

Supervisor Karl French  
 Treasurer William A. Kieft III  
 Clerk Sue Buitenhuis  
 Trustee Laurie Larsen  
 Trustee Thomas Jenkins  
 Trustee Bob Worthington  
 Trustee Maria Veach



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

**FRIENDS OF THE PARKS:**  
 Thursday, April 8th at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room.

**YARD WASTE COLLECTION PROGRAM:**  
 GHT residents may drop off yard waste at 13300 168th Ave from April 16th thru May 2nd. Hours are Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., and Sunday 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.  
No dumping of wood, limbs or brush is allowed.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FORUM:**  
 Tuesday, April 20th at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room.

**SCHOOL ELECTION:**  
 Tuesday, May 4th from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

your family in Grand Haven Charter Township.

Visit [www.spread-the-music.org](http://www.spread-the-music.org) for a full schedule and more information on the Sounds of Summer.

**FRIENDS OF THE PARKS**

GHT owns 440 acres of park lands with facilities ranging from boat launches to soccer fields to floating docks. Moreover, in 2023 the Witteveen Estate will give 115 acres of parks land to the Township.

Residents interested in starting and participating in a local “Friends of the Parks” group to help promote, maintain, and improve the Grand Haven Charter Township Parks are invited to attend an informational start up meeting at the Township offices at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 8th.

The group will work closely with the Township and have fun in the outdoors together while working to improve our parks for everyone’s enjoyment.

If you are interested, but cannot attend the April 8th meeting, please contact Paula Smith at [psmith@specialtyheat.com](mailto:psmith@specialtyheat.com) for more information.

**SHERIFF UPDATES**

- **Safety:** Would you like to attend Boater’s Safety, Hunter’s Safety, or ORV Safety classes? If you would like information about the courses offered, please go to the Ottawa County Sheriff’s website at [www.miottawa.org/CourtsLE/Sheriff/safety.htm](http://www.miottawa.org/CourtsLE/Sheriff/safety.htm).
- **Traffic:** Do you have a speed concern in your neighborhood? Grand Haven Charter Township has a speed trailer available that measures the speed of the vehicles and shows the speed on the sign. This is used to raise awareness in our community. Call Shelly at 842-5988 to schedule the trailer in your neighborhood.
- **Drug and Alcohol Test Kits:** Are you concerned about substance abuse in your home? Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD) offers a comprehensive program that empowers parents to keep their children drug-free by offering information and convenient, affordable drug and alcohol tests. These tests produce immediate results in the privacy of the home. In the event of a positive result, LEAD directs them to appropriate community resources. Tests can be purchased at the Township offices during normal business hours.
- **Neighborhood Watch:** To begin a program that assists law enforcement by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in your neighborhood, contact Deputy Smith at 888-731-1001 ext.1646.

**2010 CENSUS**

The United States Constitution requires a national census once every ten years, which is a count of everyone residing in the United States.

The census will happen on April 1st. Questionnaire responses should represent your household as it exists on this day. With only ten questions, the 2010 Census questionnaire is one of the shortest in history and will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

For Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT), this decennial census will be the single most important event that happens this year. That is because the census is the basis of all state revenue sharing payments received by the Township. State revenue sharing payments are the single largest source of income for the Township’s General Fund, producing even more revenues than the Township’s 1 mill general operating levy.

Inside this Issue:	
Census	1
No Spring Clean-up	1
Precincts Combined	2
Money Talk	2
Fast Facts	3
Summer Concert Series	3
Dates to Remember	4
Friends of the Parks	4
Sheriff Updates	4

Although the population of GHT has grown to somewhere near 15,000, without your help we will not know the exact number. For every person that is not counted, GHT will lose about \$720 in state revenue sharing over the

next ten years — monies that could be used to maintain our community’s streets, storm sewers, parks, bike paths and cemeteries.

During the 2000 Census, GHT had an 86% participation rate, which was well above the 72% national average. But, even with home visits, it is likely that some residents were missed.

Please take the time to spread the news about the census and take the time to make sure your household is counted.

**The 2010 Census: It's in our Hands.**

**NO SPRING CLEAN-UP**

All of us have complained about Federal government programs or subsidies that continue well-beyond their usefulness. However, this type of inertia can also occur at the local level.

During the days when residents burned their trash in their backyards or took their trash to the Township dump, the Township began a Spring Clean-up program, which was often referred to as “Dump Day”.

This service was started to ensure that residents had an easy way to dispose of their junk and debris so that the

*Continued on page 2*

**NEWSLETTER**

trash wouldn't end up along the side of some rural gravel road.

However, things have changed dramatically in the Township. There are now three licensed waste haulers competing in GHT for your business. And, each of these businesses will remove large items or piles of scrap for a small additional fee.

In addition, most people have become more environmentally sensitive and few would even consider dumping their trash and rubbish in some rural area.

Because it is no longer necessary for the taxpayers of the Township to fund a program that served less than 300 people each year, the Board agreed to discontinue the program for 2010.

This simple change will save the Township about \$6,830 annually.

## PRECINCTS COMBINED

The Township Board approved combining the voting precincts at the Lakeshore Baptist site (*i.e.*, Precincts 3 and 5) and the Hope Reformed site (*i.e.*, Precincts 2 and 4) for the May school election.

What this means is that for the May school election these sites will each have only one polling place. (*This will not change where any resident will go to vote. It simply means that there will only be one ballot machine in each of the locations rather than two.*)

Because the May school election typically has a very low voter turn-out and because combining these precincts will reduce labor costs by 33% (*saving the Grand Haven Area Public Schools about \$1,800*), these precincts were combined.

This change will only be in effect for the 2010 May school election.

## MONEY TALK

Although West Michigan had some years of positive growth, Michigan as a whole never recovered from the 2002 recession. There are estimates that the State of Michigan will not recover from the current economic problems until 2021 ... over a decade in the future. (*"Recovery" means a return to the pre-recession levels of employment and investment.*)

It is likely that West Michigan will recover much sooner (*perhaps as early as 2013*). But unlike past recessions with strong recoveries, this latest recession is expected to have some lingering and long-term consequences for local governments.

For example, Grand Haven Charter Township is the "Biggest Loser" in Ottawa County – the community with the sharpest decline in property values in 2010.

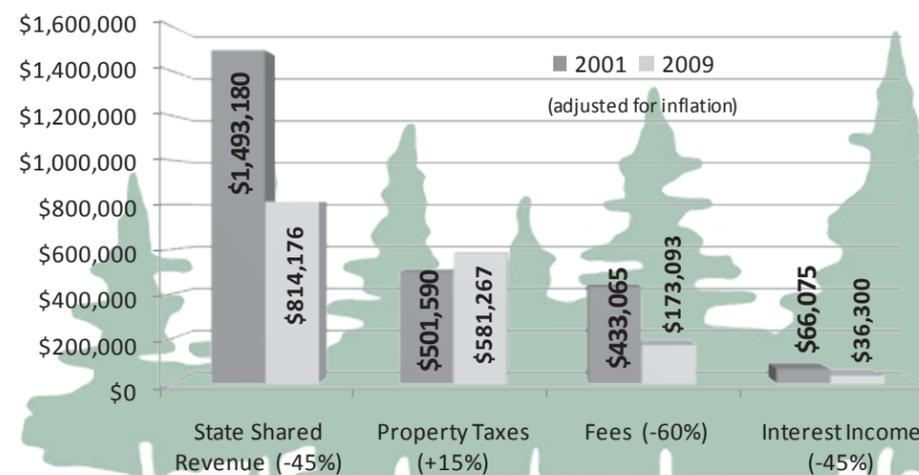
*The economic tsunami that led to double digit declines in property value on the East Side of Michigan has finally reached our shores.*

The economic tsunami that led to double digit declines in property value on the East Side of Michigan beginning in 2007 has finally reached our shores. For the first time, property values in GHT have declined.

The State Equalized Value (SEV) is expected to plummet by about 12.7% while the all-important Taxable Value (TV) will fall about 9.5%. This translates into a \$101 million drop in SEV and a \$67 million drop in TV.

Unfortunately, this will erode the last stable revenue

**Decline in Major Sources of GF Revenue 2001 vs. 2009**



source for the Township's all-important General Fund — property taxes. Property tax revenues are expected to fall by about 10% between 2010 and 2011.

Fortunately, GHT was prepared for this recession. With strong cash reserves or "rainy day" funds, the impact of this recession has been mitigated. Yet, the severity of the recession was not foreseen.

Further, over the past two years, the Township Board has implemented a series of cost savings and budget cuts that have reduced expenditures in the following areas:

- Board Costs - \$ 25,180
- Administrative Costs - \$ 19,240
- Assessing & Accounting Costs - \$ 91,000
- Community Development Costs - \$ 19,310
- Fire/Rescue Costs - \$145,530
- Information Technology Costs - \$ 33,245
- Public Works Costs - \$ 78,525
- Health Care (2011 through 2013) - \$159,000

Yet, much of these savings were directed for other essential services — such as a two-year gravel road maintenance program costing about \$236,675.

In addition, the Township has eliminated or deferred certain equipment and capital costs (*i.e.*, projects that exceed \$10,000), such as subdivision resurfacing, vehicle replacements and some bike path maintenance. These savings will exceed \$350,000 for 2010.

However, these expenditures can only be deferred for a short time and will have to eventually be faced. (*The Township could decide to allow roads, bike paths, and storm sewers to deteriorate and eventually become inferior. This "saves" money in the short-term; but makes the eventual "fix" more expensive in the long-term.*)

Fortunately, not all the news is negative. First, the magazine *U.S. News and World Report* rated the Grand Haven High School as one of "America's Best High Schools".

Second, the *USA Today* newspaper ranked the Holland/Grand Haven region second (2nd) among 162 communities in

## FAST FACTS :

- Manufacturing, Agriculture and Tourism are all "wealth creating businesses". In other words, these businesses bring "new" money into our community.
- Manufacturing accounts for about 29% of the jobs in the Holland/Grand Haven region. (*This is more than 30,000 jobs.*) In comparison, only 14% of the jobs in the nation are provided by manufacturing.
- Tourism attracts more than \$50 million each year to the greater Grand Haven area.
- Ottawa County is ranked 2nd in Michigan and 98th in the United States in the total value of agricultural production.
- Of these three types of "wealth creating businesses", manufacturing is the most important for this region and attracts the most money to our community.

a city-by-city look at how Americans feel about their jobs, their health, their lives and their future.

Third, *Site Selection* magazine rated the Holland/Grand Haven region fifth (5th) in the nation for metropolitan areas with populations of 200,000 to 1 million. This area had 27 new businesses or expansions that created 50 or more jobs each.

And finally, the residents of GHT continue to enjoy the second (2nd) lowest total residential millage rate of the twenty-four municipalities in Ottawa County — that being about 23.22 mills. (*The lowest average residential millage rate is Port Sheldon Township at about 22.55 mills, the highest is the City of Coopersville at about 39.02 mills and the average residential millage rate is about 28.82 mills — which is about 5.6 mills higher than GHT.*)

## SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

Spread the Music Foundation will be hosting the "Sounds of Summer" music series at Pottawattomie Park. Free concerts will take place every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. beginning June 16th and continuing through August 4th.

Music selection will differ from week to week. Family friendly activities will also be a part of this new event, so bring your lawn chair and enjoy an evening out with

*Continued on page 4*