

BLENDON TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

7161 72nd Ave. Hudsonville, MI 49426 | Phone (616) 875-7707 | December 2010

Township Officials

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- Bob Hop

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Zoning Adm. - Jim Scholma

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Building Inspector - Jim Scholma

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Planning Commission Members -

Mark Leathead, Chairman

Ron Wind, Rick Lamer, Paul Blauwkamp,

Paul Potter, Jim Vanderveen, Dale Brown



Calendar of Events

Township Board Meeting:

3rd Thursday of every month at 7:00pm

Planning Commission:

1st Thursday of every month at 7:00pm

Safety Service Meeting:

Last Thursday of the month

Tyler St. Fire Station at 7:00pm

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Fire Department

Christmas time is upon us and there are a few things to keep in mind to prevent fires and to promote safety this holiday season. The National Fire Prevention Safety Administration recommends the following suggestions for safety this time of year:

Picking the tree

- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

Placing the tree

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 1-2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

Lighting the tree

- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

After Christmas

- Get rid of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

Statistics also tell us that one third of all Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems and that fire fighters respond to an average of 260 structure fires per year caused by Christmas trees! Be Aware and Be Safe.

Ottawa County acquired a grant to cover 3 new radios for 3 of our trucks. Due to federal legislation; as of January 2013 all portable radios, mobile (truck mounted) radios, and pagers need to be "narrowband" compliant or they will no longer work. We currently utilize roughly 25 portable radios, 17 mobile radios, and 30 pagers. We have been purchasing a few each year, but are still only about 60% compliant, so this will help get us a little bit closer.

Recent Projects

We wrote 2 grants this past year, one for new Self Contained Breathing Apparatus, and one for two tornado warning sirens. We were turned down on the SCBA's but were awarded the grant for the tornado warning sirens. We located them to cover the most densely populated areas of Blendon. One of them is at the Tyler St. fire station (5346 Tyler) and the other is located at approximately 9320 Port Sheldon. They will each cover a radius of approximately 1 mile, depending on weather conditions at the time.

New Brush Truck. - Our old truck was worn out so we had to replace it. We looked at buying a used truck to replace it, but ended up working through the Government State contract, where we could purchase new with warranty for little difference. This truck will also be utilized for a back-up medical unit when the road conditions are poor, and when the main squad is tied up at another scene.

TAX COLLECTIONS

The Summer Tax Collection season is almost over. We will continue to collect the summer taxes through Feb 28, 2011 at which time they will be collected by the Ottawa County Treasurer. In December we will begin collection of the 2010 Winter Taxes along with Special Assessments for those parcels that are subject to a Special Assessment. The Winter Tax bills were been mailed on December 1st. We will collect the Winter Taxes until February 28, 2011 at which time all 2010 taxes yet unpaid will be collected by the Ottawa County Treasurer.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL TAXPAYERS

There has been a change made in policy for the 2011 tax collection year and all future years. The Township will no longer be using the postmark as the date of payment. All payments received in the office by 5:00 pm will be processed as paid on that date. The change is being made for two reasons. Most townships in Ottawa County are already using this procedure and it will make settlement with the county easier after the tax collection period. Please remember this policy change when making your tax payments for the tax year of 2011. To avoid a late payment penalty and interest the payment must be received at the township office by 5:00 pm on the last day that the tax is due. This policy change will NOT affect the payment of your 2010 Winter Tax bill which is due no later than February 14, 2011.

COMPUTERS USED IN ELECTIONS

The primary election on August 3 and the general election held on November 2 went smoothly without any serious difficulties here in Blendon Township. A number of factors can be mentioned.

Blendon Township has a pool of excellent workers who are careful and accurate in the running of the elections. They spent several hours in training classes held by the clerk's office of Ottawa County this summer. The election day itself is long and sometimes stressful. When the polls close at 8 P.M., they still have to balance their numbers, accounting for every ballot. For this last election, it was well after 10 when the last workers could go home. Even so, the election went smoothly, and all our numbers balanced. So thanks to our competent election workers.

This is the first year that we have used our new laptop computers, using a program from Michigan State called the electronic poll book. The computers were supplied by our state using money provided by the Help America Vote Act, a bill passed by Congress in 2001 after the voting problems that surfaced in the election of 2000. We have used these computers for the last two elections and we are pleased with how well the new system works.

We were also pleased with the great voter turnout for the last two elections. Here are some details for Blendon Township that you may find interesting:

In the August primary election voter turnout was 46%.

Library support passed with 63% of the total votes.

Fire millage renewal passed with 58% of the total votes.

Road improvement millage failed getting only 36% of the total votes.

In the November general election voter turnout was 74%.

The Planning Commission Reviews Sign Regulations

Over the past year a number of issues have arisen regarding enforcement of zoning regulations concerning the use and proper placement of signs. The Zoning Administrator has brought these enforcement issues to the attention of the Planning Commission with the suggestion that they conduct a study to consider how the current regulations could be modified.

The Planning Commission has commenced a study to determine how the current regulations could be changed to make them more user friendly without disrupting the aesthetic sensitivities of the residents of the township. The Commission has been meeting on a monthly basis to discuss various problems with the current language of the zoning ordinance as it pertains to signs. Members of the public have been invited and encouraged to attend these meetings so that their ideas could be considered during the study process. Various members of the public have been present on several occasions and they have contributed their ideas. Some of these ideas have been incorporated into the current draft changes.

It is the expectation that the deliberative discussions will continue at the January 7, 2011 meeting of the Planning Commission with a possible approval of a final draft in February 2011. If a final draft is approved in February 2011, then a public hearing will be scheduled as early as March 2011. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission could recommend that the Township Board consider the adoption of the proposed changes. Once the Township Board considers any proposed draft that the Planning Commission recommends and determines that it should be adopted, the proposed language changes will be published and normally become effective 30 days after the date of publication.

The process of adopting proposed changes to the sign chapter in the current Zoning Ordinance could be complete by June 2011. The final construction of language changes will probably take place this winter so you are encouraged to be aware of the process, attend the Planning Commission meetings and contribute your suggestions and comments during this period.

Property Assessments Again

The subject of property assessments is one of common interest for most property owners each winter. The Michigan Constitution requires that all taxable real property in the State be assessed at one half of the true cash value. Each year the assessed value of every parcel of real property is reviewed and adjusted to reflect the changes in true cash value. This is a difficult task and the assessor in each unit of local government applies the various tools and formulas as mandated by the State Tax Commission to the data available in order to find a uniform assessed value for the unit.

Sales data derived from the latest one year sales study for Blendon Township indicates that the residential values have declined approximately seven percent. This means that Ottawa County Department of Equalization expects the aggregate residential assessment to be nearly seven percent less than the previous year. Does this mean that my home or your home will experience a seven percent downward change in 2011? No, it might or it might not, depending upon unique factors that may apply in individual cases of valuation. The overall difference to ALL changes in the residential parcels should be approximately seven percent less than the previous year.

By the end of February of 2011 you will receive a notice of the assessment assigned to your property parcel for the 2011 tax year. If you believe that your assessed value does not reasonably reflect approximately one half of true cash value, you will be able to appeal the decision of the assessor to the Blendon Township Board of Review. The Blendon Township Board of Review will schedule appointments for the second week of March 2011 after your assessment statement is mailed

to you in late February. Appointments for appeals to the Board of Review will be accepted in the week beginning Monday, February 28, 2011.

Another consideration regarding property assessments is the issue of Taxable Value. Your new assessment statement for 2011 will also include a statement of your Taxable Value. Taxable Value is the amount upon which your property tax is based. The total millages that are levied by the State of Michigan, the School Districts, Ottawa County, Blendon Township and others are multiplied by your Taxable Value to determine the amount of tax that is to be paid for your property parcel.

Taxable Value is not directly connected to the value of your real property parcel but instead it is adjusted by the annual changes in the value of the dollar. The State Tax Commission every year calculates the percentage change of the dollar value by using a formula mandated by the provisions of the Michigan Constitution as amended by the 1994 peoples' initiative known as proposal A. This year that calculation has indicated a change of 1.7% therefore every parcel of real property in the State of Michigan will have the taxable value adjusted upward by 1.7% plus or minus any additions or losses. Your taxable value change that is a result of this calculation cannot be considered by the Blendon Township Board of Review because it is not directly connected to actual real estate true cash value.

Remember however that your taxable value may not exceed your assessed value so if your assessed value should fall below your current taxable value; your taxable value must be adjusted downward to be equal to the assessed value.

BUILDING INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

The Building Inspections Department activity has been steady this year. As of the end of November, more permits have been issued in 2010 than in 2009. The construction of accessory buildings has shown an increase this year. So far in 2010 the building department has issued 11 single family residence permits with an estimated value of \$2,696,900.00 compared to 2009 where 16 permits were issued with an estimated value of \$2,672,089.00. Home additions and remodels have also been steady throughout the year. There seems to be some optimism that the building industry is starting to make a comeback.

Building permit application and other building department forms are available on the Blendon Township web site. (www.blendontownship-mi.gov)

Census 2010 Update

Many of you will remember that this past year the federal government conducted its decennial census of the United States. Although the work of the census canvassers has been completed, the final tally results will not be officially published until April 1, 2011. Most of the census was conducted by the voluntary participation of citizens who took the time to mail in the questionnaire that was sent to them by Bureau of the Census. The 2010 census national mail participation rate was **74%**. The Michigan participation was **78%**. The participation rate of all of the residents of Ottawa County came to **85%**. Blendon Township had a whopping participation rate of **91%**.

Employee Retirement

A familiar face and friendly voice at the Blendon Township offices will be missing after the first of the year. Bev Vande Guchte will be retiring from her duties as chief administrative assistant for Blendon Township. Bev has been employed by the Township for over thirty years. Bev is the one person working in the office of Blendon Township that can always be depended upon to know where things are and how things have been done. She has been a valuable asset to the Township over the years; her time honed expertise will be missed.

We are grateful to Bev for her many years of service to the Township and wish her well in her retirement.

The Blendon Township Cemetery

Cemetery Development

The initial construction of phase I of the Blendon Township Cemetery development plan is complete. This construction consisted of expansion of the ground immediately west of the current cemetery development along Tyler Street up to the Tyler Street Fire Station. The ground has been excavated and graded. A gravel base has been placed where drives and walkways are anticipated. Additional wells have been sunk on the south side of the area planned for development and the irrigation system has been expanded into the graded areas that have had hydro mulch grass seed applied.

Next spring it is expected that the gravel drives and pathway will be covered with bituminous asphalt and additional landscape will be installed in the newly established grassy areas prior to the location of new gravesites.

A copy of the Cemetery Master Plan draft is available for your review at the township office.

Cemetery Regulations

Blendon Township has previously adopted regulations regarding the proper use of the cemetery. These rules are currently being studied for revisions and a revised draft is expected to be posted on the website by next summer. As a reminder, snowmobile operation on cemetery grounds is prohibited by state law.

Civil War: 1861-1865

We have discovered that we have Civil War Veterans buried in Blendon Twp. Cemetery. Two new stones will be set: one for George H. Nightengale and one for Oscar M. Sherburne. If there are family descendants living in the Township, we would like to be notified so they can be available for the ceremony involving placing these headstones.

- Pvt. Dingman, Legar S. 14th Cav Texas
- Emmert, Isaac Co B 11th Ind Inf
- Flipsey, Digness Co E 52nd Wis Inf
- Nightengale, George H. Unass'n 8th NY Cav
- Parm, James Co I 3rd Mi Inf
- Puls, William Co F 131 OH Inf
- Seydel, Charles A. Co B 1st Wis
- Scherburne, Oscar M I 3 MI Inf
- Thompson, Samuel E. I 3 MI Inf

New information regarding the cemetery historical archives should be forwarded to the Blendon Township Offices 616 875 7707 x28

DOG LICENSE

For many years Blendon Township residents had the option of purchasing an Ottawa County Dog License at the Township Office when they paid their winter tax bill. The Ottawa County Treasurer's Office has changed the procedure for the licensing of dogs and as a result of these procedural changes, Blendon Township will no longer be involved with the selling of dog licenses.

Beginning January 1, 2011, you will be able to purchase a dog license for up to three years. The exact length of the license period will depend upon the date in which your Dog's rabies vaccine expires. All new dog licenses purchased after January 1, 2011, will expire on the date in which the dog's three-year rabies vaccine certificate expires. Dog licenses will also be available at the offices of participating veterinarians. If your veterinarian is participating in the program, you will be able to purchase the dog license at the same time that the dog's mandatory rabies vaccine is administered. By mid December 2010, a list of participating veterinarians will be posted online at www.mriottawa.org

The fee for a dog license will be determined by the length of time between the application date and the date at which the dog's rabies vaccine expires and also whether or not the dog has been spayed or neutered.

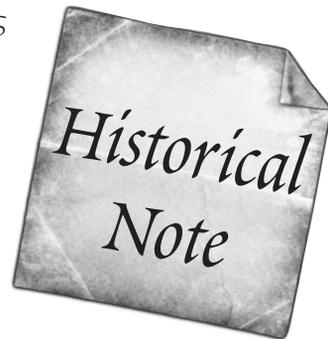
The Ottawa County Treasurer will continue to mail you a reminder application if your dog is currently registered in the system.

History of Blendon Township

Serving this area for 156 years

1854-2010

- Surveyed in 1833**
- Organized January 4, 1854**
- First Township Hall built in 1889**



MINUTES: From the record book of the Board of Health of the Township of Blendon

Nov. 17, 1860 At a meeting of the Board of Health held on the 17th day of November, 1860, the job of clearing out the trees that have fallen into the burying ground and repairing the fence and chopping down the trees that are in danger of falling across the fence was let to Wilbur C. Scott for the sum of \$4.00

Nov. 30, 1866 The Board of Health met pursuant to notice at the burying ground and proceeded to lay out said ground in lots. After leaving a space twenty feet wide on the north, east and west sides for roadway, and thirty feet on the south side for the same purpose, commenced on the north east corner and laid out fifty-four lots, sixteen feet wide east and west and twenty feet running north and south between each tier of lots taking up the ground to near the gate. A roadway thirty feet wide and a space sixteen feet wide next to the roadway, on the west side for the burial of strangers and persons having no lots in said ground

On motion, Justus Wait was elected as Sexton.

It was decided to allow people in adjoining towns to purchase lots at five dollars per lot. Also that sixty days be given persons having friends buried to select lots and remove the remains and if not done within that time, the Sexton to remove them at the expense of the town and the money be collected of persons interested. Said Sexton to receive two and 50/100 dollars for each one removed.

Charles E. Storre
Township Clerk