

Michigan Township Focus

OCTOBER 2025

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

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MTA county chapters offer officials local connection, support

I had been on the **Burt Township** (Cheboygan Co.) board for several years when a supervisor from a neighboring township asked why I hadn't been attending the Cheboygan County MTA Chapter meetings. While my township was very active in MTA, I hadn't been aware of these gatherings of local township officials. So, I started to attend and continued to take part in the decades that followed, eventually becoming chapter chair for several years.

When I was elected MTA District 5 director, I regularly attended chapter meetings in my district, including in Charlevoix and Emmet Counties. And now, as your MTA president, I have been able to attend county chapter meetings throughout the state, talking with member officials about their communities and also seeing the differences in how county chapters serve their local townships. *(I'd love to visit your chapter this year; you can request a visit from me or from MTA staff using the "Speaker Request Form" on the "County Chapters" webpage under the "Member" tab on michigantownships.org.)*

While each county chapter is different, one thing is true: they all are great opportunities to make local connections and keep informed on your local issues. My own county's chapter, for example, is very active. We meet 11 times per year, and each month, a different township hosts at their hall. When COVID hit, like many others, our chapter went dormant for awhile. I reached out to that same official who had first invited me all those years ago and said, "Let's restart it," and we got it rolling again. Our meetings continue to draw upwards of 50 officials each month.

The host township is responsible for inviting that month's guest speaker—which helps to ensure that all the chapter planning doesn't fall on just one or two individuals. The guest speaker is selected based on relevant or key topics in our area; the county sheriff, road commission and county planning and zoning representatives, and county administrator are also always on the agenda. We reach out to our state representative and senator, and they typically attend at least once a year.

This works out very well for my chapter, but each chapter must decide what works best for them and their area officials. The Emmet County MTA Chapter, for example, now meets

quarterly after its participation started dwindling during monthly meetings. Now, participation is back up to 30 to 40 attendees per meeting. Other chapters meet every other month, or host summer and holiday gatherings. What's important is to do what's best for your own chapter.

According to MTA records, more than 60 counties have MTA chapters. I would love to see all 83 Michigan counties have chapters. *(You can also find chapter contact and meeting details and information on starting a chapter, and chapter officers can provide updated information, on MTA's "County Chapters" webpage.)* In addition to bringing together local officials, they also provide a connection with MTA, as district directors often attend. MTA staff can also be invited to provide brief presentations on a wide variety of topics. The key to chapter success is finding a champion, offering valuable discussion topics, and reaching out to the townships in your county to make sure they know about these meeting opportunities.

These efforts can make a big impact to individuals and entire communities. For example, recently, a township in my county had nearly complete turnover on their township board. I reached out and told them they needed to attend our county chapter meetings—and they did. We welcomed them, as we do with all newcomers, and they have continued to attend—allowing these new officials to meet and learn from the peers in our area, the people whom they can turn to for support.

Our chapter meetings always include a time to go around and discuss issues in our own township—which can turn into unexpected results. For example, at one meeting, the subject of blight was brought up. The sheriff stated that if townships adopted a unified blight ordinance, he would enforce it. At least eight townships in the county worked together, adopted identical ordinances and now are experiencing improved enforcement—all because of a conversation that started at a county chapter meeting.

MTA county chapters can help you learn, share and grow with your fellow township leaders. I hope to visit you at your own county chapter meeting this year, and see first-hand how your chapter is helping serve Michigan's local officials.

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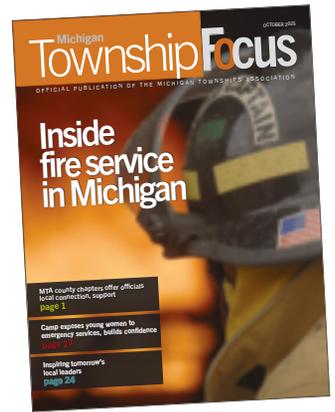
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mission statement

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



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Inside fire service in Michigan

Success in the fire service does not happen in a vacuum. It requires honest conversations, collaboration and commitment at every level of government. In this issue, Michigan's new state fire marshal—who has township roots—discusses Bureau of Fire Services initiatives, fire service challenges, and how state and local governments can partner to strengthen public safety. We also share local efforts to recruit more women into fire service, and how one department is offering a different type of valuable service to their community.

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Inspiring tomorrow's local leaders—

MTA awards annual Robinson Scholarships

A future public administrator and a college freshman inspired by her time as a township co-op student are among the 2025 MTA Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship recipients. Additional students receiving this year's award include a public servant furthering her service to her community and an active township volunteer and election worker heading to college.



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CHECK YOUR LEVELS

2026 assessor certification levels approved

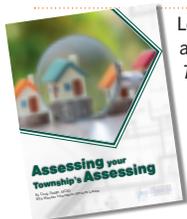


Each year, the State Tax Commission (STC) approves certification levels for Michigan certified assessors. Township boards are responsible for ensuring that their assessor of record is properly certified in accordance with commission guidelines. Township boards must be aware of these levels—and know how many units their assessor is working for to ensure they are not over-assessing for their certification level. Improper certification level and over-certification could result in the STC

removing the assessor's certification or removal of the assessor as the township's assessor. The 2026 certification levels are:

- **Michigan certified assessing officer (MCAO):** State equalized value (SEV) is less than \$927,277,000 AND the combined SEV of commercial, industrial, and utility real and personal classifications plus assessed value of special acts properties is less than 20% of \$927,277,000 (or \$185,455,000).
- **Michigan advanced assessing officer (MAAO):** SEV is greater than or equal to \$927,277,000 but less than \$4,032,748,000 AND/OR a combined SEV of commercial, industrial, and utility real and personal classifications plus assessed value of special acts properties, is greater than or equal to 20% of \$927,277,000 (or \$185,455,000) but less than 20% of \$4,032,748,000 (or \$806,550,000).
- **Michigan master assessing officer (MMAO):** SEV is greater than or equal to \$4,032,748,000 or a combined SEV of commercial, industrial, and utility real and personal classifications plus assessed value of special acts properties, greater than or equal to 20% of \$4,032,748,000 (or \$806,550,000).

If a township required MMAO-level certification for 2025, it will continue to do so until it can show a decrease in SEV for two consecutive years. A waiver (STC Form 4742) may be granted to reduce the SEV used to calculate the certification level requirement if the SEV is significantly influenced by the value of a single parcel or group of related parcels. Form 4742, along with supporting documentation, must be submitted no later than Oct. 31. For more information, visit michigan.gov/statetaxcommission.



Learn more about township boards' role in assessment administration with MTA's publication, *Assessing Your Township's Assessing*. Order via our online Store on michigantownships.org, download an order form from our website (click on "Books" under the "Learning" tab), email tonia@michigantownships.org, or call (517) 321-6467, ext. 231. Cost is \$43 for members; \$60 for non-members.

MIWAM TO MIUI

New state unemployment system to launch later this year

As employers, townships must participate in the state's unemployment insurance system as either a "reimbursing" or a "contributing" employer. By default, townships are reimbursing employers—that means the township makes payments to the state Unemployment Insurance



Agency (UIA) when an eligible employee files and is granted a claim for unemployment compensation. Some townships have elected to be contributing employers, and make regular payments to the UIA based on a formula.

The UIA is transitioning to a new computer system, MiUI, to replace its current system (MiWAM). Starting Dec. 15, employers and third-party administrators (TPAs) will perform certain duties in MiUI, including filing quarterly wage and tax reports (for applicable employers), uploading wage files, and more. Claimants will be able to begin using the new system in summer 2026.

According to the state Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), for a period of time, employers and TPAs will perform duties in both MiUI and MiWAM. The new system is intended to be more user friendly, and ease wage and tax reporting. LEO recommends keeping all MiWAM bookmarks handy until MiUI is fully launched, allowing employers to easily navigate to the MiWAM screens needed to provide benefit information for employees.

LEO has set up a "MiUI University" site (access via michigan.gov/leo) to help employers transition to the new system. With the launch of MiUI, a new process will exist for maintaining employer accounts as they switch between reimbursing and contributing status. Unlike previous processes, employers will utilize one account regardless of any changes to their reporting method. All functions—whether reimbursing or contributing—will be completed within the same account. A new account number will not be assigned. The MiUI University webpage includes a checklist of steps for employers, including confirming account details, MiUI activation and more.

Visit MTA's "Employment Issues" webpage for more resources on townships and unemployment (access via the "Index of Topics" in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab on michigantownships.org; login is required).

ESTA REMINDER

'Small business' townships must comply with ESTA beginning Oct. 1

Townships that are a "small business" under the Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA)—defined in the act as those with 10 or fewer employees—must begin to comply with requirements of the act starting Oct. 1. ESTA requires employers, including townships, to provide paid sick leave for employees.



The act requires paid sick leave to be accrued at a rate of at least one hour for every 30 hours worked. Employees of a "small business" can use up to 40 hours of paid earned sick time per year, while larger employers must allow employees to use up to 72 hours of paid earned sick time per year (employers can allow a higher limit). The ESTA applies to full-time, part-time, temporary and seasonal workers. Visit MTA's "Earned Sick Time Act" webpage on michigantownships.org (access via the "Index of Topics" in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab; login is required) or michigan.gov/wagehour for additional information.

In memoriam

Thomas Hein served **Metz Township** (Presque Isle Co.) for more than 50 years, including as constable and later trustee. Hein had retired from the township board in August, when he was recognized with a certificate of recognition "for his extraordinary legacy of public service spanning over five decades," shared Clerk **Nancy Kandow** (pictured with Hein, front center, and Kandow, far right, are, from left, Treasurer **Andrea Konwinski** and Supervisor **Nyle Wickersham**).



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



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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 coming:
Wednesday, Oct. 22 from noon to 1 p.m.

Governmental Immunity: Wait, I Can Get in Trouble for That?!

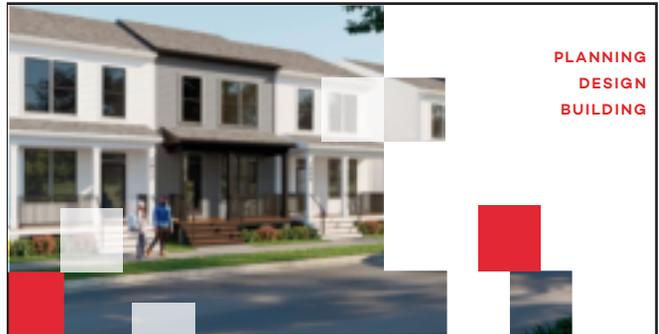


Ever wonder where the line is between your responsibilities and personal liability? Can you really get in trouble for that vote, action or comment? In this one-hour webinar, we'll break down governmental immunity in plain language—explaining what protections exist for townships (and their officials!) and where the limits are. Through real-world examples and practical guidance, you'll gain a clear understanding of when you're covered and when you're not. You can join us live, watch a recorded version later, or both!

Register online at bit.ly/NYKmta for just \$25 per session!

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MTA welcomes new staff to Administration and Finance, and Education Departments

Please join MTA in welcoming two new staff members to the Association team.

Elizabeth Santibanez has joined the MTA Administration and Finance Department as our senior accountant, assisting with the Association finance program and functions, including budgeting, accounts receivable and payable, investments, accounting records and systems, and assisting with the annual audit. “In the short time she has been with us, Liz has already proven to be a great asset, including assisting with our year-end and audit procedures, and we look forward to her continued contributions,” said Jill Smith, MTA director of administration and finance.



Santibanez

Santibanez brings to MTA more than 25 years working in the accounting realm, including most recently for the National Association of College and University Food Services. “Each position I have held has been a stepping stone, and I am pleased to bring those experiences and skills to serving MTA and its members,” she said.

A Texas native, Santibanez attended the University of Texas, where she studied accounting and finance, and has lived in Michigan for 11 years. “Yes, I am a Dallas Cowboys fan and love everything Texas,” she said. “I still cannot get used to Michigan’s long winters!”

She enjoys spending time with family, including her husband, son, daughter-in-law, three grandchildren, a goddaughter and two rescue dogs.

Sarah Arthur is MTA’s new education coordinator, following the retirement of Katrina Hnath from the Knowledge Center this summer. Arthur has more than 30 years’ experience in event planning, workshop facilitation and publishing—a perfect fit for her role with the Association, helping to coordinate MTA workshop and conference logistics, planning and marketing, and overseeing administration for the Township Governance Academy, Red Book Ready program, and MTA Online offerings and subscriptions.



Arthur

“I’m delighted to welcome Sarah to the team,” said MTA Education Director Shelley Cardenas. “Sarah has already had the chance to connect with members at our *Clerks’ Professional Development Retreat* in September, and we’re excited for the expertise and energy she brings.

Arthur has coordinated in-person and online events for writers and publishing professionals, including the biannual L’Engle Writing Retreats, which has drawn hundreds of

attendees from multiple countries and more than 32 states. She is the author of 15 books, including 12 nonfiction titles and three Young Adult novels, and has served as a contributing writer and consultant for hundreds of resources, curricula, articles, journals, podcasts and documentaries. She also has experiences as a guest presenter, editor, staff writer and church youth director, and has extensive community and volunteer involvement.

“It’s an honor to bring my background in event planning, publishing and education to serve local officials here in my beloved home state,” Arthur said. “I am looking forward to meeting all our dedicated public servants!”

Born and raised in Michigan, Arthur has resided in everywhere from big cities to rural townships, including **Empire Township** (Leelanau Co.), where she lived as a child. She now lives in Lansing with husband Tom and two sons, 14-year-old Micah and 12-year-old Sam, who keep them busy with soccer and cross country events. Having grown up sailing on big and small lakes all over Michigan, Arthur and her family are also members of the Lake Lansing Sailing Club. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Wheaton College in Illinois and a master of Theological Studies from Duke University.

classified

HELP WANTED

Municipal attorney—Mika Meyers PLC is seeking an attorney with three to eight years of experience to join its Municipal Practice Group. The ideal candidate will have a strong interest in representing cities, townships, villages and other public bodies on a wide variety of matters, including governance, land use, zoning, ordinance enforcement, property tax, public utility systems and municipal litigation.

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For immediate consideration, candidates should submit a cover letter, resumé and list of representative engagements to Nikole L. Canute, Mika Meyers PLC, 900 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 or ncanute@mikameyers.com. No phone calls, please. Mika Meyers is an equal opportunity employer.

profile



Advertorial

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.

In addition to strategic planning, FSBR provides steady support for day-to-day operations. That includes reviewing contracts, advising on public meetings, and ensuring compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act and other statutory duties. When disputes arise, the firm litigators defend township decisions and protect public resources.

As new priorities emerge, FSBR helps township officials navigate them with confidence—whether addressing sustainability initiatives, managing development pressures, or resolving employment and labor matters. Your township deserves a legal team that anticipates challenges and provides clear, workable solutions.

Stay connected. Sign up for FSBR's monthly Township Law E-Letter and educational webinars at fsbrlaw.com. Ready to strengthen your township's legal resources? Contact Attorney Chris Patterson at (517) 381-3205 or cpatterson@fsbrlaw.com for more information or to request a proposal for legal services.

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Coming next month: MTA's half-off webcast sale!

Plan now to learn—and save—with MTA's fall 'Give Thanks' webcast sale

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 when it's most convenient for you.

Check out MTA's full catalog of offerings now to see which webinars offer the most value and benefit to you and your township team, and make plans to take advantage of our **half-off webcast sale for the entire month of November** using the discount code **thanks**. (You have a full year from time of purchase to watch—or rewatch.)

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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.

mta events | october

1-2	<i>Treasurers' Professional Development Retreat, Frankenmuth</i>
14-15	<i>Supervisors' Professional Development Retreat, Frankenmuth</i>
22	<i>Now You Know lunchtime webinar Governmental Immunity: Wait, I Can Get in Trouble for That?!</i>
27-28	<i>Trustees' Professional Development Retreat, Frankenmuth</i>
29-30	<i>Planning & Zoning Team Professional Development Retreat, Frankenmuth</i>

OCTOBER

5 Deadline for clerk to post and enter into the Qualified Voter File (QVF) the hours the clerk's office will be open on the Saturday or Sunday (or both) immediately before Nov. 4 election, and any additional locations or hours if applicable, to issue and receive absent voter (AV) ballots. (MCL 168.761b)

6 Deadline for notice of days and hours for voter registration at clerk's office for Nov. 4 election to be published in the newspaper. If considered advisable by township clerk, notice may also be posted in at least two conspicuous places in each precinct. Notice must include offices and proposals that will be on the ballot. (MCL 168.498)

7 Clerks intending to process or tabulate AV ballots before Election Day must submit written notice to the Secretary of State. (MCL 168.765a)

14 Deadline for notice of Election Day polling place to be provided when temporary changes are needed to Election Day polling place. (MCL 168.662)

Deadline for precinct inspectors for Nov. 4 election to be appointed by local election commission. (MCL 168.674)

Assessor reports the status of real and personal Industrial Facility Tax property to State Tax Commission (STC). (MCL 207.567(2))

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

Rehabilitation Act (MCL 125.2794).

Assessor's 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))

17 Deadline to post notice on township website (if available) and in clerk's office of the location, dates, hours and number of election inspectors for AV counting place if processing and tabulating AV ballots before Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.765a)

20 *Not later than Oct. 20.* Deadline for payments to municipalities from the Local Community Stabilization Authority: Local Community Stabilization Share revenue for county allocated millage and other millages not levied 100% in December. (MCL 123.1357(8) (a) and (c))

Deadline to register by mail or online and be eligible to vote for Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.497)

21 In-person voter registration with local clerk with proof of residency allowed between this date and Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.497)

24 Deadline for candidates or ballot questions seeking nomination or election at Nov. 4 election to submit pre-election campaign statement. (MCL 169.233)

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

Until 5 p.m. Deadline for electors to submit a written request to spoil their AV ballot for Nov. 4 election and receive a new AV ballot by mail. (MCL 168.765b(1))

Until 5 p.m. Deadline for electors who have returned their AV ballot for Nov. 4 election to submit a written request in person to spoil their AV ballot and receive a new AV ballot in the clerk's office. (MCL 168.765b(3))

25 Deadline for county clerks to deliver remainder of ballots and election supplies for Nov. 4 election to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

Deadline for candidates not appearing on Nov. 4 ballot to submit quarterly campaign finance statement. (MCL 169.233)

27 Townships with a population of at least 5,000 may begin processing and tabulating AV ballots for Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.765a)

28 Deadline to publish notice of Nov. 4 election. One notice required. (MCL 168.653a)

30 Deadline for public logic and accuracy test for Nov. 4 election to be conducted by applicable election commission. Notice of accuracy test must be published at least 48 hours before test. (MCL 168.798) (R168.778)

Beginning of period when clerk must verify or reject AV ballot application or AV ballot return envelope by end of calendar day the application or envelope is received. (MCL 168.766b)

31 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, Charitable Nonprofit Housing PA 612 of 2006, Commercial Facilities PA 255 of 1978, and Industrial Facilities PA 198 of 1974 tax exemption applications to STC. *Note:* Applications for the above exemption programs received after Oct. 31 shall be considered by the commission contingent upon staff availability.

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for an applicant to cure a signature deficiency on the application to receive an AV ballot for Nov. 4 election by first-class mail. (MCL 168.761)

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for clerks to send AV ballot for Nov. 4 election via first-class mail. (MCL 168.761)

Until 5 p.m. Deadline for electors who have lost their absentee ballot or not yet received their ballot in the mail for Nov. 4 election to submit a written request to spoil their AV ballot and receive a new AV ballot by mail. (MCL 168.765b(5))

NOVEMBER

1 Township that establishes Election Day vote center for Nov. 4 election must post notice of establishment and location of vote center on township website (if available) and in clerk's office. (MCL 168.523b)

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 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))

3 All townships may begin processing and tabulating AV ballots for Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.765a)

Until 4 p.m. Deadline for electors who have lost their absentee 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 for Nov. 4 election in the clerk's office. (MCL 168.765b(7))

Registered voter may apply for AV ballot in person for Nov. 4 election at the clerk's office until 4 p.m. (MCL 168.759)

4 Election Day registrants may obtain and vote an AV ballot for Nov. 4 election in person in clerk's office or vote in person in the proper precinct. (MCL 168.761)

Election. (MCL 168.641)

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

By 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))

6 *By 9 a.m.* Deadline for boards of county canvassers to meet to canvass Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.821)

7 *Until 5 p.m.* Deadline for voter to cure signature on AV ballot return envelope, allowing an otherwise valid ballot to be accepted for tabulation for Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.766)

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

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

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

18 Deadline for boards of county canvassers to complete canvass of Nov. 4 election; county clerks forward results to the Secretary of State within 24 hours. (MCL 168.828) (MCL 168.822)

24 Deadline for Board of State Canvassers to meet to canvass Nov. 4 election. (MCL 168.842)

By 28 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))

**May be handled by the county treasurer. See MCL 211.43(2) or call MTA at (517) 321-6467 (press 1) for further guidance.*

Note: Early voting is optional for 2025 elections. For November election early voting dates, visit michigan.gov/elections.

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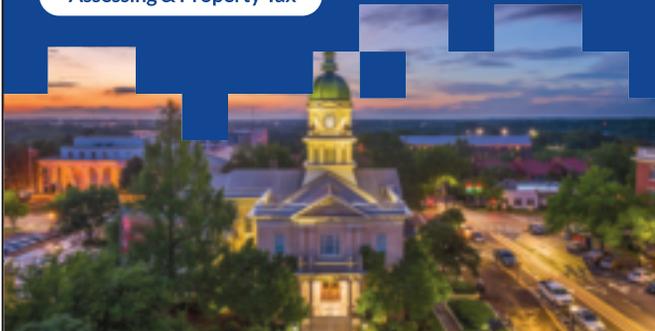
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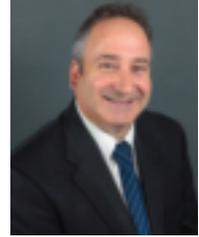


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Q As a township official, I sometimes hear that the township is protected from ‘tort liability’ because of governmental immunity, but I am not sure what that means. Can you help me generally understand governmental immunity?

“Governmental immunity is derived from the traditional doctrine of sovereign immunity that limits imposition of tort liability on a governmental agency. ... Under the governmental tort liability act ... governmental agencies are immune from tort liability when engaged in a governmental function. Immunity from tort liability ... is expressed in the broadest possible language—it extends immunity to all governmental agencies for all tort liability whenever they are engaged in the exercise or discharge of a governmental function.” (*Nawrocki v Macomb Co Rd Comm*, 463 Mich 143, 2000)

Tort liability is the legal term for being responsible for causing a harm to another person or their property, and is most often resolved by a lawsuit and the payment of money damages. It is a noncontractual civil wrong.

This immunity is rooted in the principle that the government should be able to carry out its functions without fear of constant litigation. Townships may provide a wide range of services on limited budgets, including operation of sewer and water services, law enforcement, fire protection, libraries, parks and senior centers, to name a few. Practically speaking, a township cannot be held liable in the same way as a private person. A private person can simply refuse to engage in certain activities to reduce their risk. On the other hand, a township is expected to provide certain governmental services to its residents, regardless of the risk of potential liability. In most cases, these township services cannot be appropriately provided by anyone else. In order to make it financially feasible for governments to function, they are granted governmental immunity.

The Governmental Tort Liability Act (GTLA), MCL 691.1401, *et seq.*, is the statute that grants this broad governmental immunity to townships. The GTLA generally shields government agencies from tort liability if the agency is engaged in the exercise or discharge of a governmental function. However, the GTLA also provides several exceptions to governmental immunity—things that the Legislature has decided that a government should be liable for, despite the reasoning described above.

Q What are the main exceptions to governmental immunity that our township should keep in mind?

Under the GTLA, there are a number of narrow exceptions to governmental immunity that could affect your township. You should review the following exceptions to the GTLA (and discuss them with your township attorney) to familiarize yourself with the situations where your governmental immunity could be waived:

1. Sidewalks (MCL 691.1401-691.1404)
2. Government-owned vehicles (MCL 691.1405)
3. Public buildings (MCL 691.1406)
4. Officers, employees and volunteers (MCL 691.1407)
5. Proprietary functions (MCL 691.1413)
6. Sewer overflow or backup (MCL 691.1416-691.1419)

Q Our township employs a building official who is very concerned about their potential liability when working for the township. Can you help us understand this potential liability?

An employee, such as a building inspector, generally has broad immunity under the GTLA while working for a township. MCL 691.1407(2) provides in part that:

“Except as otherwise provided in this section ... each officer and employee of a governmental agency, each volunteer acting on behalf of a governmental agency, and each member of a board, council, commission, or statutorily created task force of a governmental agency is immune from tort liability for an injury to a person or damage to property caused by the officer, employee, or member while in the course of employment or service or caused by the volunteer while acting on behalf of a governmental agency if all of the following are met:

- (a) The officer, employee, member, or volunteer is acting or reasonably believes he or she is acting within the scope of his or her authority.
- (b) The governmental agency is engaged in the exercise or discharge of a governmental function.
- (c) The officer’s, employee’s, member’s, or volunteer’s conduct does not amount to gross negligence that is the proximate cause of the injury or damage.”

Much of the time, these three prongs can be met and the official is therefore immune. However, the building official must take particular care to not be grossly negligent in the performance of the official's duties. Gross negligence is defined as conduct so reckless as to demonstrate a substantial lack of concern for whether injury results. If the building official is conscientiously performing the duties of office, they should almost never reach the level of gross negligence. But gross negligence is not an impossible standard to meet, and the township should ensure that its officials have proper training and supervision.

Additionally, it should be noted that the township may cover its employees under an insurance policy and provide indemnification for actions taken within the scope of their authority. (MCL 691.1409)

A resident has threatened to sue me personally for slander regarding statements made about an item before the board. Should I be concerned about being liable?

It is MTA Legal Counsel's opinion that you have absolute immunity from tort liability for statements made on the township board regarding matters within the scope of your authority. MCL 691.1407(5) provides that "[a] judge, a legislator, and the elective or highest appointive executive official of all levels of government are immune from tort liability for injuries to persons or damages to property if he or she is acting within the scope of his or her judicial, legislative, or executive authority." On the township board, you serve as a legislator and therefore are entitled to absolute immunity for your statements made concerning an item before the board.

Our township operates a sewer system. A business owner has accused the township of being responsible for property damage to their building from a sewer back-up that occurred 60 days prior, even though the owner knew of the damage when it occurred. Is the township immune from this claim?

Under this circumstance, the township might be immune, pursuant to the GTLA. (MCL 691.1419) This section provides that a claimant is not entitled to compensation of this property damage claim unless the claimant notified the

township of the damage, in writing, within 45 days after the date the damage was discovered or in the exercise of reasonable diligence should have been discovered. In this scenario, the property owner had an obligation to notify the township within the 45 days. There is, however, a provision in this section of the GTLA that requires the township to make available to the public information about this required notice to make a claim.

It should also be noted that this notice is not required for noneconomic damages. Noneconomic damages include, but are not limited to, pain, suffering, inconvenience, physical impairment, disfigurement, mental anguish, emotional distress, loss of society and companionship, loss of consortium, injury to reputation, humiliation, and other nonpecuniary damages. Liability for noneconomic damages are only available for death, serious impairment of body function or permanent serious disfigurement. (MCL 691.1418(2))

Learn more from MTA Legal Counsel and get your questions answered during this month's Now You Know lunchtime webinar, "Governmental Immunity: Wait, I Can Get in Trouble for That?!", held Oct. 22 at noon. Turn to page 5 or visit michigantownships.org/learning for details.

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



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No state budget as of *Township Focus* press time

As of *Township Focus* press time in mid-September, there were limited days remaining in the state's fiscal year and no resolution reached on the state's FY 2025-2026 budget that begins Oct. 1. With major differences between the Senate, House and governor's budget recommendations, negotiations before the end of September must occur to avoid a government shutdown. Additionally, road funding and public safety funding are expected to be part of a final agreement.

For townships, the major item is funding for statutory revenue sharing (*which is separate from constitutional revenue sharing*). For FY 2024-2025, townships, cities and villages received \$333 million in statutory revenue sharing. The governor's FY 2025-2026 funding proposal increases the amount to \$345 million, the Senate's recommendation proposes \$366 million, and the House proposal reduces current-year funding to \$293 million. While the House-passed budget included higher funding levels for public safety and roads than both the governor and Senate, their funding reduction removes statutory revenue sharing funding for 88% of Michigan townships—eliminating the current fiscal year inclusion that had added ALL townships, cities and villages to the statutory revenue sharing formula *for the first time in nearly two decades*.

MTA will provide updates on the budget process and negotiated outcomes in our *Township Insights* weekly newsletter.

Share input on MTA's 2026 legislative policy platform by Nov. 24

MTA is seeking review and input from our members on the Association's legislation policy platform, which guides MTA's government relations efforts, and is reviewed and updated annually to reflect emerging issues and goals. Review MTA's 2025 Legislative Policy Platform—under "Advocacy" on michigantownships.org—and share any proposed revisions and suggested additions by **Nov. 24**.

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 2026 MTA Annual Meeting, held in conjunction with our Annual Conference & Expo in April. Contact legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.



Legislative lowdown

A look at critical bills MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. Watch for updates in MTA's weekly newsletter, *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 23 & HB 4081: Land division—Authorizes municipalities to increase the number of parcels resulting from division (four splits to 10 splits). *MTA monitoring.*

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

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

SB 81 & HB 4070: Indigent Defense Commission—Expands Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Act to include youth. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 82: Public records—Creates new act to allow 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 about 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 240 & HB 4699: Term of office—Modifies term of office start date for township officials to Dec. 1. *MTA neutral.*

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 monitoring.*

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 monitoring.*

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, and modifies park passes for Recreation Passport and nonresident motor vehicle. *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: 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 423: Property taxes—Modifies sunset on certain delinquent tax payment reduction and foreclosure avoidance programs. *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 time 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.*

HB 4006: Local preemption—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: Zoning preemption—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 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.*

HB 4185: Road funding—Redirects sales tax revenue collected at the pump and earmarks funds for constitutional revenue sharing. *MTA supports.*

HB 4230: Road funding—Creates Neighborhood Road Fund and provides for the distribution of the fund, and provides funding for bridges and specific township roads without a match. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4311-4312: 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 4338: Local government—Creates Sanctuary Policy Prohibition Act. *MTA monitoring.*

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 4392: Appropriations—Provides for appropriations from the Natural Resources Trust Fund. *MTA supports.*

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 due to respond 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 the 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.*

Supporting Michigan's fire service

Partnering to meet emerging challenges

As Michigan's state fire marshal and director of the Bureau of Fire Services (BFS), it is my privilege to support the fire service across our state. I stepped into this role on June 2, 2025, after more than two decades with the **Northville Charter Township** (Wayne Co.) Fire Department, where I retired as deputy chief. My career has included leading emergency operations, building prevention programs and forging partnerships that strengthened community safety.



Earlier this summer, Tom Hughes became Michigan's state fire marshal, bringing with him extensive experience—including more than two decades working in a township fire department.

In addition to speaking to attendees at MTA's Emerging Issues in EMS workshop in September, we asked Hughes to share his insights with Township Focus readers on current issues in fire service—and what he sees on the horizon.

My path, however, began long before I wore the badge. As a child, I witnessed both tragedy and resilience. When my younger brother was struck by a car, I watched bystanders step forward to begin CPR until the Southfield Fire Department arrived and carried on the fight to

save him. Later, I stood on the lawn of my burning family home as the Northville Township Fire Department battled the flames. Among those rushing toward the fire was my neighbor, an off-duty Detroit deputy fire chief, who risked his own safety

searching for my family, then believed to be trapped inside. Those moments showed me the courage of firefighters both on and off duty and left a lasting impression about what it means to serve. On Sept. 11, 2001, as a college freshman, I watched the towers fall and knew I was called to this profession. Just three months later, I was enrolled in the fire academy, beginning a journey that has always centered on service, teamwork and leaving things better than we found them.

This September, I had the privilege of speaking with nearly 150 township leaders at a Michigan Townships Association event in Frankenmuth. We discussed bureau initiatives, fire service challenges, and how state and local governments can partner to strengthen public safety. Success in the fire service does not happen in a vacuum. It requires honest conversations, collaboration and commitment at every level of government.



The Bureau of Fire Services: Our mission and scope

The Bureau of Fire Services serves as Michigan's statewide resource for fire and life safety. The bureau's work reaches into communities across the state every day. Our inspectors and plan reviewers safeguard licensed facilities, including homes for the aged, child care centers, hospitals, and schools. The bureau also oversees consumer fireworks sales and safety, as well as cannabis facilities. We license and regulate fire alarm and suppression firms that protect both buildings and lives. We regulate underground and above-ground storage tanks, from local gas stations to large industrial sites, protecting people and the environment.

In addition, we manage firefighter certification, deliver ongoing professional development, and oversee the statewide incident reporting system, now transitioning from the National Fire Information Reporting System (NFIRS) to

the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS).

Upcoming initiatives

1. Transition to NERIS

The National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) is replacing the current National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). This shift will improve data accuracy, reporting and resource allocation. While the shift requires training and system upgrades, BFS remains committed to ensuring that departments statewide are supported during implementation. Clear communication and ongoing support will be essential for success.

2. Firefighter training and continuing education (CEs)

Ensuring that Michigan's firefighters are properly trained and certified continues to be a top priority. In 2022, firefighter continuing education requirements were established to raise the standard of training across the state. CEs ensures every firefighter, instructor and officer trains on the newest hazards, technologies and tactics. Municipal leaders play a critical role in supporting and funding these training needs so that departments are prepared not just for today, but for tomorrow.

3. MI Prevention and community risk reduction

Since its inception in 2017, the state MI Prevention program has installed nearly 160,000 smoke alarms in more than 38,000 homes across Michigan. To date, these alarms have alerted over 100 families to potential danger. The program uses data-driven risk assessments to target educational messages, with results echoing national trends showing that adults over age 65 remain the most vulnerable to fire.

Other initiatives include carbon monoxide alarm installations and assistance for residents with disabilities or those using home oxygen. Township leaders are encouraged to promote local fire safety campaigns, partner with BFS and public health agencies, and engage residents in prevention efforts.

Emerging fire service issues

Michigan's fire service is facing challenges that demand attention and innovation at every level of government. These are not emerging but present realities. Local leaders play a critical role in understanding and addressing them.

1. Modern fires—Fires today are not the same as they were 50 years ago, or even 20 years ago. Research shows modern homes burn faster and deadlier. Synthetic materials, open floor plans and lightweight construction fuel rapid fire spread. As a result, flashovers (when materials in a building rapidly and even simultaneously ignite) can occur in less than three minutes compared to 17 minutes in older homes built with natural materials. This leaves families vulnerable, making early detection, timely notification and rapid emergency response more critical than ever.



Fire departments respond not only to fires but also to technical rescue, medical emergencies, mental health crises and natural disasters. Local governments must account for this evolving scope when planning staffing and support.

2. Staffing—With incident response increasing by anywhere from 30% to 100% over the last 20 years, Michigan’s staffing numbers continue to maintain or even decline. Firefighter staffing in the state of Michigan falls well below those in our neighboring states. This holds true for all department types, whether full time, paid-on-call, combination or volunteer.

3. Recruitment and retention—Departments, especially rural and volunteer, face steady declines. Two decades ago, a career opening drew 200 applicants; today, many attract fewer than 10. Combined with rising calls, this creates major challenges. Municipal leaders can work with their departments to understand pain points and explore new recruitment strategies.

4. Rising costs of vehicles and equipment—Supply chain disruptions and inflation have driven up the cost of fire apparatus, equipment and personal protective equipment. Departments now face extended lead times and higher maintenance costs for aging fleets. Since COVID, emergency vehicle delivery timelines have stretched from 12 to 18 months to 36 to 48 months, while prices have nearly doubled in under a decade. Although supply chain issues are often cited, much of the problem stems from private equity consolidation, which has rolled smaller regional manufacturers into large conglomerates. Today, three companies—REV Group, Oshkosh Corporation and Rosenbauer—control 70-80% of the market. While federal pressure is mounting, municipalities still have no near-term relief in sight.

5. Expanding scope of emergency services—About five years ago, every member of the Northville Township Fire

Department was issued a ballistic helmet, ballistic vest, and a trauma kit with tourniquets and combat dressings—equipment once reserved for SWAT. These items are now the standard issue in many fire departments, reflecting the expanding scope of our role. Today, fire departments respond not only to fires but also to technical rescue, medical emergencies, mental health crises and natural disasters. Local governments must account for this evolving scope when planning staffing and support. At the same time, the rapid pace of technology, including electric vehicles, solar panels and battery storage systems, introduces new hazards that require specialized training and equipment.

What can you do?

Townships and other municipal leaders are vital partners. Your investment in infrastructure, personnel, equipment and prevention programming has a direct impact on community safety. We encourage townships to:

- Evaluate different funding mechanisms to establish sustainable budgets.
- Participate in community risk reduction initiatives like MI Prevention.
- Prioritize training for department personnel.
- Promote regional collaboration beyond only mutual aid.

Looking forward: Strengthening the fire service together

As we move into 2026 and beyond, BFS is focused on modernizing fire data systems, expanding access to firefighter training and enhancing community engagement through community risk reduction. We are also continuing to strengthen our partnerships with state agencies, local governments and fire service associations to build a more resilient Michigan.

At the heart of it all, I believe in one simple truth: no one cares what you did yesterday, it is what you do tomorrow that matters. We owe it to those we serve—and those whom we serve beside—to innovate, to improve a little every day, and to never accept “no” as permanent.

For too long, people have said the fire service is 200 years of tradition unimpeded by progress. Tradition gives us pride and identity, but it cannot be an excuse to stand still. Modern fire demands modern tactics, modern strategy and modern solutions. Our responsibility is not just to honor tradition, but to build upon it and leave the fire service, and our communities, stronger than we found them.

Fire safety begins at the local level, with department leadership, community education and municipal support. I invite township leaders to collaborate closely with your local departments to identify needs and opportunities. Please reach out to LARA-BFS@michigan.gov with ideas, concerns or ways we can work together. Together, we can protect lives, strengthen emergency response, and ensure every Michigan community has access to quality fire and emergency services.

Thank you for your dedication to public service and your commitment to the safety of Michigan’s communities.



Summer camp exposes young women to emergency services, builds confidence

While still in high school, **Napoleon Township** (Jackson Co.) resident **Aubree Dean** discovered she had a passion for helping people and an interest in a career in emergency services.

Dean, who graduated from Napoleon High School in 2025, signed up for everything she could to get exposure and experience with the fire service. She joined the Napoleon Township Fire Department as a cadet firefighter and now serves the department as a paid-on-call firefighter.

She also participated in the Future Female First Responder Camp, run by the City of Jackson's Fire Department to inspire more women to join emergency services. After attending as a camper in 2024, Dean served as a volunteer this summer to show young women it's a viable career for them.

"It's a great learning experience for anyone interested in fire or emergency medical services," she said. "It's a great way to learn more about the field and get the experience before you are an adult and have to commit to it as a career."

Women underrepresented in firefighting

This marked the second year for the Future Female First Responder Camp, which gives young women hands-on experience with firefighting, police work and emergency medical services. The free, four-day camp was held in July and was open to ages 14 to 18 years old.

"It's a good way to see what a day in the life of a firefighter is like and try it out before they jump all in," said Jackson's Assistant Fire Chief **Joe Smith**. "Over four days, they get a good understanding of what it takes to do this job and what all the aspects are of doing the job."

Smith decided to host the Future Female First Responder Camp based on resident inquiries and as a way to expose young women to possible careers in emergency services.

The city fire department and area townships support each other through various mutual aid agreements, so the camp benefits the greater community and county. "We are the hosting agency, but this affects everybody," Smith said. "[The fire department] used to get hundreds of applicants and now we are lucky to get 10 applicants for a full-time firefighter."

While Smith helped to organize the camp, he found female first responders to lead the training so the campers could meet real-life role models and mentors—allowing them to ask questions, see career paths and witness firsthand the diversity, strength and camaraderie within these fields.

cover story

“There’s a work shortage in first responder world. What better opportunity for females to come and see if this opportunity is for them?” Smith said.

According to Women in Fire, a national organization dedicated to championing female leadership and participation within the fire and emergency services, statistics from the 2020 U.S. Fire Department Profile indicated there are approximately 90,000 female firefighters in the country, equating to 9% of all firefighters. Of the nation’s 22,316 fire chiefs, approximately 6% are women.

“I truly love it,” Dean said of her involvement with Napoleon Township. “It has definitely become like a second home to me. With or without the pay, I find it very worthwhile. Once you get into it, you kind of get sucked into first response.”

While the 2024 camp had 30 participants, participation was capped at 15 this year to allow campers to work in smaller groups during the hands-on training exercises. Feedback from both students and their families was overwhelmingly positive regarding the inaugural camp, Smith said. The camp not only educated, it also empowered.

“Our instructors and mentors were equally impressed by the participants’ willingness to try new things and ask meaningful questions,” Smith said.

Offering hands-on experience, mentorship

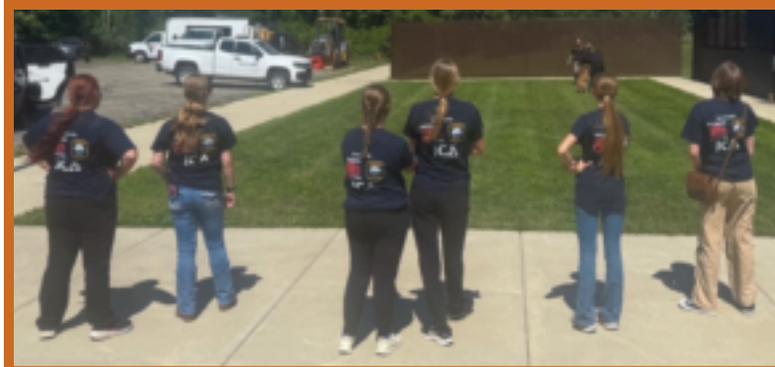
Camp participants—which included numerous township residents—spent two days training with the Jackson Fire Department and the other two days with the Jackson Police Department and Jackson Community Ambulance. The camp includes lunch and camaraderie with the other campers, along with hands-on learning led by female first responders.

“I enjoyed the food and the people I met there,” said eighth-grader Jhetta Sherels, whose sister attended the camp in 2024. “I learned how to put on firefighter gear and some activities they have to do in certain situations, like how to use the hose. It made me more interested in firefighting and considering it as a future career,” she said.

The campers participated in firefighting demos, police safety and self-defense skills, ambulance tours, EMS simulations and Q&A sessions with first responders. During the firefighting days, the campers had the opportunity to suit up and spray the fire hose, go up in the department’s tower truck, and train on search and rescue techniques. They also learned about the many career paths available in firefighting, from working as a volunteer firefighter with a small township to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildland program, the Michigan State Police’s arson investigation canine team and hazmat specialties.

“It was good encouragement,” Dean added. “They were very good about providing information for all three fields that helped me solidify my choice for fire and EMS.”

Dean said the cadet program with Napoleon Township’s fire department really sparked her interest in pursuing



firefighting as a career. Cadets participate in all township department functions, including equipment checks, fire and EMS trainings, and will respond on emergency calls with the department.

Dean also enrolled in the Fire/EMS program at Jackson Area Career Center during high school and passed the state Firefighter I and II test to become a certified firefighter. She has since enrolled in the EMT class at Jackson College, with a career goal to work for an ambulance company and become a full-time firefighter/EMT. “I always knew that I wanted to do something that was helping people,” she said. “Doing the job shadow day at Napoleon Fire, I realized I love this line of work and that I was ready to dedicate my life to helping others through first response”

Dean heard about the camp from one of her counselors at school and decided to sign up. “I thought it would be a good opportunity to meet more girls my age who were interested in first response,” Dean said of the camp. “It was a great experience. I loved it.”

Camp teaches teamwork, builds confidence

Besides exposing young women to career possibilities, they have the chance to test their endurance, mental and physical stamina, and teamwork—all qualities essential for firefighting. The camp introduces participants to the tools, skills and culture of first responder work, as well as provides a deeper understanding of what it takes to serve in these critical roles, Smith said.

The camp environment gives young women the opportunity work in teams, overcome adversity, and build leadership and resilience traits. “I think some individuals get discouraged because they may be petite and think they don’t have the physical strength or mental toughness, but they learn ‘I have what it takes to do this line of work,’” Smith said.

The campers step into real-life scenarios that require confidence, decision-making, and physical skill. “I really appreciated how hands-on it was, but also the information that was provided to the campers, to the girls,” Dean said. “Jackson Fire Department did a good job of providing multiple training scenarios for fire, police and EMS in a safe environment.”

Township bucking the trend

Currently, neither the City of Jackson Fire Department nor the neighboring **Summit Township** (Jackson Co.) Fire Department have any female firefighters. Nearby Napoleon Township is bucking that trend with eight female firefighters, said Assistant Fire Chief **Jeremy Holbrook**.

The Future Female First Responder camp, cadet program and career center’s Fire Academy program help with recruitment and awareness, which is critical. Holbrook encourages younger people to take advantage of the First Responder camp, cadet programs and job shadowing opportunities. “It gives high school students the chance to get a little bit of experience and learn more about what the jobs entails,” he said.

The field needs more diversity and female firefighters, Holbrook added. Typically smaller in stature than men, women can often gain access through tight spaces, such as crawling through a window. And victims of fires, car accidents and other traumatic events oftentimes feel more comfortable talking to females or people whom they can relate to.

“It has been a more male-dominated workforce, and we’re trying to break down some of those walls and barriers to let people know that it’s a career anybody can do and we’re open to it,” Holbrook said.

Dean added that it’s very valuable to have people from all walks of life visible to any younger person, especially as they try to figure out a career path, as well as when serving the public during an emergency.

“There are people from any and every background that choose to step up for others and be there in a person’s time of need, and it’s very valuable to have any person who is willing to do that,” Dean said, adding, “You always have someone there to have your back. It’s a very rewarding field.”

—*Authored by Marla Miller, freelance writer*



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A different kind of service

Township fire department establishes Project Fire Buddies chapter

Township fire personnel go above and beyond every day for their communities—helping keep residents safe and protecting health, lives and property. One township is now part of a network helping to further support and connect with children and families during times when they need it most.

The **Macomb Township** (Macomb Co.) Fire Department (MTFD) has taken a new step in community service by establishing a chapter of Project Fire Buddies, a nonprofit organization that partners fire departments with critically ill children and their families to create meaningful moments of joy.

Founded by firefighters in Illinois, Project Fire Buddies began in 2016 as a grassroots effort and has since grown into a nonprofit working with fire departments across the country. Over nearly a decade of outreach, the organization now has local chapters in over 140 fire departments across 10 states. MTFD was proud to add to that total in April with the founding of their local chapter. Michigan now has six Project Fire Buddies chapters—including **Plymouth Charter Township** (Wayne Co.), which joined the organization in January, and **Armada Charter Township** (Macomb Co.) Professional Firefighters Local 5053, which created its chapter in May.

“Establishing a Project Fire Buddies aligns perfectly with who we are and why we serve,” said MTFD Fire Chief **Bob Phillips**. “Firefighters often meet families on their hardest

days. This program lets us show up on the good days too and help create more of them. We haven’t met our first buddy yet, but our crew is eager to start building those relationships.”

‘Offering moments of joy and support’

Phillips first learned about Project Fire Buddies while attending a fire service conference in Indiana earlier this year. After hearing about the impact fire departments have had in their communities outside of the station through this organization, Phillips wanted to bring the idea of developing a chapter back to the MTFD crew.

“Hearing about what the organization and local chapters do was moving,” Phillips said. “These weren’t about expensive or large events; they were about firefighters sitting down to watch a movie with a child, delivering a birthday cake or simply spending time with them. I immediately thought that our department should be part of this.”

When Phillips brought the idea back to his crew in Macomb Township, the firefighters were enthusiastic about the opportunity to help critically ill children in the community. Firefighters who already dedicated themselves to

serving residents in times of crisis saw Project Fire Buddies as a natural extension of their mission.

“We are honored to bring Project Fire Buddies to Macomb Township,” said Phillips. “Our firefighters are dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of these brave children and their families, offering them moments of joy and support during such challenging times.”

For fire personnel accustomed to high-pressure calls, Project Fire Buddies provides a different kind of service. Instead of rushing to extinguish flames or respond to emergencies, the mission here is to create calm, joy and connection.

“Our firefighters are used to responding quickly to emergencies,” said MTFD Deputy Fire Chief **Adam Munro**. “Project Fire Buddies is different in that it’s patient and consistent. We will meet families where they are, listen closely and provide the kind of support that makes a difference in their child’s life.”

The program also offers firefighters a different perspective on how they impact their community. “When you spend time with a child fighting a serious illness, you gain a new understanding of strength,” Munro noted. “By the same token, we can show them the strength of a community fully behind them.”

By establishing a chapter, Macomb Township hopes to illustrate how municipal departments can be innovative when it comes to community engagement.

This program goes beyond the outlined duties of the MTFD and reinforces the township’s identity as a safe, family-centered community. For Macomb Township, Project Fire Buddies underscores a valuable lesson: innovative community partnerships enhance public trust and humanize local government. “Programs like Project Fire Buddies show residents that township departments are not just service providers but neighbors who care deeply about the people they serve,” Phillips said.

Although MTFD has not yet been paired with any children in the community, preparations are underway. “We want our first interactions to be seamless and respectful of each family’s routines,” Phillips explained. “That means getting organized now by coordinating schedules, clarifying roles and making sure our firefighters understand the heart of this program. When we meet our first buddy, we’ll be ready.”

For now, MTFD leadership is also focusing on raising awareness. The department is spreading the word among local healthcare providers, schools and community partners so that families who might benefit from the program know it is available to them.

‘Ready to make good days happen’

The benefits of Project Fire Buddies ripple outward. For families, the program provides joy, companionship and a sense of support from their community. For firefighters, it creates opportunities to connect positively with residents outside of emergency situations.



Photos courtesy of Macomb Township and Project Fire Buddies.

The program also boosts morale within the department. In a profession where stress and trauma can take a toll, moments of joy and connection are restorative. “There’s no question this will strengthen our team as well as the families we serve,” Phillips noted.

For township officials watching from across Michigan, Macomb Township’s example demonstrates how creative partnerships can expand the scope of service without overburdening municipal resources. By working with a national nonprofit, departments can tap into established structures and support networks, making local implementation easier and more sustainable.

MTFD leadership plans to share updates with residents as families are partnered with the program.

“This is a neighbor-to-neighbor service,” Phillips said. “We hope to bring some relief to families who have a lot on their shoulders. When we meet our first buddy, we’ll be there with a crew ready to make good days happen.”

Communities interested in learning more about the Project Fire Buddies organization, along with volunteer and fundraising opportunities, are encouraged to visit projectfirebuddies.org for more information.



Our township still has a petty cash fund. Should we have a separate policy from our cash drawer policy?

Yes. Most townships have a cash drawer or have cash on hand to make change when needed, and should create policies addressing the assignment, purposes for, and reconciling of change drawers. In addition, townships may also have a petty cash fund, used to record money set aside on an imprest basis for paying incidental expenses (MCL 18.1403), and should also have a policy for its use. These petty cash expenses are normally unable to be paid for in the regular manner, making cash the practical way to pay for the expense. While petty cash may be used in some townships for the making change, the township’s policy should differentiate this use from incidental expenses.

A petty cash policy should state how much cash the petty cash fund should hold. A township might allow, for example, a petty cash fund of \$100 to exist for its cash obligations. On rare occasions, if the policy that budgets for the petty cash changes the amount allowed, the account is debited or credited accordingly.

Sample petty cash policy language

The township treasurer shall maintain a petty cash fund of \$____ (identify maximum amount) to provide for the immediate purchase of emergency materials, supplies or service only. Routine or other non-emergency purchases shall not be made from the petty cash fund. The purchase requisition/purchase order procedure is required for all normal purchases.

Loans, cash advances, making change and personal check cashing are prohibited. Cash refunds shall not be issued for overpayments at the time of occurrence (i.e., either a credit should be issued or a check refund generated through accounts payable).

According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, a change drawer or petty cash fund should never be used to cash personal checks: “This is a poor internal control that can too easily lead to theft and may be a violation of the State Constitution, Article IX, Section 18, which states, ‘the credit of the state shall not be granted to, nor in aid of any person, association or corporation, public or private, except as authorized in this constitution.’”



How is petty cash disbursed?

The township policy should outline procedures for how township personnel—with the custodian’s approval—may access to the petty cash. This helps to limit who is able to use its funds. Each

time the cash is needed, the treasurer should have the individual complete a voucher (with a signature) that states what is being purchased and to which account it needs to be applied. This provides proof of what it was used for, who used it, and when it was used. In the event that the petty cash is out of balance, the voucher allows for a quick reconciliation of where the funds are.



When will it be replenished, how and how often?

The township policy can also state how often the petty cash is to be replenished. This is commonly done monthly, quarterly, or sometimes annually. When the petty cash fund is replenished, the account is debited with the total amount of the cash used from it (this can be easily done by putting each receipt with the petty cash so you can write a check for the total of the receipts).



How do we terminate a petty cash fund?

To terminate a petty cash fund, the remaining cash in the fund must be deposited into the corresponding bank account for the respective fund. For example, if the general fund has a \$100 petty cash fund, deposit this amount into the general fund bank account with a memo that details the closing of the petty cash fund.

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.

References

- “Petty cash procedure,” www.accountingtools.com
- “Petty Cash Procedures | Controller’s Office,” www.ucsf.edu
- “Petty Cash: What It Is, How It’s Used and Accounted For, Examples,” investopedia.com





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Content, connections and camaraderie

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The dates and locations for our remaining retreats are:

- » Treasurers' Retreat: Oct. 1-2
- » Trustees' Retreat: Oct. 27-28
- » Supervisors' Retreat: Oct. 14-15
- » Planning & Zoning Team: Oct. 29-30

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Get all the details, including the agenda and session descriptions, online at bit.ly/mtaretreats

Special thanks to our 2025 retreat sponsors



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Payment Options

- Check enclosed (payable to MTA)
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Which retreat do you wish to attend?

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TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Rates are for MTA members; non-members, call MTA for rates.



Send your completed registration form with payment to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078; fax: (517) 321-8908, email rebecca@michigantownships.org or register online at bit.ly/mtaretreats. For registration assistance call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, use ext. 230.



Inspiring tomorrow's local leaders

MTA awards annual Robinson Scholarships

A future public administrator and a college freshman inspired by her time as a township co-op student are among the 2025 MTA Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship recipients. Additional students receiving awards this year include a public servant seeking to further her service to her community and an active township volunteer and election worker heading to college.

This year marks the largest group of scholarship recipients in recent memory, following eligibility expansion earlier this year to include all college students pursuing a career in public service as well as individuals, including high school students, seeking coursework or training to begin or continue service to their community. Meet the 2025 Robinson Scholarship recipients:

'There is power in helping others'

Doug Ferguson is pursuing his master's in Public Administration, with a concentration in State, Regional and Local Government, from Grand Valley State University

(GVSU). With aspirations to serve as a public administrator following his anticipated graduation in April 2026, he said his goals in that role include "encouraging public and civic engagement, establishing trust between community and local government, providing a safe and exciting place for families to call home, and embracing and incorporating climate-forward solutions into local operations and planning."



Ferguson

Through his academic, personal and professional experiences, Ferguson has fostered numerous opportunities to serve Michigan's communities and residents. He has worked as an election inspector and precinct chair in his hometown of **Baldwin Township** (Iosco Co.) since 2018, and has also served as an election inspector for the City of Grand Rapids during the academic year. After earning a degree in Music Education from the University of Michigan in 2022, Ferguson served as band director for Clarenceville Schools for two years, and was also music director for the Alternative Education Academy in Tawas City while pursuing his bachelor's degree, securing grant funding for the organization.

At GVSU, Ferguson is secretary/communications director for the university's chapter for the International City/County Management Association and is a graduate assistant for the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office.

These experiences have well prepared Ferguson for a career in public service. "Through my experiences in Baldwin Township, my time as a public educator, my engagement with professional development organizations and my coursework at Grand Valley, I am confident that I will be able to serve my future community well," he said.

"A career in public service is a special responsibility," Ferguson continued. "Local governments not only ensure the public resources are put to the most efficient use, but more importantly, they help curate community connections. At a time when humanity is becoming increasingly isolated and politics are becoming increasingly hostile, local governments bear the responsibility and the opportunity to help connect our neighbors and focus on the things that truly matter to us. Citizens work hard for what they have, and ensuring that everyone has access to the benefits of our democracy is essential to harnessing growth, building community and living well. Our townships are crucial to these goals, and I am excited to continue my career in public service after my graduation."

With the "list of challenges that local administrators face," Ferguson made a conscious effort to focus on a "positive solution to the unique issues faced by townships" when writing his scholarship essay, which discussed the power of collaboration. "There is power in helping others and engaging in symbiotic collaborations," he wrote. "From businesses collaborating to uplift each other to municipalities collaborating to provide effective public safety services, our ability to be collectively efficient may be one of our most powerful tools in managing local government."

Ferguson witnessed the value of collaboration first-hand, as his father served for many years as chief of the Tawas Police Authority, which provided police coverage to numerous municipalities in the county. "Watching my dad serve my community through law enforcement gave me my passion for public service," Ferguson said. "I am excited to earn my master's [degree] and be a collaborative leader in whatever municipality I land."

'A vital role in improving residents' lives'

As **Charleigh Glasser** begins her freshman year at Alma College, she is bringing with her a new perspective on the value of local government in serving Michigan's residents.

During her senior year at Ogemaw Heights High School, Glasser was offered a co-op student position with **Edwards Township** (Ogemaw Co.), a work-based learning experience—and front row view of township operations and serving communities. The experience was eye-opening. "I had no idea how much impact local government had on my community," Glasser said. "I quickly learned that the township plays a vital role in improving residents' lives and making daily life better. What stood out most was how local government allows you to see the changes happening in real time."

The experience inspired the high school athlete—who excels at track and field and competitive swim—to pursue a career in public service, with plans to seek a degree in pre-law or public administration. During her time with the township, Glasser attended meetings and worked at elections, noting, "During the presidential election, I had the opportunity to assist adults who had never voted before. Helping my community in that way gave me a deep sense of fulfillment—truly the icing on the cake!"

Glasser even spoke at an Ogemaw County MTA Chapter meeting, sharing with attendees the value of township co-op positions. Among her contributions during her time working at the township was an intensive project—which she conceptualized and spearheaded—to digitize and organize all township records into a centralized cloud-based system for increased accessibility and efficiency. In addition to ease of use for township officials and staff, Glasser noted that the new system improved the township's ability to quickly respond to a lengthy Freedom of Information Act request, with requested records easily available in a digitized format.

"I believe this kind of transparency builds trust and confidence among our community members," she said. "I am proud of the contribution I've made, and I hope it sets an example for how small governments can improve transparency and collaboration through technology."

In addition to her athletics and work at the township, Glasser was also a member of the National Honor Society and both Girl Scouts and Scouts of America, and volunteer for Relay for Life and at Surline Elementary School.

Glasser values the recognition of receiving a 2025 Robinson Scholarship. "This was the one scholarship I truly hoped to receive," she said. "As someone involved in my township and MTA, I understand how important local government is. Being selected made me incredibly proud—not just of myself, but also of the support my township has given me along the way."



Glasser

feature

'Mission to serve and strengthen our local community'

Zoann Hallam is no stranger to serving others, and serving her community. For more than a decade, she has held various emergency services roles. Following her graduation from Hope College, she worked in the school's campus safety department as a safety communications dispatcher/operator. She then spent six years as a 9-1-1 dispatcher for Ottawa County, and has been a firefighter/emergency services technician with Graafschap Fire Department since 2016, serving **Laketown Township** and portions of **Fillmore Township** (Allegan Co.).



Hallam

"I have dedicated my career and academic pursuits to strengthening local government and public safety, focusing on making a meaningful impact at the municipal level," said Hallam, who also serves as Laketown Township deputy clerk and is pursuing a master's degree in Public Administration from Grand Valley State University.

"I've always been drawn to work that makes a direct impact, firefighting, EMS, dispatch—boots-on-the-ground roles where you show up, get your hands dirty, and help people in real time," she said. "I think I'll always feel that pull. But I've also come to see how important it is to be in the spaces where policies are shaped, decisions are made and community needs are addressed more broadly. The work done behind the scenes in local government lays the foundation for everything else. I want to continue contributing both on the ground and in those conversations, helping build strong, responsive systems that truly serve the people who rely on them."

As deputy clerk, Hallam plays an integral role in local election administration, witnessing first-hand the impact of Election Law changes in recent years. Her scholarship essay focused on the financial impact of these changes on local governments. "Ultimately, while early voting and expanded voter accessibility efforts have merits, the financial burdens they impose cannot be ignored," she wrote. "Policymakers at the state level must carefully weigh the benefits of increased voter participation against the fiscal realities of maintaining these initiatives. Cost-sharing agreements and more efficient voting models may offer solutions, but without careful planning and cooperation, smaller jurisdictions may find themselves struggling under an unsustainable financial load."

Receiving the scholarship not only offers Hallam financial support, it also serves as a recognition of her commitment to service and community. "It's incredibly validating to know that organizations like MTA are invested in people like me—those who are committed to local government and public service," she said. "It reminds me that my goals matter and that there are others who believe in the importance of this work. I'm grateful for the support and encouragement as I take this next step."

'Delivering work that genuinely benefits others'

Though he just graduated from Grant High School, **Robert VeltKamp** has spent a great deal of time giving back to his township and the greater community—and these experiences have led him to consider a career in local government as he pursues business management and accounting degrees from Muskegon Community College.



VeltKamp

In addition to assisting **Grant Township** (Newaygo Co.) with its annual township clean-up days and cemetery clean-up efforts as well as Memorial Day flag placement services, VeltKamp also worked as a certified election inspector for local, state and federal elections at two township locations and a county early voting site. "These work opportunities have provided me with some insight and experience that will assist in decision-making as I move forward in my studies and research the possibilities open to me," he said.

"I am drawn to a career in local government or public service because I am deeply concerned about my community and aspire to contribute to its improvement," he continued. "This field offers me the opportunity to engage in tangible changes that directly impact the daily lives of individuals. I believe in the significance of active listening, collaborative problem-solving and delivering work that genuinely benefits others. Local government and public service provide the platforms for such endeavors."

His time working with the township has proven beneficial and influential on several levels. "Being the recipient of this scholarship shows me that the time I've spent within the township learning election processes, attending meetings or working at the cemetery all mean something," VeltKamp said. "The board members are appreciative of my efforts, which in turn inspires me to continue helping when and wherever needed."



VeltKamp is also an active member in Royal Neighbors, assisting community members in need, including preparing food for a local food pantry and helping with food and clothing drives, as well as participating in other group and church youth activities.

His own community was the inspiration for VeltKamp's scholarship essay, which examined the need for—and lack of—affordable housing, an issue felt both throughout the state and across the country. “The current housing shortage is making it difficult for the township to grow and thrive as tax revenues remain low,” he wrote. “It's not just about buildings—it's about the people who want to call this place home and are finding it nearly impossible to do so.”

As Grant Township works to update its master plan, reviewing wants and needs for the future, VeltKamp encouraged community members to get involved in the process, particularly students and young adults. “I encourage other young people to get involved, attend public meetings and provide their input,” he wrote. “This is our future these decisions will impact!”

'A strong commitment to education and serving Michigan's residents'

MTA's Robinson Scholarship was created in honor of the second executive director and former **Meridian Charter Township** (Ingham Co.) supervisor **Robert R. Robinson** to ensure that Michigan's future local leaders continue to

value and protect township government and the Michigan residents it serves. Since its inception in 1987, the scholarship has been awarded to more than 100 students seeking to serve their community and Michigan local governments. Each of this year's recipients' community involvement and future goals made them ideal candidates for the annual award.

“MTA created this scholarship to honor the legacy of long-time township advocate and past MTA Executive Director Robert Robinson by fostering future local leaders,” said **Marilyn Strickland**, Scholarship Committee chair and **Newton Township** (Mackinac Co.) treasurer, who also serves as MTA District 4 director. “These individuals have demonstrated a strong commitment to both their education and to working toward a career serving Michigan's residents. We wish them each the very best in their future endeavors in public service.”

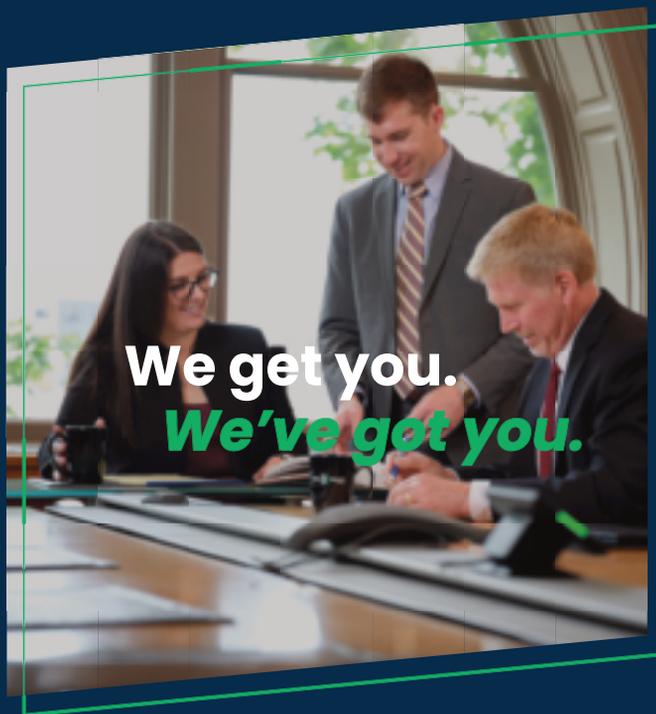
Support Michigan's future leaders

Township officials and MTA county chapters can help ensure that MTA is able to continue supporting the educational pursuits of tomorrow's township leaders by making a donation to support the Robert R. Robinson Scholarship fund. Contributions are tax deductible. Checks payable to the Robert R. Robinson Memorial Scholarship Fund can be sent to MTA, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078. Learn more on michigantownships.org (under the “About” tab) or call (517) 321-6467 with questions.



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SAVE THE DATE APRIL 20-23

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Join fellow township officials on this pathway to education, networking and connection at MTA's 2026 Conference & Expo.

Registration begins Jan. 5; housing opens Jan. 27.

Check michigantownships.org for more details, and watch for the registration brochure in your January *Township Focus*.

Scan the QR code with your phone to watch our "Look Back at MTA 2025" video and learn more about what's coming for #MTA2026!





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