



Wilson Township News

Michigan Townships Deliver Value to Residents and Business

Although economic uncertainties and recent concerns about how efficiently government operates often dominate the news, too little is said about local governments, which offer people a choice to live and work in unique communities that best match their values and preferences for taxation, government service levels and regulatory climate.

Did you know that half of all local governments in the United States have 1,000 or fewer residents? These smaller governments are well-positioned to respond efficiently to present public budget challenges. Besides offering greater accountability, decisions made at the local level help keep power in the hands of the people and prevent other layers of government from overreaching into people's liberty and freedom. In addition, the

independence and authority of townships attracts people to actively participate in civic affairs, which in turn benefit the community.

For many decades, townships have been the economic engine of Michigan's prosperity, offering employers lower property tax rates, expeditious regulatory review and action, and large land tracks. According to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau following the 2010 Census, townships serve over half of the state's population—52% to be exact. In addition, township officials govern 96% of the state's land area and protect 58% of Michigan's total property valuation. However, compared to cities and villages in Michigan, townships receive 82% less total revenue and 66% less property tax revenue. This means that townships have learned

to do more with less—not just recently, but for quite some time.

Operating with limited resources means that townships provide essential local government services to residents in the most efficient manner possible. Through innovative strategies as well as cooperative efforts with neighboring entities, townships are instrumental in the delivery of services, infrastructure expansion, and appropriate economic development site selection.

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Fix My Road

The Wilson Township Board is constantly asked by residents "When are you going to fix my road?" The answer is not simple.

While the township levies a one mill road millage, the collected millage doesn't go very far. This year the one mill road millage generated about \$59,000. From this amount, \$24,000 was budgeted to brine roads, leaving \$36,000. This fall, Afton Stone was applied to a section of Bergmann Road at a cost of \$12,535 (this road has not been graveled since 1976). Also this fall, the gravel end of Jaquay Road was improved by adding Afton Stone and better drainage. This project cost

\$25,559, which means the road fund was overspent by \$3,094.

Where does the rest of the money come from you ask... from the general fund. The general fund receives, on average, \$100,000 from the state from sales tax revenue and one mill for administrative purposes. Most of the revenue we receive from taxes goes to repairing and maintaining the roads in Wilson Township.

The chart on page 4 shows what Wilson Township has spent on roads over the past 19 years. You will note the average yearly cost for roads is \$112,441 while the average millage income was \$46,294.



Wilson Township

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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From the Wilson Township Treasurer

Wilson Township offers on-line property tax review and payment options that can be found on the township's website www.wilsontownship.org. To access these options on the website, click on Township Treasurer, and then click on Property Tax Inquiry. You can review and print your property tax bills/receipts from 2005 to the current year for no charge. Wilson Township has also partnered with *Point & Pay* to offer on-line tax payment options. Credit card payments will incur a fee of 3% of the total payment; an E-check will incur a \$3.00 flat fee. All fees are collected and retained by Point & Pay.

Treasurer's office hours are Monday through Friday 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM with limited availability Saturday and Sunday. This is a home office and the treasurer respectfully requests that no calls be made after 8:00 PM. Messages and e-mails are returned daily. The office is closed on major holidays. If you would like to pay your tax bill in person, please call ahead to make sure the treasurer is available.

Due to staffing issues at the county level, a printing service was used to print and mail tax bills and the accompanying newsletter (using bulk rate postage). However, the printing service is unable to combine tax bills; consequently if you have more than one parcel in Wilson Township, you will receive your tax bills in separate envelopes.

Winter taxes are due Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2015. On this day, the treasurer's office will be open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM for anyone wishing to pay their tax bill in person to avoid paying interest and/or penalty.

Mortgage Escrows: Tax information will be forwarded to your bank per their request. Receipts are mailed upon request only. To request a receipt, simply make a note on your payment stub. Taxes paid by a mortgage escrow or a title company will automatically generate a receipt to the current owner.

Postmarks are NOT accepted by Wilson Township as an on-time payment. Please be sure to allow time for delivery of your payment.

Address corrections: Please update as soon as possible to avoid a delay in receiving your tax bill.

Board of Review (BOR) Corrections: Corrections for the current billing year (July & Dec.) will be made within one week of the BOR meeting. Prior year BOR correc-

tions are handled by the Charlevoix County Treasurer's office. Contact their office for correction date timeline at 231/547-7202.

If you have questions regarding assessing or Board of Review, please contact Todd Sorenson, Wilson Township assessor phone: 231/582-7122 or e-mail: tbsorenson@charter.net.

Link to Wilson Township Website
www.wilsontownship.org

Link to Charlevoix County Web site:
www.charlevoixcounty.org

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Broadband Update

 Airiston Wireless Broadband, now Air North Communications, originally planned on rolling out broadband services to Wilson Township residents during the fall of 2013; but with problems in congress and funding (low interest loans from *USDA Rural Development Broadband Initiative*) the roll out was pushed to the spring of 2014. Then, because of the delays in congress and the passage of time, the USDA required that applications for loan consideration be resubmitted. This event pushed the roll out to the fall of 2014.

During the spring and summer of 2014, Air North was busy establishing locations to



erect primary and secondary towers in Wilson Township. But because of the terrain in the township, they determined that the number of primary and secondary towers was going to be more and would cost more than what was originally anticipated. Air North still plans on going forward with the installation; but has rescheduled the roll out, again, to sometime in the spring of 2015.

Wilson Township will continue to work towards developing reliable and reasonably priced high-speed internet access for Wilson township residents. However, if you wish to pursue alternatives for high speed internet on your own, some options are: **Cherry Capital Connection** starting at \$475.00 for equipment and a minimum \$50.00 per month fee; **Coli Communications** - equipment is rented and installation starts at \$99.00 with a minimum of \$39.00

month charge (**Mi Spot**, is no longer available). High speed internet access availability for Wilson Township residents from these providers is determined on a case by case basis.

Do you have pictures of Wilson Township?

A page is being developed on the Wilson Township website: www.wilsontownship.org that will be dedicated to pictures of Wilson Township. If you have pictures of the township that you wish to share, you can email them to tbsorenson@charter.net or mail them to Wilson Township, P.O. Box 447, Boyne City, Mi. 49712.

If requested, the pictures will be returned once they are digitized and published on website.

MDEQ to Complete Environmental Clean up at Clare's Country Corners

This spring the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) presented a proposal to complete an environmental cleanup at Clare's Country Corners. The site, which used to be a party store and gas station, is located on the intersection of Deer Lake Road and Boyne City – East Jordan Rd and is currently being used for commercial warehousing. The site has contaminated soils that were the result of leaking underground storage tanks that were in place when the site had gasoline pumps. While the tanks have been removed, a significant amount of contaminated soils remain. Several monitoring wells have been placed on the site and there is a concern that the contamination could migrate and contaminate ground water. The DEQ has approached the property owner and has offered to fund the clean up of the site. The clean up would consist of the re-



moval of the existing building and asphalt and excavation and disposal of the contaminated soils. The site will then be restored with clean fill and a new paved driveway will be installed and a 30' x 34' pole building will be constructed to replace the removed structure.

To accomplish this clean up, several approvals were needed from the Township.

The first approval required was an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that would allow for the replacement of

the existing nonconforming structure. Without a provision to allow for the replacement of the existing structure the clean up would not be completed. To provide for this, an ordinance amendment was adopted that allows for the replacement of a nonconforming structure that needs to be removed for the purposes of environmental clean up

completed by the State. While in most cases zoning ordinances discourage the reconstruction of nonconforming structures, it was determined that removing the contamination and the threat to groundwater was more important in this case; and in the best interest of public health and welfare the amendment was approved. After the amendment was approved, the planning commission then reviewed and approved a site plan for replacement of the nonconforming building. The site plan review process provided the opportunity to re-orient the building on the property, which eliminated some of the non-conformities.

Engineering and permitting for the project is anticipated to be completed this fall with construction commencing next spring. This project is a great example of how the State, Township and property owner worked together to complete a project that benefits everyone.

Disabled Veteran's Exemption

Last year, the State of Michigan passed P.A. 161, which allows Military Veterans who are 100% disabled to claim a 100% exemption from property taxes for their principal residence. This means that if your claim is approved, you will not have to pay property taxes for 2014. In order to file a claim for 2014, you must complete a State Tax Commission Affidavit for Disabled Veterans Exemption and provide the required documentation. The affidavit with supporting documents must be submitted to the Wilson Township assessor by December 8, 2014. Submitted affidavits will be reviewed by the Wilson Township Board of Review at the meeting on December 9, 2014 at 5:00 PM at the Wilson Township hall. The affidavit and requirements for filing can be found on the Wilson Township website www.wilsontownship.org, on the Assessor tab, or contact Todd B. Sorenson at 231/582-7122.

Two or more parcels next to each other?

Under Michigan Law, if you purchased a home and are claiming a Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) for it but you still own another home and are trying to sell it, you may be able to claim a PRE for both properties. If you would like to see if you are eligible, contact the Wilson Township assessor, Todd Sorenson at: tsorenson@charter.net or by calling 231/582-7122. You will need to provide parcel numbers for both properties in order to complete the check.



More than one Principal Residence Exemption?

If you have a Principal Residence Exemption (Homestead Exemption) for the parcel your home is on and you have vacant property on a separate deed that is adjacent to your home parcel, you may be eligible for an Adjacent Principal Residence Exemption.

If you are interested in finding out if you are eligible for this exemption, please contact the Wilson Township assessor, Todd Sorenson at: (231) 582-7122 or email him at tsorenson@charter.net.

Wilson Township Road Expenditures 1996 to 2014

Year	Brine Costs	Gravel / Work Location	Gravel Costs	Paving / Work Location	Paving Costs	Total Road Costs	Voted Millage
1996	\$12,023	None	\$0	Anderson / Crozier	\$78,391	\$90,414	\$26,945
1997	\$8,384	Barber / Hull	\$20,804	None	\$0	\$29,188	\$28,136
1998	\$10,130	Rogers / Healey / Pleasant Valley	\$28,702	Reseal / Dietz	\$8,512	\$47,344	\$29,327
1999	\$14,246	Healey	\$5,870	None	\$0	\$20,116	\$25,424
2000	\$9,048	Marvon / Bergmann / Jaquay	\$21,392	Pleasant Valley / Behling	\$250,415	\$280,855	\$31,709
2001	\$17,784	None	\$0	None	\$0	\$17,784	\$38,550
2002	\$19,236	None	\$0	Pleasant Valley	\$82,883	\$102,119	\$39,529
2003	\$14,700	Wilson / Marvon / Sloop / Richards	\$35,490	Sewer Study	\$7,700	\$57,890	\$40,080
2004	\$14,400	None	\$0	Behling / S. Wilson	\$233,450	\$247,850	\$43,651
2005	\$17,040	Marshall / Etcher / Day / Davis / Snyder	\$11,360	None	\$0	\$28,400	\$40,240
2006	\$16,250	None	\$0	Tomkins	\$188,440	\$204,690	\$52,506
2007	\$18,300	Healey / Barber / Roberts	\$47,792	W. Behling	\$120,000	\$186,092	\$56,067
2008	\$22,000	None	\$0	None	\$0	\$22,000	\$58,769
2009	\$16,000	Marshall	\$10,300	Jaquay	\$320,000	\$346,300	\$68,525
2010	\$22,200	Hull	\$30,900	None	\$0	\$53,100	\$61,118
2011	\$22,200	None	\$0	Anderson / Marshall	\$220,590	\$242,790	\$54,305
2012	\$26,700	Cosier.	\$18,686	None	\$0	\$45,386	\$63,470
2013	\$15,365	Pleasant Valley / Zinc	\$36,810	None	\$0	\$52,175	\$62,243
2014	\$24,000	Jaquay / Bergmann	\$37,890	None	\$0	\$61,890	\$59,000
TOTAL	\$320,006		\$305,996		\$1,510,381	\$2,136,383	\$879,594
YEARLY AVG	\$16,842		\$16,105		\$79,494	\$112,441	\$46,294

Wilson Township Hot Spot

Wilson Township has created an internet “hot spot” at the Wilson Township hall at Fall Park. If you need a place to access the internet, just pull in the parking lot and logon. There are several wireless networks at the Park. Select “Wilson Hot Spot” and logon with the password “**fallpark1**”.

Wilson Township Website

Would you like to read the Wilson Township meeting minutes or see what is on the agenda of a township meeting? Would you like a township form such as a zoning permit? Would you like to know information about your

Township officials or about Wilson Township? Would you like to pay your taxes on line or look up information about your property? Go to www.wilsontownship.org.

Michigan Townships Deliver Value to Residents and Business *continued from page 1*

In addition to carrying out the statutory duties of tax collection, elections and property assessment, the range of services offered by a township varies, depending on the preferences of its residents, but may include: fire, police and EMS; planning and zoning; public water and sewers; library services; parks and recreation; senior programs; waste hauling and recycling; cemeteries; and road funding.

Data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, which gathers and breaks down revenues and expenditures by type of local government, show that when compared to Michigan’s cities and villages, Michigan townships operate quite efficiently including:

- spending 80% less for operations, debt and capital outlays
- spending 79% less for law enforcement
- spending 50% less for fire protection
- spending 52% less for tax collections and accounting, and 37% less for other administrative services, including elections
- spending 80% less for salaries and wages. In fact, services are often delivered in small townships by part-time officials and employees receiving nominal salaries, often without benefits.

Providing services that are of value to you in a cost-effective manner is paramount to Wilson Township. Our goal is to continue to meet 21st century challenges in a way that provides the greatest benefit to our community while upholding the values that embody local control and authority among the citizenry of Wilson Township and its elected officials.

