



The Profile

VOLUME XXXIII NUMBER 1

OCTOBER 2007

Susan Morrow, the longest currently-serving Plainfield Township elected official, has been clerk since 1984. That's 23 years! Jeff Hawkins, appointed Deputy Clerk by Mrs. Morrow in June of 2000, has been working for Plainfield Township as a paid-on-call Firefighter for 14-years and has risen to the rank of Lieutenant. Kathy Timmerman, Clerk's Assistant, is the third full-time employee of the Clerk's Office, and she has been employed by

the Township since 1990. These three people are among the friendliest and most helpful to citizens and guests in the Township Offices.

Serving you, the public, is their business and their motivation. When you step inside the front door, Kathy is the person you are likely to meet first. She is also most likely to greet you if you call 364-8466. It is usually her friendly greeting that callers hear, and it is unusual to get an automated greeting unless Kathy and the next tier of greeters are serving others or are otherwise occupied or not available that day. Kathy prides herself on her knowledge of the Township and being able to

direct callers or visitors to the right office or the right organization. I am amazed how she can juggle so many inquiries and still have the time to complete the many other duties assigned to her. Cemetery questions, voter registration and election questions, building and parks reservations, and passport applications are among those duties. When Kathy is on vacation or otherwise not at her station, substitutes aspire to handle her key position as well as she.

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Introducing the Township Clerk's Office



Ninth in a series of articles highlighting the departments in the Plainfield Township organization

Left: Kathy Timmerman, Clerk's Asst.; Susan Morrow, Clerk; and Jeff Hawkins, Deputy Clerk

Township Clerk's Office *from page 1*

Jeff is "steady Eddie," or other attributes that may fit. He is usually off in his corner office, but he fills in at the reception desk, steps out to handle snowplow operator permits, assists with passports, takes applications for miscellaneous temporary business permits, signs documents in the absence of Mrs. Morrow, or any number of functions that require his attention. As Deputy Clerk, he is empowered and charged with performing all of the functions of Township Clerk as needed. As such, he must be sharp, knowledgeable, and ready to perform.

Sue Morrow's "Job Description," as detailed in the list of **core competencies** put out by the Michigan Townships Association, fills an entire page from top to bottom using small type. For example, to carry out her responsibilities competently and well, the Clerk's knowledge of township government operations must extend well beyond her statutory authority. To do her job well, she needs to know a huge amount of details about other people's jobs and functions. A novice running for the office of Township Clerk may not have a clue about what is involved, but the obvious — running elections, keeping records, taking minutes, receiving official correspondence, etc. — just scratches the surface. Fortunately, our Township has someone of considerable skills, knowledge, and accomplishments in the person of Sue Morrow. She reached a pinnacle of accomplishment and recognition by being elected and serving as President of the International Association of Municipal Clerks from 2005-2006. We share her pride.

The Clerk's Office has had to deal with significant changes in state and federal election law, as well as requirements for completely new voting machines. After being on the cutting edge of voter equipment technology with efficient and flexible "touch screen" equipment for the past 12 years, ALL Michigan municipalities must now use the optical scanning tech-

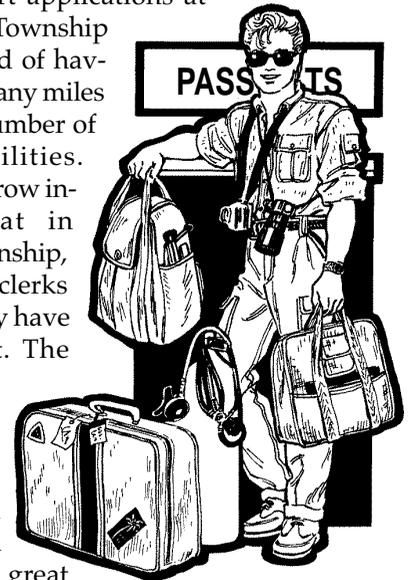
nology that Plainfield Township voters were recently introduced to. Voter registration has been integrated with a statewide system (MI-QVF). Election date schedules have been "reformed" by the state, and schools may no longer conduct their own elections with their own voter registration systems.

For the past five years, citizens have been able to file passport applications at the Plainfield Township Offices, instead of having to travel many miles to a limited number of federal facilities.

Since Sue Morrow introduced that in Plainfield Township, several other clerks in Kent County have followed suit. The Clerk's Office also coordinates the Township's website with our contracted Webmaster. A great deal of useful township information can be found on the "www.plainfieldchartertp.org" website, and the Clerk's Office is currently working with our consultant to provide more current information and to make upcoming board meeting agenda materials available to the public.

The Clerk's Office handles cemetery lot sales, administers employee benefits programs, including health insurance coordination and workers' compensation, is in charge of township risk management, coordinates Freedom of Information Act inquiries, and carries out many other functions. Sue, Jeff, and Kathy encourage citizens to call, write, or visit for assistance or to learn more about what they do.

Robert C. Homan, Township Manager





Message from the Supervisor

SUMMER'S OVER

No doubt the first nine months of 2007 have flown by. I do hope each and every one of you had the opportunity to spend

some quality time together with your families and develop some long lasting relationships with one another.

By the time you read this article, the summer days of 2007 will be behind us. We will soon be seeing the beautiful colors of a Michigan fall, with schools back in full swing. Some of the kids will be experiencing school for the first time and looking forward to each new school day with lots of excitement. Those students who are seniors, either in high school or college, are counting the number of days to the end of the school year when they will gain their long sought after "FREEDOM."

For the younger people, they can't wait to grow up and be on their own, making their own decisions that will help mold their futures and become our future leaders. For those of us who are older, we are mystified as to, "where did the time go?" and, "I don't feel that old!" As we all know, growing up, graduating from high school or college, getting married and having families, all bring new responsibilities into our lives.

It seems like there are more and more young people dying unnecessarily by firearms or auto accidents who will never have the chance to grow up and use their talents to really make a difference in our society. If you are a parent, become involved in your children's lives, become a friend and a buddy as well as a parent and help that child "make a difference." You'll be glad you did.

George K. Meek, Supervisor

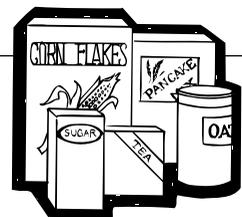
Commodity Distribution

Commodities will be distributed to qualified low-income persons on these dates:

December 6, 2007 • March 6, 2008

To qualify, you must reside between 4 Mile Road and 10 Mile Road. Distribution is at 6156 Belmont Avenue NE, directly across from the Township Offices. Hours are 9 am to 1 pm.

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



KDL NEWS

Kent District Library

New Print Management System Offers New Options

The Kent District Library has introduced a new print management system in order to provide patrons with more services including: color copies, color printing, easy to use self-service machines, and faster performance. Patrons purchase a print card for \$1.00 which works like a debit card, allowing the computer to automatically deduct the cost of printed documents or copies from the print card's balance. This management system is anticipated to reduce paper waste by 25% and be a cost-effective solution for KDL. Copy costs: black-on-white copies \$.15 each
color copies \$1.00 each

Online Testing for Education and Career Needs

Do you need help preparing for a big test or certification exam? Kent District Library offers a wide variety of databases for your educational, informational, and recreational needs. Two of these databases, **Learning Express Library** and **Testing and Education Resource Center**, allow you to take a variety of practice exams online at your leisure. The Learning Express database offers practice tests in things like algebra skills, GED, ASVAB and graduate school entrance exams. Users may track their results, save tests in progress, and receive recommendations for further areas of study. The Testing and Education Resource Center offers e-books for test preparation to accompany the practice exams. This feature allows the student to instantly download and view the test preparation book without having to check it out from

the library. These databases and other valuable tools are available 24 hours a day at www.kdl.org.

Free Library Programming for the Whole Family

For all Ages: Family Sunday events at the Plainfield Branch, all at 2 pm – no registration required:

- September 30 – **Outdoor Discovery Center Reptile Program**: A hands-on look at snakes, turtles, and lizards.
- October 7 – **Stevens Puppets**: A marionette puppet show of Aladdin.
- October 14 – **Tim Salisbury**: Comedy juggling and more.
- October 21 – **Like Water Drumworks**: Experience the fine art of West African drum.
- October 28 – **Family Pumpkin Carving** (bring your own pumpkin): Carve your family's Halloween pumpkin with our tools and templates.
- November 25 – **Rich Eddy's Rockin' Oldies Band**: A toe-tapping live musical performance featuring hits from the 50s and 60s.

For Ages 6 and Under:

Fall Babytime, Laptime and Storytime programs run from September 10-November 1. (Registration is required).

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

Plainfield – Tuesdays at 1:00 pm

Comstock Park – Thursdays at 1:00 pm

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

Plainfield – Thursdays at 9:45 am & 10:45 am

Comstock Park – Mondays at 10:30 am

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

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

Comstock Park – Mondays at 10:30 am

Family Storytime – For birth–age 6.

Plainfield – Wednesdays at 10 am

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

Plainfield – All Wednesdays at 7:00 pm

Comstock Park – Monday, Nov. 5 at 10:30 am

Other Upcoming Programs Include...

DIY Storytime and Craft - kids birth–age 6

Plainfield – Wednesday, November 7 &

Thursday, November 8 at 10 am

Olivia the Pig Party - for all ages

Plainfield – Wednesday, Nov. 14 &

Thursday, Nov. 15 at 10 am

Chocolate! – Crafts, stories and tasting – For kids age 6 and up

Comstock Park – Thursday, Oct. 11 at 6:30 pm

Plainfield – Friday, November 9 at 10 am

For Adults:

Pottery Painting - Paint a bowl or plate which will be donated to “Soups On For All,” an event to benefit God’s Kitchen. All materials provided.

Comstock Park – Tuesday, Oct. 9 at 6:30 pm

Free Computer Confidence Classes will be held at various locations throughout the district this fall including sessions at the **KDL Service Center**, 814 West River Center (behind the Wendy’s) in Comstock Park. Classes will focus on keyboarding, basic computer skills, and internet and e-mail use. Please call 647-3880 or more information or to register.

Book Discussions – You are warmly welcomed to join our friendly, informal groups. Please call to reserve your copy of the next title.

Comstock Park – Fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm

Plainfield – Second Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm

Friends of the Plainfield Library

This group is a 501 c (3) charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Code and is

eligible to receive donations which may be tax deductible to the donors. There are about 100 members with a very dedicated executive board and core group of volunteers who sponsor books sales and programs that provide additional funds for the Plainfield Library. With over \$37,000 in financial support from the Friends during the past two years, the library has been able to update and reconfigure its circulation and computer service areas. The Friends also participates in activities which benefit the community as a whole such as United Way’s Adopt-A-Family Christmas Project and the KDL Alliance of Friends. Here is a list of what the Friends have planned this fall:

Before the Snow Flies 10th Anniversary Arts & Crafts Show at the Plainfield Branch – Our 10th annual sale of crafts and baked goods; and a silent auction. Entrance fee is \$.50, with door prizes all day! Sponsored by the Friends of the Plainfield Township Library.

Saturday, October 27, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 pm.

Home-Based Sales – Great gift items for Christmas, birthday, anniversaries, or for yourself will be on sale at the Plainfield Branch! Entrance fee of \$.50. Sponsored by the Friends of the Plainfield Township Library. Saturday, November 24, 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

PLAINFIELD BRANCH HOURS

2650 5-Mile Road NE • Phone: 647-3930

Mon. through Thurs. 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Friday, Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

(during the school year only)

COMSTOCK PARK BRANCH HOURS

3943 West River Drive • Phone: 647-3860

Monday 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Friday, Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

On December 18, 2006, the Township Board adopted a comprehensive change to the zoning ordinance. The new zoning ordinance included changes that impact residential development and construction. Many of these changes were based upon input from the public and have been eagerly awaited for some time. The following outlines some of those changes pertaining to questions that we receive in the Community Development Department. They are:

1. The R-1A Zoning District: An R-1A, Single Family zoning district was created to replicate the setbacks under which our older developments were built. Most of these properties were formerly zoned as R-1, Single Family. You may ask, what's difference between the two? In many cases, but not all, the front yard setback has been reduced to 25 feet, the rear yard setback to 40 feet and the side yard put on a variable scale between 5 and 15 feet (check with staff to see how this affects you). These setbacks are intended to mirror the historical setbacks for these areas and provide more flexibility on these smaller lots. This helps to eliminate nonconformities, encour-

ages reinvestment and improvements. Some of the areas included in these new setback requirements are the neighborhoods of Hills and Dales, Orlando Park, Little Pine Island, Rezen, Dean Lake, Wabash, Riverbank, Konkle, Willow, Abrigador, Filkins, Rudy and Revere. These districts were based upon average lot size and neighborhood characteristics. Please check with the Township to see if you are included in the new district. A copy of the Zoning Map is also available at our website.

Zoning Ordinance Changes



2. The R-1 Zoning District: This is one of the largest zoning districts in the Township and where most new developments occur. The major change was a reduction in the rear yard setback from 50 feet to 40 feet.

3. Accessory Buildings: This entire section was rewritten

and here some of the major changes:

- a. Sheds under 200 square feet do not need a building permit and can be located 3 feet from side and rear property lines, **in most cases but not all. Check with the Community Development Department prior to building a shed.**

- b. Attached garage sizes are now based upon the habitable finished floor area of the dwelling. This means that in some cases they can be larger than the previous 864 square foot requirement.
- c. The allowable overall square footage of accessory buildings has been increased. However, a cap has been provided in Rural Estate and Rural Preserve zoning districts, excluding agricultural uses. Lot size is still a major factor.
- d. Temporary and portable accessory buildings such as carport tents etc., are required to meet setback requirements and depending on the size of the building, property owners are required to obtain a building permit. Temporary and portable accessory buildings constructed without building permits were not grandfathered by this ordinance. They have always been required to meet setback requirements and to obtain permits.

- a. In most residential zoning districts, fences are limited to 4 feet in height in the front yard and 6 feet in height in the rear yard. Please be aware there are additional requirements for clear vision corners.
- b. Fence posts and vertical supports must be on the inside of fences and facing inside of the property, so the "good side" faces the neighbor.
- c. Please keep in mind, fences installed prior to the December 18, 2006 ordinance are grandfathered. New fences or fence replacements after that date are not.

- 5. **Driveways:** New driveways on both public and private roads are required to be paved for the first 50 feet with the construction of a new dwelling or when a home is improved more than 25 percent of its market value. Driveways predating this ordinance are grandfathered.

4. Fencing and Walls: The fence and wall regulations are a completely new section of the zoning ordinance.

The information above has been generalized so, please check with the Community Development Department before hand. The new zoning ordinance can be found online at plainfieldchartertwp.org.



26th Annual Holly Harvest Bazaar
 Saturday, November 10, 2007 • 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
 Plainfield / Northview Senior Center
 5255 Grand River Drive NE (just west of the East Beltline)
 Lunch served from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
 Cash Prize Raffle • Drawing at 3:00 pm
 1st - \$200 • 2nd - \$100 • 3rd - \$50
 plus FREE gift drawings every hour!



Whoa!

And Now For Something Completely Different!

Have you seen it! Have you been there? Don't be frightened; don't be foolish; but do be careful. I'm talking about the new "roundabout" – traffic circle – at the intersection of Brewer Avenue and Seven Mile Road near Boulder Creek.

Travelers to this location have seen, or will see, the very first of its kind approved by the Kent County Road Commission. It is interesting, to say the least. Challenging, too, for the first time. I had thought about asking the Road Commission's Traffic Engineering Office to write a "How to" for using this traffic device, but the PROFILE is ready to go to print, and I neglected to give them advance notice; so I'm going to give my own layperson's explanation and check with the Traffic Engineer to make sure I'm not mistaken.

Here are the basic rules to follow:

Rule No. 1 – Slow down as you approach the circle. 15 MPH is about the fastest you should go.

Rule No. 2 – Stay to the right, whether you intend to turn right, go through the intersec-

tion, or to make a left. Do NOT cheat by turning left without going around the circle! It is dangerous, stupid, and very illegal to do that. I wouldn't have mentioned this, but we have heard from eyewitnesses that some have been observed doing that. DON'T!

Rule No. 3 – An entering vehicle must yield to a vehicle in the circle. When you see another vehicle approaching, entering, or using the circle, start using extra caution, courtesy, or even yielding if it appears that you might be intersecting with the path of the other vehicle. Don't stop, unless it appears that the other vehicle is not maneuvering through the circle as properly as you know it should be done.

Rule No. 4 – Do not accelerate until you have completed your transit through the circle and have straightened your wheels to proceed in the intended direction.

Rule No. 5 – Be Careful! It's not rocket science, but using the traffic circle requires careful attention.

Robert Homan, Township Manager

Four Precincts' Polling Locations are Relocated in Plainfield Charter Township

Four polling locations are being moved from schools to churches in response to security concerns at the schools. The changes become effective with the first election in 2008. Here are the changes:

Pct. #	From	To	Number of voters
3	West Oakview School	Ambrose Ridge Senior Living Center 1501 Woodworth Street	1910
5	Northview High School	Frontline Community Church 4411 Plainfield Avenue	1898
6	Rockford High School Freshman Center	Blythefield Hills Baptist Church 6727 Kuttshill Drive	2225
9	Comstock Park High School	Grace Fellowship Church 735 Buth Drive	2270

The Township has appreciated the use of the schools for many years and we thank the church boards and management of Ambrose Ridge for their assistance in making these changes possible.

All voters in each of the precincts affected by the change will receive a new voter registration card. It will be mailed close to November 01, 2007. It will come in an envelope clearly marked with an election logo on the outside. Please keep an eye open for it, save it, and take it with you to the next election.

As you can see from the chart above, many people are affected by the change. It will be very important for each voter to know the address of their polling location as we enter 2008, a very busy election year. The main entrance to each precinct will be clearly marked on Election Day.

Upcoming Election Dates

November, 2007	NO General Election in townships
January 15, 2008	Presidential Preference Primary – <i>subject to change.</i>
May 06, 2008	Election Day
August 05, 2008	Primary Election Day
November 04, 2008	General Election Day



Election Inspectors Needed

Applications to serve as an election inspector for any election are available on line at www.plainfieldchartertp.org or by calling the Plainfield Charter Township offices, 364-8466, between 7:30am and 4:30pm. Inspectors are appointed by the Election Commission for each election. In an effort to reduce the cost of elections for schools, 3 inspectors per precinct are usually appointed for the election conducted in May each year. For the Primary Election and the General Election in 2008 we will need as many as 7 inspectors per precinct. Please consider applying to serve the township in this capacity. You must be a registered voter to serve as an inspector and you must indicate your political party affiliation on your application.

Here are the pay rates for these positions:

TRAINING SESSION	WHO MUST ATTEND	PAY RATE
Election School	All inspectors and chair people	\$9.00/hr
Chairperson Election School	Chair people	\$10.00/hr
Public Test	All Chair people who are available	\$10.00/hr
Precinct Set-up	All Chair people who are available	\$10.00/hr
Election Day	Chairperson	\$160.00/day
	Election Inspectors	\$140.00/day
	Backups	\$ 20.00/day
	Absent Counting Board	\$ 12.00/hr

Inspectors are required by law to attend Election School to receive training in operating the polling locations. Election School is usually 2 hours long and is conducted just prior to each election. Chair people receive many additional hours of instruction prior to each election. The Clerk and her staff have all received training from the state and are certified to conduct elections and to teach election schools.

Township Board Election Information

All townships board members in Michigan are elected in the same election cycle as the President of the United States. Candidates must file a nominating petition, abide by campaign finance laws, and be a registered voter in the community in which they run for office.

Candidates who run on a partisan ballot appear on the Primary Election ballot in August as they oppose members of their own party for the opportunity to run in the General Election when parties oppose one another. The deadline for partisan candidates to file a completed

petition for local office is May 13, 2008.

Candidates who run as an independent do not appear on the Primary Election ballot; they only appear on the General Election ballot in November. The deadline for non-partisan candidates to file a completed petition is July 17, 2008.

All local candidates must file a petition, which has the signatures of registered voters in the township. Candidates for local office may not file with a filing fee.

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The local offices being elected in the General Election on November 02, 2008 are Township Supervisor, Township Clerk, Township Treasurer, and four Township Trustees. All terms are four years. Candidate packets will be available in the Clerk's office during regular business hours beginning February 18, 2008. Please call the office before you come to get a packet. The packets are prepared at the county and delivered to the local Clerk's offices.

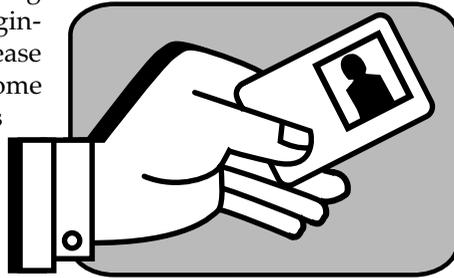


Photo Identification Required

Beginning with the next election in Plainfield Charter Township, photo identification will be required to receive a ballot for voters voting in person in a precinct. A state law requiring photo identification was passed several years ago; however, the implementation was delayed until the challenge in court was concluded. The Michigan Supreme Court ruled the photo ID constitutional and it is now being required as part of the voting process. Please remember to bring a photo ID to the polling place next time you vote in person.

A VOTE (Absent Voter Online Tracking Engine)

When the 2008 election cycle begins, voters in Plainfield Charter Township who vote absentee will be able to track their applications and ballots online. Voters will go to the township web site, www.plainfieldchartertp.org, to the Clerk's Department, click Elections, click A VOTE to see the status of their application and ballot.

A voter will see when their application for an absent voter ballot was mailed to them, when the completed application was received in the Clerk's office, when the ballot was mailed to the voter, and when the voted ballot was received in the Clerk's office. Absent voters will now know that their ballot has been received by the Clerk and is ready for tabulation. If voters have any questions about their ballots after they review the online information, they may still call the Clerk's office, however, the online service is available all hours of the day and all days of the week (24/7).

Plainfield Charter Township is the first community in Kent County to have an absent voter ballot tracking engine so we hope our voters will use this service. More than 4,000 voters voted absentee in the last General Election when a President was elected and we expect many more to vote absentee in the 2008 election cycle.

Checking **A VOTE** at www.plainfieldchartertp.org will offer the voter information about their ballot process and develop trust that their voted ballot has been received. Thank you to all the voters who vote absentee for helping to reduce the lines at polling locations on every election day.

Anyone over the age of 60 and anyone who will be absent from the township on Election Day is eligible to vote absentee. If you qualify and would like to receive an application for an absent voter ballot for every election, please call 364-8466 to put your name on the list of permanent absent voters. You will always receive an application before each scheduled election. When you receive your application you may return it for a ballot or you may decide for some reason not to vote.

Tax Commission Addresses Falling Home Values

One need only open a newspaper or turn on a television to know that home values are dropping, sales are slowing down to almost a trickle and foreclosures are on the rise. The State Tax Commission has moved to address these issues by the following:

- The state will allow local assessors to consider foreclosed properties in their sales studies for the 2008 assessments. They have determined that foreclosure sales may be used in sales studies if the sale is market-driven and the condition of the property has not deteriorated. In the past, foreclosures were not considered "arms-length" transactions. Kent County and the local units will be reviewing the circumstances of those sales before they are included in the studies.
- Assessors will be allowed to use studies based on one year of sales when markets are in the decline. In the past, our market has typically been on the rise. This is not the case today. Plainfield intends to study sales based on the one-year sales period approved by the state of October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007, to determine if that period better reflects what is actually happening in our market area. As

of this writing, we are still gathering sales data for review, which will be studied individually by sales neighborhoods. As is the case each year, our target is to define the areas that need to be increased or decreased to ultimately reflect the township overall average shown in the county studies.

Please keep in mind that changes affect the assessed value, not the taxable value. The taxable value is a calculated formula that increases with inflation. As the assessments decrease the taxable value may begin to "catch up" to the assessed value. It will continue to rise with the Consumers Price Index each year, but will never be higher than the assessed value. This means that taxpayers may see **decreases in their assessed values and increases in their taxable values.**

After our review of all pertinent data, we will be compiling assessed and taxable values and will send assessment notices to all property owners in late February. The Board of Review for 2008 will meet in early March as mandated by state law. The assessment change notices will contain information on appealing your assessments.

Please, Don't Dump in Our Parks!!!



Please DO NOT dispose of yard waste, grass, leaves and brush in the Township's parks. Come on, folks! This is like putting your trash in your neighbor's yard. It is littering on a big scale and is obviously illegal. Instead of bringing your tree-cutting and pruning byproducts to public parks, you can bring brush and logs (wood products only) to Cannonsburg Wood Products, Inc. at 10251 Northland Drive, at no charge! They will *not* accept grass or leaves. Please call them in advance to confirm that they will accept your debris. Their phone number is (616) 866-4459.

Hyser Rivers Museum Open through December 2

The Hyser Rivers Museum will be open from 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm on the first Sunday of the months of October, November and December. Tours and a children’s craft project will be offered. The scheduled craft projects will correspond with upcoming holidays.

October 7	Halloween craft
November 4	Thanksgiving craft
December 2	Christmas craft

The Museum will be closed during the winter months from December 3, 2007, through April 2008. It will open again the first Sunday of May 2008, 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm, and subsequent first Sundays of the month through the fall. Group tours can be arranged by calling the Plainfield Township offices at (616) 364-8466.



Township Pictorial History To Be Published

Township residents have a chance to contribute to an upcoming pictorial history of Plainfield Township. Former township resident Ann (Egner, Northview ‘80) Byle, a freelance writer, has received a contract from Arcadia Publishing to create the book “Plainfield Township.”

Arcadia specializes in preserving history by reproducing black-and-white photographs in book form. “Plainfield Township,” part of Arcadia’s Images of America series, will feature about 300 photographs of the township’s early days until about 1960. Photo captions will tell the story of both the township and the specific photograph, with photo credit going to the family or photographer who contributes the picture.

“Plainfield Township has such a rich history,” said Byle. “I’m hoping to tap into the many resources here to dig up some great photographs, postcards, stereographs or other images of early township residents, homes, businesses or events.”

Examples: photographs of grandparents or parents who were a part of township life; historic homes that still stand or no longer exist; events such as the 1956 tornado; school, club or church photographs; early businesses; farm life; family life.

If you have old photographs of Plainfield Township people, homes, businesses or events, please contact the township offices (726-8888) or Ann Byle (364-0691). Photographs will be digitally scanned into a computer to allow residents to keep the originals, with all rights to reproduce each photograph retained by the owner. “Plainfield Township” will be released in 2008 and will cost about \$20. Deadline for providing photographs is December 1.

Books published by Arcadia are available online or at area bookstores. Recent Arcadia titles include “Alpine Township” by Mary Alt and “Grand Rapids in Stereographs: 1860-1900” by Tom Dilley.

"In the Interest of Public Health,
Public Sanitary Sewer is Superior and Preferred
to Other Means of Sewage Disposal."

In a nutshell, this is what longstanding Michigan State law declares. To that end, local units of government have been given authority to require connection to public sewer that is available within 200 feet of any structure that generates sewage. Plainfield Charter Township has been taking this very seriously. Starting with federal grant programs in the Seventies and Eighties, most of Plainfield Township's urbanized developed areas are now being served by sewers. Over more than a decade, Plainfield Township has encouraged, required, and generated sewer extension projects to make available this important piece of urban infrastructure. In all of human history, development of public sanitary sewer systems has been THE most important factor in reducing disease and mortality.

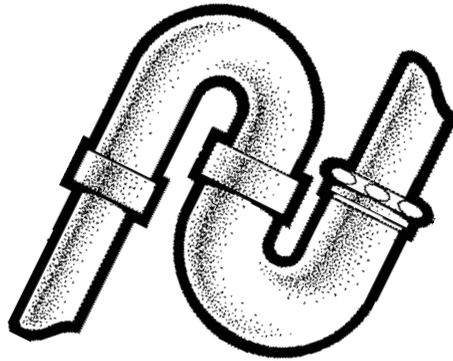
Federal and state grants that provided 80-90 percent of the cost of building sewer systems have all but disappeared in the past two decades, so the expansion of our local sewer system has pretty much depended on developers (for new neighborhoods) and the Township (for "filling in" gaps and pockets that were bypassed or were not within the reach of the sewers installed in the Seventies and Eighties).

Local governments that are as progressive in advancing public infrastructure to existing neighborhoods typically wait for petitions for special assessment districts to pave gravel roads,

put in sidewalks, and replace wells and septic systems with public water and sewer. This is a slow and often difficult process because it requires a majority of property owners to recognize these needs, to have a longer-term perspective about those needs, and to be willing to offer to spend their own money to secure the improvements. This is particularly difficult with sewers, because only a few homeowners in a typical neighborhood have problems with their septic systems at any given time. Others flush their toilets, take showers, and wash their clothes and dishes without any apparent problems. Another factor is the homeowners who have recently invested in expensive repairs to their septic systems. They certainly don't want to start paying their share of a new neighborhood sewer collection system.

In the past eleven years, I can recall only six cases where special assessment districts ("SADs") were successfully petitioned. There were five small districts consisting of 4, 10, 11, 15, and 17 homes each. The sixth SAD was Holtman Drive, consisting of 29 homes near Dean Lake. In these few areas, there were barely enough petitioning homeowners for these projects to be built. During that time, some eighteen other sewer extension projects were built. Several of these were in conjunction with road improvements, since sewers are typically built underneath road pavement to serve both sides of a street. The others were at the initiative of the Township Board, who decided that build-

Taking our Sewage Systems Seriously



ing public sewers was immediately needed for the minority who had septic system problems or would be needed in the future by those whose septic systems would ultimately fail. In every one of these neighborhoods, there were many who recognized that having public sewers would be an asset to their neighborhood and to their homes.

As a result of this proactive approach to providing for the public health, safety, and welfare of our citizens over the past ten years, approximately 350 homes are now either connected to public sewers or are able to connect to public sewers. This would not have happened without the initiative of the Plainfield Township Board of Trustees. The news media have recently reported on controversy and discontent among most of 120 property owners in a cluster of neighborhoods north of 4 Mile Road just east of Dean Lake. Septic systems in this area are typically 35-40 years old. Some are failing, nearly all do not meet current State Health Codes for construction, and many cannot fix or rebuild their systems to meet code.

About two years ago, the Township Board requested preliminary engineering information for extending sewers to serve approximately 850 homes located in pockets of 20 to 80 homes to determine the scope of this issue and to formulate a long term, systematic, and comprehensive solution to this issue. At about this time, the Kent County Health Department and some residents experiencing septic system failures in the Keeweenaw-Algansee area north of 4 Mile Road urged the Township Board to provide sewers to this area. The Board then directed the Township Engineer to design and solicit bids for extending public sewers. Eleven bids were received, and the project was awarded to the low bidder in June.

If public sewers were provided at no cost – or a fraction of the cost, there would probably be little of the opposition that you may have heard about recently. Constructing sewers in this neighborhood will cost approximately \$11,500

to \$12,000 per home, and system connection fees amount to an additional \$4,200. On top of these costs are the costs of plumbing work on individual private home sites, including the cost of abandoning old septic systems. These are the true costs, and they are not avoidable – unless the Township chooses not to positively address this issue and leaves citizens to their own devices when septic systems fail. The Board is currently working on a program of long term financing to allow homeowners the option of paying their individual shares of the sewer systems costs over a period of twenty years at a relatively low rate of interest (4-4.5%).

Right now, and since 1997, when the Board increased the period of time that a homeowner is required to connect, homeowners must connect within **10 years** of public sewer being available. Opposition leaders in the neighborhood where sewer is now under construction want that period increased to **20 years!** State law allows and encourages local governments to require connection much sooner – typically 90 to 180 days. The Township presently requires homeowners whose septic system has failed to connection to public sewer immediately. Traditional mortgage lenders often require connection as a condition of approving their mortgages. The Board is considering the following: **(1)** To what extent should Plainfield Township follow State policy on connection to public sewers? Not at all? Allow 180 days... ten years...twenty years? **(2)** How does the Township ensure that the costs of these sewer extensions get paid for in a reasonable period of time? **(3)** Should the Township's Sewer Fund subsidize a portion of the cost?

These issues are neither simple nor easily solved. The Township Board has been wrestling with them — intensively for the past couple of years, and sporadically for many more years. Your understanding of this situation is important, and your support of the Board's decisions in these matters would be welcomed and appreciated.

Robert Homan, Township Manager

Important Information About Your Drinking Water

Monitoring Requirements Not Met for Plainfield Township

Plainfield Township is required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. For 3 days in April 2007, Plainfield Township was not in compliance with the State of Michigan's **turbidity monitoring rules**, which are designed to help test and assure the required quality of our public drinking water.

What should I do? There is nothing you need to do. This violation was not an emergency. You did not need to boil water or use an alternative source of water at the time of the violation.-

The table below lists the contaminant we did not properly test for, how often we are supposed to sample, and how often we actually sampled.

Contaminant Testing Parameter:	Required sampling frequency	Our sampling frequency	Time Period
Turbidity			
Routine Operation:	Every 15 minutes	Every 15 minutes	4/1/07 to 4/18/07, 4/26/07 to 4/30/07
If a turbidity instrument needs repairs:	Every 4 hours for not more than <u>5</u> days	Every 4 hours for almost <u>8</u> days	4/18/2007 to 4/26/2007

What happened? What is being done? On April 18, 2007 a continuous online turbidimeter (which collects turbidity samples every second) failed to operate on *one* of the plant's twelve filters. When turbidimeters fail to operate, grab samples are required for at least every four hours while the filter is in service. However, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Act 399, requires that the turbidimeter be repaired and put back into service within 5 days. Unfortunately, the turbidimeter that failed to operate was offline for almost 8 full days. This was due to an unavailability of parts that had to be back ordered.

On April 26, 2007, the turbidimeter was repaired and returned to service. The filter was monitored at least once every 1.5 hours for the entire duration and at no time during the 8-day period did the turbidity readings fail to meet drinking water standards. In addition to continuously monitoring each individual filter, Plainfield Township's licensed water plant operators continuously monitored the *combined* filter effluent of all the filters, and at no time during the 8-day period did the turbidity at this location not meet drinking water standards.

A spare portable turbidimeter has been purchased. This will alleviate this type of minor violation, which has no adverse health effects. For more information, please contact Mr. Donald Petrovich, Plainfield Township Water Plant Superintendent, 5220 Woodfield Ct. NE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525 at 616-364-7174, or the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality at 616-356-0271.

You are invited to share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by Plainfield Township.

And now... a straightforward commentary and explanation of what you have just read...

Sometimes we must do things we may not particularly want to do. I would consider the foregoing “required” public notice of Plainfield Township’s violation of a United States Environmental Protection Agency regulation one of those things. Although one might think that this admission of wrongdoing is unnecessary and “chicken droppings,” the law and its enforcers require it, and we must abide by the law. However, I also think that it is right and proper to explain what the notice really is — and what it isn’t.

We have several sophisticated turbidity measurement devices that can malfunction or break down. (“Turbidity,” by the way, can be characterized as “cloudiness” in a glass of water held up to the light.) Levels of turbidity can and should be measured, because exceeding a certain threshold may indicate that there are pollutants in the public water supply that should not be there. It is important that the public water supply be tested, disinfected, monitored, and treated to safeguard the public health of our community. Protection of public health is one of the principal reasons why government exists, and we take this responsibility most seriously.

With this notice, our PROFILE readers now know that one of our turbidity-measuring devices (one for each of twelve filter chambers in our water plant) malfunctioned back in April. What should we do? We should fix it or replace it, right? Of course! When this happened, we pulled the meter, found the problem, and ordered the part needed to fix it. Meanwhile — and very important to this explanation — **we continued to test water from this filter chamber using manual “grab samples” every four hours and ran tests on them in our laboratory while the filters were running.** That is just fine and acceptable to the EPA, but they allow us to do this for only consecutive five days. “Reasonable,” you say. It shouldn’t take more than

five days to fix the meter, or replace it and put it back in service—right? Probably so on most occasions, but not this time. It took us EIGHT days to get the needed part. Meanwhile, we conscientiously took samples by hand and tested them until we got our meter back on line. We also continued to test all our other filters and composite samples from all of the filters in use, using the other functioning turbidimeters. Our water customers should expect no less.

Our shortcoming, our failure, our VIOLATION! ... was that we didn’t have a spare meter on hand, and it took three too many days to get the part. GUILTY! We are indeed guilty of that — and we publicly confess this to all of our PROFILE readers in this edition of our township’s newsletter. There could be worse penalties for what I would characterize as a minor compliance issue. Now that we have gotten this off our chest and are in compliance with the EPA rules by publishing the required public notice of our violation, we can breathe easier — and so can you, even though this is the first you’ve heard of this. The quality and safety of your water supply was never jeopardized by our three-day failure, and we are sure that you did not get “a bad batch” during those three days.

What are we doing to prevent a recurrence? We are purchasing new models in 2008 to replace several accurate and working older model turbidimeters so that we have less chance of an eight-day delay in getting parts. We bought an “extra”—a spare, too. While this does not absolutely guarantee that we will not find ourselves guilty of another such technical violation, we’re trying.

Thank you for your patience and your understanding.

Robert C. Homan, Township Manager

PLAINFIELD FD FIRE DEPARTMENT

My spring article discussed the development of a master plan for the Fire Department. We have met with the Public Safety Committee to discuss the long-range goals of the department and are preparing to meet with the community. The Fire Department has had several individual plans in place that allow us to be organized in our operations, but the intent of preparing a master plan is to bring all of those plans together in one document to assure that we have considered all options and that our efforts are as efficient as possible.

One document that has been in existence since at least the very early 90's is a Capital Purchasing Plan. This plan provides a guide for how much money we project to spend over a set period of time. The plan originally included buildings and apparatus for the next ten years, but has been expanded to twenty years and includes equipment. Equipment was added due to the cost of things such as Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), which exceeds \$250,000 per air pack, and it is necessary to replace all 40 SCBA at once, becoming a significant expenditure. It has been discussed that it would be prudent to develop a separate capi-

tal account that receives a set amount of money every year. This would allow the budget to remain relatively constant and eliminate the need to borrow money for large purchases. Occasionally borrowing works out but typically that is not the case.

The Capital Plan called for the purchase of two fire trucks over a three-year period. By ordering both trucks this year, we were able to save over \$40,000 in addition to what we saved on the financing. The savings result from less cost for engineering, more competition because of the larger sale, and we avoided having to purchase the new diesel engines which add about \$15,000 per vehicle. The trucks are being manufactured now with anticipated delivery in February. The chassis (this includes the passenger compartment and the frame of the truck) was manufactured by Spartan Motors located in Charlotte, MI. The committee that developed the specifications traveled to Spartan Motors and inspected the trucks prior to them being shipped to General Safety located in Wyoming, Minnesota. Once there, General Safety will manufacture and install the body.

You may see more pictures of the chassis on our web site at www.Plainfieldfire.org.



*David Peterson,
Fire Chief*

2007 Summer Taxes Reminder Notice

As a courtesy, the Treasurer will mail special Reminder Notices to those taxpayers who did not pay their entire 2007 summer tax bill.

Taxpayer question:

Have my taxes been paid?

You can access your "property information" via the Internet by accessing the Township's web site, www.plainfieldchartertp.org. This information is available 24/7. Click the "Property Information" button on the Township's home page. You will get a screen that lists "Plainfield Township" and all you have to do is click the Login button. From there you can retrieve information by various search criteria. The Assessing and Tax information is available. All of this is public information. **All of the pages are printable which makes it very convenient for having a copy available for Federal/State tax reporting.** The data is updated daily!! If you have any questions, feel free to call and we can walk you through the process.

Special Assessments on your winter bill

We have had many telephone calls regarding the inability to deduct Special Assessments on your IRS 1040. The Township has never played the role of a tax preparer or given any tax advice. These Special Assessments may be for delinquent water or sewer bills, or road, streetlights, water or sewer assessments.

Kent County taxes

The Kent County operating taxes are now entirely shifted to the summer taxes this year. Your 2007 winter tax bill will still have taxes being collected for the Jail and Seniors.

Dog tags

The Township will start selling the 2008 dog tags starting December 1. The last day to purchase the tag at the Township will be March 1, 2008.

A Citizen's Guide to Cold Weather Practices

Winter means mounds of snow to shovel and layers of ice to remove from our sidewalks and driveways.

We often make the job easier by applying deicers like salt, but besides sodium chloride, many deicers also contain chemicals like cyanide. When ice melts, the salts and chemicals dissolve and flow into street drains that lead directly to nearby streams and lakes, endangering aquatic life. By following a few tips, you can reduce your salt use and prevent water pollution.

1. Try an alternative.

Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) was developed as a deicing alternative because it has fewer adverse environmental impacts than salt and doesn't cause corrosion. Although CMA is more expensive than rock salt, it is recommended for environmentally sensitive areas.

2. Reduce your salt use.

By limiting the amount of salt you use on sidewalks and driveways, you can reduce the amount of polluted snow melt washing into waterways.

3. Use that shovel!

The most important step in deicing is to physically remove as much ice as possible before applying salt. Use a shovel to break up the ice before you add another layer of salt to your sidewalk. Adding more salt without removing what has melted can result in over-application, meaning more salt and chemicals end up in nearby streams and lakes. You can also reduce salt use by limiting access to your home to one entrance. For every doorway that is not used, there will be less salt running into the catch basin in your street, and ultimately the Grand River.

Plainfield Charter Township

TOWNSHIP HALL HOURS

7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday – Friday

Phone: 364-8466

TOWNSHIP BOARD

George Meek, Supervisor

Susan Morrow, Clerk

James Stover, Treasurer

Rebecca Borek, Trustee

Jack Hagedorn, Trustee

Robert Heindricks, Trustee

William Parris, Trustee



MANAGER

Robert Homan

TOWNSHIP BOARD

MEETINGS

7:30 pm

First and Third Mondays

www.plainfieldchartertp.org

The Profile

Plainfield Charter Township

6161 Belmont NE

Belmont, MI 49306

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