

Michigan Township Focus

AUGUST 2015

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

The state of recycling in Michigan

Oversight of township operations is an essential leadership function
page 3

February elections are now a thing of the past
page 12

MTA services spotlight:
Community Connection
page 22





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contents

August 2015 | Volume 3, Number 7



featured articles

14

The state of recycling in Michigan

Gov. Rick Snyder recently announced an initiative to double Michigan's recycling rate over the next two years. Townships can play a major role in increasing residents' accessibility to recycling programs—and doing so can benefit more than just the environment.

22

MTA services spotlight: *Community Connection*

This new series will highlight the various programs and services available to MTA-member township officials. The premiere spotlight explores MTA's exclusive social networking site, *Community Connection*, and how it is bringing together officials from around the state.

Special insert: **MTA Publications & Products catalog**

See what resources MTA has to offer! Remove this special insert catalog and keep for future reference.

in this issue

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|------------------|
| 3 | Local View | 12 | Inside Lansing |
| 4 | News & Notes | 20 | Knowledge Center |
| 9 | Financial Forum | 24 | Around the State |
| 10 | Hello, MTA ... ? | | |



Official Publication of
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mission statement

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allied service provider index



president's round table

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Effective oversight of township operations is an essential function of leadership

Public entity governing bodies such as township boards are expected to effectively oversee programs, services and functions, and hold accountable those who are expected to act in the public interest. The elected township board is responsible for ensuring that assessing officers, fire and police chiefs, zoning administrators, and others who



manage or direct a township function conduct themselves and manage their areas of responsibility in a manner consistent with the community's expectations, use taxpayer money appropriately, enable employees to efficiently and effectively do their jobs, and maintain the public's trust.

Oversight is an important collective and proactive responsibility of township boards

that avoids micromanagement but systematically ascertains that all is well. When conducted unilaterally by self-appointed board watchdogs, "snoopervision" lacks the broad perspective of the entire board, causes divisiveness and defensiveness, and will bring the "Lone Ranger's" motives into question.

A board is not providing effective oversight if examination is only triggered by problems and issues that should have been detected and addressed in advance. Oversight relies on the board also engaging in these other prerequisite leadership tasks:

- Identifying and discussing the implications on township operations of constituent expectations and needs, legal requirements, risks and opportunities
- Reaching a consensus on those implications
- Deliberating and adopting policies that convey the board's explicit expectations

When expectations are clearly outlined to subordinates through policies, only then can these additional activities enable the board to effectively oversee township functions:

- Monitoring immediate subordinates' activities and evaluating outcomes against the board's expectations
- Validating actions that are consistent with policies
- Identifying causes of policy non-compliance, such as:
 - Ambiguities or inconsistencies as to intent
 - Insufficient resources provided to achieve desired outcomes
 - Extenuating circumstances requiring actions not anticipated in current policy

Benign policy noncompliance warrants further policy adjustments by the board, but willful and intentional noncompliance with board policies causing harm necessitates appropriate and proportional disciplinary action.

Effective oversight also requires a high level of transparency on the part of township administrators, and such requisite transparency should also be an explicit board expectation.

Recent attention by the State Tax Commission (STC) on local government assessing practices illustrates that it is not enough for department heads to merely open their records to the township board on request. Townships that have had good evaluations from the STC's Audit of Minimum Assessing Requirements (AMAR) also tend to have assessors who regularly communicate to their boards regarding their compliance with state laws, STC bulletins, new court interpretations, and generally accepted assessing standards and practices.

The eagerness of capable, competent assessors to keep their boards apprised of their activities not only creates the appearance of assessor professionalism, the township board can make a more informed determination that the assessor complies with state requirements and is provided with context to better understand any noncompliance areas.

When informed by the STC of assessing deficiencies, board members are often caught unaware not only of the extent of noncompliance, but are only then learning about assessing's complexity. Regardless of the program or service being evaluated, township officials must be knowledgeable about appropriate evaluation criteria, legal obligations and public perceptions.

And boards should be alarmed when their assessors or other department heads push back on their expectations to be kept informed of areas of legal noncompliance or nonconformance to generally accepted management practices. Whether a township function is handled by an elected or appointed department head, an independent contractor, or another governmental entity, township boards are entitled to full transparency of all information necessary to ensure that the public trust is being maintained. Respect for and cooperation with the board's obligation to the public to provide appropriate oversight should be a fundamental prerequisite of a township official holding a position of public trust.

news¬es

a compendium of noteworthy items

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

AG opinion: Building officials must be township employees

A township building official must be an employee of the township as determined by the economic realities test, according to Attorney General Opinion 7285, issued July 9, 2015.

Under the Construction Code Act, a township may contract with a private organization to administer and enforce the code, but the act imposes limits on what the private organization may do. While many construction code administration and enforcement tasks may be performed by a private organization that contracts with a township to perform code enforcement, a number of functions like issuing building permits, occupancy permits or stop work orders may be processed or delivered by a private organization only after they are approved by the township's building official. Note that "building official" is a specific position, and not all building inspectors are building officials.

The act requires that the person who is the building official must be a township employee, even if they are also an employee of the private organization. It is not enough to be an employee in name or by appointment only; the position must be subject to direction, discipline, discharge and pay by the township. The economic realities test for determining employee status looks at factors like the: "(1) control of a worker's duties; (2) payment of wages; (3) right to hire, fire, and discipline; and (4) performance of the duties as an integral part of the employer's business toward achieving a common goal." The factors are considered in the totality of the circumstances, and no one factor is determinative.

A township may employ a building official who also works for a private organization that contracts to perform construction code administration and enforcement for the township, but is subject to conflict of interest and incompatible office restrictions. For example, he or she could not perform that contractor's work for the township that employs him or her, but could do so for a different governmental entity.

Townships that currently contract with a private organization for construction code enforcement should review the nature of their agreements and may wish to consult their local legal counsel for specific guidance on employing the building official.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

The "Project Beautification" contest in **Berlin Charter Township** (Monroe Co.) allowed residents and businesses to be nominated in recognition of those properties that enhance the appearance of the community. The township also recently unveiled a new website, www.berlinchartertp.com. The site offers a wealth of information on services provided, meetings dates, building requirements, assessing information, event notices, and more. Deputy Clerk **Jane Schreiber** played a key role in the Web project.

Highland Oaks Park, located in **Highland Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), now features universally accessible trails, three boardwalks and floating docks to help the disabled and seniors better enjoy the park. The trails are part of a bigger overall plan to create a network of connected parks. Highland Oaks offers 302 acres of picturesque rolling hills, wetlands and old pastures. Located within the headwaters of the Shiawassee River, the park preserves sensitive habitat while providing recreational experiences in a natural setting.

Eureka Charter Township (Montcalm Co.) recently partnered with neighboring **Montcalm Township** to purchase six sirens among the two townships, increasing safety for all residents. Eureka Charter Township also hosts cleanup days in September and May for township residents to help keep the township clean. The volume disposed of has increased with each cleanup day.

A new brightly colored bridge in **Meridian Charter Township** (Ingham Co.) is making the community even more connected, and walkability is safer and easier. A millage funded the \$650,000 project to build the green bridge.

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.

Retirements

Janet Kuehnlein, Raisinville Township (Monroe Co.) clerk for 30 years.

CORRECTION

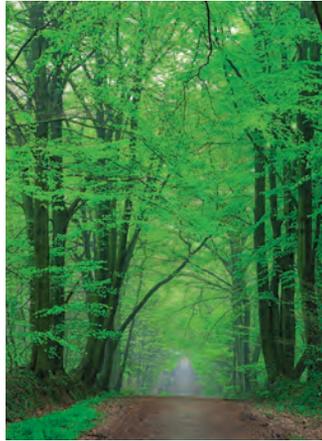
John Anderson, Manistee Township (Manistee Co.) supervisor for 32 years.



STAYING GREEN

Adopt-a-Forest program aims to clean up public lands

The Adopt-a-Forest program is looking for volunteer townships and organizations to participate in a statewide cleanup of public lands. There are currently 663 known illegal dumpsites on state and federal land across the state. Is one—or more—located in your township?



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is also looking for volunteers to scout sites in their area and report back if the sites are still there—or if they have been cleaned up, but not reported, and were therefore never removed from the list. For sites that remain and need to be cleaned up, the DNR has disposal funding on a pre-approved basis for communities and groups that are interested in cleaning up these sites.

Learn more about the Adopt-a-Forest program, and access a searchable database of dumpsites, at www.cleanforests.org/.

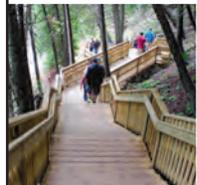


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Hondorp appointed to Fire Fighters Training Council

MTA District 15 Director **Joel Hondorp** has been appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder to serve a four-year term on the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council (MFFTC).

“I look forward to bringing a perspective to the MFFTC on how their decisions will affect local governments,” said Hondorp, who has been **Byron Township** (Kent Co.) clerk for 15 years.

He is a licensed medical first responder, and has been an on-call firefighter since 2004. Hondorp was first elected to the MTA Board of Directors in 2012.

The seven-member MFFTC serves the training and certification needs of Michigan’s 1,075 fire departments and more than 30,600 firefighters and officers.

Tim James, Benton Township (Eaton Co.) fire chief, and **Chad Tackett, Texas Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) fire chief, were also reappointed to the council by Gov. Snyder.

“Not only do these men and women serve their communities through their individual professions, they are volunteering additional time to offer valuable input that helps to improve public safety standards statewide,” Snyder said.



Hondorp

WWW.MICHIGANTOWNSHIPS.ORG FEATURED WEB PAGE

Campaign Finance

A new Web page on the MTA members-only website, this resource includes a fact sheet about Campaign Finance Act compliance, links to pertinent information, and details on what a township official can—and cannot—do under the law.

Access this member resource under the “Answer Center” drop-down menu on the members-only section of MTA’s website. To log in, click on “Member Login” in the upper right-hand corner of the www.michigantownships.org home page, and enter your username and password. Questions? Email website@michigantownships.org.

mta events | august

- 11** Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning workshop, Frankenmuth
- 12** Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning workshop, Kalamazoo
- 25** Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning workshop, Cadillac
- 26** Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning workshop, Lewiston

profile



Advertorial

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Mika Meyers PLC is privileged to serve the Michigan Townships Association and its member townships as an Allied Service Provider. Located in Grand Rapids for more than

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Many of our township clients have been active in the Michigan Townships Association. We have been honored to work over the years with numerous townships whose elected officials have served on the MTA Board of Directors, including five presidents of the Association.

Continuing education is critical in our ever-changing world. The Michigan Townships Association serves a vital educational function for Michigan townships. Similarly, our local government lawyers keep abreast of changes in state and federal law and judicial and administrative decisions that impact townships and their elected officials. Mika Meyers PLC is proud to support the continuing education of our township clients, their elected officials and the members of the Association through our involvement as an Allied Service Provider.

For more information about Mika Meyers, visit www.mikameyers.com, see the firm’s ad on page 7, or turn to the Allied Service Provider Index on page 2.

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, visit www.michigantownships.org/asp.asp.

Proposed policy changes being accepted for MTA's 2016 Annual Meeting

MTA's Legislative Policy and Resolutions Committee is accepting recommendations for proposed policy changes from member townships for presentation at the 2016 MTA Annual Meeting, held Friday, Jan. 22, in conjunction with the 63rd Annual MTA Educational Conference & Expo in Detroit.

The adopted policies form the basis for MTA's legislative focus in 2016. You can view MTA's 2015 Policy Platform on www.michigantownships.org, under the "Advocacy" tab.

Under the rules adopted by MTA's Board of Directors, advance proposed legislative policy changes or additions must be submitted to MTA 150 days prior to the Annual Meeting—by Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015. These proposed changes are reviewed by the committee for word selection and legality, and to ensure they conform with the Association's overall goals and objectives. The proposals are printed in the January/February 2016 issue of *Township Focus* and will also be available at Conference.

Amendments at the Annual Meeting are permitted, provided the purpose and substance of the original resolution remain unaltered. Resolutions may also be submitted from the floor at the Conference if they are first submitted to MTA Conference Headquarters by noon on Thursday, Jan. 21, 2016, the day before the Annual Meeting.

For more information, call (517) 321-6467 or email legislation@michigantownships.org.

MTA county chapters: Reserve your Annual Conference hospitality suite by Sept. 15

Is your MTA county chapter interested in hosting a hospitality suite during the MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo, held Jan. 19–22, 2016, at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center? Hospitality suites can provide an ideal spot to network with fellow township officials after a long day of classes. A limited number of hospitality suites are available to rent during the Conference.



Reservations for MTA county chapter suites should be made by Sept. 15 as unused suites will be made available to sponsors and exhibitors after this date, and availability is not guaranteed. Several different types of suites are available at the host hotel, the Marriott Renaissance Center, at discounted rates.

To make a reservation or for more information, call (517) 321-6467 or email kristin@michigantownships.org.

NOTE: All suite reservations must be made through MTA. Do not contact the Marriott directly, as the hotel staff will be unable to assist you.

An illustration of a green alien with three eyes and antennae sitting in a grey spaceship. A thought bubble above the alien contains a question mark. The background is a dark, starry space.

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AUGUST

1 Electors who wish to receive an absentee voter ballot for Aug. 4 election by mail submit applications by 2 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

3 Electors qualified to obtain an absentee voter ballot for Aug. 4 election may vote in person in the clerk's office by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.761)

4 Emergency absentee voting for Aug. 4 election until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.759b)

Election.

5 Township clerk delivers result of Aug. 4 election to county clerk by 11 a.m. (MCL 168.809)

Candidates without political party affiliation who seek a partisan general office on Nov. 3 ballot file qualifying petitions and Affidavits of Identity by 5 p.m. (MCL 168.590c) Withdrawal deadline elapses at 4 p.m. on Aug. 10.

By 10 Boards of county canvassers meet to canvass Aug. 4 election. (MCL 168.821)

11 Ballot wording of proposals qualified to appear on Nov. 3 ballot certified to county and local clerks by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.646a)

By 13 Local clerk forwards names and addresses of candidates without political party affiliation who seek a partisan general office on Nov. 3 ballot to county clerk. (MCL 168.321)

15 Each municipality shall report to the Department of Treasury the millage rate levied or to be levied that year for a millage described in Section 5(g) or (w) used to calculate an appropriation under Section 17(1)(a) or a distribution under Section 17(3)(a)(i). See MCL 123.1353(4) for the calculation for the 2015 report.

By 17 *By the third Monday in August.* Deadline for taxpayer to file appeal directly with the Michigan Tax Tribunal (MTT) if final equalization multiplier exceeds tentative multiplier and a taxpayer's assessment, as equalized, is in excess of 50 percent of true cash value. (MCL 205.737(7))

SEPTEMBER

3 Post-election campaign statements due. Books closed Aug. 24.

14 Summer taxes due. (MCLs 211.905b(10) and 380.1613)

Last day for qualified taxpayer to apply to local unit treasurer for deferral of payment of summer property tax. (MCL 211.51(7))

Interest of 1 percent per month will accrue if the payment is late for the State Education Tax and county taxes that are part of the summer tax collection. (MCLs 211.905b(10) and 211.44a(6))

By 19 Clerks shall electronically transmit or mail (as requested) an absentee voter ballot to each absent uniformed services or overseas voter who applied for an absentee voter ballot 45 days or more before Nov. 3 election (MOVE deadline). (MCL 168.759a)

Absentee voter ballots for Nov. 3 election must be available for issuance to voters. (MCL 168.714)

24 *through Oct. 13.* Precinct inspectors for Nov. 3 election appointed by township election commissions. (MCL 168.674)

By 28 Notice of close of registration for Nov. 3 general election published. (MCL 168.498)

30 Clerk delivers to supervisor and county clerk a certified copy of all statements, certificates, and records of vote directing monies to be raised by taxation of property. (MCL 211.36(1))

Financial officer of each township computes tax rates in accordance with MCL 211.34d and MCL 211.34 and governing body certifies that rates comply with Section 31, Article 9, of 1963 Constitution and MCL 211.24e, Truth in Taxation, on State Tax Commission Form L-4029.

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Why doesn't our township pay sales tax on purchases?

The General Sales Tax Act exempts townships and other local governments from paying sales tax on all purchases for internal use. (MCL 205.54h)



Some vendors ask for sales tax exemption certificates. What are these, and does the township need to provide them?

Sales tax exemption certificates are forms that tax-exempt organizations such as townships use to indicate to the vendor why a transaction or a series of transactions is exempt from sales tax. Sellers of tangible personal property subject to sales tax are required to maintain records of sales to organizations claiming exemptions. Vendors may request exemption certificates to avoid being assessed sales tax by the state upon audit.

Michigan Revenue Administrative Bulletin No. 2002-15 (available at www.michigan.gov) outlines the steps required to present a proper exemption certificate to the township's vendors. The bulletin also covers processes to claim exemption from sales tax, form of the certificate, documentation requirements, and conditions when the township's purchase order can substitute as an exemption certificate.

Acceptable forms of an exemption certificate are:

- The state's fillable form (search www.michigan.gov for "Michigan Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exemption")
- The "Uniform Sales and Use Tax Certificate" approved by the Multistate Tax Commission
- Purchase order issued by the township containing all required information that the state's exemption certificate published would contain
- The Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Governing Board's Exemption Certificate (search for "Certificate of Exemption" on www.streamlinedsalestax.org)

The exemption certificates can be for single or multiple purchases. In lieu of requiring an exemption certificate, the seller may choose to obtain identifying information of the purchaser, and the reason for claiming the exemption.



Can we buy the materials to build our new township hall, using our sales tax exemption, and hire a contractor to do the work?

Yes. According to the state, the township could claim exemption from sales tax on the materials purchased by township officials or employees. However, if the township hires a contractor to build the hall or install materials, the contractor becomes the ultimate consumer of the materials and could be held liable by the state to pay the use tax on the material's value. The state may charge a use tax, which is 6 percent, on the storage, use or consumption of tangible personal property on which no Michigan sales tax has been paid.

If the township plans to hire a contractor, it is a good idea to check with your township attorney and the Michigan Department of Treasury on the rules governing sales and use tax.



Are small fundraising items that the township sells to the public, such as T-shirts and coffee mugs, exempt from sales tax? I thought sales by non-profit organizations of less than \$5,000 per calendar year are also exempt from sales tax.

According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, Michigan sales tax applies to sales made by local units of government. This, of course, includes counties, townships, cities and villages. Sales and use tax provisions exempt purchases made by local units of government. However, sales made by local units of government are not exempt.

The exemption for sales made by certain organizations described in MCL 205.54b is limited to schools, churches, hospitals, parent cooperative preschools and non-profit organizations that are exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4), or were issued a letter of exemption before July 17, 1998, signed by the administrator of the state Sales, Use and Withholding and Taxes Division. None of these exemptions apply to local units of government.

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.

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We tabled a motion a while ago. How do we bring it back up?

That may depend on the form of parliamentary procedure that the board has adopted, but it will also depend on just what the board intended when it tabled the motion.

First, when we talk about parliamentary procedure, most of the rules originated with *Robert's Rules of Order*, which is the “gold standard” of meeting rules and procedure. Note that *Robert's* is not law, and Michigan law regarding townships and public bodies “trumps” *Robert's*, but *Robert's* is still the most commonly used and comprehensive form of procedure used to help board members make decisions efficiently, effectively and fairly.

However, the official version of *Robert's* is almost 700 pages long, most of which deals with large assemblies, not boards or committees, like a township board. The downside to using the full version of *Robert's* is that it can be intimidating and complicated to use, especially if you haven't had some training in using it. I personally recommend using some of the “simplified” versions of *Robert's*, such as the official *Robert's Rules of Order in Brief*, or the independent *Robert's Rules in Plain English*, by Doris Zimmerman. They are inexpensive pocketbooks that each board member could have and refer to at meetings. They are short and to the point, with easily understood, real-life examples. When questions arise, flip to that page and get the answer without delay.

Second, the motion to table is probably the most misunderstood—and possibly the most commonly misused—motion. In a nutshell, a motion to table means to **temporarily** postpone action on the motion. Supposedly, the motion “to table” originated with the English Parliament, where pending matters were filed in colored leather boxes on large tables in the center of the hall. If the king or queen suddenly arrived, the box for the matter at hand was literally put on the table until the monarch left the hall and business resumed. Today, a motion to table is in order (according to *Robert's*) either because the discussion of the motion is being interrupted, by a guest speaker, for example, or because the board needs more information or some other action and it must postpone acting on the motion until a specified time or event. It is improper, however, to use a motion to table to kill the motion.

So, if the board intended that the motion to table would kill the motion being considered, then the motion to table was improper. I would guess that the board could raise the matter again if a board member makes a motion and gets a second, but that could depend on the actual subject of the motion. If there is any question, the township board should consult with its local legal counsel for specific guidance.

If the board intended to put the matter off to a future meeting, then that is a proper motion to table, but the motion to table should have stated when the matter would come back to the board, like: “Tabled until the September board meeting, when the manager will provide a report of the statistics on how many people use the transfer station,” or “Tabled until the October board meeting, when the supervisor will provide the board with the state's projections for bimonthly revenue sharing,” for example. If done properly, then it will automatically be on the agenda for the stated meeting.



May I ask other board members what they think about a matter coming to the board for a vote?

According to MTA Legal Counsel, the two main cases on this issue are *St. Aubin v Ishpeming City Council*, 197 Mich. App. 100 (1992) and *Booth v U of M Board of Regents*, 444 Mich. 211 (1993). In the *St. Aubin* case, the court held that the Open Meetings Act is not violated where a member of a public body conducts an informal telephone poll of the other members to determine how they would vote on a particular issue.

However, in the *Booth* case, telephone calls were made that went “round-the-horn” to find out what all the members of the board of regents were thinking. After gaining input from these “telephone polls,” decisions were made to narrow the list of candidates for president. There were also closed meetings and, although no voting took place, the members did reach a “consensus.” The court concluded, in looking at several examples of the procedure that the board of regents used, that the OMA was violated.

The court noted that one of the reasons for the OMA was to prevent public bodies from agreeing privately on an action to be taken and then convening for one or two minutes to

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formally vote on a “privately arranged agreement.” The court concluded in the *Booth* case that, “even members of the committee acknowledge that its ‘round-the-horn’ decisions and conferences achieved the same effect as if the entire board had met publicly... .”

The OMA states that “decision” means a determination, action, vote or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy.

The *Booth* court particularly examined whether a decision can be limited to that part of the statute that states “on which a vote by members of a public body is required.” The university argued that the “polling” was not a vote. The court rejected this argument because, even though technically a decision wasn’t reached through telephone polling, a decision was still made. The court also noted that the statute says, “and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy” and did not find any distinction between a committee’s “consensus” and a determination or action as it relates to the definition of “decision.”

According to MTA Legal Counsel, “An individual board member may call and ‘poll’ other individual board members to find out how they individually stand on a particular issue—provided that this does not include any discussion of the issue and does not eliminate later full public discussion and

deliberation on an issue. The polling cannot rise to the level of reaching a consensus or an agreement about a certain issue.

“If all the single board member does is ‘poll’ the other members without disclosing to the others what his ‘poll’ has discovered as to the other members’ thoughts, and the discussion and decision-making is later fully made at an open meeting, then it will possibly have met the test pursuant to the *St. Aubin* decision.

“As a result, because there is such a fine line between ‘polling’ and ‘round-the-horn’ telephone calls or discussions, we would be reluctant to advise townships to engage in this type of activity. The temptation to substitute this ‘polling’ for full public deliberations in reaching a decision is too great, which would then constitute a clear violation of the OMA. Furthermore, where several board members engage in ‘polling’ on a given issue, it would be our opinion that a court would consider such polling a ‘round-the-horn’ violation of the OMA.”

Note that these cautions apply to face-to-face conversations, as well as phone calls, emails, texts or other communications.

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.

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PPT cleanup bills signed into law

A package of bills meant to clarify the intent and resolve issues regarding the administration of last year's voter-approved personal property tax (PPT) reform has been signed into law. Public Acts 119-124 of 2015 refine and establish reporting requirements while also closing potential loopholes, and provide clarification for the phase-out the PPT and reimbursement to local units for the lost revenue. The legislation also addresses issues with filing for the exemption, the audit process, record keeping and determining the value of personal property subject to the Essential Services Assessment, and allows the Michigan Department of Treasury to combine reporting of affidavits. MTA supported the changes and worked with legislators to obtain several amendments that tighten language and help eliminate potential tax loopholes.

Bill pre-empting local ordinances on wages, work rules now law

Legislation prohibiting townships and other local units from passing ordinances and policies regarding employer wages, benefits, training or work rules is now law—Public Act 105 of 2015. Under the new law, only state and federal law can regulate issues pertaining to employer-employee relationships. The measure applies to ordinances, policies or resolutions adopted after Dec. 31, 2014. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Earl Poleski (R-Spring Arbor Twp.). Read more about this legislation and MTA's opposition to the local pre-emption in the June 2015 issue of *Township Voice*.

February elections eliminated

Elections will no longer be held in February under a package of bills signed by Gov. Rick Snyder—now Public Acts 98-103 of 2015. Under previous election law, regular

elections could be held on four days during the year—the regular election dates in February, May, August and November. Under the recently signed bills, the February election date is eliminated. MTA supported the legislation for potential cost savings

to local units. Lead sponsors of the package were Rep. Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Bowne Twp.) and Rep. Dan Lauwers (R-Brockway Twp.).



More emergency loan funds to be available

Access to additional emergency loan funding will be available to townships that need help resolving a financial emergency or fiscal stress for the next three years. Public Act 115 of 2015, sponsored by Rep. Bradford Jacobsen (R-Oxford Chtr. Twp.), was signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder. Previously, the emergency loan cap for townships, counties, cities and villages was set at \$35 million. PA 115 increases the cap to \$48 million, giving



municipalities more borrowing options for emergencies. The loans are available until Sept. 30, 2018. MTA supported the legislation as it provides local units with more flexibility to restructure loan payments and eliminates the existing limits.

New law impacts qualified forest property

Owners of parcels that contain a combination of agricultural use property and productive forest property can apply to have the property considered qualified forest property under the newly enacted Public Act 107 of 2015. Previously, parcels had to contain at least 20 contiguous acres of qualified forest to be considered qualified forest property and be exempt from the tax levied for school operating purposes. PA 107 revises the criteria to allow application for a designation as qualified forest property if a parcel contains both productive forest and agricultural use property and if the combined acreage meets specific requirements. This change is expected to reduce the administrative burden of participating in the qualified forest program. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Darwin Booher (R-Osceola Twp.) and had immediate effect.

continued on page 13

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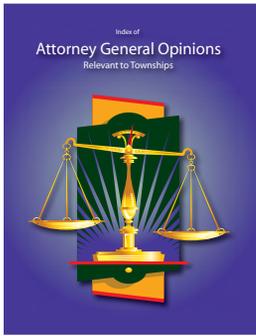
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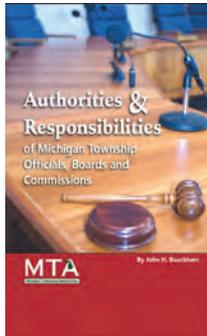


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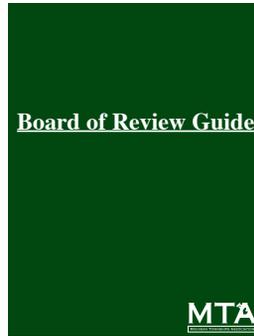
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Attorney General Opinion Index
Revised 2009
(Includes update supplement)
A guide to legal opinions issued by the Michigan Attorney General's Office that directly impact the operation of township government in Michigan. More than 700 opinion summations are organized alphabetically by major topic headings.
Member: \$15
Non-Member: \$35



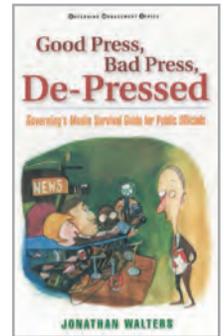
Authorities and Responsibilities of Michigan Township Officials, Boards & Commissions
Revised 2012
Known as MTA's "little red book," this primer for township board members and officials includes terms of office, vacancy, recall, meeting notices, minutes, elections, ordinance publication, investments and tax collections, in addition to the statutory duties of each elected official and township boards and commissions.
Member: \$45
Non-Member: \$65



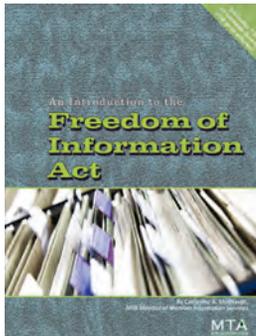
Board of Review Guide
Revised 2015
Describes the duties and structure of the board of review, the role of the assessor and the state Tax Tribunal, and the equalization process. With tabbed chapters for easy reference, this publication includes information on other topics such as principles of value, hints for successful meetings, principal residence and agricultural property exemptions, poverty exemptions, and statutory reasons for holding July and December meetings.
Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51



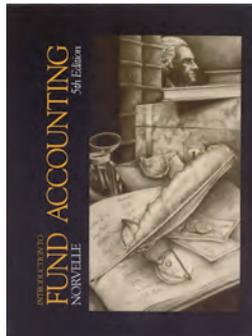
Building a Better Budget
Revised 2008;
minor revisions 2013
(Includes CD)
Addressing issues from budgeting basics to projecting future financial trends, this book includes sample general fund budget worksheets and formats to provide users with the foundation that townships need to create their township's budget. Includes a CD of Microsoft Word® and Excel® versions of several of the appendices to customize for your township's use.
Member: \$32
Non-Member: \$46



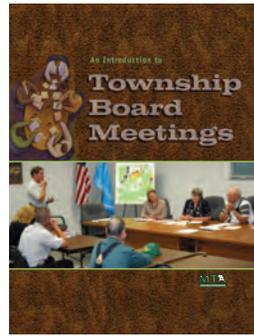
Good Press, Bad Press, Depressed
2008 edition
This book serves as a roadmap for public officials who want to do a better job of dealing with the media in all its forms, from getting the word out when good things happen to avoiding becoming a media casualty when something bad happens.
Member: \$20
Non-Member: \$29



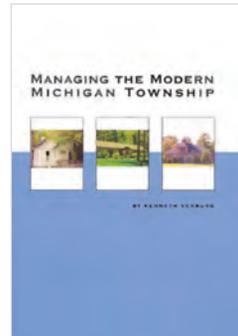
Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act
Revised 2015
Updated edition! Includes FOIA changes that took effect July 1, and includes a CD with sample forms and procedures
A must-have for all members of the township board, as well as employees responsible for fulfilling FOIA requests, this easy-to-understand, user-friendly handbook will help township officials learn more about public records, as well as how to handle FOIA requests.
Member: \$25
Non-Member: \$36.25



Introduction to Fund Accounting
1997 edition
This manual provides an introduction for those with no prior accounting experience, or serves as a reference for quick review. With topics ranging from basic accounting concepts to financial statements, this text presents the subject matter in a straight-forward manner and offers useful examples.
Member: \$45
Non-Member: \$65



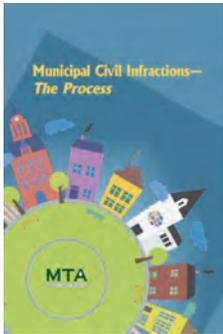
Introduction to Township Board Meetings
Revised 2012
All township board members are "local legislators," and have important roles to carry out at board meetings. This publication is a handy reference to some of the most common questions or issues that arise in scheduling, conducting and participating in township board meetings.
Member: \$13
Non-Member: \$19



Managing the Modern Michigan Township
Revised 2002 (Includes CD & 2006 update supplement)
This 500-page reference provides a historical perspective on townships, policy-making issues, administrative procedures, financing/tax/budgeting concerns, discussion on public safety and other services provided through townships, planning and zoning issues, and information on capital improvements.
Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51



Michigan Township Officials Directory
2015 edition
Updated annually to include the names and contact information of each township officials in Michigan, the *Directory* divides each township office in a separate section, along with a separate listing for townships' general contact information. This is the perfect tool when looking to network and partner with local officials from your region, putting names and numbers at your fingertips.
Member: \$30
Non-Member: \$45



Municipal Civil Infractions—The Process
2008 edition

Developed to help alleviate the confusion that often surrounds the civil infraction process, this reference supplies information regarding the adoption of a municipal civil infraction procedures ordinance, the issuing of tickets and the handling of court proceedings. Samples are also included.

Member: \$30
Non-Member: \$44



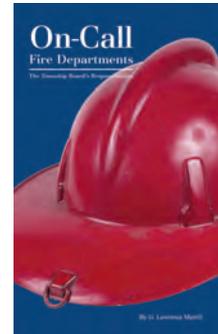
Officials' Guide to Township Government

(Supervisor, revised 2012; Clerk, revised 2012; Treasurer, revised 2012; Trustee, 2015 edition)

These handy references to township authorities and statutory responsibilities provide practical tips and techniques for township administration. A separate manual is available for each elected township office, offering insights on township governance and meetings, and additional sections detailing office-specific duties.

Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51

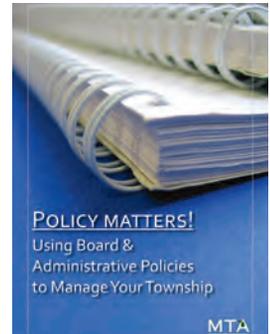
MTA members may also purchase an Officials' Guide Bundle—which includes all four books, one for each township office—for the discounted price of \$125 (no substitutions, please).



On-Call Fire Departments: The Township Board's Responsibilities

Revised 2005
Written by MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill, this book delves into the township board's responsibilities for fire protection, evaluation of your township's fire protection, and emergency and disaster planning, and also provides information on motivating and retaining personnel and financing the fire department.

Member: \$25
Non-Member: \$36

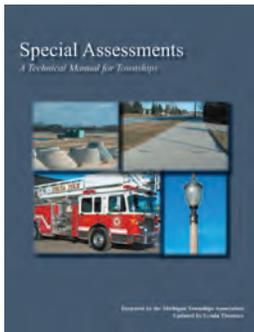


Policy Matters! Using Board & Administrative Policies to Manage Your Township

2010 edition; minor revisions 2014 (Includes CD)

In this hands-on book, township board members and staff will find sample policies, practical commentaries and expert tips to get your township started using a policy approach to board governance, ethics, financial procedures and controls, office and facility administration, personnel issues, purchasing, public information, records, using technology, and minimizing risk.

Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51

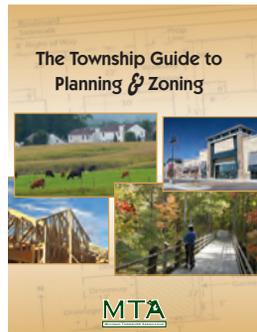


Special Assessments: A Technical Manual for Townships

2003 edition; minor revisions 2013

This manual provides discussion on how to use special assessments as a financial tool and explains the administrative process; provides a reference chart of recommended special assessment statutes for various improvements; and includes sample forms that illustrate the administrative process for creating a special assessment district.

Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51



The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning

Revised 2012

A comprehensive guide to planning and zoning from the township perspective, this resource provides a detailed look at the planning process and outlines elements of a successful planning program. Also included is information on the statutory authority for township planning, legal influences and limitations on zoning.

Member: \$45
Non-Member: \$65

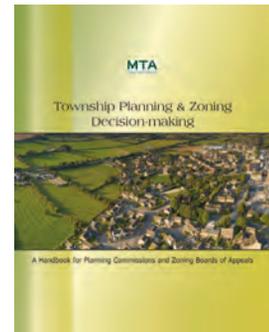


Township Cemetery Management

2009 edition (Includes CD)

From a review of statutes that govern township authority over cemeteries to the financial aspects of this valuable service, *Township Cemetery Management* serves as a guide to assist local units of government carry out this important function. Includes a CD of samples, including a cemetery ordinance, to customize for your township's use.

Member: \$35
Non-Member: \$51

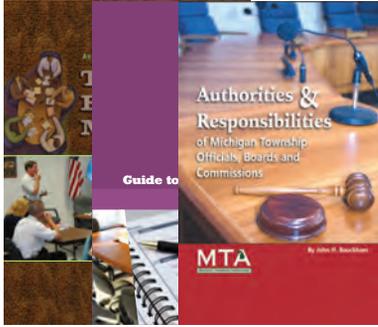


Township Planning & Zoning Decision-making

Revised 2012

Covering issues from the technical to the ethical and from day-to-day actions to those that are lasting, this handbook is intended to be at the fingertips of the township's planning and zoning officials, as a means to help them reach defensible, effective decisions and build a strong community based on sound planning principles and procedures.

Member: \$32
Non-Member: \$46



Township Basics Kit

The perfect starter kit, this package contains books that all township officials should have in their library—including our *Introduction to Township Board Meetings*, *Official's Guide to Township Government* and *Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Township Officials, Boards & Commissions*.

Member: \$80

Non-Member: N/A

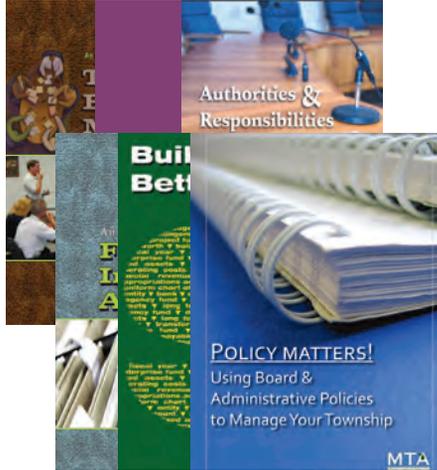


MTA Padfolio

As a township official, you'll find yourself at meetings taking notes and referring to important documents at a moment's notice. The MTA-logo padfolio assists in preparing for those meetings with a notepad ready for your use and pockets to hold those important documents. And let's not forget those numbers that need to be taken into consideration—a handy calculator comes in the padfolio! Also included is a clear pocket for your business card, a pen holder, and an outside zipper to hold everything in place.

Member: \$20

Non-Member: \$29



Township Essentials Collection

Round out your township reference library with our Essentials Collection, which includes all resources offered in the Basic Starter Kit PLUS *Building a Better Budget* (includes CD), *Introduction to FOIA*, *The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning*; and *Policy Matters!* (Includes CD).

Member: \$198

Non-Member: N/A



MTA Window Cling

(Set of two)

Pick up your very own "Townships—Neighbors Serving Neighbors" static cling. Clear with dark green text, it will look great on the rear window of your car or on the door as people enter the township hall. Don't miss your chance to help residents understand why township government is so special.

Member: \$2

Non-Member: \$3



Lapel Pins

At 1 inch wide and 5/8 inch tall, this lapel pin manages to communicate the pride that township officials feel in serving their community. The background color is white with a green MTA logo and gold outlines. There is a lapel pin for every position on the board, as well as for your deputy.

Member: \$6

Non-Member: N/A



MTA Travel Mug

For many people, waking up with a hot beverage is an essential part of the day. The stainless steel interior of our travel mug will keep your drink piping hot! Or, if you prefer a cold drink, the stainless steel interior will also keep your drink cool. With a beautiful green exterior, silver trim and MTA logo, this cup won't slip out of your hands, and is definitely one that you'll want to show off.

Member: \$10

Non-Member: \$14

How to Order

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(Only MTA-member officials and Allied Service Providers may place online orders. Non-members may order by downloading a publication order form. To receive member rates, you must be logged in to the MTA Store.)

Print an order form from the MTA Store, and fax to 517.321.8908, or mail to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI, 48908-0078.

Note: Member rates apply only to MTA member township officials and employees, member counties and Allied Service Providers.

Michigan state sales tax applies, unless tax exempt. Shipping & handling charges apply; see order form for rates.

For additional assistance, contact the MTA Office at 517.321.6467.

Government employment no longer required for building inspectors

Building inspectors will be able to register with the state without first being required to be an employee of a local government. Public Act 88 of 2015, sponsored by Rep. Anthony Forlini (R-Harrison Chtr. Twp.), was recently signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder. The enacted measure eliminates the former requirement that building officials, plan reviewers and inspectors be employed by a local governmental unit before seeking registration under the Building Officials and Inspectors Registration Act. Building inspectors must renew their registration with the state by Sept. 17 of every third year, starting in 2015.

MTA supported this measure, which takes effect Sept. 21, 2015.

Sunset to be removed for establishing district libraries

Local libraries will continue to be allowed to partner with a school district to establish a new district library. Public Act 108 of 2015, sponsored by Sen. Dale Zorn (R-Ida Twp.), was enacted with Gov. Rick Snyder's signature. Before

the bill was passed, local units and school districts were not allowed to partner and establish a new district library after Jan. 1, 2015. PA 108 eliminated the sunset, allowing local libraries to become a district library and increase their funding base.

MTA did not take a position on the bill, but monitored it for any impact to townships.

Local authority permitted for 'pedal pubs'

Townships can now regulate commercial, pedal-powered, multi-passenger cycles under Senate Bills 165 and 166, which were recently signed by the governor. MTA supported the permissive legislation, which places new requirements on multi-passenger cycles known as quadricycles. Commonly used for pub tours, these commercial four-wheeled vehicles are propelled by human power, and passengers are allowed to possess or transport open alcohol unless prohibited by a local ordinance. Local units may set additional regulations if they choose, but they are not required to do so. Quadricycle owners must carry liability insurance.

The new laws were sponsored by Sens. Wayne Schmidt (R-Traverse City) and Tom Casperson (R-Wells Twp.).

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■ Thomas Colis
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■ Harold Bulger
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The state of recycling in Michigan

Decades ago, Michigan was hailed as a leader in recycling. The state Legislature had just adopted its landmark bill creating the bottle deposit program—a major first step in residential recycling.

And the program worked. For the last 15 years, an average of 96 percent of all bottle deposits have been redeemed. But without initiatives to boost recycling of other materials, Michigan lost its leader status. Today, Michigan's recycling rate is a paltry 15 percent—well below the national average of 35 percent.

Experts say the problem isn't that residents don't want to recycle. The root issue is access. If people don't have an easy way to recycle, chances are they won't do it.

Townships can play a major role in providing residents with a way to recycle their reusable goods. Your program could be as extensive as curbside recycling, or as minimal as a small drop-off site. Any efforts you make will result in more materials being recycled instead of thrown in a landfill.

Ramping up your township's recycling efforts does more than help the environment, though that is significant. It's also a form of placemaking. Recycling can help to attract new residents who are looking for a progressive community, with convenient recycling access. It can also boost the economy by putting valuable recyclables in the hands of manufacturers and providing jobs with the increased need for processing facilities.

Residents aren't the only ones with barriers to recycling—your township might have them, too. The cost might seem insurmountable, or your township might not have a logical location for a drop-off site. With a little assistance, however, these barriers could be overcome. Many resources are available as part of the state's effort to get more people recycling.

Michigan's state of recycling

For years, the vast majority of Michigan's solid waste was thrown into landfills simply because it was easier. Families are used to tossing their trash into the wastebasket, and more often than not, those who don't have curbside recycling or don't live anywhere near a drop-off site don't take the time to drive out of their way to haul their recyclables.

Many Michigan residents would consider themselves recyclers because they return their beverage bottles and cans to get their deposit back. While the bottle deposit program is successful, this type of material makes up just 2 percent of the recycling stream.

Each year, Michigan recycles about 1.4 million tons, including traditional materials, container deposits, take-back



program materials, and organics such as yard or food waste. This number pales in comparison to the total tons taken to landfills or incinerated—about 8 million tons.

The recycling movement in Michigan took on new life last year, when Gov. Rick Snyder identified it as a priority. He announced a statewide recycling initiative with the goal of doubling Michigan's recycling rate to 30 percent. His plan focuses on four key areas—measuring progress, providing convenient access, developing markets for recycled products, and public education and technical assistance.

The primary focus in this initiative is on residential recycling. In order to get more people recycling, more people have to have easy, convenient access. The state defines convenient access as either a county with at least one drop-off location available for every 10,000 people, or curbside recycling in communities with more than 10,000 people. Recent research by the state shows that 1.3 million households still have minimal or no access to either curbside or drop-off recycling. That's something that Michigan Recycling Coalition Executive Director Kerrin O'Brien wants to change.

"If these services aren't readily available, then we're not going to effectively move people in the direction we want them to go," O'Brien said.

Additionally, the governor's initiative is working to track recycling and increase participation. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is creating reporting protocols for recyclers, allowing the DEQ to better track their performance and improvements. Snyder

also created the Governor's Recycling Council last year to regularly discuss policy and legislative issues, and examine what might be holding the state back from accomplishing its goals.

No unit of government—including the state—can stand alone in this endeavor. Townships and other local units must work with one another, the private sector and the state in order for Michigan to meet its recycling goals, O'Brien said.

"The success of this endeavor is really going to fall on everybody playing their appropriate role," O'Brien said. "It's going to take cooperation between and amongst townships, and with counties and within regions, as well as coordination at the state level. It's really going to take all of these entities working together and coordinating their activities."

Why recycling matters

Recycling is best known for helping the environment. Not only does it keep trash out of landfills—and reduce the need for new ones—but it also decreases the need for raw materials.

But recycling isn't solely altruistic. When done well, it can bring an economic benefit to your township. DEQ Recycling Specialist Emily Freeman describes recycling as a form of placemaking. People today want curbside recycling or a nearby drop-off location, and they consider this quality-of-life issue when choosing a place to live.

"Very vibrant communities tend to have really good recycling programs," Freeman said.



Ramping up your township's recycling efforts does more than help the environment, though that is significant. Recycling can help to attract new residents who are looking for a progressive community, with convenient recycling access.

Not only can recycling attract residents, but it can also create jobs. The process of recycling requires more manpower than landfills and includes multiple steps, all of which can add jobs to your township if they're done locally.

For some communities, recycling can lower the overall cost of their solid waste services. **Jefferson Township** (Hillsdale Co.) has seen a significant savings thanks to its drive-through trash and recycling facility. Treasurer **Jim Lockwood**, who helped develop the program in the early 1990s, said township residents save \$70-80 each for every ton taken out of the waste stream through recycling. The township also makes money from selling scrap metal, paper, plastic and Styrofoam to manufacturers.

"It's one of the best things our board has ever done," Lockwood said of the recycling program.

Curbside recycling

The most convenient form of recycling is the ability to simply leave materials in a bin on your sidewalk for collection. Called curbside recycling, it's recommended for denser communities, or those with more than 10,000 residents.

But curbside recycling isn't limited to large communities. **Resort Township** (Emmet Co.) has a population of just over 2,500, but started offering curbside recycling to residents about 10 years ago, thanks to Emmet County's county-wide recycling program.

All Resort Township homes receive two bins—one for paper and cardboard, another for plastics, metal and other recyclable materials. Emmet County takes care of the equipment and pick-up service, and the township pays for

its residents to participate. For residents of the northern Michigan township, curbside recycling can mean a significant financial savings. Residents must use subscription services for their trash collection and are charged \$2.50 for each bag. Because of the recycling program, which comes at no cost to residents, some have reduced their garbage pickup to a couple bags each month.

Over the years, curbside recycling has become one of Resort Township's most popular programs.

"If the township board wanted to fill the township hall with residents, we would say we're not going to do recycling anymore," Supervisor **Bob Wheaton** said. "They would be here in droves."

Drop-off sites

In rural communities, drop-off sites are often the most feasible recycling option. These can range from a few dumpsters that accept a handful of items to a comprehensive facility with single-stream containers—meaning recyclables don't need to be separated—that accept a wide range of materials. Some townships choose to pool their resources with neighboring communities and open a regional center. Others, like **Delhi Charter Township** (Ingham Co.), opt to build their own drop-off site.

The Delhi Charter Township Recycling Center opened in 2007 after several nearby sites closed for a variety of reasons. With no recycling options left, the board decided to take action.

Today, township residents and the general public can drive onto the concrete pad and dump their paper, glass, cans, cardboard and other items into the appropriate containers. During special times, like Christmas, the township stocks the center with extra containers for the flood of boxes sure to be recycled from gift packages.

To say that the recycling center is well-used would be an understatement, Director of Public Services **Sandra Diorka** said. Currently, the participation rate is 38 percent—well above the state's average.



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“It was like the ‘Field of Dreams’ movie,” Diorka said. “We didn’t have a specific campaign. We just opened the thing and, by word of mouth, people just started coming.”

Townships without any kind of recycling could consider starting a small drop-off site as a first step, Freeman said. Your board could start by collecting just a few items and gauging public interest before expanding to a more comprehensive program.

Think beyond the traditional

Cardboard, cans and bottles aren’t the only items that can be recycled. Throughout Michigan, townships are getting creative with how they can keep harmful waste out of landfills and waterways.

A popular type of program is a take-back day, when anyone in the community can bring in TVs, old paint, batteries and other items that aren’t allowed in trash or recycling bins. Delhi Charter Township takes a unique approach to this type of program, holding a community swap day rather than paying to haul away residents’ junk. Called the “Reuse Rally,” it’s a time where residents can bring in items that work but they no longer want. Diorka has seen people drop off lawnmowers, snowblowers and even a fully functional refrigerator the owner simply didn’t like.

The township also focuses on organic materials. One program collects food scraps from schools and elderly care facilities to use in the township’s anaerobic digester, which turns the scraps into energy. Another, called the Beast of Grease, provides residents with free grease containers, encouraging them to store their grease instead of dumping it down the drain. Delhi Charter Township then collects the grease and also uses it in the anaerobic digester.

Programs that go beyond what is typically thought of as recycling are important parts of keeping waste out of landfills. Even once-a-year events will make a difference in helping Michigan to increase its recycling rate.

Partnerships make a difference

Starting a recycling program is much less intimidating when you’re not alone. Freeman points to partnerships as a way to remove funding barriers and ensure that your residents have convenient access to recycling.

Some communities choose to pool their resources and create a county-wide or regional recycling program. This approach works for Resort Township, which has enjoyed participating in Emmet County’s program for more than 10 years.

Emmet County had approached each municipality in its jurisdiction asking them to participate in its new recycling program. The county would provide the equipment and take care of hauling the recyclables. All the townships had to do was find the funding. Resort, **Bear Creek** and **Little Traverse Townships** jumped on board, while other townships were too sparsely populated for the program to make sense.

Curbside recycling costs the township \$26 a year for each household. Typically, this amounts to about \$48,000 out of the township’s general fund. It’s not a small amount, but it’s a cost Wheaton is willing to pay because residents appreciate it so much.

Keeping your township clean

In addition to recycling efforts to help keep your township clean and litter-free, townships also have a variety of options to offer trash collection services for their residents. Under MCL 324.11901, *et seq.*, and other statutes, townships have authority to maintain and operate a garbage and refuse collection and disposal system.

There are several ways townships can finance solid waste disposal and recycling services:

- A township may provide garbage collection services for its residents by contracting with a company and paying for the service with general fund money or an extra-voted millage.
- A township-wide special assessment district can be established under MCL 41.721, *et seq.*
- A township may contract with a private company to provide garbage collection services within the township and may establish a system of rates or charges payable by the users and beneficiaries of the service. Only those owners of property that uses the garbage collection service should be billed. A township may include in such a contract a provision requiring all residential waste subject to its jurisdiction and police powers to be disposed of through its collection system. The township must enact an ordinance with appropriate penalties to make the requirement effective and to establish the rates or charges. If the township does not have an ordinance requiring township-wide garbage collection services, then it is MTA Legal Counsel’s opinion that residents may choose to opt out of using the township’s contracted-for garbage collection service.

Under MCL 324.11904, a township may also provide that if payments are delinquent for more than three months, they may be placed on the tax roll for collection in the same manner as a tax. The rates and charges received for garbage collection can only be used to fund such services, including the township’s administrative costs.

- A township may use a pay-as-you-go system where fees are based on the amount of trash brought into a landfill or a “bag-and-tag” system where users pay a fee and receive a number of trash bags.
- Under MCL 123.301, *et seq.*, a township may join with other municipalities to incorporate a municipal authority to collect and dispose of garbage and rubbish.
- Under MCL 46.171, *et seq.*, a township may join with the county and other municipalities to establish garbage and rubbish collection and disposal facilities and services.
- Under the Revenue Bond Act, MCL 141.101, *et seq.*, a township may establish and finance a garbage and rubbish collection system.



Community education campaigns ensure that residents use your recycling program—and that they're using it correctly. Residents need to understand what exactly can be recycled and why their participation is important.

Other communities partner with private companies to make their recycling programs possible. Delhi Charter Township teamed up with waste company Granger to get its drop-off facility up and running. The township paid for the site itself, while Granger services the facility at no charge. In exchange, Granger gets to sell some of the recyclable materials and builds name recognition with potential customers.

For some townships, a partner might not be immediately obvious. Freeman said DEQ recycling specialists can help townships find partners to make their programs more feasible.

Funding options available

For all its benefits, recycling isn't free—or in many cases, cheap. Townships can expect to set aside money at least for the initial implementation, and possibly on an annual basis.

This can be a barrier for communities that may be interested in offering recycling for residents but don't have extra cash in their general funds. However, the DEQ website lists a number of options that townships may consider, in addition to partnerships, to make a program possible. Freeman and other recycling specialists can help townships decide which funding option will work best for their situation.

Dedicated millage: To help fund a recycling program, townships may levy an extra-voted millage—subject to voter approval for any extra millage over and above the allocated millage. A guide to millages is available on MTA's website, www.michigantownships.org, on the "Millage Questions" page.

Special assessment: Townships can use special assessments—a charge against real property—for an improvement or service that benefits those living in the special assessment district, not the general public. According to the DEQ, townships can use this funding mechanism to pay for a recycling program. Unlike a user fee, residents would be charged in advance instead of paying after receiving the service. State statute has many specific requirements for special assessments, and townships must make sure there's public interest before pursuing it. Resources are available on MTA's "Special Assessments" Web page, and MTA's publication *Special Assessments: A Technical Manual for Townships* also offers guidance.

Add to your solid waste service: If your township uses a single hauler to collect solid waste, you can add recycling to your service and establish a fee collection mechanism to cover the cost, by ordinance.

Operating revenues: Your township can charge additional fees for services to help offset your cost of the program. For example, drop-off facilities can charge a user fee based on the amount being recycled. Jefferson Township uses this model to help pay for its drive-through drop-off facility. Each person who brings their trash there is charged \$2 for every bag, while the recycling is free. Though the township still contributes another \$1 for each bag, the fee makes the cost of the trash and recycling program more manageable.

Sell your recyclables: Recycled materials are a hot commodity for some manufacturers, and they'll pay good money to get it. Townships can take advantage of this by selling the recyclables. Jefferson Township has used this approach for years—in fact, it's what inspired the township to add recycling to its trash facility in the first place. Running the drive-through building was expensive, so the board decided that if they sold recyclables, they could recoup some of the cost. They started with selling newspaper and some plastics, and as they discovered other items had value too, they began collecting them as well. Today, the facility has three balers to keep up with all the materials brought in by residents, and last year, the township shipped out 152 tons of recyclables, Lockwood said. It doesn't cover the entire cost, but it makes a large dent.

Grants: Townships can apply for grants to start a recycling program, hold a special recycling event such as a scrap tire collection, and other green purposes. One such grant is the DEQ's Community Pollution Prevention grant program, which provides matching grant funds to help prevent pollution. Grants are awarded to projects that focus on reducing waste in a measurable way, have a local or regional focus, and result in long-term environmental improvements. More information is available on www.michigan.gov/deq.

Education is key

State leaders agree that education is the key to increasing Michigan's recycling rate. This includes increasing the

knowledge of residents as well as township officials charged with leading the community's program.

"One of our priorities as we move forward is to build skills and understanding about this area so that communities can begin to see providing these services as an opportunity to elevate their communities as great, environmentally friendly places to live," O'Brien said.

For township officials, educating yourself could mean attending an MTA workshop or a state conference focusing on recycling. It could also mean contacting one of the DEQ's field experts, who are trained to provide technical assistance to local governments. Freeman said they're located throughout the state and are available to drive to your township to meet with officials and help you find resources. For contact information, visit www.michigan.gov/deq; click on "Waste," then "Recycling."

Community education campaigns ensure that residents use your recycling program—and that they're using it correctly. This applies to both new and existing drop-off sites and curbside programs. Residents need to understand what can be recycled and why their participation is important.

"The most successful programs have an education and outreach component to them," Freeman said. "You can't just throw up a drop-off or implement curbside without some kind of education and outreach program."

In addition to putting information on the township's website, Delhi Charter Township's biggest success in recycling outreach is Gill, a giant fish sculpture constructed entirely of recycled laundry detergent bottles. Gill makes appearances in annual Christmas parades and is so popular he was even stolen as part of a senior prank at a local high school. It's such an unusual and beloved sculpture that it raises the recycling center's profile, Diorka said.

When Resort Township first began its curbside recycling program, Wheaton regularly updated residents on how much they'd recycled and tried to put it in real-world terms. He'd tell them the paper they recycled saved six trees, or that the metal collected that period was equal to six new cars. The visuals helped residents better understand the scope of what was being recycled and how they were helping the environment.

Small steps make a difference

Each township plays a role in helping Michigan meet its goal of doubling the recycling rate to 30 percent. Whether you boost education to improve your existing program, or you open your first small drop-off site, every effort will result in more tons of waste being recycled instead of sitting in a landfill. Your work today will make a difference for our state's tomorrow.



Bethany Mauger, MTA Staff Writer

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MTA Professional Development Retreats offer practical techniques, valuable resources

Join fellow officials from across the state this September at **Boyne Highlands Resort** for MTA's *Professional Development Retreats*. These two-day events offer premier educational programming geared to your office on concepts, trends and pressing issues in township government. Designed for elected officials at every level, *Retreats* will help you develop new skills while providing knowledge of the statutory duties and responsibilities required of elected officials.

Officials are encouraged to register for the full program to get the most out of this educational experience. The full-program fee includes all meals, workshop materials and an evening activity. Bring your deputy and save \$50 off full-program rates. Managers or superintendents qualify for this discount with supervisors. Trustees may bring a fellow trustee from the same township. Single-day rates are also available.

Dates are:

Sept. 10 & 11 for supervisors, deputies and managers/
superintendents

Sept. 12 & 13 for trustees

Sept. 23 & 24 for clerks and their deputies

Sept. 29 & 30 for treasurers and their deputies

Detailed session descriptions appeared in brochures mailed to each individual office in July. Download the registration brochure or register online at www.michigantownships.org, OR use the registration form that appeared in your July *Township Focus*.



Attendance at an MTA Professional Development Retreat is worth four (4) elective credits in the Township Governance Academy.



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upcoming MTA workshop

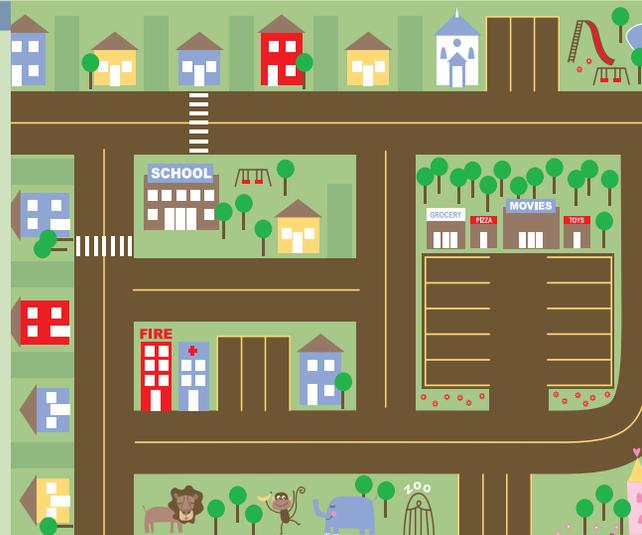
REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning

Join MTA for a how-to guide and real-life practical experiences at the summer's hottest workshop series, *Hot Topics in Planning & Zoning*. This program identifies emerging issues in planning and zoning, and is a must for planning commissioners, township board members and zoning administrators.

Time spent on topics will be tailored to the challenges specific to the area of the state in which the workshop is being held.

- Ensure your township's zoning ordinance is prepared to address the changes looming over Michigan's Medical Marihuana Act.
- Examine zoning and building code enforcement methods, techniques and strategies.
- Identify ordinance inequities impacting townships with wind farms and avoid the potential of turbulence blowing into your neighborhoods.
- Learn practical approaches to aspects of oil and gas or gravel extraction that townships can regulate or negotiate.
- Get an update on GAAMPS revisions and how they impact a township's ability to regulate agricultural uses in residential areas.



Registration and dinner begin at 4 p.m. The workshop is held from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Dates and locations are:

- Aug. 11: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth**
- Aug. 12: Fetzer Center at WMU, Kalamazoo**
- Aug. 25: Evergreen Resort, Cadillac**
- Aug. 26: Garland Resort, Lewiston**

This course was designated by Michigan State University for Master Citizen Planner (MCP) program credit.



Discounted book package available: Participants can pre-purchase MTA's Planning & Zoning Book Package, which includes *The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning* and *Planning & Zoning Decision-making*. The *Township Guide to Planning & Zoning* provides a detailed look at the planning process, while *Planning & Zoning Decision-making* helps you reach defensible, effective decisions and build sound planning principles and procedures. Books will be distributed at check-in. A limited number of each publication will also be available to purchase on-site.

Cancellation, Substitution & Switching Policy: Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by July 28 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.

Hot Topics in P&Z Registration Form

_____	_____	County
_____	Name & Title	Purchase P&Z book package? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Name & Title	Purchase P&Z book package? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Name & Title	Purchase P&Z book package? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Name & Title	Purchase P&Z book package? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Telephone	Email Address (where confirmation will be sent)

Which location will you attend?

- Aug. 11: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- Aug. 12: Fetzer Center at WMU, Kalamazoo
- Aug. 25: Evergreen Resort, Cadillac
- Aug. 26: Garland Resort, Lewiston

REGULAR rate*: \$101 For paid registrations received **after** July 28.

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

_____ (# of book packages) x (\$65.50/package*) = \$ _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

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

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Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.

Connecting township officials

'Community Connection'

When David Wesoloski has a township question and needs some advice, the **Menominee Township** (Menominee Co.) treasurer turns to social media.

But we're not talking LinkedIn or Facebook. Wesoloski is an active participant on *Community Connection*, MTA's exclusive members-only social networking site for township officials.

"I read to see what others do in certain situations—sometimes, there are several ways to do something and still be right," said Wesoloski. "Sometimes listening to what others are saying can help prevent issues from happening within our own organization."

MTA launched *Community Connection* as a means to enhance networking among our member township officials—to provide an opportunity to connect with officials from all over the state and to learn from one another about township trends and best practices. The site gives officials who might not otherwise ever interact the chance to share information and experiences with their township peers.

"The *Connection* gives me, as a supervisor, a statewide perspective versus a local perspective in problem-solving different issues," said **John Cox, Wakefield Township** (Gogebic Co.) supervisor. "I may or may not agree with what boards are doing across the state, but at least I am aware of what has or has not been tried with the issue."

Echoed Robert Hall, zoning administrator for **Norman and Everett Townships** (Newaygo Co.), "I take part in *Community Connection* in hopes of garnering and sharing valuable experiences related to township governance and risk management. I would encourage *all* township officials to become engaged with *Community Connection* because it promotes a platform of connecting, learning, sharing and networking."

Connecting—with convenience

We know that our member officials' roles and responsibilities are getting increasingly complex. And, just like everyone else, your "free" time is on the decline. *Community Connection* offers officials the opportunity to connect and learn whenever is convenient for them—hop online over your lunch hour to check out the discussions, or set aside an hour every few days to share your insights or offer a sample resource—all from the convenience of your home or office.

This valuable tool offers an online forum to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss problems—and solutions—that are impacting your township. Recent discussion topics run the gamut from bidding policies to roadside memorials to billboard regulations.

There are groups exclusively for each elected township office—and you are already a part of the group for your office! In this private group, you can network and discuss questions and issues specific to your office. The “MTA Community” group is open to all elected and appointed officials from MTA, and is the ideal place to post a discussion that has broad applicability across the township landscape.

Members with common interests can also form special groups for specific individuals or to delve deeper into subject matter that is more specific to their needs, such as the “Planning & Zoning” group. Wesoloski is also part of a group for his local MTA county chapter. The group posts meeting invitations, agendas and information on chapter officers, allowing the 40 members to access the information at any point.

Making the most of your online experience

Your *Community Connection* experience is what you make of it—you can be as involved as you wish, posting and answering questions, or you can simply be an observer and learn by reading the discussion threads. The system allows you to receive notifications about new discussions and replies as frequently—or infrequently—as you wish. Customize your settings to receive “real-time” email notifications whenever anyone from your groups posts a question or response, or even when a new participant joins your groups, or dial it back to receive updates via a weekly “digest” email. You can even opt out of notifications altogether, and simply take part in *Community Connection* when you log in and explore the conversations. The choice is yours—but no matter what your level of involvement, the end result is always learning.

Said Wesoloski, “My *Community Connection* is linked with my email. When I get notifications, I can quickly look at what someone is asking, and if I have the answer, I like to be helpful when I am available. I try to use what I was taught at MTA conferences and classes. Answering questions also reinforces what you’ve learned and enhances memory.

“If I don’t know and it appears someone is struggling to get an answer, I try to link that person up with who may know the answer or can answer more appropriately. Many times, I link the individual to a page on the MTA website.”

Ensuring maximum value

The key to ensuring the maximum benefit from this MTA service is robust participation—the more officials who share their insights, the greater the value among all participants. All MTA members with an email address in our database and an MTA password can access *Community Connection* (the same username and password used to log in to the MTA member website), and check out the conversations and resources available. What are you waiting for? Log in today, and get connected to your MTA township community.

Need help? For assistance with *Community Connection*, email ashley@michigantownships.org or call Ashley at (517) 321-6467. If you need help with your username and password, email nicole@michigantownships.org or call Nikki at (517) 321-6467.

Community Connection how-to guide

To access

- After logging in to the members-only portion of www.michigantownships.org, select the green “Community Connection” icon in the purple social media box in the left-hand column, or select “Community Connection” from the “My MTA” drop-down tab. If you are on the member log-in page, select the blue “Community Connection” tab along the top of the page.

Using the site

- **Groups:** All elected officials are automatically part of a private group for each specific office. MTA also encourages users to join the “MTA Community” group, where you can post general questions as well. You must be part of a group to view or reply to that group’s discussion, or post your own discussion.
 1. Choose “My Groups” under the “Groups” drop-down menu in the top menu bar to see the groups you are already a part of.
 2. *To join a group*—Select “All Groups” from the “Groups” drop-down menu. Browse the groups listed, and click the green plus sign box next to the group name. (*Note: If the group is a private group, there will not be a green plus sign.*)
- **View a discussion, or start your own:**
 1. *Add a discussion*—From the group’s homepage, click “add discussion” in the right-hand column. Include a title for your discussion, and type your discussion/question. Click “submit.”
 2. *Reply to a discussion*—Select the discussion from the “Discussions” tab located in the middle of the group’s homepage, then click on the discussion to which you’d like to reply. Type your response in the gray reply box at the bottom of the discussion thread. Click “submit.” You can also reply to a specific response within a discussion thread. Click “reply” near the bottom of the post or response.
- **Add a resource** (sample documents, forms, etc.):
 1. From the group’s homepage, click “add resource” in the right-hand column.
 2. Select your resource type and follow the prompts to upload your resource.

Managing your account settings

- In account settings, you can upload a photo, change your profile and manage your notifications. To get started, click on “Edit my settings” near the top of the left-hand column just below where it says “Hello!”
 - o Click the “Notifications” tab to manage how often you receive notifications from *Community Connection* (emails that provide groups updates, contact requests, content alerts, messages, etc.). You can customize your notifications to receive as often as you like—such as when someone posts a new discussion or response—or as little as you’d like. Add notifications@memberfuse.com to your email address book to ensure you receive *Community Connection* notifications.

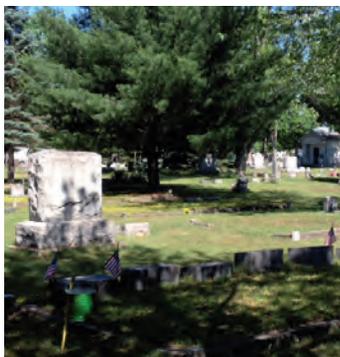
aroundthestate

townships in the spotlight



Indianfields Township

Indianfields Township is the largest township in Tuscola County, measuring almost 35 square miles with a population of approximately 2,600. Although the township has been in existence since the 1800s, it is just now getting a home all of its own.



Indianfields Township had shared offices with the Caro Police Department and Caro Fire Department for years. After the village of Caro became a city in 2009, the township relocated its operations outside of the city. The Tuscola County Road Commission sold land to the township for a new hall for \$1. Once the new township hall was completed, the public was invited to an open house to meet township officials, see the new building and witness a flag-raising ceremony.

A large portion of land in the township—39 percent—is state land, available to the community

for fishing, hunting, canoeing, and exploring. The township also manages a park for additional recreational opportunities. Established in 1947, the Indianfields Township Park has many features for community members to enjoy, including four pavilions, several picnic areas, two updated playgrounds, baseball field, horseshoes, volleyball court, access to the Cass River for canoeing, fishing areas, and almost 100 acres of nature trails for hiking and enjoying the scenery.

The park also includes a butterfly and herb garden, which is maintained by the Master Gardeners of Caro and open for visitors to explore. A grant-funded compost demonstration site is also located at the park. The demonstration site is a joint project of Indianfields Township and other local municipalities.



IT'S TIME TO

recharge

reengage

rethink

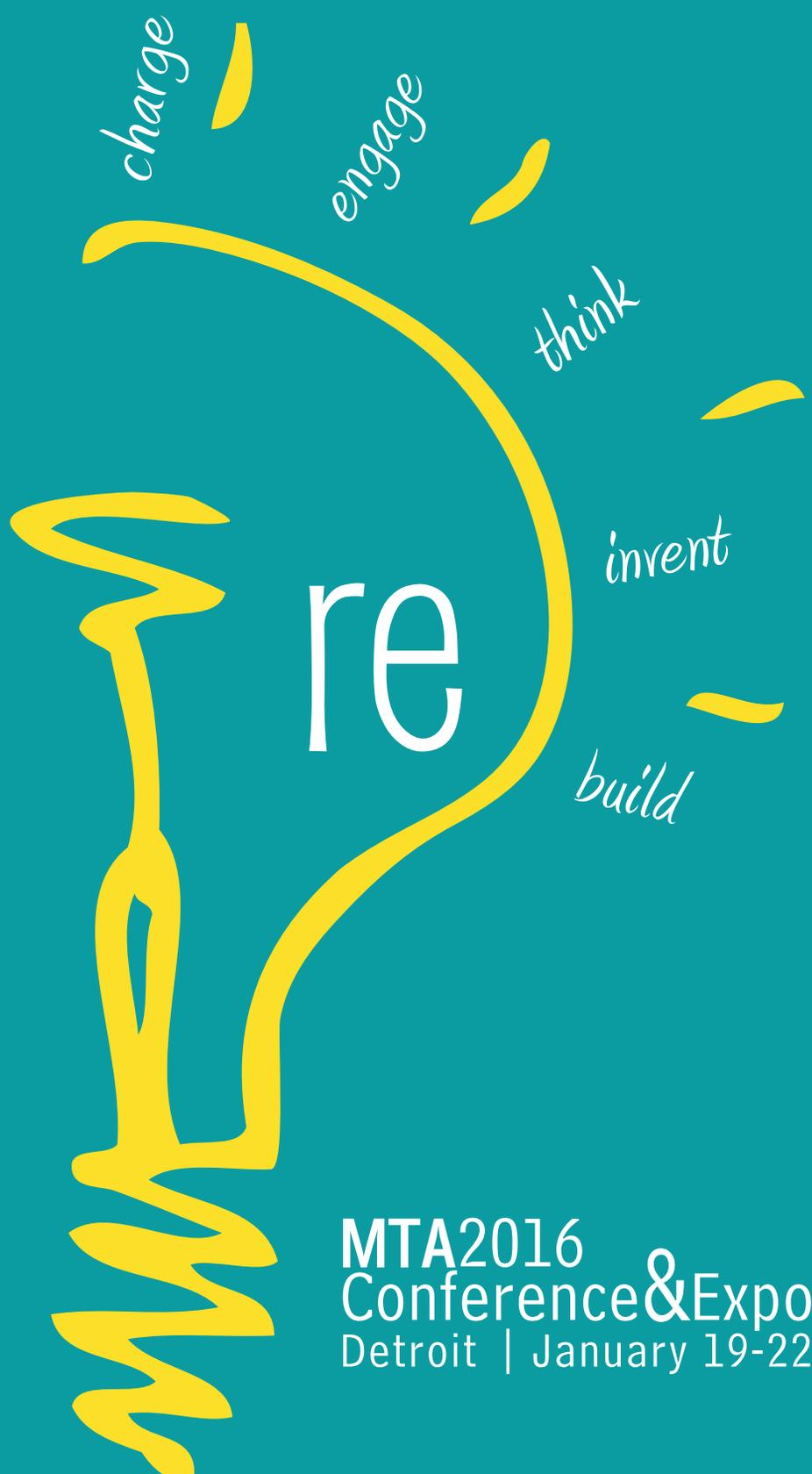
reinvent

and

rebuild

Look for the 2016 MTA Annual Conference & Expo registration brochure in the October *Township Focus*.

Registration and housing opens Oct. 27. Attendees **must** be registered for Conference to reserve housing.



MTA2016
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