

MARCH 2021

Michigan Township Focus

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

2021 MTA
president

**Peter
Kleiman**

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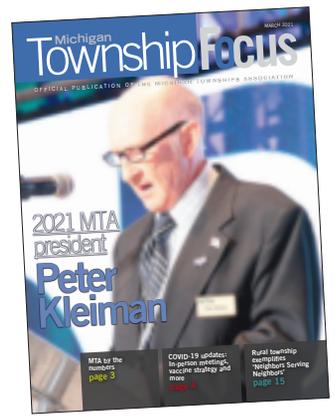


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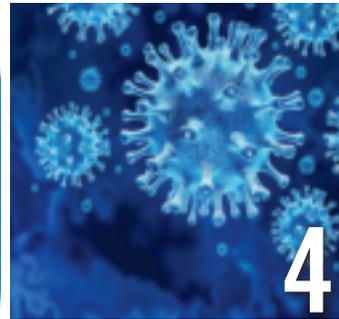
Editor Jennifer Fiedler

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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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Continued updates on COVID-19 guidance and information impacting townships, including in-person meetings, quarantine guidelines and more.

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president's round table

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MTA by the numbers

Our townships cover 96% of Michigan, and more than half of the state's residents call our townships home. There are 1,240 townships and nearly every one of them is an MTA member—we are hopeful that the last few will be able to rejoin us. In Washington, D.C., MTA joins with another 10,000 townships and towns to engage on federal matters through the national association we co-founded.

You number 6,500 elected officials and you stand with an estimated 100,000 township colleagues—deputies, staff, appointees and volunteers—all involved in serving our communities. We have about 25% turnover every four years among our elected officials, including trustees and deputies moving to the statutory roles. Many others join as newcomers to elected office. More than half of Michigan's new officials who were elected in November participated in our recent workshops for them. (If you missed it, you can take the recorded program anytime online.) About 70% of townships participated in other "live" MTA training this year while others took thousands of recorded workshop sessions. Thousands of township participants now have access through their affordable MTA Online subscriptions—if your township doesn't have one, you can start it at any time.

This year, more than 2,500 board of review members, alternates, assessors and officials took part in our *Board of Review Training*, which included a "Basics" class that was approved by the State Tax Commission to meet the new training requirement for board of review members. The rest can take it next year to be in compliance with the mandate, which under Public Act 660 of 2018, requires board of review members to take training once per term, beginning with the current term of office. For many, it was their first virtual learning experience. We are grateful to them, their supervisors, assessors, clerks and others who helped get them registered, set up and logged in. As with everything else in the COVID period, it sure was not easy, and we are proud our members met this challenge head on. Another big thank you to your MTA staff, who worked diligently to answer hundreds of tech support and registration help calls.

Last year was filled with uncertainty—98% of townships contacted our Member Information Services professionals for the assistance and knowledge needed to deal with it. More than 52,000 read our magazine or newsletters, and visited our website to get literally up-to-the-minute news on the pandemic's impacts as well as the ongoing challenges to township leadership. Thousands helped their peers in our MTA *Community Connection* forums.

Our state legislature is a busy place. In the recently concluded two-year session, more than 3,800 bills were introduced with more than 30% affecting townships in some way. Our Government Relations team was 95% successful in mitigating or stopping legislation that was adverse to the interests of our members.

Some additional important MTA numbers this month are 2019 and 2021, and 15. In this issue, MTA Past President **Jeff Sorensen**—who assumed leadership of the Association in 2019 not knowing that he would continue in the role for an additional year, leading us through unprecedented times and challenges—reflects on his unique two-year presidency. We also profile 2021 MTA President **Peter Kleiman**, who shares his thoughts on lessons learned—both his own, and for the Association and townships—over the past year. And, as of the time of publication, Michigan had vaccinated 15% of the state's population age 16 and older from COVID-19. We share important updates on the state's pandemic order, vaccine strategy and MTA's—and townships'—role in helping to ensure accurate, trusted information on the vaccine is available.

Finally, we have our greatest impact by working together. One "AA" battery can't even power our newly indispensable TV remotes. But properly aligned and neatly organized, many working simultaneously can now power semi-trucks. Our Association channels all of your energy and capacity for movement into one powerful force for Michigan. Thank you for counting among our numbers.

Neil Sheridan



COVID-19 update



COVID-19 updates and information for townships

Revised epidemic order prohibits in-person public meetings through March 29

A revised Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) “Gatherings and Face Mask” Pandemic Order that went into effect on Feb. 8 extended the prohibition on in-person township, and all public, meetings through March 29, 2021. The revised order, which allowed school contact sports to resume, continued to prohibit indoor non-residential gatherings to no more than 10 people from no more than two households. Outdoor meetings can be held, with gathering restrictions. Other types of indoor gatherings or activities may be allowed under the order as long as persons comply with the safeguards in the order, including wearing masks. However, MTA notes because the Open Meetings Act (OMA) prohibits turning a person away from a meeting of a public body, indoor public meetings do pose a different situation. Even though a township can refuse entry to its hall or other facility if a person seeks to enter without wearing a mask or following other required safeguards, the township does not have that ability when a person seeks to enter a meeting of a public body.

As a result of the order, the March board of review meetings **MUST** be held virtually or outdoors. In addition, Public 254 of 2020 allows townships, and all local governments, to meet using virtual options for any reason through March 30, 2021. Beginning March 31, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2021, remote participation is allowed only for military duty, a medical condition, or a statewide or local state of emergency or state of disaster. No legislation, revised pandemic order or updated guidance to allow for

an exception for boards of review, or to extend the virtual meeting allowance past March 30 had been announced as of *Township Focus* press time. Please refer to MTA’s website, *Community Connection*, social media and emails for updated guidance, if available.

As a reminder, “virtual” does NOT mean that everyone must participate via a computer. Most virtual platforms allow people to phone in, including using a landline phone or cell phone. MTA has updated our township facilities and meetings fact sheet to reflect the new order, and we also have resources for holding virtual meetings on www.michigantownships.org/coronavirus.asp. You can find additional MDHHS pandemic order resources on our webpage as well.

If in-person meetings become lawful, MTA believes that townships must use both virtual and in-person methods, as the township would need to provide access to the meetings for people who might not realize that the meetings are being held in-person. MTA’s sample March BOR meeting notice addresses both options. The township can recommend that individuals submit requests and information in writing, as some may not be comfortable using the remote software you are hosting the meeting with.

CDC: Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine following exposure

According to revised COVID-19 quarantine guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fully vaccinated individuals, which could include township first responders and other officials or personnel, do not need to

quarantine following exposure to a suspected or confirmed case of the coronavirus. The CDC noted that individuals should only skip quarantine after an exposure if it has been 14 days since their second dose, and they should continue to self-monitor for symptoms.

Remember, however, that guidance is subject to change as numerous COVID-19 variants are present in Michigan and other parts of the country, and additional testing and research is done on the vaccine's efficacy on the new strains.

Townships may wish to update their COVID-19 preparedness and response plans to include the updated quarantine guidance. Updated sample plans are available on www.michigantownships.org.

State releases vaccine strategy, expanded access to vaccine information

At the end of January, the state released its COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Strategy, which outlines efforts to get 70% of Michiganders age 16 and older vaccinated as quickly as possible. The strategy's guiding principles include that *all* Michiganders have equitable access to vaccines, and that vaccine planning and distribution are inclusive and actively engage state and local government, and public and private partners. The strategy includes a social vulnerability index for targeting distribution of supplies by geography within a phase of vaccination. The state, as of press time, remained at Phase 1B of the vaccination distribution plan. Several phases may be happening simultaneously.

Michigan ranked in the top 10 in the nation for vaccines administered, and with nearly 1.9 million shots in arms—or 15% of Michigan's population age 16 and older—as of press time. The state has a goal to administer 50,000 shots per day, which it has hit on several occasions, and aims to become a daily occurrence once sufficient supply of the vaccine becomes available.

Easier access to vaccine information

We know that navigating the websites and information for vaccination appointments can be frustrating for your eligible residents, and likely for township officials as well! In addition to a lack of sufficient doses to vaccinate every person in a phase, not everyone who qualifies for a COVID-19 vaccine—including those age 65 and over who are currently eligible—has access to the internet, or is able to navigate the technology many use to make vaccine appointments. Let your residents know the various paths for appointment sign-up that are available to them.

- Residents can call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136, which is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Local health departments and hospitals have created sign-ups, interest forms and wait lists, based on eligibility per the vaccine prioritization guidance, and will contact residents to schedule appointments as supply allows.

- Residents may also contact additional vaccination sites as they start to come online, such as local pharmacies like Meijer and others.
- Simply by calling 2-1-1 from any cell phone or landline, residents can get directed to vaccination clinics. This builds upon the existing partnership between MDHHS and 2-1-1 for assisting residents with connecting to local testing sites. 2-1-1 is a free, confidential service that connects them to local community-based organizations across the state.

Townships can also post a link from their website to www.michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine, which has the most up-to-date information about vaccine eligibility, safety information and clinic locations.

Jenn Fiedler appointed to governor's Protect Michigan Commission

MTA Communications Director Jenn Fiedler has been appointed by Gov. Whitmer to the newly created Protect Michigan Commission, a year-long appointment to help raise awareness about the effectiveness and safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and be an avenue to provide accurate, trusted vaccine information. The bipartisan commission is co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, Chief Medical Executive Dr. Joniegh Khaldun, among others, and includes members from a wide array of entities and organizations representing local governments, health care, advocacy, workforce, economic development and more.



Fiedler

"I am very proud to represent MTA on the Protect Michigan Commission," said Fiedler, who also serves on a Local Government Workgroup within the commission. "It will benefit our members—and their residents—to have access to first-hand information from state leaders on the vaccine distribution and priorities, and to provide the township/local government perspective. Townships can also serve as trusted sources for vaccine information for their residents and business community, and the resources and updates from the commission can be further shared by our members to their communities."

The commission serves in an advisory capacity to the governor and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Members are tasked with providing public leadership to elevate and reinforce the importance of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, identifying barriers that may impede the acceptance of an approved COVID-19 vaccine by Michigan residents, and develop an outreach action plan designed to overcome these barriers. The commission must complete its work and submit a brief final report to the governor by Dec. 31, 2021.

news¬es

a compendium of noteworthy items

TOP HONORS

Township community named state's 'No. 1 Small Town to Raise a Family'

Meridian Charter Township (Ingham Co.) is once again in the national spotlight after its community of Okemos was named by *Newsweek* magazine as the "No. 1 Small Town to Raise a Family in Michigan."

Using 2020 data from Niche, which ranks places based on a variety of factors including public schools, jobs and cost of living, *Newsweek* took a look at what makes these small towns so special and why people live there. Only communities with a population under 40,000 were considered.

"The prime community of Meridian is grateful for this recognition of what our residents know, Meridian Charter Township—with its award-winning schools, friendly neighborhoods, beautiful parks and natural areas, and convenient businesses—is the number one choice of families, young professionals and senior citizens," said Supervisor **Ron Styka**.

The community had previously earned other high rankings from Niche, including No. 1 for best places to live in Michigan and No. 1 for best suburbs to live in the state. Last year, its area schools were also ranked in the top 100 Michigan schools, according *U.S. News and World Report*. Township Assistant Manager **Derek Perry** also received the "Best of the Best—Top Assistant Manager" Award from the Michigan Municipal Executives earlier this year.

"It's an honor to represent Meridian Township," Perry said. "I am fortunate to be surrounded in the organization by so many excellent public servants. The award is truly a reflection of all of our efforts to make Meridian prime."

Coming in at No. 2 and No. 3 on Niche's list of "Best Small Towns to Raise a Family" were **Lodi Township** (Washtenaw Co.) and **Bloomfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), respectively. **Northville Charter Township** (Wayne Co.) came in at No. 10.

Tell us your township's story! We love telling your township's news, accolades, initiatives and programs! You're proud of your township, and we are, too. Let us help you tell your story. Email your story ideas, happenings in your townships, pictures, etc. to jenn@michigantownships.org.



FINANCIAL STRESS

Report: State's local government funding system has 'decimated local budgets'

Michigan's system of funding for local governments has "long incubated financial stress among its localities," according to an independent study outlining the challenges and state funding for municipalities.

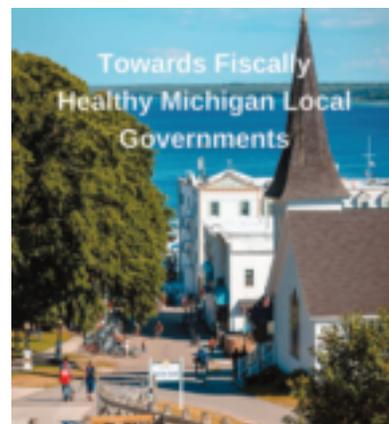
Towards Fiscally Healthy Michigan Local Governments, from the Massachusetts-based nonprofit foundation Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, found Michigan has some of

the tightest property tax limits in the country and that this unusual design has contributed to large declines in property tax revenue both during and after the Great Recession.

"Though not the state's intention, limits on local governments' ability to raise revenues, coupled with reduced state aid, have decimated local budgets," the report said.

It further noted that most states have only one or maybe two forms of property tax limits, while Michigan has three. Three studies comparing the restrictiveness of states property tax limits have ranked Michigan either second- or sixth-most restrictive. The institute also found that while many other states cut aid to local governments during and after the Great Recession, Michigan's cuts were considerably larger than those in most other states. The report identified four issues in local government financing for the state to address: state revenue sharing, property tax limits, other revenue sources, and local government fragmentation. Among the recommendations made is that the Legislature resolve conflicts between the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A, and to create a special fund to protect revenue sharing.

Noted the report, "State officials must remember that local governments provide the services and infrastructure on which residents and businesses rely; implementing policies that make it easier for local governments to do their job ultimately benefits the state of Michigan as a whole and the people and businesses that comprise it."



Retirement

Janice Thelen, Watertown Charter Township (Clinton Co.), treasurer for 23 years.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

Congratulations to two member-township officials who have been appointed or elected to serve on statewide and national boards impacting local governments. **Clinton Charter Township** (Macomb Co.) Supervisor **Bob Cannon** has been elected to serve as the next president of the National Association of Regional Councils, which advocates for regional cooperation to address community planning and development opportunities and issues. **Hersey Township** (Osceola Co.) Medical First Responder **Abigail Watkins**, who is also Newaygo County director of emergency services, has been appointed by Gov. Whitmer to serve on the Michigan Citizen Community Emergency Response Coordinating Council. The council's mission is to support and enhance Michigan's homeland security, community health, public safety and all-hazard preparedness with responsible leadership and planning, and to reduce, prevent and prepare for emergencies or disasters.

Vermontville Township Library (Eaton Co.) received a grant from the University of Michigan for "GO" bags, designed to enhance reading levels for children. The bags, which can be checked out for 30 days, contain books, reading games and worksheets, and are geared toward kindergartners, and first, second and third grade students.



Email YOUR Township Happenings to jenn@michigantownships.org. Add MTA to your newsletter mailing list! Mail to MTA, Attn. Jenn Fiedler, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078, or email to jenn@michigantownships.org.

classifieds

HELP WANTED

Public works department head—Clyde Township (St. Clair Co.) is a community of 5,580 residents with a water district of 788 households. The township is looking to fill the position of head of its department of public works. A Michigan Class 3 water license is a minimum requirement to oversee the water district. Other duties include cemetery sexton, grounds and parks maintenance. Applicant must pass a physical and drug test, and possess a valid driver's license. This is a union position in the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local No. 324-AFL-CIO. Wages will be based on union contract. If interested, contact Supervisor **Ernie Manoleas** for more information at (810) 985-7258 or email at erniem@clydetownshipsc.org.

Assessor—Bedford Charter Township (Monroe Co.) is seeking a Michigan advanced assessing officer (level III) lead assessor or a firm providing assessing services. For more information, visit www.bedfordmi.org.

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MTA mourns the passing of John West, our longest-living past president

MTA's longest-living past president, Life Member **John West**, passed away earlier this year after a short battle with COVID-19. West served as the 13th president of the Association, in 1965. He was 99.

West was born on the family farm, Lawndale Farm, and lived on the 138-year-old centennial farm for his entire life. As was noted in his obituary, he spent his entire life farming, both dairy and crops, and dedicated to public service. For a number of years, he was a volunteer firefighter for Lennon and Swartz Creek fire departments, and he served as an elected official for **Lennon Township** (Genesee Co.) for more than 25 years.

"My father embodied the wonderful characteristics of public servants: honest, respectful, hard-working, loyal and dedicated," said daughter Judy West-Wing, who said that her father attended MTA's annual Board holiday gathering until 2019. "He also enjoyed reading the magazine every month and kept track that he was the oldest past president still alive."

After his service to his township, West went on to serve on the Genesee County Board of Commissioners, including as chair. He was later the county's first purchasing agent, a position from which he retired in 1986. He continued to serve his community on various boards and commissions, and was a life member of Flushing and Swartz Creek Historical Societies, a 73-year member of the Flint Rapids Chapter 116 Royal Masons of Michigan and a board member of the Michigan Centennial Farm Association, among many others.

"Our MTA members have lost a living bridge to our history," said MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan. "John's own desire to live out his life on the heritage farm of his birth shows that he had a strong sense of our place in time and our connections to what came before and what will follow us. As the 13th president of MTA, John was a direct contributor to our success in growing out the organization and building its impact in Lansing and Washington, D.C. for our 1,240 Michigan townships."

West and wife Dorothy enjoyed traveling and visited all 50 states. He is survived by four daughters, a daughter-in-law, 11 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.



West

profile



Michigan Township Participating Plan

Public officials serving public officials

Founded in 1985 under Public Act 138, the Michigan Township Participating Plan (Par Plan) provides affordable property and casualty insurance and related services to Michigan townships and public entities.



Advertorial

Experience the difference

The Par Plan is unique in that it is governed by Michigan township public officials who make up the member-elected board of directors. Membership in the Par Plan means having a voice about how municipal coverage is handled, service quality and the future well-being of public entities.

Par Plan membership benefits include:

- Comprehensive property and casualty insurance coverages, including cyber coverage
- Risk-reduction grant opportunities
- Scholarships for Citizen Planning and Zoning Administration courses through Michigan State University
- Extensive risk control services and resources provided by a dedicated team of public sector professionals
- Access to HR MUNI—human resources compliance services provided online (24/7) and by phone
- Annual dividend program

"Recognizing the individual and unique needs of every member is the cornerstone of the Par Plan program," said Jennifer Venema, program administrator. "We are proud to partner with MTA as an Allied Service Provider and support Michigan communities through customized coverages and risk control support, local representation and personal service."

The Par Plan is insured by an A++ rated insurance carrier and administered by Tokio Marine HCC—Public Risk Group in Auburn Hills, Mich.

For more information about the Par Plan, visit www.theparplan.com or call (248) 371-3100.

Opinions expressed within do not represent the views of MTA, its Board or members. 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.

MTA's Robinson Scholarship available to students in your township



When 2020 Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship recipient Tyler Watt received the award from MTA, he said that he looked forward to a career in local government because, “the success of the community is closely tied to the work done by its officials, both elected and hired. Local governments are an asset to the improvement of their communities at a level greater than any state or federal level involvement could ever approach.” You can help encourage today’s students, like Tyler,

to become tomorrow’s local leaders! Urge students in *your* community to apply for MTA’s Robinson Scholarship by Monday, May 31, 2021.

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.

Application materials must be submitted to: Michigan Townships Association, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078 or emailed to anthony@michigantownships.org.

Help spread awareness of the scholarship by posting details on your township website or Facebook page, or in your newsletters! You can link to www.michigantownships.org/scholarship.asp. Need more information? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 229, or email jenn@michigantownships.org.

TGA scholarship deadline extended to April 15

The deadline to apply for a scholarship for MTA’s Township Governance Academy has been extended to April 15. Whether you’re already enrolled or it’s something you or your fellow board members are considering, these scholarships can assist with costs for this comprehensive credentialing program.

A limited number of scholarships, up to \$1,000 each, are available to assist elected officials from MTA-member townships that may not be in a financial position to provide the funding necessary for completion of the program. Our thanks to scholarship sponsors **BS&A Software**, **Burnham & Flower Insurance Group**, **Foresight Group** and **ITC Holdings Corp.** for funding the scholarship program.

Download the scholarship application at www.michigan-townships.org (click on “Township Governance Academy” under the “Training” tab on the members-only section, and select the “Apply for a TGA scholarship” link), or call (517) 321-6467, ext. 227, to have an application sent to you.

Now You Know

MTA’s **Now You Know** lunchtime learning series, held from noon to 1 p.m. monthly (or more!), covers timely topics and allows you to get your questions answered—all in just one hour!

Upcoming topics include*:

March 3: FOIA: What’s all the Fuss About?

April 7: OMA is Here to Stay

May 12: Understanding Planning

June 2: Taking Township Minutes

**schedule subject to change*

Learn more at <https://bit.ly/NYKmta>. Now available FREE to MTA Online subscribers at the Premium Level!

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MARCH

1 On or before the first Monday in March. The 2020 assessment roll shall be completed and certified by the assessor. (MCL 211.24)

Last day for treasurers to collect 2020 property taxes. (MCL 211.78a)

County treasurer commences settlement with local unit treasurers. (MCL 211.55)

Local units to turn over 2020 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.

2 Tuesday after the first Monday in March. The assessor/supervisor shall submit the 2020 certified assessment roll to the board of review. (MCL 211.29(1))

Tuesday after the first Monday in March. Organizational meeting of township board of review. (MCL 211.29)

8 The board of review must meet on the second Monday in March. This 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 shall hold at least three hours of its required sessions during the week of the second Monday in March after 6 p.m. (MCL 211.30) Note: The township board 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))

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

By 20 Clerks shall electronically transmit or mail (as requested) an absent voter ballot for May 4 election to each absent uniformed services or overseas voter who applied for an absent voter ballot 45 days or more before the election. (MCL 168.759a)

Absent voter ballots for May 4 election must be available for issuance to voters. (MCL 168.714)

25 through April 13. Precinct inspectors for May 4 election appointed by local election commission. (MCL 168.674)

By 31 Deadline for townships to report any errors identified in the 2020 personal property tax reimbursements on Form 5654 *Correction of Millage Rate or Other Errors for the 2020 Personal Property Tax Reimbursement Calculations* to the state Department of Treasury. (MCL 123.1358(4))

Deadline for townships to report any modifications to the 2013, 2014 or 2015 commercial personal property and industrial personal property taxable values on Form 5658 *Modification of 2013, 2014 and 2015 Personal Property Taxable Values Used for the 2020 Personal Property Tax Reimbursement Calculations* to the state Department of Treasury. (MCL 123.1345(e), (o), (z))

APRIL

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

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

Assessors are required to annually provide a copy of Form 5278 *Eligible Manufacturing Personal Property Tax Exemption Claim, Personal Property Statement, and Report of Fair Market Value of Qualified New and Previously Existing Personal Property* (Combined Document), and Form 5277 *Affidavit to Rescind Exemption*

of *Eligible Manufacturing Personal Property Defined in MCL 211.9(m) and 211.9(n)* and other parcel information required by the state Department of Treasury in a form and manner required by the department no later than April 1 of each year. (MCL 211.9m and 9n)

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 2018 delinquent property taxes, interest, penalties and fees, unless an extension has been granted by the circuit court. If unpaid, title to properties foreclosed for 2017 real property taxes vests solely in the foreclosing governmental unit. (MCL 211.78k)



63

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R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy

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5 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)

By 5 Notice of voter registration for May 4 election published. One notice required. (MCL 168.498)

Clerk shall post and enter into Qualified Voter File (QVF) the hours the clerk's office will be open on the Saturday or Sunday or both immediately before May 4 election to issue and receive absent voter ballots. (MCL 168.761b)

Clerk shall post and enter into QVF any additional locations and hours the clerk will be available to issue and receive absent voter ballots, if applicable. (MCL 168.761b)

7 The 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))

An assessor shall file Form 606 (L-4021) *Assessment Roll Changes Worksheet* with the county equalization department, and Form 607 (L-4022) *Report of Assessment Roll Changes and Classification* (signed by the assessor) with the county equalization department and the STC, immediately following adjournment of the board of review.

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

19 On or before the third Monday in April. Allocation board meets and receives budgets. (MCL 211.210)

Last day to register in any manner other than in-person with the local clerk for May 4 election. (MCL 168.497)

20 through May 4 at 8 p.m. In-person registration for May 4 election with clerk with proof of residency. (MCL 168.497)

23 Write-in candidates file for May 4 election declaration of intent forms by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.737a)

By 24 County clerks delivers remainder of ballots and election supplies for May 4 election to township clerks. (MCL 168.714)

By 27 Notice of May 4 election published. One notice required. (MCL 168.653a)

27 Petitions to place proposals on Aug. 3 ballot filed with county and local clerks. (MCL 168.646a)

By 29 Public accuracy test for May 4 election must be conducted. (R 168.778) Notice of test must be published at least 48 hours before test. (MCL 168.798)

30 Electors may obtain an absent voter ballot via first-class mail for May 4 election until 5 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

Electors may submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new ballot by mail for May 4 election until 5 p.m. (MCL 168.765b)

<p>Steven Mann</p> <p>+1.313.496.7509 mann@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Patrick McGow</p> <p>+1.313.496.7684 mcgow@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Thomas Colis</p> <p>+1.313.496.7677 colis@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Katrina Piligian Desmond</p> <p>+1.313.496.7665 desmond@millercanfield.com</p>
<p>Steve Frank</p> <p>+1.313.496.7503 frank@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Jeffrey Aronoff</p> <p>+1.313.496.7678 aronoff@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Ronald Liscombe</p> <p>+1.313.496.7906 liscombe@millercanfield.com</p>	<p>Sean Rucker</p> <p>+1.313.496.7671 rucker@millercanfield.com</p>

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How do we know if medical marijuana primary caregivers in our township are licensed? Do they need to obtain building permits?

The 2008 Michigan Medical Marihuana Act (MMMA) allows qualifying patients to grow marijuana for their own medical use or to designate a primary caregiver (through registration) to grow for them. So, the MMMA has allowed primary caregivers since 2008.

Michigan court decisions over the last several years have clarified how and where primary caregivers can grow medical marijuana. Most importantly, in April 2020, the Michigan Supreme Court held that primary caregivers *are* subject to municipal zoning regulations that are not unreasonable or inconsistent with state law. (*DeRuiter v Township of Byron*, 505 Mich 130 (2020)) Now, any primary caregivers establishing in your township can be required to obtain zoning approval, along with all required building permits.

The Michigan State Police will assist the township in regards to primary caregiver MMMA compliance. The Marijuana Regulatory Agency (MRA) does not enforce regarding primary caregivers.



Our township has not opted in for medical marijuana facilities under the Medical Marihuana Facilities Licensing Act (MMFLA) and has opted out of adult-use marijuana establishments under the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act (MRTMA). Can primary caregivers still set up in our township?

Yes. The opt-in limitation for medical marijuana and opt-out requirement for adult-use marijuana do not apply to or limit primary caregivers under the MMMA. Primary caregivers can establish in any municipality, subject to the municipal zoning, building or other regulations.

A township should review its zoning ordinance to determine where primary caregivers may establish and by what approval process. Primary caregivers are lawful and cannot be excluded from any municipality, but are required to conduct their activities in compliance with the MMMA, and local laws and regulations.



If our board has not adopted an ordinance to opt out of adult-use marijuana establishments, will the MRA issue licenses in our township?

Possibly. The MRTMA authorizes a municipality to adopt an ordinance to do one of two things: completely prohibit adult-use marijuana establishments in the municipality OR limit the number of adult-use establishments in the municipality. If the township does nothing, the MRA has the authority to issue adult-use licenses in the municipality.



Isn't the state limited for the first two years to issuing adult-use licenses to people who already hold medical marijuana licenses? Our township doesn't allow medical marijuana facilities, so aren't we protected from the state licensing adult-use establishments in our township until sometime later in 2021?

No. The initial limitation on issuing of adult-use licenses to those already holding medical marijuana licenses only applied to certain adult-use establishments. It did not apply to adult-use Class A grows or microbusinesses; either of these types of licenses could be licensed anytime after MRA started issuing licenses (December 2019).

Now, given the need for supply to meet demand in the adult-use market, the MRA is loosening this restriction. As of March 1, 2021, there is no longer a requirement to have a medical marijuana facility license first in order to obtain



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an adult-use license for a Class B grower, Class C grower, marijuana retailer, marijuana processor or marijuana secure transporter. Therefore, *any* township intending to prohibit all adult-use marijuana establishments should adopt an ordinance to completely prohibit adult-use establishments and file a copy of the adopted ordinance with the MRA.

 Our township has a few medical marijuana facilities by ordinance. When will we see money from the medical marijuana excise fund?

The medical marijuana excise fund was repealed with the adoption of the MRTMA. If your township has medical marijuana facilities, you may continue to charge your township's annual license fee (up to \$5,000 for administrative, enforcement and inspections costs), but you will not receive any additional funds from the state.

 Our township board allowed medical marijuana facilities, but has adopted an opt-out ordinance for adult-use establishments. Can anything change this decision? The township is being told by industry advocates that we must allow adult-use establishments if we allow medical marijuana facilities.

There are a lot of dynamics in play between the medical marijuana market and the adult-use marijuana market. In the most basic sense, there is a huge demand for adult-use marijuana; the regulated, licensed supply is having trouble keeping up with that demand. As the adult-use market demand increases, medical marijuana facilities may be forced to elevate to participate in the adult-use market or may be driven out of business. (This is a simplistic analysis; there are many more factors at play.)

It is likely, given the new March 1 timeline for the state's licensure of all types of adult-use facilities, that more industry pressure will now be directed to municipalities to encourage opening to the adult-use market. A township board can, at any time, adopt an ordinance to completely prohibit or to limit the number of adult-use establishments in the municipality. This is usually a police power ordinance, with accompanying zoning ordinance amendments to identify district locations and approval processes. (As previously noted, if a township does not adopt an opt-out ordinance, adult-use establishments may be licensed in the township by the MRA). A township may also repeal an opt-out ordinance.

The MRTMA also includes a referendum provision, through which members of the public can circulate petitions to force an election on one of the two options: adopt an ordinance completely prohibiting adult-use establishments OR limiting the number of adult-use establishments. The act creates this specific referendum authority in a township. While cities and villages may have charter provisions allowing referendums on other issues, the MRTMA's referendum authority is somewhat unique for townships. The township needs to be aware that petitions may be circulated to force one of the two above options to voters.

The MRTMA only requires petitions signed by 5% of the registered voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election. For small municipalities, this number—in some cases—can be easily met. If such petition is submitted to your township, consult your township attorney to determine how to validate signatures, approve the petition form, approve proposed ordinance language and, if appropriate, submit proposed ballot language to the county clerk for placement on a ballot.

Townships should also keep in mind that the township clerk runs elections for villages. Therefore, if adult-use referendum petitions are circulated for a village election, the township clerk will have a role to play.

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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Address Confidentiality Program protects addresses from FOIA

A new program known as the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), enacted in late December, will exempt participants' addresses from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests—including a participant's location in the state's Qualified Voter File system. The program was enacted to strengthen protections for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault, reduce the risk of individuals being threatened or harmed again by their abusers, and prevent their address from being subject to FOIA.

The ACP, to be administered by the state Department of the Attorney General, will protect victims of domestic violence, stalking and human trafficking under the bipartisan-passed plan, and will allow victims of crimes and their children to apply for identification numbers and substitute addresses. Victims will be able to obtain a confidential address for official documents, such as driver's licenses and mail correspondence, to help protect them from their past offenders.

Participants would receive a unique identification number and new state ID cards with a state post office box, so participants' residential addresses are not listed. The Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget would receive their mail, which would be forwarded to them. Participants can request a governmental entity use the designated address, shielding their physical address from public record requests.

The Department of State, a law enforcement agency or a local government can request the attorney general to provide the confidential address, telephone number or email address if it requires access for a legitimate government purpose. This can only occur if the governmental agency was unsuccessful in contacting the person using the designated address.

The attorney general's office has started working toward the creation of an online system that survivors of crime can use to keep their personal information secure. While the law provides the attorney general two years to implement the system after an appropriation is made by the Legislature, the office is beginning to meet with stakeholders from across state government to establish an online system for survivors. The law also requires the attorney general to establish an address confidentiality program advisory council, which includes a representative of a local unit of government. Updates throughout the development will be provided online at the Attorney General's Crime Victim Rights webpage, available from www.michigan.gov/ag.

Michigan joins 37 other states that provide address confidentiality programs for crime victims.

MTA will update members with additional information once the system is developed.

Legislative slowdown

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

HB 4014: Speed limits—Modifies procedure for establishing speed limits. *MTA supports.*

HB 4084: Unlawful dumping—Revises criminal penalties and civil fines for unlawful dumping of garbage. *MTA supports.*

HB 4123: Water supply—Modifies use of clean water assistance and safe drinking water assistance funds for energy efficiency water works projects. *MTA supports.*

HB 4129: Elections—Requires secretary of state to post on Department of State website list of local clerks who are not current with continuing education training. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4132-4133: Elections—Creates felony penalties for knowingly submitting an absentee voter (AV) ballot application using another person's name and personal information and for submitting an AV ballot application with the intent of obtaining multiple AV ballots for a person. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4134: Elections—Allows increase in allowable precinct size and requires permanent absent voter list. *MTA supports.*

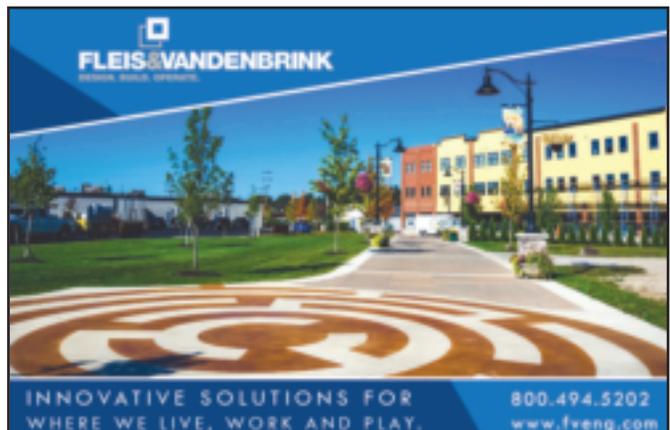
HB 4125: Elections—Requires absent voter counting boards in cities and townships with more than one election precinct. *MTA monitoring.*

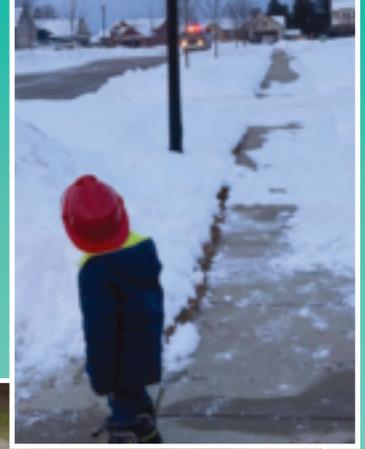
SB 17: Public employees and officers—Modifies population thresholds for contracts of public servants serving as public safety officers. *MTA supports.*

SBs 22 & 23: Elections—Limits millage elections to November elections. *MTA opposes.*

SB 46: Broadband personal property exemption—Creates a personal property tax exemption for new broadband equipment that resolves lack of broadband service. *MTA opposes.*

SB 61: Shoreline permits—Provides for expedited permit processing during high water. *MTA supports.*





Over the past year, we have been inspired by Michigan townships

and your commitment to leading and serving your communities—to the very concept of “Neighbors Serving Neighbors”—during wholly uncertain and unprecedented times and challenges.

Now, let us inspire you.

Join us April 19-21 for MTA’s 2021 Virtual Conference & Expo, an online event offering the education, connection and inspiration that township leaders need—and deserve.



Our 2021 virtual event is ...

Accessible: You’ll have access to **EVERY** session—live during the event or a recorded version afterward—and can download **EVERY** handout!

Affordable: Only **\$159/person** (less than \$8/session) makes the conference an incredible value! Plus, with savings on meals, mileage and lodging, this is one event you can’t afford to miss.

Aspirational and inspirational: MTA leadership and featured speakers offer inspiration and hope, including insights on working together to best serve your community and state.

Additional resources: Stop by our virtual expo hall to visit with vendors, browse our online “bookshelves,” or talk with MTA staff experts in our “Ask Us” and MTA-PAC booths.

A source of connection: Engage with municipal experts, exhibitors and your fellow township officials during hallway chats and more.



Registration is OPEN

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Register online at www.michigantownships.org or use the form in this brochure!

Conference Schedule

Monday, April 19

11 a.m. to Noon
Opening Session

1 to 2 p.m.
Concurrent Breakout Sessions

2:15 to 3:30 p.m.
Legislative Plenary: MTA Policy Platform
and Legislative Update

Expo open all day
*Visit with exhibitors and MTA staff
live from noon to 1 p.m. in the MTA
Bookstore, MTA-PAC Booth and
MTA "Ask Us" Booth*

Tuesday, April 20

10 to 10:45 a.m.
General Session

11 a.m. to Noon
Concurrent Breakout Sessions

2 to 3 p.m.
Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Expo open all day
*Join a live Business Solutions Session
beginning at 12:15 p.m.*

Wednesday, April 21

10 to 11 a.m.
Concurrent Breakout Sessions

1 to 2 p.m.
Concurrent Breakout Sessions

2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Closing Session

Expo open all day
*Visit with exhibitors and MTA staff
live from 11 a.m. to noon in the MTA
Bookstore, MTA-PAC Booth and
MTA "Ask Us" Booth*

***New to online learning, or have
questions about participating?
Don't worry! MTA has answers to your
questions, and tips and suggestions
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Visit [www.michigantownships.org/
conference.asp](http://www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp) and select "Virtual
Event Help" to learn more.***

Concurrent Breakout Topics

- Bringing Broadband into Your Community
- Community Outreach During COVID-19: A Volunteer Effort
- Clearing the Haze of Marijuana Regulation
- Effective Communication Strategies
- Elections Update
- Managing Expectations: A Positive, Pain-Free Audit
- Meeting Myths, Mysteries & Misconceptions
- How to Host a Virtual Meeting
- Innovating Your Township: How-to Methods and Legal Information for Leaders
- Introduction to Ordinances
- Payroll Questions? We've Got Answers!
- Policies Matter: Top 3 Policies Your Township Needs to Succeed
- Public Safety: Options for Providing Police & Fire Services for Your Community
- Safety First: Practical Responses to Violence at the Township Hall
- Show Me the Money! Grant Writing Tips for Townships
- Things I Wish I Knew When I First Took Office
- Tools of Engagement: Township Websites & Social Media
- Top Township Legal Pitfalls
- What the Board Needs to Know About Corrective Action Plans
- The Impact of COVID-19 on Your Township Workplace

**Topics subject to change; time slots and descriptions will appear in next month's magazine. Visit www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp for the most up-to-date information.*

Event Highlights

Opening Session

Kick off your virtual conference experience with a celebration of township government and public service! You'll hear from MTA's incoming and outgoing presidents, as well as Executive Director Neil Sheridan, who'll share his insights on the connection and commitment of township's local leaders in serving their communities.

General and Closing Sessions

Our featured speakers will offer motivation and inspiration!

Expo

Take virtual stroll through our exhibit hall to learn more about municipal vendors who can offer tools and services to streamline programs, systems and services within your community. Browse our virtual bookshelves in the MTA Bookstore, where you'll find more than a dozen publications geared exclusively to township government (and save 10% on all publications and MTA-logo products!). Be sure to stop by the MTA "Ask Us" Booth to get your questions answered by our experts AND the MTA-PAC Booth where you'll learn how your contributions can help MTA support legislators who value township government.

What does An MTA virtual conference look like?

You won't be glued to your computer all day! We've designed a schedule of shortened days filled with education, information and networking, while allowing for ample breaks in between.

Pre-Conference Program

Separate registration required

Designed for and open to *all* township officials, the sessions described below—featured on April 12-13—will serve as round two of our *New Officials Training* focusing on aspects not covered in our first round held in December and January. Cost for both days is only \$99/person.

Monday, April 12, 1 to 5 p.m.

Board Authorities & Responsibilities

Part one of an intensive two-day event, this session covers aspects of township government that all township officials should know to successfully carry out their statutory and governing responsibilities. Every board member has equal authority and responsibility at the head table. So even if you're not newly elected, we invite you to join us for this review of your township board "job description," offering a deep dive into the key areas where you and your board exercise important policy decisions and practical tips on keeping a productive focus on what matters most.

Presenter: Catherine Mullhaupt, MTA Staff Attorney

Tuesday, April 13: 1 to 4 p.m.

Board Roles: Who Does What?

Part two offers insights into who does what and how the township team works together to get it all done. State law assigns each elected official specific duties and responsibilities, and sets forth rules and guidelines. But there are many routine actions and decisions not governed by statute. Who sets the board agenda? Who is appointed Freedom of Information Act coordinator? What about the website, township security, and all those other duties? Gain insights into managing the day-to-day operations, including handling public funds and financial reporting.

Presenter: Cindy Dodge, MTA Member Information Services Liaison

Topics include:

- **Board authority:** Who decides what a township will do—and how?
- **Revenue sources:** How are townships funded? What options exist?
- **Enabling statutes:** Where do townships get their authority? What must townships do? What may a board choose to do?
- **Lawful expenditures:** What may townships pay for?
- **Administrative responsibilities:** Getting things done by balancing statutory duties with township responsibilities
- **Working with other local governments:** Options for boards to make effective and productive partnerships
- **The power of local engagement:** Why it's important, what tools you can use, and how you can make a difference

Wednesday, April 14: 1 to 5 p.m.

Assessors Renewal: Professionally Speaking

(\$50/person)

What does it take for an assessor to communicate effectively in today's world? How do you explain a complex assessment administration system to officials and taxpayers? Gain insights, hints and helps in this motivational continuing education course approved by the State Tax Commission for four hours of elective credit for assessors.

It's hard to be the bearer of bad news, and downright difficult to provide state facts and statute to property owners who are emotional and upset. The job of an assessor requires communication on issues that are hard for taxpayers to hear. This is not a public speaking course, it's designed to help assessors communicate better with the public and offers insights into having challenging conversations. Dive into the "how's" of communication in assessment administration, explore ways assessors can communicate better and get practical advice for real-life situations. From phone calls to presentations, get tips for navigating communications when it comes to property tax law.

Speakers: Shila Kiander, Michigan Advanced Assessing Officer, Director, Mecosta County Equalization; and Cindy Dodge, Michigan Certified Assessing Officer, MTA Member Information Services Liaison

Friday, April 16: 1 to 5 p.m.

Legal Institute for Township Attorneys

(\$99/person)

Connect with fellow municipal attorneys from across the state to discuss changes, updates and other trends affecting township government. The Legal Institute is the premier educational event for attorneys who serve Michigan's townships. Your attendance keeps you on the cutting edge of legal news and changes that impact local government.

Moderator: Rob Thall, MTA Legal Counsel, Bauckham, Sparks, Thall, Seeber and Kaufman, PC



conference registration form

Save time! Register online at www.michigantownships.org

Registrant Information (Please photocopy this form to register additional attendees.)

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ TITLE _____

TOWNSHIP _____ COUNTY _____

EMAIL *(Required for ALL attendees to access the event)* _____ TELEPHONE _____

Registration Options	Early-bird rate <small>(by April 1)</small>	Regular rate <small>(after April 1)</small>	Subtotal
Virtual Conference—Attendee (April 19-21)	\$159	\$179	
Virtual Conference—Attendee (April 19-21) <i>MTA Online Premium subscriber savings!</i>	\$127	\$147	
Add a pre-Conference session Select your session(s) and use subtotal column to calculate fees			
<input type="checkbox"/> Board Authorities, Responsibilities & Roles (April 12-13)	\$99	\$119	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessors Renewal: Professionally Speaking (April 14)	\$50	\$70	
<input type="checkbox"/> MTA Legal Institute <i>for your township attorney</i> (April 16)	\$99	\$119	
Rates shown are for member registrations made online, postmarked or faxed by the deadline. Non-members, contact MTA for rates.			TOTAL DUE

Payment Information

- Check or money order enclosed; check # _____ *(Make checks payable to MTA.)*
- Invoice my township
- Charge to credit card (MasterCard or VISA)

Card Number _____ / _____ Expiration Date _____

Print Card Holder's Name _____ Signature _____

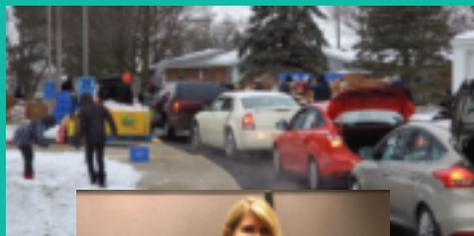
Send completed forms to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908, or fax to (517) 321-8908. Register online at www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp. Questions? Call MTA at (517) 321-6467.

Substitution, Cancellation and Refund Policy: A virtual Conference registration may be transferred to another individual (from the same township) for a \$10 administrative fee. If the original and substituted registrants both log in to the event, the township will be charged for both registrants. Refund of the registration fee, less a \$25 administration fee, will be made if notice of cancellation is received in writing by April 5, 2021. Written cancellation requests received after April 5 will incur a \$50 administration fee.

Help MTA honor your township's hometown heroes!

We need YOUR help to honor your township's dedication to "Neighbors Serving Neighbors" at our Virtual Conference & Expo. We are asking for pictures from your year—whether it's your firefighters or first responders, a drive-by birthday celebration, a food drive, your office workers continuing to serve residents safely ... anything that reflects for you your township's service this year.

We are also looking for your comments and tributes—either by emailing your remarks to us OR letting us record your thoughts in the upcoming weeks. We'll use these photos, comments and tributes in promotions for our virtual conference and during the event itself. Please send your photos, comments or interest to jenn@michigantownships.org. Thank you!



2021 Virtual Conference vendor partners



2021 Virtual Conference vendor patrons

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Neighbors serving neighbors

Rural township exemplifies service to community

In **Hayes Township** (Clare Co.), the concept of “Neighbors Serving Neighbors”—the theme of MTA’s 2021 virtual conference—is simply a way of life.

That is more evident than ever with the creation of a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the township’s civic center. Operational since mid-January, the clinic offers eligible township residents and those from the surrounding area an accessible option for receiving the vaccine.

According to Treasurer **Mayelene Rood**, the community was “so excited” when the clinic opened in the township. “This brought access to the vaccine locally,” she said. “People can’t believe we have this in our rural area.”

The clinic became a reality very quickly after the Clare County Emergency Management Office first approached the township about using its civic center for a vaccination center in January. Within just four days of the request, the Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves six counties, including Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties, held its first clinic in the township.

The civic center, which opened five years ago, had typically served as a community gathering space as well as a gym with fitness classes, and as an emergency shelter. The facility is

now being used for even greater service, with enough space for both residents and public health staff to remain socially distanced, with stations and seating set up in accordance with the current 25% facility capacity restrictions. The health department learns each week how many doses of the vaccines it can expect to receive—typically between 1,500 and 2,600 for the district—and clinic plans are made accordingly. After its fourth clinic in the township the week of Feb. 8, some 1,300 doses had been administered.

“It’s phenomenal,” Rood said. “It is so efficient and so well-organized; people do not have to wait in line. People are so pleased; they came early to see one another—safely.

“It is just running like clock-work,” she added, noting that one resident who spends time in Florida in the winter had trouble navigating that southern state’s complex appointment system. The resident was able to secure an appointment through the regional health department, returned to her home township, received a vaccine, and headed back to warmer weather within 24 hours.



Assisting at a recent COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Hayes Township (Clare Co.) civic center are (pictured from left) Clerk Debra Hoyt; Janice Parrett, Central Michigan District Health Department personal health supervisor; Treasurer Mayelene Tessner-Rood; Lori Phelps, director of Clare County Community Development; Carol Leary, case manager for Clare County Senior Services; and Jerry Becker, Clare County emergency management director.

The health department, county Council on Aging, area community leaders and volunteers are helping to both ensure their eligible residents are aware of the clinic and assist in making sure operations run smoothly. They are calling senior citizens to help make appointments, assisting with clinic set-up, sanitizing the building and stations, even shoveling and salting the walkways. Local officials are also volunteering to work in the clinic, providing water and snacks to the individuals, who must wait for 20 minutes following their vaccination before leaving the facility, one step closer to seeing an end to the pandemic.

Committed to their community and their neighbors

Rood and her fellow board members are no strangers to working to better their community, and help their fellow townships. In fact, Rood and Clerk **Debra Hoyt** recently lent a helping hand to neighboring **Summerfield Township** (Clare Co.), including helping prepare its winter tax bills after its treasurer resigned following the November 2020 election. Summerfield was the third township in her county that Rood has assisted over the past years—county officials often reach out to her to ask if she can share her advice and insights with townships that need help or assistance.

Rood, who served as her township's deputy treasurer, and as clerk and treasurer in the 1980s and 1990s, was appointed treasurer in 2011. She well knows the vast responsibilities of township officials, and has helped guide many fellow leaders in her area over the years.

"Township government has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 20 years," Rood said. "It is so much more difficult."

As she did with Summerfield Township, Rood encourages officials to take classes—such as through MTA or the state—to learn the core functions of their elected duties, as well as to stay on top of ever-changing requirements, trends and ideas.

The concept of "neighbors serving neighbors" comes naturally to Rood, who has lived in her township for nearly 50 years. "It's home," she said, simply. "I enjoy my job. We are big on customer service in our township."

Rood has helped with efforts to continue to enhance her township's sense of community, including expanding the area's veterans memorial park. Veterans Freedom Park, located in nearby Harrison, includes a "Wall of Tears" honoring those killed in action since World War II to present day from Clare, Gladwin, Isabella and Midland Counties. Rood was asked to help coordinate efforts to raise funds for the park's lighting, and toward a goal of adding every five years a statue to recognize each war. Thanks to significant business and community support, the park has unveiled two statues, one commemorating WWII as well as a soldier's cross. Part of the park's fundraising efforts include the "Rosie Challenge," which channels Rosie the Riveter's "We Can Do It" spirit to successfully focus promotion and awareness. A WWII buff, Rood herself was part of the 2017 Guinness Book of World Records "largest gathering of Rosies" in **Ypsilanti Charter Township** (Washtenaw Co.).

"We had a goal and a cause, and we worked together," Rood reflected on the support for Freedom Park.

Rood said when she and Hoyt joined the Clare County MTA Chapter, which brings together township officials to discuss challenges and opportunities in their area, they were inspired to help those who may have questions or be struggling with township issues or responsibilities.

"We want all local officials to be successful," said Rood. "We love our area. It is a big drive of ours to send a message that, in mid-Michigan, we are united."

Get inspired by "Neighbors Serving Neighbors" at MTA's 2021 Virtual Conference & Expo, being held April 19-21. See the center of this issue of *Township Focus* or visit www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp for details. Registration is now open!



Reflections on a unique MTA presidency

Dear MTA members and friends,
As I write this, my extended two-year term as Association president draws to a close, and I have found myself reflecting on my unique presidency.

I was elected to lead the Association what seems both like yesterday and also long ago, in April 2019 at our Association's Annual Meeting at the Annual Educational Conference & Expo—you know, the one where we all got to visit and learn in person! I spoke of the importance of how we shouldn't let the small things rule our dreams and decisions. I also mentioned how important it is that we have respect for our fellow board members and how we can agree to disagree, and as a board speak with one voice ... basically, what it takes to be a valued and respected board member of your township.

In the two years that I have been your Association president, these values have not changed. I have been blessed to see many of you during MTA's *On the Road* regional meetings in the fall of 2019, and inspired when speaking to many of you by phone or email during this COVID-19 pandemic. I also congratulate our 2021 MTA President, and my friend, Pete Kleiman on his presidency leading this incredible association and its dedicated members. Pete, I wish you all the best in your year.

It has been a true honor to serve as MTA president, and I hope I have made even a small impact in a positive way to the greatest organization that serves the people of the great state of Michigan—the Michigan Townships Association.

Respectfully,



MTA President Jeffrey R. Sorensen
Supervisor, Cooper Charter Township
(Kalamazoo Co.)



Peter Kleiman leads MTA in the 'ever-changing normal'



Peter Kleiman first joined the **Harris Township** (Menominee Co.) board during a tumultuous time in the community. Kleiman was already seen in the community as a strong and vibrant leader with the ability to hear both sides of a discussion and find a consensus. In just a short time after being elected supervisor, Kleiman brought together various sides with the common goal: running a successful township.

That was in 1988, and it remains true today.

After 33 years, Kleiman is still leading Harris Township—and is still seen as a strong leader for his township, the Upper Peninsula, the state, and now, for the Michigan Townships Association.

Kleiman became 2021 MTA president following the Association's Board of Directors meeting in February. It's been a year of adjustments and creativity for MTA, just as it has for townships across the state. Kleiman was originally slated to assume the helm of the Association for 2020. However, since the Association could not hold an Annual Meeting in conjunction with our Annual Conference last April, 2019 MTA President Jeff Sorensen assumed an unprecedented extended term leading the organization.

With the Association again unable to hold an Annual Meeting during our virtual conference this year, Kleiman's term as president began immediately following the February Board meeting, and will conclude at our next Annual Meeting, held during MTA's 2022 Annual Conference & Expo in Lansing next April.

Kleiman has served on the MTA Board since 2011, first joining as District 3 director, which encompasses Menominee, Delta and Alger Counties. He has also served as president, vice president and treasurer for the Menominee County MTA Chapter.

Kleiman is no stranger to hard work, public service or helping lead organizations. A lifelong dairy farmer, Kleiman, along with his son-in-law, is now trying his hand at raising



2021 MTA President Peter Kleiman, pictured above with MTA District 12 Director Yulanda Bellinger, has been a supervisor for 33 years.

beef cattle. He joined the military in 1969, and returned home in 1970. In 1974, he was asked to run for the North Central School Board, a position he held for 24 years. He was president of the Menominee County Farm Bureau for 15 years, and continues to serve on its board. He serves on the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association Board of Directors, and served 22 years on the Farm First Dairy Cooperative Board of Directors, including a brief stint as its chief executive officer. He recently joined the executive committee of the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission.

"There's no such thing as retirement," Kleiman said with a laugh.

Well-prepared for his new role

Those experiences helped prepare Kleiman to lead MTA, one of the largest municipal organizations in the nation. “My service with all of these different agencies has given me the experience of talking to both sides and helping them understand and find a common goal,” he said. “Rather than fight against each other, fight for common ground. I’ve participated in co-op mergers and even school consolidations. You learn so much of what it takes to make people work together to get to one good, common goal.”

Public service was modeled for him growing up—his father, whom he calls his hero, served on the Harris Township Board of Review for years. “My dad was handicapped, and he was a very outgoing person,” Kleiman said. “He never finished high school, but he raised 12 kids. People liked him and from the time I was little, most people said I took after my father.”

His years of public service have sparked a family tradition. His wife, Diane, is an assessor and Kleiman’s deputy supervisor. His son is Menominee County clerk, his daughter is a public school teacher, his son-in-law is a county sheriff’s deputy and his grandson is Menominee County drain commissioner.

A constant learning experience

Throughout his career in public service, Kleiman has constantly learned, adjusted and adapted to change.

“Township government is a constant learning experience,” he said. “When I first joined my township board, three of the five board members were new. But we learned—together. We took a look at what works and what doesn’t work, how to deal with the public, the state, various agencies, and slowly but surely, we got our township back on track.”

A key for township success is board members communicating and working together toward a common goal. “You work together—and you make it work,” Kleiman said. “You also have to do a lot of homework as a township official, make sure you get the proper information, and be prepared when you go in to township board meetings.”

The need to adapt to change has never been more apparent than in the past year, when townships were unable to meet in-person to accomplish board business and residents haven’t been able to pop into the township hall for guidance, to make payments, file permits, etc. A lack of internet access in some areas and troubles navigating technology only compounded the difficulties. Kleiman said that lack of face-to-face interaction—both among his board and his residents—was one of the biggest challenges for his area, as it surely was for many townships across the state. This was likely especially true for newly elected officials, getting up to speed on their new role in the township, virtually.

“This year forced townships to do things differently,” Kleiman said, noting that he spent a lot of time fielding phone calls and emails from residents due to stay-home orders and the prohibition on in-person meetings. “But we have a job to do and townships got it done.”

Change is a constant in all elements of life—and it’s something that township officials must embrace. “My grandparents farmed with horses and milked the cows by



Three generations of Kleimans serve Menominee County residents, including 2021 MTA President Peter Kleiman, pictured above with his son, Marc, who is county clerk, and grandson, Caleb, who is county drain commissioner. Kleiman’s wife Diane, with whom he is pictured at right, is an assessor and deputy supervisor.



hand,” he said. “Now milking is done with pipelines and robots. You have to change.”

“This year has been the greatest test, and this is the year that we delivered. It was incredibly challenging for us to be able to continue to deliver services, but we did it.”

And, according to Kleiman, both townships and MTA have passed that test with flying colors. Townships adapted and embraced technology to continue to serve their residents. Virtual public meetings allowed residents who might not attend in-person to take part from their homes, and in many townships, more information was likely posted onto the township’s website, to allow residents’ easier access. MTA, too, made the shift to offering online education, especially critical during the first year of the township term of office.

“With technology, participation can be so much easier,” Kleiman said. “This is the new normal, the ever-changing normal—and change allows us to make something better.”

As both township officials and the population get younger, offering more and more access to information, services and resources online is a must. “They expect it,” Kleiman said.

‘I like what I do’

With his decades of dedication to his community and township government, Kleiman has no plans of stopping anytime soon. “I stay committed because I haven’t accomplished everything I want to accomplish yet,” he said, including helping to improve the infrastructure in his own township. “And, I like what I do. I like working with the people.”

“Plus, there is so much change happening at the state level that impacts townships, and if you want to have a voice in anything, you have to have a seat at the table. From one extreme to the other, let’s bring it to the middle, to something that both sides can live with. There’s just a lot more out there for me to do yet.”

2021-2022 MTA Board-approved legislative policy platform

The following legislative policy platform was approved by the MTA Board of Directors to guide the Association's legislative efforts for 2021-22. In the absence of an MTA Annual Meeting, a legislative plenary session and a review of the platform will be held on Monday, April 19, at the MTA 2021 Virtual Conference & Expo.

Vision Statement

The Michigan Townships Association envisions a 21st Century Michigan where:

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

Assessment and Taxation

The Michigan Townships Association supports property tax fairness, equity, and efficient assessment and collection by public servants who are accountable to township officials to ensure public trust and locally accessible information and assistance. Valuation should be based on sound assessing principles. Local governments should be reimbursed by the state for property tax revenues lost due to statutory exemptions. State government should provide local governments with education and technical support to develop and defend their assessment rolls.

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

- Valuation of big box stores should be determined using the same assessing methodology as other commercial properties and prohibit the consideration of private deed restrictions or covenants imposed to reduce the value of the property or exclude competitors of the grantor from the market

Purpose

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

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

The Policy Platform delineates issues into six broad issue areas:

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

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

- Oppose expansion of property tax exemptions without replacement of local revenue, and support the state assuming administration and funding of disabled veteran's property tax exemption
- Clarify property tax exemption eligibility for nonprofit charitable institutions
- Raise the current charter township 10-mill tax limitation to allow charter townships, with voter approval, to address legacy costs, meet demands for expanding services and offset millage rollback requirements
- Recodify Michigan township statutes to include clarification that assessors are accountable to the township board when the supervisor is not certified to perform assessing functions

- Increase the specific tax on mobile homes located in licensed parks and levy on park owner rather than individual occupied dwelling owners
- Exempt minimal personal property tax obligations resulting from minor property improvements on mobile home lots such as small decks, stairs and porches
- Allow option for a local excise tax for the purpose of providing public recreational facilities and/or public safety expenses related to increased tourism

Elections

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

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

- Preserve authority of townships to convey information on ballot proposals to their residents
- Preserve the authority of townships to place millage and bond proposals before voters at any election
- Permit the option for nonpartisan township offices to be approved by the township board and the electors
- Permit the preprocessing of absentee ballots
- Allow option to increase the active number of registered voters per precinct

Environment and Land Use

The Michigan Townships Association supports state laws that enable townships to efficiently and effectively plan for land uses and adopt zoning ordinances to protect the public health, safety and general welfare. State and federal regulations should not impede local government growth and development policies and objectives. Further, preemption of local land use authority should be limited to issues of great statewide impact and any resulting adverse local impacts should be mitigated by the state or federal government.

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

- 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
- Preserve landfill capacities by directing appropriate materials to waste utilization facilities and support an increase in the state tipping fee to a rate competitive with nearby states while preserving a local tipping fee option
- Preserve local authority on zoning issues that are local in nature

- Increased state funding for environmental programs to address issues such as brownfield redevelopment, contamination and invasive species

Intergovernmental Relations

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

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

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

Township Operations

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

The Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Modernizing state laws to clarify the governance role of township boards to establish policy direction for townships
- Appropriate, cost-effective training requirements for township planning commissioners and zoning board of appeal members to reduce costly lawsuits and improve township decision-making by key appointed boards
- Authority for township board to change township name with voter approval
- Granting township supervisors discretionary authority to perform marriages
- Permit members of a public body to participate in a public meeting remotely

MTA Board-approved policy platform

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Michigan Townships Association concludes that Michigan's road system will continue to require more funding than is currently anticipated in law to ensure that county primary and local roads are safe and convenient for travel. As townships are major financial contributors to road maintenance and construction costs, the Michigan Townships Association supports the inclusion of township officials in transportation policy discussions at all government levels. Michigan has also under-invested in other infrastructure necessary to remain economically competitive and protect the health, safety and general welfare of residents. The Michigan Townships Association supports the State of Michigan working with township officials in planning, funding and delivering infrastructure needed by every community to be economically viable and free of environmental threats and risks.

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

- Additional funding above current statutory levels for primary and local roads, and increased state funding for water, sewer and communications infrastructure
- Allow townships to create special assessment districts for high-speed internet
- Allow for a county road agency in conjunction with a requesting township to lower the speed to a level deemed necessary for motorist and pedestrian safety on a gravel or unimproved surface road
- Expand township special assessment authority to include replacement of privately owned sewer leads
- Encourage county road agencies to provide matching funds for township road construction and maintenance projects to be spent at the township's discretion
- Expand engineering and safety data to include pedestrian-vehicle impact data and multiple modes of transportation to properly manage speed limits

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Mark Van Aillsburg | Andrea Crumback | Jim Scales

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ALLIED SERVICE PROVIDER MTA

Missed some of our recent live trainings? *Good news, they are now available on demand!*

Over the past few months, MTA has held incredibly valuable virtual educational events, including our ***Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection***, ***New Officials Training*** and ***Board of Review Training***.

We know that life can get hectic, and our live events might not fit into every schedule.

That's why they are available on demand—so you can watch, and learn, at your convenience.

Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection



MTA's valued ***Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection*** series—taught by Member Information Services Liaison Cindy Dodge—offers an overview of the tax collection process from start to finish. This webinar highlights everything from preparation of the tax bill through summer and winter taxes, all the way to accounting for (and disbursement of) collections. Participants will take away tips on duties, deadlines and important dates on the tax calendar, as well as summer tax deferments, delinquent personal property tax collection methods and settlement. This is also a great educational opportunity for those seasoned treasurers looking for a refresher, or deputies getting up to speed on their duties.



New Officials Training

No one understands townships like MTA. Our unparalleled, in-depth ***New Officials Training*** helps those new to township government get up to speed on their roles and responsibilities. This intensive training, geared to ALL offices, is designed to introduce those new to the board to what they need to know.

Our experienced, incomparable Member Information Services team—Michael Selden, Catherine Mullhaupt and Cindy Dodge—share their municipal expertise, offering accessible information and insights into the “hows and whys” of township government. Breakout sessions are targeted to each office.



Board of Review Training

Board of review members and alternates, assessors and township supervisors can continue to turn to MTA for the quality ***Board of Review Training*** you've come to expect! We are offering completely new “Basic,” “Beyond Basic” and “Advanced” courses—take one, two or all three! (*Note that although the live “Basic” session was approved by the State Tax Commission to meet the new state training mandate for board of review members, the on-demand version has NOT yet been approved to satisfy the requirement.*)



Continue the learning with MTA publications, including our Township “Basics” and “Essentials” book packages and updated ***Board of Review Guide***. Visit our online store at www.michigantownships.org to browse our bookshelves and order today!

To register for any of MTA's on-demand trainings, visit our Online Learning Center at <https://learn.michigantownships.org/>



Q Can the treasurer decide where to deposit township funds?

No. All depositories used by the township must be approved by the township board. MCL 41.77 states, “The township board may provide by resolution for the depositing of the money coming into the hands of the treasurer of the township, and the treasurer shall deposit the money in the financial institution the township board may direct, subject to this act.” In the resolution, the board can list several institutions the treasurer may use. The bank must be a participating member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and have a branch office located in Michigan.

Additionally, Public Act 20 of 1943, Investment of Surplus Funds of Political Subdivisions (MCL 129.95, *et seq.*), requires that every local unit of government adopt an investment policy, which addresses:

- **A statement of the purpose, scope and objectives of the policy**, including safety, diversification, liquidity and return on investment.
- **A delegation of authority to make investments.**
- **A list of authorized investment instruments.** If the policy authorizes an investment in mutual funds, it shall indicate whether the authorization is limited to securities whose intention is to maintain a net asset value of \$1 per share or also includes securities whose net asset value per share may fluctuate on a periodic basis.
- **A statement concerning safekeeping, custody and prudence.**

The act also contains provisions requiring the treasurer to report quarterly to the township board on township investments.

Sample investment policies are available on the members-only side of www.michigantownships.org. Access via the “Index of Topics” under the “Answer Center” tab after logging in.

Q Do all financial institutions participate in the FDIC or NCUSIF?

No. The FDIC insures deposits in some, but not all, banks and savings institutions. FDIC-insured institutions must display the official FDIC sign at each teller window or station. The FDIC lists member institutions and their financial operating results at www.fdic.gov. For more information on FDIC-insured institutions, call (877) 275-3342.

All federal credit unions must be insured through the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF) by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), but state credit unions may be insured by the NCUA or private insurance corporations. All NCUA-insured credit unions

must display the NCUA sign in their offices. The NCUA lists all credit unions at www.ncua.gov.

Q If the township has three accounts in one bank, is each account insured up to \$250,000?

No. Municipal corporation deposits, including township deposits, are limited to FDIC or NCUSIF coverage of \$250,000 per institution or account custodian (treasurer), not per account. If a township has a municipal building authority, economic development corporation or other separate corporation, that entity could also be entitled to depository insurance up to \$250,000 per institution.

Townships are considered “State and Local Government,” and as such are also afforded \$250,000 in additional insurance for any savings or certificates of deposit (CD) at a member bank, if the deposits are located in the Michigan.

Q Should the treasurer open accounts in different banks to maximize federal insurance coverage?

The cost of using multiple financial institutions may outweigh the benefits of having additional insurance coverage, particularly if the bank or credit union the township currently uses has a strong balance sheet and operating results. Many townships find that concentrating investments and deposits in a single or small number of financial institutions results in better service, lower fees and higher interest rates on their investments.

Many small units of government “ladder” CDs to gain more FDIC insurance coverage. The township would still have a primary bank for depository and to accomplish disbursements, but invest in CDs in many different banks that have maturities due throughout the month or quarter, so as to not impact liquidity. Larger townships won’t be able to use “laddering” as a means of diversification, but can look at direct U.S. Government investments (e.g. Treasury bills or notes) or “collateralization” of their deposits with their bank.

Unlike many states, Michigan law does not require collateralization. Collateralization involves the depository, pledging high-quality investments such as U.S. Treasury obligations, to secure the deposits. For more information, please see the Government Finance Officers Association’s white paper at <http://www.gfoa.org/collateralizing-public-deposits>.

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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