

# Township Focus

JUNE 2024

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

## Meet 2024 MTA President Connie Cargill

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## Remembering the sacrifices benefiting us today

To our veterans and their families, we are deeply grateful for their sacrifices and suffering endured to protect the freedoms many today take for granted. As I write this, we will shortly mark Memorial Day and your 2024 MTA delegation has just returned from Washington, D.C. and the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) annual fly-in conference. Coupled with the conference, we had numerous meetings with our Michigan congressional representatives and their legislative staff to discuss policy issues on behalf of township government.

The somber, strong beauty of the World War II memorial pictured above is rightly positioned between Capitol Hill and the Lincoln Memorial, and near the Vietnam and Korean War Memorials. It has always been the most meaningful memorial to me because my father fought in the Pacific and my Uncle Neil in Europe. All our military veterans, including those serving today in Congress, made it possible to have a federal government in which citizens like the 100 local officials attending the fly-in can be recognized and heard on the public policy choices impacting our communities.

I thank **MTA President Connie Cargill** for preparing and leading our Michigan team through 12 meetings at Congress and with the administration. We stressed several priorities in our meetings and asked the congressional delegation to:

- Support reducing the definition of “rural” to be no more than 20,000 residents, making our communities much more competitive for rural surface transportation grants and other funding opportunities. The current definition includes communities up to 200,000 residents! H.R. 5437 would also eliminate the \$25 million minimum project size—opening more local projects for federal funding consideration.
- Oppose H.R. 471 that would increase truck weights—causing further damage to our crumbling roads and bridges (*which was removed from the Farm Bill just prior to press time*).
- Oppose the new U.S. Department of Labor expansion of overtime eligibility for salaried employees, which threatens township budgets and program feasibility—effective in two phases: July 1, 2024, and Jan. 1, 2025.

- Support continuation of programs boosting broadband internet buildout and affordability.
- Support Farm Bill provisions promoting rural economic development, changing some loan programs to grants, reducing or eliminating local cost share requirements on some programs, helping townships apply for programs, and permanent reauthorization of the Reconnect Loan and Grant program (for broadband projects).
- Support making qualified volunteer first responders eligible for federal housing assistance programs.
- Support the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act (H.R. 3032 and S.R. 3020), which raises the volunteer mileage reimbursement rate to 65.5 cents per mile, matching the rate businesses can expense.

Congress, like our state Legislature and your own township board, hears from many voices—often conflicting—over the course of a year. Our underlying intent was to remind Michigan’s congressional leaders that their district residents are ours, too. The actions we ask them to take in our Hill meetings, on visits by our NATaT lobbyists, and by your own outreach are important to their neighbors—the people who vote for them. A flood of corporate influence effort flows through the halls of Congress. While we can’t match their dollars (or their \$2,000 shoes), we speak with the authenticity of the people back home rather than those inhabiting the K Street lobby firms.

As president of NATaT this year, I shared in my conference remarks that participants would learn from our briefing sessions, apply that knowledge in our Hill meetings, and take it home to share with their townships and residents. But you don’t have to go to D.C. to learn. At [www.natat.org](http://www.natat.org), you’ll find status reports on pending issues, background information, our federal policy platform and more. Your own U.S. representative and senator are often in their home districts and also have district staff who will take your positions and input to their D.C. legislative team.

Thank a veteran today, and then speak up with the voice they have helped protect for you.



Neil

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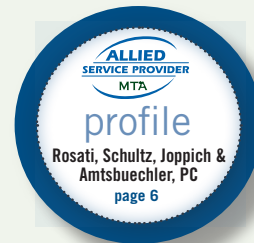
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## mission statement

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



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## featured articles

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### Meet Connie Cargill, 2024 MTA president

Long-time **Golden Township** (Oceana Co.) Treasurer **Connie Cargill**, who has served on the MTA Board since 2012, has been elected 2024 MTA president. Learn more about Cargill's dedication to public service, and her hopes for MTA and townships over the next year and into the future.

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### 'What an honor'—Kersten receives inaugural 'Spirit of MTA' award

**Chesterfield Charter Township** (Macomb Co.) Supervisor **Brad Kersten** is the inaugural recipient of the "Spirit of MTA" award, which was created to recognize the exemplary efforts of local leaders in serving and advancing their township—as the Association has done for more than 70 years.

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### Delta Charter Township is a 'Township of Excellence'

A commitment to quality governance and a spirit of service to their residents and community has led **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) to strive for and be recognized as a "Township of Excellence" for an incredible third time.



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## 2024 Annual Conference & Expo recap

Turn to pages 22-35 for complete MTA 2024 coverage, including the adopted legislative policy platform, a keynote address excerpt, photos and more!

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## MAKE THE MOVE

### Townships can receive LCSA payments electronically



Townships are reminded that they can receive their Local Community Stabilization Authority (LCSA) Act payments electronically.

The LCSA levies the local community stabilization share tax and distributes the revenue generated to local governments for local purposes, including police, fire and ambulance emergency services. The LCSA also

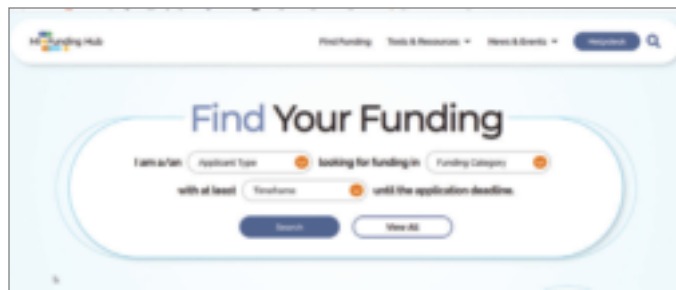
collects annual maintenance fees for use of public rights-of-ways from telecommunications providers, and distributes the fees to Michigan municipalities under the Metropolitan Extension Telecommunications Rights-of-Way Oversight (METRO) Act. To ensure local units of government are receiving state reimbursements, the LCSA is partnering with the Michigan Municipal Services Authority and Plante Moran to move local governments to electronic payments.

The LCSA issues thousands of checks each year to local governments and a number of these remain uncashed.

Issuing physical checks means a greater chance of those funds being lost, and while the LCSA works with local units to locate and/or reissue them, this can take months. The electronic payment outreach program's goal is to ensure local units of government receive payments either through automated clearing house (ACH) payments or through a Michigan CLASS participant-to-participant transfer. Allowing your township's funds to be deposited immediately following initiation of LCSA distribution eliminates any delays and potential fraudulent activity associated with physical mailing.

If you would like to convert to electronic payment for your township, email [electronicpayment@lcsami.gov](mailto:electronicpayment@lcsami.gov) to get started. For more information, email [ceo@michiganmsa.org](mailto:ceo@michiganmsa.org) or visit [www.localcommunitystabilizationauthoritymi.gov/](http://www.localcommunitystabilizationauthoritymi.gov/).

Note that a township shall not be a party to an ACH arrangement unless the township board has adopted a resolution to authorize electronic transactions and the township treasurer has presented a written ACH policy developed and adopted by the treasurer to the township board. A sample resolution and policy are available on MTA's "Automated Clearing House (ACH) Arrangements & Electronic Funds Transactions" webpage in the "Answer Center" on [www.michigantownships.org](http://www.michigantownships.org) (login is required) or by calling our Member Information Services Department at (517) 321-6467 (press 1).



## FIND FUNDING

### MI Funding Hub makes grant-searching easier

MI Funding Hub is a new initiative that can help your township apply for and track grant opportunities. This online tool—<https://mifundinghub.org>—can help you better find state and federal grants that align with your township's needs. The platform allows you to search by applicant type, funding category—from broadband to facilities, environmental remediation to public safety—and timeframe to allow you to plan for your application. Additional resources include "Funding FAQs" and a "Grants Glossary," among other tools. The website also offers informational newsletters, webinars and free technical assistance for communities to assess, plan for and apply for grants.

## REVISED VERSION

### Revised *Uniform Budget Manual* released

A revised *Uniform Budget Manual for Local Units of Government* has been released by the state Department of Treasury. This important manual is a key resource for township leaders and staff, as well as auditors and accountants, in applying legal requirements and establishing a sound budgeting process.



Recommended practices to enhance the budgeting process are also included in the manual. The revised manual is effective for fiscal years beginning July 1, 2024, and after. Earlier this year, MTA submitted comments during a public comment period on the exposure draft of the manual. Following the public comment period, changes were made accordingly.

Access the new manual—and additional resources—on MTA's "Finances" or "Budgeting" webpages in the "Answer Center" on [www.michigantownships.org](http://www.michigantownships.org) (login is required) or visit [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury). Submit questions about the revised manual to [LAFD\\_Audits@michigan.gov](mailto:LAFD_Audits@michigan.gov) or to Michigan Department of Treasury, Local Audit and Finance Division, P.O. Box 30728, Lansing, MI 48909-8228.

SAFE AND SECURE

## Townships can request a free .gov domain

There are advantages to moving your township website and email accounts to a .gov domain name, and townships can now request a free .gov domain name at a new federal website, <https://get.gov>. Using a .gov domain name is recommended by both the federal Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Agency (CISA) and the State of Michigan for a variety of security reasons, including, as noted on [get.gov](https://get.gov):

- .Gov domains are only available to U.S.-based government organizations—helping to reduce uncertainty among your residents and others that they are on your township’s official website or receiving official township emails.
- CISA manages the .gov top-level domain, verifying the identity of everyone who requests a .gov domain, and ensuring their organization meets the .gov domain criteria.
- .Gov domains help ensure a trusted space for access to public services and information, as well as security best practices and continuous improvements on how the .gov namespace is secured.

Requesters must be a government employee, or working on behalf of a government organization, to request a .gov domain, and must have a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account. The new [get.gov](https://get.gov) also shares more information and resources about the benefits, requirements, tips for moving to a .gov domain, and more.

Visit <https://michigantownships.org/dotgov> for step-by-step instructions on securing a .gov domain.

## Milestone

Thomas Bradley has served as trustee for **Elba Township** (Gratiot Co.) for 55 years. As a child, Bradley witnessed in his own home the value of township government and public service—his grandfather and uncle both served as township supervisor and his father was a township trustee. Upon returning from a teaching in Ecuador as part of the Peace Corps, Bradley took over the family farm—and became a part of the family tradition of serving as a township official. “It was instilled in us that we have an obligation to help other people,” he said. “It’s the feeling that you know all the people you are serving, and that you owe your neighbors.”



Bradley

Bradley was recently honored at a meeting of the Gratiot County MTA Chapter with a certificate from MTA, and proclamations from the county and Rep. Graham Filler (R-St. Johns). In addition to his service on the township board, Bradley also was a member of the Gratiot County Zoning Board of Appeals for more than 40 years, including as its chair.

Congratulations, and thank you, to Trustee Bradley for his years of service and commitment to his community!

*Help MTA honor officials and personnel in your township! Send your milestones, retirements and memoriams to [jenn@michigantownships.org](mailto:jenn@michigantownships.org).*

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## Bennett honored for 2023 MTA presidency

2023 MTA President **Pauline Bennett** was presented with a President’s Resolution at the Association’s Annual Meeting, held April 25 during MTA’s Annual Conference & Expo at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.). The resolution, presented by 2023 MTA Second Vice President **Harold Koviak** (pictured at right) read:



**LET IT BE KNOWN** that it is an honor for the Michigan Townships Association to acknowledge with admiration, respect and appreciation the leadership of Pauline Bennett, as her term as 2023 Association president comes to an end.

Throughout her years as a dedicated public leader serving as **Addison Township** (Oakland Co.) clerk, Bennett remains passionate about and committed to what she calls the best form of government: township government. She channeled that dedication into her time at the helm of the Association, calling on all townships to work as “One Team” to safeguard and advance the government closest to the people. She urged township leaders to work together to protect local authority and townships’ ability to govern and serve their residents and community as they best see fit. Recognizing the unique nature of every township, Bennett sought to honor and maintain the individuality of Michigan’s 1,240 townships by fighting to retain local authority from legislative threat.

A certified municipal clerk, Bennett recognizes the continual changes and challenges facing local leaders—while also encouraging and reminding them of their critical importance and value in serving their residents. She finds inspiration in those who work to better their communities, and calls those with whom she has served throughout her township career her heroes. As a leader in her community, region and in the Association, Bennett is dedicated to listening to her residents, fellow officials and all MTA members, and working as “One Team” for a better Michigan.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Michigan Townships Association offers its sincere gratitude to Pauline Bennett for her tireless efforts to advance the Association’s goals and mission during her term as president. May she always be aware of the admiration of those with whom she has served, as well as their sincere wishes for her continued success.

Thank you for your leadership this past year, Pauline! Turn to pages 22-35 for more on the Annual Conference.

## profile



### Rosati, Schultz, Joppich & Amtsbuechler, PC

#### Twenty-six municipal attorneys at your fingertips

All Michigan townships—no matter the size—face increasingly complicated legal requirements and challenges in a rapidly changing world. These days, it is incredibly easy for township boards, officials and employees to unintentionally find themselves in legal hot water, if they’re not careful.

Recognizing this, Rosati, Schultz, Joppich & Amtsbuechler, PC (RSJA) has assembled a team of 26 municipal law specialists to assist townships and their officials avoid and, if necessary, navigate through any such legal challenges whenever and however they might arise. Every attorney at RSJA has proudly dedicated their career entirely to the cause of serving the public and public officials through the practice of municipal law. And through their Farmington Hills and Lansing offices, RSJA provides attorneys across the state with deep knowledge and experience in essentially every area of municipal law.

As a result, all RSJA municipal clients, large and small, benefit from what amounts to a fully staffed, full-time municipal law department at their disposal. Each RSJA client has a primary attorney of its choosing on call 24/7/365 to help address day-to-day questions, advise the township board and administration, and attend meetings. Should specific legal issues arise in specialized areas or in the unfortunate event of a lawsuit, that lead attorney can immediately tap the considerable legal resources and specialties made available by the over two dozen other seasoned municipal attorneys in the firm, all of whom are here to assist in the defense of your township and resolution of its legal issues, whenever they may be needed.

“They have a wealth of knowledge,” said **Mark St. Charles**, **Green Oak Charter Township** (Livingston Co.) supervisor. “It’s like one-stop shopping. If I need a labor attorney, they have one. If I need a land use attorney, they have one. If I need someone for the Michigan Supreme Court, they have one. The whole firm is a very balanced, professional and knowledgeable group of attorneys.”

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Advertorial



## 2024 MTA Executive Committee

The following members will serve as the Executive Committee of the MTA Board for 2024

### Connie Cargill, President

Treasurer, Golden Township (Oceana Co.)

"Just as I am honored to serve my community, I am honored to serve as 2024 president of this great association. Every township is unique, and yet we are all united in our dedication to our communities, and working together, we make a difference in this state."



### Harold Koviak, First Vice President

Supervisor, Burt Township (Cheboygan Co.)

"Public service is an honor. It is my privilege to represent township officials throughout the state as MTA first vice president."



### Kevin Beeson, Second Vice President

Supervisor, Pine River Township (Griot Co.)

"I'm excited to continue to help lead this important organization, working with friends and colleagues from around the state."



### Malinda Cole-Crocker, Treasurer

Supervisor, Buchanan Chtr. Township (Berrien Co.)

"My role in MTA teaches me to be a stronger leader and advocate for township government."



### Marvin Radtke Jr., Secretary

Supervisor, Green Lake Township (Grand Traverse Co.)

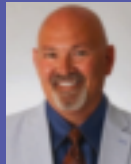
"An interest in continuing well-planned social and economic sustenance and development for the community, region and state is one of my goals."



### Glenn Rowley, Member-at-large

Supervisor, Bangor Charter Township (Bay Co.)

"I will effectively share the message of embracing and maximizing the importance of township representation in government."



### Pauline Bennett,

### Immediate Past President

Clerk, Addison Township (Oakland Co.)

"I am honored to continue to serve, and stand with, Michigan's townships in a leadership role on the MTA Board. I am committed to continuing the ongoing fight for local authority at the township level."



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Member township officials can download an annual *Michigan Township Officials Directory* for free now! This is the perfect tool when looking to contact or network with your fellow township officials—putting names and numbers at your fingertips. The directory includes a township listing (by county), as well as a separate listing for individual township officials. MTA members and Allied Service Providers can download a free PDF of the directory on the "Find a Township Official" page on the members side of [www.michigantownships.org](http://www.michigantownships.org) (login is required; look under the "Member" tab).



The most up-to-date contact information is available on our "Find a Township" webpage available on MTA's home page, or the "Find a Township Official" look-up. Help newly elected or appointed officials, as well as staff, in your township get the most of your township's MTA membership! Keep us updated on any changes to your township team or in contact information by sending updates to [database@michigantownships.org](mailto:database@michigantownships.org).

## mta events | june

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 5  | Blight Buster <i>Now You Know</i> lunchtime webinar            |
| 17 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> workshop, Kalamazoo   |
| 18 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> workshop, White Cloud |
| 19 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> workshop, Frankenmuth |
| 25 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> workshop, Marquette   |
| 26 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> virtual workshop      |
| 27 | <i>Elections Prep: Beyond the Bureau</i> workshop, Gaylord     |

MTA's lunchtime learning series, *Now You Know*, offers timely updates, insights from our experts and a chance to get your questions answered—all in just one hour! Don't miss our upcoming episode on **Wednesday, June 5 at noon**.

### Blight Buster

Many communities are plagued by blight. It can impact every township, regardless of size or geographic location. Like any problem left unaddressed, it will grow and spread. Wondering where to begin? Start by spending your lunch hour with MTA Legal Counsel Seth Koches, from Bauckham, Thall, Seeber, Kaufman & Koches, PC, and learn blight-busting strategies that can work for any size township.



Register at <https://bit.ly/NYKmta> for just \$25 per session! MTA Online subscribers at the Premium level get FREE access to EVERY session! For details, and a listing of past episodes available on demand, visit <https://learn.michigantownships.org/nyk>.

### JUNE

**1** Deadline for filing Form 2368 *Principal Residence Exemption (PRE)* affidavit for exemption from 18-mill school operating tax to qualify for a PRE for summer tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(2))

Deadline for filing the initial request of a *Conditional Rescission of PRE* (Form 4640) for summer tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

Deadline for filing Form 4983 *Foreclosure Entity Conditional Rescission of a PRE* (Form 4983) to qualify for summer tax levy. (MCL 211.77cc(5))

Assessment roll due to county treasurer if local unit is not collecting summer taxes. (MCL 211.905b(6)(a))

**3** *Not later than June 1. June 1 is a Saturday.* Requests due from a tax increment finance, local development financing or downtown development authority for state reimbursements of tax increment revenue decreases as a result of the Michigan Business Tax (MBT) reduction in personal property taxes. (Form 4650; MCLs 125.4312b(2), 125.4411b(2), 125.4213c(2))

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

**7** Deadline for assessors to report 2023 and 2024 taxable values for each renaissance zone on 2024 *Renaissance Zone Tax Reimbursement Data* (Form 3369). (MCL 125.2692)

Deadline for townships to establish, move or abolish a polling place for Aug. 6 election. Beginning of period during which township board

or board of county election commissioners may not establish, move or abolish a polling place, early voting site or central polling place, unless damaged, destroyed or rendered inaccessible or unusable. (MCL 168.662)

Clerk must inform applicable county clerk that absent voter (AV) counting board has been authorized by local board of election commissioners for Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.764d)

Location of each early voting site for Aug. 6 election must be finalized. (MCL 168.720j)

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

**17** *Not later than June 15. June 15 is a Saturday.* Requests due from a brownfield redevelopment authority for state reimbursements of tax increment revenue decreases as a result of MBT reduction in personal property taxes. (MCL 125.2665a(2))

Deadline for tax increment finance (TIF) authorities to file TIF loss reimbursement claims Form 5176 *Request for State Reimbursement of Tax Reimbursement of Tax Increment Finance Authority Personal Property TIF loss for NON-Brownfield Authorities*, Form 5176BR *Request for State Reimbursement of Tax Increment Finance Authority Personal Property TIF Loss for Brownfield Authorities*, or Form 5176ICV *Tax Increment Financing Personal Property Loss Reimbursement for Authorities with Increased Captured Value Loss*. (MCL 123.1356a(3))

Deadline to submit Water Pollution Control PA 451 of 1994 Part 37 (MCL 324.3702 and R 209.76) and Air

Pollution Control PA 451 of 1994 Part 59 (MCL 324.5902 and R 209.81) tax exemption applications to State Tax Commission (STC).

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

**22** Beginning of period during which clerk must make reasonable effort to verify or reject AV ballot application or return envelope for Aug. 6 election by end of business day after application or envelope is received. (MCL 168.766b)

County clerk must provide municipal clerk or early voting site coordinator with programming for electronic voting equipment to be used at early voting site for Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.720j)

Deadline for clerks to electronically transmit or mail (as requested) an AV ballot to each absent uniformed services or overseas voter who applied for an AV ballot 45 days or more before Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.759a, Mich. Const., Art II, Sec 4)

Deadline for county clerks to deliver AV ballots for Aug. 6 election to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

Notice of polling place or early voting site must be provided for sites newly established or changed by 60 days before Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.662)

**27** Beginning of period secure AV drop boxes must be accessible 24 hours each day (until 8 p.m. on Election Day). (Mich. Const., Art II, Sec 4)

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

### JULY

**1** Taxes due and payable in those jurisdictions authorized to levy a summer tax. (MCL 211.44a(3) and (4))

**2** *First Tuesday in July.* Deadline for governmental agencies to exercise the right of refusal for 2024 tax foreclosure proposals. (MCL 211.78m(1))

Beginning of period of required daily collection of election materials for the Aug. 6 election from AV drop boxes on each day clerk's office is open. (MCL 168.761d)

**7** Early voting for Aug. 6 election may begin. (MCL 168.720e)

**8** Clerk shall post and enter into Qualified Voter File (QVF) the hours the clerk's office will be open on the Saturday or Sunday or both immediately before Aug. 6 election, and any additional hours, to issue and receive AV ballots. (MCL 168.761b)

Notice of days and hours of voter registration at the clerk's office for Aug. 6 must be published in the newspaper. If considered advisable by the clerk, notice may also be posted in at least two conspicuous places in each precinct. Notice must include offices and proposals that will be on the ballot. (MCL 168.498)

**9** Clerks intending to process or tabulate AV ballots before Aug. 6 election must submit written notice to secretary of state. (MCL 168.765a)

**16** *Tuesday after the third Monday in July.* July board of review may be convened. (MCL 211.53b) The township board may authorize, by adoption of an ordinance or resolution, an alternative meeting date during the week of the third Monday in July. (MCL 211.53b(9)(b))

Deadline for notice of early voting site for Aug. 6 election to be provided when temporary changes needed to early voting site. (MCL 168.662)

Precinct inspectors for Aug. 6 election must be appointed by this date by the local election commission. (MCL 168.674)

**18** *By 4 p.m.* Deadline for candidates without political party affiliation seeking partisan offices to file qualifying petition and Affidavit of Identity for Nov. 5 general election. Withdrawal deadline elapses at 4 p.m. on July 22. (MCL 168.590c)

**19** Deadline to post notice on website (if available) and in clerk's office of the location, dates, hours and number of election inspectors

for AV counting place if processing and tabulating AV ballots before Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.765a)

**22** Deadline for public logic and accuracy test to be conducted by applicable election commission. Notice must be published at least 48 hours before the test. (MCL 168.768)

Last day to register by mail or online to be eligible to vote in Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.497)

**23** *through Aug. 6.* In-person registration with local clerk with proof of residency for Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.497)

**25** Candidates or ballot questions not participating in an election in the calendar year to submit July campaign statement by 5 p.m. (MCL 169.233)

**26** Candidates or ballot questions seeking nomination or election at Aug. 6 election submit pre-election campaign statement by 5 p.m. (MCL 169.233)

Challenges against qualifying petitions filed by candidates without political party affiliation to be submitted to filing official. (MCL 168.552)

*By 5 p.m.* Deadline for electors to submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new AV ballot by mail for Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.765b(1))

Electors who have returned their absent voter ballot may submit a written request in person until 5 p.m. to spoil their ballot and receive a new AV ballot by mail. (MCL 168.765b(3))

Write-in candidates' declaration of intent form due to respective filing official by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.737a)

**27** Begin mandatory period of early voting for Aug. 6 election. (Mich. Const., Art. 2, Sec. 4)

Deadline for county clerks to deliver remainder of ballots and election supplies for Aug. 6 election to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

**29** Townships with a population of at least 5,000 may begin processing and tabulating AV ballots for Aug. 6 election. (MCL 168.765a)

**30** Petitions to place local ballot question on Nov. 5 ballot to be filed with the applicable clerk due. (MCL 168.646a)

Deadline to publish notice of Aug. 6 election. One notice required. (MCL 168.653a)

**31** Form 170-CFT *Commercial Facilities Tax Report*, Form 170-CRA *Commercial Rehabilitation Act Tax Report*, Form 170-OPRA *Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act Tax Report* and Form 170-IFT *Industrial Facilities Tax Report* must be filed with the state Treasury Property Services Division on or before July 31 of the tax year involved.



**63**  
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## What are the clerk's statutory requirements regarding cemetery management?

A township clerk has no specific statutory responsibility or authority regarding management of township cemeteries. There is a common misunderstanding that a township clerk is responsible for the cemeteries. This mistake in understanding is not unfounded. Years ago, the township board served as the local board of health, and the township clerk served as the clerk of the local board of health and had special responsibilities over cemetery management. The township local board of health was eliminated by law in 1978. However, many clerks have continued their role regarding management of township cemeteries.

While a clerk has no specific statutory responsibility for management of township cemeteries, there are some general statutory responsibilities of a clerk that would impact cemetery management, including maintenance and custody of township records and preparation of financial information (i.e., maintains general ledger, prepares warrants for township checks, and prepares financial statements). These general duties do not require the clerk to create cemetery records or otherwise manage any specific aspect of township cemeteries, but instead only require the clerk to be given the cemetery records and other information to secure their custody and prepare and maintain detailed accounting records.



## Can the clerk receive extra compensation for township cemetery management?

Yes. To the extent that a township board assigns to the clerk certain non-statutory duties for management of township cemeteries and the clerk accepts such extra duties, the clerk may receive extra compensation as determined by the township board. Additional compensation for extra duties performed by township board members is allowed pursuant to MCL 41.96.

To prevent future issues, the township board should be quite specific with regard to the cemetery management duties being accepted by the clerk and the amount of compensation for such services. Further, the township board should make it clear that the clerk is providing these additional duties in their position of township clerk and not as a separate employment position. Finally, it should be noted that in townships with a population over 40,000, these extra duties could create an incompatibility of offices pursuant to Public Act 566 of 1978, as amended.



## Can a township board refuse to allow winter burials?

No. MCL 333.2852, part of the Public Health Code, provides that: "When weather conditions prevent immediate interment of a dead body and storage is necessary, the individual in charge of a cemetery shall obtain written authorization for delayed interment signed by the next of kin or authorized agent. The authorization shall specify the approximate hour and date of interment and place of temporary storage. The storage is not considered interment and a disinterment and reinterment permit is not required."

If the township does not obtain written authorization for delayed interment, the township would be in violation of the Public Health Code by refusing to allow winter burial.

While the township may not be able to delay winter interment if written authorization cannot be obtained, the township can certainly set a different fee for opening and closing graves in the winter. This fee could be substantially more than the charge to open and close graves at other times, due to the increased cost and reasonable concerns in performing winter burials (i.e., frozen ground, difficulty in locating graves, snowplowing access, required heavy equipment and liability hazards). This fee should cover the township's actual costs.



## Should our board adopt a cemetery ordinance instead of our current cemetery rules and regulations, which were adopted by board resolution?

Yes. While a township is not required to have a cemetery ordinance, it is strongly suggested that a township have one to regulate its cemeteries. The most effective way to enforce cemetery rules and regulations is for those rules and regulations to be contained in a township ordinance. In general, rules and regulations adopted by resolution of the township board are unenforceable against the general public. Such rules and regulations could possibly be enforceable as a contract right with parties who have purchased burial rights if such burial rights have language subjecting the purchaser to the township cemetery rules and regulations.

On the other hand, a cemetery ordinance would give the township legal recourse against anyone for violations of the ordinance terms. A violation of the township ordinance can be a municipal civil infraction (fine) or misdemeanor (fine and/or jail) and can also allow the township to abate a violation by court order.



## How do we take back purchased burial spaces that remain vacant for a certain period of time?

How to handle forfeiture of vacant burial spaces can be a difficult issue. The intent of a forfeiture provision is to prevent an all-too-often occurrence where there are a large number of vacant purchased burial spaces that will remain vacant for various reasons unknown to the township (i.e., person buried elsewhere; family unaware of parents' purchase; cremated and not buried, etc.). The number of remaining burial spaces for sale in a cemetery is almost always an issue. There is a natural conflict between the township's desire to reclaim vacant burial spaces and the potential for reclaiming burial spaces that someone still intends to use.

To consider this issue, it must be understood that when the township issues someone a burial rights certificate for a burial space, a contractual relationship is created between the township and the purchaser. The burial rights certificate creates the terms of the contract and may subject the purchaser to present and future cemetery regulations. If the burial rights certificate subjected the contract holder to future rules and regulations of the township, then the township could add vacant burial space forfeiture provisions to a cemetery ordinance and subject the purchaser to such terms. Otherwise, if vacant burial space forfeiture provisions were added to the ordinance, then the provisions would only be applicable to those burial rights certificates issued after the amendment.

A township can be fairly creative in designing a forfeiture provision for its cemetery ordinance that meets the township's need to reclaim unused burial spaces while recognizing that burial spaces may not be used for many years after purchase. In drafting the forfeiture provision, at least 40 years of vacancy is suggested prior to beginning the forfeiture process. The forfeiture process should be intended to attempt to notify the present owners of the burial rights certificates of the township's desire to forfeit their burial rights certificate and take back the space. This would normally involve an ordinance requirement that the purchaser provide a mailing address and have a continuing obligation to keep the township aware of any mailing address changes. The township could then send notice to the last known address and if there was no response by the owner that they still intended to use the burial space, then the township would forfeit the burial rights certificate and take back the space.

Since unused burial spaces are a big problem in cemetery management, it is strongly recommend some type of forfeiture provision in your cemetery ordinance.

*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 (press 1) or fax (517) 321-8908.



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# The township audit, the MD&A and your role in ensuring transparency

Reading and understanding a township audit can be overwhelming and confusing. Although the audit is mandated by the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act (Public Act 2 of 1968, MCL 141.421 *et seq.*), board members often miss the opportunity to leverage the value of this document in effectively managing their township. The better you understand the elements and information within the audit, the more effectively you can use it to ensure financial transparency, make informed decisions, and uphold your fiduciary responsibilities to your community.

Local government audits help to ensure accurate and complete financial statements and compliance with laws and regulations, like the state chart of accounts and federal grants. Although not a primary goal, audits can reveal potential fraud, asset misuse or weak internal controls. Additionally, audits help increase transparency and foster public trust by allowing citizens, investors and other stakeholders to review and better understand the township's financial management and stewardship.

It is easy to think that the audit is the auditor's document, but it is essential to remember that the auditor is simply presenting your financial statements. While they offer the opinion that the statements are materially accurate and give a fair view of the township's financial positions, all the information in the document is the township's.

One section that is easy to overlook is the Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD&A). Most auditors draft this section and ask that the client review it. A local unit may not understand the purpose of this section, so they accept what the auditor provides.

The MD&A provides additional context, analysis and explanations of the financial statements and other key information outlining the township's financial decisions and rationale. A well-written MD&A presents the entire story, and the remainder of the financial statements support the themes written in the MD&A. This provides an opportunity to communicate with stakeholders. It is the township's chance to tell its financial story, justify its budgetary choices and present its economic outlook. Your MD&A should help achieve the following objectives:

- Enhancing understanding by providing a narrative that complements the numerical data in the financial statements, offering insights into significant events, trends and financial indicators.
- Providing interpretation and analysis to explain the reasons behind the changes in financial position, highlighting notable achievements or challenges, and

explaining variations in revenue, expenditures and fund balances.

- Helping assess the township's financial condition, including its ability to meet its obligations, fund ongoing operations, and invest in necessary infrastructure or services.
- Providing forward-looking information that the financial statements do not provide about future projects or potential risks that may impact the township's financial position.

Once the audit provides the draft MD&A, it is recommended that the township board discuss in a public meeting what additional information needs to be added to the MD&A. Standard templates that your auditor provides can serve as a guide to infuse any information and context needed to tell the story of your community. The MD&A is your opportunity to highlight your township's successes over the past year and to share a vision for the future. For instance, if the township reduced expenditures by 20% while still paying for paving an additional mile of road, emphasize that achievement. Use this section to inform stakeholders of the positive outcomes and outline the future vision.

The MD&A is more than just an audit requirement; it's a communication tool that can fortify trust in local governance. By combining financial data with a clear, engaging and forward-thinking narrative, townships can foster greater community understanding of the complexity of local government and help pave the way for informed decision-making. Don't miss an opportunity to craft a thoughtful MD&A that communicates the township's story to its considerable advantage.

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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## Speed limit measure provides greater flexibility

Townships and other local units now have greater flexibility in setting speed limits under MTA-supported legislation that was signed into law April 2.

Sponsored by Rep. Bradley Slagh (R-Zeeland Chtr. Twp.), Public Act 33 of 2024 clarifies situations for local units of government to set speed limits based on the 85th percentile of free-flowing traffic and allows traffic engineering practices that provide an objective analysis of the characteristics of the highway to be considered. It also allows additional flexibility in setting speed limits by rounding to a multiple (up or down) that is within five miles per hour of the 85th percentile speed. The bill retains townships' ability to set speed limits between the 85th percentile—the speed vehicles are traveling at or under on a segment of road—and a floor of the 50th percentile in certain circumstances.

The law took effect on April 2.

## Portion of changes to asbestos abatement signed into law

Two bills that are part of a six-bill package supported by MTA to amend the handling of asbestos and removal activities have been signed into law—Public Acts 16 and 17 of 2024. The remaining four bills, House Bills 4186 and 4190 and Senate Bills 225–226, are pending action by the state House. HBs 4186 and 4190 and SB 225 specifically regulate how public entities enter into contract agreements with construction or demolition firms regarding asbestos removal activities.

## Sunset for Marketable Record Title Act extended

The sunset for preserving existing mineral interest or other interests in a marketable title was extended by Public Act 20 of 2024 from March 29, 2024, to Sept. 29, 2025. Stakeholders are working to make changes to the act, and without the extension of the act, real property interests including easements, restrictions and agreements to maintain roads or storm drains would have been lost. The extension took effect on March 28.

## Hotel-motel county tax increased and expanded for local units in Kent County

Municipalities in Kent County can choose to implement a hotel-motel tax under Public Act 35 of 2024, sponsored by Rep. John Fitzgerald (D-Wyoming). The tax would have to be approved by a majority of the local units' voters. As originally introduced, the bill would have allowed all municipalities the option to implement such a tax with voter approval; however, it was narrowed prior to passage.

The law also allows an increase from 5% to 8% in the maximum excise tax that an eligible county can impose, if approved by the voters in the county. Previously, the law

allowed counties to enact a hotel-motel tax ordinance to levy an accommodations tax of up to 5% of the total charges for accommodations based on population with revenue to be used to support construction and maintenance costs of convention and entertainment facilities and activities promoting tourism and convention business within the county. The law took effect on April 2, 2024.

## Trial court funding law extended, court costs to be analyzed

Trial courts can continue to impose certain costs on criminal defendants with the enactment of Public Act 39 of 2024, effective April 30, 2024. Currently, 19 townships fund in whole or in part district courts in their township. Under the criminal code, if a defendant enters a plea of guilty or no contest, or if the court determines after a hearing or trial that the defendant is guilty, the court must impose the minimum state costs as set forth by statute and may assess other specified fines, costs or reimbursements. Among those allowable assessments, the court may assess any cost reasonably related to the actual costs incurred by the trial court, including salaries and benefits for relevant court personnel, goods and services necessary for operation of the court, and necessary expenses for operation and maintenance of court buildings and facilities. PA 39 preserves existing revenue streams for local governments from court cost assessments on criminal defendants to Dec. 31, 2026.

Additionally, House Bill 5534—which was pending the governor's signature, as of press time—requires the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) to analyze trial court costs and revenue sources by May 1, 2026, and use the information to develop a new statewide court debt collection system and new systems to fund courts' capital improvement and operational costs. The SCAO also must develop legislative proposals for schedules and standards to meet these requirements.

## Under construction: MTA sample CREO

MTA's model compatible renewable energy ordinance (CREO) has been paused as the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) continues to hold stakeholder meetings and release draft guidance on implementation of Public Act 233 of 2023—which removed local zoning authority over utility-scale renewable energy facilities and shifted oversight to the MPSC. The Association and its legal counsel are reviewing the MPSC's recently released draft guidance for necessary changes to the model CREO. Watch for an MTA eblast on model CREO and application availability, as well as other MTA publications. Once the MPSC releases final guidance, we anticipate additional changes will be required. Find stakeholder meeting recordings and more information at [www.michigan.gov/mpsc](http://www.michigan.gov/mpsc) (click on "Commission Activities," then "Workgroups" and "2023 Energy Legislation").



## Legislative lowdown

A quick look at critical bills that MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. Watch our weekly *Township Insights* e-newsletter for updates.

**SB 10 & HB 4036: Public utilities**—Prohibits local units of government from imposing a ban on the use of natural gas or installation of natural gas infrastructure. *MTA opposes.*

**SB 17: Fireworks**—Modifies the days that fireworks use may be regulated by a local unit of government and increases penalties for certain violations. *MTA supports.*

**SB 40: Unemployment**—Increases maximum number of unemployment benefit weeks. *MTA monitoring.*

**SB 41: Construction**—Prohibits local units from enacting an ordinance prohibiting use of energy-efficient appliances in new or existing residential buildings. *MTA opposes.*

**SB 47: Farmland**—Allows relinquishment of portion of farmland from agreement or easement to make boundaries more regular. *MTA neutral.*

**SBs 95-96, 454-455 & HBs 4894-4895: Disabled veterans' property tax reimbursement**—Provides a mechanism for the state to reimburse local units of government for the property tax exemption available to veterans classified as 100% disabled and their surviving spouses. *MTA supports.*

**SB 150: Michigan Tax Tribunal**—Expands methods for tax tribunal to hold small claims hearings to include telephonically or by videoconferencing. *MTA supports.*

**SB 155: Voting equipment**—Prohibits use of electronic voting systems that contain certain parts or equipment. *MTA monitoring.*

**SB 171 & HB 4231: Local government**—Repeals the Fair and Open Competition in Governmental Construction Act. *MTA supports.*

**SBs 182-183 & HBs 4274-4275: Revenue Sharing Trust Fund**—Establishes a "Revenue Sharing

Trust Fund" and dedicates portion of general sales tax revenue to the fund to distribute to townships, cities, villages and counties. *MTA supports.*

**SB 244 & HB 4729: Workers' compensation**—Extends presumption of causation of heart and respiratory diseases to certain members of police, fire and public safety departments. *MTA opposes.*

**SB 293: Housing**—Modifies and expands the Housing and Community Development Fund to make financing available to middle-income households. *MTA supports.*

**SBs 401-404: Elections**—Creates state voting rights act. *MTA opposes.*

**SB 473 & HB 4694: Special assessments**—Amends required number of participating members from each local unit for special assessment districts for police and fire. *MTA monitoring.*

**SB 480: Land division**—Modifies the number of parcels resulting from land division. *MTA opposes.*

**SBs 486-487 & 489: Mobile home licensing**—Modifies licensure requirements for owners of mobile home parks and seasonal mobile home parks and the duties of entities involved in the regulation of parks. *MTA supports.*

**SBs 549-554 & HBs 5090-5093: Water utilities**—Creates water rate affordability program and shutoff protections. *MTA monitoring.*

**SBs 559-562, 569 & HBs 5907, 5104-5107: Strategic fund**—Revises Critical Industry Program and Michigan Strategic Site Readiness Program, and creates Michigan 360 program. *MTA supports.*

**SBs 683-684: Animals**—Provides for potentially dangerous dogs and dangerous dogs in the animals act and creates sentencing guidelines for related crimes. *MTA monitoring.*

**SB 700: Tax increment financing**—Modifies the definition of downtown district to include separate and distinct geographic areas in a business district if the municipality is located on the mainland and one or more islands and a body of water is between the two

separate and distinct geographic areas. *MTA supports.*

**SB 870: Open Meetings Act**—Provides for remote meeting participation for public body members with disabilities. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4023: Underground storage tanks**—Revises placement distance of underground storage tanks from a public water supply. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4033: Elections**—Requires state to reimburse costs for certain special elections. *MTA supports.*

**HBs 4207-4208: Broadband equipment**—Exempts eligible broadband equipment from personal property taxes. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 4210: Elections**—Provides for the electronic return of absent voter ballots by military voters and their spouses. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4360: Local government**—Allows emergency services authorities to serve partial municipalities. *MTA supports.*

**HBs 4382-4383: Drain Code**—Revises Chapter 22 of Drain Code process through determination sufficiency of petition and proposed boundaries. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4428: Public notices**—Revises publication of legal notices and creates the Local Government Public Notice Act. *MTA supports.*

**HBs 4479-4480: Statewide sanitary code**—Provides for the assessment and regulations of on-site wastewater treatment systems. *MTA monitoring.*

**HBs 4502-4503: Election challengers**—Provides requirements and training requirements for election challengers. *MTA supports.*

**HBs 4526-4528: Local preemption**—Preempts local authority for regulations for sand and gravel mining operations. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 4548: Notaries public**—Provides fee for remote notarization. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4566: Vehicle registration**—Allocates revenue from vehicle registration fees to county where registrant resides and distributes per



lane mile to local road agency. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4572: Property tax assessments**—Exempts transfer of ownership of certain real property to certain individuals from uncapping of taxable value upon transfer. *MTA monitoring.*

**HBs 4605-4606: Public safety**—Creates the public safety and violence prevention fund and provides for the earmark and distribution of 1.5% of the 4% of sales tax revenue into the fund for disbursement. *MTA supports.*

**HB 4675: Land bank authorities**—Provides exemption for land bank authority property from all state and local taxes, fees and special assessments unless contracting for services. *MTA neutral.*

**HB 4688: Collective bargaining**—Requires minimum staffing levels within a bargaining unit to be a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 4693: Open Meetings Act**—Allows nonelected and noncompensated public bodies to meet remotely. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 4860: Charter townships**—Amends conflict of interest policy for charter township officials. *MTA supports.*

**HB 4866: Annexation**—Exempts certain charter townships from annexation. *MTA supports.*

**HB 4965: Franchise fees**—Modifies definition of video service. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 5028: Homeowners association**—Invalidates energy-saving home improvements prohibition by homeowners association. *MTA neutral.*

**HBs 5039-5041: Local preemption**—Prohibits local governments from enacting or enforcing an ordinance, policy, resolution or rule that regulates a dog based upon breed or perceived breed. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 5353: Unfunded mandates**—Provides for state financing of activities or services required of local units of government. *MTA supports.*

**HB 5380: Property taxes**—Provides for property tax exemption for certain nonprofit charitable institutions operating under Continuing Care Community Act. *MTA opposes.*

**HB 5438: Short-term rental**—Creates the short-term rental regulation act that **retains local zoning authority**, imposes an excise tax to be distributed to municipalities and creates a statewide registry. *MTA supports.*

**HB 5550: Elections**—Extends the time period by which an elections board must determine a recall petition to be factual and of sufficient clarity from 20 days to 40 days. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 5551: Elections**—Modifies eligibility requirements for members of board of state canvassers and boards of county canvassers. *MTA monitoring.*

**HB 5557: Housing**—Requires local government master plans to forecast and take into account housing needs. *MTA supports.*

**HB 5695: Emergency medical services**—Requires participation in the ground emergency medical transport disbursement program. *MTA supports.*

**HB 5699: Township term of office**—Modifies the term of office start date for township officers to Dec. 1, beginning after Dec. 31, 2024. *MTA neutral.*

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# upcoming MTA workshop & webinar

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

### Election Prep: Beyond the Bureau

Early voting, absent voter (AV) ballots, new storage and security requirements—oh my! Township clerks and deputies have an awful lot of new hurdles to navigate this year when it comes to your township elections. One thing that hasn't changed, MTA is here to help! Spend an afternoon with us this June for a deep dive into the new requirements and explore effective ways to manage your upcoming elections.

We'll review who can do what when it comes to election duties and offer tips to "lighten the load" for township clerks. So, grab your deputy and join MTA's resident election experts and former clerks Cindy Dodge and Judy Bigney as we explore the latest in elections and tackle hot-button topics like:

- **Election workers:** Learn how the increase in hours due to early voting and overall administration time impacts your election workers' compensation, Social Security exemption and other income taxes.
- **Required election notices:** Additional voting requirements and updated laws have increased the list of required elections notices. We'll share, and discuss, what's new and why.
- **Record retention, storage and security of election documents:** Early voting equals new storage and security requirements for election materials. We'll review the new requirements as well as how AV ballots are handled in precincts and drop boxes.
- **Freedom of Information Act requests pertaining to election records:** You won't want to miss these tips and tricks for processing what can seem like an overwhelming amount of documents.

You'll walk away with insights into what's new, what works (and doesn't) as well as tried-and-true checklists and time management tips that will help you troubleshoot even those nagging Election Day issues! Lunch is included with registration and begins at noon. Class is held from 1 to 5 p.m. Dates and locations are:

**June 17:** The Shack Country Inn & Conference Center, White Cloud

**June 25:** Northern Center at NMU, Marquette

**June 18:** Four Points by Sheraton, Kalamazoo

**June 26:** Online option (via Zoom)

**June 19:** Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth

**June 27:** Treetops Resort Conference Center, Gaylord



## Election Prep Registration Form

Township \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

### Which location will you attend?

- June 17:** White Cloud                       **June 25:** Marquette
- June 18:** Kalamazoo                         **June 26:** Online
- June 19:** Frankenmuth                     **June 27:** Gaylord

**Early-bird Rate\*:** \$100/person *Expires two weeks prior to event date*

**Late Rate\*:** \$150/person *Applies one week prior to event date*

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

# of Persons	Registration Fee	Total
_____	_____	_____
	X	=
	_____	_____

*Confirmations, online access and "know before you go" communications will be sent via email to individual registrants. To add or update your email, contact MTA at (517) 321-6467, ext. 231 or email [database@michigantownships.org](mailto:database@michigantownships.org)*

<b>Payment options:</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Invoice township	<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed (payable to MTA)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard    VISA		
Card # _____	CSV (3-digit code) _____	Expires _____
Print Card Holder's Name _____		Signature _____



Send your completed registration form to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at [www.bit.ly/twptraining](http://www.bit.ly/twptraining). Need event registration assistance? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 234



**Don't miss MTA's**

# **UP North Summit**

**July 23-24, 2024**

**Island Resort &  
Conference Center,  
Harris (near Escanaba)**

**Join us for two days of intensive  
learning, networking—and fun—  
in the splendor of Michigan's  
Upper Peninsula.**

**Take advantage of discounted early-bird rates.  
Register by June 25 and save!**



Join fellow officials from across the state July 23 & 24 at the Island Resort & Conference Center—located in Harris, just west of Escanaba—for MTA’s *UP North Summit*. This event offers excellent networking opportunities and premier educational programming.

## Practical techniques and valuable resources

The program is packed with informative sessions featuring topics relevant to the entire township board, and some tailored to the duties specific to your township board position. Take advantage of this learning opportunity and connect with others who can help make your role as a township official more fulfilling. It’s an investment worth making!

## Exceptional value

Officials are encouraged to register for the full program to get the most out of this educational experience. Registration fees include all meals and activities. Can only get away for one day? Single-day rates are also available.

## Educational sessions include:

### ***What Your Audit Really Means***

Does your township’s audit seem to be a confusing set of numbers and narratives? Gain a better understanding of what the audit report really says about your township and what may (and may not!) be red flags. This session will help you hone in on what matters most, best practices and other important information you may be missing.  
*Speaker: Rod Taylor, Senior Manager, Government Consulting Group, Maner Costerisan*

### ***Out with the Old, In with the New***

This November, townships across the state will experience the changing of the guard. We’ll share what you need to know about the transition of incoming and outgoing officials between now and the launch of the new township term of office. Learn how to handle resignations, appointments, compensation and the oath of office, as well as required meetings and dates. Learn what “the transition” actually is, what’s happening, how you handle “elects,” and when those running unopposed can assume duties.  
*Speakers: Michael Selden, MTA Director of Member Information Services, and Cindy Dodge, MTA Member Information Services Liaison*

### ***Making Your Money Work for You***

Every board member must be familiar with the township’s finances, including required procedures and reporting. Get an overview of the revenue your township receives, including what’s coming in, when it is going out and what you should be doing with it in the meantime. Review the ins and outs of how different revenues may—or may not—be used, and options your board may consider for putting the money where your mouth is!  
*Speaker: Rod Taylor*

### ***State of the U.P. Fire Service***

Don’t miss this unique opportunity to learn from the expertise of our state fire marshal and engage in critical discussion that reviews and evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our approach to fire service in the Upper Peninsula. Lend your critical insights in what’s sure to be an eye-opening session that has direct impact on the safety of your community now and into the future.  
*Speaker: Kevin Sehlmeier, State Fire Marshal, Director, Bureau of Fire Services, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs*

### ***Effective Meetings Meets the Act***

Unproductive meetings? Uninspiring agendas? Closed session questions? You’ve got questions, we’ve got answers! Learn how the Open Meetings Act empowers you to take control of your meeting, and other time management tools that allow you to get the most out of your meetings while keeping yourself—and your township—out of trouble!  
*Speaker: Michael Selden*

### ***Board Insights into the Working Relations Between Clerks & Treasurers***

Do you know what the roles and responsibilities of the clerk or treasurer are? How about what reports each office is responsible for? What’s important about the way the clerk and treasurer interact on a regular basis? Learn the laws, debunk the myths and walk away with best practices for empowering your township’s dynamic duo.  
*Speaker: Cindy Dodge*

### ***Managing Meeting Disruptors***

Controversial, emotionally charged meetings or public hearings where tensions are high and tempers flare are neither comfortable nor new. What is changing? The same high tension and flaring tempers may greet you in the parking lot (or elsewhere) and may come armed with a video camera hoping to catch you reacting badly to their profanity-laced complaints and aggression. Explore steps you can take and better decisions you can make before, during and after difficult meetings and encounters to help you manage the disruptions and avoid taking the bait!  
*Speaker: Seth Koches, MTA Legal Counsel, Bauckham, Thall, Seeber, Kaufman & Koches, PC*

### ***When Reliable Becomes Unreliable***

Outdoor recreation plays a vital role in your community’s quality of life, leisure and health. It can also be a big part of your economy. But what happens when the weather doesn’t always cooperate? Gain insights into “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” strategies to take control of your community events and make the most of your natural resources regardless of what Mother Nature brings. This session will help you recognize, evaluate and promote your local resources to elevate recreation opportunities in your township.  
*Speaker: Maureen Stine, Natureology, Certified Environmental Educator, Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education and Certified Parks & Recreation Professional, National Recreation and Park Association*

Session marked with the red book icon qualifies for credit in MTA’s **Red Book Ready** learning series. Enrollees also earn two elective credits just for attending the *Summit*.

Enrolled in MTA’s **Township Governance Academy**? Join us at the *Summit* and earn four elective credits. No project required!



# Agenda

Eastern Standard Time

## TUESDAY, JULY 23

9:30 a.m.

Registration check-in, continental breakfast and Northern Market

10 a.m.

Welcome address

10:30 a.m.

General session—Legislative Panel

11:30 a.m.

Meet the exhibitors

Noon—Northern Market

12:30 p.m.—Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Concurrent sessions

- What Your Audit *Really* Means
- Out with the Old, In with the New

2:30 p.m.—Northern Market

3 p.m.

Concurrent sessions

- Making Your Money Work for You
- State of the U.P. Fire Service

4:45 p.m.

General session—What the Board Needs to Know about Elections

6:30 p.m.

Dinner and evening activity

## JULY 24

8 a.m.

Breakfast and registration for single-day registrants

9 a.m.

General session—Legislative Update

10:30 a.m.

Concurrent sessions

- Effective Meetings Meets the Act
- Board Insights into Working Relations Between Clerks and Treasurers

Noon—Lunch

1 p.m.

Concurrent sessions

- Managing Meeting Disruptors
- When Reliable Becomes Unreliable

2:45 p.m.

General session—Putting Your Ordinances to Work

4 p.m.—Adjourn

## Informative general sessions

Gather as a group for **four informative sessions** offering insights and information for today's townships.

On Tuesday morning, **state legislators** will join us for a panel discussion lending their **legislative insights** on what is happening in Lansing and how it affects your township. Later that afternoon, we'll offer a **primer on elections geared for your entire township board**. From board responsibilities to resources, we'll help you get a handle on the impact elections administration has on your township.

On Wednesday, we'll begin with an update from MTA's own Director of Government Relations Judy Allen, including a breakdown of the latest legislative issues, as well as what's at the forefront, what is on the horizon for the lame-duck session and tips for working with your state legislators. Our closing session will help you determine **which ordinances are right for your township** to address conflicts and complaints that come with hot-button land use topics like short-term rentals, sand and gravel mining, and blight. Get real-life, practical examples and find the right fit for regulation in your township.

## Evening event

After a full day of intensive education, we know you'll be ready to get out of the classroom and into the fun! Get into the game at our free game night featuring everyone's favorite classic: bingo! Keep your eyes on the prize as each game brings you closer to victory and the chance to walk away a winner. Not a bingo aficionado? We'll have other games to play and opportunities to earn tickets for our big prize drawings at the end of the night. So, grab your lucky charm and join us for an evening of fun, laughter, competition and the chance to win big.

## Northern Market

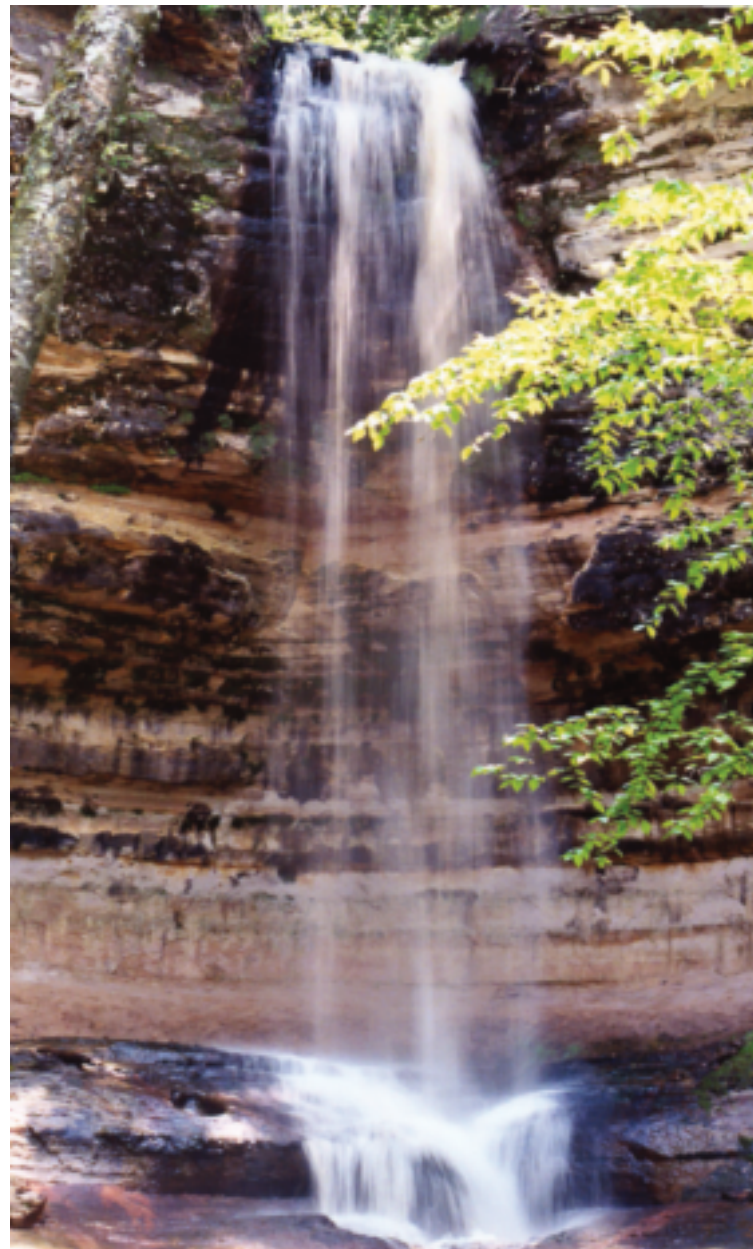
Designed to help you find providers of products and services that can help your township run more efficiently. Network with vendors and get your questions answered.

## Valuable networking

MTA's *UP North Summit* is a unique opportunity for northern Michigan township officials to gather for valuable education and networking. Your fellow officials know better than anyone the challenges you face!

## Cancellation and substitutions

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by July 1 will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter without extenuating circumstances. You may substitute another individual from your township for your registration at any time without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change.



# Registration Information

Register for the *Summit* by June 25 to take advantage of discounted registration fees. A limited number of hotel rooms are available at discounted rates until June 21. Contact the Island Resort directly to book your hotel room. (Details below.)

**Discounted lodging is limited—Call the Island Resort to reserve your hotel room today!**

The Island Resort & Conference Center offers spacious, well-appointed rooms with many amenities, including free parking, free Internet, in-room coffee maker, indoor pool and hot tub, gift shop, spa and salon, and multiple on-site restaurants.

**Check-in:** After 5 p.m. **Check-out:** 11 a.m. (EST)

### MTA Discounted Room Rates

*(Rate includes resort fee and local taxes)*

Single- or double-bedded rooms—\$104.10

Call the Island Resort at (877) 475-7375 and reference **Group #18949** for the *MTA UP North Summit*.

You must make your hotel reservation by June 21 to receive the MTA discounted rate. Please notify the Island Resort of accessibility needs when reserving your room.

## 2024 Summit Sponsors



## Summit Registration Form — — — — —

Name & Title (Reg. 1)  Full Summit  July 23 Only  July 24 Only

Name & Title (Reg. 2)  Full Summit  July 23 Only  July 24 Only

Name & Title (Reg. 3)  Full Summit  July 23 Only  July 24 Only

Township & County \_\_\_\_\_

*Confirmations and "know before you go" details will be sent via email to individual registrants. To add or update your email address, contact MTA at (517) 321-6467, ext. 231 or email [database@michigantownships.org](mailto:database@michigantownships.org)*

- Invoice township  Check enclosed (payable to MTA)  
 Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ CSV (3-digit code) Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Print Card Holder's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Register today to save your seat!

*MTA must submit the food and beverage order to the Island Resort on July 2, so availability after that date is not guaranteed. Registration officially closes July 9. Submit special dietary needs by July 1 to [education@michigantownships.org](mailto:education@michigantownships.org) or call (517) 321-6467, ext. 230.*

### Full Summit Registration (July 23 & 24)

*Includes all sessions, meals, refreshments and activities.*

- Early-bird rate \$220/person Ends June 25  
 Late rate \$250/person June 26-July 9

### Single-day Summit Registration

*Includes that day's sessions, meals, refreshments and activities.*

- Early-bird rate \$135/person Ends June 25  
 Late rate \$165/person June 26-July 9

### Guest dinner and evening activity only

*Register your guest by July 1; guest tickets are limited.*

- \$40/person Reg. 1 Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$40/person Reg. 2 Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$40/person Reg. 3 Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT DUE:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Above rates are for MTA members; non-members, call MTA for rates.*



Send your completed registration form to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078;  
 fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at [bit.ly/MTASummit](http://bit.ly/MTASummit). Need event registration assistance?  
 Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, use ext. 234

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# 'Grateful and proud'

Connie Cargill leads MTA as its 2024 president

**C**onnie Cargill has spent nearly the entirety of her career working in local government. After all that time, she remains as dedicated as ever to serving her community and its residents.

Now, Cargill—who has been **Golden Township** (Oceana Co.) treasurer for nearly 30 years—will be serving all of Michigan's 1,240 townships, their officials and staff, and their residents as 2024 MTA president. She was elected to the position at MTA's Annual Conference & Expo, held April 22-25 at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.).

Before becoming township treasurer, Cargill worked for the Oceana County Drain Commissioner's Office, including as deputy drain commissioner, for 24 years, and prior to that, with the City of Hart for 10 years. Experiences she garnered in those roles—including tax collection and working with the assessment roll—parlayed perfectly when she was asked to serve as the township's deputy treasurer and was later appointed treasurer in 1995. She has served as treasurer ever since.

"After all that time, I still love my job," said Cargill, who joined the MTA Board in 2012. "I love working with our residents and the opportunity that we have to help people every day. I value, and appreciate, the connections we make with the people we serve."

When Cargill thinks about township government, and the officials who serve them, she sees that love of community

and of public service. Cargill saw that commitment to public service in county Drain Commissioner Cal Ackley, for whom she worked—and from whom she learned—for two decades. Calling Ackley her hero, she noted that the public leader "would work at things and work with people to get the job done. He wasn't afraid of a challenge, and he put his trust in the people around him." Engaging with others, and helping to inspire and cultivate future public leaders, is one area on which Cargill hopes to focus during her time as MTA president.

"In the year ahead, I will work to help share the importance of township government," she said, noting the value of involving today's youth in township government. For decades, Cargill—an avid horsewoman since childhood, continuing as she raised her daughters—worked with area youth as an Oceana County Fair light horse superintendent and an Oceana Agricultural Society Board member, which serves as the county fair board.

As we enter a new township term of office later this year, Cargill also emphasized the importance of welcoming new individuals interested in serving their township.







Connie Cargill shared acceptance remarks at the MTA Annual Meeting following her election as 2024 MTA president (pictured at right). Earlier in the week at the MTA Annual Conference, Cargill addressed attendees at the Opening Session (above), spoke with officials between sessions (above right), and supported Friends of MTA, encouraging member involvement as MTA advocates on behalf of townships and its leaders (left).

Those dedicated local leaders—both newcomers and those who have served for years—are critical to continuing to fulfill the role and value of township government that is accessible to residents and provides community quality of life and essential services. “Township officials are very dedicated to their community,” said Cargill. “They take great pride in their townships.”

Ask Cargill what makes her proud about her own township, and she shares community assets, like a new township park built on the shores of Silver Lake, funded through state grants and community support and donations. The township has boasted a strong roads program for more than three decades—improving roadways not only for residents but for the droves of visitors who come to enjoy the Silver Lake Dunes State Park and seven miles of Lake Michigan shoreline in the township every year.

Cargill will also continue to fight for local control in the year ahead, ensuring that all townships can continue to safeguard, protect and plan for the future of the township assets, character and community of which they are proud. “Local control is the biggest issue for township government,” Cargill noted. “But there is strength in numbers, and I am asking all townships to unite together to fight to retain our

local authority and our ability to serve our residents in a way that best fits what they want and need. Together, we can make a difference.”

With 1,240 townships in the state, from southeast Michigan to the shores of Lake Superior, each township has its own unique characteristics and qualities. When reflecting on her own area, Cargill notes that her own township is primarily agriculture and tourism-based. “Drive 15 minutes down the road, and there is a township that is more than half federal forestland and farmland,” she said. “Drive 15 minutes in the other direction, and there is a full-service township with highways, industry, school districts. We are all different, but we are all united in our dedication to our communities.

“We all deal with similar challenges and issues, and we must support each other—and support township authority.”

Officials can turn to MTA for information and assistance to stay apprised of threats, opportunities and resources for township government, including through its educational workshops and conference. “MTA is our educator, and our advisor,” Cargill said. “MTA is township government’s biggest supporter, and I know that MTA will continue to fight tirelessly on behalf of our townships.”

“I am grateful and proud to be part of this organization.”

# ‘Every challenge is an opportunity’

Conference keynoter shares how to play offense in a defensive world

**P**aul Epstein turned his 15 years working as an executive in the NBA and NFL into a playbook for leaders on personal and team transformation, and creating an environment where your culture becomes your township’s greatest advantage. Here’s some of what our 2024 Conference keynote speaker shared on the main stage during our General Session.

How do we build and inspire a championship culture? How do we leverage confidence as our currency when we lead, when we live, when we pass it forward to every single member in our community? And most important, how do we build unstoppable momentum in our civic service and in our lives?

The return on investment of [this] conversation comes down to the decisions we make and the actions we take on Monday morning. All momentum is born on Monday. Winning is born on Monday. And when we can win Monday, we now have a playbook to win Tuesday, Wednesday—and we keep it rolling.

## **The decisions we make and actions we take**

[My time in the sports industry] is where I learned how to play offense in a defensive environment. Defense is around each and every one of us, every single day. Defense is the storms, the hurdles, the setbacks, the obstacles, the challenges—all the things that get between us and winning, producing, performing and showing up as one team. Regardless of how defensive the world around us gets, we can always choose to play offense.

Leadership and life are a game of decisions and actions. The quality of business and the quality of life comes down to two things: the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Show me the quality of your decisions, and I’ll show you the quality of your life and leadership. Show me the quality of your actions, and I’ll show you the quality of your life and leadership.

Even taking action is a decision. What are we anchoring our decisions on? If it can be our values, that’s how we can build confidence, because now our confidence is our bet on *self*. And maybe we’re making those bets. But is every person in your township, in your family, in your community? There is exponential impact by placing these bets on self and in inside-out confidence.

The compounding effect of inside-out confidence is unshakable confidence—that’s the end state, that’s the goal. But here’s the problem. There are some gaps that are very problematic, and they are impacting every township in the state of Michigan and beyond. Here are some of the scary stats:

- 85% of leaders lack confidence in their team, in their people.
- 76% of people lack confidence in their leaders.
- 85% of people lack confidence in the mirror.

How can we possibly be one team if this is the world that we lead and the world that we live in? I’m on a mission to take this problem—this challenge—and transform it into an opportunity.



## Standards over goals

On the other side of every challenge is an opportunity. When I think of confidence as a game of inches, it's the moment, the decisions and the actions. How do we cultivate and win those inches, and how do we close our gaps? Here is a mantra that I would love to rally us around: standards over goals.

A manager manages to the goal. A leader manages to the standard. We're all high performance, high achievers in this room. We've all succeeded and had a lot of wins in our life. So, we're going to hit a lot of goals, but inevitably, we're going to miss some. But we never have to take a day off from our standards. If we want to lead the township of tomorrow and be one team, standards will always beat goals.

Let's call [the first standard] a standard of excellence. We're not here to finish second place. We all want the best township. We all want the best team.

Every single high performer and high achiever in the world treats confidence as currency. Confidence becomes their competitive advantage. Confidence is fuel. Confidence is oxygen. And I believe that it's the strongest currency as leaders that we can step forward with.

What I want to share is a formula that is relevant for everyone. This is a formula for how we can each build and sustain unshakable confidence: confidence equals values times action. Show me a person who takes consistent action on their values, and I will show you a confident person. Show me a township that takes consistent action on our values, and I will show you the most confident version of your township.

Leadership is a privilege. It's an honor. It's a responsibility. And as leaders, our standard needs to be who we are on our best day.

We're the beacon of light. We're the positivity, the hope, the optimism. But the real world is going to say, "Not so fast, blue sky. This is a storm." And adversity is something that we all know does not discriminate. There are storms that we don't even know are coming, that are going to smack us in the face.

Tough decisions, change and uncertainty are ahead. Welcome to leadership. This is the life that we chose. If that's going to be the environment that is non-negotiable around us, that's defense. How do we play offense? That's the key.

After a while, you've been through enough storms and you say, all right, been there, heard that, been there, seen that, been there, done that. Adversity is not the character builder. Adversity is the character revealer. We're judged as leaders on who we are during a storm.

What offensive people, teams and townships do differently than those who play defense is, they are highly decisive. They don't freeze. They don't get stuck. They don't need all the information. What offensive people, teams and organizations do differently is they prioritize action over outcome.

## Better decisions faster

Imperfect action becomes an ally because a defensive fork in the road is, "I succeed or I fail"; an offensive fork in the road is "I succeed or I learn," "I succeed or I grow." That's how offensive-minded people think, act and operate. Decisiveness is the key. Let's make them better and faster.

The average adult makes 35,000 decisions in a day. A lot of them are on autopilot: turn left into the driveway, brush your teeth. But what about those critical few [decisions]—those ones of higher consequence, of higher value?

In sports, there's an acronym MVP, most valuable player. I would call these your most valuable decisions (MVD). Think of a decision that you're facing right now, personal or professional. You might be stuck. You don't know what to do next. You're challenged by it. How do we move forward with clarity, with peace of mind, with confidence for our most valuable decisions? Check in with three things: your head, your heart and your hands. You could also think of them as mindset, authenticity and action.

Instead of thinking of these as three separate elements, they're actually all connected. And here's how: I call it the head, heart, hands equation. Head plus heart equals hands. When deciding whether to use your hands, whether to take action ... two checkpoints: head and heart. Head: Do I think it's a good idea? Heart: Do I feel it's a good idea?

When your head and heart are on board, it is a green light 10 out of 10 times that you take that action. Now the opposite. No head, no heart, red light. Don't do it. And when one of the two—head or heart—is on board, that's the yellow light. There are a lot of yellows. And that's the messy middle. And for your MVDs, the majority are going to fall in the yellow. I believe in a world of an abundance of green lights. We all deserve a green light. We all need a playbook for how to navigate and conquer the messy middle of yellow, but it's this vision of a green light life, a green light township, a green light team.

Regardless of how defensive the world around us gets, we can choose to play offense. We have a playbook to make better decisions faster. How confidence becomes currency, and our competitive advantage as we emerge as one team. We all understand the power of Monday momentum. Monday is where momentum is born. Monday is where winning is born. And when we can win Monday, we now have a playbook to win the rest of the week, and we all deserve a green light life.



# One Team

Nearly 2,000 township officials and team members, exhibitors, speakers and guests joined MTA at the [2024 Annual Conference & Expo](#) to harness the power of working together as [One Team](#). Throughout the week, officials learned, connected and encouraged one another in their service to their townships and state. Held April 22-25 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme Township (Grand Traverse Co.), attendees took part in more than 50 educational sessions, visited nearly 100 vendors at the state's largest municipal expo, attended informational—and motivational—general sessions, and enjoyed fun networking events throughout the week. Our Annual Conference is truly a celebration of township government and those who serve—and we look forward to celebrating with you next year, March 31-April 3 in Grand Rapids!





# CHICAGO GAIN WINSHIPS



Cover story photos by David Trumple, Trumple Photography. See all the photos from the 2024 MTA Conference & Expo and download for FREE at <https://bit.ly/MTA2024PICS>

# 2024-2025 MTA legislative policy platform

As adopted by delegates at MTA's Annual Meeting, held April 25, these policies guide the platform from which legislation is sought in the coming year.

## Vision Statement

The Michigan Townships Association envisions local governance where:

- Townships have statutory authority and state financial support sufficient to provide fiscal stability, high-quality services and infrastructure consistent with community needs and expectations, and to enable full compliance with ever-expanding state-imposed mandates without cutting local spending priorities
- Elections are accurate, secure, fair and a high percentage of registered voters participate
- Local control is respected and valued by state lawmakers as townships work to solve local and regional challenges through visionary, ethical leadership and collaboration
- Natural resources are utilized in a manner consistent with township regulations that ensure long-term sustainability and leverage value as public assets
- There is clarity of roles and responsibilities for township officials essential for efficient and effective services to the public
- Townships retain authority to protect and regulate the public rights-of-way and other land uses in the interest of the public
- State laws recognize that township officials are elected by and accountable to their residents for the township's governance, financial position, programs and services consistent with community values

## Assessment and Taxation

The Michigan Townships Association supports property tax fairness, equity, and efficient assessment and collection by public servants who are accountable to township officials to ensure public trust and locally accessible information and assistance. Valuation should be based on sound assessing principles. Local governments should be reimbursed by the state for property tax revenues lost due to statutory exemptions. Townships must be fiscally positioned to ensure economically resilient communities.

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

- Require the valuation of big box stores to be determined using the same assessing methodology as other commercial properties and prohibit the consideration of private deed restrictions or covenants imposed to reduce the value of the property or exclude competitors of the grantor from the market
- Support the state assuming administration and funding of disabled veterans' property tax exemption
- Oppose expansion of property tax exemptions without replacement of local revenue
- Limit property tax exemption eligibility for nonprofit charitable purposes

- Allow townships to create special assessment districts for infrastructure needs such as high-speed internet and the replacement of privately owned sewer leads
- Raise the current charter township 10 mill tax limitation to allow charter townships, with voter approval, to address legacy costs, meet demands for expanding services and offset millage rollback requirements
- Recodify Michigan township statutes to include clarification that assessors are accountable to the township board when the supervisor is not certified to perform assessing functions
- Increase the specific tax on mobile homes located in licensed parks and levy on park owner rather than individual occupied dwelling owners
- Exempt minimal personal property tax obligations resulting from minor property improvements on mobile home lots such as small decks, stairs and porches
- Allow option for a local excise tax for the purpose of providing public recreational facilities and/or public safety expenses related to increased tourism

## Elections

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

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

- Preserve the authority of townships to convey information on ballot proposals to their residents
- Preserve the authority of townships to place millage and bond proposals before voters at any election
- Permit the option for nonpartisan township offices to be approved by the township board and the electors
- Establish state fund for the statewide replacement of voting equipment
- Require continued funding for the operations of state election requirements
- Require election challenger training

## Environment and Land Use

The Michigan Townships Association supports state laws that enable townships to efficiently and effectively plan for land uses and adopt zoning ordinances to protect the public health, safety and general welfare. State and federal regulations should not impede local government growth and development policies and objectives. Local authority over land use decisions must be protected. The Michigan Townships Association will work to minimize preemption of local decision making and retain local authority as an essential part of land use decisions.

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

- Ensure any statewide sanitary code requirements adopted reduce septic system failures that create serious public health threats and that expose townships to liability for expensive public sewer systems
- Preserve landfill capacities by directing appropriate materials to waste utilization facilities and support an increase in the state tipping fee to a rate competitive with nearby states while preserving a local tipping fee option
- Preserve local authority on zoning issues that are local in nature to ensure protection of public health and safety and property values
- Increase state funding and support for environmental programs to address issues such as brownfield redevelopment, contamination and invasive species
- Ensure that any heightened review of environmental permits for communities overly impacted by environmental degradation protects public health and allows for local development goals to be met in a timely manner
- Ensure that the state retains the United States Environmental Protection Agency-delegated authority to issue wetlands and other water permits
- Ensure that 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, is not extended to non-navigable waters such as roadside ditches and culvert installation and maintenance

## Intergovernmental Relations

The Michigan Townships Association supports township officials having the discretion to resolve policy issues that are manifestly local in nature. MTA also supports state laws that encourage intergovernmental collaboration to restore economic prosperity, efficiently and effectively deliver programs and services, and solve other challenges. State laws should allow creativity, flexibility and incentivize fair and equitable cost-sharing benefits and governance in interlocal agreements. State laws authorizing economic development tools and other powers should be based on community characteristics relative to policy objectives. State taxation and spending policies should mitigate adverse revenue impacts on townships.

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

- Ensure state laws allow township officials to solve local issues in a manner consistent with local values, priorities and needs rather than impose a one-size-fits-all approach
- Guarantee full funding to townships for payments in lieu of taxes for state-purchased lands, commercial forest lands and swamp tax/tax-reverted properties
- Expand the number of townships eligible for statutory revenue sharing and grants
- Ensure a local government consolidation process continues to require voter approval

## Township Operations

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

The Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Clarify and strengthen the governance role of township boards to establish policy direction and manage operations for their community
- Enact appropriate, cost-effective training requirements for township planning commissioners and zoning board of appeal members to reduce costly lawsuits and improve township decision-making by key appointed boards
- Allow township supervisors the authority to perform marriages
- Permit members of a public body to participate in a public meeting remotely
- Allow public notice requirements to be met by posting the required notice on the website of the public body

## Transportation and Infrastructure

The Michigan Townships Association concludes that Michigan's transportation system will continue to require more funding than is currently anticipated in law to ensure that county primary and local roads are safe and convenient for travel. As townships are major financial contributors to infrastructure needs, the Michigan Townships Association supports planning, funding and delivering infrastructure needed for every community to be economically viable and to protect the health, safety and general welfare of residents. The Michigan Townships Association supports a strong partnership between local, state and federal officials to establish long-term reliable funding necessary to create and maintain infrastructure and improvements.

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

- Modernize and increase funding above current statutory levels for primary and local roads and increase state funding for water, sewer and communications infrastructure
- Allow for a county road agency in conjunction with a requesting township to lower the speed to a level deemed necessary for motorist or pedestrian safety on a gravel or unimproved surface road
- Encourage state and county road funding agencies to provide funds for township road construction and utilize allocated funds for maintenance projects
- Ensure that any move to alternatives to the gas tax to help fund transportation infrastructure incorporates the practicalities for rural communities
- Expand engineering and safety data to include pedestrian-vehicle impact data and multiple modes of transportation to properly manage speed limits

# Three directors join the MTA Board

The MTA Board of Directors welcomed three new district directors, following appointments and a caucus election at the 2024 MTA Annual Conference.

The new Board members were recognized at the MTA Annual Meeting on the final day of the Conference and took the oath of office at an organizational meeting held later than morning. We welcome the new members and look forward to their leadership on behalf of townships and officials in their districts!

## Misty Filsinger, MTA District 1 director

**Misty, Grant Township** (Keweenaw Co.) treasurer, has been appointed to serve on the MTA Board of Directors, as District 1 director, which encompasses Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties.

Filsinger has been Grant Township treasurer for six years, and is dedicated to serving her community, region—and now all of Michigan’s townships in her new leadership role in the statewide organization.

“I am proud to be part of the MTA team that advocates for and assists townships in moving their community and Michigan forward,” Filsinger said. “I take township democracy and leadership very seriously and am committed to our township in moving us forward, making positive strides daily. I am passionate about strong public policy both in my community and across the state, and know that it is essential for vibrant communities and a vibrant state.”



Filsinger

## Joan David, MTA District 11 director

**Newfield Township** (Oceana Co.) Supervisor **Joan David** was elected director of MTA District 11, which encompasses Lake, Mason and Oceana Counties.

Prior to her election as supervisor in 2016, David served as township trustee for eight years. She also serves on the township’s cemetery committee and has been secretary of the Oceana County MTA Chapter for two years.

Collaboration and cooperation among her fellow local leaders, residents and business owners—and seeing the positive impact it has in the township—are among the most rewarding experiences of serving in local government for David. She will bring that spirit of cooperation to her new leadership role in the Association.



David

“I enjoy being part of our community and working with other township officials and residents to continue growing our community,” she said. “As an MTA Board member and District 11 director, I will take this opportunity to work with the team to expand growth and partnership throughout the state.”

David was involved in Hesperia Community Schools for many years, including 39 years as a district employee. She was also part of its parent-teacher association from 1990-2016, Positive Behavior in Schools (PBIS), 2015-2019, and playground committee, 2000-2001.

## Jim Frederick, MTA District 19 director

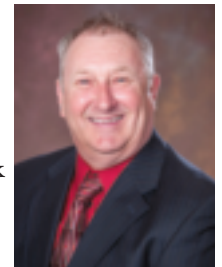
**Jim Frederick, Cooper Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) trustee, has been appointed director of MTA District 19, which encompasses Allegan, Barry and Kalamazoo Counties.

In his new role on the Board, Frederick will help to represent and strengthen township government on the Association board—as he has in his own township since his first election as trustee in 1997.

Whether at the local, county or now statewide level, Frederick is proud to be a public servant.

“I have a statement that I often use: ‘I am a trustee of Cooper Charter Township, in the county of Kalamazoo, in the great state of Michigan, of the United State of America,’ and I proudly stand by that,” Frederick said. “I am a consensus-builder and consider myself a voice to the citizens in my community—and will bring the needs of our townships and our residents to the state level.”

In addition to more than 19 years as trustee (serving from 1997 to 2008 and 2016 to present), Frederick is also the township board’s liaison to the planning commission and treasurer of the Kalamazoo County MTA Chapter, where he has also served as president, clerk and trustee. He was also a member of the 2004 Kalamazoo County Justice Millage Committee.



Frederick





## Recognizing the TGA 'Class of 2024'

The Township Governance Academy (TGA) graduating class of 2024 crossed the stage during a ceremony at the Opening Session of MTA's Annual Conference. Six individuals joined the ranks of more than 110 officials who have earned the prestigious TGA credential (*pictured above, from left*): **Savannah Cavanaugh**, deputy treasurer, **Hayes Township** (Clare Co.); **Darcia Kelley**, zoning administrator, **Eureka Charter Township** (Montcalm Co.); **Carie Milburn**, clerk, **Roscommon Township** (Roscommon Co.); **Frederick Thorsby**, supervisor, **Flushing Charter Township** (Genesee Co.); **Linsey Rogers**, deputy clerk, and **Vanessa Werner**, treasurer, **Briley Township** (Montmorency Co.).



"We honor these six individuals for their commitment to local governance—and to constantly learning to be the best local leaders they can be," said MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan, who presented the graduates with their certificates, joined by 2023 MTA President **Pauline Bennett**.

The graduates will put the knowledge, skills and tools that they learned in the Academy to use in their own communities. "Enrolling in TGA, I expected to dive into rules and laws," Cavanaugh said. "But it also provided practical tools for conflict resolution, connecting with the public, and understanding laws within our township. I'm truly grateful for this enriching experience and can't wait to apply these lessons to better serve and uplift our community."



2018 MTA President Ken Gauthier, who has served as Sanborn Township (Alpena Co.) supervisor for 38 years, was presented with the MTA Life Member Award at the banquet held during the Annual Conference. Gauthier also received an MTA Service Award at an MTA Board meeting following the Conference, recognizing his commitment and efforts helping to lead the Association. "Working with the MTA Board is like working with family," he said. "It's been really great; it's been fun."

# Thank you 2024 Conference Sponsors

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**B**rad Kersten, Chesterfield Charter Township (Macomb Co.) supervisor, knows that being a local official is tough—but it’s also one of the best jobs he can imagine.

Kersten was named the inaugural recipient of the “Spirit of MTA” award. The MTA Board of Directors created the new honor to highlight and recognize the exemplary efforts of local leaders in serving and advancing their township—as the Association has done for more than 70 years. Kersten was presented with the award before nearly 1,000 of his township peers on April 24 during an awards ceremony at the banquet held during MTA’s Annual Educational Conference & Expo at the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.).

“What an honor it is to receive the ‘Spirit of MTA’ award,” Kersten said. “I am humbled and amazed by this recognition. It’s not about me, though. It’s about who we serve, what we do and what we want to be. It’s about the team that we put around us—that’s where we become successful. Politics is a tough business, but it’s the greatest joy.”

#### **Honoring those who make a difference**

Each and every day, township officials work tirelessly on behalf of their communities in large ways and small, and it makes a difference in the lives of every person who lives, works or plays in your townships. These leaders epitomize the meaning of the word team, and the MTA Board wanted to create a program that recognizes this commitment and dedication seen in townships throughout our state every day. With a theme of “One Team,” the 2024 Annual Conference was an ideal place to present the new award.

Following a call for nominations in *Township Focus* and other MTA communication channels, the accolades came pouring in. “We were truly overwhelmed with the response,” said Award Committee Chair **Diana Lowe**, MTA District 25 director and **Genoa Charter Township** (Livingston Co.) trustee. “We received and reviewed dozens of nominations,

showing us how many township leaders value their colleagues on your township team and the selfless, important work that they do every day.”

Kersten received four separate nominations, including one from a neighboring township. In his nominations, he was called an “exemplary leader” with “an unwavering commitment to his community,” who “directly defended and enhanced his township to work together as one team.”

### ‘Do the right thing’

Before presenting the award, 2023 MTA President **Pauline Bennett** reached out to Chesterfield Charter Township Assistant Supervisor **Karen Gharbie** for additional insights into Kersten’s leadership in the township. Gharbie shared with Bennett that Kersten “leads by example, showing employees that the needs of the residents come first. He demonstrates a ‘one team’ atmosphere by continuing to remind staff members how interconnected our departments are. He is the type of leader I aspire to be—honest, dependable, passionate, innovative, empathetic and trustworthy. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to work next to him and learn from one of the best.”

Following a 30-year career with the township police department—starting as patrol officer, and rising to police chief and then public safety director—Kersten was appointed supervisor in 2021. Since his appointment, he has spearheaded more than 45 projects to help improve his community, from infrastructure to I.T., creating a community center to improving community safety—and more.



Chesterfield Charter Township (Macomb Co.) Supervisor Brad Kersten (second from right) was presented with the inaugural “Spirit of MTA” award by (from left) MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan, Awards Committee Chair Diana Lowe and 2023 MTA President Pauline Bennett at the banquet during MTA’s Annual Conference.

Putting the community first and working as part of a broader team is key to community success, Kersten said. “Do what the community wants,” he said. “Parks, pathways, roadways, police, fire, EMS. That’s what our goal should be. This recognition isn’t about me—it’s about who we put around us, and the partners we work with that make us successful.

“We are all township officials, and we have a tough job to do. But it’s about doing the right thing. We can impact so many people, and we can always do the right thing. That’s very simple.”



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## Delta Charter Township named **'Township of Excellence'** for incredible third time

**A**sk **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) leaders what makes their township special, and they can quickly share an extensive list of community characteristics of which they are proud, from parks and recreation opportunities and exceptional public safety to great schools and neighborhoods, thriving area shopping and restaurants, and growing economic development.

"There's a lot of opportunity," said Manager **Brian Reed**. "We have a very good industrial sector and commercial sector, and a lot of great residential areas. We bolster those with quality-of-life amenities—great parks and pathways, excellent public safety services. Those are the things that make Delta Township special."

Every township board member, appointed official, staff and volunteer strives to not only meet but exceed the wants

and needs of its residents, businesses and visitors—and the township has been recognized, once again, for this commitment. The township has earned, for an incredible third time, MTA's "Township of Excellence" designation. The intensive, comprehensive program evaluates township governance, administration and programs to ensure adherence to exceptional practices in boardmanship and in serving the community.

Leaders representing the township accepted the award on April 23 before hundreds of their peers at MTA's Annual Educational Conference. It is the second township in the state to receive the recognition for three successive township terms of office.

The township first achieved "Township of Excellence" status in 2015, and received the honor for a second time in 2020. Townships receive this designation after meeting a series of demanding, high-level criteria, as defined by the Association and its members (*learn more about the program at right*). Delta Charter Township's recognition is for its latest achievement in the 2020-2024 township board term. Board members include Supervisor **Kenneth Fletcher**, Clerk **Mary Clark**, Treasurer **Dennis Fedewa**, and Trustees **Elizabeth Bowen**, **Fonda Brewer**, **Andrea Cascarilla** and **Karen Mojica**.

"We exemplify, I think, what a 'Township of Excellence' stands for," Clark said. "As a community of over 30,000 people, we are one of the larger jurisdictions in the state; yet we have a lot of small community amenities. People know each other."

### Board leadership, dedicated staff

Board leadership and staff dedication are essential to the township's success, Reed said. "We have great leadership from the board, which has always provided a very holistic, strategic direction, focusing on quality of life, but also making sure we have a focus on our core services. We also have really dedicated staff here historically in Delta who take great pride and dedication in providing those services to the public."

Fletcher, too, credits each member of the township team in playing a role in ensuring exceptional administration, services and programs. "Earning this honor has been a great team effort and everybody takes pride in the fact that we've been able to receive this designation," he said. "Going through the process to apply for this recognition makes us be the best that we can possibly be and helps to ensure that we are focusing on local government best practices. That allows us to give that assurance to our residents that they are served by a professionally run community, and that we are doing the very best we can to serve them in the best possible way."

Another benefit of going through the program application process is its emphasis on ensuring officials receive continual education and training, and that they are apprised of both the statutory and changing requirements and trends for townships. "When I became clerk, I realized right away there were a lot of things that I did not know," said Clark, recalling an MTA planning and land use class she attended shortly after becoming clerk. "It was a wonderful introduction for me into the wide, wide, wide array of training that MTA offers, and I think a 'Township of Excellence' is going to take advantage of all of those opportunities."

Earning the distinguished recognition is just one way for the township to demonstrate to its residents that they are working hard each and every day to offer the best services possible. "We are incredibly proud of having achieved this designation for the third time, and it means a lot to us," Clark said. "It reaffirms what our goals are, and what we try to be in our community and in our state."

## Become a 'Township of Excellence'

MTA started the "Township of Excellence" program as a way to recognize townships that demonstrate superior processes and outcomes in governance, while also adhering to best practices in the statutory duties of financial stewardship, property assessment, tax collection and election administration. Townships of all sizes and locations, and regardless of the level of services that you offer, can apply for this recognition. Every service that the township offers must demonstrate excellence, such as transportation, utilities, cemeteries, emergency services, land management and economic development. However, it is important to note that your township is not required to offer all of these services in order to apply for the designation. Your township is evaluated based on the services that you *do* provide.

### 'The process will make you better'

The Township of Excellence program is rigorous and challenging—and we did that intentionally. Townships can expect to spend 18 months scrutinizing every aspect of their governance and operations and filling out the application while demonstrating excellence over an extended time period. And you can start out small—rather than applying for the full designation, your township can choose to apply for "certificates of achievement" in various services areas, such as governance, financial stewardship or election administration. The program is meant to encourage townships to achieve excellence while also bringing the board, as well as the community, together.

Simply going through the process can be beneficial for townships. "I definitely would encourage all townships to apply for 'Township of Excellence,'" said **Ken Fletcher**, supervisor of **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.), which received the honor this year. "It's a great experience to sit down and go through the process and find out areas maybe where there's more that you can do. It helps you develop your A-game and be the best that you possibly can be. I think a lot of townships would find that they are already doing a lot of the key things that are part of 'Township of Excellence.'"

Added Delta Charter Township Clerk **Mary Clark**, "Looking at the program brings into focus what you are or are not doing, or what you might need to shore up. Just the process of going through the application will make you better."

This is also an achievement that we feel every township can attain, noted MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan. "We would love to stand on the stage at our Conference and present dozens of designations every year," he said. "I would like to personally encourage every township to take a look at the program and aspire to be recognized for excellence in your township. I assure you—the journey will be well worth it."

If a township submits an application for a full designation, but does not meet the criteria for all of them, it can receive the certificate of achievement for the section(s) it has completed. A township may work toward a full designation within a township term by applying for one or more sections at a time. Townships must reapply for each township term in which they wish to receive an award.

Visit <https://michigantownships.org> (under "About") to learn more, including previous recipients and full application details.

# aroundthe**state**

townships in the spotlight



## Skandia Township

Settled in 1870, **Skandia Township** (Marquette Co.) detached from then-**Chocoley Township** and became a separate township in 1892. The first recorded landowner within the current township borders was Peter White, who obtained 39 acres of land on Aug. 25, 1862. A rural community located on the east central border of the county, the 72-square-mile township has a population of 810 residents.

The Skandia Township hall and pavilion, built in 1978, houses the U.S. Post Office, and the offices of the supervisor, clerk, treasurer, assessor, zoning administrator and water authority. The hall hosts all elections, as well as meetings of the township board, zoning board of appeals and planning commission.

Together with **West Branch Township** (Marquette Co.), the township provides emergency medical services through a fire department and first responders unit. The township also



provides the community with a transfer station for household waste.

Each summer, Skandia Community Day offers fun for the entire community, with a parade kicking off the festivities followed by food, crafts, games and bounce houses at the township hall and pavilion.

The township opened a new playground in the fall, celebrating the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The new park replaces an outdated playground that had been in use since the 1970s. The new playground features new swings, slides, climbing toys and interactive displays about nature. Students from Superior Central School added to the new community asset by building a playhouse for the park. The new playground, constructed to help meet the needs of the growing community, also includes a new restroom, walking paths and new fencing. The township, which received a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Passport Grant that covered the majority of project costs and fundraised the remaining expenses, is excited for the playground to be enjoyed by the community.





## This just in! New '10 Timely Township Topics' package added to MTA's Online Learning Center

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    - Renewable Energy Update
- Campaign Finance Act: What Can We Say?
  - What the Board Needs to Know about the Clerk and Treasurer Dynamic
- Subpoenas, Depositions and Discovery, Oh My!
  - Civil & Collaborative Leadership



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