

Watertown Charter Township

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Office Hours
Monday-Friday
9:00am-5:00pm

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Newsletter Committee
George Weitzel, Chair
Ken Mitchell
Janice Thelen
Christy Sochay, Coordinator

Township Offices
Closed:
Monday, February 21
Friday, April 22

Supervisor's Department
Deb Adams, Township Supervisor Jennifer Tubbs, Township Manager
Donna Case, Administrative Assistant

STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP

The Township Board has once again provided Watertown residents with a 2011 balanced budget that is fiscally responsible to the community needs, and despite declining revenues, required no millage increase to continue services.

As revenues decline, Watertown Township continues to make the necessary tough budget cuts to ensure services continue without interruption. We have continued to fare better than most municipalities who are cutting programs and services to make ends meet. Our continued fiscal restraint, strategic planning, and maintaining reasonable cash reserves to meet critical emergencies has kept Watertown in sound fiscal condition.

In light of the current financial crisis facing our economy, we feel that it is important that our residents have a clear understanding of the 2011 township budget. A comparison of the last four years is as follows:

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Revenues:	\$2,038,310	\$2,001,170	\$1,914,211	\$1,916,919
Expenses	\$2,022,069	\$1,984,569	\$1,903,136	\$1,899,915

The taxable value for property decreased across the board for township residents. Despite the taxable value decrease, there was enough development to offset the loss in revenues. Although there was a slight increase in revenues from 2010 to 2011, there is a small decrease in expenses. The 2011 budgeted expenses are \$17,000 less than revenues which will remain in the township fund balance. Hopefully, we are seeing an end to the decline in revenues that has been the trend.

The Township Board continues to make operating on a balanced budget a top priority. The Board has planned properly and saved in advance over several years for improvements, maintenance, and upgrades, instead of draining the fund balance or requesting a millage increase from the voters to cover the difference for general operation of the township. The fund balance/reserves are funds set aside for specific

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items, like the new fire truck purchased in 2010 and the new bridge that will be constructed in 2011. In other words, it's the township's savings account. Sometimes, this account has been confused with having a large excess of funds instead of what it actually is, a savings account for future expenses. The Township Board's fiscal responsibility in making cuts to bring the expenses in line with revenues has left Watertown Township as one of the very few fiscally sound municipalities in the area.

Legacy costs have been a buzz word that is used in the media regarding the economic crisis of state and local governments. Legacy costs are the ongoing and increasing costs for retiree pension plans and health benefits that remain a burden long after an employee has retired. There has been recent confusion regarding the benefits of Watertown Township employees and elected officials. For clarification, Watertown Township does not have ongoing retirement or health benefits for its employees or elected officials once they separate service or retire, therefore there are no ongoing legacy costs.

Watertown Township has answered the current economic crisis by trimming staff, and asking those remaining to work harder and more efficiently. A department has been eliminated, staff levels have been reduced, and positions continue to be combined to maximize efficiency. Over the past five years, the equivalent of two full time positions have been eliminated. As a result, employees have been cross trained in several areas to ensure good service to the residents. In addition, the Township Board reduced the health care program by limiting it to only full time employees (previously part time employees and all elected officials were eligible for full health care). In an effort to remain fiscally sound, Watertown Township has acted responsibly to preserve the economic sustainability of township services at current levels without interruption to residents.

I hope that this article gives assurance that the Township Board, along with the Township staff, are operating as efficiently and fiscally responsible as possible in service to the residents of Watertown Township. For an independent accounting of Township funds, I encourage you to look at the 2010 audit when it becomes available in May as evidence of Watertown's fiscal responsibility. If you have any questions regarding any of this information or would like to see the full Township budget, please feel free to contact Jennifer Tubbs at (517) 626-6593.

BRIDGE WORK HAS BEGUN

The bridge replacement on Herbison Road has begun and is due to be completed in early June. The detour signs are in place and will remain as the detour route throughout the project. Please check the township website for information and progress on this project.

Treasurer's Department
Janice Thelen, Treasurer Amy Kinney, Deputy Treasurer

Property owners in Grand Ledge and Waverly School Districts may have noticed a slight increase in their 2010 winter property taxes. This slight increase is due to an increased school debt millage, necessary to meet the school debt obligation. As property values decrease, in theory, the amount of money paid for property taxes should decrease as well. The exception is debt. The schools are obligated to collect enough money to pay the debt previously approved by the voters within the school district. As values decrease, the millage must increase so that the necessary amount of money may be collected to meet debt obligations.

Property Tax payment information – Just a reminder that 2010 property taxes are payable through February 14, 2011 without late payment penalty. Payment must be made no later than February 14, 2011, by close of business to be considered paid on time. The Treasurer's Department is open Monday through Friday, 9am—5pm, (keep in mind that extreme weather may force us to close the office). Property tax payments may be made in person, by mail, credit card, ACH Withdraw, or by use of the drop box. Please remember that postmarks are not accepted when determining timely payment and that payment placed in the after hours drop box will be applied the next Township business day. Do not place cash in the drop box.

Watertown Township works with a third party, Official Payments Corporation, to process credit card payments. Credit card payments may be made online (www.officialpayments.com) or by phone (1-800-272-9829). **Jurisdiction Code 7067** will be required for credit card payments. Official Payments Corporation will assess a 3% processing fee to all credit card payments. Additional credit card payment information should be on the back of your winter tax statement.

Payments using ACH withdraw require an Authorization Form to be completed and returned to the Treasurer Department. Completion of the Authorization Form allows the Treasurer to withdraw payment directly from your account on specific payment dates, transferring responsibility of making timely payment to the Treasurer's Department. The Authorization Form should be included in the envelope with your winter tax statement and is available online on the Treasurer's page.

Our newest payment option embraces your financial institution's online payment process. By using the information below you should be able to set up a payment file, which will transfer the payment from your account directly into the designated township account. Please be aware that the funds must be received into the township account by February 14, 2011 to be considered a timely payment. You may need to contact your financial institution for assistance in setting up this process and to assure timely arrival of the payment.

Account Name: Watertown Charter Township
Account Number: 453-572-2161
Routing Number: 072-400-528

Planning and Zoning Department
Andrea Polverento, Planning Director Amy Kinney, Planning Assistant

In October 2009, the Township adopted an update of its master plan, which includes a clear statement of the Township's long and short term goals and objectives for development and land use. These goals and objectives, developed with a great deal of public input through a community visioning workshop, include a number of action items to guide the Township's implementation of the master plan.

One of the major elements of the master plan is a focus on sustainability, including the application of techniques known as "Low Impact Development," or "LID." In an effort to look at ways the Township's Zoning Ordinance can be updated to include incentives and applications of LID, the Planning Commission has established an ad-hoc committee to study this concept and make recommendations on how best to implement changes to encourage LID throughout the Township.

Low Impact Development is basically a collection of techniques to better manage stormwater. It is focused on replicating the natural water cycle, often with small, cost-effective landscaping projects. These include things such as rain gardens, which typically include native plantings in areas where water pools to aid in the natural absorption of the rainfall. Other types of LID include buffer strips, green roofs, pervious pavement, and landscaping near and within large paved areas like parking lots to better accommodate the runoff from the impervious surfaces. At the residential level, utilizing rain barrels can also go a long way to manage stormwater.

The Planning Commission committee will be looking closely at these techniques and many others in the coming months as they study the issue and look for the best ways to encourage LID within the Zoning Ordinance and existing policies.

The Planning Commission has also been working on incorporating medical marijuana uses into the zoning ordinance, following the passing of the Michigan Medical Marijuana Act in 2009. There will be a public hearing to consider new Zoning Ordinance regulations that pertain to this type of use at the regular meeting of the Planning Commission on Wednesday, February 2 at 7:00pm. The draft regulations are available for review on the Township's website at www.twp.watertown.mi.us, or contact the Planning and Zoning office for more information.

Fitness 4 You Aerobics
Jerry McNeilly

Have you been thinking lately, "I really should start getting some exercise"? How about that New Year's resolution to become more fit this year? Well, join us at the township gym as we move to the music!

The music starts at 6:15pm on Monday and Wednesdays. The class consists of two parts, is co-ed, and is non-competitive. Come for the first part of 45 minutes and leave, or stay another 24 minutes for toning and stretching. This is all done at a low to medium intensity, and conforms to the American Council on Exercise (ACE) recommendations for group fitness aerobic classes. We use golden oldies music and an occasional line dance as a cool down. You can try the class free until you decide if it fits your needs. For more information, call Jerry McNeilly at (517) 627-9570.

Township Meeting Dates

The following meetings will take place at 7:00pm in the South Room of the Township Hall, which is located at 12803 South Wacousta Road, Grand Ledge, MI 48837.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

January 17, 2011	July 18, 2011
February 22, 2011	August 15, 2011
March 21, 2011	September 19, 2011
April 18, 2011	October 17, 2011
May 16, 2011	November 21, 2011
June 20, 2011	December 19, 2011

PLANNING COMMISSION

January 5, 2011	July 6, 2011
February 2, 2011	August 3, 2011
March 2, 2011	September 7, 2011
April 6, 2011	October 5, 2011
May 4, 2011	November 2, 2011
June 1, 2011	December 7, 2011



Watertown Charter Township's Parks and Recreation Committee is sponsoring an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 16, 2011 at 10:00am SHARP. The "hunt" will take place at the Wallace Watts Community Center (gym) located at 12803 S. Wacousta Rd. Please bring a basket or bag to collect the surprise-filled eggs. Weather permitting the eggs will be hidden outside, so dress accordingly! For more information call (517) 626-6593*207.



**Clinton County Sheriff's Report
Deputy Sharon Worthington**

I am sure many of you are aware of the scams that are out there and that there are always new ones cropping up. I received an email, purportedly from the Director of the FBI, informing me they had sued some of the foreign scammers and have \$3,000,000.00 British pounds in an UK bank for me! Although this would be nice, it too, is another scam. We have had numerous incidents of people being contacted by email and/or telephone saying someone they know is either in jail somewhere or were the victims of robbery and need money. Just ignore the emails. If you receive the telephone calls, I suggest hanging up. If you are concerned, start asking questions only you and the other person know the answers to.

We continue to experience random break-ins. However, a group that had been active in this and surrounding areas has been arrested in the past month. They had been responsible for many break-ins in our county. Detectives are still investigating.

If you will be gone for the winter or are taking a vacation you can call our office and be put on our property checklist. It is also a good idea to have a neighbor check on your home while you're away and drive in and out of your driveway when there is fresh snow. Be careful about the information you put out on social networks, emails, and during discussions in public. Remember, robbers prefer to break into an unoccupied home.

Helpful information about emergency preparedness is available at www.do1thing.us. Being prepared doesn't have to be hard or expensive. By doing one thing a month, you can make sure that you and the people you depend on will be prepared for whatever happens.

Meals on Wheels

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Tri-County Office on Aging is in need of volunteers to deliver hot, nutritious meals to senior citizens in the Watertown Township area who are unable to prepare their own meals.

The time frame is approximately one hour per volunteer session, beginning at 11:00am. You can volunteer as many or as few times as you like, preferably at least two times per month. Meals on Wheels delivers Monday - Friday.

The meal pick-up location is in Watertown Township, eliminating long-distance travel.

More information can be obtained through the Tri-County Office on Aging. Contact Carrie Hartenburg or Joan Bancroft by phone at (888) 224-3030 or (989) 224-3600, or visit the website at <http://www.tcoa.org/nutrition>.

We're Losing Our Ashes
Ronald V. Overton, Master Gardener

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has come to Watertown Township. The EAB infects all true ash trees. The most common in this area are white (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) and green (*F. americana*). There are thousands along the Looking Glass River, which is probably why EAB has spread so quickly. If your ash trees are not infected, you can treat them with insecticides, but it's an annual program that can be costly. You would want to consult a certified arborist. Arborists are estimating that over time, we will lose all the ash trees in North America – some 7.5 billion as compared to the loss of 200 million elms to Dutch Elm disease. Indeed, it's ironic that these many of these ash trees were planted to replace the elms.

The EAB lays eggs inside the bark and its larvae girdle the tree. As branches are girdled, their ends die and this continues until the tree dies. I have been told that from the time of infection, they might last three years. To identify an ash tree, you'll see they have opposite branching instead of alternate and compound leaves. See the links below to help with identification.

The ash trees in my yard along the Looking Glass River are dying and look like they have the mange with a splotchy bark. You should check your property and make sure that any infected trees are no danger to people or property. If they are in the woods and not a hazard, you can let them stand. Standing dead trees, or snags, provide food and shelter for wildlife. If they are a danger, you should contact a licensed tree service to have them removed.

Ash wood is wonderful – white, strong, and straight grained. It's the best for tool handles and baseball bats, but also great for furniture and flooring and is a great substitute for oak. Because the EAB does not damage the interior wood (just the outer layers just under the bark) the wood can be salvaged. For use as lumber, your tree would have to be at least 12 inches in diameter and have a straight and clear trunk for at least 6 feet. You will need to find someone to mill your lumber and then you need a place to store the wood to allow it to dry. One arborist told me that he'd heard of sawmills that would cut up your tree for half the resulting wood. You can find them in the phone book or contact the county MSU Extension office.

The loss of our ash trees is going to hurt. Not only are we losing their shade, so is the river. Trees along the river improve water quality by absorbing waterborne pollutants through their roots, prevent erosion, and moderate the temperature. If they are along the river bank, they actually shade the water, thereby lowering its temperature. In addition to these watershed functions, trees produce oxygen while breathing carbon dioxide, provide wildlife habitat, reduce air and noise pollution, enhance aesthetics and property values, and are an important contributor to community image, pride, and quality of life.

Replacing our ashes is paramount to our quality of life, but also to that of the river. Below is a link to a listing of suitable replacement trees to consider. If you start now and buy young trees, they are relatively inexpensive. The single most important thing to keep in mind when planting trees and shrubs on your property is to DIVERSIFY. When you only plant one variety, you run the risk of having something like the EAB come and wipe them all out. I would also suggest trying to stay with native trees. Native plants and trees are used to the climate, the soil, and the local insects and diseases. They also serve as host to native insects which can help to keep alien invaders under control. You can start with the oaks and maples, but consider alternatives such as hornbeam, hackberry, honeylocust, sweet gum, tulip tree, black gum, and basswood. Again, diversity is the key. Not only does it protect you from some devastating event like the EAB, it provides much great interest and beauty in your landscape.

Links for additional information:

MDA EAB home page: http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1568_2390_18298---,00.html

Ash tree identification: <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/files/E2942.pdf>

Recommended alternatives to ash trees: <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/Bulletin/PDF/E2925.pdf>

Other EAB links of interest: http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1568_2390_18298_41640---,00.html

DeWitt District Library Winter Programs and Services
Jennifer Balcom, Library Director

YOUTH AND TEEN PROGRAMS

Howdy, pardners! DDL's Youth Services Librarian is rounding up prospectors, desperadoes, cowpokes, buckaroos - any and all readers are wanted - for a western themed winter reading program. The Winter Reading program began on **MONDAY, JANUARY 3rd** and runs through February; kids and teens can pick up reading logs at the Winter Reading Station inside the library and get started trail-blazing their way to claiming a great prize bag.

Looking for more fun? "Round-up Some Fun" programs will be held on **THURSDAYS at 4:30pm**, with stories, crafts, maybe a game, a snack, and prize drawings (must be present to win). These programs are intended for children ages four years old or older, although younger children can participate with direct supervision of an accompanying caregiver/helper. Grab a programming calendar for specific dates and information on the Winter Reading Final Party, and don't forget to be on the lookout for some slithering snakes when you visit DDL's Children's Room.

TEEN GAMING AND TEEN ADVISORY GROUP DATE CHANGES

Teen Gaming has been moved to **THURSDAYS at 4:00pm**. Teens can drop in between 4:00pm - 6:00pm for gaming fun. There will be Wii games, board games, snacks, and quarterly drawings for movie packs (hints on increasing your odds of winning given during program).

Teen Advisory Group Meetings have been changed to the **FIRST THURSDAY MONTHLY at 6:30pm**. Teens can stop in, grab a slice of pizza, and discuss issues that shape teen programming and collection development at the library.

ADULT PROGRAMS

PHOTO SEMINARS

Instructor Bob Grzesiak's popular photo seminars are being offered again this year. Each class requires registration and a \$25.00 instructor fee, of which \$5 will be donated to the library. Classes offered in February and March are:

- **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7th at 6:30pm** — Single Lens Reflex Cameras: Advanced Techniques
- **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14th at 6:30pm** — Digital Photography and Your Computer
- **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21st at 6:30pm** — Advanced Photo & Computer Techniques
- **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28th at 6:30pm** — Photographic Composition Basics
- **MONDAY, MARCH 7th at 6:30pm** — Advanced Photographic Composition

KITCHEN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

- **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1st at 7:00pm** — with Darla Jaros, author of "The Kitchen Assistant"

ART AND COLLAGE ASSEMBLAGE CLASSES

- **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26th at 6:30pm** — About Me
- **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2nd at 6:30pm** — Found Object
- **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9th at 6:30pm** — Create an "assemblage"

Additional information on programs and services offered through the DeWitt District Library are available online at www.dewittlibrary.org, or by phoning (517) 669-3156 during business hours. The DeWitt District Library is located at 13101 Schavey Road in DeWitt, next to the Schavey Road Shopping Center. Hours of operation are: Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday from 10:00am – 8:30pm; Tuesday & Friday from 1:00pm – 8:30pm; Saturday from 10:00am – 4:00pm; and Sunday from 1:00pm – 4:00pm.

**Grand Ledge Area District Library
Ruth Thompson**

BEAT THE BLUSTERY BLUES AT THE GRAND LEDGE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

The beginning of a new year brings change to our lives with the turn of a calendar page. The library is a great place to follow through on those New Year resolutions to eat healthier, exercise, and enjoy the little things in life. Pursue these goals, as you save money, at the library when you check out a cookbook to learn a new recipe, plan a trip with a book from our travel section, or use the Internet.

For activity ideas, check out the following books: "Build it with Boxes" by Joan Irvine, for endless hours of activity made with a box. "Crafts to Make in the Winter" by Kathy Ross, will provide children with some cool winter projects that are surprisingly simple. Carlynn Hershberger will keep your hands busy with pencil, brush and paper with "Creative Colored Pencil Workshop". Finally, fill the house with enticing aromas from the kitchen with recipes from Emeril Lagasse's book, "Emeril's There's a Chef In My World," or the hands-on book "Let's Cook a Treat" by Helen Drew.

You may find yourself longing for a spring thaw when you are snuggled in your winter gear, facing gusty winds and frosty air. Visit the travel section and take a mind's vacation from your reading chair to southern skies.

You may also take the chill out of your day at the Grand Ledge Area District Library Preschool Story Time which will run on Tuesdays from February 1st through March 29th at 11am - 12 noon. There are plenty of fun-filled activities for 3-6 year olds. These free programs are a great place for preschoolers to express themselves in a semi-structured environment. This is also a place to meet new people and build essential skills for school.

For your older students, join us on the first Wednesday of the month for an After School Program from 4:30pm—5:30pm. Enjoy some down time with a book, crafts, card or board games. We look forward to seeing you this winter.

Please contact the Grand Ledge Area District Library at (517) 627-7014. We are located at 131 East Jefferson Street. Main library hours of operation: Monday – Thursday from 10am-9pm; Friday and Saturday from 10am-5pm; and Sunday from 1pm – 5pm.

Contact the Wacousta Branch at (517) 626-6577. The branch is located at 10380 Wacousta Road, Suite D. Branch hours of operation: Monday & Wednesday from 3pm-7pm; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10am-2pm; closed on Friday and Sunday.

For 24 hour online access, check out the library website at <http://grandledge.lib.mi.us>.

POSTAL CUSTOMER
GRAND LEDGE, MI 48837

OFFICE CONTACTS
Main Office (517) 626-6593

Supervisor

Deborah Adams - Home (517) 626-2273
dadams@whiteschneider.com

Trustees

John Maahs - Home (517) 669-5698
johnny@tir.com
Kenneth Mitchell - Home (517) 321-2452
tarzan30@aol.com
George Weitzel - Home (517) 626-2305
gweit10422@aol.com
Dale Westrick - Home (517) 626-2256
dale.trustee@yahoo.com, dwestrick@watertowntownship.com

Township Manager

Ext. #207

Jennifer Tubbs, Township Manager
jtubbs@watertowntownship.com
Donna Case, Administrative Assistant
dcase@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning Special Assessments; Sewers; Roads; Non-Zoning Ordinance Enforcement; Sewer and Water Permits

Office of the Treasurer

Ext.#206

Janice Thelen, Treasurer
jthelen@watertowntownship.com
Amy Kinney, Deputy Treasurer
akinney@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning Tax Bills; Special Assessments

Planning and Zoning Office

Ext.#205

Andrea Polverento, Planning Director
apolverento@watertowntownship.com
Amy Kinney, Planning and Zoning Assistant
akinney@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning Development/Building Permits; Zoning Requirements; Zoning Ordinance; Zoning Board of Appeals; Planning Commission; Basic Building/Zoning

Office of the Clerk

Ext. #201

Melissa Freeman, Clerk
mfreeman@watertowntownship.com
Christy Sochay, Deputy Clerk
csochay@watertowntownship.com
Mary Jo Kelley, Bookkeeper
Questions concerning the Cemetery; Freedom of Information; Elections; Meeting Dates; Voter Registration; Subscription Service; Records of the Township; Accounts Payable; Payroll

Cemetery

Weekdays (517) 626-6593 or (517) 626-6066
Andy Case, Maintenance Supervisor/Sexton (517) 490-1383

Office of the Assessor

Ext. #210

Jeff MacKenzie, Assessor
jmackenzie@watertowntownship.com
(Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday)
Questions concerning Assessing; SEV's; Property Listings; Property Splits

Building Department

Jeff Cranson, Building Inspector
Phone (517) 622-8822 Fax (517) 622-8833

LOOKING GLASS REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

(517) 627-9831 (517) 627-9833
FAX (517) 627-9846
Chief Steve Fabiano
Questions concerning Fire Coverage Districts, Burn Permits

Newsletter Committee

George Weitzel, Chair
Ken Mitchell
Janice Thelen
Christy Sochay, Coordinator