



Michigan Township Focus

SEPTEMBER 2025

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

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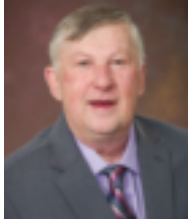
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Educating the young—and young at heart—about public service

As the leaves begin to change and yellow school buses return to our streets, thoughts often turn to back to school. And while we often say that township officials can head back into the classroom—to help educate students about township government—the teaching doesn't end there. It is also essential to educate your residents and community members about the importance of what your township does, how they can get involved, and the immense value that comes from serving one's community.

At the MTA Annual Conference, and in my first letter here, I shared the chart you see at right, and some interesting, but perhaps not surprising, statistics—including that just 3% of elected township officials are under the age of 40, according to a 2024 MTA member survey. Folks, we have to change this chart. At the conference and in these magazine pages, I also shared the three words that I put into practice in my own township and that are my mantra during my time as your 2025 MTA president: **recruit, mentor**

and **youth**. But when I talk about youth, I don't mean those students hopping off the bus and heading into the school building. For townships to succeed—and to survive—we have to make a concerted effort to engage and involve young individuals—or those young at heart—in our communities.

Ask your kids or your grandkids what they learned in their civics or government class about townships. My guess is, it wasn't much. But just like today's students, many of your residents probably don't know much about what townships do and how we operate—except when it comes time to vote and pay their taxes. We have to tell them—and invite them to get involved, and help shape and improve the place they and their families call home.

A great way to start is to bring people in to serve on committees or in appointed positions. This incremental

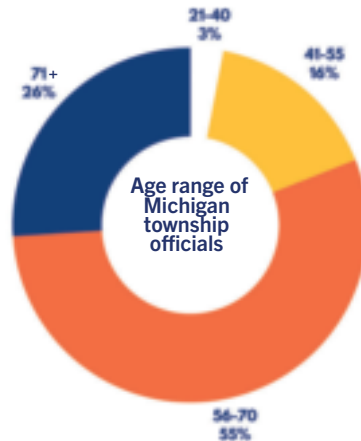
approach is a lesser commitment than elected roles, but it also exposes people to what their local government does and how it functions. With this foot in the door—and experiencing first-hand the value and impact of their involvement—we often see ripple effects, and their service continues and expands, whether that means becoming an election inspector, joining another board or commission, or maybe even deciding to run for elected office.

This entry point to service can also be a good avenue to helping overcome one of the key barriers for many individuals: busy schedules. Easing people into public service is not only less of a time commitment, it also allows them to gain experience and confidence in serving. This is also why I include those “young at heart” when I talk about youth. Those whose children are a little older or who are empty-nesters may find themselves in a new stage of life, with more available time in their schedule to give back to their community.

We live in a politically divisive world, and people may be afraid to enter the world of politics. But on the local level, I find that many things are far less partisan. Local government truly is closest to the people—it's where you can make a difference and help share your community for the future. You are not only improving your township for yourself and your family, but also your neighbors, your area businesses, and the generations to come. We can't solve every problem—but by being involved and being part of the process, we can make a difference.

This is the message that we need to share to help encourage our future leaders. I have been grateful to see more and more townships taking on these efforts. You have to nurture this engagement—and you have to *want* to do it—to be successful. Remember, this is not just for you. This is for your community, and for all Michigan townships.

My thanks to MTA District 5 Director Emma Radatovich, Bear Creek Township (Emmet Co.) clerk, and MTA District 20 Director Jennifer Hodges, Muskegon Charter Township (Muskegon Co.) supervisor, for sharing their insights for this article.



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On the record: Michigan's Freedom of Information Act

Nearly 50 years after the Freedom of Information Act was first enacted, transparency and public access to public records are as important to public policy as ever. The act—and other Michigan records statutes—exist to protect both public records and the public's right to know, and it is critical for township officials to know their options and their obligations regarding public records access.

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Specific rules for township board meetings

Last month's *Township Focus* cover story delved into the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Requirements for township board meetings, however, go beyond the OMA. Both general township laws and the Charter Township Act impose specific requirements for board meeting schedules, notices and minutes.



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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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PAID SICK LEAVE

ESTA goes into effect Oct. 1 for townships with 10 or fewer employees

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.

When ESTA was signed into law earlier this year, it extended the compliance date for smaller employers to Oct. 1. The effective date for employers with more than 10 employees was Feb. 21, when the act was signed.

The ESTA applies to full-time, part-time, temporary and seasonal workers. Independent contractors are not employees and are not subject to the ESTA. According to the state Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), only ESTA-eligible employees count toward an employer’s number of employees when determining if your township is a “small business.”

Per LEO’s *ESTA Frequently Asked Questions*, elected and appointed officials are not considered employees for ESTA purposes, even if they receive some sort of compensation. There are additional considerations for certain township positions, such as deputies who also hold township job responsibilities, and paid on-call firefighters. An MTA fact sheet shares additional information and guidance for townships. View or download the fact sheet from our “Earned Sick Time Act” webpage; access via the “Answer Center” under the “Member” tab on michigantownships.org; member login is required.

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). Employers can frontload sick hours at the beginning of the year, and would then only need to track paid sick time use and not calculate and track hours of accrual. They may also offer a combined leave bank for paid leave; 40 hours (if 10 or fewer employees) or 72 hours (if more than 10 employees) would be subject to the ESTA.

The ESTA contains additional requirements, including for notice and documentation, permissible uses for sick time use, and more. Townships are encouraged to work with their local legal counsel with any questions and to ensure compliance with the act. Find further guidance at michigan.gov/wagehour, including LEO’s *ESTA FAQs*, the mandated workplace poster, brochures and additional information.

EDUCATING YOUTH

Township officials! You can head back to school this fall, too

Students across the state are returning to the classroom for a new academic year. Back-to-school time provides an opportunity for township officials to reach out to your area schools to offer to share information, insights and experiences about the value of township government—and the role it plays in residents’ lives every day. And MTA can help! We have tools to take into the classroom, for all grade levels, at michigantownships.org (click on “Tools for Teachers” under the “About Townships” tab). You can also find a quick three-minute “10 Facts about Michigan Townships” video that you can show in the classroom.

Most civics or government classes or lessons do not go in depth about township government—if it is discussed at all. By talking with students in your area schools, you can help spread the message of what townships are—and how they positively impact students, parents and businesses. September is the perfect time to call or email your local school superintendent, principals or government teacher to let them know you are available as a resource in the school year ahead. Offer to come to the classroom to make a presentation about township government or ask if any other leaders in your township would be willing to do so. Even if you or your township have been invited to make a presentation in years past, it’s always a good idea to remind a teacher that you are available to talk with students each year.

By putting a “face” on local government, you are helping give students an accessible opportunity to talk with you about your roles and responsibilities as a township official and the day-to-day operations of the form of government that represents more than 52% of Michigan’s residents. You may even help to inspire students to get more involved in their local community—volunteering, taking part in programs, registering to vote (and remember, 16- and 17-year-olds can serve as election inspectors!), or even running for elected office in the future.

While in the classroom, discuss topics that students can relate to. Hold a mock election, talk about fire and police protection, library services, and even local roads. As a township leader, *you* truly are the expert on township government. So share that expertise and go back to school this fall—and throughout the year as well. Your efforts can have an impact on the life of a student and the future of your community.



CLARIFICATION ON TREASURY DISTRIBUTION

Explaining heavy equipment rental personal property distributions from state

Townships may recently have received one (or more) qualified heavy equipment rental personal property (QHERPP) distributions, issued by the Michigan Department of Treasury at the end of July—and may have wondered what the money was for and what to do with it.

Under Public Act 35 of 2022, owners of eligible heavy equipment rental personal property can apply for a property tax exemption from their local assessor each year. Those who receive the exemption become a qualified rental business location and must collect a tax on rental transactions of the exempt personal property and remit that tax to Treasury. These tax revenues are then distributed to local units.

Townships (and cities) with a qualified rental business location will receive a QHERPP 90% distribution, and also must distribute an allocation to other tax units. Treasury shared additional guidance with those local units in mid-August. The vast majority of townships, however—those without a qualified rental business location—received a QHERPP 10% distribution. According to Treasury, these funds can be spent as General Fund and should be accounted for using account 101-000-569, Other State Grants. (An open account under state grants may be used if the township wishes to record the funds separately.)

The recent distribution was for revenues collected in calendar year 2023. Payments for calendar 2024 are expected by the end of September for both 90% and 10% QHERPP payments, and the 90% payments for January–June 2025 are anticipated in October. Moving forward, the 90% payments are anticipated to be distributed each September and March, and 10% payments in July. Additional information and distribution amounts was also shared by Treasury with local units, and in MTA's *Township Insights* enewsletter, in early August. Questions? Contact (517) 335-7484 or TreasRevenueSharing@michigan.gov.

Townships can visit the state's SIGMA Vendor Self-Service System (access via michigan.gov/SigmaVSS) to view state-issued payments, as well as a brief description of the payment. The site also includes guides for creating or activating an account, and how to identify which agency is responsible for payments, payment status, etc.

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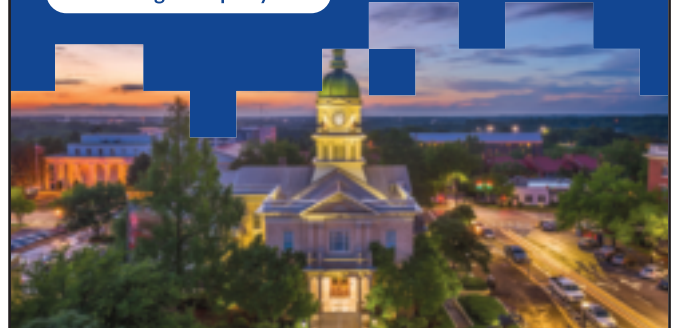
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Don't miss our next episode coming:
Wednesday, Sept. 17 from noon to 1 p.m.

Revenue Sources: Coins in the Couch

Townships receive revenues from several sources. Some, like revenue sharing and allocated millage, are provided by law for township general operation. Others, like voted millages, special assessments and fees, are options that township boards may consider using to cover specific costs. The township board makes important policy decisions about which revenue sources it will use, and board members should understand your options and the ways different revenues may—or may not—be used. Join us as MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt shares insights and information critical for all elected township leaders. You can join us live, watch a recorded version later, or both!

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classified

FOR SALE

Fire vehicle—LeRoy-Rose Lake Fire Department (Osceola Co.) is selling a 2008 Chevy 5500 four-wheel-drive vehicle with cab and chassis platform that can be removed at the buyer's expense. It has an LMM diesel motor and Allison 2200 series transmission. Vehicle has 29,100 miles, red exterior and black interior, and is an automatic. Driver's seat is air ride-equipped. Lettering will be removed, and lights and sirens can be negotiated. Asking price is \$40,000 or best offer, and the department retains the right to accept or reject any or all bids. For more information, contact Chief **Kirk Edstrom** at (231) 388-2333.



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SEPTEMBER

4 Deadline for candidates or ballot questions appearing on the August ballot to submit post-election campaign finance statement. (MCL 169.233)

5 Local clerk in a combined absent voter counting board (AVCB) agreement for Nov. 4 election must inform applicable county clerk that an Election Day AVCB has been authorized by local board of election commissioners. (MCL 168.764d)

Beginning of the period during which township board or board of county election commissioners may not establish, move or abolish a polling place, early voting site or central polling place for Nov. 4 election, unless damaged or destroyed. (MCL 168.662)

15 Last day for qualified taxpayers to file intent for 2025 summer tax deferral. (MCL 211.51(7))

Deadline to amend a previously certified 2025 essential services assessment statement. (MCL 211.2057(4))

Summer taxes due. (MCL 211.107)

16 Interest of 1% per month will accrue if the payment is late for the State Education Tax and county taxes that are part of the summer tax collection. (MCLs 211.905b(9) and 211.44a(6))

20 Deadline for clerks to electronically transmit or mail (as requested) an absent voter (AV) ballot for Nov. 4 election to each absent uniformed services or overseas voter who applied for an AV ballot 45 days or more before the election. (MCL 168.759a; Mich. Const., Art. 2, Sec. 4)

Deadline for county clerks to deliver AV ballots for Nov. 4 election to local clerks. (MCL 168.714)

Beginning of period during which clerk must make reasonable effort to verify or reject AV ballot application or AV ballot return envelope for Nov. 4 election by the end of the business day after the application or envelope is received. (MCL 168.766b)

25 AV ballots for Nov. 4 election must be available for issuance to voters. (Mich. Const., Art. 2, Sec. 4)

Beginning of period secure drop boxes must be accessible 24 hours each day (until 8 p.m. on Election Day). (Mich. Const., Art. 2, Sec. 4)

30 Township clerk delivers to supervisor and county clerk a certified copy of all statements, certificates and records of any vote directing monies to be raised by taxation of property. (MCL 211.36(1))

On or before Sept. 30. Financial officer of each township computes tax rates in accordance with MCLs 211.34d and 211.34 and governing body certifies that rates comply with Section 31, Article 9, of 1963 Constitution and MCL 211.24e, Truth in Taxation, on State Tax Commission (STC) Form L-4029. (MCL 211.36)

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 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 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 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 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



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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))

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



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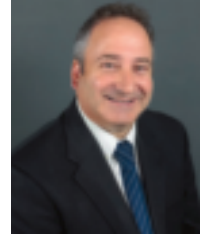
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Our zoning administrator would like to start using a drone to capture images of certain properties suspected of zoning violations, which are not in areas visible from the street. The zoning administrator intends to use the photos in pursuing municipal civil infraction zoning citations requesting compliance with the ordinance. Should our township allow the use of this drone?

Whether and how you allow the zoning administrator to use a drone should be determined by the township board after consultation with your township attorney. There are a number of legal concerns, including potential liability, related to the use of drones for ordinance enforcement. We also recognize how helpful a drone may be for ordinance enforcement. With that said, MTA Legal Counsel provides the following information as general guidance on this issue.

MTA's Legal Defense Fund participated as an amicus in the appellate court proceedings in the case of *Long Lake Township v. Maxon*. In this case, the township filed a civil enforcement action seeking injunctive relief to require zoning ordinance compliance against the Maxons for storing junk cars on their property in violation of the township zoning ordinance and a prior settlement agreement between the parties. A drone operator was hired by the township to fly over the property and take aerial photographs/video to investigate and provide evidence of the violations. The township did not get a warrant for the flyovers and the photographs/video were taken of an area not visible from the street.

The township then used these photographs/video as evidence in its court case. The Maxons moved to suppress the drone evidence, claiming that the drone flyovers were unconstitutional violations of the 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Michigan Constitution, which protect against unreasonable searches by the government without a warrant. The Maxons alleged that the drone evidence should have been subject to the exclusionary rule, a legal proposition that evidence that is obtained illegally is not admissible in court.

In this case, the Michigan Supreme Court issued an opinion finding that the exclusionary rule should not be extended to civil actions seeking to enforce local zoning and nuisance ordinances and that the photographs/video taken by the drone could not be suppressed. Although the Michigan

Supreme Court decided the evidentiary issue of whether the drone photographs/video could be used, it did not determine whether or not the use of the aerial drone in that case was an unreasonable search in violation of the 4th Amendment of the U.S. and Michigan Constitutions.

So, while the evidence from an overhead drone flyover may be admissible, we cannot tell you that the use of the drone without a warrant would be in compliance with the constitutional limitations against unreasonable searches without a warrant. A violation of this constitutional limitation could entail substantial financial liability including paying for the other party's attorney fees. Without a precedential court decision providing the standards for a warrantless use of this type of drone investigation, we would not recommend that you surveil a property for a zoning violation using a drone without first receiving an administrative search warrant—unless, however, your township wants to risk being the test case through courts.



If our township still wishes to operate the drone without seeking an administrative search warrant each time, do you have some suggestions to put the township in the best light if an unconstitutional search claim is made?

You will need to consult with your township attorney on this issue, but we do offer the following considerations. The 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and corresponding section of the Michigan Constitution both protect against unreasonable governmental searches and seizures without a warrant. This limitation on governmental authority, which is at the core of our society's expectations of government, is often litigated. It is a constitutional standard of what is unreasonable or, stated another way, what constitutes a "reasonable expectation of privacy." There must be a reasonable expectation of privacy before there can be a determination that an unreasonable warrantless search occurred.

There is a two-part test for determining whether a reasonable expectation of privacy exists. This test requires a determination of: first, whether the individual, by their conduct, has exhibited an actual (subjective) expectation of privacy; and secondly, whether the individual's subjective expectation of privacy is objectively one that society is prepared to recognize as reasonable. From this test, it can be seen that it will be a very fact-specific situation to determine whether an unreasonable search occurred. A determination is made based upon the totality of the circumstances in the case.

So, let's consider a scenario where a drone flies directly over a backyard to take pictures or videos of a property where a junkyard with piles of used tires is being operated in violation of the zoning ordinance. The subjective expectation of privacy could be fencing the property from a neighbor's view, locating materials in a backyard away from being viewed from the street, or covering items. But even if the individual has a subjective expectation of privacy, the second part of the test requires that their subjective expectation of privacy is one that society is prepared to recognize as reasonable.

With all the generally available technologies to view a property from neighboring properties or from directly overhead, it might very well be that society is no longer prepared to objectively recognize this property owner's subjective expectation of privacy. With the number of airplanes, helicopters, drones, security cameras and trail cameras in use and the availability of overhead views of properties by Google maps and the like, is there still a reasonable expectation of privacy from an overhead drone photo or video? Consider that anyone can go to an online mapping program and view most every property from above.

Additionally, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has registered 822,039 drones as of July 2025. The FAA has further issued over one million drone trust certificates, indicating that a drone pilot has completed a knowledge and safety test mandated by the FAA. Drones are fast

becoming common place for recreational, commercial and governmental uses. When a case comes forward, a court will need to decide what remains of the reasonable expectation of privacy to protect someone from an overhead view from a drone based upon the totality of the circumstances.

To create the best circumstances possible, you could consider the following:

1. The drone should be operated in accordance with any applicable state and federal requirements for drone operations (see 14 Code of Federal Regulation, Part 107, regulating small, unmanned aircraft systems).
2. The drone should not fly over people in the backyard.
3. The drone should not fly lower than roof height or be in a position where it can look into windows or inside of buildings.
4. The drone should be flown over the property for the shortest period of time possible and the fewest number times possible.
5. Do not use enhanced technology to take the picture or video or, at a minimum, technologies that are not in wide use by the general public.

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 FY 2026 budget as of late August

As of late August, no agreement is in sight for the state's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget, which is constitutionally required to be adopted by Oct. 1. This leaves approximately 30 days for the Legislature and the administration to put a budget in place. While there is a statutory July 1 deadline to approve the state's upcoming fiscal year budget, the deadline was not met and has led to a stalemate, with lawmakers at odds over funding priorities and a road funding plan.



The delay in passing the budget has impacted townships and other local units of government, leaving them in the dark on funding for revenue sharing. This has led to tighter local budgets, hiring freezes, and postponed decisions on various programs, staffing and projects in local communities. Lawmakers need to negotiate to finalize the budget and prevent further disruption.

Share your input on MTA's 2026 Legislative Policy Platform

MTA is committed to speaking on behalf of its members. This is evident in the development of our legislative policy platform. We are seeking review and input from our members on the Association's policy platform, which guides MTA's government relations efforts, and is reviewed and updated annually to reflect emerging issues and goals. MTA-member officials are encouraged to review MTA's 2025 Legislative Policy Platform—under "Advocacy" on michigantownships.org—and share any proposed revisions and suggested additions by **Nov. 24**.

"MTA's policy platform outlines priorities to help safeguard and enhance townships' ability to continue to provide exemplary services and quality of life to their residents," said Judy Allen, MTA director of government relations. "I urge our members to review the current platform, offer your input, be part of the platform adoption at our Annual Meeting—and engage with lawmakers throughout the year to help advocate for these priorities on behalf of township government."

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 disposal fees and limits certain disposal wells and certain naturally occurring radioactive material (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 vehicle 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.*

MTA Professional Development Retreats return this fall!

Join us for two days of education and networking—
customized for your role in your township

No one understands townships or your roles and responsibilities like MTA. That's why we hold our unique **Professional Development Retreats**—with education and information designed specifically for YOU! Join us, your colleagues and other municipal experts from across the state at the **Bavarian Inn Lodge in Frankenmuth this fall** for a township educational and networking opportunity like no other.

Content, connections and camaraderie

Each retreat is carefully crafted with hand-picked educational sessions **geared to your role** on concepts, trends and pressing issues for townships. Designed for officials at every level, these events offer a unique opportunity to **gather with your peers** for valuable education and networking. You'll walk away with insights tailored to challenges (and opportunities) you face and connections that last a lifetime.

Session descriptions appear in registration materials mailed to every township last month and posted on our website. Get it online now by visiting bit.ly/mtaretreats

Clerks' Retreat—September 29 & 30

- FOIA Me This: A Guide to Public Records Access
- Three Manuals Walk into a Township Hall
- Elections Update: Straight from the Source
- Reconciling: Behind the Numbers, Ahead of the Problems
- Legislative Update: What's New, What's Next
- From Confused to Compliant: Mastering OMA
- Meeting Adjourned ... Now What?
- Dollars & Sense: Financial Stewardship Made Simple
- Payroll and Paper Trails

Supervisors' Retreat—October 14 & 15

- From Confused to Compliant: Mastering OMA
- All in Favor? Running Effective Meetings
- Legal Matters: Agent Authority and Attorney Use
- Navigating the Nuances of Revenue Sources
- Legislative Update: What's New, What's Next, What You Need to Know
- Budget Prep: The Buck Starts Here
- Dollars & Sense: Financial Stewardship Made Simple
- Bonds, Municipal Bonds
- Assessing Your Assessor

Treasurers' Retreat—October 1 & 2

- Legislative Update: What's New, What's Next
- Three Manuals Walk into a Township Hall
- Reconciling: Behind the Numbers, Ahead of the Problems
- Investments: Township Dollars at Work
- From Confused to Compliant: Mastering OMA
- Dollars & Sense: Financial Stewardship Made Simple
- Two Roles, One Roll: A Treasurer-Assessor Tag Team
- Collecting Personal Property Tax
- Defending Your Tax Collection Process

Trustees' Retreat—October 27 & 28

- Legislative Update: What's New, What's Next
- I'm a Fiduciary ... (Psst, What's a Fiduciary?)
- Money, Manuals & Monitoring:
A Day in the Life of Fiscal Oversight
- Dollars & Sense: Financial Stewardship Made Simple
- From Confused to Compliant: Mastering OMA
- That's Harassment! Boards, Boundaries and Behavior
- Revenue Rundown: Financing Township Services
- Board Games: Finding Common Ground
- Promoting What Makes You Proud

Planning & Zoning Team Retreat—October 29 & 30

- Legislative News You Need to Know
- Clarifying Roles, Following Rules
- It's All Part of Our Master Plan (Or is it?)
- Zoning In on the Hot Topics
- Watt Works for You: Renewable Energy Ordinances that Fit
- The Power of Possibility: Flexing Your Zoning Ordinance
- By Special Request: Making Sense of Special Land Uses
- Next-level Zoning: Navigating Sophisticated Projects

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We encourage you to register for the full program to get the most out of this experience. The full-program fee includes approximately **11 hours of education tailored to your role**, all meals and refreshments, ample time for networking, evening entertainment and a vendor showcase! Register early to take advantage of early-bird savings. Save \$60 off full-program rates by registering your deputy, a fellow trustee, or member of your township planning and zoning team. Discount applies to second registrant attending the same retreat when registered at the same time. Can't stay for both days? Single-day options are also available.

Evening activity

After a full day of intensive education, we know you'll be ready for some fresh air! Put your notes away, leave the meeting room behind and join us as we hop aboard the Bavarian Belle Riverboat. Enjoy the natural beauty of Frankenmuth along the scenic Cass River on an authentic stern-driven paddlewheel riverboat. These evening festivities are designed to allow you to catch up with old friends, and connect with new ones.

Lodging

Make your reservations with the Bavarian Inn Lodge directly. Online reservation links, hotel details and group discount codes are available at bit.ly/mtaretreats and in your confirmation email, OR call (989) 652-7200 and reference the MTA retreat you are attending. Discounted lodging is limited—reserve your hotel room today.

Special thanks to our 2025 retreat sponsors



Cancellation & substitution policy

Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office four weeks prior to the event will receive a full refund; two weeks prior will receive a half-refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter without extenuating circumstances. You may substitute another individual from your township for the same retreat without incurring a charge. Please contact MTA to let us know of the switch. Changes to hotel reservations must be made directly with the Bavarian Inn Lodge. NOTE: Those who select "Invoice my township" as payment type but fail to cancel by the deadline will still be required to pay balance due, even if unable to attend.

REGISTRATION FORM

Township & County

Name & Title ☐ Full program ☐ Day 1 only ☐ Day 2 only

Email Address

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- ☐ Check enclosed (payable to MTA) ☐ Invoice my township (members only)
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Card # CSV 3-digit code Expiration date

Print Card Holder's Name

Signature

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Single-day rates: Include that day's sessions, breakfast and lunch. Dinner and riverboat cruise can be added for an additional fee.

Check the day you wish to attend: ☐ Day 1 OR ☐ Day 2

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☐ Regular rate \$280/person within three weeks of event

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

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

On the Record

Michigan's Freedom of Information Act

In 1973, Senate Counsel Fred Thompson asked a White House aide during the congressional hearings on the Watergate break-in about the possibility of White House tape-recordings—and the aide, under oath, admitted that a system was in place for taping conversations and phone calls.

After a dramatic battle of legal wills, a number of tapes were released by the White House, but one had an 18-1/2 minute “gap.” It didn’t matter whether that gap was intentional or accidental—the damage to the public image of the Oval Office was irreparable. The “gap” became one of the most public representations of the Nixon administration’s covert activities and cover-up.

Following Richard Nixon’s resignation in 1974, individual states and the federal government adopted “sunshine” laws requiring government officials to conduct meetings in public—hence the Open Meetings Act—and to allow public access to public records. In Michigan, the latter took the form of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Public Act 442 of 1976, MCL 15.231, *et seq.*, which took effect on April 13, 1977.

Nearly 50 years later, transparency and public access to public records are as important to public policy as ever. Although the FOIA was a new statutory requirement when first enacted, it is now one of the basic areas of statutory compliance that every township must be prepared to provide. Even the smallest township should organize its records in a manner designed to support FOIA compliance. The good news is that by doing so, a township will also be in a better position to manage its records more efficiently.

What does the FOIA require?

In a nutshell, the FOIA requires that the public be able to request to receive copies of or to inspect public records. A township must:

- Designate a FOIA coordinator and train township officials and employees to properly fulfill FOIA requests.
- Adopt written procedures and guidelines for handling FOIA requests, and a written public summary of those procedures and guidelines to assist the public in making FOIA requests. ***A township cannot charge FOIA fees if it does not have procedures and guidelines or a public summary.***
- Respond to a FOIA request within specified time periods.
- Provide the requestor with a detailed cost itemization of any fees related to a specific FOIA request. The requesting person has a right to appeal an excess fee to the township board, and to appeal the board’s decision to circuit court.
- Notify a requesting person when it is denying all or part of a FOIA request, and the requesting person has a right to appeal any denial to the township board or in circuit court, or both.

Of course, there’s a lot more to it than that. While this article cannot cover all aspects of the FOIA, it highlights some of the areas that seem to raise the most questions.



What can a person request under the FOIA?

Under the FOIA, a person has a right to request to: 1) inspect, 2) receive a copy of, or 3) subscribe to regular issuances of identifiable public records. The request must be in writing and must sufficiently describe the public records or information that is included in identifiable public records. The FOIA does not specify a format for making a request, but it does state that the request must be in writing and must describe “a public record sufficiently to enable the public body to find the public record.” (MCL 15.233(1))

What is a public record?

There are several factors that determine whether something is a “public record” for FOIA purposes.

A. The record must be “a writing.”

The FOIA defines a “public record” as a “writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created. Public record does not include computer software.” (MCL 15.232)

The FOIA defines a “writing” as “handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, photocopying, and every other means of recording, and includes letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combinations thereof, and papers, maps, magnetic or paper

tapes, photographic films or prints, microfilm, microfiche, magnetic or punched cards, discs, drums, or other means of recording or retaining meaningful content.” (MCL 15.232)

The FOIA definition of “writing” anticipated future forms of writing, such as email and other digital or electronic “means of recording or retaining meaningful content.” It includes video recording (*Rataj v. City of Romulus*, 306 Mich. App. 735, 2014) and digital recording (including voice messages, for example).

Note that, although computer software is **not** a public record, the FOIA definition of “software” refers only to the instructions that enable a computer to function or process information. Computer-**generated** “writings,” such as a text file, PDF or spreadsheet, **are** records and may be public records subject to FOIA disclosure.

B. The record must be involved in the performance of an official function of the public body.

Under the FOIA, a record is a “**public** record” based on its **content and use**, depending primarily on its involvement in the performance of an official function by a public body.

According to the FOIA, “‘Public record’ means a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body *in the performance of an official function*, from the time it is created.” (MCL 15.232) [*Emphasis added.*]



The FOIA and other Michigan records statutes exist to protect both public records and the public's right to know, and it is critical for township officials to know their options and their obligations regarding public records access.

Another definition of a public record is provided by MCL 399.911(2), which imposes the statutory requirement for the state record retention schedules: “A record that is *required to be kept by a public officer in the discharge of duties imposed by law, that is required to be filed in a public office, or that is a memorial of a transaction of a public officer made in the discharge of a duty* is the property of this state and shall not be disposed of, mutilated, or destroyed except as provided by law.” [Emphasis added.]

So, for a record to be a public record, it must have been prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the township (or a township official, employee or contractor) in the performance of an official function. If that is the case, then it is a public record from the time it is created.

C. “Private” records are NOT always “private.”

This also means that a private record can *become* a public record if it is used by a public body in the performance of an official function—at any time since it was created. A record need not have been created by a public body to be a public record.

D. But a record in public possession is not always “public.”

The fact that a record is in a township's possession does not automatically make that record a public record. There is no general rule that says all records in a township's possession are public.

Examples of records that have been found **not** to be a public record include:

- Handwritten notes prepared by a township board member, not otherwise used by the township board's remaining members or the township. “Individual notes

taken by a decision-maker on a governmental issue are only a public record when the notes are taken in furtherance of an official function.” (*Hopkins v. Duncan Twp.*, 294 Mich. App. 401, 2011)

- An electronic calendar of a public official, including both personal and business appointments, maintained on a public agency's computer system. (*Bloomberg, LP v. United States Securities & Exch. Comm.*, 357 F.Supp.2d 156 (D.D.C., 2004)—cited favorably in *Howell Ed. Ass'n, MEA/NEA v. Howell Bd. of Ed.*, 287 Mich. App. 228, 2010)
- Email sent by a public school teacher to a family member or friend that involves an entirely private matter such as carpooling, childcare, lunch or dinner plans, or other personal matters, unrelated to the public body's official function. (*Howell Ed. Ass'n, MEA/NEA v. Howell Bd. of Ed.*)

The determination of whether a document is a public record may sometimes be complicated, and numerous court and attorney general opinions have addressed the issue. If a township needs a determination of whether a record is a “public” record, it should consult with its local legal counsel for specific guidance.

How should a township respond to a FOIA request?

All township personnel should be trained to recognize a FOIA request (in any format) and forward it to the FOIA coordinator. Time is of the essence, and there are legal consequences to the township if the FOIA deadlines are not met. The FOIA **requires** any township personnel who receive a request for a public record to **promptly** forward that request to the FOIA coordinator. (MCL 15.233(1))

Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the person making the FOIA request, a township must respond to a written request for a public record within five business days after the request is received by doing one of the following: 1) granting the request, 2) issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request, 3) granting the request in part and issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request in part, or 4) issuing a notice in writing extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the township will respond to the request. Only one extension can be issued for a particular request. The 10-business day extension begins on the first business day after the fifth business day of the initial response period. The township's notice of extension must specify the reasons for the extension and the date by which the township will grant the request, deny the request, or grant in part and deny in part. (MCL 15.235(7))

For FOIA purposes, “business days” are weekdays—Monday through Friday—but not Saturday, Sunday or holidays.

A person making a FOIA request may agree in writing to a deadline other than those required by the FOIA. (MCL 15.235(2)) If there is any reason to believe that the request

may take more than the original five-business-day period, township personnel may ask the person making the request if he or she would like to agree to waive the FOIA deadlines and state a later delivery date on the FOIA Request Form. This is completely optional, and no one can be required to agree to a delivery date later than 15 business days after the request is received as a condition of receiving the request.

A township's response to a FOIA request must also contain a **"best efforts estimate"** by the township regarding the time frame it will take the township to comply with the law in providing the public records to the requestor. The time frame estimate is nonbinding upon the public body, but the public body must provide the estimate in **"good faith"** and strive to be reasonably accurate and to provide the public records in a manner based on the public's right to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the nature of the request in the particular instance. (MCL 15.234(8))

In calculating its "best efforts estimate" for fulfilling a request for public records, a public body may take into consideration events or factors affecting its ability to produce requested records. But note that, according to the FOIA, if a township does not respond in the time frame required by the FOIA, it is not relieved from its requirements to provide proper fee calculations and time frame estimates in any tardy responses. Providing an estimated time frame does not relieve a township from any of the other requirements of the act. (MCL 15.234(8))

What is a denial?

In practice, providing anything less than what was requested is a "denial." This includes denying the entire request or denying some records because they are exempt, redacting exempt information, or denying because the records requested do not exist or the request did not sufficiently identify records for the township to determine which records were requested.

Failure to respond to a FOIA request within the first five business days has the same legal status as a denial if either of the following applies:

- (a) The failure was willful and intentional, OR
- (b) The written request included language that conveyed a request for information within the first 250 words of the body of a letter, facsimile, electronic mail or electronic mail attachment, or specifically included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information," "information," "FOIA," "copy," or a recognizable misspelling of such, or appropriate legal code reference to this act, on the front of an envelope or in the subject line of an electronic mail, letter or facsimile cover page. (MCL 15.235)

A FOIA denial is significant because the requesting person may appeal the denial to the township board or go directly to circuit court, so it may subject the township to legal liability if the request was improperly denied. Note that not all denials are improper, but the township may still have to defend its denial in court.

Got FOIA questions? Let MTA resources help you find answers!

MTA has information and resources to help officials navigate the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and requests to inspect and receive public records.

- Visit our "Freedom of Information Act Compliance" webpage for sample guidelines and forms, including cost itemization and request forms that you can customize for your own township's use, plus further information on FOIA requirements, a sample public inspection of records policy and more. Access this page, and "FOIA Coordinator" and "Records Management & Retention Schedules" pages, in the "Answer Center" on michigantownships.org under the "Member" tab (login is required).
- Get on-demand education when it works best for you in the MTA Online Learning Center, which includes "Role of the FOIA Coordinator" and "FOIA ... What's All the Fuss?" from our *Now You Know* one-hour webinar series. Cost is just \$25!
- Our educational session line-up at the *Clerk's Professional Development Retreat*, coming Sept. 29-30 to Frankenmuth, includes the session, "FOIA Me This: A Guide to Public Records Access" (see pages 14-15 for details).
- Turn to page 23 for information on MTA's *Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act* publication, updated in 2025, which puts all things FOIA right at your fingertips.



If a township denies a FOIA request in whole or in part, the requesting person must be given a written notice containing:

- An explanation of the basis under the FOIA or other statute for the determination that the public record, or portion of that public record, is exempt from disclosure, if that is the reason for denying all or a portion of the request
- A certificate that the public record does not exist under the name given by the requester or by another name reasonably known to the township, if that is the reason for denying the request or a portion of the request
- A description of a public record or information on a public record that is separated or deleted pursuant to MCL 15.244, if a separation or deletion is made
- A full explanation of the requesting person's right to do either of the following:
 - o submit to the township board a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason(s) for reversal of the disclosure denial, or
 - o seek judicial review of the denial under MCL 15.240
- Notice of the right to receive attorney fees and damages as provided in MCL 15.240 if, after judicial review, the circuit court determines that the township board has not complied with this section and orders disclosure of all or a portion of a public record (MCL 15.235(5))

The township FOIA coordinator must sign the written notice of denial.

When can a document or information be denied?

There are several situations in which a FOIA request may be denied:

- **The requested document never existed.** A township is not required to create a new public record or a compilation, summary or report of information in response to a FOIA request.
- **The requested document has been properly destroyed.** Township public records must be retained by a public body, but some records may be destroyed in compliance with an approved record retention schedule. If a public record did exist, but has been destroyed in accordance with the record retention schedule, then it is not subject to a subsequent FOIA request. A township should not, however, destroy a public record that is subject to a current FOIA request, even in compliance with a record retention schedule, until after the FOIA request is fulfilled.
- **The requested document did exist, but does not exist at the time the FOIA request was received.** This is a tricky one. A record should not be destroyed following receipt of a FOIA request for that record. But records are occasionally lost through fire, flood, or other disasters or mishaps over time. It is very important for a township to make reasonable efforts to determine if a requested record exists in the possession or custody of the township. That includes records that the township still owns, even though they are currently in the possession of another unit or party (like the county, historical society, library, or former township official or employee).

It is also important to note that under the Michigan Penal Code, all official books, papers or records created by or received in any office or agency of the state of Michigan or its political subdivisions are declared to be public property, belonging to the people of the state of Michigan, and they can only be destroyed in compliance with an approved state record retention schedule.

- **The requested document or information is exempt from disclosure.** The FOIA separates public records into records that are *subject to* disclosure and records that are *exempt from* disclosure. Records that are “subject to” disclosure *must* be made available upon written request for inspection or copies.

Requests to inspect or receive copies of records that are “exempt from” disclosure are denied in whole. Records that are not exempt but contain information that is exempt from disclosure are “redacted” (edited) to black out or remove information that is exempt from disclosure.

Exemptions to public disclosure

MCL 15.243 lists the categories of public records exempt from disclosure (the statute is often amended, so always refers to the act itself for complete language). The township bears the burden of proving that an exemption applies to a specific record. The exemptions provided by the FOIA must be considered on a case-by-case basis for each specific requested record. The exemptions are not broad categories—the township must determine that all criteria of an exemption apply to the specific record or information that has been requested.

For example, the FOIA states that: “A public body may exempt from disclosure as a public record under this act any of the following: (a) Information of a personal nature if public disclosure of the information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual’s privacy.”

This exemption does not simply apply to any information regarding an individual person. It is interpreted narrowly by Michigan courts to require a two-part determination. First, the township must determine that the information is “of a personal nature,” meaning intimate or embarrassing details of an individual’s private life, evaluated by the customs, mores or ordinary views of the community. If the information is not of a personal nature, then it must be disclosed. If it is of a personal nature, then the township must determine whether disclosure is “a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual’s privacy” because the information is unrelated to the workings of the government.

A number of other laws exempt different records or information from public disclosure, including—but not limited to—the Open Meetings Act, Social Security Number Privacy Act, Election Law, Address Confidentiality Program Act and General Property Tax Act.

Because an improper exemption of a record or information from disclosure is a FOIA denial, a township may wish to consult its local legal counsel for guidance regarding a specific request for a record that the township believes is subject to a FOIA exemption.

What fees can a township charge for a FOIA request?

MCL 15.234 provides the guidelines for setting FOIA fees and any other fees a township may impose for almost anything to do with records. Unless another statute specifically authorizes fees or the amount of a fee that a township may charge for record search, copying or inspection, a township may charge only those fees that comply with the FOIA itself.

Historically, there has been confusion regarding records maintained by a township for a statutory function, such as the property tax records or bills that treasurers receive requests for from mortgage companies, banks and others, compared to

those that might be maintained by county officials for what seems to be a similar function. But note that all township records are subject to the FOIA and FOIA fees, and applying other fees that exceed the FOIA fees is unlawful.

Where the FOIA does not specify the amount that may be charged, a township's FOIA fees can only recover "actual" and "incremental" costs. That means: 1) they must be the **actual** costs incurred for that specific FOIA request, and 2) they must be limited to **only** the costs incurred in fulfilling that specific FOIA request, over and above the township's regular costs of doing business.

The cost of each request must be individually calculated.

A township cannot charge fees for FOIA requests unless it has: 1) **established procedures and guidelines** to implement the FOIA, 2) **created a written summary** of the specific procedures and guidelines the township uses to handle FOIA requests, and 3) **adopted a standard form** for detailed itemization of any fee amount in any response to a FOIA request. (MCL 15.234(4))

If the township has an official internet presence, it must post and maintain the procedures and guidelines and written summary on its website. These documents must also be available free upon in-person or written request, though the website link may be provided in lieu of paper copies. (MCL 15.234(4)) A sample procedures and guidelines, summary and itemization form are available on michigantownships.org (via the "Index of Topics" in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab; MTA-member login is required) or by calling MTA Member Information Services at (517) 321-6467 (press 1).

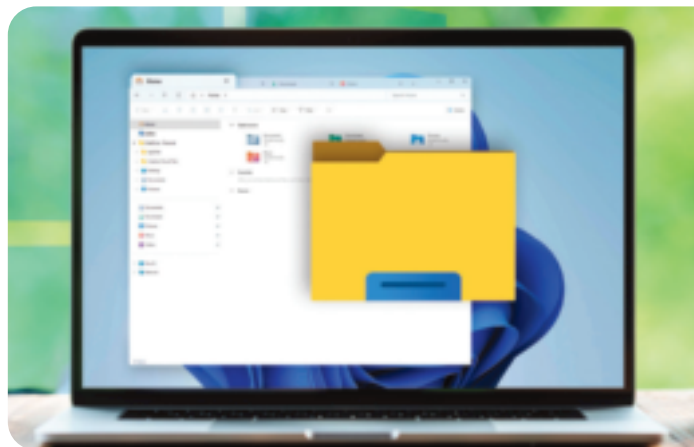
Where do you get the cost of making a paper copy?

According to MCL 15.234(1)(d), the fee for making a copy cannot exceed 10 cents **per sheet** of paper for copies made on 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper (letter size) or 8-1/2 by 14-inch paper (legal size). The cost per sheet is the same if the sheet is printed single- or double-sided. The township must use the most economical method available for making copies of public records, including using double-sided printing, if that saves costs and is available.

If the township does not have access to a copier/printer, and it must pay to make copies through an outside copy service, library, post office, etc., the township is still limited to **charging** 10 cents **per sheet** for all letter- or legal-size copies, regardless of where the copies are made.

For larger paper sizes, the township may charge the **actual, incremental cost** of what it paid to have the copies made. But this must be the way the township typically makes those copies—not just for FOIA requests or a specific request.

If the type of record to be copied requires a more specialized type of paper copy, like a blueprint or oversized site plan, then the township can charge the **actual, incremental cost** of what it must pay to have the copy made (unless the copies are letter or legal size copies, in which case, the 10-cents-per-sheet limit applies).



If some or all of the information in a FOIA request is available on the township's website, the township must notify the requestor in its written response of its online availability and the web address where the information is available. If the requestor still asks that the records be provided in a paper or non-paper format, the township must do so.

The cost of paper copies must be itemized for the requestor on the detailed cost itemization, showing both the cost per sheet and the number of sheets provided.

What about digital copies?

A person making a FOIA request may ask that the records be provided on non-paper physical media, emailed or otherwise electronically provided in lieu of paper copies if the township has the technological capability to do so. The township may charge the **actual and most reasonably economical cost** of computer discs, audio tapes or videotapes, computer tapes, drives or cards, or other digital or similar media. If it reasonably costs \$4.99 to buy a thumb drive of sufficient size to deliver the requested files, then that's what the township can charge for the copies of the requested files.

If the requestor has asked for digital files to be emailed to him or her, without use of physical media such as a drive or disc, there would be **no copying or mailing charge** for the copies of the requested files.

If some or all of the requested information is available on the township's website, the township must notify the requestor in its written response of its online availability and the web address where the information is available. (MCL 15.234(5)) If the requestor still asks that the records be provided in a paper or non-paper format, the township must do so and may use a fringe benefit multiplier greater than the 50% limitation in MCL 15.234(2), not to exceed the actual costs of providing the information in the specified format. Any public records available online at the time the request is made **are exempt from any labor charges involving redacting exempt information**. (MCL 15.234(5))

cover story

On the detailed cost itemization, the township must separate the requested public records that are available on its website from those not available on the website, and shall inform the requestor of any additional charges to receive copies of the public records available on its website in a paper format or non-paper physical digital media. (MCL 15.234(5))

How about labor costs?

When calculating labor costs, the fee components must be itemized in a manner that clearly states both the hourly wage and the number of hours charged, including overtime (which can only be charged if agreed to in writing by the requestor and clearly noted in the cost itemization) and fringe benefits (a township may add up to 50% to the labor charge to cover or partially cover fringe benefits; this must also be noted in the cost itemization).

There are three types of labor costs that may be charged for, including labor costs for **printing** or **making copies** (*paper or digital*) and **mailing** (*including transferring digital records via non-paper physical media, email, online or other electronic means, as stipulated by the requestor*) for any FOIA request. These labor costs may be estimated and charged in time increments of the township board's choosing, but all partial time increments must be rounded down. (MCL 15.234(1)(e)) Because the act specifies time increments of 15 minutes or more for the other types of labor, a township may want to be consistent and use 15-minute or more increments for copying labor as well.

The other two types of labor costs, for **finding** or **redacting** records, may be charged ONLY if the township would incur specific, unreasonably high costs as a result of that request, and the township specifically identifies those unreasonably high costs. (MCL 15.234(3))

A township cannot charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of the necessary duplication or publication in the particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or actually performs the labor.

How should a township handle requests to inspect records?

A township is not required to have office hours, but a number of laws, such as the General Property Tax Act and Michigan Election Law, specifically require that public records be available for public inspection.

Township officials are not required to hold general office hours (and there are only minimal requirements for specific statutory office hours during the year). Regardless of where or when township officials work, however, the township's public records must be maintained so that the public may inspect them. A township should establish policies to accommodate requests to inspect.

MCL 750.492 requires inspections to be allowed "during the usual business hours." If a township or official does not

hold regular hours, a reasonable effort must be made to arrange a time when the requestor may inspect the records, and the person may spend up to four hours per weekday that is not a holiday, Saturday or Sunday inspecting records. If the records are maintained in a township office located in a private residence, the official may allow the requestor to review the records in the residence or agree to meet at an appropriate alternate facility, such as the township hall or a local library.

MCL 750.492 also specifically prohibits the use of pen and ink for taking notes. Township personnel assisting with inspection of public records must inform any person inspecting records that only pencils, and no pens or ink, may be used to take notes.

A person may be required to inspect records at a specified counter or table, and in view of township personnel. A person cannot remove books, records or files from the place the township provides for inspection.

A township may provide copies of original records because it needs to redact exempt information, to protect old or delicate original records, or because the original record is a digital file or database not available for public inspection. The township may charge a copying fee for this, but MTA recommends charging only to the extent that it would be an undue burden on the township to not charge.

Protecting public records—and the public's right to know

All townships must strive to be prepared to properly handle FOIA requests and other requests for access to records at all times. This article covers just a few key aspects of the FOIA, but does not delve into every area of this important—and potentially complex—local government function.

Whether from residents, community members, the media, school or university classes, or mass requests from interest groups, township officials routinely handle public requests for records with the same "How can I help you" approach they take on a daily basis to serving their residents and the community in other township programs and services. Providing access to records is as much a matter of customer service as it is a legal mandate. The FOIA and other Michigan records statutes exist to protect both public records and the public's right to know, and it is critical for township officials to know their options and their obligations regarding public records access.



Catherine Mullhaupt,
MTA Staff Attorney

Watch Township Focus later this year for a cover story on records management, from the State of Michigan Records Management Services.

Decoding FOIA

All townships have public records, and all townships must comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which allows public access to public records. Are your township's board members up to speed on all things FOIA?

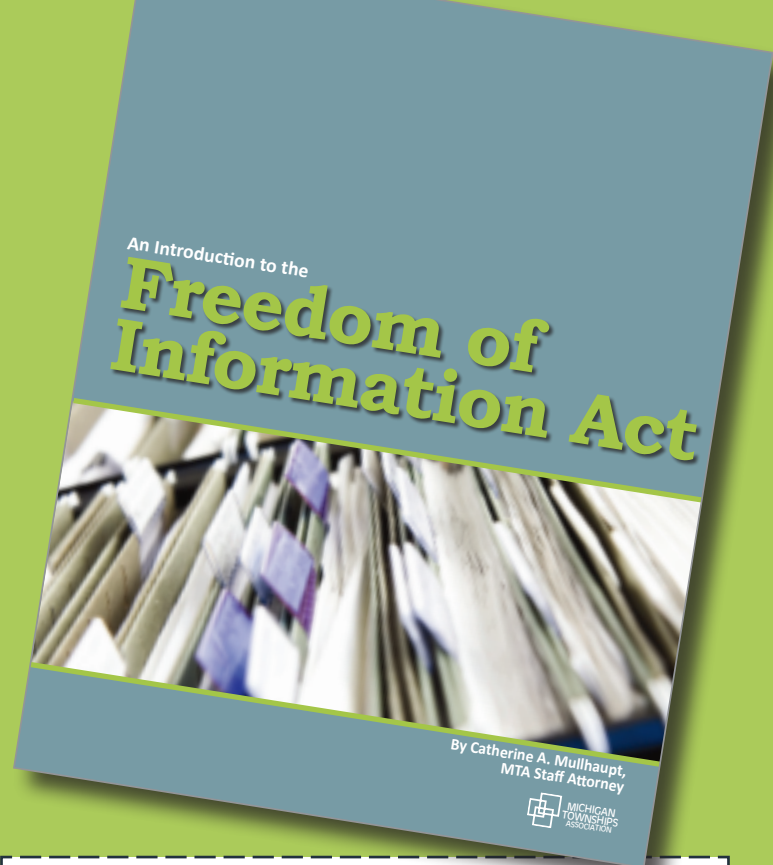
MTA's *An Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act* book is the only publication of its kind—an easy-to-understand, user-friendly handbook created by MTA to help township officials learn what they need to know about public records, as well as how to respond to FOIA requests, fees and payment procedures, appeals and more.

Updated and expanded in 2025, this is a must-have for all members of the township board, as well as employees responsible for fulfilling FOIA requests. This resource also includes:

- Common township records requests
- Exemptions from public disclosure
- Sample FOIA procedures and guidelines, cost itemization and request forms, and inspection policy (*customizable for your township's use!*)

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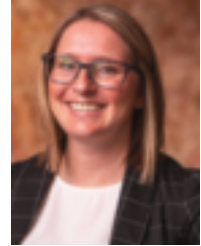
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☐ MasterCard or Visa # _____

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Authorizing signature

MTA members can order on MTA's online store at michigantownships.org (member login is required), by faxing completed form to (517) 321-8908, mailing to MTA, PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078, or contacting tonia@michigantownships.org or (517) 321-6467, ext. 231.



Issuing bonds: What township officials need to know

As elected officials, you are responsible for making financial decisions that shape your township's future. Issuing bonds is one option to fund major infrastructure improvements, expand public services or invest in long-term assets. While effective, bonding is a serious financial commitment that requires careful consideration.

Pros of issuing bonds

Immediate funding for critical projects. Bonds provide up-front capital for large-scale projects, such as road repairs, water upgrades or community buildings. This allows improvements to happen sooner, without waiting years to accumulate funds through annual budgeting.

Fair cost sharing across generations. Repayment occurs over many years, distributing costs among both current and future residents. This approach supports the principle that those benefiting from the project should help fund it.

Preserves the operating budget. Bonding enables you to fund capital improvements without draining reserves or cutting services—protecting the general fund and maintaining day-to-day operations.

Potential for low borrowing costs. A strong credit rating can help your township secure low-interest rates. Because municipal bonds are often tax exempt, overall borrowing costs may be lower than other financing methods.

Cons to consider

Long-term debt obligation. Bonds lock the township into repayment obligations for years, often decades, limiting future financial flexibility. This makes long-term fiscal responsibility essential.

Interest and up-front costs. Borrowing isn't free. In addition to interest payments, bond issuance includes legal, underwriting and administrative fees, which need to be accounted for in your budget.

Need for public support. General obligation (GO) bonds often require voter approval. Gaining public buy-in requires clear, honest communication about both benefits and costs.

Impact on credit and future borrowing. Excessive debt can hurt your township's credit rating, raising the cost of future borrowing. A well-planned debt strategy is essential to safeguard financial health.

Key considerations before issuing bonds

Define the purpose. Be clear about what the funds will support, whether it's rebuilding roads, upgrading water systems or replacing emergency equipment. Bonding should be reserved for long-term capital investments, not operational expenses.

Understand bond types. Townships typically issue either:

1) GO bonds, which are backed by taxing authority and usually require voter approval, or 2) revenue bonds, which are repaid from project-specific revenues like utility fees. Choosing the right type depends on the project, repayment source and legal requirements.

Evaluate financial capacity. Consider how much debt your township can responsibly handle. Review existing obligations, revenue streams and legal debt limits. Consulting financial advisors or bond counsel can help determine your bonding capacity.

Calculate total long-term costs. Beyond the borrowed amount, consider interest and issuance fees. Repayment over 10 to 30 years can significantly increase the total cost. Compare bonding with other financing options to make an informed decision.

Plan for community engagement. If voter approval is required, transparency is vital. Share how the funds will be used, potential tax impacts and community benefits. Use FAQs, public meetings and outreach materials to educate and build support.

Timing and market conditions. Economic factors like interest rates and inflation impact borrowing and construction costs. Work with financial experts to assess whether now is the right time to issue bonds or if waiting could save money.

Final thoughts

Bonding can be a powerful tool to fund critical improvements and invest in your township's future. But it also requires diligent financial planning and community trust.

As elected leaders, your role is to weigh current needs against long-term obligations. With careful analysis, strategic communication and responsible planning, bonding can help your township grow stronger, without sacrificing future stability.

Information provided in *Financial Forum* should not be considered legal advice, and readers are encouraged to contact their township auditor and/or attorney for advice specific to their situation.

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MSC: Foreclosing governmental unit must return surplus proceeds

Jackson v. Southfield Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative ____ Mich ____ (July 16, 2025, Docket No. 166320)—In *Rafaeli, LLC v. Oakland County*, 505 Mich. 429 (July 17, 2020), the Michigan Supreme Court held that when a property has been offered for sale at a public auction, just compensation requires the foreclosing governmental unit (FGU) to return any proceeds from the tax-foreclosure sale in excess of the delinquent taxes, interest, penalties and fees reasonably related to the foreclosure and sale of the property.

In a unanimous opinion, the Michigan Supreme Court has now held that the same principles apply when, as in *Jackson*, there is no sale by public auction because a governmental unit exercises its right of first refusal under former MCL 211.78m(1). The governmental unit still commits a taking if the value of the property retained exceeds what the government was owed.

Because the properties in *Jackson* were purchased for the minimum bid in lieu of being made available to purchase through public auctions, to the extent the value of plaintiffs' respective properties exceeded the amount plaintiffs owed in delinquent taxes and attendant fees, the court held it was a taking without just compensation in violation of Michigan's Takings Clause.

The court noted that after *Rafaeli* was decided, the Legislature amended portions of the General Property Tax Act by passing Public Acts 255 and 256 of 2020:

"MCL 211.78m(1) now requires the governmental unit exercising its right of first refusal to acquire foreclosed property to pay the *greater* of the minimum bid or the fair market value of the property. ... Retroactive application of the amended statute would impose a new financial obligation on a real-estate transaction that took place years earlier. Accordingly, amended MCL 211.78m applies only prospectively to claims accruing after 2020 PA 255 became effective, i.e., claims accruing on or after January 1, 2021.

"Under MCL 211.78t(12)(b), 'remaining proceeds' is defined as 'the amount equal to the difference between the amount paid to the foreclosing governmental unit for a property due to the sale or transfer of the property under section 78m and the sum of (1) the minimum bid, (2) other fees and expenses incurred by the FGU not included in the minimum bid, and (3) a sale commission. ...

" 'Remaining proceed' does not include the additional value associated with the real property that was acquired or retained by a governmental unit when the retained value was not reduced to a monetary amount through a sale."

The court concluded, "When a governmental unit has exercised its right of first refusal under former MCL 211.78m(1) and purchased the property from the FGU for the minimum bid, the process outlined in MCL 211.78t for recovering remaining proceeds does not govern a claimant's dispute regarding the additional value associated with the real property that was acquired or retained by the governmental unit. Instead, such claimants should proceed through standard processes of inverse condemnation, separate from the statutory process of MCL 211.78t, to recover that additional value."





Specific rules for township board meetings

Last month's *Township Focus* cover story delved into the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Requirements for township board meetings, however, go beyond the OMA. Both general township laws (MCL 41.1a-41.110c) and the Charter Township Act (MCL 42.1, *et seq.*) impose requirements in meeting schedules, notices and minutes.

Scheduling regular meetings

A general law township board must adopt a schedule of regular meetings by resolution and must meet no less than one regular meeting every three months. If a time set for a regular meeting of the township board is a holiday, as designated by the township board, the regular meeting must be held at the same time and place on the next secular day that is not a holiday. (MCL 41.72a)

A charter township board must adopt a schedule of regular meetings by resolution, and must meet no less than one regular meeting each month. If a time set for a regular meeting of the township board is a holiday, then the regular meeting must be held at the same time and place on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or holiday. (MCL 42.7)

Both general law and charter township boards may, at a board meeting, revise its regular meeting schedule at any time. If the schedule is changed, notice of the change must be posted within three days after the meeting at which the change was made and at least 18 hours before the newly scheduled meeting time. (MCL 15.265)

Calling special meetings

A general law township has three options for calling a special meeting:

- 1) During a meeting, the township board can schedule a special meeting in the future.
- 2) The supervisor can call a special meeting when he or she considers it necessary.
- 3) A majority of the board (three of a five-member board, or four of a seven-member board) can submit a written request to the township clerk stating the specific reason for the special meeting.

A general law township supervisor could simply post the special meeting notice, but MTA recommends that a request from the supervisor also be made in writing and delivered to the clerk. (MCL 41.72a) At the very least, this is a courtesy to the clerk, who must post the notice, and provides a clear record of the request.

If the supervisor calls a special meeting, a general law township clerk must give notice of the time, place and purpose of the meeting to each board member, either in

person or by leaving a written notice at the member's address. (MCL 41.72a) MTA recommends that board members be notified whenever a special meeting is posted. There is no time requirement for notifying general law township board members of a special meeting, but MTA recommends establishing a consistent policy, such as using the 24-hour notice period required for charter townships.

In a charter township, a special meeting may be called: 1) by the board, during a meeting, 2) upon the written request of the supervisor, or 3) upon the written request of two township board members.

When a meeting is called by the supervisor or two board members, the clerk or someone designated by the clerk must notify each board member of the time, place and purpose of the meeting at least 24 hours prior to the meeting by written notice served personally or left at the member's usual place of residence. (MCL 42.7)

Public notice of special meetings

The OMA requires that the public must be notified of any special meeting of a township board by notice posted at least 18 hours prior to the meeting time. The notice must state the date, time and place of the meeting. If the township has a website and regularly posts meeting agendas or minutes to the website, then any special meeting notice must also be posted on the website. (MCL 15.265)

In addition, both general township law and the Charter Township Act (MCLs 41.72a and 42.7) require that notice of a special meeting must state the purpose(s) of the meeting. If any board members are missing at a special township board meeting, the board can only do the business that was stated in the meeting notice, along with at least one public comment period.

In practice, if any member of a township board is not present at a special meeting, then the meeting notice becomes the agenda of the meeting. Even routine, "housekeeping" agenda items such as approving checks or approving minutes may not be addressed unless they were listed in the special meeting notice. (MCLs 41.72a and 42.7) (Note that this restriction applies only to township board meetings.) As a result, the notice of a township board special meeting should not include any statement to the effect that its agenda "will include any business that may lawfully come before the board."

If, however, all the township board members are present at a special meeting, then any business that might lawfully come before a regular meeting of the board may be transacted at the special meeting.

Taking meeting minutes

In a general law township, the township clerk has the statutory duty to transcribe the minutes of the proceedings of each township board meeting, including each order, direction or rule made by the board. (MCL 41.66) The law does not require a specific person or persons to sign general law township board meeting minutes; however, it is a good practice to have the supervisor and clerk sign the minutes

after they are approved at the subsequent meeting, as is required in a charter township.

In a charter township, the board must keep a "journal of its proceedings in the English language." The minutes must be signed by the supervisor and the clerk. (MCL 42.7)

Ultimately, the answer to "Who does the minutes?" is that *someone* must do them, because the public body is responsible in the law for having them done. For a township board, the clerk, other board member, deputy clerk or a "recording secretary" may take the notes or recordings for minutes and may draft the minutes. They are the board's minutes, and the board determines the format and style.

Publishing minutes

The OMA does not require minutes to be published in a newspaper, but township laws do contain publication requirements for township board minutes:

General law township meeting minutes

In a general law township with a taxable value of \$114 million or more in 2025, the minutes of a board meeting must be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the township, not more than 21 days after the board meeting. That taxable value amount is annually indexed to inflation, so the applicable level is announced by the state Department of Treasury every year. (MCL 41.72a)

If a synopsis (short summary that shows "the substance of each separate proceeding of the board") is used, the clerk is responsible for preparing it, subject to approval by the supervisor. (MCL 41.72a)

Charter township meeting minutes

All charter townships must "publish" the board minutes or synopsis at least once a month. (MCL 42.8)

For a charter township, "publishing" has a different meaning. It is up to each individual charter township board to determine whether it will publish minutes or other actions required to be published, such as ordinances by: 1) printing the township board minutes or a synopsis in a newspaper or 2) posting the minutes or synopsis in the clerk's office and five public places, or the township website, plus printing a notice in the newspaper that identifies where the minutes are posted within seven days of posting. (MCL 42.8)

Newspaper of general circulation

MCL 691.1051 defines a "newspaper of general circulation" as a newspaper that: 1) is published in English, 2) is for the purpose of news or information or legal news, 3) has a bona fide list of paying subscribers or has been published not less than weekly in the community for at least two years, 4) has been published weekly for at least one year in the township, and 5) annually averages at least 25% news and editorial (non-advertising) content per issue.

Visit michigantownships.org/resource-toolkits (on our website in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab; login required) for meetings resources, including "Just the Facts! Taking Township Minutes," which includes sample minutes and a sample synopsis for publishing. You may also purchase our *Introduction to Township Board Meetings* publication via the online Store on MTA's website, by calling the MTA office or emailing tonia@michigantownships.org.

aroundthe**state**

townships in the spotlight



Woodhull Township

Woodhull Township (Shiawassee Co.) was organized in 1838 and named for brothers John and Josephus Woodhull, who had begun purchasing land in the area in 1837. The first township meeting was held the following year. At that time, Woodhull Township included what is presently **Sciota Township** (Shiawassee Co.), until 1842 when the two townships separated.



The township also includes the Village of Shaftsbury, founded in 1876 by John Shaft on part of his 2,380 acres property. In the 1800s, the village had several stores, a hotel, post office, blacksmith shop, a school and several churches.

Today, the township is now home to more than 3,600 residents. There is a picturesque park with two well-maintained baseball and softball fields, two pavilions, children's playground, and a paved one-mile trail perfect for walking and jogging. A portion of the State of Michigan Rose Lake Wildlife Reserve is in the township, where visitors can enjoy hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and more. The township also boasts a highly trained emergency services staff in partnership of the Laingsburg, Sciota, Woodhull Emergency Services Authority.

The township built a hall in 1895, but by the 1960s, its operations had outgrown the

building. The township purchased a two-room schoolhouse from the Woodhull Township School District in 1962 after the school moved to a larger building. The space is now used for township meetings, community meetings and gatherings, reunions, and, for more than 20 years, the monthly music jamboree gathering. An annex building, added later, houses the township offices.

In 2016, the township hall—the former Shaftsbury School—was designated as a state historical building, and is listed in the State Register of Historical Sites. A marker at the township displays information about the old Shaftsbury School and historical Woodhull Township.

Additional historic preservation efforts are underway in the community, where the former Shaftsbury Hotel—which has been owned by the same family for over 100 years and was in operation from 1880 to the 1950s—is being restored. The current owner, Joel Spitz, worked with the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership on the best use for the building, which is being renovated to add housing to the community and will be turned into four apartments. The project will continue to honor the community's history, seeking to preserve the building's brick design and aesthetic.



upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Emerging Issues in Emergency Services

Providing emergency and fire protection services for your community may be one of the more complex (and critical!) services your township provides. This insightful event is designed to help you stay on top of the hot issues facing your fire department and emergency services personnel. Township board members, fire officials and anyone serving on your emergency services team are welcome to attend for insights, updates and a better understanding of current challenges.

Held at the Bavarian Inn Lodge in **Frankenmuth on Sept. 10 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, this event includes continental breakfast and lunch, and brings the heat with updates and insights from the state's leading experts. You'll hear directly from the state fire marshal and the director of the Division of EMS and Systems of Care in Michigan's Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, EMS, and Systems of Care. Because when the pressure's on, preparation makes all the difference—and it all starts here. Discussion includes:

- An update from Bureau of Fire Services, led by State Fire Marshal Thomas Hughes, Jr.
- Insights from the Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, led by the Division Director of EMS and Systems of Care Emily Berquist
- Fire and life safety in Michigan's cannabis industry
- Fire station alerting systems—considerations and risk assessment
- What you need to know about the federal Assistance to Firefighters and Fire Prevention & Safety Grant programs
- And more!

Whether you're making decisions at the board level, serving on the front lines or just passionate about public safety, this event is sure to spark ideas, fuel better decision-making, provide valuable connections, and help your township stay safe and responsive.



Emerging Issues in EMS Registration Form — — — — —

Township _____ County _____

Name _____ Title _____

Email _____

Name _____ Title _____

Email _____

Registration Rate* Effective Aug. 28

☐ \$175/person

_____ (# registrants) x \$ _____ (Rate) = \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE = \$ _____

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

Please note that the deadline to cancel and receive a refund has passed. You may substitute another individual from your township without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change in advance when possible.

Payment Options

☐ Invoice my township (members only)

☐ Check enclosed (payable to MTA)

☐ Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Print Card Holder's Name _____ CSV (3-digit code) _____

Signature _____

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



Send completed registration form to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078, fax to (517) 321-8908 or email rebecca@michigantownships.org. You can also register online at bit.ly/twptraining. Need event registration assistance? Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 230.



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