

SANDS TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

January 2016

OFFICE COMPLEX HOURS: MON, WED, THURS & FRI 10 AM-3 PM, TUES 1:30-6:30 PM
987 S. State Hwy M-553, Gwinn, MI 49841. Ph (906) 249-9169 Fax (906) 249-2120

Website—www.sandstownship.org E-mail—office@sandstownship.org

FIRE DEPARTMENT'S NEW TRUCK



**ELECTED
TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS**
Supervisor—Darlene Walch
249-9945

Clerk—Lee Yelle
346-4423

Treasurer—Cheryl Schram
346-9907

Trustee—Joe Wixtrom
250-8956

Trustee—David Kallio
249-3418

**APPOINTED
TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS**
Zoning Administrator
Randall Yelle 346-4423

PLANNING COMMISSION
Ron Titter (Chair)
Joe Wixtrom Jane Noe
Shelley Brauer Russell Card
Eric Anderson
Aaron Burbey

**ZONING BOARD OF
APPEALS**
Rick Nelson (Chair)
Ron Titter
Robert Vietzke
Jackie Winkowski
David Kallio
Pamela Lajewski-Pearson
(Alternate)

EMERGENCY SERVICES
Fire Chief—Terry Sleeter
249-9201
Assistant Chiefs
Hall #1—Lyn Nelson
249-3392
Hall #2—Benjamin Yelle
236-2796

EMS Coordinator
Lyn Nelson
249-3392
Assistant Coordinator
Frank Rosado 249-3081

The Fire Department recently purchased a new truck. This truck will not only be used as a brush truck when fighting wildland fires, but will also be used to carry personnel and equipment when responding to emergencies. This truck was purchased with funds from the fire millage. The Fire Department thanks residents for their continued support.

DRIVE SLOW ON ICE AND SNOW!!

Winter travel starts with our vehicle preparation: outside and inside. Assure that you have adequate tire tread and proper air pressure. Make yourself visible by removing snow from roof, lights and windows. A mountain of snow on the top of your vehicle will eventually be driven by gravity to slide over your windows. People living here may have a survival kit in their vehicle 365 days of the year, but make sure it's tidy with winter necessities! A blanket should also be within arm's reach so you don't have to try to get out to get a layer of warmth. Being outside of your vehicle on a roadway is dangerous, as is leaving your vehicle to walk during a storm.

Our township has straight roadways with minimal side trees that allow for the wicked winter winds to reduce, sometimes eliminate, visibility. We also have roadways with curves and hills. Remember to brake before entering the curve and take a proper line of travel through it in order to reduce the potential for losing control. We experience high volume traffic times on some of the roads, which gives us the opportunity to always remember to leave distance between our vehicles.

When you see an emergency vehicle stopped on the road with its emergency lights on, that means slow down and, if safe, move over. This includes tow trucks working on a scene.

Fender bender with no injuries? A 2010 Michigan law requires drivers who have been in minor crashes to move their vehicles to the side of the road, a practice that improves safety by preventing secondary crashes.

Consult the Michigan Department of Transportation MI-DRIVE for road conditions and remember to drive slow on ice and snow! Submitted by: Lyn Nelson, Ambulance Coordinator

WHAT IS ZONING?

What is Zoning? Why Do We Need It?

Zoning is governmental regulation of land use with primary goals to ensure the compatibility of land uses and prevent nuisances, protect natural resources, and protect property values. (*Source: MTA*) The Zoning Ordinance divides the Township into separate zoning districts and specifies the land uses (Residential, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, etc.) that are authorized by right, permitted with conditions, or prohibited. Regulations are in place regarding the physical development of the Township – land use, minimum lot size, building height, setbacks, parking, signs, fences, etc. Ordinances and regulations are also in place regarding Noise, Nuisances, Vehicle Parking & Storage, Dog Control, and other important issues. If you have a complaint about a neighboring property, these Ordinances allow for enforcement and control. These Ordinances are available at the Township office, and the Zoning Ordinance is on our website.

Do I Need a Permit?

Zoning requires obtaining permits before moving forward with changes on a property. If you are making changes to the land use, putting up any structures or altering the footprint of a structure, or putting up a fence, you need a permit. If you have any questions on whether or not a permit is needed, please contact the office. Zoning Compliance Permits are available online or in the office. Submitted by: Randall Yelle, Zoning Administrator

ILLEGAL DUMPING

At least four times in the past year (that we are aware of), people used the Sands Plains and other areas of the Township to dump garbage and unwanted items. Two of these dump piles were cleaned up by Township employees, one by private citizens who paid for disposal of items, and one was handled by the Michigan State Police and the offenders were prosecuted.

Not only is dumping like this illegal, it also creates an unsightly mess, has a potential to contaminate the surround-

ing land and water, and leads to an extra cost that is passed on to taxpayers.

Please properly dispose of your waste and unwanted items. There are several options for getting rid of trash –call the office for information and to find what works best for you. And if you see someone doing illegal dumping, please take action. A call to the sheriff's department or the Township office will help to stop this problem and catch offenders.

Submitted by: Randall Yelle, Zoning Administrator

BLUEBERRY RIDGE WARMING HUT

A ribbon cutting for the new warming hut at Blueberry Ridge Ski Pathway will take place on Thursday, January 14 at 4 pm. The hut is at the lighted parking lot off of M-553.

Dan Wiitala, President of the Superiorland Ski Club, stated "This building has been a long term goal of the Superiorland Ski Club and has been a dream and a necessary amenity since the lighted loop and Ski trails have been around for over two decades at Blueberry. The warming hut is a partnership between the Superiorland Ski Club, the State Park and Recreation DNR and Sands Township. A Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant of \$83,700 was awarded to Sands Township in 2014 for the building of the hut which required a 50% match from the community in order to construct this building. Major donors include: Cliffs Natural Resource Foundation, The Superiorland Ski Club, River Valley Bank, Barry Polzin Architects, Dan Perkins Roofing, Marquette Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the U.P., and community service organizations: The Marquette Rotaries and the Kiwanis Club plus business donations from Closner Builders and Border Grill, and individual cash donations from community members. We are ec-

static to have the hut open in time for winter skiing 2016. The Superiorland Ski Club operates several youth cross country ski programs who use the Blueberry Ridge trails and now parents can be assured their kids are warm after practice. Everyone is welcome and invited to use this warming shelter. The Ski Club thanks the State DNR for partnering with the club and Sands Township in order to build this hut and to lease this space for a well needed amenity for enjoying winter."

The Michigan State DNR owns and operates the Blueberry Ridge Ski Pathway, but through a collaborative effort with the Ski Club and Sands Township, funds were raised to construct the hut.

The Superiorland Ski Club continues to solicit for tax deductible donations which will help in furnishing and making the hut cozy inside and out, and will help with creating a fund to support its electric and general maintenance. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Deb or Pam (debby@northjacksonco.com or pamfeldheim@hotmail.com). Monetary donations can be mailed to SSC, PO Box 864, Marquette, MI 49855. Thank you! Submitted by: Superiorland Ski Club

TREASURER'S NEWS

2015 winter property taxes were mailed on November 30. Since 2016 is a leap year, 2015 taxes can be paid at the township office until 5 pm on Tuesday, February 29, 2016. Interest continues to accrue on summer taxes, and a 3% penalty will be added to both 2015 summer and winter taxes beginning Wednesday, February 17, 2015. Unpaid 2015 summer and winter taxes will be turned in to the Marquette County Treasurer's office on March 1, 2016 and must be paid at their office. Submitted by: Cheryl Schram, Treasurer

LIBRARY UPDATE

The Peter White Public Library is currently in the process of updating its Strategic Plan. This plan lists goals for the upcoming years, and looks at what goals previously listed in the plan have already been met or are being worked on. This current update looks at the next three years and the direction the library hopes to take to best serve its members. One current goal is to incorporate more of a rural feel to library programming. The public will be given an opportunity to share thoughts on this plan. Check the library's website at www.pwpl.info for more information on this Strategic Plan. The website also lists upcoming events, services provided at the library, and different programs offered for all ages.

After 24 years with the Peter White Library, Director Pam Christensen moved on to become the Director of the Superiorland Library Cooperative. Assistant Director Bruce MacDonald was appointed Interim Director until a new Director is hired.

Sands Township residents are able to use the Peter White Library and its services at no charge because of the millage paid to support the library operations and programming.

TAX ASSESSOR TO HOLD OFFICE HOURS AT THE OFFICE

A representative for property tax assessment will be available at the Sands Township office complex each month beginning on Tuesday, April 12, 2016. The hours will be from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. Sands Township contracts with Marquette County for property tax assessment. While citizens can get information about their property tax assessment at the Marquette County Office building, our assessor, Ms. Jackie Lykins, offered to have office hours in the Township. The Assessor will hold office hours from 1:30 – 5:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month.

Property owners looking to dispute their property values should come to the March Board of Review. This is held on Tuesday, March 8 from 9:00 am—3:00 pm and Wednesday, March 9 from 3:00 pm—9:00 pm. These dates will be printed on your property assessment that is mailed in February. Submitted by: Darlene Walch, Supervisor

NEW ISO RATING

This past summer, our fire department underwent a lengthy review from the ISO (Insurance Services Office) regarding our fire classification. Previously, the township had a classification of 9, with some areas further from the fire hall being a 10. After the review this summer, any property that is 5 road miles or less from a fire hall was given a new rating of 8B. This new classification has the potential of lowering homeowner insurance rates for up to 80% of our township, so residents are encouraged to contact their insurance agent with this information. Not all insurance companies use this rating when determining insurance rates. We thank the men and women on our fire department for their work and dedication to achieving this new rating.

2016 Election Dates:

**Presidential Primary—
March 8**

**Gwinn School Election—
May 3**

**Primary Election—
August 2**

**General Election—
November 1**

TRANSFER STATION INFORMATION

Many calls come in asking “What can I bring to the Transfer Station?” An easier way to answer that question is to give a list of **items NOT accepted:**

- Shingles
- Brush or Yard Waste
- Appliances with Freon (unless they have been tagged that Freon is removed). This includes refrigerators, freezers, window air conditioners, water coolers and dehumidifiers.
- Concrete or Cement
- Household Garbage

Electronics are accepted, although we recommend recycling instead. Please call the office for information.

Charges begin at \$10. Check and cash accepted (Please—no bills larger than \$20). Tires are accepted, with a charge per tire: Auto Tire (any size) without rim—\$3, Auto tire with rim—\$10, Heavy Duty Truck Tire without rim—\$10, Heavy Duty Truck Tire with rim—\$20.

Transfer Station hours are 10:00—5:00. From April through December, it is open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month. From January—March, it is only open the 2nd Saturday of the month. The schedule is on our website, or you can call the office.

The Transfer Station is located on the East side of M-553 and South of the fairgrounds on County Road ND (Flodin Rd). It is across from the Mini Movers office (formerly Mattson's Auto).

OLD TOWN HALL AND FIRE STATION—WHAT TO DO?

This past summer, residents reported on the poor appearance of the old town hall, located on Flodin Road east of M553. At first we thought a simple paint job would make the building look better. Due to the condition of the exterior wood, it then seemed that siding the building might be a longer-lasting option. However, further investigation revealed many issues with the condition of the building.

The roof is in need of repair and there is no drip edge, which is partly to blame for soffit and fascia damage. The block addition at the back of the building is separating from the main structure; electrical components need to be updated; a light fixture dangles above the main entry; the handicapped access ramp is rotting; some of the wood exterior needs to be replaced; windows need glazing and painting. Estimates indicate it would cost the Township around \$28,000 to fix the old town hall exterior. In addition, the fire station next door to the old town hall needs a new roof at a cost of nearly \$8,000.

The interior of the old town hall also has its problems. Musty smells indicate possible mold and mildew. Plumbing fixtures need repair to be functional. Doors to the storage rooms are warped and walls are in need of repair and refinishing. The metal kitchen cabinets are damaged. Carpeting must be replaced. Electrical and heating systems also need to be updated and there probably is little or no insulation in the building. It is unknown whether asbestos or other hazardous materials need to be abated.

These costly repairs raise the question of whether we should rehabilitate the old town hall and fire station or clean up the property for future sale. The Township Board is considering what, if any, uses would benefit the township, thereby making it worth the expense of refurbishing and maintaining the buildings. By next summer, we will either be investing in repairs or moving toward sale of the property. Your comments and suggestions regarding the old town hall can be made in person, sent via U.S. mail or e-mailed to office@sandstownship.org. Submitted by: Darlene Walch, Supervisor

WINTER FIRE SAFETY TIPS

With our cold weather finally here, the fire department reminds you to please follow these winter fire safety tips. More tips and safety information can be found at www.usfa.fema.gov.

- Make sure your chimney is cleaned when needed and inspected annually.
- Keep combustible/flammable items away from wood stoves, fireplaces and other heat sources.
- Never dispose of hot ashes inside or near the home. They should go in a metal container well away from the house.
- Have your furnace inspected regularly to ensure it is working properly. Check the flue pipe, pipe seams, and the chimney also.
- If you use an electric heater, be sure not to overload the circuit. Only use extension cords that have the necessary rating to carry an amp load.
- Never try to thaw a frozen water pipe with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or a laboratory tested device for thawing.
- Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm that is tested and cleaned monthly.



Submitted by: Terry Sleeter, Fire Chief

ELECTION NEWS

The polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on election day. Please be prepared to show photo ID before being issued a ballot.

If you are planning to be out of town, are over the age of 60, are disabled, or cannot make it to the polls for other reasons, please contact the office to receive an Absentee Ballot.



For residents considering running for a Sands Township Board position, the deadline to file a nominating petition in order to have your name on the August 2016 Primary ballot is April 19, 2016. A candidate must be a US Citizen, a township resident and at least 18 years of age. Nominating petitions can be obtained at the township office or the County Clerk office. For additional information please contact the township office. Submitted by: Lee Yelle, Clerk

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS NEEDED

Are you looking to get involved in your community? Do you have courage, dedication, and a desire to help others in need? If that sounds like you, have you considered becoming a volunteer firefighter? Sands Township is in need of firefighters for both Station 1 and Station 2.



No experience is necessary. We will train the right people. If you are interested in seeing what the department is all about, you are welcome to attend a meeting. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month at 7:00 at Station 1 (Crossroads Station). Applications are available at the Township office and from any fire officer.

Submitted by: Terry Sleeter, Fire Chief

PROPOSED ROAD PROJECT

For many years, Sands Township has had its sights on constructing a road connecting M553 to Silver Creek. This road provides resolution to two significant concerns: a second egress for Silver Creek area residents and a more direct access to the Silver Creek area for emergency and service vehicles. Approximately one-third (1/3) of Sands Township residents and twenty-eight percent (28%) of our registered voters live in this area.

Residents in the Silver Creek area of Sands Township currently have only one way out, exiting via Silver Creek Road onto US 28/41 in Harvey. Building the road extension from M553 to Silver Creek would provide residents with an alternate route to get from their homes to a major highway. Sands Emergency Medical Services, Fire, and Sanitation vehicles would likewise have a more direct route to reach Silver Creek residents in cases of emergency and to provide services.

This project is consistent with the Sands Township Master Plan section on New Roads. Factors used to determine the placement of new roads include: providing missing links on an interconnected road pattern; relieving and preventing congestion; providing alternative means of access for certain types of traffic; and being located appropriately to support potential development (Master Plan page 59).

Rights-of-way for the road extension were secured in 2002, but the project has not been undertaken for many reasons. We are in the process of renewing those rights-of-way. Preliminary discussions have taken place with Chocolay Township and the Marquette County Road Commission with positive results. To facilitate budget planning, we obtained an updated construction estimate and the cost for a gravel road built to County Road Commission standards (approximately \$250,000) is now within the Township's reach. Building a gravel road is the most realistic at this time. Traffic volume and speed are concerns. According to the Marquette County Road Commission, gravel roads tend to have less traffic and slower traffic speeds than paved routes. The cost of a county-standard gravel road is considerably less than a paved road, thereby making the project financially feasible.

Early this spring, we will hold a public hearing to discuss the proposed road construction plan. The project is tentatively scheduled for either 2016 or 2017. It may be advantageous to construct this connecting road in 2016 because the Michigan Department of Transportation is planning to do major road work on M553 just south of Marquette Mountain ski hill in 2017. While that road project may not require a complete detour, it certainly will slow traffic through that area making it even more important for Sands Township's emergency and service vehicles to have an alternate route to our Silver Creek residents.

Submitted by: Darlene Walch, Supervisor

Township Board meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM.

Minutes are posted at the Township Office and Fire Hall #2. Approved minutes are available on our website.

The public is welcome to attend all meetings.

Check out our website for the latest Township information!

www.sandstownship.org

Here you will find approved board minutes, zoning information, the transfer station schedule, garbage holidays, facility rental information, and a News page with the latest information for our residents.

Monthly reports are submitted by several departments and committees. These reports are posted in the office. Check them out to see what is happening in the Township.



NEWSLETTER

987 S. State Hwy M-553
Gwinn, MI 49841

Striving to protect your water & environment

HELPFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TOWNSHIP ENCLOSED

GARBAGE INFORMATION

Monday & Tuesday are normal pickup days. Please have garbage out by **5 am**. This pickup is for *normal household trash only!* The following items will not be picked up:

****Items too large to put in the truck **Building materials or Lumber**

****Carpeting **Scrap metal **Leaves or brush**

****Bags weighing more than 30 pounds. *Please do not overfill garbage bags.***

We recommend using garbage cans to place garbage for pickup. Cracked cans make collection difficult. If the garbage crew determines your can is no longer usable, they will tag it. Please help the guys out and replace damaged cans.

There is no garbage collection on holidays. If Monday is a holiday, Monday's collection will be on Tuesday and Tuesday's will be on Wednesday. If you have a question regarding garbage, pickup dates or items for disposal, please call the Township office.

2016 Garbage Holidays:

President's Day (pickup
February 16 & 17)

Memorial Day (pickup
May 31 & June 1)

4th of July (pickup July 5
& 6)

Labor Day (pickup Sep-
tember 6 & 7)

December 26 (pickup De-
cember 27 & 28)

January 2, 2017 (pickup
January 3 & 4)

Garbage Pickup Begins at **5 am!**

Please put garbage out by that time.

Contact Us

(906)249-9169

FAX 249-2120

987 S. M-553, Gwinn, MI 49841

office@sandstownship.org

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Your newsletter is paid for with your tax dollars. We welcome your opinions and comments. Please contact the Township office or a Township Official with your suggestions or topics of concern you would like addressed.