

Michigan Township Focus

DECEMBER 2019

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



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mission statement

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



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Joyous holidays and new year to all of us

Can it really be December already? It has definitely been a fast six months since I started, and they've been very busy. I've met and spoken with well **over a thousand members**, traveling from Escanaba to Chelsea, from Kalamazoo to Alpena, and the many points in between. From those conversations, I have been learning what matters most to you from among MTA's advocacy, education, communications and expert guidance services. We are beginning our annual budget and programming planning soon—I welcome your thoughts if we haven't spoken yet in person. Please email me at neil@michigantownships.org.

Shelley Cardenas, our education director, whose unofficial title is **Annual Conference quarterback**, has been developing our educational, entertainment and celebration events. Registration materials will be in the January magazine, with all the details on educational sessions, our fascinating keynoter, banquet, and our wonderful sponsored evening events. As you may know, the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.) has become our most popular Conference destination. Registration starts right after the holidays and I encourage you to register early to get your housing code for hotel reservations, which begin three weeks later. In addition to rooms at the resort, we have blocks at eight nearby hotels to which there will be continuous shuttle service.

The state budget process this year has been unprecedented process from the negotiations, vetoes and budget transfers, to the public perception. As the third month of the state's fiscal year begins, funding for several programs impacting townships remain unfunded—the largest being \$27.3 million for payments in lieu of taxes for state-purchased lands, commercial forest lands and swamp and tax-reverted lands.

Judy Allen and our Government Relations team continue to press for better prioritization of township needs and for road funding reform that addresses funding at the local level that is equitable to our townships and fair to the **half of all Michigan residents** who call them home.

In this month's magazine, we provide data and insights of the **opioid addiction epidemic** in Michigan: how this blight impacts our residents and communities, what some townships are doing to respond, and what partnerships and resources may be able to help.

This month, MTA celebrates the retirement of **Penny Haney**, who has served three executive directors, advancing through her career to become director of operations. Like my predecessors, I have appreciated Penny's guidance and her passion for serving your needs. In this issue, we profile Penny, her time at MTA and what she has planned for retirement.

You'll also read the inspiring story of how the **Burr Oak Township** deputy clerk and a passionate volunteer helped provide gravestones for previously unmarked Civil War veterans.

In closing, on our cover, we feature for the first time in many years, a photo of the state Christmas tree, a project that shares some key leaders from MTA and a rich tradition of choosing stunningly beautiful trees nominated from our townships. We salute the **hard-working Christmas tree team** from Michigan's Department of Treasury, Management and Budget, who work all year to find candidate trees, celebrate the selection, safely transport these giants, and decorate them in front of our Capitol. Details for next year's nomination process will follow in the spring.

New opportunities and new issues will arise in the New Year, but for the moment, let's pause, enjoy the still of the winter nights, the company of family and friends, and the prospects of the full year ahead.

From our families to yours, we wish you very happy and joyous holidays!

Neil Sheridan





CENSUS 2020

The case for a complete count

The census happens once every decade with the mission of counting every resident in Michigan. An accurate count is critically important as it determines funding for local communities and essential services.

On the one hand, the census is a huge opportunity for our state given that Michigan has grown in population and our economy continues to do well. Yet many challenges, obstacles and misinformation about the census persist that can hamper participation in the census, with negative consequences for our state and local communities.

MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan is part of the state of Michigan's Complete Count Committee, a bipartisan group of 60-plus leaders, businesses, non-profits and local communities. The committee is launching "Count Me In," a statewide campaign effort to communicate the importance of the census and dispel myths to maximize participation in the 2020 Census.

The campaign's—and your township's own—message to Michigan residents can be summarized with the "Three C's."

- We want to make sure everyone is counted because it's critical to the future success of Michigan.
- The census is 100 percent confidential and secure, and respondents' information will not be shared with anyone.
- Responding to the census is convenient—people can respond by mail, phone or online.

Billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to Michigan and other states in whole or in part based on decennial census data. The census is used to ensure fair representation for Michiganders and funding for critical programs and services such as public safety, housing, worker

retraining, education, health care, roads and other physical infrastructure improvements, and much more.

A challenge

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Study (CBAMS) to prepare for the census. Key data points from the 2010 and 2020 CBAMS reports include:

- Going into the 2010 Census, 85 percent of CBAMS respondents, taking the survey in 2008, said they would "definitely" or "probably" respond to the 2010 Census.
- The 2010 Census had a 76 percent self-response rate—people over-reported their intent by nearly 10 percent.
- Preparing for the 2020 Census, just 67 percent of respondents who participated in the 2020 CBAMS conducted in 2018 said they were "very likely" or "extremely likely" to respond to the 2020 Census. Using the 2010 Census trend, the self-response rate for the 2020 Census would produce a lackluster 58 percent of residents participating.

If these survey results were applied to Michigan:

- Thirty-three percent—or approximately 3.3 million Michiganders—are less inclined to fill out the census in 2020 than the last census.
- Adding those who over-report (10 percent), up to 43 percent of residents—or 4.3 million Michiganders—would be less inclined to fill out their census form in 2020.
- For background, the 2010 population was 9,883,640.
 - There were 7,709,239 people or 78 percent who self-reported.
 - 2,174,401 people were "enumerated," or counted by other means because the individuals did not self-report.

The census plays a significant role in the future of our state, and townships can help to raise awareness, encourage participation and dispel any myths to ensure everyone in their community, and in Michigan, is counted.

Access a U.S. Census Bureau toolkit for state and local officials educate residents, and build awareness and support for the 2020 U.S. Census and get additional resources and information on MTA's "Census" webpage on the members-only side of www.michigantownships.org (access via the "Index of Topics" under the "Answer Center" tab after logging in), review the September *Township Focus* cover story, and check out our recent *Township Talk* podcast, featuring an association spearheading efforts to garner a complete count statewide.



ATTENTION TREASURERS

Reminder for tax collection office hours

The township treasurer must be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to receive tax payments on the last day taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent under MCL 211.55. (MCL 211.44(2)(b)) MCL 211.55 refers to the last day of February as the last day that taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent to the county treasurer, and provides for the unpaid taxes to be returned as delinquent to the county treasurer the next day.

In addition, the treasurer must be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at least one day between Dec. 25 and Dec. 31. However, the requirement to hold hours in December is waived if the township has an agreement with a local financial institution to collect taxes on behalf of the township, and the township provides timely notification to the taxpayers of their ability to pay their taxes at this financial institution.

For 2019, the available days for required December office hours are **Thursday, Dec. 26 through Monday, Dec. 30**. Treasurers **must** choose at least one day (unless a bank assists in collection). (MCL 211.44(2))

The last day to pay 2019 property taxes without incurring any interest or penalty is **Friday, Feb. 14, 2020**. Treasurers **may** choose to hold office hours.

The last day to pay 2019 property taxes before they are returned as delinquent is **Monday, March 2, 2020** (the last day of February in 2020 is Saturday, Feb. 29). (MCL 211.45) Treasurers **must** hold office hours.

The treasurer also **must** be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to receive tax payments for the collection of a summer tax levy, on **Monday Sept. 14, 2020** (the last day taxes are due and payable before interest is added under MCL 211.44a(5)).

Looking for additional resources? Purchase MTA's Treasurer's Guide to Township Government (order online at www.michigantownships.org/mta_store.asp or by calling 517-321-6467), or our "Guide to Tax Collecting" webcast. Members can also visit the "Tax Collecting" Web pages on the members-only portion of www.michigantownships.org (access via the "Index of Topics" under the "Answer Center" tab after logging in).

SURVEY SAYS

Local officials worried about impact of next recession on services

A majority of local leaders statewide are concerned about the potential impact of the next recession on their jurisdictions' ability to deliver public services and maintain government operations, according to the latest results from the spring 2019 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), from the University of Michigan's Center for Local, State and Urban Policy.

According to the survey, in which MTA is a partner, more than three-quarters of officials from larger communities (with more than 10,000 residents) are concerned about the potential impacts on service provision. Roughly 50 percent of officials in communities under 1,500 population, and 54 percent of those with 1,500 to 5,000 residents reported at least some concern about the impact of the next recession. Among township respondents specifically, 49 percent said they were "somewhat" or "very" concerned.

Although many local officials are concerned about the next recession, there is little immediate sense of urgency. Overall, 39 percent of local leaders don't know when to expect that the next recession will start (when asked in spring 2019), while 57 percent believe it is more than a year away, including 31 percent who say it is more than two years away. Meanwhile, just 3 percent think it will likely start within the next 12 months.

Only 13 percent of local leaders overall (16 percent of township officials, specifically) believe their jurisdictions are very prepared for the next recession, although another 57 percent (and 58 percent for townships) say they are at least somewhat prepared. Meanwhile, 20 percent report being either somewhat unprepared (16 percent) or very unprepared (4 percent) to deal with the next economic recession.

Local officials who say their jurisdictions are unprepared for the next recession are most likely to be from mid-sized jurisdictions and those in the Upper Peninsula, Southeast and East Central regions. In addition, county officials are more likely than city, village or township officials to say their jurisdictions are unprepared.

Just a quarter (26 percent) of local officials—and 21 percent of township officials, specifically—report their governments have taken specific actions to prepare for the next economic recession.





This year's Annual Lovells Bridge Walk, held the third weekend of August in **Lovells Township** (Crawford Co.), broke all records with nearly 400 people attending. Proceeds from the annual event—which first began in 1991 as a small-scale version of the Labor Day Mackinac Bridge Walk—also broke the previous fund-raising record, raising almost \$12,000 for the township's volunteer fire department, according to trustee **Heather Lovells**, who provided *Township Focus* with photos of the event. Dozens of area businesses contribute to the success of the walk as sponsors. A pancake breakfast and parade precede the walk, which concludes with a community luncheon.



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SAFE AND SECURE

New state specialist, commission working to ensure election security

Michigan has its first-ever full-time elections security specialist, dedicated to coordinating Michigan's overall election security plan, and working with state and federal partners to assess, train and communicate with local election officials on election security best practices.

Ashiya Brown was named to the new role, housed within the state Bureau of Elections, this fall.

A state Election Security Commission was also formed this spring to recommend reforms and strategies for ensuring the security of elections in Michigan.

The first-of-its-kind effort—which includes four local government representatives—brings together 18 local and national experts on cyber security and elections to secure elections and protect the integrity of every vote. They will advise the secretary of state and Bureau of Elections on best practices, and are set to deliver a set of recommended reforms and actions by the end of 2019. The commission's work is funded through a federal grant for election security.

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R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy

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HIGHER WAGES

Reminder: Michigan minimum wage increases Jan. 1

The state minimum wage increases to \$9.65 per hour, effective Jan. 1. Under the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act (Public Act 337 of 2018), Michigan's minimum wage will increase each Jan. 1 until it reaches \$12.05 in 2030. PA 337 outlines a set schedule for the increases.



Township talk Watch your email or visit www.michigantownships.org/township_talk.asp to listen to new and past episodes!

MTA's podcast, **Township Talk**, helps keep our member township officials—as well as lawmakers and the public—better informed on issues impacting local government.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

Frenchtown Charter Township (Monroe Co.) Fire Department recently held a “Courage to Act” class, free to the public. Emergency responders taught basic fire safety skills, basic first aid, fire extinguisher skills and emergency procedures.

Macomb Township (Macomb Co.) Clerk **Kristi Pozzi** was recently awarded the Certified Municipal Clerk designation by the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks. To qualify for certification, a clerk must invest a minimum of 120 hours in educational programming over three years and then continue education to maintain the certification. Pozzi was first elected township clerk in 2016, and also serves on the township zoning board of appeals. She is 2019 president of the Macomb County Clerks Association.



Pozzi

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.



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As has become a state—and MTA—tradition, MTA Life Member **Denny Olson, Breitung Charter Township** (Dickinson Co.) supervisor

(pictured at right), Immediate Past President

Ken Gauthier, Sanborn Township (Alpena Co.) supervisor,

and Second Vice President

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

(pictured at lower left, far left), once again took part in the search for, harvest, delivery and standing of the impressive conifer that signifies the holidays for many Michiganders. As members of the Christmas Tree Crew, the

MTA members helped with the 2019 state Christmas tree, a 61-foot blue spruce from Iron Mountain (which neighbors Olson's township). The tree, which was brought to Lansing on Oct. 26, was lit for the holiday season in front of the Capitol at the Silver Bells in the City event held Nov. 22.



Member input sought on MTA Policy Platform

MTA is seeking member input for the Association's 2020 Legislative Policy Platform. The deadline for submissions for consideration by the MTA Legislative Policy and Resolutions Committee is **Monday, Dec. 2**. Proposed policies are reviewed by MTA committees for word selection and legality, and to ensure they conform with the Association's overall goals and objectives.

The proposed policy platform for 2020 will be presented for membership approval at the 2020 MTA Annual Meeting, to be held Thursday, April 30 in conjunction with the 67th MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.).

View MTA's 2019 Policy Platform on MTA's website, www.michigantownships.org, under the "Advocacy" tab.

Contact the MTA Government Relations Department at (517) 321-6467 or email legislation@michigantownships.org with suggestions or questions.

classifieds

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Planner—CarlisleWortman Associates, Inc. (CWA) is a multi-disciplinary urban planning firm based in Ann Arbor. CWA strives to provide the highest level of service to more than 60 municipal clients throughout the state of Michigan. Services include on-site staffing; development review; master planning; zoning ordinance evaluation, amendments and administration; park planning; public meeting facilitation; and more. CWA is seeking qualified candidates to join our dynamic team. This opportunity is for an entry level planner who will work closely with principles and associates to provide service to CWA clients.

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Qualified individuals should send a resume and cover letter to khoxie@cwaplan.com, or CarlisleWortman, Inc., Attn: Benjamin R. Carlisle, AICP, Principal 117 N. First St., Ste. 70, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

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

Got township questions? MTA has answers!

Member township officials and employees may contact MTA Member Information Services staff with questions Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (517) 321-6467, fax to (517) 321-8908, or email:

- MTA Director of Member Information Services Michael Selden: michael@michigantownships.org
- MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt: catherine@michigantownships.org
- MTA Member Information Services Liaison Cindy Dodge: cindy@michigantownships.org



Redistricting Michigan



MTA joins SOS in announcing Citizens Redistricting Commission applications

MTA joined Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson—and an alliance of nonpartisan statewide partners—to announce that applications are being accepted for Michigan’s Citizens Redistricting Commission. MTA District 15 Director **Josh Westgate, Wright Township** (Ottawa Co.) supervisor (*pictured above, left*), spoke on behalf of the Association at a Grand Rapids news conference announcing availability of the applications, while MTA Past President **Doug Mansfield, Union Township** (Grand Traverse Co.) supervisor (*above, right*), participated in a Traverse City event. MTA Communications Director Jenn Fiedler also spoke at a kick-off event, held in Detroit.

Following approval by Michigan voters last November of the “Voters Not Politicians” constitutional amendment, the commission—comprised of 13 randomly selected citizens—will be responsible for drawing district lines for the Michigan Legislature and U.S. Congress. Any eligible Michigan voter can apply to serve on the commission, which does not require any special skills or expertise.

“MTA is the largest community of local government officials in the state—and one of the largest in the nation,” Mansfield said. “We are a nonpartisan association with a vision that promotes the continuation of strong, vibrant local governments in Michigan.”

Noted Westgate, “With the change in the redistricting process enacted by the voters, we are pleased to promote and encourage local participation among our members and those who are proud to call a Michigan township their home.”

The application, FAQs and more are available at redistrictingmichigan.org. In addition to the online application, thousands of applications will be mailed to randomly selected Michigan registered voters by Jan. 1, 2020, inviting them to apply to serve on the commission.

profile



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Advertorial

DECEMBER

By 1

On or before Dec. 1, county treasurer delivers to the township supervisor a signed statement of approval of the bond and the township supervisor delivers the tax roll to the township treasurer.

On or before Dec. 1, deadline for foreclosing governmental units to transfer list of unsold 2019 tax foreclosure parcels to the clerk in the municipality in which the parcels are located. (MCL 211.78m(6))

2019 taxes due and payable to the local treasurer are a lien on real property. (MCL 211.40)

Results of the equalization studies should be reported to assessors of each township.

2

Deadline for payments to municipalities from the Local Community Stabilization Authority. Local Community Stabilization Share revenue to municipalities with state facilities under PA 289 of 1977, MCLs 141.951 to 141.956. (MCL 123.1357(8) (e))

By 3

Petitions to place proposals on March 10 presidential primary ballot filed with county and local clerks. (MCL 168.646a)

10

Tuesday after the second Monday in December. Special board of review meeting may be convened by assessing officer to correct qualified errors. (MCL 211.53b) The township may authorize, by adoption of an ordinance or resolution,

an alternative meeting date during the week of the second Monday in December. (MCL 211.53b(7))

For taxes levied after Dec. 31, 2011, an owner who owned and occupied a principal residence on June 1 or Nov. 1 for which the exemption was not on the tax roll may file an appeal with the December board of review in the year for which the exemption was claimed or the immediately succeeding three years. (MCL 211.7cc(19))

An owner of a property that is qualified agricultural property on May 1 may appeal to the December board of review for the current year and the immediately preceding year if the exemption was not on the tax roll. (MCL 211.7ee(6))

December board of review to hear appeals for current-year poverty exemptions only, but not poverty exemptions denied by the March board of review. (MCL 211.7u, State Tax Commission (STC) Bulletin 6 of 2017)

17

Ballot wording of proposals to be presented at March 10 presidential primary certified to clerk by 4 p.m. Local clerk forwards ballot wording to county clerk within two days. (MCL 168.646a)

31

Tax day for 2020 property taxes. (MCL 211.2(2))

An eligible claimant may appeal an assessment levied, a penalty or rescission under the Essential Service Assessment Act to the Michigan Tax Tribunal by filing a petition no later than Dec. 31 in that same tax year.

All taxes due and liens are cancelled for otherwise unsold 2018 foreclosure parcels purchased by the state or transferred to the local unit or the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority. (MCL 211.78m(12) and (13))

Deadline for an owner who had claimed a conditional rescission of a principal residence exemption (PRE) to verify to the assessor that the property still meets the requirements for the conditional rescission through a second and third year annual verification of a *Conditional Rescission of Principal Residence Exemption* (Form 4640). (MCL 211.7cc(5))

Deadline for a land contract vendor, bank, credit union or other lending institution that had claimed a foreclosure

entity conditional rescission of a PRE to verify to the assessor that the property still meets the requirements for the conditional rescission through the filing of an annual verification of a foreclosure entity. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

A rescission affidavit (Form 5277) shall be filed with the assessor of the township in which the personal property is located, no later than Dec. 31 of the year in which the exempted property is no longer eligible for the eligible manufacturing personal property tax exemption.

JANUARY

2

Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 are state holidays. Deadline for counties to file 2019 equalization studies for 2020

HOW CAN YOU PREDICT THE LEGAL RISKS YOUR COMMUNITY MIGHT FACE?

- A. CRYSTAL BALL
- B. TAROT CARDS
- C. OUIJA BOARD
- D. ROSATI, SCHULTZ, JOPPICH & AMTSBUECHLER, PC

ANSWER: D

“They are integrally involved with the day-to-day operations of the township. They anticipate what the impacts will be for the township and make recommendations on how to deal with them.”

—Township Supervisor



ROSATI | SCHULTZ
JOPPICH | AMTSBUECHLER
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starting bases with the STC for all classifications in all units on Form 602 (L-4018P) *State Tax Commission Analysis for Equalized Valuation of Personal Property* and Form 603 (L-4018R) *State Tax Commission Analysis for Equalized Valuation of Real Property*. [R 209.41(5)]

By 7 Township election commissions finalize precinct boundaries for 2020 election cycle. (MCL 168.661)

By 10 Final date townships can establish, move or abolish a polling place for March 10 presidential primary. (MCL 168.662)

10 Except as otherwise provided in Section 9m (bank or trust), 9n (farm products) or 9o (sugar from sugar beets),

assessors and/or supervisors are required to annually send a personal property statement to any taxpayer they believe has personal property in their possession in their township. Form 632 (L-4175) *Personal Property Statements* must be sent or delivered no later than Jan. 10 each year. (MCL 211.19(2)(c))

By 25 County clerks deliver absentee voter ballots for March 10 presidential primary to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

Delivery of military and overseas absentee voter ballots must begin for March 10 presidential primary by this date. All requests received since Nov. 5, 2019, from a military or overseas voter must be honored for all 2020 elections. (MCL 168.759a)

27 Local units with a state equalized value of \$15 million or less: 2019 taxes collected by Jan. 10 must be distributed with 10 business days of Jan. 10. (MCL 211.43(5)) All others must distribute 2019 taxes collected with 10 business days after the 1st and 15th of each month except in March. (MCL 211.43(3)(a))

By 28 Petitions to place proposals on the May 5 ballot filed with county and township clerks. (If governing law sets an earlier petition filing deadline, earlier deadline must be observed.) (MCL 168.646a)

30 through Feb. 18. Precinct inspectors for March 10 presidential primary appointed by township election commissions. (MCL 168.674)

31 Feb. 1 is a Saturday. Deadline to submit STC Form 2699 (L-4143) *Statement of Qualified Personal Property by a Qualified Business* with the assessor (not later than Feb. 1). (MCL 211. 8a(2))

Deadline for employers providing Affordable Care Act information, including IRS Forms 1095-B (Health Coverage) and 1095-C (Employer-provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage), that must be reported to covered individuals and employees.



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On Nov. 1, 2019, the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) Marijuana Regulatory Agency (MRA) began accepting applications for “adult-use” recreational marijuana establishment licenses under the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act (MRTMA). The process is governed by the Emergency Rules, effective July 3, 2019, which are referenced in this article. Drafts of final rules are expected in January 2020, to be promulgated by spring 2020.



What are the license types?

There are several “marijuana establishment” licenses:

- Class A Marijuana Grower
- Class B Marijuana Grower
- Class C Marijuana Grower
- Excess Marijuana Grower
- Marijuana Microbusiness
- Marijuana Processor
- Marijuana Retailer
- Marijuana Secure Transporter
- Marijuana Safety Compliance Facility (Note that a secure transporter facility must still have its primary place of business in a municipality that has not prohibited marijuana establishments.)
- Designated Consumption Establishment

There are also “special licenses” that provide for licensees to organize temporary events:

- Marijuana Event Organizer License
- Temporary Marijuana Event License



We submitted an ordinance to prohibit or limit recreational marijuana establishments to LARA, but how can we be sure

that it will be considered if someone applies for a license in our township?

One of the conditions of eligibility to apply for a license or renew a license is that the applicant provide an “attestation form” from the municipality as part of the application. The applicant must request that the municipality complete an Attestation 2-C, Confirmation of Section 6 Compliance Form and then submit it with their application. If the attestation is not included or the municipality does not allow

that type of license, the license will not be approved. (Rule 8)

Rule 8 requires that a complete application for a state license must include all of the following:

- Confirmation of compliance with any municipal ordinances the municipality may have adopted under Section 6 of the MRTMA. (MCL 333.27956)
- Verification that the municipality has not adopted an ordinance prohibiting marijuana establishments.
- Description of any regulations within the municipality that apply to the proposed marijuana establishment.
- The date and signature of the clerk of the municipality or his or her designee on the attestation form attesting that the information stated in the document is correct.

The application must also include an attestation by the applicant that any changes that occur with the municipal ordinance or any violations of a municipal or zoning ordinance will be reported to the agency by the applicant.

Falsifying information on an application or failure to satisfy the confirmation of compliance by a municipality requirement are grounds for denial of a license. (Rule 14)



What will the MRA do if a township adopts an ordinance to prohibit after a license has been issued?

An applicant is ineligible to receive a state license if the MRA determines that the municipality in which the applicant’s proposed marijuana establishment will operate has adopted an ordinance that prohibits marijuana establishments or that the proposed establishment is noncompliant with an ordinance adopted by the municipality under Section 6. (Rule 9)

Note that this same requirement applies to applications to renew. An application for renewal of a state license must include a statement under oath by the licensee that the information provided in the licensee’s annual renewal form is current, complete, true and accurate, and that the licensee has fulfilled its obligation under the MRTMA and the rules

to notify the agency of any change in information provided in its original state license application and subsequent annual renewal form or forms previously filed, if applicable. (Rule 15)

Applicants and licensees must report to the MRA any proposed material changes to the marijuana establishment. A material change includes a description of a violation of an ordinance or a zoning regulation adopted pursuant to Section 6 committed by the licensee, but only if the violation relates to activities licensed under the MRTMA and its rules, or the Medical Marijuana Facilities Licensing Act (MMFLA) and its rules, or both. (Rule 16)

The agency may take action if notified of a violation of a municipal ordinance pursuant to Section 6. (Rule 19)



May a licensed marijuana establishment move its location?

Any change of a location of a marijuana establishment after licensure requires a new state license application including written confirmation on Attestation Form 2-C of compliance with any municipal ordinances the municipality may have adopted under Section 6. (Rule 22)



Are licenses automatically renewed?

No. Because the marijuana establishment licenses are state-granted licenses issued for a one-year period only, every licensed establishment must apply for renewal of its license or cease all activities. A person who has not applied for state license renewal for any and all licenses that are due for renewal must cease and desist operation and is subject to any sanctions or fines, or both. (Rule 15)



If a municipality allowed a type of license and then adopted an ordinance to prohibit that type of license, what happens to any of those licenses that the MRA issued in that municipality?

An applicant for renewal of a license is subject to the same requirement that the applicant must be eligible to hold a license based on an ordinance adopted by the municipality. As with an original application for a license, the applicant must submit an attestation form from the municipality. But with a renewal application, the attestation by the municipality must also include a description of any violation of an ordinance or zoning regulation adopted under Section 6 that has been committed by the licensee if the violation relates to activities licensed under the MRTMA or the rules, the MMFLA and its rules, or both. The attestation must also

state whether there has been a change to the municipality's ordinance or zoning regulation, with a description of the change, since the state license was last issued. (Rule 15)

The procedures for an applicant to challenge a license denial or a licensee to challenge a revocation or refusal to renew a license by the MRA are governed by the Michigan Administrative Procedures Act (MCLs 24.271 to 24.287) and the LARA rules. An opportunity for a contested case hearing conducted by an administrative law judge within the Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules will be provided. (Rule 69)

A person operating without a state license must cease operation and may be subject to, including but not limited to, sanctions or fines, or both, in accordance with the MRTMA or the rules, and may be referred to the state police and Department of Attorney General. (Rule 20)



What is a temporary marijuana event license?

A "temporary marijuana event license" means a state license held by a marijuana event organizer for an event where the onsite sale or consumption of "adult-use" recreational marijuana products, or both, are authorized at the location indicated on the state license during the dates indicated on the state license. (Rule 1(hh))

A temporary marijuana event license may only be issued to a person who holds a marijuana event organizer license. (Rule 61)

A temporary marijuana event license is required for any date in which the applicant engages in onsite marijuana product sales or allows onsite marijuana product consumption. A temporary marijuana event license may only be issued for a single day or up to seven consecutive days. No temporary marijuana event license will be issued for more than seven days. (Rule 62)

A licensed marijuana event organizer and all other licensees participating in a temporary marijuana event are required to comply with all other applicable requirements in the act, and the rules and any municipal ordinances. (Rule 62)

An application for a temporary marijuana event license must be submitted to the agency no less than 90 calendar days before the first day of the temporary marijuana event. The application must be made under oath on a form provided by the agency and must include written attestation from the municipality on the Attestation 4-B, Confirmation of Section 6 Compliance Form authorizing the applicant to engage in onsite marijuana sales to, and/or onsite consumption by, persons 21 years of age or older at the temporary marijuana event at the proposed location/venue and date(s) and time(s). (Rule 62)

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.

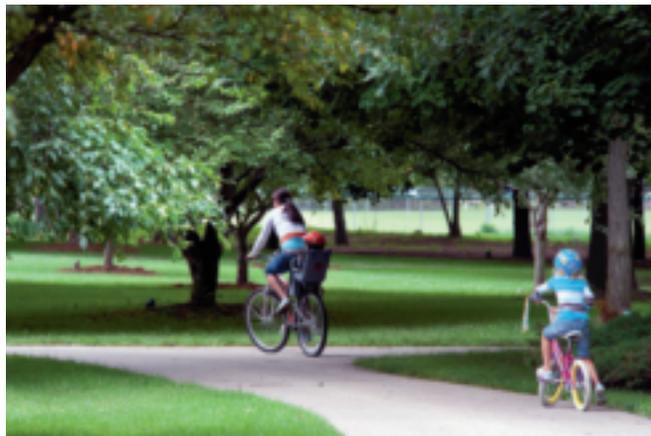


Designee can be appointed for tax collection purposes

A designee for the township treasurer will soon be able to act on his or her behalf for tax collection purposes.

Public Act 124 of 2019, sponsored by Rep. Bradley Slagh (R-Zeeland Chtr. Twp.), was supported by MTA. Previous statute required the township treasurer to maintain hours to receive taxes during the last week of the year and on specific days when taxes are due (*see page 5*). However, instances have occurred—due to business, personal emergencies or other issues—when the treasurer was unavailable during the tax collection dates. PA 124 (House Bill 4209) would allow a designee, approved by the township board, to be appointed to take the treasurer's place and accept tax payment during these designated times. The designee could be a deputy treasurer, an elected official, or another individual acting on behalf of the treasurer.

The measure became effective Nov. 21, 2019.



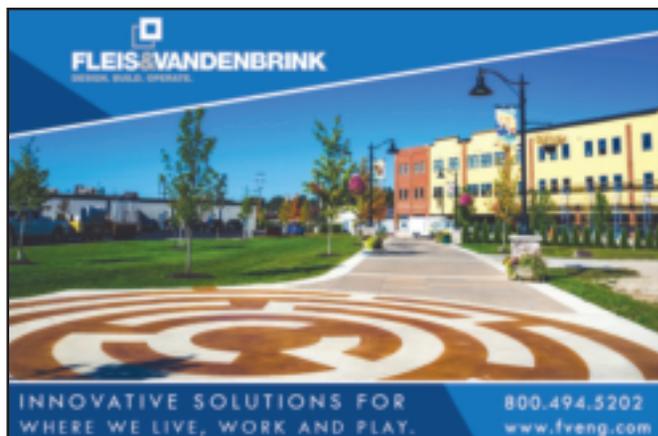
Audit change for recreational authorities

Townships with recreational authorities that do not levy/collect a tax, or have annual expenditures less than \$100,000 will now be permitted to conduct an audit only biennially.

House Bill 4408, sponsored by Rep. Aaron Miller (R-Sherman Twp.) and supported by MTA, is now Public Act 123 of 2019. The new law amends the Recreational Authorities Act, changing when an audit will occur for some recreational authorities.

Previously, the statute required the board of a recreational authority to obtain an annual audit. PA 123 amends the requirement to provide savings for smaller recreational authorities that do not levy a tax or have under \$100,000 in annual expenditures, changing the audit requirement to biennial. However, if an audit discloses any fiscal irregularity or material deviation, the authority could be subject to an audit in the next year.

The new law became effective Nov. 21, 2019.





Certain alternative energy equipment tax exempt

Legislation changing the tax treatment of certain alternative energy equipment was recently enacted. The new laws exempt specific solar panels, wind turbines and other alternative energy equipment from personal property taxes (PPT).

Public Acts 117 and 118 of 2019 (House Bills 4069 and 4465), sponsored by Reps. Bronna Kahle (R-Clinton Twp.) and Youssef Rabhi (D-Ann Arbor) respectfully, and PA 116 of 2019 (Senate Bill 47), sponsored by Sen. Tom Barrett (R-Benton Twp.), were introduced in an effort to encourage more people to install environmentally beneficial systems.

The new laws exempt from PPT alternative energy equipment producing not more than 150 kilowatts used residentially, commercially or industrially. PAs 116 and 118 address the commercial or industrial application of these systems, and PA 117 addresses the residential application. The General Property Tax Act states that a home's true cash value cannot increase based on expenditures for normal repairs, replacement and maintenance until the property is sold. The change adds installing, replacing or repairing an alternative energy system to that list as long as the system has a generating capacity of no more than 150 kilowatts, the annual energy output of which does not exceed the home's annual energy consumption.

The measure also eliminates the certification and resolution process previously required to certify alternative energy personal property as eligible for an exemption. Instead, the PPT exemption already in effect would apply to alternative energy. This exemption applies only if two conditions are met—the personal property has a generating capacity of no more than 150 kilowatts and is used solely to offset all or a portion of the commercial or industrial energy usage, and if installed after the effective date, the personal property must have a true cash value of no more than \$80,000.

Based on the inclusion of amendments negotiated on similar legislation last session, MTA took a neutral position. All three public acts took effect Nov. 15, 2019.

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Legislative lowdown

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

SB 14: Drinking water standards—Provides for maximum PFAS contaminant levels allowed for drinking water standards. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 19: Public employees and officers—Modifies population thresholds for contracts of public servants serving as public safety officers. *MTA supports.*

SB 26, HBs 4025 & 4047: Property tax—Requires Michigan Tax Tribunal determinations to consider all three methods of appraisal in assessment disputes and prohibits deed restrictions on valuation of property. *MTA supports.*

SB 28: Motor fuel tax—Requires motor fuel tax to be dispersed to county where fuel is pumped. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 31-32: Recreation passport—Expands current recreation passport program to include trails and state forest campgrounds. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 39: Property tax assessments—Excludes private deed restrictions from being considered by the Michigan Tax Tribunal if they substantially impair the highest and best use of property as compared to property subject to assessment. *MTA supports.*

SB 46: Property tax assessments—Clarifies valuation of wind energy systems. *MTA supports.*

SB 54 & HB 4100: Historic preservation tax credit—Restores the state historic preservation tax credit program. *MTA supports.*

SB 78: Elections—Requires ballot instructions to be printed on ballot. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 79, 117 & 297: Elections—Revises procedure for returning absentee ballots for military personnel. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 104 & HB 4179: Open Meetings Act—Allows additional remedies for noncompliance to include attorney fees and allows a one-year window during which civil actions may be brought. *MTA opposes.*

SB 431: Local preemption—Prohibits local regulations of certain conditions under zoning ordinance for mining permit approval. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 518-519: Transportation—Provides for the allocation of federal aid funding to MDOT and directs non-federal aid funds to local road agencies. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 520: Transportation—Clarifies pavement warranties for construction and repair. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 521: Transportation funding—Requires local road agencies to identify funding sources for new roads including maintenance when adding new infrastructure or planned developments. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 522: Transportation—Establishes a local road agency advocate to the Transportation Asset Management Council. *MTA supports.*

SB 546 & HB 5082: PILT supplemental appropriations—Provides supplemental appropriations to restore payments-in-lieu-of-taxes for FY 2019-20. *MTA supports.*

SB 549 & HB 5083: PFAS supplemental appropriations—Provides supplemental appropriations to restore FY 2019-20 polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) funding for municipal airports. *MTA supports.*

SBs 560, 576 & HB 5074: Secondary road patrol supplemental appropriations—Provides supplemental appropriations to restore FY 2019-20 secondary road patrol. *MTA supports.*

HB 4035: Local preemption—Prohibits local regulation of dogs based upon breed or perceived breed. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4046: Land use/zoning preemption—Limits local zoning regulation of vacation rentals and short-term rentals. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4083: Sanctuary cities—Prohibits local laws that prevent local officials from cooperating with federal authorities regarding an individual's immigration status. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4091 & SB 319: Neighborhood Enterprise Zones—Modifies eligibility requirements to qualify as a rehabilitated facility. *MTA supports.*

HB 4095: Land use/zoning preemption—Preempts local zoning authority for child foster care institutions for a state-licensed facility up to 10 children. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4185: Destruction of property—Adds willfully and maliciously destroying or damaging the real property of a fire, sheriff or police department to the current prohibition regarding a fire or police department's personal property. *MTA supports.*

HB 4268 & SB 163: Broadband personal property exemption—Creates a personal property tax exemption for new broadband equipment that resolves lack of broadband service. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 4389-4391: Firefighting foam—Requires specific reporting requirements to the state when firefighting foam containing PFAS is used and sets minimum training and certification standards regarding use of firefighting foam and PFAS. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4454: Unlawful dumping—Revises criminal penalties and civil fines for unlawful dumping of garbage. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4554-4563: Short-term rental—Creates the Short-term Rental Promotion Act requiring registry of short-term rentals and retains local zoning authority. *MTA supports.*

HB 4691: Municipal stormwater utilities—Creates a new act to provide for and authorize a fee for municipal stormwater utilities. *MTA supports.*

HB 4692: Drains and sewers—Specifies rainfall levels and what constitutes a sewage system defect for liability for overflow or backups. *MTA supports.*

HB 4750 & SB 400: Lead—Requires testing and disclosure of lead in water systems. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4775 & 4776: Recreation passport fees—Modifies the distribution of recreation passport fee revenue and increases the percentage to the Local Public Recreation Facilities Fund. *MTA supports.*

HB 4800: Transportation funding—Allocates a portion of revenue from vehicle registration fees to the township, city or village where registrant resides for road funding. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4963-4964: Transportation funding—Allows a county, city or township to ask voters to create a local gas tax and/or a local add-on to their driver registration fees. *MTA supports.*

HB 4966: Transportation funding—Modifies allocations for certain expenditures by county road agency for primary and local roads to provide more flexibility. *MTA supports.*

HB 4971: Transportation—Requires the Transportation Asset Management Council to evaluate roads throughout the state for “right-sizing” and to work with local road agencies to ensure infrastructure is not overbuilt. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5024 & 5025: Property tax/special assessment—Allows authority for townships to establish a millage or special assessment for mosquito abatement. *MTA supports.*

HB 5031: Elections—Expands polling place locations to include a privately owned building. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5032: Elections—Increases allowable precinct size, allows for precinct consolidation at certain elections by adding primary elections and requires permanent absent voter list. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5123 & 5141: Elections—Requires absent voter counting boards in cities and townships with more than one election precinct and allows municipality to enter into an agreement with the county to establish a county absent voter counting board. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5247: Elections—Allows township board elections to be nonpartisan with the approval of voters. *MTA supports.*

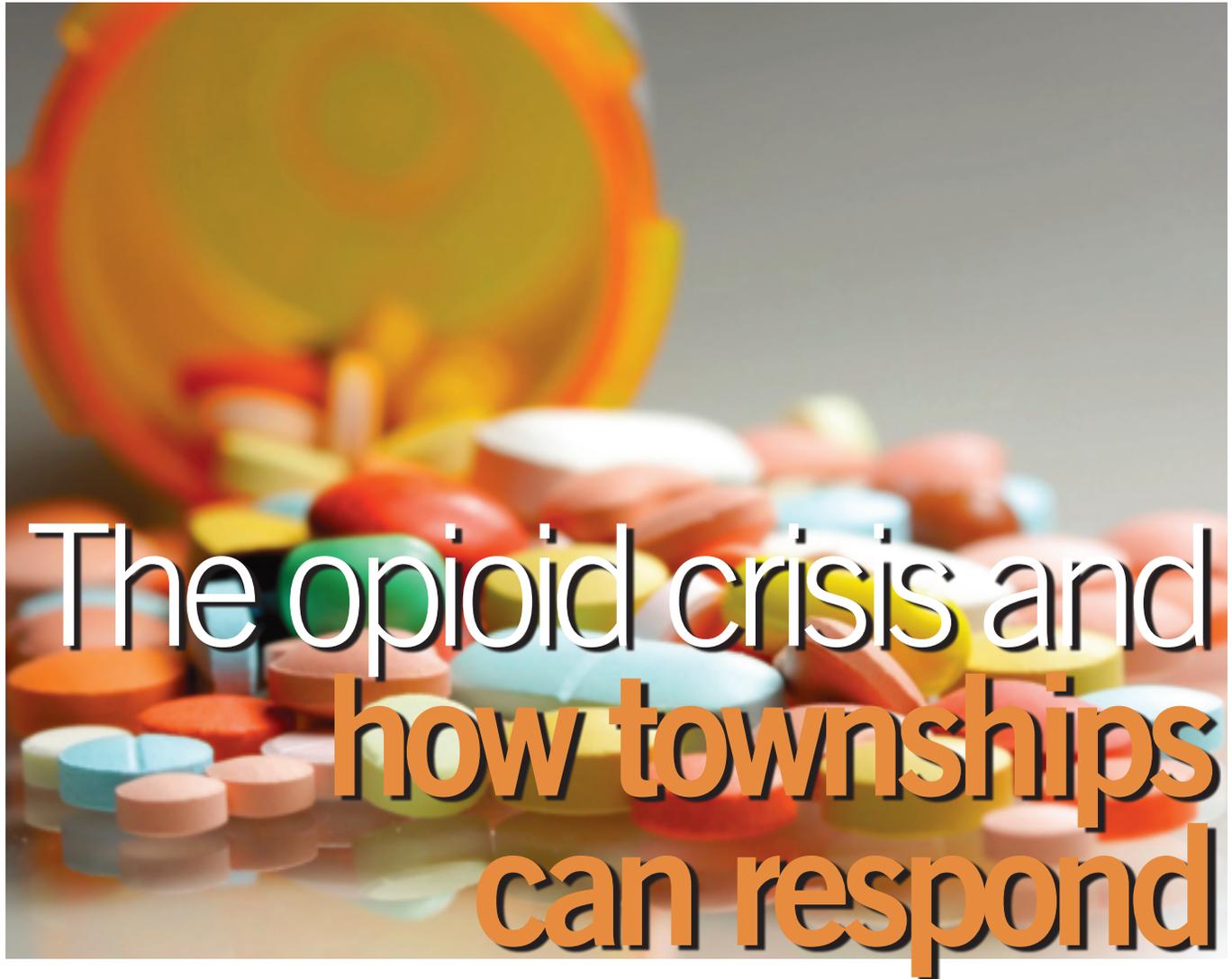
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MTA's 2020 Capital Conference

February 26 | Lansing

Join MTA and fellow township officials for this important event where you will learn about legislative issues impacting townships, and have the opportunity to meet with state decision-makers and legislators. Look for registration details in upcoming issues of *Township Focus* and MTA e-newsletters, and on www.michigantownships.org.



The opioid crisis and how townships can respond

The swearing in ceremony can be a landmark moment for new firefighters, with family, friends, fellow first responders and local officials gathered to honor the heroes and recognize their achievement.

“There’s a feeling that you made it,” said **Ken Verkest**, supervisor of **Harrison Charter Township** (Macomb Co.). “It’s ceremonial, there is a level of pride that comes with it. It’s a big deal for a firefighter.”

One recent ceremony at Harrison Charter Township didn’t go quite as planned. Scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m., when the guests began to arrive, they realized that the first responders were out on a call. When the responders finally returned to the station, the audience was told that the run was to help someone overdosing on opioids—the same individual they had helped less than 24 hours earlier.

Same person. Same crisis.

When recounting the story, Verkest sighed and, thinking of the first responders, said, “There is a certain sadness. You think to yourself, ‘Man, I’ve been here twice in less than 24 hours. What’s the likelihood that I’m not going to get a call again because this guy’s gonna be dead?’”

A nationwide epidemic with Michigan impacts

As explained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the opioid epidemic began in the late 1990s, when pharmaceutical companies told the medical community that

patients could not become addicted to prescription opioids. This led to the narcotics being prescribed and used at a greater rate. In time, this grew to misuse and dependence, and medical professionals began to see firsthand how addictive these medications truly are. Today, the widespread crisis involves both heroin, which is now commonly laced with additives like fentanyl, as well as prescription medications, such as Vicodin or OxyContin.

Opioid abuse is a nationwide epidemic that is hitting home in the Great Lakes State, and likely impacts every Michigan community. In 2017, of 2,739 deaths related to drug overdoses in Michigan, nearly 71 percent—1,941—were related to opioids. This is an increase of 17 times since 1999, when the state had just 99 *total* drug-related deaths. The correlation to opioids is unmistakable.

Along with efforts at the federal level, both former Gov. Rick Snyder and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer have also focused attentions on the crisis. In 2016, Snyder created a prescription drug and opioid abuse commission, and the state launched a new web resource last year, www.michigan.gov/opioids/, providing information about opioid addiction—from data about the epidemic, where those suffering from addiction can get help, and information for health care professionals—in one location.

Just prior to *Township Focus* press time, Whitmer announced an awareness campaign, with aspirations to reduce the number of opioid-related deaths by 50 percent over the next five years. This campaign follows the governor's August executive order creating the Michigan Opioid Task Force, which aims to identify the root causes of the epidemic, raise public awareness and implement actions to help Michiganders struggling with addiction access the recovery services they need.

This epidemic is devastating to its victims and their families. It also has ripple effects, tearing at the fabric of the community, stretching thin public services and health systems, and impacting the economy. Substance abuse can result in myriad issues, including increased crime and violence, car accidents, homelessness, unemployment, and more.

"Opioids and heroin abuse impact every community, and it feels like everyone you run into has been personally impacted or affected," said **Pat Williams**, supervisor of **Canton Charter Township** (Wayne Co.). "It goes beyond the state of Michigan. It is a national problem.

"We are making runs for public safety, on average, twice a week responding to overdose calls," he continued. "Last year, I believe, the number is nine souls that we lost. It is significant."

The statistics and stories may seem bleak, but townships can play a role in helping to combat this epidemic—through education, information and partnership—offering hope to those in need.



Programs like Hope Not Handcuffs bring together local law enforcement and community organizations to find viable treatment options for individuals seeking help to reduce dependency on heroin and prescription drugs, as well as alcohol.

Opioid epidemic hits home

No corner of Michigan has gone untouched by the opioid crisis—and township officials across the state say their communities are struggling with the issue.

The spring 2019 Michigan Public Policy Survey, conducted by the University of Michigan's Center for Local, State and Urban Policy, asked local officials statewide—including township supervisors, clerks and managers—about opioids in communities, and their impacts. The survey results showed that 87 percent of township officials felt that there were at least some problems with opioids in their communities—with 19 percent calling the problems "significant." And the issue doesn't discriminate based on the size of the jurisdiction—anywhere from 60 to a full 92 percent of communities in populations from less than 1,500 to more than 30,000 all said that they are experiencing problems associated with opioids.

The results also showed that no region of the state is untouched. Some 87 percent of township officials in the Upper Peninsula said that there were problems associated with opioids in their community—and of those, 26 percent said it was a significant issue. Similar responses were reported throughout the Lower Peninsula. For example, in Southeast Michigan, 91 percent say there are problems, and 26 percent say these problems are significant.

Township officials—especially those in smaller communities—expressed concerns that the problem was not being addressed. In townships overall, only 8 percent of respondents say their own jurisdiction is taking steps to address opioid issues. Some 55 percent of townships felt the issues were being addressed at the county level—which is 10 percent higher than the 40 percent of township respondents who felt like the state was addressing the issues.

cover story

The survey also reaffirmed the impact on local services, with 76 percent of township respondents saying that opioids are an additional burden on local law enforcement services (25 percent called it a “significant” additional burden). Identical numbers were reported for the impact on emergency medical services as well.

Rural areas hit hard

The impact of the opioid epidemic on small towns and rural places has been particularly significant. A December 2017 study by the National Farmers Union and the American Farm Bureau Federation said that almost 74 percent of farmers surveyed have been directly impacted by the opioid epidemic. That year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also announced that the rates of drug overdose deaths are rising in rural areas, surpassing rates in urban areas.

Rural areas face unique challenges in dealing with the substance abuse crisis, including a lack of or limited mental and behavioral health care and rehabilitation facilities, decreased access to primary care and specialty providers, emergency services that may be spread over larger geographic areas, and limited resources among hospitals or emergency rooms.

“I cover extremely rural areas,” said Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director of three regional health departments, covering 19 rural counties in mid- and central Michigan. “This is a huge issue we deal with. Even when people have gone through a recovery program, they come back home, they have nowhere else to live, the only support people they have are their friends they used drugs with, and it’s really hard for them not to relapse. They have nowhere else to go. That is one thing that is really hard in small, rural areas.”

According to the state Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Michigan Automated Prescription System, from 2012–2017, more than 7.5 million patients in Michigan received more than 103 million opioid prescriptions—which were linked to 5,261 overdose deaths. CDC records indicate the state of Michigan is listed at 74.2 prescriptions per 100 people—and among the counties with the highest rates were in the central and northern part of the state.

Roscommon County has been hit particularly hard by the opioid crisis. In a recent survey, the county ranked 25th in the nation for most opioid prescriptions filled. More opioids have been dispensed in Roscommon County than anywhere else in Michigan, enough for 443 pills per person.

Gerrish Township (Roscommon Co.) Police Chief **Brian Hill**, who has been with the department for more than 37 years, says that he has witnessed changes in his area. Over the course of the past several years, he noticed a gradual change in his community, including an uptick in things like domestic violence, drunk—and drugged—driving, and an increase in calls related to mental health and suicides. The township decided to take action.

“We’re not unlike any other community,” said Hill, noting that the township hosted a round table discussion on the opioid epidemic last year with U.S. Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) and local first responders, health care providers and community partners. “But we do try to be proactive in our approaches to this crisis. You can’t put a band-aid on a crisis.

“There are good folks, from across all spectrums of life,” he said of the people who are battling with substance abuse addiction. “There is a lot of work to do. But we have to attack it proactively to reduce the numbers. Let’s go after it.”

The impact of the epidemic on rural communities is so stark that last year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a program to help these areas address the crisis. Included in the USDA efforts are funding opportunities for mobile treatment clinics, temporary residential facilities, halfway houses, treatment clinics and others. They also offer funding for workforce development to help those who have overcome their addiction move forward.

This is not a battle that townships have to tackle on their own. Morse notes that partnering is critical in these efforts. Officials can reach out to their neighboring municipalities and county, area health care facilities, local service organizations and churches to work together to ensure proper education and information about the issues, support for addicts and their families, as well as to help secure funding for programs—all of which can make a difference, no matter how big or small your township.

“You can’t do it by yourself,” Hill echoed. “You just can’t. You have to reach out to partners. We can make a difference, but we have to think globally to make a difference locally.”

One such social service organization that is endeavoring to make strides against addiction is Families Against Narcotics (www.familiesagainstnarcotics.org). What began in Macomb County in 2007 has expanded across the state, with 22 chapters in counties from southeast Michigan to the Thumb, throughout northern Michigan and into the Upper Peninsula. The community-based program assists those seeking recovery, those in recovery, family members affected by addiction, and community supporters. Townships, or regional partners, can reach out to Families Against Narcotics (FAN) as they seek to change the face of addiction, dispel the stigma of addiction, and educate the community as well as those affected by addiction.

Funding is also a major issue for any efforts to help curb this epidemic, and federal, state and other grants—including from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov)—are available. Morse also recommends that townships connect with the county to ensure any and all available funding is being used to its fullest potential. “Liquor tax money, which is earmarked for anything drug related, is often not utilized,”

she said. “I encourage townships and counties to really look at that, and if they do have unspent liquor tax money, they can work with community partners and use it toward drug prevention or drug treatment. That money might just be sitting there—not being used for what it’s meant to be used for.”

The difference between life and death

One critically important way that townships can help to reduce the number of opioid deaths in their area is by equipping their local law enforcement and first responders—and even other municipal employees—with the opioid antagonist naloxone. Injected or administered nasally, the life-saver—more commonly known by its brand names Narcan or Evzio—blocks the effects of the opioids and can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose in progress.

Hill is one of Gerrish Township’s trainers to educate officers in the use of naloxone—and what to look for when suspecting an overdose. “We carry naloxone in all of the department’s police cruisers, I can tell you that,” Hill said, noting that the department receives the antagonists through an area social service organization. During the training, officers watch a PowerPoint presentation about the effects of naloxone in intercepting the opioid signal in the brain.

“Since naloxone only works on breaking that connection, we focus on signs and symptoms as to whether or not Narcan would be a proper response for a person having an opioid crisis,” said Hill, who also said that the township’s “fantastic” ambulance service arrives on scenes so quickly EMS personnel are often the ones administering the Narcan, rather than the police officers.

Since 2017, all police personnel on the road in **Van Buren Charter Township** (Wayne Co.) have been trained in the use of naloxone. The department training was provided by the county department of mental health, which also supplied the naloxone kits.

“Like so many other departments, it’s a step we’ve taken to help with the opioid crisis,” said **Gregory Laurain**, director of the Van Buren Township Police Safety Department. “It is a community crisis, no doubt about it. It’s all over the place.”

In September, Van Buren police hosted an opioid forum where it was noted that, over the course of nine months, officers used Narcan to counteract more than 20 opioid overdoses.

State laws to increase access to and use of naloxone began in 2014 with legislation amending the Good Samaritan law, creating protections for those hoping to save a life, as well as laws requiring that emergency vehicles carry opioid antagonists and EMS personnel to be trained in administering the life-saving drug.

Laws to enhance access to naloxone have continued since 2014. In 2016, Michigan passed a naloxone “standing order” law, allowing a pharmacist to dispense naloxone without an individual prescription and without identifying a particular patient. The Good Samaritan Law was also amended to prevent drug possession charges against those who seek medical assistance for themselves or others in the event of an overdose. And this summer, Gov. Whitmer signed

Community response to opioid abuse

First Responders | Public Safety | Law Enforcement Officers



- Get adequate supply and training for naloxone administration.
- Identify changes in illicit drug supply and work with state and local health departments to respond effectively.
- Collaborate with public health departments and health systems to enhance linkage to treatment and services.

Community-Based Organizations



- Assist in mobilizing a community response to those most at risk.
- Provide resources to reduce harms that can occur when injecting drugs, including ones that offer screening for HIV and hepatitis B and C, in combination with referral to treatment and naloxone provision.

Local Health Departments



- Alert the community to the rapid increase in opioid overdoses seen in emergency departments and inform strategic plans and timely responses.
- Ensure an adequate naloxone supply.
- Increase availability and access to necessary services.
- Coordinate with key community groups to detect and respond to any changes in illicit drug use.

Community Members



- Connect with organizations in the community that provide public health services, treatment, counseling, and naloxone distribution.

vanburen.cdc.gov

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into law a package of bills creating the “Administration of Opioid Antagonists Act,” which makes it easier for municipal employees to administer naloxone. Now, it’s not just first responders and law enforcement who can save a life. A properly trained municipal employee could use the opioid antagonist if they believed someone was experiencing an opioid overdose. (It is important to note that employees who act in good faith are exempt from any liability if their conduct doesn’t amount to gross negligence.)

Rescue and recovery

Williams has seen first-hand in his own community the impact that opioid addiction can have. He knows that helping opioid abusers access treatment can make all the difference. That’s why Canton Charter Township—along with neighboring **Plymouth Charter** and **Northville Townships** (Wayne Co.)—are the lead communities in creating a “rescue recovery program” to help those battling addiction in their communities. Rescue recovery programs give addicts an opportunity to seek help, rather than end up behind bars.

The Conference of Western Wayne Rescue Recovery program, which started last fall and also includes two cities as its partners, is a pilot program that attempts to break the common cycle with addicts of detoxing in jail—rather than with proper treatment—which frequently results in the person using drugs again when they are released. Through a partnership with regional social support group Growth Works and an area hospital, as well as the townships’ public safety departments, a network has formed.

Now, “when an addict is encountered, it gives them the option of treatment versus jail,” said Williams.

Gerrish Township also works closely with a nonprofit, Neighbors on Watch, which reaches out to residents in need to ensure that they have ongoing support, as well as the basic essentials. “We are so blessed within our community to have this organization,” Hill said. “We work with them every single day. It shows the compassionate side of addressing issues in the community.”

Nine townships are also part of a statewide program, created by Families Against Narcotics, called Hope Not Handcuffs. The program is aimed at bringing local law enforcement and community organizations together to find viable treatment options for individuals seeking help to reduce dependency with heroin and prescription drugs, as well as alcohol.

Under the program, an individual suffering with addiction can go to a participating police agency and ask for the help. From there, Hope Not Handcuffs helps the person get into treatment as soon as possible, regardless of if they have health insurance. Since the program began in 2017, more than 3,500 individuals have taken part—and received hope. Among the townships participating in the program are **Clinton Charter Township** (Macomb Co.), **Waterford Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), **White Lake Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), **Argentine Township** (Genesee Co.), **Genesee Charter**



One critically important way that townships can help to reduce the number of opioid deaths in their area is by equipping their local law enforcement and first responders—and even other municipal employees—with the opioid antagonist naloxone.

Township (Genesee Co.), **Grand Blanc Charter Township** (Genesee Co.), **Montrose Township** (Genesee Co.), and **Saginaw Charter Township** (Saginaw Co.), with **Huron Charter Township** (Wayne Co.) coming on board soon. In addition, the Macomb County Sheriff’s Office—which serves **Harrison Charter, Macomb, Lenox and Washington Charter Townships**—also participates.

Townships can reach out to their local Families Against Narcotics chapter if they would like to consider starting a similar program in their own area. More information can also be obtained by calling Hope Not Handcuffs at (833) 202-HOPE.

The Michigan State Police’s (MSP) Angel Program also allows someone struggling with opioids to walk into any state police post during business hours and ask for help. They will then be transported to a treatment facility. In addition to participating in MSP’s Angel Program, Gerrish Township also works directly with a nationwide, faith-based community program called “Lion’s Den” to help area residents battling addiction.

“It’s all voluntary,” Hill noted. “The person does have to want to get off the addiction themselves. It’s successful—I’ve seen it. It’s a great opportunity and a great thing for our community.”

Williams echoes how each of these rescue recovery programs can make a positive difference. He too has seen it first-hand in his own community with Help Not Handcuffs. “Some 86 percent of those engaged wanted treatment, which is a good thing,” he said. “Once they are detoxed, there is the next level of counseling and support that goes on perpetually until the individual is fully recovered.”

Drop off and take back

While opioids do have a role in medical care, preventing them from falling into the wrong hands is critical, according to Morse.

One solution is offering residents the opportunity to drop off unwanted or unneeded opioids, and other medication, for proper disposal. Gerrish Township has had its drop-box for medications for more than 16 years. Originally funded by a community group more than a decade ago, the drop-box sits outside the police department and is available 24 hours a day, seven days week. The township also just received a new drop-box from the Rite Aid KidsCents Foundation.

“The community loves it and we love to have it for them,” said Hill, noting that because his township is by Higgins Lake, he also had concerns that drugs would be disposed of improperly and end up in the watershed, which is another reason the drop-box is valuable to the community. The dropped-off drugs are collected every six months and incinerated.

Van Buren Charter Township also offers a “drug drop-off” in the lobby of its police station. “We started this earlier this year,” Laurain explained. He sees the box as an opportunity for people to dispose of the unneeded drugs in the time between the Take Back events they host with federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (discussed below).

“We try to make it convenient for residents,” he said. “The receptacle is available, basically around the clock. Even if it is after hours, as long as they see the front desk first, they can dispose of the items.”

The program is in partnership with the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority, which supplied the box. When the drugs are dropped off, they are logged into their property room. The department also works with a company that collects the pills on a quarterly basis. The drugs are then burned and destroyed.

The township has seen a positive reaction to the drop box in the short time they have had it available, and Laurain encourages other townships to explore offering a similar service. “What a way to help give back to your community if you have a way to get rid of these drugs,” he said.

Even if a township does not have its own drop-off program, it can promote others in the area. “I believe all of the state police posts have permanent stations,” Morse said. “A lot of other local police and sheriff’s departments will have them as well. Townships can help just by being aware of when they are available and helping law enforcement advertise their availability. And if you don’t have one in your community, encourage law enforcement to have it available.”

In addition to drop boxes, townships can also help to organize or take part in “Take Back” community events, which are an opportunity for participants to dispose of any unneeded medications, including opioids.

“This is a big effort in law enforcement,” Laurain said, noting his township’s quarterly partnership with the DEA’s National Prescription Drug Take Back Days. Once the township responds to the DEA whether it wishes to

participate that quarter, the federal agency sends boxes for collection, and the township promotes the event on its Facebook page and website. During a four-hour window, residents from the township and neighboring areas enter the police station discarding their unwanted prescription drugs into the boxes supplied by DEA.

During the DEA’s October Take Back Day, 208 different Michigan law enforcement agencies participated in 262 collections—making it the fourth highest participation in the nation. Over the course of this one day this fall, a total of 27,856 pounds in prescription drugs were collected in Michigan. The DEA has hosted 18 Take Back events in all, collecting 272,931 pounds of prescriptions in Michigan alone. Townships that wish to join the DEA’s Take Back events can visit www.dea.gov and register online.

Education and communication efforts

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has a three-tiered approach to combat the epidemic across the state. Many options, including access to treatment, use of naloxone, and take back events, are considered “secondary prevention”—help or assistance after someone is using or has used opioids.

There is another component as well: primary prevention, or efforts to prevent the abuse from beginning in the first place.

“This is a disease, and we need to come at it from a

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different angle,” Hill said. “It is a matter of trying to intervene before we need things like Narcan.”

Strong social support systems, changes in how opioids are prescribed, and education are key components. In fact, this year, Public Act 255 of 2017 began supporting a prescription opioid drug abuse education curriculum in schools starting during the fall semester.

Talking with students, explaining the risks, and what addiction looks like is one way that communities can get involved. Williams sees efforts like that occurring in his own local schools. He said he speaks regularly with his school superintendent, and together, they discuss issues that are significant and important to his community and school district.

“Our regional social service network, Growth Works, works not only with adults in our community, but also all the student-aged groups,” he said, noting that the educational presentations combine videos, subject-matter experts, speakers and questions-and-answers periods.

Information can also be shared through your township newsletter, website, at board meetings, or posted in the township hall or public areas. For Hill, educating the public on the epidemic is an everyday thing.

“It’s constant for me, as chief of police, to make sure I am informing the public,” he said. “For me, and our officers, this is whenever we are out and about.” It goes beyond simply reminding residents of the township’s drop-box or other community programs. “It’s also, ‘Hey, listen, you need to pay attention to what’s around you,’” Hill said. “A lot of it is partnering—having meetings, sharing information and resources. That’s the biggest issue.”

Williams concurs that face-to-face conversations keep the issue at the forefront. “When I attend an event, such as the chamber of commerce and other community groups, or have programs, like the State of the Township address, I share what we are doing,” he said. “So, the word is out there.”

Even talking with peers can help keep the issue at the forefront. “When the leaders of different municipalities come together, we are all sharing ideas and trying to figure out how to solve issues in our own communities,” said Williams. “This happens to be one issue, but it is a significant one.”

Supporting local efforts

Townships can even play a role simply by working with and offering support to social service organizations.

The Wayne County chapter of Families Against Narcotics holds its monthly meetings at Canton Charter Township’s Summit on the Park facility. “They do a lot of publicity and different programs in the region, where they reach out again not just to the families of those who are using but also to the users themselves,” Williams said.

Morse also praised the outreach done these substance

abuse service organizations—some of which are started by local officials themselves, and all of which make a difference in their community. “More and more communities are getting these types of organizations,” she said. “Some are started by family members, some are started by county or township officials or other community members. Getting more and more communities to start those kinds of programs can help encourage and continue involvement by the community to keep the community drug-free.”

Townships could consider reaching out to similar organizations in their regions—offer to help publicize information, share details about meeting space, or just have contact information available for police and emergency services personnel to share. If a township doesn’t have organizations helping families or people suffering with addictions in their region, consider investigating USDA grants and other funding opportunities or maybe even reaching out to other local partners to see if there is something you can do together to help your residents who need an extra hand.

Seeing hope, finding solutions

While Verkest saw firsthand what his local first responders deal with around opioids that morning of the swearing in ceremony, he also sees hope in other places.

“Our District Court 41B has an excellent drug/sobriety court,” he said. The community corrections program combines efforts of the judiciary, community and treatment providers to create a safe and addiction-free society. Recalling ceremonies where not just family and friends, but also law enforcement and staff from the court system attend to support the program participants, Verkest said, “You can’t go through a graduation ceremony without being teary-eyed. There is also incentive for those still going through the program to say, ‘I want to be there someday.’”

In time, with assistance and support from local communities, more Michigan residents suffering under opioid addiction can truly find that hope for a better day.

“If we could all work together to destigmatize and bring it to the light of day, then we can also work together to find a solution,” said Williams.



Scott Southard, MTA Staff Writer, and **Jenn Fiedler**, MTA Communications Director



Do election workers receive W-2s or 1099 forms?

Election workers do not receive 1099s—they are township employees, and 1099 forms are issued to independent contractors. Election workers are a very special class of employee under federal tax law:

- Payments to election workers are generally exempt from federal and state income tax withholdings. (IRC Sections 3121 (b)(7)(F)(iv) and 3121 (u)(2)(B)(ii)(v))
- Election workers earning less than \$1,800 per year in 2019 are exempt from Social Security and Medicare taxes—even if the employment is covered by a 218 Agreement. “Modification 975,” effective Jan. 1, 2004, made this change to the state’s master agreement with the Social Security Administration.

If the above exemptions apply—no federal income, Social Security or Medicare taxes were withheld—federal tax law does not require employers paying election workers less than \$600 to issue W-2s.



For purposes of the exemption from Social Security and Medicare taxes, what services are considered performed by election workers?

Election workers are individuals hired by government entities (including townships) to perform services at polling places in connection with national, state and local elections. An election worker may be referred to by other terms and titles, for example, poll worker, moderator, machine tender, checker, ballot clerk, voting official, polling place manager, absentee ballot counter or deputy head moderator. These workers may be employed by the township exclusively for election work, or may work in other capacities as well.



What if the annual pay for the election worker exceeds the \$1,800 threshold?

FICA taxes apply from the first dollar paid if an election worker is paid the federal threshold amount or more. For example, when payments made to an election worker in 2019 meet the federal threshold amount, \$1,800, all amounts paid to the worker are subject to FICA, including the first \$1,799.

If it’s anticipated that an election worker may earn the federal threshold amount or more in a calendar year, the

employer may choose to begin withholding FICA taxes on the first dollar earned. If the worker then earns less than the federal threshold amount in the calendar year, the worker would be entitled to a refund of the withheld FICA taxes. If the employer chooses not to begin withholding until after the worker earns the federal threshold amount, then the employer would be liable for the total amount of FICA taxes due.



What if one of our employees also performs services as an election worker?

The services are bifurcated—the services as an election worker, if under the threshold, are exempt from federal and state withholding, as well as Social Security and Medicare taxes. The other services to the township would be generally subject to income, Social Security and Medicare taxes (assuming that there is a 218 Agreement in place, or the township doesn’t have a 218 Agreement nor does it have a “public retirement system” in place).

For example:

Township A pays Worker Y \$100 in 2019 for election worker services, and also employs Worker Y in another capacity in which Worker Y earns \$1,000. The services of Election Worker Y are excluded from the 218 Agreement (State of Michigan Modification 975), but non-election services are included. The \$1,000 payment is subject to income tax and FICA withholding, but the \$100 payment is not. Because it made payments in 2019 to Worker Y equal to \$600 or more, the township must report all payments as wages (Box 1) on Form W-2. Separate Forms W-2 may be used for the two types of payments.

It is recommended that townships give all election workers W-2s regardless of the amounts paid, as a means of informing the election workers the amount they were paid, annually, as these amounts are taxable to the election worker, even though they are exempt from income tax withholding.

Additionally, according to the State of Michigan, election worker pay is reportable on quarterly unemployment forms, as they are considered part-time temporary employees.

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.

January classes explore What the Board Needs to Know About ...



Authorities & Responsibilities

MTA's completely revised **Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Townships** (coming soon!) provides a modern take on our original "Little Red Book" to reflect the evolving role of townships in Michigan government. One new emphasis in the book is the ultimate responsibility of the township board as a whole for mandated township functions.

Every board member has equal authority and responsibility at the head table. So if you've ever wondered just what your township board "job description" is, don't miss this new morning class (held from 9 a.m. to noon)—**taught by A&R author and MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt**—offering a deep dive into the key areas where you and your board exercise important policy decisions and practical tips on keeping a productive focus on what matters most:

- **Board authority:** Who decides what a township will do—and how?
- **Revenue sources:** How are townships funded? What options exist?
- **Enabling statutes:** Where do townships get their authority? What must townships do? What may a board choose to do?
- **Lawful expenditures:** What may townships pay for?
- **Administrative responsibilities:** Getting things done by balancing statutory duties with township responsibilities
- **Working with other local governments:** Options for boards to make effective and productive partnerships



Board of Review for Township Boards

A lot has changed in assessment administration in the last two years, including new (and expanded) requirements for township assessors and board of review members alike. It's not enough to simply send your appointed board of review members to training—your township board needs training to stay on top of these changes and reforms, too! Township boards across the state are realizing that the board—not the assessor—is held responsible if something is incorrect.

This afternoon class, held from 1 to 4 p.m. and **taught by MTA Member Information Services Liaison and Michigan Certified Assessing Officer Cindy Dodge**, will help every elected board member understand their responsibilities on these important functions.

- Get an overview of the new requirements for the board of review, particularly in the areas of assessing reform
- Learn what qualifies someone to be a board of review member
- Gain insights into your first line of defense if you discover assessing errors or incomplete assessor work
- What's the differences between the March, July and December board of review?
- What happens (or should be happening!) at an organization meeting
- Tips for setting poverty exemption guidelines
- Examine the role of the township supervisor
- Learn what your assessor should be providing



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

Registration Form

Which location will you attend?
 Jan. 8: Frankenmuth Jan. 15: Kalamazoo Jan. 22: Gaylord

Township _____ County _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Name & Title **Authorities & Responsibilities** **Your Role with BoR** **Both**

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	Early-bird* By Dec. 27	Regular Rate* Starts Dec. 28	On-site Rate* 3 days prior
Authorities & Responsibilities	\$ 91/person	\$111/person	\$131/person
Your Role with Board of Review	\$ 91/person	\$111/person	\$131/person
Both Sessions	\$132/person	\$152/person	\$172/person

Attendees receive a \$50 discount when they register for both sessions!

_____ (# of people/sessions) x \$ _____ (rate) = \$ _____
 AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

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

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_____ / _____
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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.

2020 Board of Review Training

MTA's *Board of Review Training* has earned a reputation for being the best, most comprehensive training for new and seasoned board of review members (and alternates), as well as township supervisors and assessors. That's with good reason. Your registration includes:

- Comprehensive resource materials, including samples, updated forms and bulletins, as well as guidance and information created specifically for this class
- More than just the basics in our "Basic" session
- Detailed updates in our "Advanced" session from Michigan master assessing officer instructors, providing critical insights, even if you've been on the board of review for years
- Ample time throughout the day for networking with one another, and asking questions to our experienced speakers
- Continued support through MTA's "Community Connection" online networking group, where you can ask questions, get answers or simply learn from others

These half-day events allow participants to choose the appropriate level and topics of interest. The advanced session is geared to experienced board of review members, while the basic session acquaints newer board of review members with their statutory duties and requirements.

Registration check-in and lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. Sessions are held from 12:30-4:30 p.m. Dates and locations are:

- Jan. 28:** Fetzer Center at WMU, Kalamazoo
- Jan. 29:** Comfort Inn Conference Center, Chelsea
- Jan. 30:** Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- Jan. 31:** AgroLiquid Conference Center, Bingham Township (Clinton Co.)
- Feb. 4:** Treetops Resort Conference Center, Gaylord
- Feb. 5:** Alpena Events Complex (APlex), Alpena
- Feb. 6:** Quality Inn/Forward Conference Center, West Branch
- Feb. 11:** Magnusson Franklin Square Inn, Houghton
- Feb. 12:** Island Resort Conference Center, Harris
- Feb. 13:** Little Bear East Arena, St. Ignace
- Feb. 18:** Kirkhof Center at GVSU, Allendale Charter Township (Ottawa Co.)
- Feb. 19:** Evergreen Resort, Cadillac
- Feb. 20:** Holiday Inn Conference Center, Mt. Pleasant

Download directions or register online at www.michigantownships.org.

Focus on Advanced Issues

- Future direction, forward momentum
- Overview of assessment administration
- Classification and equalization
- Understanding valuation
- Statutory duties: 2020 Procedural Changes & Bulletin Review

Instructor varies by location: Debby Ring, Michigan Master Assessing Officer (MMAO); Shila Kiander, MMAO, Director, Mecosta County Equalization; Laurie Spencer, MMAO, Director, Leelanau County Equalization

Approved by the State Tax Commission for 4 hours of elective credit for assessors.

Getting Started Right

- Review of the assessment process
- Overview of the board of review's statutory authority
- Responsibilities of the assessor and township supervisor
- Understanding what can be appealed and the documents used to review appeals
- How to listen to, and act on, protests
- What's new this year

Instructor: Cindy Dodge, MTA Member Information Services Liaison & Michigan Certified Assessing Officer

Special Discount

Members may purchase a 2020 edition of MTA's comprehensive and updated *Board of Review Guide*, at a discounted rate of \$34.50, when registering for the class. Books will be handed out on-site.

Board of Review Guide

MTA

Cancellation, Substitution & Switching Policy

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

Registration Form

Please indicate which session EACH person will attend AND whether a book is desired.

Township _____ County _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Name & Title _____ Attending: Advanced Basic Need a book? Yes No

Name & Title _____ Attending: Advanced Basic Need a book? Yes No

Name & Title _____ Attending: Advanced Basic Need a book? Yes No

Which location will you attend?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jan 28: Kalamazoo | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 11: Houghton |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 29: Chelsea | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 12: Harris |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 30: Frankenmuth | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 13: St. Ignace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 31: Bingham Twp. | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 18: Allendale Chtr. Twp. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 4: Gaylord | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 19: Cadillac |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 5: Alpena | <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 20: Mt. Pleasant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 6: West Branch | |

- Early-bird rate***: \$94 Save when you register by Jan. 14!
- Regular rate***: \$114 Begins Jan. 14.
- On-site rate***: \$134 Three business days prior to event.

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

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

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

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

Check enclosed (payable to MTA)

Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

_____ / _____

Card # _____ Expires _____

Print Card Holder's Name _____ Signature _____



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

All of our best

MTA bids a fond farewell to Penny Haney

For just shy of three decades, MTA's Director of Operations Penny Haney has been a constant at the Association—always there with a helping hand, willing smile, and a quick answer to questions from a staff member or member township.

During her time at MTA, and under three different executive directors, Haney rose in the ranks, starting first as a finance assistant and then as chief financial officer before being named to her current role, which she has held since 2006. She has seen the Association grow in its services, programs—and its capabilities.

Haney remembers a time at MTA when there were only a few computers, information for townships was sent “snail mail” and data was stored on floppy discs. Haney has always been an advocate for improving technology at MTA, from the early days requesting WordPerfect and Lotus 1-2-3 for the office, and continuing today, researching association databases and technology to help MTA and its members.

“Technology has improved vastly,” she said, calling her contributions to improving Association technologies among her proudest accomplishments. “When I started at MTA, not all staff even had a computer, we didn't have email or a website. Our Member Information Services Department was one full-time person, with part-time help. Now, we have three full-time staff answering member questions.”

Members first

Haney embodies the spirit of and dedication to member service for which MTA is known. It's a mantra that she has held close throughout her career.

“In my head, the first thing I think is how does it make it better for our members,” she said. “I try to put our members first.”

Although much of Haney's role is primarily behind the scenes in MTA's Administration Department, where she oversees the Association's finances, including the annual audit, budget, member dues and overall operations, she has long been a fixture at MTA's Annual Conference. There, she helps with MTA Registration, assisting members with questions, and helping in all areas to ensure the event runs smoothly. She has also taught Conference sessions on internal controls and fraud prevention.



Haney will be leaving the halls of MTA for the last time this December, starting her next chapter with a well-earned, much-deserved retirement. She takes with her not only a passion for MTA and its work supporting its members, but a vast array of knowledge that can only come from spending 28 years supporting and caring about Michigan and its townships.

“It’s a pretty neat place to be when you know that you’ve had a part, even if it is in the background, of making a difference in our state,” she said, noting that she finds inspiration in “the time and commitment that township officials put in on behalf of their community.”

When asked what she has loved about working for MTA over the years, Haney is quick to answer: it’s the people.

“Township officials, MTA Board members and my colleagues here at the MTA office, through the years, have become those on whom I knew I could depend,” she said.

It’s those many thousands of people with whom Haney has interacted that she will miss the most about leaving the Association.

“What I’ll miss is the same thing as what I love about being part of MTA: the people,” she said. “I will miss seeing, greeting and helping township officials—many of whom I only see at the Annual Conference—as well as the MTA Board and my colleagues.”

Making MTA, and Michigan, a better place

After leaving the Association, Haney is focused on her new path ahead. She now dreams of exploring the United States in a fifth-wheel with her husband, John, and visiting as many national parks as they can. She is an amateur photographer, even taking pictures for five different weddings—and helping with photography at the MTA Annual Conference as well. She looks forward to further exploring and learning about her favorite hobby—and taking pictures of her adventures along the way.

A mother of two daughters and a son, Haney has 10 grandchildren, five who live in Washington state. Her retirement will give her an opportunity to be in all of their lives more.

“I want to spend as much time as I can with them,” she said.

“Penny’s long service to MTA helped make our past executive directors successful and having her available during my own transition into the role has been a crucial help,” said Neil Sheridan, MTA’s executive director. “Penny has worked hard for Michigan over many years and now truly deserves her planned journeys across the rest of our vast nation.”

Haney looks back at her time at MTA fondly, noting that, “For me, MTA makes Michigan a better place, and I liked being a part of that.”

Over the past decades, Haney has helped to make MTA a better place, and for that, we say, thank you, Penny, for all your support, encouragement and leadership. All of our best in your retirement!



Forgotten no more

Unmarked graves of Civil War veterans receive headstones, thanks to deputy clerk, volunteer

Hours of research and dedication has helped place headstones at the formerly unmarked grave sites of four Civil War veterans at the **Burr Oak Township** (St. Joseph Co.) Cemetery.

According to Anne Davis, a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Tri-State Genealogical Society, the veterans were buried at the cemetery more than 100 years ago. She said they never received proper recognition for their military service.

Township Deputy Clerk **Beverly Greshaw** helped Davis research the history of the veterans and the locations of the unmarked graves. Greshaw found two of the graves while noting each plot in the cemetery, while Davis found the other two through additional research.

The experience had an impact on Greshaw. “As I walked around the cemetery comparing our map with each veteran’s grave to see if they had a marker, I was moved by the number of young men who were 19, 20 and 21 who lost their lives in the Civil War—in some cases, two or three brothers in the same family or a father and son,” she said. “I have new respect for the men and woman who have given their lives for our country, and also for their families.”

This summer, the veterans’ final resting places were honored at a rededication ceremony, and headstones were finally provided at the graves of:

- Sergeant Robert Gulliver (1820-1889), a member of Company G 99th Ohio Infantry, and Company H 1st

Veterans Volunteer Engineers. He served from 1861 to 1864, and reenlisted from December 1864 until March 1865.

- Private Levi Thompson (1838-1900), who served with 61st New York Cavalry from September 1864 until June 1865.
- Private Lewis Dunning (1834-1916), who served with Company E 5th Infantry regular army through the entire war.
- Private Michael Gross (1816-1903), who served with Company G 46th New York Infantry from September 1861 until he was discharged with a disability in October 1862.

“It was a rewarding experience to help obtain memorials for the unmarked graves, and hold this military service,” said Greshaw. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs paid for the headstones.

A gathering to honor

Community members and military service groups gathered together to honor the veterans with a traditional military memorial dedication service.

The service was organized by March to the Sea Camp No. 135, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the LaGrange de LaFayette Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Tri-State Genealogical Society. The Michigan Army National Guard Honor Guard performed military honors, while Rev. Kurt Kuhlmann of St. John's Lutheran Church in Burr Oak offered the invocation and the benediction. Township Supervisor **George Letts** also participated in the day, which included Sen. Kim LaSata (R-Bainbridge Twp.) as a guest speaker.

Descendants of Private Michael Gross also attended. "Michael Gross is my third great grandfather," said Stacey Law, who drove up with her mother and aunt from Roanoke, Ind. for the service.

Law, who accepted Gross's flag and a flower presentation on behalf of the family, said her mother and her mother's seven siblings were adopted when they were very young, making it tough to trace their family history. Law had traced them back to Michael Gross, but didn't know much about his life until the ceremony. During it, Davis explained the history of each of the veterans, including when and where they served.

"It's an honor to be able to come and attend something like this and have your family be the one being honored," said Law. "The whole thing was just beautiful."

Remembering the forgotten

Davis has helped identify the unmarked graves of more than 20 veterans in St. Joseph County. She said her family comes from a long line of military service, and turning a blind eye to the graves is not an option.

"Forgetting about our veterans is not acceptable. They've given so much for what we have now, and we take it for granted," she said. "The least we can do to pay it back is give them a headstone, and let people know that they lived."

Davis said she plans to keep identifying the unmarked graves of veterans as long as she can, and has goal to see that every veteran in Michigan has a gravestone. Anyone aware of a veteran in unmarked grave can contact Davis through Burr Oak Township at (269) 689-3342.

Information and photos provided by Burr Oak Township Deputy Clerk Beverly Gresbaw. Portions of this article were excerpted with permission from WMMT Channel 3, "Civil War veterans receive headstones after more than a century since burial," by reporter Genevieve Grippo, which aired on July 28, 2019.

Tell us your story

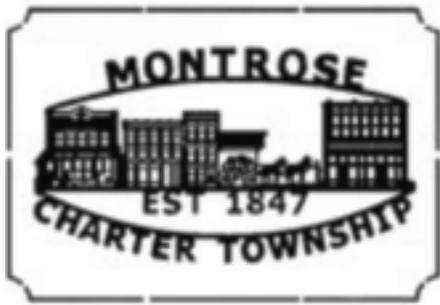
MTA knows that every township has a story—and we want to help tell yours. Tell us what's happening in *your* township. Your insights, suggestions and ideas could be featured in *Township Focus* magazine, as part of our "Township Happenings" column (see page 7). They could inspire a longer article or a feature on your township, or be included in cover stories. Or we may share with our followers on social media. You could even be asked to share your insights and experiences as part of an MTA workshop or Conference session.

Email your story ideas, happenings in your townships, pictures, etc. to jenn@michigantownships.org.



aroundthe**state**

townships in the spotlight



Montrose Charter Township

More than 6,000 residents are happy to call **Montrose Charter Township** (Genesee Co.) home. It is a typical six-mile square township with the City of Montrose occupying approximately one square mile in the middle of the township.



When the township was formed from **Vienna Charter Township** (Genesee Co.) in 1847, it was known as Pewonigowink Township. The name was derived from the portion of the Pewonigowink Indian Reservation, of the Saginaw Chippewa, that extended into the township. The name was officially changed to Montrose Township by an act of the Michigan Legislature on Jan. 15, 1848.

The township's geographical landscape was considerably different than it appears today. Originally studded with pine woodlands that launched a large lumbering population, today's landscape is largely agricultural.

The community's first post office was established in 1854, and the first school district—which served the southeastern quarter of the township—began in the spring of 1845.

The township incorporated as a charter township on March 26, 1985.

The historic Church on the Hill overlooks the Montrose Cemetery. Construction began in 1894 on the prominent

historical church in the township once commonly used for funeral services.

Montrose Pioneer Museum is Michigan's only telephone museum. It houses many hands-on working exhibits, including antique telephone equipment, historic highlights of Montrose, as well as Montrose History Gazettes.

A weekly farmers market at Barber Memorial Park is another popular township attraction, with local vendors selling produce, handmade jewelry, candles and more throughout the summer and into fall. Rotating food trucks are the cherry on top. The annual All Blueberry Days festival offers something for everyone, with numerous events including a car show, teen dance, royal tea party, craft show and, of course, blueberry baked goods!





Neighbors serving neighbors. Does any phrase more perfectly sum up township government, and the elected leaders who serve them? Township officials are known to drive an absentee ballot to a voter's home, or meet with residents on their front porches over coffee. Townships provide residents with a level of service, understanding and support that they just can't get at any other level of government.

This April, MTA will honor that service—and offer connections and education to ignite inspiration and ideas in today's local leaders—whether you've been serving for decades or are brand-new to office.

Join us this spring at our 2020 Annual Educational Conference & Expo, coming April 27-30 to the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme Township (Grand Traverse Co.), just outside Traverse City.

We hope to see you there.

Registration begins Jan. 2; housing opens Jan. 23.

Look for registration materials on www.michigantownships.org and in the January issue of Township Focus.

The week includes:

Monday, April 27

- Pre-Conference Sessions *(add'l fee)*
- Bendzinski "3-D" Welcoming Reception

Tuesday, April 28

- Opening Session
- Educational Sessions
- Expo
- Par-Plan "Fun Night"

Wednesday, April 29

- General Session
- Business Solution Sessions
- Educational Sessions
- Expo
- VIP Reception *(add'l fee)*
- Banquet
- Burnham & Flower Afterglow Reception

Thursday, April 30

- MTA Annual Meeting



Municipal Office



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