



# **2016 Annual Township Administrative Report**

Charter Township of Comstock  
Kalamazoo County, Michigan

Presented to the Township Board at the February 6, 2017 meeting

# CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMSTOCK

## 2016 ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

The Administrative Team handled many topics throughout 2016 some of which we have highlighted in this report.

### MILLAGES

- Numerous discussions took place through 2016 to increase the millage for road funding as the millage has been the same since **1964**. Options were noted: raising the millage up to 5 mils without a vote (by resolution), raising the millage up to 10 mils with a vote, or an assessment.
- Also discussed MCL 247.640 which allows townships to levy up to 3.000 Mil for roads without a vote. The Board chose this option and approved increasing the millage by 0.8651 to be dedicated for roads for a period of 10 years.
- The Board made a motion to increase the millage by 0.4514 to be ear-marked for street light operations, maintenance and new lights and the existing light special assessment rescinded. The realized millage would increase affects 20% of the residents while the other 80% of the residents realize a reduction from what they currently pay for street light assessments.
- The Board addressed the possibility of a township-wide street light assessment however this could not be done when the Board passed the millage. Therefore, the Township will continue to assess properties that are within 300 feet of a street light.
- Motion to rescind the street light assessment in perpetuity was adopted.
- Board approved the ballot language for a law enforcement millage of up to 1 mil. The millage will allow for 24/7 coverage throughout the Township.
- Truth in Taxation Hearing held regarding Township Boards approval of the levy of an additional 0.8651 mills for Township Operating ear-marked for road improvements and 0.5 mills for the Senior Center as approved by the voters in May, 2016.
- Truth in Taxation Hearing held to raise operating millage by an additional 1.0 mills for police protection as approved by the voters in November, 2016.

### SUPERINTENDENT FORM OF GOVERNANCE

- Reviewed the differences between a Superintendent and a Manager.
- Special meeting held in January, 2016 to discuss the superintendent form of governance.
- Presentations during various Board meetings were provided;

- February, 2016 – Representatives from Texas Charter Township addressed the Board and shared experience with their Superintendent position. Handouts provided regarding Superintendent and/or Manager Form of Governance.
  - March, 2016 - Larry Merrill, Michigan Township Association gave both the Board and Township staff a presentation on the superintendent form of governance.
- Board members reviewed the MTA Publication “Policy Matters” and examples of at least three other jurisdictions currently using a Superintendent. Public participation welcomed.
  - Residency vs non-residency was discussed as an option.
  - Duties of the Superintendent are clearly defined under State law.
  - The Board voted 5-2 to proceed with the superintendent form of governance.
  - Job descriptions created for both Township Superintendent and Township Supervisor.
  - Contract prepared, negotiated and executed with Mr. Scott Hess, first Township Superintendent.

## **SAW GRANT**

- Prein & Newhof, Township Engineering Consultant, has completed its assessment of the sanitary sewer system in the Township.
- A Public Education Plan has been drafted.
- An Infrastructure Committee formed to implement the Public Education Plan. The Infrastructure Committee includes the following:
  - Treasurer Bret Padgett
  - Planning & Zoning Administrator Stefforia
  - Art Bates
  - David Burgess
  - Jeff Balkema
  - Gillian Stoltman
  - 3 additional members (to be appointed)

## **IFT REQUESTS**

- Burchett Tool; Cost of machinery, equipment, furniture and fixtures estimated at \$717,000 and anticipate retaining 2 employees and adding 2 employees as a result.
- TechNiq; Construct a 105,000 square foot facility. Currently have 68 employees and anticipate doubling their staff in the next 2 years. Anticipated opening date is March, 2017.

## **TRANSFER STATION**

- Transfer station sales show that it is only serving a small portion of Township residents.
- Held three roundtable meetings open to the public to talk about issues and concerns with the transfer station and its future.
- Concerns: Increase in fees - last increase was in 2009—renewal fee instituted in 2003; grass and brush previously was \$10/cubic yard but was changed to free and is now a problem; cost of overhead manning the station, changing hours of operation, theft, possible use of a kiosk or machine for financial transactions, Point & Pay.

- Treasurer Padgett recommended changes and noted some possible changes that could be made. The Treasurer is looking into additional options for payment and will present more information in the future.
- Changes adopted effective January 1, 2017 are as follows:
  1. Raised the disposal fee for rubbish to \$20 per cubic yard.
  2. Instituted a disposal fee of \$10 per cubic yard for grass, brush, and leaves.
  3. Raised the charge for a new compactor card to \$20 and the renewal to \$10.
  4. Reduced the days of operation to Thursday and Saturday and no longer open on Tuesday.

## **CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS**

- Water Service Connection Tap Contract Amendment with SWT Excavating approved.
- Mowing Contract with Cutting Edge approved.
- Letter of Understanding approved for independent audit services of Vredeveld Haefner.
- Building sprinkler alarm monitoring approved.
- Contract approved with A+ Carpet Cleaning and Janitorial Services.
- Letter of Engagement with Siegfried Crandall to prepare the Township's Financial Statements.
- Approved Letter of Understanding to engage Siegfried Crandall for 2017.
- Authorized 2016 PAR Projects with the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County.
- Approved contract with Blue Fire Media to rebuild and host the Township's website.
- Approved contract with Asset Protection Specialists to improve door security to secure the front doors should the building need to go into lock down.
- Independent Consultant, Dorothy Steffey-Wagner to update portions of Township Employee Handbook; including time off policy.
- Amended Agreement with the Kalamazoo Area Building Authority due to the split off of Cooper and Oshtemo Townships.
- Contracted Siegfried Crandall to conduct audit of payroll, account classifications and paid time off.
- Two Year Agreement for Curbside Cleanup with Waste Management (1-1-2017 to 12-31-2019).
- Kalamazoo County Household Hazardous Waste Agreement approved for 2017.
- Intergovernmental Hazmat Agreement approved.
- Township Superintendent Employment Agreement approved and the Board waived the residency requirement.
- Michigan MABAS Agreement approved.
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield Silver Plan approved for the higher per person deductible but with the 100% coverage after deductible met.
- Approved letter of understanding to engage Siegfried Crandall for 2017.

## **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK POLICY ADDITIONS AND UPDATES**

- Comstock Fire & Rescue - Secondary Employment Policy.
- Comstock Fire & Rescue - Full Time/On-call-tables.
- Comstock Fire & Rescue – Driver's License Requirements.
- Computer Use Policy (Township).
- Information Technology Management Policy (Township).
- Vehicle Use Requirements Policy (both Fire & Rescue and Township).

- Amended the Vacation Accrual/Paid Time Off Policy.
- Compensatory Time Off Policy written to address the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Alternative Work Schedule Policy; there will be trial periods for all alternative schedules.
- Non Township resident employees approved for use of Transfer Station at resident rate.
- Holiday policy amended.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND HIRINGS**

- Approved job description for Superintendent.
- Approved job description for Township Supervisor.
- Hired full time Assistant Assessor.
- Hired temporary part time Administrative Assistant for elections.
- Hired a seasonal appraiser to assist the assessing department with property assessments.
- Hired first Township Superintendent, Scott Hess.
- Hired a Clerk's Assistant.
- Conducted Fire Chief Evaluation with Board members and fire department via SurveyMonkey®.
- Ordinance Officer's hours increased from 24 to 32 hours from May to November.
- Leave of absence request by Firefighter.
- Two promotions in the Fire & Rescue department.
- Approved salary of Superintendent.
- Wage Increase for Deputy Clerk.
- Approved request to hire seven new firefighters.
- Hired an Election Assistant to assist in with the Primary and Presidential elections.
- Approved change to fire department pay rates.
- Fire Department received approval to hire four full time staff for 2017.

## **GENERAL AND ZONING ORDINANCE**

- Rezoning of land in Section 30 on ML Avenue.
- Various zoning ordinance text amendments adopted.
- General ordinance text amendments; anti-noise and public nuisance adopted.
- General Ordinance text amendment to the Housing Code; to make it easier to prosecute municipal civil infractions adopted. This would also move housing concerns away from the Dangerous Building process to be handled with infractions.
- Collection Boxes Ordinance adopted and established a permit fee for same.
- First reading text amendment for chickens defeated (2 to 5).
- Fireworks Ordinance No. 484 adopted.
- Landscaping ordinance and other zoning ordinance amendments based on recommendation of the PZA as part of the Master Plan.
- Rezone 1402 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street from LM to B-3.

For more detailed information, see the 2016 Comstock Township Planning Commission Annual Report.

## **TOWNSHIP-LIBRARY BUILDING**

- Discussed Township Building Security Issues. Possible security cameras installed at the Township Office, Transfer Station, and Parks.
- Lobby restroom renovated for Handicap accessibility; including special wall covering for easier cleaning and maintenance.
- Sprinkler Alarm Monitoring System approved.
- Parcel file storage upgraded with new movable lateral file system.
- Management software purchase approved (Accela).
- Website upgrade (Blue Fire).
- Improvements for a more camera friendly backdrop behind the Board table in the large board meeting room and lighting improvements.
- Purchased movable bulletin board for displaying maps and similar items.
- Painted Township & Library building lobby.
- Purchased Pictometry “ChangeFinder” software layer for use by Assessing that will compare structural changes from one year’s aerial to another.
- Converted the closet under the stairway to the Board meeting room to place the Public Media Network cameras.
- Approved purchase of a new lawn mower and security cameras for the Township office and three parks.

## **CEMETERIES**

- Trees removed at the Comstock Cemetery.
- Flooding issue dealt with at the Maple Grove Cemetery—MDOT changed the tributary area due to the construction of the ramp/roundabouts. Currently there is more runoff as the vegetation hasn’t had time to grow. This will be monitored to see if there are further issues.

## **COMSTOCK PARKS & RECREATION**

- Received a \$300,000 Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant for Merrill Park. The Grant entails the Township match of \$100,000 (\$60,000 from Parks & Recreation carryover and \$40,000 from the Township). Both the Parks & Recreation Commission and Township Board approved the match funding.
- See the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Annual Report for additional information and activities for 2016.

## **TRAINING-CONTINUING EDUCATION**

- Deputy Treasurer Robinson attended MMTA Basic Institute.
- Treasurer attended MMTA Advanced Institute.
- Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer attended MMTA/APT US&C Joint Conference.
- Assistant Assessor attended class offered by the State Tax Commission.
- Deputy Clerk attended MAMC Master Academy and Annual Conference.
- Planning & Zoning Administrator attended Michigan Economic Developers Association Annual Meeting and the Michigan Association of Planning Annual Conference.

- Fire Chief participated in State-wide committee on fire deaths.
- Assistant Assessor attended Land Valuation and ECF Class.
- Clerk attended MTA Township Governance Workshop.
- Fire Chief attended the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Annual Conference.

## PROPERTY

- Board reviewed township owned properties for possible sale to the public vs retaining. One citizen expressed interest, property on Proctor. A quit claim deed was prepared and the parcel was sold.
- Township approved selling Parcel 3907-15-455-033 to Enviroappraisal.
- Township approved purchasing four properties foreclosed through the County for use by the Comstock Township Parks & Recreation Department. Properties are near South Wenke Park, Section 19.
- Township reviewed the recommendations and report from GZA in connection with the Middle Comstock Dam. It was acknowledged the dam is structurally sound, however, the dam should be observed, a visual inspection checklist created based on type of dam and how it is constructed, and a record made on a quarterly basis (along with pictures) to track any changes that may be occurring.

## COUNTY AND CITY OF KALAMAZOO

- Sheriff Fuller and Captain VanDyken of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department discussed the Crime Watch program, accessible through their website, and noted that the public can monitor a particular area and the calls being made to that area.
- The Sheriff informed the Board of a change made in November, 2015, that individuals are now being brought to the jail for retail fraud and they are hoping to see decreasing numbers with this new policy.
- Resolution establishing rules for use of the Kalamazoo County Trails which includes the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail adopted.
- Continued work with the Regional Commission and the City of Kalamazoo on water and sewer contract and user rates issues.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Resolution adopted for when there is a need for sewer repairs and water connections within an MDOT right of way.
- Accela Training conducted with select staff as well as Board members; going paperless with electronic Board packets with Township Board members using tablets during meetings.
- Comstock Fire & Rescue sale of Engine 933.
- Change in fees on Fee Schedule; Land Division/Combination Application Fees.
- Collection Box Review Fee established.
- Transfer Station Fees (Effective 1-1-2017).
- Bells Brewery Liquor License request for wine making approved.
- Comstock Fire & Rescue requested purchasing a 2016 Pierce Enforcer Rescue/Pumper
- Adopted 2017 Budget.

- Resolution to officially appoint the Kalamazoo Area Building Authority as its Inter Local State Construction Code Enforcement and Administration Agency.
- Four elections held in 2016.
- Approved the Metro Act permit application by Fiber Technologies to connect cell towers with each other, however, does not include any new supporting poles or distributed antenna systems (DAS) antennas.
- Set salaries for incumbent and newly elected officials for 2017.
- Township switched credit cards from Fifth Third to Mercantile Bank.
- Continued Township-wide curbside pickup – Spring and Fall.
- Peter Haefner, Vredevelt Haefner, gave an overview of the 2015 Audit-no adjustments recommended.
- Township Board asserted right to approve Master Plan on July 18, 2016 and passed a resolution adopting the Vision 2025 Master Plan.
- FDIC discussion and update given what would need to be done to put funds in FDIC insured accounts.
- Resolution of Support for TecNiq, Inc. for application for Category A TEDF Grant Funding. Grant is for infrastructure improvements to accommodate new traffic and improvements to E Michigan/M-96.

## **JOINT MEETINGS**

- Special Joint Meeting with Comstock Public School Board of Education held in February. Open discussion on status, options and possible plan of action in connection with the Administration and Comstock Learning Center Building (former Adult Ed/Comstock High School).
- Joint meeting with the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County held in April.



## BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS FOR 2017

- Charter Township of Comstock Planning Commission (3 Year Terms)
  - David Burgess
  - Sandra Katje
  - Bob Pratt, Township Board Liaison (4 Year Term)
- Charter Township of Comstock Zoning Board of Appeals (3 Year Terms)
  - Art Bates
  - Roland Taylor
  - Jodi Colby, Alternate
- Charter Township of Comstock Board of Review (2 Year Terms)
  - Jim Jenkins
  - Terry Simpson
  - Larry Nichols
  - Jonica Camburn, First Alternate
- Elections Commission
  - Michelle Mohny, Township Clerk
  - Terry McIver, Township Board Trustee
  - Bob Pratt, Township Board of Trustee
- Kalamazoo Area Building Authority Board Member (KABA)
  - Michelle Mohny
  - Randy Thompson, Alternate
  - David Camburn, Resident Member
- Metro Transit Local Advisory Committee Member
  - Jerry Amos
  - Michelle Mohny, Alternate
- Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Member
  - Randy Thompson
  - Terry McIver, Alternate
- Public Media Network Member
  - Bret Padgett
  - Jerry Amos, Alternate
- Kalamazoo Regional Water and Wastewater Commission Member
  - Bret Padgett
  - Randy Thompson, Alternate