

Michigan Township Focus

APRIL/MAY 2018

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



your township's programs and services

'I did it. I was wrong.
And I am sorry.'
page 3

We are all
super heroes
page 32

Cooperative efforts
bring Barns Park
history from past
to present
page 34



You Serve Others. We Serve You.

Since 1966, Burnham & Flower Insurance Group has been specializing in the unique coverage needs of Michigan's townships. We've learned what is important to public officials like yourself and have made it our ongoing commitment to provide you with unparalleled service and expertise.

Burnham & Flower is your single source for Property & Liability, Group Health Benefits, and Group & Individual Retirement Planning. In addition to comprehensive coverages we provide risk management services, onsite reviews, online enrollment, 24/7 access to each employee's benefits information, and much more.

You can count on us to deliver the products, service and support you want and deserve. Contact us today to discuss how we can serve you!

Burnham & Flower

INSURANCE GROUP

Serving Michigan Townships Since 1966

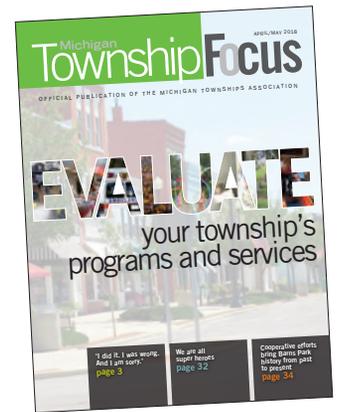


315 South Kalamazoo Mall, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

800.748.0554 • www.bfgroup.com

contents

April/May 2018 | Volume 6, Number 4



MTA Official Publication of the Michigan Townships Association

mta officers

President

Diane Randall, Supervisor
Roscommon Township
(Roscommon Co.)

First Vice President

Ken Gauthier, Supervisor
Sanborn Township (Alpena Co.)

Second Vice President

Jeff Sorensen, Supervisor
Cooper Charter Township
(Kalamazoo Co.)

Treasurer

Peter Kleiman, Supervisor
Harris Township
(Menominee Co.)

Secretary

Bill Deater, Supervisor
Grant Township (St. Clair Co.)

Immediate Past President

Doug Mansfield, Supervisor
Union Township
(Grand Traverse Co.)

past presidents

Linda Preston, Supervisor
Pokagon Township (Cass Co.)

Doug Merchant, Supervisor
Arcada Township (Griot Co.)

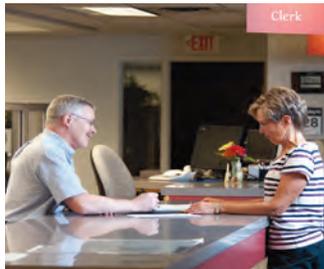
Denny Olson, Supervisor
Breitung Charter Township
(Dickinson Co.)

editorial & design

Publisher G. Lawrence Merrill
Editor Jennifer Fiedler
Advertising Manager Ashley Maher
Staff Writer Bethany Mauer
Printer Foresight Group, Lansing

mission statement

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



featured articles

21

Evaluate your township's programs and services

Ensuring township programs and services are meeting expectations and community needs can be a daunting task. By setting goals and expectations and asking questions, your board can go a long way toward creating a culture of accountability and excellence.

32

We are all super heroes

To Brett Culp, all township officials are super heroes. Our 2018 Conference keynoter will inspire attendees to channel their inner hero and see their work as a noble cause, making a difference in their communities.

34

Cooperative efforts bring Barns Park history from past to present

Two communities worked together to preserve a piece of local history, creating a Midwest destination venue on the site of an old state hospital.

Special insert: MTA 2018 Annual Conference at-a-Glance, including sponsor & MTA Expo exhibitor listing



in this issue

- 3 Local View
- 4 News & Notes
- 10 Hello, MTA ... ?
- 12 Inside Lansing

- 16 Financial Forum
- 28 Knowledge Center
- 36 Proposed Policy Platform
- 40 Around the State



mta board of directors

Steven Karpiak Jr., Osceola Township (Houghton Co.), Dist. 1
Jim Nankervis, Ishpeming Township (Marquette Co.), Dist. 2
Peter Kleiman, Harris Township (Menominee Co.), Dist. 3
Marilyn Strickland, Newton Township (Mackinac Co.), Dist. 4
Harold Koviak, Burt Township (Cheboygan Co.), Dist. 5
Sharon Schultz, Torch Lake Township (Antrim Co.), Dist. 6
Ken Gauthier, Sanborn Township (Alpena Co.), Dist. 7
Marvin Radtke Jr., Green Lake Township (Grand Traverse Co.), Dist. 8
Steven Ebels, Clam Union Township (Missaukee Co.), Dist. 9
Kimberly Anderson, Whitney Township (Arenac Co.), Dist. 10
Connie Cargill, Golden Township (Oceana Co.), Dist. 11
Yulanda Bellinger, Morton Township (Mecosta Co.), Dist. 12
Dennis Bragiel, Kawkawlin Township (Bay Co.), Dist. 13
Lawrence Krohn, Oliver Township (Huron Co.), Dist. 14
Joel Hondorp, Byron Township (Kent Co.), Dist. 15
Kevin Beeson, Pine River Township (Griatiot Co.), Dist. 16
Joanne Boehler, James Township (Saginaw Co.), Dist. 17
Bill Deater, Grant Township (St. Clair Co.), Dist. 18
Jeff Sorensen, Cooper Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.), Dist. 19
Patti Jo Schafer, Eagle Township (Clinton Co.), Dist. 20
Pauline Bennett, Addison Township (Oakland Co.), Dist. 21
MTA Executive Committee member-at-large
Malinda Cole-Crocker, Buchanan Township (Berrien Co.), Dist. 22
Donald Rogers, Coldwater Township (Branch Co.), Dist. 23
Al Boggs, Rome Township (Lenawee Co.), Dist. 24
Ann Bollin, Brighton Charter Township (Livingston Co.), Dist. 25

To find your MTA District, visit www.michigantownships.org or call (517) 321-6467.

postal requirements

Michigan Township Focus serves as the medium for the exchange of ideas and information for the elected and appointed officials of Michigan townships. The views expressed and the material presented by the contributors and advertisers are not to be construed as having the endorsement of the officers, board of directors, staff or membership of the Michigan Townships Association nor represent the views or positions of said parties unless specifically so stated.

Michigan Township Focus, Issue 4 April/May 2018 (ISSN 2330-9652), is published monthly, except for a combined April/May issue. MTA membership provides a subscription to township board members, the manager/superintendent, planning commission chairperson and township attorney. Member counties also receive subscriptions for elected officials, the equalization director and road commission chairperson. Annual membership dues include \$33 for a one-year subscription to *Michigan Township Focus*. Additional member subscriptions are available for \$33 per year. Subscription rate for residents and firms in member townships is \$44 per year (schools and libraries may subscribe for \$33 a year).

Michigan Township Focus is a publication of the Michigan Townships Association, 512 Westshire Dr., Lansing, MI 48917-9757. Phone: (517) 321-6467; fax: (517) 321-8908; Web: www.michigantownships.org. Periodicals postage paid at Lansing, MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Michigan Township Focus*, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078.

Direct all display and classified advertising inquiries to Ashley Maher at (517) 321-6467. Member rate for a classified ad in either the magazine or on the MTA website on a monthly basis is \$1 per word. Call MTA for non-member rates. Deadlines for display and classified ads in the magazine are five weeks preceding the publication date. Send ads to: P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; phone: (517) 321-6467, ext. 254; fax: (517) 321-8908; or email: ashley@michigantownships.org.

Michigan Township Focus, © 2018
Michigan Townships Association, all rights reserved.

allied service provider index



president's round table

Burnham & Flower Insurance Group
315 S. Kalamazoo Mall
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(800) 748-0554
www.bfgroup.com
See ad on inside front cover.

Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan
1134 Municipal Way
Lansing, MI 48917
(517) 703-9030
www.mersofmich.com
See ad on page 11.

Michigan Township Participating Plan
1700 Opdyke Ct.
Auburn Hills, MI 48326
(248) 371-3657
www.theparplan.com
See ad on back cover.

Ted Hartleb Agency, An EMC Insurance Company
5840 King Hwy.
Kalamazoo, MI 49048
(269) 385-5911
www.hartlebagency.com
See ad on page 5.



leadership circle

Asphalt Materials Inc.
3737 Fisher Rd.
Columbus, OH 43228
(614) 634-6024
www.asphalt-materials.com

Consumers Energy
2400 Weiss St.
Saginaw, MI 48602
(989) 791-5608
www.consumersenergy.com

Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, PC
313 S. Washington Sq.
Lansing, MI 48933-2193
(517) 371-8100
www.fosterswift.com

Johnson, Rosati, Schultz & Joppich, PC
27555 Executive Drive,
Ste. 250
Farmington, MI 48331
(482) 489-4100
www.jrsjlaw.com

Bauckham, Sparks, Thall, Seeber & Kaufman, PC
458 W. South St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269) 382-4500
www.michigantownshiplaw.com

DTE Energy
One Energy Plaza
Detroit, MI 48226
(800) 477-4747
www.dteenergy.com

ITC Holdings Corp.
27175 Energy Way
Novi, MI 48377
(248) 946-3000
www.itc-holdings.com

Mika Meyers PLC
900 Monroe Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
(616) 632-8000
www.mikameyers.com
See ad on page 26.

Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC
4151 Okemos Rd.
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 381-0100
www.fsblawyers.com



keystone club

Carlisle Wortman Associates, Inc.
117 N. First St. Ste. 70
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 662-2200
www.cwaplan.com
See ad on page 7.

GFA
123 W. Front St.
Traverse City, MI 49684
(231) 946-5874
www.gfa.tc

Miller, Canfield
150 W. Jefferson Ave.,
Ste. 2500
Detroit, MI 48226
(313) 963-6420
www.millercanfield.com
See ad on page 39.

Wade Trim
25251 Northline Rd.
Taylor, MI 48180
(734) 947-9700
www.wadetrिम.com
See ad on page 11.

David Chapman Agency
5700 W. Mt. Hope Hwy.
Lansing, MI 48917
(517) 321-4600
www.davidchapmanagency.com

GFL Environmental USA Inc.
6200 Elmridge Dr.
Sterling Heights, MI 48313
(844) 464-3587
www.gflusa.com

Nickel & Saph, Inc. Insurance Agency
44 Macomb Place
Mount Clemens, MI 48043
(586) 463-4573
www.nickelsaph.com

Emergent Health Partners
1200 State Circle
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
(734) 477-6783
www.emergenthealth.org

Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority
14001 Merriman Rd.
Livonia, MI 48154
(734) 513-0318
www.mmrma.org

Tyler Technologies
1194 Oak Valley Dr.,
Ste. 150
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
(800) 457-3863
www.tylertech.com

Participation in the Allied Service Provider program does not constitute or imply MTA's endorsement of the company or its products/services.

‘I did it. I was wrong. And I am sorry.’

“Mistakes were made.”

A phrase we hear all too often, delivered in a passive monotone by yet another disgraced public official facing an angry and disillusioned public following disclosure that the public trust has again been violated.

Superficial remorse and insincere contrition further enrage victims, their advocates and the public at the callousness, blindness, stupidity and, most of all, the lack of personal ownership. But in the end, no one is held responsible and nothing was learned, except by the public that it’s never wrong to mistrust government.



Public officials are keenly aware of their authorities and responsibilities. But accountability—being answerable

for one’s actions—is too often disregarded. No institution, public or private, large or small, is immune from dysfunctional cultures and poorly designed governance and administrative structures that amplify the potential for bad things happening because no one feels personally responsible to see that it doesn’t. Incumbency can breed complacency, especially in organizations with an indifferent constituency.

To hold someone accountable, there must be an obligation to inform and justify to others one’s actions, and face punishment for acts of misconduct. In many organizations, these conditions are not constantly present. Governing boards and managers deal with a multitude of simultaneous issues and conflicts, easily missing clues that something is wrong. Subordinates are unsure of expectations that are never explicitly articulated. Performance suffers when leaders fail to provide vision and goals, and no one can be held accountable for what results.

In theory, township government’s Jacksonian Democracy roots assure accountability to electors. Townships have no independently powerful executive, administrators are popularly elected, the elected board is charged with financial oversight, and the voters can simultaneously broom everyone out of office for any reason. The general law township annual meeting puts power directly in the hands of electors. However, when townships were created, political parties worked hard to get over 80 percent of the electorate regularly voting in frequent elections, unlike today’s disengaged citizenry, lower election turnouts and the news media paying little attention to local government affairs.

Clearly, it would be disingenuous to claim that accountability is assured in any public institution, townships included. All government entities have statutory checks and balances to protect the public interests, but shared responsibility without personal accountability creates the illusion that no one is responsible for failures in which everyone had a hand. For statutes to protect the public interest, leaders must hold everyone—themselves included—to doing things “by the book.” Accountability must be reflected in the township’s culture, and the board must actively monitor subordinate performance and compliance with policies and state requirements. However, assuring accountability is made more challenging because:

- Elected officials are accountable to state agencies for some statutory duties and to the electorate for others. Consequently, state agencies or the public must be motivated to take interest and act.
- Statutory responsibility and accountability is sometimes poorly defined.
- Boards comprised of friends and family can make collegiality and warm relationships paramount, and critical scrutiny is uncomfortable.
- Township leaders may be unsure what to expect from subordinates.
- Intergovernmental services administered by joint boards and commissions operate outside the public limelight, and information is not always forthcoming. Further, oversight is shared with other entities.
- Independent contractor relationships can mislead boards to think they are absolved of responsibility for core township government functions.
- Board micromanagement compromises accountability of subordinates for outcomes.

Township leaders are responsible for the township’s performance, but no organization will excel when there are no clear expectations and personal agendas displace the public interest. Holding others accountable is impossible if leaders themselves don’t own their own mistakes and failures, along with their successes.

“I did it. I was wrong. And I am sorry.” Words essential to restoring the public trust. But hopefully made unnecessary when leaders instill a culture of accountability—essential for organizations doing the right things and doing them right.

UP IN THE SKY

Townships' role in fireworks regulation and permits

The Michigan Fireworks Safety Act (Public Act 256 of 2011, MCL 28.451, *et seq.*) legalized the sale and use of consumer fireworks—such as aerials, roman candles, bottle rockets, helicopter/aerial spinners, and other items that leave the ground. The law also limited some aspects of local fireworks regulations.

What can townships regulate?

A township may enact an ordinance incorporating standards for the competency and qualifications of operators for articles pyrotechnic and display fireworks, including time, place and safety aspects of the display of such fireworks, as part of

the permit-granting process. National Fire Protection Association fireworks standards should be used. (MCL 28.466) Such an ordinance could be required by the township's insurance carrier as a condition of fireworks liability insurance.

The Federal Safe Explosives Act requires any person who receives explosive materials, including display fireworks, to have a license or permit from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

The act mandates inspections of applicants

for new display fireworks licenses or permits, as well as inspections of existing licensees or permits. Townships may be contacted by ATF investigators during these inspections to determine compliance with state and local requirements.

A township *cannot* regulate or adopt an ordinance specifically regulating the sale, display for sale, storage, transportation or distribution of fireworks that are regulated by PA 256—consumer fireworks and low-impact fireworks. (MCL 28.457)

A township *may* enact an ordinance regulating—including prohibiting—the ignition, discharge and use of consumer fireworks. As amended by PA 65 of 2013, MCL 28.457 provides that such an ordinance can regulate or prohibit the use of consumer fireworks on the day before, day of or day after a national holiday—including Christmas Day, New Year's Day and the Fourth of July—in the following ways:

- 1) In a township with a population of 50,000 or more or a township located in a county with a population of 750,000 or more, an ordinance may regulate the ignition, discharge or use of consumer fireworks between the hours of 12 midnight and 8 a.m., or between the hours of 1 a.m. and 8 a.m. on New Year's Day.

- 2) In a township with a population of less than 50,000 located in a county with a population of less than 750,000, an ordinance may regulate the ignition, discharge or use of consumer fireworks between the hours of 1 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Do townships issue display permits?

PA 256 refers to fireworks “displays” in two ways. One relates to the display of fireworks for sale—which townships *cannot* regulate. The more commonly understood use of “fireworks display” refers to the ignition, discharge and use of display fireworks or “articles pyrotechnic for proximate display”—such as a Fourth of July display. Townships are still responsible for issuing permits for public or private displays of these two types of fireworks. All such permits must be obtained from the township where the fireworks will be displayed. Any fees charged for these permits are retained by the township.

Fireworks application and permit forms are provided only to the township (the local permitting authority), and are available only from the state Bureau of Fire Services. Each year, the township supervisor or clerk must contact the Bureau of Fire Services via email at fireworks@michigan.gov to request the current permit forms.

For more resources, visit MTA's “Fireworks Regulation” Web page at www.michigantownships.org/members.

CLEARING THE HAZE

LARA releases medical marijuana symbol

The state Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs recently issued an advisory bulletin to publish the universal medical marijuana symbol as required by the emergency rules, published in December in accordance with the Medical Marijuana Facilities Licensing Act (MMFLA). A marijuana plant or product containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) that is being sold or transferred must be labeled according to Emergency Rules 38 and 39.

Prior to marijuana product being sold or transferred to or by a provisioning center, the container, bag or product holding the marijuana product must have a label with the symbol and be sealed. If the plant or product does not meet the definition of “marihuana” as defined in the MMFLA, the universal symbol is not required.

Learn more about medical marijuana from a panel of experts at MTA's Annual Educational Conference, April 23–26, at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.). Turn to the center of this issue of Township Focus or visit www.michigantownships.org for more details.

CONTAINS THC



LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

A portion of highway I-94 in Kalamazoo County will be named in honor of former **Comstock Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) Fire Chief **Ed Switalski** under Senate Bill 543 signed by Gov. Rick Snyder. Switalski was struck and killed by a vehicle while responding to an accident on June 13, 2017. "Chief Ed Switalski Memorial Highway" begins at exit 80 on I-94 and ends at mile marker 86. "Michigan's first responders put their lives on the line daily to help ensure the safety of all Michiganders, and Fire Chief Switalski made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty," Snyder said. "On behalf of all Michiganders, it's an honor to recognize his bravery and service by naming this stretch of highway in his memory."

Harrison Charter Township (Macomb Co.) recently debuted a redesigned township website, creating a visually appealing and user-friendly information hub for residents, businesses and visitors.

Lyon Charter Township (Oakland Co.) is hosting its 10th Annual Lyon Township Kite Festival in June at James Atchison Park. Kite-flying professionals from all over the world will showcase their award-winning skills choreographed to music. Hundreds of kites take flight on Saturday during the mass ascension. Kids receive a free kite to customize with decorations, and attendees can enjoy live music, games, food, live animal presentations, cars on display and vendors.



West Bloomfield Charter Township (Oakland Co.) joined scores of Michiganders and others around the world in congratulating township resident Kyle Mack on his Silver Medal win in snowboarding big air at the 2018 Winter Olympics.

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.

FLEIS & VANDENBRINK
DESIGN. BUILD. OPERATE.

Helping your community create vibrant spaces

800.494.5202
www.fveng.com

SAFETY FIRST

Study ranks townships among safest communities in Michigan, nation

Townships once again topped a recent listing of safest communities in Michigan. The National Council for Home Safety and Security and alarms.org recently released their annual list of the safest communities in every state for 2018. The listing is for communities over 10,000 population.

Of the top 25 communities listed, 19 were townships. As identified in numerous similar lists over the past years, **Grosse Ile Township** (Wayne Co.) was ranked the safest community in the state, with just two violent crimes and 15 property crimes in the latest year for which data is available. Further, noted the group, "These excellent numbers render the town one of the safest in the nation: top five overall."

Oakland Charter Township (Oakland Co.), **Hamburg Township** (Livingston Co.) and **Brandon Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) came in at Nos. 2, 3 and 4. The study noted the low crime rates were "characteristic of communities of their size in The Great Lakes State."

Flushing Charter Township (Genesee Co.), **Independence Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) and **Springfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) rounded out townships appearing in the top 10.

To compile its list, the organization reviewed the most recent FBI Uniform Crime Report statistics, along with its own population data and internal research.

Municipal Insurance You Can Count On



Let One of Our Experienced Insurance Professionals Help You Realize the Benefit of Purchasing Your Municipal Insurance Through the Ted Hartleb Agency

Jonathan Koets jonathankoets@hartlebagency.com **Ken Lind** kenlindinsurance@gmail.com

David Bellinger davidbellinger@hartlebagency.com **Ken Garnaat** garnaatk@charter.net

Jim Hnilo jimhnilo@hartlebagency.com **Geoff Lansky** geofflansky@hartlebagency.com

Mike Ormstead mikeormstead@hartlebagency.com **Rob Koets** robkoets@hartlebagency.com

count on

EMC INSURANCE

TED Hartleb AGENCY

5840 King Highway Kalamazoo, MI 49048
phone: 269.385.5911 fax: 269.385.3370

Securities offered through Michigan Securities, Inc. Member NASD, SIPC

MTA welcomes new staff member

A new voice will greet township officials and others who call the MTA office. Elsa Muños has joined the MTA team as our new receptionist.

Along with greeting visitors at the MTA office in **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.), Muños answers and routes the many phone calls received each day from MTA-member township officials. She is also responsible for managing MTA's database and other administrative functions.



Muños

"I am elated to be a part of this MTA team that reaches out to Michigan's local governments!" she said.

Muños recently returned to her home state after living in Texas. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Northwood University in Dallas, Texas, and loves to travel. She cites Israel, Hong Kong and Lugano, Switzerland among her favorite adventures.

"What I enjoy most about my travels is being able to mingle with the locals," she said. "That's what takes the experience above and beyond!"

Join MTA in recognizing two Allied Service Providers



Please join MTA in recognizing two members of the Allied Service Provide program. **Johnson, Rosati, Schultz & Joppich, PC**, a Farmington-based law firm, has joined the program at the Leadership Circle level. **DTE Energy**, an Allied Service Provider since 2005, furthered its commitment to MTA and townships by increasing its participation to the Leadership Circle level.

For more on the Allied Service Provider program, turn to page 2 or visit www.michigantownships.org/asp.asp.

Announcements

MTA office closed for Annual Conference—The MTA office will be closed April 23-27, 2018, while MTA staff is at the Annual Educational Conference at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.). You may call the MTA office and leave messages for staff at (517) 321-6467. The office re-opens on Monday, April 30.

April and May Township Focus combined—*Reminder:* The April and May issues of *Township Focus* are combined into this one expanded issue. The next issue you receive will be in June.

profile



Advertisorial

Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan

Your partner in retirement

The Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) of Michigan is an independent retirement services company that operates on a not-for-profit basis. MERS is dedicated to partnering with Michigan municipalities to offer affordable, sustainable strategies for providing retirement and other post-employment benefits for their employees.



Experienced oversight

With more than 70 years' experience, MERS is one of the longest-established and most successful shared-services stories in Michigan, providing administration, investment expertise, fiduciary responsibility and oversight for benefit plans. The company manages more than 2,000 retirement and employee benefit plans, and proudly serves over 880 municipal members—including 137 townships.

Low-cost solutions

MERS is committed to holding the line on administrative costs. It creates economies of scale by pooling assets for investment purposes only, meaning its members benefit from the substantial buying power of more than \$11 billion in assets.

Participant engagement

MERS wants to help each of its participants reach their retirement goals, and knows that their success begins with knowledge. The company actively engages with participants throughout their careers to provide ongoing education and individualized guidance to help them plan for a financially secure future.

Visit www.mersofmich.com to learn more about partnering with MERS.

Opinions expressed within do not represent the views of MTA, its Board or members. Participation in the Allied Service Provider program does not constitute or imply MTA's endorsement of the company or its products/ services. For more information, stop by Booth 309 at the MTA Expo during MTA's Annual Conference, turn to the Allied Service Provider Index on page 2 or visit www.michigantownships.org/asp.asp.

MTA Robinson Scholarship deadline is May 31

Help ensure that today's youth become involved in local government tomorrow! Encourage students in your community to apply for MTA's Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship by May 31, 2018.



The scholarship is a one-time award determined on a competitive basis by the applicant's academic achievement, community involvement and commitment to a career in local government administration.

Applicants must be a junior, senior or graduate student enrolled in a Michigan college or university and pursuing a career in local government administration. The following materials are required to apply: 1) a letter of recommendation from a professor or instructor, 2) a copy of a resolution of

support from a Michigan township board, and 3) a short essay on an important issue facing local government.

Students must submit application materials to: The Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o Michigan Townships Association, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078.

Ensure students in your area know about the scholarship! Post a link on your township website to www.michigantownships.org/scholarship.asp. Need more information? Call (517) 321-6467.

Contributions to the scholarship fund are also accepted throughout the year. Call the MTA office for details.

mta events | April

10

Last day to obtain regular MTA Conference registration rate; on-site rate applies after this date. Join us at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.), April 23-26.

Last day to register for MTA Conference to have a confirmation sent to you. All attendees must still check in at the MTA Registration Center.

16

Contact MTA office if you registered *by the April 10 deadline* and have not received a confirmation.

23-26

MTA's 2018 Annual Educational Conference & Expo at the Grand Traverse Resort. On-site registration available.

mta events | May

1-31

"Spring Fever" 50 percent off MTA webcasts sale throughout May. Use promo code: spring

District 7 caucus election slated for MTA Conference

A caucus election will be held on April 24, during the 2018 MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo, to elect a new District 7 director to the MTA Board of Directors.

District 7 encompasses Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, Presque Isle and Oscoda Counties.

Elected officials from MTA-member townships in District 7 are eligible to run for the MTA Board. Officials who wish to run for district director can campaign for the position before the caucus, though there are no requirements for prior announcement of candidacy.

Only elected township officials from District 7 may vote at the caucus meeting; appointed officials and township employees are not eligible to vote. All votes must be cast in person.

The caucus will be held from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in Michigan GH (Lobby Level). Additional information and facility maps will be published in the Conference program booklet received on-site.

Be part of something Greater. Be part of MTA's 2018 Conference. Learn more at www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp, or turn to pages 17-20 of this issue of Township Focus.

63

Michigan communities have a 22-person planning department.

You can, too.

"They're always available to provide advice on most planning or zoning issues and their advice is based on 35 years of experience in numerous communities throughout Michigan."

R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy

Carlisle | Wortman
ASSOCIATES, INC.

CWAPLAN.COM [734.662.2200](tel:734.662.2200)

APRIL

By 2 Notice of close of registration for May 8 election published. (MCL 168.498)

2 *On or before the first Monday in April.* The board of review must complete its review of protests of assessed value, taxable value, property classification or denial by assessor of continuation of qualified agricultural property exemption. (MCL 211.30a)

4 The township supervisor or assessor shall deliver the completed assessment roll, with board of review certification, to the county equalization director not later than the 10th day after adjournment of the board of review or the Wednesday following the first Monday in April, whichever date occurs first. (MCL 2511.30(7))

Assessor shall file State Tax Commission (STC) Form L-4021 with the county equalization department, and STC Form L-4022 (signed by the assessor) with the county equalization department and the STC, immediately following adjournment of the board of review. (R 209.26(6a), (6b))

Form 4626 *Assessing Officers Report of Taxable Values as of State Equalization* due to the county.

9 Last day to register for May 8 election. (MCL 168.497)

16 Allocation board meets and receives budgets. (MCL 211.210)

By 24

Partisan and nonpartisan candidates (other than judicial candidates) file nominating petitions (or fees if applicable) and Affidavit of Identity for Aug. 7 primary by 4 p.m. Withdrawal deadline elapses at 4 p.m. on April 27.

By 27 Pre-election campaign statements filed (books closed April 22).

27 Write-in candidates for May 8 election file Declaration of Intent forms by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.737a)

By 30 Clerks forward names and addresses of partisan and nonpartisan candidates for Aug. 7 primary to county clerk. (MCL 168.349)

MAY

By 1 Notice of May 8 election published. One notice required. (MCL 168.653a)

Petitions to place county and local questions on Aug. 7 primary ballot filed with county and local clerks. (MCL 168.646a)

Challenges against nominating petitions filed by partisan and nonpartisan candidates for Aug. 7 primary submitted to filing official. (MCL 168.552)

1 Deadline for filing a principal residence exemption (PRE) active duty military affidavit to allow military personnel to retain a PRE for up to three years if they rent or lease their principal residence while away on active duty. (MCL 211.7dd)

Last day of deferral period for winter (Dec. 1) property tax levies, if the deferral for qualified taxpayers was authorized by the county board of commissioners. (MCL 211.59(3))

Deadline for filing the farmland exemption affidavit (Form 2599) with the local assessor if the property is not classified agricultural or if the assessor asks an owner to file it to determine whether the property includes structures that are not exempt.

By 3 Public accuracy test for May 8 election must be conducted by local election commission. (R 168.778) Notice of test must be published at least 48 hours before test. (MCL 168.798)

5 Electors who wish to receive an absentee voter ballot for May 8 election by mail submit applications by 2 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

7 Electors qualified to obtain an absentee voter ballot for May 8 election may vote in person in the clerk's office until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.761)

8 Emergency absentee voting until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.759b)

Election.

14 Boards of county canvassers meet to canvass May 8 election. (MCL 168.821)

By 15 The state must have prepared an annual assessment roll for the state-assessed properties. (MCL 207.9(1))

Ballot wording of local proposals to be presented at Aug. 7 primary certified to county and local clerks; local clerks receiving ballot wording forward to county clerk within two days. (MCL 168.646a)

29 *Fourth Monday in May. May 28 is a holiday.* Final state equalization order is issued by STC. (MCL 209.4)

31 *After May 30 and before June 6.* Last day for allocation board hearing (not less than eight days or more than 12 days after issuance of preliminary order). (MCL 211.215)

By 31 Appeals of property classified as commercial real, industrial real, developmental real, commercial personal, industrial personal or utility personal must be made by filing a written petition with the Michigan Tax Tribunal on or before May 31 of the tax year involved. (MCL 205.735a(6))

JUNE

1 *Friday following the fourth Monday in May.* If as a result of state equalization, the taxable value of property changes, the equalization director shall revise the millage reduction fractions. (MCL 211.34d(2))

Deadline for filing PRE affidavits (Form 2368) for exemption from the 18-mill school operating tax to qualify for a PRE for the summer tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(2))

Deadline for filing the initial request of a conditional rescission of principal residence exemption (Form 4640) for the summer tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

Deadline for filing for foreclosure entity conditional rescission of a PRE (Form 4983) to qualify for the summer tax levy. (MCL 211.77cc(5))

Assessment roll due to county treasurer if local unit is not collecting summer taxes. (MCL 211.095b(6)(a))

Not later than June 1. Requests are due from a brownfield redevelopment, tax increment, local development financing or downtown development authority for state reimbursements of tax increment revenue decreases as a result of the Michigan Business Tax reduction in personal property taxes. (Form 4650; PA 154-157 of 2008)

4 *By first Monday in June.* Deadline for notifying protesting taxpayers in writing of board of review action. (MCL 211.30(4))

County equalization director calculates current year millage reduction fractions, including those for inter-county taxing jurisdictions. The completed, verified STC Form L-4028 is filed with the county treasurer and the STC on or before the first Monday in June. (MCL 211.34d(3))

5 Deadline for assessors to report the current year taxable value of commercial

personal property and industrial personal property to the county equalization director. (MCL 123.1353(3))

Deadline for assessors to file the personal property 2017 taxable value for expired tax exemptions (Form 5403), and for expired/ expiring renaissance zone tax exemptions (Form 5429) with the county equalization director and state Department of Treasury. (MCL 123.1353(6))

By 7 Post-election campaign statements filed (books closed May 28).

8 Final date townships can establish, move or abolish a polling place for Aug. 7 primary. (MCL 168.662)

11 *Not later than the second Monday in June.* Allocation board must issue final order. (MCL 211.216)

15 Deadline for the assessor's report to the STC on the status of each neighborhood homestead exemption granted under the Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Act. (MCL 207.786(2))

Each municipality that is a tax increment finance authority shall calculate and report to the state Department of Treasury the municipality's

tax increment small taxpayer loss for the current year. (MCL 123.1356a)

Deadline for tax increment finance (TIF) authorities to file 2017 TIF loss reimbursement claims on Form 5176, Form 5176BR or Form 5176ICV. (MCL 123.1356a(3))

By 23 County clerks deliver absentee voter ballots for Aug. 7 primary to township clerks. (MCL 168.714)

Delivery of military and overseas absentee voter ballots must begin for the Aug. 7 primary. All requests received since Nov. 7, 2017, from a military or overseas voter must be honored for all 2018 elections. (MCL 168.759a)

25 *Fourth Monday in June.* Deadline for equalization director to file tabulation of final taxable

valuations with the STC on STC Form L-4046. (MCL 211.27d)

28 *through July 17.* Precinct inspectors for Aug. 7 primary appointed by township election commissions. (MCL 168.674)

29 *June 30 in a Saturday.* Township supervisor shall prepare and furnish the summer tax roll before June 30 to the township treasurer with supervisor's collection warrant attached if summer school taxes are to be collected. (MCL 380.1612(1))

Deadline for classification appeals to STC. (MCL 211.34c(6)) Appeal must be filed in writing on Form 2167 by June 30.



We've got plans to cover all of yours.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network offers the complete insurance solution to protect the overall health and well-being of your employees.

For more information, contact the Michigan Township Association at 800-653-2483

GROUP HEALTH PLANS | SPECIALTY BENEFITS | BCBSM.COM/EMPLOYERS

DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. 10/15/2017

MONROE · CANTON · LANSING · DETROIT · TRAVERSE CITY · HOUGHTON

TECHNICAL SKILL.
CREATIVE SPIRIT.

- Municipal Engineering
- Special Assessment Districts
- Asset Management Plans
- Planning | Landscape Architecture
- Site Plan Review & Inspection
- Road / Bridge Design
- Funding Assistance
- Geotechnical
- Environmental
- Surveying
- Construction Support

www.MannikSmithGroup.com



Can my township use a 425 agreement with a neighboring township to help provide some needed services, including water service, to a specified area where we would like to attract commercial development?

Yes. Public Act 425 of 1984, known as the Intergovernmental Conditional Transfer of Property by Contract Act, is designed to address your circumstance. PA 425 provides a comprehensive procedure that allows two or more cities, townships or villages to conditionally transfer property by written contract for a period of not more than 50 years (plus renewal periods not to exceed 50 years) for the purpose of an economic development project. While a 425 agreement can be used for a specific project, it may also be used for the development of a planned area for economic development.

PA 425 broadly defines an economic development project as “land and existing or planned improvements suitable for use by an industrial or commercial enterprise, or housing development, or the protection of the environment, including, but not limited to, ground water or services water. Economic development project includes necessary buildings, improvements, or structures suitable for and intended for or incidental to use as an industrial or commercial enterprise or housing development; and included industrial park or industrial site improvements and port improvements or housing development incidental to an industrial or commercial enterprise; and includes the machinery, furnishings, and equipment necessary, suitable, intended for, or incidental to the commercial, industrial, or residential use in connection with the buildings or structures.”

An appropriate 425 agreement must specify the area that is being transferred to the other municipality, the length of the transfer, the manner and extent to which taxes and other revenues are shared, methods of enforcement of the contract, and which unit has total jurisdiction at the end of the 425 transfer. The agreement would transfer jurisdiction of the area to the other township for the term of the 425 agreement; however, jurisdiction for all purposes does not need to be transferred. For example, your township could retain zoning jurisdiction to assure how the property is developed. Other jurisdiction could be transferred as agreed between the parties, such as police protection, fire protection, and water or sewer service.

All or any portion of the foregoing transfers could be agreed to occur at such time as a parcel is sold or otherwise transferred from present ownership or is connected to the other township’s water facilities or is developed from a vacant parcel to a new building.

The terms of the 425 agreement can be very flexible to coordinate the abilities of each township to properly provide for the economic development of the property for the betterment of the community.



Can we enter into the 425 agreement even though the area to be transferred is not contiguous to the other township?

Yes. The area does not need to be contiguous. The impetus behind Act 425 was a situation where General Motors wanted to expand its plant in the City of Flint, but there was no vacant land to accommodate this expansion in the city. There was however a vacant industrial park about a mile from the city located in **Genesee Charter Township** (Genesee Co.), which General Motors could use for its expansion plans. While the city and the township wanted to cooperate to get this new plant, there was no appropriate statutory process for the township to transfer jurisdiction to the city in exchange for tax revenue sharing. Although the plant expansion plans were abandoned due to the downturn in the economy in the early 1980s, this situation was the genesis of the PA 425 legislation.



Should our townships be concerned that after we have entered into the 425 agreement, the city contiguous to this proposed commercial area might want to annex it?

No. Pursuant to MCL 124.29, while a 425 agreement is in effect, the area is not subject to annexation.



Is it legal for a general law township to delegate to the township supervisor the authority for hiring and supervising the office manager?

Yes, with limitations. In a general law township, Michigan law does not grant any specific township official general authority over administration of office personnel (i.e., office manager and secretaries). The authority for hiring and

administrative oversight of the office personnel lies with the township board as a whole. It is our opinion, however, that the township board may delegate this administrative authority as long as reasonable parameters are provided along with such delegation.

Case law recognizes that a township board may delegate ministerial or executive duties. This delegation of authority from the township board to the supervisor for the administration of office personnel qualifies as the performance of ministerial and/or executive duties where there are reasonable parameters upon which the supervisor is to exercise such authority. For some townships, this delegation of authority makes sense as it would be unreasonable to require the board to meet to enforce or handle routine office personnel matters. In delegating this authority, the township board should have an adopted personnel policy that specifies the parameters.

With regard to the delegation of authority to the township supervisor for hiring office personnel, again there must be sufficient parameters. At a minimum, the township board must set a salary or salary range for an appropriate delegation to occur. The establishment of the township budget and approval of appropriations of such budgeted funds is a responsibility of the township board and until the employee's salary is budgeted and the board has authorized appropriation

of such an amount, the township supervisor would not have the authority to incur the salary obligation on behalf of the township. An appropriate parameter would allow the office manager to be hired by the township supervisor at a salary or in salary range as approved by the township board.

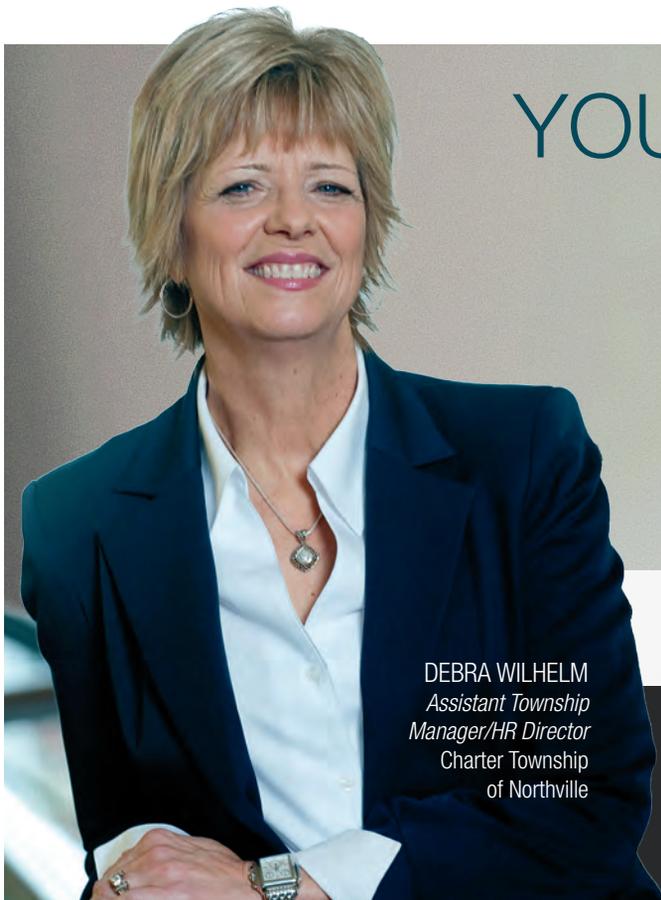
Hello, MTA ... ? provides general information on typical questions asked by township officials. Readers are encouraged to contact an attorney when specific legal guidance is needed. Member township officials and personnel may contact MTA Member Information Services with questions or requests from 8 a.m.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



800.482.2864
www.wadetrिम.com

Engineering Stronger Communities

For nearly a century, we've been solving complex engineering challenges to maximize the value of your infrastructure investments. We adapt our work processes to fit the unique demands of each project using a collaborative, friendly style. The result? Solutions you can stand behind.



DEBRA WILHELM
Assistant Township
Manager/HR Director
Charter Township
of Northville

YOUR PARTNER IN RETIREMENT

MERS provides our members with:

The buying power of pooled assets to maximize investments and reduce costs

Unique plans to meet every need

Sole fiduciary oversight

That's the not-for-profit difference
That's MERS



www.mersofmich.com



Road funding gets a boost

Michigan's roads and bridges are getting a shot in the arm just as warming temperatures bring more crumbling asphalt and gaping potholes.

State lawmakers gave final approval to a \$175 million supplemental for roads, sponsored by Rep. Laura Cox (R-Livonia). The supplemental includes funding for the current Fiscal Year 2017-18 and will be distributed to county road commissions, cities and villages as well as the state through the Public Act 51 formula this spring.

The bill also earmarks \$15 million of the state's portion to be used for next-generation projects, including autonomous vehicles and hydrogen fueling stations.

Increased 911 fees to improve technology

New technology will help first responders get to the scene faster and save more lives, thanks to a fee increase under Public Act 51 of 2018.

The new law, sponsored by Sen. Rick Jones (R-Oneida Chtr. Twp.), was supported by MTA and was recently enacted by Gov. Rick Snyder. Previously, Michigan had not raised its 911 fees in a decade—despite the increasing need for improved technology to locate 911 callers. Michigan's 911 funding was projected to soon be insufficient to maintain its 911 wireless network infrastructure.

PA 51 will provide additional money to implement next-generation 911 technology statewide by increasing the fee charged on telephone bills from 19 cents per month to 25 cents per month, as well as the percentage surcharge on prepaid wireless services from 1.92 percent to 5 percent. Together, the increased fees would generate an estimated \$44.6 million. County commissions will also continue to have the ability to adopt a resolution to increase county-levied monthly 911 surcharges up to the current cap of 42 cents per month. The measure became effective on March 6, 2018.

More charitable fundraisers may solicit funds in intersections

The ability to conduct charitable fundraisers in street intersections will be expanded to even more organizations under a new law.

House Bill 4888, sponsored by Rep. Dan Lauwers (R-Brockway Twp.), was pending signature by Gov. Rick Snyder as of press time, and amends the recently enacted PA 112 of 2017. This law allows fundraisers that take place in street intersections, such as the commonly seen “boot in the street” fundraisers by firefighters. Local units can set regulations and restrict locations where the fundraisers may take place, but they cannot prohibit them. The law also requires that specific safety, liability and age restrictions be followed.

The law enacted last year included qualified charitable, civic and veterans organizations. HB 4888 adds social, recreational and fraternal organizations established under sections 501(c)(7), 501(c)(8) and 501(c)(10) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.



TIF statutes streamlined under new law

An important economic development tool for townships is getting a makeover with additional reporting and transparency requirements under a new law.

Under Michigan law, municipalities can utilize TIF authorities to capture growth in property tax revenues in a specific area, using the money to pay for activities such as infrastructure improvements to help attract economic development. Public Act 57 of 2018, sponsored by Sen. Ken Horn (R-Frankenmuth), repeals and recodifies multiple TIF acts and creates the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act, incorporating standard reporting requirements and penalties. MTA supported this bill for retaining townships' ability to utilize these important economic tools.

Under the new law, seven acts were repealed and recodified—the Downtown Development Authority Act, TIF Authority Act, Local Development Financing Act, Nonprofit Street Railway Act, Corridor Improvement



Authority Act, Water Resource Improvement TIF Authority Act and Neighborhood Improvement Authority Act. Two more acts were fully repealed—the Historical Neighborhood TIF Authority Act and the Private Investment Infrastructure Funding Act.

Six of these acts—excluding the Nonprofit Street Railway Act—now will have uniform reporting requirements, with annual reports to be filed with the Michigan Department of Treasury rather than the State Tax Commission as currently required. The reporting information must also be posted either on the municipality’s website or a newly created website. Additionally, the law requires the Department of Treasury to consult with local government associations and create an annual reporting form for TIF authorities. This form must be finalized and published no later than 60 days after the bill’s effective date of Jan. 1, 2019.

The newly enacted changes also include penalty provisions. Any authority that doesn’t comply with the new reporting requirements will receive written notice from the Department of Treasury and if it still doesn’t comply within 60 days, the authority is prohibited from capturing any TIF revenues above the amount needed to pay its bonded indebtedness and other obligations for the noncompliance period. The authority also could not amend or approve a TIF plan during that period. After two consecutive years, the authority would need a resolution of authorization to capture TIF revenue in excess of the amount needed for debt payment, and excess funds captured must be returned to the taxing jurisdiction.

Community center board members could be paid

Townships with community center boards have a new option to help encourage more people to participate.

Public Act 61 of 2018, sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Wells Twp.), allows townships and villages under 10,000 in population to compensate their community center boards of directors. The bill was supported by MTA and was introduced at the request of **Negaunee Township** (Marquette Co.).

Over the years, filling the board’s seat became more and more difficult for the township—especially since members of other appointed boards were paid for their time, Supervisor **Bill Carlson** said. Having the ability to pay community center board members could help them recruit more members. “We have always had responsible persons serving on the board, and we believe they should receive the same compensation for service as other boards within the township,” Carlson said.

The new law is permissive and will not require townships to offer compensation—but simply provides them the same option that other forms of local government possess. They will also be able to determine by resolution the compensation level. The new law is effective June 12, 2018.

‘Pure Michigan’ trail management streamlined

“Pure Michigan” trails will be easier to manage across multiple jurisdictions under Senate Bill 596.

Sponsored by Sen. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart Twp.), the law addresses the issues surrounding trails that pass through more than one jurisdiction.

Because of this, trail management can be inconsistent throughout the state and even along different segments of the same trail. SB 596 is meant to provide trail management councils with more tools and support to help them have greater consistency and more success.

Under the new law, trail operation and management agreements between local units or trail management councils and the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) could include provisions on building, installing and maintaining benches, signs and other amenities. The trail management council could also set protocols for trail development and management, including guidance for trail safety, a plan for providing transit-based access to trails, signs, a historical and cultural interpretive plan, a maintenance cost-sharing formula and, if applicable, a plan to link the trail to nearby water trails. Additionally, a Pure Michigan trail could include park benches, signs and connectors and access to rest areas, lodging and eating facilities.



Locals can’t regulate job interview questions under bill

Your township cannot require an employer to ask or exclude questions during a job interview under a newly enrolled bill.

Senate Bill 353, sponsored by Sen. John Proos (R-St. Joseph Chtr. Twp.), amends an existing law that already prohibits local units from adopting or enforcing an ordinance, policy or resolution regulating the information an employer or potential employer can include or exclude on a job application.

Under the new law, this prohibition would extend to job interviews as well. While it is uncertain if any such ordinance exists in Michigan, this would prevent local units from banning employers from asking about an applicant’s current or past salary history, among other questions.

Legislative lowdown

A quick look at critical bills that MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. For a complete list, head to MTA's "Legislative Action Center" on the members portion of www.michigantownships.org, or look to our weekly and monthly newsletters sent to all MTA member officials.

SB 45: Disabled veterans property tax exemption—Expands disabled veterans property tax exemption to include residential real property or agricultural real property owned by a disabled veteran, decreasing local revenue. *MTA opposes.*

SB 157/HB 5723: Water works projects—Preempts local ordinances restricting or prohibiting the evaluation, comparison or use of certain pipe and piping materials. *MTA opposes.*

SB 258: Disaster & Emergency Contingency Fund—Increases statutorily required fund balance and increases cap on disaster assistance grants to local units. *MTA supports.*

SB 290: Election recounts—Increases recount fee when differential separating winning candidate and petitioner is more than 5 percent of total votes cast. *MTA supports.*

SBs 302-303/HB 4475: State land cap—Amends requirements for acquisition/disposition of state land; requires state to make full PILT before acquiring additional land; allows county resolution approval for purchase if full PILT payments not made. *MTA supports.*

SBs 305-310: Tax increment financing—Modifies capture of library mills to allow libraries to opt out of tax capture and redefines "obligation" to exempt library millages automatically. *MTA opposes.*

SB 329/HB 4503: Land use/zoning preemption—Limits local zoning regulation of vacation rentals and short-term rentals. *MTA opposes.*

SB 578: Deed restrictions—Excludes private deed restrictions from being considered by Michigan Tax Tribunal when highest and best use of property considered subject to an assessment dispute. *MTA supports.*

SB 637: Small cell—Creates Small Wireless Communications Facilities Deployment Act that would standardize permits, fees, right-of-way use and other regulation of wireless service providers when utilizing the public right-of-way. *MTA neutral.*

SB 723/HB 4362: Disabled veterans property tax exemption—Requires reimbursement to local taxing units for property tax revenue loss incurred due to disabled veterans property tax exemptions. *MTA supports.*

SB 741: Local preemption—Prohibits local regulation of dogs based upon breed or perceived breed. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4077: Freedom of Information Act—Prohibits public bodies from commencing civil actions against entities making FOIA requests. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4184: Open Meetings Act—Clarifies physical presence required for vote, excluding emergency meetings and elected members called for military duty; allows board to waive one meeting for each member for good cause. *MTA neutral.*

HB 4290: Sewer backup liability—Amends definition for a sewage disposal system event, clarifies the identification of a design or construction defect in a sewage disposal system, and provides governmental agencies with expanded immunity from system overflow or backup. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4359, 4370 & 4371: Special assessments—Allows townships to create special assessment district for private utility services. *MTA supports.*

HB 4397: Dark stores—Requires Michigan Tax Tribunal determinations to consider all three methods of appraisal in assessment disputes and prohibits deed restrictions on valuation of property. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4431-4432: Legislative subpoena—Expands legislative subpoena authority to include local public bodies. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 4609-4610: Disaster & Emergency Contingency Fund—Increases statutorily required fund balance and increases cap on disaster

assistance grants to local units. *MTA supports.*

HB 4671: Election administration—Allows local or county clerk to conduct election activities for a local clerk if approved by the governing bodies of both participating entities. *MTA neutral.*

HB 4679/SB 495: Legislative fiscal note—Would require fiscal notes to be prepared on the financial impact of legislation before legislative action could occur. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4747-4748: Filing fee for township candidates—Provides option for individuals seeking township offices to a pay filing fee or file signature petitions to be on the ballot. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4814-4815: Millage election limitation—Would limit *all* millage ballot questions—including new, increasing and renewal millages—to November general elections after Dec. 31, 2017. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4766: Open Meetings Act—Allows additional remedies for noncompliance to include attorney fees and allow a one-year window during which civil actions may be brought. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5098: Rights-of-way—Requires local governments to provide one-year notification, and waive permit and inspection fees, and prohibits request for any study or survey when requesting the temporary or permanent relocation of facilities owned by an entity holding a license under the Michigan Telecommunications Act or a franchise under the Uniform Video Services Local Franchise Act. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5143: Alternative energy personal property tax exemption—Provides personal property tax exemption for alternative energy personal property (residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial). *MTA opposes.*

HB 5207: Semi-open primary—Requires voter to indicate which political party ballot he or she wishes to vote at primary election. *MTA neutral.*



THOUSANDS
of Public Entities.

BILLIONS
of Taxpayer Dollars.
Protected.



Safe, Smart, Flexible Solutions for Managing Public Funds.

Across the United States, local and state governmental organizations use the Insured Cash Sweep[®], or ICS[®], and CDARS[®] services to access multi-million-dollar FDIC insurance through a single bank relationship, safeguard taxpayer money, keep the amount of their deposit local, and eliminate the burden of ongoing collateral tracking.

What could be easier? See if your bank offers ICS and/or CDARS, or find one of the thousands that do.

ICSandCDARS.com

 ICS[®] & CDARS[®]

Placement of customer funds through the ICS service or CDARS service is subject to the terms, conditions, and disclosures set forth in the agreements that a participating institution's customer enters into with that institution, including the applicable Deposit Placement Agreement. Limits apply, and customer eligibility criteria may apply. Program withdrawals are limited to six per month when using the ICS savings option. If a depositor is subject to restrictions with respect to the placement of funds in depository institutions, it is the responsibility of the depositor to determine whether the placement of the depositor's funds through ICS or CDARS, or a particular ICS or CDARS transaction, satisfies those restrictions. CDARS, ICS, and Insured Cash Sweep are registered service marks of Promontory Interfinancial Network, LLC.



Our township has a special voted tax to support our fire operations and we are considering acquiring some fire apparatus, with a total cost of \$200,000. We have two payment options: an installment payment plan over 10 years with 2.75 percent interest, or pay on delivery, with a \$5,000 discount. What is the accounting treatment of each option?

The accounting method for one payment option is quite simple; the other, more complicated. If the township acquires the assets without the financing, the expenditure is recorded in the Fire Department Fund:

GL Line Item		Debit	Credit
206-336-970	Capital Outlay	\$195,000	
206-000-001	Cash		\$195,000

To record fire apparatus purchased

The accounting treatment for the installment purchase is somewhat complex. First, the difference between the cash price (\$195,000) and the installment price (\$200,000) is considered additional interest paid. For example, if you finance the installment purchase price of \$200,000 for 2.75 percent, payable in 10 annual installments. This includes stated interest of \$23,188.76. Assume the township purchases the apparatus on Jan. 1, the first day of your fiscal year, and makes its first payment on Dec. 31, 2018. The stated interest, according to a loan amortization program, on the first year's payment is \$5,484.93; however, this must be adjusted by the premium paid to finance the transaction—\$5,000.

This premium—the difference between the cash and installment price—changes the effective interest rate from the stated interest of 2.75 percent to the actual computed rate of 3.233 percent. This means the actual interest paid is the stated interest of \$5,484.93, plus an allocation (known as amortization) of the premium you paid over the cash price. A straight line amortization of this premium would be \$5,000/10 years = \$500 per payment. However, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles require the effective interest rate method, if material.

Entries to record the annual payment (assuming payment comes from the Fire Department Fund) using the effective interest rate method (an amortization of the actual cash flows using the effective interest rate, not the stated interest) is as follows:

GL Line Item		Debit	Credit
206-336-994	Debit Service-Principal	\$16,797.16	
206-336-996	Debit Service-Interest	\$6,391.60	
206-000-001	Cash		\$23,188.76

To record the payment on the installment purchase obligation

The township should consult a financial advisor familiar with statutory requirement, and review any proposed transactions with legal counsel (and likely township bond counsel). It is likely that the installment purchase would be accomplished using Public Act 99 of 1933, Purchase of Lands and Property for Public Purposes. This format has a maximum 15-year duration and the total of all installment purchase contracts is capped at 1.25 percent of state equalized value. Typically, installment purchase contracts are used for equipment purchases, but may have certain applications for infrastructure and building projects.



A vendor performed a service for our township at the end of one fiscal year and the beginning of the next. Our year-end is in March. We paid 50 percent of the contract up-front in February, and 50 percent in April upon completion. How much of the cost should be recognized in our current fiscal year?

The answer depends on how much of the work was done before the end of the fiscal year. For example, if the township paid \$2,500 in February, but none of the work was done until April, the entire February payment would be a “prepaid item”—which is a balance sheet account, not an expenditure account. If 30 percent of the work was done, the township would recognize \$1,500 as an expense and \$1,000 as prepaid. If all the work was completed except a small portion—say 10 percent—and the total contract was \$5,000, the township would recognize \$4,500 in costs, by expensing all of the \$2,500 paid in February, and accruing as an accounts payable \$2,000 of the April payment.

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.

DON'T MISS

the largest township educational & networking event of the year



MTA
MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

GREATER

Township Good

MTA's 65th Annual Educational Conference & Expo

April 23-26, 2018 | Grand Traverse Resort | Acme Township

2018 Conference at-a-glance

Monday, April 23

8 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

MTA shuttle service available

8:30 a.m. to Noon

Making Meetings Work
More Effectively* (TGA Course B-105)
Includes continental breakfast.

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Lessons from *Menard Inc. v. City of Escanaba**
Includes continental breakfast.
Approved by the State Tax Commission
for six hours of Assessor Elective Credit

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Auditor Institute*
Includes continental breakfast & lunch.
Approved for CPE credits

9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Legal Institute for Township Attorneys*
Includes continental breakfast & lunch.

11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

MTA Registration Center, Ticket Xchange &
MTA-PAC booth open

1 to 5 p.m.

Cemeteries: Challenges & Solutions*
OR Strategic Planning* (TGA Course B-104)
Includes lunch served at noon.

12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

EduTour: Historic Barns Park*

3 to 5:30 p.m.

Taste of Traverse City Culinary Crawl*

5 to 6 p.m.

MTA Volunteer Training Reception
(by invitation only)
Sponsored by Miller Canfield

8 p.m. to Midnight

"3-D" Welcoming Reception
Sponsored by Bendzinski & Company,
Municipal Finance Advisors

* A separate registration fee is required to attend.

Tuesday, April 24

7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

MTA shuttle service available

7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MTA Registration Center, Ticket Xchange &
MTA-PAC booth open

8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

Opening Session
Sponsored in part by DTE Energy; projection
screens sponsored by Hubbell Roth & Clark, Inc.

9:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

MTA Expo and MTA Bookstore open
Chair massages sponsored by
Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes, PLC

10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Bridging the Talent Gap
- Get the Latest from Around the Capitol
- Great Place, Great Governance
- How to Interpret Your Township's Financial Statement
- Inside Your 425 Agreement
- Small Townships Can Compete in the Grants Game
- Water Trails: Michigan's Emerging Trail Trend
- What Townships Can't Do, But May Not Know It
- Why Can't We All Get Along?

11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

MTA Caucus Election (MTA District 7 only)

11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

TGA Graduate "Class of 2018" Luncheon
(by invitation only)
Sponsored by ITC Holdings Corp.

1 to 2:15 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Ask the Experts:
Township Question-and-Answer Forum
- Capital Improvement Programs and Master Planning Efforts
- Conflict Management:
Understanding Communication Styles
- Don't Get Soaked by Drain Projects
- Drafting and Policing Developments,
Developers and Development Agreements

- Human Trafficking: Not in My Township
- Social Media: Tools of Engagement
- Telecommunications Update
- What's Your Investment IQ?

2:45 to 4 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Budgeting for Small Townships
- Can You Dig It?
- Current Water & Sewer Issues
- Financial Wellness:
Preparing for Life's Challenges
- Invasive Knotweed
- Listening Makes Better Leaders
- Medical Marijuana Commercial
Facilities Update
- Retirement Myth Busters
- We Are the Government ...
and We're Here to Help

4:30 to 5:15 p.m.

Informational Sessions

- Getting the Most from
MTA's Member Salary Survey
- Introduction to MTA's Township
Governance Academy
- Social Networking with MTA
- The Inside Scoop on County Chapters

6 to 9 p.m.

Par-Plan "At the Hop" Fun Night
Sponsored by Michigan Township Participating Plan

Wednesday, April 25

7 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

MTA shuttle service available

7 to 11 a.m.

MTA Registration Center, Ticket Xchange &
MTA-PAC booth open

8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

General Session
Sponsored in part by Consumers Energy;
projection screens sponsored by
Hubbell Roth & Clark, Inc.

9:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

MTA Expo and MTA Bookstore open
Chair massages sponsored by
Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes, PLC;
portrait studio sponsored by General Code

10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Concurrent Educational Workshops

- Alternative Energy Regulation Tips
- Financing Joint Fire Operations
- Get the Latest from Around the Capitol
- High Standards: Decisions by the Zoning Board of Appeals
- Ins and Outs of Collective Bargaining
- Leadership is an Invitation
- Regulating Liquor Licensing in Your Community
- Understanding Township Millage Questions
- Unemployment Compliance

Noon to 1 p.m.

Township Business Solutions Sessions

- Freedom of Information Act: Your Mistakes Matter
- Hostile Work Environment, Disparate Treatment, Retaliation and Quid Pro Quo
- Special Assessments from A to Z
- The Legal Landscape for Townships in 2018: A Practical Approach
- Understanding the Wind Siting Process
- We're Glad You Asked That! We're Glad You Asked That!

1:30 to 2:45 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Collecting Delinquent Personal Property Tax
- Elections Update
- Funding Township Roads
- How Township Boards Make the Right Decisions
- Leading Effective Land Use Meetings
- Managing Township Personnel: Why is My Attorney Asking for That?
- Policing Standards: What to Expect from Your Chief
- Water, Water Everywhere: Can We Regulate its Use?
- What's New in the Proposed MTA Policy Platform

3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Workshops

- Ethics in Governance
- Farm to Head Table: Understanding the Right to Farm Act
- Funding Township Improvements
- Mobile Food Regulation

- Tax Collecting Paper Trail
- Tools and Resources to Improve Elections Administration
- That's Unconstitutional! Fact and Fiction Regarding Townships and the Constitution
- What to Put on Your Township's Website

5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

VIP Reception

(additional charge; pre-registration required)

Sponsored by EMC Insurance Companies & Ted Hartleb Agency

6:30 to 9 p.m.

MTA Banquet

Entertainment sponsored in part by Burnham & Flower Insurance Group; photo booth sponsored by Giffels Webster; projection screens sponsored by Hubbell Roth & Clark, Inc.

9 p.m. to Midnight

Afterglow Reception

Sponsored by Burnham & Flower Insurance Group

Thursday, April 26

7 a.m. to Noon

MTA shuttle service available

9 to 11 a.m.

MTA Annual Meeting

Projection screens sponsored by Hubbell Roth & Clark, Inc.



There's still time to register!

Join MTA this April to learn innovative solutions, processes and ideas to effect greatness in your community and your state. We're returning to the Grand Traverse Resort for our 65th Annual Educational Conference & Expo, April 23-26, 2018. The Grand Traverse area offers so much more than just a picturesque landscape—the greater region is an inspiration for communities working together for the greater good of their corner of Michigan—helping to create a regional destination, with national recognition and a reputation for excellence.

Be part of something *Greater*—be part of MTA's 2018 Annual Conference & Expo. Learn more at www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp.

Regular rates apply until April 10; on-site registration is also available.



2018 Conference Sponsors

18 Exhibitor List

Visit these exhibitors at the MTA Expo, April 24 & 25, held in conjunction with the MTA Annual Educational Conference.

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze



- 4Front Credit Union
- AGCO Corporation
- Airvac—A brand of Aqseptence Group
- American Legal Publishing Corp.
- Anderson, Eckstein & Westrick, Inc.
- APM Mosquito Control
- Asphalt Materials, Inc.
- Baruzzini Contracting LLC
- Bauchham, Sparks, Thall, Seeber & Kaufman, PC
- BMJ Engineers & Surveyors, Inc.
- Brick Industry Association
- BS&A Software, Inc.
- Burnham & Flower Insurance Group
- Carlisle/Wortman Associates
- CHMP, Inc.
- Consumers Energy
- Cougar Mountain Software
- County Road Association of Michigan
- CSI Geoturf
- Dixon Engineering, Inc.
- DN Tanks
- DTE Energy
- Election Systems & Software
- Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC
- Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering, Inc.
- Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC
- General Code
- GFL Environmental USA, Inc.
- GFA
- Giffels Webster
- Gosling Czubak Engineering Sciences, Inc.
- Govspend
- Great Lakes Chloride, Inc.
- Great Lakes Recreation Company
- IAI
- I.T. RIGHT, Inc.
- Inch Memorials
- Invoice Cloud, Inc.
- ITC Holdings Corp.
- IVSComm, Inc.
- Johnson & Anderson, Inc.
- Jones & Henry Engineers
- Kennedy Industries, Inc.
- Kent Communications, Inc.
- Kunz, Leigh & Associates
- Lumecon LLC
- Mackinaw Administrators LLC
- McGraw Morris PC
- McKenna Associates, Inc.
- Meeder Investment Management
- MERS of Michigan
- Michiana Land Services, Inc.
- Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks
- Michigan Chloride Sales
- Michigan CLASS
- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
- Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority
- Michigan Rural Water Association
- Michigan Township Participating Plan
- Michigan's Public Safety Communications System
- Miller Canfield
- Miracle Midwest
- Mobile Medical Response, Inc.
- Municode/Municipal Code Corporation
- Partners In Architecture, PLC
- Penchura, LLC
- Playworld Midstates
- Point & Pay
- Polly Products
- Pontem Software
- Printing Systems, Inc.
- ProFleet Care—Flint Rust Proofing
- Provident Insurance
- Pummill Promark
- Republic Services
- Revize Government Websites
- Rose Pest Solutions
- ROWE Professional Services Company
- SAFEbuilt
- Secant Technologies
- Shifman & Carlson, PC
- Shumaker Technology Group
- Siegfried Crandall, PC
- Sinclair Recreation
- Spalding, DeDecker & Associates
- Spicer Group, Inc.
- Strawser Construction Inc.
- Ted Hartleb Agency, An EMC Insurance Company
- The Breadon Group
- The Mannik & Smith Group
- Tyler Technologies
- UIS SCAOA, Inc.
- Umbaugh
- USDA Rural Development
- Vortex Aquatic
- Wade Trim, Inc.
- Waste Management
- WEX/Speedway
- Wightman & Associates, Inc.
- Williams & Works
- Williams Aerial & Mapping, Inc.

Allied Service Providers are indicated in blue.



your township's programs and services

Chances are, you weren't a certified assessor when you ran for township office. Your only experience with tax collection was receiving your property tax bill in the mail. Ran a class election back in high school? It probably didn't involve special equipment or precincts.

Most township board members don't come to their elected position with extensive expertise in township services. It's not your job to know every detail—that's why the township has staff, consultants and others to help accomplish the township's programs and services. But as a board member, the buck ultimately stops with you. Your residents elected you to ensure that the township follows state statutes and meets residents' needs. They expect their elected officials to set standards and ensure accountability to meet those standards.

Some township officials may believe that without a large staff or department heads, the evaluation process does not apply to them. The reality is this responsibility is critical for townships of *all* sizes. All townships have at least some individuals who assist in the delivery of township services and programs. For a majority of townships, the elected township officials themselves *are* the "department heads." In others, volunteers, office assistants or appointed committee members oversee a majority of program delivery. Still others have full-time staff, including departments comprised of department heads and employees, and dozens of townships have hired township managers to oversee day-to-day operations.

This continuing education article and accompanying self-assessment are worth 2.0 elective credits in MTA's Township Governance Academy. See page 27 for details.



OBJECTIVE

- To examine the roles and responsibilities of township officials in ensuring township programs and services best serve and meet residents' needs

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Possesses knowledge of township services and their policy implications
- Works effectively with individuals, departments and committees to achieve desired outcomes

cover story

But in all cases, the township board needs to ensure that the township's programs and services—no matter how many or how extensive—are provided effectively, efficiently and in a manner consistent with community wants and needs. Your job doesn't end with delegating. The board must provide the oversight necessary so that you are best serving your residents.

Evaluating services is sometimes overlooked as a board's key function, but Susan Radwan, owner of Leading Edge Mentoring and a frequent instructor for MTA Township Governance Academy (TGA) courses, says it's one of the most important.

"It's the base. It's the essential piece of government," she said. "If the board is not doing that, they're not even beginning to do their job."

The responsibility is heavy, but it's not out of reach. By setting goals and expectations, asking questions and communicating with departments or those overseeing programs and services, your board can go a long way toward creating a culture of accountability and excellence.

A culture of accountability

Every member of the township team—including elected and appointed officials, staff and even volunteers—must be held to a certain standard. Whether they're tasked with estimating a home's taxable value or putting out fires, they'll still be held accountable to how they treat township residents and exhibit ethical character in their daily interactions.

But personnel can't be held to a standard if they don't know what it is. Defining the desired outcome creates the playing field for the entire township and empowers individuals to succeed, Radwan said. It's up to your board to create a culture where all township personnel understand what's expected of them. This shouldn't be left up to chance. Your board's values should be put in writing and communicated to all township employees, Radwan said.

To create this list of core values, your board could brainstorm what's important to both officials and residents, such as professionalism when interacting with the public and township colleagues, customer service and transparency. Radwan recommends putting these values into a board policy that also defines unacceptable behaviors and consequences for these actions.

When **Todd Anderson** became a **Conway Township** (Livingston Co.) clerk, township employees had no human resources document to guide them. After attending TGA courses, he learned the board should give employees a detailed policy manual. The board spent about a year working to create its first employee handbook—a much more complicated process than Anderson ever expected. Creating a culture of accountability is a process that takes time.

"We're taking it step by step," Anderson said. "I'm learning as I go."



To create a list of core values to guide township personnel, your board could brainstorm what's important to both officials and residents, such as professionalism when interacting with both the public and township colleagues, customer service and transparency.

Remember, the township's culture starts with your board. Every official should embody these values and set an example for all township personnel. Your township team will learn from the board—for better or worse.

Beyond the status quo

The board's job is to cast a wholistic vision for the township and determine how each program, service or department fits in that vision. Program leaders or department heads can't do this themselves—it can sometimes be difficult to see beyond their own goals and day-to-day operations to how they fit into the entire township's vision.

Some boards might say they already evaluate their services. Once a year, whoever is responsible for a program takes the podium at a board meeting and rattles off a list of activities that have been completed. The board might ask a question or two, but the dialogue doesn't expand beyond the surface level.

Others might say they go above and beyond the norm for evaluating their services. Board members are in the assessor's office or the treasurer's office almost every day, and they don't hesitate to email the fire chief with suggestions for how the fire department can improve.

But Radwan says neither scenario is ideal. Your board needs more than an activity log to adequately evaluate your township's services. At the same time, meddling in departments' daily operations goes beyond what's necessary and is still activity focused.

Instead of only worrying about making sure departments check off a to-do list, board members need to step back and see the big picture. Evaluating your township services means carefully examining their outcomes. In other words, what is the result of all those activities? How do they fit into the township's overall goals? Board members need to define what success looks like for each program or service and how that success will be measured.

"Evaluation is creating the expectation, defining the expected outcome, and monitoring to make sure those outcomes are being achieved," Radwan said.

Evaluating your township's services comes down to asking more questions, said **Brian Reed**, manager of **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.). As he examines the diverse departments of his township, and the programs and services they offer, he views everything through the lens of three questions:

- What do we do well?
- What isn't going so well?
- How can we improve?

It's critical that your board has a process for asking these questions, with no assumptions of how the department is doing.

"Evaluation is creating the expectation, defining the expected outcome, and monitoring to make sure those outcomes are being achieved."

—Susan Radwan, governance expert and
MTA Township Governance Academy instructor

It all starts with goals

Your township can't evaluate a department, program or service without criteria or a standard by which to hold its personnel accountable. For many townships, this criteria is developed naturally during the budgeting process. This is a time when the board is taking a fresh look at its priorities for the coming year, and department heads or staff are determining their needs.

Before the **Delhi Charter Township** (Ingham Co.) board votes on its budget, Manager **John Elsinga** sits down with each department head to ask, what defines your department's mission? What else would you like to be able to do? And what resources do you need to meet those goals?

These questions help department heads educate board members on what their department does, while also helping to shape their goals for the coming year. It's also a good

time for board members to evaluate how the department performed the previous year and, if it missed the mark in areas, determine if the budget should be adjusted so that the program has the resources it needs to reach last year's goals.

While expected goals might include "buy new equipment" or "shave 10 seconds off our response time," Radwan challenges townships to shift away from project-based policies. Project-based policies are easier to write and meet, but values-based policies are more all-encompassing statements that set an overall expectation.

For example, rather than saying, "The fire department will buy a new fire truck in the next two years," the policy might instead say, "The fire department will ensure its equipment is up-to-date and safe." Values-based policies should include how the department treats staff and residents, how it spends money and how it uses its resources.

Kalamazoo Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.) Manager **Dexter Mitchell** refers to this type of goal as taking a 100,000-foot view of the township. With the help of community input, the board created a strategic plan with broad goals for the entire community and for departments such as police and fire, assessing, and planning and zoning.

The board starts with a broad, short statement that communicates a vision. Then, Mitchell meets with department heads to drill down into the vision statement and determine what that looks like in practice. The department head works with his or her employees to make a game plan for steps the department will take to meet that goal.

For example, the board set a goal of community policing for its police department. Mitchell and the township police chief took a microscope to that broad statement to decide what it meant for their community and how the department would implement it. From there, the police chief created a plan of action—spending time in area high schools, hosting Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, and inviting community children to see the inside of a police car and watch the lights flash.

"The board's vision and the board's statement doesn't have to be crystal clear," Mitchell said. "The vision should be broad. Then we fine-tune it from there."

The best policies mean nothing if no one knows what they are. Your board creates a culture of accountability by communicating its policies to the staff, then reinforcing those policies. The point is for your board to delegate responsibilities to the department heads and responsible individuals and let them do their job. Then, it's up to the board to regularly evaluate each department and determine whether those expected outcomes are being met.

Mitchell believes this not only prevents boards from taking on too much responsibility, or even micromanaging, but also motivates township staff and adds a sense of ownership. Most employees are more eager to tackle their work when feel they had a hand in the process, Mitchell said.



Boards should examine departments, from assessing to parks and recreation, from a lens of risk management, thinking through possible risks present in any of the programs or services and outline ways to minimize those risks. This mindset helps boards define unacceptable situations and think about the big picture beyond one-time incidents. It also keeps the focus on what's most important—what's best for residents.

Evaluation as risk management

When a goal is project-based, it's easier to track and evaluate. The board hears regular updates on the project's progress, and members can clearly evaluate the result. Evaluating a department's yearly accomplishments when a major project isn't involved takes a little more thought. Radwan recommends that boards examine departments, from assessing to parks and recreation, from a lens of risk management. The board should think through possible risks present in any of the programs or services and outline ways to minimize those risks.

This mindset helps boards define unacceptable situations and think about the big picture beyond one-time incidents. It also keeps the focus on what's most important—what's best for residents.

For example, many townships offer trail systems. A common goal might be to keep the trails clear of leaves, snow and debris. But dig a little deeper, and the root issue is that snowy and icy trails are unsafe and leave the township open to liability. A broader, more encompassing goal might instead be to keep the trail system safe. Then, the parks and recreation department—or whoever oversees trails in your township—would be responsible for determining what that means. The department director could conduct a risk assessment and determine where risks exist. Then, the board would sit down during the budgeting process and determine the funding that's needed to minimize those risks.

Don't wait for an annual review

An annual review of each department and department staff is a great practice for your board and an excellent way to ensure that each is regularly evaluated. But don't wait a full year to check in. By that point, a project could be significantly far behind, or what could have been a small problem may have ballooned into a full-on crisis.

Many boards ask departments to provide updates at board meetings at least on a regular basis. This not just a time to list recent activities, but also to discuss accomplishments and results. It's also a chance for board members to ask questions.

Communication doesn't always need to be formal, said **Jim Nankervis, Ishpeming Township** (Marquette Co.) supervisor and MTA District 2 director. The long-time official makes it a point to have frequent conversations with everyone from assistants to department directors. He asks questions and helps employees plan when they need it. If he notices an issue, he addresses it right then and there. While there's certainly a line between being involved and micromanaging, Nankervis says that isn't an issue in his township.

"If I start micromanaging, the employees tell me," he said with a laugh. "I back off a little bit."

Those frequent conversations aren't just essential for determining whether your departments and services are effective. Mitchell said they're the key to building relationships with township employees. When you have robust relationships with employees, they'll come to you when there's a problem.

Don't stick to the surface level in your conversations. If all you ask is, "How are things going?" you'll rarely gain valuable insight. Mitchell's strategy is to keep asking "why?" Start with a question, then follow each answer with "why?" as many as five times. These questions help you to reach the root issue rather than just the symptoms.

How do I evaluate?

You've set goals, you've monitored, but how do you know if your department is succeeding? Your board needs to evaluate the township's departments using metrics outlined in your goals. This is especially daunting when looking at technical and complicated departments, such as assessing. Luckily, many services are held to specific standards by statute. Your board can use the data already available to you to determine where departments are succeeding and where they're falling short, Reed said. Is your Audit of Minimum Assessing Requirements (AMAR) showing deficiencies to be addressed? Does your public drinking water meet the state testing and quality standards? Were your assessment notices and tax bills sent by the state deadline? These metrics can help to raise red flags if something in a department isn't quite right.

Other numbers can paint a picture of where your board needs to make changes. For example, more people showing up to contest their assessments at board of review meetings could indicate a trend or problem to analyze. While you shouldn't judge your fire department's success by how many runs it made last year, a significant increase or drop could indicate your staffing needs have changed. An increase in response times could also signal an issue.

Elsinga also relies on feedback from his township's residents. If park equipment is in disrepair, or the wait time was too long on Election Day, he knows he'd hear about it. By the same token, if he routinely hears residents say the township's emergency medical technicians took good care of them, he knows that department is doing well. And with the advent of social media, the public has ample opportunity to let their opinions be known. "Feedback is my No. 1 method of determining whether or not we're meeting the demand and/or expectations of the public," Elsinga said.

When considering complaints, it's important to put them in context. If your board receives multiple complaints about the same issue, it could signal that there's a systemic issue you should address. But don't make major changes in response to outliers. You can't please all residents at all times—there are bound to be complaints here and there.

Sometimes, even if everything looks good on paper, something doesn't smell right when you evaluate an issue or program. Trust your gut, Reed said. If something tells you

that something's not right, ask more questions and find out what's triggering your intuition. An objective look at an issue can be helpful.

We're not meeting our goals. Now what?

Most departments won't hit their goals 100 percent of the time. Sometimes, a department head misses the mark, or a service falls short of expectations. When this happens, your board needs to sit down with the department head and find out why. While the problem could be a performance issue, there could also be contributing factors that are just as important for the board to consider, Radwan said.

Sometimes, falling short of a goal can point to inadequate funding. Maybe the department didn't have the resources or equipment it needed to meet expectations—a problem that could be remedied during the budgeting process if your board has enough dollars to move around. It's also possible that the goal was unrealistic and could be modified for the next year.

This kind of careful examination can make a huge difference in the quality of your services. Just 20 years ago, Delhi Charter Township Fire/EMS Department had about 1,500 runs a year and provided basic life support. But a review of the numbers showed that runs were drastically increasing due to the township's aging residents, as well as an overall growth in population. This didn't mean that the department wasn't doing a good job. Elsinga realized they just needed more people and more training.

Donate a Park Bench Program

Portland, Michigan placed over 200 donated benches in parks and along a river-walk trail with no cost to their budget

for more info:
877-609-2243
PollyProducts.com

Made from Recycled
HDPE #2 Plastic

PROUD TO MANUFACTURE IN MICHIGAN
MMTC

cover story

So when the time came to evaluate the township's emergency medical services, Elsinga helped the board craft a new goal—offer the staffing and services needed to adequately serve older residents. The department transitioned from being staffed by volunteers to being a full-time fire department. And in the past year, the township added a few extra full-time personnel so they could be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If the problem is a personnel issue, it's time to sit down with the department head and work together on how to improve their performance. But Mitchell said personnel issues can largely be handled by having regular conversations and dialogue well before a formal evaluation takes place. If you know about issues as they happen, you can address them right then and there.

When your township has truly created a culture of accountability, employees who don't agree or won't comply often don't stay, Elsinga said. Creating a workplace that's focused on excellence and serving residents becomes self-perpetuating. Township and department leaders who are dedicated to public service and constantly striving to improve will attract like-minded employees.

"Folks who don't understand the beauty of delivering services to this community, they generally won't stay here,"

Elsinga said. "Our department heads create a great work environment where they all work well together. We all collectively help one another out. It's an intrinsic value that department heads have when they see that the customers they serve are worth working for. That's who stays."

Never too late

If your board hasn't evaluated its programs and services regularly, it's not too late to start. Your next budget could be the perfect opportunity to sit down with department heads and set goals. Or, if you don't have an employee handbook or personnel policies, your board could tackle that project. The process certainly isn't easy, but the result will be assurance that your township is delivering on its promise to residents—high-quality, efficient services.



Bethany Mauger,
MTA Staff Writer

See page 27 for a continuing education self-assessment, worth 2.0 elective credits in MTA's Township Governance Academy.



Mika Meyers PLC
Attorneys at Law



Legal counsel that helps local government work effectively.

Our Local Government Law practice group works with local governments and public authorities to ensure the efficient and cost-effective delivery of vital public services. We provide specialized legal expertise in areas as diverse as zoning and land use planning, bond issues, special assessments, tax increment financing, DDAs and other public authorities, labor contracts and arbitration, employee benefits, elections, environmental regulation and many other matters affecting local governments. For more than 50 years, skilled Mika Meyers attorneys have helped public-sector entities meet the ever-increasing demands of their constituents and communities.

For more information on how our **Local Government Law** team can assist your community, visit mikameyers.com.



900 Monroe NW Grand Rapids, MI 49503 (616) 632-8000

mikameyers.com



Continuing Education Self-Assessment

Participants enrolled in the Township Governance Academy (TGA), MTA's credentialing program, may obtain 2.0 elective credits for successful completion of this quiz. (To receive credit, this quiz must be completed by April 1, 2021.) To obtain credit, participants must answer the following 10 multiple-choice questions by circling the correct answer and receive a minimum passing score of 70 percent. The questions are based on content from the article, "Evaluate your township's programs and services," beginning on page 21. There is no charge for MTA members to take the quiz or to obtain TGA credit. Completed quizzes should be faxed to (517) 321-8908 or mailed to: MTA, 512 Westshire Dr., Lansing, MI 48917. MTA will notify you of your results within two weeks after receiving your quiz. **IMPORTANT:** Please keep a copy of your completed quiz in your TGA binder. For information about TGA, call (517) 321-6467, email tga@michigantownships.org, or visit www.michigantownships.org/members/tga.asp.

TGA Continuing Education—April/May 2018 Evaluate your township's programs and services

NAME: _____ **TOWNSHIP & COUNTY:** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

1. **Evaluating your township's programs and services:**
 - a. Should be done each year by the department head.
 - b. Is the supervisor's responsibility.
 - c. Is a requirement in state statute.
 - d. Is the entire board's responsibility.
2. **Ideally, programs and services would be evaluated by:**
 - a. An annual report at a township board meeting.
 - b. Carefully examining the department's outcomes.
 - c. Daily interaction between board members and township employees.
 - d. Providing board members with a log of recent activities.
3. **Goal-setting:**
 - a. Provides the criteria by which departments are held accountable.
 - b. Allows boards to create action plans for each department, program and service.
 - c. Tells boards how much to budget for new equipment.
 - d. Provides an up-close look at each aspect of the township.
4. **How are goals turned into action plans for departments?**
 - a. Board members create a list of steps and activities.
 - b. Township managers are responsible for interpreting policy.
 - c. Department heads and staff interpret goals.
 - d. Township supervisors delegate this responsibility to trustees.
5. **Boards create a culture of accountability by:**
 - a. Eliminating employees who don't meet their goals.
 - b. Communicating its policies to township personnel.
 - c. Creating policies in closed session.
 - d. Hiring experienced department heads and staff.
6. **How can boards evaluate accomplishments when a major project isn't involved?**
 - a. Carefully track the department's activities.
 - b. Delegate the responsibility to the department head.
 - c. Evaluate it through the lens of risk management.
 - d. All of the above.
7. **When should the board check in on a department's progress?**
 - a. Monthly
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Up to the board
8. **Boards should determine metrics for evaluating programs and services in advance, including:**
 - a. Data provided by the state
 - b. Personal observations.
 - c. Feedback from social media.
 - d. All of the above
9. **While complaints can be an indicator of how a program or service is doing, your board should consider:**
 - a. Who was making the complaint.
 - b. If the complainer was trying to get someone in trouble.
 - c. Whether the complaint indicates a systemic problem.
 - d. Whether the complaint was made by a prominent citizen.
10. **When a department isn't meeting a goal, the board should:**
 - a. Put the department head on a performance improvement plan.
 - b. Determine what factors contributed to the problem.
 - c. Budget more money for the department.
 - d. Create a less lofty goal for next year.

upcoming MTA workshops

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Cemeteries: Challenges & Solutions

Township cemeteries provide a positive personal service to residents during a difficult time. Gain a better understanding of the rules and regulations, along with other important aspects of cemetery management and administration during this half-day workshop.

Led by **MTA Member Information Services Liaison Cindy Dodge**, a featured Michigan Association of Municipal Cemeteries conference speaker, this informative workshop will also dig into elements of green or natural burials and other options many conventional cemeteries are incorporating. Participants will also:

- Review the **legal obligations** for cemeteries, including content and procedures for adopting a cemetery ordinance.
- Explore fees and other **budgeting and financial aspects**, including tips on dealing with special cemetery management issues.
- Examine the **role of advisory committees, cemetery sextons and other caretakers**, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the clerk and township board.



Choose from two locations, each offering a different schedule. Join us **June 26 in Frankenmuth**, where class will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and includes a networking lunch at noon. On **July 31 in Harris**, held in conjunction with *MTA's UP North Summit*, registration and lunch begin at noon; the class is held from 1 to 5 p.m.

Cancellation, Substitution & Switching Policy

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office at least two weeks prior to the event date will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may switch workshop locations at no charge if you notify MTA of the change at least one week prior to the workshop; otherwise, a \$25/person fee will be assessed. You may substitute another individual from your township without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change.

Members may purchase MTA's *Township Cemetery Management* book for the discounted price of \$34.50 when registering for the class. This informative book offers a review of statutes that govern township authority over cemeteries, along with the financial aspects of this valuable service. CD of samples included. Pre-purchased books will be distributed at check-in. A limited number of books will also be available to purchase on-site.

Cemeteries Registration Form

Township _____ County _____

Name & Title _____ Purchase *Cemetery Management Book* Yes No

Name & Title _____ Purchase *Cemetery Management Book* Yes No

Name & Title _____ Purchase *Cemetery Management Book* Yes No

Telephone _____ Email _____

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

Check enclosed (payable to MTA)

Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # _____ Expires _____ / _____

Print Card Holder's Name _____ Signature _____

Which location will you attend?

June 26: Frankenmuth July 31 Harris

REGULAR rate*: \$109 for paid registrations received within two weeks of the event

DISCOUNTED rate*: \$89 for paid registrations received more than two weeks prior to the event

_____ (# registered) x \$ _____ (rate*) = _____

_____ (# of books) x (\$34.50/book*) = _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = _____

*Rates apply to MTA members; non-members, call for rates.

Save time, register online:
www.michigantownships.org



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. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.

upcoming MTA workshops

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

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

MTA can help you better understand the fundamentals of assessment and taxation, identify what's important to the residents you serve, and offer strategies to improve transparency and enhance credibility. Join us at the **Bavarian Inn Lodge** in **Frankenmuth** this **June** for one (or all!) of the sessions described below:

Fundamentals of Assessment & Taxation (F-105; 4 credits) June 26 from 4 to 8 p.m. (Includes dinner served at 5:30 p.m.)

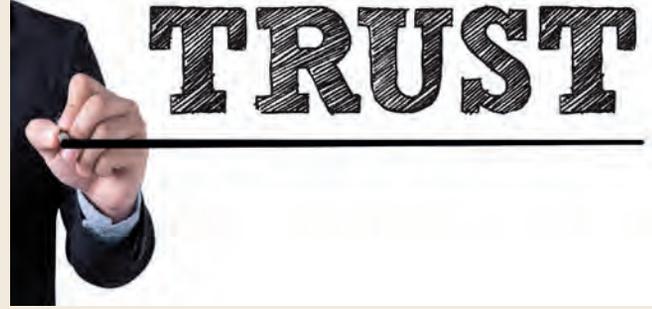
Property taxation and assessment administration are two cornerstones of township operations. From assessment and board of review meetings, all the way to tax collection—it's essential that board members have an understanding of how the process works. Learn more about the Headlee Amendment and Proposal 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.

Creating a Vision for Your Township (B-103; 4 credits) June 27 from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (Includes continental breakfast)

Identifying core community values and expectations is a critical component in serving your community. Learn strategies for evaluating township programs and services, and explore the need for innovation and change. By examining both adversity and opportunities, you can identify how to balance short-term issues with a long-term vision. Rekindle your township's mission by examining your community's past, present and future.

Linking with the Community (B-106; 4 credits) June 27 from 1 to 4:15 p.m. (Includes lunch served at 12:15 p.m.)

Enhancing credibility in the public eye begins with your board. Examine ways of being more transparent to your community—a great exercise to increase trust at the local level. Explore ways of determining what your constituents want and how to keep them informed about your township's activities. Join the discussion on cultivating emerging leaders in your community.



These courses are part of MTA's Township Governance Academy (TGA). They are designed to enhance your leadership skills and motivate you to take on the challenges and opportunities unique to those serving as an elected official. Regardless of your position on the board or amount of experience, TGA will move you to a higher level of performance and make your service more rewarding. Uncertain whether TGA is for you? Try it! You do NOT have to be enrolled in TGA to attend the courses. Credit will be assigned retroactively if you enroll within six months of attending.



Cancellations & Substitutions: Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by June 12 will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may substitute another individual from your township for your registration at any time without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change. Substitutions are not allowed for registrations made using scholarship funds.

TGA Registration Form

Township _____ County _____

Daytime Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Name & Title Assessment Vision Community All sessions

	Registration Rate* After June 12	Discounted Rate* By June 12
FULL PROGRAM: All sessions	\$327/attendee	\$267/attendee
Assessment & Taxation (F-105)	\$109/attendee	\$89/attendee
Creating a Vision (B-103)	\$109/attendee	\$89/attendee
Linking with Community (B-106)	\$109/attendee	\$89/attendee

# of Sessions		Registration Fee		Total
_____	x	_____	=	_____

*Rates apply 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) MasterCard VISA

- - -	/
Card #	Expires
Print Card Holder's Name	Signature



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. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.



Save half-off all MTA webcasts in May!

Use the promo code:
spring

Thinkspring!

We're thinking spring around the MTA office, and that makes us want to celebrate! To share our joy, we are extending our March Madness webcast sale into a "Spring Fever" webcast sale in May. **All MTA webcasts will be half-off for the entire month of May!** Helping to educate Michigan's local officials is an incredible honor, and we just wanted to take the opportunity to show our appreciation. When checking out, use promo code: **spring**

Choose from more than 30 webcast topics under the following categories:

Assessment & Taxation

Board Essentials

Financial

Planning & Zoning

New Officials Training

Township Governance Academy

MTA webcasts offer convenient, affordable education by bringing the targeted township learning right to you—whether to your township hall for the entire board to partake, to your office computer, or your own mobile device. And with prices half-off in May, there's just no reason NOT to try them out!

Detailed descriptions of each webcast are available online; visit MTA's eLearning Library at www.michigantownships.org (under the "MTA Products & Training" drop-down menu) or view the full webcast library at <https://mta.elevate.commpartners.com>.



**Are you ready
to take the
next step?**

**Stronger leaders make
stronger townships.**

Learn more at MTA's
2018 Conference or visit
www.michigantownships.org.

MTA's Township Governance Academy (TGA) was developed to help you to be a stronger leader in your community.



TGA courses go beyond board meetings and budgets, enhancing your leadership skills and motivating you to take on the challenges and opportunities unique to those serving as an elected local official.

MTA's Annual Conference is the perfect place to learn more about the Academy!

Get an introductory overview of the program and have your questions answered. You can also earn up to 16 credits, including eight elective credits JUST for attending Conference, and eight Boardmanship credits if you attend the two pre-Conference classes!

**Join the
Parade**

**Register
today!**



The Township Parade of Flags will kick off MTA's 2018 Annual Conference's Opening Session on Tuesday, April 24.

Register today to take part in the Parade—what some attendees call “the most inspirational part of the Conference!” To register, fax this form to (517) 321-8908, or email jenn@michigantownships.org by April 13, 2018. Information and instructions will be emailed to all Parade participants prior to Conference.

Township/County _____

Contact Person _____ Title _____

Email Address _____

Questions? Call Jenn Fiedler at (517) 321-6467
or email jenn@michigantownships.org.



We are all super heroes

In Brett Culp's mind, all township officials are really super heroes at heart.

Our 2018 Conference Keynote Brett Culp inspires everyday people to engage in a passionate, meaningful mission that leaves a positive impact

on the world and brings out the heroic spirit in us all. Township Focus asked the award-winning documentary filmmaker to

share a bit of his thoughts on how heroic stories and heroic individuals can inspire us to believe in a better tomorrow. Learn more from Culp at MTA's 2018 Annual Conference this April in Acme Township.



True, they might think of themselves as only their mild-mannered alter egos. But when a crisis hits, Culp knows they won't hesitate to don their capes and save the day.

A life-long lover of all things super hero, documentary filmmaker Culp has drawn the connection between the beloved stories of Batman and Superman and reframing your life's work as an adventure, as living an extraordinary mission. He's shared with audiences around the world how ordinary people can change the world.

And as the keynote speaker at MTA's upcoming Annual

Educational Conference & Expo, he'll inspire MTA members to channel their inner hero and see their work not as a mundane list of statutory duties, but as a noble cause.

"This is what super hero stories give us—to live life as a bold, daring adventure of fighting the enemies and keeping the world safe," Culp said. "We have to wake up every morning and say, the township needs to be saved, and I'm the one who can save it."

'Use your powers to help others'

To Culp, super hero stories are parables of characters who were forced to look in the mirror and decide whether they were willing to devote their lives to something bigger than themselves. While kids might like their costumes and powers, adults can still relate to that inner battle that so many of us face today, he said. We may not have the ability to bend steel with our bare hands and we might not wear a special suit, but we have influence, whether it's the comments we

leave on Facebook or the words we say to the people around us. All of us have power—especially as township officials—and we have to decide what to do with it.

“At a subtle level, those stories are saying, you are powerful, you have good stuff in you, and you can use your power to help others,” Culp said.

These stories eventually drove Culp to create his documentary film “Legends of the Knight.” He’d seen too many documentaries telling stories of everything that’s wrong with the world. Culp wanted to do something different—he wanted to show audiences what was right with the world. His documentary did just that, featuring people who loved Batman as a child and found a way to make a difference as adults just like their hero did.

The film was streamed on multiple online services and is now available on Amazon Prime. But Culp took it a step further. He created an initiative where people could host screenings of the film, with proceeds donated to their charity of choice. The grassroots movement had no money for marketing or management, but it caught on. Eventually, the film was screened in 110 cities around the world, raising \$100,000 for charity.

“That transformed the way I saw community, the way I saw the impact of everyday people to do good, and the way I thought about leadership,” Culp said. “Normally you think of leaders as being managers who tell people what to do. Most of these people who hosted screenings were everyday people, and yet they invited everyday people in their community to join them on a mission to do something extraordinary together.”

Good people doing good things

Culp never planned to become a motivational speaker. But when he was invited to attend screenings of his film, he shared his vision for the documentary and his goals behind the screenings. Before he knew it, he was invited to speak at conferences, associations, large organizations and companies. His message of good people doing good things resonated with nearly every audience—especially in an age when we’re bombarded with bad news on a daily basis.

Township officials can be hit especially hard with difficulties and challenges. Many townships have legitimate reasons for officials to say that there are too many issues for one board member to ever fix, Culp said. In his work, however, he’s seen change happen little by little when everyday people stay committed and persevere.

“I’m excited to bring to this community of super heroes that empowerment, that reinvigoration of the importance, the urgency and the value of what they’re doing every day,” Culp said of his upcoming MTA Conference keynote address.

It’s not that township officials aren’t willing to struggle—if they weren’t, they never would have run for office! What most people fear deep down is that their efforts are meaningless. Anyone fighting those worries can shift their point of view by thinking of someone their work has

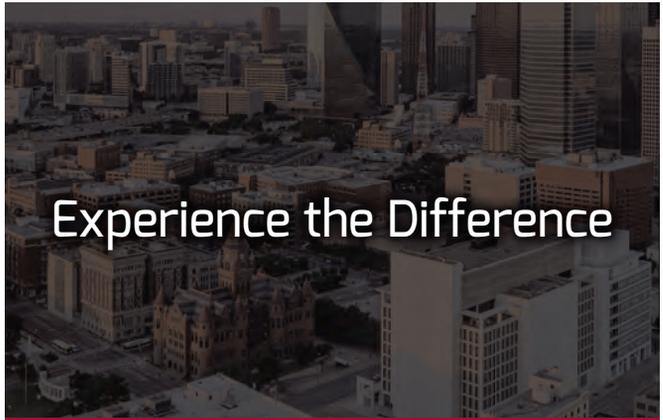
impacted for the better. Public servants have to believe that they’re making a difference, even if they never get a thank you note, and even if they can’t put a face to it. They also must realize that even if they can’t fix the problem today, they’re leaving a legacy that will help others long term.

“When you can feel that in your heart, that idealism that you felt when you were four years old and you put on a cape and ran through the backyard, imagine what you can do in the world,” Culp said.

In his years as a filmmaker, Culp has seen that the people truly making an impact aren’t necessarily the rich and famous. Instead, it’s the ordinary people devoting themselves moment by moment, day by day, who are making a difference. Culp knows township officials are no different. Public service is a selfless act, he said. It’s work that isn’t glamorous, and it doesn’t come with great pay, but it’s also very noble.

“Township officials know in their hearts that it matters,” Culp said. “I want them to know that I know it matters, too.”

Learn more from Brett Culp at the General Session of MTA’s 2018 Annual Educational Conference & Expo on Wednesday, April 25. Culp will share additional insights in his breakout session, Leadership is an Invitation, being held later that day, from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. For more about the Conference, turn to pages 17-20, or visit www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp.



Experience the Difference



Local Government ERP
Financial Management
Community Development
Public Works
Personnel Management



Get started today at (855) BSA-SOFT | www.bsasoftware.com



Cooperative efforts bring Barns Park history from past to present

The fight to save Grand Traverse County's former state hospital is now the stuff of legend.

When the state planned to demolish the massive buildings on the multi-hundred-acre property, residents were outraged. One attorney claims he waved a court order in the contractor's face, demanding that he stop immediately. Another resident swears he laid down in front of a bulldozer and dared the operator to keep going.

While some of these stories are debatable, everyone can agree that no single person or municipality can claim responsibility for the property's restoration. What had become a community albatross is now a major destination thanks to a multitude of collaborations and partnerships, including **Garfield Charter Township** (Grand Traverse Co.) and the City of Traverse City. Together, the two entities created a joint recreational authority to successfully campaign and pass a millage to renovate the old hospital farm. Today, the giant barns that once helped feed hospital patients and staff house a major wedding and meeting venue in the middle of what is now known as Historic Barns Park.

Soon, MTA members will have the chance to see Historic Barns Park up close. On Monday, April 23, attendees at MTA's Annual Educational Conference can tour the grounds and learn about how joint recreational authorities work at an Edutour hosted by **Matt Cowall**, executive director of the joint recreational authority. They'll also dig into how this unique public park is managed, including the collaborative approach to managing and improving the site, raising revenue, and regulating an event barn.

A vital partnership

Garfield Charter Township Supervisor **Chuck Korn** credits the recreational authority—and the hard work of private residents—with getting a project off the ground that many thought was impossible. "I don't think any one of us could have pulled this off alone," Korn said. "The partnership was vital to making this happen."

Just a few decades ago, no one would have imagined that the Traverse area site could become a Midwest destination. Built in the 1880s, the old state hospital provided mental health care and was the largest employer in Traverse City for the better part of a century. The massive grounds spanned hundreds of acres and included a large agricultural operation. Not only did the farm grow fruits and vegetables to feed more than 2,000 patients and staff daily, it was also a part of the hospital's treatment program. Patients were encouraged to get outside and help weed the gardens or milk the cows.

But when the hospital closed in 1989, the state wanted to demolish it. The Victorian-era buildings were laden with lead paint and asbestos, and restoring the property didn't make financial sense for the state. Local citizens, however, were firmly against demolition. The community had a soft spot in its heart for the property—nearly everyone knew someone who had worked there, and they didn't want to lose the natural beauty or the buildings that could never be replaced. Their protests finally won out, and Grand Traverse County bought the property from the state before transferring ownership to the newly created Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation.

Then, the project came to a screeching halt. No one knew what to do with the blighted behemoth, or how to fund the costly clean-up it would take just to make the grounds reusable by modern standards. Proposals were submitted, but none were feasible. Would-be developers came and went, and residents' hopes were dashed over and over again. Some believed that talks of renovations would never come to fruition.

As discussions continued, it became clear that the project was too much for just one entity to handle. The former hospital straddled the line between Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township, and whatever happened to it would impact both municipalities.

"Having the third-party energy of the recreational authority focused on the old farm really helped to advance the site as far as it's gotten today," Cowall said. "I think it would have been harder to do if the property was absorbed into an existing parks system. The hyper-focus of the authority really helped the authority to do a lot over the years and leverage a lot of creative investments."

With the authority in place, the ball was rolling for the old farm. But the question remained: What exactly should be done with the barns? In 2004, the authority had successfully passed a small millage to operate Historic Barns Park and two other parklands, but that support alone was not enough to rehabilitate the old buildings and return them to public use.

A community vision turned reality

In 2007, the authority hosted an extensive series of public visioning sessions to brainstorm exactly what residents wanted to see done with the property. Citizens threw down a challenge: find a public use for the barns that could also help to support the ongoing operation and maintenance of the buildings themselves. With their high ceilings, sturdy construction and unique beauty, the old barns were practically made for hosting events. After vetting several different options, it was determined that event rentals would be the best shot at opening the structures to the public while also bringing in needed revenue.



The giant barns at the former state hospital in Grand Traverse County that once helped feed patients and staff are now a major Midwest destination wedding and meeting venue called Historic Barns Park.

Funding wasn't the only need. Many aspects of the public's vision for the park included experiences and programming that the authority wasn't equipped to provide on its own. That led to formal collaborations with three area nonprofits whose missions support that public vision, including The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park, SEEDS, and TC Community Garden. These partners help to manage and redevelop areas of the park while advancing their own missions on the site.

In 2010, armed with park partners and a business plan, the authority embarked on a three-year fundraising campaign to refurbish the Cathedral Barn's upper level for public events. Today, every loose nail and drafty crack are gone. In their place is a stunning space that regularly wows wedding guests and meeting attendees. "It's expansive. It's impressive," Cowall said. "You don't see buildings like that anymore."

The park is still a work in progress. For example, more development remains for the Cathedral Barn, and the recreational authority hasn't decided what to do with the second barn just yet. In the meantime, the adjacent Historic Barn is safe, completely free of contaminants and serves as a backdrop for the countless wedding photos taken on the park grounds.

Korn is proud of the park, of the gardens full of flowers and plants, of the trails leading over to the Village at Grand Traverse Commons, the ambitious private redevelopment of the old hospital's main buildings, now bustling with shops, restaurants, offices and condos. The partnership it took to pull off this project wasn't easy. It took years of cooperation, hard work and, yes, sometimes disagreements. But the end result was worth it. "There are always negotiations and give and take," Korn said. "Overall, it has been a good process."

Room is still available to register for the Historic Barns Park EduTour, held Monday, April 23, from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Use the Conference registration form or call the MTA office at (517) 321-6467 to register. For more about the Conference, turn to pages 17-20, or visit www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp.



2018 MTA proposed policy platform

As adopted by delegates at MTA's Annual Meeting, April 26, 2018, at the Grand Traverse Resort, these proposed policies will become the platform from which legislation is sought in the coming year.

Purpose

The Michigan Townships Association Policy Platform is a member-adopted plan that identifies the Association's primary legislative policy objectives. It provides broad policy guidance to the MTA Board of Directors and staff in responding to legislation in a manner that reflects the values and preferences of the MTA membership. It offers instruction as to the issues that the membership desires the Association to bring to the attention of policymakers and for which the Association is to effectively advocate. The Policy Platform also identifies positions on issues that the Association's membership pledges its active support, including engaging in grassroots advocacy consistent with the Policy Platform objectives.

The legislative process requires compromise and accommodations to alternative perspectives. As such, the Association will pursue legislative outcomes that most closely achieve the spirit and intent of the Policy Platform, but cannot be bound to premise its position on the precise wordage of its Policy Platform.

The Policy Platform delineates issues into six broad issue areas:

- Assessment and Taxation
- Elections
- Environment and Land Use
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Township Operations
- Transportation and Infrastructure

The issues addressed in a particular subject area may have implications for issues addressed in other subject areas and should be interpreted such that the broad policy objectives of all affected areas are accomplished.

MTA Annual Meeting Deliberation and Adoption Process

Member officials are strongly encouraged to review the Policy Platform prior to the MTA Annual Meeting and, if they have questions regarding the purpose or intent of any of the specific policy objectives, to attend the *What's New in the Proposed MTA Policy Platform* session on Wednesday, April 25 from 1:30 to 2:45 p.m. in Michigan GH (Lobby Level).

The MTA president will present the Policy Platform, focusing discussion and deliberation on the policy objectives in each of the six policy areas. Following discussion, debate and potential amendments, a vote will be taken to adopt a resolution of support for the entire Policy Platform. Amendments may include striking (removing) a policy objective. If a policy objective is removed from the Policy Platform at the Annual Meeting, it will be construed by the Board of Directors that it is the membership's intent that MTA refrain from engaging in any advocacy regarding that particular objective.

Amendments. Members who desire to amend a policy will be required to do so in a manner consistent with *Robert's Rules of Order (RONR (11th ed.)* section 12, pages 130-162). Amendments are permitted to any policy submitted at the Annual Meeting provided the purpose of the original policy remains unaltered. (MTA Bylaws, Article IV. C.3)

Amendments can take one of three forms:

- **Add content.** This is accomplished by the following: "I move to amend the proposed policy by adding the words ' _____ ' to the policy objective beginning with the words ' _____ ' in the section under current consideration." The president will ask for a second, which is required for the amendment to be discussed, and will restate the policy objective with the new wording. After restating the amendment, the president will ask for debate on the amendment. One secondary amendment, on the new language under consideration only, is in order. Once debate has finished, the president will ask for a vote. If a majority of the membership votes in favor of the amendment, the wording of the original policy objective is changed accordingly.
- **Substitute content.** This is accomplished by the following: "I move to amend the proposed policy by substituting the words ' _____ ' for the words ' _____ ' to the policy objective beginning with the words ' _____ ' in the section under current consideration." The same procedures that apply to adding content apply to substituting content.
- **Strike content, including eliminating an entire policy objective.** This is accomplished by the following: "I move to amend the proposed policy by striking the words ' _____ ' to the policy objective beginning with the words ' _____ ' in the section under current consideration." If the intent is to strike the policy objective entirely, the proper amendment would be, "I move to amend the proposed policy by striking the policy objective beginning with the words ' _____ ' in the section under current consideration." The same procedures that apply to adding and substituting content apply to striking content. If an entire policy objective is struck (removed), the Association will not advocate for that objective.

Added and substitute content must be in compliance with the MTA Bylaws, Article IV. C.1 and 2, such that it is germane to the purpose of the original policy and does not constitute a new purpose to the policy.

Robert's Rules of Order Regarding 'Tabling' a Motion (properly referred to as 'Lay on the Table')

The motion to "lay on the table" enables the Annual Meeting to lay the pending question aside temporarily, when something else of immediate urgency has arisen. It is in order if the intention is to resume deliberations after the urgent issue has been resolved, but "... is out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a measure." (*Ibid*, section 17, pages 206-207) It can be applied to a main motion, such as the adoption of the entire Policy Platform, but cannot be applied to a specific policy objective of the Policy Platform. (*Ibid*, page 208) A motion to table must be seconded and is not debatable. If adopted, a motion to take from the table would be in order at any time. (*Ibid*, section 17, pages 209-210)

Policies from the Floor. Pursuant to the MTA Bylaws, Article IV. C.2.a-c, policies from the floor shall be submitted to the MTA Headquarters Room not later than 12:00 noon the day prior to the Annual Meeting. The Legislative Policy Platform Committee shall review the wording and legality of such policies. No policy shall be accepted from the floor unless a petition signed by at least one hundred (100) registered delegates to the Conference accompanies the policy. The policy sponsor shall furnish sufficient copies of the policy to be distributed to all delegates at the beginning of the Annual Meeting.

Special Rules. The Board of Directors submits to the Annual Meeting the following special rules, pursuant to *Robert's Rules of Order (RONR (11th ed.))*, section 2, pages 15-17):

- There is a time limit of three minutes per delegate on debatable issues the first time that a delegate addresses the Annual Meeting membership on an issue, and one-and-a-half minutes the second time that a delegate addresses the Annual Meeting on the same issue.
- The chair shall have discretion in further limiting the time of debate considering the overall limitation of time.

Policy Platform

The Board of Directors submits to the MTA Annual Meeting the following Legislative Vision, Statements of Principles and Policy Objectives for adoption:

Legislative Vision

The Legislative Vision expresses long-term aspirational goals of the Association. The Michigan Townships Association envisions a 21st-century Michigan where:

- Townships have statutory authority and state financial support sufficient to provide high-quality services and infrastructure consistent with community needs and expectations, and to enable full compliance with ever-expanding state-imposed mandates without cutting local spending priorities

- Elections encourage a high level of voter participation
- Townships are valued and respected for solving local and regional challenges through visionary, ethical leadership and collaboration
- Natural resources are developed from townships in a manner consistent with township regulations that protect public safety and property values
- There is clarity of roles and responsibilities among township officials essential for efficient and effective services to the public
- Townships retain authority to protect and regulate the public rights-of-way and other land uses in the interest of the public
- State laws recognize that township officials are elected by and accountable to their residents for the township's governance, financial position, programs and services consistent with community values

The membership of the Michigan Townships Association supports the Association's efforts to achieve the following Legislative Policy Objectives:

Assessment and Taxation

The Michigan Townships Association supports property tax fairness, equity, and efficient assessment and collection by public servants who are accountable to township officials to ensure public trust and locally accessible information and assistance. Valuation should be based on sound assessing principles. Local governments should be reimbursed by the state for property tax revenues lost due to statutory exemptions. State government should provide local governments with education and technical support to develop and defend their assessment rolls.

As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current tax laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Valuation of big box stores should be determined using the same assessing methodology as other commercial properties and prohibit the consideration of private deed restrictions or covenants imposed to reduce the value of the property or exclude competitors of the grantor from the market
- Clarify the current statutory criteria for charitable institution property tax exemptions and oppose expansion of exemptions
- Raise the current charter township 10 mill tax limitation to allow charter townships, with voter approval, to address legacy costs, meet demands for expanding services, and offset millage rollback requirements
- Recodify Michigan township statutes to include clarification that assessors are accountable to the township board when the supervisor is not certified to perform assessing functions

2018 MTA proposed policy platform

- Increase the specific tax on mobile homes located in licensed parks
- Exempt minimal personal property tax obligations resulting from minor property improvements on mobile home lots such as small decks, stairs and porches

Elections

The Michigan Townships Association supports fair, transparent and efficient elections administered by township officials that encourage high voter participation and procedures appropriate to varying community resources and population densities.

As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current election laws, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Preserve authority of townships to convey information on ballot proposals to their residents
- Allow candidates seeking township office to pay a filing fee in lieu of filing petition signatures
- Preserve the authority of townships to place millage and bond proposals before voters at any election

Environment and Land Use

The Michigan Townships Association supports state laws that enable townships to efficiently and effectively plan for land uses and adopt zoning ordinances to protect the public health, safety and general welfare. State and federal regulations should not impede local government growth and development policies and objectives. Further, preemption of local land use authority should be limited to issues of great statewide impact and any resulting adverse local impacts should be mitigated by the state or federal government.

As lawmakers and regulatory agencies enact changes to laws addressing township land use and environment, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Require local approval for any DNR purchase of land in townships where a significant amount of land is commercial forestland or is owned by the State of Michigan
- Require DNR to notify townships and provide opportunity to discuss a proposed state land acquisition
- Statewide septic system maintenance standards to reduce septic system failures that create serious public health threats and expose townships to being required to build expensive public sewer systems
- Require lead and copper rules be supported by science-based risk assessment
- Preserve landfill capacities by directing appropriate materials to waste utilization facilities
- Preserve local authority on zoning issues that are strictly local in nature

Intergovernmental Relations

The Michigan Townships Association supports intergovernmental collaboration to restore economic prosperity, efficiently and effectively deliver programs and services, and solve other challenges. State laws should allow creativity, flexibility and incentivize fair and equitable cost-sharing, benefits and governance in inter-local agreements. State laws authorizing economic development tools and other powers should be based on community characteristics relative to policy objectives, rather than city or township legal status. State taxation and spending policies should mitigate adverse revenue impacts on townships.

As lawmakers and regulatory agencies consider altering the fiscal relationship of the state to local governments as well as powers and authorities of local governments, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Full funding to townships for payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, commercial forest program and the swamp tax program
- Expand the number of townships eligible for statutory revenue sharing and grants
- Allow a municipality to create or continue the use of a tax increment financing (TIF) authority to capture tax revenue attributable to increases in property value within an area or district and allow the use of that money for identified TIF purposes
- A local government consolidation process that continues to require voter approval

Township Operations

The Michigan Townships Association supports state and federal governments granting to Michigan townships broad discretion and autonomy to govern the funding and delivery of programs and services. MTA also supports state reimbursement to townships for increased costs resulting from new mandated services and state regulations. Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Modernizing state laws to clarify the governance role of township boards to establish policy direction for townships
- Provide townships that are struggling to pay for retiree pensions and health care benefit commitments the flexibility to choose solutions that are appropriate to local circumstances
- Appropriate, cost-effective training requirements for township planning commissioners, zoning board of appeal members and board of review members to reduce costly lawsuits and improve township decision-making by key appointed boards
- State funding to townships providing public safety protection to state-owned, tax-exempt properties

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Michigan Townships Association concludes that Michigan's road system will continue to require more funding than is currently anticipated in law to ensure that county primary and local roads are safe and convenient for travel. As townships are major financial contributors to road maintenance and construction costs, the Michigan Townships Association supports the inclusion of township officials in transportation policy discussions at all government levels. Michigan has also under-invested in other infrastructure necessary to remain economically competitive and protect the health, safety and general welfare of residents.

The Michigan Townships Association supports the State of Michigan working with township officials in planning, funding and delivering infrastructure needed by every community to be economically viable and free of environmental threats and risks.

As lawmakers and regulators address pressures to better address Michigan's infrastructure, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Additional funding above current statutory levels for primary and local roads and increased funding for water, sewer and communications infrastructure

- Allow townships with voter approval to create special assessment districts for communications infrastructure including broadband and high-speed internet
- Require road agencies to comply with a township's Complete Streets Policy resolution
- Encourage county road commissions or departments to provide matching funds for township road construction and maintenance projects to be spent at the township's discretion



<p>Steven Mann</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7509 mann@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Patrick McGow</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7684 mcgow@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Thomas Colis</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7677 colis@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Harold Bulger</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7507 bulger@millercanfield.com</p>
<p>Steve Frank</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7503 frank@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Jeffrey Aronoff</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7678 aronoff@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Dorothy Heebner</p>  <p>+1.313.496.7860 heebner@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Ian Koffler</p>  <p>+1.517.483.4904 koffler@millercanfield.com</p>

THE LAW FIRM FOR TOWNSHIPS

From municipal bonds to innovative projects, collaborative agreements and tax increment financing, townships and their attorneys throughout Michigan rely on Miller Canfield's 160+ years of collective wisdom and diverse expertise.

We are where you are. Local firm. Global resources. ■



MILLER CANFIELD

millercanfield.com/PublicLaw

aroundthe**state**

townships in the spotlight



Frenchtown Charter Township

Frenchtown Charter Township is a located in eastern Monroe County on the shores of Lake Erie. Frenchtown Charter Township originally was occupied by Native Americans, including the historic Potawatomi. As early as 1784, French Canadians settled along the banks of the River Raisin. Those descendants were known as Muskrat French. During the War of 1812, the area was the site of the Battle of Frenchtown in which 397 Americans were killed—the highest number of American fatalities of any battle during the war. The area of the township was renamed and incorporated in 1817 as the village of Monroe. When the city of Monroe was named a county seat, Frenchtown was reorganized as a township in 1837.



Frenchtown's location provides its residents with the advantages of living in a rural environment within easy access of major metropolitan areas. The township covers a

total of 43.3 square miles, with a beautiful shoreline that stretches for 10.3 miles. In 1986, the township created a special tax assessment district, "Resort District Authority," unique in the state, for the express purpose of correcting and preventing further deterioration in a defined area along the shorelines of Lake Erie.

A variety of recreational resources on the regional, county and local levels draw new residents and visitors to the beautiful area. Swimming, fishing and boating are just a few of the "four-season lifestyle" activities. Frenchtown Charter Township has been fortunate to have received \$386,000 in grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to assist in developing recreational opportunities. Within Frenchtown Charter Township are three township parks, two county parks, one state park, four school facilities, and a large number of private parks, which include three golf courses and two marinas. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, the Edward Loranger House built in 1825, and the Navarre-Anderson Trading Post are some of the historical sites located around the township. The Enrico

Fermi Nuclear Generating Station is also located in Frenchtown Charter Township.

Frenchtown Charter Township is a 21st-century township growing to meet the needs of this diverse community. The township is looking forward to more commercial growth as the new ProMedica Monroe Regional Hospital is built off I-75, which runs through the township.

Frenchtown Charter Township—with the wonderful Lake Erie shoreline, a wide range of activities, and outstanding commercial and residential growth—is dedicated to serving the community as this growth continues and each resident and visitor calls this township "home."





2018 UP North Summit

August 1-2

Island Resort & Conference Center,
Harris

Save the date for MTA's 2018 UP North Summit. Join us for two days of premier education and networking fun in the splendor of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

*Watch MTA publications and
www.michigantownships.org
for updated information, including registration
details and session descriptions.*



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIP PARTICIPATING PLAN



Municipal Office



- Largest Public Act 138 program in Michigan- Providing tailored Property/Casualty insurance coverages for public entities
- Underwritten by an A+ rated insurance carrier
- Supervised by a Michigan board of directors elected from the membership, by the membership
- Administered by Tokio Marine HCC Public Risk providing in-house underwriting, risk control and claims administration
- Servicing over 1300+ Michigan public entities

For more information please contact 1-800-783-3100 or visit our website www.theparplan.com

