



GRAND HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP

HARBOR TRANSIT

Over a decade ago, the Township Board worked with a consultant and unanimously concluded that it was not the right time to join Harbor Transit.

That same consulting firm completed a new study in 2010 and, as a result, the Township Board unanimously recommended that the Township join the other area communities and form a new authority that would bring Harbor Transit into our entire community.

The question is what has changed over the past 10 years that led the Board to propose the expansion of Harbor Transit? In brief, the elected officials noted the following when making their decision:

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First, because the Township changed. Grand Haven Township now has the largest population (*about 30% larger than the city*); the largest tax base; and covers the largest area in this region. A significant portion of that population (54%) believes it will use Harbor Transit if it is expanded into the Township.

Second, because Township residents are now the largest users of many of the services

found in the city. They are the largest users of the library, the area wide recreation authority, the school district, many of the health care organizations, and the Council on Aging. However, for many residents, it is problematic getting to these services.

Third, because the Township is now a destination for many of the residents of Grand Haven, Ferrysburg, and Spring Lake. Whether we are talking about big box stores, the high school, new health care facilities, or industrial plants, the Township can no longer be viewed as only a “*bedroom community*”. City and Village residents consistently request Harbor Transit service to Township businesses, which has important economic growth implications for this region.

Fourth, because even with the proposed property tax, Grand Haven Township will still have a total millage rate that is about 4.3 mills below the average of the 24 communities in Ottawa County. The Township’s millage is the lowest among the charter Townships.

In fact, even if the cost for Police Services are included, the Township’s total tax rate has fallen from 3.7605 mills in 2006 to the current 3.2367 mills, a **13.9% decline over the past five years.**

Fifth, because Michigan is encouraging local units to collaborate and cooperate. This new cooperative agreement for Harbor Transit will further connect the Township to its neighbors. If the Township joins Harbor Transit now, we will have an equal voice in its operations, and will utilize the same millage rate as the other communities. (*All of the other communities have already agreed to the Authority and approved their respective millage proposals.*)

And finally, because Baby Boomers have aged, fuel

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NEWSLETTER

prices continue to rise, and an increasing percentage of the elderly, students, and disabled need this transit option. All projections indicate that the need for transit services will continue to increase over the next decade.

Bottom line – The Township continues to receive calls from Township residents that need to get into Grand Haven, Ferrysburg or Spring Lake and from their residents that want to get to a business or service in the Township.

The Township believes that now is the time **to ask residents if they favor cooperation** with our neighbors and to regionalize Harbor Transit.

STREETS AND ROADS

All roads may no longer lead to Rome, but they certainly seem to lead to the Township offices when residents are unhappy with their streets.

Road maintenance and improvement is one of the most expensive services demanded by Township residents. The average costs for basic maintenance include:

- Resurfacing local roads = \$150,000 per mile
- Re-graveling unpaved roads = \$40,000 per mile
- Dust control of gravel roads = \$1,600 per mile

Unfortunately, the Township has no direct authority over the roads. Rather, the Township plays a support role to the Ottawa County Road Commission (OCRC).

The problem is simple to explain, but difficult to solve. The OCRC has the legal authority to maintain all of the public roads within the Township. However, the OCRC's source of operating revenue is through Public Act 51 – the gas and weight taxes collected by the State of Michigan and distributed based upon a complicated formula.

Because these gas and weight taxes are insufficient to maintain the roads within the 17 townships in Ottawa County, each township must either supplement the monies from the Road Commission or allow their streets to deteriorate. *(The same is true for every city and village within the State that must also supplement the Act 51 monies for their streets and roads.)*

For Grand Haven Charter Township, this specifically means the following maintenance activities must either

be funded by the Township or deferred:

- Resurfacing of local and neighborhood streets;
- Crack sealing of local and neighborhood streets;
- Dust control and stabilization of gravel roads; and,
- Re-graveling of unpaved roads.

These four items cover about 60 miles of the 106 miles of public streets and roads within the Township.

Prior to 2009, the Township was able to pay for these costs through the General Fund and supplemented road maintenance activities with between \$293,000 and \$459,000 annually.

Unfortunately, property tax revenues declined by 10% during 2010 and the State has cut our annual Revenue Sharing payments by over \$413,000 when compared to 2001. *(More, if you account for inflation.)*

The result is that the Township can no longer afford to meet all of these necessary street maintenance obligations and discontinued road resurfacing in 2009.

Deferring maintenance for the short-term is a “good strategy”, **if** revenues are expected to return.

However, long-term deferring of street maintenance is a **risky** plan because the cost of repairs increases dramatically over time. And, the number of streets and roads needing repairs continues to grow.

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dramatically over time.***

For example, if resurfacing a neighborhood road is deferred too long, that road will have to be “milled” to the base and an entirely new surface constructed. This increases costs by about 30%.

The federal government will not “bail out” the Township, the State of Michigan will not increase gas and weight taxes, and the Road Commission does not have sufficient monies to maintain all of the streets and

roads within the Township.

Bottom line – If the Township’s neighborhood streets and gravel roads are to be properly maintained, Township residents will have to help fund the costs.



MILLAGE REQUEST

The Township Board scheduled an election for Tuesday, May 3rd to request a 0.95 (*or 95 cents per \$1,000 of taxable value*) for the Township’s transportation system.

This millage will raise about \$605,200 annually. Approximately \$295,000 of the total will be used for Harbor Transit; about \$258,200 will be used to maintain neighborhood streets and gravel roads; and, the remaining \$52,000 will be used for local streets in commercial and industrial areas.

The Board proposed a single millage for **all** of the Township’s transportation needs because they view the different components (*i.e., Harbor Transit, neighborhood streets, gravel roads, safety enhancements, etc.*) as part of a single, integrated system.

Although taking a “smorgasbord” approach would maximize voter choice, the Board believes that **Township residents should win or lose as a “team”** rather than having—for example—people on paved streets “win” while those on gravel streets “lose” or having residents who need Harbor Transit “win” while those who need their street repaired “lose”.

The Township encourages you to take the time to vote on May 3rd and make your opinion count.

SNOW REMOVAL—PATHS

The Township Board is considering requests to remove snow from the Township’s 22 miles of pathways, starting next winter.

Although many Townships—such as Park Township and Holland Charter Township—remove snow from their pathways, Grand Haven Township does not keep the pathways clear each winter.

Residents have requested snow removal along the pathways in order to provide a safe travel option for school children and to allow for pedestrians, runners and others to be able to use the pathways during the winter months.

The estimated cost of pathway snow removal includes a capital purchase of \$75,000 for the snow removal equipment and additional operating costs of about \$10,000 annually.

In order to gauge the public support for this new service, a brief survey has been placed on the Township’s web site—www.gh.org/snowremoval



Please take a moment to visit the web site and voice your opinion.

CRACK SEALING FOR 2011

Water is the most destructive element to our streets. If it rained and snowed everywhere except on our roads 90 percent of street maintenance would be eliminated.

Since no law will prevent rain or snow from falling on streets, we need to prevent water intrusion into our pavements. Filling or sealing pavement cracks to prevent water from entering the base and sub-base will extend the pavement life by three to five years.

In addition, because crack sealing is much less expensive than re-surfacing the entire street, crack sealing needs to become another “tool” for the Township’s road maintenance program.

The Township will spend \$137,275 for crack sealing during 2011. This is the first time that the Township is funding this maintenance technique.

The roads scheduled for crack sealing include the following four groupings:

Group A

- Brucker Street
- Greenleaf Lane
- Finch Lane
- Juniper Hills Court
- Ronny Road
- 178th Avenue
- Redbird Lane
- Garnsey Avenue
- Robinwood Court

Group B

- Reenders Court
- Maplewood Street
- Merrywood Lane
- Pine Ridge Road
- Widgeon Road
- Terrence Road
- Deremo Avenue
- 154th Avenue
- Beechnut Court
- Charles Court
- 177th Avenue
- Pepperidge Avenue
- Beech Hill Drive
- Woodside Trail
- Channel Road
- Kevin Street
- Harry Street
- Bittersweet Drive
- Deercreek Drive

Group C

- Tamarack Lane
- Oakhill Court
- Fairmont Court
- Sikkema Drive
- Oak Grove Road
- Shore Acres Road
- Comstock Street
- Hillandale Lane
- Whippoorwill Drive
- Birdsong Lane

- Riverside Trail
- Bignell Drive
- Meadowbrook Lane
- Angelus Circle
- 148th Avenue
- Ammeraal Avenue
- O’Brien Court
- Sharon Avenue

Group D

- Cutter Park Subdivision Streets
- Forest Park Subdivision Streets
- Forest Park East Subdivision Streets

SILENT OBSERVER

Silent Observer is a program for anonymously reporting tips on crimes. Silent Observer programs are a valuable tool in solving crimes in Ottawa County.

The citizens of Ottawa County are served by 3 Silent Observer organizations across the County: Northwest Ottawa Silent Observer, Holland Silent Observer, and Eastern Ottawa Silent Observer. Each of the 3 Silent Observer organizations has a governing board for administration of the individual programs.



However, the three (3) Silent Observer Boards are cooperating with a new county-wide 24/7 Silent Observer number — 1-877-88-SILENT.

Tipsters can submit information through the Internet at www.mosotips.com or may text their tip to "OCMTIP plus your tip" to 274637 (CRIMES).

Any tip will be handled confidentially, and will be interactive with law enforcement. These tips are completely anonymous, and double encrypted, so the identity of the tipster is protected.

FRIENDS OF TRANSIT

If you support public transit and the benefits it offers a community, then you may want to join the Lakeshore Friends of Transit (LFOT).

LFOT provides advocacy for preserving and improving public transportation to serve the needs of the lakeshore communities. It supports Harbor Transit as well as Allegan Transportation and Macatawa Area Express in Holland.



If you want to be kept informed of public transit issues (*even if you don't use it personally*), visit LFOT's website at:

www.transitmeansmore.org

The Facebook page for Lakeshore Friends of Transit, can be found at:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Lakeshore-Friends-of-Transit/152809581419044>

COMMUNITY ALERT

“Community Alert” is a means by which members of any community in Ottawa County can receive information about incidents or events that may impact their respective community. Whether the information includes details about an emergency notification of an event taking place or general information about specific local crime trends, we believe the information will be very helpful to our citizens.

Residents can sign up to receive the “Community Alert” messages by simply going to www.miottawa.org and selecting the “Community Alert” link to register

2010 FAST FACTS

- The Township’s Taxable Value fell by 9.5%, dropping from \$706 million to \$639 million
- The Township’s millage rate has fallen from 3.7605 mills in 2006 to the current 3.2367 mills, a 13.9% decline over the past five years.
- To reduce costs, the Township moved from a traditional HMO to a Health Savings Account HMO. This change is expected to save the Township \$250,000 over the next three years.
- The Township does not provide guaranteed benefit pension plans or defined retirement health care. Rather, like most businesses, the Township uses a defined contribution plan - similar to a 401(k). As a result, the Township does not have problems with so-called “legacy costs”.

for this **free** service.

Registrants are able to select the specific Ottawa County community or communities for which they want to receive the alert messages, and will be able to receive the messages via their e-mail or as a text message on their cell phone (*standard text rates would apply*).

SAFETY TRAINING

The following safety courses are being taught by the Township’s Sheriff deputies or Fire/Rescue staff:

- ◆ Boater Safety April 23rd and/or May 7th from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
- ◆ ATV/ORV Safety May 21st from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
- ◆ Adult & AED CPR May 17th from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Please contact the North Ottawa Recreation Authority at 850-5125 to sign-up for the Boat and ATV/ORV safety classes.

To enroll in the Adult and AED CPR class, please contact the Township offices at 842-5988. Space is limited.

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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.ghet.org • info@ghet.org

DATES TO REMEMBER

- **April 15th through May 1st**
Yard Waste Collection Program
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.
- **May 3rd**
Harbor Transit and Roads Election
- **June 15th to August 3rd—each Wednesday**
Sounds of Summer Concert Series at
Pottawattomie Park 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

BUILDING CODE AUDIT

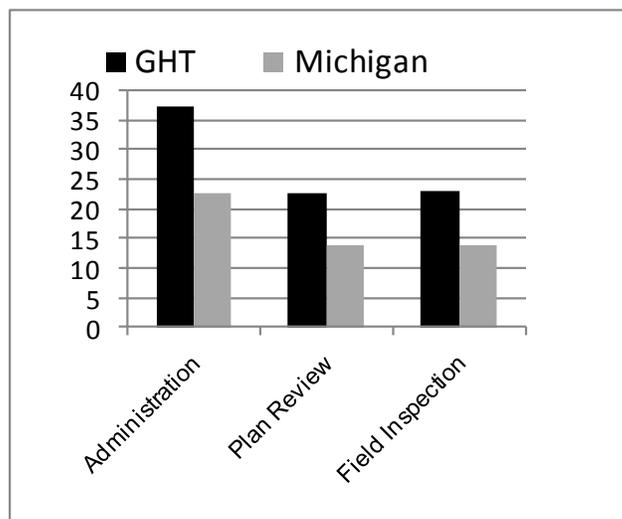
GHT received a 55-page “Building Code Enforcement Evaluation Report” from the Insurance Service Office (ISO). The ISO assesses the building codes in effect in a particular community and how that community enforces its building codes, with special emphasis on mitigation of losses from natural hazards.

The concept is simple: municipalities with well-enforced, up-to-date codes demonstrate safer buildings, better loss experience, and less damage from any emergency event.

In brief, on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the highest, GHT received an overall ISO rating of 3. To place that into perspective, there is not a single community in the entire Mid-West that received an ISO rating of 1.

Further, GHT ranked far above the national average, the state average and the county average. (See the chart below.)

Grand Haven Township vs. Michigan Average Residential Code Enforcement



Moreover, total points that GHT received improved from the last evaluation in 2006, from a three-part score equaling 77.97 to 82.84 on a 100 point scale.

It is also important to note that the State’s new residential building code went into effect on March 9th. These building regulations include a new energy code that is significantly different than the previous code.

Contact the Township’s building department if you plan any construction in order to understand if the new code will impact your project. Permits are required for most work, excluding roofing and siding.