

Township Focus

JULY 2023

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

Inside the Proposal 2 implementation laws

PLUS: Key legislative updates, including what's in the state budget



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Talking elections with MTA President Pauline Bennett

Around our state, township clerks are preparing for historic changes to elections resulting from the passage of Proposal 2022-2 last November. The role and workload that many clerks and their deputies thought they took on when they took office has dramatically expanded. We held production on this issue of *Township Focus* so that we could include details on implementation legislation passed by the Legislature at the end of June (*see our cover story on page 20*), along with available state Bureau of Elections guidance, which we will continue to share as it is released. We know that continued uncertainty and great concern remain among clerks and election workers, particularly regarding nine required days of early voting and other election administration changes brought about by the constitutional amendment passed by 60% of Michigan voters. I asked 2023 MTA President **Pauline Bennett** to sit down with me to discuss these issues from her perspective as an experienced clerk in **Addison Township** (Oakland Co.) and as a leader of our Association. Here is our conversation.



Neil: Pauline, what are clerks doing now for elections preparations in light of Proposal 2 changes?

Pauline: There is deep concern in some communities about administering Proposal 2. As much as possible, we are pre-planning what we expect the most likely scenarios to be. Some items may include contacting poll workers, ordering and installation of absent ballot drop boxes, checking out status of equipment, ordering additional equipment if needed, reviewing and ordering forms/envelopes, and reading state and MTA updates as issued. This differs from county to county, as the townships determine how to assemble election workers, equipment and polling locations. For early voting, some are going to share voting places with other municipalities or join their county with an agreement for early voting.

Where are you recruiting the needed election workers?

I am very fortunate that residents in my township or nearby communities are there for the election process. My township elections teams (*including those pictured below right; photo courtesy of the Oxford Leader*) give 100%-plus. Residents call me and ask if I need help. For recruitment, always be looking for those who could be candidates for election workers. You can reach out to high school students, or ask residents who attend board meetings or while they are pulling a permit or paying tax bills!



What can township boards do to support the clerk and elections team?

Again, I'm fortunate that my board supports us during elections, which can be stressful. The board approves the budget and supports us with their confidence in our election team in each election cycle. The election commission is always very supportive and timely with their duties. If I ask for help, they are willing. Please continue supporting your elections team!

At several MTA county chapter meetings recently, I've heard from discouraged clerks. What would you say to them?

Hang in there! Election law is continually changing—but we've got this change! Take one day at a time, read the updates from MTA, the bureau of elections or your county clerks, and attend as many training sessions as offered. Your

residents are wondering what's going on with Proposal 2 as well, and they also need your leadership and support.

Where can the next generation of township clerks be found? What can prospective elected officials expect?

The next generation will step up. They need to have a willingness to serve and help others. Serving is the most precious asset of the position. Maintain integrity, respect and treat others fairly.

What have you enjoyed about being a township clerk?

Becoming the clerk really draws you in. I truly enjoy the many aspects of learning and the different responsibilities. There is never a dull moment. This role, and really all of the township positions, have the best interests of the residents at the heart and it is exciting to serve residents in this way. There is the constantly changing legal and regulatory environment, but also opportunities and challenges for your community—some good and welcomed, some not so. Finally and always, lobbying for local authority is a priority and a passion for me.

You chose "One Team" as the theme of your MTA presidency. What does that mean?

One team for local authority. We need to gather the diversity of experiences and backgrounds in our townships, and come together as one team to strengthen our voices and retain what is truly best for our individual communities. We are the closest to the people and I believe that every community is different and offers something unique. Let's support each other. My goal as president is to ignite the membership so that when MTA issues an email to contact your elected representative when local authority is being threatened, we do it. Officials will may tire of hearing this from me in 2023—but hopefully it will become a good habit!

What's next, Pauline?

Spending time with family, friends and enjoying life! In my township, we'll be working on administering the 2024 elections under the applicable changes in election law. Thank you, team! I also have a priority to obtain funding or a grant to complete a small, accessible recreational park so our area youth, families and seniors have an area to play and gather. And, statewide, I'll work with MTA members for retention of local authority!

Thank you, Pauline, for your insights and your leadership. It's going to be a busy year!

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Proposal 2 implementation laws enact historic changes to elections administration

When voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal 2022-2 last November, they enshrined numerous new voting rights into the Michigan Constitution—impacting every township in the state. Implementation legislation detailing the new requirements outline new processes that each township faces. While questions—and concerns—certainly remain and final guidance will be forthcoming, we share an overview of the Election Law changes.

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Catching up with ... Violet Lentz

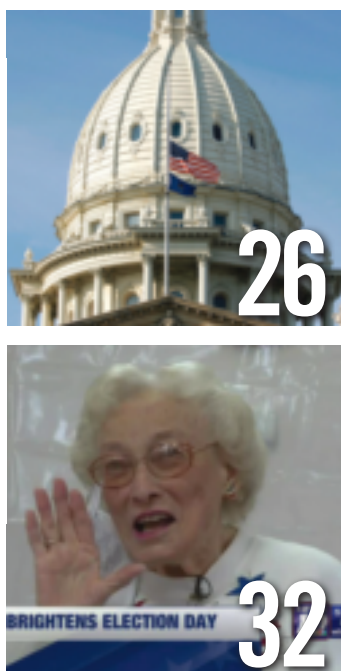
After 75 years of volunteering, township resident Violet Lentz is still looking for ways to help. The 98-year-old, who received national recognition several years ago for her community volunteerism, says the reason for her continued dedication is simple: her township is family.

Editor's Note: Thank you for your patience in awaiting your July Township Focus magazine. Due to the impact on township elections administration, we made the decision to hold production of this issue until legislation implementing Proposal 2022-2 was passed at the end of June. We will continue to provide updates and information on this important issue as it becomes available.

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The Michigan Townships Association advances local democracy by fostering township leadership and public policy essential for a strong and vibrant Michigan.

Special insert: 2023 MTA
Professional Development
Retreats registration details



BY THE NUMBERS

As state population declines, townships and rural counties continue to lead growth



Townships continue to lead the state in population growth—a trend we have seen for the past two decades—with more and more residents seeking out communities with high quality of life and lower taxes and many moving to rural counties. While Michigan’s total population has declined by roughly 43,000 residents since the 2020 Census, according to a

population report released this spring, townships—both by percentage and by number—are seeing the largest influx of new residents, according to recent estimates.

Springdale Township (Manistee Co.) saw the biggest jump in population, in terms of percentage, over the past two years—growing 29% to 1,093, an increase of 243 residents. **Lyon Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) and **Holland Charter Township** (Ottawa Co.) were the only Michigan municipalities to increase by more than 1,500 residents in the past two years, with Lyon Charter Township increasing 1,552 residents since 2020, and Holland Charter Township up 1,523 residents.

The state’s population was estimated to be 10,034,113 residents as of July 1, 2022, according to the latest U.S. Census data. Nearly two-thirds of Michigan’s 83 counties saw growth in the population, with 53 counties in all seeing an increase. Ingham County experienced the largest net migration, with a net increase of more than 12,000 residents, growth of 4.7%.

In terms of percentage population growth, Michigan’s most sparsely populated counties are seeing the biggest increases, with Montmorency County seeing a 7.2% rise in population and Keweenaw County experiencing a 7.1% increase.

To help develop a statewide strategy aimed at growing our state population, a new Growing Michigan Together Council has been formed to advise on specific policies, including identifying a population goal for 2050. The council will look at ways to prepare Michigan’s workforce for in-demand jobs and emerging industries by proposing initiatives to improve preK-12 educational outcomes and long-term funding solutions for higher education. The council is also charged with developing long-term, sustainable transportation and water infrastructure funding solutions.

UP TO THE CHALLENGE

Eight townships recognized for sustainability accomplishments

Eight townships were among the 48 Michigan communities celebrated by the Michigan Green Communities Challenge for their environmental efforts that improve the quality of life for their residents. The four dozen townships, counties, cities and villages logged the actions they took through 2022 related to energy efficiency, climate adaptation and resilience, recycling, environmental justice, and more.



There are three levels of certification in the challenge. Gold-level townships include **Canton Charter Township** (Wayne Co.), **Delhi Charter Township** (Ingham Co.), **Meridian Charter Township** (Ingham Co.), **Orion Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), and **Pittsfield Charter Township** (Washtenaw Co.). At the Silver level are **West Bloomfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) and **Williamstown Township** (Ingham Co.). **Saugatuck Township** (Allegan Co.) was recognized as a Bronze-level community.

“Saugatuck Township’s list of accomplishments encompasses a wide range of initiatives,” according to Manager **Daniel DeFranco**, including a rewrite of the township zoning ordinance that takes steps toward sustainable development, incorporates solar policies, prioritizes tree preservation measures, and introduces a new section on agritourism; a township hall renovation in progress that incorporates energy-efficient design; recycling efforts; and implementing a Well Head Protection Zone to ensure preservation of local water sources.

“These accomplishments exemplify the township’s dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainable growth,” DeFranco said.

Pittsfield Charter Township was also among a dozen municipalities that completed new-this-year challenge metrics to track success in reducing water use and greenhouse gas emissions, adopting renewable energy and electric vehicles, and more.

Michigan Green Communities, in which MTA is a partner, is a sustainability networking, benchmarking, and technical assistance program. It guides and supports municipalities and counties in adapting to a changing climate, protecting infrastructure, improving the quality of life for residents, and creating a more environmentally and economically sustainable future for the state of Michigan. The program is free and open to all local governments in Michigan. Learn more at www.migreencommunities.com.

RECORD RETENTION AND DISPOSAL

New administrative records retention schedule available



A new General Schedule #35—Local Government Administrative Records retention schedule has been adopted by the State of Michigan, and is now available. “General retention schedules” cover records that are common to a particular local government function. The state previously did not have an approved

general schedule for administrative records created by local government agencies, even though just about every local government office creates and maintains these types of records. The new schedule covers these types of records.

Public records of a township are also the property of the state and can only be disposed of or destroyed in compliance with Michigan law. State records retention and disposal schedules identify all of the records that are maintained by government agencies, regardless of format. Approved schedules provide the only legal authority for townships to destroy public records. If a record is not covered by an approved schedule, it cannot be legally destroyed and must be kept permanently.

As the township official with the responsibility for “the safekeeping of the records, books and papers of the township in the manner required by law,” a township clerk has a duty to see that township records are retained as long as the law requires. However, it is important for all township officials with recordkeeping responsibilities to be aware of the retention periods.

Townships do not need to take any action to adopt adopted state record retention schedules. Additional state retention schedules also cover common records that identify when certain public records may be disposed of or destroyed, including General Schedule #10, *Michigan Township Record Retention*, which is the official record retention schedule for township records not covered by another schedule. Separate general schedules have also been adopted based on program areas, such as law enforcement, fire/ambulance departments, libraries, elections, clerks, treasurers, human resources, and financial documents. These separate schedules supersede General Schedule #10.

Learn more about records management, and find links to retention schedules, on MTA’s “Records Management” webpage on www.michigantownships.org. Access via the “Answer Center” under the “Member” drop-down menu; member login is required.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Updated FCC broadband map released, challenges can still be submitted

An updated National Broadband Map, released in late June by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), includes availability data reported through Dec. 31, 2022, as well as challenges made to that data more recently.

The updated map identifies some 8.3 million U.S. homes and businesses lacking access to high-speed broadband—nearly 330,000 more unserved locations than were identified on the November map. Individual and bulk challenges can still be submitted to this new data under the same system used to challenge the pre-production maps.

According to the Michigan Office of High-Speed Internet, more than 212,000 households in our state lack the opportunity to access a high-speed internet connection and an additional 865,000 households face barriers related to affordability, adoption or digital literacy. Taken together, this means that approximately 31% of Michigan households do not have an affordable, reliable high-speed internet connection that meets their needs. Townships are encouraged to review the FCC map for accuracy and to challenge any inaccuracies. Visit <https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData> to learn more about how to help ensure the FCC’s Broadband Map is accurate.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

Jenny Johnson was recently sworn in as **Barry Township** (Barry Co.) police chief—the first female police chief in the county. Johnson has been in law enforcement for 27 years, including the last 12 years with the Barry Township Police Department. Johnson said, “I’m very honored to be [township] police chief. I take this opportunity as chief to give back to a community that has always given so much to me.”

Students from **Whitefish Township** (Chippewa Co.) Community Schools received the 2023 Environmental Service Award from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, for an 11-month project to help educate the public on native plants, and identify and reduce the spread of invasive plant species in Lake Superior State Park. In addition to installing boot brushes in the park, the students helped research and create signage installed along the state park’s Paradise Pathway’s South Loop Trail, located in the township.



Email YOUR Township Happenings to jenn@michigantownships.org. Add MTA to your newsletter mailing list! Mail to MTA, Attn. Jenn Fiedler, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078, or email to jenn@michigantownships.org.

Members can choose to receive their *Township Focus* digitally

We know how much our members value their monthly copies of *Township Focus* magazine, which keeps readers up to date on key township issues, trends and resources as you serve your community. In fact, we regularly hear that officials keep their copies for years, to refer back to important articles and information!

We also know that some officials prefer to get their news and updates digitally versus a hard copy, paper version. You can now receive your monthly issues of *Township Focus* electronically only, via an emailed link. Please contact elsa@michigantownships.org to request to be added to an electronic distribution list. A hard copy magazine will no longer be mailed to you. The change will take effect within two issues. Note that we also post the full issue each month on www.michigantownships.org (look under the “News” tab) and provide a link in *Township Insights* at the beginning of each month.



classified

HELP WANTED

Assessor—Bedford Charter Township (Calhoun Co.) is seeking a candidate to fill the position of township assessor with, at a minimum, Michigan certified assessing officer certification, with preference to a Michigan advanced assessing officer who has at least five years’ experience in assessment administration.

The township is comprised of 4,532 real property parcels and 168 personal property parcels. Experience with eligible manufacturing personal property is preferred. Responsibilities include preparing the assessment roll, preparing the department budget, conducting March, July and December boards of review, representing the township at any Michigan Tax Tribunal proceedings, processing land divisions, and being actively responsive to resident inquiries.

Applicants must have a valid Michigan driver’s license. The township will consider this as a part-time position. Salary range starts at \$26,000 and will be negotiated through the selection process.

The position is open until filled. Bedford Charter Township is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Interested applicants should send resumés and cover letters to superintendent@bedfordchartertwpmi.gov.

Want to place a classified in Township Focus or on www.michigantownships.org? Visit www.michigantownships.org/classifieds.asp for more information, email ashley@michigantownships.org, or call (517) 321-6467, ext. 254.

profile



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Asphalt Materials recognizes the value of a knowledgeable sales staff to assist clients in the technical aspects of constructing and maintaining asphalt pavements. Its marketing team has the “real world” experience of having worked within the public sector and understands the demands placed on agencies to provide services to the traveling public.

Through consistent research and the strong relationship between other Heritage-related industries, they continue to introduce new technology to ensure the highest quality asphalt products. New technologies available to townships for pavement preservation and rehabilitation include cold in-place recycling and cold central plant recycling. The recycling process uses the existing roadway materials to create a new asphalt base course. Scrub sealing is used as a mass crack-filling and chip-sealing process. This creates a sealed underlying surface with a chip seal-wearing surface.

Asphalt Materials Inc. is committed to building long-term relationships with its customers based on trust and confidence, creating solutions to issues affecting its customers. For more information, visit www.asphaltmaterials.com or contact Scott Assenmacher, P.E. at (734) 755-8274 or Bucky Brooks at (734) 755-0073.

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Advertorial

mta events | july

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- 18** Cemetery Management and Insights into Planning & Zoning workshops, Harris
- 19** Financial Fundamentals and Hot Topics for Township Fire Departments workshops, Harris

Save the date! MTA's Professional Development Retreats are coming this fall; turn to the center of this issue for details.

Welcome new MTA Allied Service Provider

Please join MTA in welcoming **McKenna** as the newest member of our Allied Service Provider program at the Keystone Club level. McKenna serves Michigan communities with municipal planning, design, economic development, zoning, form-based code, transportation, landscape design, and more. For more on McKenna and other Allied Service Providers, check out the Allied Service Provider Directory on www.michigantownships.org (under "Vendor Directories").



MTA's lunchtime learning series, *Now You Know*, offers timely updates, insights from our experts and a chance to get your questions answered—all in just one hour! Don't miss our next episode coming:
July 12 from noon to 1 p.m.

Summer Legislative Update

Now You Know

Hear the latest on today's political landscape from MTA's Government Relations team as they break down the first six months of the legislative session. Get the inside scoop on legislative priorities, latest actions and the state's budget, as well as what is likely on tap for summer and fall action. You'll walk away with insights on election changes, revenue sharing, local authority, solar and much more—and more importantly—how you can help!

Register at <https://bit.ly/NYKmta> for just \$25 per session!

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JULY

1 Taxes due and payable in those jurisdictions authorized to levy a summer tax. (MCL 211.44a(3) and (4))

5 *First Tuesday in July.* Deadline for governmental agencies to exercise the right of refusal for 2023 tax foreclosure proposals. (MCL 211.78m(1))

10 Notice of days and hours of voter registration at the clerk's office for the Aug. 8 election must be published in the newspaper. One notice required. Notice may also be posted in at least two conspicuous places in each precinct and must include offices and proposals that will be on the ballot. (MCL 168.498)

Clerk shall post and enter into the Qualified Voter File (QVF) the hours the clerk's office will be open on the Saturday or Sunday or both immediately before the Aug. 8 election to issue and receive absent voter ballots. (MCL 168.761b)

Clerk shall post and enter into the QVF any additional locations and hours the clerk will be available to issue and receive absent voter ballots, if applicable. (MCL 168.761b)

18 *Tuesday after the third Monday in July.* The July board of review may be convened. (MCL 211.53b) The township board may authorize, by adoption of an ordinance or resolution, an alternative meeting date during the week of the third Monday in July. (MCL 211.53b(9)(b))

Precinct inspectors for the Aug. 8 election must be appointed by this date by the local election commission. (MCL 168.674)

24 Last day to register by mail or online to be eligible to vote in the Aug. 8 election. (MCL 168.497)

25 *through Aug. 7.* In-person registration with local clerk with proof of residency for the Aug. 8 election. (MCL 168.497)

Candidates not appearing on the Aug. 8 ballot must submit quarterly campaign finance statement by 5 p.m. (MCL 169.233)

28 Candidates or ballot questions appearing on the Aug. 8 ballot to submit pre-election campaign finance statements by 5 p.m. (MCL 169.233)

By 31 Form 170-CFT, *Commercial Facilities Tax Report*; Form 170-CRA, *Commercial Rehabilitation Act Tax Report*; Form 170-OPRA, *Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act Tax Report*; and Form 170-IFT, *Industrial Facilities Tax Report* must be filed with the Property Services Division of the Michigan Department of Treasury on or before July 31 of the tax year involved.

AUGUST

By 1 Deadline for township or local authority to file Form 5608, *Portion of 2022 Essential Services Millage Rate Dedicated for the Cost of Essential Services*. (MCL 123.1353(7))

Deadline for a municipality to file Form 5613, *Millage Rate Correction for the 2023 Personal Property Tax Reimbursement Calculations*. (MCL 123.1358(4))

Notice of the Aug. 8 election published. One notice required. (MCL 168.653a)

3 Public accuracy test for the Aug. 8 election must be conducted. (R 168.778) Notice of test must be published at least 48 hours before test. (MCL 168.798)

4 Electors may obtain an absent voter ballot via first-class mail for the Aug. 8 election until 5 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

Electors may submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new ballot by mail until 5 p.m. for the Aug. 8 election. (MCL 168.765b (1))

Electors who have returned their absent voter ballot for the Aug. 8 election may submit a written request in person to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new absent voter ballot in the clerk's office until 5 p.m. (MCL 168.765b(3))

Electors who have lost their absentee voter ballot for the Aug. 8 election or not yet received their ballot in the mail may submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new absent voter ballot in the clerk's office or by mail until 5 p.m. (MCL 168.765b(5))



63

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7 Electors who have lost their absentee voter ballot for the Aug. 8 election or not yet received their ballot in the mail may submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new absent voter ballot in the clerk's office until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.765b(7))

8 Emergency absentee voting until 4 p.m. (begins Friday at 5 p.m.) (MCL 168.759b)

Election Day.

Registrants may obtain and vote an absent voter ballot in person in the clerk's office or vote in person in the proper precinct until 8 p.m. (MCL 168.761)

9 Local clerk delivers results of the Aug. 8 election to county clerk by 11 a.m. (MCL 168.809)

10 Boards of county canvassers to meet to canvass the Aug. 8 election by 9 a.m. (MCL 168.821)




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Are townships required to use competitive bids for purchases?

Unless a township has adopted a policy to require a competitive bidding process for specific purchases or purchases over a specified amount, there is no general requirement to use competitive bids for township purchases.



Don't townships have to use competitive bidding to hire a contractor for a contract over \$20,000?

No. Attorney General Opinion 5599 of 1979 states that, in the absence of a statutory requirement, a municipality is not required to seek competitive bids before awarding a construction project.

Local ordinances may require the use of competitive bidding procedures. It is important to determine if your township has such a requirement. Many townships do have a competitive bidding ordinance because they were required by statute from 1993 to 1996.

Public Acts 167 and 168 of 1993 (MCLs 206.481 and 208.136) required a township to require sealed competitive bids for contracts of \$20,000 or more, except for contracts for professional services, emergency repairs or services pursuant to a written policy adopted by the township board. Under MCLs 206.481 and 208.136, a township was not eligible to receive certain revenue sharing payments if it did not require competitive bidding. Each township was required to submit its policy to the Michigan Department of Treasury's Office of Revenue and Tax Analysis; most townships had adopted such a policy.

In 1996, the Legislature repealed MCLs 206.481 and 208.136. Townships are no longer required by a specific statute to seek competitive sealed bids for contracts over \$20,000. However, many townships still have a policy dating back to November or December 1993 requiring sealed competitive bids.



What can we do if our township adopted a competitive bidding policy?

MTA advises townships to research the township board minutes or administrative policies to determine if the township has a competitive bidding policy. Until that policy is repealed or amended by the township board, the township should follow that competitive bidding

policy. Because a competitive sealed bidding process is no longer required by statute, it is up to the township board to decide if it is in the best interest of the township to continue that policy or amend or repeal it.



Can a township require a bidder to provide his or her qualifications in order for the contractor's bid to be considered?

The Bidders on Public Works Act (MCL 123.501, *et seq.*) permits any officer, board, commission, committee or department of a township authorized to receive bids for construction, maintenance and repair of public works (except public buildings) to require any interested bidders on the project to submit a sworn statement at least 10 days before bids are opened documenting his or her qualifications to satisfactorily carry out the work within the time specified for the project. The act allows the township to judge the bidder's qualifications based on his or her past performance on work of a similar nature, on the bidder's financial resources, and the construction equipment and facilities proposed for use on the project. Any person determined not to be a suitable person to bid on the proposed work must be notified of that determination in writing at least five days before the bids are opened.



Are there any other statutory requirements a township should consider when bidding out a project?

Under MCL 339.2011, a township may not engage in a public works project costing \$15,000 or more unless the plans and specifications for the project are prepared by a licensed professional engineer, the land is surveyed by a licensed professional surveyor, and the work is supervised by either a licensed professional architect or engineer.

If a public works project exceeds \$50,000, MCL 129.201 requires the principal contractor to furnish both a performance bond and a payment bond to the township for the completion of the project in accordance with the plans and specifications, and for the payment of all subcontractors, laborers and material suppliers.

Public Act 517 of 2012, the Iran Economic Sanctions Act, MCL 129.311, *et seq.*, requires townships to require a person submitting a bid on a request for proposal (RFP) to certify that it is not an Iran-linked business. The act

prohibits individuals who have economic relations with Iran from submitting bids on RFPs with the state, any political subdivision of the state or any other public entities. The act also includes penalty provisions for those who submit false certification.



Our township board would like to establish a bidding procedure. What should be considered when developing a procedure?

A township board may want to consider the following when developing a bidding procedure:

- Dollar thresholds for requiring a) written quotations and b) sealed bids or RFPs
- Types of purchases where quotes or competitive bids will not be required, such as small purchases, up to a specified dollar amount, sole source procurement (where only a single source is available or when the township is participating in a purchasing pool, such as the MiDEAL program provided by the State of Michigan), and emergency purchases (identify what constitutes an emergency and when board approval will be required)
- In order to receive comparable and informative bids and proposals, the township should prepare comprehensive specifications for prospective candidates, including:
 - The length of the contract period
 - Any required qualifications, such as a certified public accountant license
 - If attendance is required at township board or other meetings, and the number of meetings per year
 - The amount of anticipated consultation time (such as time for phone consultations included in bid, etc.)
 - The anticipated nature and number of the activities required, such as the average number of ordinance enforcement prosecutions for an attorney, the number and type of funds to be audited for an accountant, or the number of parcels for an appraiser
 - The titles of the township official(s) authorized to direct or request services
 - Whether the activity, such as auditing or appraisal, is to be performed at the township hall
 - That all documents and records created in a governmental function are property of the township and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act
- As appropriate, a request for proposals should ask each candidate to describe:
 - The individual or firm's municipal and township experience
 - Specific experience with the service or project
 - The names, credentials and references of the specific individuals who will be assigned to work with the township
 - Specific certification, such as certified public accountant
 - Potential conflicts of interest, such as township property owned, interest owned in businesses located in the township, or other clients who may have interests that are potentially adverse to the township
 - Services to be billed above the retainer amount, including the amount charged per hour, with a maximum amount for specific types of services, such as additional meetings not covered under the retainer or whether the meetings are to be billed on a per diem or hourly basis
 - The individual or firm's policy regarding reimbursement for travel time, phone bills, mileage, copying, postage and other incidental expenses
 - The services the township requires and if those services are to be included in a retainer
- The criteria for awarding bids or requests for proposals should be identified by the board at the outset, including factors such as:
 - Cost
 - Experience
 - Reliability
 - Sufficiency of equipment
 - Insurance
 - References
 - Good communication
- Any board member or department head who has any ownership or other interest in a company submitting a bid should disclose the conflict of interest to the board, and recuse him- or herself from all deliberations and votes involved in awarding the bid.

For sample policy language on bidding procedures, and many other township administrative policies, townships may wish to purchase the MTA publication, *Policy Matters! Using Board & Administrative Policies to Manage Your Township*, available in the online MTA Store on www.michigantownships.org, or by calling (517) 321-6467, ext. 221 or emailing elsa@michigantownships.org.

Hello, MTA ... ? provides general information on typical questions asked by township officials. Readers are encouraged to contact an attorney when specific legal guidance is needed. Member township officials and personnel may contact MTA Member Information Services with questions or requests from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays, at (517) 321-6467 or fax (517) 321-8908.

Budget measure approved for FY 2023-24 and supplemental funding for FY 2022-2023

Final action on the state's Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget took place the last week of June, with the Legislature approving the largest budget in the state's history.

The Legislature and governor reached agreement on the \$81.6 billion budget, combined with \$6 billion in additional spending for the current fiscal year and approval of the Natural Resources Trust Fund projects. Budget highlights that impact townships include:

- \$64 million increase in constitutional revenue sharing (determined by sales tax revenue collections)
- \$14 million or a 5% increase in the base for City, Village and Township (CVT) revenue sharing, with 1% of that amount tied to a requirement that the local unit obligate all of its American Rescue Plan Act money by the end of 2023 (a full year prior to the federal requirement)
- \$6 million or a 2% one-time appropriation for CVTs for public safety initiatives, such as public safety employee recruitment, retention, training, equipment and infrastructure improvements
- \$1.6 billion through the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to expand high-speed internet access to over 200,000 Michiganders in unserved and underserved areas across the state
- \$39 million additional funding for local roads
- \$80 million for local bridge bundling—for the repair and replacement of local bridges
- \$30 million (one-time funding) for renewable ready community grants to assist local governments with the establishment of wind, solar and energy storage facilities
- \$9 million for lead service line replacement
- \$233 million (one-time funding) for water infrastructure projects, including lead line replacements and wastewater infrastructure improvements
- \$280 million for local water infrastructure projects
- \$37 million (one-time funding) to remediate PFAS and emerging contaminants
- \$10 million for remediation of orphaned oil and gas wells
- \$450,000 for municipal assistance to provide support for State Revolving Fund programs for water infrastructure projects
- \$5 million for aggregate mapping
- \$20 million (one-time funding) for the presidential primary
- \$46 million for secretary of state for implementation of Proposals 1 and 2, with up to \$30 million for incentive grants to counties to coordinate implementation of early voting by local governments and incentivize multi-jurisdictional coordination
- \$11.5 million (one-time funding) for implementation of Proposals 1 and 2 to the secretary of state to include software updates and drop boxes
- \$30 million for the recruitment, retention and well-being of first responders
- \$15 million for fire gear equipment grants not to exceed \$3,500 per full-time member of the fire department
- \$18 million for in-service training for licensed law enforcement officers
- \$1.8 million for firearm safety and response—\$500,000 (one-time) grant program for local law enforcement agencies to distribute firearm safety equipment and \$1.3 million for active shooter response training
- \$9 million for a state trooper recruit school for 50 troopers
- \$10 million for missing middle housing to increase supply of housing stock, with 30% of grants to go to rural community projects
- \$5 million for local units to access grants (up to \$50,000) for zoning updates to increase housing and address affordability issues
- \$50 million in recurring funding for the Revitalization and Placemaking grant program for rehabilitation of vacant, underused and blighted structures
- \$50 million in recurring funding for the Housing and Community Development Fund to expand access to affordable housing
- \$2.1 million increase in payments in lieu of taxes for property tax payments to local units for state lands (to align payments with current property tax estimates)
- \$31.5 million to foster local partnerships through strategic planning and projects that mitigate cybersecurity threats and risks
- \$23.3 million for 15 land acquisition projects and 30 land development projects from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The budget bill was pending approval by the governor at the time of press.

Solar PILT bills soon to become law



Following two years of workgroup meetings, legislation passed in late June to allow for the creation of solar payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) agreements for a commercial solar energy facility.

House Bills 4317 and 4318 permit the option to create a solar PILT in place of the current assessment of

personal property taxes. The legislation provides a township, city or village the option to grant a 20-year property tax exemption to a “qualified solar energy facility” and establish a specific tax based on the electricity-generating capacity of the facility. The PILT agreement would also require State Tax Commission approval.

MTA was neutral on the proposal after negotiating—and achieving—many changes. Recent changes added a longer period for a local unit to act on an application and clarified the PILT would only apply to the equipment part of original application—not additional equipment added during the 20-year period (i.e., large-scale solar battery storage).

The bills will be effective upon signature by the governor.

New laws allow recoupment for law enforcement training academies

Local law enforcement agencies could recoup training costs for recruits if they later leave that agency’s department under two new laws. Public Acts 43 and 44 of 2023 allow police departments to recover the costs of sending recruits to training academies if they leave after a certain period. The bills took effect on June 14, 2023.

Local grade separation fund created for rail crossings



Local units and county road agencies will soon have the opportunity to seek grants for the local grade separation to eliminate blocked railroad crossings in their communities under two bills passed in late June and pending signature by the governor. Senate Bill 125 and House Bill 4153 require the state Department of Transportation to develop a local grade separation grant program, which would require a 20% match from the applicant and develop parameters for prioritizing the approval of funding applications

for railroad crossing projects under the program. The bills are tie-barred, and the fund requires an appropriation by the Legislature.

Reporting of sexual assault changes now law

A six-bill package—debated in prior legislative sessions because of the Dr. Larry Nassar scandal—is now law. Two of the new laws—Public Acts 46 and 49 of 2023—impact local units of government. PA 46 requires the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to create training materials for individuals who are considered mandatory reporters, including law enforcement, to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Employers are required to make these materials available to mandatory reporters unless they have a training program that is updated annually and is similar in substance to the materials provided by MDHHS. PA 49 prohibits individuals from using or attempting to use their professional authority to prevent certain crimes from being reported, including child abuse and criminal sexual conduct, to law enforcement or a Title IX coordinator at a postsecondary education institution.

The new laws take effect on Sept. 26, 2023.

Brownfield development changes for TIF and transformational brownfield plans

Changes to allow tax increment financing (TIF) to be used for housing development projects through the state’s brownfield development plan, including previously developed properties, are pending signature by the governor.

Senate Bills 129, 130, 131 and 132, supported by MTA, allow TIFs to be used for housing development projects through the state’s brownfield program. When a brownfield development generates new tax revenue due to an increase in property tax value, that revenue can be captured by a local brownfield redevelopment authority and given back to the property developer to reimburse certain eligible costs associated with the development. The legislation allows housing development activities to be eligible for reimbursement under the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act.

Another change approved, Senate Bill 289, will allow a local brownfield redevelopment authority (BRA) to capture revenue from sales and use taxes to pay for eligible activities through the state’s transformational brownfield program and to increase the caps on annual and total allowable reimbursements. The act authorizes BRAs to use captured tax revenues to pay for certain activities that benefit or develop eligible brownfield properties. A transformational brownfield plan is a brownfield plan created under the act that, among other requirements, must be for a mixed-use development that involves a minimum level of capital investment depending on the population of the municipality.

All bills will take effect once signed into law by the governor.

Legislative lowdown

A quick look at bills MTA is following.

SB 10 & HB 4036: Public utilities—Prohibit local units of government from imposing a ban on the use of natural gas or installation of natural gas infrastructure. *MTA opposed.*

SB 17: Fireworks—Modifies the days that fireworks use may be regulated by a local unit of government and increases penalties for certain violations. *MTA supports.*

SB 40: Unemployment—Increases maximum number of unemployment benefit weeks. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 41: Construction—Prohibits local units from enacting an ordinance prohibiting use of energy-efficient appliances in new or existing residential buildings. *MTA opposes.*

SB 47: Farmland—Allows relinquishment of portion of farmland from agreement or easement to make boundaries more regular. *MTA neutral.*

SB 55: Property tax—Provides retroactive application of poverty exemption. *MTA supports.*

SBs 95-96: Disabled veterans property tax reimbursement—Provides a mechanism for the state to reimburse local units of government for the property tax exemption available to veterans classified as 100% disabled and their surviving spouses. *MTA supports.*

SB 150: Michigan Tax Tribunal—Expands methods for tax tribunal to hold small claims hearings to include telephonically or by videoconferencing. *MTA supports.*

SB 155: Voting equipment—Prohibits use of electronic voting systems that contain certain parts or equipment. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 171 & HB 4231: Local government—Repeals the fair and open competition in governmental construction act. *MTA supports.*

SBs 176, 330 & 364: Disabled veterans property tax exemption—Allows one-time filing for exemption and an unremarried surviving spouse to retain exemption. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 182-183 & HBs 4274-4275: Revenue sharing trust fund—Establishes a “Revenue Sharing Trust Fund” and dedicates portion of general sales tax revenue to the fund to distribute to townships, cities, villages and counties. *MTA supports.*

SB 244: Workers’ Compensation—Extends presumption of causation of

heart and respiratory diseases to certain members of police, fire and public safety departments. *MTA opposes.*

SB 277: Solar operations—Allows policy for farmers to rent land for commercial solar operations while enrolled in the PA 116 program. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 293: Housing—Modifies and expands the housing and community development fund to make financing available to middle-income households. *MTA supports.*

HB 4012: Speed limits—Modifies procedure for establishing speed limits. *MTA supports.*

HB 4023: Underground storage tanks—Revises placement distance of underground storages tanks from a public water supply. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4033: Elections—Requires state to reimburse costs for certain special elections. *MTA supports.*

HB 4044: Labor—Eliminates the requirement that wages and benefit levels be “frozen” during contract negotiations for public employees (*note: public employees subject to compulsory arbitration are currently exempt*). *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4129-4130: Elections—Prohibits intimidating an election inspector or preventing an election inspector from performing his or her duties. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4185-4190: Asbestos abatement—Modifies and creates new acts relating to the regulation of asbestos handling and removal activities and how public entities may enter into contracts and agreements with contractors engaging in those activities. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4207-4208: Broadband equipment—Exempts eligible broadband equipment from personal property taxes. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4210: Elections—Provides for the electronic return of absent voter ballots by military voters and their spouses. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4230: Labor—Removes prohibition against deduction from a public employee’s wages for certain political purpose. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4321: Environmental protections—Provides criminal penalties and civil fines for unlawful dumping of garbage. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4382-4383: Drain Code—Revises Chapter 22 of Drain Code process through determination sufficiency of petition and proposed boundaries. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4428: Public notices—Revises publication of legal notices and creates the Local Government Public Notice Act. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4479-4480: Statewide Septic Code—Provides for the assessment and regulations of on-site wastewater treatment systems. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4486: Governmental immunity—Eliminates governmental immunity and allows governmental agency and employee liability for criminal sexual conduct. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 4502-4503: Election challengers—Provides requirements and training requirements for election challengers. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4526-4528: Local preemption—Preempts local authority for regulations for mining of sand and gravel operations. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4548: Notaries public—Provides fee for remote notarization. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4553-4554 & SB 331: Local government reimbursement—Creates local government reimbursement fund, provides for distribution of money to the fund to reimburse local governments for revenue lost due to the increase in the small taxpayer exemption. *MTA supports.*

HB 4566: Vehicle registration—Allocates revenue from vehicle registration fees to county where registrant resides and distributes per lane mile to local road agency. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4567: Elections—Removes certain references to challenged ballots. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4568: Elections—Eliminates prohibition on hiring transportation assistance to the polls. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4569: Voter registration—Provides preregistration to vote at age 16. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4570: Absent voter ballots—Provides online application for absent voter ballots. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4572: Property tax assessments—Exempts transfer of ownership of certain real property to certain individuals from uncapping of taxable value upon transfer. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4605-4606: Public safety—Creates the public safety and violence prevention fund and provides for the earmark and distribution of 1.5% of the 4% of sales tax revenue into the fund for disbursement. *MTA supports.*

HB 4693: Open Meetings Act—Allows nonelected and noncompensated public bodies to meet remotely. *MTA monitoring.*



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2023 Professional Development Retreats

Connect with MTA and your fellow officials face to face this fall for two days of exclusive learning, networking and fun!

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September 26-27

Trustees' Retreat
October 3-4

Planning & Zoning Team Retreat
October 3-4

Supervisors' Retreat
October 5-6

Strategy & Innovation
October 5-6

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October 10-11

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Each retreat offers a learning experience geared to your role on concepts, trends and pressing issues for townships. These informative educational sessions are designed for officials at every level, and will help you develop new skills while providing you with knowledge of the statutory duties and responsibilities required of you. Sessions are being designed now, and detailed descriptions will appear in registration brochures being mailed this month and will be posted on www.michigantownships.org (look under "Training"). Can't wait? Here's a sneak peek at topics*:

Clerks' Retreat—September 26 & 27

- Elections Update
- Under Surveillance: Township Security Cameras
- Practical Payroll Procedures
- Insights into Internal Controls
- Gotcha! Don't Take the Bait
- Legislative Lowdown: Local Control & Your Role
- Out of Order! Managing Meeting Hot Potatoes
- You're Not the Boss of Anyone
- Why Isn't THAT on Your Website?

Trustees' Retreat—October 3 & 4

- Inside a Financial Report
- Who's the Boss?
- Out of Order! Managing Meeting Hot Potatoes
- Gotcha! Don't Take the Bait
- How the Heck Do We Enforce Our Ordinances?
- Legislative Lowdown: Local Control & Your Role
- Planning & Zoning Policy and Process

Planning & Zoning Team Retreat—October 3 & 4

- Meeting Guidelines and Ground Rules
- Out of Order! Managing Meeting Hot Potatoes
- Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning
- Renewable Energy Update
- Decision-Making: By the Book
- How the Heck Do We Enforce Our Ordinances?
- What You Can (and Can't!) Regulate, and Why
- Gotcha! Don't Take the Bait

Supervisors' Retreat—October 5 & 6

- Out of Order! Managing Meeting Hot Potatoes
- Gotcha! When Free Speech Crosses the Line
- How the Heck Do We Enforce Our Ordinances?
- Ground Rules for Great Meetings
- Financial Deep Dive
- Legislative Lowdown: Local Control & Your Role
- Boost Board Engagement
- Assessing Insights
- You're Not the Boss of Anyone

Strategy & Innovation Retreat—October 5 & 6

People, Places and Things: Envisioning & Executing Economic Strategies

- Attracting and Retaining Residents, Township Talent and Businesses
- Reimagining Redevelopment
- True Costs and Impact of Community Development
- Addressing Infrastructure
- Rethinking Resident Relations: Addressing Loss of Trust in Local Government
- Legislative Insights & Update

Treasurers' Retreat—October 10 & 11

- Township Investments 201
- Navigating Nuances of Revenue Sources
- Reconciling: How What You Do Impacts Others
- Internal Control Insights
- Legislative Lowdown: Local Control & Your Role
- Gotcha! Don't Take the Bait
- Out of Order! Managing Meeting Hot Potatoes
- You're Not the Boss of Anyone
- Why Isn't THAT on Your Website?

** Topics subject to change.*

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Exceptional value

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Cancellations & substitutions

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office four weeks prior to the event will receive a full refund; two weeks prior will receive a half-refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter without extenuating circumstances. Instead, registered attendees who are unable to attend will be given access to the online version in MTA's Online Learning Center. Or you may substitute another individual from your township for the same retreat. Please contact MTA to let us know of the switch. Changes to hotel reservations must be made directly with the Highlands at Harbor Springs.



Continuing education credit

Are you enrolled in MTA's *Township Governance Academy*? You'll earn four elective credits just for attending. No project required!



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Are you ready to learn more about these exciting educational opportunities? Visit <https://bit.ly/MTAlearnmore>, or email education@michigantownships.org for more details.

Product and service providers

Each retreat includes networking time with vendors targeting your role in the township. The Vendor Showcase is designed to help you find providers of products and services that can help your township run more efficiently.

Evening activity

After a full day of intensive education, we know you'll be ready for some fresh air! Put your notes away, leave the meeting room behind and join the fun! These evening festivities are designed to allow you to catch up with old friends, and connect with new ones.



Registration Information

Register early to take advantage of discounted registration fees AND lodging!

Discounted lodging is limited—Reserve your hotel room today!

The Highlands at Harbor Springs offers multiple room layouts to suit a variety of needs, including newly updated guest rooms in the Main Lodge, as well as spacious lofts and suites at the Heather Highlands Inn building. All rooms feature signature Boyne beds and linens, coffeemaker, mini-fridge or kitchenette, and free WiFi.

Classes and meals for both the *Trustees' Retreat* and *Strategy & Innovation Retreat* will be held in the Heather Highlands Inn building. If you wish to stay in the same building, be sure to reserve a Pleasantview Suite or Inverness Loft room type. All other retreats will be held in the Convention Center building; for details on all room types, visit <http://bit.ly/MTAretreats>.

Additional resort-wide amenities include a heated outdoor pool and hot tub, hiking trails, business center, fitness center and multiple dining outlets. *Check-in: 5 p.m. Check-out: 11 a.m.*

Two ways to make your hotel reservation:

- 1) **Online:** Visit <http://bit.ly/MTAretreats>
- 2) **Call:** (800) 462-6963 and reference which "MTA Retreat" you wish to attend



MTA discounted room rates

Start at \$145
(rate does not include 10% resort fee)
and 5% local occupancy tax

Registration Form

Township _____ County _____

Name & Title _____

Email Address _____

Name & Title _____

2nd registrant
saves \$60!



Email Address _____

NOTE: Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.

- ☐ Check enclosed (payable to MTA)
- ☐ Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # _____

Print Card Holder's Name _____ Expiration date _____

Signature _____ CSV 3-digit code _____

Which retreat do you wish to attend?

- ☐ Clerks ☐ Trustees ☐ Supervisors
- ☐ Treasurers ☐ P&Z Team ☐ Strategy & Innovation

Save \$60 off your second **full-program** registration by bringing your deputy, a fellow trustee, manager or superintendent OR a member of your township planning and zoning team. Must register both individuals for the same retreat at the same time to take advantage of the savings.

Full-program rates: Includes all sessions, meals, refreshments and evening activity. Housing is NOT included; see lodging details above to book your room.

- ☐ Early-bird rate \$365/person
- ☐ Regular rate \$415/person within three weeks of event
- ☐ **BONUS: I saved \$60 on a second full-program registration!**

Single-day rates: Includes that day's sessions, meals and refreshments. Day One includes evening activity. Housing is NOT included; see lodging details above to book your room.

Check the day you wish to attend: ☐ Day 1 OR ☐ Day 2

- ☐ Early-bird rate \$230/person
- ☐ Regular rate \$280 within three weeks of event

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Above rates are for MTA members; non-members, call MTA for rates.



Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908, or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Need event registration assistance? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 221.



What is the purpose of petty cash?

Petty cash is used to record money set aside on an imprest basis for the purpose of making change or paying incidental expenses. (MCL 18.1403) These expenses are normally unable to be paid for in the regular manner, making cash the practical way to pay for the expense.



How do we budget for petty cash?

A township should have a resolution/policy that states how much cash the petty cash fund should hold. For example, a township might allow a petty cash fund of \$500 to exist for its cash obligations. On rare occasions, if the policy that budgets for the petty cash changes the amount allowed, the account is debited or credited accordingly.



How is petty cash disbursed?

A township needs to have a policy that states who will have access to the petty cash, therefore limiting who is able to use its funds. For example, the petty cash might be kept by the treasurer. Each time the cash is needed, the treasurer should have the individual complete a voucher (with a signature) that states what is being purchased and to which account it needs to be applied. This provides proof of what it was used for, who used it, and when it was used. In the event that the petty cash is out of balance, the voucher allows for a quick reconciliation of where the funds are at.



When will it be replenished, how, and how often?

Each township should have a policy that states how often the petty cash is to be replenished. This is commonly done monthly, quarterly, and sometimes annually. When the petty cash fund is replenished, the account is debited with the total amount of the cash that was used from it (this can be easily done by putting each receipt with the petty cash so that you can write a check for the total of the receipts).



How do we terminate a petty cash fund?

To terminate a petty cash fund, the remaining cash in the fund must be deposited into the corresponding bank account for the respective fund. For example, if the general fund has a \$500 petty cash fund, deposit this amount into the General Fund bank account with a memo that details the closing of the petty cash fund.

Information provided in *Financial Forum* should not be considered legal advice, and readers are encouraged to contact their township auditor and/or attorney for advice specific to their situation.

References

"Petty cash procedure," www.accountingtools.com
 "Petty Cash Procedures | Controller's Office," www.ucsf.edu
 "Petty Cash: What It Is, How It's Used and Accounted For, Examples," www.investopedia.com

Get more 'Financial Fundamentals' at MTA's U.P. Education Extravaganza this month!

Oversight of your township's financial affairs is a critical function that protects you from serious pitfalls, including fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and more. Join MTA's Cindy Dodge, our Member Information Services liaison, on **July 19** at the Island Resort in Harris, for a comprehensive overview of *Financial Fundamentals*.

In this session, perfect for all members of the township board and any staffer involved in township finances, Dodge will review effective solutions for outlining (and communicating) your township's approach to financial matters. Participants will gain insights into effective financial policies and procedures that not only make your life easier, but that can be adapted for your township's specific circumstances.

The program is part of our two-day "U.P. Education Extravaganza," which includes four sessions on key topics, that have been or will also be taught downstate, at one location—offering a convenient learning opportunity for our northern Michigan and Upper Peninsula officials. Turn to page 30 for more information, or visit <https://bit.ly/twptraining> to download a brochure or register online.

Inside Proposal 2 implementation laws

In November 2022, more than 60% of Michigan voters—some 2.5 million in all—approved Proposal 2022-2, enshrining new voter rights into the state Constitution. Touted as a historic expansion of voter access to elections, the constitutional amendment sparked immediate concern, consternation and questions from those who administer elections—our local clerks.

In the ensuing months, clerks and other township leaders have sought answers about the new requirements, processes and costs of continuing to provide effective, efficient elections with the added responsibilities required by Proposal 2. Questions have abounded on how communities—particularly our smaller townships and those with part-time hours—will implement the new voter rights, which include nine days of early in-person voting for statewide and federal elections, as well as sweeping changes to absentee voting (AV). While the state Bureau of Elections (BOE) has provided initial guidance and processes over the past several months (as shared regularly in MTA's *Township Insights* weekly newsletter and in *Township Focus*), many elements required legislative action.

Thus began a five-month process, with legislators working with election experts, including representatives from the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks and Michigan Association of County Clerks, on the intricacies of putting the proposal requirements into state law, as well as enacting other statutory changes necessitated, but not directly dictated by, the proposal. Identical 11-bill packages were introduced and debated in both chambers of the state Legislature—with both House and Senate bills crossing the finish line the final

week of June and heading to the governor for signature. The legislation was expected to be signed shortly after *Township Focus* press time.

The Fiscal Year 2023-24 state budget—which passed the same day as the Proposal 2 legislation—recognized the need for funding toward these efforts. All told, some \$46 million was allocated in the final budget for the Michigan secretary of state (SOS) to implement Proposal 2 (as well as Proposal 2022-1, which impacts legislator financial disclosure and term limits)—with up to \$30 million for incentive grants to counties to coordinate implementation of early voting and incentivize multijurisdictional coordination. An additional \$11.5 million, primarily for drop boxes, was included in the supplemental portion of the budget in the current fiscal year (FY 2022-23).

Now that implementation legislation has passed the Legislature, the real work begins—in every township in the state. As township boards weigh how to budget for these additional requirements, and clerks adapt to the new processes, staffing requirements and more, both the BOE and MTA are also working on providing additional guidance, trainings and resources to assist and help answer questions. The following is an overview of the legislation, what it does, and what information the BOE has provided thus far.



Venturing into new territory—early voting

With Proposal 2, Michigan joined dozens of other U.S. states that offer some form of early voting—though this is accomplished at the county level in those states, where early voting is generally not offered at the municipal level. This is likely the biggest and most concerning change for many clerks and election workers to administer. Michigan is now required to offer nine days of early in-person voting **prior to statewide and federal elections only**. (Townships have *the option* of offering early voting for local elections.) Voters, of course, can still vote in person on Election Day or by absentee ballot. The first election for which early voting will be in effect is Michigan's 2024 presidential primary, whose date has not yet been finalized.

Cooperative agreements

Senate Bill 367 implements early voting requirements and processes. Under the bill, a township can choose to operate the nine days of early voting on its own. The bill also spells out two other options, allowing townships to share costs, equipment and personnel and join with other municipalities or with the county to cooperatively accomplish this new requirement.

If a township joins other municipalities or the county, they must enter into either a municipal or county agreement

to do so. The bill outlines what must be included in these agreements, including number of precincts of participating municipalities, how voters will be notified of early voting sites, budgeting and cost-sharing procedures, supervision, staffing, and more.

County clerks must notify all municipal clerks in their county at least 155 days before the first regularly scheduled statewide or federal election in an even-numbered year whether the county clerk intends to conduct early voting. The clerk must notify the county clerk 150 days before the election whether the township will conduct early voting on its own or in a municipal agreement or a county agreement. In addition, a township can choose to conduct early voting on its own for a presidential primary, and still enter into a municipal or county agreement for the remaining statewide and federal elections to be held in that year, as well as any elections held during the following year, and any other elections covered by the agreement. The township could enter in such an agreement until April 15 of the year of the presidential primary, either through an amendment to an existing agreement that was in effect for the presidential primary, if all parties to that agreement agree, or through a new agreement.



With Proposal 2, Michigan joined dozens of other U.S. states that offer some form of early voting. Michigan is now required to offer nine days of early in-person voting, prior to statewide and federal elections only.

If a township wants to withdraw from a municipal or county agreement, it must provide 30 days' written notice to all other parties in the agreement. It cannot withdraw during the period beginning 150 days before the first statewide general election in an even-numbered year and ending with the completion of the county canvass for that statewide general election.

Township clerks must provide voters notice of their early voting site within 45 days of the election (if offering with the county, the county clerk may also provide the notice to all electors in the county).

The legislation requires the secretary of state to create model municipal and county agreement templates, as well as model early voting plan templates.

Early voting sites

Municipalities offering early voting on their own, or with other municipalities, must provide the county with an early voting plan at least 120 days before the first statewide or federal election in each even-numbered year, including the municipalities covered, early voting site locations, how voters will be informed about their early voting opportunity and more. The county clerk then provides the SOS with a countywide early voting plan and must certify that every registered voter in every municipality is served by at least one early voting site.

"Early voting sites" operate similar to typical Election Day polling locations, with some additional flexibility—including

that they can serve electors from more than six precincts and from more than one municipality within a county and are not subject to limitations on how many electors are assigned to a precinct. SB 367 also offers some additional flexibility in securing polling places and early voting sites.

Early voting sites must be finalized at least 60 days before Election Day.

Security, tabulating and pre-processing

While many of the logistical issues will be determined by the secretary of state—including software changes, agreement and voting plan templates, preventing double votes, and security—SB 367 does include security procedures to be followed for securing tabulators and ballots at the end of each night of early voting.

The bill also allows all communities to pre-process and tabulate AV ballots before Election Day. Townships with a population of 5,000 or more can pre-process and tabulate AV ballots on any of the eight days—one or more, or all days if desired—prior to Election Day. Any township, regardless of population, can do so the Monday before the election.

Townships that have processed 500 or more same-day registrations in either of the last two November general elections can establish "Election Day vote centers" that would operate as a polling place for same-day registrants. These would have to be in the same building where the clerk provides same-day registration.

The legislation also removes the provision that does not allow a worker to leave an AV counting board before the close of polls on Election Day, and adds a provision making it illegal to photograph or record in an AV counting board, with some exceptions. A companion bill, House Bill 4696, provides sentencing guidelines for reporting early voting results prior to the close of polls on Election Day, which is a five-year felony, as well as making technical updates.

The Bureau of Elections recently conducted a Lean Process Improvement exercise to map out the procedural and technical updates that will be needed to implement early voting. The BOE has reviewed issues related to voting systems, reports, ballot storage, record keeping, chain of custody, voting locations and electronic pollbooks, among others. It is expected many of the issues discussed will be useful in quickly implementing early voting.

Overhaul on absentee voting

Proposal 2 included several provisions in efforts to expand access and ease for AV voting, which saw a dramatic increase during the pandemic. Although the costs of some of the new requirements—such as prepaid postage and drop boxes—are primarily covered by the state, clerks must implement new—and ongoing—responsibilities, including permanent

AV voting lists and signature curing notices. While the new laws outline requirements and processes and the BOE has released some guidance, additional resources will continue to be released as the bureau develops final procedures.

Prepaid postage

Under the proposal, state-funded postage is required for voters to return their AV ballot application and ballot. This was codified into law by Senate Bill 370, which also prescribes the signature matching and curing process that voters are to use for mismatched or missing signatures on AV applications and ballot return envelopes (see below for more on the curing process).

The BOE is continuing to work with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to finalize sub-permits for each of Michigan's 1,520 jurisdictions that conduct elections. This allows each jurisdiction to print AV ballot applications and envelopes with a permit that will be billed to the state.

As of *Township Focus* press time, fewer than 172 permits had yet to be finalized, and all permits for jurisdictions with an Aug. 8 election were in place, according to the BOE. If your township needs to order AV ballot application or return envelopes, the BOE instructs that clerks should contact the township's vendor to find out if the township's sub-permit has been established. If not, and your township has an August election, the BOE will reimburse for the postage applied to the return envelopes, as it did with the May 2 election.

When using a permit, USPS will send an invoice to the township, indicating postage costs incurred and postage due, and that the amount has been deducted from the township's advance deposit account (this is the master account established by the State of Michigan). **The township should not incur actual charges from these mailings.** If a township account has been charged, an invoice and proof of the debit from the account should be submitted to the BOE. According to the bureau, townships can retain the invoices if desired—however, no action is required, and the township will continue to receive them for the life of the permit.

Permits were established using the mailing address listed in the Qualified Voter File (QVF). Clerks were urged to review this information for accuracy and update if necessary. For AV ballot applications and AV ballots to be returned to the correct address, the BOE and USPS must have the township's correct mailing address to add to the BOE's statewide postage permit. If the mailing address in the township changes when a new clerk takes office (for example, if it is the clerk's home address), it is recommended that the township establish a post office box as the clerk mailing address. For mail to be routed to the correct address, the BOE must maintain an accurate, up-to-date mailing list. A mailing address with a PO box will be the PO box only and not include a street address.

For jurisdictions not able to use their permit for the August election, a postage reimbursement form is available from the BOE.

Democracy MVP program helps recruit election workers

With nine days of early voting required by Proposal 2022-2 before statewide and federal elections, there also comes an increased need for additional poll workers. Townships can learn about individuals interested in working elections through the state's Democracy MVP program.

The program was launched to make it easier for residents to learn more about and share their interest in becoming election workers. Townships can also spread the word by sharing program details with individuals in your township and help attract more election workers to assist in your local elections (there is even a Democracy MVP toolkit to help you share details). The program website (access at www.michigan.gov/elections and scroll down to the "Democracy MVP" link) allows individuals to complete an interest form online, explore an election inspector resource library (including an Election Worker Intro video) and review frequently asked questions about this important role.

After individuals apply through the Democracy MVP program, the local clerk is notified, allowing them to contact the new potential election worker to complete the application and hiring process. The program also encourages individuals to apply directly with local clerks' offices.



Drop boxes

Proposal 2 requires that there be at least one state-funded AV drop box for every 15,000 registered voters in a jurisdiction, plus an additional drop box for every additional 15,000 registered voters. House Bill 4697, which puts these provisions into place, clearly states that the SOS is to pay for the drop boxes, their installation, and any required video monitoring (*note: this does not, however, include video data storage*).

Drop boxes must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be clearly labeled as an AV ballot drop box where voters can return completed AV applications and ballots.
- Be securely locked, affixed to the ground or another stationary object, and designed to prevent applications and ballots from being removed when locked.
- Be accessible 24 hours each day during the 40 days before Election Day, and until 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- Be equipped with a slot or mailbox-style lever to allow ballot applications and ballot return envelopes to be put in it. All other openings on the drop box must be securely locked.
- Be located in a publicly accessible, well-lit area with good visibility.



Additional election law changes

Additional election legislation—some necessitated by, though not specifically a component of Proposal 2022-2—also recently passed the Legislature and is pending the governor's signature, as of *Township Focus* press time.

Voter identification for election purposes. Senate Bill 373 modifies the types of photo identification that can be used for election purposes to conform with Proposal 2. The bill provides a definition for “educational institution,” now in the state Constitution, and replaces previous language that referenced universities and colleges. The bill also adds photo identification issued by a local government to the types of ID that can be used for election purposes.

Increased precinct size. House Bill 4702 allows municipalities to increase their precincts to up to 5,000 active registered voters from the current 2,999. The bill also removes the provision in law that proscribes the number of voting machines a precinct should have. While the legislation is not a requirement of Proposal 2, it was included to realize savings by requiring fewer numbers of voting equipment and resources, such as absentee voter counting board tabulators, to meet the election needs per precinct.

The bill also outlines considerations for the required “equitable distribution” of a drop box (or drop boxes) throughout the township, including population density and distribution, proximity to parking, and other considerations the clerk may feel is relevant. The clerk must notify the SOS of drop box placement, which will be included on the state's website and allow voters to see where a drop box is located in their community.

The bill does retain the current statutory requirement for video monitoring on drop boxes installed after October 2020. Beginning in 2026, **all** drop boxes must have video monitoring. Video monitoring must be in place for the 75 days prior to any election, and any vandalism and suspicious activity occurring near a drop box must be immediately reported to local law enforcement. Townships are responsible for any costs related to video storage and

maintenance. HB 4697 removes a previous requirement that clerks document the total number of AV ballot return envelopes collected from each drop box.

Statewide contracts with three vendors are now in place, and clerks can order their required state-paid drop box (or drop boxes, depending on the number of registered voters in the township) using the order form in the BOE's “Michigan Elections eLearning Center.” Clerks can also view the vendors and available drop boxes on the eLearning Center's drop box webpage. The bureau will place orders with the vendors at regular intervals, prioritizing those jurisdictions with an August election, then those with a November election, and then the rest of the jurisdictions.

All drop boxes should be ordered prior to the 2024 presidential primary absent voter ballot period. Drop boxes will be delivered directly to the township to the address provided by the clerk. For those jurisdictions with a May or August election that needed to purchase and install a drop box prior to the finalization of the ordering processing, the BOE will provide reimbursement via the drop box reimbursement form available in the eLearning Center.

Permanent AV ballot list

Under Proposal 2, voters may now complete a single AV application to receive an AV ballot in *all* future elections.

This is required for all jurisdictions and all elections.

According to the BOE, permanent AV status moves with the voter when they update their registration address within the state, including across jurisdictions. Voters are removed from the list upon request, with cancellation of voter registration, with reliable information that the voter has moved from the registration address, or if the voter has not voted for six years.

House Bill 4699 sets up the process for the permanent AV ballot mailing list. These voters are referred to as “permanent mail ballot voters.” The bill also:

- Creates a presidential primary ballot selection form for voters to select their party preference for voting in presidential primary elections and how to change this preference.
- Lists the conditions under which an individual can be removed from the permanent list, and notices that must be sent to the voter when this happens.
- Changes some retention periods for election materials to conform with the federal 22-month requirement.

Updated printed and QVF AV ballot applications provide voters with the option to join the permanent AV ballot list. A QVF update now captures a voter's permanent AV ballot status.

Given that many voters will receive absentee ballots, they will now be allowed to bring their marked absentee ballot to an early voting site or an Election Day precinct and insert them into the tabulator.

Signature matching/curing

SB 370 prescribes the signature matching and curing process for clerks and election inspectors to use for mismatched or missing signatures on AV applications and ballot return envelopes. The bill sets guidance for comparing signatures and allows voters whose signature “does not agree sufficiently” with the signature on file to “cure” any deficiencies using a new “cure form” to be developed by the SOS. Clerks must notify an elector of any deficiency within one business day of receipt (for those envelopes received within six or more calendar days of the election), and can do so by telephone, email or text message. Those received within five days of the election must be notified of deficiencies by the end of the same business day received. An AV application or return envelope is not considered received until the “first subsequent day on which the clerk has scheduled business hours.”

AV ballot return envelopes can be cured up to three days after an election. If a deficiency is cured within those three days, the ballot is tabulated.

The bill also codifies the use of a driver’s license or state ID signature on file with the secretary of state for applying for an AV ballot online and strikes the identification requirement for applying for an AV ballot in the clerk’s office except for the day before Election Day.

Proposal 2 also requires a state-funded tracking system for submitted AV applications and ballots, including electronic status notifications. SB 339 requires the secretary of state to create the new tracking system, which also must inform the voter of any deficiencies with either the application or ballot and provide instructions for addressing such deficiencies. The legislation exempts voters’ phone numbers and email addresses from the Freedom of Information Act.

MOVE ballots

Public Act 25 of 2023, which was signed in to law in May with immediate effect, was the first Proposal 2 implementation bill to go into effect. The law requires absentee ballots of military and overseas voters (MOVE) to be counted if they are received within six days after the election if the return envelope is postmarked on or before Election Day. PA 25 also provides the process to be used if the postmark is not legible, indicates how these ballots will be tabulated and updates the instructions for absentee voters.

Supporting townships and clerks

Proposal 2022-2 and its implementing legislation represent the largest change in elections in years. Townships and clerks have long-adapted to ever-evolving changes to local services, and we fully recognize this may be a significantly challenging time for Michigan local governments and election administrators, and that many questions likely remain. MTA remains committed to supporting our members, clerks and all who assist in administering elections, to ensure that townships can continue to provide efficient, effective elections and support local democracy as they have done for nearly two centuries. Continue to watch future issues of *Township Focus* and *Township Insights*, and MTA’s website for continued updates and resources as they become available.



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MOVING FOR CIRCULARITY

Sen. Winnie Brinks

Senate majority leader (D-Grand Rapids)

Sen. Winnie Brinks first ran for the state Legislature 10 years ago for one simple, but true reason.

“I love this state,” said Brinks, who made history this year, becoming the first woman to serve as Senate majority leader. “And I am proud to serve it. Michigan is a great place and we have so much to offer. Our workforce, entrepreneurial spirit, natural resources and educational opportunities make us the envy of the world, and our smart, measured leadership is getting national attention.

“I firmly believe that our greatest challenges are our greatest opportunities, and any problem can be tackled when you maintain that attitude.”

Likewise, Brinks, who serves the 29th Senate District, knows that Michigan townships also play a role in embracing opportunities and challenges, and believes the Legislature is integral in supporting local governments to provide resources to address issues and improve their communities.

“Our caucus has worked hard this session and past sessions on giving local governments tools and mechanisms to improve their economic growth and stability,” she said. “We have worked with local stakeholders to allow local units of government to create new zoning and to rehabilitate and make use of brownfields. We see ourselves as partners of local governments and understand that the vitality of local economies is a cornerstone to the health of the state’s economy.”

Support for townships is critical, as they provide programs and services for more than half of Michigan’s population. “For residents of townships, their governments provide so many valuable services that they interact with regularly, like election administration, parks and rec programs, trash collection and recycling, and much more,” said Brinks, who served three terms in the state House before being elected to the Senate in 2018. “Townships play a critical role in the day-to-day function of these communities as well as a larger role in building the culture and identity of their neighborhoods.”

Brinks says her caucus is focused on serving every person in Michigan. “Our new majority is a majority for the people—all of them!” she said. “We want to make sure the solutions that we pass work for the people of our state who come from different backgrounds and regions. We know that township officials have a lot of expertise in big infrastructure projects, like roads, drinking water and broadband, and we will continue to work collectively on those issues.”

Township officials, too, play a valuable role in helping to shape legislation and policy that impacts the government



Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) is the first woman senator to represent the city of Grand Rapids since Eva McCall Hamilton was elected in 1920.

closest to the people. “Communication is key,” said Brinks. “We want to hear about problems [township officials] are encountering as well as proposed solutions you may have. In the state Legislature, none of the work we do happens in a vacuum. Township input is particularly important as we want to make sure that our decisions don’t benefit one region at the expense of another. I look forward to continuing our partnership; my door is always open.”

Core values of dedication, honesty and hard work found in so many public servants were instilled in Brinks from a young age.

“They’re the values I was raised with as a young kid on a dairy farm, and they’re the values I brought with me in the various community service-based positions I’ve held throughout my career,” she said. “While those values are evergreen, they’re especially needed now, and as leader I’m proud to bring an ethical, no-drama approach to leading the Michigan Senate and the important work it does for the good people of our state.”



Sen. Aric Nesbitt

Senate minority leader (R-Porter Twp.)

Sen. Aric Nesbitt's southwest Michigan roots run deep. His family has owned and operated a small dairy and grape farm for six generations in **Porter Township** (Van Buren Co.).

In fact, "my great, great grandmother built the first fence in the county, to keep animals away from her outdoor kitchen," shared Nesbitt, who currently serves as Senate minority leader.

Nesbitt first ran for state office in 2010 to better the state he calls home. "I watched as many of my friends and neighbors were leaving the state for better opportunities," he said. "I decided to run because I wanted to make Michigan a place where my friends and neighbors wouldn't leave, as well as a place where others would want to come and start a life."

He helped to accomplish those goals during his three terms in the state House, when "taxes were reduced, government red tape was cut, our population increased, the average median income grew, and businesses were looking to invest in Michigan again," he said.

Now in his second term in the Senate serving the 20th District, Nesbitt's goals remain the same. "It is imperative that we put in place the policies that attract investment and allow jobs to be created, and not those that create more debt and allow government to pick winners and losers," he said.

Among the key issues for investing in Michigan, and its communities, are infrastructure and public safety, according to the senator. "We must ensure that the tax dollars that are sent to Lansing are being utilized on the essential services and infrastructure that allow our communities to function properly and grow," said Nesbitt, adding that Michiganders want the Legislature to work in a bipartisan manner. "Repairing local roads and bridges, replacing and investing in water and wastewater infrastructure, and properly funding our public safety departments should be the foundation of any plan to strengthen our communities."

Access to broadband is another infrastructure investment that is critical for the state, Nesbitt added, saying, "We need to continue to try and expand access to broadband, especially in our underserved and rural communities. By eliminating red tape and finding ways to cut costs, this is achievable."

Townships are also an important part in Michigan's success—helping to ensure that families and future generations continue to remain in or locate to the Great Lakes State.

"Townships should work to make themselves the best place to raise a family, operate a business, and live a high quality of life," said Nesbitt. "With each township working to make themselves even better, Michigan will be able to compete with other states and attract more talent, investments and families."



Senate Minority Leader Aric Nesbitt (R-Porter Twp.) has served in the state Legislature since 2010, with three terms in the House of Representatives and is currently serving his second Senate term.

Establishing and maintaining working relationships with their state legislators is another way that township officials can help improve their communities, and the state, according to Nesbitt. "It is imperative that local elected officials and those elected officials in Lansing have open lines of communication and work together," he said. "The needs and concerns of a local community should be relayed to and known by those serving in Lansing. Without communication, productivity breaks down."

"Reaching out to your legislator's office and keeping them updated on events, actions and strategies that are on the horizon for your local community are key. While many legislators do a good job of maintaining that communication, we still don't know what we don't know. The more information we have, the better we, as legislators, can help."

During his time in the Legislature, being a voice for his local community brings the most pride to the senator, who said, "Being able to represent the place where my family has called home for six generations is truly humbling, and I am motivated every day to make sure their thoughts and concerns are heard in the halls of the state Capitol."

A promotional graphic for WaDe Trim. The top section features a photograph of three women in an office setting, looking at a laptop. Below the photo is a blue banner with the text "ENGINEERING STRONGER COMMUNITIES" in white. At the bottom, there is a white section containing the phone number "800.482.2864", the website "www.wadetrim.com", the "ALLIED SERVICE PROVIDER MTA" logo, and the "WADE TRIM" logo which consists of a green stylized 'W' and the company name in bold black letters.

Rep. Joe Tate Speaker of the House (D-Detroit)

Public service was modeled for Speaker of the House Joe Tate his entire life.

His mother worked in the Detroit public school system, while his father served as a Detroit firefighter. Before seeking public office in 2019, Tate served in the U.S. Marine Corps, deploying twice to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. His decision to run for the state House was inspired by his deep, lifelong commitment to public service.

“Service has been a consistent theme throughout my life,” said Tate, who received a scholarship to play football at Michigan State University and later played in the NFL. “First, through the example set by my parents and continuing on in my decision to join the military and serve my country. Serving the residents of the 10th House District is just one more way I can be of service to my community, my state and my country.”

Tate’s philosophy of service is to put people first—and that principle drives his efforts as speaker of the House, a position he calls both a privilege and great responsibility.

“Our residents are our primary focus in the issues and bills that advance through the Michigan House,” said Tate, who made history this year as the first Black person to serve as House speaker. “From the very start of this term, House Democrats emphasized the importance of safe and strong communities. For us, that means investing state dollars in priorities like affordable housing and public safety. It also means making sure Michigan is a welcoming place for all who want to work, live and invest in our state. The people of Michigan drive our agenda.”

While today’s sometimes contentious political climate may not always be easy to navigate, ultimately, lawmakers are working on behalf of their residents—and to improve our state, Tate says. “My caucus members are fierce advocates for the issues that matter most to their constituents,” he added. “That passion fuels enthusiastic debate that can be challenging at times, but the ultimate result is a better product for the residents of Michigan.”

Townships’ responsibility in serving the needs of residents is also critical, Tate noted, including working with state leaders to improve their communities. “Local governments are the best positioned to respond to the ever-changing and specific needs of those who live within their jurisdiction,” he said. “I view townships, cities and villages as our partners in governing.”

Local officials can build on that partnership by ensuring their voices are heard throughout the legislative process.



Speaker of the House Joe Tate (D-Detroit) says that he is proud of leading a diverse caucus of individuals committed to being champions for the residents of their respective districts.

“Local government is closest to its residents and can convey the unique needs of the population it serves,” said the state representative. “That is why I value the open line of communication I have with the Michigan Townships Association. We may not agree on every issue, but we continue to work to share information and understand the impact of policy.”

Tate’s life experiences—as a college and professional athlete, a veteran, and a state lawmaker—have shaped how he approaches serving the Michigan residents. “Drawing on the fundamentals of what it means to be part of a team, and to lead a team, are invaluable lessons,” he said. “I have spent time overseas helping people raise infrastructure in other countries and experienced firsthand the impact of creating a literal and figurative foundation upon which to build a community. It is my sincere privilege to serve the people of Michigan and help build upon the work of these first few months as speaker.”

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Rep. Matt Hall

House minority leader (R-Richland Twp.)

Rep. Matt Hall wants every Michigan community to thrive. And Hall, who is House minority leader, knows that a partnership between the state and its communities is needed to help make that happen.

“Michiganders depend on local government for public services that are especially important and relevant to their daily lives, such as public safety, firefighting, water service, roads, sidewalks and parks,” said the **Richland Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) resident. “Our state and local governments must continue working together to meet the needs of the people of Michigan.”

Among those needs are a safe place to call home—and a smooth road to get there. Hall calls infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water and sewer, one of the biggest priorities in our state, along with public safety.

“Throughout Michigan, families want safe communities and good roads,” said Hall, who is serving his third House term. “Different townships play different roles in addressing these needs, but public safety and quality infrastructure are important to help every community thrive.

“Last year, the Republican-led Legislature invested billions of dollars in infrastructure throughout our state to repair roads, expand broadband internet, and improve water and sewer systems. Township residents need solid roads, drinkable water and reliable sewer services. Michigan started this year with a \$9 billion surplus, so we have more resources that we can invest in local infrastructure to help residents in townships and all our communities.”

These priorities are among the reasons that Hall first sought state office. “I ran for the House to represent the people of southwest Michigan and make our state a better, more affordable place for the people who live here and a more attractive place for new residents and businesses in our townships, cities and villages,” said Hall, a constitutional law attorney.

“We’ve made some progress bringing high-paying careers to Michigan, and we’ve provided tax relief to make life more affordable for Michiganders and small businesses. These goals will still be my priorities as I work to protect the advancements we’ve made and continue making Michigan a more competitive state.”

Michigan has much to offer—and tremendous potential for even greater accomplishments in the future, Hall said, adding that he will continue working daily on the priorities of his constituents in the 42nd House District. “Our state has been the manufacturing hub of the nation, but there is more work to do to make Michigan the economic powerhouse of the future,” said the state representative. “As I serve the people of Michigan, I’m striving to help our



House Minority Leader Matt Hall (R-Richland Twp.) says that House Republicans are “working to make life more affordable and make our communities safer” for the people of Michigan.

state compete for the careers of the future by encouraging research, development and engineering—and by fostering an affordable economy to keep and attract talented people to Michigan.”

As township officials, too, serve their residents, they can help state lawmakers by collaborating and offering their insights and perspectives—which is especially helpful for lawmakers who are just starting in their legislative careers.

“Each person has a unique perspective about how state issues will impact our communities, and I value the input and expertise of the people I serve,” said Hall, who previously worked in the defense technology industry, serving as a business development representative for L-3 Combat Propulsion Systems before being elected to state office in 2019. “Many legislators are in their first term, and local officials should reach out to share their experience and the unique needs of each local community. In my office, my staff and I work to engage with and hear from local officials from our community, and we encourage public servants and citizens to reach out directly to share information, discuss legislative issues, or request assistance dealing with a state agency.”



Education Extravaganza Coming to the U.P. in July

MTA is packing up our resources, publications and municipal experts and bringing them to the Island Resort in Harris (west of Escanaba) for two full days of education! Join us for a session, a day or both days, based on your areas of interest. Here's what's happening, when:



Cemetery Management & Administration

July 18, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST; includes lunch

Township cemeteries provide a positive personal service to residents during a difficult time. Gain a better understanding of the rules and regulations for managing your township cemetery from MTA's own Cindy Dodge, a frequent speaker for the Michigan Association of Municipal Cemeteries. Dig into legal obligations for cemeteries and procedures for adopting a cemetery ordinance. Explore fees, budgeting and financial aspects, as well as elements of green or natural burials. Examine the roles of advisory committees, sextons and caretakers AND the duties and responsibilities of the clerk and township board.



Financial Fundamentals

July 19, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST; includes lunch

Oversight of your township's financial affairs is a critical function that protects you from serious pitfalls, including fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and more. Don't miss this review of effective solutions for outlining (and communicating) your township's approach to financial matters. Gain insights into effective financial policies and procedures that not only make your life easier, but that can be adapted for your township's specific circumstances. Delve into the "do's and don'ts" for enhancing and implementing financial policies that work for any size township, and learn best practices for how the clerk and treasurer can work together to safeguard your township's finances.



Insights into Planning & Zoning

July 18, 4 to 8 p.m. EST; includes dinner

Lack of knowledge about planning and zoning and laws that townships are required to follow is one of the biggest challenges facing planning commission and zoning board of appeals members. It's difficult for many township board members, too. Join MTA legal counsel to review the legalities—and controversies—that can come with balancing private property rights with public interest and your township's authority to regulate land use. Explore special uses from what goes in your ordinance (and why) to the difference between special and conditional uses. Learn how a variance might impact a use, the process for review and approval, and whether you can revoke a use. We'll talk about public hearings, site plans, timeframes and share what your township needs to know about the placement of solar sites.



Hot Topics for Township Fire Departments

July 19, 6 to 9 p.m. EST; includes dinner (served at 5 p.m.)

Providing emergency and fire protection services for your community may be one of the more complicated—and expensive—services your township provides. This class can help board members and fire officials get a handle on financial emergencies in your township fire department. We'll examine funding and cost recovery, provide insights into joint authorities and review must haves for your fire ordinance. You'll walk away armed with a better understanding of the legalities and financials that can help turn down the heat on some of the hot issues facing your fire department.

Register today! Registration rates are \$150 per class, which includes classroom materials, refreshments and one meal. Visit www.bit.ly/twptraining to register.

upcoming MTA workshops

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Relevant to the entire township board ... no matter your level of experience

Review what your board needs to know about assessment and taxation, and explore your role—and authority—for providing services for your residents. Join MTA at the **Evergreen Resort in Cadillac on Aug. 1-2** for one (or both!) of the sessions described below:

Fundamentals of Assessment & Taxation

(F-105—4 credits; includes dinner served at 6 p.m.)

Aug. 1 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Property taxation and assessment administration are two cornerstones of township operations. From assessment and board of review meetings, all the way to tax collection—it's essential that board members have an understanding of how the process works. Learn more about the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A, as well as truth-in-taxation, assessing and equalization. Delve into a variety of revenue sources coming into the township, including millages, administrative fees and special assessments.

Presented by Shila Kiander, MAAO, Director, Mecosta County Equalization Department

At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs

(F-101—6 credits; includes continental breakfast and lunch)

Aug. 2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Learn more about the role, authority and legal requirements of the township board in providing services for your residents. Explore funding options as well as the board's responsibility in assuring that the risk is properly managed. Walk away with techniques for evaluating whether your township's services are effectively serving your community and what considerations should be made to ensure future viability.

Presented by Attorney Steve Mann, Miller Canfield (former trustee, Plymouth Charter Township, Wayne Co.) and governance expert Susan Radwan, Owner, Leading Edge Mentoring



These courses are part of MTA's Township Governance Academy (TGA) curriculum. You do not have to be enrolled in TGA to attend. If you decide to enroll in the Academy after class, credit will be applied retroactively.



What's TGA? We're glad you asked! TGA courses take you beyond board meetings and budgets, enhancing your leadership skills and motivating you to take on the challenges and opportunities unique to those serving in local government. Earning this prestigious credential elevates your leadership skills and provides recognition for possessing an in-depth understanding of the governance process, the role of the township and how to lead for success. Regardless of your position in the township or amount of experience, the Academy will move you to a higher level of performance and make your service in your community more rewarding.

TGA Registration Form

Township _____ County _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Name & Title _____ ☐ Fundamentals ☐ At Your Service

Name & Title _____ ☐ Fundamentals ☐ At Your Service

Name & Title _____ ☐ Fundamentals ☐ At Your Service

Name & Title _____ ☐ Fundamentals ☐ At Your Service

Early-Bird Rate*

Ends July 14

Fundamentals (F-105) \$100/attendee

At Your Service (F-101) \$125/attendee

Regular Rate*

July 15-24

\$125/attendee

\$150/attendee

Onsite Rate*

Begins July 25

\$150/attendee

\$175/attendee

_____ (# registered) x \$_____ (Rate*) Fundamentals

_____ (# registered) x \$_____ (Rate*) At Your Service

= \$_____ Total Amount Enclosed

*Rate applies to MTA members. Non-members, call for rates.

NOTE: Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.

☐ Check enclosed (payable to MTA)

☐ Charge to: (circle one)

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Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at <http://bit.ly/twptraining>. Need event registration assistance? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 221.

Catching up with ... Violet Lentz

After 75 years of volunteering, township resident is still looking for ways to help

Though you won't find her face in the dictionary under the word "volunteer," **Violet Lentz** has spent more than 75 years helping her community.

Lentz, 98, doesn't think her service makes her better than anyone. "I don't think I am any different than anybody," said Lentz, a life-long resident of **Wheatfield Township** (Ingham Co.). "I just like to keep busy."

Lentz's public service to her community—which includes acting as cemetery sexton and secretary to the planning commission—received national attention several years ago when she received a special accolade as part of the Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award program. Lentz was one of 100 public servants to receive the national award, and received special recognition from the awards program as the oldest volunteer to be honored.

A lifetime of service

Lentz called the greater township community her playground when she was growing up. "We could go into any store. Walk in and they'd say, 'Would you like to work for a while?', [and] we would," Lentz said.

Money was tight growing up in a family of six kids. With her understanding of the value of hard work and working together, it wasn't long before she added volunteering to her resumé. Lentz's efforts picked up in 1949 when she married her late husband Harold and started working on their family farm. In addition to her farm work, Lentz also gave her time and talents to Wheatfield Township.

"I worked under four supervisors, seven clerks and five treasurers," she recalled.

What Lentz is most known for is her work in local elections, which she has done for more than 75 years, opening and closing the polls in her own signature fashion. "I would just holler 'hear ye, hear ye, the polls are now open' and then at night I would yell, 'hear ye, hear ye, the polls are now closed,'" she explained.

While Lentz says some things have remained the same, the world has undergone serious changes in those seven and a



After more than seven decades working elections and volunteering for Wheatfield Township (Ingham Co.), 98-year-old Violet Lentz shows no signs of slowing down.

half decades. "I've gone through paper votes. I've ruined more clothes with those old carbon sheets," Lentz recounted. "But now they've got electronic books and it's a godsend."

Lentz also spent decades helping out at the Ingham County Medical Care Facility and even established the facility's pet therapy program. She's also spent more than 70 years helping out with her township's three cemeteries.

She mowed the lawns, tended to flowers, repaired headstones and added American flags to veterans' graves. Her late husband was a veteran, so of course, Lentz has also volunteered with the American Legion Auxiliary for more than 60 years.

The 98-year-old said that she still wishes she could do more for her community. But why? The answer is simple, Lentz says: "The people in Wheatfield Township are family."

Portions of this article are excerpted and reprinted with permission by WLNS TV-6 (www.wlns.com), from March 16, 2023, by Chivon Kloepper and Iz Martin



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Upgrade to **Premium Pass** and get more than **100 webinars!** You also receive **FREE** access to our live monthly webinar series, **Now You Know** (featuring a new topic every month) AND our Township Governance Academy courses.

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