



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

DUMP DAYS

9 am-3 pm

June 26

July 31

August 28

September 25

October 30

November 6

(leaves only

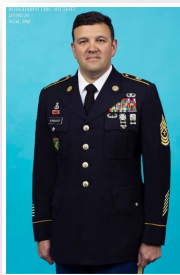
November 20

(and leaf drop off)

SHRED DAYS

10 am-12 pm

Sept 18



Member: Eric Burghardt

Hire Date: 11/09/2006

Position: Full-Time, Training and Safety Officer for Oshtemo Fire and Rescue

Rank: Captain.

Captain Eric Burghardt has recently retired from our U.S. Army reserve with a distinguished record. Eric started his renowned career in 1999 by enlisting in the U.S. Army fresh out of High School in Indian River, MI.

His 21-years of service bestowed him with a variety of jobs which included:

Team Leader, Abu Ghraib, Iraq, 428th Military Police

Team Chief, Tala Far, Iraq, 415th Civil Affairs

Platoon Sergeant, South Bend, IN, 428th Military Police

Officer In-Charge, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 428th Military Police

First Sergeant, South Bend, IN, 428th Military Police

First Sergeant, Inkster, MI, 785th Military Police

Operations Sergeant Major, Portage, MI, 415th Civil Affairs

Those assignments encompassed deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II: Abu Ghraib, Iraq, and Operation Iraqi Freedom VII: Tal Afar, Iraq, and Operation Enduring Freedom (Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay, Cuba) followed by a stateside deployment to Ft. Bragg in North Carolina. Among others, his energetic career was validated by the receipt of various awards which include: Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal w/Valor, Meritorious Service Medal, Two Army Commendation Medals, Four Army Achievement Medals

Capt. Burghardt is continuing to dedicate his varied talents to Oshtemo as our departmental training and safety officer as well as the critical assignment as our department accreditation manager. Congratulations, Captain Burghardt!

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



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From Clerk Dusty Farmer—

This fall we will have a November election for local millage issues. If you would like to be on the permanent absentee list, please call or email my office. Absentee applications are sent about 8 weeks before the election, and ballots are sent beginning 40 days before the election. During election season, if you do not receive an application or ballot and you are already on the permanent list, call the office as soon as possible.

Dusty Farmer, Clerk

dfarmer@oshtemo.org or clerk@oshtemo.org

269-216-5224



From Treasurer Clare Buszka—

Summer Tax bills will be mailed on July 1st, 2021, and must be paid before September 14th, 2021 (postmarks will not be accepted, but drop box payments will until 8 am on September 15, 2021.)

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 by using the link above (Please note: A fee is charged by the credit processor for online payments.)

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

Clare Buszka, Treasurer

cbuszka@oshtemo.org

269-216-5221



From Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell—

During the second full week in June, the Township Board began the budgeting process for the 2022 Fiscal Year. The process begins with the Board receiving updates from each department, focusing on accomplishments, vision, and goals. The Supervisor's office also shares their AGVs, which include these goals for the remainder of 2021:

- Continue to update the required COVID19 safety plan
- Coordinate with Clerk's Office to streamline payroll process and continue shift of benefits and some onboarding and benefits processes to HR
- Provide organization & guidance to complete staff performance evaluations, including compensation adjustments with review and discussion of salary market ranges
- Document comprehensive employee compensation information (salary & benefits) for management understanding & for communication with staff individually
- Continue to dialogue with managers and staff to develop staff, organize processes, & manage HR issues.
- Provide regular employee training on safety, harassment, etc
- Develop employee recognition programs
- Maximize communication efforts with employees, including "One Point Lessons"
- Audit and organize personnel files
- Develop standard work practices for HR tasks
- Review & discuss Employee Handbook & Fire Lexipol Policies
- Develop balanced budget working with the Township Board
- Work with all departments to develop annual Capital Improvement Plan and 5 year Illustrative Capital Improvements Plan
- Review, discuss, coordinate, and implement various Board policies
- Successfully complete and adopt water contract with the City of Kalamazoo
- Work to implement water contract & serve on the new Utility Policy Committee
- Commence negotiations as member of the KRWWC team to negotiate with the COK for new wastewater contract
- Work with Kalamazoo Area Transportation Policy (KATS) strategically on subcommittees

If you have any questions or concerns to share with my office, please don't hesitate to call

269-375-4260

or email

libbyhc@oshtemo.org

Public Works

Roadway Needs & Long-term Funding. During April and May, the Board participated in presentations from Public Works and the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County on long-term maintenance needs and financial planning. Capital infrastructure investments are typically large in size and require close coordination among road work, utility improvements and “complete streets.” Complete streets being a goal adopted by the Township to assure transportation needs include all users. The needs of non-motorized users (pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit, etc.) are not to be excluded from consideration when planning infrastructure investments. These Board public deliberations about comprehensive projects, priorities, and funding strategies are both preparatory and continuing components of the annual formal public budgeting process that starts in June.

-Sanitary Sewers. Due to their location under the roadway, sanitary sewer extensions require significant roadway reconstruction. Oshtemo leadership has long been concerned with older neighborhoods with failing septic systems. W.E. Upjohn Institute for Research was asked to construct, analyze, and review a community survey on sewers, including septic system demographics and preferred funding methods. Board members considered and discussed the survey results during their two May meetings. Links can be found at Oshtemo.org to video recordings provided by Public Media Network. No decision is made at this time and discussion continues.

Connections to Available Public Sewers. A fast-approaching deadline of August 31, 2021 is coming for properties where sanitary sewer service is available. Initial notices of their requirement to connect the service were distributed in January of 2018. Residents requested more time than the 18-months originally given (same timeframe given in the State Public Health Code) to connect and the Board responded by revising ordinance for 24-month connection requirement. As the Covid-19 health restrictions came into effect, Oshtemo issued a blanket suspension of original compliance dates. In January 2021 the affected owners were re-noticed that the suspension was lifted, and that a new August 31st compliance date was effective, ultimately allowing residents over three years to make connections. Public Works Staff has received many inquiries related to this requirement; with many being confused whether the connection requirement was voided after the defeat of last November’s ballot question. The ballot question was whether or not to allow a municipal bond sale to finance Oshtemo’s planned new sewer extensions into unserved neighborhoods. The two are *not* directly related.

Enhanced Oshtemo Financial Assistance & Hardship Consideration. All residents can finance public utility connection fees through long-term financing offered by the Township. Assistance has been expanded to include a Hardship Program which provides deferred payments and other considerations for qualifying owners. Any property owners interested in setting up an Installment Payment Plan or exploring hardship eligibility should call (269) 216-5228 to review the available options:

- Homeowner eligibility for federal grants and loans must be explored first. These are available through the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) 504 Home Repair Program. Call (269) 657-7055 Ext. 4 to review eligibility with a program specialist and see if you qualify!
- The Township’s Hardship Financing Ordinance allows application to finance or defer costs of the private side connection. The qualifications can be found online in the general ordinances under section 233 or call (269) 216-5228 for an application. From resident input, the Board made recent policy modifications and other changes which have further reduced costs and enhanced the attractiveness of the option to seek Township financing.
 - The Township offered *refinancing at a lower rate of 3.25%* for current holders of financing through the Township under mandatory sewer connection requirement.
 - Eliminated mortgage component* from financing which could have affected personal credit and liability. State statutes which provide for an Installment Payment Agreement breaks this linkage and *stays with the property* as a lien.
 - Created a new local *policy for financial hardship* situations based on income level.
 - Extend timeframe* for mandatory connection requirement to 24-months and after service is available.
 - Elected to *freeze connection fees* at 2018 rates for the (currently suspended) Phase I expansion.
 - Capped the length of frontage length at *200 feet maximum* for single-family homes.
 - Allow properties to defer the connect mandate until current *septic system is 15 years old*.

Introducing Drake Farmstead Park!

Oshtemo's newest community park is now open daily from sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. Located at 927 North Drake Road, just north of West Main Street, the park provides much needed green space in the densely populated east side of the Township.

Drake Farmstead Park is on the site where Benjamin and Maria Drake and their children, some of Oshtemo's earliest settlers, arrived in 1830. Their old brick farmhouse is the centerpiece of the new park. It is being restored by the Oshtemo Historical Society and open for special events. The historic driveway, lined with ancient sugar maples, probably looks a lot like it did when the Drake family lived here. Though the land hasn't been farmed for decades, Park visitors can imagine stepping back in time and think about what life might have been like in those early days.

Bring a picnic to enjoy in the shade of the new shelter, hike the trails through woods and meadows, or explore the old barn foundations. Interpretive signs dotted along the trails offer interesting insights in local history, and educational programs and events will soon be offered in the new timber frame barn. Rest on one of the sturdy wood benches built by Eagle Scout candidate Liam Drake (no relation to the historic family).

This new community asset was created with much help and leadership from Oshtemo's Historical Society and Friends of the Parks. Generous donors include the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Oshtemo Rotary Club, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, and many donors to the Drake Farmstead Park Capital Campaign.

In addition to restoring the historic house, volunteers are helping recreate both the prairie and forest landscapes that were here prior to European settlement. If you'd like to get involved, contact Karen High, Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org.



'Yoga in the Park' at two Oshtemo locations! *New this year!* Outdoor yoga classes are offered on the lawn at the historic Drake House *and* at the Flesher Field gazebo. These are drop-in classes; no registration or advance sign up is required and all levels are welcome. Cost is \$10 per class. Bring a yoga mat or blanket and water. Instructor is Samantha Schaefer. For more information contact Karen High, Parks Director, at khigh@oshtemo.org or (269) 216-5233.

Yoga @ Drake Farmstead Park, 927 North Drake Road – every **Tuesday** from 7 to 8:15 pm, through August 31, 2021. Meet on the lawn outside the historic house.

Yoga @ Flesher Field, 3664 South 9th Street – every **Thursday** from 7 to 8:15 pm, through September 2, 2021. Meet at the gazebo.

Tennis Lessons at Township Park

'Let's Serve' Tennis is again offering youth and adult tennis lessons at Township Park, behind the Township Hall at 7275 West Main Street. Class times are listed below. Sessions are from June 7 to June 30 and July 12 to August 4. \$40 per session. For more information contact tennis instructor Warner Offord at wotennispro20@gmail.com.

Youth ages 4 – 6: Monday or Wednesday from 9 to 10 am

Youth ages 7 – 12: Monday or Wednesday from 10 to 11 am

Middle School / High School youth: Monday or Wednesday from noon to 1

Adult Introductory level: Wednesday from 6 to 7 pm

Monday Night Dance Parties at Oshtemo Township Park!

New this year! Just Move Fitness and More is bringing the club to the tennis courts at Oshtemo Township Park every Monday night at 7:00 pm, starting June 14th. Zumba® (international dance fitness), WERQ® (chart-topping pop and hip hop dance fitness), POMSQUAD® (dance team and cheerleading-inspired routines to today's hits and yesterday's favorites), OLD SKOOL (pop and hip hop beats from decades past!) and more! Certified fitness professionals show modifications for all fitness levels.

- simply go to www.justmovefit.com and click on Schedule.



Free, family-friendly outdoor concerts return to the Flesher Field gazebo, 3664 South 9th Street. Dates and performers are listed below. Concerts are from 6:00 – 7:30 pm. Bring a blanket or chair for lawn seating. Treat yourself to dinner from our food truck or bring a picnic. Alcohol is prohibited. In case of rain, concerts will be rescheduled.

New this year: \$1 raffle tickets will be sold to raise funds for playground improvements; enter to win a \$25 restaurant gift card! Drawings held during intermission at each concert. Must be present to win.

June 27 – Last Gasp Collective: Hip hop, jazz, soul, classical, R&B and gospel come together to touch hearts

July 25 – Airtight: Soulful and energetic renditions of jazz, blues, Motown and R&B

August 29 – Out of Favor Boys: A blues staple in Southwest Michigan

These fun, free events would not be possible without our community-spirited sponsors!
Please join us in thanking:

Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, Marana Group, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Oshtemo Downtown Development Authority, Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineers, Miedema & Associates, Aunalytics, Advia Credit Union, Harding's Friendly Markets, Ted Hartleb Agency, Naylor Landscapes, Oshtemo Pharmacy, Siegfried Crandall, and Supercuts (W Main).

Rentals are open for reservations!



With the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on indoor gatherings effective June 22, our indoor facilities (Community Center, Grange Hall, and Carriage Barn) are now available for rental.

Please check our website for availability and to download a Rental Agreement, or visit the Township office (Mon-Thurs 8:00-5:00; Fri 8:00-1:00).

Calling all artists!

Oshtemo Friends of the Parks is considering a juried art show of



Oshtemo artists. Please email

Bruce Dannenhauer if

interested in participating:



mmrr@charter.net



Welcome to new staff at the Township!



Enjoying problem solving and being outdoors, Anna Horner has been a municipal engineer for 7 years working on road projects, park development, streetscape improvements and utility management. The positive impact on a community and its future generations that these projects (investments?) bring, is something she is very passionate about. Anna is a proud Bronco Alum as a graduate of Western Michigan University's Civil Engineering program. She believes the mitten is the Midwest's hidden gem and is always looking for a new place in Michigan to explore. You can often find her in the yard dotting on her Hostas with her husband Isaac, Baby Mac, and dog Maverick nearby.



Sara Feister joined Oshtemo Township in September 2020 as the HR/Benefit Coordinator. Sara attended Mattawan Consolidated Schools (K-12) and graduated from Western Michigan University in 2010 for Human Resources. She currently resides in Vicksburg with her husband Lance and their three daughters: Rilynn (age 10), Lenynn (age 6), & Gracelynn (18 months). Sara enjoys attending concerts, camping, and spending time with her friends & family.



Rod Rought recently joined the Oshtemo Township Team in January 2021. Rod retired from the Kalamazoo County Sheriff Department in October 2020 after serving Kalamazoo County community for over 33 years. Rod was hired to the Township as a part time Ordinance Enforcement Officer. Rod loves turtles.



Jon Gibson joined Oshtemo Township in 2021 as the I.T. Coordinator. Jon has been a professional in his field for 30 years with the last 19 years as an I.T. Consultant supporting many local municipalities in the West Michigan Area. Jon lives with his wife Cheryl in the Mattawan area near his two children and three grandchildren.



Letter from the OHS President, Kenn Livingston

Unquestionably, 2020 was a tough year. The impact of Covid -19 and the accompanying financial crisis have deeply affected our organization, our community, our families and friends in unprecedented ways. We all are finding new ways to engage with each other. The Oshtemo Historical Society is no different. We are continuing to work on the Drake House, which is our major project. The Drake House is a shared treasure and community asset. The OHS, together with the Township, who is developing a park on the farmstead land around the house, look forward to sharing this treasure with the community. We humbly ask for your support in financial donations or donations of your time to be able to go forward with our restoration of the Drake House.

OHS Volunteer Profile



Kathryn (Katy) Steadman brings her love of history and special talents to OHS. She graduated from Michigan State University where she majored in history and minored in art history. Her thesis was on American architecture. Originally she wanted to have a career in museum curatorship, but instead received an MA from WMU in Librarianship. Katy retired from The Kalamazoo Public Library after a satisfying and rewarding 45 year vocation. “I learned something new every single day. Public service was my favorite part.” Katy grew up in a farm setting with her grandparents. She loves to see the preservation of agrarian societies, such as the Drake Farmstead. She is on several committees that include Archives, Restoration and Design, Programs and Events and Bylaws. Her favorite committee is Restoration and Design. She likes to walk the grounds, especially when no one is there. “It’s like you’re really away from the city.” OHS is lucky to have Katy on board! Thank you, Katy!

Community Appreciation:

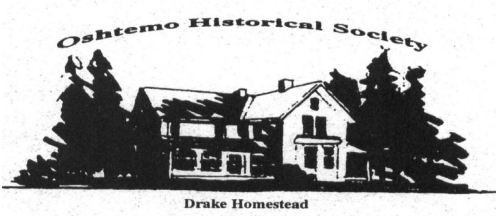
OHS could not survive without monetary and archival donations. Thank you to the generosity of the following supporters! The Drake House is full of furniture, so we will not be accepting future furniture at this time.

Monetary Donations Since 10-12-20: Sue Casarez, William Buell, W & J Truscott, L & K Oppliger, Sue Grossman, Denise Hartsough, Roy Secor, Jacqueline Wnuk, Elizabeth Roelofs, Robert Pikkaart, N & G Schripsema, Neil Sikora, Scott Betzler, Freya Lake, V & M Strehlow, P & A Pancella, Robert Latterner, Jacquelyn Ruttinger, N & M Miller, R & C VanAntwerp, R & C Estes, B & M McMann, D & C VerHage, Gloria Grieg, J & R Novara, Joyce McNally, Elizabeth Zabik, Gloria Korman.

SPECIAL THANKS to all who renewed their membership in 2021 and to all NEW MEMBERS! Membership dues help to offset the cost of newsletters and other OHS projects.

Jan & Bill Urfer: Hand crocheted bedspread, hand embroidered scarves, doilies and pillow case and hand crocheted doilies (from great aunt in Indiana who lived to be 94).

Laura VanVlack Ailes: Late 1880 – 1920 stove top flat irons, metal stove-top toaster, old wooden wringer, wooden barn pulley, picture of 1933 Oshtemo Grange parade wagon (from ancestors who were life-long residents on Bonnie Castle Lake, off M-43).



OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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

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

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