



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

Supervisor

Libby Heiny-Cogswell
libbyhc@oshtemo.org

Clerk

Dusty Farmer
dfarmer@oshtemo.org

Treasurer

Clare Buszka
cbuszka@oshtemo.org

Trustees

Cheri Bell
cbell@oshtemo.org

Kizzy Bradford
kbradford@oshtemo.org

Kristin Cole
kcole@oshtemo.org

Zak Ford
zford@oshtemo.org

2023 Trash Days

- March 18,
- April 1 and 22
- May 27
- June 24
- July 29
- August 26
- September 30
- October 28
- November 4 LEAVES ONLY
- November 18 Trash and Leaves

2023 Shred Days

- May 13
- September 16

News You Can Use...

2023 Hardship Tax Exemption Qualifications

2023 taxes are based on 2023 taxable value. If you feel you will not be able to pay your 2023 taxes, you may be eligible for a Hardship Exemption. Please review the information below for eligibility.

Income thresholds for use in setting hardship exemption guidelines for 2023 assessments are below.

Size of Family Unit	Qualifying Income per Township	Size of Family Unit	Qualifying Income per Township
1 person	\$16,987	5 persons	\$40,587
2 persons	\$22,887	6 persons	\$46,487
3 persons	\$28,787	7 persons	\$52,387
4 persons	\$34,687	8 persons	\$58,287
		Additional persons add	\$5,900

The March, July or December Boards of Review will consider completed applications. **All applications must be submitted at least one week before the start of the March, July or December Boards of Review. Deadline dates for submission are below.**

March 6th, 2023, July 11th, 2023 or December 5th, 2023 Boards of Review.

Please contact the Assessor's office by phone: **269-216-5225** or e-mail: assessor@oshtemo.org. Applications for Hardship Exemption and additional information is available on the Township website: oshtemo.org/officials-and-departments/assessing-department.

Township Department Information

Assessor Kristine Biddle
216-5225 assessor@oshtemo.org

Fire Chief Greg McComb
375-0487 gmccomb@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



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From Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell—

Oshtemo Township did not receive any contractor construction bids at the scheduled bid opening, Tuesday, January 17th, for the Phase 1 sewer expansion projects. Five companies requested the bidding plan sets and showed interest. Contractors present at the bid opening indicated their work schedules for 2023 work were already full.

Oshtemo went out to bid as soon as feasible, following the November Court of Appeals ruling upholding the Clerk's decision rejecting the sewer bond petitions.

The Township Board considered next options at their regular January 24th meeting for rebidding Phase 1. The engineering design work for Phase 2 sanitary sewer expansion continues, and further discussion on the timing of bidding for Phase 2 is also ongoing. The township continues to work in concert with the USDA Office of Rural Development.

On another topic, the Board consensus is to move forward with a Township-wide community survey, likely with the Cobalt Community Research firm. Cobalt is a non-profit organization specializing in this type of municipal survey, and they are Michigan based. The Township worked with Cobalt in the years 2013 and 2017 on two previous surveys. Given the Cobalt's professional expertise and approach, the results are statistically significant, and therefore useful to inform Township Board decisions related to Parks, Police, Fire, Roads, etc.

Open Office Hours for the Supervisor are scheduled for Monday, **February 27th, from noon to 2 pm.**



From Treasurer Clare Buszka—

As the 2022 tax season comes to the end, I would like to thank all of you for making it a smooth season. The online payment portal is being used more than ever. Online payments are quick, easy, and allow you to avoid lines at the Township, travel in bad weather, and peace of mind that your payment is processed on the date you determine.

For those who have not yet paid your taxes, please remember that summer taxes can be paid in-person or online by 2/14/2023 without penalty. Taxes paid after that but before 2/28/2023 will have a penalty. Beginning 3/1/2023, no payments will be accepted at the Township. All delinquent taxes will be turned over to the County on this date, no exceptions.

Personal property taxes and mobile home taxes due for 2022 will be suspended from 3/1/23-3/31/2023. These payments will resume on 4/1/2023. This allows for accurate information to be transferred to the appropriate accounts.

Again, THANK YOU from the Treasurer's Office for a great 2022 tax season. We appreciate you!

Clare Buszka, Treasurer
cbuszka@oshtemo.org
269-216-5221



From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

We will have an election in May this year, with more details to come as we receive them. We know that KRESA will have an item on the ballot. Other details will be added to the Elections page on our website.

We still plan to move forward with our large records management project this year, and we are preparing to hire for the Clerk's Assistant position that will focus on elections and records management.

In addition, we will be out in the cemeteries cleaning up debris and helping families bring the burial plots into compliance with the Township Cemeteries Ordinance. In preparation of this work, we have been clearing bushes, shrubs, and trees that can be damaging to headstones and prevent the use of mowing and maintenance equipment throughout the cemeteries. We look forward to having these spaces look wonderful for our guests while also maintaining them in a way that is cost-effective for tax dollars.

If you or someone you know ever has questions about elections or cemetery options, please do not hesitate to contact my Office.

Dusty Farmer, Clerk
dfarmer@oshtemo.org



Greetings from the Oshtemo Fire Department!

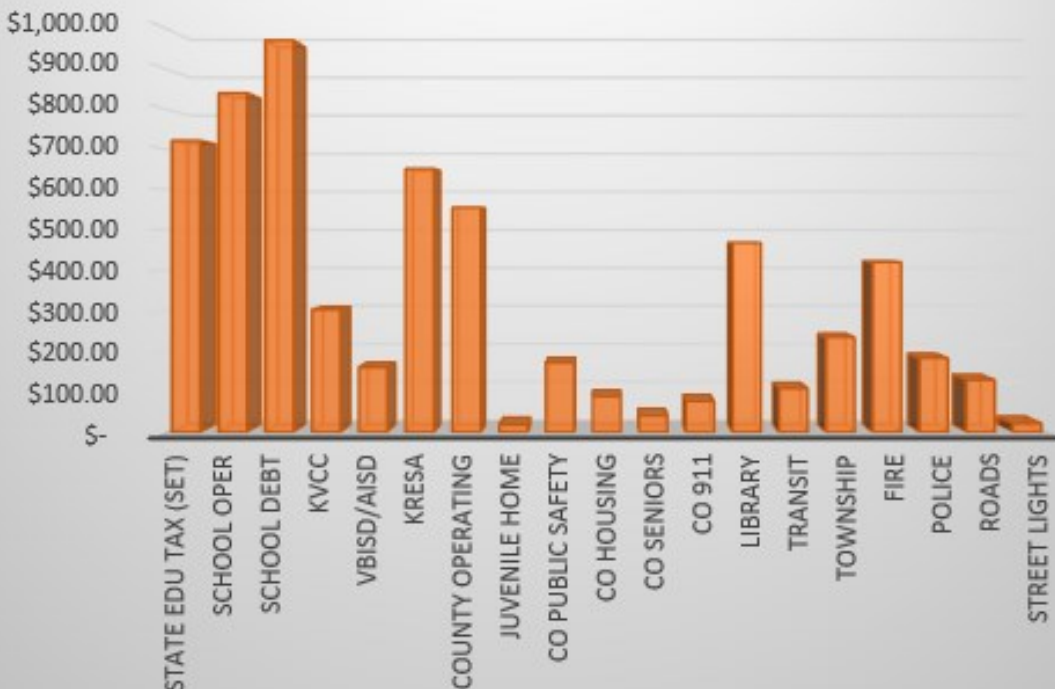
Your Oshtemo Firefighters have been very busy and ended our year with 3,347 calls for service. 30% of those calls were overlapping, meaning we were on a call when another came in. We averaged 9.17 calls per day and have committed 1,794 hours of time total for calls.

As we start 2023, we are fortunate to have received a \$70,000 anonymous donation to purchase a new set of Jaws of Life extrication tools. Our current set of tools is over 10 years old and needed to be upgraded. After extensive review and testing, we opted to go with Holmatro battery powered extrication tools.



Where do my taxes go?

Average Taxes To Be Paid by Residents
and Businesses in 2022



Combined summer and winter tax bills, this model is based on an average taxable value of \$120,240.94. Your individual tax bill will have an itemized list of where every penny goes. If you do not receive a tax bill in the mail, you can access the bill for your property through our website

www.oshtemo.org under Parcel Information. You can also access tax information for past years on this website.

OSHTEMO TOWNSHIP

HOUSING SURVEY

Your response will help guide the future of housing types and options in Oshtemo!



5 MINUTES OR LESS

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OshtemoHousing>

Personal information will **not** be collected, stored, or reported through this survey.

Survey results will be incorporated into the Oshtemo 2023 Housing Plan.



WE. UPJOHN
INSTITUTE
FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

Oshtemo Village Downtown Development Authority—

Oshtemo's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) funded and completed the construction of new concrete sidewalk on the north side of Stadium Drive from Quail Run Drive to 8th Street in 2022! This segment connects to the sidewalk project the Township completed to the east the prior year. The Township and its partners continue to work toward expanding Oshtemo's non-motorized network for the safety and accessibility of all users.



Ordinance Enforcement—

The mission of the Ordinance Enforcement Department is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our community by encouraging compliance with Charter Township of Oshtemo General and Zoning Ordinances. The Ordinance Enforcement Department works with community members to resolve issues that impact quality of life in Oshtemo Township by enforcing a broad range of codes and ordinances related to property maintenance, building safety, rental housing, health, public nuisances, zoning, blight, site development and other Township concerns. It is our goal to obtain voluntarily compliance, whenever possible, by administering a fair and unbiased enforcement program.

Do you have a question about Township ordinances?

You can review Ordinance FAQ's by visiting oshtemo.org and navigating to the Ordinance Enforcement Department page.

If you have a question or concern that needs to be addressed by Ordinance Enforcement, visit www.oshtemo.org/Home and select the "Ordinance Complaint" form link. Your complaint/inquiry will be reviewed and investigated by an Ordinance Enforcement Officer. Please include your contact information for the officer to contact you with questions and follow up.

Sidewalk Snow Maintenance:

When snow accumulates or ice is formed upon the public sidewalk in front of a house, building, lot, parcel or building site, it is the responsibility of the owner or occupant of the abutting premises to remove the snow or ice within 48 hours after it has formed. Please do your part to keep sidewalks clear and to maintain a safe path for our pedestrian community this winter.

Ord. No. 468, Part 294.007 Sec. VII., B. & C. - Maintenance of sidewalks and non-motorized paths/facilities.



Consumers Energy has announced it will provide \$25 million to homes and business to help customers facing challenges with their energy bills. \$15 million will go to automatic bill credits and \$10 million will be reserved for assistance for financially vulnerable households.

People who need help should contact 2-1-1, a free service that connects Michiganders with nonprofits to find help with basic needs, from energy bills to food and shelter. Consumers Energy customers also should call 800-477-5050 if they are facing challenges with their bill.

Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest energy provider, is the principal subsidiary of CMS Energy (NYSE: CMS), providing natural gas and/or electricity to 6.8 million of the state's 10 million residents in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

**CONNECT TO ROAD COMMISSION
OF KALAMAZOO COUNTY ALERTS**



Have You Signed Up?

Receive Message Alerts
for:

- ◆ Road Construction
- ◆ Road Closures/Detours
- ◆ General Public News

RCKC CONNECT
RCKC ALERTS SIGN UP NOW

Visit : www.kalamazooountyroads.com

Parks Department—

Volunteers needed for Oshtemo's 'Music in the Park' concert series



Oshtemo Friends of the Parks have begun planning another season of free outdoor concerts at Flesher Field Park. **Additional volunteers are needed, especially to direct cars to overflow parking and other similar tasks during the hour before the concerts.** If you'd like more information or to volunteer, contact Karen High, Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5233. Volunteers receive a free Music in the Park t-shirt!



Music in the Park is entirely funded by grants from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council, the Greater Kalamazoo Arts Council, and generous support from local businesses. The season includes three family-friendly concerts held at the Flesher Field gazebo, 3664 South 9th Street. Dates and performers will be announced in the next newsletter and on the Township website, Facebook, and Next Door.

'Senior Activities' are off to a great start at the Oshtemo Community Center!



Activities like card games and chair yoga that allow seniors to socialize and improve their health began in mid-January at the Oshtemo Community Center. The new program got off to a strong start, with over 40 attendees in the first two days. Activities are organized by Oshtemo seniors. A huge thank you goes out to resident Sue Commissaris for spearheading this effort.

Activities are on Tuesdays (Card games 12-3 pm) and Wednesdays (Chair Yoga 1-2 pm, \$5) and all seniors are welcome to attend. (Pinochle and open card games that were proposed on Thursdays are no longer being offered.) The Oshtemo Community Center is located at 6407 Parkview Avenue. No advance sign up is needed. Volunteers are available to teach card games. Cancellations are posted on the Oshtemo Township website calendar: www.oshtemo.org For more information, contact Sue at (269) 350-5953 or skcommissaris@charter.net

Fruit Belt Rail Trail Construction delayed to 2024 or later—

In December we learned that our grant applications to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) were not selected for funding. \$600,000 was requested to construct two-miles of accessible nonmotorized trail in the former Fruit Belt Rail Corridor. Oshtemo purchased the property from AT&T in November 2021 with grant funds from the MNRTF.

Our applications scored well, and we were optimistic they would be funded. However, the amount of funding to local governments for development grants was reduced from \$20M in 2021 to \$8.3M in 2022. Funding amounts are dependent on revenue, investment earnings and interest accruing to the MNRTF in a particular fiscal year. According to Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant coordinator Charamy Cleary, the reduction in grant funds was due to market performance.

We plan to resubmit the trail grant applications to the MNRTF for consideration in the 2023 round of funding. We also plan to apply for trail funds from a new DNR recreation grant program called Spark. Deadline to apply for MNRTF grants is April 1, 2023. Awards will be announced in December 2023. If selected, construction could begin in summer 2024. Spark grant deadlines for 2023 have not been announced yet. In the meantime, the existing footpath in the rail corridor is available for hiking, birding, dog-walking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. Public access is from Flesher Field, 3664 S 9th Street. Temporary directional signs are 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. **Please note that snowmobiling and off-road vehicles are not allowed.**

Update on ecological restoration of the Fruit Belt Rail Corridor—

Recent visitors to the Fruit Belt Rail Corridor may notice piles of brush along the footpath. These are the stems and branches of invasive shrubs, vines and small trees cut down by Kalamazoo Nature Center staff, students from Heronwood Field Station, and volunteers. The invasive plants are being removed to allow more space for native plant species, which provide better habitat and a higher quality food supply for birds and other animals. Removing vines smothering the trees will improve the health of the tree canopy. These ecological restoration efforts are funded by a \$150,000 Planet Award grant from the Consumers Energy Foundation.

Volunteer work sessions are ongoing, typically every other Friday from 10 am to noon, weather permitting. Dates are posted on the Township website at <https://www.oshtemo.org/Events> or contact Karen High, Parks Director, to be put on an email list. Volunteers meet at the north end of Flesher Field, 3664 South 9th Street, and walk to the corridor. All ages and abilities are welcome.

A community meeting to provide input on the trail project and the grant application will be held on **Wednesday, March 1st from 4 – 6 pm at the Oshtemo Community Center**, 6407 Parkview Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. All are invited to attend. The meeting has an open house format: arrive when it is convenient and stay as long as you choose. For more information, contact Karen High, Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5233.

Avian Influenza: What should I do about feeding birds?

As Avian influenza (bird flu) outbreaks in wild birds and poultry continue across the US, a record number of birds have been affected compared to previous bird flu outbreaks. Avian influenza viruses are classified as either “low pathogenic” or “highly pathogenic” based on their genetic features and the severity of the disease they cause in poultry. Most viruses are of low pathogenicity, meaning that they cause no signs or only minor clinical signs of infection in poultry. This outbreak is classified as “highly pathogenic” as it causes severe disease in poultry.

Since early 2022, 628 poultry flocks have been affected in 46 states. As of early November, this includes 267 commercial flocks and 361 backyard flocks, totaling 50.44 million (poultry) birds that have either died or have been culled due to exposure to infected birds. This is devastating both economically and emotionally to the poultry industry and to those who keep backyard flocks.

Outbreaks have occurred in wild birds as well as commercial flocks. One stark example was the death of 1500 Caspian terns on Lake Michigan islands last June. Caspian terns are listed as threatened in Michigan and endangered in Wisconsin. In recent years, the bird’s populations have been growing and peaked about 2018. However, since that time, high water levels have made nesting difficult. Wildlife biologists were distraught at finding hundreds of birds dead and dying and knowing there was nothing they could do because this disease is fatal and there is no effective treatment. The birds that were still alive were experiencing tremors from the neurological damage caused by the virus and some birds were on their nests, still trying to incubate eggs. Undoubtedly, more birds died elsewhere, over the water, or were carried off by scavengers. It is estimated that 64% of adult Caspian terns in WI are dead. This massive die-off of adults means the loss of a new generation of Caspian terns since young were not produced. Terns live about 30 years and don’t start breeding until they’re at least 3 years old. Why Caspian terns were so hard hit by avian flu, but other close-nesting seabirds were less severely affected is not known.

In Michigan, deaths due to bird flu have occurred in many different wild bird species and have especially affected waterfowl, raptors and some shorebirds. Of the birds that were found dead or sick and tested in Michigan, there have been 57 Bald eagles and 42 Mallard ducks positive for avian flu since spring. Other species in Michigan that have tested positive include Rough-legged, Red-tailed, and Red-shouldered hawk; Snowy, Great horned, and Barred owl; Peregrine falcon; Mute, Tundra, and Trumpeter Swans; Wood duck, Northern pintail, Green-wing teal, Canada goose, Sandhill crane, Caspian tern, Double-crested cormorant, Lesser scaup, Herring gull, Hooded merganser, American widgeon, Gadwall, Redheaded duck, Great blue heron, Common loon, American white pelican, and Crow.

Now that it is winter, and a time when people especially enjoy watching birds in their yards, the question is “Is it okay to put out bird feeders?” The current recommendation from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has been one of precaution, especially during migration. As a safeguard to domestic poultry, they advised not to feed wild birds. However, according to news released by Cornell Lab of Ornithology on November 18, 2022, there is currently a very low risk of an outbreak among wild songbirds and no recommendation from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) National Wildlife Disease Program to take down feeders unless you are close to domestic poultry.

How do we know that songbirds are at low risk? USDA APHIS has a multiyear surveillance program that routinely samples wild birds, including flocks of songbirds and other species, such as pigeons and mourning doves that are often around humans. Avian flu does not affect all types of birds equally. The “highly pathogenic” designation refers specifically to the disease in poultry. Waterfowl often carry and transmit avian flu but are not as often sick from the disease. Raptors are much more sensitive than waterfowl. Domestic poultry are extremely susceptible often resulting in 100% mortality. Songbirds are much less likely to contract avian flu and less likely to shed large amounts of virus, meaning they don’t transmit the disease as easily. Although they do have a limited role in the epidemiology of avian flu, there is not strong evidence that they serve as a reservoir, and it is unlikely that bird feeders will contribute to an outbreak among songbirds.

At this time, it seems that there is a very low risk of disease transmission by feeding your favorite wild birds. As in any pandemic or disease outbreak, the recommendations will change as conditions change, so stay abreast of updates as they emerge. Knowing that raptors are more susceptible, we certainly hope they will stay safe and healthy from their interactions with songbirds.

Because poultry are so susceptible, it is important to keep songbirds away from poultry, including their food and water. Avian flu is only rarely transmitted to humans, but nevertheless good hygiene is recommended when handling bird feeders or nest boxes. If you handle or monitor waterfowl or raptors, or find a dead bird of any species, disposable gloves and a mask are recommended.





7275 West Main Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS



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

March 16—Sugarbush Season by Amy Jo Morseau, Culture Events Coordinator of the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Center of History and Culture.

April 20—Preservation and Maintenance of Civil War Gravesites by Gary Swain, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

May 18—The Griffon: La Salle's Lost Ship on the Great Lakes by Valerie Van Heest.

June 15—The Most Dangerous Man Alice: A Killing in Capone's Playground by Chriss Lyon.

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

March 5—2-5 PM, Just for Fun Dance

March 11—3-5 PM, English Country

March 11—7-10:30 PM, Contra and Squares

March 12—2-5 PM, Advanced Contras and Squares

March 15—7:30-9:30 PM, English Country

March 25—7-10:30 PM, Contras and Squares

Arrive a half hour early for basic skills lessons

Covid Protocols: We welcome vaccinated and boosted folks. Masks are required at all times. Bring your own water; no shared snacks. Bring your vaccine card with 2 vaccines and a booster identification.

Country Dancing in Kalamazoo
Grange Hall—3234 N 3rd St
Choose your admission price
(\$1-\$15)

