

# Michigan Township **INSIGHTS**

Jan. 26, 2024

## MTA's 2024 Capital Conference draws nearly 200 to Lansing

Even with a winter storm, nearly 200 township officials from across the state convened this week for MTA's 2024 Capital Conference to gather insights and information on key township issues at the forefront in Lansing, including the need for creation of a revenue sharing trust fund, the preservation of local control and local reimbursement for the disabled veterans' property tax exemption. MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan stated, "With the continued threat of the erosion of local authority looming over Michigan's local governments, advocacy on behalf of the government closest to the people is more important now than ever before. Our Capital Conference is an opportunity for officials to share with lawmakers the value of townships in providing essential services and programs that best fit their unique community's needs."



The Capital Conference included a discussion with Rep. John Fitzgerald (D-Wyoming), chair of the House Local Government and Municipal Finance Committee, and allowed attendees to hear from experts on critical issues that impact townships and their residents, including utility-scale renewable energy facility siting, election requirements now in effect, and the role of townships in the upcoming BEAD challenge process for federal broadband infrastructure funding for the state. Additional sessions explored the state's Address Confidentiality Program and the local role in the new Part 115 solid waste management planning requirements. In addition to MTA legal counsel, expert presenters included staff from the Michigan Office of High-Speed Internet, Michigan Bureau of Elections, Office of the Attorney General, and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

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## Upcoming MTA Training & Events

Jan. 31 and throughout February—[Board of Review Training](#)

## MTA QUICK LINKS

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## Revised constitutional revenue sharing estimates

Check out your township's [FY 2024 Projected Constitutional Revenue Sharing Payments](#). Based on the state's updated revenue estimates from the January Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference, the state Department of Treasury has updated the constitutional revenue sharing payment estimates for the balance of this fiscal year. Click on the link above and locate your county and then your township's estimated total for the current fiscal year.

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## Townships asked to verify 2023 millage rates

Townships are being asked to review their 2023 total millage rates that have been reported to the state. The Michigan Department of Treasury has compiled [2023 total millage rates](#) and uses these rates to audit homestead property tax credits—so it is important the rates match what were actually on the July and December 2023 tax bills. If the rates on the [report](#) do not match the rates the township actually levied on the July and December tax bills, please email [erhardtj@michigan.gov](mailto:erhardtj@michigan.gov) and attach a copy of the relevant July and December 2023 tax bills. Note that the only part-unit special assessment rates that may be included are public safety special assessments levied township-wide excluding villages.

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## Governor delivers State of the State address

Gov. Whitmer delivered her sixth State of the State address this week, highlighting accomplishments from 2023 and outlining her legislative agenda for the current year. Increased investments in housing in the state was among the 2024 priorities affecting local units of government. Other measures proposed include a vehicle rebate program, a tax credit to care for aging family members, free community college for all high school graduates, a tax credit for research development, and a fund to invest in high-growth business start-ups. The governor also proposed expansion of free preschool to cover all four-year-olds and funding continuation for school food programs. Many of these are expected to be included in the Executive Budget Recommendation that will be presented to the Legislature on Feb. 7.

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### ALLIED SERVICE PROVIDERS



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\* [Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C.](#)

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\* [ITC Holdings Corp.](#)

\* [Rosati, Schultz, Joppich & Amsbuechler, P.C.](#)

\* [Mika Meyers, PLC](#)

## Board of State Canvassers approves summary language for petition initiatives

The Board of State Canvassers approved 100-word summaries for two petition initiatives last week on proposals that would have an impact on local governments and local authority. However, the proposal for a constitutional amendment was withdrawn from further consideration by the organization earlier this week.

The first is a petition initiative to repeal the law enacted last year (PA 233) that gives siting authority for large-scale renewable energy facilities to the Michigan Public Service Commission. Citizens for Local Choice is the group leading the effort to collect a minimum of 356,958 valid signatures before May 29 to place the proposal on the November 2024 ballot.

*The initiation of legislation to: amend the clean and renewable energy and energy waste reduction act by repealing statewide requirements for the construction and development of certain wind and solar energy facilities and energy storage facilities, including: assessment of environmental, natural resources, and farmland impact; wages and benefits requirements for workers; setback distance; size and height of structures; and amount of light and sound emitted. If enacted, this proposal would allow local units of government to determine their own standards for such facilities.*

The petition for a constitutional amendment submitted by the AxMITax organization proposes to eliminate all property taxes, prohibit state or local alternatives, provide only a portion of replacement revenue for local units of government, no revenue replacement for other entities that receive property tax funding (including schools, libraries, senior programs and parks and recreation), require a supermajority for any tax increase (both at the local and state legislative levels), and eliminate caps and limitations in the constitution. While summary language was approved by the Board of State Canvassers, the request was withdrawn on Jan. 24. If the group proceeds without a board-approved petition, they are required to submit a petition first to the state prior to circulating petitions for signatures. If they fail to do so, any signatures on those petitions are invalid.

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## Submit comments on Draft Uniform Budget Manual

The state Department of Treasury’s Local Audit and Finance Division is soliciting [feedback](#) on [recent revisions to the Uniform Budget Manual](#), which assists local units of government in applying legal requirements and establishing a sound budgeting process, and provides recommended practices to enhance the budgeting process. Comments must be submitted in writing by **Feb. 23** to [LAFD\\_Audits@michigan.gov](mailto:LAFD_Audits@michigan.gov) with the subject line, “Exposure Draft—Budget Manual” or to Michigan Department of Treasury, Local Audit and Finance Division, P.O. Box 30728, Lansing, MI 48909-8228. Questions can be directed to (517) 335-7468.

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## Housing Readiness Incentive Grants available for master plan updates, zoning

Townships can apply for the new [Housing Readiness Incentive Grant Program](#) to support costs associated with the adoption of land use policies, master plan updates, zoning text amendments and similar actions to encourage increasing housing supply and affordability. The new \$5 million grant program includes \$3 million to be utilized by municipalities not part of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation redevelopment program, and \$2 million available to municipalities enrolled in the redevelopment program.

The online application opened Jan. 16 and will remain open until funding is fully committed. Applications are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Email [MSHDA-OHS@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-OHS@michigan.gov) with questions.

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## EGLE updates: Materials Management virtual conference, water affordability grants

- [Materials Management Conference](#)—Learn more about changes modernizing Michigan’s solid waste law—and what they mean for your township—at the [2024 Virtual Michigan Materials Management Conference](#), hosted by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) on **Feb. 13 and 14**. This is important as **many of the new statutorily required notifications and registrations are due no later than March 29, 2024**. Cost to participate is \$20.
- [Affordability and Planning Grants](#)—There is \$5.7 million in competitive grants available for communities seeking to improve drinking water quality and affordability. Grants are up to \$500,000 per applicant or \$2 million for applications on behalf of multiple community water suppliers. [Applications](#) are due **Feb. 19**, and must include a project workplan and project cost detail.

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## Updates for clerks

**Presidential primary selection form.** All clerks should have received an email letter from the director of the state Bureau of Elections (BOE) on the requirement to reach out to voters who have not yet made a presidential primary ballot selection. The

letter suggests points to consider to assist clerks with these follow-up procedures. While the statute applies to voters who have not made a ballot selection by the 40th day before the election (which was Jan. 18), it does not specify when this communication must be conducted. Because the law does not take effect until Feb. 13, BOE recommends all follow-up communications be conducted by then. Additionally, the law does not require that all methods (phone, email, text, mail) be conducted at the same time. It is at the discretion of the clerk to determine which method to utilize first. Clerks are not required to use personal resources to communicate to voters, so if municipal resources are not available (such as texting), the law does not require that method of communication to be used. BOE has also added [a link in the Michigan Voter Information Center](#) so that permanent mail ballot voters may make their selection there.

**In-person early voting.** Early voting must begin Saturday, Feb. 17. An early voting electronic poll book (EPB) tool has been set up in the Qualified Voter File (QVF). Virtual training sessions to use the early voting EPB are expected to begin the week of Feb. 5. Multiple sessions will be available, followed by hands-on sessions to practice using the tool.

**Alternate addresses.** When clerks' offices receive requests that an absent voter (AV) ballot application, ballot selection form or AV ballot be sent to an address other than the voter's permanent mailing address, it is important to record this as an alternate address in the QVF, rather than a permanent mailing address. If a new permanent mailing address is inadvertently updated in the QVF, this also updates the driver's license file, triggering an update to the driver record and a notification to the voter that their residential or mailing address may have changed.

**Presidential primary reimbursement.** Following the Feb. 27 presidential primary, clerks can electronically submit a reimbursement form for expenses attributable to the presidential primary. A "Reimbursement Guidelines for the 2024 Presidential Primary" document is available in the BOE [eLearning Center](#). To be reimbursed, claim forms must be received by **May 27, 2024**.

**Pre-processing deadlines.** Townships that intend to process or tabulate AV ballots before Election Day must submit a written notice by **Jan. 30** to [elections@michigan.gov](mailto:elections@michigan.gov) with the subject line: "Early tabulation." Notice of the location, dates, hours and number of election inspectors for the AV counting place must be posted on the township's website (if available) and in the clerk's office by

**Feb. 9.** Any needed revised notice must be posted by Feb. 16. Townships with a population of at least 5,000 may begin processing and tabulating AV ballots on **Feb. 19.** All other communities can begin on **Feb. 26.**

**Other deadlines.** The deadline to report in the QVF and post hours that the clerk's office will be open the weekend before the Feb. 27 election is **Jan. 29.** Clerk's offices must be open at least eight hours on the Saturday and/or Sunday before the election. Clerks coordinating an early voting region should also establish early voting regions and sites in the "Early Voting" module under "Elections" in the QVF by Jan. 29. While this date is not set in statute, clerks are required to ensure that the BOE has the information necessary to include the locations, days and hours of operation for each early voting site on [Michigan.gov/vote](https://Michigan.gov/vote). It is strongly recommended that clerks enter this information at the same time as they enter their weekend hours. An "Early Voting Region QVF Setup Guide" in the [eLearning Center](#) provides additional information. Further guidance on setting up early voting election inspectors and devices in QVF is still being finalized.

Election inspectors must be appointed by your election commission no later than **Feb. 6.**

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### Does your board of review need training? MTA can help!

MTA is hosting 11 in-person and three online *Board of Review Training* classes, beginning next week and ending March 4. Whether you're looking to satisfy the state's biennial training requirement OR seeking a deeper dive into advanced issues, we have a class for you! You'll walk away with critical insights, comprehensive handouts and resource materials, and expert guidance valuable to even the most experienced board of review members. [Learn more, including dates and locations, here](#) or [register online now.](#)



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### Annual competition helps 'Put Your Town on the Map'

Enter your township into Consumers Energy Foundation's annual ["Put Your Town on the Map" pitch competition](#), which will provide

\$50,000 in grant funding for three projects to help small communities in Michigan grow and thrive. Communities with up to 10,000 residents can submit proposals through **Feb. 15**. “Put Your Town on the Map” seeks to reward innovative ideas that attract visitors to downtowns, advance housing, education or employment, cultivate community pride and more. The Consumers Energy Foundation and Community Economic Development Association of Michigan will select 10 finalists to make their pitches at the Small Town and Rural Development Conference in June. The top three winners will receive grants worth \$25,000, \$15,000 and \$10,000, respectively.

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### **Certified assessors, technicians must take 2024 STC Updates class**

**All** certified assessing officers and assessing technicians **must** take the *2024 STC Updates* class as part of their continuing education renewal requirements for the renewal cycle beginning Nov. 1, 2023, and ending Oct. 31, 2024. A [listing of scheduled training programs](#) in January, February and the beginning of March is available from the State Tax Commission (STC) and will be updated as more courses are added. The course will also be offered online through the STC's [Continuing Education Portal](#) in March 2024.

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### **Federal update for week of Jan. 22**

Check out the National Association of Towns and Townships [Weekly Legislative Update](#) for an update of federal actions impacting townships.