

# BLENDON TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

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

## Township Officials

**Supervisor** - Larry Ver Hage  
E-mail: twpsuper@centurytel.net

**Clerk** - Phil De Lange  
E-mail: bltwpclerk@centurytel.net

**Treasurer** - Don VanderKuyf  
E-mail: bltwptr@centurytel.net

**Assessor** - Melissa Koster  
E-mail: bltwpassessor@centurytel.net

**Trustees** - Paul Blauwkamp  
E-mail: meadowridge@centurytel.net  
- Bob Hop  
E-mail: blendonpines@hotmail.com

**Zoning Adm.** - Jim Scholma  
E-mail: bltwpzoning@centurytel.net

**Building Inspector** - Jim Scholma  
E-mail: bltwpzoning@centurytel.net

**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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## Library Services

Larry Ver Hage, Supervisor

Libraries are an important hallmark of a civilization. They are a repository of important information regarding law, science, history, language and literature. Through libraries we have access to a plethora of information that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. It is this readily-available source of information that forms one of the pillars of a society that is based upon the individual liberties that we so highly value in America.

The libraries of today not only furnish informational services in the traditional form, such as books and periodicals, but now they also offer information in the current formats that compose contemporary media such as DVDs, CDs, tapes, and internet service. People from all walks of life have made use of this valuable public resource for research as well as entertainment. Individual lives, as well as society in general, have become enriched by the availability of library services.

As it is with everything in life, there is a cost for the benefits received from these valuable services. Public libraries are financed by taxes and fees. Without sufficient revenue to finance the cost of staff, utilities, maintenance, buildings, the purchase of resource material, as well as other operational necessities, this public service could not continue to exist. Cities and townships have designated revenues from dedicated millages to finance the cost of establishing and operating library services for their residents.

Blendon Township does not have its own library. The cost to build a library and establish a library service would be very expensive and duplicative; so in 1979, in order to provide the residents of Blendon Township with library services, the Township entered a contract with the City of Hudsonville, the City of Zeeland, and Georgetown Township. The contract split the revenues from the penal fines generated by traffic and ordinance violations in the Township between these three library service providers. This allowed the residents to avail themselves of the

services of the libraries and access to the Lakeland Library System at no cost as individuals or as taxpayers. Now, however, due to decreases in State funding to libraries, it has been determined that to continue operations, services must be reduced or additional revenues must be provided. It has further been determined that services should be eliminated to those users who have not been contributing their proportional share of the cost of these services.

Effective on July 1, 2010, the Blendon Township contract with Hudsonville, Zeeland, and Georgetown will be terminated. A new contract is being proposed that will allow Blendon residents the use of a library of their choosing (either Hudsonville or Zeeland) but they will not have access to the Lakeland Library system. This will limit Blendon Township residents to only the resources of the particular library that they have chosen and thus significantly curtail the availability of library services to the residents of the Township. The Lakeland Library Service is now offering their services only to communities that are supporting the system by contributing approximately 0.3 mills of revenue. For Blendon Township, this would mean approximately \$62,000 annually or on average about \$25 per household per year.

This issue has generated a significant amount of interest among various residents of the Township and they have petitioned the Board to present this issue to the voters of the Township. The Board, in response to the petitioners, has passed a resolution to place the issue on the August 3, 2010 election ballot. If the voters decide to approve this ballot issue, Blendon Township would then contribute sufficient support to the library system to regain full library services for all of the residents of Blendon Township.

This choice will be presented to the voters of Blendon Township on Election Day, August 3, 2010.

## *The Blendon Township Cemetery*

The Blendon Township Cemetery has developed a reputation as a memorial park that has a tranquil location and an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere. Because of this appeal we continue to sell a large volume of lots to both residents of the Township and nonresidents alike.

As the demand for cemetery space continues to proceed in Blendon Township, expansion of the developed cemetery ground has become a necessity. In order to develop the cemetery in phases, it seems prudent to create a master plan for development. This master plan creates a vision for the final development of the existing cleared space of the cemetery along Tyler Street. This plan will allow development in phases as economic prudence and public demand require. Upon conclusion of the final phase of development, it is expected that the product will be consistent and coherent so that an aesthetically pleasing cemetery and memorial park will be the result. In order to be ready to supply additional cemetery lots in the near future, we expect to commence with the initial phase of the master plan this year. A print demonstrating the master plan for the cemetery is available for viewing by the public at the Township Offices.

## **Ballot Issues**

The Township residents will have several ballot issues to consider at the polls on August 3, 2010. There will be a ballot issue regarding the financing of library services, the financing of public road construction, and to renew and merge the fire millages.

Blendon Township does not have a library and thus receives library services from various communities that levy a millage to finance those services. Until now, Blendon residents have received services without having to share in the true cost of the service. With reduced funding to libraries from the State of Michigan, these libraries have decided that they have no alternative but to withdraw from areas that do not pay the true cost. Residents of the Township have requested a ballot question regarding this issue to be placed on the August 3 primary election ballot.

Blendon Township has 54 miles of unpaved roads and rapidly deteriorating subdivision roads. The cost of reconstructing and paving an existing gravel road averages between \$300,000 and \$500,000 per mile. The cost of resurfacing an existing paved surface subdivision street is approximately \$50 per linear foot. The current cost to resurface all the existing subdivision streets will exceed \$1,100,000. Residents have petitioned the Board to place a ballot issue before the voters on August 3, 2010 for the purposes of proposing a millage of 1.5 mills. This millage would raise approximately \$310,500 per year. The funds raised by this millage would be used exclusively for the construction and maintenance of public roads and subdivision streets in the Township.

The Blendon Township Fire Department and Emergency Services is financed by 0.4885 of a mill for operational expenses and 0.9771 a mill for the acquisition of equipment and other capital improvements. The millages are collected in the winter of each year but operational expenses occur throughout the year and this creates a cash flow problem for the operational side of the department. There is usually a cash shortage in the autumn of the year prior to the date when the winter taxes are collected. While the current language does not allow one fund to borrow cash from the other, this could be resolved by acquiring additional millage for the operational side but it can also be done without raising taxes by merging the two millages. This proposed merger will not affect the funds sequestered in the capital improvements fund and the capital equipment replacement plan will not be affected by this proposed change. The proposal will alleviate cash flow problems in operations, enhance budgeting flexibility and continue efficient operation of the Fire Department and Emergency Services without the need of a tax increase. The proposed renewal millage would be 1.4656 mills which is the sum of the separate, existing millages.

## *Department of the Assessor*

**Melissa Koster, Assessor**

Spring is in the air, and so is the Township Auditor. He's back at it, helping the Township Assessing Department verify the rest of the data on our residential record cards. We are pleased to announce that we are over 86% finished with the data entry of all the residential information into the computer and hoping to close that gap and complete that portion of the project by the end of this year. The remainder of the project includes having our Auditor physically visit the remaining residential parcels which we have not yet been to and to verify the data that we currently have on those cards. This has been a long journey and we are very pleased to be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is our expectation that Blendon Township will be in "substantial compliance" with the requirements of the Michigan State Tax Commission for uniformity and equity upon the completion of this process. Thank you to everyone for their continued cooperation! This gives us the ability to more accurately assess the residential properties in Blendon Township, which creates better uniformity and equity. And, as always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Assessor at 875-7707 ext. 24. My office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm.

# Time for a Change

## Elections and Voting Phil De Lange

Early this year, the Blendon Township Election Commission decided to adjust the precinct boundaries. Because of this change, some of the Township's voters will be asked to vote in a different location in the next elections.

We've had two problems in the past that we've tried to improve with these changes.

- Many voters had to travel several miles to vote, when there was a polling place much closer. For example, a person living in Borculo, south of Port Sheldon, voted in the Town Hall on 72nd Avenue, while someone living near the Town Hall had to vote either in the Borculo Community Center or at the Fire Barn on Tyler Street.
- The precinct that voted at the Fire Barn on Tyler was just too large. Sometimes the crowd was backed up and a person might wait a half hour to cast his vote.

So, we drew up new precinct boundaries that will help to correct these problems. Not every voter will be affected, but many will. Notice the maps of the Township showing the old precinct boundaries and the new. Please look it over to see where you will vote in the coming elections.

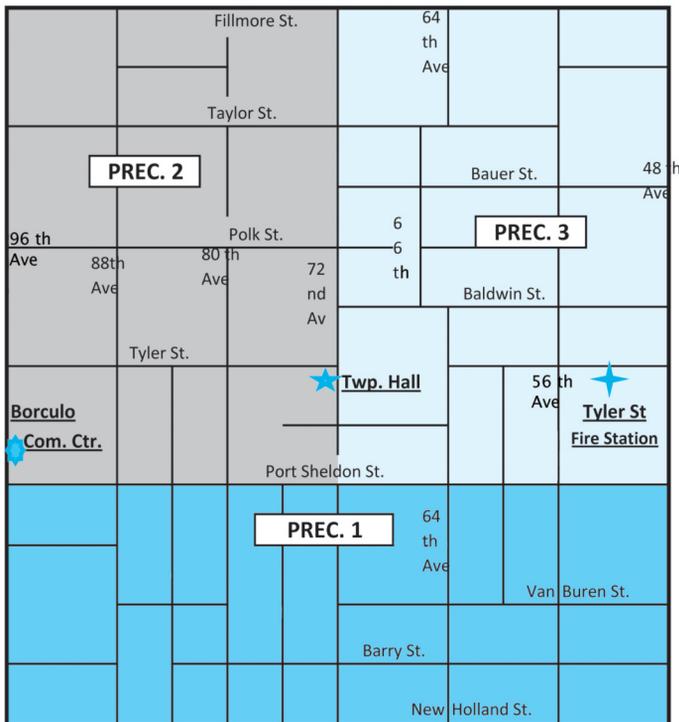
If you have a question about this, please call us or stop in to discuss your concern. We'd appreciate getting errors fixed before the election, rather than have a problem surface on Election Day!

The elections that we ask you to vote in this year are:

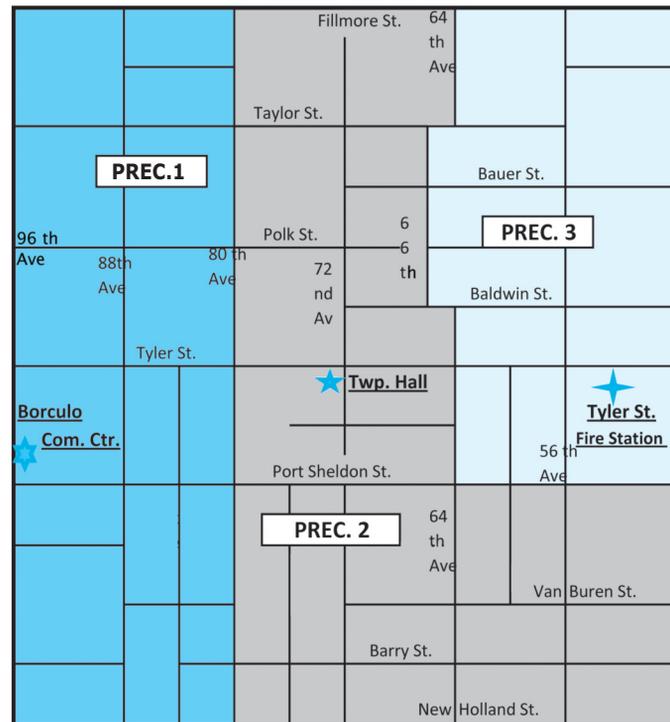
1. Primary Election ..... Tuesday, August 3.
2. General Election ..... Tuesday, November 2.

Hope to see you at this year's elections. Remember, it's a privilege and responsibility to vote.

**OLD PRECINCT MAP**



**NEW PRECINCT MAP**



**Please look over the map on the right. If you live in:**

**Precinct 1 ... you should vote at the Borculo Community Center.**

**Precinct 2 ... you should vote at the Township Hall.**

**Precinct 3 ... you should vote at the Tyler Street Fire Station.**

# Investments of the Township

Don Vander Kuyl, Treasurer

People have asked me if the funds of the Township, which are not being used for current expenditures, are being held securely. The law allows the Township Treasurer to invest in bank certificates of deposit, credit union certificates of deposit, and in agencies of the federal government. We are also allowed to invest in high grade commercial paper. We have always chosen to be very conservative and invest only in certificates of deposit at banks and credit unions.

To assist the local treasurers, the County Treasurer's Office sends out a bank rating report each quarter. I use that information, along with the FDIC web site, to check on the bank's rating before depositing. We currently do not have any money on deposit with any bank that is in the news. Prudence and safety are the main concerns when Township money is invested with a bank.

# Zoning Administration

Jim Scholma

Recently there have been a few complaints about specific signs in the Township and also about sign clutter in general. The Department of Zoning Administration is currently conducting an inventory of signs to determine the location and type of signs currently existing in the Township. The data gathered from this inventory will help us determine whether the complaints are warranted. We encourage you to take a close look at your sign and review the Township regulations regarding signs. If you discover that your sign is a sign that is not conforming to the ordinance, you may be able to make adjustments to bring it into conformity with the Township Zoning Ordinance. You may find that you no longer need the existing sign so you might want to consider removing it. All signs are required to be limited to a maximum size in area and a maximum of height above the ground. Since the year 1982 it has been a requirement in Blendon Township that a sign permit be acquired from the Zoning Administrator prior to placement of a sign. Currently the Zoning Ordinance prohibits all portable signs. The regulations regarding signs can be found in Chapter 10 of the Blendon Township Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance is now available on the Township website at [www.blendontownship-mi.gov](http://www.blendontownship-mi.gov) and the details regarding sign regulations can be found there or you may wish to contact the Zoning Administrator, Jim Scholma at 616 875 7707 ext 25.

# Where is all this tax money going?

Don Vander Kuyl, Treasurer

This is a question I often hear when collecting property taxes. It often seems like we no sooner pay our winter tax bill and then we need to start thinking about our summer tax bill. In just a couple of weeks our summer tax bill will arrive in the mail and we will have until Wednesday, September 15, 2010 to get it paid on time. Although we write our check to Blendon Township for the full amount of the tax bill, in reality, none of the revenue from the summer tax bill goes to the Township treasury. The Township is only a collection agent for the schools, the county, the intermediate school district and the state education tax.

A summer tax bill on a typical residential dwelling in the Zeeland School district of Blendon Township might be \$1600. The revenues collected by Blendon Township will be distributed to Zeeland Public Schools, Zeeland Recreational District, Zeeland Building Site, Zeeland Debt Retirement, State of Michigan Education Tax, Ottawa County and the

Ottawa County Intermediate School District. The same typical residential dwelling might receive a winter tax bill of \$600.00. The revenue received from this bill is distributed to Zeeland Public Schools, Zeeland Recreational District, Zeeland Building Site, Debt Retirement, Ottawa County Parks, Ottawa County 911, Blendon Township operations, Blendon Twp Fire Dept. Operations and Blendon Twp Fire Dept. Equipment Acquisition.

The sum of the summer and winter tax bill for this typical residential dwelling would be \$2,200. This amount would be the total annual property taxes of this typical residential dwelling. Of this total \$2,200, Blendon Township retains approximately \$200.00 for the Township Treasury. Of the \$200 of our total taxes that goes to the Township Treasury, approximately \$120 goes to the Blendon Township Fire Department and Emergency Services and approximately \$80 goes to the general operations of the Township.

# 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 1854.

The said Board of Health met on the third day of June and selected a place for a burying ground on the northwest corner of the N.E. ¼ of section 24. The said burying to be twenty rods east and west, by sixteen rods north and south. Albert H. Vredenburg and William G. Woodruff were appointed a committee to procure a title for the land.

July 29, 1854 The Board of Health met according to notice on the 29th day of July, 1854, for the purpose of letting a job of chopping one acre of timber on the burying ground to commence from the center of the road, all to be cut down and chopped up fit for logging. The brush to all be cut and piled in good style, to be finished in two weeks from this date. Bid off to Benjamin A. Avink for nine dollars. Also, one acre to winnow and done in good style chopped from the center of the road, to be done by the first day of September, bid off by Benjamin A. Avink for five dollars. August 10, 1854 No. 1 order given to Benjamin A. Avink , \$14.00.

The Board of Health of the Township of Blendon met at the burying ground in said Township in pursuance to publish notice on the 15th day of May, 1854 at 1:00 p.m. The job of clearing and fencing the burying ground was let to Wilbur C. Scott at \$75.00.