

DATES TO REMEMBER

Drop-off Hours for Yard Waste:

Monday, April 13th through Tuesday, May 5th starting at 8:00 a.m. on weekdays; 10:00 a.m. Saturdays; and, noon on Sundays.

Tea with Township Trustees:

Friday, April 24th from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. at the Lucky Tea Café, 1705 South Beacon Boulevard.

Elections:

A vote on Proposal 1 and the general school elections will be held on Tuesday, May 5th.

Pathway Trimming:

Week of May 4th, staff will be trimming all shrubs, trees, and foliage that are encroaching upon the pathways. All homeowners are encouraged to trim their own plantings prior to the week of May 4th.

If any homeowner is unsure of the amount that needs to be trimmed, please contact Kristi Walsh at 616-604-6325 to schedule an appointment to meet at the property. If trimming is not completed by May 4th, Township employees will begin to perform the trimming to help ensure the safety of pathway users.



SURVEY RESULTS

As you may recall from the Fall newsletter, Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT) has about **26.7 miles** of non-motorized pathways. And, an additional **10 miles** of pathway is being considered through the use of a bond millage that voters would have to approve. (*The new pathway segments currently being planned are listed in the table below.*)

In order to gauge voter support of this proposal, GHT hired Epic-MRA to complete a telephone interview of 300 registered voters. The results of the survey indicated that **64%** of the voters support a 15-year, 0.45 mills pathway millage—which equates to a tax rate of 45 cents for every \$1,000 of taxable value.

As a result of the survey, the Township Board instructed staff to plan on placing this bond millage on a ballot in 2016, which will likely be the Presidential Election in November.

Like any of the Township's property taxes, including the original 0.9 mills to construct the initial 12.3 miles of pathways in 1990 or the 1.7 mills to construct an additional 11 miles of pathway in 1998, this proposed pathway millage will require voter approval.



CREDIT CARDS

One of the Township Board's goals for 2014 was implementing a credit card payment system.

The credit card payment system (*using a firm called "Point and Pay"*) was rolled out in April of 2014. Since that time, a total of 226 residents utilized this option despite the 3% to 6% convenience fee required to offset the credit card company costs associated with providing this service. Actual payments received included the following:

Over-the-counter credit card payments	- \$ 64,102
Phone credit card payments	- \$ 2,047
Online credit card payments	- \$ 50,105
Total	- \$116,254

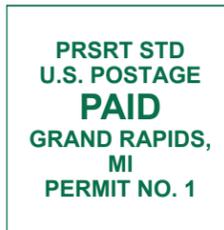
Unlike other communities, GHT does not receive any fees from the credit card program.

Proposed Pathway Segment	Miles	Cost
Lincoln Street (<i>Lakeshore to West of US-31; East of US-31 to 144th and connector to Ferris along East side of US-31 easement</i>)	3.7 Miles	\$1,638,727
144th Avenue (<i>Mercury to Lincoln</i>)	1.4 Miles	\$656,938
Buchanan Street (<i>Lakeshore to US-31</i>)	1.3 Miles	\$610,090
152nd Avenue (<i>Ferris to Lincoln</i>)	0.5 Miles	\$334,765
168th Avenue (<i>Buchanan to Ferris</i>)	1.5 Miles	\$576,177
Groesbeck Street (<i>152nd to West end</i>)	0.8 Miles	\$192,654
Sleeper Street (<i>168th to Hofma Preserve</i>)	0.8 Miles	\$136,885
Total	10 Miles	\$4,146,236

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Clerk Laurie Larsen
Trustee Howard Behm
Trustee Mike Hutchins
Trustee Calvin Meeusen
Trustee Ron Redick



We are on the web
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NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT) Board appointed two new members to fill recent vacancies.

First, the GHT Board unanimously appointed **Laurie Larsen** as the new Township Clerk, who started her new position on January 2nd. The Township Board selected Larsen due to her extensive experience and familiarity with board functions.

Larsen has served on the GHT Board for eight years. Prior to that, she was Chair of the Planning Commission for a decade, and also served as a member of the same.

Larsen has lived in the township since 1974 and works as the Lakeshore Area Manager for Consumers Energy. She holds degrees from Grand Valley State University and Aquinas College.

Larsen serves on a variety of local organizations, including the Board of Directors of Four Points and the Ottawa County Brownfield Authority.

The Township Board also unanimously appointed **Ron Redick**, a longtime member of the Township's Planning Commission, to fill the trustee seat vacated by Larsen after her appointment as Clerk.

Redick has served on the Planning Commission since 2000 and was elected as the chair in 2003.

Redick is a member/attorney with Mika, Meyers, Beckett & Jones PLC in Grand Rapids. He is experienced in municipal law, including zoning and land use planning, elections, the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information Acts, employment issues, utilities, intergovernmental contracts, special assessments, and other local government matters.

The appointed terms of both Clerk Larsen and Trustee Redick will expire in November of 2016.

NEWSLETTER

COST SAVINGS — \$300,000

Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT) had provided a limited amount of retiree health insurance coverage for full-time employees. Specifically, between the ages of 60 and 65, the Township provided health insurance for retirees and a partial Medicare supplement insurance plan, thereafter. However, employees could not qualify for this retirement benefit until after 15 years of service and would not receive the full benefit without a minimum of 30 years of service.

However, because of the changes that are occurring in the health care field and because of the uncertainty related to “valuing” retiree health insurance, the Township Board eliminated this benefit for all full-time, non-union staff. (*Current retirees will continue to receive a Medicare supplement insurance policy and the members of the Fire/Rescue union will also continue to receive this benefit through a collective bargaining agreement.*)

In brief, the Township Board used a “buyout” option to eliminate this post retirement benefit and removed any unfunded accrued liability associated with retiree health insurance.

The cost savings to the Township associated with eliminating retiree health insurance coverage is estimated at about **\$300,000** and would remove the “uncertainty” associated with future health care cost increases.

TOWNSHIP TAX RATE AMONG THE LOWEST

The 2014 Annual Apportionment Report from the Ottawa County Treasurer shows that residents in Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT) continue to enjoy one of the lowest millage rates in West Michigan.

The total average 2014 **Principal Residence Exemption** (PRE) millage for each of the twenty-four (24) communities in Ottawa County is shown on the adjacent table. (*Some communities are covered by more than one school district, which leads to differing property tax rates from one part of that community to another. For these communities, the differing millage rates were averaged and all of the millage rates were rounded to the nearest hundredth.*)

In terms of nearby communities, Spring Lake Village’s PRE tax rate is about 48% higher than GHT’s; Grand Haven City’s PRE tax rate is about 37% higher;

Ferrysburg City’s PRE rate tax rate is about 20% higher; and, Robinson Township’s PRE tax rate is about 3% higher.

GHT continues to be over four mills (*i.e., 4.12 mills*) below the average PRE property tax millage rate for Ottawa County.

COMMUNITY NAME	2014 PRE MILLAGE RATE
Holland City	40.12
Coopersville City	39.18
Spring Lake Village	38.15
Grand Haven City	35.26
Zeeland City	35.15
Hudsonville City	35.11
Ferrysburg City	31.00
Holland Charter Township	30.89
Zeeland Charter Township	30.64
Polkton Charter Township	29.62
Park Township	28.98
Olive Township	28.90
Chester Township	28.85
Allendale Charter Township	28.06
Jamestown Charter Township	26.98
Blendon Township	26.60
Robinson Township	26.54
Wright Township	26.29
Georgetown Charter Township	25.98
Grand Haven Charter Township	25.70
Crockery Township	25.26
Tallmadge Charter Township	24.42
Port Sheldon Township	23.99
Spring Lake Township	23.95
Ottawa County Average	29.82

PLANNING & ZONING

“Community Building” is predicated on the Township Board and Planning Commission collaborating as a team. Working together, GHT has been updating three important plans — the Master Plan, Strategic Plan, and Community Parks and Recreation Plan.

The **Master Plan** is long-range document (*i.e., a 20 year vision, which is required to be reviewed every 5 years*) that guides many policy decisions, and primarily focuses on land use. The current update is known as the Resilient Grand Haven project, which is a joint effort between the City of Grand Haven and Grand Haven Township.

The two municipalities were selected to participate in this grant-funded project to update their respective Master Plans. The plan has a theme of resiliency, which is the capacity to absorb any severe shock — natural or economic — and return to a normal state following the “disaster.” The two municipalities have been meeting at least once per month since April 2014 and expect to complete this Master Plan update by the late summer.

The **Strategic Plan** is a tool used by the Board to link policy goals to performance. This document assists the Township in achieving a high quality of life for residents while ensuring fiscal integrity. The Township updates this plan every three years, and expects to complete this most recent update this fall.

The **Community Parks and Recreation Plan** was a joint effort between five municipalities in Northwest Ottawa County—Grand Haven Township, City of Ferrysburg, City of Grand Haven, Spring Lake Township, and the Village of Spring Lake. This plan is developed in compliance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requirements, which enables each community to be eligible for grant funding to pursue improvements and expansions of parks, recreation, and natural areas. This Plan was accepted by the DNR in March

Both the Strategic and Master Plans include goals to preserve the Township’s natural resources, and Parks and Recreation Plan document provides GHT with tools to accomplish the goal.

Each of these three plans are interconnected and requires the collaboration of several boards, commissions, and committees. The Township Board emphasizes the necessity to maintain open communication during these planning efforts, including the following:

- Members must sit on more than one committee to ensure good communications (*e.g., one Township*

COLLABORATIONS

Grand Haven Charter Township residents comprise a significant percentage of the following collaborative services:

- North Ottawa Recreation Authority (GHT is 1 of 5 members) = 61%
- Loutit District Library (GHT is 1 of 5 members) = 37%
- Chamber Economic Development (GHT is 1 of 5 members) = 30%
- North Ottawa Water System (GHT is 1 of 7 members) = 27%
- Harbor Transit Authority (GHT is 1 of 5 members) = 23%
- North Ottawa Ambulance Authority (GHT is 1 of 7 members) = 18%
- Grand Haven / Spring Lake Sewer Authority (GHT is 1 of 5 members) = 10%

Board member, and one Zoning Board of Appeals member sit on the Planning Commission).

- The Township Board and Planning Commission have scheduled two bi-annual meetings to discuss topics important to the community (*the first of which was held in early February 2015, and the next is scheduled for June 2015*).
- The Township Manager sends a “*Weekly Report*” to all elected officials, commission members, staff, media, and other groups to recap the week’s highlights and share important information and trends impacting the Township.
- Members of the Township Board, Planning Commission, and other Committees are included on different email groups used by staff (*e.g., ZBA memoranda and minutes are always received by the Township Board*).

Communication is the “*make or break*” issue for “Community Building”. Open communication and respectful relationships between the Board and Planning Commission is a vital aspect in protecting our quality of life.

If you would like any information on any of the plans please contact GHT Planner Stacey Fedewa by emailing sfedewa@ght.org or calling 616-604-6326.