

BLENDON TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

7161 72nd Ave. Hudsonville, MI 49426 | Phone (616) 875-7707 | October 2009

Township Officials

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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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The 2010 Census

Larry Ver Hage, Supervisor

They say time goes fast when you are having fun and to me it really doesn't seem that long ago since the last census of the United States. The last census was done almost ten years ago, in the year 2000. These decennial census measurements determine not only how many people reside in the United States but also in what states, cities, townships and villages these residents are located along with other important and interesting information regarding the general population of the United States.

The year 2000 was notable for the fact that it was not only the beginning of a new decade and a new century but also a new millennium. Many of you, I am sure, will remember the Y2K scare that was so prevalent just prior to the turn of the century ten years ago. Some of the hysteria generated by concerns about that major calendar change had people believing that there would be massive failure of computers and other ancillary micro processors resulting in social and economic chaos and a collapse of civilization. Many people purchased electrical generators, large stocks of canned food, large quantities of bottled water, and some even developed small home armories in anticipation of predicted chaos. None of this happened and for the most part only a few minor problems occurred as a result of the change. It was only about the arrangement of numbers and our ability to deal with them in a rational manner as is the case today.

It's not that numbers are not important to us, they certainly are important. Many of the most important facets of our lives are governed by quantitative measurements that are expressed by numbers. We express the physical and financial dimensions of our lives by numbers. Many of the social and economic problems of our time are rooted in public innumeracy or the failure to correctly understand or properly interpret the meaning of numerical relationships. Some advertisers and advocates have been known to take advantage of this general public innumeracy by either wittingly or unwittingly making incorrect utilization of

numbers and statistical information to promote their products or ideas in a quest to gain a competitive edge or to induce belief and decisions resulting in a behavior that would not otherwise occur.

The coming year, 2010, is the beginning of a new decade and it is the time designated by law to recount the population of the United States and to determine where the population resides. This decennial census has already begun with some preliminary work beginning as early as the year 2005 but the actual counting process will begin early next year. There will be a mailing of 130 million questionnaires to the American public by mid March of 2010 and it is expected that approximately 70% of these returns will be returned in the mail by mid April. The census bureau expects to follow up with visits to the approximately 30% of the non-reporting households from late April to early July of 2010. On December 31, 2010, the total population count for the United States and the 50 states is expected to be announced as required by the Constitution for the apportionment of the Congress. (U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 2) On April 1, 2011, the "official" count will be delivered to the Governor of each of the States for the purpose of redistricting of the state legislatures and in Michigan the County Board of Commissioner Districts.

Why is the census important to us? The census is important because it determines the distribution of over \$300 billion annually of government funding for critical community services and impacts our voice in the state legislature and the Congress.

The 2000 census determined that Blendon Township had a population of 5,721. One factor that is driven by this number is Constitutional Revenue Sharing. Constitutional Revenue Sharing is a percentage of the revenue in the Michigan Treasury that is derived from the sales tax. The formula provides that the distribution of this revenue from the State Treasury to local

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units of government is apportioned on the basis of the population served by such local government. This source of revenue is important to you and me in Blendon Township because it finances a major portion of the Township's annual General Fund Budget and thus reduces the dependency of operational expenses on the local property tax. If the population of Blendon Township is under counted, some of our share of this revenue sharing will be diverted to other units of government and the people of Blendon Township along with neighboring communities will also lose a proportional influence in the state legislature.

It will be important for all of us to help in the development of an accurate census count by reporting in a timely manner via the questionnaire or to the census worker the information requested. The development of honest and accurate information may then be used to accurately reflect the position of Blendon Township in Ottawa County, Michigan and the United States. We have been requested to remind you to promptly complete and return your household census questionnaire in order that this important process may conclude quickly and accurately.

Was it really ten years ago? It hardly seems like it. Maybe I was just having too much fun.

More detailed information about the 2010 census can be found at: www.census.gov/2010census

Building Department

The freefall that once gripped the housing market continues to subside, but signals remain mixed, making the end of the housing downturn difficult to determine. Blendon Township has had twelve single-family house permits issued through the month of September. This is a 40% decrease from the same period last year. Nationally, housing starts are down 44%. During the months of August and September building activity increased due somewhat to the government's \$8,000.00 stimulus for first time buyers. Home additions and remodels have been steady through September of this year. Building permit applications and other building department forms are available on the Blendon Township web site. (www.blendontownship-mi.gov)

Building & Grounds Department

The summer brought some changes to the Township Office. Renovations were done to the administrative area, the Clerk's office and the Treasurer's office. The front foyer area was enlarged with a window to the treasurer's office installed for better access to the treasurer. The office atmosphere is now bright and cheery with easy access to the township officials and staff. Comments received from residents have been "it was about time" to "this is very nice."

The grounds maintenance team did a great job this year in the cemetery and other Township facilities. Many positive comments were received about the condition of the cemetery.

Borculo Community Center use increases every month. To rent the facility call the Township Office for dates and pricing. Please enjoy this facility with your families and friends.

Zoning Administration and Ordinance Enforcement

The Zoning Department has been busy assisting residents with land splits and combinations questions and paperwork. The forms for these and other zoning requests are available on the Blendon Township web site. Also, the complete Blendon Township Zoning Ordinance is on the web site.

The most received ordinance complaints are unlicensed and inoperable vehicles and noise. Your cooperation is appreciated in addressing these issues.

Field Audit Nearing Completion

Melissa Koster, Assessor

I want to thank everyone for being so patient with our department and so helpful to our field auditor as we audit and review all the residential properties in Blendon Township. It is the LAW that we review each property within the township on at least a 5 year cycle. Once the total review is done, we will begin a 5 year cycle review so that we continue to comply with the State of Michigan requirements.

This audit has been a huge undertaking. We've made great progress and I'm pleased to say that we have reviewed and confirmed the data of more than 70% of the residential parcels within the township and the data has been put on the computer and can now be seen via our website at www.blendontownship-mi.gov. We are hopeful to have the remaining 30% of the residential data confirmed and entered into the computer by next spring.

From the Desk of Treasurer

Don VanderKuyl

The summer tax season is over. The collection process went smoothly and most of the taxes have been distributed to the schools, the state of Michigan and Ottawa County. As you can see from your summer tax bill all the money that was collected by Blendon Township in the summer was for other units of government.

The following is an interesting fact about the property tax bill. When the bill arrives in your mailbox it is due and payable. However, there is a grace period of 75 days to pay this bill with

no penalty, but there is that "due date" and after that date additional interest and fees apply. I am not aware of many bills that arrive at our homes with such a long grace period. Interest is assessed at the township office after the "grace period," and according to the schedule printed on the tax bill. This action of applying interest is a requirement of the law and not an arbitrary action on the part of the township. I hope this explanation adds greater understanding about tax bill collections and the requirements of Michigan law.

Phil De Lange, Clerk

One of the essential functions of township government is the keeping of township records. Details concerning property, cemetery, ordinances and the minutes of meetings are all part of Blendon Township records. As you can imagine, this adds up to a very large amount of information, some of which must be kept available for generations. Eventually, so many filing cabinets are filled, that space becomes severely limited. Keeping the details organized and available for use becomes time consuming.

About two years ago, your township supervisor, Larry Ver Hage, and I, township clerk, began investigating possible solutions to this growing problem. We found a number of companies with software designed to manage information such as ours. After careful consideration, one in particular seemed to fit our needs. General Code, a company based in Rochester, New York, sold us their program, Laserfiche. Early this year, we got it up and running.

Since then, we have begun the task of converting mountains of paper to digital copies. Although the computer is fast, the task of organizing and labeling takes considerable time. So throughout

the spring and summer we have been making good progress, but the work gets done when our regular work is not more pressing. All new material, for example the minutes of our last Board meeting, is stored directly, without delay. But older information on paper must be scanned to make a digital copy which can then be placed in its proper position in the township archives.

It can sometimes be a bit of challenge as to who gets to work on this. Jim Scholma may be working on building permits while Bev Vande Guchte is waiting to work on cemetery records, and Robin Overway needs to input P.A. 116 farm land preservation records. Cheri Bowman will get some time later for recording the current month's invoices and tax receipts.

All in all, despite occasional congestion and glitches with the computer, the work is progressing well. The benefit to the township is the saving of space and easier retrieval of information.

I should also mention that there are some items of historical interest for which we are keeping the original material, but that may be the topic of a future article.

History of Blendon Township

Serving this area for 155 years

1854-2009

Surveyed in 1833

Organized in 1854

First Township Hall built in 1889

Acts of The Legislature of the State of Michigan passed at The Regular Session of 1855, by the Authority of the State of Michigan, the following took place:

An Act to organize the Township of Blendon, The Board of Supervisors of the County of Ottawa, State of Michigan, enact, that Township six north, of range fourteen west, in the County of Ottawa, State of Michigan, be and the same is hereby set off from the Township of Allendale, in said County, and organized into a separate Township by the name of Blendon; and that the first Township meeting for the election of Township officers shall be held on the first Monday in April, 1854 at the home of Booth Perry, in said Township; and that Booth Perry, Albert W. Vredenbergh and Lathan L. Carr, be and they are hereby appointed to preside at such meeting, appoint a clerk, open and keep the polls, and exercise the same powers as the inspectors of elections at any Township meeting. Mr. Lathan L Carr, be and he is hereby appointed to post up notices, according to law, of the time and place of such meeting, in the newly organized Township of Blendon.

Dated at Grand Haven, this fourth day of January, 1854.
State of Michigan, County of Ottawa.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of an act to organize the Township of Blendon, passed at the session of the Board of Supervisors of Ottawa County, held January 4, 1854.

Hoyt G. Post, Ottawa County Clerk

Michigan Place Names

Published by Walter Romig, L.H.D.

BLENDON, Ottawa County: John Ball became the first settler in the area in 1836; Booth Perry came in 1845 and the first town meeting was held in his home in 1854.

The Blendon Lumber Company owned most of the land here and it was named for them. Mr. Alfred H. Vredenbergh was the first Supervisor; the first post office was started on May 22, 1860 with Milton N. Woodruff as its first Postmaster, the office operating until October 1, 1899. Later town settlements were named: North Blendon and South Blendon.

Blendon Fire Department

Kurt Gernaat, Blendon Township Fire Chief

Cold weather has arrived and with it comes the increased use of space heaters and other heat sources. Remember... **Space Heaters Need Space!** Keep portable space heaters at least 3 feet (1 meter) from paper, curtains, furniture, clothing, bedding, or anything else that can burn. Never leave heaters on when you leave home or go to bed, and keep children and pets well away from them (nfpa.org).

A good thing to have in your home is a carbon monoxide (CO) detector. These can save your family's lives by detecting the presence of the odorless, colorless, tasteless, yet deadly gas. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure. The National Fire Safety Administration suggests:

If no one is feeling ill:

1. Silence the alarm.
2. Turn off all appliances and sources of combustion (i.e. furnace and fireplace).
3. Ventilate the house with fresh air by opening doors and windows.
4. Call a qualified professional to investigate the source of the possible CO buildup.

If illness is a factor:

1. Evacuate all occupants immediately.
2. Determine how many occupants are ill and determine their symptoms.
3. Call 911 and when relaying information to the dispatcher, include the number of people feeling ill.
4. Do not re-enter the home without the approval of a fire department representative.
5. Call a qualified professional to repair the source of the CO.

The best thing is to protect you and your family from CO exposure.

- Install at least one carbon monoxide alarm with an audible warning signal near the sleeping areas and outside individual bedrooms. Make sure the alarm has been evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Carbon monoxide alarms measure levels of CO over time and are designed to sound an alarm before an average, healthy adult would experience symptoms. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm. This does not mean that CO is not present.

- Have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems at least once a year.
- Never use your range or oven to help heat your home and never use a charcoal grill or hibachi in your home or garage.
- Never keep a car running in a garage. Even if the garage doors are open, normal circulation will not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent a dangerous buildup of CO.
- When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house. The presence of a carbon monoxide alarm in your home can save your life in the event of CO buildup.

Reference: *"Exposing an Invisible Killer"*, March 2009, USFA, www.usfa.fema.gov.

In closing, I would also like to take a minute to thank the residents of Blendon for renewing our equipment millage last year. With that money, we were able to replace our rescue squad from the Borculo Station. The old rescue was a used 1992 ambulance that had about 250,000 miles on it, and was becoming costly to repair. We replaced it with a 2002 unit with only 80,000 miles on it. Our budgeted amount was \$60,000 but we were able to find one for only \$40,000 (This same unit brand new would cost close to \$160,000 to \$175,000). I would like to personally thank the BTFD truck committee (Tom Haveman, Joel Bosma, Brian Walters, Trevor Overweg, and Rob Behrens) for keeping us under budget, and still getting us a very functional truck that should serve the township well for the next 15-20 years.

Blendon Township Cemetery

The Blendon Township Cemetery continues to be an attractive final resting place and memorial grounds for the residents of Blendon Township and surrounding communities. The demand for cemetery lots continues to grow and the need to develop additional space has now become an issue being considered by the Board. In order to proceed with expansion that will be orderly, aesthetically pleasing and complimentary to previous cemetery development, we are creating a basic master plan for the remainder of the ground between the existing cemetery and the Tyler Street Fire Station. The creation of this plan will allow for the prior introduction of landscaping and the layout of future lots which will then allow for the orderly application of the irrigation system and driveways. We expect to have a basic plan in place prior to the end of this fiscal year.