



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

Cheri Bell
cbell@oshtemo.org

Clerk

Dusty Farmer
dfarmer@oshtemo.org

Treasurer

Clare Buszka
cbuszka@oshtemo.org

Trustees

Kizzy Bradford
kbradford@oshtemo.org

Kristin Cole
kcole@oshtemo.org

Zak Ford
zford@oshtemo.org

Neil Sikora
nsikora@oshtemo.org



From Supervisor Cheri Bell—

In April of 2023, Oshtemo Charter Township Supervisor Libby Heiny-Cogswell retired. Her service of over 14 years is greatly appreciated. I enjoyed and learned a great deal during the years of working with her. I want to publicly thank Libby for her dedicated service. In May, I was honored with becoming Oshtemo's next Township Supervisor. Though I am familiar with many of Oshtemo's residents by virtue of living in the Township virtually my entire life, I wanted to take this opportunity to formally introduce myself.

My community roots run deep. Married for over 25 years to an Oshtemo guy, we chose to raise our children here just like my parents and great grandparents had done. The values of hard work and community were instilled by my family who worked the earth to make their living here in Oshtemo.

As a young mother, my service to the Oshtemo community began on the Parks Committee. Then moved on to the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Commission, the Go! Green Oshtemo award-winning initiative, and finally serving as a member of the Board of Trustees. Each step along the way afforded me an opportunity to learn and become more involved in shaping the direction and growth of our community.

(continued on page 9)

2023 Trash Days

9 AM-3 PM

September 30

October 28

November 4 LEAVES ONLY

November 18 Trash and
Leaves

2023 Shred Day

10 AM-12 PM

September 16

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 Vanessa Street
216-5233 vstreet@oshtemo.org

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/oshtemochartertownship/> or sign up at www.oshtemo.org to join the email list



From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

The Clerk’s Office is excited for fall and we are gearing up for the County-wide November Election. Voters will be deciding on a millage for veterans and can expect to see Absent Voter applications in the mail. Those who chose to receive a permanent ballot will see that in the mail around the last week in September. You can check the voter registration status, application status, and ballot status at www.mi.gov/vote.

In addition to preparing for the election this fall, we are also preparing for the implementation of Prop 2 from 2022. Early voting is the biggest change we will see in 2024, most likely beginning with the Presidential Primary. In the past the Presidential Primary was held in March, but depending on when the State legislature recesses in 2023, we may see this moved up to February 27. For all State and Federal elections, Prop 2 requires 9 days of early voting in addition to no-reason absentee voting and in-person voting on election day. In an effort to reduce costs to taxpayers, Oshtemo and most other jurisdictions in Kalamazoo County will enter into an agreement with the County to provide 4 locations for early voting. We will have more to share as those details are finalized.

We are happy to announce that Oshtemo is now a proud owner of a high-speed tabulator! This new ballot tabulator will be used by our Absentee Voter Counting Board on election day to tabulate ballots more quickly than the regular tabulators that can be seen in the voting precincts. The idea to purchase this tabulator was formed after the 2020 Presidential Election and witnessing the long hours workers spent after the polls closed. One of our Absent Voter Counting Boards was working well past 2 AM. Realizing that Oshtemo Township’s population has grown to the level of needing a high-speed tabulator, I vowed to my election workers that we would not go through another Presidential Election without one. We will be trained on this new tabulator at the end of September in anticipation of using it for the first time this November. We are planning to have an open house for the public to take a look at the new tabulator and all of our other voting equipment, and we will also have a short presentation about all of the new changes to the voting process at the same time.



From Treasurer Clare Buszka—

The Treasurers Office thanks our businesses and residents for getting the 2023 tax season off to a great start. Summer tax payments can still be made at the Township office or online and be considered as “on-time” by September 14th at close of business. (Summer tax payments can be made at the Township office through February 28, 2024, but will be subject to additional penalties and interest starting September 15, 2023). CLARIFICATION: Many people have inquired about the Senior discount. This discount comes from the State Tax returns filed annually as credit for taxes owed or added to your refund amount.

Tax Payment Options:

Cash – Cash is accepted inside the Township Hall during normal business hours (please do NOT put cash in the drop-box outside).

Check or Money Order – Checks or Money Orders can be mailed, placed in the secure drop-box outside, or brought into the Township Hall during normal business hours.

Debit/Credit Cards- Processing fees for debit/credit cards are 2.75% of the total amount due and is paid to the company that processes our credit card payments.

Online– (RECOMMENDED) This is accessible on our website www.oshtemo.org under the “Tax Payments and Information” link. We accept E-CHECK, VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS, DISCOVER, PAYPAL, PAYPAL CREDIT, and GOOGLE PAY. The additional 2.75% processing fee applies to online payment.

EFT/Online E-check using your routing and account number is another option and the fee for this is only \$1.95. Again, all fees charged here go to the processing company, not the Township.

Winter Bills should be in mailboxes the first week of December. If you have an Escrow account and would like a copy of your bill, please contact the Treasurers Office to request one.

As always, if you need assistance or have questions about your tax bills, please feel free to contact the Treasurer’s Office.



Stay Tuned - A New Comprehensive Master Plan

Oshtemo Charter Township is gearing up to create a new Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). A master plan is an important tool used to identify needs and to set a direction for future growth and development. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which grants authority to the Township to prepare plans for its future, requires that the Master Plan be updated every five years. The current Master Plan was adopted in 2011; the most recent update to the plan was in 2019. A lot has happened since then; Oshtemo is now the 85th most populous community in Michigan and the third largest community in Kalamazoo County. A new Comprehensive Master Plan is needed that reflects the growth that the Township has experienced and looks at how the Township should continue to grow, while remaining a healthy community.

The Township Board has entered into a contract with Progressive AE (<https://www.progressiveae.com/>), an accomplished national architectural, planning, and engineering firm based out of Grand Rapids, to create a new CMP for our community. The Comprehensive Master Plan will focus on the Township's future with a strong emphasis on land use planning, placemaking, transportation, and economic development. The CMP will honor and build upon the community's previous planning efforts.

We expect work on the Comprehensive Master Plan to begin in September of this year and be completed in the summer of 2025. This is a significant, multi-year project; as work on the new CMP proceeds, more information will be made available regarding community events and other opportunities for you to get involved. Community input is key to the success of the Comprehensive Master Plan. Please check the Township website at www.oshtemo.org over the coming months for more information.

We look forward to working with the community to continue to protect and improve Oshtemo Township!

Growth Happens... Let's Decide How

Welcome our new employees!

Kerri Tyler

POSITION: Clerk's Assistant: Election Specialist/Records Clerk

HIRE DATE: 5/8/2023

BIO: : I am excited for the opportunity to learn and grow in the Clerk's Assistant position with Oshtemo Township. My background is in the clerical and customer service fields, making this new position an ideal challenge. In my free time I enjoy cooking, baking, gardening, growing mushrooms, foraging, fishing, swimming & travel, along with time spent with my family in the beauty of the UP with my husband Jim.

Leeanna Harris

POSITION: Zoning Administrator

HIRE DATE: 7/10/2023

BIO: Leeanna Harris was born and raised in Muskegon, Michigan. She graduated from Michigan State University with both Master and Bachelor degrees in Urban and Regional Planning. She recently moved to Oshtemo Township and is extremely excited to work in the Planning and Zoning Department. She looks forward to her time with the Township and serving the residents.

Scott Fitzgerald

POSITION: GIS Specialist

HIRE DATE: 7/10/2023

BIO: Hello, my name is Scott Fitzgerald, and no, I did not write The Great Gatsby. I was born and raised in Clawson, in the southeast of Michigan, outside of Detroit. I fell in love with the west side of the state when working on my Bachelor degree at Grand Valley State University in Geography and Sustainable Planning and my Master degree at Western Michigan University in the Geography Department with certification in GIS and Geospatial Applications of Unoccupied Aerial Systems. I did my Master's thesis on monitoring erosion at Hagar Park/Beach of the shoreline and bluff due to the neighboring seawall using my drone. What is better than spending time at the beach for a school project? I previously worked at Metro as the Transit Planner. I am excited to use what I have learned there to serve the residents of Oshtemo Township. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time outdoors playing tennis, biking, hiking, gardening, and playing video games like Dance Dance Revolution and Cities: Skylines.

Trustee Neil Sikora

POSITION: Oshtemo Township Trustee

APPOINTMENT DATE: 6/27/23

BIO: Neil Sikora joined the Township Board in June as a Trustee. Even before retiring from Pfizer in 2016, Neil was an active volunteer in Oshtemo. For over more than 30 years, he has served as an Election Inspector and Chair, on the Planning Commission, on the Board of Review and others, as a Trustee, and as President of the Oshtemo Historical Society. When not volunteering, Neil enjoys hiking in our community parks, creating/maintaining his native plant gardens, attending local music events, and reading mystery



Public Works—

Parkview Ave Shared Use Path Completion

The Township partnered with the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) to install sanitary sewer and a shared use path on Parkview Ave from 11th Street to 12th Street while the new roundabouts were being constructed. This effort recognizes cost savings, minimizes impacts from construction, and implements the Master Plan.

The shared use path, an 8 foot to 10-foot-wide facility, is anticipated to be completed with asphalt paving in 2024 from Vienna Street to Drake Road. This segment was prioritized in the Master Plan for the access it provides to schools, residential areas and the broader non-motorized network. The plan also called for it to continue west on Parkview to Stadium Drive and Flesher Field, and the Township will pursue those opportunities next.



East facing view of the roundabout at 11th and Parkview

West facing view of the roundabout at 11th and Parkview



Sewer installation on Parkview

Sanitary Sewer Expansion Project Update

Continued litigation has postponed the closing of USDA bonds needed to complete Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Neighborhood Sanitary Sewer Expansion projects. The Contractor is holding their bid for Phase 1 for the time being to work jointly with the Township however at some point this will not be feasible for them. The Township Board and Staff are still hopeful that the Phase 1 neighborhoods will start construction in Spring of 2024.

The Township Board did award a portion of Phase 1 to start this fall. The project is on 7th Street north of M-43 and M-43 between 7th Street and 8th Street. A map is available on the *Public Works Department page of the Township website under dropdown “Map of Expansion Areas”.

Phase 2 design is complete and is under permit review by partner agencies. It is expected to be ready for bidding early 2024. Staff anticipates that construction would commence late 2024 or early 2025, depending on contractor availability.

As more defined dates are set, the Township will be hosting open houses for each neighborhood to answer construction questions and logistics.

[*https://www.oshtemo.org/Officials-Departments/Departments/Public-Works-Department](https://www.oshtemo.org/Officials-Departments/Departments/Public-Works-Department)



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



Senior Activities

Where: Oshtemo Community Center
6407 Parkview Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan



When: Every Tuesday & Wednesday,
continuing until further notice.
See schedule below for details and cost.

Who: These activities are organized by Oshtemo seniors. All seniors are welcome!
Volunteers will be available to teach card games.

Schedule of Activities

Tuesdays
12 to 3 pm

Hand & Foot
Card Games

Wednesdays
1 to 2 pm

Chair Yoga
with Leslie



Oshtemo
Friends of the Parks



DRAKE FARMSTEAD PARK

927 N. Drake Road
Kalamazoo

Fall on the Farm



**Saturday, October 7
1 to 4 p.m.**



Raindate: Sunday, October 8 1-4 p.m.

Foot-stomping, old time music from the front porch stage, spinning demonstrations by South County Fiber Arts, butter churning and wood turning demonstrations, and more!

Kids can paint a pumpkin, pet a little goat, play old fashioned kids' games and go on a scavenger hunt!

Overflow parking and shuttles are available at Maple Hill Mall. For more information, contact Vanessa Street, Oshtemo Township Parks Director, at (269) 216-5233 or vstreet@oshtemo.org



927 N. Drake Road • Kalamazoo



Did you know?

Country dancing opportunities abound at our Grange Hall!

Country Dancing in Kalamazoo is a non-profit organization passionate about preserving the joy and excitement of the contra, square and English dance traditions. They provide instruction, live or recorded music, and **welcome everyone**. For more information, including the names of musicians and callers for specific dances, visit their website at:

www.countrydancinginkalamazoo.org, or

Facebook Contra Dance Kalamazoo.



The following dances will be held at the Oshtemo Grange Hall, 3234 North 3rd Street (corner of 3rd Street and H Avenue). Come a half hour early if you'd like to take part in a lesson to learn basic skills and dance moves. Suggested donation is \$1 -\$15, pay what you choose.

Contra and Squares: Saturdays, Sept 23, Oct 28, Nov 11, Dec 9, 7-10:30 pm.

Just for Fun Dances*: Sundays, Oct 8, Nov 5, Dec 3, 2-5 pm.

English Country Dances: Sat Dec 9, 3-5 pm.

English Country Dances: Weds Oct 18, Nov 15, Dec 20, 7:30-9:30 pm.

*Just for Fun Dances – An afternoon of variety in couple dances & set dances. For example – waltz, contra, English squares, etc. New dancers are welcome. Learn new styles & skills in a relaxed atmosphere. It's a workshop and a party!
Recorded music. Sunday afternoons 2-5pm.



GO! Green Oshtemo Open House

Planning Ahead for Oshtemo Parks

Does your neighborhood need a playground? Or a place to play basketball or tennis? Concerned about how our parks will meet the needs of a growing and aging population? Please share your ideas, thoughts and concerns as we update Oshtemo's Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This meeting will also offer an opportunity to provide feedback on future improvements to Flesher Field Park and Drake Farmstead Park.

**Parks and Recreation Open House
Wednesday, October 11th from 4:00-6:00pm
Oshtemo Community Center,
6407 Parkview Ave, Kalamazoo 49009.**

Please arrive any time during the open house. Stay for just a few minutes or as long as your schedule allows!

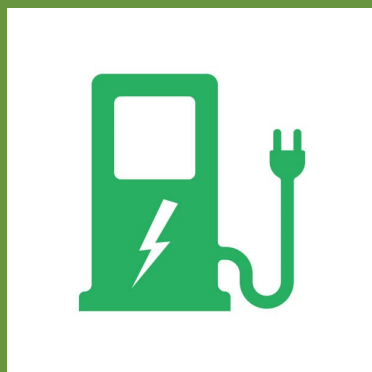
If you can't attend the meeting but would like to participate,
please contact Vanessa Street, Parks Director, at (269) 216-5233 or vstreet@oshtemo.org

Oshtemo Safety Committee—

The Charter Township of Oshtemo is excited to launch a Community Safe Exchange Zone! This Community Safe Exchange Zone has 24/7 lighting and video surveillance. The location of the Community Safe Exchange Zone is at Township Hall (7275 West Main Street) in the southwest corner of the parking lot. Please feel free to use this space at will!



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!

Is Your Streetlight Out?

Streetlight issues, including outages or repairs, can be reported directly to Consumers Energy by visiting:
www.consumersenergy.com/outages/street-light



(continued from front page)

Why is Oshtemo such a special place to live? Local government impacts the day-to-day lives of residents the most directly. Our location in relation to municipal neighbors, the level of commercial and residential development that continues to happen and the thoughtful engagement of residents helps guide and inform direction. You should know that the professional staff that support the work of the Township is top-notch and committed to making the community a great place to live. Currently, the Board, the staff and myself are working on the 2024 budget. It is an essential part of local government's ability to meet the needs of our community; such as policing, fire services, parks, road and public infrastructure, maintenance and more.

Looking to the future, managing growth is by far our biggest challenge. The township is a highly desirable shopping, entertainment, recreation, suburban and rural-living balance that I aim to support and preserve. I will continue to work with residents, Board and professional staff to look for ways to continually improve and maintain the quality of life we enjoy.

In the pages of this newsletter, you will find valuable information on projects and programs that impact our community. Being an open and transparent public servant is important to me. The Board and myself are well aware of the call for more transparency in our local government. As a part of reaching that goal, Oshtemo has engaged a professional media and marketing firm, LKF Marketing, to help us communicate with the community in a broader manner. You will see more information in the coming weeks, but I am eager to increase the level of conversation between the Township and residents.

Best regards, Cheri Bell, Supervisor

**14
OCT**

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**Free
Entry**

**OSHTEMO FIRE
PREVENTION DAY**

—
**FREE PANCAKE
BREAKFAST**

— 9AM - 11AM

LIVE BURN DEMONSTRATION

— 11AM

TOUCH A TRUCK

—

LIVE BAND

—

OSHTEMO FIRE STATION #1

7275 W MAIN ST.

KALAMAZOO MI 49009

- LOCATED BEHIND THE STATION



Car Seat Safety

Oshtemo Fire Department Station 1 is excited to announce that we are now a nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) car seat inspection station. Our training and certification is made possible by Safe Kids Worldwide, a non-profit organization that works with families and communities to keep kids safe from injuries. Safe Kids holds safety events in all 50 states, which includes car seat checkups (more than 8,000 a year), community events, educational workshops and sport safety clinics.

In addition to the inspections, the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning supports local car seat distribution efforts by providing car seats for child safety events and inspection stations for qualifying families. The car seats are available for children as small as 5lbs to 100lbs. Since March 2023, the Oshtemo inspection station has provided and installed 19 car seats to families in need.

Did you know?

*Michigan law requires children to be buckled in rear-facing car seats until 1 year, however, it is highly suggested to keep rear-facing until at least 2 years old. The head, neck and spine of toddlers are *much* more protected in the event of a crash in a rear-facing position. In fact, many states have already made the change in their seat belt law to reflect this recommendation based on car crash statistics and research from groups including the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

*Children under the age of 8 and under 57" are required to be in a car seat or booster seat in Michigan.

You can make an appointment to get your car seat professionally checked - at no cost- by calling 269-375-0487. You do not need to be a resident of the township to make an appointment.





OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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

Third Thursday at 7 PM at the Oshtemo Township Hall Meeting Room

September 21—Westbound on Route 66 by John Lacko, an editorial photographer based in Kalamazoo. He specializes in photojournalism, sports, performance, and environmental portraiture

October 19—Drake House investigations by Kathy Conder of Michigan Paranormal Encounters

November 16—TBD

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

7275 West Main Street
 Kalamazoo, MI 49009

CHARTER TOWNSHIP
 • Established 1839 •

