.porthurontownship.org.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY LIGHTING CONTEST

Nominate yourself or another resident by calling the Township Hall at 810-987-6600. Nominations will be accepted until 12 noon on December 9, 2013. Contest judging will take place on December 9th at 6:15 p.m. If you've been nominated, be sure to have your lights on by then.



DOG LICENSES

Dog tags can be purchased at the Township Administrative Offices from December 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014 with the preprinted form from St. Clair County Animal Control. The cost this year is \$12.00 for altered dogs and \$22.00 for unaltered. All checks must be made payable to Port Huron Township. If mailing your form in, please send the entire form with a self addressed stamped envelope and a check made out to Port Huron Township. We will not mail your tag if you do not provide a stamped envelope. If the rabies certificate has expired, you must supply a current rabies certificate before the license can be issued.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

With the onset of winter, please be aware that Township ordinances require recreational vehicles to be stored in the rear yard. The term recreational vehicle includes boats, recreational trailers, motorhomes, snowmobiles (and the trailers). Storage of this equipment in the front yard constitutes an ordinance violation. In addition, trash cans are to be stored out of public view, either behind a fence, in the rear yard, or inside the garage. Storage of trash receptacles or items such as lawn equipment, yard toys, etcetera should not be in the front yards. A little attention to these areas will keep the Township a clean community. Firearm use is restricted to approved ranges, except when hunting in approved areas. Firearms include air rifles, archery, handguns, rifles and shotguns. Specific Restricted Areas are east of Beach Road, North of Lapeer and west of I-94. Hunting is also restricted within 450 feet of any building.