

## SPRING LEAF DROP-OFF

The Spring Yard Waste Collection Program will be from April 14th through May 5th at the drop-off site located behind the DPW Building at 13300 168th Avenue.

The hours of operation are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.; Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.; and Sunday from 12:00 noon until 6:00 p.m.

There is no dumping of wood, limbs or brush allowed.

## WATER QUALITY REPORT

The North Ottawa Water System did not detect any contaminants in 2013 above EPA accepted levels for drinking water. You may view the report and learn more about your drinking water by going to:

<http://www.gh.org/Community/WaterQualityReports/CCR.pdf>

If you want a paper copy of the 2013 Annual Drinking Water Report mailed to your home, please call 842-5988.



## FIRE/RESCUE ASSESSMENT

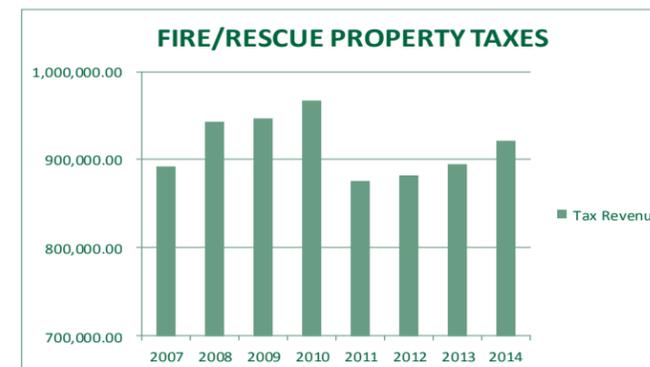
Since the early 1990's, Grand Haven Township has stressed that "**growth does not pay for itself**".

Your municipal and school taxes are higher today than thirty years ago because, in part, of the growth that is still occurring. (*Think about it, "blueberries" require very little in terms of fire protection or K-12 education. But, replace blueberries with people and these costs increase dramatically.*)

One example of a service cost that is increasing because of growth is the Township's Fire/Rescue Department.

Since **1985** (or almost thirty years), Grand Haven Township has charged a 1.5 millage rate to operate the Fire/Rescue Department. During this same period, the Township's population has increased by about 84% and the number of emergency runs has increased by about 794% annually.

However, a more serious issue occurred as a result of the so-called "Great Recession." In brief, property values fell. The property tax monies collected on behalf of the Fire/Rescue Department for 2014 are actually less than what was collected in 2008.



On top of that, because of inflation, these monies used to operate the Fire/Rescue Department are worth about 9% less today than in 2008.

In order to make up these short-falls, the Township's General Fund has been contributing to the Fire/Rescue Department (*i.e., a total of about \$655,000*); the Fire/Rescue Department has drawn down its Rainy Day Fund using about \$243,000; and, the Township charged a one-year equipment millage to collect about \$350,000 to purchase a new fire truck.

All of these were temporary measures as the Township waited for the economy to improve.

In response, the Township Board has recommended approval of a Township-wide assessment equal to 1.86 mills, which is an increase of about 1/3 of a mill. This recommendation was made, in part:

- ◆ Because an assessment will allow the department to have a lower levy (*as compared to a tax millage*) due to the assessment not being captured by any Tax Increment Financing Authority;
- ◆ Because an assessment levy will be about 2% lower than a similar property tax that collects the same amount of money for the Fire/Rescue Department; and,
- ◆ Because an assessment levy is not subject to the Tax Administrative fee, saving residents another 1%.

In addition, the Board agreed to separate the assessment into two categories. About \$1.1 million of the monies collected will fund the day-to-day operations of the department.

But, the remaining \$100,000 of the monies collected each year will be set aside for future capital equipment

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*Clerk Sue Buitenhuis*  
*Treasurer William A. Kieft III*  
*Trustee Laurie Larsen*  
*Trustee Howard Behm*  
*Trustee Mike Hutchins*  
*Trustee Calvin Meeusen*



*We are on the web*  
[www.gh.org](http://www.gh.org) • [info@gh.org](mailto:info@gh.org)

## SMART 911

Residents can now sign up for Smart911 online and provide information about themselves and their homes for 911 dispatchers.

For example, residents can specify whether there are children or pets in the home, allergies, medical conditions, and even where bedrooms in a home are located. In addition, users can specify hidden key locations, emergency contact information or include photos of family members for authorities.

In an emergency, every second counts. Smart911 will reduce response times and improve the communication between 911 dispatchers and callers. All information is kept private and only accessed in the event of an emergency. The service is free.

To get your household information onto the Smart911 database, please register at:

[www.Smart911.com](http://www.Smart911.com)

## COFFEE SHOP MEETING

Appearing at a Township Board meeting can be intimidating ... or perhaps the evening meetings are inconvenient for your schedule.

To provide another option, elected officials will be at the New Creation Coffee Café at 13040 US Highway 31, on Thursday, May 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Please stop by with any questions, concerns, issues or even compliments that you would like to share in an informal environment while enjoying a cup of coffee.

# NEWSLETTER

purchases, such as the replacement of a fire truck or rescue vehicle.



You will be hearing a great deal about this change from a millage rate to an assessment levy over the next few weeks. If you would like to discuss the matter, please feel free to email or phone Chief Tom Gerencer at [tgerencer@ght.org](mailto:tgerencer@ght.org) or (616) 604-6322.

## 7th PRECINCT ADDED

Many voters in the Grand Haven Township received a new voter identification card in the mail during the month of March.

Because some of the Township's precincts were approaching the maximum number of voters allowed by law (*i.e.*, 2,999 voters), the Township's Elections Commission determined it was in the best interest of the voters to add a new precinct and re-draw the precinct boundary lines of four of the existing six precincts in order to meet the future growth needs of the Township, as well as reducing the wait times during elections with large turn-outs.

While many voters will have to change the location of where they vote, the Township believes these changes will ensure better service for the future.

Some of the changes include the following:

- ◆ The polling site for Precinct 3 has been moved from Haven Shores Church back to Lakeshore Baptist Church, located at 13664 Lakeshore Drive, with the entrance from the rear parking lot of the church.
- ◆ The polling site for the new Precinct 7 will be located upstairs at Hope Reformed Church, located at 14932 Mercury Drive. (*The polling sites for Precincts 2 and 4 are also located at Hope Reformed Church.*)

- ◆ The borders of Precincts 1, 5, and 6 have been modified. But, the polling sites for these precincts remain the same.

To view the new Precinct map that contains all seven precincts, please go to:

[http://www.ght.org/OnlineResources/Maps/Precinct\\_Changes.pdf](http://www.ght.org/OnlineResources/Maps/Precinct_Changes.pdf)

You can find information relating to elections at :

[www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos)

Once at this site, click on the "Elections in Michigan" icon, or you can go to:

[www.MiOttawa.org/Departments/Elections/](http://www.MiOttawa.org/Departments/Elections/)

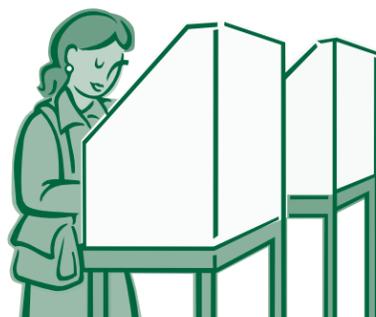
You can also call the Township Clerk's office at (616) 604-6343 or you can email either:

[sbuitenhuis@ght.org](mailto:sbuitenhuis@ght.org)

or

[kdeverney@ght.org](mailto:kdeverney@ght.org)

to have any of your questions answered.



## COST CONTAINMENT

Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) is an accounting concept developed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) that is designed to address future expenses that entities may or may not be legally bound to pay, but pay as a moral obligation of past commitments or "promises" to employees.

For Grand Haven Township, the only OPEB expense is a retiree medical benefits plan that provides health insurance for retirees between the ages of 60 and 65 and a Medicare "filler" insurance program after age 65. This benefit is also provided to employees that become fully disabled.

A private firm completed an actuarial study in 2012 that calculated the present value of the projected benefits associated with this OPEB at about \$1.2 million over 30 years with about \$121K of this liability pre-funded through a Special Revenue Fund.

Although the Township may have a "moral obligation" to current employees to pay for past commitments, there is no obligation to provide OPEB benefits to future employees.

Therefore, to ensure that the existing OPEB costs are not increased due to the hire of new staff, the Township Board eliminated any form of retiree health care for any new, non-union employee hired after March 1, 2014.

## COLLABORATION

In addition to individual cost containment measures, another way to reduce costs and improve efficiencies is to collaborate with other nearby municipalities or school districts. Grand Haven Township already collaborates with other governmental units for services such as municipal water; sanitary sewage treatment; recreation services; Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS); library services; shared emergency response areas; local public transportation; and services for seniors.

In all, there are more than **fifty** collaborative ventures that occur every day in Northwestern Ottawa County.

Some of the most recent examples of collaboration include:

- A joint telephony study with Ottawa County, the area school districts and many local municipalities that may lead to shared telephone services and combined management of portions of Information Technology (IT) services.
- A proposal to expand the area's recreation programs to also include services for culture and arts. (*This is considered to be an important feature to attract business and industry to the area by improving the quality of life.*)
- A joint five-year Recreation Plan by all of the area municipalities, which will lead to lower costs since each community will not have to produce a separate study and better coordination of recreational facilities between the communities.
- A joint Grand Haven City/Township Master Plan update that takes advantage of grant monies to reduce the costs of this state required plan.
- Examining the use of a Local Development Finance Authority to jointly develop industrial land for manufacturers. (*Currently, there is very limited industrial land available for businesses that want to expand or locate in our communities.*)

Bottom line — we do not want our municipal borders to act as barriers for economic development.

## Fast Facts

### During 2013 Grand Haven Township:

- Issued building permits totaling about \$20 million of new construction, including 67 new single family homes; 106 remodels; and, 21 additions.
- Increased the population to about 15,622 residents.
- Resurfaced 4.36 miles of roadways.
- Crack sealed 6.67 miles of roadways.
- Responded to a record high 1,020 emergency calls with about 61% of the calls being for medical and rescue services.
- Delivered 581 million gallons of water and added 76 new users to the water system.
- Collected 103 million gallons of sewage and added 24 new users to the sanitary sewer system.
- Acted upon 231 ordinance violation complaints.
- From December 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014, the Township spent 496 hours plowing the 22 miles of pathway. This is about a 100% increase compared to the same months last year.

## PRIVATE ROADS & DRIVES

Grand Haven Township contains about 139 private streets and roads that total about 27 miles in length.

These private roads are maintained by the adjacent property owners. In addition, many home owners have driveways that are over 200 feet long.

To help ensure the Fire/Rescue Department can respond during emergencies and ensure the safety of residents that live on private roads or long drives, minimal standards have been adopted to ensure these private roads and drives are "**clear and passable**".

One of the most important requirements is trimming trees, brush and low hanging branches. Private roads should be clear of all obstructions within 2 feet of either side of the roadway and to a height of 13 feet.

In an emergency situation, seconds count. Helping the emergency first responders gain quick access to your home can be the difference between life and death.

For example, did you know that a fire can double in size every 30 seconds!