

Michigan Township Focus

MARCH 2016

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

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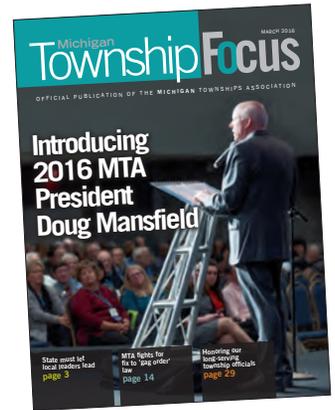
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MTA Official Publication of the Michigan Townships Association

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mission statement

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



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A lifetime of service: Honoring long-serving officials

It's no secret that township officials are a committed group. Among Michigan's 6,500-plus local township leaders are scores of public servants who have dedicated a lifetime to serving their communities. We profile just a handful of these amazing individuals.



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allied service provider index



president's round table

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State must let local leaders lead

The messianic zeal of some lawmakers to criminalize ballot information dissemination by local leaders is but the latest example of Michigan's long-standing efforts to financially cripple and limit the discretion of its local governments.



A recent white paper released by Michigan State University, *Beyond State Takeovers: Reconsidering the Role of State Government in Local Financial Distress, with Important Lessons for Michigan and its Embattled Cities*, documents that Michigan virtually stands alone in the breadth and scope of its restrictions on local governments' ability to raise local resources,

coupled with meager state aid.

For decades, Michigan laws have imposed restriction after restriction on the ability of local leaders to raise local resources while legislatures have simultaneously reduced state funds that formerly offset draconian fiscal restrictions. The state has also been all too willing to reward favored interest groups with property tax exemptions that only marginally affect state government, but over time shift the cost of local government to homeowners and others lacking political influence in Lansing.

And it is no coincidence that, just as the Michigan economy has begun recovering in earnest from a one-state recession endured through much of the 2000s, our beloved state is once again the subject of international pity and judgment.

While some argue that the Flint water crisis could arguably have happened anywhere, the debacle was incubated by decades of antipathy by state officials of both political parties to the financial viability of Michigan's local governments. A pattern of making political hay at the expense of local democracy inevitably raised the odds that a massive failure of government would most likely happen first—and to an unprecedented degree—in our beleaguered Michigan.

Most of Michigan's local governments and schools have ratcheted down spending to align with lower financial resources, but in too many communities, balanced budgets were accomplished with substandard services and poor life quality endured by those who are without the physical, emotional or economic means to leave. Many

more communities face questionable long-term solvency, having borrowed from their future by underfunding retiree obligations and deferring infrastructure maintenance and replacement. Older local governments are especially vulnerable to water and sewer system failures due to population declines and fewer industrial customers to shoulder costs, resulting in unaffordable water and sewer rate increases that nonetheless fail to generate enough money to replace aging pipes.

If lawmakers sincerely want to avoid future Flints, they need to stop devising more ways to deny local governments sufficient resources to meet the expectations of its residents and businesses. Absent the political will to restore revenue sharing to all of the entities coping with state revenue restrictions, lawmakers should follow the lead of other states that allow local government revenue levels and sources to be determined through the local democratic process instead of by state fiat, including abandoning attempts to restrict the flow of information back and forth between voters and local leaders.

Yes, critics will undoubtedly continue to find a few instances where local leaders let their zeal for educating Michigan's children or improving services cross the line into express advocacy for a bond issue or a millage increase, but attempts to "clarify" the law just create new ambiguity and more words requiring judicial interpretation. Leadership should not be an offense worthy of imprisonment.

Unlike state government, at the local level a wide range of important decisions are a shared responsibility of governing boards and voters, requiring ongoing two-way communications between elected officials and citizens—and voters appropriately hold accountable any local officials who communicate in a manner that offends public sensibilities. Legislation is about balancing competing interests. Local leaders with fiduciary duties to the voters deserve respect from state lawmakers and recognition that communications with voters regarding a governing body's ballot question intentions serves the greater public good.

'911, HOW CAN I HELP YOU?'

New rules for multi-line phone systems seek to improve emergency response

New rules go into effect Dec. 31, 2016, that require all multi-line telephone systems (MLTS) or private branch exchange (PBX) phone systems in Michigan to provide accurate locations for phones when a user dials 911 from one of these systems. Townships may be impacted by these new regulations, as well as businesses within your community.

Currently, not all phone systems provide granular location information with the 911 call to enable first responders to know the actual location of the emergency. For example, a call from the 12th floor of a large office building may only provide the street address of the building. If the caller is unable to provide his or her specific location within the building and no one else is available to provide assistance,

emergency response can be delayed as first responders work to find the individual.

Under administrative rules enacted in October 2011 pursuant to the Michigan Emergency 911 Services Enabling Act, owners of MLTS or PBX phone systems in Michigan must upgrade their systems by Dec. 31, 2016, to provide location information.

According to State 911 Administrator Harriet Miller-Brown, "Having the correct location information associated with a 911 call is vital in making sure the call goes to the correct 911 center with the correct location information. It is also imperative that the 911 operator knows where to send help, even if the caller is unable to speak."

Owners and operators of MLTS or PBX systems within Michigan are encouraged to review the complete set of administrative rules to ensure compliance of their systems by the effective date. Rules R 484.901-R 484.906 can be found on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website at www.michigan.gov/mpsc, under "Documents Library."

To further assist owners and operators in understanding the rule change and requirements, the State 911 Committee developed a guide available at www.michigan.gov/snc, under "Current Issues."

LIVE, WORK, PLAY

Free placemaking guidebook available for MTA members

For the past several years, the Michigan Townships Association has been involved in the Michigan Sense of Place Council (SOPC), a network of organizations advancing prosperity in Michigan through placemaking. Placemaking is the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, shop, learn and visit. While it may sound like a bunch of jargon, placemaking can play a critical role as the state transitions to a more diversified economy that embraces entrepreneurship and innovation.

One of the tangible products from the SOPC partnership is a new guidebook on placemaking, *Placemaking as an Economic Development Tool*. The resource includes everything township officials should know about placemaking, including elements and processes of placemaking, regulatory tools, the four types of placemaking, and more. Because of MTA's involvement with the SOPC, the MSU Land Policy Institute (LPI), the authoring organization, is offering the guidebook to MTA members *first and free* (for one year).

Placemaking as an Economic Development Tool can be an excellent resource for township elected officials, downtown development authorities, planning commissions, and more. The techniques and tools discussed in this guidebook can help to improve local quality of life and economic competitiveness by assisting in creating vibrant places where people are drawn. Each chapter includes a case example of a placemaking project in action in Michigan.

The guidebook is available as an eBook in electronic format (PDF) only. To receive access to your free download, complete the Limited Use Agreement form (download at <http://landpolicy.msu.edu/resources/pmedtguidebook>) and send it directly to LPI. Further instructions are included on the form. This offer is valid only to MTA members, so please do not distribute this further at this time.

MTA members can also download the use agreement from MTA's "Economic Development" and "Placemaking" Web pages, on the members-only section of www.michigan-townships.org. After logging in, access the pages via the "Index of Topics" under the "Answer Center."



OPTIONS FOR CONFLICTING MEETING DATES

Reminder: March primary and first BOR meeting fall on same day

This year, the March 8 presidential primary election falls on the same day as the first meeting of the board of review. For those townships whose township hall serves as both the meeting place and an election precinct, some options are available.

The first meeting of the board of review is the organizational meeting, not one where taxpayers come to appeal their assessments. A township does not have the option to switch the first meeting of the board of review (unlike the second or subsequent board of review meetings).

The board of review is not required to hear individual assessment appeals at the organizational meeting, although it must conduct a public comment period, as the Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, *et seq.*, requires at every meeting of a public body. So the disruption may be minimized, as long as the township plans ahead.

Townships do have options for where they conduct meetings, including board of review meetings. A township public body may meet in any location that can accommodate the anticipated number of attendees. It can be in a public facility or a private facility. A township may use a free location or pay a fee or room charge. As with any meeting of a public body, the notice of the meeting must include the date, time and location of the meeting.

Although the following language is required by the OMA only when the meeting is held in a private residence, MTA recommends that it be used on all meeting notices, "This meeting is open to all members of the public under Michigan's Open Meetings Act," especially if it is a new location or a private facility.

Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting of the board of review shall be given at least one week before the meeting by publication in a generally circulated newspaper serving the area. The notice shall appear in three successive issues of the newspaper where available; otherwise, by the posting of the notice in five conspicuous places in the township. (MCL 211.29(6))



NEW REIMBURSEMENT RATE

IRS standard mileage rate decreases for 2016

The standard mileage rate—the maximum amount employers can reimburse employees for business miles driven in the employee's personal vehicle, without tax consequences—is 54 cents per mile in 2016.

There is no requirement for townships to pay this amount per mile; the IRS sets these "safe harbor" limits whereby the employer [township] can reimburse the employee for the business use of his or her personal vehicle without income tax consequences.

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POSTING REQUIREMENT

Employers must post MIOSHA form through April 30

The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) requires most Michigan employers with 11 or more employees to log and maintain records of work-related injuries and illnesses, and to make those records available during MIOSHA inspections of the workplace.



Employers must post the MIOSHA Form 300A (Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses) for three months, through April 30, of each year.

The form is available at www.michigantownships.org (search for “Workplace Posters” on the members-only portion of the website).

CENSUS ESTIMATES

Michigan’s population increases for fourth consecutive year

Population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau at the end of December showed that the state’s population increased again in 2015—the fourth consecutive year of a rise in population. State demographer Eric Guthrie called the estimates “a welcome change from the mid- to late 2000s when Michigan experienced several years of consecutive population losses.”

The Census data estimated the state gained 6,270 residents, increasing 0.06 percent to 9,922,576 as of July. Michigan saw nearly 39,000 residents leave for other states in 2015, an increase of more than 10,000 from 2014. An increase in births and a decrease in deaths helped offset those losses.

Michigan’s population increase is dwarfed by growth in California and southern states including Texas and Florida. North Carolina, for example, grew by 1 percent in 2015 or more than 102,000 residents. The Southern state bypassed Michigan in 2014 to become the nation’s ninth largest by population. Michigan remained the 10th most populous state in 2015.

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DEADLINE DELAYS

Several Affordable Care Act reporting requirements delayed

In its Notice 2016-4, the IRS has delayed the deadlines for several Affordable Care Act reporting requirements *for the 2015 tax year only*. Previous deadlines were included in the January/February *Township Focus*, which went to press prior to the IRS delays. The following due dates were extended:

- For furnishing to individuals the 2015 Form 1095-B, *Health Coverage*, and 2015 Form 1095-C, *Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage*, from Feb. 1, 2016, to March 31, 2016.
- For filing with the IRS the 2015 Form 1094-B, *Transmittal of Health Coverage Information Returns*, 2015 Form 1095-B, *Health Coverage*, 2015 Form 1094-C, *Transmittal of Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage Information Returns*, and 2015 Form 1095-C, *Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage*, from Feb. 29, 2016, to May 31, 2016, *if not filing electronically*, and from March 31, 2016, to June 30, 2016 if filing electronically.

In addition, individuals who do not receive their Forms 1095 by the time their 2015 tax returns are filed will not be required to amend their returns upon actual receipt of Forms 1095, or any subsequent corrections, for the 2015 tax year.

These requirements impact townships with 50 or more full-time equivalent employees.

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Attorneys Frank DeFrancesco, Scott Dienes and Steve Smith will continue to serve clients from their St. Joseph office located at 728 Pleasant Street.

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Courtade elected MTA District 8 director

East Bay Charter Township (Grand Traverse Co.) Clerk **Susanne Courtade** has joined MTA's Board of Directors. At a caucus election at MTA's Annual Educational Conference & Expo, held in January at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center, Courtade was elected director of MTA District 8, which encompasses Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Manistee counties.



Courtade

In her new role on the MTA Board of Directors, Courtade said she will promote Association services and education. "I am passionate about making sure my fellow officials of all positions have opportunities to learn, educate and grow to better serve our communities," she said.

Courtade was first elected clerk in 2006. She has taken an active role in the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks (MAMC), where she currently serves as second vice president, chair of the MAMC Legislative Committee and co-chair of the Council of Elected Officials. She has also served in multiple roles, including president, on the Grand Traverse County Municipal Clerks Association.

In 2011, Courtade received the Certified Municipal Clerk designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, and she became a Certified Michigan Municipal Clerk in 2014.

Courtade and her husband, Matt, have five daughters and nine grandchildren. Their grandchildren are the eighth generation of Courtades to live in East Bay Charter Township.

Turn to pages 18-24 for our full recap of MTA's 2016 Annual Educational Conference & Expo.

mta events | March

25 Early-bird registration deadline for MTA's 2016 Capital Conference, held April 12-13 at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing

Deadline to sign up to ride the U.P./Northern Michigan Bus to the MTA Capital Conference

28 *Utilizing Strategic Planning to Achieve Results* workshop, Battle Creek

29 *At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs* workshop, Battle Creek

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Par Plan became an MTA Allied Service Provider at the President's Round Table level in 2005. "It's really quite simple," Rita Evans, Par Plan program administrator, said. "MTA is the foundation of knowledge and teachings for Michigan communities. Being able to partner with MTA offers the Par Plan another avenue for networking to provide Michigan communities local representation and personal service for their property and casualty needs."

The Par Plan is administered by HCC Public Risk of Auburn Hills. For more information about the Michigan Township Participating Plan's services, please visit www.theparplan.com or call the administrative offices at (800) 783-1370.

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



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The scholarship is a one-time award determined on a competitive basis by the applicant's academic achievement, community involvement and commitment to a career in local government administration.

Applicants must be a junior, senior or graduate student enrolled in a Michigan college or university and pursuing a career in local government administration. The following materials are required to apply: 1) a letter of recommendation from a professor or instructor, 2) a copy of a resolution of support from a Michigan township board, and 3) a short essay on an important issue facing local government.

Students must submit application materials to:

The Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o Michigan Townships Association, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078.

Ensure students in your area know about the scholarship! Post a link on your township website to www.michigantownships.org/scholarship.asp. Need more information? Call (517) 321-6467.

Contributions to the scholarship fund are also accepted throughout the year. Call the MTA office for details.



FOR SALE

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

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

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

MARCH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 Presidential primary. (MCL 168.613a)

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

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

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

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

14 *Second Monday in March.* First meeting of the board of review. (MCL 211.29) Meeting must start not earlier than 9 a.m. and not later than 3 p.m. The board of review must meet one additional day during this week and hold at least three hours of its required sessions after 6 p.m. (MCL 211.30) The township may authorize an alternative starting date for the second meeting of the March board of review, which can be either the Tuesday or Wednesday following the second Monday in March. (MCL 211.30(2))

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

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

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

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

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

Townships with 50 or more full-time employees must file information returns with the IRS and provide statements to each employee who was a full-time employee for at least one month of the year about health coverage offered by the township or to show that the township did not offer health coverage. Forms 1095-C must be provided to employees by March 31.

Note: A different date appeared in the January/February Township Focus. The deadline was delayed by the IRS in early January, for the 2015 tax year only.

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APRIL

1 General law townships with an April 1 to March 31 fiscal year should conduct the budget public hearing and adopt the budget before April 1.

Assessors must annually provide a copy of Form 5278, *Affidavit and Statement for Eligible Manufacturing Personal Property and Essential Services Assessment*, Form 5277, *Affidavit to Rescind Exemption of Eligible Manufacturing Personal Property*, and other parcel information required by the Department of Treasury in a form and manner required by the Department of Treasury no later than April 1 of each year. (MCLs 211.9m and 211.9n)

4 On or before the first Monday in April. The board of review must complete its review of protests of assessed

value, taxable value, property classification or denial by assessor of continuation of qualified agricultural property exemption. (MCL 211.30a)

6 Supervisor or assessor shall deliver the completed assessment roll, with board of review certification, to the county equalization director not later than the 10th day after adjournment of the board of review or the Wednesday following the first Monday in April, whichever date occurs first. (MCL 211.30(7))

Assessor shall file State Tax Commission (STC) Form L-4021 with the county equalization department, and STC Form L-4022 (signed by the assessor) with the county equalization department and the STC, immediately following adjournment of the board of review. (STC administrative rule: R 209.26(6a), (6b))

Form 4626 *Assessing Officers Report of Taxable Values as of State Equalization* due to the county.

18 Allocation board meets and receives budgets. (MCL 211.210)

19 Partisan and nonpartisan candidates (other than judicial candidates) file nominating petitions (or fees if applicable) and Affidavit of Identity for Aug. 2 primary by 4 p.m. Withdrawal deadline elapses at 4 p.m. on April 22.

By 25 Clerks forward names and addresses of partisan and nonpartisan candidates to county clerk. (MCL 168.349)

By 26 Petitions to place county and local questions on Aug. 2 primary

ballot filed with county and local clerks. (If governing law sets an earlier petition filing deadline, earlier deadline must be observed.) (MCL 168.646a)

Challenges against nominating petitions filed by partisan and nonpartisan candidates submitted to filing official. (MCL 168.552)

29 Deadline for filing Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) Active Duty Military Affidavit to allow military personnel to retain a PRE for up to three years if they rent or lease their principal residence while away on active duty. (MCL 211.7dd)

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Q What is the Single State Construction Code?

Prior to 1999, Michigan did not have a single unified construction code. Because of this, each individual municipality that administered and enforced a construction code used one of several different nationally recognized codes. You may remember opening a code book and finding an “ordinance” in the back that could be used to administer and enforce that particular book.

As you can imagine, the variation between different municipalities caused a great deal of confusion amongst members of the building trades industry. For example, two adjoining municipal units may have had different code books and therefore, different codes. The Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act (PA 245 of 1999, as amended) provided the framework for a single statewide construction code by the State Construction Code Commission.

Q What constitutes ‘all trades’?

There are four main component “trades” encompassed in the construction code:

- building
- mechanical
- plumbing
- electrical

“Mechanical” refers to the heating and cooling systems in a building. A township may administer and enforce any or all of these.

Q How do I know if my township is the administering and enforcing agency for any of the four trades?

For the most part, you should already know the answer to this question. Does your township employ a local building official, building department or building inspector? If so, the township is probably the administering and enforcing agency for the at least a portion of the State Construction Code.

You can check by visiting www.michigan.gov and typing in “statewide jurisdiction list.” There you will find a list, by county, of every municipal entity with a column for each trade. By checking the entry for township with the trade, you will find the word “local, county or state.” If you find the word “local,” then the township is the administering and enforcing agency for that trade (building, mechanical, electrical or plumbing).

Q What are the components of the Single State Construction Code?

Pursuant to MCL 125.1504(2), the State Construction Code consists of the following nationally recognized codes “with amendments, additions or deletions” as the State Construction Code Commission determines appropriate:

- International Residential Code
- International Building Code
- International Mechanical Code
- International Plumbing Code
- International Existing Building Code
- International Energy Conservation Code
- National Electrical Code

MCL 125.1504(5) authorizes the director to “add, amend, and rescind rules to update the Michigan building code, the Michigan mechanical code, the Michigan plumbing code, the Michigan rehabilitation code for existing buildings, the Michigan electrical code, and the commercial chapters of the Michigan energy code not less than once every 3 years

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to coincide with the national code change cycle.” MCL 125.1502a(q) defines department as “the department of licensing and regulatory affairs” (LARA). So, the director of LARA or a designee of the director, such as the Bureau of Construction Codes, may add, amend or rescind the rules.

The national codes adopted by LARA may not be the most recently promulgated codes. It is up to the township’s building department to ensure that it is administering and enforcing the correct version of the nationally adopted code. The 2015 “International Residential Code” is the most current of the nationally recognized codes that is now part of the State Construction Code, effective as of Feb. 8, 2016. Most of the other codes (International Building Code, International Mechanical Code, International Plumbing Code, and International Existing Building Code) are the 2012 versions as of time of this writing, even though 2015 versions are available. Portions of the 2015 and 2009 International Energy Conservation Code are currently effective in Michigan. Additionally, as of the time of this writing, the most current electrical code adopted as part of the State Construction Code is the 2014 Michigan Electrical Code (National Electrical Code).

LARA has promulgated a schedule with proposed adoption dates for more current codes. A township’s building department should stay abreast of these changes.



What does ‘enforce’ mean?

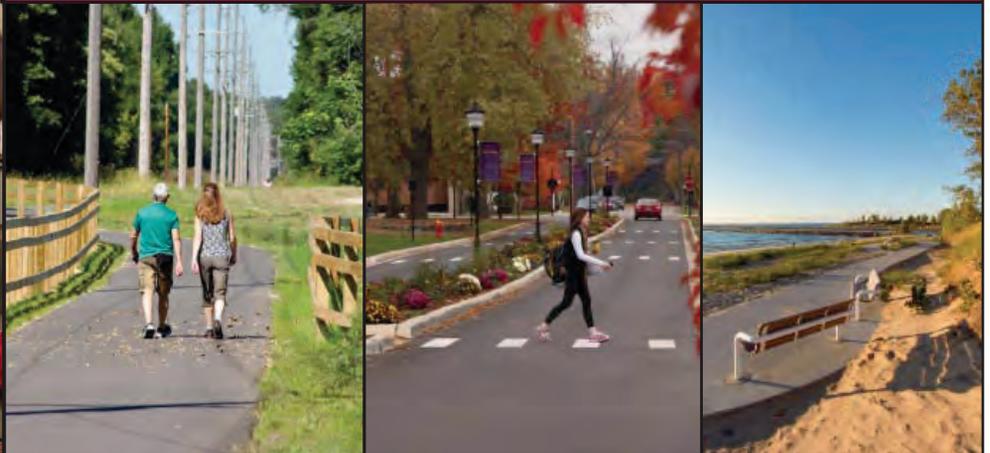
MCL 125.1523(1) provides that a violation of the State Construction Code constitutes a misdemeanor, unless an administering and enforcing agency converts violations to municipal civil infractions as authorized by MCL 125.1523(3). If a township designates violations of the State Construction Code as municipal civil infractions, then it may choose to proceed through the local district court. One advantage is that the court can issue a court order requiring compliance with the code, which can help gaining compliance from violators.

If the township has an ordinance violations bureau, violations of the State Construction Code designated as municipal civil infractions by local ordinance are payable at the ordinance violations bureau and the township may retain the fines. MTA has sample language that a township board can use to assist the township’s attorney in drafting an ordinance violations bureau ordinance. Access the samples on the members-only section of www.michigantownships.org. Look for “Ordinance Adoption and Enforcement” in the “Index of Townships” under the “Answer Center” tab.

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



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MTA fights for fix for ‘gag order’ law

Townships can—for now—continue to provide factual communications with their residents about local ballot proposals despite a recent law restricting the ability to do so.

On Feb. 5, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting the state from enforcing Section 57(3) of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCL 169.257) until further order of the court. MTA is part of the coalition that filed the lawsuit on behalf of 17 local government and school officials and one private citizen to halt a new law—Public Act 269 of 2015—that severely restricts how local officials can communicate with their residents about local ballot proposals. As of *Township Focus* press time, the injunction still stands.

In one of the final votes for the 2015 legislative session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 571 with a floor amendment that added more than 40 pages to the original 12-page version. This amended version included language that was not subject to testimony or public review. Among the changes added was Section 57(3) that prohibits a public body, or person acting on its behalf, from using public funds or resources to communicate via radio, television, mass mailing or prerecorded calls referencing a local ballot question within 60 days before a local election. This is not limited to millages but includes all ballot questions and applies to factual information. Under PA 269, a person who knowingly violates these restrictions is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment of up to a year, or both. If the violator is not an individual, the punishment would be a fine of up to \$20,000. The bill—which is now PA 269—was effective immediately upon the governor’s signature on Jan. 6.

Gov. Snyder said in a signing letter to legislators that this section of the law needs to be clarified.

Rep. Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Bowne Twp.), sponsored HB 5219 in an effort to clarify PA 269. The bill would eliminate the 60-day limitation, and add that “communication” would allow the language of a local ballot question, the date of an election, or factual and “strictly neutral” information. However, the communication cannot “reasonably be interpreted” as an attempt to influence the outcome. Though the bill offers some improvements, MTA does not support HB 5219, as it still leaves the ambiguity local officials face under PA 269. MTA is attempting to work with legislators to address these issues. As of press time, the bill was before the Legislature.

MTA is working to seek removal of the language added to Section 57 in PA 269, and believes that voters deserve to have ballot issues fully explained to them, and that townships need the freedom to be able to do so.



Many townships rely on newsletters and fact sheets to provide their residents with information explaining a local ballot proposal. PA 269 eliminated the most effective means townships have of ensuring their residents are informed before an election takes place. As a result, residents may not have factual information they need to make a decision on ballot proposals.

MTA urges members to contact their representative and senator and let them know that Section 57(3) of PA 269 must be repealed or, at a minimum, amended to provide clarity and unambiguous direction for local officials.

More townships could have rental inspection programs

More townships could start a rental inspection program under Public Act 14 of 2016. Michigan’s previous rental inspection law set a population threshold of 100,000 for requiring rental inspection programs for apartment buildings and rooming houses, but excluded townships except for limited circumstances.

PA 14 lowers the population threshold to 10,000 and now includes townships. Townships are not required to inspect rental properties unless they receive complaints of housing law violations. No local unit can require inspection fees to be paid more than six months before the inspection takes place. MTA supported the bill’s inclusion of townships and its permissive nature. The measure will take effect May 16.

Editor’s note: An incorrect timeline for the bill passage appeared in the January/February Township Focus. We regret the error.



Judgment levies protected under new law

Tax dollars collected as the result of a judgment could only be used for their intended purpose under Public Act 15 of 2016.

PA 15 was formerly Senate Bill 615, which was sponsored by Sen. Wayne Schmidt (R- Traverse City) and monitored by MTA. The new law specifies that a judgment entered against a governmental entity that is assessed and collected as a tax, and any specific local tax attributable to the judgment, must not be retained or captured by any other governmental entity, for any other purpose. The bill was introduced to address an assessment levied by Wayne County to pay a judgment from litigation over retirement benefits.

Without the protection provided by PA 15, the assessment levied would be subject to capture by other entities, such as tax increment finance authorities, and the county would be short \$5 million to pay the judgment. However, PA 15, which is retroactive to all judgments entered after May 6, 2015, applies to all judgment levies by townships and other local units.

Law allows certain earth changes without a permit

Some farmers could soon build fences, remove tree roots or make other earth changes without a permit under Public Act 2 of 2016. The new law was previously House Bill 4604, sponsored by Rep. Brett Roberts (R-Eaton Twp.), which was monitored by MTA. The public act amends a portion of previous Michigan law that did not allow anyone to make an earth change without getting a permit from the appropriate county or municipal enforcing agency.

Effective Feb. 25, 2016, PA 2 exempts earth changes associated with certain agricultural practices from this requirement. This includes the construction, maintenance or removal of fences and fence lines; removal of tree or tree stumps or roots; installation of drainage tile, irrigation or electrical lines; or construction or maintenance of ponds if the earth change was less than five acres, did not result in a discharge of storm water into waters of the state, and was not part of a larger plan of development.

Mutual funds could lead to more money for cemetery care funds

Townships that use a fund to perpetually care for and maintain their cemetery could invest that money in mutual funds under a bill that was recently signed into law.

Senate Bill 303, sponsored by Sen. Marty Knollenberg (R-Troy) and supported by MTA, became Public Act 13 of 2016 after it was signed by the governor. The measure amends the law allowing municipalities to own and maintain cemeteries to expand how the funds apportioned to that maintenance may be held and invested, providing townships with a way to receive a better return on investment for their cemetery care funds.

Previous law already allowed townships to establish an endowment and care fund for a municipally owned cemetery as part of an agreement with a community foundation. SB 303 also allows governing bodies to invest that money into mutual funds consisting of fixed income securities, equity securities or both. This could only be done if the cemetery fund's equity position did not exceed 60 percent of the fund balance, and if the equity position does not contain more than 40 percent in any given asset category. Each mutual fund must also be rated in the top two of five or more tiers by Morningstar, Inc., or another nationally recognized mutual fund rating agency at the time of purchase. Other investments already authorized by law will not be prohibited under the new law.

This change could be a positive development for local units, as the current investment options are considered short-term and might not yield a strong return. With a better possibility for a stronger return on investment, townships could have more money to take care of a cemetery even after all the lots are sold. PA 13 is effective May 16, 2016.



Legislative lowdown

Here's a quick look at important bills that MTA is following as they move through the legislative process.

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

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

SB 569: Allow local units to keep more money in their budget stabilization fund. *MTA supports.*

SBs 651-653: Creates 'Transitional Qualified Forest Property Specific Tax Act' to establish phase-in transfer of commercial forest property to qualified forest property. *MTA neutral.*

SB 673: Extends Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act to Dec. 31, 2026. *MTA supports.*

SB 729/HB 5261: Allows county to loan funds to township for road construction; permissive. *MTA supports.*

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

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

HB 4516: Allows disabled veterans who miss filing period to receive property tax exemption for 2013 and 2014. *MTA opposes.*

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

HB 4580: Requires written agreement between local unit and eligible Next Michigan business beginning Jan. 1, 2017, to grant specific personal property tax exemption and allow local unit to revoke exemptions if business is in violation of written agreement or is no longer eligible. *MTA supports.*

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

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

HB 4758: Amends Drain Code to allow issuance of bonds subject to mandatory redemption. *MTA supports.*

HB 4795: Prescribes penalties for local officials regarding local enactment or enforcement of gun control measures that are pre-empted by the state. *MTA opposes.*

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

HB 5077: Extends required mailing notice for assessment notices to taxpayers from 14 days to 30 days prior to the board of review. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5169: Changes disabled veterans property tax exemption to state income tax credit. *MTA supports.*

HB 5219: Would amend recently enacted PA 269 of 2015 regarding rules for communication on local ballot proposals by local officials. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5238-5245: Would create new requirements for local units of government when contracting for architectural, engineering, and land surveying services. *MTA opposes.*

2016 MTA President Doug Mansfield

Honor the past, look to the future

If anyone knows local government, it's **Doug Mansfield**. Not only has the supervisor of **Union Township** (Grand Traverse Co.) been involved with township government for 20 years, he has also made local government his profession. As president of Mansfield Land Use Consultants, he's attended more township, city and county board meetings than he can count.



Mansfield knows from his experience that townships help to shape, preserve and protect the character of their community. What works for neighboring Traverse City or Garfield Charter Township might not work in his small, 400-person township. That's what makes local control so valuable—and why Mansfield is so determined to protect it.

This year, Mansfield will take an active role in protecting local control as the 2016 MTA president. He was elected to the position at the MTA Annual Meeting, held Jan. 22 during the MTA Annual Conference & Expo in Detroit.

By the end of his term, Mansfield hopes to have led the MTA Board through a transition to a new, more representative model of governance that he believes will better serve MTA members. He plans to help township officials remember the past while also keeping an eye toward the future. He wants to encourage officials to engage their residents and look within the community for expanding local leadership.

Mansfield recently sat down with Township Focus to reflect on the experiences that prepared him to lead the largest local government association in the state, as well as what he envisions for the future of township government and MTA.

What are your goals as MTA president?

A large part of me wants to honor those MTA presidents who have come before me in leading the Association, and just perform the role as well as they did. But another part of me wants to tip the system upside down and shake it up. My ultimate goal is to gain acceptance and approval to operate the MTA Board through a policy governance model, which is a much more representative form of governance and better represents our constituency.

What progress do you hope to see townships make in the upcoming year?

Township officials must remember how fast things can turn upside down economically in this state. We need to

always be prepared for that to happen again—because it will happen again—and open doors to new policies or strategies that can help prevent another downturn. Those officials who have been involved in local government for a while will remember, but newer officials may not fully appreciate how bad the economy was for local government. When I am on the road as MTA president, I will help officials learn how townships can help to prevent such hardships.

How can townships better engage residents in local government?

We're busy people. Local officials are grassroots people, but sometimes the last thing some of us want is for people to show up at our board meetings. We

need to invite people, challenge them, and applaud them for coming and being interested.

Make it fun and keep it current. For example, at the end of your meeting, you could pose a question to the audience to get them thinking. During the recession, I did that at my township to spawn new thinking about different topics. We'd spend a limited amount of time on the issue at each meeting—sometimes the topic would be a piece of property, sometimes it would be a business use, or something during those tough times that could create revenue. Doing this shows residents that township business is more than just paying the bills. Township officials are strategic, higher thinkers, and we're thinking ahead.

What keeps you committed to township government?

I've always been one who thinks a person should serve. That should be the basis, the desire to serve the community. In my work as a planner, I can understand what it's like to get frustrated with any municipal system. But it's always the idea of local control that brings me back. My community is only about 400 people. You can get good participation—you can have a town hall meeting and have everyone attend; you can write a letter to everyone in your township. You're representing a community that you know and that you care about.

How can MTA equip townships to meet challenges they face?

Township leadership must be stronger, harder and more strategic. MTA is best equipped to help officials learn to look in places and resources that maybe they've never looked before. MTA is engaged to support our member officials in many different ways, but the Association needs to hear from its members what they really need. That's part of my goal, that being a more strategic and representative MTA Board will help that come forward.

How can townships achieve quality leadership in their communities?

Townships should invest more in their appointed committee members. Some townships send elected officials or staff to continuing education opportunities, but may not do the same when it comes to a planning commissioner

or park board member. Investing in these individuals can be anything from inviting them to board meetings to sending that person to educational workshops or conferences.

What experiences have prepared you to serve as MTA's leadership?

My day job is land use consulting—to bring land and land uses to their highest and best level. We've done projects from southeast Michigan to Dowagiac to Marquette. I dare say that I've been to more board meetings than most people and in more regions of the state. I've learned to understand where each community's local character and personality comes from. I use that knowledge to mitigate an open-minded discussion on a topic—and it always comes back to local control. And I respect that. No matter how pretty the picture, it's really up to that community.

What do you see in the future for township government?

Townships must look at being more self-sustaining in a time of flat revenue sharing and tax dollars. We also need to take responsibility for what and where our jurisdiction lies in a region within the state of Michigan, and to open up our resources. That's key if we're going to continue to be the form of government that has the respect of our peers and our constituents.



2015 MTA President Linda Preston affixes the MTA president pin on Mansfield upon his election at the MTA Annual Meeting.

'My personal heroes'

The MTA staff has asked who would be my personal hero.

I have had the benefit and honor of growing up around, learning from and working with a group of people whose advice I have idealized and treasured. These were members of the greatest generation. These were **my mentors**.

I was raised in a stable, happy, patient, sharing and supportive home by two of the most wonderful and in love people I will ever know. These are **my parents**.

My wife of 30 years is the best human being I know. Gracious, frank, smart, fun and warm, she is a person of respect and admiration. I am proud to be with her and she makes me a better person. She is **my partner**.

But if I had to say who **my heroes** are, it would be my two sons, Ben and Sam. Both in their early 20s, Ben is a Michigan Tech engineer now with Ford Motor and Sam is "expected" to graduate from U of M (Go Blue!) this spring.

Ben, our first, is the emotional, deep thinker who would sacrifice anything for anyone. He is our award winner, not for grades or high achievements, but for his leadership and commitment. Sometimes he will drive you crazy, sometimes I worry he is a lot like me.

Sam is our surfer dude who, with all his studies, friends and activities, is like a tornado. He does not let things get to him, or at least it doesn't show. Sometimes I wish I never knew him, sometimes I wish I was a lot like him.

Neither of them avoided the various acts of idiocy that growing up involves—i.e., they were not angels.

Neither of them is as strong as they claim to be—i.e., I can still take them down (I think).

I am so happy and proud of these two. Considering all of the pressures, temptations, exposures and crazy conflicts growing up today involves, how these kids have become the men they have, must have taken so much courage, I am just in awe.

What I enjoy most is watching them interact with my good friends now, the fathers of their childhood friends. I watch and listen, and find that they are respectful, funny and relevant. I get comments from these guys, who say, "Your kids are really cool." Is there any better compliment a dad can get from his friends, about his boys—**his heroes**?



Mansfield chats with new MTA District 8 Director Susanne Courtade.

re remembering #MTA2016



Linda Preston reflected on her year as 2015 MTA president during her President's Address at the Opening Session.



Between educational sessions, township officials were able to reconnect and network with colleagues.



The MTA Expo connected attendees with more than 100 vendors offering township solutions and services.



Larry Merrill reinvigorated officials as he kicked off the Opening Session, while Keynoter Josh Linkner recharged township officials at the General Session with his message of relentless drive to ensure a strong future.



Photos by Trumpie Photography. To view or order online, visit www.trumpiephotography.com.



Conference-goers relaxed and enjoyed Michigan Township Participating Plan's RE-mix! Dodge City Casino.



The Parade of Flags offered an inspirational start to the Conference.



2015 MTA President Linda Preston presented 2014 MTA President Doug Merchant with the MTA Past President Award.



Attendees danced the night away at the Burnham & Flower Afterglow Reception.



Attendees reengaged with lawmakers at MTA's VIP Legislative Reception.



Yellow Brick Road Dueling Pianos provided the entertainment at the MTA Banquet.



Delegates debated MTA legislative policy at the Annual Meeting.



Attendees could choose from more than 70 educational sessions, gleaning insights from dozens of speakers who shared their expertise.

Preston honored with President's Resolution

2015 MTA President **Linda Preston** was honored with a President's Resolution, recognizing her leadership over the past year, at the MTA Annual Meeting. The resolution, presented by 2016 MTA President Doug Mansfield, read:

LET IT BE KNOWN that it is an honor for the Michigan Townships Association to acknowledge with admiration and respect the leadership of **Linda Preston**, as her term as president of the Association for 2015 comes to an end.

Using her people skills and commitment to MTA's principles, Preston led the Association with a focus on service, engagement, education and advocacy. While crisscrossing the state for countless MTA workshops, events, conferences and meetings, she made it her mission to talk with as many officials as possible, to hear their comments and concerns to ensure the Association is meeting—and exceeding—member expectations. At the same time, she encouraged the 6,500-plus elected township officials to take advantage of MTA's educational offerings and resources, and push themselves to continually improve their knowledge, involvement and skills as local leaders.

Preston knows that continued engagement with the state's legislators about critical township issues is key to ensuring the local government perspective is considered when new laws are discussed. "Walking the walk and talking the talk," Preston brought the township message to both Lansing and Washington, D.C., and was a key Association media spokesperson for the continued push for additional road funding. She learned from her father, a decorated World War II veteran, that keeping a positive outlook can help you overcome any adversity, and she approaches all aspects of her various leadership roles with a focus on diplomacy and consensus-building.

Preston has dedicated more than three decades to township government, first serving as clerk of **Pokagon Township** (Cass Co.) for 20 years, and as supervisor since 2005. A dedicated wife, mother and public servant, Preston has a big heart that is evident in the way she treats her colleagues, residents and other public officials. She truly believes in townships and works diligently to preserve and protect the form of government that is closest to the people.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan Townships Association offers its sincere gratitude to Linda Preston 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.



2016 MTA Executive Committee

Doug Mansfield, President

Supervisor, Union Township (Grand Traverse Co.)

"I hope to remind townships of how far we've come in advancing Michigan's economy ... and inspire them to think strategically and engage their residents more robustly in their local government."



Diane Randall, First Vice President

Supervisor, Roscommon Township (Roscommon Co.)

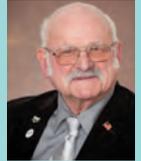
"I look forward to continuing our efforts to make township government more effective and efficient for the good of the citizens."



Ken Gauthier, Second Vice President

Supervisor, Sanborn Township (Alpena Co.)

"I truly believe townships are the form of government closest to the people, and I'm dedicated to promoting that message and preserving townships for future generations."



Jeff Sorensen, Treasurer

Supervisor, Cooper Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.)

"I look forward to serving the MTA membership and will give my best to better township government."



Peter Kleiman, Secretary

Supervisor, Harris Township (Menominee Co.)

"MTA works hard to move our state forward, and make it a better place for our residents to live, work and raise a family."



Bill Deater, Member-at-large

Supervisor, Grant Township (St. Clair Co.)

"To be an advocate for my community and the Association is an honor."



Linda Preston, Immediate Past President

Supervisor, Pokagon Township (Cass Co.)

"I have enjoyed helping townships to be recognized for the value of the services they provide, and ensuring that the voice of the people can be heard."



U.S. Rep. Candice Miller receives MTA Lifetime Achievement Award

MTA honored U.S. Rep. Candice Miller with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her decades of public service. She received the recognition before more than 1,000 local officials and special guests at the MTA Annual Banquet, held Jan. 21.

“In Rep. Miller’s early career in public office, she quickly became a standout public servant,” said Larry Merrill, MTA executive director. “As supervisor of **Harrison Charter Township** in Macomb County, Candice’s exemplary

leadership and managerial skills served as a model for other local officials. As she continued her journey through county and statewide offices, Candice was consistently principled, innovative and accessible. As a member of Congress, Candice distinguished herself as a pragmatic and trusted problem-solver

who earned universal respect for her knowledge of complex policy issues and tenacity on behalf of issues as diverse as transportation funding to national security. MTA is proud to call U.S. Rep. Candice Miller one of our own, and proud of her immeasurable contributions to her township, county, state and country.”

Miller first began serving Harrison Charter Township when she was elected trustee in 1979. Just one year later, she became the youngest and first female supervisor in the township’s history when she was elected to the office. Miller was elected Macomb County treasurer in 1992, and was elected secretary of state in 1994. She was elected to her first term in Congress in 2002.

In her acceptance speech, Miller recalled her days as a township official and her interactions with MTA, which she referred to as a “pillar” and a “constant.” She said she attended many MTA Conferences when she was a township supervisor, calling the event “the best investment your township can make.” As a lawmaker, she now knows from experience that when MTA takes a position on an issue, legislators take notice. Township officials have their finger on the pulse of the people, she said, and she thanked them for the work they do in their community, state and nation.

“MTA plays such a critical role in representing and advocating for Michigan’s more than 1,200 townships,” Miller said. “As we all know, the local government is closest to the people and, as a former township supervisor, I have a very good understanding of and a great appreciation for the challenges they face. It is this understanding that makes this award particularly special for me. I thank the Michigan Townships Association and its township members for this extraordinarily humbling honor.”



Conference sponsors

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2016 MTA policy platform

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

Assessment and Taxation

Taxation is the means by which governments at all levels are provided financial resources to perform functions and provide services necessary for the general well-being of society.

The Michigan Townships Association supports taxation policies that are fair, equitable and efficiently administered. As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current tax laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

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

Elections

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

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

Environment and Land Use

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

1. The definition of Waters of the United States, subject to permitting processes of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, should not be extended to non-navigable waters such as roadside ditches, field drainage systems, and culvert installation and maintenance
2. Federal and state laws and regulations should not be intended to impede the growth and development policies and objectives of local governments

3. Statewide septic system maintenance standards to reduce septic system failures that create serious public health threats and expose townships to being required to build expensive public sewer systems
 4. Land use planning and zoning decisions remain a local government responsibility
 5. Expansion of solid and liquid waste recycling programs
 6. Any newly instituted statewide landfill tipping fees be fairly and equitably distributed to all local units of government
 7. Greater authority for local governments to prevent the spread of invasive species of plants and animals
 8. State responsibility for mitigating effects of preempted land uses
 9. The imposition of local impact fees on oil and gas exploration and extraction
 10. Restore township zoning authority to regulate oil and gas wells in residential areas
5. Joint service agreements among local governments providing fair and equitable sharing of costs, benefits and governance; long-term stability and predictability; and effective and fair problem resolution mechanisms
 6. Boundary protection for townships that provide all essential local government services; discouraging boundary adjustments that are merely tax base grabs; and imposing appropriate standards for county board decisions related to expansion of village boundaries
 7. A standard local government consolidation process applicable to all local government entities that continues to require voter approval of any consolidation; and state funding for independent consolidation impact studies as a prerequisite for county boards or the State Boundary Commission to order a consolidation vote among local governments
 8. Equitable treatment for all local units of government for statutory revenue sharing and grants
 9. Full funding for payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, commercial forest act and the swamp tax program to compensate townships for property owned by the State of Michigan
 10. Funding for local government programs should not be negatively impacted or reduced due to the redirection of state General Fund dollars for increased funding for roads

Intergovernmental Relations

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

1. State laws should apply to townships in the same manner as they do other local government entities
2. Level playing fields and win-win outcomes in resolving intergovernmental conflicts
3. Flexible laws and regulations that promote local government creativity and locally appropriate solutions consistent with statewide objectives
4. Regional collaborations and initiatives that provide meaningful input by township officials to achieve outcomes that appropriately balance regional public policy objectives and local concerns



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2016 MTA policy platform

Township Operations

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

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

Transportation

As the state increases funding for roads, township officials want lawmakers to include them as participating partners in providing transportation solutions. Without statutory responsibility, Michigan townships contribute more than

\$186 million per year for road maintenance and construction decisions affecting transportation costs and priorities, and institute efficiencies to stretch scarce transportation funding. As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current transportation laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

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

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Our Local Government Law practice group works with local governments and public authorities to ensure the efficient and cost-effective delivery of vital public services. We provide specialized legal expertise in areas as diverse as zoning and land use planning, bond issues, special assessments, tax increment financing, DDAs and other public authorities, labor contracts and arbitration, employee benefits, elections, environmental regulation and many other matters affecting local governments. For more than 50 years, skilled Mika Meyers attorneys have helped public-sector entities meet the ever-increasing demands of their constituents and communities.

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Our township does not have a formalized purchasing policy. Do you have any suggestions?

Your township may wish to consider adopting purchasing policies by resolution or ordinance after careful study of your current practices and future needs. Formalized purchasing policies are designed to ensure that all purchases of goods and services provide the best value for the township and that all vendors are treated fairly and impartially.

Most communities have several different methods used to select vendors, including competitive bidding, quotations and small purchase orders (blanket orders)

Townships must weigh the costs of developing bid specifications and administration with the benefits of the competitive bidding through a formalized process. Many communities have a high dollar threshold for purchasing through competitive bids or requests for proposals, a mid-term policy for other purchases, and a small purchase policy, where township officials, department heads and employees can accomplish small purchases through “blanket orders” (purchase orders that are awarded to vendors on an annual basis to accomplish small-dollar transactions).

Any township purchasing policies should be mindful of the fact that procurement standards for purchases of goods and services for state and federal grants usually require adherence to Office of Management and Budgeting (OMB) standards, which may differ from their own.



Should we centralize purchasing in a single department?

Municipal purchasing typically falls into two categories: centralized and decentralized systems. In the past, a central purchasing authority was believed to ensure purchasing integrity, fix accountability and provide for the efficient processing of the transaction. Further, a central purchasing authority was desirable to limit the power of the department and to assure professionalism of public purchasing. Many experts now believe that this “paradigm” is not in keeping with modern, more nimble governance. They believe that purchasing must be decentralized to provide more responsive support to end-users, and to empower department managers to procure what they need without impediment by a centralized organization.

Perhaps the best solution will be found in combining elements of both—user departments would develop specifications, perhaps with engineering assistance, and use a centralized process to award contracts.



How should check-writing procedures for townships work?

We recommend the following:

- Use three-part checks—the original copy of the warrant/check becomes a check after it’s signed by the treasurer; the other two copies are for the clerk and treasurer’s records.
- Clerk prepares the checks (which serve as the “warrant”) and presents them to the township board for approval.
- Township board approves payment.
- Clerk signs the check, which now represents a “town order” and forwards signed checks to treasurer. If using a three-part check, the clerk should retain one copy, which should be attached to the invoices or bills it pays.
- Treasurer counter-signs the check and forwards directly to vendors.

Checks should be pre-numbered, and controlled by another officer not initiating cash disbursements. For smaller townships, the treasurer could control the numeric sequence of the checks, if the clerk initiates the check-writing process. The clerk would request additional checks from the treasurer, and the treasurer could account for checks as they come back for counter-signature, noting any missing numbers and inquiring as to their disposition.



Our board meets monthly. What if there isn't enough time to go through this process?

The board can pre-authorize certain disbursements, such as utility bills, payroll taxes and bond payments, that have to be accomplished prior to board meetings. These authorizations should be for specific types of transactions, and are then subject to ratification at the next meeting.

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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TGA Class of 2016 honored

The Township Governance Academy (TGA) graduating class of 2016 crossed the stage at the General Session of MTA's 63rd Annual Educational Conference at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center on Thursday, Jan. 21. Ten individuals were recognized for completing the Academy.

The 12th graduating class received their TGA certificates and lapel pins onstage as MTA President Linda Preston and MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill congratulated the graduates on their accomplishments.



The graduates are (pictured above, front row, from left): **Regina Miller**, Trustee, **Van Buren Charter Township** (Wayne Co.); **Kathy Van Voorst**, Clerk, **Port Sheldon Township** (Ottawa Co.); **Cindy Cronk**, Trustee, **Bath Charter Township** (Clinton Co.); and **Malinda Cole-Crocker**, Supervisor, **Buchanan Township** (Berrien Co.)

(Back row, from left) **Heather Stewart**, Trustee, **Greenwood Township** (St. Clair Co.); **Cindy Berry**, Clerk, **Chesterfield Charter Township** (Macomb Co.); **Barbara Rose**, Supervisor, **Covert Township** (Van Buren Co.); **Terri Webber**, Clerk, **Richfield Township** (Genesee Co.); **Gordon Pickerd**, Trustee, **Algoma Township** (Kent Co.); and **Tom Hawkins**, Trustee, **Raisin Charter Township** (Lenawee Co.)

Not pictured: **Sue Camilleri**, Clerk, **Waterford Charter Township** (Oakland Co.)

TGA scholarship deadline extended

The application deadline for MTA's Township Governance Academy scholarship has been extended to **April 1**. A limited number of scholarships, up to \$1,000 each, are available to assist elected officials from MTA-member townships that may not be in a financial position to provide the funding necessary for completion of the program.

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

Go Inside the Township ZBA at MTA's April workshop

Join MTA for an afternoon this April and get an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the township zoning board of appeals (ZBA).

The ZBA was created as a safety valve, in recognition that the zoning ordinance is not able to anticipate how every property might be affected by zoning. With thousands of individual properties, a single zoning regulation cannot possibly be applied uniformly to every property's unique physical characteristics.

The half-day workshop, *Inside the Township ZBA*, will demonstrate how the ZBA serves as a safety valve in those circumstances where zoning requirements don't fit. We'll also explore how variances approved without sufficient justification can turn the safety valve into a leak, and a leak into a flood.

A registration brochure was mailed to township supervisors and is also available on MTA's website, www.michigantownships.org. A registration form will also appear in the April issue of *Township Focus*.



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upcoming MTA workshops

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

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

MTA can help your township identify which services are most important to the residents you serve and manage the risk inherent with those services. Delve into the elements of strategic planning and learn strategies for aligning your township's resources.

Join us in **Battle Creek** at the **Holiday Inn** on **March 28-29** for one (or both!) of the sessions described below:



Utilizing Strategic Planning to Achieve Results

(B-104 - 4 credits; includes lunch served at Noon)
March 28 from 1 to 4:15 p.m.

Enhancing credibility in the public eye begins with your township board. Examine ways of being more open and transparent to the community—a valuable exercise to increase trust at the local level. Explore strategies for determining what your constituents want and how to keep them informed about your township's activities. Join the discussion on cultivating emerging leaders in your community.

Presented by governance expert *Susan Radwan, Owner, Leading Edge Mentoring*

These courses are part of MTA's Township Governance Academy, an innovative credentialing program for township officials and local leaders in Michigan. You do NOT have to be enrolled in the Academy to attend.



At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs

(F-101 - 6 credits; includes continental breakfast & lunch)
March 29 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

Presented by *Steve Mann, Attorney, Miller Canfield Paddock & Stone, PLC, and Plymouth Charter Township (Wayne Co.) Trustee, and governance expert Susan Radwan, Owner, Leading Edge Mentoring*

Cancellations & Substitutions: Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by March 14 will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may substitute another individual from your township for your registration at any time without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change. Scholarship funds are not subject to substitution.

Registration Form

Registration Rate Discounted Rate
After March 14 Before March 14

FULL PROGRAM: Both sessions	\$254/attendee	\$214/attendee
Strategic Planning (B-104)	\$109/attendee	\$ 89/attendee
At Your Service (F-101)	\$145/attendee	\$125/attendee

Township _____ County _____

Daytime Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Name & Title Both classes Strategic Plan At Your Service

Name & Title Both classes Strategic Plan At Your Service

Name & Title Both classes Strategic Plan At Your Service

Name & Title Both classes Strategic Plan At Your Service

of Sessions Registration Fee Total

_____ x _____ = _____

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

NOTE: Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed (payable to MTA)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA	
- - -	/
Card # _____	Expires _____
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Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.

MARCH

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MADNESS

MTA webcasts include:

Assessing

- Assessing Oversight: The Process
- Board of Review Training
- Fundamentals of Assessment and Taxation*

Board Essentials

- Anatomy of a Township
- At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs*
- Cemetery Management
- Effectively Exercising Board Authority
- How Boards Make Decisions*
- Legal Pitfalls in Human Resources
- Making Meetings Work More Effectively*
- Meeting Misconceptions
- Secrets Behind Great Board Meetings
- Utilizing Strategic Planning*

Financial

- Accounting & Payroll
- Exploring Revenue Sources
- Introduction to Millage Questions
- Making the Most of QuickBooks (FREE!)
- Special Assessment Procedures
- Spending Public Money
- Who Gets Paid What ... and How?

Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Urban Cooperation Strategies

New Officials Training

- Tools for Getting Started Right
- Sessions for each office

Planning & Zoning

- Introduction to Planning & Zoning
- Land Use: Defining Your Township's Future*
- Roles & Functions of the ZBA
- Writing, Adopting & Enforcing Ordinances

Public Safety

- Governing an Accountable Fire Department

Taxation

- Delinquent Personal Property Tax
- Tax Collecting
- Taxation Trouble Spots
- Tips for Treasurers

* An MTA Township Governance Academy course



Descriptions of each webcast are available online; visit MTA's Online Learning Portal via www.michigantownships.org, or go directly to the portal at <http://eo2.commpartners.com/users/mta/>. Questions? Call MTA at (517) 321-6467.



A lifetime of service

Honoring long-serving township officials

The average worker stays at his or her job for just over four years. Township officials, however? They are a dedicated, loyal group, and beat that national average by a mile.

It isn't unusual to find a township whose officials—elected or appointed—have served for decades. For some, it's even a family affair—they followed in the footsteps of a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle. Whether it's the honor of serving their fellow township residents or the satisfaction of doing what they believe is their civic duty, there's just something about township government that makes its officials stay.

Township Focus spoke with just a few officials who have made township government their lifelong passion. Year after year, election after election, they've stayed with their township, in many cases long past the age many others would have retired. We know that the individuals profiled here are but a handful of the many amazing local leaders who have dedicated their lives to public service. We salute and honor all of our long-serving officials, who can be found in every corner of the state. These public servants serve as an inspiration and represent the best of citizen-led government, and neighbors serving neighbors.

'A walking township encyclopedia'

If **Mills Township** (Midland Co.) board members have a township question about anything that's happened in the last several decades, they ask **Maxine Brink**.

The longtime township clerk is the go-to resource for her township board. It wasn't necessarily her intention to become a walking Mills Township encyclopedia. As a lifelong resident, though, it was bound to happen.

Brink has served as township clerk since 1967. Prior to that, she was the township's justice of the peace. And even before that, her father was township supervisor and passed on his knowledge of the township to his daughter.

Today, Brink knows that eventually, she'll step down and pass the baton to someone else. But that won't happen without a significant amount of work on her part. She's working on a guide to the clerk's job, putting her files in order and even introducing her granddaughter to the work in case she's interested in taking over one day.



Brink

"You can't learn this overnight," Brink said. "And you've got to be interested in doing it."

The clerk position has kept Brink's interest for nearly five decades. A people person, being clerk gives Brink the opportunity to get to know everyone in the community. She is on a first-name basis with even new residents, since they must contact her if they want a recycling bin or to rent the township hall. Administering elections has never been a burden, even when it required counting punch cards until 3 a.m.—for Brink, it is just a chance to see everyone in one day.

MTA events, especially the Association's Annual Conference, are always a highlight for Brink. The educational offerings are her chance to expand her knowledge, and she has loved meeting new people. Brink said she has attended the Conference every year that she has been able, since 1953. Brink was in the first graduating class of MTA's Township Governance Academy, an experience that she said helped her become a better clerk.

Even after all these years, Brink knows she has something to add to her township. All her years of experience certainly will not be easy to replace.

‘Serving the township is a way of life’

Dale Mitchell isn't letting his age slow him down. The 91-year-old serves as trustee for **Raisin Charter Township** (Lenawee Co.) and only recently retired from his responsibilities as a full-time farmer. After 66 years, serving his township is a way of life.

When Mitchell was a child, his uncle, **Jim Mitchell**, was Raisin Charter Township supervisor. Mitchell wanted to know how he could give back to his community. He got his first opportunity in 1949, when he became an original member of the township's volunteer fire department. He drove to Battle Creek to pick up the township's first fire truck, and helped to build the township's first hall/fire department. He later served as fire chief, a position he held for 10 years.

Mitchell's work wasn't limited to the fire department. When the township sexton asked for help digging plots in the cemetery, Mitchell said yes. By the 1980s, he'd taken over as sexton, and served in that position until 2004. He continues to serve the township as trustee.

Mitchell has also served on the township board of review and the cemetery board. He helped plant grass and trees when a new park was built, and helped manage the workforce for the Lenawee County Drain Commission.

Serving his township is still fulfilling to Mitchell, and his dedication has not gone unnoticed by his staff. As Superintendent **Jim Palmer** talked with Mitchell about his history with the township, it was clear what his time serving the community has meant to Mitchell.

"As we talked, his eyes watered up many times thinking how blessed he has been living and working with neighbors and not expecting anything in return except a smile, a handshake and a thank you," Palmer said.



Mitchell

‘This is my home’

Growing up, **Al Silhavy** heard the message from his father loud and clear: Do all you can for your township.

Though he was just a little boy then, Silhavy took those words to heart. He started serving **Arcada Township** (Gratiot Co.) when he was 21 years old and hasn't stopped since. Now, at 86, Silhavy still serves as the township clerk. Though he'd like to find a replacement at some point, he still enjoys doing all he can for his home community.

"This is my township," Silhavy said. "This is my home."

Silhavy first became interested in government as a teenager, when he was selected to attend the American Legion week-long government program called Michigan Boys



Silhavy

State in 1945. Then, when he was 21 years old, he was asked to serve on a township election board. He continued serving until one day, a township trustee decided to resign, and Silhavy was appointed as his replacement. He was still serving as trustee in 1985, when the clerk passed away and Silhavy was appointed to take his place.

Since 1951, Silhavy has worked nearly every township election in some capacity, sometimes not getting home until 4:30 a.m. He's proud of how Arcada Township handles its elections and remembers a conversation in which a woman told him she didn't want an absentee ballot because no one bothered to count them. Silhavy assured her that he sees to it that each and every vote is counted.

The people he encounters have always been his favorite part of the job. He maintains that the Arcada Township residents who come to vote are the nicest people in Gratiot County. Even when he and other township board members don't see eye to eye, they can argue at meetings but still leave the township hall as friends.

"When I got on the board, the treasurer told me that if you want to sleep nice, you keep the township business on the table," Silhavy said.

Today, Silhavy is serving what he says will be his last term. He believes it's time for someone else to take the reins. But after six decades serving the township, it's a job he still enjoys.

‘It's fascinating and satisfying’

Fifty-two years later, **Don Thall** still enjoys coming to work.

The **Kalamazoo Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) clerk was first elected to township office in 1963, and he's served his township in some capacity ever since. Asked when he'll retire, he says simply, "When I can't do it anymore."

Thall enjoys the people in the community and the camaraderie with his fellow officials and township employees.

He says he particularly enjoys administering elections.

"You actually accomplish something," said Thall, an MTA life member and 1997 MTA president. "It's fascinating and it's satisfying, because when it's all done, you step back and say, there goes another successful election. It takes a lot of cooperation."

Thall first dipped his toe into township politics when his neighborhood was rezoned. He and his neighbors weren't happy about the change, so they moved forward with a referendum to undo the rezoning. When they were successful, the other members of his group pushed him to run for township trustee. He was 30 years old when he was elected—the youngest elected official in the county at the time.

Nine years later, when the Kalamazoo Charter Township clerk retired, Thall ran for the full-time position. He was successful, and he's held the position continuously since then.



Thall

The work always kept him interested, as the township faced zoning issues when shopping centers and other developments wanted to move into long-vacant areas. Thall also enjoyed helping residents solve problems. Each day, he sits in his office with a direct view of the main office counter. He watches to make sure the residents who come in are taken care of and get the help and information they need.

Thall believes his long tenure with the township has helped to provide some stability. For years, the board has moved steadily in one direction, rather than hopping constantly from one issue to the next. Board discussion is collegial, and officials rarely get into heated debates at meetings anymore.

Although Thall says that he and his wife Liz have not yet decided if he'll run for another term, he knows he'd be happy to keep serving the township for another four years.

'Oceana's legend'

Bill Wagner got his start in township government all because he said yes.

He was fresh from serving the U.S. Army in Korea when the **Grant Township** (Oceana Co.) clerk at the time approached him. The clerk didn't want to run again, and felt Wagner was well-qualified for the position. It was 1963, and Wagner was only 27 years old. But he said yes and was elected for his first term as township clerk.



Wagner

Fifty-two years later, Wagner is still serving his community. He's made it his mission to accommodate the people of Grant Township and help them however he can. Sometimes that means helping them find a cemetery plot. Other times it means showing them where their property lines are. He enjoys working both from his home and from the township office while still maintaining his family farm.

Wagner has served so long that some in the community refer to him as "Oceana's Legend." He was just 27 years old when he was first elected and, for years, was the youngest member on the board. Now, the tables have turned—he's the most senior member of the board. But most of the time, it doesn't feel that way to him.

"I still think I'm a kid yet," he said.

Wagner has seen township elections move from a caucus system to primary elections. Fifty years ago, most of the township's roads were gravel or in very poor condition. Over time, Grant Township helped to get 38 miles of the township's roads covered in blacktop. He was also there to witness the township building a new hall and fire department.

Wagner is proud of the job he's done, and local residents seem to approve too—in all but a couple of elections, he has run unopposed. Even when he's had opposition, he has let his record serving the township speak for itself, and has been reelected each time.

Today, people ask him if he's going to run again. Wagner says he never decides until it's close to the filing deadline. But as long as his health allows, he wants to keep accommodating the residents of Grant Township.

Our thanks

When *Township Focus* put out a call looking to profile some of our long-serving officials, we were blown away by the response we received from our members—some contacting us to tell us about their own years of service, but more frequently, it was colleagues who wanted to honor the service of their fellow official. While we could not profile all of the officials we learned about, we would like to offer our sincere thanks for contacting us, and for your years of service!

- **Ruth Albaugh**, clerk, **Fredonia Township** (Calhoun Co.), 40 years of service
- **William Bolton**, supervisor, **Empire Township** (Leelanau Co.), 54 years of service
- **Ronald Cischke**, supervisor, **Goodland Township** (Lapeer Co.), at least 45 years of service
- **Shirley Clutter**, treasurer, **Newton Township** (Calhoun Co.), 38 years of service
- **Meta Jackson**, election official, **Juniata Township** (Tuscola Co.), about 58 years of service
- **Robert Pochyla**, clerk, **Shelby Township** (Oceana Co.), 60 years of service
- **Joseph Villemure**, clerk, **McMillan Township**, 42 years of service
- **Keith Zick**, township attorney, **East China Charter Township** (St. Clair Co.) since 1977, **Fort Gratiot Charter Township** (St. Clair Co.) since 1980

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Litchfield Township



Litchfield Township (Hillsdale Co.) has a population of just under 1,000 in its 33.1 square miles. The community was founded in 1833 by Andrew Bushnell. One year later, a mail route was established between Jonesville and Marshall, running through the township. Postage was .25 cents for letters going 150 miles or more. Soon after, the first tavern, store and a soap factory were built in the township. The community's first school was built in 1837.

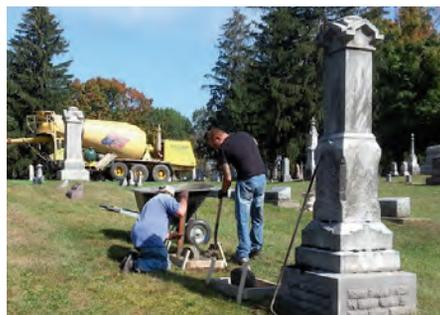
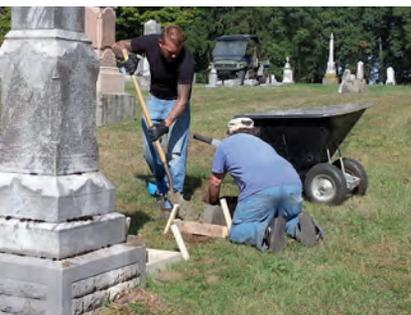
In 1869, the township voted to help fund the construction of the Northern Central Railroad. After the railroad was completed, Teddy Roosevelt stopped in the township on the train when he did a barn storming through the area. A building boom hit the township in the late 1800s, when many new homes, businesses and the railroad station were built—many which still exist today. The local newspaper, *The Gazette*, was also started during this time.

The Litchfield Fire Department is a collaborative effort between the township and neighboring City of Litchfield. The department also provides emergency services to portions of **Butler** and **Scipio Townships**.



Local officials are immensely proud of the township's historic roots. The township's Wayside Memorial Park was recently approved for a historical marker from the Michigan Historical Commission. The park, which includes a World War II monument, was completed in 1946. In addition, the township operates four cemeteries—the Mt. Hope, Sand Creek, Todd Town and Saratoga Cemeteries—where many gravesites date back to the early 1800s. Groundskeepers **Brian**

Childs and **Roger Wilson** recently undertook the time-consuming, but rewarding, project of restoring damage done over the years in each of the four cemeteries. The pair located old grave markers, removed trees that have disrupted gravesites, and poured new foundations and reset markers for greater stability into the future. The township is dedicated to preserving this piece of township and county history for the family members of those laid to rest there and for future generations.



Be here. Be heard. Be engaged.

MTA's 2016 Capital Conference

Radisson Hotel, Lansing • April 12-13

Join MTA and fellow township officials for this **expanded two-day event**, where you will learn about legislative issues impacting townships, and **have the opportunity to meet with state decision-makers**. A registration brochure was sent in February to each township. Online registration is also available on www.michigantownships.org.

Registration Form

Name & Title

Township

County

Daytime Telephone

Email Address

Guest Name

Please copy this form for additional registrants.

U.P./Northern Michigan Bus Information—Register to ride the bus by March 25. Indicate at which location you would like to board the bus.

- Escanaba**—depart Super 8, approx. 2:45 a.m.
- St. Ignace**—depart McDonald's, approx. 5:25 a.m.
- Gaylord**—depart McDonald's, approx. 6:45 a.m.
- Clare**—depart Wendy's, approx. 8:05 a.m.

REGULAR rate*: \$145 For paid registrations received **after** March 25.

EARLY-BIRD rate*: \$125 For paid registrations received **by** March 25.
Rates do not include lodging.

\$ _____ (rate*) = _____

Guest (\$80 Early-bird/\$95 Reg.) = _____
Includes meals & refreshments only

_____ (# riding bus) x \$25 = _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = _____

Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.

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

Card #

Expires

Print Card Holder's Name

Signature



Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908.

Or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.



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