

**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

New Year's resolutions most of them have probably been forgotten by now, well maybe we can do better next year. Many of the news articles coming from the media express relief that 2009 is behind us. So, what are they expecting will change or is it just relief that we can look forward with a sense of beginning and optimism to 2010?

2009 brought about several significant changes here at the Township. We replaced some of our aging fire trucks with two new ones. At the Cutlerville Fire Station one truck was replaced with Gaines Township partnering with Byron Township to purchase a new one. Both Townships utilized Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a portion of the \$385,000 purchase. The balance of the purchase was divided between the two townships. The **Dutton fire truck** replaced two aging units at a cost of approximately \$395,000. Gaines Township had budgeted for this purchase for several years. Usually when a fire truck is replaced it is about twenty years old and is beginning to require significant maintenance. The only way we can make purchases of this magnitude is to plan ahead for several years. Even then it is a shock to the budget when the time comes to make the replacement. Another change came to the Township last May when the Board appointed (hired) a Township Superintendent. State statute allows for a Charter Township to create this position. The person filling this position takes on part of the duties normally exercised but the Township Supervisor. Since this position has been established it has allowed me to channel my thoughts in a different direction. Even though my hours have been reduced I continue to represent the township citizens on several different Boards and Commissions and I am readily available for anyone wishing to make an appointment to meet with me.

After several years of planning and setting funding aside we have just completed a **new storage building** in Blain Cemetery. The Cemetery Sextons have been using a small building to house all of the equipment used to maintain the three township cemeteries. The current structure has become obsolete with very little space available to maintain equipment and the building is in need of significant repair. The new building is much larger and is located near a new driveway entrance making it much more accessible. This building is designed to accommodate a future office currently there are no plans for that to happen anytime soon. The building is large enough to allow for maintenance of equipment as well as adequate storage area. Because it is located adjacent to a residential community we designed the exterior to be compatible to nearby homes. Next spring final grading of the site will be finished and landscaping will be completed.

Two projects are in the planning stages for 2010: The thirty-four year old Dutton Fire Station will take on a new look. Several of our Township staff working with the Township Superintendent and was success-

ful in acquiring a federal stimulus grant of \$866,561. This grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is awarded under the FEMA Fire Station Construction Grant Program. These funds combined with an additional \$225,000 of township funding appropriated by the Township Board will be used for remodeling or possibly totally rebuilding the station.

The second project, **Hammond Avenue sidewalk**, has been in the planning stage for several years. This project is intended, at a later date, to become a link between the Paul Henry Trail and 68<sup>th</sup> street commercial district in Dutton. The project will be funded in part with the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Program funding with the balance coming from the Township Trails Budget. Total cost for this project is estimated at \$75,000. *(Continued on page 4)*



**Treasurer's Notes**

Laurie Lemke, Treasurer

You should have received your 2009 Winter Tax Bill in the mail last month; if not please call our office at 616-698-6640 and a copy can be sent to you. I know many of you are facing job losses and reduced incomes, the treasurer's office will be happy to work with you on a payment plan for your taxes if a full payment is not possible; to avoid any interest and penalty charges the winter taxes are to be paid **no later than Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>**. This is Presidents Day but our office will be open to accept your payments. On March 1, 2010 taxes will be forwarded to the Kent County Treasurer's office and all unpaid summer and winter 2009 property taxes at that time will become payable to them.

Gaines Township is a wonderful place to live; we enjoy our parks and trail systems, our beautiful rural landscapes as well as shopping and dining opportunities. We have two fire stations that serve the Township Dutton and Cutlerville. The Kent County Sheriff sub-station is located in our township as well as many fine schools and churches. One hidden asset to living in our Township is our **low millage rate**. For example a \$100,000 home in Gaines Township would have a township tax amount of \$48.00, in Byron Township it would be \$111.00 and in Caledonia Township it would be \$110.00. Part of the reason is we do not have any additional millage rate as of yet for Police and Fire Protection, those service costs come directly from our general fund budgeting.

**Dog licenses** are available again this year **until March 1**; bring in your reminder post cards or proof of your pet's rabies vaccination. To obtain a license your proof of rabies vaccination must not expire within 30 days. A local vendor has agreed to provide a "treat" with each license renewal this year!



My office door is always open and **I am here to serve you**, please feel free to stop in with any questions or concerns and I will be glad to help you in any way I can.

## Water and Sewer Department

Jeff Gritter, Township Engineer

Township Utility Rates for 2010: The Township has completed its annual utility rate study in late 2009 and the Township Board has

adopted the following rates for 2010 in Resolution 09-06-WS:

- ◆ Water Usage Rate = \$1.99/1,000 gallons
- ◆ Water Ready-to-Serve Rate = \$15.72/quarter
- ◆ Sewer Usage Rate = \$3.23/1,000 gallons
- ◆ Sewer Ready-to-Serve Rate = \$15.11/quarter



The usage rates are charged to all customers and ready to serve rates listed above are for most residential customers. For a complete summary of all rates and charges as they relate to the Township's Water and Sewer System please review the information that can be found on the Township's website at <http://www.gainestownship.org>. A copy of Resolution 09-06-WS can be found on the Water and Sewer Department's webpage. If you have any questions about the rates please email Jeff Gritter the Township Engineer at [jeff.gritter@gainestownship.org](mailto:jeff.gritter@gainestownship.org) or Jan Boone the 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: The Water and Sewer Department is implementing a **new option** for receiving your Water and Sewer Bill. If you wish, you may now receive the bill via your email address. This is a voluntary program and if you would like to sign up please send us the following information: Name on the Account, physical address of the home or business for which you wish to receive the email bill for, email address and a phone number we can reach you.

As we begin implementing this billing option we will be sending you your bill both ways; via email and the usual postcard. Once we are comfortable that the system is working properly the postcard bill will be phased out. Payments can be made in the same way that you are used to. If you have any questions about this or 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.



## Clerk's Corner

Crystal Osterink, Clerk

After a year of relative calm in the Clerk's office with only the school elections to administer,

we find ourselves looking toward the **election cycles of 2010**. We will, of course have the (annual) school elections which take place in May but also will prepare for and hold the state primary in August and the state general in November. As you know, this is the year we elect a new governor, Secretary of State and Attorney General for Michigan as well as decide on many other offices including U.S Senator and Representative in Congress, State Senator and Representative, County Commissioner and others. There is no better time than now to become aware of and involved in the issues and candidates for whom you will be voting this year.

On the practical end of the elections you will see a few changes the next time you go to vote in Gaines Township. The State is moving quickly toward the **use of electronic poll books** which facilitates not only voting but transmission of results to local and state levels.

## Planner's Corner

Brian Tingley, Planning Director

The Planning and Zoning Department provides staff support to the **Planning Commission**

and **Zoning Board of Appeals**. We are always willing to discuss with residents the roles that these two public bodies play in the Township. In addition, we would love to talk with any resident who may be interested in serving on these bodies in the future.



In cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Committee, Planning and Zoning Department staff will prepare a **Non-motorized Transportation Plan in 2010**. This Plan will be separate from the 2010 – 2014 Parks and Recreation Plan and will center on trails, sidewalks, paths, etc. It will focus on the specific location of future facilities, potential costs associated with those facilities and potential phasing. Once completed, this document will help the Township in future capital improvement programming. Starting in 2010, the Parks and Recreation Committee will also begin development of an in-house contact database of 1,000 local residents, schools and other stakeholders. The goal is to reach this mark by 2013 so that events and communications can be rapidly sent via email. If you would like to be on this list, please send your name, mailing address and email address to [jennifer.lamb@gainestownship.org](mailto:jennifer.lamb@gainestownship.org). Including your phone number is optional.

The Planning and Zoning Department is now linking its Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals staff reports to the agendas that are found on the Township website. With a simple click, residents will now be able to read the staff reports approximately one week before the meeting date. We feel that making the staff **reports available**

**on the website** would allow for yet another opportunity for the public to become educated about the items prior to the meeting date. Although full agenda packets are not yet available for viewing on the website, we hope this is the first step towards that process. Lastly, please check out the Planning and Zoning Department website page throughout the year, as staff will be preparing "educational pieces" on various topics related to land use planning and zoning matters.

If you have any questions about any of these items please contact us at [brian.tingley@gainestownship.org](mailto:brian.tingley@gainestownship.org) or [megan.sharp@gainestownship.org](mailto:megan.sharp@gainestownship.org).

Laptops will be used this year to check you in when you present your application form not unlike you experience in nearly every other aspect of your lives. I am confident that this will be a **positive step** for all of us. There are also changes proposed for absentee voting for military and overseas citizens as well as registering to vote online. More information will be released as time gets closer to the August and November elections.

As usual, business in the elections department keeps changing and progressing. All of these changes are made to **keep our democratic system operating** as securely and efficiently as possible.

And, for those of you who have voted at the Cornerstone United Methodist Church on 68<sup>th</sup> Street (Precinct 8) you will still go to the same building which is now under the ownership of Ada Bible Church.



## Assessor's Office

Kelley Ziesemer, Assessor

The decline in the housing market will be reflected this year when assessment change notices are mailed in late February. Residential assessments in Gaines Township will **decrease an average of 8.5% in 2010**. The decrease applies to areas that have had properties sell for less than double the assessed value in the past year. 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 an area, 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 2010 assessments occurred between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009. 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 see limited reductions due to recent land sales that support current valuations. Most Commercial and Industrial properties **will also see small reductions for 2010**.

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 -0.3%**. This rate will be applied to the 2009 taxable value to determine the 2010 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.

**Appeal Information:** Assessment Change Notices (State Form #L-4400) are 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 8 and 9, 2010 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. If you find inaccuracies in ownership, property transfers or residency exemptions, please contact us to address those issues in the Assessing office.

**General Information:** Principal Residence Exemption Audits are currently being conducted in Gaines Township. The State of Michigan has contracted Tax Management 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 the data is accurate.

## Superintendent's Dept.

Thomas Tilma, Superintendent

When local government officials mention "quality of life," they are talking about the assets of the community that make it a desirable place to live, work, and play. The Gaines Charter Township Board and staff are truly committed to maintaining the high quality of life we enjoy here in the Township. I would like to highlight three recent efforts of the Board and staff that are among many examples of this ongoing commitment. (*Continued on page 4*)

## Parks and Recreation Committee

In December 2009 several exciting events happened for the Gaines Charter Township Parks and Recreation Department. On December 14, 2009 the Township Board conducted a public hearing for a new parks and recreation plan. After considering the public comment, the Board officially adopted the **2010 to 2014 Parks & Recreation Plan**. Please check out the new Plan on the Township website at [www.gainestownship.org](http://www.gainestownship.org). After submitting this plan to the State of Michigan, Gaines Charter Township will now be eligible for DNR/Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants through the year 2014.

Also in December 2009, Gaines Charter Township was **awarded a \$1,375 grant** by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the implementation and development of an irrigated, educational tree grove at Prairie Wolf Park in 2010. A second request for \$1,580 was not awarded. The Parks and Recreation Committee and Gaines Charter Township are committed to making this project happen. If any resident or business is interested in making a **tax-deductible contribution** towards this or other park projects happen please contact the Gaines Charter Township Treasurer for more information.



The Parks & Recreation Committee looks forward to the year 2010 and beyond. As the preparation continues for the upcoming projects we welcome input from the community as well as anyone interested in volunteering with the "Friends" of the Parks & Recreation Group please contact Jenni at Township Offices at 616-698-6640 or via email at [jennifer.lamb@gainestownship.org](mailto:jennifer.lamb@gainestownship.org). We sincerely hope you have a few moments very soon to enjoy one of the parks during the winter months and thank you for your continued support.

## Fire Department

Chief Russ Jansen, Cutlerville and Dutton

With the cold weather comes the need to heat our homes. Here are

some seasonal tips to **keep your homes safe** during the winter months:

- ◆ Check fireplaces/woodstove chimneys for build-up regularly and clean as needed.
- ◆ Test your CO detectors, fire alarms, and their batteries to be sure they are in working order.
- ◆ Inspect your homes furnace for proper operation and clean/replace filters as needed.
- ◆ Fixed and portable space heaters should be at least 3 feet from anything that can burn and always turn them off when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- ◆ Make a home fire escape plan and practice it at least a year.
- ◆ Make sure your street number is easily identifiable on both sides of your mailbox.

For more tips about how to keep your home and family "fire safe" please visit the National Fire Prevention Association website at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).



## Gaines Library News

Michelle Boisvenue-Fox, Branch Manager

The Gaines Public Library offers **more than just a good book** to read.

They host a full schedule of great activities to fill the winter months. Find information about all of the activities being offered on their website at [www.kdl.org](http://www.kdl.org) or by calling 616-647-3870.



## Superintendent's Dept.

Thomas Tilma, Superintendent

*(Continued from page 3)* [Dutton Fire Station Grant](#): The Township has received a highly competitive Federal

stimulus grant of \$866,561 to reconstruct and expand the 37-year-old Dutton Fire Station. The grant from FEMA is one of four in Michigan and 104 across the nation funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (FEMA received applications from 6,025 fire departments).

The 11,000-square foot project will create jobs in an area hit hard by the recession, incorporate "green" design elements, improve firefighter training, safety, and response times, and be able to accommodate part-time and full-time firefighters. The entire Dutton community will benefit from this investment, which will include a cost-share of \$225,000 in Township capital reserve funds.

This project has been a team effort of the Board, the Dutton Fire Committee, and staff, and I served as the project manager and grant writer for the Federal grant application. Cutlerville-Dutton Fire Chief Russell Jansen has provided invaluable leadership during all stages of this project, and an advisory committee of Board members, staff, and residents is overseeing the design, bidding, and construction.

[CPR Class](#): For the second year in a row, the Township sponsored a free Saturday CPR class for residents. The class was held on November 7 in the Community Room at the Township Offices, and was followed this year by a free first aid certification class. There were 37 individuals who attended the classes, and the value of the classes at \$50 per person per class totaled \$3,700! Special thanks to Gaines resident Tim O'Connor for again donating the training and coordinating this project with Jenni Lamb, Executive Secretary, and Alice Courtney, Receptionist.

[Yard Waste Collection](#): The Township again offered a yard waste collection program this past fall. Fourteen 40-yard dumpsters of leaves and brush were hauled away during the three-week program, which ended on November 7. An attendant was provided on Fridays and Saturdays to assist residents with unloading their yard waste and to maintain the drop-off site at the Township Offices' upper parking lot. The cost of the program was about \$6,800, and the Township Board has budgeted funds to continue this program in 2010. All of the waste is being composted. Township receptionist Alice Courtney made the arrangements with the vendor, and special thanks to Township Supervisor Don R. Hilton, Sr. for once again volunteering to set up the stairs and platform adjacent to the dumpsters.

## Supervisor's News

Don R. Hilton Sr., Supervisor

*(Continued from page 1)* Your Township Board is committed to find and fund projects in a manner that will increase township dollars with the use of grants

whenever possible. These two projects planned for 2010 will not only provide safety, and enjoyment but will enhance the Township for well into the future.

I trust that **2010 will bring joy, good health and a prosperous year** for you and your family.

## CENSUS 2010

In March of 2010, census forms will be delivered to every residence in the United States and Puerto Rico. When you receive yours, just [answer the 10 short questions](#) and then mail the form back in the postage-paid envelope provided. If you don't mail the form back, you may receive a visit from a [census taker](#), who will ask you the [questions from the form](#).

It is very important that you mail these back as the numbers directly affect the quality of life in our state and in our Township. These figures not only determine monetary distributions from various revenues but also distribution of Representatives and Senators on a state and local level.

So, please take just a minute to fill out the form and send it in.

## February

8th	Township Board	7:00 pm
10th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
28th	Planning Commission	7:00 pm

## March

8th	Township Board	7:00 pm
10th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
22nd	Township Board—Workshop meeting	7:00 pm
25th	Planning Commission	7:00 pm

## April

5th	Parks and Recreation	11:30am
9th	Zoning Board of Appeals	7:00 pm
14th	Township Board	7:00 pm
24rd	Planning Commission	7:00 pm
28th	Township Board—Workshop Meeting	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