

Michigan Township Focus

OCTOBER 2016

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



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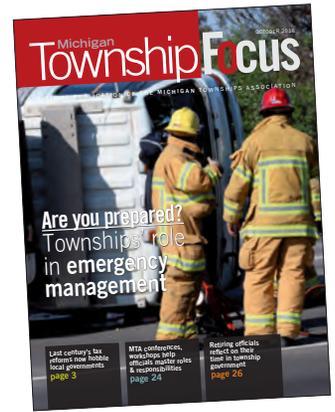


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Last century's tax reforms now hobble local governments

Time travel back to the early 1990s when a 15-year run-up of jaw-dropping annual property assessment increases, driven by an overheated real estate market, is causing major headaches for policymakers at both the state and local level. A 57-mill average statewide property rate—compared to a little over 40 mills today—adds



fuel to taxpayer ire. A string of constitutional and statutory circuit breakers and tax growth limitation band aids have little effect on individual assessments driving annual tax bills up hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Desperate to quell taxpayer anger, lawmakers freeze assessments, which only exacerbates taxpayer outrage when the freeze is lifted and two years of assessment

increases simultaneously materialize. The drum beat is incessant: “Fix the state’s broken property tax system!”

This was the economic reality from which was born Proposal A, an amendment to the Michigan Constitution considered such policy genius that both Republican Senate Majority Leader John Engler and Democratic State Sen. Debbie Stabenow proudly claimed authorship. Proposal A slashed school millage rates and replaced revenue losses with state aid to schools funded by a 50 percent sales tax increase.

Most important to townships and other general purpose local governments, Proposal A also tightly capped the taxable value on individual properties. By disconnecting taxable and assessed values until ownership changed, the age-old principle of equal taxes for like-valued properties was jettisoned to ensure that property tax increases could not exceed the rate of inflation, no matter how much the property increased in value.

State officials pointed to Proposal A as proof that they could creatively solve Michigan’s thorniest problems. Proposal A made life easier for local officials who no longer dreaded boards of review hearings, free from raucous, overflow crowds venting their anger over whopping property tax increases. Revenue losses were generally shrugged off as long as new construction and revenue sharing increases generated offsetting revenue growth.

Now 22 years later, many local officials are asking for a do-over on Proposal A. While property values are returning to their pre-recession levels, tie-barring taxable

value increases to an essentially flat consumer price index is creating large disparities between the current values of many properties and the levels at which they are taxed. The interaction over time of Proposal A’s taxable value caps with other millage rate rollbacks mandate locals to annually roll back millage rates, which further erodes property tax revenues. The recent repeal of industrial personal property taxes and liberal property tax exemptions to favored interest groups further diminish property tax revenue recovery. Consequently, property tax revenues can’t keep pace with state-imposed mandated cost increases, public demands and operational cost inflation. Communities with stagnating or declining property values must choose between confiscatory millage rates or insolvency; most likely, they will face both.

Since the 1940s, Michigan state government shared its revenues with local governments to offset draconian local revenue limitations and to equalize local resources. However, from 2001 until 2010, the state’s own budget crisis drove lawmakers to divert large amounts of local revenue sharing to fund state programs. Even after the state budget stabilized and raiding revenue sharing stopped, many lawmakers resist restoring revenue sharing while exempting more purchases from sales tax liability—which further reduces money available for revenue sharing.

With Proposal A firmly embedded in the state constitution, tax and valuation equity will likely never be restored. However, state government’s revenue growth trends are an opportunity for lawmakers to make local governments whole from costly state mandates and a plethora of state-imposed revenue limitations.

State revenue sharing isn’t charity—it is time-proven essential to overcome state-imposed resource limitations that impede the ability of townships and other entities to keep people safe and to create communities where our children and grandchildren can find good-paying jobs. A prosperous Michigan is inconceivable as long as local governments cannot offer the quality of life people elsewhere take for granted.

Larry Merrill

FEDERAL REQUIREMENT

Limited English Proficiency requirements part of federal funding compliance

Townships that receive grants or loans from the federal government may need to review their compliance with the program, to ensure they comply with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) requirements.



Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination against persons based on national origin, the federal government has developed LEP requirements for federally funded programs. One of the most common ways a township will receive federal funding that requires LEP compliance is through USDA Rural Development or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding.

According to the Office for Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), all recipients, regardless of the duration of the federal assistance, must

meet their requirements under Title VI to LEP persons. Of note for recipients of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grants, used by townships and other municipalities to procure firefighting equipment, the township is subject to Title VI for the entire time the property is in use by the department, or for as long as the recipient retains ownership or possession of the property, whichever is longer.

Entities receiving USDA Rural Development funding must complete a "4-Factor analysis," and develop and implement a Language Access Plan (LAP).

LEP requirements are aimed at ensuring that governmental programs and services can assist people who have a limited ability to read, write or speak English to access those programs and services. Although the requirement is not new, many townships received USDA correspondence this summer that it will look at compliance as part of its grant and loan compliance reviews.

MTA has created a "Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Federal Requirements" resource page on the members-only section of our website, www.michigantownships.org (after logging in, access via the "Index of Topics" under the "Answer Center tab"). You can also visit www.lep.gov for additional information, including federal agencies' guidelines for compliance.

BOARD OF REVIEW MEMBERS

BOR appointments due Jan. 1

The General Property Tax Act (MCL 211.28(1)) requires township boards to appoint members to the township's three-, six- or nine-member board of review (BOR).

BOR members serve for two years, beginning at noon on Jan. 1 of each odd-numbered year. Each BOR member must take the oath of office within 10 days after his or her appointment. **The appointments must be made and the oath taken no later than Jan. 10.** The oath is kept on file by the township clerk.



Reminder: Alternate BOR members may be appointed

Under MCL 211.28, township boards may 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 BOR member in the absence of a regular member, or for the purpose of reaching a decision in issues protested in which a regular member has abstained for reasons of conflict of interest.

Visit the "Board of Review" Web page on the members-only section of www.michigantownships.org for additional resources. Order a copy of MTA's *Board of Review Manual* online, or by calling (517) 321-6467.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

Due to the increasing popularity of cremations, **Easton Township** (Ionia Co.) recently installed three large columbariums in its cemetery. Each columbarium can store 588 cremains and will save space in the township cemetery.

The summer was packed with entertainment for residents of **Waterford Charter Township** (Oakland Co.), including a first annual "community field day," sponsored by the Waterford Township Police Officers Association. The day featured carnival games, children's prizes, face painting and fun fair food. The event was held at the township's Shell Park, which the community is working to upgrade and beautify for the enjoyment of area residents. Residents also enjoyed a summer concert series in the park, Movies Under the Moonlight, the eighth annual Peacefest art and music festival, a community Run to End Hunger, and more.

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

ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION

'Pass the boot' campaigns are unlawful

"Pass the boot" campaigns and soliciting donations on a public street are not lawful if they interfere with the normal



flow of traffic, according to Attorney General Opinion 7291, issued July 29, in response to an inquiry from Sen. Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair).

The written opinion stated that the Michigan Vehicle Code prohibits a person from soliciting contributions from the occupants of a vehicle, even if it's on behalf of a civic or charitable organization, if

the person soliciting blocks, obstructs, impedes or otherwise interferes with the normal flow of traffic. "No other statute or rule authorizes or permits the authorization of a person to engage in this activity," the opinion continued.

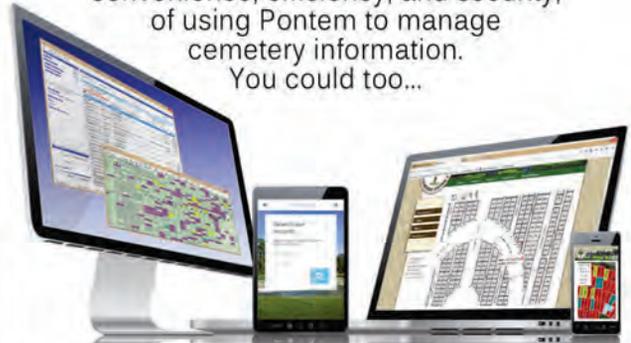
Further, according to the opinion, "... the Uniform Traffic Code prohibits a person in the improved portion of a roadway from soliciting contributions in support of a civic or charitable organization from the occupant of any vehicle."

While the law has not changed, many communities had interpreted the law to mean that people seeking charitable contributions are exempt from the law, while those asking for money for themselves are not. The attorney general opinion clarifies this misinterpretation.

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Attn. clerks: Help MTA keep our database up-to-date for new, returning officials

Just after the Nov. 8 general election, MTA will be seeking updated information on all new and veteran officials in your township to update our database. A mailing will be sent following the election, asking clerks to confirm the names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of all



current officials, and to provide this information for any new officials elected in the Nov. 8 election.

It is critical to review the information, make corrections as needed and provide changes to MTA as quickly as possible so that all newly elected officials in your township receive

correspondence from MTA following the election—including information on workshops, publications and other resources to acquaint them with their new roles and responsibilities. Updated information (or an “OK as is”) can also be emailed to nicole@michigantownships.org.

Clerks can also make adjustments to officials’ online profile information—including adding a new official or marking a former official for removal from the database. *(When adding a new official, be sure not to overwrite the former official’s information with the new official’s name and information. Contact MTA with questions.)* These efforts will help ensure that the right information goes to the right person.

Officials can also update their contact information online at any time. Simply log in to the members-only portion of www.michigantownships.org using your email address on file with MTA and password. After logging in, select “My Profile” under the “My MTA” tab to get started. *(Not sure of your password? Select the “Forgot Your Password?” link on the log-in page. Enter your email address on file with MTA, and you will be sent a link to create a new password. Contact nicole@michigantownships.org for assistance.)*

Keeping up-to-date information—including email addresses—on file with MTA is critical to ensure all officials are getting the most out of their Association membership. If we have the incorrect email address, officials are missing out on valuable legislative updates and information in our e-newsletters, *Township Insights* and *Township Voice*, as well as notices about educational seminars and other opportunities for today’s township officials. Your email address also serves as your username to access the members-only portion of MTA’s website, featuring hundreds of pages of resources, samples and information—exclusively for MTA member officials.

Questions? Contact MTA at (517) 321-6467.

profile



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For as long as the Michigan Townships Association has been around, the law firm of Bauckham Sparks has successfully guided Michigan townships through the complex and often challenging legal issues they face. In fact, back in 1953, the firm’s founders also helped found MTA—and the Association itself has relied on Bauckham Sparks’ expertise ever since.

The legal challenges Michigan townships face have certainly changed over the past six decades, and Bauckham Sparks’ attorneys continue to change with the times. The firm’s guiding principles, however, remain as steadfast today as they were over 60 years ago. The firm continues to provide careful and thoughtful analysis, detailed problem-solving, and individual attention to its clients’ needs with the highest degree of integrity in all circumstances.

That’s why so many Michigan townships trust Bauckham Sparks as their general counsel and why so many others rely on the firm’s attorneys as special counsel for their most challenging situations. Bauckham Sparks offers clients in-depth experience, expertise and a history of successful service to Michigan townships. Bauckham Sparks is proud to provide that expertise to MTA members and is dedicated to representing the townships and citizens they serve.

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HELP WANTED

BUILDING/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR—Chikaming Township (Berrien Co.) is seeking a building/zoning administrator, whose duties include supervising the building department, working with the zoning board of appeals and enforcing township ordinances. A bachelor's degree in urban planning or closely related field is required. Applicants with experience in planning, enforcement principles, state planning laws and computer mapping will be given preference. Must have appropriate licenses, must be bondable and have a valid operator's license. Interested parties should send resume to: Wayne Warner, Supervisor, Chikaming Township, PO Box 40, Harbert, MI 49115.

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mta events | October

- 5 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Houghton

- 6 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Marquette

- 7 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, St. Ignace

- 17 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Gaylord

- 18 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Alpena

- 19 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, West Branch

- 21 *Emerging Issues in Emergency Services*, Frankenmuth

- 25 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Big Rapids

- 26 *MTA On The Road* regional meeting, Thompsonville

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OCTOBER

By 4 Notice of close of registration for the Nov. 8 general election published. (MCL 168.498)

11 Last date to register for the Nov. 8 general election. (MCL 168.497)

14 The assessor reports the status of real and personal industrial facility tax property to the State Tax Commission (STC). (MCL 207.567(2))

Qualified local governmental units report to the STC on the status of each exemption granted under the Commercial Redevelopment Act, (MCL 207.666), the Commercial Rehabilitation Act (MCL 207.854), and the Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (MCL 125.2794).

The assessor sends annual report of the determination made under MCL 207.783(1) to each taxing unit that levies taxes upon property in the local governmental unit in which a new facility or rehabilitated facility is located and to each holder of the Neighborhood Enterprise Zone certificate. (MCL 207.783(2))

By 28 Pre-general campaign statements filed. Books closed Oct. 23.

28 Write-in candidates file declaration of intent forms for the Nov. 8 general election by 4 p.m. (MCL 168.737a)

By 29 County clerks deliver remainder of ballots and election supplies for the Nov. 8 general election to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

NOVEMBER

By 1 Notice of Nov. 8 general election published. (MCL 168.653a)

Deadline for submission of 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), Commercial Facilities (PA 255 of 1978) and Industrial Facilities (PA 198 of 1974) tax exemption applications to the STC.

Deadline for filing Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) affidavits (Form 2368) for exemption from the 18-mill school operating tax to qualify

for a PRE for the winter tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(2))

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

Deadline for filing for foreclosure entity conditional rescission of a PRE to qualify for the winter tax levy. (MCL 211.7cc(5))

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

By 4 Township supervisor notifies township 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 Electors who wish to receive an absentee voter ballot for the Nov. 8 general election by mail submit absentee voter ballot applications by 2 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

7 Electors qualified to obtain an absentee voter ballot

for Nov. 8 general election may vote in person in the clerk's office until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

8 Emergency absentee voting for Nov. 8 general election until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.759b)

General election.

9 Boards of county canvassers meet to canvass Nov. 8 general election by 1 p.m. (MCL 168.821)

By 22 Boards of county canvassers complete canvass of Nov. 8 general election; county clerks forward results to Secretary of State within 24 hours. (MCL 168.822, 828)

By 28 Board of state canvassers meet to canvass Nov. 8 general election. (MCL 168.842)

Township treasurer gives county treasurer a bond* running to the county in the actual amount of county, state and school taxes. (MCL 211.43(2))

*May be handled by the county treasurer. See MCL 211.34(2) for additional information, or contact MTA at (517) 321-6467 for further guidance.

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What are millage reduction calculations? Why are they made?

Like other governmental units that levy property taxes, townships must make two calculations that could reduce the rate for township operating and debt levies. The calculations are:

- The millage reduction required by the Headlee Amendment (MCL 211.34d), which applies only to non-debt millage, and
- The potential adjustment to millage rates under the Truth-in-Taxation (MCL 211.24(e)) provision of the General Property Tax Act, which applies to debt and operating millage.

The Headlee Amendment was designed to limit tax increases due to changes in property values to the rate of inflation, and was implemented by reducing millage rates. Truth-in-Taxation calculations were required by the Legislature to provide for public disclosure of property tax increases resulting from valuation increases to the tax base. The calculations are made to determine the maximum millage rates a township can levy without holding a public hearing.



Since both of these reductions are designed to cap tax increases, how do they differ?

Reductions under the Headlee Amendment permanently reduce (“roll back”) a township’s authorized millage rate, while Truth-in-Taxation reductions can be avoided by holding a public hearing on raising taxes.

The **Headlee rollback** works as follows: Multiply the Headlee current year millage reduction fraction (MRF), provided to local units by the county equalization department, by the township’s 2015 compound MRF. The product is the 2016 compound MRF. This fraction is then multiplied by the maximum rate authorized by the voters as extra-voted millage or by the Michigan Constitution. The result is the maximum rate the township can levy for that particular tax year. These calculations must be made on each individual millage.

Example:

Voted authorization	2.00 Mills
x 2015 compound MRF	.95
Maximum 2015 rate	1.90 Mills
x 2016 MRF	.99
Maximum 2016 tax rate	1.881 Mills

Truth-in-Taxation calculations are not cumulative like Headlee reduction fractions. Instead, multiply prior year tax rates by the current year Truth-in-Taxation reduction fraction provided to local units by the county equalization department. Truth-in-Taxation calculations are not required by townships levying one mill or less.

Example:

Voted Authorization	2.00 Mills
2015 tax rate (assume levied the maximum)	1.90
x 2016 Truth-in-Taxation factor	.98
Maximum rate without public hearing	1.862 Mills

Note: Calculations are made to the fourth decimal place, and must be rounded down. In addition, the current millage reduction fraction can never be higher than 1.0000.

In the above examples, the township could levy 1.862 mills without holding a public hearing, or 1.881 mills after holding a public hearing in the prescribed fashion. By following specific budget procedures outlined in MCL 141.412, it is not necessary to publish a separate Truth-in-Taxation notice or hold a Truth-in-Taxation public hearing in addition to the annual budget public hearing. Both the notice and the public hearing can be combined with the regular statutory budget hearing, as long as the published budget public hearing notice includes this sentence in 11-point, bold-faced type: **“The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.”** Contact MTA for a sample public hearing notice, or visit www.pslz.com/document.html to download a rollback calculation spreadsheet.



How do reduction calculations apply to newly voted millage?

The Headlee rollback does not apply to a new millage (increase) authorized after April 30 and up through the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. (MCL 211.34d(9))

The Truth-in-Taxation reductions apply to all increases in the base tax rate (prior year actual millage), even newly authorized millage.



How are renewal millages impacted by rollbacks?

All renewed millages are subject to the Headlee rollback in each year. (MCL 211.34d(11) and Attorney General Opinion 7193)

If the renewal is approved at an election held before June 1, the millage reduction is based on the immediately preceding year’s millage reduction applicable to that millage. If the election occurs after May 31 of a year, the millage reduction must be based on that year’s millage reduction applicable to that millage had it not expired.

For more information, download MTA’s “Introduction to Township Millage Questions” resource toolkit, on the members-only section of www.michigantownships.org.

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.



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

Every person elected in November to a township office must take the oath of office before assuming the office in the new term, including persons re-elected to office.

The earliest that an official may assume office is with the beginning of the new township term of office at noon on Nov. 20, 2016. An official may take the oath before that time, but cannot assume office until that time.

Note: Based on an MTA Legal Counsel determination, the following is a revision of the interpretation of MCL 168.362, regarding when the oath must be taken by a township board member. If a person who is elected or re-elected to the township board does not qualify for office by taking the oath on or before **Jan. 1, 2017**, then that position is vacant on **Jan. 2**, and the township board has 45 calendar days to appoint to fill the vacancy. The board may choose to appoint the person who was elected but failed to take the oath in time. A person appointed to fill a vacancy created by failure to take the oath serves the remainder of the term, without having to run in the mid-term election.



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, 2017, 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, 2017, if the person elected fails to take the oath.

A person “holding over” is still entitled to the salary of the office (as established in the salary resolution), pro-rated to the day the new person takes the oath or through Jan. 1, 2017. If the person elected does not qualify for office, the position is vacant on Jan. 2, 2017.



Who has authority to administer oaths to township officials?

The positions that are authorized by law to administer the oath of office are the township clerk/deputy clerk, supervisor/deputy supervisor, county clerk/deputy county clerk, notary public, judge/justice (of any court of record), and state senator or representative.



Must an assessor take the oath of office?

To the extent that a position is determined to be a “public officer,” Article XI, Section 1 of the Michigan Constitution requires that the officer take an oath of office. The certified assessor who signs the assessment roll must be classified as a public officer, so that position is required to take the oath of office. Note that a supervisor who is the assessor has already taken the oath and is a public officer. Also, an assistant assessor who does not supervise the preparation of or sign the roll is not required to take the oath—but could.

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Who is required to take the oath of office?

The most common township positions that are required to take the oath of office include the township board members and their deputies, board of review members, elective library board members, elective park commission members, constables, election inspectors, the assessor who certifies the assessment roll, commissioner of noxious weeds, and downtown development authority board members. Ordinance enforcement officers and construction code inspectors must take the oath if they will be issuing or serving municipal civil infractions or misdemeanor appearance tickets. (This is not an exhaustive list; other officials or bodies may be required to take the oath.)

assistant assessors or appraisers, but who do not certify the assessment roll

- Fire chief and police chief
- Fire administrative board
- Officers compensation commission member
- Superintendent or manager
- Historical commission member
- Recreation commission member
- Fence viewer
- Economic development commission member
- Others, as township board policy indicates



May the oath be given to other positions?

Yes. MTA recommends giving the oath to the following:

- Planning commissioner
- Zoning board of appeals member
- Ordinance enforcement officer
- Construction code inspectors
- Personnel who work on the assessment roll, such as



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

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

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



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Bills clear haze on medical marijuana regulation

Townships now have clear authority to allow or ban medical marijuana facilities to operate within their boundaries.

Gov. Rick Snyder has signed a package of three bills designed to provide the state's medical marijuana system with a new regulatory framework. The primary bill in the package—House Bill 4209 (now Public Act 281 of 2016), sponsored by Rep. Mike Callton (R-Nashville)—provides

this framework while allowing townships and other local units to determine whether to allow such licensed facilities in their community. It also permits the local unit to control which—if any—of the five types of licensed facilities they would allow and how many.

While MTA did not take a position on the bill, we worked hard to ensure that local control was maintained for approval and regulation. We were successful in our efforts—if townships do not want medical marijuana facilities within their jurisdiction, no action is required. State licensed

facilities can only locate in a local unit if the township adopts an ordinance permitting them. Townships can adopt additional ordinances, including zoning ordinances, to further regulate these facilities.

HB 4209 is tie-barred to HB 4827 (now PA 282), sponsored by Rep. Clint Kesto (R-Commerce Chtr. Twp.), which establishes a seed-to-sale tracking system, as well as HB 4210 (PA 283), sponsored by Rep. Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Bowne Twp.), which would allow medical marijuana to be used in edible and topical form.

Taming a 'Wild West' scenario

The legislation comes years after voters approved medical marijuana in 2008. However, there was little regulatory guidance, resulting in what one lawmaker called a "Wild West" scenario. The bills do not impact the current caregiver-to-patient model but are meant to stop unregulated growers from selling marijuana to provisioning centers.

PA 281 creates the regulatory framework of a state licensing system with five defined types of licenses—grower, processor, secure transporter, provisioning center and safety compliance facility. Once enacted, the bill will provide criminal and civil immunity to license-holders operating within the scope of the law, as well as to registered caregivers and patients.

However, before any individual or entity can apply for any of the five types of medical marijuana licenses, the local unit in which it wants to locate must first have "opted in" by adopting an ordinance. The ordinance must specify which type or types of facilities are allowed, and can also include a limit on the number of facilities allowed in the jurisdiction. Without this ordinance, the state cannot issue a license for any facility in that local unit.

Local units also have the option to adopt other ordinances that regulate the medical marijuana facilities permitted in their jurisdiction. These include zoning, nuisance, lighting, noise, and setbacks from schools and other areas. The local ordinances cannot regulate the purity or pricing of marijuana, and they can't interfere or conflict with statutory regulations for licensing the facilities.

When someone applies for a medical marijuana license, they must notify the local unit by registered mail. Then, within 90 days, the local unit must provide the state licensing board with a copy of its authorizing ordinance and a copy of any applicable zoning regulations or ordinances. In the case of a license renewal, the local unit must also provide applicant.

The bill stipulates that a state operating license is a revocable privilege, not a property right. In a renewal, the board may consider any written input on a licensee from an individual or entity within the local unit, including the local unit itself. PA 281 also creates a 17-member marijuana advisory panel, which includes one township representative, to make recommendations concerning rules and the administration of the act.

All provisioning centers will be charged a 3 percent tax of their gross retail receipts, and townships with state licensed marijuana facilities within their jurisdiction will receive 25 percent of that tax revenue, in proportion to the number of facilities there. Local units can also charge up to a \$5,000 annual, nonrefundable fee. Thirty days after the end of each state fiscal year, the licensee must submit a report to the state and local unit where it's located that includes financial statements of its total operations.

The earliest any person may apply is 360 days from the act's effective date, Dec. 20, 2016. No licensing applications can be accepted by the state before Dec. 15, 2017.



Legislative lowdown

Here's a quick look at bills that MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. For updated information, look to *Township Insights* and *Township Voice*, MTA's weekly and monthly newsletters sent to all MTA member officials.

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

SBs 39-40: Amends state Department of Natural Resources land acquisition and public access requirements. *MTA supports.*

SBs 184 and 188: Regulates transportation network companies under limousine transportation act. *MTA supports.*

SB 239: Prohibits local dog ordinances based on breed. *MTA opposes.*

SB 570: Provides property tax exemption for sportsmen's clubs. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 579, 619-624: Allows public libraries be excluded from tax captures. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 630-631: Preempts local judgment levy and requires judgment bonds to be approved by voters. *MTA opposes.*

SB 732: Allows real and personal property tax exemption for property used for Masonic purposes. *MTA opposes.*

SB 953: Provides revisions to highway advertising act and qualifies public school property as unzoned / exempt from local zoning ordinances. *MTA opposes.*

SB 960: Modifies property tax exemption for real and personal property of a nonprofit charitable organization. *MTA opposes.*

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

HBs 4423-4427: Modifies speed limits on certain roads. *MTA is neutral.*

HBs 4637-4641: Preempts local ordinances regarding the regulation of transportation network companies. *MTA opposes.*

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

HB 4686: Allows the use of "open and obvious" defense in sidewalk injury claims. *MTA supports.*

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

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

HB 5041: Allows for property improvements and additions for nonconforming property (spot zoning). *MTA opposes.*

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

HB 5113: Modifies the term local government may enforce a municipal water or sewage system lien. *MTA supports.*

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

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

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

HB 5282: Specifies rainfall levels and what constitutes a defect for overflow or backup liability. *MTA supports.*

HBs 5490-5492: Diverts the distribution of civil fines from commercial vehicle citations, including serious safety defects, size, weight, and load penalties, from local jurisdiction to county road commission. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5493: Allows township to set by resolution compensation for community center board members. *MTA supports.*

HB 5578: Codifies procedures for the Michigan Tax Tribunal to apply specific criteria in assessment; intended to address the "Dark Stores" valuation loophole that has been utilized for the past several years by "Big Box" retailers and has resulted in disparate valuations and lost revenue to local governments. *MTA supports.*

HB 5826: Prohibits public bodies from taking civil action against the person making FOIA request. *MTA opposes.*

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Are you **prepared?**

Townships' role in emergency management

The first wet, heavy snowflakes began to fall one March 2012 evening in **Leelanau Township** (Leelanau Co.). By the time the sky finally cleared, the township was covered with 30 inches of snow. Roads were impassible, 27 power lines were down and 57 trees had toppled over one stretch of road alone. Virtually everyone who didn't have a generator was without power.

But the township was prepared. The fire department had a list of 37 elderly or homebound residents to check on that it had collected in advance from the senior center and area churches. It had a key to a local grocery store and an agreement that, in an emergency, the fire department could take all the food it needed and pay its bill later. And it already had designated the fire station as a shelter in case of an emergency.

"The rest of it, everybody just came together," Fire Chief **Hugh Cook** said. "You can never plan for that completely."

Over the course of the weekend, firefighters hopped on snowmobiles or strapped on snowshoes to check on every single person on their list, bringing 10 of them back to the fire station to take shelter. Firefighters and their spouses cooked breakfast, lunch and dinner for more than 300 residents desperate for a hot meal. The department helped supply the American Red Cross with water to distribute to those in need, and it opened up its showers to nearly 120 people willing to make the trek.

While their plan might not have worked for a larger community, it was perfect for the township of about 2,200 people, Cook said.

Whether it's a snowstorm, a tornado or a safety threat, chances are your township will experience an emergency at some point in time. While it's true that you can't plan for every scenario, your township can take steps today to make sure you're prepared. Your response will be smoother—and your residents will reap the biggest benefit. By continually updating your plan, staying in contact with partnering agencies and participating in training exercises, you can help to ensure that if the worst happens, your township isn't caught off guard.

What the law says

Emergency management in Michigan is guided by the Michigan Emergency Management Act (Public Act 390 of 1976). The rules and regulations in this law govern how municipalities and the state respond to disasters and how they're managed, Michigan State Police First Lieutenant Gabe Covey said.

Under the law, counties are required to appoint an emergency management coordinator to coordinate all response, recovery and preparedness measures in the event of an emergency or disaster. The communities within that county are then involved with their county's emergency plans.



“You can’t plan for everything. You plan for the things that are more likely to occur. You have the discipline in place. You know who you call, and how you will react.”

—Ann Nieuwenhuis, supervisor
Comstock Charter Township
(Kalamazoo Co.)

Municipalities may also have an emergency management coordinator. Communities with a population more than 10,000 can appoint their own emergency management coordinator. A municipality with less than 10,000 residents is automatically integrated into the county emergency management program, but still may appoint a coordinator who serves at the discretion of the county emergency coordinator. Municipalities across the state have different preferences and approaches. Some—like **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) and **Canton Charter Township** (Wayne Co.)—appoint their own emergency coordinators, while many others integrate into their county emergency management program and work closely with the county emergency coordinator.

When an emergency or disaster takes place, local units are expected to be the first to respond, and the emergency management coordinator monitors the situation. If the crisis reaches a point where several agencies must coordinate, the local emergency coordinator may decide to activate the local Emergency Operations Center, and key personnel must report there to manage the incident and coordinate with one another. If the jurisdiction has used all of its resources, and the chief elected official decides the situation is beyond what they can handle locally, he or she can ask the governor to declare a state of emergency or state of disaster and send in state assistance. The governor can then ask for federal assistance and a presidential declaration when state resources are exhausted.

The emergency management coordinator is charged with putting together an emergency plan, whether that’s at the township or county level, for your community. It’s your township’s responsibility to work with the coordinator.



A nearly 200-vehicle pile-up on I-94 in Comstock Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.) on a cold winter morning in 2015 necessitated the coordination of multiple entities, including local police and fire, the county sheriff's department and Michigan State Police. A city transit system dispatched buses to carry uninjured crash victims from the scene, and an area school served as a warming station.

“Our model here in Michigan is that all emergencies start and end at the local level,” Covey said. “Communities locally are supposed to be trained, have a plan and make sure that they have some sort of response to whatever the emergency is.”

Emergency management: An ongoing process

Because Michigan doesn't experience many major natural disasters, like hurricanes, it can be easy to become complacent. As a result, community leaders may not think about what they might need in case of an emergency until it's too late.

Preparing for an emergency is an ongoing cycle, and emergency management coordinators are constantly in one of five phases. They're always preparing for, protecting against, mitigating, responding to, and/or recovering from an emergency or disaster, Covey said. It's a mindset in which your township is constantly thinking about potential risks and making sure they're prepared to handle those risks, while also effectively handling the emergencies that come and learning from them as a result.

A good place to start is by thinking about possible threats. What kinds of emergencies or disasters could your township feasibly experience? At a minimum, your township will more than likely experience a major snowstorm at one point or another, simply by being located in Michigan! Websites such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (www.noaa.gov) can provide historical weather data to help you better predict the types of natural disasters that are more likely to occur in your township.

You can also reference recent history. Think about whether you have a river that floods every few years, or if you tend to get a storm with high winds once in a while. Are there stretches of power lines with trees and branches nearby? Are there berms that need to be strengthened? These questions can help you prepare for the worst.

For **Comstock Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) Supervisor **Ann Nieuwenhuis**, planning can start simply by watching the news. When she sees a report of a natural disaster, such as the recent flooding in Louisiana, she thinks, what would my community do if that happened here? How would our emergency services respond, and what resources do we need?

Some emergencies, such as an active shooter situation, aren't pleasant to think about but need to be considered. If there was a threat outside your township hall, how easy would it be to lock down? How could you spread the word to residents to stay indoors?

Nieuwenhuis always knew Interstate 94 in her township had the potential for accidents, especially in snowy weather. She'd never imagined a pile-up involving 192 vehicles. In January 2015, though, that's exactly what happened. The point isn't to try to predict every scenario.

“You can't plan for everything,” she said. “You plan for the things that are more likely to occur. You have the discipline in place. You know who you call, and how you will react.”

Know your resources

As you consider how your township would respond to a disaster, it's important to take inventory of the resources you have to aid in your response. Your resources can include anything from the number of police and firefighters available in an emergency to your available ambulances and fire trucks to buildings that could be used as shelters.

Taking inventory is a key part of the planning process for **Bloomfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.). Fifteen years ago, township officials decided they wouldn't be caught off guard by an emergency. Whether the township is hit with a flood, storm or tornado, they knew they wanted to be able to stand on their own feet without assistance, at least at first, Fire Chief **Dave Piché** said.



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In addition to being part of the county's plan, Bloomfield Charter Township has its own plan, where every department head is trained in who does what in case of an emergency, from the police and fire departments to senior services and the school district. Everyone knows their responsibility when a disaster hits so that, ideally, they won't need outside resources. They know how much manpower they can provide at the scene and for how long, how those employees or equipment will get there, and what they can and can't do.

"We'll be able to be self-supportive longer," said Piché, who is also the township's emergency management coordinator. "It provides us with a better foothold and a better foundation, and makes everybody better prepared."

It's crucial to be realistic with your assessment, Piché said. You need to know at what point you've depleted your resources and will need to reach beyond the scope of your township, whether that's to the county or other neighboring communities.

It's all about partnerships

A major disaster will likely involve a response by multiple agencies. Leaders of each department should all be well-acquainted with one another, whether they're at the township or county level. It's also crucial to work with the emergency coordinator and build that relationship now, not later.

"Talk to entities in the township and get to know them," Covey said. "Even if you sit and have a cup of coffee and talk for a few minutes, that makes you a lot more efficient when you do need to come together for a disaster."

Michigan offers a program called the Michigan Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which allows municipalities to leverage resources from other communities during an emergency response. This compact operates on the principal that one entity can loan their personnel or equipment to another with proper compensation provided by the requestor to the provider. There is no cost for joining and is another level of security in the event a community is affected by a disaster.

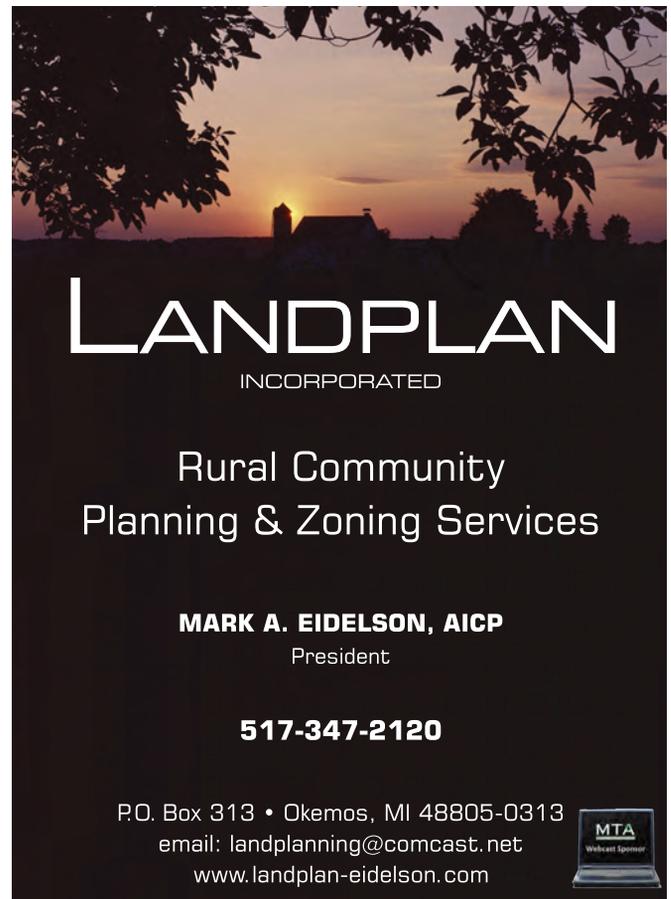
Partnerships even go beyond emergency services. In a given situation, your township might need to communicate with the power company, the school district, senior services, even a store that offers sand bags. Your emergency response will be much smoother if you make calls and create your plan ahead of time, not in the middle of a disaster. "Have those contracts and deals worked out ahead of time, so when it does happen, all you're doing is flipping the switch instead of making cold calls," Covey said.

Those partnerships were key in Leelanau Township's response. Officials didn't need to make last-second calls to the senior services center, local churches or the grocery store. The township already had the names and addresses of everyone they needed to check on in case of a snowstorm. They already had a key to the grocery store and permission to take what they needed. All they had to do was set the plan into motion. "It worked out so well in the storm, it was unbelievable," Cook said.

Blackman Charter Township (Jackson Co.) needed its local partners 10 years ago, when what started as a gasoline spill became too big for just one entity to handle. A 20-inch aging gasoline pipeline had ruptured, and the fire department was called when someone spotted gasoline pooling near the breakage. Then-Director of Public Safety **Tom Finco** immediately made multiple calls—to the local emergency management director, the sheriff's department, the Michigan State Police (MSP) and the state Department of Environmental Quality. He called the train operator, because the breakage point was almost directly under a high-voltage power line, with a train track right next to it.

The situation became even more serious—the gas had flowed through a creek drain and into a residential area by the Grand River. Even more agencies became involved. Finco worked closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Jackson County Health Department, MSP and even the Coast Guard, since the incident involved a waterway. The township worked with the state and federal entities to evacuate residents and protect them from a potential explosion, while the Coast Guard took charge of the gasoline cleanup, along with the oil companies and cleanup crews.

Even though there were so many agencies involved, the response was smooth. The county had already set up a program called Unified Command, in which more than one person shares the role of incident commander. Finco, the county sheriff and a representative from the MSP made decisions



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cover story

together on what to do next, sticking closely to advice from the EPA and the Coast Guard. Their system worked because they had established their partnership in advance, even though they could never have imagined an incident of this magnitude. “Overall it was an excellent outcome,” Finco said.

Nieuwenhuis recommends calling your partners for help early, not later. You’re better off calling and finding out you don’t need assistance than to wait and start your response after the fact.

Partnerships aren’t just about what other departments or businesses can provide for you. It’s also about what you can provide for others. For example, maybe your township has a full-time police or fire department, while the municipality next door has a volunteer-only department. Your township could aid them in their emergency response. Perhaps your township has an airport that could be used to bring in supplies for the county, or you have a building with a generator that could offer shelter to the community during a power outage. Map out how these resources could be used to help your neighbors in an emergency.

Plan to communicate

While communicating with other agencies during an emergency is crucial, your responsibility doesn’t stop there. Residents in your township will expect—and deserve—to stay updated on the latest news.

In recent emergencies, such as an ice storm that struck the Lansing area in 2013, residents looked to Twitter and social media for updates on when their power would be restored. Townships can also use text alert services, such as Nixle, to push the latest updates to their residents’ cellphones.

It’s important to be familiar with your local media, including TV stations and newspapers, Nieuwenhuis said. Your emergency plan should include notifying the local media of closures, local states of emergencies and other updates. In certain cases, especially if multiple media outlets are involved, you may want to consider holding a press conference. When working with multiple agencies, you may want to have one designated person to act as a public information officer.

And sometimes, you’ll just need to improvise. In addition to doing press conferences and media releases, Blackman Charter Township sent emergency service workers door to door, notifying each resident in the area about the gasoline spill and the mandatory evacuation. Later, as the situation progressed, they hired a company to put together flyers explaining what was happening.

Training for the unexpected

Your plan won’t work if the township officials and personnel involved don’t know their role in an emergency response. Everyone—from the fire chief to the police chief to the senior services coordinator to the school superintendent—needs to understand what’s expected of them and what to do when disaster strikes.



Your plan won’t work if the township officials and personnel involved don’t know their role in an emergency response. Everyone—from the fire chief to the police chief to the senior services coordinator to the school superintendent—needs to understand what’s expected of them and what to do when disaster strikes.

But reading a written plan will only take you so far. One of the best ways to get ready—and put your plan to the test—is with a training exercise, many of which are planned by your county. Townships count on mock disasters to experience an emergency response from start to finish, Nieuwenhuis said.

Bloomfield Charter Township takes its mock disasters seriously—one training exercise alone can take six months of planning. A representative from each department involved in the exercise helps plan the disaster from start to finish. In the past, only the fire department participated. Now, everyone who has a role in an emergency response, from elected officials to representatives from state agencies and even gas and power companies, takes part in the training.

The planners stage a large-scale disaster and do a dry run of the emergency response, to find out how the variety of agencies and organizations will react so that any kinks or bugs can be worked out. Then, if a similar disaster happens down the road, the agencies are prepared.

“The disasters are real-life,” Piché said. “A train derailment can happen, or a tornado, and you’ll all be called in to help fix the mess.”

In addition to the training exercises, Covey recommends regularly having table-top run-throughs of emergency scenarios. This could be especially helpful in planning for emergencies such as active shooter situations. In these role-playing discussions, the people talk through what they would do in the event of a terrorist attack or a shooting. The discussions don’t take the place of training exercises, but they do help your emergency responders and township officials be better prepared.

Finco drew from his 28 years of MSP training exercises when Blackman Charter Township was hit with the gasoline spill. It was a good thing, too—the spill happened just 10 days after he became the township’s director of public safety.

“If you’re involved in a department, when the county plans these mock disasters, whether it’s a table-top discussion or a functional exercise where you’re out on a scene, it’s worth the time,” Finco said. “You never know when it’s going to be you who’s involved.”

Preparing your residents

Your emergency services and elected officials aren’t the only ones who need to be prepared for an emergency—your residents do, too. Before the next snowstorm or flood hits, residents should know where they can look for updates, where they can go for shelter and even what they can do at home to prepare.

Bloomfield Charter Township posts extensive emergency readiness information on its website. There, residents can learn all about making an emergency plan, what they need in a supply kit and other tips for self-sufficiency in an emergency. The township even teaches first aid and CPR classes for residents. In an emergency, the police and fire departments will likely be overwhelmed, Piché said.

“We try to teach people how to shelter in place,” he said. “It’s a multi-pronged approach. You’ve got to teach your residents and your employees. Everybody’s got to learn.”

When residents are ready, they can also play a key role in spotting and alerting the police to possible emergencies, such

as shootings or an environmental spill. Covey said the state police constantly pushes situational awareness and encourages people to call the police if they see something suspicious. Even if it turns out to be nothing, it’s always worth calling if it could possibly prevent or minimize a crisis, he said.

Plan to keep planning

No emergency plan is ever complete. As technology changes and new threats emerge, your township will need to continually adjust its plan and its role in your countywide emergency response. Whether it’s on an annual basis or more frequently, Nieuwenhuis recommends pulling your plan off the shelf regularly and looking for any necessary updates. You may need to reevaluate your plan as a result of an emergency response that revealed problems that must be addressed. Big changes in your township’s population or services offered would also call for a shift in your emergency plan.

A community that’s truly prepared is always looking ahead, Covey said. You can stay a few steps ahead of a disaster simply by frequently asking yourself: what would you do?



Bethany Mauger,
MTA Staff Writer

 Steven Mann +1.313.496.7509 mann@millercanfield.com	 Patrick McGow +1.313.496.7684 mcgow@millercanfield.com	 Thomas Colis +1.313.496.7677 colis@millercanfield.com	 Harold Bulger +1.313.496.7507 bulger@millercanfield.com
 Steve Frank +1.313.496.7503 frank@millercanfield.com	 Laura Bassett +1.313.496.8460 bassett@millercanfield.com	 Dorothy Heebner +1.313.496.7860 heebner@millercanfield.com	 Ian Koffler +1.517.483.4904 koffler@millercanfield.com

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MTA regional meetings wrap up this month

This fall, we've been traveling across the state for our *MTA On The Road* regional meeting series and hope to see YOU at one of the remaining locations:

- Oct. 5:** Magnusson Franklin Inn, Houghton
- Oct. 6:** Holiday Inn, Marquette
- Oct. 7:** Little Bear East Arena, Saint Ignace
- Oct. 17:** Otsego Resort, Gaylord
- Oct. 18:** Sanctuary Inn, Alpena
- Oct. 19:** Quality Inn Forward Conference Center, West Branch
- Oct. 25:** Holiday Inn, Big Rapids
- Oct. 26:** Crystal Mountain, Thompsonville

Each meeting features a thought-provoking general session, insightful legislative update and breakouts on important topics including financial literacy and oversight, internal control pitfalls, and our first-ever live version of the popular "Hello, MTA ... ?" column, addressing our most frequently asked member questions and misconceptions.

For full details or to register online, visit MTA's website, www.michigantownships.org.

WORTH THE WAIT

Looking for the MTA Annual Conference brochure in this issue of Township Focus? Never fear—it's coming, just not until January!

Beginning in 2017, MTA's Annual Conference & Expo is moving to the spring! Township officials from across Michigan will "Come Together" April 10-13 in the Capital City.

The timing may be different, but one thing will never change: MTA's Conference remains THE premier educational and networking event for today's Michigan township officials.

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upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Emerging Issues in Emergency Services

Providing emergency and fire protection services may be one of the more complicated (and important!) services your township provides. MTA can help you gain a better understanding of the myriad of hot issues facing your fire department and emergency services personnel.

Township board members and fire officials alike should join us on **Oct. 21** at the **Bavarian Inn Lodge** in **Frankenmuth** for this full-day event entitled, *Emerging Issues in Emergency Services*.

Get an overview of ambulance standards created by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 1917), along with the “Triple K” rules established as a guideline for federal agencies and grant recipients.

Meet State Fire Marshal Julie Secontine and hear her thoughts on new distribution models for training dollars, as well as an update on Mutual Aid Box Alarm System development in Michigan.

Gain insights into the efforts to rewrite Public Act 291 of 1966, the Firefighters Training Council Act. Delve into the MiResCu initiative for high-performance CPR that’s increasing cardiac arrest survival rates. Learn more about volunteer recruitment and retention, and walk away armed with resources to improve your efforts.



Get an update on EMS in Michigan, including EMS provider data, the Narcan protocol, and other new protocols and efforts being implemented to support areas that are challenged with not having enough paramedics—both rural and urban. Learn about planned changes to the EMS Service Bridge that will help satisfy reporting requirements without a major investment at the local level.

Registration, along with continental breakfast, begins at 8:30 a.m. Class is held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and includes lunch served at noon.

Cancellations & Substitutions

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by Oct. 7 will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may substitute another individual from your township for your registration at any time without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change.

Emerging Issues Registration Form

October 21 at the Bavarian Inn Lodge in Frankenmuth

- REGULAR** rate*: \$121 For paid registrations received **after** Oct. 7.
 EARLY-BIRD rate*: \$101 For paid registrations received **by** Oct. 7.

Save \$20/person by registering early!

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

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

NOTE: Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.

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

- - -	/
Card #	Expires
Print Card Holder's Name	Signature

Township County

Telephone Email Address

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Name Title

Name Title

Name Title



Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.

upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection

Whether you are a seasoned treasurer, newly elected or anything in between, this 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. This full-day event includes discussions on:

- Getting started
- Preparation of the tax bill
- Summer taxes
- Winter taxes
- Accounting for and disbursement of collections
- Settlement
- Delinquent personal property tax



In addition to discussion on applicable laws, "best practices" will also be discussed. Opportunities to ask questions will occur throughout the day. This workshop is also appropriate for deputy treasurers and any employee who has some responsibility in the property tax collection process. Registration and continental breakfast begin at 8:30 a.m.; class is held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Continue the learning process

The registration fee* includes lunch and all handout materials. Attendees may also purchase MTA's newly revised *Treasurer's Guide to Township Government*—an essential resource for all township treasurers in Michigan—at the discounted rate* of \$31.50 when registering for the class. Pre-purchased books will be distributed at check-in. Additional books will be available for purchase on-site while supplies last.

Dates & Locations:

- Nov. 21: Ramada Inn, Grayling
- Nov. 22: Fetzer Center, Kalamazoo
- Nov. 28: Community Center, Marquette Charter Township
- Nov. 30: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth

Cancellations & Substitutions

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office by Nov. 14 will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may switch locations at no charge if you notify MTA of the change at least one week prior to the workshop; otherwise, a \$25/person fee will be assessed. You may substitute another individual from your township without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change.

Tax Collection Registration Form

Which location will you attend?

- Nov. 21: Grayling Nov. 28: Marquette
 Nov. 22: Kalamazoo Nov. 30: Frankenmuth

- REGULAR** rate*: \$121 For paid registrations received after Nov. 14.
 EARLY-BIRD rate*: \$101 For paid registrations received by Nov. 14.

_____ (# registered) x \$ _____ (rate*) = \$ _____
 _____ (# of Treasurer's Guides) x (\$31.50/book*) = \$ _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

Township _____ County _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Name & Title _____ Purchase guidebook

Name & Title _____ Purchase guidebook

Name & Title _____ Purchase guidebook

NOTE: Payment must accompany form in order to be processed.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed (payable to MTA)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA	
_____ - _____ - _____	_____/____
Card #	Expires
Print Card Holder's Name	Signature



Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908. Or register online at www.michigantownships.org. Questions? Call (517) 321-6467.

Lifelong learning

MTA conferences, workshops help officials master their roles & responsibilities

MTA's Professional Development Retreat was nothing short of a lifeline for **Debbie Eckhout**.

The brand-new treasurer of **Arcadia Township** (Manistee Co.) was completely green when she took office July 1, 2015. So when she had the chance to attend MTA's *Treasurer's Retreat* that September, she jumped at it.

Eckhout spent the two days at Boyne Highlands scribbling pages of notes and listening to advice from other treasurers. When she returned to work, she referred constantly to her notes and handouts any time she needed information on investments, personal property tax collection and her statutory duties.

"Starting out so green in this job is intimidating," Eckhout told MTA. "Knowledge is power! Handling \$2.5 million in taxes collected is a huge responsibility. MTA has helped a lot with building my confidence."

Public service isn't an easy job

Being a township official is not an easy job. How does an individual make the move from citizen to elected leader? Where does one learn how to effectively lead a community, carry out statutory duties and serve as a board member? What mechanisms are in place to provide ongoing awareness of, and guidance about, new laws and court cases that affect

townships? Who can offer insight and solutions for problems that arise throughout the year?

Professional development is the tool that enables an elected leader to successfully carry out his or her role as public servant. And MTA is dedicated to ensuring that all township officials—from those newly elected to public office to those who have served townships for decades—have the same opportunity that Eckhout had when she first took office.

MTA educational workshops and conferences—held throughout the year, in all corners of the state—are designed to equip township officials to meet their statutory requirements and better serve residents in their community. Officials who attend these educational programs agree that they are essential for anyone who wants to do the best they possibly can in their job. And ultimately, the people who benefit are the community members, who can enjoy a township run by effective, knowledgeable leaders.

Lynda Sower, Otisco Township (Ionia Co.) clerk, has attended MTA trainings since 2012 and simply says, "I don't know how anyone could begin to do a good job in their township if they do not attend MTA's very helpful classes."

'Education is key'

MTA's Annual Educational Conference & Expo (www.michigantownships.org/conference.asp) is the can't-miss event for township officials who want to expand their knowledge and up their game. This premiere event brings together more than 1,000 officials for three days of education and networking, as well as pre-conference educational opportunities. MTA strives to gather the very best local government thought-leaders, trend-watchers, and policy and governance experts to create a learning experience that's not available anywhere else. There's also plenty of time for township officials to network with one another, whether it's in a class, at the expo or during an after-hours evening event.

In years past, attendees braved the freezing January temperatures to travel to the Conference. Those days are coming to an end, as we are switching to a spring Conference. The 64th Annual Conference & Expo is scheduled for April 10-13, 2017, right in our state's capital.

Somerset Township (Hillsdale Co.) Clerk **Deb Spicer** hasn't missed a Conference since she was elected in 1996. Her eyes were opened at her first-ever event 20 years ago to what her responsibilities were and how she can make informed decisions. She knows that continuing education is crucial to being an effective leader, and she has tried to attend every seminar she can that pertains to her job.

"Education is key to being an effective elected official and being responsible to your residents," Spicer said. "Being in government is nothing like a regular business. There are so many do's and don'ts that you can and can't do."

'Information shared, new ideas given'

While Conference is our premiere event, it is far from the only opportunity for education. MTA provides a wide variety of educational workshops throughout the state each year. Topics range from the basic "nuts and bolts" duties of township officials, to advanced policy issues that our members face. All programs are tailored to address core competencies for elected township officials, and they're held everywhere from the northern tip of the Upper Peninsula to southeast Michigan, and all regions in between.

Coldwater Township (Branch Co.) Clerk **Diane Morrison** came away from MTA's recent *Election Tips and Tricks* workshop with plenty of ideas for making the township's elections run more smoothly. It's one of the many seminars and conferences she's attended since 2006, something she credits with helping her and her fellow board members become more knowledgeable and professional.

"Township government is not run like the private industry. There are statutory duties, rules and laws that we need to follow," Morrison said. "Between the speakers and fellow township officials, there is information that is shared and new ideas that are given to become an efficient, professional and knowledgeable member of your township board, making training a valued asset to taxpayers."

From our annual *Board of Review Training* each February, to office-specific training at our *Professional Development Retreats*, MTA offers half- and full-day sessions, evening

classes and multi-day events to accommodate a variety of schedules. Every other year, MTA also heads north for our *UP North Summit*, where officials spend two days attending general sessions and breakouts—in the beauty of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Don't want to travel far? Let MTA come to you! *MTA On the Road* regional meetings (*see page 20 for the remaining dates of this year's tour*) bring updates on the latest issues affecting townships to nearly every area of the state. Attendees leave armed with information and strategies to make their board more effective and better serve their residents.

To accommodate the schedules of today's busy township officials, MTA also offers webcasts—delivering MTA training online straight to your township hall, office, local library or home. Every March and November, members can take advantage of a special 50 percent discount on all MTA webcasts (*see the inside back cover for details*).

For township officials who want to bring their learning to the next level, MTA offers our Township Governance Academy (TGA). This voluntary credentialing program is intended to give township board members the knowledge and skills they need to make effective decisions for the benefit of their township. Graduates leave the program with new ideas and "best practices" on how to deal more effectively with everyday issues that their board faces.

'Keep yourself as informed as you can'

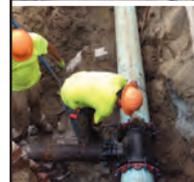
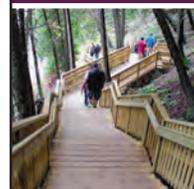
Without attending MTA's education programs, Sower said she would not have known about many state and federal laws as well as other changes she needed to make at her township.

"Learning is beneficial to keep things running smoothly," she said. "Thank you, MTA, for being there for me whenever I need you."

Spicer agreed. "I can't stress enough how important it is, as an elected official, to keep yourself as informed as you can. Things are changing every day, and without the help and knowledge that is available through MTA, elected officials would not be able to do their jobs efficiently. Education is key to doing your job effectively, so get as much as you can!"

Stay in the loop about MTA educational offerings by visiting the "MTA Training" page on www.michigantownships.org, looking for registration brochures mailed to each township, watching your email inbox for eblasts, and checking out the "Knowledge Center" section in each issue of *Township Focus*!

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Thank you

Retiring officials reflect on their time in township government

As we prepare to welcome legions of new township officials following next month's general election, MTA also wanted to honor those who are retiring from township office this fall. We asked retiring officials to share with us their remembrances and reflections on their time in office, their MTA memories, and any advice for new officials, and we share their responses here. We know that the following is but a sampling of dedicated officials who are passing the reins to a new roster of local leaders—to them, and to all retiring officials, we simply say, "Thank you."

"I've enjoyed every position I've held for the township, because I've had the fortune of working with some wonderful people, on boards, commissions, committees, and administrative duties, who had positive visions for the entire township. I have also met many of the residents throughout the years whom I consider friends.



"I've been asked several times why I've stuck with the township so long and my only answer is that I love where I live and have always wanted to be

involved in trying to keep the rural nature of the entire township intact. I've been told the reason people keep voting me into office is because I've earned their respect, that I'm tough but fair, and I consider the entire township in any decisions I make. I have felt blessed to be involved."

—**Ethel Knepp, Hayes Township** (Charlevoix Co.) supervisor for nine years, clerk for 17 years, and former zoning board of appeals member, planning commissioner and zoning administrator

"Township clerk has been a very rewarding, wonderful job in a small community as we raised our children. MTA has been a great source of

information over the years. I tell everyone that the district (now regional) meetings are worth going to every year—you will always learn something that can help you be a better township official."

—**Beth Caswell, Adams Township** (Hillsdale Co.) clerk for 41 years

"MTA provided the resources to train everyone in township government, and the interaction with fellow members helped to solve specific problems. I always looked forward to the legislative updates and Larry Merrill's presentations."

—**Lee Philport, Brady Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) trustee for four years, supervisor for nine years, 15 years on the zoning board of appeals

Submitted by **Rich Probst, Jr.**, **Eagle Harbor Township** (Keweenaw Co.)

supervisor: Ann Johnson has been our treasurer for 16 years, and was deputy treasurer for the eight previous years. Ann is turning 90 this October, and is an amazing woman—you would never guess her age, and she usually proves to be smarter and sharper than the rest of the board!

“My favorite part of the job is all of the wonderful people I have come to know. My job serving the community has been very rewarding.

“My advice to incoming officials is ‘realize you cannot please all the people all the time.’ Your decisions and vote must be based on the good for the majority of the people involved.



Rely on MTA for questions and help with any issues you are not familiar with. Attend as many training and conferences as are available, and network with other communities for support.”

—**Janet Bovee, Madison Charter Township** (Lenawee Co.) treasurer

“I have been in office for eight years, and there have been a lot of changes during this time. It has been a struggle for some people, because of the economy. I will miss interactions with my constituents.”

—**Jan Breimayer, Otisco Township** (Ionia Co.) treasurer

Submitted by **Kayleigh Hutchings, Paw Paw Township** (Van Buren Co.)

deputy treasurer: Paw Paw Township regrettably announces the retirement of David L. Richardson after 16 years of exceptional service as supervisor. David has also served 13 years as the township sewer administrator, nine years on the board of review, and two years on the cemetery board. He also has been with Paw Paw Fire Department for 56 years. David will be missed by everyone at the township.

‘The perfect fit’

MTA Life Member, 1998 President Neil West says goodbye to township government

More than 50 years ago, a former **Leroy Township** (Ingham Co.) supervisor approached **Neil West** with the idea of getting involved in township government. He wanted West to run for the township board and thought he would make a good township official.

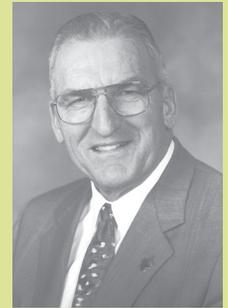
It turned out that supervisor was right—township government was the perfect fit for West. After serving a term as treasurer, he successfully ran for township supervisor—a position in which he was one of the original supervisor-assessors who attended assessing school. One term became two, then three, then four. Now, as West nears the end of his 52nd year in office, he’s decided that it’s time to retire.

“I’ve met a lot of nice people, and I enjoyed doing the work,” West said. “It keeps me in touch with all my constituents, who I otherwise wouldn’t see often. Hopefully, I made the township a better place to live.”

In addition to working for his township, West faithfully served MTA for decades. He was a chairperson for the Ingham County MTA Chapter before he was first elected to the MTA Board of Directors in 1983. West rose through MTA’s leadership positions before becoming president in 1998—something he knew was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that not many people get. Some of West’s favorite moments came at MTA conferences, when he networked and compared notes with other township officials.

As a part-time township supervisor, West also maintained a successful career, first in farming before he went into the building business with his father-in-law. Later, in 1978, he started his own residential building company, West Construction. He also served on a wide variety of community boards and committees.

West is looking forward to attending more baseball games and doing some reading in his retirement, but he knows he’ll miss his fellow township officials and residents when he steps down. “I’ve always liked the people, and I like to visit with them. That part I’ll miss a great deal,” he said. “Making friends was a big part of my life.”



West

“It has been a privilege to serve the residents of Somerset Township and there are many aspects of this honored position that I will truly miss. I have learned a lot during my 20 years, and MTA and networking with other elected officials are greatly responsible for being a part of that. As for MTA memories, I have so many good ones that this article would be too lengthy to list them all.”

—**Deb Spicer, Somerset Township** (Hillsdale Co.) clerk



Submitted by **Karen Felt:** My father, **Robert Pochyla**, is the clerk for **Shelby Township** (Oceana Co.). He has held this elected position continuously for over 60 years, since April 1955. This fall is the first election where he will not be running for office. He is now 87 years old.

He has seen many changes over the years, as you can imagine. The clerk’s office used to be in our home and people would come to the house to register to vote. He was the “expert” in Oceana County during the time of any elections as he set up many, many manual voting machines over the course of his time in office. My father has always been very dedicated to his position and his township.

'Time flies'

Don Hilton, MTA life member and 2005 president, retires after more than 50 years of public service

Don Hilton knows he was born for public service.

The **Gaines Charter Township** (Kent Co.) supervisor grew up popping popcorn and dipping ice cream cones for the visitors vacationing at his parents' summer lakefront business.

Later, when Gaines Charter Township first formed its planning commission, the acting supervisor encouraged Hilton to serve. Not only did Hilton serve as chair of the planning commission, he also served on the zoning board of appeals. Time flew and before he knew it, 30 years had gone by.

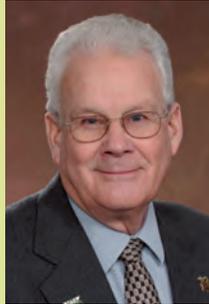
In 1992, Hilton decided to switch roles and run for supervisor.

Now, after more than 50 years of service to the township, Hilton's retirement is drawing near. He has loved his public service career, and credits the people who surrounded him on his boards and commissions with much of his success.

"I have always told all of our staff, the day will come when you walk out of the township door for the last time, so I guess that time has come for me," Hilton said. "I firmly believe that in government, you need the support of your board, staff and community. It is a lot like finding a turtle on top of a fence post. You know that it didn't get there without help."

Hilton has never shied away from doing whatever it takes to promote not only his township, but townships across the state. He is proud of the fact that he is an MTA life member, a past district director (1996) and president (2005). Hilton has served the Michigan Township Participating Plan in many different capacities, is on the executive board of the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), and served on the GVMC's Regional Geographic Information System (REGIS) board and the board of The Right Place, a West Michigan business and economic development agency.

He calls his experiences a blessing—an example of what happens when you have the support of the citizens, a talented staff, and a board that shares your vision of a township where people want to live, work and play.



Hilton

"It has been an honor to serve the residents of Somerset Township as treasurer for the past 12 years. I have a passion for and enjoy the duties of public service. To use one's education, experience and skills to improve something for others is a worthwhile profession.

"I encourage all incoming officials to educate themselves—to take every opportunity to learn how to better serve their residents. The training and networking available through MTA have proved invaluable throughout my three terms of service. There are personal friendships built that will last a lifetime. Thank you to all those at MTA, who work so diligently to make our time as public servants successful!"

—**Pamela Esterline Beck**,
Somerset Township (Hillsdale Co.)
treasurer

Submitted by **Leanne Simon**, **Portland Township** (Ionia Co.) treasurer: **Julius Platte** has served as trustee for 20-plus years, and also served on the township planning commission and zoning board of appeals. Among other things, Julius helped put together the Portland Area Fire Authority, which combined fire services with Portland Township, **Danby Township** and the City of Portland into one fire authority. When asked for advice to new members, he said, "Every township board member should be on the board for the township people, not for any personal reason."

"In 28 years as clerk, I have seen a lot of changes. I am also on the planning commission, zoning board of appeals, and a board representative on Ogemaw Hills Recreation and on our MTA county chapter. I was bookkeeper for my husband's business for 20 years and for several years, I did township work out of our home. During this time, we raised a daughter and son, who have made us very proud. I have had a good life and am looking forward to more."

—**Margaret Winslow**,
West Branch Township
(Ogemaw Co.) clerk

Submitted by **Stambaugh Township** (Iron Co.); excerpted from article appearing in the Iron County Reporter—**Eugene Pellizzaro** will not be running for supervisor this year after 50 consecutive years as supervisor and 47 years as township assessor.

The main concerns for the township when Pellizzaro took office were roads and water. During his 50 years on the board, the township installed 48 miles of water lines and has 61 miles of local roads.

He said, "I enjoyed being the supervisor and I enjoyed helping out. It's been a good run. I haven't regretted a minute of it. I've met a lot of nice people along the way."

Submitted by the **Williams Charter Township** (Bay Co.) Board of Trustees—Williams Charter Township will be losing one of our most knowledgeable and personable board members this November. **Amy Charney**, our clerk for 25-plus years, has decided to retire at the end of her current term. Her dedication to the position and her uncanny ability to record and recall details from the past (both in meeting minutes and general knowledge of things that happened in the township) will be sorely missed! Thank you, Amy, for your dedication and service to your little corner of the world!

GIVE *thanks*

MTA is grateful for the opportunity to educate Michigan's township officials and decision-makers. To show our appreciation, we are offering a discount on all webcasts this November! This is just MTA's way of thanking township officials for their dedication to professional development.

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