

SANDS TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021

**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

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

Clerk—Carolyn Kerkela
361-0630

Treasurer—
Kent Koehn
360-9305

Trustee—Justin Yelle
360-3038

Trustee—David Kallio
249-3418

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

PLANNING COMMISSION
Shelley Brauer (Chair)
Justin Yelle
Suzanne Sundell
Pamela Lajewski-Pearson
Cory Bushong

**ZONING BOARD OF
APPEALS**

Robert Vietzke (Chair)
Shelley Brauer
David Kallio
Victoria Jenema
Jane Noe

EMERGENCY SERVICES
Fire Chief—Andrew Sicotte

Assistant Chiefs
Hall #1—Ben Yelle
236-2796

Hall #2—Terry Sleeter
360-5733

EMS Coordinator
Lyn Nelson
249-3392

Assistant Coordinator
Frank Rosado 249-3081

COVID-19 UPDATE

Sands Township continues to monitor and adhere to State and Federal guidelines regarding the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, Supervisor Walch has been meeting regularly via Zoom with neighboring governmental units and the Marquette County Health Department to understand guidelines, restrictions and vaccination roll-out plans. Currently there are restrictions on indoor gatherings, including public meetings.

One of our challenges has been to keep up with changes to MI Department of Health and MIOSHA orders. Our primary goal is to keep essential township business functioning while maintaining a safe environment for people who perform those functions. We continue to use face masks, social distancing and sanitizing protocols as a matter of workplace routine.

Like everyone, we hope to get back to more normal operations as soon as we can. Until then, we'll continue to limit public access to the offices and indoor facilities. We also encourage getting vaccinated for this virus and are very happy that our frontline EMS and Fire Department personnel are already getting the vaccine as part of the first phase rollout. Vaccination information will come from the MQT County Health Department and Sands Township will post on our website changes to our facilities use policies as things unfold over the coming months.

NEW RECYCLING AND TRANSFER FACILITY

Our new Recycling & Transfer Station, located just west of the Township Offices, opened for business on December 2nd. The facility, partially funded by a grant from the MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), was completed with almost no construction delays in spite of disruptions due to the pandemic. We thank Randy Yelle for his efforts along with Bittner Engineering and Closner Construction for their work on this project.

There are six color-coded bins inside the building: green bins for recycling, a blue bin for glass, black for metal, and brown for rubbish. For the first time, all the bins are indoors away from rain and snow. Now that the Marquette County Landfill has moved to single stream recycling, you no longer need to separate fiber (paper, cardboard) from rigids (plastics and cans). We do need to keep glass separate from other materials. We encourage recycling to promote reusing materials and as a method to minimize how much matter goes into the landfill.

And speaking of the landfill, you probably heard about the December fire. Although the exact cause may never be known, such incidents can happen when inappropriate items are placed into the garbage. EGLE promotes "Know It Before You Throw It" to help ensure that materials are disposed of properly. Batteries, medications, paints, motor oil, antifreeze and tires are among the many items that should not be tossed into the garbage. Not only are these items bad for the landfill, they are hazardous to our sanitation workers. Sands Township's website (<http://www.sandstownship.org>) has information about our recycling and waste programs and the Marquette County Solid Waste Management website (<https://mcswma.com>) has information about appropriate disposal methods and the *Recycle 906* program. Submitted by: Darlene Walch, Supervisor

TOWNSHIP INFORMATION

STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR TOWNSHIP

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 and postings for our residents to include Zoom Links for meetings held electronically. Monthly reports are submitted by several departments and committees and are posted in the office for public viewing. We are also on Facebook—Like our page to keep up-to-date on Township information.

For last minute information such as weather related closings, garbage pickup changes, office closures and other information, we will try to update the outgoing phone message when possible, especially if the office is closed. We will also try to update Facebook and our website. For garbage delays due to weather, TV6 will also be notified.

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.

Monthly department reports are posted at the office. Stop in to keep updated on Township information.

The Fire Department meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 7:00 PM at Station 1. The public is welcome to attend.



We still have face masks available for those who need them! Stop by the office during regular hours and we will be happy to give you a pack.

Garbage Crew Reminders:

There are no 2021 Holidays on our scheduled garbage pick up days!

Have your garbage out by 4 am.

Please shovel out your cans and keep your garbage area clear. Place cans or bags where they are visible with snowbanks, such as the far side of your driveway from the direction we approach.

If animals get into your garbage, it is your responsibility to clean up.

Do not put out large items or bags heavier than 30 pounds.

WINTER TRANSFER STATION HOURS (January—March)

Every Wednesday from 4-7 PM

2nd Saturday ONLY of each month from 10 AM—5 PM

Recycling is free for our Township Residents! Please see our website for waste charges. We do not accept household garbage, appliances with freon, brush, concrete or hazardous waste at the Transfer Station.

Keeping Our Township Services Funded

It's budget time! Our fiscal year begins in April and we're reviewing our township budget, along with our most recent audit, to plan for the coming year. We take into account all revenue and expenditures, looking at past years and the current year as we make projections for next year. Some of our most critical functions rely heavily on millages for funding: Sanitation, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services, and Roads have millages that will be up for renewal in 2021. As we look toward funding these services, we will also be drafting long term plans for large ticket items such as vehicle replacement. These plans can include a variety of funding sources, including grants and partnerships. Recent successes such as the Silver Creek Road extension, various paving projects, the Recycling & Transfer Station, and improvements to our facilities and parks helped us achieve objectives laid out in our Township Master Plan. We look forward to continued progress in the coming years and truly appreciate the support we receive from our residents.

Submitted by: Darlene Walch, Supervisor

TREASURER'S NEWS

Tax season is well underway. The letter opener is becoming dull and the deposit stamp is running out of its ink. Taxes collected are being disbursed to the schools, our township departments and county programs. The 2020 winter property tax statements were mailed by December 1. If you have not received your statement or if your statement went to your escrow company and you would like a copy, please call the office (906 249-9169). To avoid interest or penalty, winter taxes must be paid in the office by February 14, 2021. On March 1, 2021 any unpaid summer and winter 2020 taxes must be paid to the Marquette County Treasurer's office. Submitted by: Kent Koehn, Treasurer

PETER WHITE PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS

What a year we had in 2020! We all look forward to a better year in 2021! As with all of us, Peter White Public Library (PWPL) faced restrictions on gathering in public places. So, the building was closed to the public for some months. As the restrictions lessened in the summer, curbside service, phone support, and electronic media were all available to us. The staff did a wonderful job of making library services available. They also created family packets of books and activities for families who needed additional ways to enjoy each other's company. Gradually, the building was able to open with shortened hours and limited numbers of patrons inside at any one time to maintain social distancing while continuing curbside pickup for those who wished. It felt like an early Christmas to be able to go into the building and browse the shelves or pick up a few items at the Used Book Store again. By late fall, as the virus started gathering more steam and new restrictions began, PWPL again had to close the building, but the staff remained at work and curbside pickup continued. Throughout the pandemic, most services have remained available through online access and phone help. I am very thankful for the dedicated PWPL staff members who made materials and services available throughout this challenging time.

The Board of Directors for PWPL is planning to conduct a survey in each township sometime in the early winter (dates to be announced). The reason for the survey is to ask for suggestions on additional services patrons might be interested in and to make library services as accessible and enjoyable as possible for all. Watch the PWPL website (www.pwpl.info) in late January or early February for a link to the survey. It is your library, so be sure to fill it out with your ideas.

Martin Achatz, the Upper Peninsula Poet Laureate for the last two years, is now a member of PWPL staff. Martin has developed some exciting new online programs. Check out the weekly offerings of all events and how to access each at <https://pwpl.info/events/>. Martin is a very talented writer and has great ideas for new programs focused on varied aspects of literature. What a great asset he will be to the already talented staff at our library!

Here's to a Happy New Year for each resident of Sands Township! Be sure to check out the PWPL website and see what types of materials and services are available to you every day.

Submitted by: N. Suzanne Standerford, TAC Representative

ELECTION NEWS

2020 would have been a challenging election year even without a pandemic that added additional challenges to conducting safe and secure elections. With a record number of absentee ballot requests, restrictions on office operations, staff changes and quarantines, and rising questions about election integrity, we are proud of how the Sands Township 2020 elections were conducted. Our staff worked long hours making sure absentee ballot requests were filled quickly. Election inspectors worked hard to not only properly process voters and issue ballots, but to also follow all safety and security protocols.

For the November 3rd election, Sands Township registered almost a 74% voter turnout, with 1464 ballots processed. Of those voters, more than half (57%) voted by absentee. Absentee ballots are not counted early, so that meant our election inspectors processed 828 absentee ballots after the polls closed, which led to a late night before final numbers were tallied.

We had many residents calling to ask how they could help - they were willing to work as election inspectors, or even just help sanitize voting stations or open envelopes. We appreciate all of the offers and the thoughtfulness of our residents. And for everyone who voted, whether in person or by absentee ballot, we thank you for your patience and understanding as we worked hard to move through this challenging time.

All states conduct elections differently, and Michigan has many procedures in place to ensure elections are conducted according to law, voters are registered and ballots are issued properly, and that the results are tabulated accurately. After this November election, Sands Township was randomly chosen by the State for a post-election audit. That meant the County Clerk came and looked at every aspect of that election, from the proper training of our Election Inspectors, correct posting of election notices, and even hand counting every ballot issued. There is also a state-wide Risk Limiting Audit that will be performed in January.

At this point, it looks like Sands Township will have an August election in 2021. Those on our permanent absentee voter list will automatically be mailed an application for an absentee ballot several weeks before the election. For absentee voters who choose not to use the mail, we now have a locked and secure drop box outside the office for the return of ballots.

We will be recruiting additional election inspectors for future elections, so if you think it is something you may be interested in, please contact the office for more information. Submitted by: Clerk Department, Carolyn Kerkela & Lee Yelle



NEWSLETTER

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

Striving to protect your water & environment

HELPFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TOWNSHIP ENCLOSED

Want to Get Involved?

Are you interested in getting involved with the Township, but aren't sure how? We always need subs on our garbage truck. We are always looking for people to join our Fire Department and EMS. We also can use more people on our Recreation Committee and are currently seeking a representative to serve on the Peter White Library Township Advisory Committee. In busy election years we are always looking for more election inspectors. Contact the office if any of these sound like something you are interested in. If none of these sound like a good fit, but you would still like to get involved, let us know and we will see how we can use your help!

Contact Us

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office@sandstownship.org
www.sandstownship.org

We are also on Facebook. Like or follow *Sands Township* for the latest news, information and updates.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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.