



NEWSLETTER

*To advance the quality of life of all residents through a commitment to responsible growth, and value-driven municipal services that promote the relationships among economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and social equity.
(Adopted 2/14/2017)*

TOWNSHIP BOARD

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Libby Heiny-Cogswell
libbyhc@oshtemo.org

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Dusty Farmer
dfarmer@oshtemo.org

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cbuszka@oshtemo.org

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cbell@oshtemo.org

Kizzy Bradford
kbradford@oshtemo.org

Kristin Cole
kcole@oshtemo.org

Zak Ford
zford@oshtemo.org

Welcome to the new employees joining Oshtemo!

Patrick Steffey, General Maintenance:

Thank you for this opportunity to serve Oshtemo Township. This position will be very refreshing coming from an Industrial Maintenance background. I enjoy music, motorsports, time on the water, and spending time with family and friends. If you see me out and about in the Township, feel free to say hello or wave. I'm looking forward to this time.

Tamiko Rehagen, Paid on Call Firefighter:

I'm happy and honored to have joined the Oshtemo Fire Department! I joined the fire service in 2009 with the Mattawan Fire District. I grew up playing sports throughout high school and college and missed being part of a team. Joining the fire service allowed me to be part of a team again and I love the comradery that goes along with being a part of the fire department. I grew up in Oshtemo and currently live in Mattawan with my husband,

Dave, my son Kai (8), daughter Emi (6), our 3 dogs (Axel, Rudy, and Muse), and tortoise (Herman). In my free time, I like to spend time with my family, mountain bike with my son, watch my daughter compete in Taekwondo, and train and compete with my dogs in disc and dock diving.

Joshua Lower, Paid on Call Firefighter:

Hello, my name is Joshua Lower. I am extremely honored and proud to join the Oshtemo Fire Department, and to continue to be a part of this community. Before moving to Oshtemo Township, I spent 7 years in the Marines, which included active and reserve in my hometown of Battle Creek, MI, and a deployment to Iraq in 2009. After leaving the service I moved to Oshtemo Township and started working at Kaiser Aluminum. I am married and I reside in Oshtemo with my wife, Jessica, and my daughter Lorelei (3). I enjoy hunting, fishing, blacksmithing, and helping those in need.

2022 Trash Day

Schedule

9 AM – 3 PM

July 30

August 27

September 24

October 29

November 5 – LEAVES ONLY

November 19 – trash/leaves

SHRED DAYS

10 am-NOON

September 17

Township Department Information

Assessor Kristine Biddle
216-5225 assessor@oshtemo.org

Interim Fire Chief Ron Farr
375-0487 rfarr@oshtemo.org

Ordinance Officer Rick Suwarsky
216-5227 rsuwarsky@oshtemo.org

Parks Director Karen High
216-5233 khigh@oshtemo.org (Rentals: 375-4260)

Planning Director Iris Lubbert
216-5223 ilubbert@oshtemo.org

Public Works Director Anna Horner
216-5236 ahorner@oshtemo.org



Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/oshtemochartertowship/> or sign up at www.oshtemo.org to join the email list



From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

In 2018, the Township developed a Go! Green Master Plan that includes the opportunity for green burials at our cemeteries. A green burial is a burial without many of the characteristics we have become accustomed to in modern time. To take advantage of a green burial, no embalming can take place, no vault can be used, no headstone will be placed on the grave after burial, and nothing can be placed in the burial space unless it is biodegradable. The pilot for this opportunity was launched in our West Oshtemo Cemetery located near the corner of 1st St. and Almena Dr. Since then, we have sold many plots for future burials, and I am happy to announce that we had our first green burial occur this month. Oshtemo currently offers the only green burial option in Kalamazoo County, but be on the lookout for other municipalities to develop their own green burial plans. If you are interested in learning more, please call my office at 216-5224 and speak with either me or my Deputy, Melissa Rugg.

We have two more elections this year, the first on August 2 and the second on November 8. Absentee ballots for August 2 have been sent out, and we continue to process new requests each day. Never hesitate to contact my office with any questions regarding elections.

Dusty Farmer, Clerk
dfarmer@oshtemo.org
269-216-5224



From Treasurer Clare Buszka—

Tax bills will be sent out at the beginning of July and are due by September 14, 2022. If you do not receive a tax bill, and believe you should have, contact my office as soon as possible to avoid late fees. We encourage you to mail your tax payment to 7275 West Main, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009, or make use of the convenient outside drop box in the Township Hall parking lot. Another option is to pay your taxes online at www.oshtemo.org (Please note: A fee is charged by the credit processor for online payments.)

Tax payments are updated daily on the website. If you would like a receipt, please contact the Treasurer's office ([269-216-5221](tel:269-216-5221)) and one will be sent to you.

A 1% late fee will be charged for summer taxes paid September 15 – 30, 2022, and a monthly 1% late fee will be charged from October – February 2023 until the taxes are paid.

Clare Buszka, Treasurer
cbuszka@oshtemo.org



From Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell—

The Contra and Square family dances and English Country dances at the Grange Hall started up again this Spring! Visit Country Dancing Kalamazoo if interested in joining in the Fall-- www.countrydancinginkalamazoo.com

An important update on the sewer expansion—the Circuit Court ruled June 8th to uphold the Clerk's finding that referendum petitions were insufficient. From this decision, the sanitary sewer expansion and road reconstruction projects can proceed. Township staff is working closely with USDA, bond counsel, municipal finance advisors, and consulting engineers on when and how next steps may unfold. Many are likely aware of the current state of construction-- less contractor availability, increases in the cost of materials, and longer supply chain timelines to obtain materials. This will affect the bidding and construction timeline. Most likely the bidding will include specifications for the contractors to have increased time to gather materials and to complete the work.

Another update on the Oshtemo Residents Association challenge to the validity of the township's sanitary sewer connection fee claiming that it was a tax and violation of Headlee as well as a violation of equal protection. The Circuit Court struck down both claims and upheld the validity of the township's sanitary sewer connection fees. The Oshtemo Fire Chief search continues. No decision at time this article is written.

The Township Board held multiple public discussions on the Federal American Rescue Program Act (ARPA) funds and prioritized their use. Citizens, Departments, and Board members contributed suggestions, and those ideas were all on the table. Please know some ideas not prioritized for funding were noted to remain important, but to have other possibilities for funding, such as the General Fund tax dollars, or other grant programs. One example of this is the expansion of broadband in underserved areas of the Township. The broadband expansion remains a priority. There are State grant programs for this, so the Oshtemo local ARPA dollars were not identified for this use. The Supervisors of Kalamazoo County Townships previously joined together to apply to the County for use of the County ARPA funds for the first step in assessing the need for broadband expansion—a thorough identification and mapping of broadband services as they currently exist throughout Kalamazoo County. The funding priorities for use of the ARPA funds identified by the Board are shown elsewhere in this newsletter.

In closing, the negotiations between Townships and the City of Kalamazoo on the Wastewater contract are to commence in July.

Please reach out if you have questions or concerns:
libbyhc@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5220.

One Tennis Court to be Converted to Two Pickleball Courts at Oshtemo Township Park

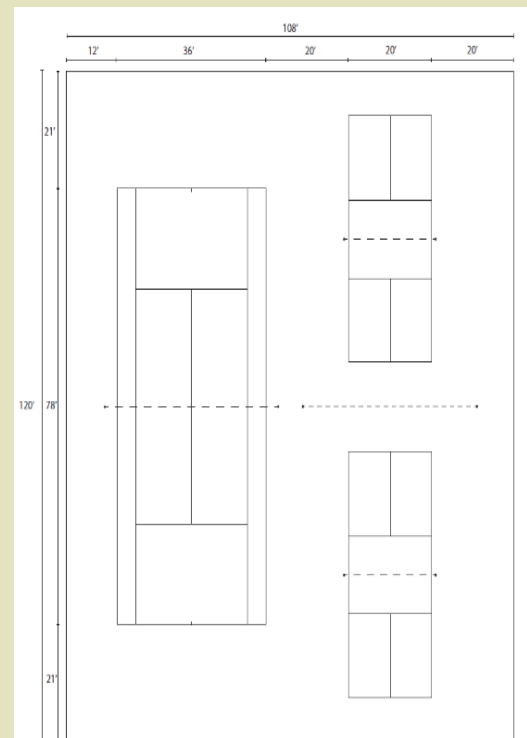
The tennis courts at Oshtemo Township Park, located behind the Township Hall at 7275 West Main Street, will be resurfaced this summer and one of the tennis courts will be converted into two pickleball courts, as shown in the sketch at right. The work is expected to occur in July and will cause the courts to be closed for five days.

The idea to convert a tennis court to pickleball courts came from numerous appeals for pickleball over the past few years, coupled with reports of positive experiences from similar conversions in Kalamazoo and Parchment. The Parks Committee requested feedback on the idea in the April newsletter and received over 100 responses by online survey or email. Support for pickleball courts was strong. Here's a sample of some of the responses received:

- Would love the pickleball courts! We are close by and would play a lot!
- Thank you for seeing the need for pickleball courts to accommodate this popular activity that is open to all ages to play.
- This will add more options for physical activity in the community, which is great!
- Thanks for considering this. Pickleball is a fast-growing sport that is so much fun. I love seeing people of all ages out playing. It's cheap to play and a little easier physically than tennis.

A compilation of all responses is posted on our website at <https://www.oshtemo.org/files/assets/public/about/documents/tennis-and-pickleball-court-survey-results-june-2022.pdf> . For more information on the project, please contact:

Karen High, Parks Director, at (269) 216-5233 or khigh@oshtemo.org.



Proposed layout with one tennis court and two permanent pickleball courts.



2022 Oshtemo Music in the Park

Concert Series presented by Friends of the Parks

For more details, visit oshtemo.org/events or look for us on Facebook.

Guests will be asked to follow all state of Michigan and Kalamazoo County public health guidelines in place at the time of the concert.

FREE!

WIN PRIZES!

Oshtemo restaurant gift cards will be raffled at each concert. Funds raised will support Oshtemo parks!



Sunday, July 10
The Michigan Nightingales

Kalamazoo gospel legends celebrating 50 years together



Sunday, June 26
Schlitz Creek
BLUEGRASS BAND
Bluegrass with some bite

Sunday, August 28
Corn Fed Girls
One part salty breakup, two parts bear hug
Original acoustic Americana

6 - 7:30 p.m.
Flesher Field
3664 South 9th St.
Kalamazoo

Concerts will be rescheduled in the event of rain.
Alcohol is prohibited.
Bring a chair or blanket for lawn seating.



Oshtemo Township receives \$150,000 Planet Award grant from Consumers Energy Foundation

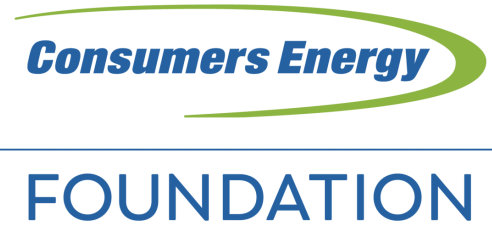
The Consumers Energy Foundation presented a \$150,000 Planet Award grant to Oshtemo Township at a grant ceremony on Wednesday, June 8, 2022. Grant funds will be used to restore habitat in a two-mile section of the historic Fruit Belt Rail Corridor, along with environmental education and stewardship opportunities focused on climate resilience. Kalamazoo Nature Center's Conservation Stewardship team, a partner on the project, will provide most of the ecological restoration activities and environmental education programming.

Oshtemo Township purchased the former rail corridor property from ATT in November 2021 using grant funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). A condition of the MNRTF grant is that the land be dedicated to public recreation and natural resource protection in perpetuity. Ecological restoration work by the Kalamazoo Nature Center is starting with a survey to identify and assess plant species, which will be ongoing during the 2022 growing season. A plan for invasive species management and native plantings will be developed later this year. The project is expected to be completed at the end of 2023.

The project site extends from 9th Street to Oshtemo Township's southern border with Texas Township. Acquisition of this section of former rail corridor was a priority in part because it abuts Flesher Field Park, 3664 South 9th Street. Park visitors can enjoy hiking, birding, or dog-walking on the former rail corridor. Temporary directional signage is in place at the north end of Flesher Field to guide visitors to the walking path.

There is no other public access to the site at this time. Future plans are to construct a 10-foot-wide crushed stone trail on the property.

The Planet Award grant was one of three the Consumers Energy Foundation recently announced. The grants aim to preserve, restore, and protect Michigan's natural resources. The Consumers Energy Foundation is the charitable arm of Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest energy provider.



'Yoga in the Park' returns to Flesher Field with new instructor and day

We're pleased to announce that outdoor yoga classes will again be offered on the lawn in front of the gazebo at Flesher Field Park, 3664 South 9th Street.

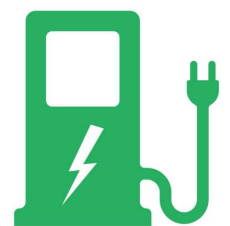
One hour vinyasa practices will be held at **10am on the following Sundays: June: 19, 26, July: 10, 17, 24, 31, August: 21, 28, September: 11, 18, 25.**

Classes will be led by Kaitlyn from KP (Fit)ness. All ages & levels of experience are welcome.

Please bring your own yoga mat or blanket. Drop-in fee is \$10 per class or prepay for all 12 sessions & save \$20. A portion of the proceeds go to support the park!

Questions? Email: kaitlyn@kpeacefitness.com.
Yoga in the Park is a program of Oshtemo Friends of the Parks.

Car Charging Station at Flesher Field!



The Oshtemo Downtown Development Authority has donated an electric vehicle charging station with two charging ports to Flesher Field. The model installed is a Juicebox Enel X. Come charge your hybrid or electric car and enjoy all that Flesher Field and the surrounding businesses have to offer!



News from the Oshtemo Fire Department



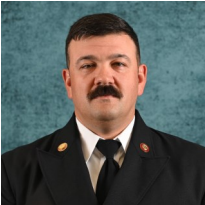
From the notes of Interim Fire Chief Ron Farr-

I am Ronald Farr and I have the honor of serving as your Interim Fire Chief while the “Fire Chief Search Committee” does a Nationwide search for a new Fire Chief to fill the role of Retired Chief Mark Barnes.

I have been an active member of the fire service in Michigan for 54 + years starting as a Paid-on-Call member of the Plainwell Fire Department in 1967. In 1972 I went to work full time for Kalamazoo Township serving as a police officer, Fire Marshal, Deputy Chief and then Chief of the fire department the last 6 + years. Upon retirement from Kalamazoo Township (after 37 years) I was appointed Michigan’s State Fire Marshal under Governor Granholm’s administration. When things transitioned to a new administration, I chose to go to work for Underwriters Laboratory (UL) in Northbrook, IL serving in their Regulatory Services Division for 6+ years.

Ron is married to Wendi, his wife of 27 years, and has two kids and two grandchildren.

The Fire Department is pleased to announce the hiring of two full-time fire fighters, Cody Roberts who is from the Mattawan area and Terry Holroyd from Coldwater. More to follow when they introduce themselves in the next Township newsletter.



From the notes of Training Officer Captain Eric Burghardt-

For your safety and protection please test your smoke alarms and make sure they are functioning. Thank you and remember to Stay Safe.

“Get ready, stay ready” is a motto we use in the fire service to remind ourselves that our residents, visitors and fellow firefighters are counting on us. Firefighters “get” ready during the fire academy and initial training at their fire department. They “stay” ready through continuing education and fire service experience. We are always looking for innovative ideas to keep our training up-to-date, relevant and exciting. To accomplish this goal, we rely heavily on the citizens we service to supplement our in-house training opportunities. For example, last year H&K Excavation allowed us to conduct Trench Rescue training on their property and provided the equipment and personnel to make a realistic trench. Several of our apartment complexes have been gracious enough to allow our Fire Department to utilize a vacant apartment or one of their stair wells to train on high rise fire suppression operations. Every so often a citizen will even donate a house, scheduled for demolition, for us to train in. These acquired structures are one of the most valuable training assets we can obtain. We are currently in possession of a two story, residential structure on 3rd St. We will have this structure for several month to perform realistic fire suppression training. Since April we have conducted 48 hours of training in this acquired structure. Subjects range from search and rescue, chainsaw operations, ladder training, and fire suppression techniques. The Oshtemo Township Fire Department does not operate without support from our neighbors, so we invite them to train with us too. Texas Township, Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, Ross-Augusta Township, Comstock Township, South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority, and Mattawan Fire Departments have all participated in training with us.

It cannot be overstated, these contributions from our citizens not only make Oshtemo Township Fire Department better but also improve the county and regional emergency response network. We are dedicated to getting our new firefighters ready and staying ready through excellent training. This will allow us to provide the best possible service with *...respect, responsibility, and pride.*

If you would like to learn more about donating a structure for temporary use in training please visit our website at <https://www.oshtemo.org/Officials-Departments/Departments/Oshtemo-Fire-Department>. Additionally, don’t forget to follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/oshtemofire> to stay up to date on what your Fire Department is doing.



From the notes of Fire Administrative Assistant Erin Phillips-

Have you ever had a question about your Oshtemo Fire Department but couldn’t find it online? Our recently revamped website should be able to provide you with the information you are looking for in a very user-friendly manner. You are able to look up our leadership team, station locations, career and volunteer opportunities and fleet information. While there, you could also submit your 3 day burn permit, a Freedom of Information Act request, or Food Truck Inspection packet.

You may review our Township Budget, yearly call numbers and even our quarterly Department Statistics. This report breaks down our calls between fire and medical emergencies; it really shows how diverse your OFD is when it comes to how we serve this community.

If you have a structure that you are considering tearing down, you may be interested to know that we might be able to help you out with that chore! Take a minute to read the “Donate your Structure” information box and see if your property qualifies.

There is also an extensive Frequently Asked Questions Section and Contact Us link if you are unable to find what you’re looking for. Check us out at <https://www.oshtemo.org/Officials-Departments/Departments/Oshtemo-Fire-Department>

The Board worked with a consultant from OCBA to help organize and determine possible uses for the American Rescue Plan Act dollars allocated to Oshtemo Township in 2021 and 2022. All of the ideas on how to best utilize these funds that were submitted by staff, Board members, and the public, were organized and discussed by the Board over the course of several public meetings.

Below you will find the final determinations of the Board.



ARPA FUNDS DISCUSSION - Final Selections

14-May-22

Category	Project Idea	Project Description	Project Budget
Build	Sidewalks/non-motorized trails	Set aside funds for grant match for planned sidewalk projects. Budget is flexible. Could be a combination of ARPA and General funds.	\$1,000,000
Build	Solar panels on Township Hall & Station Two	Staff has been researching, waiting for confirmation that roof on Station Two will support weight.	\$500,000
Outreach	Improve office efficiency through digital records management, GIS data systems, automated Township services	Digitize all Township records, update GIS data, organize existing files, enhance recordkeeping of easements, hire archivist to expedite transition into electronic storage, determine GIS staffing needs, educate staff to improve efficiencies. See memo from Legal Dept and recommendations from Public Works and Planning Dept.	\$320,000
Plan	Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Update, including GO! Green Oshtemo	Hire consultant to conduct a major master plan review and update. This project would include a long range transportation plan, a market study/analysis, the evaluation of all existing master plan documents, and the incorporation of desired planning concepts such as habitat corridors, and age friendly communities. Review and update zoning ordinance based on results of Master Plan update. Include update to signage ordinance. Necessary to implement the Master Plan.	\$280,000
Build	Fruit Belt Rail Trail	Set aside match funds for Fruit Belt Rail Trail MNR/TF grants	\$200,000
Equip	Purchase new fire engine	Replace past due fire engine. See letter from Fire Dept.	\$200,000
Outreach	Communications Specialist	Staff, contracted position, or consultant to develop and implement a communications plan for all depts. Include public education, community outreach, marketing. Will require funding from other sources after the first year.	\$50,000
Plan	Asset management plan for parks and non-motorized facilities	Inventory existing parks and non-motorized facilities, evaluate condition and gaps. Create Asset Management Plan to implement preventative maintenance and capital planning.	\$30,000
Total			\$2,580,000



7275 West Main Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
Ph 375.4260 Fax 375.7180
www.oshtemo.org

Visit our website for more information.
www.oshtemohistoricalociety.org

OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS



Our first program since the beginning of the pandemic is scheduled for July 21st at 7:00 pm at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 W. Main Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. The presenter, Peter D. Ter Louw, President and Director of SW Michigan Land Conservancy. His program will detail the restoration of the Wolf Tree Nature Trail to Pre-European settlement time. Light refreshments will be available. There will be a business meeting after the program.

OHS is in need of a new webmaster. If you have computer and organizational skills, please consider this important and needed volunteer position. Most people rely on the internet for information and it is vital we keep our supporters and interested history buffs informed of our past and future. If you are interested, please contact:

Irene Livingston, OHS Board Secretary, at 269-271-2842 or mamareany@aol.com

Contact Us: email oshtemohs@gmail.com Check out our FACEBOOK page!