

February

# COMMUNITY BULLETIN

2012

## LOOKING FOR INFORMATION?

Check out our website at:  
[www.gainestownship.org](http://www.gainestownship.org)

**Working Together to  
Preserve Family Values.**

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## Supervisor's News

Don R. Hilton Sr., Supervisor

As I look to the future in an attempt to determine the needs / requirements normally funded through the annual Township budget, I almost wish that a crystal ball could truly be a reality. Obviously many ideas come to mind. However, with these ideas comes the reality that most of them come with a price tag attached. As township taxpayers we have come to expect a number of services ~ roads, parks, trails, police, fire protection~ services we rely on for both safety and enjoyment.

During the mid 2000's, the Township experienced significant population growth, much like that which occurred in the 1990's. About that time, it became clear to me that we needed to address future public safety for our citizens. Enhancements to our Fire Departments and additional Sheriff Deputies needed to be seriously considered. I recommend to the Township Board members that a citizens committee be established to review future trends and to establish a recommendation for a funding mechanism. After receiving Board approval, I appointed a public safety committee comprised of several Township citizens. This committee met several times, gathered information from surrounding communities and interviewed several individuals; including Kent County Sheriff Larry Stelma. In 2008 the committee presented its findings and recommendations to the Township Board. Although for many years we have contracted with the Sheriff Department for a dedicated car patrolling the township streets and roads around the clock, 365 days a year, the citizen's report concluded adding additional patrol(s) and improvements to the Dutton Fire Station were extremely important. The committee suggested that their recommendations be funded by asking the Township voters to approve additional millage, to be set aside and used specifically for police and fire budgets. Even given the fact that at .88 mills, Gaines Charter Township has one of the lowest millage rates in the area, the Township Board decided to explore other ways to finance any contractual increase with the Sheriff Department.

In December 2010, The Township Board members engaged in a strategic planning seminar. They emerged from those sessions with four goals; one being the increasing of public safety. An application for a Community Policing grant from the Federal Government was submitted; however this attempt at funding was unsuccessful. Recently another opportunity came about. Earlier in this article I mentioned population increases from the 90's and also during the last decade. During the 2000's our population increased by 4,000. This increase brought our population count to 25,146; which in turn in-

A portion of the Supervisor's responsibilities is to continually review services being provided to our citizens.

creased our state shared revenue by approximately \$400,000.00. *(State shared revenue is money returned to a local unit of government based on a constitutional formula)*

Based on the 2008 report, and the results from strategic planning, the Township Board members decided to use the additional state shared revenue funds to contract for an additional 12 hours, 365 day a year Sheriff Department patrol. The cost is approximately \$225,000.00 and includes the patrol car, equipment and officer. The Township also contracted for a 40 hour per week Community Policing Officer. This officer is also a Deputy from the Sheriff Department, but will concentrate his efforts working with citizens groups, business owners, school administrators, youth groups, and others to offer his expertise in preventing crime from occurring in the Township. The cost for this officer is approximately \$100,000.00 per year, which includes his car and equipment. The total amount budgeted for law enforcement in 2012 is \$780,000.00.

As we move forward through 2012, we as Township citizens can do so with the peace of mind, knowing that our Township Officials are addressing our protection and safety as a number one priority.

## Treasurer's Notes

Laurie J. Lemke, Treasurer  
Gaines Charter Township

The 2010 Census was very important to our Township, and has impacted us in a positive way.

The State revenue sharing, which is a result of our portion of the 6% sales tax collected, is calculated based on residency. This census has shown an increase of 4,034 men, women and children into our Township. What this means is an increase in our state revenue dollars. These extra funds will be spent on much needed additional police protection for our Gaines Township community. **Thank-you** for completing your 2010 government census survey, this would not have happened without you.

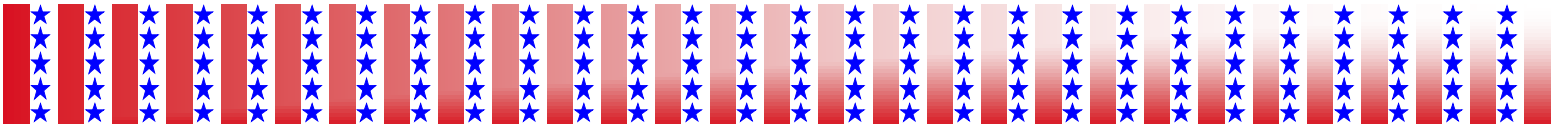


Just a reminder your **2011 winter property tax bill** is due by 5PM on **February 14th**. Please stop in and see me and I just might even have a valentine treat for you!

Also, remember you may purchase your 2012 Kent County Dog License at the Township offices thru **February 29, 2012**. Please bring in the reminder card sent out by the county and a current Rabies Certificate if the rabies vaccination expires within 30 days.



I am here to serve you, if you have any questions or concerns, my door is always open and I will be happy to help you in anyway I can.



## Clerk's Corner

Crystal Osterink, Clerk

**ELECTIONS!**  
**ELECTIONS!**  
**ELECTIONS!**

*Are you tired of it yet?* When was the last time you tuned into the news or read the newspaper and the candidates' speeches, travels, and families were not discussed in detail?

Although we may all be tired of the constant media attention to the upcoming elections, I would like to take this space to remind us all of their importance. We should never take for granted the blessing we have of living in a country in which we can have a voice in electing our political leaders. Please take the time to vote in the following:

**February 28~Presidential Primary:** For Gaines Township, this election is solely to nominate presidential candidates to run for their parties in the November 6 election. For this election, you will need to indicate on your application (either absentee or at the polls) which of the two ballots you want-either Republican or Democrat. That choice will not remain in your permanent record, but is necessary for the Presidential Primary only.

### **May 8~Grand Rapids Community College:**

The college will be asking for a millage approval.



**August 7~Primary Election:** A primary is an election in which voters in a jurisdiction select candidates for a subsequent election. In other words, primary elections are one means by which a political party nominates candidates for the following general election. In the August election you must limit your votes to one party-no crossing over. **The President's office is not on this ballot** because that election was held previously in February of this year.

**November 6~General Election:** While primary elections serve to narrow down a field of candidates to one per position per party; general elections actually elect candidates to offices.

**Absentee Voting:** Please call my office you have the desire to vote absentee and fit the following qualifications: 60 years or over, absent from the community on election day, physically unable to attend the polls, prohibited from attending due to religious beliefs, in jail awaiting arraignment or trial, or working as a precinct inspector on election day. You can also download a form from our website or the Michigan Secretary of State's website.

For those of you voting at the polls: Please take a minute to ensure you are registered in our Township and locate the polling location. You can do that by visiting the Secretary of State's website at Michigan.gov/vote. As for Election day, proof of identity will be required (as it has been for several years). It is my goal to make your voting experience as simple as possible. The Clerk's Office is always happy to help you with any of your election questions. Call us at 616-698-6640.

## Fire Department

Chief Russ Jansen, Cutlerville and Dutton



January 2012 and finally...**SNOW**



Amazing... Watch your Speed!

If you have been driving through Dutton, you surely have seen that the renovations to the Station are complete. The grass started to grow, most of the plantings are completed and the electronic sign is working out great.

**Stop by or call 616-541-0119...**

**I would be happy to give you a tour !**

In addition to completing the new station, 2011 proved to be a busy year. Dutton ended the year with 496 recorded calls; 43-Fire, 283-Medical and 170'Other.

Some quick safety reminders for the winter months:

- ◆ "Keep those Chimneys Clean", several chimney fires have already been reported this heating season.
- ◆ Test your smoke and CO detectors on a regular basis throughout the winter to ensure they are in working order. Keep them clear of dust, check batteries, etc.



### **DUTTON SNOWMAN FESTIVAL**

February 11, 2012

10 am to 3 pm

Cash prizes for 1st & 2nd Place in Two Categories:  
Snowmen and Snow Art

Register at the Fire Station and stop by for some Hot Chocolate ~ courtesy of area Dutton Merchants. The cash prizes will be awarded at the Station later in the day. Hope to see you there! Thank you for all your support and stay safe!

*Chief Jansen*

## Important Reminder for Township Residents

*Grab a Sled ..... Strap on your cross-country ski's .....*

*Fire up the Snowmobile.....*

However you choose to enjoy the wonder and beauty of a Michigan winter, please remember to respect property boundaries.

Gaines Chrtr Township, (Kent Co.,)

Michigan—Code of Ordinances

*MCL 750.377 a et seq. Sec. 28-87. Trespass. No person shall trespass or unlawfully remain upon the premises of another to the annoyance or disturbance of the lawful occupant or his agent. (Ord. No. IV, § II (V)), 4-3-1973)*



**Serving the Community with Pride**



## Water and Sewer Department

Jeff Gritter, Township Engineer



### TOWNSHIP UTILITY RATES FOR 2012

The Township has completed its annual utility rate study, and the Township Board has adopted the 2012 rates listed below in Resolution 11-12. With the approved changes in rates, the Township has been able to reduce Ready-to-Serve charges, but the commodity rates for water and sewer usage have continued to rise. The effect on the average utility bill will be an increase in cost of about 2.24%. Please note that each individual customer will be affected differently by the new rates, as water use varies by individual needs.

#### **2012 Water & Sewer Rates:**

- ◆ Water Usage Rate = \$2.25/1,000 gallons
- ◆ Water Ready-to-Serve Rate = \$15.60/quarter
- ◆ Sewer Usage Rate = \$3,.78/1,000 gallons
- ◆ Sewer Ready-to-Serve Rate = \$14.80/quarter

Please find the complete summary of all rates and charges as they relate to the Township's Water & Sewer System, and a copy of Resolution 11-12 WATER AND SEWER RATES, on the Township's website at <http://www.gainestownship.org>, click on Water & Sewer Department. If you have any questions about the rates, please contact Jeff Gritter, Township Engineer at [jeff.gritter@gainestownship.org](mailto:jeff.gritter@gainestownship.org) or Jan Boone, Water & Sewer Administrator at [janice.boone@gainestownship.org](mailto:janice.boone@gainestownship.org). Jeff and Jan can also be reached at 616-698-6640.

#### **Paperless Utility Bills**

If you prefer to receive your water and sewer utility bill via your email address, please send us the following information: Name on the Account, physical address of the property that you wish to receive the email bill for, email address and a phone number we can reach you at. If you have any questions or if you are interested in receiving your bill via email, please contact Jan Boone at [janice.boone@gainestownship.org](mailto:janice.boone@gainestownship.org) or 616-698-6640.

#### **Utility Bill Payments**

Gaines Charter Township accepts check payments by mail (no post marks accepted), cash or check, at the Township office. Lobby hours are Monday–Friday, 8:30am–5:00pm. A payment drop box is located near the main lobby door; all payments left in the drop box will be posted to the next day's business.

We also offer Automatic Draft Transfer (ACH); this payment method requires an application complete with your bank account information, proof of ownership (voided check or letter from the bank) for the account that the funds would be transferred out of to cover the utility payment. The transfer is made on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month that you are billed in. For an application, please call Jan at 616-698-6640 or print one found on the website listed above.

## Parks and Recreation Committee



Happy New Year to Everyone! The Gaines Township Parks & Recreation Committee is looking forward to 2012 & the exciting opportunities it brings. We continue to strive to enhance the parks and trails located in Gaines Township, and welcome input from the community. The old adage "Many hands make light work" rings true. So, if you have a desire to help improve these areas, or just want to work outside for an afternoon, please contact the Township Office at 616-698-6640. The ever growing membership of the "Friends of Prairie Wolf Park" currently totals 78. It is the awesome work of our volunteers that enables us to continue to improve the Parks and Trails of Gaines Township!

One such volunteer is Denny Cooper. Along with his wife Sherry, Denny spends hours assisting with Prairie Wolf Park (PWP). Denny recently completed a wonderful metal sculpture of a wolf, which he and Sherry donated to PWP. The sculpture has been placed near the point where the trails converge, yet is visible from Kalamazoo Avenue, and is a great salute to the heritage of the area.

Volunteers have been integral in the newest project already in progress in PWP. In January 2011, plans were finalized for an 11-acre prairie establishment project in the southern meadow. The 1st acre of the prairie was planted with over 40 varieties of seed harvested from other local established prairies. Each year another acre will be seeded; until the entire 11 acres is completed in 2020. Visit <http://www.pwpprairie.blogspot.com> for details.

We also thank Brian and Kerri Diemer for their donation of the beautiful "Halfway to Arkansas" plants that will adorn the PWP overlook with pale blue flowers in May, and colorful foliage in the fall.

The annual PWP Garlic Mustard Pull was a great success, with volunteers removing a truckload of the invasive weed. Repeat volunteers could *really see the difference* made by the last 3 years of effort! Look for this event the 2nd Saturday in May. Join in the effort to eradicate this invasive species from our beautiful park.

The 2011 Gaines Heritage Festival (at PWP) was enjoyed by all! Thank you Robin Halsted & Laurie Lemke for all your effort! The 2012 Festival will be October 13th. Planning meetings begin in March. Hayrides, vendors, food, antique tractors and possibly a Civil War re-enactment! Contact the Township Office to volunteer.

Slated 2012 progress for PWP includes new distance signage, boardwalk in the raised wetland, and boxes to enhance the habitat for Wood Ducks (provided by local Boy Scout Troy Hall). As for area trails, the Committee strongly supports the inclusion of Dutton & Shadyside parks in the nearby Paul Henry Trail System. Kent County is completing the final section of the Paul Henry, near East Paris Ave., between 68th and 76th streets.

We sincerely hope you have a few moments to enjoy the parks and trails during the remaining winter months, as well as the upcoming spring season. There are many activities ~ walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing and sledding ~ which provide fun and exercise and also offer an opportunity to observe the natural beauty and wildlife of our parks and trails. *Always remember to follow posted signs.*

The Parks and Recreation Committee and Gaines Charter Township are committed to enhancing our parks & trails. If residents or businesses are interested in assisting with contributions of effort or finances to make projects happen, please contact the Township Office at (616) 698-6640.



## Assessor's Office

Vicki VanderLugt, Assessor

### 2012 ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

The decline in the housing market values has slowed in Gaines Township this past year, and will be reflected when assessment change notices are mailed in late February. Residential assessments will decrease an **average** of 1.0% in 2012. The decrease applies to areas that have had properties sell for less than double the assessed value. Some properties will increase if sales in their area indicate the assessments are too low. The changes are determined by the average relationship of sale price to assessment in a given area. If property sales are limited or non-existent in a neighborhood, the average change from surrounding neighborhoods will be taken into consideration to determine the percentage change in assessment.

As mandated by law, the sales used to determine the 2012 assessments occurred between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011. The listing of the sales used is available on the Township website. (Please note that, based on strict guidelines issued by the State, foreclosure sales are typically not considered when determining assessments.) Agricultural properties will also see minimal reductions, similar to residential properties. Most Commercial and Industrial properties will see decreases for 2012 as well.

As required by the Constitution (Proposal A amendment), there is a predetermined rate of change used as the basis for determining taxes. The CPI (consumer price index) this year is 2.7%. This rate will be applied to the 2011 taxable value to determine the 2012 taxable value. If the assessed value and taxable value are the same, and the assessed value is reduced more than the CPI, these two values will continue to be equal. The CPI does not apply to properties that have sold or made improvements during the year. It also does not apply to improvements that were discovered during our annual visits to properties in reappraisal areas.

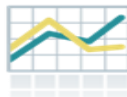
### APPEAL INFORMATION

Assessment Change Notices (State Form #L-4400) will be mailed the last week of February. Please review this notice carefully. In addition to valuation changes, it indicates Principal Residence and property transfer status, as well as property classification. The Board of Review will meet, on an appointment basis, March 12th and 13th, 2012 to hear appeals. If, **after you receive your Assessment Change Notice**, you believe the assessed valuation on your property does not accurately reflect market value, please call 616-698-6640 to schedule an appointment.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Principal Residence Exemption Audits are currently being conducted in Gaines Township. The State of Michigan has contracted TMA Associates to verify the validity of exemptions that have been claimed. If you no longer qualify for the exemption (you must own and occupy your home as your principal residence to qualify), please contact our office to rescind the exemption.

Assessment data is available at [www.gainestownship.org](http://www.gainestownship.org), under "Tax & Property Info". You are encouraged to review your property characteristics to confirm our data is accurate.



## February

8th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
11th	Dutton Snowman Festival	10am-3pm
13th	Township Board	7:00 pm
14th	Winter Tax Bill Due	8:30am-5pm
23rd	Planning Commission	11:00am
28th	Presidential Primary	Polls Open 7am-8pm

## March

12th	Board of Review	8am-5pm
13th	Township Board	7:00 pm
13th	Board of Review	1pm-9pm
14th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
15th	Board of Review	8am-5pm
22nd	Planning Commission	11:00am

## April

9th	Township Board	7:00 pm
11th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
11th	Parks and Recreation	7:00 pm
26th	Planning Commission	11:00am
30th	Special Board Workshop	7:00 pm

## Important Phone Numbers

Dutton Fire	911	(616) 541-0019
Cutlerville Fire	911	(616) 455-7670
Sheriff Substation	911	(616) 632-6490
Kent County Road Commission	Road Repairs/ Dead Animals/ Snow plowing	(616) 242-6900
Consumers Energy	Street lighting	1-800-477-5050
Gaines Library		(616) 647-3870
Township Offices	Phone (616) 698-6640	Fax (616) 698-2490
Byron/Gaines Utility Authority		(616) 971-0002

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