

Torch Lake Township

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Eastport Michigan 49627

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Kim Schmidt, Supervisor

Doris Leech, Clerk

Sharon Schultz, Treasurer

Alan Martel, Trustee

George Parker, Trustee

VOLUME XI

MARCH 2005 NEWSLETTER

SERIES NO. 1

TOWNSHIP BOARD BRIEFS

Well, spring should be just around the corner, but with temperatures still in the teens at night, it still feels like winter. I guess like previous years Spring will come if we are patient!

On behalf of the Township Board I would like to welcome Vala Shipman as one of our newest EMS squad members. Also I would like to acknowledge and welcome Alan Martel as our newest Township Board Trustee. Alan will bring fresh approaches to decision-making consensus on our Board.

George Parker, our other Township Board Trustee has been appointed as the Township Board representative to the Planning Commission. George has over twenty years previous experience on township planning commissions. George will be a well-seasoned addition to our planning commission.

The Planning Commission and our community will miss Brian Altonen since he and his family have moved from our community to be closer to school and work near Elk Rapids. We appreciate all the hard work he has done for our community. Jim King has been appointed to replace Brian representing agriculture on our Planning Commission. Welcome Jim!

I would also like to thank John Berst for his hundreds of hours of tireless work in our community. John is in the process of moving from our community. John has done so much for the community; it's hard to list all of his accomplishments. John served on our Road & Access Advisory Committee, Planning Commission member and as the Chairperson, authored the Torch Bay Nature Preserve (TBNP) Preservation Plan, successfully sought out grants for the TBNP and assisted in negotiation of the acquisition of the TBNP. Among other things, John has been the Day Park and TBNP custodian for the past several years. This meant that during the summer, day after day he opened, closed and cleaned the park facilities. He also managed the pavilion rentals along with Doris. I will personally miss him and the great working and personal relationship I had with him. On behalf of the Township Board and our wonderful community, thank you John for all your tireless efforts in making our community an enjoyable and better place to live!

As you can guess we are now looking for a new Parks Custodian. If interested please contact the Township Office for information.

I hope everyone has heard our website is up and running. This is just another opportunity for the township government to communicate with the community, our residents and taxpayers. Some of the information available on line is board and commission minutes, agendas and listings of elected and appointed members. You can also access ordinances, forms, contact information and this and future newsletters. We are still adding new items, so be patient and visit the site often. Check it out at www.torchlaketownship.org. If you have any suggestions or would like to see additional items on the website, just give us a call or send us an email. Again we would like to thank Michelle Schmidt and the Elk Rapids public schools for the development of this new addition of services to our community.

If you are still waiting for your dial up internet to connect and your information, pictures or files to download, you might want to check out the wireless broadband internet service that is available to most if not all of the township area by Chain O' Lakes Internet (COLI) You can visit and get further information on wireless broadband at www.torchlake.com. You will be surprised at the economy of their service. They now host the township's website and provide our offices with wireless broadband in exchange for the use of our tower in Eastport.

All Township Budget Hearing will be held on March 26th, 9:00 AM. at the Township Hall. Also on March 26th along with the Budget hearings will be the Annual Meeting of the Electors. The budget hearings start at 9 AM. Following a break, we will commence the Annual Meeting. The annual meeting is limited only by the desires of the attendees. Under Michigan Law, the electors present may officially act on the Township Board Salary Resolutions previously approved by the Township Board for the upcoming fiscal year. The electors present may make additional salary resolutions for any Township Board Elected Official. Any salary resolutions made and approved at the annual meeting cannot result in the official's salary being decreased beyond the current fiscal year's salary amount without the office holder's written permission. If the electors do not make any additional salary resolutions, the salary resolutions approved by the Township Board, will stand approved for the fiscal year of 2005-2006. Please come to this important once a year meeting. Coffee & goodies will be served! See you on Saturday, March 26th.

By Kim Schmidt

CLERK'S CORNER

Hello to all, wherever you may be!

ELECTIONS: All registered voters in our township should have received a letter from the County Clerk giving you the new polling location for elections in the Elk Rapids and Central Lake School Districts. The changes are due to elections having been consolidated under the jurisdiction of the county, township and village clerks. The law says if a school district has a voter registration count of more than 4999, each township that is part of that school district must hold school district elections in their local precinct for their township voters. If a school district has 4999 or less, the township with the greatest number of registered voters shall conduct the election in that townships precinct.

Therefore, if you live in the Elk Rapids School District, which has more than 5000 registered voters, you will vote school elections in the Torch Lake Township polling place, which is the Township Hall meeting room. If you live in the Central Lake School District, which has less than 5000 registered voters, you will vote school elections in the Central Lake Township polling place, which is their meeting room of the Government Center on M-88.

School elections will be held on Tuesday, May 3. If you need an absentee ballot, apply to the clerk of the township where you will be voting. If you have any questions, please call me.

PARK PAVILIONS: I want to remind you that our two pavilions at the Day Park in Torch Lake Village are available to rent for special occasions. The park has become a popular place for birthday parties, graduation parties, weddings, reunions, class parties, etc. The fee for township residents for a half-day is \$15 and \$30 for a full day. July and August weekends are prime time and some groups book a year in advance. If you think you are going to want the use of one of the pavilions, give me a call now and avoid being disappointed later.

PASSPORT ACCEPTANCE: The township office has been designated as a Passport Acceptance Agency with me as the accepting agent. I will be available to accept applications during my normal hours of 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Monday, Wednesday and Friday or by appointment.

See you soon!

By Doris Leech

TREASURER'S COMMENTS

This spring newsletter is a welcome time for the season ahead. Welcoming back the 'snowbirds' and the warmer temps is always a good sign of summer to come. I do enjoy the winter season, but as I get older, maybe a little less.

The July 1st 2005 summer tax collection will bring another change on your bills. In October 2004, the Michigan Legislature passed new laws, which will move the collection of the county allocated operating tax to the summer bill over the period of 2005 to 2007. The collection of this tax will be shifted to the summer during these years. For 2005, 1/3 of the allocated tax will be on the summer tax bill and 2/3 will be on the winter bill. For 2006, 2/3 on the summer and 1/3 on the winter. Then in 2007, the entire county allocated tax will be on the summer tax bill and none on the winter tax bill. This legislation was in response to the suspension of all state revenue sharing disbursements to the counties and will have a major impact on counties. There were no changes to the Elk Rapids and Central Lake school district's tax collections. They remain the same as past years.

Application forms for deferment of summer taxes are available upon request. I'm going to have them on our township web page also. This form must be completed each year in order to have taxes deferred without penalty and filed with me by September 14th, to receive the deferral, if qualified. If you have questions or need an application mailed to you just let me know.

I'm looking forward to the coming year ahead and the proposed new township building project. To me, this is very exciting and very much needed. If you have any questions about the new tax changes or anything else of concern, please let me know. If in the event of my absence, Sharon Velding is my deputy and a devoted community resident. Have a great summer and don't forget the Firemen's Field Day.... Be Safe.

By Sharon Schultz

SUPERVISOR'S THOUGHTS

The new Public Safety Building (PSB) project is still progressing. The size and layout of this combined public safety facility was the result of a year and a half of planning accomplished by the Fire Department Facilities Advisory Committee (FDFAC), fire department and EMS department personnel, and the Township Board.

In a parallel planning stage along with the new PSB, we were planning the remodeling of the township hall/offices in Eastport. During the bidding process for a new roof, some inconsistencies in the old roof cover were discovered. This prompted us to have an engineering review of the roof that revealed a *structural* problem. If the roof had been replaced without this discovery, it's anyone's

guess what might have happened in the future. It could have been very tragic. As a result of this discovery, we have been monitoring the snow accumulation/load on the roof and removing the snow when necessary.

Because of the significant cost required to remedy the roof structure for the township hall, we had our contracted architectural firm, DEM, add the township hall/office facility to the proposed PSB drawings so we could properly analyze areas of the building that could be used commonly by all three users. Over the past several weeks the FDFAC and the Township Board have reviewed this latest addition to the PSB drawings. It appears with this change, the multipurpose area used by our public safety services and the township hall/offices facilities is approximately 30% of the total area of the building. Along with the savings of common areas, come the economies of only one building for these uses, which currently are two.

As you may know, our main fire station in Eastport is inadequate as a main fire station under present day standards. The building is too small and too low for modern fire trucks. The building has no storage, office or record keeping facilities and the building does not meet current MIOSHA or OSHA standards. The station also needs to be centrally located in our community.

Our township hall and offices are also inadequate for our community. With our growth, the need for a larger meeting room has increased. The offices in the current building now consist of 2 rooms with five officials sharing these rooms. One of these rooms is also a conference room.

It would be a great advantage to have one building that could serve all three uses. Fire & EMS personnel could work closely together. Proper space for maintenance and storage of fire and EMS vehicles will also accompany this building. Storage, office and records area, which are very important, will be provided for. Training classroom area combined with the meeting room would be greatly enhanced. The combined meeting room with the training classroom would also be used as the township hall meeting room. This would increase the size of our current hall by 50% to accommodate our growing community. Township offices would be expanded to allow township officials to better serve our residents. The high efficiency and the combined use of this building would result in substantial savings of electricity, heating and maintenance costs over the next 30 to 50 years.

The Township Board has completed the proposed budgets for the Ambulance District, Fire District and Township General Fund for the upcoming 2005-2006 fiscal that starts April 1st. The Township Board has also determined that with the revision of the building project including the combined uses of fire, EMS and township hall/offices, the building could be paid off in a period of 15 years, without increasing taxes. The original projection of increases in the Ambulance and Fire special assessment district levies no longer would apply if the three uses were combined. By building new and bypassing the remodeling project, funds dedicated for the township hall/office remodeling project could be diverted and used for the new building. This would allow more cash and stronger debt retirement ability for this new building. In addition to the budget projections, we would sell the Eastport property and place those dollars into the debt retirement for this building.

In conclusion, at their regular monthly meeting in March, the Township Board made the decision to include the township hall/office facilities in the revised drawings for this building. They also decided to move into the engineering phase of the building and prepare bidding proposal documents in preparation for general bid advertising. Stay tuned, attend Board Meetings or contact the office for the latest update on this exciting project for our community.

By Kim Schmidt

DATES & TIMES

Township Meetings

Township Board	3 rd Tuesday of the month 7:30 PM.
Planning Commission	2 nd Tuesday of the month 7:30 PM.
Zoning Board of Appeals	2 nd Wednesday of the month 7:00 PM.

Township Office Hours

Supervisor/Assessor	Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9-noon & 1-2:30 PM.
Clerk	Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9-noon.
Treasurer	Various Evenings & Weekends & By appointment.
Zoning Administrator	Tuesday & Thursday, 9-2:30 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Volunteers are still needed to fill future vacancies on various boards, commissions & committees.

**WANTED Part time EMS & Fire Department
Personnel, contact the Township Office is interested**

THE ZONING ZONE

Short-term rental of residential property has been an open question for about the last year-and-a-half in Torch Lake Township. Both the Township Board and the Planning Commission have proposed ordinance changes that would answer the question of what is and is not allowed, but the Board has not accepted any of the proposals.

The most recent news on the subject is that your Township Board has officially asked the Zoning Board of Appeals to interpret the ordinance. If you are interested in this subject, keep your eyes on the ZBA agendas that are posted publicly and on our website.

In the ordinance enforcement area, we are now finally in the business of issuing Municipal Civil Infraction Notices (tickets) to violators. Two have been issued so far, with some more to follow. If you have questions about possible zoning violations, please contact me or come in to discuss your concerns.

Once again, remember that if you are planning some construction, large or small, a zoning permit is most likely required. The fee is only \$30 for residential areas. Don't find yourself on the receiving end of a ticket.

The Township website is now up and running. An up-to-date version of the Zoning Ordinance is available, as well as Planning Commission agendas and minutes, so you can keep yourself informed with much less effort than was required in the past.

The Zoning Administrator maintains regular office hours, 9:00 to 2:30 PM. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or you can contact me by email at any time, wbriggs@voyager.net.

By Bill Briggs

EMS RESPONSE

We had a record year in 2004. Already this year we have had more calls than we had last year, Maybe another record year? We would like to say congratulations to Vala Shipman for completing her EMT class and looking forward to her becoming a regular crewmember. If there is anyone that would like to help out, stop by the township hall and pick-up an application. Hope everyone has a great summer and see you at Firemen's Field Day the first Saturday of August.

Michael Watson

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL FOR FIRE PROTECTION**

**TORCH LAKE TOWNSHIP, ANTRIM COUNTY, MICHIGAN
FIRE PROTECTION SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT**

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF TORCH LAKE TOWNSHIP, ANTRIM COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Township Board of the Township of Torch Lake will conduct a public hearing at the Township Hall at 5081 North US 31 in Eastport, Michigan on March 26, 2005, at 9:00 AM. to consider the proposed Special Assessment Roll prepared by the Township Supervisor pursuant to the direction of the Township Board, concerning the Fire Protection Special Assessment District previously created.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Fire Protection Special Assessment District within which the cost of fire protection is proposed to be assessed includes the entire Township and the estimated cost of providing fire protection within the Special Assessment District for the fiscal year of 2004-2005 is approximately \$181,600. The amount of the Special Assessment is based upon the special benefit to real property from the nature and level of fire protection service to be provided by the Township.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the total amount proposed to be specially assessed in the Fire Protection Special Assessment District and the millage rate proposed are:

TOTAL: \$181,600 MILLAGE RATE: 1.0000

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that copies of the proposed budget and of the proposed special assessment roll may be inspected at the office of the Township Clerk at 5081 North US 31 in Eastport, Michigan, on regular business days and may also be inspected at the public hearing.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that at the public hearing, the Township Board will review said proposed special assessment roll and any comments or objections thereto which might be made or filed with said Board at or prior to the time of said public hearing, and will consider any revisions, amendments, or changes to said proposed special assessment roll and the amount of special assessments to be levied against benefited property

Appearance and protest at the public hearing is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. An owner, or party in interest, or his or her agent may appear in person at this hearing to protest the special assessment, or shall be permitted to file his or her appearance or protest by letter received at or before the public hearing, and if such a letter is filed, then the personal appearance of the person protesting is not required.

The owner or any person having an interest in the real property who protests in person or in writing at this hearing may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 30 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if the proposed special assessment roll is confirmed, or is modified and confirmed, the Special Assessment will be collected in the same manner as property taxes as provided for by law.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

All interested persons are invited to be present at the aforesaid time and place to submit comments concerning any of the foregoing, or to protest the proposed special assessment roll and/or Special Assessment.

Torch Lake Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audiotapes of printed material being considered at the hearing, to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon four (4) days notice to the Township Clerk. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk or Township Supervisor at the address or telephone number listed below.

**Kim Schmidt Township Supervisor
PO Box 713, Eastport, MI 49627
(231) 599-2036**