

The Profile



JUNE 2015

VICTORY FOR PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP IN DISPUTE WITH MDEQ

Plainfield Township has secured a major victory to keep costs low at its water treatment plant for decades to come. Earlier this year a three-judge panel of the Michigan Court of Appeals found in favor of Plainfield Township in their suit against the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Plainfield filed the lawsuit in 2009 as a last resort after the DEQ made an arbitrary regulatory change in 2008 that would have cost the Township millions in unneeded expenses to operate the water plant.

"Plainfield Township feels vindicated that we were able to succeed in our battle against an overreaching bureaucracy that stretched well beyond their authority or mandate on an issue that by their own admission was not creating any public harm," said Township Superintendent Cameron Van Wyngarden.

At issue in this case was the disposal of used lime residuals, a natural material needed in the water softening process. After a water plant uses the lime to soften the water the remaining lime, which is the consistency of toothpaste, is removed from the water and must be disposed. Most water treatment plants have lagoons – large ponds where the lime residual is deposited until the water evaporates and the lime is then used on farm fields to make the soil more productive for plant growth.

However, in Plainfield's situation, the DEQ suggested in 1987 that the Township deposit the residuals in the gravel quarry that was being mined right next door. This would eliminate the need and expense of periodically clearing out the lime lagoons and transporting the material away from the plant. Over time as the gravel pit grew deeper ground water began to fill the bottom of the mine until the pit began to look like a small lake. The lime deposited in the mine actually helped improve the quality of the water in the pit so that it began to act like a natural body of water with fish and plant life.

Over the decades since this practice began in 1987, the Township has expanded or changed the water plant three times, and each time the DEQ permitted the change and accepted the use of the pit for lime disposal. However, in 2008, just one year after the last approval, the DEQ abruptly changed its mind and determined that the practice was no longer acceptable. The DEQ did not identify any health risks or risks to the environment, but rather stated that the practice did not follow regulatory standards.

Plainfield Township investigated its options to discontinue use of the pit, but determined the lowest cost solution would have required the Township to "mechanically dewater" the lime (squeeze the water out of it) and send the material by truck to a landfill for disposal. Given the volume of lime used, this would need to occur daily throughout the year. The equipment to make this system work would have cost approximately \$5 million to purchase and install, and would increase annual operating costs by over \$300,000 each year. Currently the annual cost to operate the plant is approximately \$3.5 million each year. Further, the addition of this equipment would have decreased the reliability of the water plant, as any breakdown in equipment could stop production of clean water.

As a result of the Court of Appeals decision the DEQ has agreed to settle with the Township, allowing continued use of the pit for lime disposal for the life of the water plant. This is a major victory for Plainfield Township water customers, as the Township's engineers estimate that the amount of lime deposited in the pit wouldn't fill it in over 100 years.

FREE SMOKE ALARM PROGRAM A SUCCESS

Over the last nine months, the Plainfield Fire Department (PFD) has been installing free smoke alarms in many homes within Plainfield Charter Township with the assistance of a FEMA Firefighter Grant. To date, PFD has reached over 1,000 homes and installed over 4,000 alarms. The program targets high risk populations within the township and installs free smoke alarms per the National Fire Protection Association standards. The target areas include mobile homes, homes built prior to 1975, and homes with occupants age 65 or older, 14 or younger, or hearing impaired. While in the homes, firefighters performed home safety surveys and pointed out over 1,750 common fire safety hazards. The most common hazards include: 1) no carbon monoxide alarms, 2) overloading of electrical cords, and 3) improper uses of heating appliances. If you have not yet scheduled your installation and you fall within the parameters listed above, please contact the fire department at (616) 363-6651, Monday through Friday from 8AM to

5PM, or email smokealarms@plainfieldmi.org. You will be asked to provide your name, address, phone number, and best time for installation. We will contact you within 10 business days to schedule an appointment.

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP NAMES NEW DEPUTY CLERK



Plainfield Township has hired Monica Burt as Deputy Clerk, replacing Stephanie McMillen who left for the same position with the City of Grand Rapids. Burt, who started her employment with the Township on April 6, comes to Plainfield from Grattan Township where she has worked since 2005, serving as Deputy Clerk since 2006.

Monica looked forward to joining the Plainfield Township community saying, "The new position with Plainfield Township will offer me more opportunities and professional growth. I feel my 10 years of township government and Deputy Clerk experience will be an asset to the Township."

Plainfield Township Clerk Ruth Ann Karnes stated, "Monica's wealth of experience with election administration and other statutory duties made her a natural choice for the Deputy Clerk position. I view her appointment as a sign of Plainfield Township's commitment to maintaining the high standards and excellent service for which we are known and I'm looking forward to working closely with Monica."

"Monica stood out from the field of applicants due to her strong experience in the clerk's office as well as her well-rounded knowledge of township operations," said Plainfield Township Superintendent Cameron Van Wyngarden.

In 2012 Plainfield Township changed the job description of the Deputy Clerk by placing it under the authority of the Township Superintendent (Manager). This change was made to ensure Township services continued in a consistent and professional manner through changes in elected officials and to streamline the overall delivery of Plainfield Township services. The Deputy Clerk is responsible for overseeing a number of services for the township, including elections, issuing licenses, maintaining official records and responding to requests for information. Additionally, the Deputy Clerk oversees sales of cemetery lots and the Township's U.S. Passport office. The Deputy Clerk is a full-time position that supports the part-time elected Clerk in fulfilling the duties of the office.

No Wipes Down the Pipes

Even if a product says it is "flushable" ...

Unless it is toilet paper, it should not be flushed!

- Diapers (including cloth, cotton, disposable, or plastic)
- Flushable, disposable, cleaning, or baby wipes
- Paper towels, cloth towels, or any type of rag
- Feminine hygiene products
- Facial Tissues



Place the items listed above in a trash can

**Putting these items down toilets may plug sewers and
cause raw sewage to back up into YOUR HOME**

REMINDERS FROM THE ASSESSING DEPARTMENT

November 1, 2015 is the next deadline to file for the Principle Residence Exemption Affidavit (form 2368). This will apply to the winter tax levy and subsequent levies so long as it remains the owners' principal residence. The form can be obtained on Plainfield Charter Township's website.

Our assessing staff is out in neighborhoods this summer. If your neighborhood was chosen for our cyclical re-inspection you would have received or will be receiving a letter in the mail. There is a questionnaire that we ask you to complete which is included with the letter, or it can be obtained on our website. When we have visited your property, notice will be given by leaving a door hanger.

Commercial property owners please return your questionnaire if you were mailed one this year. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Teresa Zimmerman, Assessor