



# 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

Grant Taylor  
gtaylor@oshtemo.org

### Trustees

Cheri Bell  
cbell@oshtemo.org

Deb Everett

deverett@oshtemo.org

Zak Ford

zford@oshtemo.org

Ken Hudok

khudok@oshtemo.org

## 2020 Dump Days

### Proof of Residency Required

Township Hall  
7275 West Main St.  
9 AM– 3 PM

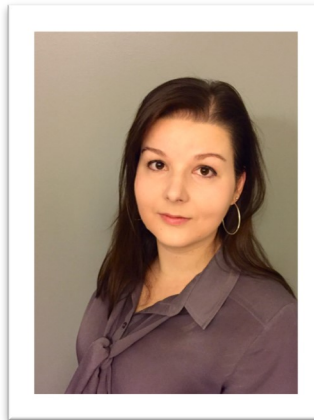
March 28th

### Township Office Closed

MLK Jr. Day—1/20/20  
Presidents' Day—2/17/20

## Welcome the New Planning Director

Iris Lubbert joined the Oshtemo Township team in early November as our new full time Planning Director. She attended Kalamazoo College for her undergraduate work and earned a degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Michigan.



Iris comes to us from the City of Cedar falls, Iowa where she worked as a Planner and Program administrator for the past 5 years. Her achievements include obtaining and administering a grant with the City's Historic Preservation Commission to get their downtown listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

She brings her experience of working for a growing community, her knowledge of project management, as well as her passion for public engagement. Recently married to a Kalamazoo local, she is excited to be back in Michigan and closer to family. Her hobbies include painting, cooking, playing boardgames, hiking, and volunteering for animal shelters. She looks forward to serving the citizens of Oshtemo Township and becoming an active member in the community.

If you happen to see Iris when you stop into the Township office, welcome her to our community!

## Township Department Information

Assessor Kristine Biddle  
216-5225 assessor@oshtemo.org

Fire Chief Mark Barnes  
375-0487 mbarnes@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 Marc Elliott  
216-5236 mellriott@oshtemo.org



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From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

Happy New Year! This will be a busy year for the Clerk's Office, and we have already started preparing for the four anticipated elections in 2020 (learn more on page 5). Both my Deputy Clerk Amanda McMillon and I are certified as election administrators through the State of Michigan Bureau of Elections, and we renew our training each year to ensure that the voting process in Oshtemo has the utmost integrity.

When people have questions about elections, my goal is to get those questions answered by the correct source since it is the only way to ensure that the answer is accurate. Either your local clerk or the Bureau of Elections should be the source of information for Michigan voters. If you have any questions about voting or elections, please do not hesitate to call or email my office. You can also access Oshtemo elections information at [www.oshtemo.org/elections-information/](http://www.oshtemo.org/elections-information/) or through the State of Michigan at [www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)



From Treasurer Grant Taylor—

Winter tax bills have been mailed and are now available to be paid at the Township office. If you have not received your winter tax bill, you can request a copy from the Treasurer's office by either calling 269-216-5221 or emailing me directly at [GTaylor@oshtemo.org](mailto:GTaylor@oshtemo.org). Winter tax bills are Due February 14<sup>th</sup> by 5 pm. Our offices will be open that day until 5 pm. Please note, our offices will be closed Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> in observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day. Any tax payments received after 5pm on Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup> will be considered delinquent and subject to penalties. If you have any questions about your tax bills or payments, please feel free to contact our office at 375-4260.

If you cannot make it in during our office hours Monday through Thursday 8am-5pm, Friday 8am – 1pm, our drop box in the parking lot is checked daily. We will send a receipt if a self-addressed stamped envelope is provided with your payment.

The Township has had a record-breaking year of investments with our interest on holdings reaching close to \$170,000. This is a 222% increase from the previous year. The 2020 forecasted projections are to reach \$200,000. This will help to offset our increasing operating costs.

The tax collection process has been updated to hold Township portions of collected taxes in a high yield account over the tax collection period. This will generate over \$20,000 in additional revenue for the Township every year moving forward.

Wrapping up our delinquent tax collection, we collected over \$275,000, of which \$21,140 will be retained by the Township. Other entities such as our local schools, library, KVCC, and county operations and programs all received portions of the money collected.



From Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell—

Happy New Year! The Township signed its first four-year police protection agreement with Kalamazoo County and the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office. With the amended terms, the Supervisor and Sheriff will interview candidates to fill the Oshtemo Lieutenant position. The contract also establishes an updated pricing system reflective of the assigned deputies' wages.

Besides increasing police protection in 2020, the Township will rebuild many neighborhood roads through the sewer expansions. Project bidding is underway. South 8th Street remains closed due to flooding. Please know the Road Commission and Oshtemo Township appreciate your continued patience. The prolonged flooding, about 200 feet in length and just north of ML Ave, is unusual. South 8th has no known history of flooding. The Township reached out to geological experts at WMU who concluded this flooding is unlikely to recede in the foreseeable future. The RCKC and Oshtemo met in November to review the situation and from that meeting determined the following-- First, a temporary solution of building the road up to a height above the current water level is not an option due to the uncertainty of the structural integrity of the road and the increased risk posed to users. Second, the Township and RCKC will work with civil engineers to develop reconstruction plans to build the long-term solution. This process includes designing, estimating costs, identifying funding, and securing permits. Our shared goal is to rebuild S. 8th Street as early as possible in the 2020 construction season so the road is re-opened.

Many questions about mandatory sewer connections are on residents' minds. Public Works is further developing FAQs to expand available information. Please don't hesitate to contact the Township Public Works by calling the main line at 375-4260. I am also available for questions at 216-5220.

## Supervisor Open Office Hours

February 3rd, 2020

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM



## Notice from the Assessor:

### 2020 March Board of Review Dates

Monday, March 9: 9am-4pm

Wednesday, March 11: 1pm-4pm &  
6pm-9pm

Thursday, March 12: 9am-4pm

At the Township Hall  
7275 W. Main St.

Call the Assessor's Office at 216-5225 beginning **March 1st** for an appointment, or use the contact form at [www.oshtemo.org/officials-and-departments/assessing-department/](http://www.oshtemo.org/officials-and-departments/assessing-department/)

By board resolution, residents are able to protest by letter, provided the protest letter is received by **5:00pm on Friday, March 6, 2020.**

### 2020 March Board of Review

The Oshtemo Board of Review, appointed by the Township Board, is comprised of

### 2020 Property Tax Hardship Exemption Qualifications

Your 2020 taxes will be based on your 2020 taxable value. If you feel you will not be able to pay your 2020 taxes, you may be eligible for a Poverty Exemption.

Please review the information below on eligibility.

**Income thresholds for use in setting poverty exemption guidelines for 2020 assessments are below.**

Size of Family Unit	Qualifying Income per Township	Size of Family Unit	Qualifying Income per Township
1 person	\$15,612	5 persons	\$37,712
2 persons	\$21,137	6 persons	\$42,237
3 persons	\$26,662	7 persons	\$48,762
4 persons	\$32,187	8 persons	\$54,287
		Additional persons add	\$5,525

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 Board of Review.

Please contact the Assessor's office by phone: **269-216-5225** or e-mail: [assessor@oshtemo.org](mailto:assessor@oshtemo.org). Applications for Poverty Exemption and additional information is available on the Township Website: [oshtemo.org/officials-and-departments/assessing-department](http://oshtemo.org/officials-and-departments/assessing-department).

## Drake Road Sidewalk Project

The construction for the Drake Road sidewalk project south of West Main St. was suspended until next Spring due to the approaching winter weather. A buried electrical line that was to be relocated in advance of sidewalk construction remains unresolved at year-end. This utility work, which is continuing through December/January, caused a short stretch of sidewalk to remain incomplete. Meanwhile, Oshtemo is securing grant funding to extend the Drake Rd. 10-ft wide non-motorized facility from its current end at Green Meadow Rd., south to KL Ave. Oshtemo's two Drake Rd pedestrian projects will be coordinated with a planned 2020, Drake Rd pavement restoration project of the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County.

**Need a safe place to exchange online purchases?**



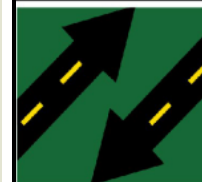
The Township Hall is safe and secure and open Mon-Thur 8am-5pm and Fri 8am-1pm

## Is Your Streetlight Out?

Streetlight outages can be reported directly to Consumers Energy by calling: **800-477-5050**



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](http://www.kalamazooountyroads.com)



## Events with the Parks Department



### Yoga at the Oshtemo Community Center

Join us for drop-in Community Yoga every **Wednesday, January 8 – February 26** from 7-8:15 pm. \$10 per session, sponsored by Oshtemo Friends of the Parks. The Oshtemo Community Center is located at

6407 Parkview Avenue. All ages and levels of experience welcome, bring a yoga mat or blanket.

Yoga Instructor Samantha Schaefer completed her 200-hour teacher training in the ParaYoga tradition with Karina Ayn Mirsky. She has since practiced in a wide variety of styles, including studies in Anusara yoga in Rome, Italy, and Ashtanga yoga in Chicago, IL.



### Oshtemo Friends of the Parks granted funds for Concert series

Good news! Oshtemo's popular 'Music in the Park' concert series will return in 2020, thanks in part to a grant from the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Three free, family-friendly outdoor concerts will be held at Flesher Field and one indoor concert will be held at the Grange Hall. Volunteers are needed to help plan the concerts. To volunteer, contact Karen High, Parks Director, at [khigh@oshtemo.org](mailto:khigh@oshtemo.org) or (269) 216-5233.



Schlitz Creek Bluegrass Band performing at the Flesher Field gazebo (2019)

### Donate Now for the Future of Our Parks

If you know and love Oshtemo's parks, help us preserve and maintain them for future generations. Please consider donating to the Oshtemo Township Parks and Recreation Fund at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Proceeds from the Fund are used solely for park acquisition, improvements, and maintenance. It's easy to donate! Visit the Kalamazoo Community Foundation

website at <http://www.kalfound.org> Select the Give Now button at the top of the screen, then enter 'Oshtemo' in the search box. Select Oshtemo Township Parks & Recreation Fund and follow the prompts for billing and payment information. Thank you!



## Fire Department: Replacement Rescue Engine

The Oshtemo Fire Department maintains a 25-year projected capital plan with the largest of those items being fire apparatus. In 2019, the department undertook the



process of replacing two large fire apparatus (Engine 521 and Rescue 582) with one vehicle. This will provide crews with the simultaneous capability of suppressing fires while providing technical rescue services. Instituting this combined Engine / Rescue will reduce maintenance costs since the overall fleet size is being reduced.

The replacement process started in 2018 when the department formed a small committee of members which was chaired by the Deputy Fire Chief. Their tasks included writing a request for proposals which was used to identify the preferred vendor who was then recommended to the Township Board. The



detailed work then began as they jointly authored the highly detailed construction documents. This team was also responsible to monitor various steps of the fabrication process which took all of 2019. An estimated 300-man hours was dedicated to this important project.

Black Line-X was preferred over traditional polished chrome for areas like the radiator grill, wheel well trim, bumpers and fender skirts. This will reduce the amount of upkeep. The unit will carry 1,000 gallons of water (the largest in our fleet), the fire pump will provide up to 2,000 GPM and truck will meet the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association 1901 standard.

Following our countywide fire vehicle numbering system, this apparatus will be identified as Rescue Engine 512 and will be responding from our station #5-2 on 6<sup>th</sup> Street. As of this writing, Rescue Engine 512 has passed its final inspection at the factory. After some minor adjustments, it is projected to arrive in Oshtemo by 12/31/19. Crews will then oversee the relocation and mounting of equipment from two trucks into this one unit.





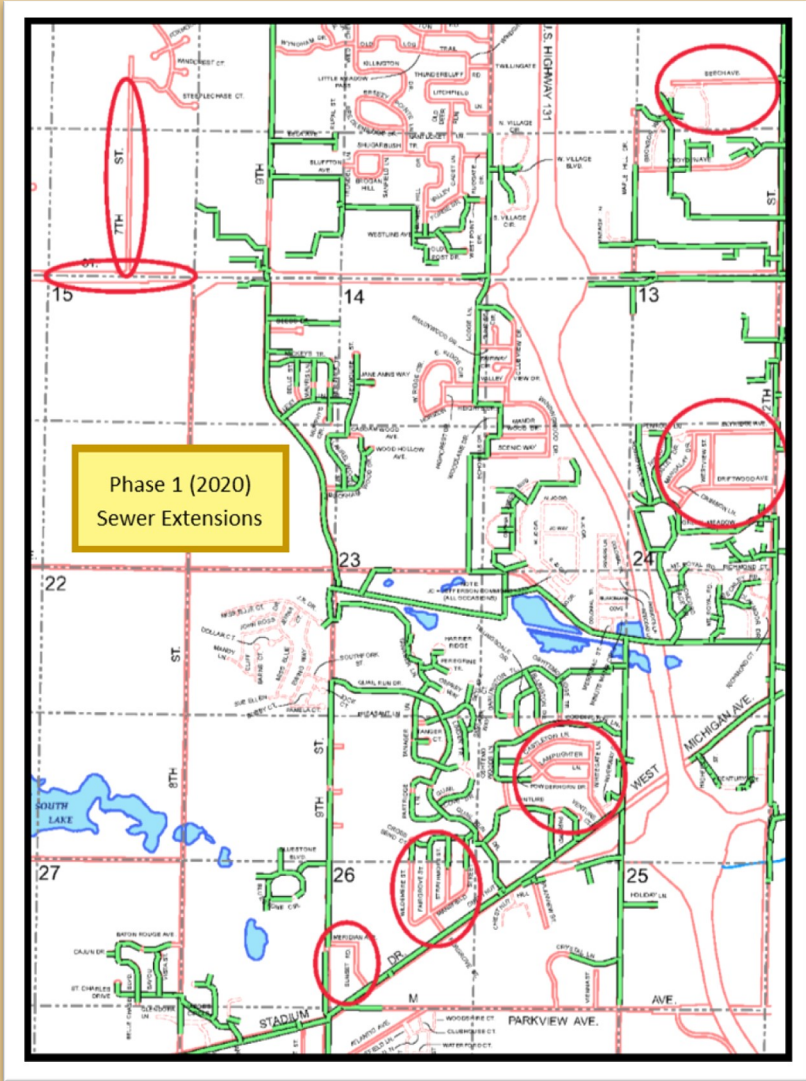
# Sewer Project Update

## Mandatory Connections

Second notices were mailed out on December 2nd to all properties that have yet to complete connecting to sewer in locations where public sewer service is available. Per Ordinance, owners have two years to connect following notification. Since initiating the mailing of formal notice, approximately 128 properties have paid sewer connection fees, and 99 properties have completed their connection by the end of the 2019 construction season. Oshtemo recognizes the difficulty of winter construction, therefore accommodations may be made should your 2-year compliance date occur in Winter. If sewer connection payment has been made to the Township, and the owner has a contract/deposit with a licensed contractor to complete the private-side work in the Spring, these items will be considered evidence of "good-faith intent" to comply with the mandatory connection requirement.

## USDA Phase 1 Sewer Extension

In anticipation of late 2020 availability of sewer service (from Oshtemo's planned extension of sewer service into existing Oshtemo neighborhoods), a first notification letter was mailed on October 10, 2019 to 280 properties within the phase I project area. Once the sewer is available, connections can be made. This project is scheduled to go out to bid next month for 2020 construction. If your septic system is less than 15 years old, immediate connection to public sewer is not required. However once the septic system reaches its 15<sup>th</sup> year, connection to public sewer is required.



## 2020 Election Information

### Notice to Precincts 5 & 6 Voters

West Kalamazoo Christian Church has notified us that they will no longer be a polling place for Precincts 5 & 6.

- **Precinct 5 will now vote at Skyridge Church**  
located at 394 S. Drake Rd.
- **Precinct 6 will now vote at Centerpoint Church**  
located at 2345 N. 10th St.

All voters in Precincts 5 & 6 will be receiving new voter ID cards with the location change as required by Michigan Election Law.

### Upcoming Election Dates

- March 10, 2020—Presidential Primary
- May 5, 2020—Possible Local Election
- August 4, 2020—State Primary Election
- November 3, 2020—Presidential Election

As a reminder, polls open at 7 AM and close at 8 PM. Anyone that is in line at 8 PM is still able to vote in the election.

### Election Inspectors Needed

Would you like to help protect democracy? Are you a registered voter in the State of Michigan? The Clerk's office is accepting

applications for precinct inspectors. Help preserve the integrity and public confidence in our elections and earn money for your service. No prior experience is necessary. Computer proficiency is a desired skill, but not required. Training is required and paid for. This will take place in February before the Presidential Primary and again in July prior to the August Primary.

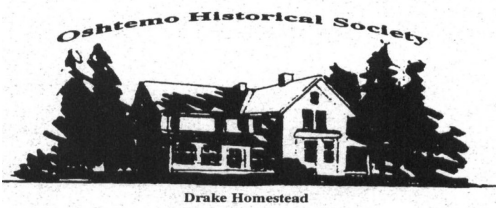
Applications are available the Township website at: [Oshtemo.org/applications/](http://Oshtemo.org/applications/) Under the Election Applications heading. Or you can contact the Clerk's office at 269-216-5224 or e-mail [clerk@oshtemo.org](mailto:clerk@oshtemo.org).

### Permanent Absentee Voter List

Current registered voters in Oshtemo Township, if you would like to be added to our permanent absentee voter (vote at home) list, sign up on-line at [Oshtemo.org/elections-information/](http://Oshtemo.org/elections-information/) or contact the Clerk's office at 269-216-5224 or e-mail [clerk@oshtemo.org](mailto:clerk@oshtemo.org).

About 8 weeks before each election, you will receive an application for an absentee ballot to be signed and returned to the Clerk's Office. Once the ballots are ready they are mailed out.





## OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The Oshtemo Historical Society would like to thank all who have supported us throughout the past year. The OHS members, the Friends of the Parks Capital Campaign, a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and YOU for helping develop the Drake Farmstead into an important part of the Oshtemo Parks system. With this support and the work of many volunteers, we have made

many changes to the house and grounds.

Inside the house, we have come a long way in developing the 1950s kitchen into a welcoming Reception Room with extensive demo, new windows, plaster, exterior door, flooring and woodwork restoration and refurbishing. Elsewhere in the house we have added new wallpaper, woodwork refurbishing, and “new” historic furniture, some from the Drake family.

Outside, we have a wonderful new event barn with modern restrooms, an ADA ramp for access to the house, woodlot clearing of invasive species and the development of a new parking area and the beginning of new trails for accessible hiking.

With upcoming open houses, watch for the completion of many of these projects. Also join us for our monthly educational programs on the third Thursdays, beginning in March. Please consider joining the Oshtemo Historical Society and work on the development of this landmark property that is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Visit our website for more information.

[www.oshtemohistoricalsociety.org](http://www.oshtemohistoricalsociety.org)

www.oshtemo.org

Ph 375.4260 Fax 375.7180

Kalamazoo, MI 49009

7275 West Main Street

**oshtemo**  
charter township

