

DECEMBER 2024

Township Focus

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION



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Roll out the Welcome Wagon

One day, when I was a young kid, I was astonished when a lady carrying a big basket of food, supplies, movie coupons and other gifts came to our new home. It was the Welcome Wagon, a tradition drawn from how Conestoga wagons met westward settlers along the way, offering fresh food and supplies. To all our newly elected township officials, consider this your Welcome Wagon basket. Your MTA staff and Board members have been preparing it for more than two years. Here's a sample of what's in it:

- *New Officials Training*, full-day, in-person workshops held at 13 locations statewide in December and January (an online option is also available)—consider it the driver's education course for your new township career. It will make your start faster, more successful and less nerve-racking. Discounted book packages are available as an add-on option.
- Our Member Information Services Department staff, who are available to answer your questions by phone, email and even fax. These local government experts have also assembled the multiple-hundred-page "Answer Center" on our website, <https://michigantownships.org>, covering township topics from A to Z. This is an excellent place to look for a self-service start to your township knowledge.
- MTA's highly regarded Government Relations team, who advocate on behalf of our townships, your residents and you in Lansing and Washington, DC.
- A newly updated *Authorities and Responsibilities of Michigan Townships* (also called "the Little Red Book" or "A&R"), an essential reference that covers many, many township topics for you. We also have expert guidance and instruction in guidebooks specific to your new role on the township board, and on numerous other township services and responsibilities.
- By making sure that we have your email and mailing addresses, you'll receive our weekly *Township Insights* newsletter and our monthly *Township Focus* magazine, which I hold to be the best of its type in our nation.

- Your new statewide network of peers ready to help you get started and many of whom you will likely count as trusted friends for many years to come.
- Registration for what many refer to as "the MTA"—our Annual Educational Conference and Expo, held March 31-April 3 in Grand Rapids—opens Jan. 2. (You must register for the Conference to receive your personalized housing code to take advantage of our discounted room blocks at nearby hotels.) A pre-Conference class will serve as "Part 2" of our *New Officials Training* and continue a focused preparation for you. The main Conference features more than 50 educational sessions, inspirational general sessions, a banquet, networking events and our Annual Meeting.
- MTA district directors and your MTA county chapter can facilitate local networking with your neighboring townships' officials, legislators, county officials and others.

Are you holding someone else's copy of the magazine? MTA has a project underway to collect updated information for all officials, including those newly elected (*turn to page 9 for details*). By January or February, you should be getting your own mailed to your preferred address.

For the column's picture this month, I'm pleased to honor MTA Life Member **Denny Olson**, who, for 23 years, has helped lead the effort to find, celebrate and install the magnificent state Christmas tree in front of the Capitol building in Lansing. Pictured is the scene in **Eagle Township** (Clinton Co.) at this year's tree harvest: 600 school kids, 50 volunteers, 30 fascinated neighbors, two competing choirs, numerous members of the MTA Board, and a 65-foot Norway Spruce (with no partridge).



Neil

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allied service provider index



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mission statement

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



featured articles

18 Renewable energy in Michigan: Questions answered, questions remain

Public Acts 233 and 234 of 2023—which largely preempt township and other local government control over the siting of certain large-scale renewable energy wind, solar and battery storage facilities—went into effect Nov. 29. While many questions remain involving the new laws, MTA legal counsel provides an update on what we know now—including the details of the Michigan Public Service Commission’s PA 233 implementation order, which sought to clarify some of the confusion.

25 Connecting your community: The power of broadband and the BEAD program

Nearly \$1.6 billion in federal funding has been allocated to deploy infrastructure to unserved and underserved homes, businesses and community anchor institutions across Michigan. Township leadership will be important in helping ensure that the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program works well for your community and your constituents.



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news¬es

a compendium of noteworthy items

WELCOME TO TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

What every new official must know

Here are some tips to ensure a smooth transition for newly elected township officials.

Take the oath of office. All officials elected to township office at the Nov. 5 general election must take the oath of office no later than Jan. 1, 2025, or the office becomes vacant on Jan. 2. To qualify for office, each official must take the oath of office and, in some circumstances, be bonded.



If a township official elected in the November 2024 election does not become qualified until late December, for example, the official “holding over” would be paid a pro-rata share of the monthly salary. The new official’s compensation would be pro-rated to the day of the month that official qualified for office.

The oath may be administered by the township supervisor or deputy supervisor, township clerk or deputy clerk, or other qualified person, such as a judge, county clerk, deputy county clerk, state senator or representative for the jurisdiction, or notary public.

Take custody of the records of the office. An outgoing official must turn over to his or her successor all of the files, computer passwords, keys, equipment and other materials related to the office. This should be done after the county board of canvassers certifies the election and notifies the candidates. All documents, records or files created while in office are township property, and the willful withholding or destruction of township books, papers or records is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to two years in prison or a fine of up to \$1,000. (MCL 750.491)

Note: An “exit” audit of township finances is not required simply because township offices have changed hands. A township board may choose at any time to contract to have an audit done if there are concerns about financial irregularities, but it will be in addition to any regularly scheduled audit.

Notify financial institutions. New clerks and treasurers should notify each banking institution that does business with the township that the previous clerk or treasurer’s signature is no longer valid. Establish the new official’s signature as the one of record. The same applies to a new deputy clerk and deputy treasurer.

Appoint a deputy. The clerk and treasurer are each required by law to appoint a deputy as soon as possible after taking the oath of office. The supervisor has the option to appoint a deputy. A deputy must also take the oath of office. (*Turn to page 12 for more on township deputies.*)

Contact the township’s bond representative. A treasurer, deputy treasurer, clerk, deputy clerk, and constable if applicable in the township, must be bonded before taking the oath of office. Contact the township’s bond representative immediately after the election is certified to add new names to the bond. Some companies offer a “blanket” bond that covers all township employees who handle funds.

Complete employee payroll forms. For IRS and Social Security reporting purposes, all elected township officials are “employees.” If a new official is a new township employee, he or she should complete the IRS W-4, Michigan W-4 and U.S. I-9 forms, and file them with the clerk or township payroll department. The township must report new employees to the state on the State of Michigan *New Hire Reporting Form 3281*. If the new official will be participating in a township pension plan, he or she should receive the Social Security Form SSA-1945 windfall elimination provision notice.

Learn about your new office and township policies. Review the township board meeting minutes from the last few years to learn about current township issues and projects. Ask for copies of any written board policies and procedures, and make an effort to become familiar with parliamentary procedure. Because townships are only able to take actions authorized or expressly implied by law, take some time to learn about the most common township enabling statutes. Review the mission statements or minutes of township departments, committees or commissions.

DATE TO OBLIGATE

Deadline to obligate ARPA funds is Dec. 31

Townships have **until Dec. 31, 2024**, to obligate their allocation of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. If your township has not fully obligated the money, you should do so as soon as possible to meet this deadline. ARPA funds must be fully spent by Dec. 31, 2026. MTA has been told that the federal government may “claw back” the funds from townships that do not obligate the funds or continue to file their annual reporting each April. Townships may still choose the standard allocation option, which allows up to \$10 million to be used for general government services. For additional resources, visit MTA’s “ARPA Resources and Updates” webpage on <https://michigantownships.org> (under the “Advocacy” tab).



ATTENTION TREASURERS

Reminder for tax collection office hours



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

treasurer, and provides for the unpaid taxes to be returned as delinquent to the county treasurer the next day.

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

For 2024, the available days for required December office hours are **Thursday, Dec. 26, Friday, Dec. 27 and Monday, Dec. 30.** (Please note: Incorrect weekdays appeared in the November *Township Focus*. We regret the error, and apologize for any confusion or inconvenience.) Treasurers **must** choose one day (unless a bank assists in collection). (MCL 211.44(2))

The last day to pay 2024 property taxes without incurring any interest or penalty is **Friday, Feb. 14, 2025.** Treasurers **may** choose to hold office hours.

The last day to pay 2024 property taxes before they are returned as delinquent is **Friday, Feb. 28, 2025** (the last day of February). (MCL 211.45) Treasurers **must** hold office hours.

The treasurer also **must** be in his or her office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to receive tax payments for the collection of a summer tax levy, on **Monday, Sept. 15, 2025** (the last day taxes are due and payable before interest is added under MCL 211.44a(5)); Sept. 14 is a Sunday).

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

Need more tax collection resources? Our Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection webinar, available at <https://learn.michigantownships.org>, shares an overview of the tax collection process, from getting started to accounting for collections, disbursements to settlement—and more. MTA's Treasurer's Guide to Township Government also offers valuable insights on the treasurer's role in the township. Purchase on the Store at <https://michigantownships.org>, email tonia@michigantownships.org or call (517) 321-6467, ext. 231. Members can find more resources on the "Tax Collecting" webpages on our website (in the "Answer Center" under the "Member" tab; login is required).



APPOINTMENT REMINDER

Board of review appointments due Jan. 1

The General Property Tax Act (MCL 211.28(1)) requires township boards to appoint members to the township's three-, six- or nine-member board of review. Board of review members serve for two years, beginning at noon on Jan. 1 of each odd-numbered year. Both new and reappointed board of review members must take the oath of office within 10 days after his or her appointment. The oath is kept on file by the township clerk.



Under MCL 211.28, a member of the township board may not serve on the board of review or fill any vacancy. A spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter, including an adopted child, of the assessor is not eligible to serve on the board or fill any vacancy. MTA Legal Counsel recommends that a township board take a prudent approach and use a similar prohibition on appointing the same relatives of the supervisor. At least two-thirds of the board of review members must be property taxpayers of the township. (Michigan Election Law, MCL 168.342, requires all members to be taxpayers, however, the State Tax Commission (STC) has stated that is not necessary. MTA Legal Counsel suggests taking a prudent approach.)

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

BOR required training—Under MCL 211.10g, the township board is responsible for seeing that all board of review members, including those who are reappointed, receive STC-approved training at least once every two years. This training requirement is a subject of the state audit of the assessment roll. The *PA 660-Required* session at MTA's *Board of Review Training*, held in February across the state and online, qualifies for this requirement. Please note that the *Advanced* session does **NOT** meet the PA 660 requirement, and supervisors are not required to complete the PA 660 training. Turn to page 27 for registration information, dates and locations for our 2025 *Board of Review Training*.

Retirement

Paul Swartzendruber, Chandler Township (Huron Co.) trustee for 20 years.

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

HIGHER WAGES

Reminder: Michigan minimum wage increases Jan. 1, Feb. 21

Michigan’s minimum wage will increase twice in 2025, due to the reenactment of Public Act 337 of 2018 following a Michigan Supreme Court ruling this summer. On Jan. 1, 2025, the minimum hourly wage will increase from \$10.33



an hour to \$10.56 an hour. The hourly rate is effective until Feb. 20, after which it will increase to \$12.48 an hour.

Legislation has been introduced that would amend the annual minimum wage increase scheduled to take effect in February, but it is uncertain if the bill will be considered by the Legislature before they adjourn for the year. Watch MTA publications and information for updates if any legislative changes occur to the new minimum wage schedule.

For more information, including FAQs and the required employer poster, visit www.michigan.gov/MinimumWage.

LOCAL UPDATES FROM ACROSS MICHIGAN

Township happenings

A solar array specifically designed for northern climates has been installed at the **Marquette Charter Township** (Marquette Co.) hall. The panels—which tilt on a vertical axis to easily shed snow and are two-sided to absorb light reflected by snow—will both help power the building and send excess power back to the energy grid. The township anticipates that the project will offset a majority of the building energy usage throughout the year, and will benefit the community by reducing hall energy costs in the long term.

It was a celebration 100 years in the making, as **Port Sheldon Township** (Ottawa Co.) commemorated its centennial anniversary this spring, with a look back at the community’s history—and a nod to the future. The township hall was graced with historical exhibits, with items and photos gathered from residents, including honoring area veterans, as well as an art show featuring the works of local artists. A car and tractor show and community picnic, complete with games and live music, rounded out the events—which kicked off with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new township playground.

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

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MTA's **2025 Annual Educational Conference & Expo** at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids March 31-April 3 will honor the **Unique & United** spirit of Michigan's 1,240 townships. Embracing **uniqueness** allows townships to celebrate and leverage their distinct characteristics, community culture and strengths—leading them toward a strong sense of local identity. **Unity** promotes collaboration and shared resources, and provides an empowered approach to tackling common challenges. Blending **unique attributes** with a **unified approach** helps townships drive sustainable progress, enhance regional resilience, and build vibrant, cohesive communities.



Registration begins Jan. 2; housing opens Jan. 23. Watch www.michigantownships.org for further details, and look for the registration brochure in your January *Township Focus*.

MTA welcomes new legislative associate

Please join MTA in welcoming Joanne Wisely to our Government Relations team as our new legislative associate. In her role with the Association, Wisely will support MTA efforts to advocate at both the state and federal levels on behalf of Michigan's 1,240 townships and their leaders.



Wisely

"I'm very excited to join MTA and the Government Relations team," Wisely said.

"MTA has a revered reputation of effective advocacy in the Legislature and transparent communication with township officials. It's an honor to join these efforts and put my public policy experience to work in service of MTA's members."

Prior to joining MTA, Wisely spent more than three years as legislative director, serving in the offices of now-Sen. Mary Cavanagh and Rep. Noah Arbit. While pursuing her bachelor's degree in the Honors College at Eastern Michigan University (EMU), she was a legislative and policy intern with Michigan Legislative Consultants.

"We are delighted to welcome Joanne, and the knowledge and experiences working in the Legislature that she brings to our organization," said MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan. "Townships and their leaders will benefit from her talents and contributions."

The **West Bloomfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.) native now calls East Lansing home. An avid hiker and camper, Wisely enjoys spending time with her family, and says she can also be found obsessing over football, rooting for the Detroit Lions, Notre Dame Fighting Irish, and of course the EMU Eagles.

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Dennis Bragiel, former MTA Board member

Former MTA District 13 Director **Dennis Bragiel** passed away in November. Bragiel, who was **Kawkawlin Township** (Bay Co.) supervisor for 11 years and later its zoning administrator, served on the MTA Board of Directors for six years. A longtime volunteer for the Bay City school district, he was also a Bay City Western Booster Club treasurer for many years and was the "Voice of the Warriors" football and wrestling announcer for more than 25 years. As shared in his obituary, "Denny's life was a testament to the power of love, the importance of family, and the value of service."



Bragiel

"Rest in peace, Dennis," said MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan. "You made your community and our Association better with your leadership and presence."

profile



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Reminder: Share township updates with MTA

In November, MTA mailed a paper roster to every township, seeking information to update our database. If your township has not already done so, please review the roster—which includes every person from your township listed in our database, along with their contact information—and return to MTA. This will allow us to **reach your township’s newly elected officials** as quickly as possible, helping them get started on the right foot and receive access to helpful MTA benefits and resources as they begin serving their community.

The township’s clerk or treasurer can manage the township’s complete profile—including adding a new official or ending the relationship of a former official to the township—via “My Profile” under the “Member” tab on <https://michigantownships.org>. The roster can be returned with updates (or an “OK as is”) via email to database@michigantownships.org, faxed to (517) 321-8908, or returned to MTA via mail to PO Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078. Current officials can also update their own contact information online at any time under “My Profile,” and newly elected officials may submit their information via a simple contact form on MTA’s website (available on the “Welcome New Officials” page under the “About” tab).

Questions? Contact MTA at (517) 321-6467 (press 4) or database@michigantownships.org. **Thank you for your assistance. We appreciate your help!**

mta events | december

- | | |
|----|--|
| 10 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Muskegon</i> |
| 11 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Lansing</i> |
| 12 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Kalamazoo</i> |
| 13 | <i>“Legislative Wrap-up: What’s In, Out and What’s to Come” Now You Know</i> lunchtime webinar |
| 17 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Frankenmuth</i> |
| 18 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Hale</i> |
| 19 | <i>New Officials Training workshop, Thompsonville</i> |



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Earlier this fall, Fife Lake Township (Grand Traverse Co.) Supervisor Lisa Leedy and MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan participated in the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago’s Rural Economic Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. The conference brought together experts and community leaders to explore innovative approaches to land use, labor attraction, employment opportunities and more.

Leedy, who is also executive director for the Builders Exchange of Northwest Michigan, shared her expertise at two panel sessions: “Replicable Strategies Rural Communities Can Use to Attract and Retain Labor” and “Focus on Rural Housing.” Current labor trends, immigration and strategies to make rural areas more appealing to skilled workers were discussed, along with creative solutions to address the unique housing challenges rural communities face. Sheridan moderated the session “Creative Ways for Rural Communities to Attract and Retain Labor,” facilitating discussions on actionable strategies to help rural areas thrive. Their contributions highlighted practical, forward-thinking ideas that can help boost the growth of rural communities in Michigan and nationwide.

MTA’s lunchtime learning series, *Now You Know*, offers timely updates, insights from our experts and a chance to get your questions answered—all in just one hour! Don’t miss our next episode coming: **Friday, Dec. 13 from noon to 1 p.m.**

Legislative Wrap-up: What’s In, Out and What’s to Come



As the Legislature wraps up its final days of the 2024 session, MTA’s government relations team shares the impact of the 2024 election results, the latest on legislative action during “lame duck”—both finished and unfinished issues—as well as key topics expected to be addressed in the new session. Get the inside scoop on these items and their impact on townships. Can’t make the date? We’ll record it so you can watch it later, when it works for you.

Register at <https://bit.ly/NYKmta> for just \$25 per session!

If your township subscribes to MTA Online at the Premium level, you get FREE access to **EVERY** session! For details, and to see a listing of past episodes available on demand, visit <https://learn.michigantownships.org/nyk>.

DECEMBER

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

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

2024 winter taxes due and payable to local unit treasurer are a lien on real property. (MCL 211.40)

2 *On or before Dec. 1. Dec. 1 is a Sunday.* Deadline for foreclosing governmental units to transfer list of unsold 2024 tax foreclosure parcels to the clerk of the municipality in which the parcels are located. (MCL 211.78m(6))

5 Deadline for candidates or ballot questions seeking nomination or election at the Nov. 5 election to submit the post-election campaign statement. (MCL 168.233)

10 *Tuesday after the second Monday in December.* December board of review may be convened. (MCL 211.53b) The township board may authorize, by adoption of an

ordinance or resolution, an alternative meeting date during the week of the second Monday in December. (MCL 211.53b(7))

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

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

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

Tax day for 2025 property taxes. (MCL 211.2(2))


JANUARY

2 Deadline for counties to file 2024 equalization studies for 2025 starting bases with the State Tax Commission (STC) for all classifications in all units on Form 602 (L-4018P) *STC Analysis for Equalized Valuation of Personal Property* and Form 603 (L-4018R) *STC Analysis for Equalized Valuation of Real Property*. [R 209.41(5)]

10 *No later than Jan. 10.* Except as otherwise provided in section 9m (bank or trust), 9n (farm products), or 9o (sugar from sugar beets), assessors and/or supervisors must annually send Form 632 (L-4175) *Personal Property Statement* to any taxpayer they believe has personal property in their possession in their local unit. (MCL 211.19(2)(c))

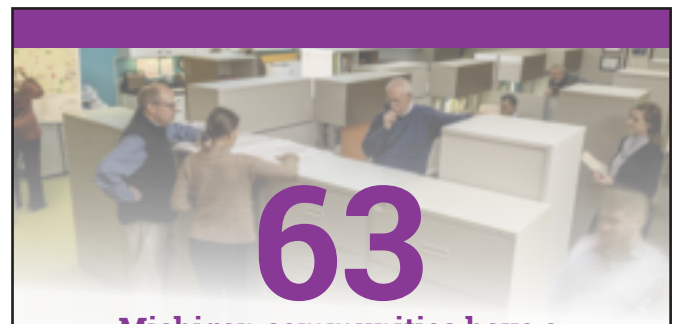
27 Local units with a state equalized value of \$15 million or less: 2024 taxes collected by Jan. 10 must be distributed within 10 business days of Jan. 10. (MCL 211.43(5)) All other local units must distribute 2024 taxes collected within 10 business days after the first and 15th of each month except in March. (MCL 211.43(3)(a))

31 *Not later than Feb. 1; Feb. 1 is a Saturday.* Deadline to submit STC Form 2699 (L-4143) *Statement of Qualified Personal Property* by a qualified business with the assessor. (MCL 211.8a(2))



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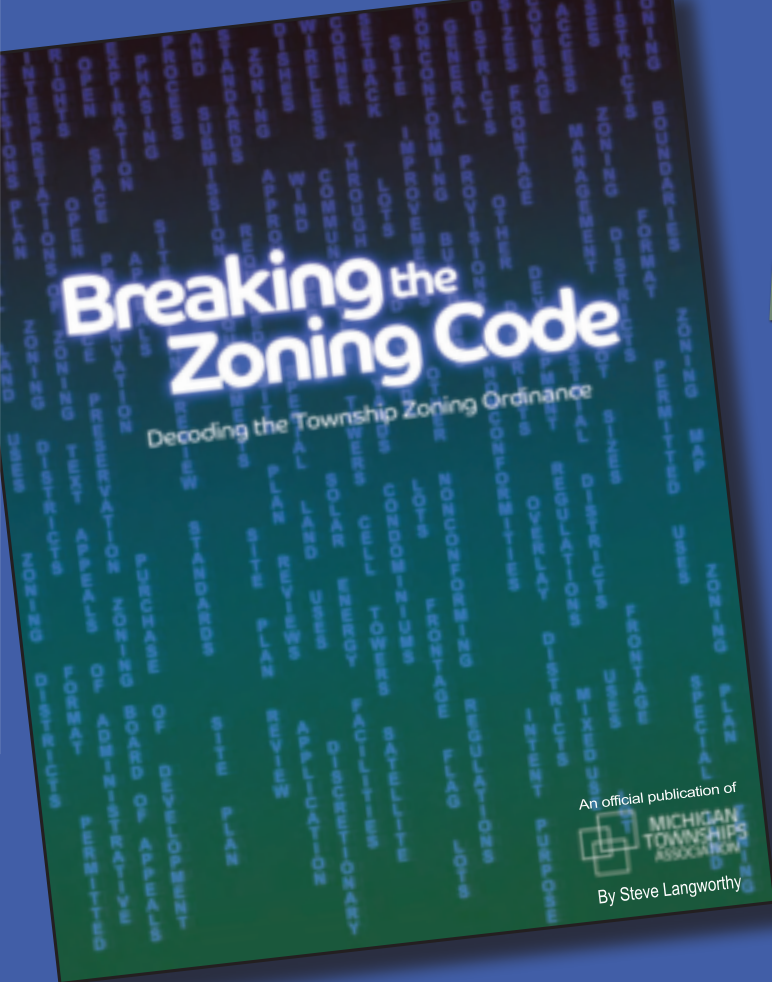
R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy



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Zoning is a complicated, ever-evolving field. What's more, much of the language of zoning is unique, using everyday terms that can take on an entirely different meaning in the context of local land use regulations. MTA's newest publication, *Breaking the Zoning Code*, decodes the complexity, sharing an exploration of zoning regulations, why they exist, what they are intended to accomplish, and how they may be used to the benefit of your township.

Authored by land use expert Steve Langworthy (who wrote MTA's two additional planning and zoning books), this helpful guide breaks down a zoning ordinance by its individual parts, providing the background necessary to help understand how they work—and how to explain it to others. *Breaking the Zoning Code* is an essential new resource to help local leaders in their journey as township zoning decision-makers.

Member price: \$43 | Non-member price: \$60



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What township board positions have the authority to appoint a deputy?

The township clerk and treasurer are each required by law to appoint one deputy. (MCLs 41.69 and 41.77) The township supervisor may choose to appoint one deputy. (MCL 41.61)



What authority does a deputy have?

Deputies are different from other “employees.” A deputy position is not a “job at the hall.” It is an appointment to public office.

The number one authority of a deputy is to serve as a substitute for the official in performing the statutory duties of the office. In the case of the absence, sickness, death or other disability of the official, the deputy possesses the powers and performs the statutory duties of the office, except that a deputy does not have a vote on the township board. In addition, a deputy supervisor does not moderate a township board meeting.

This means that a deputy automatically has the authority to perform a statutory duty of the office, without further authorization, when the official is absent, sick, disabled or has died. But it also means that a deputy has no authority beyond those situations to perform a statutory duty of the office—or any additional duties or job functions—without further authorization by the board and the official.



Does a deputy continue to serve when the official resigns from their board office?

No. A deputy serves at the “pleasure of the official,” which means that the deputy’s appointment depends on the official holding the office. The laws that state when a deputy has the authority of the office do not specifically state that a deputy serves in the event of the official’s resignation, even though they do specifically state a deputy’s authority to serve in the case of the absence, sickness, death or other disability of the official. When an official resigns board office, he or she gives up all authority of the office, including the authority to appoint the deputy, so the deputy’s authority also ends.



Who may serve as a deputy?

Anyone who is capable of performing the specific duties of the office may be appointed. There is no minimum age limit, but the person

must be legally able—and responsible enough—to perform the statutory duties and functions.

There is no requirement that a deputy be a resident of the township—or the state or the country! There have been some deputies who crossed state lines or even over from Canada to serve in a Michigan township. But the person must be readily available when the official is not.

There is no prohibition against a relative serving as an official’s deputy. But the most important qualification of a deputy is the ability to be available when the official is absent, ill, disabled or has died. So a relative may not be a good choice if that person is going on vacation with the official, or would be a caregiver or a grieving family member.

It is possible for one person to serve as more than one deputy, such as the same person serving as both a deputy clerk and deputy supervisor, but it is not possible for the same person to serve as both deputy clerk and deputy treasurer (or for the clerk or treasurer to serve as the other’s deputy), because of the segregation of duties required by law and the Michigan Department of Treasury regarding those two offices.



How many deputies may an official have?

An official may have only one deputy at a time. It is possible for an official to appoint different deputies during the official’s term of office—as long as it is only one at a time. For example, an official who has her spouse as her deputy might want to appoint someone else to be her deputy while the official and her spouse are away on vacation.



How do I appoint a deputy?

There isn’t an official process, other than you state who you are appointing and the new deputy must take the oath of office. If you want to switch deputies, you let one deputy go by appointing a new deputy who takes the oath; then the “old” deputy is no longer the deputy. That’s all that must be done to make the appointment legal, but from a practical standpoint, you should let the board and other staff—and the bank, if your signatures are on the bank cards—know, so they know who has the deputy authority for your office.



What control does a township board have over my deputy?

The township board does not have a vote over who you appoint, but the board determines what hours the deputy may work and what the compensation will be. (The one exception to board control over who serves

as a deputy is if you want a trustee to serve as your deputy in a township under 40,000 in population. A board would have to authorize a trustee to serve as deputy supervisor, clerk or treasurer as an additional duty before that could occur because the positions are otherwise incompatible. Note that although it may be possible, it may not be appropriate for a trustee to serve as a deputy, because of the fiduciary responsibilities.

The board's authority over the person who serves as a deputy is best explained in "Catherine's Theory of the Three Types of Deputies." You won't find these spelled out by name in the law, but this does explain what the law allows:

1) The Substitute Deputy

This is the original form of deputy required by law. This deputy shows up only when the official cannot perform a statutory duty of the office. It's like Superman and Clark Kent—you never see the official and their deputy together at the same time!

If the official is always available, it may be that the deputy never actually shows up or performs any of the statutory duties of the office, but as long as they were ready and available to do so, they fulfilled their responsibility. This deputy has no authority to perform at other times. The board controls what, if anything, this deputy position is paid.

2) The Assistant Deputy

Here the deputy works along with the official. The official must have township board authorization for a deputy to work as more than just a substitute. MCLs 41.61, 41.69 and 41.77 state that, with the approval of the official, the deputy may assist the official in the performance of the statutory duties of the office at any additional times agreed upon between the board and the official, except the deputy shall not have a vote on the township board.

The board has the ability to determine the extent or limit of the hours that the deputy works, either directly by specifying hours or through the amount the board allocates to pay for deputy hours.

Neither of these first two types of deputies are subject to wage and hour restrictions. Just like the township board offices, deputies hold public office and are not required to be paid a minimum wage or to work certain hours. There are no legal requirements to provide overtime, vacation, sick time or comp time. A township board may choose to treat these deputy types as if they are subject to any or all of these employment laws—and it may really be appropriate to do so—but it is not required.

Neither of these types of deputies are subject to unemployment insurance, but they are subject to worker's disability compensation.

3) The Deputy Plus

This is when a person who is a deputy also holds an employment position with the township. For example, the clerk makes a township clerical worker his deputy. Or the deputy treasurer is hired by the board to also serve as office manager. Here the township board is the employer, just as with any other township employment position.

The official has no individual authority over those job duties. The employment "part" of this dual position *is* subject to unemployment insurance (but still not the deputy part). It is also subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act, and wage and hour regulations.

Sometimes this type of deputy situation can create confusion, especially if the township doesn't distinguish between the deputy duties and any employment job description. It may seem like splitting hairs when everything is going well, but when things change or go badly, it can really make a difference—especially to the person who is caught in the middle. For example, if the board discharges the person from the employment position, they are still the deputy. Or, if the official removes the deputy or the official resigns or isn't reelected, then the deputy part is gone, but the employee "part" still shows up for work!

To avoid confusion and stress for all involved, I strongly recommend that townships have a position description for deputy duties and a separate job description for the nonstatutory township "job" position. If the township has a need for that "job" position, then it should have a separate job description and pay rate anyway.

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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New law requires local zoning master plans to include housing provisions

Township planning commissions will soon be required to consider local housing needs in developing or revising a master plan, under a new law recently signed by Gov. Whitmer. Under MCL 125.3815, membership of a planning commission must be representative of important segments of that community. Public Act 153 of 2024, sponsored by Rep. Kristian Grant (D-Grand Rapids), also adds housing as a major interest that the membership of a planning commission must represent.

The new law will take effect 91 days after the end of the 2024 session.

Possessing a firearm in and around polling places banned

Individuals will soon be prohibited from possessing a firearm in a polling place or within 100 feet of an entrance to a polling place on Election Day while the polls are open, under legislation pending approval by the governor.

House Bill 4127, sponsored by Rep. Penelope Tseronglou (D-East Lansing), is also applicable to an early voting site on any day early voting is conducted, or for the 40 days preceding an election at a clerk's office or satellite voting site where absentee ballots may be returned. Additionally, firearms will be prohibited within 100 feet of any absentee voter (AV) drop box in the 40 days preceding an election. HB 4128, sponsored by Rep. Stephanie Young (D-Detroit), prohibits possessing a firearm in an AV or combined AV counting location or within 100 feet of its entrance.

Once signed, the bills will take effect 91 days after the end of the 2024 session.



Automated speed enforcement systems in work zones soon to be law

Legislation allowing automated speed enforcement systems in work zones on Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) highways and roads is pending final approval by the governor. House Bill 4132, sponsored by Rep. Will Snyder (D-Muskegon), and HB 4133, sponsored by Rep. Mike Mueller (R-Fenton Charter Twp.), allow MDOT to install and use automated speed enforcement systems in work zones on highways or streets under their jurisdiction. The legislation also creates a new unit in MDOT to oversee the use of these systems and set up the Work Zone Safety Fund to cover system costs, with excess funds used to help pay for further work zone safety issues.

Once signed, the bills will take effect 91 days after the end of the 2024 session.



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2025 MTA
CAPITAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 4
THE LANSING CENTER

Watch for registration details in your email and on michigantownships.org later this month!

MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

Legislative lowdown

A look at critical bills MTA is following as they move through the legislative process. Watch MTA's *Township Insights* e-newsletter for updates.

SB 10 & HB 4036: Public utilities—Prohibits local units of government from imposing a ban on the use of natural gas or installation of natural gas infrastructure. *MTA opposes.*

SB 17: Fireworks—Modifies the days that fireworks use may be regulated by a local unit of government and increases penalties for certain violations. *MTA supports.*

SB 40: Unemployment—Increases maximum number of unemployment benefit weeks. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 41: Construction—Prohibits local units from enacting an ordinance prohibiting use of energy-efficient appliances in new or existing residential buildings. *MTA opposes.*

SB 47: Farmland—Allows relinquishment of portion of farmland from agreement or easement to make boundaries more regular. *MTA neutral.*

SBs 95-96, 454-455 & HBs 4894-4895: Disabled veterans' property tax reimbursement—Provides a mechanism for the state to reimburse local units of government for the property tax exemption available to veterans classified as 100% disabled and their surviving spouses. *MTA supports.*

SB 155: Voting equipment—Prohibits use of electronic voting systems that contain certain parts or equipment. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 171 & HB 4231: Local government—Repeals the Fair and Open Competition in Governmental Construction Act. *MTA supports.*

SBs 182-183 & HBs 4274-4275: Revenue Sharing Trust Fund—Establishes a "Revenue Sharing Trust Fund" and dedicates portion of general sales tax revenue to the fund to distribute to townships, cities, villages and counties. *MTA supports.*

SB 244 & HB 4729: Workers' compensation—Extends presumption of causation of heart and respiratory diseases to certain members of police, fire and public safety departments. *MTA opposes.*

SB 293: Housing—Modifies and expands the Housing and Community

Development Fund to make financing available to middle-income households. *MTA supports.*

SB 401: Elections—Creates a state Voting Rights Act. *MTA opposes.*

SB 402: Elections—Creates Voting and Elections Database and Institute Act, requires Secretary of State to enter into agreement with one or more universities to create database and institute by November 2025, and allows local clerks to refer certain Freedom of Information Act election requests to the institute. *MTA supports.*

SB 403: Elections—Creates Language Assistance for Elections Act to require local government to provide language assistance for elections if it meets certain conditions and requires Secretary of State to provide language assistance in each designated language. *MTA neutral.*

SB 404: Elections—Establishes new notice requirements, codifies curbside voting and allows individual to provide necessities (i.e., food, warmth) to electors at polling location, early voting site or local clerk's office. *MTA opposes.*

SB 473 & HB 4694: Special assessments—Amends required number of participating members from each local unit for special assessment districts for police and fire. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 480: Land division—Modifies the number of parcels resulting from land division. *MTA opposes.*

SBs 486-487 & 489: Mobile home licensing—Modifies licensure requirements for owners of mobile home parks and seasonal mobile home parks and the duties of entities involved in the regulation of parks. *MTA supports.*

SBs 549-554 & HBs 5090-5093: Water utilities—Creates water rate affordability program and shutoff protections. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 605-607 and HBs 5242, 5245 & 5247: Environment—Modifies environmental cleanup standards to residential and safe drinking water standards unless technically infeasible, and excludes cleanup criteria and target detection limits in definition of rules. *MTA opposes.*

SB 660: Stormwater utilities—Creates act that provides for municipal stormwater utilities. *MTA supports.*

SB 669-670: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)—Amends FOIA to add and

modify definitions to include the Legislature and Executive Office of the governor or lieutenant governor. *MTA neutral.*

SBs 683-684: Animals—Provides for potentially dangerous dogs and dangerous dogs in the animals act, and creates sentencing guidelines for related crimes. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 700: Tax increment financing—Modifies the definition of downtown district to include separate and distinct geographic areas in a business district if the municipality is located on the mainland and one or more islands and a body of water is between the two separate and distinct geographic areas. *MTA supports.*

SB 870: Open Meetings Act—Allows remote meeting participation for appointed members of a public body with disabilities. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 898-899: Renewable energy—Repeals PA 233 of 2023 zoning exemption provisions for large-scale solar, wind and energy storage facilities and deletes the provision subjecting zoning authority to Part 8 of the Clean and Renewable Energy and Energy Waste Reduction Act (PA 234 of 2023). *MTA supports.*

SB 920: Water supply—Regulates mobile home park water delivery systems. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 941: Property tax—Provides for property tax exemption for certain nonprofit charitable institutions. *MTA opposes.*

SB 958: Civil rights—Establishes standards for public bodies collecting and reporting data related to race and ethnicity. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 1004: Electric vehicles—Provides electric vehicle charging station parking restrictions. *MTA monitoring.*

SB 1023: Open meetings—Modifies grounds for going into closed session when a public body consults with its attorney. *MTA supports.*

SB 1052: Hazardous waste—Imposes moratorium on, limits capacity and geographic concentration of, and prohibits acceptance of TENORM (Technologically Enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material). *MTA monitoring.*

SB 1068: Election—Modifies requirements and procedures for election challengers, and clarifies challenges to voter registration and the procedure regarding certain absent voter ballots. *MTA monitoring.*

SBs 1129-1130: Health benefits—Modifies public employer contribution to medical benefit plan. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4023: Underground storage tanks—Revises placement distance of underground storage tanks from a public water supply. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4033: Elections—Requires state to reimburse costs for certain special elections. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4207-4208: Broadband equipment—Exempts eligible broadband equipment from personal property taxes. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4210: Elections—Provides for the electronic return of absent voter ballots by military voters and their spouses. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4382-4383: Drain Code—Revises Chapter 22 of Drain Code process through determination sufficiency of petition and proposed boundaries. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4428: Public notices—Revises publication of legal notices and creates the Local Government Public Notice Act. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4479-4480 & SBs 299-300: Statewide sanitary code—Provides for the assessment and regulations of on-site wastewater treatment systems. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 4502-4503: Election challengers—Provides requirements and training requirements for election challengers. *MTA supports.*

HBs 4526-4528: Local preemption—Preempts local authority for regulations for sand and gravel mining operations. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4548: Notaries public—Provides fee for remote notarization. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4566: Vehicle registration—Allocates revenue from vehicle registration fees to county where registrant resides and distributes per lane mile to local road agency. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4572: Property tax assessments—Exempts transfer of ownership of certain real property to certain individuals from uncapping of taxable value upon transfer. *MTA neutral.*

HBs 4605-4606: Public safety—Creates the public safety and violence prevention fund and provides for the earmark and distribution of 1.5% of the

4% of sales tax revenue into the fund for disbursement. *MTA supports.*

HB 4675: Land bank authorities—Provides exemption for land bank authority property from all state and local taxes, fees and special assessments unless contracting for services. *MTA neutral.*

HB 4688: Collective bargaining—Requires minimum staffing levels within a bargaining unit to be a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4693: Open Meetings Act—Allows nonelected and noncompensated public bodies to meet remotely. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 4708: Property taxes—Exempts qualified electric vehicle charging stations from property taxes levied after Dec. 31, 2023. *MTA opposes.*

HB 4860: Charter townships—Amends conflict of interest policy for charter township officials. *MTA supports.*

HB 4866: Annexation—Exempts certain charter townships from annexation. *MTA supports.*

HB 4965: Franchise fees—Modifies definition of video service. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5039-5041: Local preemption—Prohibits local governments from enacting or enforcing an ordinance, policy, resolution or rule that regulates a dog based upon breed or perceived breed. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 5133-5134: Property taxes—Provides property tax exemption for certain senior citizens and replaces with a specific tax. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5188: Drains—Increases the amount that a drain commissioner or drainage board can spend on necessary maintenance and repairs from \$5,000 per mile to \$10,000 per mile without being subject to the Drain Code's petition requirements. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5189: Drains—Modifies the procedures to revise the boundaries of a drainage district to add land from one or more counties not originally a part of the district. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5190: Drains—Modifies compensation and expense reimbursement of various public offices serving on drainage boards. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5353: Unfunded mandates—Provides for state financing of activities or services required of local units of government. *MTA supports.*

HB 5380: Property taxes—Provides for property tax exemption for certain nonprofit charitable institutions operating under the Continuing Care Community Act. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5438: Short-term rental—Creates the short-term rental regulation act that retains local zoning authority, imposes an excise tax to be distributed to municipalities and creates a statewide registry. *MTA supports.*

HB 5550: Elections—Extends the period by which an elections board must determine a recall petition to be factual and of sufficient clarity from 20 days to 40 days. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5551: Elections—Modifies eligibility requirements for members of board of state canvassers and boards of county canvassers. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5695: Emergency medical services—Requires participation in the Ground Emergency Medical Transport disbursement program. *MTA supports.*

HB 5699: Township term of office—Modifies the term of office start date for township officers to Dec. 1, beginning after Dec. 31, 2024. *MTA neutral.*

HB 5724 & SB 871: Public records—Creates act to allow judges to request that a public body not publicly post or release certain information concerning the judge or the judge's family members. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5797: Property taxes—Clarifies and permits the postmark date to be used when determining date property taxes are paid. *MTA opposes.*

HB 5855-5858: Alternative energy sources—Eliminates zoning exemptions for large-scale solar, wind and energy storage facilities. *MTA supports.*

HBs 5865-5868: Property taxes—Addresses the "dark store" tax loophole by prohibiting the use of comparable sales for assessment purposes in certain circumstances and requires certain tribunal determinations in assessment disputes as to the valuation of property. *MTA supports.*

HBs 5884-5885: Marijuana—Modifies certain licenses for medical and recreational marijuana and repeals medical marijuana act. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5886: Brownfield redevelopment—Modifies Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act, removes population thresholds and adds requirements. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 5898-5900: Notaries public—Provides education and licensing requirements for notaries public and revised eligibility requirements, and requires record keeping. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5902: Recycling—Creates packaging reduction and recycling requirements. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5905: Labor—Provides protection for emergency responders for absence from work to respond to an emergency as an emergency responder. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5923: Hazardous waste—Prohibits the disposal of radioactive waste in the state. *MTA supports.*

HB 5982: Collective bargaining—Requires certain employers to display poster of collective bargaining rights at work sites and provide to employees. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 5983: Working conditions—Requires employers to provide to employees suitable seat under certain circumstances. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6022: Tobacco—Eliminates preemption of local ordinances pertaining to the sale of tobacco

products or the licensure of distributors. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6052: Elections—Expands allowable uses for on-demand ballot printing systems. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6053: Elections—Modifies time frame for civil actions related to elections. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6054: Elections—Updates sentencing guidelines for certain early voting violations under the Michigan Election Law. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6055: Elections—Clarifies certain provisions regarding early voting, use of electronic pollbook software, permanent mail ballot voter list for military and overseas voters, procedures for absent voter ballots missing a stub or with a ballot number that does not match, and provides for other general amendments. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6056: Minimum wage—Modifies minimum hourly wage rate. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6057: Labor—Modifies requirement for accrued earned sick time to carry over year to year. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6058: Medical benefits—Modifies public employer contribution to medical benefit plans. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6059: Property taxes—Provides continuation of poverty exemption without subsequent application for homeowner who previously established eligibility in certain circumstances. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6088: Public transportation—Modifies and eliminates ability of political subdivisions to opt out of membership in public transportation authorities (Wayne County). *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6095: Zoning—Limits minimum residential parking space requirements to 1.5 spaces. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6096: Zoning—Prohibits site plan requirements for repeat studies. *MTA monitoring.*

HB 6097: Zoning—Permits duplexes in single-family residential zones. *MTA monitoring.*

HBs 6018-6109: Local preemption—Preempts local authority for regulations for mining of sand and gravel operations. *MTA opposes.*

HBs 6136-6142: Labor—Eliminates mandated public employee contributions to employer-provider health care benefits and removes cross-references to Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act. *MTA opposes.*



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Renewable energy in Michigan

Questions answered, questions remain

On Nov. 28, 2023, Gov. Whitmer signed into law two bills that largely preempt township and other local government control over the siting of certain large-scale renewable energy wind, solar and battery storage facilities. The new laws replace local control with a state-controlled statutory framework and grant new siting authority over these facilities to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC). The January 2024 *Township Focus* cover story discussed these new bills and some of the questions they generated. Eleven months later, many questions still remain, but the following will provide an update on what we know now—including the details of the MPSC’s order released on Oct. 10, 2024, which sought to clarify some of the confusion.

Inside PAs 233 and 234

To briefly summarize the new laws, Public Acts 233 and 234 of 2023 severely limit local control over the location and regulation of large-scale renewable energy projects—including wind energy facilities, solar energy facilities and battery energy storage systems. In essence, there is no way to completely prohibit large-scale renewable energy projects in your community. If a developer wants to construct a large-scale renewable energy project, they will be able to do so in any community. The key question now is who will review that project and under what standards.

A large-scale project, as defined by PA 233, is solar energy facilities at 50 megawatts (MW) or more, wind energy facilities at 100 MW or more, and battery storage facilities at 50 MW or more and energy discharge capability of 200 MW hours or more. Any projects smaller than this are still completely regulated by local governments that choose to impose regulations. Also note that “hybrid” projects, discussed later on, are also allowed under the MPSC order.

Options

Municipalities have three main avenues to consider under the new laws. First, **a township could choose to do nothing.** In



unzoned communities, this is essentially the only option (per the MPSC order, discussed below), unless the unzoned community desires to change course and establish local zoning. In a zoned township, you may still opt to do nothing and leave the entire determination up to the MPSC.

Second, **a township can adopt a “compatible renewable energy ordinance” (CREO)**. A CREO is a special kind of ordinance the township can adopt that regulates renewable energy facilities in the township. With a CREO, the township can require that the developer go through the township, and not the MPSC, to review and approve the renewable energy project. Importantly, however, the state law provides that “the requirements of [a CREO] are no more restrictive than the provisions included in section 226(8)” of PA 233. So, although the township can require that the developer go through a local process, the statute greatly limits the sorts of things that the township can consider in reviewing and approving that project. If the application complies with the requirements of section 226(8) but the township denies the application, the developer can submit their application to the MPSC and seek approval anyway.

Third, **a township can adopt a “workable” ordinance**. A workable ordinance provides greater control to the township, but at greater risk. With a workable ordinance, a township adopts an ordinance that it knows is not a CREO: setting standards more stringent than what the statute allows. The developer must voluntarily choose to follow this local ordinance instead of the MPSC. Importantly, a developer can always fall back on the state/MPSC process. The township cannot force them to use a “workable” ordinance.

Some developers have indicated that they still want to work with townships, rather than the state, in order to ensure local buy-in for the project. The township may also be able to offer a faster and easier process than the MPSC. Keep in mind that if the workable ordinance practically prohibits large-scale renewable energy projects, then the developer will just go straight to the MPSC; the ordinance needs to be “workable.”

The MPSC order

The two public acts laid the foundation for the new regulations on renewable energy. However, they also left many questions unanswered. In the year since the acts were signed into law, the MPSC has been hosting work sessions, soliciting expert opinions, and taking public comments on the implementation of the legislation. Throughout the entire process, MTA and its legal counsel participated in each MPSC stakeholder meeting, provided detailed input and feedback on all draft guidance, and shared with the commission background on local land use considerations such as site plan review and decommissioning. This whirlwind of activity culminated with the release of the MPSC’s order on Oct. 10, 2024, which refined and clarified some of the confusion, but still left many questions unanswered. The following will lay out some of the major updates from the MPSC’s order—and also what questions remain.

1. ‘Affected local unit’

PA 233 defines an “affected local unit” (ALU) as “a unit of local government in which all or a part of a proposed energy facility will be located.” This can include a “county, township,



As of *Township Focus* press time, the MPSC order stands as valid and will govern the application process for renewable energy projects, effective Nov. 29, 2024. Townships should reach out to their legal counsel to discuss their options, in particular whether the township wants to do nothing and wait, adopt a CREO, adopt a workable ordinance, or something else.

city, or village.” The definition of an ALU is important, because only ALUs can adopt CREOs, obtain special funding to intervene in a hearing at the MPSC, and obtain notice of proposed renewable energy projects.

Initially, based on the definition from PA 233, it was thought that an ALU was every local unit of government in which the proposed energy facility would be located. This meant that, at a minimum, every project would have two ALUs: the local municipality (township, city or village) where the project was located, and the county in which that locality was located.

However, under the MPSC order, an ALU is limited to be only the unit of local government with zoning jurisdiction. This limits most projects to a single ALU, because no two entities can share zoning jurisdiction over the same single parcel. However, projects may still contain multiple ALUs if they span multiple zoning jurisdictions, such as a project that crosses township boundaries.

Under the MPSC order, in a township that has county zoning or no zoning, the township will not receive the intervenor funds to participate in the MPSC approval process and will not receive the one-time \$2,000 per MW host community fee.

2. Unzoned communities

Following from the discussion of an ALU, the MPSC order also clarified some important points regarding unzoned communities. Because an ALU only includes the unit of

local government with zoning jurisdiction, an unzoned township cannot be considered an ALU. This means that an unzoned township gets very few benefits or opportunity for input under the acts. Unzoned townships are not permitted to adopt a CREO. They also will not receive any notice of meetings or hearings regarding proposed projects in their jurisdiction. Further, unzoned townships will not obtain any funds to intervene in the application process at the MPSC.

3. Hybrid projects

Many projects contain only one renewable energy facility type: either all solar panels, all wind turbines, or all battery energy storage systems. It is relatively simple to calculate whether these projects reach the required size for PA 233: just count the MW. However, the MPSC order has also included so-called “hybrid” projects. These are projects that combine wind, solar and/or battery storage systems—for example, a solar project that also includes battery storage elements that can store the power generated by the solar panels until it is needed in the electrical grid.

For these hybrid projects, the MPSC order states that the combined MW of all renewable energy elements is used to calculate whether the project reaches the required size. In our example solar + battery co-located project, a 30 MW solar facility with 20 MW battery storage would reach the 50 MW minimum to be governed by this MPSC process, even though the two parts individually would not. Another hybrid example would be a collocated 20 MW wind facility with 40 MW battery storage and 40 MW solar to reach the 100 MW minimum for a wind facility.

The order further goes on to explain that if an ALU wants to regulate a hybrid facility through a CREO, then it could have a single CREO ordinance addressing each of the hybrid uses or separate CREOs for each hybrid use.

4. Definition of CREO

As noted, a CREO can be no more restrictive than the provisions included in section 226(8) of PA 233. Section 226(8) establishes the minimum setbacks, fencing, height, sound and lighting for solar, wind and battery storage projects.

The MPSC order states that to be a CREO, “the ordinance must be no more restrictive than PA 233 for the technology type(s) addressed in the ordinance.” If a township adopts a CREO that is in any way more restrictive than section 226(8) and then denies the application on the basis of a more restrictive provision, then the township runs the risk that the developer will just go to the MPSC for approval of the project. If this occurs, the township loses out on the \$75,000 intervenor fund to participate in the MPSC approval process.

It should further be noted that if a township has a moratorium on development of energy facilities, then it cannot be considered to have a CREO.

5. Sound regulations

The MPSC order establishes some more specific details on sound monitoring and compliance. Without diving too deep into the details, the MPSC has essentially adopted the American National Standards Institute sound modeling, which includes how sound interacts with walls and structures on adjacent properties. The order makes the maximum sound levels stricter, essentially requiring quieter systems.

The order also requires that developers conduct pre-construction sound modeling, to predict where and how sound will be generated on the property. It further requires post-construction monitoring, paid for by the developer, to confirm that the project does not exceed the maximum sound levels.

6. Notice of meetings

Under PA 233, the developer is required to hold a meeting in the ALU regarding the project and provide opportunities for public input at the meeting before filing an application with the MPSC. (If the developer determines to go through a workable ordinance or is going through a CREO, then the developer is not required to hold this public meeting and instead goes through the local ordinance process.) Unless otherwise requested by the township supervisor, the public meeting should start between 5 and 7:30 p.m. if held on a traditional workday of Monday through Friday. The public meeting should also be recorded or transcribed. The notices must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in each ALU or a comparable digital alternative at least 14 days prior to the public meeting. The notice must also be submitted to the township clerk at least 30 days in advance of the public meeting.

The developer is also required to provide public notice and the opportunity to comment on an application. However, the notice of the right to comment on a project must be mailed to postal addresses within one mile of a solar or battery storage project, and within two miles of a wind project. These enhanced notice requirements are to ensure that those closest to the project, and therefore most impacted by it, have an opportunity to comment on the development. However, there is no requirement that the developer or the MPSC respond to or address any comments.

7. MPSC application process

If the developer goes through the MPSC (either because the township does not have a CREO, has adopted a workable ordinance that the developer does not like, or because the township adopted what it thought was a CREO but was not), the process is much more comprehensive than is permitted by a CREO at the township. The MPSC has been granted more expansive power of review than a township under a CREO, and the MPSC order clarifies what extra elements they will consider.

For example, the developer must provide a detailed report on the public benefits of the facility. If the proposed project is on undeveloped land, the developer must also identify feasible alternative locations (such as brownfield or developed areas) and explain to the MPSC why those sites were not chosen.

The MPSC also requires that a developer meet with local first responders and fire departments to discuss their capabilities to handle emergencies at the renewable energy site. The developer is also required to pay for or hold training for emergency personnel to address any gaps in managing emergencies at these energy sites.

Further, the MPSC requires the developer to pay for a third-party independent monitor who will be on the construction site at least once per week for the duration of construction. This monitor will evaluate whether the developer is following their proposed plans and also report any concerns to the MPSC.

8. Eminent domain

Finally, many townships have asked MTA whether the new law gives the state, the MPSC or developers the power of eminent domain. In other words, can property owners be forced to lease or sell off their land to be used in renewable energy projects? The MPSC has clarified that participating or not participating in a renewable energy project is a decision for individual landowners. The certificate from the MPSC to the developer to locate their site does not include the power of eminent domain; it does not require landowners to participate against their will.

Pending litigation challenges MPSC order

It is also important to note that the MPSC order is currently subject to legal challenge. Dozens of Michigan townships and several counties have jointly filed an appeal to the Michigan Court of Appeals contesting certain aspects of the MPSC order. This appeal does not challenge the laws as a whole—it only challenges the MPSC order and specific provisions therein.

First, the appeal challenges the authority of the MPSC to adopt the order at all. The MPSC is considered an agency of the State of Michigan. Agencies in Michigan must generally follow the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), MCL 24.201, *et seq.* The APA allows an agency to interpret or explain statutes through orders. However, part of the APA requires that establishing substantive rules and standards must be done through a process known as “rulemaking.” The appeal alleges that the MPSC’s order establishes substantive standards and was therefore required to go through “rulemaking.” The MPSC did not go through the formal rulemaking process when issuing its order.



cover story

Second, the appeal challenges the definition of a CREO put forth by the MPSC. PA 233 defines a CREO as “an ordinance that provides for the development of energy facilities within the local unit of government, the requirements of which are no more restrictive than the provisions included in section 226(8).” The MPSC order further provides that “a CREO may only contain the setback, fencing, height, sound, and other applicable requirements expressly outlined in Section 226(8) of Act 233 and may not contain additional requirements more restrictive than those specifically identified in that section.” The appeal argues that the MPSC’s order unlawfully restricts a CREO, and instead argues that local units are authorized by the statute to impose additional regulations on energy facilities.

Third, the appeal challenges the definition of an affected local unit. As discussed, the MPSC order defines an ALU as “only those local units of government that exercise zoning jurisdiction.” The act defines an ALU as “a local unit of government in which all or part of a proposed energy facility will be located.” The appeal argues that the MPSC order unlawfully restricted the definition of an ALU by zoning jurisdiction and that it should instead include all local units in which the project is located (county, township, city and/or village).

Fourth, and finally, the appeal challenges the definition of a “hybrid facility.” The appeal argues that the MW values of the individual components should not be added together to determine whether the project reaches the minimum MW requirement to be covered by the act. Instead, the appeal argues that each individual piece (solar, wind or battery energy storage) must meet its own minimum MW requirement before it will be covered by the act.

Effect of the litigation

As of the writing of this article, the appeal is still pending and no court orders have been issued. The appellants have requested that the Court of Appeals vacate (in other words, invalidate) the MPSC order in its entirety, or at least the specific parts described above. They also ask that the Court of Appeals block the MPSC from enforcing any part of its order while this appeal is ongoing.

The filing of the lawsuit does not automatically invalidate or halt the enforcement of the MPSC order. Those decisions must be made by the Court of Appeals in a formal court order. It is unknown at this time whether the Court of Appeals would grant a stay while the case is pending, or whether the court will ultimately invalidate the entire order.

What is known for certain is that this lawsuit is not challenging the acts as a whole. Even if the MPSC order is invalidated, PA 233 and 234 are still valid pieces of legislation that took effect Nov. 29, 2024. The MPSC order clarified, and perhaps changed, some aspects of the acts, but their overall structure and preemption scheme will remain whether the appeal succeeds or fails.

Consult with your legal counsel

As of *Township Focus* press time, the MPSC order stands as valid and will govern the application process for renewable energy projects, effective Nov. 29, 2024. Townships should reach out to their legal counsel to discuss their options, in particular whether the township wants to do nothing and wait, adopt a CREO, adopt a workable ordinance, or something else. Please note that different attorneys have different interpretations of the acts and the MPSC order. It is important that the township does not take any action without consulting its legal counsel, as missteps can result in very negative consequences for the township as it relates to renewable projects.

To stay up to date on the latest news and updates regarding renewable energy legislation, the MPSC order and the pending appeal, watch MTA publications, including *Township Focus* and the weekly *Township Insights* e-newsletter.



Robert E. Thall, MTA legal counsel, and **Michael Bila**, attorney, Bauckham, Thall, Seeber, Kaufman & Koches, PC

Sample PA 233 documents, including a CREO, application and escrow documents, and example workable ordinances, are available on <https://michigantownships.org/sample-creo> (member login is required).



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Understanding compensated absences in your township

In the world of public accounting, staying up to date with new regulations is crucial, particularly for township officials responsible for maintaining and reporting financial information. One of the newer updates from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is Statement 101, which introduced new guidance for reporting compensated absences. This new standard, released in June 2022, had significant implications for how townships account for and report employee benefits, particularly paid leave.

What is GASB Statement 101?

GASB Statement 101, effective for fiscal years beginning after Dec. 15, 2023, focuses on the financial reporting of compensated absences, which refer to paid leave earned by employees but not yet taken (or leave taken and not yet paid), such as vacation, sick leave or paid time off (PTO). GASB 101 aims to facilitate more transparent and consistent reporting of compensated absences, which will improve comparability across local units of government. This will help provide more clarity to both internal officials, such as township boards, and external parties, including auditors, bondholders and the general public.

Key changes for township officials

For some Michigan townships, reporting compensated absences is not new. However, GASB Statement 101 introduces important changes that township officials everywhere need to be aware of:

Recognition of a liability: Under GASB 101, townships must recognize a liability for compensated absences when earned by the employee, not just when the leave is taken. This means that almost all accrued PTO is recorded as a liability for the township, even if the employee has not yet taken the leave. Previously, townships were required to report liabilities for earned but unused compensated absences; however, the timing and method of recognition could vary. In contrast, GASB Statement 101 clarifies that most all earned leave accruals must be reported as liabilities in the financial statements as they are accrued, ensuring a more consistent approach to recognizing these obligations.

Inclusion of salary-related payments: GASB Statement 101 expands the scope of compensated absences to include salary-related payments, such as employer contributions to retirement plans, Social Security and Medicare that are directly associated with earned compensated absences. This means townships must not only account for the value of unused leave but also recognize the additional costs tied to these benefits when employees take their leave or are paid out.

Estimation of leave usage patterns: Townships will need to estimate how much of the accrued compensated absences liability is expected to be paid out in cash versus leave that is more likely than not (greater than 50% chance) to be used as time off. This requires careful tracking of employee leave usage patterns to develop reasonable estimates. By accurately

estimating these usage patterns, townships can better manage their financial obligations and ensure that they have adequate resources allocated for future payouts.

Steps to compliance

To ensure compliance with GASB Statement 101, township officials should begin by reviewing current policies and systems for tracking employee leave. Here are a few steps to consider:

Review employment policies: Make sure your township's employment policies clearly define the types of leave employees are entitled to, how leave accrues, and any limits on carryover or payouts. These policies will directly impact how compensated absences liabilities are calculated.

Enhance recordkeeping systems: Ensure township recordkeeping systems accurately track accrued leave. You may need to collaborate with your payroll service provider to gather the necessary data.

Coordinate with auditors: Given the complexity of the new reporting requirements, it's essential to coordinate early with your auditors to ensure that your township is meeting the new standards. Auditors can provide guidance on best practices for tracking and reporting these liabilities.

Why this matters

GASB 101 represents more than just a change in accounting practices—it's about creating a more accurate picture of the township's finances. This improved accuracy allows township boards to make more informed decisions regarding budgeting, long-term planning and resource allocation. Accurate financial statements also benefit township residents, who rely on transparent reporting to assess how their tax dollars are managed. When financial obligations are clearly represented, it fosters trust and accountability, enabling residents to engage meaningfully in discussions about fiscal policy and budget priorities. By aligning reporting practices with public sector best practices, GASB 101 strengthens the foundation for informed decision-making by both township officials and the constituents they serve.

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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Connecting your community: The power of broadband and the BEAD program

The Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program is moving forward and will soon be accepting grant applications. Nearly \$1.6 billion in federal funding has been allocated to deploy infrastructure to unserved and underserved homes, businesses and community anchor institutions across our state. Final lists and maps of BEAD-eligible locations will be available in the coming weeks from the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office (MIHI).

Why broadband matters

Broadband access is critical to all Michigan communities, and their residents, affecting:

Economic growth. Increasing opportunities for businesses and job growth.

Rural development. Supporting rural communities with availability of e-commerce and digitization of business practices.

Innovation. Fostering entrepreneurship by providing access to self-employment tools and services.

Education. Access to online learning at all levels, homework assistance and virtual classrooms for all.

Healthcare. Improve overall health outcomes with telemedicine appointments, health information access and remote monitoring.

Connectivity. Staying connected with friends, family, local governments and the world.

How you can be involved

Internet service providers (ISPs) will submit applications to MIHI to secure grant funding to build to each BEAD-eligible location in our state. Local officials' leadership will be important in helping ensure that the BEAD program works well for your community and your constituents.

Township letters of support will be considered as part of grant application scoring: you can provide a letter of support to one project, multiple projects, or none at all. It is important to know: **no BEAD-eligible location will be left out.** Any internet service provider who tells you that you must "act now" so that your township is not left behind is not being truthful.

As the state prepares for Michigan's BEAD program, MIHI encourages township officials to:

- Communicate with ISPs that may approach you to share information about their potential applications.
- Share with the ISPs any input that you may have regarding their proposals (e.g., what permits will be required, best construction routes to minimize impact to the community).
- If you have not done so already, work with your colleagues to ensure that you are preparing to review and respond to permit applications that you anticipate receiving in 2025 for BEAD-funded projects.

Have questions about Michigan's BEAD program and what it may mean for your township? Contact MIHI at LEO-MIHighSpeedInternet@michigan.gov. You can also learn more on MIHI's BEAD website, www.michigan.gov/leo (click on "Bureaus & Agencies," then "MIHI," "Funding Opportunities" and "BEAD").

upcoming MTA workshop

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

New Officials Training

This full-day, in-person event—held at 13 locations across the state—is essential to help newly elected officials start out on the right foot! Designed to build on your abilities and understanding of township government, MTA's *New Officials Training* will enable you to successfully represent and serve your residents while shaping your community's future. We'll review the "hows and whys" of township government, and explore the duties and responsibilities of the township board—and your role. We'll start out the day (at 9 a.m.) with discussion on:

- **What Townships Do—and Don't Do:** Every township's required government functions, plus the optional "do's and don'ts."
- **Who's in Charge (and What Did I Get Myself Into?):** How township boards work.
- **Public vs. Private:** You're the government, using public money—what are the rules? What is your "fiduciary" responsibility?
- **Township Revenues:** How does a township pay for government programs and services?

After lunch (*included with your registration*), join the breakout session (1 to 4 p.m.) geared for your office. Here's what we'll review:

- **Clerks:** Records, minutes, notices, financial administration and reporting, accounts payable, elections and additional duties
- **Supervisors:** Meeting management, ordinances, lawful expenditures, budgets, township administration, overseeing assessing and risk management
- **Treasurers:** Financial administration, internal controls and reporting, selecting township financial institutions and investments, and receiving and receipting money
- **Trustees:** Understanding your role (*hint: all board members are "trustees" at the head table*), including budgeting, decision-making, and fiduciary responsibility (*looking out for the township's best interests*)

Can't make the date nearest you? There's an online option, too! Watch a recorded class (*available Dec. 20*), then join us online for a live Q&A to get your questions answered in real time. We'll begin at 10 a.m. as follows:

Clerks: January 27

Supervisors: January 28

Treasurers: January 29

Trustees: January 30

Continue learning with MTA publications: Members save up to 20% off our township-targeted resources when purchased with registrations:

OPTION 1: Township Basics package (\$94.50 discounted rate; online registrants, include \$6 for shipping) Includes *Official's Guide to Township Government* (specific to your office), *Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Townships*, and *Introduction to Township Board Meetings*

OPTION 2: Township Essentials collection (\$230 discounted rate; online registrants, include \$10 for shipping) Includes resources in the Township Basics package PLUS *Building a Better Budget*, *Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act*, *The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning* and *Policy Matters!*



Confirmations, with locations, directions, lodging information and event policies, will be sent via email to individual registrants.

New Officials Training Registration Form

Township & County _____

Name & Title _____ Purchase books? Basics Essential

Email address _____

Name & Title _____ Purchase books? Basics Essential

Email address _____

Payment Options

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

Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # _____ Expires _____

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

Which location will you attend?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 10: Muskegon | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 6: Houghton |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 11: Lansing | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 7: Harris |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 12: Kalamazoo | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 8: Sault Ste. Marie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 17: Frankenmuth | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 14: Port Huron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 18: Hale | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 15: Gaylord |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 19: Thompsonville | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 16: Mt. Pleasant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online option | <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 17: Ann Arbor |

▶ **Online Rate*:** \$150/person

▶ **In-person Early Rate*:** \$150/person *Expires two weeks prior to event*

▶ **In-person Regular Rate*:** \$180/person *Applies two weeks prior to event*

For on-site registration, as space allows, add \$20

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

_____ (# of Basic kits) x (\$94.50/package*) = \$ _____

_____ (# of Essential kits) x (\$230/package*) = \$ _____

(Online attendees, add \$6 per Basics package and \$10 per Essentials package, for shipping and handling)

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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



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Send completed registration form to MTA, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078,
fax to (517) 321-8908 or email rebecca@michigantownships.org. Need event registration assistance?
Call (517) 321-6467, ext. 226. For other event-related questions, call (517) 321-6467, ext. 234.

MTA's 2025 Board of Review Training

Every board of review member (and alternate) **must** complete State Tax Commission-approved training at least once every two years. **MTA offers both in-person and online Board of Review Training. We've got advanced training, too!** Whether you need to satisfy the biennial training requirement OR are seeking next-level training, we've got you covered. Regardless which class you choose, every participant will receive comprehensive handouts and resource materials, including samples, updated forms and bulletins, as well as guidance and information created specifically for the board of review.

PA 660 Required Training for Board of Review Members (Approved by the STC; meets the biennial training requirement)

- Overview of the board's role and statutory authority
- How to handle protests
- July and December boards of review
- Key items for 2025

Check-in and lunch begin at 11 a.m. and sessions are held from noon to 4 p.m. Dates and locations for in-person training include:

- Feb. 3: Log Cabin Inn Banquet Center, Muir Feb. 13: Treetops Resort, Gaylord
 Feb. 4: Van Buren ISD Conference Center, Lawrence Feb. 19: Soaring Eagle, Mt. Pleasant
 Feb. 5: Commonwealth Commerce Center, Jackson Feb. 20: Evergreen Resort, Cadillac
 Feb. 11: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth Feb. 25: Northern Center at NMU, Marquette
 Feb. 12: Eagle Pointe Plaza, Hale Feb. 26: Walker Cisler Center at LSSU, Sault Ste. Marie

Prefer online training? Choose from:

- Feb. 6: 4-8 p.m. Feb. 18: 1-5 p.m. Feb. 28: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Online participants **must** keep their cameras on for the full duration of class and complete a quiz at the end of to receive certification.

MTA's Board of Review Guide:

In-person attendees may purchase the 2025 edition of MTA's *Board of Review Guide* for the discounted onsite rate of \$37.40/book (member rate only; non-members, call for rates). Books will be distributed on-site.

Rate for online registrants is \$44/book, which includes shipping and handling.

Advanced Training: Board of Review Management (For those who've already met the biennial training requirement; this class does NOT meet the STC's biennial training requirement)

- Procedural changes
- Best practices for minutes and agendas
- Administration of paperwork and forms
- How to respond and when to punt to your assessor
- 2025 trouble spots and hot topics
- Key points of the PA 660 audit

Check-in and lunch begin at 11 a.m. and sessions are held from noon to 4 p.m. Dates and locations for in-person training include:

- Feb. 5: Commonwealth Commerce Center, Jackson
 Feb. 13: Treetops Resort, Gaylord
 Feb. 19: Soaring Eagle, Mt. Pleasant

Prefer online training? Join us Feb. 27: 1-5 p.m

Uncertain which class you need?

Scenario—If you:	Training—then you must:
Are newly appointed	Complete training before acting at any board of review meeting.
Were reappointed and completed training in Jan./Feb. 2023	Complete PA 660 Required Training in Jan./Feb. 2025.
Were reappointed and completed training in Jan./Feb. 2024	Complete PA 660 Required Training in Jan./Feb. 2026; this year, you could attend MTA's Advanced Training.
Completed training mid-year 2023	Must complete PA 660 Required Training by two-year date on certificate. Consider Jan./Feb. 2025 to get on biennial cycle (mid-year training is limited).
Completed training mid-year 2024	Must complete PA 660 Required Training by two-year date on certificate in 2026; this year, you could attend MTA's Advanced Training.

Board of Review Training Registration Form

Must include which session EACH person will attend.

Township & County _____

Name & Title _____ Email (required for online training) _____
 Attending: PA 660 Required Training OR Advanced Training **Add a book:** Yes No

Name & Title _____ Email (required for online training) _____
 Attending: PA 660 Required Training OR Advanced Training **Add a book:** Yes No

Name & Title _____ Email (required for online training) _____
 Attending: PA 660 Required Training OR Advanced Training **Add a book:** Yes No

Confirmations, including location details and/or online instructions will be sent via email. To add or update an email, contact MTA at (517) 321-6467, ext. 231 or email database@michigantownships.org.

Payment Options

- Check enclosed (payable to MTA) OR Invoice my township (members only)
 Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card # _____ Expires _____

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

Choose your training, date and method of participation:

PA 660 Required Training

- Feb. 3: Muir Feb. 18: *Online via Zoom*
 Feb. 4: Lawrence Feb. 19: Mt. Pleasant
 Feb. 5: Jackson Feb. 20: Cadillac
 Feb. 6: *Online via Zoom* Feb. 25: Marquette
 Feb. 11: Frankenmuth Feb. 26: Sault Ste. Marie
 Feb. 12: Hale Feb. 28: *Online via Zoom*
 Feb. 13: Gaylord

Advanced Training

- Feb. 5: Jackson Feb. 19: Mt. Pleasant
 Feb. 13: Gaylord Feb. 27: *Online via Zoom*

Early-bird Rate*: \$100/person *Expires three weeks prior to event date*

Regular Rate*: \$125/person *Begins three weeks from event date*

Late Rate*: \$150/person *Applies one week prior to event date*

____ (# registrants) x \$ _____ (rate) = \$ _____

____ (# of books) x \$ _____ (rate) = \$ _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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



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

aroundthestate

townships in the spotlight



Filer Charter Township

Filer Charter Township (Manistee Co.), nestled along Lake Michigan just south of the City of Manistee, is an integral part of the greater Manistee community. The township is home to a diverse industrial base, boasts a thriving commercial district, and its scenic landscapes offer breathtaking views of Lake Michigan to the west and Manistee Lake to the east.



Founded by Delos L. Filer in 1867, the township's history is rooted in the lumber industry. Filer, along with his sons, built a sawmill that fueled the local economy. As the lumber trade flourished, a railroad line was constructed in 1883 to support the expanding industry, and the rail station became known as "Filer's Switch."

Today, the township's 2,300-plus residents embrace its history as a means of strengthening a sense of community, while township leaders—with community input—aim to work cooperatively on regional initiatives, make sound land-use decisions, and embrace opportunity for transformation, such as developing a vision for the U.S. 31 corridor.

Established in the late 1960s, the Filer Township Fire Department moved to its current location in 1971—the same year it purchased the department's first fire truck—and began a first response unit in 1990. After a millage was approved in 2002, the station was renovated, including a large addition to house equipment. Today, the department's 12 dedicated volunteers respond to 350 calls each year, serving township residents in 36 square miles.

The township's four parks and recreational amenities help foster a healthy, active multi-generational community. Each season brings new activities to township parks for residents and visitors to enjoy, including trails, sports courts, picnic areas, and even a recreation center facility at Oak Hill Park, available to rent for weddings, events and parties. Two scenic parks are situated on the shores of Lake Michigan, including Sundling Park, which offers a trail to the beach and a newly

paved parking area. Though modest, it provides residents and visitors easy access to the Great Lakes shoreline.

Magoon Creek Park, often referred to as the crown jewel of Filer Charter Township, spans 97 acres and features 2,300 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline. Perched atop a 100-foot bluff, the park is equipped with numerous benches, picnic tables, grills and a pavilion. The natural beauty of Magoon Creek Park is evident in its rolling dunes, wooded trails and sandy beaches, which—along with the panoramic views of Lake Michigan—make this park a favorite destination for nature enthusiasts. Visitors can explore 1.5 miles of scenic hiking paths that wind through the forest, eventually leading down to the beach. The park is also a haven for wildlife, with deer and turkey frequently spotted amidst the trees and shrubs. The township remains committed to preserving the fragile dunes and allowing the natural landscape to evolve.

The land that makes up the park was acquired in 1983 with funds from a state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Trust Fund grant and the area was developed the following year. In 2017, the township was awarded another DNR Trust Fund grant, which enabled a number of extensive improvements to the park, where the township recently planted five giant sequoias for the enjoyment of future generations.



24/7 Remote Water Monitoring

Free for All
Par Plan
Members



- Detect Presence of Water
- Monitor Indoor Temperatures
- Prevent Frozen Pipes

Provided by the Michigan Township
Participating Plan



theparplan.com



Members: Scan the QR code for
program details and to order your kit.

