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UTILITY BUDGET PLAN

In order to allow residents to have greater certainty with regard to their quarterly water bills, the Township will begin to offer Budget Billing for all water/sewer bills beginning in January 2012. Budget Billing is designed to eliminate the highs and lows in your utility bills, so your bill remains the same from quarter to quarter.

If you would like to sign up for budget billing, please call Kristi Walsh at (616) 604-6325 or email your request to kw Walsh@gh.t.org and an agreement will be sent to you.

create a path to future prosperity. Developing and supporting an economic development plan for the next 20 years will take the support of both the public and private sector.

Planning Commissions and elected officials will need to come to the table, working as a region to determine where to site new manufacturing.

An observation recently shared at the Chamber's Economic Development Action Team was "if we do not continually seek new business we will lose jobs, our standard of living will decrease, and our community will suffer in many ways". As residents of Grand Haven Charter Township and Northwest Ottawa County, we all have an obligation to plan for our economic future.

We all share a fantastic community to live, but we need to protect our place by ensuring there are well-paying jobs in the future.

HARBOR TRANSIT

The Harbor Transit service area will expand to include all of Grand Haven Township, Grand Haven, Spring Lake Village and Ferrysburg on January 1st.

Within Grand Haven Charter Township, 0.6 mills of the 0.95 Transportation millage will be used to support this new service during its first year of operation. *(The remaining portion of the millage will supplement the Township's road maintenance program.)* It is expected that the millage rate needed for Harbor Transit will drop to 0.53 mills in 2013.

To utilize public transportation services through Harbor Transit simply call 842-3200 at least 30 minutes in advance of pickup at your chosen location. If you need the assistance of the power lift or ramp, please indicate to the Customer Service Representative that you will need aid when you schedule your pick-up.

It is recommended if you have an appointment, to call for a pick-up one hour prior to the scheduled time to help ensure that Harbor Transit brings you to your appointment on time.

And finally, for those residents that spend a great deal of time on bikes, Harbor Transit vehicles are equipped with bike carriers to assist you.



PATHWAY SNOW PLOWING

Beginning this winter, Grand Haven Charter Township (GHT) will begin a program to remove snow from the Township's 22+ miles of non-motorized pathways.

The Board decided to provide this service because of improved safety for pedestrians, especially children and young adults going to and from the high school and elementary schools. The Board also believes that this service will benefit the community as a whole because the pathways will be available for all twelve months for those who want to exercise or simply walk.

Although the pathway is eight feet across, the Township will only clear a five foot width. In general, snow plowing will begin whenever three or more

inches of snow accumulate, using either a "v-plow" or a snow blower for deeper snowfalls.

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For residents with homes abutting the pathway, this will mean that they will have to contend with the "throw" from both the Road Commission snowplows clearing the streets and the Township equipment clearing the pathways.

Also, it will mean that the Township will strictly enforce the

prohibition against storing any snow on the pathway. Therefore, if you have your driveway plowed, ensure that the driver does not store or pile the snow on the pathway.

Although GHT staff have spent many hours with other communities or organizations that "plow" their pathways, including Holland Charter Township, Park Township and Hope College, the Township understands that this type of change will produce some unintended consequences and controversy. As a result, staff will closely monitor any complaints or suggestions from residents and modify the snow removal procedures, as necessary.

Let us know how we are doing with the snow removal on the pathway by either calling 842-5988 and leaving a message or emailing bikepaths@gh.t.org.

CENSUS DATA

The U.S. Census Bureau's latest report on local government public employment reveals that Michigan is providing local government services through one of the most efficient systems in the nation.

According to the Census Bureau's Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll, Michigan has 120,500 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees providing services at the county and local level – equaling 12.2 FTEs per 1,000 residents. The national average is 16.4 local government employees per 1,000 residents.

Michigan ranks a startling 43rd in the nation in the number of local government employees on a per capita basis.

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NEWSLETTER

And, in case you were wondering, Grand Haven Charter Township (population 15,230) has 27 full-time employees, 28 part-time employees (the majority of which are Fire/Rescue personnel) and 4 seasonal staff.

CREDIT RATING

A credit rating from Standard & Poor's is an opinion on the general creditworthiness of a government or corporation.

Recently, Standard & Poors completed its surveillance of Grand Haven Charter Township and affirmed the Township's "AA Stable" credit rating. This is the second highest rating that the agency provides.

The report from Standard and Poors noted the following items about Grand Haven Charter Township in providing the "AA Stable" rating:

- Low debt burden
- Strong cash reserves
- Strong income levels and market values
- Access to employment opportunities

Standard and Poors affirmed the Township's "AA Stable" credit rating

To place this in perspective, GHT maintained its credit rating during a severe recession when a large percentage of municipalities, including the United States, experienced downgrades.

HEALTH INSURANCE

You may have read about a recent legislation approved at the state level that caps health care costs for public employees at \$15,000 for family coverage, \$11,000 for couples coverage and \$5,500 for single coverage.

This Act will require any local unit who receives

Statutory Revenue Sharing, renamed the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) to comply or take a 10% penalty to their EVIP. However, because GHT does not receive EVIP, there will be nothing to penalize if the Township did not comply with the Act.

Regardless, the Township has reviewed its health care spending in view of the limits that the State of Michigan is seeking to enforce to determine if GHT currently complies. A review using current health premium costs and contributions to HSA accounts shows that the maximum GHT would be able to contribute without penalty is \$266,500. For the current fiscal year, GHT contributes about \$231,550, which is **\$34,950 below the cap** (or about 13.1% below the cap).

In addition, GHT is just about to enter the second year of a three-year plan designed to further control costs of employee health insurance and require employee contributions toward premium costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development is building up the capacity of a local area to enhance its trade and industry and improve the quality of life for all its residents. Simply put, this means job creation and retention.

GHT funds the process of local economic development collaboratively with the other local governments and the business members from the Chamber of Commerce. Together we work to grow a healthy and sustainable local economy ... not only for today but for future generations.

This team approach, which is led by the Chamber of Commerce, has primarily focused on the concept of "Economic Gardening", which is growing and nurturing local businesses and entrepreneurs and making sure that they have the necessary tools to be successful and removing barriers to help them create jobs and tax base in our community.

We are very fortunate that we have a diverse economic mix of year round, family sustaining jobs. According to 2009 data from the State of Michigan, 19% of individuals were employed in the manufacturing sector, 19% in transportation and utilities, 14% in professional and business services, 14% in education and health services, 9% in leisure and hospitality and 16% in other services, which includes retail.

However, our strategic plan for the future focuses not only on economic gardening, but also looks to accommodate the growth that comes from both being successful and from the targeted recruitment of new business and manufacturing to our area.

Our efforts for the past ten years have been primarily focused on local companies that provide "base jobs" for the region and substantial tax base to local units of government. (*"Base Jobs" are supported predominantly by sales to out-of-area customers, which bring new dollars and wealth into our community.*)



The Chamber of Commerce continues to work with local manufacturers assisting them with tax abatement applications, job training grants, training programs for their employees, and infrastructure grants.

With the downturn in the national economy, the strategy has proved

to be effective and we have seen growth over the last ten years of many of our manufacturers. The entrepreneurial attitude, strong work ethic, and strategic management principals have helped West Michigan business survive very challenging economic times.

Our region of Northwest Ottawa County is now at a crossroad when it comes to our ability to attract new business, including manufacturing. As our current manufacturers and businesses grow, where can they expand and stay in our community? Does Northwest Ottawa County have available sites or business parks in excess of 20 acres that are zoned to support manufacturing, research or knowledge based companies that have utilities (e.g., sewer, water, electric, phone, internet), and roads? How do we come together as a community and plan for the future jobs and tax base that will continue to support the quality of life we have all come to enjoy and want to protect?

It will be critically important to answer these questions if we want to create jobs and increase family income.

SNOW PLOWING

The Ottawa County Road Commission will plow streets whenever snow accumulates more than three (3) inches.

Further, the priority for winter maintenance is as follows:

- 1 – State Highways
- 2 – Multi-lane Primary Roads
- 3 – Primary Roads
- 4 – Local Paved Roads
- 5 – Subdivision Streets
- 6 – Local Gravel Roads
- 7 – Dead End Streets and Cul-de-sacs

When a company is looking to locate in our community, or even expand to a new site, waiting for the planning and construction of a new industrial site means they will likely move on to another community that is prepared to meet their needs. And, that means a loss of jobs.

Montgomery Consulting publishes an annual Michigan Multipliers report to help us understand the spin-off effect of new jobs. According to this report, the multiplier for Ottawa County is 2.54. Hypothetically, if 100 new direct base jobs were added to our local economy, the spin-off jobs would total 154 for a total of 254 new jobs. Recently in Crain's Detroit Business, the Center for Automotive Research estimated for each new job hired by automakers, seven other jobs are created either by suppliers or because of added income.

Either formula shows the importance of job creation through the "spin off" jobs, new income and added tax base.

Throughout our community's history there has been a progression of the types of businesses that have provided jobs in Northwest Ottawa County. Many have come and gone throughout our 150+ years, but our entrepreneurial spirit has always created new industries to drive our economy.

But times and the economy have changed. Community leadership is absolutely critical today to