

The Profile

VOLUME XXXIV NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2009

- If you have purchased a new home, new applications for a **Principal Residence Exemption** (formerly “Homestead Exemption”) must be filed by May 1st. You do not have to file each year if you don’t change your residence.

- It is your responsibility to review your assessing record card periodically to be sure you agree with all the information currently on record. You may go to the Township’s website (www.plainfieldchartertp.org) and click on property information to review your record.

- Your taxable value can never exceed your assessed value. The Assessed Value becomes the Taxable Value when a property’s ownership is transferred.

- If a property’s ownership changes, a **Property Transfer Affidavit** must be filed in the Assessor’s Office within 45 days of that change to avoid penalties.

- Although your property’s assessed value is set at one-half of its True Cash Value (the price

FROM THE ASSESSOR’S OFFICE

What Property Owners Should Know



you should be able to sell it for), the Assessor, by State law (Sec 27(5) of the General Property Tax Act), is not permitted to set the assessed value at one half of your purchase price. In a declining market, assessors are allowed to use a one-year sales study. We have elected to use the one-year study and will use sales from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008 to determine our assessed values for 2009.

- 2009 Residential Assessments (Assessed Value) were decreased an average of 4%, and the Taxable Value for 2009 was increased by the CPI (Consumer Price Index) of 4.4%. The CPI is set by the State in the fall of each year. Unless there were additions or losses to a property, the Taxable Value cannot increase by more than the

CPI or 5%, whichever is less. It is possible for your Assessed Value to decrease and your Taxable Value to **increase** if the two values are not equal. (See the next article about Proposal A). If the Assessed Value stays the same or decreases, the Taxable Value will con-

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What Property Owners Should Know

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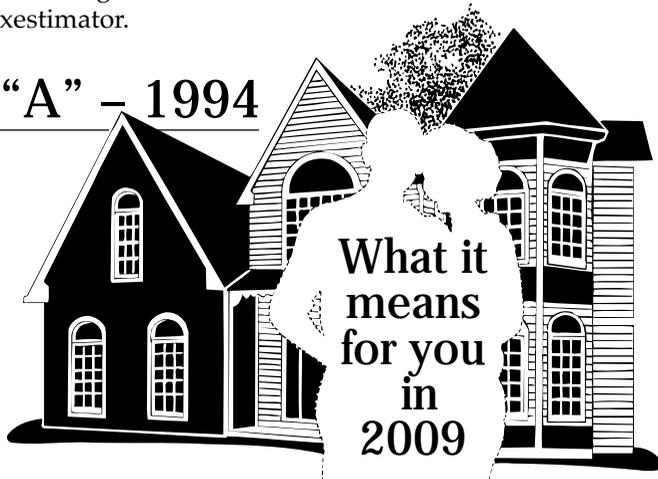
tinue to increase until it reaches the Assessed Value or the property has transferred ownership.

- Plainfield Charter Township has a total property value (True Cash Value) of over \$2.5 billion with over 14,000 parcels.
- For further information regarding the calculation of CPI rates, etc, access the state website: www.michigan.gov/treasury/ and select Local Government Services, www.michigan.gov/taxes and select Property Taxes, or go to www.michigan.gov/propertytaxestimator.

Property assessing and property taxing procedures are very complex. While we in the Assessing Department deal with this routinely, we understand that most citizens do not understand these complexities. If you have any questions, please feel free to call our office directly at (616) 726-8880. **Please note: Assessment Change Notices will be mailed mid-February, and the March Board of Review will be held March 9th and 10th. You must call for an appointment by March 9th.**

Judy LaFave, CMAEIII, Assessor

PROPOSAL "A" - 1994



What was Proposal A and how does it impact me?

The failing economy and the crash of the real estate market that Michigan is experiencing has led many homeowners to take a second look at their property tax bills. Residents can't help but wonder how Michigan's tax system works.

Proposal A was added to the Michigan Constitution in 1994 by a vote of the people to address how property taxes are determined. Before Proposal A was enacted into law, the state constitution required that every property owner pay property taxes based on the fair market value of their property. While the system insured that everyone would pay his fair share, it could be very punishing to the individual taxpayer. Whenever housing market values escalated quickly, it was not unusual for some homeowners in the community to see

their tax bill jump by 20 percent or more in one year. People demanded relief from this, and Proposal A was on the ballot to address the problem.

Significant changes to the property tax system

When Proposal A was approved, it contained two significant changes to the property tax system: The first was to significantly cut school property taxes, and the second was a provision that significantly limited how quickly individual property tax bills could increase from year to year. Proposal A stated that the value of property used to calculate property taxes could not increase each year by more than the increase in inflation, or 5 percent, whichever is less, until the ownership of the property changes.

Property owners have seen the benefit from this valuation cap for years. Each year every property owner receives a statement from the township that indicates the property's State Equalized Value. This amount represents 50 percent of the current value of the property. The township's assessor determines the State Equalized Value (SEV) and is required to follow procedures established and monitored by the state. However, the more important number is the **Taxable Value**, which is the amount used to actually calculate property taxes. Any difference between the SEV and Taxable Value shows how Proposal A has limited your property taxes.

Inequity in the system

Proposal A protected individual property owners, but has created inequities. When a house is sold, the new owner must pay taxes on the full value of the property, with the same cap (lesser of 5% or rate of inflation) on future assessment increases. This means a person who has owned the same home for the last 14 years is likely paying much less in property taxes than his neighbor who bought his just three years ago, even though both homes may be identical.

The latest fairness issue has been exposed with the falling housing market. Our state law that implements Proposal A directs that the Taxable Value must increase by the rate of inflation any time the Taxable Value on a piece of property is less than its SEV. This occurs even if the value of the property is decreasing. The Taxable Value continues to increase with normal inflation until the SEV and Taxable Value are equal, at which point any further decline in SEV results in real property tax reductions. This leads to the question asked by many: Why did my property taxes go up when the value of my home just went down?

As administrators of the property tax system, the township can only point to the constitution and the decision made in 1994 by the residents of this state that a *predictable* property tax assessment was more important than an *equitable* assessment – an assessment related

to the market value of the property.

The economic crisis we are experiencing is hitting everyone. Some property owners — generally those who have owned their homes for years — are seeing increases in their property tax bills, and many are seeing real declines. Local governments also feel the strain and have been struggling for years to maintain services due to declining funding from the state. The expected decline in property tax collections — our most important revenue source — simply means local governments must also do more with less, just like our residents are doing. It doesn't diminish our responsibility to maintain a community that is a great place to live, work and raise our children. We intend to continue to do what we can to provide you with the services that you expect in a cost-efficient way.

*From the Michigan Townships Association
Quarterly Township Newsletter
– 4th Quarter 2008*

Foreclosure Response

Foreclosure Response connects residents with community resources and advocates for change to stop foreclosures in Kent County.

Why Should You Be Concerned About Foreclosures? Foreclosures are affecting every area and every resident of Kent County. Since 2004, more than 1 of every 20 homes in the county has been foreclosed: 9,996 homes. Property values are going down. Property records show that the problem is still building, but the community is responding.

If you are behind on your house payment, don't wait to take action. Call Home Repair Services, a non-profit organization, for FREE help from a QUALIFIED housing specialist. **They can help you work with your lender** – the sooner you call the better. Call (616) 241-2601 Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm, Saturday 9 am to 2 pm. Their website is www.homerepairservices.org/foreclosure.php. If you'd like more information, logon to www.ForeclosureResponse.org.

The Rogue River – A Designated Natural River

One thing you may not know about the Rogue River and one of its tributaries, Barkley Creek, is that it has been designated as one of sixteen Natural Rivers in Michigan. The Natural Rivers Program was developed by the Michigan DNR to preserve, protect and enhance our state’s most beautiful river systems for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. This is accomplished by allowing property owners their right to reasonable development, while protecting Michigan’s unique river resources

(MDNR). The Natural River Zone consists of a section of land that is 300 feet wide on each side of and parallel to the river’s edge of the Rogue River and Barkley Creek within Plainfield Township. If your property lies within this section in Plainfield Township, the restrictions for development will be a bit more stringent than those residing or owning property outside the Natural Rivers Zone. The following setback requirements will apply to all properties that lie in the Natural Rivers Zone in Plainfield Township:

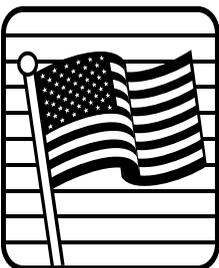
| TYPE OF REQUIREMENT | ROGUE RIVER | BARKLEY CREEK |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Building Setback | 150 | 100 |
| Minimum lot width | 200 | 200 |
| Natural Vegetated Buffer | 50 | 25 |
| Septic System Setback | 150 | 150 |

These distances are measured in feet from the ordinary high water mark on each side of the river. The 50 feet of natural vegetated buffer is protected from clear cutting as well, however, dead, diseased, unsafe, or fallen trees and noxious plants and shrubs may be removed. Vegetation removal is also permitted for landscaping and pruning to allow for a filtered view of the river. In addition to more stringent setback requirements and vegetation buffering, stream channel alteration, industrial and commercial development and building in floodplains or wetlands is also prohibited in the Natural Rivers zone.

If you would like to learn more about the Rogue River’s designation as a Natural River, you can visit the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr. The Plainfield Charter Township Zoning Ordinance also has a chapter that outlines all regulations in the Natural Rivers Zone. Please visit our website to read the entire chapter at www.plainfieldchartertp.org/pctcommdev.htm.

Thanks to local government, state agencies such as the DNR and DEQ, and local watershed councils such as the Rogue River Watershed Council, the wild habitat and scenic beauty of Natural Rivers in our Township can be preserved.

Tricia Anderson



Veterans Park Celebration – Memorial Day

Please mark your calendars for a Memorial Day service to be held on May 30, at 2:00 pm, recognizing those men and women who have served our country to preserve our freedom.

Message from the Supervisor: Nothing Stays the Same

Since writing my last *Profile* article titled "It's Up to You," there have been a lot of faces changing at the federal, state and local levels of government. When one evaluates the effect the change will have on a given governmental body, it almost becomes scary. I



I trust that the people who voted in the general election on November 4, 2008, were well informed and understood the candidates, proposals and issues. The people have spoken. Whether our individual voting was in the majority and won, or in the minority and lost, we must all work towards a strong government that serves each and every one of us. I have some very strong feelings, as I'm sure some of you do regarding the overall outcome of the general election. If we stay focused in our ambitions and our commitments, justice will prevail.

At Plainfield Charter Township, we have three newly elected officials on the township board. K. Scott Harvey is the new Township Clerk, replacing Susan L. Morrow who was the clerk for over twenty-four years. In the trustee positions we have Victor Matthews and Chuck Weldon. Vic Matthews is a new trustee and Chuck Weldon is an experienced trustee, returning after a four-year absence. These gentlemen replace William Parris, who did not run for another term, and Robert Heindricks, who ran an unsuccessful campaign. If you see Scott Harvey, Vic Matthews or Chuck Weldon, please congratulate them. If you see Sue Morrow, Bill Parris or Bob Heindricks, please give them a nice "thank you" for their time, efforts and contribution of service to Plainfield Charter Township.

Just like the former township board, the new, current township board has some real challenges coming up in the next few years and some tough and potentially unpopular decisions will need to be made. I'm confident the seven board members have the ability to do what is in the best interest of all the people of Plainfield Township.

Thank you.

George K. Meek, Supervisor

FREE Tax Preparation

United Way's Kent County Tax Credit Coalition provides free tax preparation for families whose household income is \$41,646 or less in 2008. This service is available on Tuesdays from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, through April 15, at the North Kent Service Center, 10075 Northland Dr. NE, Rockford, MI 49341. For information and to determine if you qualify, call United Way 211 or (616) 459-2255.

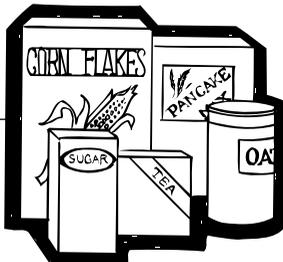
“What does a Clerk do?”

The most asked question when I was campaigning this past summer was, “What does a Clerk do?” My answer was, “They run the elections for the township, they are responsible for keeping township records and they must make sure township funds are spent properly. But, most importantly, the Clerk is a voting member of the Township Board.” Now that I have had the privilege to serve as your Township Clerk for the past two months, I am pleased to report all of those statements are true. But, I found out in a hurry that there is much more that I am responsible for in the day-to-day operations of Plainfield Township.

As a lifelong learner, I view challenges of the unknown as opportunities to grow. It is the rare day that goes by that I do not get an e-mail request, a phone call, someone stopping by the office, or a document from the State of Michigan requesting services that are the statutory

responsibility of the Township Clerk. Then there are the day-to-day tasks of the Clerk’s office that have been put in place by resolutions and ordinances of the Board. These everyday job functions include the service of providing United States Passports, selling snow plow licenses, making sure all changes in voter registrations are current, oversight of the cemeteries and burials, and licenses required by the State of Michigan’s Department of Labor and Economic Growth, to name a few of the functions for which our department is accountable to you, the residents of Plainfield Charter Township. There are many more tasks that I will continue to discover.

It is important to note that we are a department in the Township governmental structure. Most of the day-to-day functions fall on Kathy Timmerman, Clerk’s Assistant, and Jeff Hawkins, Deputy Clerk. Both of these employees are performing these jobs with a passion to serve the citizens of our community. This has



Commodity Distribution from River Grove

Commodities will be distributed from River Grove Retirement Community, located at 5761 Jupiter Avenue, just north of West River Drive (enter from Jupiter Avenue) from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. To qualify, you must reside between 4 Mile Road and 10 Mile Road.

2009 distribution dates are **March 5, June 4, September 3 and December 3.**

New families wishing to qualify may call Jim or Peg Granzotto at 784-5249, or come to the distribution site on the above date. Bring Social Security cards for each member of your family along with income statements.

made the transition from serving you at the state level to the local level very pleasant. I want to thank them publicly for their efforts. I am in the process of learning these functions. I have attended the "New Elected Officials Orientation" course provided by the Michigan Township Association, the Michigan Elections Accreditation Training that is required by the Michigan Bureau of Elections, have been given an overview of the elections process in Kent County by Susan deSteiguer, the Kent County Elections Director, and have met with Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, who has made herself available to answer any questions I have concerning elections. At times I find myself behind the reception desk at Town Hall, and I am happy to report I lost only one phone call in the call transferring process.

I commit to you that I take all of my statutory responsibilities seriously. I also will keep my promise that we must have transparent government in our Township. The Clerk's office is working on a more user-friendly Web page. We plan on having all of the information that is provided to the Board available online prior to the Board voting on these items. We are reaching out to the business community to make sure we are not a roadblock in their ability to begin or expand their business in the township. It will be the small businesses of America that will bring us out of these tough economic times, and they need all of the support possible from their local government. We will be putting in place a system of measuring how well the Clerk's office is serving you. We will be making sure that questionable or unlawful expenditures are challenged prior to the Clerk approving payment of these expenses through the electronic warrant approval process. Most of all, we in the Clerk's Office want you to feel welcome when you visit Town Hall.

We will be having School Board Elections on May 5th, and following are the important dates for that election.



ELECTION DATES

May 5, 2009 *Members of the Board(s) of Education*

Registration Deadlines

April 6, 2009 *Last day to register to vote for the May Election*

Filing Deadlines:

County and Local Proposals

By 4 pm February 10, 2009 – Filing deadline for candidate's nominating petitions or filing fee and Affidavits of Identity

By February 24, 2009 – Ballot wording of local proposals qualified to appear on the ballot certified to the county and local clerks.

The Township Election Committee will meet soon, and we will be asking many of the past election workers to help on this election. We will be seeking new election workers on a continual basis. If you would like to help us on Election Day, you need to be a registered voter of Kent County. Please contact me by phone at (616) 364-8466, by e-mail at harveys@plainfieldchartertp.org, mail at 6161 Belmont Ave NE, Belmont MI 49306, or stop in the office.

The most important role of the Clerk is being a voting member of the Township Board! To be able to make decisions that impact your day-to-day lives, I will need to be informed on the issues. Please contact me at any time to share your concerns. I want to make an educated vote on all matters brought before the Board.

*Scott Harvey
Clerk*

What is a zoning ordinance, and what does it mean for you? The Township's zoning ordinance is prepared by the Planning Commission and Township staff. Then it is approved by the Township Board. It is intended to implement the strategies and goals laid out in the Township's Master Plan. A typical zoning ordinance is divided into two parts: (1) the text and (2) a zoning map. The text outlines regulations that address the following three areas: land use, building size regulations, and building setbacks from property lines. The zoning map shows the Township boundaries and the different zoning districts.

The intent of the zoning ordinance is to help guide and regulate development in order to maintain and improve Plainfield Township as an attractive place to live. Having a well-managed zoning ordinance typically results in a community that makes a better first impression to visitors and potential residents. Zoning regulations allow individuals to use their property in a way that will not have a negative impact on their neighbors, environment or the community. Zoning ordinances are strictly regulated by the 5th and 14th amendments of the U.S. Constitution, and therefore, must be written carefully to protect personal property rights and the rights of the community at large. The following is a brief summary of what a zoning ordinance can and cannot do:

A Zoning Ordinance Can:

- Group together compatible land uses and separate those that are not compatible;
- Indicate sufficient lot sizes for different land uses to develop;
- Protect agriculture by directing other types of development elsewhere;
- Lessen congestion on roads and help to minimize the costs associated with road construction and maintenance.
- Serve as a development tool to keep down future costs of public services;

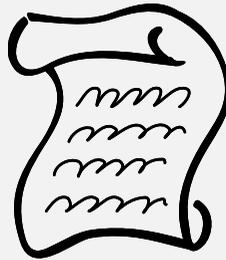
A Zoning Ordinance cannot:

- Cure all social, economic and environmental problems;
- Correct past mistakes in land use, some of which were created before and some after the Township adopted a zoning ordinance;
- Guarantee the soundness or appearance of structures and property;
- By-pass state or federally

regulated land uses and related activities such as schools, farms, cell towers and mineral removal.

- Ensure agreement on controversial land use issues and what is defined as a negative impact;
- Control activity occurring outside of the Township boundaries.

Call the Plainfield Township Community Development Department with questions at 726-8899.



**Plainfield
Charter
Township
Zoning
Ordinance 101**

Rogue River Watershed

Did you know that part of Plainfield Township is located in the Rogue River Watershed? So are 17 other municipalities and about 60,000 residents. Why should that matter to you— and what IS a watershed anyway?

A watershed is the area of land that catches rain and snow and drains or seeps into a marsh, stream, river, lake or groundwater. Watershed boundaries are based on water flowing downhill; they do not follow local county, city, or township boundaries.

It is important to remember that things you do to your yard, throw out the window of your car, or dump in the gutter probably end up in the water you swim and play in, eat fish from, and drink. Although most of Plainfield Township residents don't live next to a waterway,

local waterways are affected by what all the residents and visitors do.

Storm drains lead directly to streams, ponds, wetlands, lakes or rivers. What runs off your lawn, driveway or road (pesticides, oil, dog poop) eventually makes its way into local waterways. Water from storm drains does not go to a wastewater treatment plant.

The Rogue River Watershed Council is a local organization dedicated to the long-term protection and restoration of the Rogue River and its tributaries through community stewardship, education and watershed-based land-use planning. To get involved or learn more about the Watershed, go to <http://gvsu.edu/wri/isc/index.cfm?id=34E5937B-C064-7F5F-1F9D8D264F4A2681> or call Andy Bowman at 776-3876.

Why We Put Dog Poop in Plastic Baggies!

Did you know that pet waste has bacteria that can make our streams and lakes unsafe for swimming? Pet waste left on sidewalks, streets, or yards can be washed into storm drains, which flow directly to our streams and lakes. Water with high concentrations of bacteria can cause human illness.



Prompt and Proper Disposal

Dispose of your pet's waste by double wrapping it in a plastic bag and throwing it in the garbage.

Avoid Feeding Waterfowl

Watch and enjoy the ducks and geese but avoid feeding them. Feeding these waterfowl is bad for them and can cause unnaturally high populations, which creates more animal waste. Like pet waste, waterfowl waste contributes pollutants to our streams and lakes.

Healthy Lawns and Gardens Keep Rivers, Lakes and Streams Healthy

Healthy lawn and garden practices can save homeowners time and money and promote a beautiful landscape. You can help prevent pollution of nearby streams and lakes by following these healthy lawn and garden tips.

1. Select native plants suited for the site and climate conditions.
2. Mow your grass at a high setting and leave the grass clippings on the lawn.
3. Mix grass clippings with leaves and soil to make a backyard compost pile.
4. Use mulch (shredded leaves, grass clippings, or compost) to control weeds, retain moisture, and build fertile soils.
5. Reduce the use of insecticides, herbicides, and other chemicals on your lawn or garden.
6. Select a no-phosphorus or low-phosphorus fertilizer.



KDL NEWS

Kent District Library

KDL joins MeLCat – an even bigger network of library materials for you!

We are proud to join over 250 public, academic, school and special libraries as part of a new resource-sharing service called MeLCat (short for Michigan Electronic Library Catalog). MeLCat offers KDL patrons access to 26 million items and over 8 million titles, from libraries around the state. You can request an item just as you do now, using your library card number and PIN (usually the last four digits of your phone number). Materials usually arrive in about two weeks. Please be aware that not everything shown on MeLCat is available to KDL customers; these items, often AV materials such as music or movies, would be listed as “Not Requestable.” Also, it is not possible to request a MeLCat item currently checked out. In that case, it is best to simply wait until the item is returned to its home library. This free service greatly expands what is available for library users. Look for the MeLCat link on our the library catalog, or stop by any KDL branch and a staff member will be happy to show you how it works.

Let it Snow Reading Club for Adults. You have until March 31 to play KDL Bingo! By reading books in various categories, you earn a prize and get your name in bi-weekly drawings for \$20 gift certificates. Register at any KDL Branch Library to participate.

2009 One Book, One County. *The Highest Tide* by Jim Lynch is the book everyone is reading together this year. Many KDL branches are offering lively discussions of this thought-provoking novel about the amazing life under the sea. The author will appear at East Kentwood

Fine Arts Auditorium on Thursday, March 26 at 7 pm. For more information, and a copy of the book, visit your nearest KDL branch.

Watch for these upcoming programs, and please join us!

For Young Children and Families

Program sessions run March 2 through April 30 and registration is required. Pick up a branch-specific program schedule or check the library program schedules online at www.kdl.org.

Babytime – One-on-one rhymes for babies and their parents.

Plainfield – Tuesdays, 1:00 pm

Laptime – Stories, music and rhymes for babies, toddlers and their parents.

Comstock Park – Mondays, 10:30 am

Plainfield – Thursdays, 9:45 am and 10:45 am

Storytime – Stories and crafts for ages 3-6 years.

Comstock Park – Mondays, 10:30 am

Plainfield – Thursdays, 9:45 am and 10:45 am

Family Storytime – Stories / crafts for all ages.

Plainfield – Mondays, Saturdays at 10:00 am

Pajama Storytime – Stories and nighttime fun for the whole family.

Comstock Park – Monday, May 4, 10:30 am

Plainfield – Every Wednesday, 7 pm, except March 4 and 11

Other programs for children include:

Storytime in German – For all ages

Plainfield – Monday, February 23 and

Tuesday, March 10 at 10 am.

Dinosaur Romp – A prehistoric party that promises loads of fun for ages 6 and under, including stories and crafts.

Comstock Park – Monday, March 2, 10:30 am

PLAINFIELD BRANCH HOURS

2650 5-Mile Road NE • Phone: 647-3930
Mon. through Thurs. 9:30 am to 8:00 pm
Friday, Saturday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm
Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
(during the school year only)

Take me out to the Ball Park – For fathers and sons (or special friends) ages 3 and up. Wear your favorite baseball caps and come for baseball food, crafts and games. Meet a real baseball player.

Comstock Park – Saturday, March 28, 1:30 pm

Fancy Nancy - For kids under age 6

Plainfield – Mon., May 4, Thurs., May 7,
and Sat., May 10 at 10 am

Are You Curious? – Science exploration program for all ages

Plainfield – Mon., May 11, Thurs., May 14,
and Sat., May 16 at 10 am

Ruff Readers – A unique read-aloud program pairing kids ages 6 and up with trained therapy dogs and handlers, now through the end of April.

Plainfield – Call to register for a 15-minute session to read to a dog.

For Teens at the Plainfield Branch

Join the Teen Crew and be a summer volunteer. Pick up an application starting May 1. Orientation sessions will be Sat., May 30 at 11 am or Wed., June 3 at 7 pm.

Teen Café – Sing, play music, read your poetry or creative writing, or just hang out with your friends at the library. Thursday February 19, 4 pm and Tuesday March 17, 6:30 pm.

Playing Games @ Your Library! (for Teens) – Whether you're hopeless at board games or a board game whiz, you'll have fun at our teen game day. Thursday, February 26, 4 pm.

Altered Journals for Teens – Glue it, stamp it, make it your own! Decorate a journal using the supplies provided. Thursday, March 5, 4pm.

Guitar Hero – Legends of Rock III will be available for open play in the Teen room.

COMSTOCK PARK BRANCH HOURS

3943 West River Drive • Phone: 647-3860
Monday 9:30 am to 8:00 pm
Wednesday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm
Tuesday, Thursday 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Friday, Saturday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Thursday, March 12, Thursday, April 2, and Thursday, May 7, 4 pm.

Anime Festival – A cool place for teen anime fans to meet and enjoy a common bond, learn more about various forms of anime and expand their knowledge of anime and Japanese culture. Tuesday, April 7, 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm

For Adults

Early Childhood Essentials classes for parents and daycare providers.

Plainfield – Tuesday, February 17, 6:45 pm

The Importance of Play

Plainfield – Tuesday, March 24, 6:45 pm
Learning Differences Between Boys and Girls

The Knitting Circle – Join us to share your projects or learn to knit! Supplies included for first-time knitters. For adults and teens grades 6-12. No registration required. Comstock Park – Every other Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Monthly Book Discussions – You are warmly welcomed to join our “no-pressure” book discussion groups, where you can relax and talk about books with other readers.

Comstock Park – 4th Thurs. of month, 7 pm
Plainfield – 2nd Thurs. of month, 1 pm

Note: Unable to attend the daytime book discussion at the Plainfield Branch? We are adding an *evening* book discussion group centered on the works of the best international authors whose books have been translated into English. The first meeting will be **Tuesday, March 31st at 6:30 pm** to discuss *The Secret Supper* by Javier Sierra. Call the branch to register and arrange to pick up the book. Ann Byle, a freelance writer and author of *Plainfield Township* (Arcadia, 2008) and two other books, will lead the group. She has been using the Plainfield Library since she was a child.

2009 VERSLUIS PARK NEWS

FISHING INSTRUCTION

Plainfield Township has again partnered with the Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America for fishing instruction at Versluis Park. The fishing instruction will take place in June on 17th & 24th and on July 1st & 8th in the evenings and last for 1¹/₂ hours. Plainfield Township will provide the bait and some fishing poles will be available for those that do not have one. Last year the kids caught walleye, blue gill, and bass.



The mission of the Izaak Walton League of America is “to conserve, maintain, protect, and restore the soil, forest, water, and other natural resources of the United States and other lands; to promote means and opportunities for the education of the public with respect to such resources and their enjoyment and wholesome utilization.”

Plainfield Township is privileged to have such a highly regarded organization such as the Izaak Walton League of America to assist our youth in the understanding and experience of fishing.

SUMMER SWIMMING

Versluis Park will be opening on Sunday, May 24, 2008. Versluis is open from 11:00 am – 8:00 pm (swimming beach ONLY). All other areas of the park are open from 11:00 am – 9:00 pm. A Season Pass Sticker may be purchased by Plainfield Charter Township residents for \$15.00. For those who don't live in the township, a Non-Resident



Season Pass Sticker is being offered for \$75.00. Without a sticker, the entrance fee, per vehicle, is \$8.00. You may purchase Season Pass Stickers at the park. The Plainfield Charter Township Parks & Recreation Department wishes you a wonderful Summer Season!

LIFE JACKETS

Plainfield Charter Township is **recommending** that **ALL** children under the age of 8 years old use a “**Coast Guard Approved**” life jacket while in the water at Versluis Park. Please check the label on the inside of your life jacket to make sure it is “**Coast Guard Approved**.” Life jackets or flotation devices that are not “**Coast Guard Approved**” are not allowed.

BATHING BEACH RULES

1. NO swimming except when lifeguard is on duty.
2. Swimming permitted 11:00 am to 8:00 pm
3. Swimmers must stay within buoy lines.
4. NO inner tubes, flotation devices, swim fins, masks, large balls, arm floats, or battery powered toys or models are allowed into swimming area.
5. NO scuba diving or scuba diving equipment allowed.
6. NO boats of any kind allowed into swimming area, except for lifeboat.
7. NO ball playing or roughhousing is permitted.
8. NO food, glass containers, or picnicking on beach.
9. NO smoking on the beach.
10. Children must be 10 years of age or older to be in the water at the beach area. Children younger than this will be allowed in the water if accompanied by a responsible adult, who will stay with the child at all times.
11. Rubber pants must be worn over diapers.

12. Beach will close when thunder and lightning occur or when any other condition occurs that warrants closing of the swimming and beach area, such as a severe thunderstorm watch or tornado watch, severe thunderstorm warning or tornado warning.
13. All swimmers must clear the water immediately when the signal to do so is given, and no one may enter the water until an all clear signal is given.
14. Follow all directions by lifeguards. Lifeguards are authorized by Township Ordinance to exclude and expel from the beach or park area any persons who violate these regulations (See lifeguard if you have any questions).
15. Appropriate clothing is required on the beach and swimming area. (Clothing must be modest, consistent with a family park environment).

Versluis Park was designed to accommodate ALL levels of ability. All activity areas are designed to enhance the park experience for the community of the disabled. As the disabled community uses the facilities at the park, please check with the staff to take advantage of any accommodations we can make to improve your experience. Those guests that choose to swim need to speak with the Lifeguards to ensure a safe experience.

Please remember that pets are NOT allowed and Versluis Park is drug and alcohol free. Violators will be removed and prosecuted.

Friends of the Plainfield Library

The Friends of the Library is a 501-C 3 nonprofit group that raises money to enhance library services and to make it user-friendly. We continue to sponsor programs and furnishings that make you want to come back again and again. We could not do this without the donations of books, magazines, CD's, and videos to sell in the Book Nook, the Kiosk and during our Used Book Sales held in the spring, fall and at Christmas time. A big THANK YOU to all who continue to contribute these items.

The spring "Spectacular Book Sale" will be Friday, March 6 through Monday, March 9. Click the events tab at the library website (www.kdl.org) or call the library at 647-3930 for the times and other details.

A Car Care Clinic is scheduled in March. Think you know all about cars? You will be surprised, plus, you will receive a gift bag of goodies. This is a no-fee program but registration is required. Also, a container-gardening program will be held in the spring, and other programs are in the planning stages.

Please consider joining the Friends of the Plainfield Library. The membership fee is nominal and the benefits are great. Forms to join the Friends are available at the library. Meetings are held the second Monday of every month at 6:30 pm in the basement meeting room (an elevator is available). For further information regarding membership, upcoming programs, or if you would like to suggest programs, visit the Plainfield Library at 2650 Five Mile Road.

Every day we get bombarded with more bad news about the U.S. and Michigan economy. Those of us who have them have taken huge hits to our investment portfolios, making security and optimism about our retirements turn shaky. The value of our homes has dropped, and about every fourth person you talk to has either been laid off, forced to retire early, or had their hours reduced. The federal government is printing money faster than ever and assuring us that Congress will save us from our woes, but we know deep in our hearts that someone will be paying that piper. Doom and gloom? I suppose one could look at the looming mess that way, but there are those who refuse to buckle and resort to cautious optimism.

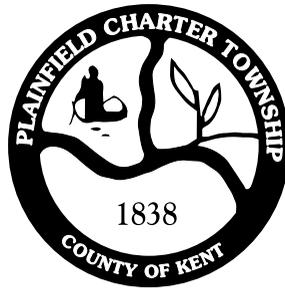
This country, and certainly our state, is experiencing “the most challenging economic environment since the Great Depression,” I read today. I can’t disagree, and I am accepting it as the unvarnished truth. And where, in all this, is your local government – Plainfield Charter Township? We – that’s the Township Board, me, our faithful and hardworking employees, and all of the citizens of Plainfield Township – are all in this “pickle.” Like most businesses, revenue has leveled off with the slump in building and development, and it looks like revenue will be declining. I’m speaking of the General Fund here, the source of money that pays for police and fire services, senior citizens programs, parks maintenance, sidewalks and road maintenance, maintenance of libraries, and, yes, things like property assessing, tax collection, community development, ordinance enforcement. The need for these required and basic functions remains, whether or not property values and tax revenues are up or down.

What are we going to do as everything is heading toward harder times? We are going to use

our resources wisely, find ways to avoid spending money without damaging our ability to do our jobs and serve the community. Finding better deals when purchasing supplies and equipment. Repairing things longer than we usually do and hoping things don’t break beyond repair. Avoiding purchases – even of necessary things, like we have been doing for years now. The likelihood of wage and salary increases certainly doesn’t look promising as we move forward into 2009 toward 2010 with no apparent light at the end of the tunnel. I don’t envy me in negotiating with the Township’s collective bargaining units and having to tell employees that we must all hunker down and ride this thing out like everyone else.

Half of the 14,000-odd properties in the Township have seen their “Assessed Value” equal their “Taxable Value” – something that was inconceivable just a few years ago. You could always sell your home for more than you bought it for. Not likely these days. Declining property values will result in declining general fund revenues for Plainfield Township as well as schools, libraries, county government, etc. Yet, all local government must still perform and provide services. Plainfield, and most other townships, has thus far been able to manage the eight years of economic decline for three principle reasons: (1) Townships tend to manage the business of local government more cost-consciously and efficiently than cities and generally have a smaller scope of services than cities do. Significant examples are that we don’t manage and maintain roads, and we don’t have our own police forces. Countywide agencies, the Sheriff and the Road Commission handle those more efficiently than townships could ever hope to do it individually. (2) Townships have always been where growth is occurring. New residential and commercial development has

Hard Times

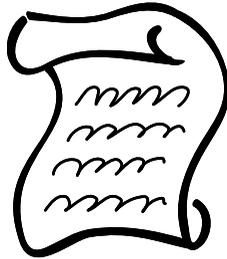


continued to grow our local tax base. (3) We socked away money that we didn't have to spend, saving for large projects, improvements, and equipment, and trying to plan for that "rainy day" that we are experiencing now.

Working on behalf of a fiscally conservative Township Board, minding the Ps and Qs that I have learned about managing local government for the last 35 years, and getting a lot out

of solid and dedicated employees has helped get the Township to where it is on modest taxes and now-shrinking shared revenue from the State of Michigan. We will continue to do the best we can to weather this storm. There is no "magic" out there. Stimulus gifts from the sky are not going to save us. Hard work and determination will have to suffice. None of us is totally immune from this turn of events; we are all in this together.

Robert C. Homan, Township Manager



BUILDING PERMITS 101 – Building Permits Are Beneficial To All Concerned

Before taking on home improvement projects, please check with Plainfield Township's Building Service in the Community Development Department to find whether a permit is required. A building, electrical, and/or mechanical permit provide the "legal permission" to start construction of a project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications that conform to the International Building Code adopted by Plainfield Township. A permit is usually required for the following:

- New buildings or structures.
- Additions (bathrooms, family rooms, etc.)
- Decks, garages, fireplaces, pools, accessory buildings (sheds) over 200 square feet, etc.
- Renovations such as garage conversions, basement furnishings, kitchen expansions, re-siding, hot water heater replacement, etc.
- Electrical systems.
- Plumbing systems.
- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Our permit system ensures that the proposed construction meets minimum safety standards and allows our inspectors to protect the public by reducing potential hazards of unsafe construction. Property insurers may not cover

work done without permits and inspections, and the value of the property could be reduced and problems may arise when the property is sold.

Just by answering a couple of questions like: "What are you planning to do?" and, "Where are you planning to do it?", our staff will be able to provide the information and applications for the permits needed for compliance with the building and zoning codes.

A permit fee is collected to cover the cost of the application, the review of the project and the inspection process. Once the permit is issued, work on the project may begin. On-site inspections are required to make certain that the work conforms to the permit, codes and plans, with usually more than one inspection – depending on the nature of the project.

Finally, the Building Official will provide documentation for final approval when construction has been completed and code compliance is determined. This information should be helpful and we encourage you to visit the Township's website for more information regarding building codes and regulations.

*Building Services –
Community Development Department*

Water Rate Increase

Plainfield Charter Township has always strived to maintain reasonable water rates for our customers. The Township operates a not-for-profit public water system requiring compliance with strict requirements established by regulatory agencies for the safety of our customers and the reliability of our water system. Operating a water system to comply with these rules and regulations involves extensive planning and maintaining the ability to pay for system upgrades, repairs, and replacement of expensive components of a water system that serves almost 50 square miles and over 30,000 people.

In 2003, we came close to running out of cash in our water fund. To resolve the situation it was decided to increase our cash by selling \$5 million of bonds and to increase rates by 27%. It was projected this would provide enough money to pay for water system projects through 2008, which it has. We reached the

point again where we needed to plan how to pay for future projects and rising expenses. Thinking it would be easier for customers if a modest rate increase was implemented each year, rather than to do a large increase that will hold us over for another five years, the Township Board decided to increase rates each year by 2.9%.

Effective for water bills sent out 1/1/09 there has been a 2.9% rate increase. This increase is on both the commodity rate (usage) and the quarterly base fee. This change increases the commodity rate from \$2.74 per 1,000 gallons to \$2.82 per 1,000 gallons and it increases the base fee from \$10 per quarter per REU (Residential Equivalent Unit) to \$10.29 per quarter per REU. An average residential customer uses 16,000 gallons of water per quarter and is charged for 1 REU, so an average residential customer will see a quarterly increase of \$1.57, or 52 cents per month.

Plainfield Charter Township

TOWNSHIP HALL HOURS

7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday – Friday
Phone: 364-8466

TOWNSHIP BOARD

George Meek, Supervisor
Scott Harvey, Clerk
James Stover, Treasurer
Rebecca Borek, Trustee
Jack Hagedorn, Trustee
Vic Matthews, Trustee
Charles Weldon, Trustee



MANAGER

Robert Homan

TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETINGS

7:30 pm
First and Third Mondays

www.painfieldchartertp.org

The Profile

Plainfield Charter Township
6161 Belmont NE
Belmont, MI 49306

PRESORTED
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US POSTAGE
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI
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