



## Delta Charter Township named ‘Township of Excellence’ for incredible third time

Ask **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) leaders what makes their township special, and they can quickly share an extensive list of community characteristics of which they are proud, from parks and recreation opportunities and exceptional public safety to great schools and neighborhoods, thriving area shopping and restaurants, and growing economic development.

“There’s a lot of opportunity,” said Manager **Brian Reed**. “We have a very good industrial sector and commercial sector, and a lot of great residential areas. We bolster those with quality-of-life amenities—great parks and pathways, excellent public safety services. Those are the things that make Delta Township special.”

Every township board member, appointed official, staff and volunteer strives to not only meet but exceed the wants

and needs of its residents, businesses and visitors—and the township has been recognized, once again, for this commitment. The township has earned, for an incredible third time, MTA’s “Township of Excellence” designation. The intensive, comprehensive program evaluates township governance, administration and programs to ensure adherence to exceptional practices in boardmanship and in serving the community.

Leaders representing the township accepted the award on April 23 before hundreds of their peers at MTA's Annual Educational Conference. It is the second township in the state to receive the recognition for three successive township terms of office.

The township first achieved "Township of Excellence" status in 2015, and received the honor for a second time in 2020. Townships receive this designation after meeting a series of demanding, high-level criteria, as defined by the Association and its members (*learn more about the program at right*). Delta Charter Township's recognition is for its latest achievement in the 2020-2024 township board term. Board members include Supervisor **Kenneth Fletcher**, Clerk **Mary Clark**, Treasurer **Dennis Fedewa**, and Trustees **Elizabeth Bowen**, **Fonda Brewer**, **Andrea Cascarilla** and **Karen Mojica**.

"We exemplify, I think, what a 'Township of Excellence' stands for," Clark said. "As a community of over 30,000 people, we are one of the larger jurisdictions in the state; yet we have a lot of small community amenities. People know each other."

### Board leadership, dedicated staff

Board leadership and staff dedication are essential to the township's success, Reed said. "We have great leadership from the board, which has always provided a very holistic, strategic direction, focusing on quality of life, but also making sure we have a focus on our core services. We also have really dedicated staff here historically in Delta who take great pride and dedication in providing those services to the public."

Fletcher, too, credits each member of the township team in playing a role in ensuring exceptional administration, services and programs. "Earning this honor has been a great team effort and everybody takes pride in the fact that we've been able to receive this designation," he said. "Going through the process to apply for this recognition makes us be the best that we can possibly be and helps to ensure that we are focusing on local government best practices. That allows us to give that assurance to our residents that they are served by a professionally run community, and that we are doing the very best we can to serve them in the best possible way."

Another benefit of going through the program application process is its emphasis on ensuring officials receive continual education and training, and that they are apprised of both the statutory and changing requirements and trends for townships. "When I became clerk, I realized right away there were a lot of things that I did not know," said Clark, recalling an MTA planning and land use class she attended shortly after becoming clerk. "It was a wonderful introduction for me into the wide, wide, wide array of training that MTA offers, and I think a 'Township of Excellence' is going to take advantage of all of those opportunities."

Earning the distinguished recognition is just one way for the township to demonstrate to its residents that they are working hard each and every day to offer the best services possible. "We are incredibly proud of having achieved this designation for the third time, and it means a lot to us," Clark said. "It reaffirms what our goals are, and what we try to be in our community and in our state."

## Become a 'Township of Excellence'

MTA started the "Township of Excellence" program as a way to recognize townships that demonstrate superior processes and outcomes in governance, while also adhering to best practices in the statutory duties of financial stewardship, property assessment, tax collection and election administration. Townships of all sizes and locations, and regardless of the level of services that you offer, can apply for this recognition. Every service that the township offers must demonstrate excellence, such as transportation, utilities, cemeteries, emergency services, land management and economic development. However, it is important to note that your township is not required to offer all of these services in order to apply for the designation. Your township is evaluated based on the services that you *do* provide.

### 'The process will make you better'

The Township of Excellence program is rigorous and challenging—and we did that intentionally. Townships can expect to spend 18 months scrutinizing every aspect of their governance and operations and filling out the application while demonstrating excellence over an extended time period. And you can start out small—rather than applying for the full designation, your township can choose to apply for "certificates of achievement" in various services areas, such as governance, financial stewardship or election administration. The program is meant to encourage townships to achieve excellence while also bringing the board, as well as the community, together.

Simply going through the process can be beneficial for townships. "I definitely would encourage all townships to apply for 'Township of Excellence,'" said **Ken Fletcher**, supervisor of **Delta Charter Township** (Eaton Co.), which received the honor this year. "It's a great experience to sit down and go through the process and find out areas maybe where there's more that you can do. It helps you develop your A-game and be the best that you possibly can be. I think a lot of townships would find that they are already doing a lot of the key things that are part of 'Township of Excellence.'"

Added Delta Charter Township Clerk **Mary Clark**, "Looking at the program brings into focus what you are or are not doing, or what you might need to shore up. Just the process of going through the application will make you better."

This is also an achievement that we feel every township can attain, noted MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan. "We would love to stand on the stage at our Conference and present dozens of designations every year," he said. "I would like to personally encourage every township to take a look at the program and aspire to be recognized for excellence in your township. I assure you—the journey will be well worth it."

If a township submits an application for a full designation, but does not meet the criteria for all of them, it can receive the certificate of achievement for the section(s) it has completed. A township may work toward a full designation within a township term by applying for one or more sections at a time. Townships must reapply for each township term in which they wish to receive an award.

Visit <https://michigantownships.org> (under "About") to learn more, including previous recipients and full application details.