Michigan Township Focus

NOVEMBER 2026

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

Building your bench



For love of country and township
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Civic engagement efforts 'changing perceptions of government'
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Township honors centennial of mining tragedy, its victims and the resilience of community
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Tom Hickson,
MTA Executive Director



For love of country and township

Thankfully for many of us, a very contentious election is behind us. The myriad of campaign ads and mailers stuffing our mailboxes can finally give us and the candidates time to breathe and think about the work ahead. This election year did not include many township candidates, except for those filling vacancies in select townships. Regardless, any election season features candidates from multiple parties who believe they have something to offer to help improve the quality of life in our state. This engagement in civic activity is one of our earliest American traditions.

Townships, as the most grassroots level of government, are one of the most important forms of civic engagement. It is an entry into service that likely has a greater impact on someone's day-to-day lives than any state lawmaker or even the U.S. Congress. Because of the nature of township government, it is also one of the most accessible to our residents. That is the great thing about our form of government: it is easily accessible to run for and provides a personal touch on service.

However, as you all know quite well, these roles are not without significant challenges. A recent survey of local government officials by the University of Michigan demonstrated that nearly 75% of townships have difficulty recruiting candidates for office. For our part, MTA conducted our own survey, which showed similar numbers *(read more in this month's cover story, starting on page 16)*. There are many reasons for this, which are evident when you speak to township officials around the state.

Recently, 2026 MTA President **Kevin Beeson**, members of the MTA team and I have been travelling around the state for MTA County Chapter meetings and MTA's fall *Regional Meetings* tour. We took the opportunity to utilize these meetings as networking and listening sessions as well. Our MTA Board of Directors also addressed the survey questions and township challenges in a very robust discussion at its September meeting.

Upon reflection of those conversations, a few things became apparent. First, our culture has changed over the years from collegiality to increasing behaviors at public meetings and online that would have never been deemed acceptable in years past. While it takes courage to run for office and to serve your township, I don't know anyone who enjoys getting screamed at during a board meeting or berated in an online forum simply for doing their job.

The demands of township officials have increased over the years. More responsibilities get added in a one-size-fits-all approach, and the funding never seems to match what is required. Early voting is a perfect example of a new idea that may sound great, but that mandate falls to local officials. What's more, when the Legislature usurps local decision-making authority—as it did for utility-scale renewable energy facility siting and with proposed zoning preemption on various housing matters—citizens express frustration (and anger) to township officials, who have no decision in a matter due state law that removes township input.

With changes in our culture and increased demands on township officials' time, it can be challenging to attract people who want to serve. Even so, townships are proving time and time again that we are the perfect place to make an impact in our communities and in our country.

Our great past MTA President **Harold Koviak** took up the mantle to encourage more participation from young people in township government. MTA offers a scholarship to students seeking to pursue a career in public service, and a new MTA award and scholarship aims to support new township leaders who are looking to grow in their service (*see page 20*). These initiatives are bearing fruit and in visiting townships, I see many young people taking the opportunity to lead. This is encouraging. It is also important to note that for every negative element in service, there are countless examples of integrity, leadership and success throughout our 1,240 townships. Ultimately, we can be the starting place to change this conversation, away from vitriol, and start promoting solutions that serve our residents and our state.

With changes in our culture and increased demands on township officials' time, it can be challenging to attract people who want to serve. Even so, townships are proving time and time again that we are the perfect place to make an impact in our communities and in our country.

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To find your MTA District, visit michigantownships.org (click on "Leadership" under the "About" tab).

postal requirements

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president's round table

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leadership circle

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itc-holdings.com

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keystone club

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black-rock.tech

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(734) 662-2200
cwaplan.com
See ad on page 8.

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memtechacoustics.com

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trimediaee.com

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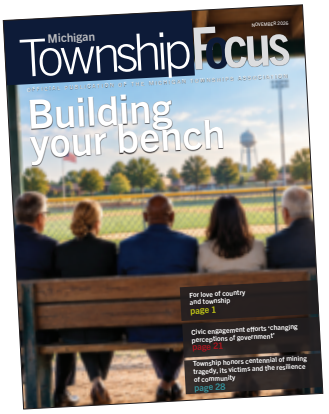
featured articles

16 **Building your bench: Connecting with the community to bring new people into the game**
In our challenging political environment and among cultural and societal shifts, finding individuals to serve in our communities can feel harder than ever. The greatest ambassadors for township government are those serving today. Every township leader can play a role in sharing the message about the value of contributing to community and building the township leaders of tomorrow.

28 **'For a lot of us, it is family'—Township honors centennial of mining tragedy, its victims and the resilience of community**
One Upper Peninsula township, partnering with numerous community organizations, is commemorating the centennial of Michigan's deadliest mining disaster, honoring the victims and their families, and the reverberations that can still be felt today throughout the area.

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Official Publication of the Michigan Townships Association

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mission statement

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

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news&notes

a compendium of noteworthy items

A WARM WELCOME

Ensuring a smooth transition for newly elected board members

If any new officials are elected to your township board this month, there are important steps that you can take to ensure a smooth transition.

- An outgoing official must, by law, turn over to his or her successor all of the paper records, digital files (including email), computer passwords, keys, equipment and other materials related to the office he or she held (including township records on private computers or devices). This should be done after the county board of canvassers certifies the election and notifies the candidates, and certainly once the successor has taken the oath of office. *Note:* All documents, records or files created while in office are township property, and the willful withholding or destruction of township books, papers or records is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to two years in prison or a fine of up to $1,000. (MCL 750.491)
- A new clerk must be certified to run an election and must be issued a state Bureau of Elections (BOE) email, so they need to notify the BOE right away so they know when the first election training is and receive the bureau's *News Update for Election Administrators* enewsletter.
- New treasurers should notify each banking institution that does business with the township that the previous treasurer's signature is no longer valid. Establish the new official's signature as the one of record. The same applies to a new deputy treasurer. (If the bank also requires the clerk/deputy clerk's signature on the bank cards, update those as well, although the clerk or deputy clerk's signature should never be honored by the bank.)
- The clerk and treasurer are each required by law to appoint a deputy as soon as possible after taking the oath of office. The supervisor has the option to appoint a deputy. A deputy must also take the oath of office.
- A treasurer, deputy treasurer, clerk and constable must be bonded before taking the oath of office. Contact the township's bond insurance representative immediately after the election is certified to add new names to the bond. Some companies offer a "blanket" bond that covers all township employees who handle funds. The treasurer must also be covered by a tax collection surety bond to collect taxes.
- An "exit" audit of township finances is not required simply because township offices have changed hands. A township board may choose at any time to contract to have an audit done if there are concerns about financial irregularities, but it will be in addition to any regularly scheduled audit and will have an additional cost.
- If township mail is received at an official's home, fill out a change of address card for the post office to ensure that mail will be forwarded to the appropriate new official. If township email addresses were personalized, be sure to change the account names or access.
- Give new officials copies of any policy manuals or documents explaining township procedures.
- Notify MTA so we can ensure that new officials receive *Township Focus* magazine and *Township Insights* weekly enewsletter, workshop brochures, including for our upcoming *New Officials Training* (see page 34 for details) and other appropriate information and MTA member benefits. *Important:* Just after the Nov. 3 election, MTA will mail each township a paper roster of all individuals in your township included in our database. Please review and share any updates with us as quickly as possible to help begin serving your township's new leaders. (See page 6 for additional information.)
- Most importantly, welcome a new board member to the township "team" as a colleague and an equal on the board, regardless of political differences or experience. The new person may look at the job with an entirely new perspective. Sitting board members may be comfortable with each other and may have developed an understanding of how they work together but adding a new member can be a positive opportunity to explore why you do what you do.

In memoriam


feature

All in the family

Serving as clerk is part of family legacy

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

Murry Stocking served as **Sherman Township** (Newaygo Co.) clerk for almost 40 years, and was a member of the White Cloud Fire Board for over 30 years. We featured the Stocking family in *Township Focus* more than a decade ago, sharing that a member of the family had held the position of clerk in Sherman Township for over a century. Both of Murry's grandparents—**Dexter** and **Nellie Stocking**—and later his parents—**Murry Sr.** and **Princess Stocking**—served in the role, which was first held by Dexter Stocking's father-in-law when he was elected in 1884. Murry told *Township Focus* in 2016, "It's something to be a little proud of, that [residents] have trusted the family for so many years. When you get to do things for people and the township as a whole, it's rewarding."

Let MTA help honor the leaders in your township. Send milestones, memoriams or retirements to jenn@michigantownships.org.

ATTENTION TREASURERS

Reminder for tax collection office hours



The township treasurer, or their designee, must be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to receive tax payments on the last day taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent under MCL 211.55. (MCL 211.44(2)(b)) MCL 211.55 refers to the last day of February as the last day that taxes are due and payable before being returned as delinquent to the county treasurer, and provides for the unpaid taxes to be returned as delinquent to the county treasurer the next day.

In addition, the treasurer (or designee) must be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. one business day between Dec. 25 and Dec. 31. However, the requirement to hold hours in December is waived if the township has an agreement with a local financial institution to collect taxes on behalf of the township and the township provides timely notification to the taxpayers of their ability to pay their taxes at this financial institution.

For 2026, the available days for required December office hours are **Monday, Dec. 28**, **Tuesday, Dec. 29** and **Wednesday, Dec. 30**. Treasurers **must** choose one day (unless a bank assists in collection). (MCL 211.44(2))

The last day to pay 2026 property taxes without incurring any interest or penalty is **Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2027**. *(Feb. 14 is a Sunday and Feb. 15 is a state holiday.)* Treasurers **may** choose to hold office hours.

The last day to pay 2026 property taxes before they are returned as delinquent is **Monday, March 1, 2027** *(the last day of February is a Sunday)*. (MCL 211.45) Treasurers **must** hold office hours.

The treasurer also **must** be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to receive tax payments for the collection of a summer tax levy, on **Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2027** (the last day taxes are due and payable before interest is added under MCL 211.44a(5)).

Under Public Act 129 of 2019, a designee for the township treasurer can act on his or her behalf for tax collection purposes. The law allows the treasurer to appoint a designee, approved by the township board, to take the treasurer's place and accept tax payment during these designated times. A designee can be the deputy treasurer, an elected official or another individual acting on behalf of the treasurer.

Need more tax collection resources? Join us on Nov. 24 in Gaylord or Dec. 2 in Lansing for our full-day *Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection* workshop (turn to page 32 or visit michigantownships.org for details) MTA's *Treasurer's Guide to Township Government* publication also offers valuable insights on the treasurer's role in the township; order on the Store at michigantownships.org, by calling (517) 321-6467, ext. 231 or emailing tonia@michigantownships.org. Check out our Online Learning Center, at learn.michigantownships.org, to find tax collection on-demand webinars *(most are half-off this month!)*, and visit the "Tax Collecting" webpages on our website (in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab; login is required).

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

Drummond Island Township (Chippewa Co.) has a new community logo! The township held a contest this year, with residents and property owners voting from 10 designs. Winning designer Kris Kuizenga shared that the "logo celebrates the island's identity as Michigan's northernmost gem in Lake Huron. The circular design symbolizes unity, continuity and the close-knit nature of the community. At its center, the silhouette of Drummond Island provides an instantly recognizable landmark, anchoring the township's sense of place and honoring its unique geography."



Camping under the stars was a summer highlight in two townships, bringing together families for fun community events. The Lincoln Township Public Library in **Lincoln Charter Township** (Berrien Co.) held its second Family Campout, complete with dinner, crafts, s'mores and a movie together, waking up to the sounds of chirping birds and a delicious breakfast of pancakes and sausage. "We loved seeing all the smiles and memories being made!" the library shared on its Facebook page. "We had such a great time and can't wait for the next adventure!" **Canton Charter Township** (Wayne Co.) hosted a Family Movie Campout in its Preservation Park, which included a double feature (Frozen and Zootopia 2!) at dusk, themed crafts, visits with Frozen characters, free popcorn and more. Participants could enjoy just the evening activities or stay for the overnight campout.

We want to know YOUR township's story! *Send articles, updates, pictures and details of what's happening in your township to jenn@michigantownships.org.*



Share your input on MTA's 2027 Legislative Policy Platform by Nov. 23



MTA is committed to speaking on behalf of its members. This is evident in the development of our legislative policy platform. We are seeking review and input from our members on the Association's policy platform, which guides MTA's government relations efforts, and is reviewed and updated annually to reflect emerging issues and goals. MTA-member officials are encouraged to review MTA's 2026 Legislative Policy Platform—under "Advocacy" on michigantownships.org—and share any proposed revisions and suggested additions by **Monday, Nov. 23**.

Member-proposed policy changes will be reviewed by MTA legislative committees for word selection and legality, and to ensure they conform with the Association's overall goals and objectives. The proposed platform will be presented at the 2027 MTA Annual Meeting, held in conjunction with our Annual Conference & Expo in April. Contact legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.

MTA's lunchtime learning series, *Now You Know*, offers timely updates, insights from our experts and a chance to get your questions answered—all in just one hour! Don't miss our next episode held **Wednesday, Nov. 18** from **noon to 1 p.m.**

Drawing the Lines: Inside the Land Division Act

Amendments to the Land Division Act are paving the way for new development possibilities. Are your township's zoning and land division ordinances ready? Join MTA Legal Counsel Robert Thall from Bauckham, Thall, Seeber, Kaufman & Koches, PC as he digs into what's changed, the impact on townships and what the amendments mean for your community's planning decisions. Join us live, watch the recording later, or both!

Satisfies Chapter 15: Land Use in MTA's Red Book Ready program.

Register online at bit.ly/NYKmta for just $25* per session!
Townships with an MTA Online subscription at the Premium level have **FREE** access to **EVERY** session for their entire township team!

To see a listing of past episodes available on demand, visit learn.michigantownships.org/nyk.

**MTA-member township rate*

Remembering former MTA Board member Gary Brandt



Brandt

Former long-time township official and past member of the MTA Board of Directors **Gary Brandt** has passed away. "His dedication to public service was evident in the many roles he held over the years," his obituary noted, including 40-plus years of service to **Monitor Charter Township** (Bay Co.)—12 years as supervisor, and 30 years as trustee and on the township fire department. He served a four-year term on the MTA Board and was a board member for the Michigan Association of Township Supervisors. He was also active in the Bay County Township Officers Association and the Michigan Township Participating Plan Board of Directors.

Calling all townships! Please let us know about new officials in your township



Will any new officials be elected to your township board in the November election, or have new personnel recently joined your team? Help MTA ensure we have your township's correct individuals and contact information—allowing all elected and appointed officials, and staff to receive their MTA-member benefits, including resources to help them get up to speed on their roles and responsibilities.

Just after the Nov. 3 election, MTA will send every township a hard copy paper roster of all officials and personnel in their township listed in MTA's database. The roster will be sent to the clerk, who can make updates via MTA's website for each individual in the township (instructions are included in the roster mailing). The treasurer is also able to make changes online. The form can also be returned (via mail, fax or email) to us, with updates or an "OK as is" if there are no changes. We are asking to receive changes no later than Monday, Nov. 23.

Updates to the township profile can be made any time changes occur; visit michigantownships.org/update for instructions. Thank you for your assistance! Your help allows us to better serve your township—and its leaders.

mta events | november

1-30	*"Give Thanks"* half-off webcast sale throughout the entire month of November
18	MTA *Now You Know* lunchtime webinar: Drawing the Lines: Inside the Land Division Act
24	*Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection workshop*, Gaylord

MTA county chapters: Reserve your 2027 MTA Conference hospitality suite now



The 2027 MTA Annual Conference & Expo returns to the Grand Traverse Resort in **Acme Township** (Grand Traverse Co.) April 19-22. Is your MTA county chapter interested in hosting a hospitality suite during the event? Hospitality suites can provide an ideal spot to network with fellow township officials after a long day of classes. A limited number of hospitality suites are available to rent at the resort, which also serves as our host hotel.

Don't wait to make your reservation! Suites will also be made available to sponsors and exhibitors in December, and availability is not guaranteed. The Grand Traverse Resort offers several different types of suites, each with different amenities and rates. Visit michigantownships.org/conference and click on "Hotel Details" to learn more or to download the reservation form. For more details, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 230 or email kristin@michigantownships.org.

NOTE: All suite reservations must be made through MTA. Do not contact the Grand Traverse Resort directly, as resort staff will be unable to assist you.

Volunteers needed for '27 MTA Conference

Would you like to get more involved in MTA's 2027 Annual Educational Conference, while also providing a service to your colleagues? If so, consider serving as a sergeant-at-arms (SAA) volunteer or ambassador during the conference. We truly could not conduct an event of this magnitude without our volunteers, and thank you in advance for considering serving your fellow attendees during the April event.

All MTA members attending the conference may volunteer. SAA duties include distributing handouts and evaluation forms for educational sessions, monitoring session rooms, and collecting evaluation forms. The role of an ambassador is to provide a warm welcome, help with basic questions, and direct attendees to registration and other key locations.

For more information or to volunteer, visit the MTA Conference website, michigantownships.org/conference, and click on the "Volunteer" link. Please let us know of your interest as soon as possible; additional details will be sent to interested parties in early 2027.

profile

Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC

Counseling township leaders on today's most pressing governance challenges

Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC (FSBR) understands the challenges facing Michigan townships—pressures on local control, complex statutory requirements, and growing demands from residents and developers. Since 2008, FSBR has become one of Michigan's premier township law firms, with its attorneys bringing decades of specialized legal expertise to every matter. Today, FSBR represents nearly 200 townships and local governments across the state, giving unmatched perspective on the issues officials confront every day.

FSBR counsels township leaders on today's most pressing governance challenges: renewable energy siting, land use and zoning disputes, short-term rentals, and marijuana regulation. The team drafts and enforces ordinances, negotiates intergovernmental agreements, and guides boards through major infrastructure projects involving water, sewer, broadband expansion and more.

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calendar

Dates and deadlines for townships

NOVEMBER

1 Last day of mandatory early voting period. (Early voting optionally may be held on the Monday before Election Day until 4 p.m.) (Mich. Const., Art. II, Sec. 4

On or before Nov. 1. Deadline for filing *Principal Residence Exemption Affidavit* (Form 2368) for exemption from the 18-mill school operating tax to qualify for a principal residence exemption (PRE) for the winter tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(2))

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

Deadline for filing *Foreclosure Entity Conditional Rescission of a Principal Residence Exemption* (PRE) (Form 4983) to qualify for the winter tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

2 Any township with an established absent voter (AV) counting board, which has provided timely notice that they will preprocess and tabulate AV ballots, may begin processing and tabulating AV ballots. (MCL 168.765a)

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for electors who have lost their AV ballot or not yet received their ballot in the mail to submit a written request to spoil their AV ballot and receive a new AV ballot in the clerk's office. (MCL 168.765b(7))

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for a registered voter to apply for an AV ballot in person at the clerk's office. (MCL 168.759)

Deadline for submission of tax exemption applications to the State Tax Commission (STC) for New Personal Property PA 328 of 1998, Obsolete Property PA 146 of 2000, Commercial Rehabilitation PA 210 of 2005, Neighborhood Enterprise Zone PA 147 of 1992, Charitable Nonprofit Housing PA 612 of 2006, Commercial Facilities PA 255 of 1978, and Industrial Facilities PA 198 of 1974. *Note:* Applications for the above exemption programs received after Nov. 2 shall be considered by the commission contingent upon staff availability.

3 Election. (MCL 168.641) Election Day registrants may obtain and vote an AV ballot in person in clerk's office or vote in person in the proper precinct. (MCL 168.761)

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for emergency absentee voting. (Begins Friday at 5 p.m.) (MCL 168.759b)

By 5 *On or before Nov. 5.* Supervisor shall notify treasurer of the amount of county, state and school taxes apportioned in township to enable treasurer to obtain necessary bond* for collection of taxes. (MCL 211.43(1))

5 *By 9 a.m.* Deadline for boards of county canvassers to meet to canvass Nov. 3 election. (MCL 168.821)

6 *Until 5 p.m.* Deadline for voter to cure the signature on AV ballot return envelope, allowing an otherwise valid ballot to be accepted for tabulation for Nov. 3 election. (MCL 168.766)

9 Deadline for a ballot submitted by a military and overseas (MOVE) voter and postmarked on or before Election Day to be deemed timely received and counted. (Mich. Const, Art. 2, Sec. 4)

10 Deadline for local clerk to deliver MOVE ballots received within six days of Election Day to the county clerk. (MCL 168.759a)

13 *Nov. 14 is a Saturday. Nov. 15 is a Sunday.* Form 600 (L-4016) *Supplemental Special Assessment Report* due to STC.

17 Deadline for boards of county canvassers to complete canvass of Nov. 3 election; county clerks forward results to the Secretary of State within 24 hours. (MCL 168.822)

23 Deadline for Board of State Canvassers to meet to canvass Nov. 3 election. (MCL 168.842)

25 *Nov. 26 and 27 are state holidays, Nov. 28 is a Saturday.* Treasurer gives county treasurer a bond* running to the county in the actual amount of county, state and school taxes. (MCL 211.43(2))

By 30 Deadline for payments to municipalities from the Local Community Stabilization Authority: Local Community Stabilization Share revenue to municipalities with state facilities under 1977 PA 289, MCL 141.951 to 141.956 and to municipalities that incur certain costs of required and allowable health services under 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.2475. (MCL 123.1357(8)(e))

**Can be done by the county treasurer.*

DECEMBER

1 Deadline for foreclosing governmental units to transfer list of unsold 2026 tax foreclosure parcels to the clerk in the municipality in which the parcels are located. (MCL 211.78m(6))

Results of equalization studies must be reported to assessors of each township.



County treasurer delivers to supervisor a signed statement of approval of the bond and the supervisor delivers the tax roll to the township treasurer. (MCL 211.43)

2026 winter taxes due and payable to local unit treasurer are a lien on real property. (MCL 211.40)

15 *Tuesday after the second Monday in December.* December board of review may be convened. (MCL 211.53b) Township board may authorize, by adoption of an ordinance or resolution, an alternative meeting date during the week of the second Monday in December. (MCL 211.53b(7))

31 Deadline for an owner that had claimed a conditional rescission of a principal residence exemption to verify to the assessor that the property still meets the requirements for the conditional rescission through a second and third year annual verification of a *Conditional Rescission of Principal Residence Exemption (PRE)* (Form 4640). (MCL 211.7cc(5))

Deadline for a land contract vendor, bank, credit union or other lending institution that had claimed a foreclosure entity conditional rescission of a principal residence exemption to verify to the assessor that the property still meets the requirements for the conditional rescission through the filing of an annual verification of a foreclosure entity. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

An eligible claimant may appeal an assessment levied, a penalty or rescission under the Essential Service Assessment Act to the Michigan Tax Tribunal by filing a petition no later than Dec. 31 in that same tax year. (MCL 211.1057(7))

Tax day for 2027 property taxes. (MCL 211.2(2))



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hello, MTA ... ?

Catherine Mullhaupt,
MTA Staff Attorney



What is the 'oath of office' for township officials?

According to Article 11, Section 1 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, "All officers, legislative, executive and judicial, before entering upon the duties of their respective offices, shall take and subscribe the following oath or affirmation: I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of this state, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of ... according to the best of my ability. No other oath, affirmation, or any religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust."

According to MCL 168.363, "All township officers shall, before entering upon the duties of their offices, take and subscribe the oath as provided in Section 1 of Article 11 of the state constitution before the township clerk or other officer authorized to administer oaths, and file the same with the township clerk who shall record the same; and such oath shall be administered without reward and certified by the officer before whom the same was taken, with the date of taking the same."

For township officials, MTA Legal Counsel has provided this wording of the oath of office:

> "I do solemnly swear (*or affirm*) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this state, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of _____ in and for the Township of ___, County of _____, according to the best of my ability."

When should a person elected to a township office at the 2026 November election take the oath of office?

Every person elected or reelected in November to a township office must take the oath of office before assuming the office for the remainder of the term, regardless of how many terms they may have previously served.

The **earliest that an official may assume office** (perform the duties) following the mid-term election is at **noon on Dec. 1, 2026**. Note that this is a new starting date for a new term or mid-term for township officials, following an amendment to MCL 168.362 by Public Act 19 of 2026, changing it from Nov. 20. An official may take the oath before that time, but he or she cannot assume office until that time.

The **latest** that an official may take the oath to assume office for the remainder of the term is **Jan. 1, 2027**.

Is it enough to simply take the oath?

No, the oath "slip" (affidavit) must be signed to complete the administration of the oath, and the signed oath slip must be filed with the township clerk. That makes it "official." If an official other than the clerk administers the oath, the original oath slip or a copy of the slip must be provided to the township clerk for official township records.

What if a person does not take the oath?

If a person who is **elected** or **reelected** to the township board does **not** qualify for office by taking the oath and filing it **on or before Jan. 1, 2027**, then that position is **vacant** on **Jan. 2**, and the township board has 45 calendar days to appoint to fill the vacancy. The person appointed to fill that vacancy will serve until the November 2028 election fills the position for the new term.

A township board may choose to appoint the person who was elected but failed to take the oath in time to fill their own vacancy.

If the position that is vacant is the office of constable, a township board is not required to fill a vacancy in the office of constable.

Who performs the duties of the office if a person elected to a position on the township board does not take the oath of office right away?

Between the certification of the election and through Jan. 1, 2027, the person who held the office going into the election "holds over" in the office until the person elected takes the oath and assumes the office. The person "holding over" is still holding office and has the same statutory authorities until the person elected qualifies for office by taking the oath, or through Jan. 1, 2027, if the person elected fails to take the oath. If the person elected does not qualify for office, the position is vacant on Jan. 2, 2027.

A person "holding over" is still entitled to the salary of the office (as established in the salary resolution for that township office), pro-rated to the day the new person takes the oath or through Jan. 1, 2027.

Who has authority to administer oaths to township officials?

The township clerk or deputy clerk, supervisor or deputy supervisor, county clerk or deputy county clerk, a notary public, judge or justice of any court of record, or a state senator or representative for the jurisdiction.

Who is required to take the oath of office?

Any township board office (supervisor, clerk, treasurer or trustee), the deputy clerk or deputy treasurer (deputy supervisor if one is appointed), assessor (per the IRS and MTA Legal Counsel), election inspectors, elective library board or park commission members, and *all board of review members* (see question below). Others include a commissioner of noxious weeds or a downtown development authority member.

Wait, that list doesn't include the planning commission members . . . ?

Even though they are not required by law to take the oath, MTA **recommends** giving the oath to members of the following township public bodies or offices, because they are likely holding public office:

- Planning commission, zoning board of appeals, fire administrative board, construction board of appeals, economic development commission, historical commission and salary compensation commission.
- Superintendent or manager; fire chief and police chief; building official and building, electrical, mechanical or plumbing inspectors; fence viewer, and others as township board policy indicates.

Why give the oath of office if it is not required?

Taking the oath tends to lend credibility to the office or position to which a person has just been appointed or assigned. It also provides an opportunity to create a "paper trail" for the date of appointment and the expiration date of that person's appointment so the township knows when to make future appointments.

Must current board of review members be reappointed by the township board if we want them to continue in the new 2027-2028 board of review term?

Yes. All current appointments to every township board of review will expire on Dec. 31, 2026. Every township board must appoint a new board of review for the new two-year term that begins Jan. 1, 2027. Both new and previously appointed board of review members must be appointed ***and must take the oath of office and file it with the clerk within 10 days after appointment.***

Under MCL 211.28, a member of the township board may not serve on the board of review or fill any vacancy. A spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter, including an adopted child, of the assessor is not eligible to serve on the board of review or fill any vacancy. MTA Legal Counsel recommends that a board take a prudent approach and use a similar prohibition on appointing the same relatives of the supervisor or a deputy supervisor.

At least two-thirds of the board of review members must be property taxpayers of the township. *(Michigan Election Law (MCL 168.342) requires all members to be taxpayers, however, the State Tax Commission has stated that is not necessary. MTA Legal Counsel suggests taking a prudent approach.)*

Alternate members may be appointed: MCL 211.28 authorizes a township board to appoint not more than two alternate members for the same term as regular members of the board of review. An alternate member may be called to perform the duties of a regular member of the board of review in the absence of a regular member. An alternate member may also be called to perform the duties of a regular member of the board of review for the purpose of reaching a decision in issues protested in which a regular member has abstained for reasons of conflict of interest.

Under MCL 211.10g, the township board is responsible for seeing that all board of review members receive training and updates required and approved by the State Tax Commission. Beginning with 2022, board of review members have been required to have STC-approved board of review training at least once every two years. This requirement is a subject of the state assessment roll audit. MTA's annual *Board of Review Training*, being held in February and online, qualifies for this requirement.

Hello, MTA ... ? provides general information on typical questions asked by township officials. Readers are encouraged to contact an attorney when specific legal guidance is needed. Member township officials and personnel may contact MTA Member Information Services with questions or requests from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays, at (517) 321-6467 (press 1) or fax (517) 321-8908.



Legislative lowdown

A look at critical bills MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. Watch for updates in MTA's weekly enewsletter, *Township Insights*.

SBs 6 & 7: Employment practices—Provides employer requirements for payment of wages and fringe benefits, and provides penalties for violations. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 16: Farmland—Allows relinquishment of portion of farmland from agreement or easement to make boundaries more regular. *MTA neutral.*

SB 46: Water supply—Regulates mobile home park water delivery systems. *MTA supports.*

SB 80 & HB 4084: Transportation—Provides criteria and funding, including grants or loans to local road authorities, for noise abatement measures. *MTA supports.*

SB 82: Public records—Allows judges to request a public body not publicly post or release certain information concerning the judge or judge's family members. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 86: Social services boards—Allows elected officials to serve on a county social services board. *MTA neutral.*

SB 110: Property tax exemptions—Provides for a homestead property tax exemption for the surviving spouse of an emergency first responder killed in the line of duty. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 120: Elections—Modifies process for voting without identification for election purposes to include proof of identity and proof of state residency. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 129: Open Meetings Act—Provides for remote meeting participation of certain non-elected public body members with disabilities. *MTA neutral.*

SB 145: Employment—Prohibits an employer from seeking or asking certain information about a job applicant's compensation history and credit history. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 161: Workers' compensation—Extends the presumption of causation of heart and respiratory diseases to certain members of police, fire and public safety departments. *MTA opposes.*

SB 192: Property taxes—Provides for the freeze of taxable value for primary residences of certain senior citizens. *MTA opposes.*

SB 246 & HB 4393: Landfills—Increases fees and surcharges for the disposal of solid waste, hazardous waste and naturally occurring radioactive material (TENORM), and limits certain disposal wells and TENORM disposal. *MTA supports.*

SB 247 & HB 4389: Hazardous waste—Provides for injection well disposal fee. *MTA supports.*

SBs 248-256: Water utilities—Creates water rate affordability program and shutoff protections. *MTA opposes.*

SB 271: Open Meetings Act—Revises provisions of Open Meetings Act relating to virtual attendance and participation of members of public bodies at public meetings. *MTA supports.*

SB 278 & HBs 4539-4540: Housing—Modifies and expands the Housing and Community Development Fund to make financing available to middle-income households. *MTA supports.*

SBs 280-281: Recreation Passport—Makes state Recreation Passport fee mandatory for all vehicles, modifies park passes for Recreation Passport and provides 2% funding increase to local recreational facilities fund. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 285: Marriage—Modifies persons authorized to solemnize marriage to include township supervisors. *MTA supports.*

SB 288: Open Meetings Act—Modifies grounds for going into closed session when a public body consults with its attorney. *MTA supports.*

SB 292: Property taxes—Provides property tax exemption for principal residence of individuals 70 years of age and older. *MTA opposes.*

SB 319 & HB 5290: Collective bargaining—Requires minimum staffing levels within a bargaining unit to be a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 416-417: Bottle deposit law—Provides for a referendum to expand the bottle deposit law, earmarks funds and provides for the revenue distribution. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 427: Open Meetings Act—Modifies remedies for civil actions against a public body, including court costs and attorney fees. *MTA opposes.*

SB 441: Stormwater utilities—Creates a new act that provides for municipal stormwater utilities. *MTA supports.*

SB 442: Property taxes—Modifies property tax exemption for certain nonprofit housing property. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 468: Elections—Prohibits use of electronic voting systems that contain certain parts or equipment. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 484-485: Property taxes—Amends existing authority for land bank funding to increase property tax exemption period from five to eight years and add all parcels foreclosed and sold at auction or claimed under the right of first refusal. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 597-598: Marijuana—Places limit on number of marijuana retailer and medical marijuana provisioning center licenses. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 621: Elections—Clarifies the definition of identification for election purposes to exclude mobile licenses. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 624: Liquor licenses—Requires local legislative body approval for a specially designated merchant license or specially designated distributor license. *MTA supports.*

SB 691: Elections—Moves statewide primary election to May, eliminates August election date and adds February election date. *MTA neutral.*

SBs 761-763: Data centers—Amends limits on water withdrawals and provides

for energy and water usage report requirements for data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 771: Environmental protection—Regulates onsite wastewater treatment systems, and provides for assessment and regulations. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 792: Economic development—Modifies Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act and extends sunset. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 793: Economic development—Modifies the industrial facility tax for plant rehabilitation. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 796: Appropriations—Provides funding for PFAS mitigation and water safety. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 817: Environmental contamination—Provides location guidelines for wastewater discharge. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 818: Environmental protection—Provides for guidelines on location of landfills. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 820: Elections—Allows consolidated precincts for certain local elections. *MTA supports.*

SBs 898-899: Economic development —Modifies environmental brownfield redevelopment program. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 934-935: Mobile homes—Modernizes and strengthens regulation of mobile home parks, revises licensing and enforcement, and provides for resident protections. *MTA neutral.*

SBs 950-951: Water—Provides for the Michigan Water Trust Fund, and requires permit and license for water withdrawal for water bottling. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 960: Local government—Provides process to vacate certain deed restrictions. *MTA supports.*

SB 961 & HB 5969: Elections—Creates State Voting Rights Act. *MTA opposes.*

SB 962 & HB 5970: Elections—Creates Voting and Elections Database and Institute Act. *MTA supports.*

SB 963 & HB 5971: Elections—Creates Language Assistance for Elections Act. *MTA neutral.*

SB 964 & HB 5972: Elections—Provides for voter access and assistance provisions. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 971: Land sales—Regulates the purchase of residential homes by investors. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 983: Taxation—Allows local units to levy excise tax on rentals of accommodations if approved by electors. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 985: Land use—Prohibits a local unit from adopting or enforcing a zoning ordinance that regulates land development for residential use. *MTA opposes.*

SB 988: Property tax—Increases the number of days from 30 to 35 days to appeal a claim for a poverty exemption to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 1018-1019: Data centers—Provides for statewide moratorium on certain approvals for and the operation of any new data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 1046-1051: Data centers—Requires water and use permitting, energy contracts and ratepayer protection, and labor standards for construction of data centers, prohibits nondisclosure agreements for public officials, requires community input processes, and requires Michigan Public Service Commission to track energy use by data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 1053: Neighborhood Enterprise Zones—Increases percentage, from 15% of a local government's total acreage to 20%, for the maximum acreage allowed of neighborhood enterprise zones (NEZ) containing only new or rehabilitated facilities and NEZs containing only homestead facilities. *MTA supports.*

SB 1136 & HB 6237: Public employer/medical benefits—Modifies public employer contribution to medical benefit plans. *MTA opposes.*

SB 1179: Data centers—Requires certain reporting requirements for data centers to local government. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4006: Land use—Prohibits exclusion of commercial wedding or similar events in agricultural zones. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4014: Property tax assessments—Exempts transfer of ownership of certain real property to certain individuals from uncapping of taxable value upon transfer. *MTA neutral.*

HBs 4027-4028: Land use—Eliminates zoning exemptions for large-scale renewable energy facilities and repeals PA 233 of 2023. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4049-4050: Chickens—Allows and requires Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices be developed for rearing of egg-laying chickens in residential areas. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4079-4080: Special assessments—Reinstates and expands special assessment deferment program, and modifies the income eligibility cap. *MTA supports.*

HB 4085: Land use—Preempts local zoning for mining cryptocurrency. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4118: Drains—Provides special assessments for levy against state Department of Natural Resources lands. *MTA supports.*

HB 4137: Speed limits—Modifies determination in accordance with traffic engineering practices. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4311-4312 & SBs 559, 561 and 912: Revenue Sharing Trust Fund—Establishes a "Revenue Sharing Trust Fund" and dedicates a portion of general sales tax revenue to the fund for the purpose of distributing to townships, cities, villages and counties. *MTA supports.*

HB 4328: Appropriations—Provides supplemental appropriations for emergency response funding. *MTA supports.*

HB 4342: Revenue sharing—Provides for withholding of revenue sharing payments to townships, cities and villages for enactment and enforcement of certain sanctuary policies. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4397: Public records—Allows legislators, current or former governors, and current lieutenant governor, attorney general and secretary of state to request a public body not publicly post or release certain information concerning themselves or their family members. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4411: Environmental protection cleanup—Provides cost recovery for removal of damaged vehicles and debris. *MTA supports.*

HB 4433: Labor—Protects adverse employment action for emergency

responder when absence from work is due to response to an emergency. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4443-4444: Property tax exemption—Exempts disabled veterans from property tax and creates specific tax exemption based on percentage of disability, without local reimbursement. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4583: Property tax/elections—Limits all millage elections to November ballot. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4707: Elections—Prohibits ranked choice voting procedures. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4731: Fireworks—Allows local ordinances regarding fireworks in certain circumstances. *MTA supports.*

HB 4757: Local government financing—Modifies financing requirements for investment of surplus funds of political subdivisions. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4763: Public employees—Modifies definition of "public safety officer" in Public Safety Officers Benefit Act to include certain medical examiners and part-time firefighters. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4787-4788: Personal property taxes—Provides a personal property tax exemption for certain utility personal property and creates a specific tax on said personal property. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4799: Property taxes—Requires the postmark date to be determining date when property taxes are paid and other communications and notifications are provided by taxpayer. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4801: Property taxes—Exempts a qualified residential child day care from collection of property taxes. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4949: Shooting ranges—Expands liability exemptions for sport shooting ranges. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5057: Housing—Mandates director of the state Construction Code Commission to discuss and recommend modifications to construction code to allow for triplexes, quadplexes, five-plexes or six-plexes in certain residential structures. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5079-5080: Crimes—Increases penalties and provides sentencing guidelines for disarming a law enforcement officer of a firearm if accomplished by force or if law enforcement officer is injured. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5103: Natural resources—Authorizes temporary erosion control structures without permit during high water levels. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5123 & SB 719: Franchise fees—Modifies definition of video service. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5192: Local government—Prohibits local government use of funds to hire certain lobbyists. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5225: Property taxes—Modifies eligibility level for a summer property tax deferment. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5246: Property tax—Requires parcels used to cultivate marijuana to be classified as commercial real property under the General Property Tax Act. *MTA supports.*

HBs 5319-5332: Drones—Regulates or prohibits use of drones in certain areas, prohibits purchase or use of certain drones by the state and public agencies, requires cybersecurity and data protection for drones, creates database of restricted zones and flight paths for unmanned vehicles, and provides penalties for using unmanned vehicles in a restricted zone or flight path. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5333: Landfills—Increases civil, administrative and criminal fines on the owners and operators of a landfill who violate state statute. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5396-5398: Sales and use taxes—Eliminates sales and use tax exemptions for data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5399: Public employees and officers—Prohibits local officials from signing nondisclosure agreements related to the construction of data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5450: Food trucks—Prohibits a county, city, village or township from adopting a rule, regulation, code or ordinance that imposes or collects a fee, tax or assessment for the operation of a mobile food establishment. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5451: Food trucks—Provides for annual fire inspections for food trucks. *MTA neutral.*

HB 5452: Criminal procedure—Modifies sunset on certain costs that may be imposed upon criminal conviction. *MTA supports.*

HB 5467: Elections—Provides deadline for putting replacement candidate on ballot to fill certain candidate vacancies due to death, withdrawal or disqualification. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5468: Elections—Amends information required on nominating petitions and qualifying petitions to no longer require a candidate's street address. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5488-5489: Emergency medical services personnel—Allows licensure of medical first responders and emergency medical technicians at 17 years of age. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5529-5530: Land use—Prohibits local ordinances from requiring a minimum parcel or lot size greater than 1,500 square feet for single-family residence. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5531: Land use—Limits required studies and documents for site plan approval and establishes a 60-day decision clock after receipt of an application. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5536: Natural resources—Amends the definition of wetlands. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5572-5573: Property tax—Modifies exemption for real and personal property owned by a nonprofit corporation to include continuing care community. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5574-5575: Crimes—Prohibits and provides penalties for intimidating or harassing an individual based on actual or perceived employment as a first responder. *MTA supports.*

HB 5581: Land use—Prohibits minimum area requirement greater than 500 square feet for a dwelling. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5582: Land use—Mandates parking requirements at no more than one space per dwelling unit for multi-family residential use of property and allows mobile homes in any residential zone. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5583: Land use—Mandates setback requirements at 15 feet or less from the front property line and five feet from the sides and rear for dwellings or outbuildings if the local unit of government is located in whole or part within a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or is located adjacent to an MSA area. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5584: Land use—Creates a statewide definition of "duplex" and mandates duplexes are a permitted use in any district where single-family residences are allowed. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5585: Land use—Creates a statewide definition of "accessory dwelling unit" (ADU), mandates ADUs be permitted by right in residential zoning districts and not subject to a public hearing, and requires mobile homes be allowed in any residential zone. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5594-5595: Data centers—Provides for moratorium on certain approvals for and operation of any new data centers. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5647: Property tax—Allows for county equalization department staff to perform township assessments. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5660-5661: Housing—Creates the MI Home program, and allows the Michigan State Housing Development Authority administration and operation of the MI Home program and funds under the act. *MTA supports.*

HBs 5696 & 5945: Property taxes—Excludes property used to cultivate marijuana from personal property tax exemption and revises definition of qualified agricultural property. *MTA supports.*

HB 5717: Elections—Allows township to contract with an accredited individual to perform election law duties in the absence of township clerk. *MTA supports.*

HB 5872: Property tax—Eliminates uncapping of taxable value for transfers of property. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5878: Property tax—Eliminates all personal property tax. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5928-5929: Land sales—Prohibits use of residential property by certain businesses and modifies definition of a crime. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 6026-6027: Short-term rentals—Establishes short-term rental registry and clarifies prohibition on ban on short-term rentals. *MTA monitoring,*

HB 6105: Inland lakes—Modifies payments for lake level assessments. *MTA supports.*

HB 6161: Charter townships—Amends conflict of interest policy for charter township officials. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6221: Charter townships—Revises procedures to exempt certain charter townships from annexation. *MTA supports.*

HB 6255: Legislative reports—Requires fiscal note on the financial impact of legislation to local governments. *MTA supports.*

HB 6272: Speed limits—Modifies general gravel road speed limits. *MTA supports.*

HJR A: Property tax—Eliminates uncapping of taxable value for transfers of property. *MTA opposes.*



Building your bench

Connecting with the community to bring new people into the game

Every township needs strong leadership today. But equally important is making sure there are people prepared to lead tomorrow.

In today's challenging political culture and societal and cultural shifts, however, finding individuals to serve in our communities can feel harder than ever. Media coverage is increasingly negative, social media provides an opportunity for keyboard warriors to rant and often share half-truths or straight-up misconceptions, and economic and legislative changes often require townships to do more with less.

Conversations are happening throughout the state on how to support Michigan's communities and the leaders who serve them, including at MTA and among our members. There are no easy fixes. But we do know one paramount truth: townships are the backbone of Michigan, providing invaluable, accessible local government to residents in every corner of the state. MTA is working to determine tools, resources, partnerships and potential legislation that can help alleviate the challenges facing our townships—and more broadly, public service in Michigan.

We also know that the greatest ambassadors for township government are you: our members, and the dedicated people serving your communities every day. Every township leader can play a role in sharing the message about the value of contributing to community, and of building the township leaders of tomorrow.

Sometimes easier said than done

The responsibility for local government often falls on a relatively small group of people in a community. But today's township leaders won't be around forever, and it is essential to take an active role in developing the next generation of local leaders. In many townships, this may be easier said than done.

As times, technology and our society have changed and evolved, so too has the willingness of individuals to step up and serve their communities. According to the spring 2025 Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) from the University of Michigan Center for Local, State and Urban Policy, more than three-quarters—77%—of township, city, village and county officials who responded indicated that not enough residents are willing to run for elected office. What's more, 75% say not enough are willing to serve on appointed boards or commissions. Township responses specifically echoed statewide responses, with smaller, rural townships and villages particularly expressing strong concern.

More recently, MTA conducted a brief survey in September of our own members about public service, finding people to serve, as well as barriers and potential resources, tools or efforts that could help to encourage the next generation of local government leaders. In responding to MTA's survey,



79% of township elected officials said they have a "great deal" or "some" difficulty finding people to run for the township board or fill appointed positions (though 14% said they have no trouble at all). Further, 42% say the problem is getting worse, while 45% say this issue is status quo for them—no better or no worse (and 7% say things are improving).

This issue isn't limited to townships, or even to simply local government. School boards, service organizations and community groups like Rotary and the Lions Club are all struggling to find new members. And it's easy to see why. In responding to MTA's survey, numerous themes emerged about barriers to serving in townships, including: low compensation; apathy or distrust toward government; increased negativity, particularly online; a growing lack of civility (among residents and, at times, even among public leaders themselves); and insufficient knowledge among residents about opportunities to serve, what each role entails and even how townships operate. Respondents also noted that many schools no longer educate students about civics, local government and public service.

It's easy to get mired down in the day-to-day and negative interactions, and understandable why people are challenged to join public service. But often, those are the exception rather than the norm. The township story is also one of neighbors serving neighbors, where individuals can have the biggest impact on the place they call home. Promoting the township and its role, creating opportunity, sharing information, and nurturing involvement can all have a positive impact on encouraging individuals to get involved in their community. As one official noted in MTA's survey, "Encouragement is the best practice."

Where do we find people—and how?

One of the biggest questions is also one of the simplest: Where do you find people who want to become involved?

The answer is that potential volunteers and future leaders are already part of the community. It's the people who come into the township office to pay their taxes, who attend the township meetings, or even the ones who are posting comments and questions on the township's social media. Every interaction and engagement is a potential opportunity for today's township leaders to encourage new individuals to get involved in some way.

"I use every citizen interactions to identify anyone whom I may feel is a good fit for a role within the township," noted one official in MTA's survey. "I also try to not have the same person serving in more than two roles—though it's difficult in a community of 1,600. I work hard to find folks with differing backgrounds and views to fill our commissions, committees and boards for diversity."

Businesses and community organizations can be good places to find people who are already demonstrating an interest in their communities. Civic-minded employees, business owners and organization members may have skills and experience that can benefit township government.

Look to the township board meetings or other township activities. Who regularly attends? Who asks thoughtful questions? Who demonstrates an interest in a particular issue? These residents may already be showing the qualities of someone who could become involved more formally. Some townships even keep a running list of individuals who have expressed interest in serving or have a general interest application, to make outreach a little easier when a role needs to be filled.

Township voices

In MTA's recent member survey, we asked officials how they got involved in township government—and why they would encourage others to do so as well. Here's a sample of what they had to say.

"I ran for office to effect positive change in our township, as well as to help residents resolve problems."

"My township needed new blood that would work for growth and community involvement."

"I was asked to backfill and then ran for another term. To make a difference you need to show up—and encourage candidates they can make a difference."

"I like to serve the public and help solve issues the constituents in my township have."

"I wanted to be more informed and help out the township."

"I ran for office just to be able to be involved and really see how things work in the township I live in. I would encourage others to get involved in whatever it may be they have an interest or expertise in."

"To take my turn in serving my community, and gain and understanding of how government really works."

"I started attending city council meetings as a teenager and continued being involved as an adult with the township where I live."

"I felt that if you weren't willing to be a part of the process then you shouldn't complain about the outcome of the decisions made."

"I felt that I would be able to serve the community and be capable of doing the job. Getting involved helps make the community better."

"I didn't like the way things were being done and lack of things that weren't being done. I wanted to be involved in the direction of the township and to help reach those goals."

"Appreciation and gratitude of those who have served that I have reaped the benefits of and a passion for my township. The more involvement, the better chance the township can achieve its full potential."

"I was approached by the deputy treasurer. I had never really thought about it before she presented the opportunity."

"I started with the township many years ago in a minor capacity that eventually grew and led to more responsibility. I was deputy clerk for many years and continued as clerk when the position was available."

"I encourage others to participate to try and keep control on what comes into our community."

"I enjoy serving the people of my community. If you are involved, you can help shape your community. Instead of complaining about what is going on, do something about it."

"Being active every day in the township with everyone works in our community," said one MTA survey respondent. "We take an interest in their interest, and ask them if they'd be interested in serving their community and be a legislator for their township. I share with them the duties and responsibilities. That seems to help make the decision to serve and it's worked well for us."

Townships can also encourage participation by being the source for information, whether it's through discussion at board meetings or in-person conversations, sharing information with local media, or through the township's own website, social media, newsletters and other avenues. A simple post inviting residents to volunteer, join a committee or help with a community project can reach people who might never think to approach township officials themselves. By sharing your township's news, information and opportunities, you set the tone—one for inviting, engaging and welcoming involvement from your residents.

Meet-and-greets and township open houses can serve the same purpose. They make government more approachable and give residents an opportunity to interact with the people responsible for running their local government. Townships can also offer resident advisory committees, engage with area students, host listening sessions, or offer programs to help residents learn more about their township and how it operates (*turn to page 21 for how one township is tackling civic engagement and page 24 for more on engaging with youth*).

Don't shy away from residents asking questions—or hiding behind a keyboard to stir up an issue. Someone posting negative or ill-informed comments on your social media? Invite them into the township office to have a discussion, share factual information, listen to questions and concerns, and you just may end up walking away with a supporter instead of a naysayer.

But most often, the most effective strategy is simply to ask people. Both MTA's survey and the 2025 Michigan Public Policy Survey showed that word of mouth is by far the most used and most effective means of getting individuals involved. And for good reason—after all, these are your neighbors, your coworkers, the person you see every week at church or in line at the bank or the grocery store. As noted one official in MTA's survey, "I talk to our community members to encourage them to apply or run for positions, and tell them the importance of having people involved who care what happens in our community."

People may not volunteer because they assume their help isn't needed, they don't know where to start or they don't believe they have the qualifications. A personal invitation can overcome all three obstacles.

It takes intentional effort

Building a roster of engaged individuals certainly does not happen automatically. It requires intentional effort, a willingness to welcome new people, and an understanding

that civic involvement can begin in many different ways. It also requires current leaders to recognize that building a strong township is not just about getting today's work done. It is about preparing others to carry that work forward.

This means thinking beyond filling vacancies and recruiting candidates for elected office. Rather, townships should create opportunities for residents to participate in local government, discover their interests, bring new ideas, develop their skills, and potentially become tomorrow's leaders.

Not everyone wants the same level of responsibility, and not everyone has the same interests. A successful recruitment effort recognizes those differences.

Some people may be interested in serving on a township board or committee. Others may prefer volunteering for an event, helping with a particular project, or contributing professional expertise. Some may be interested in becoming township employees, while others may eventually consider elected office.

All of these pathways are valuable.

Townships should make available opportunities visible to residents. If a committee needs members or a project needs volunteers, the community should know that help is wanted. Recruitment should be an ongoing conversation rather than something that happens only when a vacancy must be filled.

When someone expresses interest, officials should make an effort to understand what that person wants to do. Asking about their interests, skills and availability can help identify a suitable starting point.

The closer the match between a person's interests and the work they are asked to do, the greater the chance that the experience will be rewarding.

This does not mean pressuring every interested resident into a major commitment. In fact, starting small may be the most effective approach. A manageable assignment gives people an opportunity to learn about the township and discover whether they want to become more involved.

Once they have a positive experience, they may choose to take on additional responsibilities. Over time, that initial involvement can develop into a deeper commitment to public service. As noted one MTA survey respondent, "We are doing more by asking people to serve in supportive roles to experience township service gradually."

Leaders need to mentor

Recruiting new people is only the beginning. Once someone agrees to become involved, existing leaders have an important responsibility: help them succeed.

MTA survey respondents highlighted the need for education and training for new township leaders, particularly those in elected and appointed roles. Townships need processes for educating people about their responsibilities and helping them understand how local government operates. Michigan Townships Association training, services and resources are a great place to start. Whether it's finding information on our member website, contacting our Member Information Services Department with questions, and

Additional insights

Officials responding to MTA's member survey on finding individuals to serve the community shared additional reflections, offering insights into their experiences in serving in our townships across the state.

"I have deep roots in the community and I want to see that it is managed well."

"The media's constant portrayal of public elected officials as scoundrels is not helping. If the stories were showing the heroics and sacrifices, then I think the problem of recruitment would be solved."

"Many people are interested in running for political office but don't like the meetings and a few angry citizens that constantly show up and make false accusations and appear hostile."

"There will be major turnover at our township in 2028 and we are taking steps to make sure that all five positions will be filled."

"Being an elected official, our jobs are very difficult at times. We cannot make everyone happy and we get blamed for things when people do not do appropriate research."

"I encourage residents to volunteer in our community and give any time to help no matter how big or small."

"Encourage people you come into contact with to do what is right for the community. Honestly, it goes a long way."

"With the climate of our society and social media, I see a real concern with getting people involved in the future."

"We have been communicating more with residents and becoming more transparent. That develops more trust, and consequently more interest."

"Sometimes if change is needed, it may happen in incremental steps rather than all at once. Public servants should have an open mind and work hard to reach consensus on hard issues."

"I LOVE my township and I love my job (and I love my community), but the angry public is a very difficult cross to bear at times, and I can see why it is challenging to find people to be in these roles (or stay in these roles)."

"Encouraging people to serve locally is a worthy proposition. We need a pool or bench of smart and active leaders, so I am truly hopeful that this survey helps."

"You need to be involved in the township outside of the office. Preach township government. Be involved in everything. Always keep your residents first and foremost. Constantly let the people know what you are doing for them. Make them feel like they WANT to be involved."

"I have served as a trustee, the clerk and now supervisor. 25+ years of experience but nothing is like the anger of the past two years."

"People seem to have become much more polarized in their thought process and are not able to step back to see the big picture, not only with local government but with other local issues as well."

"I love serving as an elected official. I appreciate all of the tools and resources provided by MTA to assist in the fulfillment of my duties."

attending an MTA training for new officials or on-demand online trainings on myriad topics—MTA is available to help your new leaders get up to speed and succeed in serving your township. MTA has also launched a new "Future of MTA" award for those new to township government, which includes a scholarship for the award recipient to attend MTA's Annual Educational Conference & Expo *(see information at right for details on the award and scholarship).*

Policies and procedures are also important. Board policies and employee manuals provide a framework that helps people understand how the township operates. New participants also need people who are willing to answer questions, explain processes and share their experience.

It's also essential to recognize that current leaders are setting the tone—both for newcomers and potential future leaders. A cohesive, respectful board can be very encouraging to potential participants. That does not mean everyone must agree all the time. Healthy boards can disagree. The important thing is that members can work together, respect one another and remain focused on serving the community.

Potential public leaders are watching. If they see a board that works through disagreements professionally and creates opportunities for residents to participate, they are more likely to believe that they, too, can become part of the process.

Start building the bench today

Building your township bench is an ongoing process of identifying people, inviting them into the process, giving them meaningful opportunities, mentoring them, and helping them develop the confidence and experience to take on greater responsibility serving the community.

It requires township leaders to look beyond the people who are already involved and ask who else could contribute. It requires making government accessible, communicating opportunities, and setting aside assumptions about who might or might not be interested. And it requires remembering that leadership development can begin with something very small—a Facebook post, an invitation to an advisory committee, a conversation at a community event, a simple question: "Would you like to get involved?"

In today's environment, the struggles in finding people to serve may seem more and more difficult. But small moments can create a pathway to something much bigger.

Building your bench is ultimately about creating that pathway. Today's volunteer could be tomorrow's planning commission chair. Today's student worker could be tomorrow's township employee. Today's planning commissioner could be tomorrow's clerk.

The next generation of township leaders is already out there. The job is to find them, invite them in—and give them a reason to stay. The time to build tomorrow's leaders is today.

Portions of this article used information from the 2026 MTA Annual Conference session, "Building Your Bench: Bringing New People Into the Game," presented by Michael Selden, MTA director of Member Information Services, and Rachel Crowther, Courtland Township (Kent Co.) trustee.

THE FUTURE OF MTA

Apply now for the NEW Harold Koviak Memorial
"Future of MTA" Award & Scholarship
To encourage and support new township leaders

Includes scholarship to MTA's 2027 Annual Conference & Expo!

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Elected township officials, those appointed to a township board or commission, deputies, staff and others seeking to grow in their role in the township or potentially seek elected office

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND DETAILS

- Applicants must have served **four years or less** in their township role *and* have **not previously attended** the MTA Annual Conference & Expo.

Applicants must submit:

- A brief essay (500 words or less) on their local government involvement, value of serving, and how they hope to put the Conference education and experience to use in their community.
- A resolution of support from their township board.
- Applications are accepted until **Monday, Jan. 4**. Apply on michigantownships.org ***(click on "Future of MTA" under the "About" tab)***, or send applications materials with name, title, township (and county) and years of service to jenn@michigantownships.org.

Questions? Contact jenn@michigantownships.org

‘Changing perceptions of government’

Township initiatives improve community engagement—and involvement

One west Michigan township has created numerous innovative and ongoing initiatives to engage its community in local government, from township operations to trail use to leaning on community ambassadors to help improve engagement and communication.

One of the most successful ventures into community engagement in **Spring Lake Township** (Ottawa Co.) can be found in its Citizens Academy, an eight-week program that brings together participants interested in learning more about day-to-day township operations and how the township serves its residents. During the program, participants meet various township staff who inform the group about their roles and provide information such as the breadth of services provided by the department of public works; an in-depth look at the budget from the finance director; and tours of facilities that show first-hand how water and sewer services are delivered.

“The Citizens Academy is one of our staff’s favorite initiatives, because they get a chance to really dive into their areas of expertise and inform the participants about how the township is working for them,” said Manager **Gordon Gallagher**. “Without fail, after every session we hear from members saying, ‘I had no idea how our water is monitored and makes its way to our home,’ or ‘I had no idea that the township provides so many services.’ Our staff does a fantastic job during these sessions.”

Beth Anne Piehl, the township’s new communications director (a shared position with the Village of Spring Lake), enrolled in the academy when she moved back to the area in May 2026 from northern Michigan to take on the newly created role. She said it helped her to get acquainted quickly to the community and learn important information for her role with the public.

“It was a terrific way to get quickly engaged in my community and to meet some incredible people who share an interest in preserving the quality of life and services in Spring Lake Township,” said Piehl, one of 14 in the 2026 academy. “It was also great to see people of all ages taking part, from retirees to young parents and all stages in between.”

Gallagher noted the Citizens Academy also spurs some participants to get further involved in local government, such as volunteering to join important boards and committees. “When residents meet the people providing services, it changes their perception of government. Now, instead of the ‘township’ providing services, it’s Amy or Kyle or Heather, and they’ve created connections. It opens the door for increased engagement and the thought that they, too, can become instrumental in serving our community,” Gallagher said.

Supervisor **Jerry Rabideau** echoed Gallagher’s comments. “Spring Lake Township’s efforts to inform and engage residents have yielded results in the area of service,” he said.



Participants in Spring Lake Township's Citizens Academy learn about day-to-day township operations and how the township serves its residents, including tours of facilities that show first-hand how water and sewer services are delivered.

"Residents who have completed the Citizens Academy are more engaged. They have been appointed to local boards and volunteer to contribute. We are blessed to have a community where residents are engaged and recognize the value of service."

Creating a 'Culture of Kindness'

In addition to the Citizens Academy, the township continues to emphasize communication and engagement in other ways. During summer 2026, the township launched a "Culture of Kindness" campaign along its extensive trail network in response to community concerns about e-bikes, speed and some users not abiding by common pathway etiquette standards.

"Instead of approaching this from a punitive stance—such as increasing law enforcement to ticket those using trails inappropriately—staff developed a 'Culture of Kindness' campaign to encourage courtesy, caution and control along our trails," said Rabideau.

To reinforce messaging, staff created yard signs with the Culture of Kindness logo and courtesy reminders, and hosted pop-up events along different sections of trails. Residents were encouraged to come out and share concerns and ideas for trail use. Staff and volunteers took notes of comments and handed out stickers, bike bells and print materials about the campaign.

Over the course of the summer, dozens of people provided valuable feedback that is helping to shape an updated trail ordinance, said Rabideau.

"We wanted to see for ourselves what was taking place along our trails. We wanted community feedback from residents' experiences. We wanted to learn what they would like to see to keep our trails enjoyable for all users. Our residents stepped up and gave us an incredible amount of feedback that we have reviewed as we consider an updated ordinance," said Rabideau. "I truly believe that if we did not host these trail engagement events, we would not be successful in crafting an ordinance that reflects what the community would like to see. We learned so much from our residents."

It is likely the township will replicate the Culture of Kindness trail events in summers to come. "It's a great way to engage the community and listen to our residents," Rabideau noted. "Not only did we hear about trail use concerns, but residents shared valuable feedback with us about other ideas and issues around the township."

Residents help spread the word

The township's Community Ambassadors played a key role in the Culture of Kindness activities and much more each year. This group grew out of the township's desire to communicate more effectively with residents by utilizing volunteer ambassadors who are their friends and neighbors.

This 12-member group holds monthly meetings with township officials to learn about topics of discussion coming before the township board and to receive updates about projects such as park development, planning and zoning projects, and ways they can help share messages.

In September, one ambassador—Joanne Johnson—was selected as the Ambassador of the Year, awarded at the board's regular meeting. Johnson was integral in the Culture of Kindness activities, personally delivering 300 flyers to homes around the event areas each time.

"Joanne's efforts played a huge role in the great turnout we had for our trail events," said Rabideau. "She has gone above and beyond on a regular basis and we are so grateful to have her support as a Community Ambassador."

Not only do township staff inform the ambassadors about what is happening at the municipal level, but the ambassadors also share about things they are hearing from residents that may prompt addressing by the board or staff.

Gallagher said the ambassadors and the engagement initiatives embody the three tenets of the township's core messaging:

- Spring Lake Township has a Culture of Kindness and puts a high value on respectful communication and building trust in local government.
- Spring Lake Township is committed to fiscal responsibility and being a good steward of taxpayer money and resources.
- Spring Lake Township values direct, open communication to foster transparency, participation and engagement in local government.

"We don't just talk the talk on engagement, we walk the walk," said Gallagher. "We will continue to prioritize engagement and communication in all that we do. I believe our residents are seeing the results of our efforts as well."

For townships interested in increasing their community engagement, Gallagher pointed out that the Community Ambassadors, Citizens Academy and Culture of Kindness are very inexpensive—with minimal to no cost—"easy wins" for other municipalities to mirror.

"These are programs that can be implemented without impacting the budget, but that can make a big impact on resident engagement," he said.

Expanded efforts for community communications

This past year, the township and its village collaboration partner launched new websites and three new reporting and communication tools for residents to improve how the public can receive information quickly and efficiently.

One tool, Urgent Alerts, allows residents to sign up for text, email or phone call notifications about urgent matters such as water boil advisories, road closures, or community-wide announcements. A second tool, Notify Me, allows residents to sign up for text or email alerts when new content is added to the township website of interest, such as meeting agendas and minutes, news, calendar events and e-newsletters. The third tool, SeeClickFix, allows residents or visitors to easily report issues they see when out-and-about, such as park maintenance needs, potholes, graffiti, or trees over trails.

"We have invested significant resources in both staff time and financially to bring these tools to our residents because we value communication immensely," said Gallagher. "These new tools will provide even more ways for our residents to communicate with us, and us with them, in efficient ways. We just rolled these tools out in early September and we are already using them and receiving great feedback."

Gallagher said the close collaboration the township has with the Village of Spring Lake—the two staffs even share office space in Village Hall—is an efficient way to serve residents of both municipalities. He pointed to a shared communications director as further evidence of commitment to communications.

"Investing in a communications director and a part-time communications specialist demonstrates that we are committed to doing our very best to keep residents apprised of township matters through various channels," Gallagher said. "We regularly talk about how we can be sure we are reaching the majority of our residents with information they need to know."

For example, Gallagher said staff recently decided to increase mailed, print newsletters from two each year to four, and have committed to at least one, but usually more, e-mailed newsletters as well. "Taken as a whole, I believe we are doing an excellent job in our communication and engagement efforts," Gallagher said. "We have a great staff who I'm sure will continue to develop new and innovative methods to keep our momentum going."



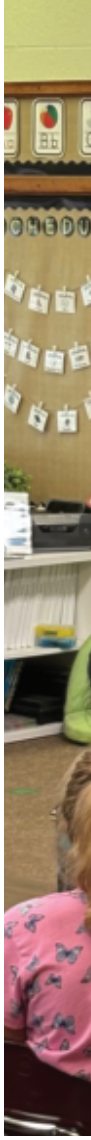




Spring Lake Township launched a "Culture of Kindness" campaign along its trail network in response to concerns about e-bikes, speed and some users not abiding by pathway etiquette standards.



Start with students



According to the 2025 Michigan Public Policy Survey, 61% of local leaders says it's difficult for their jurisdiction to find young people to serve or run. Young people are an important part of the future leadership bench, but they need opportunities to see local government in action.

Most students likely know very little about the community they call home—how it functions, the services it provides, and its impacts on their everyday lives. The lack of knowledge about local issues is prevalent among many citizens, but can be especially apparent among youth.

You can help to change that.

The more residents know about their local government, the greater the connection they will feel and the more likely they may be to get involved in improving and championing their hometown. This connection can help to inspire today's youth to become tomorrow's local civic leaders. Township officials can play an integral role in this by undertaking efforts to engage with youth and educate them on the value of local government.

Back to school

Perhaps the most obvious—and important—way to improve youth awareness about the importance of local government is to head back to school. There are no shortages of ways to engage with students through your local school district. From elementary school through high school, students at every level can benefit from an introduction to the government closest to the people—township government.

This is becoming more important than ever as most schools likely teach local government only briefly—if at all. And it's even less likely that township government specifically is taught all. This lack of township education was a key element cited by members in MTA's recent survey about finding individuals to serve their community. Shared one, "I would like to see education, starting with our local k-12 schools making a connection for students that there are paths to employment in local government and opportunities to serve your community. Young people need to understand they have a voice if they get involved." Added another, "I believe it starts in the school, educating the students about the understanding of community service."

Sometimes all it takes is reaching out to your local school superintendent, principals or social studies or U.S. history or government teachers to ask them if you or other township leaders can come to the classroom to make a presentation about township government. Even if you or your township have been invited to make a presentation in years past, it's always a good idea to remind a teacher that you are available to talk with students each year.

MTA can help! We have tools to take into the classroom, for all grade levels, at michigantownships.org (click on "Tools for Teachers" under the "About Townships" tab). There, you'll find everything from coloring pages of fire trucks and township halls to bring to elementary schools to an activity walking students through, "What is a Community?" and the value of citizen participation. You can also find a quick three-minute "10 Facts about Michigan Townships" video that you can show in the classroom.

For many years, **Ida Township** (Monroe Co.) Clerk **Tera Shaffer** visited the local high school twice a year to help register teens to vote and walk through the ballot with students so they understood the voting process. With automatic voter registration when teens get their driver's licenses or state IDs, in-school voter registration isn't as critical. But Shaffer has found another way to connect with area students: asking them to work at the local elections.

Under MCL 168.677, students who are at least 16 years old and a Michigan resident can serve as election inspectors. (Note: Before a minor can be appointed, three election inspectors meeting the requirements of MCL 168.677(1)-168.677(3) must be appointed.) Shaffer, who works with the high school government teacher each year to find student election workers, calls the opportunity a "win-win."

"It's been very successful," she said. "The schools love it. A lot of first-time voters are very nervous, and this exposes



Photo from Niles Charter Township (Berrien Co.) Fire Department Facebook page

Ways to involve youth in local government

- Visit classrooms to share with students the impact townships have on their lives every day. From mock elections, to discussing fire safety, highlighting local parks and libraries or even presenting a community decision and having the students debate—you can help show students of all ages the value and importance of their local government.
- Create a "shadow" opportunity where youth work with an individual township board member and do a job shadow for school credit.
- Designate a "Township Government Day." Each year, a particular grade could tour the township hall and various departments. Students can speak with the members of the township board and other officials to gain an understanding of how their township functions. Each student could prepare a report on what he/she learned that day.
- Encourage teachers to take a field trip to a township board meeting to allow students to see how decisions are made and how citizens can participate in township meetings.
- Start a youth advisory committee.
- Appoint young people to local boards and commissions.
- Consider creating an Explorer program for youth to become involved in the township fire department.
- Hold a "mock" township election where only youth vote.
- Mentor youth election workers.
- Sponsor a poster contest. Each student could create a poster representing how township government affects their life. Posters could be displayed at the township hall.

them to the process, so they feel more confident. It also engages them in local elections, and they get very excited to see the winners at the end of the night."

She has also noticed that the students' engagement with the public can have an almost calming effect among voters, saying the residents who may be riled up or on edge when voting take a gentler, more congenial approach when interacting with the young poll workers. The experience also gives the students a great resumé-builder, as well as confidence engaging with members of the public.

While most student election inspectors may only work local elections for a year or two, there are ripple effects, Shaffer noted, recalling one former student worker who continued to work all local elections while attending the University of Michigan and is now continuing to serve the public as a school teacher in Detroit. Other nearby townships have reached out to Shaffer about how to find students to work in their elections, something that Shaffer "highly recommends," she said.

The township board is "trying to brainstorm the next generation of local leaders and is actively having those conversations," Shaffer said, sharing that when the township was looking to renovate a local park, they turned to a key focus group for insights: a local eighth grade leadership class. The students gave feedback on improvements they wanted to see in the park, and were "fully engaged for the whole hour, which can be rare among eighth-graders," Shaffer laughed. "They got so excited, and checked back in at the end of the year to see what we had decided." Area high school seniors also must complete community service hours, and students will often pop into the township hall—which is just across the street from the school—to ask if there are opportunities to help the township. And of course there are, including helping Shaffer set up election equipment in the voting room.

Morton Township (Mecosta Co.) has reached out to students on the other end of the education spectrum—working with Ferris State University (FSU) students to garner insights and suggested plans for several of their parks, including a new addition now in the works.

Trustee **Yulanda "Yo" Bellingar** says that township parks and recreation have been her passion since she first became involved in the township nearly 20 years ago, when she helped to create the township parks committee. The township was looking to create a park on 40 acres of pine tree forest and open green space, but was stumped on ideas. Bellingar thought local college students studying land use planning might be able to offer some suggestions. She reached out to nearby FSU and got connected with a professor who said, " 'This is a great idea,' and made it their student project for the term," Bellingar recalled.

With that, the township was presented with 17 different park plans—with each student outlining their ideas, from lighting to amenities, restrooms to parking lot placement, at a regular meeting of the township board. The students got a grade, and the township was able to keep the plans for inspiration. "It was amazing," Bellingar said.

The resulting Pine Grove Park is a 40-acre recreation area with walking and biking trails carved through the pine forest, green space, a picnic area and more. "These students are helping to shape the community, and what a neat thing for them to be able to say, 'I had a hand in this,' " Bellingar said.

Since then, the township has worked with students two more times, including for its River Access Park and its latest venture, a 50-acre all-seasons recreation area. The class size was larger for the newest park project, with the students working on their recommendations as part of a group project. Bellingar visited the class, sharing what the township was looking for, and emphasizing a desire to make the park amenities accessible and available for families and all members of the community at no cost. Pitching ideas including a disc golf course, basketball and pickleball courts, and various soccer fields, the students once again presented their ideas to the full township board. "They were all excited," Bellingar said. "I was sad to see the class end! Hopefully, this also changes the way that the students in the future look at their local government, and they have seen the impact they can have. They've seen up close what townships and small communities can do and offer. So it could have a ripple effect."

In fact, it already has. When the president of the nearby Village of Mecosta learned about the township's student projects, she asked if she could also reach. "She's a brand-new village president, and is trying to invite some redevelopment into the area," Bellingar said. "She went in and talked with the class and asked them to give some ideas of what types of businesses they could try to bring in. The students toured the village, and they came up with a number of great ideas. It made a big impression on them."

Contributing to their community

There are many ways that townships can help to engage with area students—of all ages. These opportunities give young people a chance to learn about local decision-making and contribute their ideas.

The objective is not necessarily to prepare every student to run for office. It is to help young people understand how their community works and show them that their ideas and participation are welcome. These opportunities provide students with practical experience and help them understand that government is not simply something they study in a classroom. It happens in their own community.

And they can be part of it.

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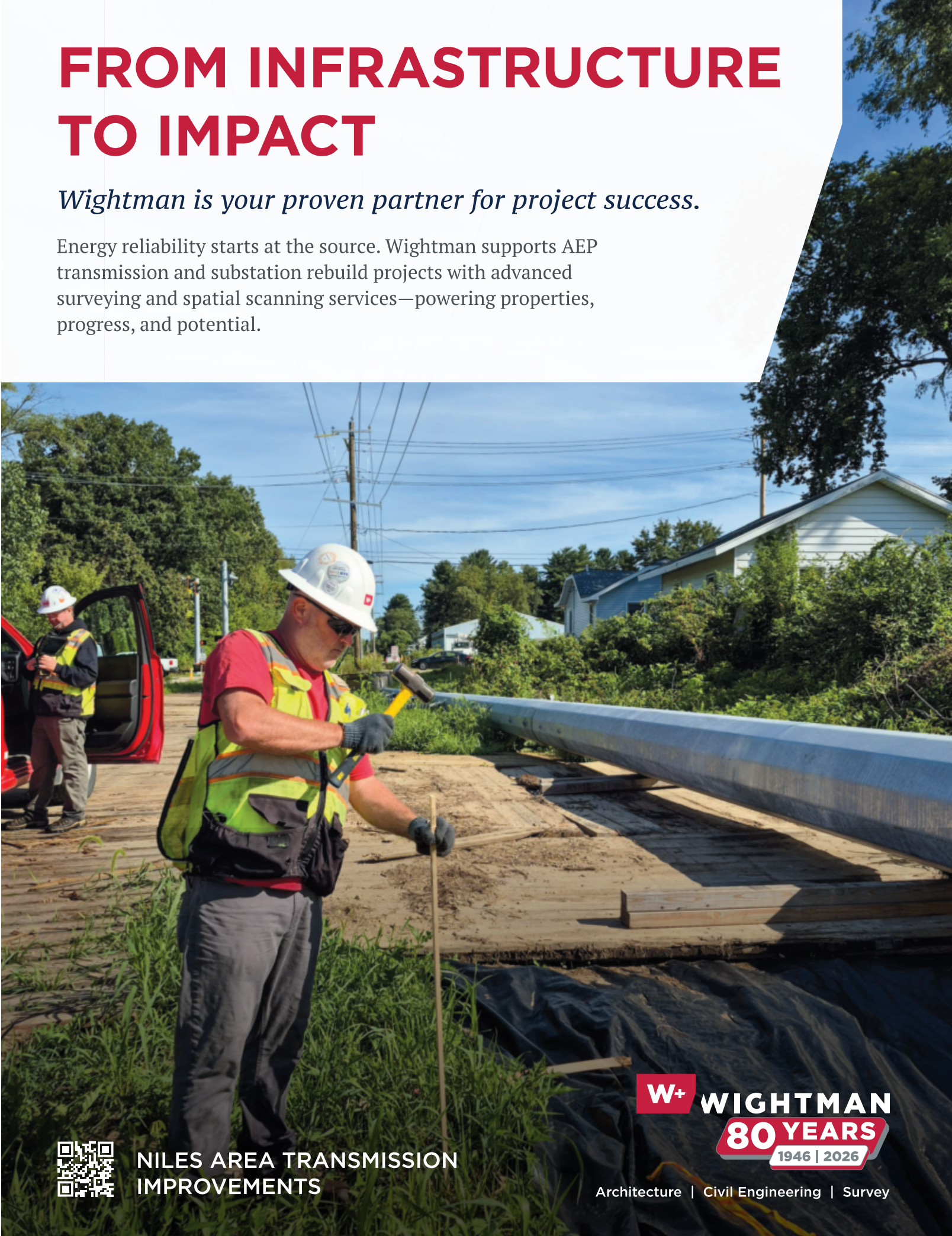
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‘For a lot of us, it is family’

Township honors centennial of mining tragedy, its victims and the resilience of community

For townships across Michigan, the date Nov. 3, 2026, likely brings to mind the statewide general election. In **Ely Township** (Marquette Co.), the date holds an entirely other meaning.

Nov. 3, 2026, marks the 100th anniversary of Michigan’s deadliest mine disaster, which occurred in the township when the Barnes-Hecker Mine collapsed, claiming the lives of 51 men who were buried in the cave-in. The event is the worst mining disaster and the largest loss of life in an industrial accident in Michigan history.

The township is commemorating the centennial of the accident, honoring the victims and their families, and the reverberations that can still be felt today throughout the area. Many ancestors of the collapse victims still live in the township and surrounding communities, and carry with them the memories, passed-down stories and impact of that long-ago tragedy.

Among those descendants is Clerk **Glenn Wing**, who lost two great uncles in the iron mine collapse. Wing has been an integral part in helping to plan the centennial activities held this summer, through the fall and into 2027.

“It’s a labor of love for me,” Wing said. “Many of us in the area are descendants of this. My great aunt lost her husband. There were 41 widows and 132 children left without fathers. Fifty-one men died—41 one of them are still in the mine. They went to work that day, and they never came home.”

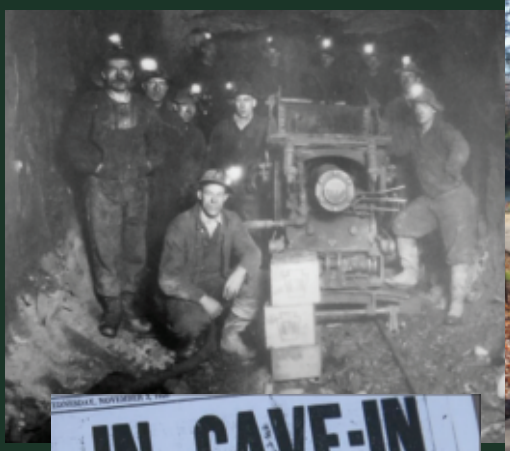
A memorial 100 years in the making

Now, through an enormous amount of effort—and community support—the township is home to the new Barnes-Hecker Memorial Park.

After the collapse, the mine was abandoned and the property fell into disrepair—despite being the final resting place for more than three dozen miners. In 1927, the year after the incident, families asked the mining company to consider turning the property into a park, but the company declined. In the decades that followed, the property was in private ownership and changed hands numerous times, eventually returning to a vacant, wooded and unkept space.

As the 100th anniversary approached, a local committee formed to collaborate and plan a series of commemorative events. In addition to the township, committee members include Marquette Regional History Center, Michigan Iron Industry Museum, Ishpeming Historical Society, Barnes-Hecker 100th Anniversary Committee, Cliffs Shaft Museum and Northern Michigan University Beaumier Center.

“All of us got involved,” Wing said. “At the first meeting, one of the discussions was that it would be nice if this wasn’t private property and we could have something at the site.”








IN CAVE-IN
Miners Entombed At North Lake When Quicksand And Water Drop From Surface – Shaft Is Filling Up
4 STATES VOTE DRY LAW CHANGE


ELY TOWNSHIP CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL 1871 — 1971 TO THE BARNES-HECKER MINE TRAGEDY NOV. 3, 1926





Clockwise from left: News report following the mine collapse; the only known photo of miners below ground in the Barnes-Hecker Mine; visitors explore the new Barnes-Hecker Memorial Park; a stainless steel plaque shares details on the lone survivor of the collapse and a statue depicts his frantic climb; hundreds attended the park dedication; after 100 years, the new park offers a place of remembrance and reflection; and an Ely Township centennial memorial honors the Barnes-Hecker Mine tragedy. *Photos from Barnes-Hecker Remembrance, Barnes-Hecker 100th Anniversary and U.P. Fabricating Facebook pages.*

And the idea took off. The township approached the property owners and, thanks to an anonymous donor, were able to secure 19 acres of the property, including the area where the mine shaft is located.

"It became clear pretty fast that the best route would be to make it a township park, and it will be a park forever," said Wing, who serves as project manager for the park construction. The new memorial park was formally dedicated on Oct. 17, with a ribbon-cutting and remarks from family members and others reflecting on the legacy of the men, the families and the community that have carried their memory forward for a century.

Near the mine shaft—"where the guys went up and down for work," Wing explained—is a meadow garden, next to the lake that formed at the site of the cave-in area. The township has commissioned three large statues for the garden, each reflecting powerful and moving aspects of the mine, the community and their experiences following the immense tragedy.

In the years after the disaster, families would visit the site and throw flowers in the lake to remember their loved one. One statue depicts a woman kneeling at the lake and laying flowers on the water. The second is of the lone survivor of the disaster, Rutherford Wills. "He climbed 800 feet of ladders in 15 minutes, with the water chasing him," Wing said. "Four men tried to make it up, and he was the only one who made it to the top." The statue depicts Wills' frantic climb up the ladders.

The final statue is a woman and child, holding hands, with one holding a lunch pail, looking toward the shaft entrance. "When they put a mine in, the company put housing near the mine, where families could live and the guys could walk back and forth to work," Wing explained. "And every day, they would blast just before lunch and the men would come up out of the mine while the dust cleared, and their wives or their children would run them a hot, fresh lunch." The blast that caused the cave-in on Nov. 3 occurred just before lunchtime—when numerous women and children were already on-site, carrying a lunch pail.

The area "will serve as both a place of reflection and education," according to the anniversary committee's webpage. The park will commemorate each of the men who perished, including plaques—made of stainless steel to withstand the Upper Peninsula winters for the next 100 years—engraved with their photo, if possible, as well as biographical information about each man, their history and their family. The plaques will be placed along the new paved

pathway leading to the lake, where a lookout area allows visitors to reflect along the water's edge.

The efforts have seen an extraordinary amount of community support, said Wing, including local businesses and area schools. Two welding students at Westwood High School completed a replica mining head frame structure, which will serve as a memorial placed on the cap of the mine shaft. An area construction company cleared the land, completed earth work and built a roadway to the park, and a roofing company offered to roof any building on the site—all free of charge. The construction company also owns property next to the site and is donating 31 acres to the township—ultimately resulting in a 50-acre township park. Additional plans include adding cross-country and snowshoe trails.

"The public support, community support, is sky high," Wing marveled.

'For us, it is family'

In addition to the lasting remembrance of the memorial park, numerous other community events commemorate the 100-year anniversary. Over the summer, visitors to nearby Ishpeming Cemetery could take a self-guided tour, exploring the resting places or commemorative stones of the men lost in the 1926 disaster. Maps guided attendees through the cemetery, highlighting key locations. Family members of miners stood at select headstones to share stories about their loved ones' life and legacy. Earlier in the summer, National Honors Society students from the area high school cleaned the headstones to ready them for the tours.

An exhibit at Northern Michigan University—running until May 1, 2027—explores the history of mining in the Upper Peninsula, details what led to the mine collapse, and features photos and artifacts from the event, as well as stories of the miners and their families. Both descendents and a local historian have shared community presentations on the disaster, and a news program exploring the history, stories and reflections from families impacted by the collapse will air on a local TV station on the anniversary of the incident.

Also on that day—Nov. 3—at 11:20 a.m., which is when the collapse occurred, church bells throughout Ishpeming will toll 51 times, in remembrance of each man who lost his life in the tragedy. In the days leading up to the anniversary, a candlelight vigil will be held at the mine site, and a memorial service at an Ishpeming church will bring together descendants, community leaders and others for a time of remembrance and reflection.

These efforts will help to solidify that the memories of the miners, and the impacted families and community, receive the respect, solemnity and dignity that they have long-deserved. This important part of one township's history will be remembered by residents in the area, region and throughout the state, now and well into the future.

"We're on the third generation of families impacted by this," said Wing. "For a lot of us, it is family."



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Understanding fund balance in governmental accounting

In governmental accounting, a term that is commonly misunderstood is fund balance. As the difference between a township's assets and liabilities, fund balance represents the net financial resources available to the township. It can serve as an emergency fund, but it also allows the township to cover any unforeseen expenses that may arise as well as keep the township operating smoothly, without having to rely heavily on debt or increases of taxation.

What is fund balance?

Every time the fiscal year closes, all the temporary accounts are closed out and the net difference between revenues and expenses is transferred into the fund balance account. A few main drivers of this are when revenues exceed expenditures. Spending under budget is another way that fund balance is grown, allowing the unused funds to flow into the fund balance. Other not-so-common methods of growing fund balance include large windfalls, such as when an unexpected emergency grant is received or a sale of a large governmental asset is made.

The five fund balance classifications

Fund balance is split into five categories by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB): **nonspendable**, **restricted**, **committed**, **assigned** and **unassigned**. These classifications have different levels of restrictions as to how the funds may be spent.

Nonspendable funds are those that cannot be spent because they are either not in spendable form or are legally or contractually required to be maintained intact, such as inventory, prepaids items and long-term receivables.

Restricted funds are resources that have specific purpose for which they can only be spent that are set in place by laws, regulations, grant requirements or other provisions. Examples include grants earned but not spent, unspent bond proceeds, taxes dedicated to a specific purpose or revenues restricted by enabling legislation.

Committed funds are those that the board has allocated for a specified purpose, such as building a new fire station or renovating an existing township hall. These restrictions stand in place by a formal binding resolution or ordinance that will remain active until the project is completed. Once completion is achieved, the board may make a motion to accept any leftover committed funds as unassigned funds.

Assigned resources are those that are intended for a specific purpose but are neither "restricted" nor "committed." An assignment may be made by an official with the authority to assign funds or by the board, which requires only express intent via motion, policy or budget plan and can be easily reassigned by the person who assigned it should the need arise without a formal vote.

Unassigned funds are the remaining balance available for any lawful governmental purpose. This last classification has no restrictions on it and is simply general operating reserves that typically sit in the general fund.

Why fund balance matters

Over time, townships have to renew or upgrade their equipment, technology and buildings, which all can prove to be expensive endeavors. Thus, the importance of a fund balance. Instead of having the township look to increase taxes or obtain new loans in order to accomplish these essential maintenance items, they can use money from fund balance to cover these large expenses. It is important to have policies in place to maintain a healthy balance of using the fund balance.

A healthy fund balance is made possible by the implementation of strong policies that govern who has the authority to assign funds, how and when it is to be spent, what steps the township will take to replace the funds that get used, how long it will take to restore fund balance to a healthy level, and the annual review requirements to ensure that the policy requirements are being met. The Government Finance Officers Association recommends that local governments adopt a formal fund balance policy rather than relying on an arbitrary dollar amount, thus emphasizing the importance of budgeting according to realistic needs and circumstances of each township.

Given the ever-changing financial landscape that townships face, it is important for townships to manage their fund balance well, so that their officials have the resources to meet these challenges head on, while maintaining the quality of their services to the community.

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.



upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection

Whether you are a seasoned treasurer, newly elected or anything in between, this full-day workshop is a must! Collecting property taxes is a highly visible function of the township treasurer's office. It comes with significant responsibility not only for the large amount of money collected but also for compliance with the General Property Tax Act.

MTA Consultant Cindy Dodge will take you step by step through the process, offering expert insights into:

- Preparation of the tax bill
- Summer and winter taxes
- Accounting for and disbursement of collections
- Settlement
- Delinquent personal property tax
- Applicable laws, "best practices" and more

This class is also valuable for deputy treasurers and any member of your township team who has some responsibility in the property tax collection process.



Event Details

Light breakfast will be available at registration, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Lunch is served at noon and class is held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on:

Nov. 24: Treetops Resort Conference Center, Gaylord

Dec. 2: M-TEC at LCC West Campus, Lansing

All participants will receive the Treasurer's Record Retention Schedule #29, the *Accounting Procedures Manual for Local Units of Government in Michigan,* and examples of what the tax bill can include to reduce taxpayer misunderstandings, cut through the confusion and reduce your call volume.



Continue learning

Attendees may purchase MTA's *Treasurer's Guide to Township Government* (2024 edition) at the discounted rate of $36.55. Pre-purchased guidebooks will be distributed at check-in. Additional copies will be available on site while supplies last.

Attendees earn full chapter credit toward ***Chapter 11: Tax Collecting*** *in MTA's* ***Red Book Ready*** *program. Are you "ready" to learn more? Visit bit.ly/MTA-RBR*

Tax Collection Registration Form

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Township and County

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Name and Title Purchase *Treasurer's Guide*? ❒ Yes ❒ No

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Name and Title Purchase *Treasurer's Guide*? ❒ Yes ❒ No

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❒ Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

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Print Card Holder's Name Signature

Choose location:

❒ **Nov. 24:** Treetops Resort Conference Center, Gaylord

❒ **Dec. 2:** M-TEC at LCC West Campus, Lansing

► **Early-Bird Rate***: $130/person
Expires two weeks prior to event date

► **Regular Rate***: $160/person
Applies two weeks prior to event date and on site

_____ (# registered) x $_____ (rate*) = $_____

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**Rate applies to MTA-member townships. All others, call for rates.*

Confirmations will be sent via email to individual registrants. To add or update an email, contact MTA at (517) 321-6467, ext. 231 or email database@michigantownships.org.

MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

Send your completed registration form to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax to (517) 321-8908, email rebecca@michigantownships.org or register online at bit.ly/twptraining. Need event registration assistance? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, use ext. 234.

upcoming MTA workshops

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Strengthen your board's financial foundation

MTA can help your board master the fundamentals of township finances, assessing and taxation. Join us at **Bay Pointe Inn** in **Shelbyville** this **December** for one (or both!) of the courses described below:

Township Finances

Dec. 8 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. *(Includes light breakfast and lunch)*
Oversight of township finances is a fundamental statutory duty of township boards. Good governance demands that every board exercise effective oversight of all township assets, including human and physical resources. Explore in-depth how township boards can achieve a greater degree of control over the township's financial position and assure that resources are directed to address the township's highest and greatest needs. We'll review the board's role in establishing a powerful budgeting process, techniques for protecting your financial assets, determining the correct amount of reserves and early warning signs of potential financial problems.
Presenter: Rod Taylor, Senior Governmental Consultant, Maner Costerisan
TGA course F-103; 6 credits
Red Book Ready Chapter 8, Accounting, Budgeting & Lawful Expenditures



Fundamentals of Assessment & Taxation

Dec. 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. *(Breakfast served at 8 a.m.)*
Property taxation and assessment administration are two cornerstones of township operations. From assessment and board of review meetings, all the way to tax collection—it's essential that board members have an understanding of how the process works. Learn more about the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A, as well as truth-in-taxation, assessing and equalization. Delve into a variety of revenue sources coming into the township, including millages, administrative fees and special assessments.
Presenter: Shila Kiander, Osceola County Equalization Director
TGA course F-105; 4 credits
Red Book Ready Chapter 10, Assessing & Board of Review

Excellence in Governance: All are welcome to attend these courses, which are part of MTA's ***Township Governance Academy (TGA)*** curriculum. You don't have to be enrolled in TGA to attend. If you enroll within six months of class, credit will be applied retroactively.

What's TGA? These confidence-building courses enhance your leadership skills and motivate you to take on the challenges unique to those serving as a local leader. Regardless of your position in the township or amount of experience, TGA will move you to a higher level of performance and make your service to your community more effective—and more rewarding.

Learn more about TGA online at bit.ly/MTA-TGA

Winter Academy Registration Form

Township and County

Name and Title

Email

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Signature	

Which class(es) will you attend:
❑ Finances ❑ Assessment & Taxation ❑ Both

Need lodging? Visit bit.ly/MTA-TGA to book hotel rooms at the discounted MTA group rate or call (888) GUN-LAKE and reference MTA.

	Early-Bird Rate* Ends Nov. 23	Late Rate* Begins Nov. 24
Registration rates		
Township Finances	$125/attendee	$175/attendee
Assessment & Taxation	$100/attendee	$150/attendee
Both courses	$175/attendee	$225/attendee

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

Save $50 when registering for ***both courses***! Discount applies only if the same registrant attends both courses.

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upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

New Officials Training

Upon taking the oath of office as a township official, you are assuming multiple responsibilities, requiring a unique combination of leadership, decision-making and administration skills, as well as an understanding of statutory requirements.

How can you bring fresh perspectives to the board, while valuing the work of veteran board members and staff? What are the crucial functions you need to perform right now?

Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to start out on the right foot! Also an insightful refresher for those changing office.

Designed to build on your understanding of township government, this full-day event enables you to successfully represent and serve your residents while shaping your community's future. Get an overview of the "hows and whys" of township government, and explore the duties and responsibilities of a township board.

Breakout sessions will review duties specific to:

Supervisors and Trustees: meeting management, ordinances, lawful expenditures, budgets, township administration, assessing oversight and the role of the trustee

Clerks and Treasurers: financial operations, internal controls, records and reporting, along with other additional duties



Event Details

Light breakfast will be available at registration, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Lunch is served at noon and class is held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on:

Jan. 5: M-TEC at Lansing Community College West Campus, Lansing
Jan. 7: Treetops Resort Conference Center, Gaylord

Continue the learning with MTA publications

Members save 15% off our township-targeted resources when adding them to event registrations or purchasing on site.

OPTION 1: Township Basics package ($100.30 discounted rate) Includes *Officials Guide to Township Government* (specific to your office), *Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Townships, and Introduction to Township Board Meetings*

OPTION 2: Township Essentials collection ($241.40 discounted rate) Includes resources offered in the Township Basics package PLUS *Building a Better Budget, Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act, The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning* and *Policy Matters!*



New Officials Training Registration Form

Township and County

Name and Title — Purchase books? ❒ Basics ❒ Essentials

Email

Name and Title — Purchase books? ❒ Basics ❒ Essentials

Email

Payment Options:

❑ Check enclosed (payable to MTA) OR ❑ Invoice my township (members only)

❑ Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # — CSV (3-digit code) — Expires

Print Card Holder's Name — Signature

Choose location: ❒ Jan. 5: Lansing ❒ Jan. 7: Gaylord

- **Early-Bird Rate***: $150/person
  Expires two weeks prior to event
- **Regular Rate***: $180/person
  Applies two weeks prior to event

_____ (# registered) x $_____ (rate*) = $_____

_____ (# of Basic kits) x ($100.30/package*) = $_____

_____ (# of Essential kits) x ($241.40/package*) = $_____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = $_____

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Save half-off MTA webcasts in November!

Use promo code: thanks



Fall into savings all November!

MTA's **Online Learning Center** is home to a wide variety of recorded webinars designed with township officials in mind—and new topics are being added all the time! From **assessing** to **zoning**, you're sure to find something for *every* member of your township team, at every stage in their public service career, all available for you to watch on-demand. We recognize how valuable time is and strive to help you balance your demanding schedules with your educational needs. That's why we record our classes, so you can get the **targeted township training** you need to succeed when the timing is right for you.

MTA Online Learning Center

Here at MTA, we're as proud of our online learning options as we are of your dedication to improving yourself. We take our role in educating—and supporting—our members very seriously. In honor of that, and to demonstrate our appreciation that you continue to turn to us for your educational needs, we are offering a **half-off webcast sale for the entire month of November!** When checking out, use promo code: **thanks** Plus, you can purchase now and save, and have a full year to watch (or re-watch!)—when it works best for you.

Choose from **more than 100 webinars** under the following categories:

Assessment & Taxation | Board Essentials | Financial | Planning & Zoning | New Officials

Detailed descriptions of each webcast are available online; visit learn.michigantownships.org to learn more. There, you can also find out how to unlock the savings with MTA Online subscriptions, which give your entire township team access with no additional "per person" fees.

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Managing Editor *(Name and complete mailing address)*
N/A

10. Owner *(Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)*

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Michigan Townships Association	512 Westshire Drive, Lansing, MI 48917

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☑ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status *(For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)*
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☑ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months *(Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)*

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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

16. Electronic Copy Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies	18	19
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	8500	8494
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	8526	8520
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100)	99.7	99.7

☐ **I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.**

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

☑ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the November 2026 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner — Date: 9/30/26

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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13. Publication Title: Michigan Township Focus

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 09/01/2026

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation			Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies *(Net press run)*			8512	8505
b. Paid Circulation *(By Mail and Outside the Mail)*	(1)	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	8482	8475
	(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 *(Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)*		
	(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
	(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution *(Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))* ▶			8482	8475
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution *(By Mail and Outside the Mail)*	(1)	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(2)	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541		
	(3)	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	20	20
	(4)	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail *(Carriers or other means)*	6	6
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution *(Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))*			26	26
f. Total Distribution *(Sum of 15c and 15e)* ▶			8508	8501
g. Copies not Distributed *(See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))* ▶			4	4
h. Total *(Sum of 15f and g)*			8512	8505
i. Percent Paid *(15c divided by 15f times 100)* ▶			99.7	99.7

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

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MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



NEW THIS YEAR!
Two awards will be presented: to an official from a township below 4,000 population and above 4,000 population.

Nominate a township official who inspires you!

It's Time to recognize the people who make a difference in our townships every day—honoring those who embrace challenges, create positive change, and lead their community with vision, innovation and a commitment to service. Sound like someone in your township? **It's Time to nominate them for the "Spirit of MTA" award! The nomination deadline is Jan. 4.**

This annual award was created to recognize township leaders who defend and advance the best interests of their township and townships as a whole—as the Association has done on behalf of Michigan's 1,240 townships for nearly 75 years. We'll honor the award recipient at our Annual Educational Conference in April 2027. Our Annual Conference theme of "**It's Time**" signifies the importance of this moment for townships in leading communities and our state to success, and nominations should highlight how the nominee's public service reflects these efforts. **It's Time** to celebrate service. **It's Time** to recognize dedication. **It's Time** to honor those who make a difference.

Only currently serving elected township board members are eligible for nomination; to avoid duplication, please consolidate nominations for the same individual from one township.

"Spirit of MTA" nominee information

Name _____ Title _____

Township _____ County _____

Email _____ Phone number _____

Township population ☐ 4,000 or below ☐ 4,000 or above

How is the nominee embracing this moment to ensure exellence in their township? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your name _____

Your email _____ Your phone number _____

Your relationship to the nominee _____

Submit your nomination by Jan. 4. Complete an online nomination form at michigantownships.org (under "About"), or return this form via email to awards@michigantownships.org or fax to (517) 321-8908, Attn. Jenn.

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