



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

DDA COVID-19 Grant Program

Downtown Development Authorities were created for the purposes of promoting health, safety, prosperity, security, and general welfare; preventing property value and structural deterioration; halting or preventing the growth of blighted areas; and assisting municipalities in the development and redevelopment of such districts.

They quickly pulled together a special meeting (held virtually) to launch a grant program to provide immediate relief to small businesses that had to abruptly close.

The DDA sent notices to business owners to offer up to \$2,500 to help cover operational expenses such as rent or mortgage payments, utility payments, and basic operations payroll.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 response back in March, the Downtown Development Authority quickly realized that the local businesses located within the district were particularly prone to financial distress.



To date, 19 grants have been awarded to total \$47,500 from the DDA to the local businesses in the district.

2020 Dump Days
Proof of Residency Required

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

MORE DAYS ADDED FOR CONVENIENCE!

- July 11
- July 25
- Aug 29
- Sep 26
- Oct 31

Nov 7 Leaf Drop off
Nov 21 Trash and Leaf

Shred Days 10AM-12PM:
July 18 and Sep 19

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 mellott@oshtemo.org



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



From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

As of right now, the August 4th and November 3rd elections will proceed with in-person voting at the polling precincts. Mail-in ballots are still encouraged to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and to prevent long lines at the polls.

What do you do when you have a question about elections or voting? CALL YOUR CLERK. There are many organizations that are willing to help, but calling your local Clerk will get you closer to your answer in a much more efficient manner. My staff and I are Certified Elections Administrators and we are in the office every day. Call us at 216-5224 or email clerk@oshtemo.org.

What do you do if you encounter a problem on election day? CALL YOUR CLERK. Again, while there are many groups and organizations who want to help, your first call should always be to your local Clerk. We are here to work for you!



From Treasurer Grant Taylor—

The Treasurer's Office is pleased to announce a new payment option for residents and business owners that will offer a secure and easy way to manage payments to the Township. The new option to pay tax bills online will include the ability to create a secure profile and receive due date reminders via email or text. There will be nominal processing fees and you can choose to receive paperless billing. Additional payment options will include E-checks and ACH.

This is being launched in a effort to reduce late fees associated with checks that arrive after the deadline, to encourage payments to be made from home instead of having to drive to the Township Hall, and to allow the convenience of access to tax information at your fingertips. If you are not interested in this option, you can continue to pay your taxes through the mail, drop box, or by coming into the office. If you are interested, this option should be up and running by late summer/early fall.

Online bill payments won't be limited to taxes! Payments for Parks rentals and cemetery purchases will be available soon. Call the Treasurer's Office to speak with Treasurer Grant Taylor or Deputy Treasurer Cheryl Moeslein if you have any questions about tax payments or online bill payments.



From Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell—

The Township continues to adapt to the many 2020 challenges caused by COVID 19. Work in all departments continues. For your health, please remain vigilant as the pandemic months continue. Staff are adapting to a cautious new normal. To see the Supervisor or someone in a specific department in person, please schedule meetings by appointment. The Supervisor remains available through libyhc@oshtemo.org, (269) 216-5220, or by virtual or scheduled in-person meetings.

PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

If you are interested in becoming more involved with your local community, please fill out an application to serve on a Board or Committee with the Township. Applications are kept on file and then reviewed as vacancies occur.

Applications can be accessed here:

<https://www.oshtemo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/board-appointment-application.pdf>



GRATITUDE.

Gratitude is the word of the day extended in appreciation for the time, input, and physical labor that so many Oshtemo residents and business owners give to their community. Look at this list of boards and committees! Their work makes the Oshtemo greater community “world go round.” On behalf of the Supervisor, the Township Board, and the community, we express our gratitude.

BOARD OF REVIEW

Fred Gould (Resident)
Kitty Gelling (Resident)
Neil Sikora (Resident)
Kim Bourner (Resident)
Fred Antosz (Resident)
Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Kristine Biddle (Staff)
CCTA (Public Transit)
Dusty Farmer
SoDA (South Drake CIA)
Galen Rike (Resident)
Joe Gesmundo (Interest)
Christine Morse (County Rep)
Corey Ashley (Interest)
Kelly Bringman (Interest)
Denny Patzer (At Large)
Theresa Spurr (Interest)

DANGEROUS BUILDING OFFICER

OSHTEMO DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Jack Siegel (Interest)
Bruce Betzler (At Large)
Grant Taylor (At Large)
Dick Skalski (At Large)
Mike Lutke (Interest)
Themi Corakis (Interest)
Rich MacDonald (Interest)
Ryan Wieber (At large)
Bill Cekola (Interest)
Libby HC (TB Liaison)
Iris Lubbert (Staff)

ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD

Chad Hughson (Resident)
Druba Bhattari (Resident)
Neil Sikora (Resident)

OSHTEMO ELECTION COMMISSION

Dusty Farmer
Deb Everett
Zak Ford

FRIENDS OF THE PARKS

David Walsh (Resident)
Bruce Dannenhauer (Resident)
Dennis Patzer (Resident)
Shari Wykrent (Interest)
Vacancy

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN BUILDING AUTHORITY

Dusty Farmer, Chair
Grant Taylor
KATS (Transportation)
Libby HC, Vice Chair
Dusty Farmer
Colten Hutson (Staff)
Iris Lubbert (Staff)
Marc Elliott (Staff)
KALAMAZOO REGIONAL WATER & WASTEWATER COMMISSION

PLANNING COMMISSION

Mary Smith (Resident)
Micki Maxwell (Resident)
Anna Versalle (Resident)
Ron Commissaris (Resident)
Chetan Vyas (Resident)
Bruce Vanderweele (Resident)
Dusty Farmer (TB Liaison)
Iris Lubbert (Staff)
Jim Porter (Staff Attorney)

PUBLIC MEDIA NETWORK

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Neil Sikora (Resident)
Fred Antosz (Resident)
Anita Smith (Resident)
Fred Gould (Resident)
Ollie Chambers (Resident)
Micki Maxwell (PC Liaison)
Cheri Bell (TB Liaison)
Iris Lubbert (Staff)
Jim Porter (Attorney)
CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH AUTHORITY (KCCDA)

COMMITTEES-- BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Carl Benson (Resident)
Rick Everett (Staff)
Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Grant Taylor

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Tim Mallett (Resident)
Dick Hertzell (Resident)
Bernie Mein (Resident)
Marc Elliott (Staff)
Colten Hutson (Staff)
Zak Ford
Grant Taylor
Libby Heiny-Cogswell

CENTRAL COUNTY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (Public Transit)

KALAMAZOO COUNTY BROWNFIELD AUTHORITY

METRO TRANSIT AUTHORITY LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dusty Farmer
PARKS
Paul Sotherland (At Large)
Vacancy (Resident)
Cheri Bell (as Resident 10 yrs)
Deb Everett
Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Karen High (Staff)

POLICE

Jack Shepperly (Resident)
Jim Sterenberg (Resident)
Malcolm Blair (Resident)
Jim Taylor (Resident)
Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Deb Everett
Zak Ford

Mark Barnes (Staff, Fire Chief)
Ed Hellwege (Staff)
Josh Owens (Staff)

WELLHEAD PROTECTION TEAM

Iris Lubbert (Staff)
Colten Hutson (Staff)



Planning—

Curious as to what development has been going on in your community? Look no further! The 2019 Planning Department Annual Report is here!

Every year the Planning Department produces a report that documents its activities. This report includes projects worked on by the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals in 2019 and gives a sneak peek into what is anticipated for 2020. The report provides an overview of what site plans, variances, rezonings, ordinance amendments, and more have been approved or are ongoing within Oshtemo Township. The full 2019 Planning Year End report can be found on our website: <https://oshtemo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2019-Annual-Report.pdf>

Some of the highlights include:

- The approval of the Agribusiness/Agritourism Ordinance, which was designed to provide those who either produce an agricultural product or live in the rural area the opportunity to generate some additional revenue on their property without impeding the enjoyment of the rural character of the area.
- The approval of a new Lighting Ordinance; Oshtemo Township is now a community that actively supports the Dark Sky Initiative - a campaign to reduce light pollution.
- The ongoing development of the Maple Hill Overlay Zone; which if adopted would allow for the redevelopment of the existing golf course at the south east corner of W Main Street and US Highway 131 into a compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district.
- The development of a three story 151,190 square foot office building, with a footprint of approximately 41,770 square feet, immediately east of Meijer on West Main Street to house the new corporate administrative headquarters for Advia Credit Union.
- A new 12,706 square foot medical office for Bronson Primary Care. This new building will be addressed as 6210 West Main Street and will be located on the same four-acre parcel as the existing Bronson FastCare facility.

We thank our community members on our Boards and Commissions for their time and effort in making Oshtemo what it is today and continually working toward expressing the community's vision for the future. We also would like to thank the members of the public that have and continue to contribute to these discussions. To stay up to date on ongoing activities and find ways that you can contribute to shaping your community, we encourage you to watch for events and meetings on our website and Facebook page.

Oshtemo's 'Music in the Park' 2020

Oshtemo Friends of the Parks plans to continue hosting live music at Flesher Field this summer, with a modified format to encourage social distancing. Dates, musicians, and format changes are still to be determined. If you'd like to help plan the event(s), please contact Karen High, Oshtemo Township Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5233.

**Please thank our sponsors for supporting free, family-friendly
entertainment in Oshtemo!**

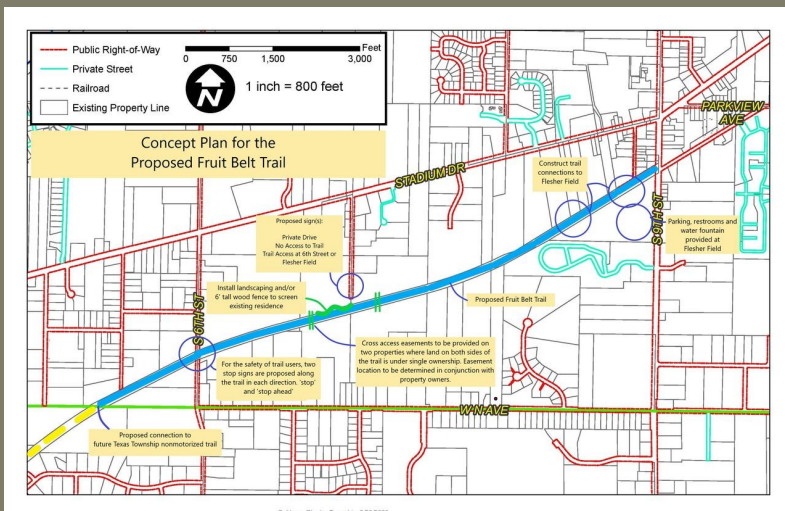
Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Marana Group, Oshtemo Downtown Development Authority, Aunalytics, Fleis & Vandenbrink, Miedema & Associates, Harding's Friendly Markets, Ted Hartleb Agency, Siegfried Crandall, and Naylor Landscape Management.

State Grant Sought for Recreation Land Acquisition

Oshtemo Township is seeking to purchase 35 acres of land near Flesher Field for outdoor public recreation. The 150' wide property adjoins the north side of Flesher Field (3664 S 9th Street) and extends to the Township's south border, a length of approximately two miles. Formerly a railroad corridor, the property is now owned by Ameritech Michigan Co. and is used for underground telecommunications. Ameritech will retain a permanent easement for telecommunications. Future plans are to create an 8'-10' wide crushed stone trail in the corridor for walking & bicycling. The remainder of the corridor will be preserved for wildlife habitat and natural resource protection.

An application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund was submitted to fund the purchase. The grant request is \$58,000, which includes a sale price of \$40,000 plus \$18,000 in incidental costs (appraisal fees, environmental assessment, closing fees, title insurance, transfer tax). The required 25% match (\$20,000) is provided by Ameritech's donation of a portion of the value of the land. Therefore, no Township funds are required. If successful, the property could be acquired in the summer of 2021.

The proposed trail is named the 'Fruit Belt Trail' for its location on the former Fruit Belt Railway Line, which once ran from Kalamazoo to South Haven. This section of future trail was identified as a priority in the **GO! Green Oshtemo** plan for Parks & Recreation, Nonmotorized Transportation, & Conservation. Long term plans are to extend the trail east to 11th Street. Texas Township plans to extend the trail west through their jurisdiction toward Mattawan. The 14 mile Van Buren Trail, which runs from South Haven to Hartford, is also on the former Fruit Belt Railway Line.



Drake Farmstead Park Opening Postponed Due to Coronavirus

Contractors, Township staff and volunteers are back to work preparing Oshtemo's newest park for visitors. Though much of the project was accomplished in 2019, construction of the picnic shelter, seeding of lawn, native grasses and wildflowers, and installation of interpretive signs remains to be completed. A park opening date has not been set but will be announced on the Township website and social media. Due to concerns about large gatherings, the grand opening celebration will be delayed until 2021.

Drake Farmstead Park features 26 acres of woods and fields with walking trails, a picnic shelter, and interpretive signs on local history and nature. The historic Drake house serves as the park's centerpiece and is available for scheduled tours by the Oshtemo Historical Society. A timber frame carriage barn was built in 2019 for educational programs and private events. Park improvements were funded by the Drake Farmstead Park Capital Campaign, grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Oshtemo Rotary Club, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and Oshtemo Township.

'Yoga in the Park' returns to Flesher Field



Please join us at the Flesher Field gazebo for another summer of outdoor yoga! All attendees are asked to remain at least six feet apart for social distancing. Classes are from 7:00 to 8:15 pm each Wednesday until Labor Day. Cost is \$10 per class. No registration or advance sign up is required and all levels are welcome. Please bring a yoga mat or blanket and water. Yoga instructor is Samantha Schaefer. Flesher Field is located at 3664 South 9th Street. Last minute cancellations due to weather will be posted on Oshtemo Friends of the Parks' Facebook page. Questions? Contact Karen High, Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5233.

Fire Department—

Birthday Greetings:

Who would have imagined that celebrating a child's birthday would become hazardous? Unfortunately, COVID-19 has caused a myriad of changes in our everyday lives, not the least of which impacted our children. But in the face of adversity comes opportunity.

During the Stay Home, Stay Safe period, OFD was able to continue to serve 84 of our community's children by providing touch free, safe distance drive-by visits. Once posted to our social media page, parents would let us know of the particulars and our on-duty crew would make a special trip to the residence providing a slow drive-by with lights and sirens fully activated. It was our way of letting them know that, although we cannot be close in distance, we can still be close at heart.



Fire Academy Graduations:

Like many events, our county-wide fire academy was significantly hampered in its delivery this year. Initially, it was temporarily postponed not knowing that the virus would become widespread and last so long. However, with the visionary efforts of the volunteer instructors and allowances issued by the State Fire Marshal (who oversees the course materials & process), alternative delivery methods were employed for the lecture segments. That provided time to establish modifications to allow social distancing for the hands-on segments.

We are happy to announce that Oshtemo recruits Jared Spallina and Charlie Sullivan, as well as a total of 22 other recruits from Kalamazoo County fire agencies, have now successfully completed all segments of the training and have passed the State proctored final written and practical examinations. Congratulations!

Fire Hydrant Testing

Last year we performed basic flow testing on nearly half of the fire hydrants in Oshtemo Township. Crews also checked vegetation clearance requirements and attached a marker flag directly onto the barrel of the hydrant. With the onslaught of the pandemic, restarting this project has been delayed, but will begin again soon.

Appreciation of Recent Donations

We would like to thank the many community members who have recently blessed us with numerous donations. Homemade face masks, hand sanitizer, and of course treats are appreciated and gave a much needed boost to the morale of our dedicated firefighters. Thank you Oshtemo and Kalamazoo communities!

Drake Road Sidewalk Project

The second phase of the **Drake Road Non-Motorized Path** Project has been let for bid and will be underway in the second half of the 2020 construction season. The Township is currently waiting for AT&T to relocate their fiber optic utilities, which is expected to be completed by mid-July. **The scope of the project is from Green Meadow Road to KL Avenue on the west side of Drake Road.** The competitively bid project was contracted to Brenner Excavating, Inc. VIRIDIS Design Group remains the design engineer and project manager. **Additionally, the Kalamazoo County Road Commission started construction activities on Drake Road, south of West Main Street to complete paving and traffic signal improvements.**



Stadium Drive Sidewalk Project

Construction for the first phase of the **Stadium Drive Sidewalk Project** will begin in early- to mid-August. **The scope of the project is from S. 11th Street to Quail Run Drive, and will be a 6 ft wide non-motorized facility on both sides of Stadium Drive.** The project is scheduled to be let for bid by MDOT on July 10, 2020. Prein and Newhof is the design engineer and project manager.

Public Works—

Sanitary Sewer Hardship Program

Helpful news-- The Oshtemo Township Board adopted the **new sanitary sewer hardship program** on April 28, 2020, which came into effect on May 07, 2020. Thank you to the many residents who communicated the need for this program. A new Township Ordinance (Ordinance No. 620) allows residents experiencing financial hardship the ability to complete a public sewer service connection by seeking **special Oshtemo financing or payment deferment. Residents who qualify for the hardship program will be able to apply the funds towards the Township's sewer connection fees and/or the private plumbing expenses.** The private-side expenses are the costs to physically connect the dwelling to the available public sewer service lead. Property owners who think they may qualify will be asked to fill out and file a Hardship Financing or Deferment Application for Sanitary Sewer Payments. Residents will need to have their final application and other relative documents, such as tax returns, **submitted to the Township between January 01, 2021 and the first week of March 2021.** Staff will assist property owners in completing the form and identifying needed supporting documentation. Applications will be scheduled with the Hardship Advisory Review Committee (HARC) for review. HARC will consider the applications according to the ordinance qualifications and then provide recommendations to the Board. **Deferrals are for the current year. Applications are requested annually** to assure ongoing hardship qualification. Please note, in order to receive hardship financing, the applicant must consent and execute an Installment Payment Plan with the Township, **prior to connecting to the public utility or deferring sewer connection fees.** Residents who think they may qualify are encouraged to discuss their situation with the Public Works Department, prior to January 1st of the year they intend to apply.

USDA Phase 1 Sewer Project

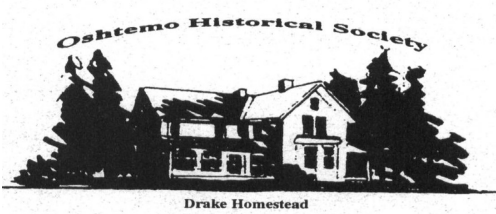
On May 12, 2020, the Township Board conditionally awarded and noticed the winning low-bid contractors for the **USDA Phase 1 Sewer Project.** The winning contractor for Contract A was Peters Construction, with a low bid of \$4,395,422.59. The neighborhoods included in Contract A are N 7th Street, M-43, and Skyridge. The contractor for Contract B was Dunnigan Brothers, with the low bid coming in at \$3,892,510.70. The neighborhoods included in Contract B are Beech Avenue, Whitegate Farms, Fairlane, and Pioneer Acres. **Both contractors are finalizing the necessary paperwork in advance of a planned bond sale and anticipated July 23, 2020 USDA loan closing. (NOTE: This date will be delayed if those opposed to moving forward at this time gather enough signatures during the 45 day right of referendum to place the bonding on the November ballot. In that case, the November general election vote will determine whether the project moves forward.)** Phase 1 consists of extending 23,730 Ft of public sanitary sewer to approximately 282 occupied properties. The project also includes the installation of two lift stations, which are needed to service the Skyridge Neighborhood and N 7th Street/M-43. **Following citizen requests to extend the October 2021 connection deadline, the Township Board is exploring whether the request can be accommodated and still make bond payments.**

USDA Phase 2 Sewer Project

Oshtemo received a **conditional award letter from the USDA** last year allowing us to move forward with the second phase of the sewer project. Necessary federal loan monies are reserved for Phase 2 to extend sewers into **additional neighborhoods and provide sewer service to approximately 640 occupied properties.** We are continuing to work on the design/utility plans with our design engineers of Fleis and Vandenbrink. Currently, the design and RCKC and EGLE permitting processes are scheduled to be completed in February 2021.

Mandatory Sewer Connections

Recently, the Public Works Department sent letters to residents who have not yet connected to the available service lead for sewer. **This letter notified residents that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Township suspended all enforcement actions for the remainder of the 2020 calendar year.** Out of 300+ identified occupied properties in Oshtemo, 161 properties have paid sewer connection fees and 141 properties have physically connected to the public utility. If your septic system is less than 15 years old, immediate connection to public sewer is not required. After 15 years, connection to public sewer is required. The suspension of the deadline is being made to better assist property owners during the unique circumstances that COVID-19 presents to our community. Oshtemo will continue to work with property owners toward the goal of connecting to public sewer in a reasonable and responsible timeframe. We encourage residents who benefit from this enforcement suspension to make good-faith efforts to proceed with completing their individual sewer connections. Property owners will receive a follow-up notification letter which shall reestablish a new compliance date to complete the required connection to public sewer. Please refer above for anyone seeking hardship assistance.



OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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

We invite you to join us to learn about local history. Our programs are free and you do not need to be a member to attend. We meet at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 W. Main St, unless otherwise stated.

**NOTE: PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
DUE TO COVID-19 CONCERNS.
WE ARE HOPEFUL TO BE ABLE TO MEET IN SEPTEMBER.**

Enjoy your summer and be safe.

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7275 West Main Street

