

Michigan Township Focus

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



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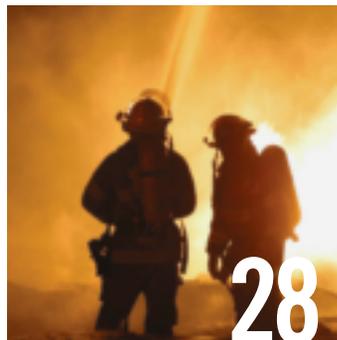


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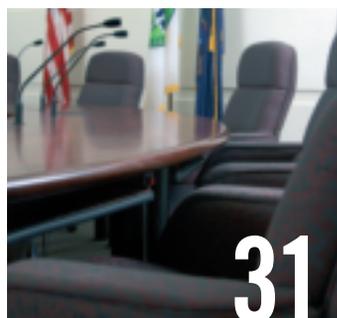
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mission statement

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

featured articles

14 Examining trends to predict future fiscal needs

A Michigan State University study of the long-run drivers of local government growth reveals a range of new—and future—pressures on township services and fiscal needs.

28 GIS technology—A life-saving tool for fire departments

Township fire departments can integrate pre-incident planning into Geographic Information Services (GIS) technology—saving time, resources and critical moments as emergencies unfold.

31 All in the family—Serving as clerk is part of family legacy

For more than 100 years, the same family has held the office of clerk in one western Michigan township. Overseeing elections, maintaining records and taking meeting minutes has been a family tradition since the 1880s.

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allied service provider index

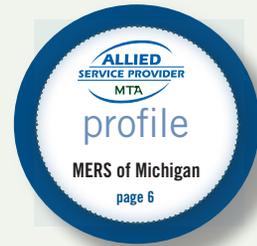


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Financial support to deserving candidates to continue MTA-PAC to discontinue endorsing candidates

In recognition of inherently high political risks and questionable benefits, the Michigan Townships Association Political Action Committee (MTA-PAC) will no longer endorse political candidates, but will continue



to financially support candidates who support townships.

Formed in 1982 in response to Michigan's Campaign Finance Act that prohibits corporations (including not-for-profit corporations such as MTA) from contributing corporate funds to political campaigns, MTA-PAC's original intent was to lawfully solicit donations from MTA

members to enable Association staff

to continue attending campaign committee fundraisers for quality face-time with current and aspiring lawmakers. Many other Lansing-based associations also created political action committees, and while PACs representing trade associations and labor unions have flourished, among local government advocacy groups, PACs are something of an anomaly.

MTA-PAC will continue to be an important component of the Association's advocacy efforts. Without question, contributions to MTA-PAC have made MTA more effective in advocating on behalf of township government by enabling more face-time with lawmakers. MTA-PAC has also strategically contributed money to campaigns for candidates who genuinely support local democracy. The legions of township officials who have generously contributed to the MTA-PAC can be very confident that their financial support has paid dividends in securing laws promoting local democracy. No doubt, more contributions would make us even more effective.

PACs also flex their political might by publicly endorsing candidates, as has MTA-PAC. Nonetheless, MTA's leadership has decided that MTA-PAC should return to its original purpose—enabling effective communications with lawmakers at their fund-raising events and targeting financial support to deserving candidates. MTA-PAC is discontinuing making endorsements intended to influence voter preferences for the following reasons:

- Endorsing a losing candidate often means a less-than-optimal relationship with the winner. With all of the election advantages of incumbency, it has become increasingly risky for MTA to not endorse

an incumbent, even those with poor voting records on our issues. Assuming a lock on receiving our endorsement, many incumbents no longer even return MTA's candidate questionnaire. Member township officials often question us as to why lawmakers who are clearly adversarial to our issues nonetheless receive our endorsement; it is because non-endorsements or endorsements against their opponents only further erode relationships crucial to our legislative success. PAC endorsements are a high-stakes game with, at best, modest political benefits, but potentially considerable downsides.

- Without our members' active engagement, PAC endorsements arguably lack grassroots authenticity. Despite the hundreds of hours of staff and PAC member time invested in soliciting input from MTA members regarding candidates, just 7 or 8 percent of our members customarily return our questionnaire on legislative candidates in their area. MTA must solicit member input well in advance of most campaigns getting in gear, so many members may not know much about all of the candidates. And while we are sure that on an individual basis MTA members make knowledgeable decisions when they vote, they appear reluctant to weigh in on the endorsement process when wearing their township official hats.
- Many MTA members are passionate supporters of various candidates, especially when those candidates are themselves. However, with MTA-PAC attempting to minimize adverse political consequences by supporting candidates with high probabilities of winning, PAC endorsements unfortunately disappoint MTA members supporting non-endorsed underdog candidates.

Going forward, MTA-PAC will still make financial contributions to deserving candidates and continue to comply with disclosure requirements of the Campaign Finance Act, but will forego publicly announcing endorsed candidates with the intention of swaying voter preferences. MTA members should expect to hear from the candidates themselves whether or not they are on the side of local democracy and deserving of their votes.

Building positive, trusting relationships with lawmakers has always been an MTA staff priority, and our members can help build those bridges as well. And without all of the baggage of who MTA-PAC did or didn't endorse, MTA can focus more on policy, and less on politics.

ENTREPRENEURIAL-FRIENDLY TOWNSHIPS

Townships honored for fostering economic growth

Thirteen townships were among the 66 communities from 29 counties recognized by the University of Michigan *eCities* program honoring local efforts to foster entrepreneurial growth and economic development. MTA assists in the *eCities* project, which is an annual research study that examines community-level factors that influence entrepreneurship, economic development and job growth.

The 2015 Five-Star Honored Communities include **Cascade Charter Township** (Kent Co.), **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.), **Kochville Township** (Saginaw Co.), **Northville Charter Township** (Wayne Co.), **Pittsfield Charter Township** (Washtenaw Co.) and **Plymouth Charter Township** (Wayne Co.).

The 2015 Four-Star Honored Communities include **Alpine Township** (Kent Co.), **Comstock Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.), **Flint Charter Township** (Genesee Co.), **Garfield Charter Township** (Grand Traverse Co.), **Meridian Charter Township** (Ingham Co.), **Saginaw Charter Township** (Saginaw Co.) and **Thomas Township** (Saginaw Co.).

Pittsfield Charter Township was also named an *eCities* “Best Practices” community. The Best Practices survey is an opportunity for participating communities to share their story with entrepreneurs, highlighting key strategies, resources and assets that promote their municipality. Communities highlighted as “Best Practices” are communities that a panel of entrepreneurs found had concise, compelling, unique and relevant messages.

The 2015 *eCities*-recognized communities are home to 20 percent of Michigan’s residents, and 20 percent of Michigan entrepreneurs—who earn nearly \$1.8 billion in self-employed income. More than 80 percent of the *eCities* communities engage in placemaking efforts, and have spent more than \$2.3 million on economic development efforts.

The communities that participate in the project receive benchmarking reports showing their performance at creating inviting business environments and encouraging entrepreneurial growth. The project aims to learn and share the “best practices” to attract entrepreneurial development and create business growth. Understanding the best practices and utilizing these concepts across Michigan can have a positive impact on the state’s economic future.



MONEY MATTERS

Township budget reminders

Schedule budget public hearings

For the roughly 900 general law townships with an April 1-March 31 fiscal year, the proposed budget should be prepared, and the budget public hearing scheduled and notice published so the hearing can be conducted and the budget adopted by the township before April 1.

Townships may spend funds on dues, seminars

All local governments may pay dues to associations. The payment of dues has been challenged and upheld in several Michigan Supreme Court cases. MTA Legal Counsel advises that laws are to be liberally construed in favor of townships’ authority to expend funds for association dues, registration fees to attend useful public information or educational workshops, and mileage reimbursement for attendance at authorized seminars and governmental meetings other than township board meetings.

Adopt salary resolutions before annual meeting

Townships that hold an annual meeting are required to pass a salary resolution for each elected office paid by salary at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting date. Townships that hold an annual meeting in March should adopt salary resolutions in January or February, depending on the March meeting date.

If the township board does not pass salary resolutions at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting, the electors have no authority to act on or increase salaries. As a result, the salary of each elected official would remain at the previous year’s established level. Electors cannot reduce township board members’ salaries during a term of office, unless the duties of the office have been diminished and the township official consents in writing to the reduction. (MCL 41.95)

According to Attorney General Opinion 6422 of 1987, a separate resolution must be adopted for each township office. Each resolution must contain the date in the next fiscal year the salary will be effective. A sample resolution to establish township officers’ salaries is available on the members-only section of www.michigantownships.org (search for “Compensation”), or by calling (517) 321-6467.



NEW PUBLISHING THRESHOLD

2016 threshold for publishing minutes set at \$82 million for general law townships

The 2016 taxable value threshold for exempting general law townships from the requirement to publish minutes has decreased to \$82 million. The 2015 rate was \$83 million. The rate is determined by the Michigan Department of Treasury's Office of Revenue and Tax Analysis. Public Act 465 of 1996 exempts general law townships with a taxable value under a threshold from the requirement to publish township board meeting minutes, or a synopsis of the proceedings, within 21 days after the meeting.



According to PA 465, the limit must be adjusted annually for inflation each Jan. 1 and rounded to the next million.

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 2016, the last day to pay 2015 property taxes without incurring any interest or penalty is Tuesday, Feb. 16. (Feb. 14 is a Sunday and Monday, Feb. 15 is Presidents Day.) (MCL 211.44) Treasurers **may** choose to hold office hours. In 2016, the last day to pay 2015 property taxes before they are returned as delinquent is Monday, Feb. 29 (the last day of February). (MCL 211.45) Treasurers **must** hold office hours.

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Remembering 2011 MTA President Jack Randolph

MTA and township government lost an ardent champion, when 2011 MTA President **Jack Randolph** passed away this November.

Randolph dedicated much of his life to public service, beginning with four years in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam conflict. Later, he worked for the St. Clair County Road Commission, from which he retired in 1998 after 30 years. His experience in township government began in 1970, when he was appointed to serve on the **East China Charter Township** (St. Clair Co.)



Randolph

planning commission and zoning board of appeals. In 1994, he became a township trustee, a role in which he remained until he was elected supervisor in 2000.

Randolph joined the MTA Board of Directors in 2004, serving as MTA District 18 director for seven years before being elected president in 2011. Randolph was deeply dedicated to townships and worked tirelessly to keep them strong and effective. He believed in MTA and was committed to being a strong voice in state government. He also encouraged other township officials to engage their citizens, from school-aged children to adults. Randolph loved serving his township residents and continued to do so until he left office in 2012.

"I'm sure everyone who served with Jack shares my good memories of him as a wonderfully positive person and a passionate advocate for MTA," MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill said. "I was lucky to count Jack as a friend."

Announcements

MTA office closed for Annual Conference—The MTA office will be closed Jan. 18-22, 2016, while MTA staff is at the Annual Educational Conference in Detroit. You may call the MTA office and leave messages for staff at (517) 321-6467. For emergency situations only, MTA staff can be reached at Conference headquarters. The headquarters telephone number will be included on the MTA office outgoing message.

January and February Township Focus combined—The January and February issues of *Township Focus* are combined into this one expanded issue. The next issue you receive will be in March.

Article index online—The 2015 *Township Focus* article index is now available on MTA's website. Visit the members-only section of www.michigantownships.org (click on "Township Focus" under the "Publications" tab) for a listing of *Focus* articles from 2015.

profile



Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan

Partnering with Michigan's communities

The Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) of Michigan is a public nonprofit organization dedicated to partnering with Michigan's municipalities to provide affordable, sustainable retirement solutions for their employees.

MERS is committed to building strong, long-term relationships that support the well-being of its communities throughout Michigan. MERS strives to provide its participants with excellent service in addition to providing cost-effective benefit plans.

MERS offers many retirement solutions, customized to fit your township's specific needs. With more than 65 years' experience and nearly 800 municipal members—including more than 100 townships—MERS has a unique insight into the challenges municipalities face. The company collaborates and innovates with its employers to create cost-reducing strategies to fit their budgets.

From defined benefit, defined contribution, hybrid and 457 retirement plans, to other post-employment benefits (OPEB) solutions like the health care savings program and retiree health funding vehicle, and much more, MERS is committed to helping its member municipalities provide flexible, affordable benefits to their employees and retirees.

MERS invites townships to partner with it to find solutions to common challenges. Together, MERS and townships can work toward a better future for Michigan.

Please visit www.mersofmich.com to find out how MERS can help your township.



Participation in the Allied Service Provider program does not constitute or imply MTA's endorsement of the company or its products/services. For more information, see MERS' ad on page 25, turn to the Allied Service Provider Index on page 2 or visit www.michigantownships.org/asp.asp.

Advertorial

MTA welcomes new director of Member Information Services

The Michigan Townships Association welcomes Michael Selden as its new director of Member Information Services. Selden brings eight years of experience in public administration and municipal management to the position.

Each year, MTA's Member Information Services Department—which includes MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt and Member Information Services Specialist Cindy Davis—fields more than 8,000 calls, emails and faxes from MTA-member township officials and employees on all facets in township government. As director, Selden will supervise the development and delivery of Association member information programs and resources.



Selden

"It is with great excitement that I come to MTA," Selden said. "I look forward to working with the terrific staff here and working diligently to provide the best service possible to our members."

Selden comes to MTA after serving as the city manager of Wayland, Mich., since 2012. In that role, he prepared and managed the city budget, supervised 22 employees, oversaw multiple city departments, and served as liaison to numerous boards and commissions. Selden also served as the city manager of Bangor, Mich., from 2007-2012. He holds a master's in public administration from the University of Michigan—Flint, where he also earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Selden and his family reside in Richland, Mich.

mta events | January

1 MTA office closed for New Year's holiday.

4 Last day to obtain housing at discounted rates in the MTA room block for MTA's 2016 Annual Conference & Expo in Detroit. Contact Amy at (810) 623-9008 for details.

4 Last day to register for MTA Conference to have a confirmation sent to you. After Jan. 4, attendees must stop by the MTA Registration Center to register on-site.

11 Contact MTA office if you registered *by the Jan. 4 deadline* and have not received your Conference confirmation materials.

19-22 63rd Annual MTA Educational Conference & Expo, Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center

February

2-29 MTA's *Board of Review Training*, being held at 13 locations throughout the state. Turn to page 26 for dates and locations.

Information

when you need it.

Connect with the Michigan Townships Association on Facebook!



MTA is now on Facebook! "Like" our page for updates on legislation, educational opportunities, MTA news and resources, and more—all on your Facebook timeline!

Check it out at www.facebook.com/mitownships, or access from www.michigantownships.org. You can also follow @MiTownships on Twitter and connect with fellow officials on our members-only social networking site, *Community Connection*.



FOR SALE

Office equipment—The Michigan Townships Association is selling the following office furniture and equipment:

- Two (2) solid wood credenzas (71" w x 29" h)—\$100 each or best offer
- Three-shelf metal bookcase (36" w x 42" h)—\$50 or best offer
- Four-shelf metal bookcase (36" w x 52" h)—\$60 or best offer
- Solid wood four-drawer lateral file cabinet (36" w x 57" h)—\$100 or best offer
- Three-shelf wood bookcase (36" w x 48" h)—\$75 or best offer
- Two (2) two-drawer lateral metal file cabinets (42" w x 27" h)—\$40 each or best offer
- Two-drawer lateral metal file cabinet with Formica top (42" w x 29" h)—\$50 or best offer
- Three (3) three-drawer lateral metal file cabinets with Formica top (42" w x 43" h)—\$60 each or best offer
- Metal storage cabinet (36" w x 41" h)—\$60 or best offer
- Six-drawer lateral metal file cabinet with Formica top (84" w x 42" h)—\$120 or best offer
- Stationary utility cart (26" w x 26" h) – \$20 or best offer
- Two (2) rolling utility carts with folding side table (26" x 26" h) – \$20 each or best offer

To inquiry, or request photos, call (517) 321-6467 or email julie@michigantownships.org.

JANUARY

9 Except as otherwise provided in MCL 211.9m-211.9o, 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 local unit. Form 632, Personal Property Statements, must be sent or delivered no later than Jan. 10 each year. (*Jan. 10 is a Saturday.*) (MCL 211.19)

22 Local units with a state equalized value of \$15 million or less must distribute taxes collected within 10 business days of Jan. 10. (MCL 211.43(5)) All other local units must distribute taxes collected within 10 business days after the 1st and 15th of each month, except in March. (MCL 211.43(3)(a))

By 23 Absentee voter ballot for March 8 presidential primary must be available for issuance to absentee voters. (MCL 168.714)

Clerks shall electronically transmit or mail an absentee voter ballot for March 8 presidential primary to each military or overseas voter who applied for an absentee voter ballot 45 days or more before the election. (MCL 168.759a)

28 through Feb. 16. Local election commissions appoint precinct inspectors for March 8 presidential primary. (MCL 168.674)

FEBRUARY

By 1 Notice of close of registration for March 8 presidential primary

published. (MCL 168.498) Deadline for a qualified business to submit State Tax Commission (STC) Form L-4143 for qualified personal property with the assessor. (MCL 211.8a(2))

Townships with 50 or more full-time employees must file information returns with the IRS and provide statements to each employee who was a full-time employee for at least one month of the year about health coverage offered by the township or to show that the township did not offer health coverage. Forms 1095-C must be provided to employees by Feb. 1

By 4 Last date precinct boundary alterations made for 2016 election cycle can go into effect. (MCL 168.661)

8 Last day to register for March 8 presidential primary. (MCL 168.498)

10 Deadline to file the affidavit to claim the exemption for Eligible Personal Property (Form 5076). (MCL 211.9o(2))

12 *On or before the third Monday in February.* Deadline for county equalization director to publish in a newspaper the tentative equalization ratios and estimated SEV multipliers for 2016. (MCL 211.34a(1))

16 Last day to pay property taxes without the imposition of a late penalty charge equal to 3 percent of the tax in addition to the property tax administration fee, if any. (MCL 211.44(3))

Townships that collect summer property tax shall defer the collection until this date for property that qualifies. (MCL 211.51(3))

STC reports assessed valuations for DNR lands to assessors. (MCL 324.2153(2))

The governing body may waive penalty for homestead property of a senior citizen, paraplegic, quadriplegic, hemiplegic, eligible service person, eligible veteran, eligible widow or widower, totally and permanently disabled or blind persons, if that person has filed a claim for a homestead property tax credit with the state treasurer before Feb. 15. Also applies to a person whose property is subject to a farmland/development rights agreement or verification that the property is subject to the development right agreement before Feb. 15. If statements are not mailed by Dec. 31, the township may not impose the 3 percent late penalty charge.

22 Deadline for taxpayer filing of personal property statement with assessor.

Form 5278 must be filed not later than Feb. 20 for each personal property parcel for which the eligible manufacturing personal property exemption is being claimed.

Deadline for taxpayer to file Form 3711 if a claim of exemption is being made for heavy earth-moving equipment. (MCL 211.19)

By 27 County clerks deliver remainder of ballots and election supplies for March 8 presidential primary to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

29 The STC shall publish the inflation rate multiplier before March 1. (MCL 211.34d(15))

For applicable employers, Affordable Care Act Forms 1094-C and 1095C are due to the IRS by Feb. 29, if filing on paper, or March 31, if filing electronically.

MARCH

1 Notice of March 8 presidential primary published. (MCL 168.653a)

County treasurer commences settlement with local unit treasurers. (MCL 211.55) County property tax administration fee of 4 percent added to unpaid 2015 taxes and interest at 1 percent per month. (MCL 211.78a(3))

Last day for local treasurers to collect 2015 property taxes. (MCL 211.78a)

Local units to turn over 2015 delinquent taxes to the county treasurer. (MCL 211.78a(2)) On March 1 in each year, taxes levied in the immediately preceding year that remain unpaid shall be returned as delinquent for collection. However, if the last day in a year that taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent is on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the last day taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent is on the next business day and taxes levied in the immediately preceding year that remain unpaid shall be returned as delinquent on the immediately succeeding business day.

By 3 Public accuracy test for March 8 presidential primary must be conducted. (R 168.778) Notice of test must be published at least 48 hours before test. (MCL 168.798)

5 Electors who wish to receive an absentee voter ballot for the March 8 presidential primary by mail must submit application by 2 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

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

On or before the first Monday in March. The 2016 assessment roll shall be completed and certified by the assessor. (MCL 211.24)

8 Presidential primary. (MCL 168.613a)

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

Tuesday after the first Monday in March. The assessor/supervisor shall submit the 2016 certified assessment roll to the board of review. (MCL 211.29(1))

Organizational meeting of the board of review. (MCL 211.29)

9 Boards of county canvassers meet to canvass March 8 presidential primary. (MCL 168.821)

14 *Second Monday in March.* First meeting of the board of review. (MCL 211.29) Meeting must start not earlier than 9 a.m. and not later than 3 p.m. The board of review must meet

one additional day during this week and hold at least three hours of its required sessions after 6 p.m. (MCL 211.30) The township may authorize an alternative starting date for the second meeting of the March board of review, which can be either the Tuesday or Wednesday following the second Monday in March. (MCL 211.30(2))

Within 10 business day after the last day of February, at least 90 percent of the total tax collections on hand, must be delivered by the local unit treasurer to the county or school district treasurers. (MCL 211.43(3)(b))

31 School district or intermediate school district must reach agreement for summer tax collection with township or county if there is a summer school levy. (MCL 380.1613(2))

Not later than April 1, local units treasurers make final adjustment and delivery of the total amount of tax collections on hand. (MCL 211.43 (3)(c))

Separate tax limitations voted after April 1 of any year are not effective until the subsequent year. (MCL 211.205i(2))

Last day to pay all forfeited 2013 delinquent property taxes, interest, penalties and fees, unless an extension has been granted by the circuit court. If unpaid, title to properties foreclosed for 2013 real property taxes vests solely in the foreclosing governmental unit. (MCL 211.78k)

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 How should our planning commission respond to a conditional rezoning application that contains a long list of proposed uses and suggested conditions?

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) specifically authorizes a municipality to accept and take action on a conditional rezoning application. (MCL 125.3405) The MZEA allows for a property owner to “offer” conditions in writing for the use of land as a condition of a rezoning. So a property owner may seek to rezone to a particular zoning district, but limit the use of the property should the conditional rezoning request be approved. For instance, a property owner may seek rezoning from a residential district to a neighborhood business district, with the condition that the property will be used for a beauty salon, with no more than 2,000 square feet and with hours of operation limited to 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.

The MZEA authorizes a township to consider a written offer of conditions submitted with a rezoning application. But that does not mean that a township has to process a conditional rezoning request. Each township needs to determine if it will accept and process conditional rezoning applications. However, as a matter of due process, a township needs to treat all applicants the same. If the township has determined that it will not accept conditional rezoning requests, the township should instruct its zoning administrator and/or other staff to reject such conditional rezoning applications in writing.

 Our zoning administrator thinks that a submitted conditional rezoning application might be a good solution for a difficult-to-develop property, but wants to suggest other conditions to the applicant. Can the zoning administrator do that?

No, the MZEA is very clear that any conditions offered as part of a conditional rezoning application should be offered by the property owner voluntarily and in writing. The township should be very careful not to coerce or otherwise urge an applicant to provide certain or different conditions. (MCL 125.3405(5)) Moreover, a township cannot require that a property owner submit a conditional rezoning request in order to seek rezoning on a property.

 Can the property owner change the conditions offered as part of a conditional rezoning application after hearing public comment at the planning commission public hearing? Does the planning commission need to have another public hearing if the property owner amends the conditional rezoning application?

In some cases, an astute property owner may hear concerns at the planning commission public hearing and ask for time to amend the application in response to the concerns. In such cases, the planning commission can table the request, if it chooses to do so. If the township has adopted an ordinance regulating the review process for a conditional rezoning application, the township must follow those procedures.

The township also needs to be aware that if the amended application changes the request substantially or adds/changes the proposed conditions, the planning commission should hold another public hearing. Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard. It is always best for a planning commission to err on the side of providing more notice than less. In such case, the township may need to renotice and republish for a second planning commission public hearing.

 Our township board approved a conditional rezoning three years ago, stating that the property owner had two years to comply with all the offered conditions of the rezoning. Nothing has been done on-site. What can the township do?

The MZEA provides that a local unit of government may provide a time period during which the rezoning conditions apply to the land. The MZEA says that if the conditions are not satisfied within the specified time frame, the “land shall revert to its former zoning classification.” Reversion to the former zoning classification is a big hammer. The township needs to understand the process it will use to have the property “revert” to its former zoning classification. The township should check to see if it has an ordinance specifying how conditional zonings will be handled. While many municipal attorneys advocate that the township board initiate the rezoning to the former zoning classification, each township should consult with its own municipal attorney regarding the recommended process for zoning reversion.



Can an application for conditional rezoning to a proposed zoning district be submitted for approval of a land use that is not permitted in the proposed zoning district?

Many township attorneys agree that a conditional rezoning request can only request land uses listed as permitted uses in the proposed zoning district. Each township, however, should consult its own ordinance and its own township attorney in this regard.



Our township has not adopted an ordinance for conditional rezoning, but has received a conditional rezoning application. Can we process the application?

The MZEA provides authority for any municipality to accept and process a conditional rezoning application. Many townships choose to adopt an ordinance, amending the zoning ordinance, to provide a prescribed process for such review. An ordinance will provide details on application requirements, review standards and processes, provide for written memorialization (and recording) of any resulting agreement, provide for zoning reversion process and may provide a method for voluntary termination of the conditional zoning. So, while a conditional rezoning ordinance is certainly helpful and is recommended, it is not mandatory to have one in place before accepting and processing a conditional rezoning application.

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



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Straight-party voting eliminated

Citizens will no longer be able to make a single selection to vote for all the candidates of one political party.

Senate Bill 13, sponsored by Sen. Marty Knollenberg (R-Troy), received final passage in a late-night, sometimes contentious session as the final scheduled legislative days of 2015 wound to a close. Once signed, the bill would ban ballot labels in partisan elections from including an option where voters could make a single selection to vote a straight ticket. The bill also includes a \$5 million appropriation for the Department of State to buy voting equipment to help implement the elimination. This appropriation means the bill cannot be subject to a referendum.

The House had tie-barred SB 13 to House Bill 4724, sponsored by Rep. Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Bowne Twp.), which would allow any voter to apply in person at their clerk's office for an absentee ballot without providing a reason. However, the Senate removed the tie-bar, and HB 4724 did not move out of the Senate Government Operations Committee.

MTA previously testified in opposition to SB 13, echoing concerns from township clerks that voters can expect long lines and unnecessary confusion if straight-party voting is eliminated. The bill has immediate effect.

Groundwater discharge fees remain unchanged into 2019

Townships will continue paying the same groundwater discharge fee they've paid for more than 10 years under recently passed legislation.

Senate Bill 552, sponsored by Sen. Mike Green (R-Fremont Twp.), received final passage and is expected to be signed by Gov. Rick Snyder. The law amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, which sets a groundwater discharge permit fee paid by facilities or municipalities that discharge wastewater to the ground or groundwater. The Department of Environmental Quality collects fees assigned to different classifications of facilities and municipalities, and the money goes to a fund that helps regulate Michigan's groundwater resources and protects them from hazardous and solid waste contamination.

The previous law had a Dec. 31, 2015, sunset for the fees, but SB 552 extends the same level of fees to Sept. 30, 2019. Initially, the bill included a groundwater discharge fee schedule increase; however, after discussions with lawmakers, the final version retained existing fee levels.

Economic development tool to continue being option for townships

Townships have five more years to utilize a tool that effectively helps them attract economic development.

Senate Bill 556, sponsored by Sen. Ken Horn (R-Frankenmuth), was signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder and is now Public Act 218 of 2015. The law amends the Commercial Rehabilitation Act so that property tax abatements won't end on Dec. 31, 2015. Instead, they may continue being granted until Dec. 31, 2020.

The Commercial Rehabilitation Act allows local units to provide a tax abatement for older commercial properties to be rehabilitated or renovated. More local units are using the Commercial Rehabilitation Act as an economic development incentive, as other tax credits have expired. MTA supported PA 218 as it allows townships to continue using this tool to attract investment and rehab old commercial properties.

Rental inspection programs allowed in more townships

More townships can start a rental inspection program, under Senate Bill 394, sponsored by Sen. David Robertson (R-Grand Blanc Chtr. Twp.), which was sent to Gov. Rick Snyder after receiving final passage with MTA's support. The law amends the previous inspection statutes, which set a population threshold of 100,000 for requiring rental inspection programs for apartment buildings and rooming houses. Townships were excluded except for certain, specific circumstances.

SB 394 lowered the population threshold to 10,000 and included townships in its language. However, under the new law, local units are not required to inspect rental properties unless they receive complaints of housing law violations. The law also specifies that inspection fees cannot be required to be paid more than six months before the inspection takes place.

Townships can pay for victim services

State law now gives townships clear authority to enter into contracts with private nonprofit corporations to provide services to domestic and sexual assault victims.

House Bill 4563, sponsored by Rep. Eric Leutheuser (R-Hillsdale), was enrolled and sent to Gov. Rick Snyder for enactment. Michigan law already authorizes a township board to appropriate or spend money on specific purposes.

The bill retains those purposes and adds the clear authority to enter into a contract for services to domestic or sexual violence victims with any private, nonprofit corporation or organization that provides the services. This includes, but is not limited to, a safe emergency shelter, a 24-hour crisis hotline, supportive counseling, case management and legal advocacy. MTA supported the legislation as it is permissive and does not require townships to take any actions.

Cemetery care funding can be invested in mutual funds

Money for cemetery care and maintenance could see a greater return on investment under Senate Bill 303.

The bill, which received final passage, was sponsored by Sen. Marty Knollenberg (R-Troy). Once the law takes effect, it will allow townships to invest money set aside for perpetual care and maintenance of cemeteries into mutual funds.

The funds must consist of fixed income securities, equity securities or both. No more than 60 percent of the perpetual care money can be invested in equity funds, and each mutual fund must be rated in the top two of five or more tiers by Morningstar, Inc., or another nationally recognized mutual fund rating agency.

This law is meant to help municipal cemeteries at a time when all plots are sold, and no new revenue is being brought in by selling plots. Investing money in mutual funds could bring a greater return on the investment of perpetual care and maintenance dollars, helping townships to maintain their cemeteries indefinitely.

Townships can keep EpiPens on hand

Townships can keep EpiPens on hand under certain circumstances under a newly enacted bill.

House Bill 4438, sponsored by Rep. Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Bowne Twp.), recently received final passage. The law amends the current statute allowing school boards to receive prescriptions for devices known as EpiPens to treat anaphylaxis to expand the list of authorized entities. This expansion now includes a person or governmental entity that operates activities such as recreational programs or sports camps where allergens capable of causing anaphylaxis may be present. The EpiPen could be administered to someone believed to be experiencing anaphylaxis by an individual who has completed required training.

Townships and their employees would not be liable for any injuries or damages resulting from administering the device, as long as there is no willful misconduct.

New laws extend sunset for road commission consolidation

Counties can continue saving money by opting to consolidate their road agencies with the county government.

House Bill 4212 and HB 4215, both sponsored by Rep. Roger Victory (R-Georgetown Chtr. Twp.), were recently given final passage and sent to Gov. Rick Snyder. Previous law had a deadline of Jan. 1, 2015, for county commissioners to pass resolutions dissolving county road commissions and transferring their powers to the county board of commissioners. HB 4212 and HB 4215 extend the sunset five years to Jan. 1, 2020.

Legislative lowdown

Here's a quick look at important bills that MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. For up-to-date information on this legislation, and more, look to our *Township Insights* e-newsletter, sent every Friday to all member officials with an email address on file in our database, as well as our in-depth legislative e-newsletter, *Township Voice*. If you are not receiving *Insights* or *Voice*, email michelle@michigantownships.org or call (517) 321-6467.

'Dark stores' assessing theory (HB 4909, SB 524): Would curb the widely used assessing theory that "big box" stores' taxable values should be based on sales of similar properties that are vacant and abandoned. *MTA supports.*

Unfunded mandates (HBs 4753-4755, SBs 388-390): Would not require local units to provide new services required by state law unless state provides the funding. *MTA supports.*

SB 6: Would expand disabled veterans property tax exemption to include residential and agricultural real property. *MTA opposes.*

SB 507: Would require certain recycling facilities to report to the state the amount of recyclables they receive and ship. Most township facilities would be excluded. *MTA supports.*

HB 4004: Would require charter township board approval before an annexation question can be placed on the ballot. *MTA supports.*

HB 4209: Would provide for state and local regulation of five types of medical marijuana facilities. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4516: Would allow disabled veterans who missed the filing period to retroactively receive a property tax exemption for 2013 and 2014. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4522: Would allow certain state legislative committees to subpoena any records or files of local units with a majority committee vote. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4567: Would exempt property owned or leased by public schools from local zoning. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4645: Would exempt property transfers between a limited liability company and a closely related party from the taxable value "pop-up." *MTA opposes.*

HB 4747: Would protect township land from adverse possession claims. *MTA supports.*

HB 4862: Would provide for standardized local regulation of textile recycling collection bins. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5016: Would require local units of government to reimburse Internet service providers for the cost of relocating their underground facilities when the local unit requested the relocation. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5041: Would allow improvements or additions to residential rental properties that are non-conforming uses. *MTA opposes.*

Examining trends to predict **future fiscal needs**



Township officials who strive to strategically plan for the long-term funding and delivery of township services need to understand the impact that changes in the local economy and demographics can have on community expectations and the willingness of taxpayers to provide funding.

Of course, not all changes in local government revenues and spending result from the changing economic and demographic make-up of residents. State and federal mandates will likely continue to place pressure on local governments. Nevertheless, the ability of local governments to generate sufficient revenue, and pressures to alter historical spending priorities depend greatly on changing resident needs, demands and willingness to pay for services. Examining local government revenue and spending patterns over the last 40 years in response to changing economic and demographic forces provides important clues to future fiscal trends, and enables local officials to anticipate and adapt to the changing environment.

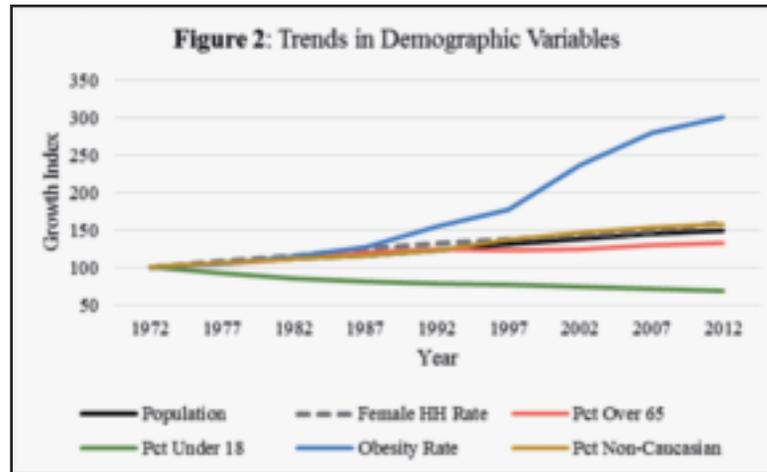
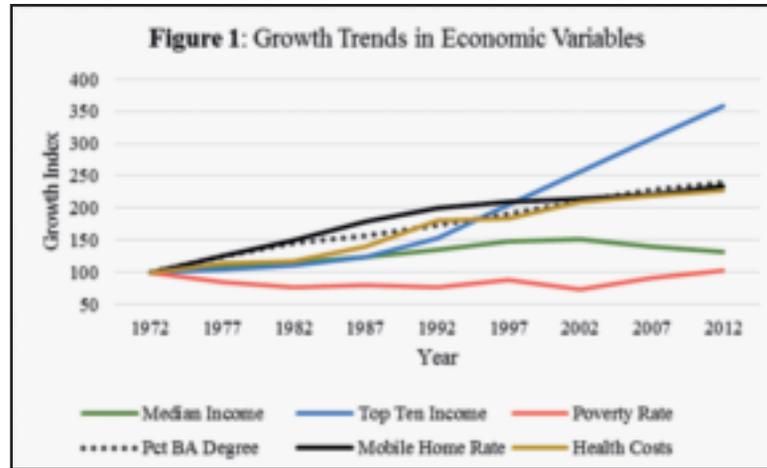
Changing trends across the nation

Michigan State University recently completed a study of the long-run drivers of local government growth, examining data from all units of local government for the entire country over 40 years (from 1972-2012). Focusing on changing demographic and societal forces, the study reveals a range of new pressures on local government services.

Charts on the following pages highlight summaries trends for 3,110 U.S. counties and illustrate how the economic and demographic make-up in the United States has changed over time—summarizing trends in economic factors, demographics, and in major local government spending.

Two primary drivers of local government revenue capacity and spending priorities are resident income and population. Increases in per capita income and population typically results in increased demand for many types of local public services. However, revenue and spending patterns also depend on the distribution of income as well as the resident demographics.

As shown in Figure 1 (*on page 15*), the U.S. median household income grew from 1972 until 2002, and then declined over the past decade. However, the income of the highest earners has grown substantially over time, while in recent years, the poverty rate has also increased. Consequently, income disparity is increasing over time. The proportion of households living in mobile homes has more than doubled over the 40-year period, which may also place pressure on township budgets. The changing composition of income within communities has important implications



for local governments' revenue base as well as spending priorities. There has also been substantial growth in health care costs, which increases local government employee benefits expenditures and long-term liabilities for retiree health care costs.

Changes in America's demographics are depicted in Figure 2 (at right, above). The overall U.S. population is aging—the proportion of the population that is over the age of 65 is increasing, while there are fewer school-age children. More households are female-headed, and importantly, the overall health of the U.S. population is declining. This is a phenomena not seen before in this country.

Obesity, for example, has increased from about 12 percent of the population in 1972, to 35 percent in 2012—exacerbating related physical health problems, such as

type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Mental/emotional health problems are also on the rise. The changing health status of residents within a community can have important public service implications. Nationwide, medical emergency calls increased from about six million in 1985 to nearly 20 million in 2010. Today, about 6 of every 10 emergency calls are medically related—which ultimately impacts local government service priorities.

Figure 3 (on page 16) shows changes in the level of and pattern of total local government spending (including county, municipal, township, school districts and special districts) in the U.S. Local government revenue and expenditures has outpaced income and population growth, with income and population growth accounting for about 81 percent or about one-third of total growth of the 240 percent growth in government spending. Changing demographics as well as increasing mandates from higher levels of government both drive local governments to increase spending levels and alter priorities over time. For example, public safety spending increased between 1972 and 2007 then fell, while education spending grew slower but more steadily over the entire period. Research also shows a high rate of growth in utilities and waste management expenditures for Michigan local governments, and townships in particular.

cover story

Figure 3: Aggregate Revenue and Expenditures

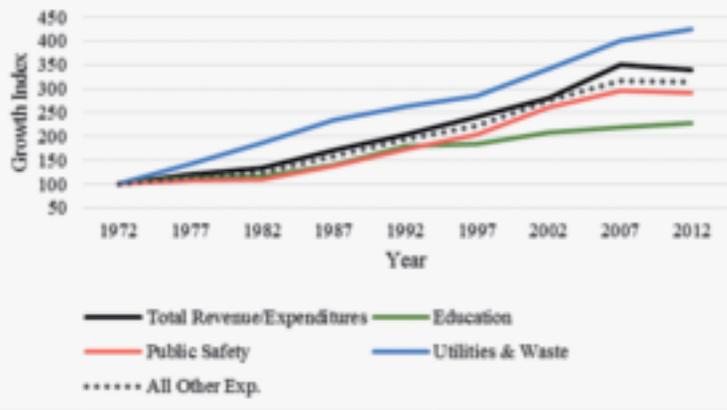
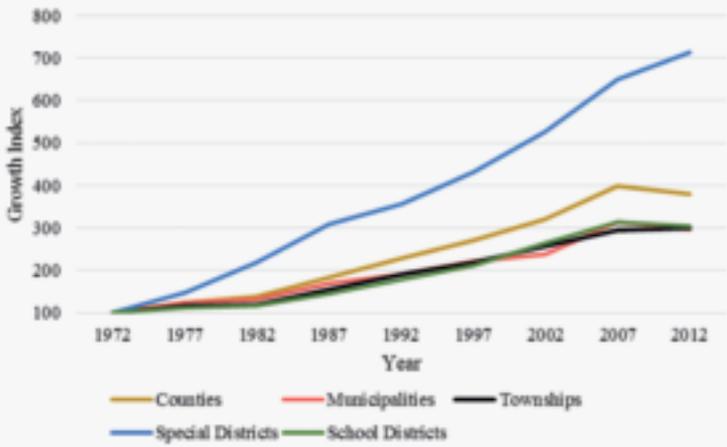


Figure 4: Local Spending by Jurisdiction Type



Each state sets potentially different responsibilities for their local entities—counties, municipalities, townships and special districts. Comparing spending patterns among these entities is nevertheless informative. As shown above in Figure 4, municipalities, townships and school districts across the U.S. grew at similar rates, with revenues growing by about 200 percent for the three jurisdiction types. County government, however, experienced a higher rate of growth, at about 280 percent, while special district spending increased even more rapidly with a 610 percent increase. Special districts are often established to provide a single service and operate independently from the authorizing general purpose local governments to provide services such as airports, ports, highways, mass transit, parking facilities, fire protection, libraries, parks, cemeteries, hospitals, irrigation, conservation, sewerage, solid waste, stadiums, and water supply.

Narrowing in on Michigan trends

When looking specifically at local government spending trends for Michigan, there are both similarities and differences in comparing nationwide trends to Michigan

local units. Special district spending in Michigan has risen at a rate similar to the U.S., albeit with greater fluctuation over the period. However, spending in Michigan counties, municipalities and schools have risen at a slower pace than the national average. This flatter trend is in part due to the fact that Michigan’s manufacturing-based economy lagged the nation for many years.

Focusing even more narrowly on Michigan townships and their top functional expenditures, research shows very high spending growth on sewer and waste—which can be attributed to the Federal Clean Water Act that made hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding available to townships. Sewer and waste expenditures also follow the business cycle: rapidly rising during the 1997-2007 housing boom and then following the 2007-2012 bust period when housing construction came to a standstill.

Fire and police spending has also grown rapidly, whereas growth in the other township spending categories has been relatively modest. A portion of fire expenditure growth has been driven by state and federal training and equipment mandates and medical run increases. Police expenditure growth has partly resulted from a drug enforcement emphasis; nationally, the number of drug-related arrests increased from about 500,000 to 1.5 million over the 1982 to 2007 period.

These spending trends reflect a composite of all townships in Michigan and do not necessarily reflect individual townships. Trends differ across the state depending on nature of the area—rural, exurban, suburban, and older urbanized communities.

Data presented in index form enables one to easily compare trends. However, indices do not provide information regarding the share of each spending category to overall township budgets. Table 1 (*below*) offers information on spending allocations for townships in Michigan. These figures represent average revenue and expenditures for all townships per county.

Expenditure Category	1972	1992	2012
Total Revenue/Expenditures	\$8,153	\$16,781	\$27,945
General Expenses	1,410	2,047	2,719
Fire	581	1,582	3,597
Police	519	2,329	3,494
Parks and Recreation	406	607	959
All Other Expenditures*	5,237	10,216	17,176

*This category includes: Sewerage and Waste, Highways, Miscellaneous Commercial Activities, Corrections, Education, Financial Administration, Judicial/Legal, Central Staff, Hospitals, Health, Public Buildings, Housing/Community Development, Libraries, Natural Resources, Parking, Inspection and Regulation, Welfare, Utilities, Employee Retirement, Interest on General Debt

What is the effect on township finances?

Exploring these statistics can help determine the degree to which changing socio-economic conditions can lead to changes in the level of revenue and spending—and predict future local government revenues and expenditure trends.

These shifts in socio-economic trends influence a township's revenue generating capacity, as well as its expenditure priorities. Median household income and income of the top 10 percent of households relates positively to most local government services—increasing income will increase the tax base as well as increase the demand for many public services. Poverty and the proportion of household living in mobile homes is associated with lower tax bases and reduced revenue potential. Increased households living in mobile home parks results in increased local spending, creating a fiscal imbalance from providing public services to mobile home households in relation to the revenue they generate. The effect is strongest in education and public safety spending.

An aging population (and fewer school-age children) also alters the historical mix of local public service demands. For example, education needs and spending will decline as society ages. However, demand for public safety may increase (police, fire and emergency services). Reduced societal health may place increasing pressure on a variety of human service-oriented local government expenditures.

In looking at how economic and demographic changes have affected local government fiscal patterns for all local governments, certain socio-economic factors are expected to change in the coming years and may have a significant and meaningful impact on local government spending patterns.

While population growth, of course, leads to increased spending to meet public service needs, the demographic make-up of a community is also important. With the exception of a positive effect on public safety, the increase in female-headed households has a limited effect on local government spending. However, as discussed below, this factor does affect township spending patterns.

An aging population results in reduced education spending, as does a decline in school-age children. While education spending, naturally, falls with fewer school-age children, this trend is also associated with increased spending on public safety. There are two explanations for this relationship. First, younger children require fewer public safety expenditures relative to other population groups. In addition, households with children are typically more stable. Second, there may be a substitution effect—when communities require fewer resources to support education some of those resources may be reallocated to support other types of public services. Conversely, when education needs rise, such as approving construction bonds to build new schools, communities may allocate resources to education and away from other public services.

Declining community health increases spending pressures for education and public safety in particular. As local authorities respond to physical/mental/emotional



The overall U.S. population is aging—which alters the historical mix of local public service demands. For example, education needs and spending will decline as society ages, while demand for public safety may increase.

health-related needs in schools and in households, there tends to also be shift in spending away from “all other expenditures” (as noted in Table 1 on page 16) in order to spend more in human service-oriented activities.

Forecasting local government revenue and expenditures

The evaluation of local government fiscal patterns for all local units across the nation sets the stage for forecasting expected changes in Michigan townships. We can use these trends and statistics to provide predictions for future revenue and expenditure trends for the two subsequent decades (2012-2032).

While increasing population from 1972-2012 generated substantial growth in all the expenditure categories, Michigan's population is expected to grow very slowly in the coming years. Household income has declined in recent years and is not expected to recover in the near future. This means that other socio-economic trends will likely have a greater impact on changing public service priorities in Michigan townships.

Total township revenues and expenditures will likely continue to increase in townships experiencing an aging population, rising health care costs and deteriorating health; these factors are expected to drive total spending up by 28 percent over the next 20 years. The aging population and deteriorating health increase pressure to provide human services, and increasing health care costs increase the costs of providing benefits to township employees and retirees.

One statistically significant driver that is expected to reduce overall revenue/expenditure projections is the



The declining health of the population is a key driver of township general expenses. Increasing health problems pull resources away from general expenses to meet increased human service needs, such as police and emergency services.

female-headed household rate. Female-headed households typically have limited resources and lower property wealth and therefore contribute less to the local tax effort, and yet still need public services. The overall net effect is decreased pressure on local government spending.

Overall, township revenues and spending are expected to increase by about 14 percent as a result of these changing economic and demographic factors. The following is a summary of the forecasted effects of economic and demographic change for each of the primary expenditures, and discussion on the largest expected impacts.

General expenses

The declining health of the population is a key driver of township general expenses. Diminishing health is projected to decrease spending on general expenses; increasing health problems pull resources away from general expenses in order to meet increased human service needs such as police and emergency services, as discussed below. Overall, general expenses are expected to decrease by 141 percent as a result of changing economic and demographic changes.

Fire services

Turning to fire services, an increasing number of female-headed households is expected to reduce fire expenditures in the coming years, whereas an increasing elderly population and increasing health costs are the two positive fire spending

drivers. An aging population is expected to increase human service needs such as emergency calls and the like. Overall, the net effect is an estimated 10 percent reduction in spending due to these factors.

Police expenditures

Increases in top 10 income and health care costs are projected to increase police spending by a substantial 56 percent. An aging population—as measured by the proportion of the population over the age of 65 and under the age of 18—is also projected to increase police spending in the coming years. As described earlier, aging communities tend to reduce spending on education and increase spending in other areas. The forecast indicates that the largest driver of future police spending is diminishing health, which may in part be the result of increased emergency calls and the like. For the average township in Michigan, these changing socio-economic factors are expected to increase police spending by 183 percent.

Parks and recreation expenditures

Changing socio-economic factors are also projected to result in increased parks and recreation spending, where the main spending drivers are increasing health care costs and the aging population. An aging population typically possesses more leisure time and prefers more resources to be devoted to recreational activities such as golf, etc. Parks and recreation spending are forecasted to increase by about 34 percent by 2032 as a result of these factors.

All other expenditures

Modest spending pressures are projected in the remaining “All Other Expenditures” category (*composed of the remaining expenditures as noted in Table 1 on page 16*); net spending is expected to increase by about 43 percent due to changing socio-economic factors.



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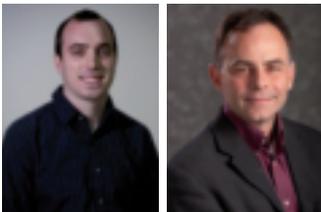
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Long-term considerations

Local government spending across all categories has increased over the past 40 years; this trend will likely continue. An evaluation of the role of socio-economic forces in determining local government spending patterns enables the forecast of future public service needs and spending patterns. Long-run budget planning can be improved by taking into consideration the following:

- The economic and demographic make-up and trends of your community. The effects within any given township depend how these factors change over time. The forecasts presented in this article are for the average Michigan township and not any one specific township.
- Use economic and demographic trends to anticipate changes in public service needs and adapt accordingly.
- Economic and demographic change is expected to place pressures on public safety, particularly police spending.
- Changing age structure, increases in female-headed households, increasing health care costs, and diminishing health are important long-run drivers of township revenue generating capacity and spending priorities.

The economic and demographic changes highlighted in this article are important, but they are certainly not the only factors that affect township revenue and expenditures. Changing institutional features and mandates from higher levels of government are also important, but those factors are difficult to forecast. Nevertheless, improved understanding of economic and demographic trends in your community can be valuable for planning your township's future.



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Food, and Resource
Economics, Michigan State
University, East Lansing

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This article is based on technical analysis provided in the research paper "Diminishing Health, Rising Health Care Costs and Long-run Growth in Local Government Spending," which is available from the authors upon request.

Learn more about long-range budgeting at MTA's 2016 Annual Conference & Expo. Join *Financial Forum* author David Williamson, CPA, for his session, "Multi-Year Forecasting and Your Township Budget," held from 1:30 to 2:45 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 21. Turn to pages 20-22 for more on the Conference, being held Jan. 19-22, at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center. You can also visit www.michigantownships.org for complete Conference information, including educational session descriptions and online registration.

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Conference at-a-glance

Tuesday, Jan. 19

8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

MTA shuttle service available

9 a.m. to Noon

Great Board Meetings*

Includes continental breakfast.

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Land Use: Defining Your Township's Future*

Includes continental breakfast & lunch.

Qualifies for 6 TGA foundations credits, course F-102.

Coffee service sponsored by Spalding DeDecker & Associates

9 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.

Auditor Institute (CPE credit course)*

Includes continental breakfast & lunch.

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

Legal Institute for Township Attorneys*

Includes continental breakfast & lunch.

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

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

12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Assessors Renewal: Thinking Inside the Big Box*

Includes refreshment break.

Approved by the State Tax Commission for Assessor Elective Credit

1 to 4 p.m.

How Boards Make Decisions*

Includes lunch, served at noon.

Qualifies for 4 TGA boardsmanship credits, course B-102.

5 to 6 p.m.

MTA Volunteer Training Reception
(by invitation only)

Sponsored by Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, PLC

8 p.m. to Midnight

"3-D" Welcoming Reception
Pre-Conference Festivities

Sponsored by Bendzinski & Company, Municipal Finance Advisors

** A separate registration fee is required to attend.*

Wednesday, Jan. 20

7 to 10:30 a.m.

MTA shuttle service available

7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

7:45 to 8:15 a.m.

New Member Welcome/
1st-time Attendee Orientation

Coffee service provided by Pontem Software

8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

Opening Session

Sponsored by DTE Energy; projection

screens sponsored by Kitch Drutchas Law Firm

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

MTA Expo open

Chair massages sponsored by

Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes, PLC

10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Addressing New Requirements for Post-Retirement Benefits
- Economic Redevelopment Using Tax Incremental Revenues
- Effective Planning & Zoning Decision-making
- Making Appointments and Filling Vacancies
- New Kids on the Block
- Personal Property Exemptions and Reimbursements—What You Don't Know Can Hurt You!
- Reap the Rewards of Recycling
- Reengage Your Community
- Revitalize Your Meetings
- Roads Explained: More than Dirt, Gravel, Oil and Concrete
- Townships and Tribes: Rebuilding Your Relations
- What Every Elected Official Needs to Know About Law Enforcement
- What's in a Name?

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

TGA Graduate "Class of 2016"

Luncheon (by invitation only)

Sponsored by ITC Holdings Corp.

Noon to 4:30 p.m.

Rediscover Historic Detroit, including High Tea at The Whitney
(additional charge; pre-registration required)

1 to 2:15 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Around the Capitol: Legislative Update
- Balancing Form and Function in P&Z
- Behind Closed Doors: What Can Be Discussed in Closed Session?
- Building Trails, Building Communities
- Cost Benefit Analysis: When is Good Enough, Enough?
- Optimizing Banking Services and Investments
- Records Management: Paper vs. Electronic
- Restoring Trust in Your Community
- Rethink Maintenance-Mode Governance
- Rethinking Township Management
- Revisit Options for Borrowing Money for Capital Projects and Leasing Equipment
- Roads: Township Authorities, Prohibitions and Obligations
- What Every Elected Official Needs to Know About Assessing

2:45 to 4 p.m.

Concurrent Educational Sessions

- Ask the Experts: Township Question-and-Answer Forum
- Communication Towers: What's New?
- Green vs. Grey Infrastructure
- New Legal Trends in Zoning and Land Use Regulation
- Preparing for Tax Tribunal
- Reinventing Tourism in Your Township
- Resolving Board Conflict
- Rethinking Employment Issues and Policies
- Rural Development: Revitalize Your Community
- Strengthening Internal Controls and Fraud Prevention
- What You Need to Know About Your Farmers Market

4:30 to 5:15 p.m.

Informational Sessions

- Becoming a "Township of Excellence"
- Introduction to MTA's Township Governance Academy
- The Inside Scoop on County Chapters

6 to 9 p.m.

Fun Night: RE-mix! Dodge City Casino

Sponsored by Michigan Township Participating Plan

7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

Detroit Red Wings v. St. Louis Blues
(additional charge; pre-registration required)



Thursday, Jan. 21

7 to 11 a.m.

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

8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

General Session
Keynote speaker underwritten in part by Consumers Energy; projection screens sponsored by Kitch Drutchas Law Firm

9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Shopping Trip to Great Lakes Crossing Mall (additional charge; pre-registration required)

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

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

10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

- Concurrent Educational Workshops*
- Around the Capitol: Legislative Update
 - Creating Your Mobile Strategy
 - Getting the Most from MTA's Member Salary Survey
 - Introducing Michigan's Redevelopment Ready Communities® Program
 - Invasive Species: Township Treatment
 - Rebuild Your Relationship with the Drain Commissioner
 - Rebuilding Public Relations
 - Regulating Signs and Solicitations
 - Refresh Your Knowledge of QuickBooks
 - Reinvent Yourself
 - Understand Your Role—and Everyone Else's
 - What Every Elected Official Needs to Know About Their Fire Department
 - Why Can't We Get Along? How to Avoid Legal Issues by Working Together

Noon to 1 p.m.

- Township Business Solutions Sessions*
- Assessing the Benefits of Using Special Assessments for Improvement Projects: From Petitions to Appeals
 - How to Free Yourself from the Freedom of Information Act
 - Special Events and Fireworks Liability: How to Make Your Event Safe
 - Strategies to Enhance Health Care Benefits While Reducing Costs and Limiting Liability
 - Successful Site Planning—Keeping the Power On
 - Top 5 Legal Issues for Townships in 2016
 - We're Glad You Asked That!

1:30 to 2:45 p.m.

- Concurrent Educational Sessions*
- Building Code Enforcement
 - Elections Update
 - MTA Policy Review
 - Multi-year Forecasting and Your Budget
 - Placemaking Projects to Improve Quality of Life in Your Township
 - Rethink Your Reactions
 - Reviewing Michigan's Clean-up Laws
 - Safety Matters
 - Small Township, Big Ideas
 - Special Assessments
 - Straight Dope on Marijuana Legalization
 - Strategic Placemaking in Suburban Townships
 - Your Township on Twitter

3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

- Concurrent Educational Workshops*
- Big Boxes Revisited
 - Clarifying Township Powers
 - Crowdfunding: Recharging Communities
 - Innovative Solutions for Rural Connectivity
 - Just the Facts: Taking Township Minutes
 - Recharging Your Batteries
 - Refresh Your Payroll Knowledge
 - Rethink Your Leadership Style
 - Revisiting Collection of Delinquent Personal Property Taxes
 - Social Media Policies for Townships
 - Uniform Fire Code Adoption and Enforcement

4:30 to 9:30 p.m.

MTA shuttle service available

5 to 5:30 p.m.

MTA District 8 Caucus Election

5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

VIP Legislative Networking Reception (additional charge; pre-registration required)
Sponsored by EMC Insurance and Ted Hartleb Agency

6:30 to 9 p.m.

MTA Banquet
Entertainment sponsored by Burnham & Flower Insurance Group

9 p.m. to Midnight

Afterglow Reception
Sponsored by Burnham & Flower Insurance Group

Friday, Jan. 22

7 a.m. to Noon

MTA shuttle service available

9 to 11 a.m.

MTA Annual Meeting



There's still time to register!

REenergize your enthusiasm for public service, REconnect with colleagues, and REdedicate yourself to leading your community with passion and purpose.

Download a brochure or register online on MTA's website, at www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp. Don't miss this opportunity to REkindle your commitment to take your leadership—and your township—to the next level.

Conference housing (www.grandconnection.com/mta2016) closes on Jan. 4. To obtain a room after this date, or change your reservation, call (810) 623-9008.

Evening events include:

"3-D" Welcoming Reception
sponsored by



RE-mix! Dodge City Casino Fun Night
sponsored by



Afterglow Reception
sponsored by



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2016 Exhibitor List*

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 Merit Network
 MERS of Michigan
 Michigan Agency for Energy
 Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners
 Michigan Chloride Sales

Michigan CLASS
 Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development—Right to Farm
 Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority
 Michigan State University Extension
 Michigan Township Participating Plan
 Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, PLC
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*As of Dec. 9, 2015.

Allied Service Providers are indicated in turquoise.



Q What are some helpful tips for preparing the township's annual W-2 Forms this year?

Here are some practical steps to make sure that the information reported to the IRS/Social Security Administration and your employees is accurate:

- The W-3 form is the total of all the W-2s issued to employees. This information should agree with the amounts reported quarterly to the IRS on Form 941. Prior to issuing the W-2/W-3, townships should verify that these totals match by adding the information reported on quarterly 941 tax return forms, and compare them to the W-2/W-3 totals.

For example, information on the following W-3 totals should agree to the totals reported on quarterly 941s as follows:

- 1) Box 1 of the W-3 (wages, tips and other compensation) should agree to the totals reported on line 2 of Form 941
 - 2) Box 2 (federal income taxes withheld) should agree to the totals reported on line 3 of Form 941.
 - 3) Box 3 (Social Security wages) should agree to the totals reported on line 5a of Form 941.
 - 4) Box 5 (Medicare wages) should agree to the totals reported on line 5c of the Form 941.
- Carefully review the instructions to box 12 ("other") to determine proper coding and amounts of items such as deferrals to 457 (deferred compensation plan) plans.
 - W-2/W-3 Forms should be filed electronically, if you are issuing 250 or more forms.

The IRS also has helpful resources—Publication 15, Circular E, known as the employer's tax guide, and the instructions for W-2 and W-3 forms. These guides can be obtained at your local IRS office or at www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html.

Q Our township's only pension program is an elective 457 plan. Should we record the plan as a qualified pension plan on township employees' W-2 forms?

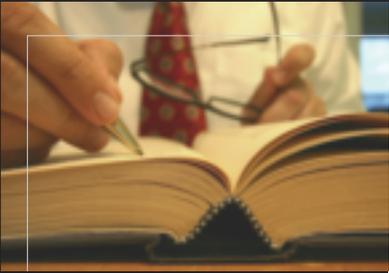
Mark only the deferred compensation, not the pension plan, box. A 457 plan does not meet the requirements of a qualified pension plan for purposes of determining whether an employee can have a deductible individual retirement account. However, a 457 plan is considered a "public retirement system" for purposes of determining whether the employee may be considered covered by a pension plan for Social Security purposes.

Q What is the maximum wage base for the Social Security taxes in 2016?

If an employee is subject to these taxes:

- The Medicare portion of Social Security taxes is not capped; all covered employees' wages are subject to this tax.
- The Social Security portion is limited to the first \$118,500 wages paid in calendar year 2016 (the same amount as in 2015). This limit is adjusted annually and published in IRS Circular E.

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



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Learn more from *Financial Forum* author David Williamson at MTA's 2016 Annual Conference in Detroit!

Williamson, a certified public accountant who has authored articles and taught seminars for MTA for nearly two decades, will be teaching several workshops on financial topics on Thursday, Jan. 21, including:

- *Refresh Your Knowledge of QuickBooks*, from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.
- *Multi-year Forecasting and Your Budget*, from 1:30 to 2:45 p.m.
- *Refresh Your Payroll Knowledge*, from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

Take advantage of this opportunity to have your questions answered in person by a local government financial expert! Learn more about the Conference on pages 20-22 or visit www.michigantownships.org.

March workshops explore strategic planning, managing services

MTA's March workshops can help you identify which services are most important to your residents, manage the risk that comes with those services, and improve your township's transparency and credibility.

Held in Battle Creek at the Holiday Inn on March 28-29, attendees can choose to attend one session or both!

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

These workshops are part of MTA's premier credentialing program, Township Governance Academy (TGA). The Academy offers new ideas, shares "best practices" in township government and provides a hands-on approach to help you deal more effectively with everyday issues that your board faces. You do not have to be enrolled in TGA to participate. Course credit will be extended if you choose to enroll within six months of attending.



Utilizing Strategic Planning to Achieve Results

(B-104—4 credits; includes lunch)

March 28 from 1 to 4:15 p.m.

Strategic planning is critical to achieving real results in your township. Yet the creation of a strategic plan may be a delicate matter if your environment is politically charged, especially when dealing with entities outside of your jurisdiction that have an impact your community. Get on the path to strategic exploration and learn the steps and stages involved, as well as the voices that must be heard in the planning process to develop a solid plan that aligns your township's resources and creates favorable outcomes.

Presented by Susan Radwan, Owner, Leading Edge Mentoring

At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs

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

March 29 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Learn more about the role, authority and legal requirements of the township board in providing services for your residents. Explore funding options as well as the board's responsibility for ensuring that the risk that comes with offering services is properly managed. Identify ways to evaluate whether your township's services are effectively serving your community and learn what considerations should be made today to ensure future viability.

Presented by Steve Mann, Attorney, Miller Canfield Paddock & Stone, and Susan Radwan

Registration brochures were mailed to township clerks and TGA candidates in December. Visit MTA's website, www.michigantownships.org, to download a registration form or register online.

TGA scholarships available

Whether you're already enrolled in MTA's Township Governance Academy, or it's something you or your fellow board members are considering, scholarships are available to assist with costs for this comprehensive credentialing program.

A limited number of scholarships, up to \$1,000 each, are available to assist elected officials from MTA-member townships that may not be in a financial position to provide the funding necessary for completion of the program. **Applications are due March 1.**

MTA thanks scholarship sponsors **BS&A Software, Burnham & Flower Insurance Group, Foresight Group and ITC Holdings Corp.** for funding the scholarship program.

Download the scholarship application at www.michigan townships.org (click on "Township Governance Academy" under the "Training" tab on the members-only section, and select the TGA scholarship link in the right column), or call (517) 321-6467 to have an application sent to you.



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Join the Parade

MTA's Township Parade of Flags will kick off the 2016 MTA Conference's Opening Session on Wednesday, Jan. 20. Sign up today for this inspirational start to Conference!



To register for the Parade, fax this form to (517) 321-8908, or email jenn@michigantownships.org by Jan. 8, 2016. Instructions will be sent to all Parade participants prior to Conference.

Township/County _____

Contact Person _____

Title _____

Township Address _____

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Email Address _____

Check here to have Parade information mailed, rather than emailed, to you.

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

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upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

2016 Board of Review Training

To assist board of review members, alternates, township supervisors and assessors in preparing for 2016 board of review sessions, MTA is conducting half-day *Board of Review Training* at 13 locations throughout the state in February.

Concurrent sessions offered at each location 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. A light lunch is included.

Dates and locations are:

- Feb. 2: Ramada Inn, Lansing
- Feb. 3: Doubletree by Hilton, Grand Rapids
- Feb. 4: Fetzer Center at WMU, Kalamazoo
- Feb. 5: Comfort Inn, Chelsea
- Feb. 9: Magnuson Hotel Franklin Square Inn, Houghton
- Feb. 10: Island Resort & Conference Center, Harris
- Feb. 11: Little Bear East Arena, St. Ignace
- Feb. 16: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- Feb. 17: Quality Inn Forward Conference Center, West Branch
- Feb. 23: Sanctuary Inn, Alpena
- Feb. 24: Treetops Resort, Gaylord
- Feb. 25: Evergreen Resort, Cadillac
- Feb. 29: Comfort Suites, Mt. Pleasant



Registration check-in & light lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.
Sessions are from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Cancellation, Substitution & Switching Policy

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

Advanced Session: What You Need to Know

- 2016 procedural changes and bulletin review
- Reviewing the appeal process
- Step by step, the assessing process from tape to pen
- Sales studies and how they affect the assessment
- Land values, maps and should you pay attention to them?
- Exemptions—poverty, veterans and more
 - PREs—old, new and who is getting denied
 - Qualified? (forest and agriculture)
- What is an AMAR, and why should you be concerned?
- What the future holds

Basic Session: 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 exemptions
- How to listen to, and act on, protests
- What's new this year

SESSION CONTENT



SPECIAL DISCOUNT: Members may purchase a 2016 edition of MTA's comprehensive and updated *Board of Review Guide*, at a discounted rate of \$31.50, when registering for the class. The books will be distributed at check-in.

Registration Form

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

TOWNSHIP	COUNTY
NAME & TITLE	Attending: <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Need a book? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
NAME & TITLE	Attending: <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Need a book? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
NAME & TITLE	Attending: <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Need a book? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
NAME & TITLE	Attending: <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Need a book? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
TELEPHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS

Which location will you attend?

- Feb. 2: Lansing
- Feb. 3: Grand Rapids
- Feb. 4: Kalamazoo
- Feb. 5: Chelsea
- Feb. 9: Houghton
- Feb. 10: Harris
- Feb. 11: St. Ignace
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A photograph showing the silhouettes of two firefighters in full gear, including helmets and oxygen tanks, standing in front of a large fire. The scene is backlit by the flames, creating a dramatic, high-contrast orange and yellow glow.

GIS technology

A life-saving tool for fire departments

Reducing the element of surprise is critical in preparing for emergency situations. Lives, property and resources can be saved when decision-makers have access to critical details about a building and its contents. It's why fire and public safety departments work closely with businesses and schools to gather and maintain pre-incident records.

Considerable time and effort go into conducting site visits, talking with owners and employees, gathering information, and updating details as situations change. But, in the end, the information is only as good as a department's ability to access it when the need arises.

Information stored in a well-organized three-ring binder, in a secure filing cabinet, or in a spreadsheet on a computer can be challenging and time-consuming to access in the face of a 2 a.m. emergency call to a fire at a warehouse on the other side of town.

To make better use of the valuable pre-incident information available for buildings and their contents, municipalities are turning to GIS as a solution.

A powerful tool

GIS, or Geographic Information Systems, is a software that transforms location-based data found in spreadsheets and other databases into interactive maps. Connecting data with location in an online environment creates a powerful tool accessible to multiple users within a department or organization, as well as to other agencies of the local government.

Resources such as fire hydrants and hazards can be marked with easy-to-identify icons on a map. Building structures are outlined on the map for quick and clear identification. By clicking on the structure within GIS, a window appears with all the pertinent information about the location.

The data within GIS is customizable to the needs of each fire department. Any type of information a department might want to know about a site during an emergency can be built into the system, such as:

- Emergency contact information
- Utility contact information
- Building access points and location of stairwells
- Building dimensions and construction materials
- Shut-off locations for alarms, electric and gas utilities
- Nearby fire hydrant locations
- Number of employees typically on site
- Presence of hazardous materials and barriers to the property
- PDF documents of floor plans
- Photos of the building

The ability to access this information from a tablet device running on a cellular or Wi-Fi connection makes the information mobile. As a crew is in route to an emergency, one responder can load the pre-incident report and brief the rest of the emergency personnel about hazards they may encounter and how many people could be on site.

Armed with this knowledge before they arrive, firefighters can develop a more informed plan of action and move more quickly to make life- and property-saving decisions.

For example, by knowing a property adjacent to a fire contains explosives or hazardous materials, emergency personnel can make decisions sooner about the need to evacuate the immediate area to protect the safety of nearby residents. By knowing that one end of a property is fenced off, the crew can immediately decide to enter the property from another direction, saving critical moments that can be used to save lives and preserve property.

Information is readily available to anyone within the department or municipality who has been given access to the GIS. Varying levels of authorization are available. Based on the tasks and responsibilities of the individuals, they can have view-only privileges or the ability to input, edit and maintain records within the system.

GIS can also safeguard information that, if only contained in a paper-based system, can be lost or destroyed. It creates a repository where knowledge can be recorded, preventing important details from “walking out the door” with the departure of a long-time member of the department.

Benefitting local departments

The Bangor Community Fire Department, which covers a rural, 75-square-mile area including **Bangor and Arlington Townships**, and the City of Bangor in Van Buren County, converted its pre-incident reports to GIS in 2012. According to Fire Chief **Derek Babcock**, the new system has benefited the department in many ways.

“When our pre-fire planning information was in a binder system, documents would often get wet when we went out on a call and we ran the risk of misplacing records. It also was very labor intensive to update information that was, in many cases, handwritten,” Babcock said. “With GIS, it is quick to make changes and we have a protected record of all our information.”



Since the Bangor Community Fire Department converted its pre-incident reports to GIS three years ago, the new system has benefited the department in many ways.

Once a township decides to explore the use of GIS to manage pre-incident information, they can work with a GIS consultant to select a system best suited to their needs. After software and hardware have been purchased, the GIS consultant can assist in setting up and implementing the system to meet the needs of the municipality. This can include training department personnel how to use the system, and providing support and troubleshooting services during and after implementation.

After the basic system structure has been configured, the GIS consultant, fire department personnel, or other individuals within the township can input data. In the case of the Bangor Community Fire Department, Chief Babcock assigned two individuals from within the department to the task.

“We set up appointments with all our businesses and schools to make sure the information we had on file was up-to-date,” Babcock said. “We asked them to complete a cover page with standard items like emergency contact information, alarm codes, and number of employees. That was followed by a facility walk-through to make sure it matched the floor plan we had on file. We took our findings, used a computer software program to draw the floor plan, and entered all of it into the GIS. The whole process took about six months.”

Information at your fingertips

After a system is implemented, information is easy to update. Fire department staff can take a tablet device along on inspections and input information during the visit. It eliminates the duplicative process of recording information on paper and entering the data into the system at a later time. Dropdown menus with routine information can be embedded into the system to reduce the amount of typing and to ensure consistent terminology no matter who is documenting the information.

GIS can also be an important way to monitor a municipality’s fire hydrant system. Records can be kept about when individual hydrants have been flushed and serviced. Information about damage and the overall condition of hydrants can be assigned to each location, making it a useful tool for planning maintenance schedules and long-range budget needs for capital replacement.

business solutions

Many communities have seen Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) grants become the catalyst for using GIS in other areas of their organization. SAW grants allow communities to inventory their stormwater and wastewater assets, assess the condition of them, and plan for future repair or replacement financially. The GIS software used to map and catalog stormwater and wastewater systems can be used for fire and public safety purposes. It becomes a logical next step in coordinating information and creating efficiencies throughout the municipality.

Larger fire departments throughout the state have been using GIS technology for many years, but now smaller departments, like Bangor, are beginning to adopt the technology and are seeing the benefits.

Up next for the Bangor Community Fire Department is tying their GIS pre-incident reports into the 9-1-1 system Van Buren County is currently upgrading. Once this happens, dispatchers will have access to Bangor's reports and can share that information with other responders called to emergencies. This integration step will also be the point when the Bangor Community Fire Department will have computerized access to the data in all of their trucks.

"Departments in rural areas similar to ours sometimes think they are too small to use a system like this," stated Babcock. "We find it to be a useful tool in being prepared for the next emergency and will see even more benefits when we are able to connect with the countywide 9-1-1 system."

Pre-incident planning integrated into GIS not only saves time and resources for municipalities of all sizes, but it can save critical moments as emergencies unfold—moments that can be used to protect property, save lives, and protect the safety of firefighters and other emergency responders.



Ryan Miller, GISP, GIS Manager
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All in the family

Serving as clerk is part of family legacy

Some families pass down recipes or antique furniture from one generation to the next. **Murry Stocking's** family passes down a commitment to township government.

For more than 100 years, a member of Stocking's family has held the office of **Sherman Township** (Newaygo Co.) clerk. Overseeing elections, maintaining township records and taking meeting minutes has been a family tradition since the 1880s.

Stocking, who has served as clerk since 1980, is proud to be part of such an unusual family legacy. One day, he hopes that his own son might continue the tradition, though he doesn't pressure him to do so.

"It's something to be a little proud of, that [residents] have trusted the family for so many years," Stocking said. "They trust what I'm doing, that I'm making the right decisions."

Stocking's first relative to hold the part-time office of clerk was **William Davis**, who was elected in 1884. He served until 1889, when he was elected supervisor. He eventually returned to the clerk's office in 1904 and kept the job until he was elected state representative in 1909. Then, his son-in-law, **Dexter Stocking**, was elected and served until his death in 1939. Dexter Stocking's wife, **Nellie Stocking**, was appointed in his place, and she continued to serve until she passed away in 1948.

When Nellie Stocking died, her son, **Murry Stocking Sr.**, took over. When his health forced him to retire in 1967, his wife, **Princess Stocking**, didn't want to see the family legacy end. She ran and took over the office that same year. Princess Stocking held the office for about 13 years until her son, Murry Stocking Jr., ran for clerk in her place.

His family legacy is part of what drew Stocking to the job. Growing up, he remembers seeing his parents sitting at the kitchen table, completing township paperwork. And when Election Day arrived, they sometimes put him to

work setting up voting booths. As a child, he even attended township meetings once in a while.

But he didn't plan on becoming clerk, at least at first. When Stocking graduated from college, he moved out of the community and lived in Grand Rapids, and then Grand Haven. Later, he moved back to the township area. His mother wanted to move out of her house because it was too big, so Stocking bought the family farm. And when she decided not to run for clerk again, Stocking decided to step in. He won his first election in 1980 and has carried on the family name in the clerk's office ever since. His mother died four years later in 1984, but got to see him continue the family legacy.

Being a clerk today is significantly different from the days when Stocking's parents served. His mother used to take down minutes in longhand, and the ledgers were still kept with pen and paper. Stocking used the traditional tools until he made the switch to a computer financial program. His family has also witnessed the change from old paper ballots to big voting machines with levers, to today's Optech Eagle voting system. Back in the paper ballot days, it wasn't unusual for Stocking to be at the township hall until 1 a.m. counting ballots on Election Day.

Stocking, who is also an assistant professor at Ferris State University, has often run unopposed for clerk. Other years, he faces opposition. Each time, though, township residents vote to keep the office in his family's hands.

He keeps serving not just because his mother would want him to, but because it's satisfying to help his community.

"When you get to do things for people and the township as a whole, it's rewarding," Stocking said.

aroundthe**state**

townships in the spotlight



Onekama Township

Onekama Township (Manistee Co.) has grown from a few settlers in 1867 to a community today of 2,500.

Known as the "Two Lake Town," it features the inland Portage Lake with a channel connecting to Lake Michigan. The inland lake was identified by the original surveyors as "O-nek-a-ma-engk" or "portage," which the Native Americans did when traversing between land and the lakes.

Much has happened in the area since 1867. The community is known for agricultural farms and produce, fishing, boating and other water sports, hunting, and a variety of other summer and winter activities. It has also grown to include several parks, churches, a school that features a full schedule of extra-curricular activities for all ages, restaurants, and small shops.

The township's biggest accomplishment recently includes a re-decorated township hall and fire hall. The new look includes landscaping, an irrigation system, exterior signage and bulletin board, exterior painting, and installation of a memorial and flags. Interior lighting and emergency power to the building have been updated, and an energy-efficient



heating system has been installed in both the fire hall and township hall. A new roof and surveillance cameras have been installed throughout the building. The former furnace room has been remodeled into a kitchenette. A new telephone system is in place and the digital storage of records has begun. Funds for the remodeling projects came from a designated building fund; the surveillance cameras were funded through a grant from the Michigan Township Participating Plan.

The township also recently purchased an Alexis International fire engine and a 2016 Ford Explorer Interceptor Emergency Medical Response Vehicle for the fire department.

A large group of community volunteers and several organizations are the backbone of the community for numerous projects, and are instrumental in fostering its progress and growth. Some of their activities include the Petunia Parade, Concerts in the Park, Onekama Days with a parade, fireworks and events, Scarecrow display along Main Street and Christmas in Onekama.

The township is looking to the future with anticipation of more progress and accomplishments.



Authored by Mary Lou Millard. Photos courtesy of (from the top left to bottom left) Peter Armstrong, Al Taylor, Dan O'Connor, Mike Lough and Clinton Osborn.

proposed policy platform

As adopted by delegates at MTA's Annual Meeting, Jan. 22, 2016, at the Marriott Renaissance Center in Detroit, these proposed policies will become the platform from which legislation is sought in the coming year.

Purpose

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

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

The Policy Platform delineates issues into six broad issue areas:

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

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

MTA Annual Meeting Deliberation and Adoption Process

Member officials are strongly encouraged to review the Policy Platform prior to the MTA Annual Meeting and, if they have questions regarding the purpose or intent of any of the specific policy objectives, to attend the *MTA Policy Review Session* on Thursday, Jan. 21 from 1:30 to 2:45 p.m.

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

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

Amendments can take one of three forms:

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

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

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

The motion to "lay on the table" enables the Annual Meeting to lay the pending question aside temporarily, when something else of immediate urgency has arisen. It is

proposed policy platform

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

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

Special Rules. The Board of Directors submits to the Annual Meeting the following special rules, pursuant to *Robert's Rules of Order (RONR (11th ed.))*, section 2, pages 15-17, which were included in the official Annual Meeting notice sent to all members, and were also published in the January/February 2016 issue of the *Michigan Township Focus*, to provide prior notice that these special rules would be submitted for approval:

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

Policy Platform Resolution

The Board of Directors submits to the MTA Annual Meeting the following resolution to adopt the Association's legislative policy objectives for 2016:

Be it resolved, that the membership of the Michigan Townships Association supports the Association's efforts to achieve the following legislative policy objectives:

Assessment and Taxation

Taxation is the means by which governments at all levels are provided financial resources to perform functions and provide services necessary for the general well-being of society. The Michigan Townships Association supports taxation policies that are fair, equitable and efficiently administered. As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current tax laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. Maintaining property tax assessment and administration at the local level to ensure accountability, public trust and locally accessible information and assistance
2. Careful consideration and concern for revenue impacts and administrative burdens to townships and other local governments, and the greater burden placed on other taxpayers resulting from broadening tax exemptions
3. Tax appeal decisions consistent with the principles of assessment administration required of assessors by the manuals and directives promulgated by the State Tax Commission, and with which compliance is required of local assessors as a condition of maintaining state certification
4. Assessor certification and continuing education classes are available at sufficient locations such that excessive distances do not create a barrier to enrollment, participation and successful class completion, with course content focused on developing and maintaining effective assessing skills
5. State financial and technical support to local entities engaged in expensive tax appeals
6. Greater clarity of roles and responsibilities of assessors and township boards for compliance with State Tax Commission requirements
7. Eliminating unnecessary redundancy of collecting taxes twice each year
8. Increasing tax limitations for charter townships from 10 to 12 mills
9. Increasing the specific tax on mobile homes located in licensed parks
10. Exempting minimal personal property tax obligations resulting from minor property improvements on mobile home lots such as small decks, stairs and porches
11. Property values based on the highest and best use of the property and recognition that such highest and best use may result in a value based upon the continuation of an existing use of the property

Elections

Democracy requires transparent and efficient elections with high voter participation while maintaining election integrity. Township clerks administering elections can best accomplish these objectives. Given the wide disparities in resources and population densities among local governments, a “one-size-fits-all” approach is often not good public policy. As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current election laws, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. Protect local control of election administration
2. Encourage voter participation by authorizing “no reason” absentee ballots
3. Standardized absent voter ballot application forms
4. Ability to register to vote online with digital signatures through the Secretary of State website
5. Embrace the use of emerging technology to administer elections while considering the needs and limitations of all jurisdictions
6. Term limits lengthened, or repealed
7. Pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds at Secretary of State offices
8. Make voter registration process uniform and allow local clerks with access to the Qualified Voter File to register any voter regardless of their jurisdiction of residence
9. Permit a person who registers by mail and wishes to vote by absentee ballot to present valid identification to satisfy the picture identification requirement of a first-time voter at any clerk’s office

Environment and Land Use

The activities of township governments impact Michigan’s environmental quality, and state laws and regulations regarding environmental protection impact township government programs, services and policies. The Michigan Townships Association advocates for environmental laws and practices that appropriately support the responsibility of townships to efficiently and effectively perform their duties to protect the public health, safety and general welfare. As lawmakers and regulatory agencies enact changes to current environment laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. The definition of Waters of the United States, subject to permitting processes of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, should not be extended to non-navigable waters such as roadside ditches, field drainage systems, and culvert installation and maintenance
2. Federal and state laws and regulations should not be intended to impede the growth and development policies and objectives of local governments
3. Statewide septic system maintenance standards to reduce septic system failures that create serious public health threats and expose townships to being required to build expensive public sewer systems

4. Land use planning and zoning decisions remain a local government responsibility
5. Expansion of solid waste recycling programs
6. Any newly instituted statewide landfill tipping fees be fairly and equitably distributed to all local units of government
7. Greater authority for local governments to prevent the spread of invasive species of plants and animals
8. State responsibility for mitigating effects of preempted land uses
9. The imposition of local impact fees on oil and gas exploration and extraction
10. Restore township zoning authority to regulate oil and gas wells in residential areas

Intergovernmental Relations

Successfully solving many of Michigan’s greatest challenges, such as restoration of greater prosperity to the Michigan economy and providing effective and economical governmental programs and services, requires governments at all levels to work collaboratively toward a common mission. As lawmakers and regulatory agencies enact changes to current laws and local government requirements impacting intergovernmental relations, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. State laws should apply to townships in the same manner as they do other local government entities
2. Level playing fields and win-win outcomes in resolving intergovernmental conflicts
3. Flexible laws and regulations that promote local government creativity and locally appropriate solutions consistent with statewide objectives
4. Regional collaborations and initiatives that provide meaningful input by township officials to achieve outcomes that appropriately balance regional public policy objectives and local concerns
5. Joint service agreements among local governments providing fair and equitable sharing of costs, benefits and governance; long-term stability and predictability; and effective and fair problem resolution mechanisms
6. Boundary protection for townships that provide all essential local government services; discouraging boundary adjustments that are merely tax base grabs; and imposing appropriate standards for county board decisions related to expansion of village boundaries
7. A standard local government consolidation process applicable to all local government entities that continues to require voter approval of any consolidation; and state funding for independent consolidation impact studies as a prerequisite for county boards or the State Boundary Commission to order a consolidation vote among local governments
8. Equitable treatment for all local units of government for statutory revenue sharing and grants

proposed policy platform

9. Full funding for payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, commercial forest act and the swamp tax program to compensate townships for property owned by the State of Michigan
10. Funding for local government programs should not be negatively impacted or reduced due to the redirection of state General Fund dollars for increased funding for roads

Township Operations

State and federal governments should give Michigan townships broad discretion and autonomy to govern the delivery of programs and services. The Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. Township authority to decide how local government services will be funded from currently authorized revenue sources
2. Improving the ability of townships to recover the costs of providing emergency services
3. Prohibiting the imposition of mandates on local governments that increase the costs of services
4. State funding to townships providing public safety protection to state-owned, tax-exempt properties
5. Publishing public notices on websites in lieu of newspaper printing

Transportation

As the state increases funding for roads, township officials want lawmakers to include them as participating partners in providing transportation solutions. Without statutory responsibility, Michigan townships contribute more than \$186 million per year for road maintenance and construction. This partner role should include decisions affecting transportation costs and priorities, and institute efficiencies to stretch scarce transportation funding. As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current transportation laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

1. Regulations to prevent road damage and protect the public safety from vehicles that are not required to be licensed or plated as well as other equipment that use public roads
2. Requiring road agencies to comply with a township's Complete Streets Policy resolution
3. Support mass transit in urbanized areas
4. Creating a bid process for the sale of timber located on property managed by the Michigan Department of Transportation or located in Michigan Department of Transportation rights-of-way to fund road and bridge maintenance

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