



# The Profile

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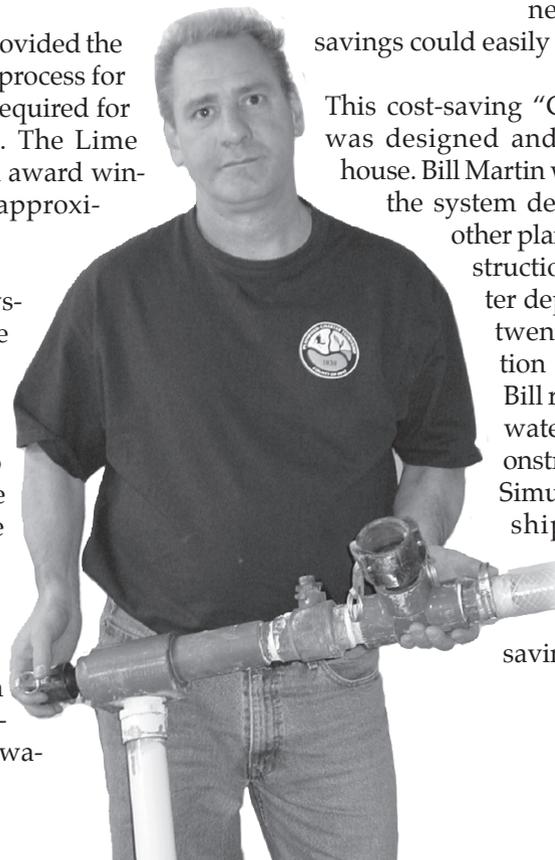
NOVEMBER 2011

## Gimmicks and Gadgets Winner Saves \$5,000 a Year

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) annually acknowledges the best “Gimmick and Gadget” that saves a utility time and money. Plainfield Charter Township Water Plant Operator Bill Martin received the 2011 Gimmick and Gadget award. Bill’s entry provided the water plant a more efficient process for lime slurry mixing (lime is required for drinking water treatment). The Lime Slurry Eductor System is an award winner, saving the township approximately \$5,000 per year.

The Lime Slurry Eductor System was conceived because the original system was complicated, parts were expensive and did not last, the control panel was difficult to operate, and hoses became plugged up and the entire system required a great deal of maintenance and house-keeping.

Bill designed a simple system requiring no electronic components and the township’s wa-



ter system’s own pressure provides the operational power. This system is completely maintained by water plant operators, whereas the old system required an outside contractor to keep it operational. The water plant has estimated that the new “educator system” savings could easily exceed \$5,000 per year.

This cost-saving “Gimmick and Gadget” was designed and built completely in-house. Bill Martin was the impetus behind the system design and teamed with other plant operators on the construction. Bill has been a water department employee for twenty-two years. In addition to his operator duties, Bill regularly participates in water plant tours by demonstrating the Groundwater Simulator. Plainfield Township would like to acknowledge and congratulate Bill Martin for his cost-saving award.

*Mark Bogdanik  
and Mary Trapp*

# Busy Year Ahead

Time passes so fast when I enjoy the work I do. It seems like yesterday when I took the oath of office to proudly serve as your clerk. I get great satisfaction knowing that there are many dedicated Township employees doing their jobs to best serve our citizens. When it comes time for an election, those who volunteer to serve as Election Inspectors continue to impress me with their dedication to insure our political process, a process that continues to be envied throughout the world. This is so important because we will have as many as five elections over the next twelve months. As soon as we complete the November 8, 2011 election we will start preparing for the Presidential Primary that will be held on February 28, 2012.

**The Presidential Primary in the State of Michigan will not be an open primary this year.** Voters will be required to declare a party affiliation when they request a ballot. When you come to the polling location or request an absentee ballot, you will be asked what political party you desire to cast your vote for. Only that party's candidates will be on the ballot you receive. Absentee ballots will be available by mid January for this election. As soon as this election is complete we will be preparing for the possibility of a May election. May 8 is that election date, but we have no details about what might be on the ballot at this time.

**Mark your calendars for May 15 if you plan on having your name on the August primary ballot.** If you are thinking about becoming a local or state elected official, you will need to file your Nominating Petitions and Affidavit

of Identity on or before May 15 at 4:00 pm. Those forms are available on line at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos), click on the "Elections in Michigan" and then "Information for Candidates" or the forms can be picked up at the clerk's office here at Town Hall. Active citizens make for better government and now might be the time for you to take the challenge of running for public office. Please contact me if you have any questions about the process of becoming a candidate. August 7, 2012 is the date for this important primary election.



## Elections '12

**As soon as the August primary is over, we gear up for the November general election.** The presidential election, a very busy election, will be held on November 6, 2012. As you can see I plan on enjoying 2012; as your Clerk I am going to be very busy! If you would like to be part of all of this fun by being an Election Inspector, I will be glad to get an application to you or you can find one on the Township web page [www.plainfieldchartertwp.org](http://www.plainfieldchartertwp.org) under *Voter Information*.

**Those of you who live in the Rockford or Comstock Park Public School districts in Plainfield Charter Township might be receiving notification that your polling location will be changing in May of 2012.** We need to realign some of the precinct boundaries to make for more efficient elections. This is due in part to changes made by the Michigan Legislature. If you haven't heard, you will be seeing the names of school board members on the November 2012 ballot. This change and the 2010 Census have prompted a realignment of pre-

cinct boundaries in Precincts 1, 2 and 9. These changes will save money and help eliminate confusion on Election Day. You will be notified if you are impacted by these changes.

**The Plainfield Township Farmers Market closed for the year on October 27.** Our effort to make fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce available to more customers at the market was a big success. The *Double Up Food Bucks* program grant processed 1,144 transactions that benefited our local growers. We plan on applying for this grant again next year. We were also pleased to have the Northview High School band perform three times at the Market this summer. I am sure glad we had a really hot day for the Band Boosters Dunk Tank at the end of August. If you know of any group that would like to entertain at our market, please let us know. This is a good way to have live performances and allow for the possibility of an additional way to raise funds. The Market will open next year on June 12, 2012 and run through October 18, 2012. The *Discover*

*You Can* grant program for canning education was also a success. Barb Brinkman shared her expertise in canning and provided over 15 canning demonstrations at the Farmers Market, the Plainfield Library, and the Wolverine World Wide YMCA.

**We will also continue to have our passport office open the Saturdays prior to each election here at Town Hall and at the Farmers Market during the season for your convenience.** We are a one-stop passport shop; we can take your picture here and if you have your forms filled out when you arrive it takes less than 15 minutes to complete the application process. If you have a group planning on international travel, you can contact our office and we will be glad to set up a time at your location to accept passport applications.

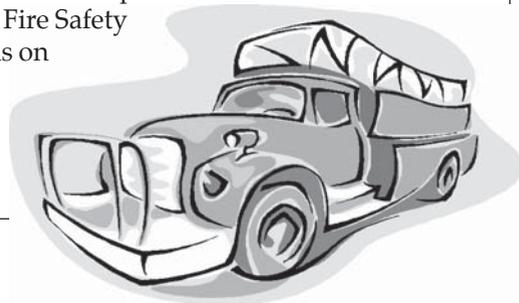
Wow, another year has passed and it is time to think about enjoying the Holidays. I wish all of you a wonderful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Scott Harvey, Township Clerk*

## Fire Safety Tips *From "Freddie the Fire Truck"*

**F**ire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence in the wild land. Our brush-covered hills and forests have burned periodically, long before we built homes there. However, many residents have built their homes and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire could have on them. Successfully preparing for a wild-fire requires you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. Studies show that as many as 80 percent of homes lost to wildfires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices.

Plainfield Fire Department takes every precaution to help protect you and your property. Please contact the Fire Safety Bureau at (616) 361-2895 if you have any questions on how to protect your family and property against wild fire or to schedule a free property survey.





**W**ith construction season coming to a close, it is a good time for an update on the current and upcoming utility projects. 2011 was the year of the water system upgrades with five major water projects going at one time. All of these projects are being constructed using Drinking Water Revolving Fund grants and loans through a program administered by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The projects, along with a short update on each, are as follows:

### **2 Million Gallon (MG) Precast Concrete Ground Storage Tank**

Prior to this project there was a single 4 MG ground storage tank at the Water Treatment Plant. Since the plant was expanded in the 1980's a second tank was anticipated on the site to improve water quality and system operation flexibility. The tank construction itself has been completed. Site work is still ongoing and is expected to be completed in the next few weeks at which time the tank will be commissioned into service. Final restoration and tank touch-up painting will be completed next spring.

### **Westgate Water Main Improvements**

Water main in the Westgate area of Alpine Township was constructed in the 1960's with cast iron water main. The water main in this area has had an increasing number of breaks due to its age. This project involves replacing areas of cast iron water main with new ductile iron water main to provide needed reliability. This project has been completed and all of the streets are back open.

### **Coit Avenue & Plainfield Avenue Transmission Main**

On both Coit Avenue and Plainfield Avenue there were missing links of large diameter transmission water main that were needed to improve reliability throughout the water system. These links were completed this summer, but not without some delays. If you traveled north on Plainfield Avenue toward Coit Avenue this summer you probably noticed construction activity on the shoulder. Although it took much longer than expected to construct the water main up the hill on Plainfield Avenue, it was finally completed in September. This project is substantially complete with some restoration yet to be finished.

## Grand River Transmission Main Crossing

The original south Grand River crossing water main was constructed in the 1960's. This water main is a 12" diameter cast iron main that has reached its useful life and is no longer large enough to help serve the Comstock Park and Alpine Township area. The new Grand River crossing is a 20" diameter ductile iron pipe that extends from Coit Avenue, down Bailey Park Drive, across Willow Drive, running under and across the river to Abrigador Trail and up to the White Pine Trail. This project is still under construction due to delays caused by high floodwaters on the Grand River during the peak construction period. The project is anticipated to be substantially completed by the end of November, with final restoration to occur in the spring.

This complex construction project involved crossing the river with buried water main (see picture at left). This was accomplished by building a temporary bridge-type structure as a base for the equipment to work from and sheet steel was driven into the river bottom creating an installation space below the river bottom for the water main. The water main was installed and backfilled with excavated material. Upon completion, the bridge structure will be disassembled.

## Five Mile Control Valve Station

In order to maintain adequate flow to the southeast area of the water system, a connection was needed between the high and intermediate pressure districts. Due to the difference in pressure between these two districts, an automated pressure reducing valve station needed to be constructed on Five Mile Road, west of Grand River Avenue. This project is substantially complete and currently going through a performance test phase.

If 2011 was the year of the Water System Upgrades, 2012 will be the year of the Wastewater System Upgrades. In 2012 there are five pump stations that will be either rehabilitated or replaced, the Coit Avenue Trunk Sanitary Sewer will be completed from Hunsberger Ave. to Jupiter Ave., and the Scott Creek Trunk Sewer will be replaced from West River Drive to Samrick Ave. Some of the work on these projects may begin this winter, but the majority of the work will occur in the spring and summer of 2012. All of these projects are being constructed using State Revolving Fund grants and loans through a program administered by the MDEQ.

Look for further updates on these projects at [www.plainfieldchartertp.org](http://www.plainfieldchartertp.org).

*Rick Solle, Director of Public Services*

## History Buffs Take Note

The Plainfield Township Historical Preservation Advisory Committee meets next on Tuesday, November 22, at 3:00 pm at Township Hall, 6161 Belmont Avenue, and the public is invited to attend. The Committee will consider opportunities to preserve the heritage of Plainfield Township in terms of protecting and preserving the physical landmarks as well as written and photographic documentation of the township. If you have information, documents, or items to donate to

the Hyser House Historical Museum, please send a brief summary of the items to the committee, including your name and phone number, to the Parks and Recreation Department, 5205 Plainfield Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525, or call (616) 363-9399.

An open house will be held at the Hyser House Historical Museum, located at 6440 West River Drive, on Sunday, December 4, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

# KDL

## Kent District Library

[www.kdl.org](http://www.kdl.org)

**Free Computer Confidence Classes** for all skill levels are available at the KDL Service Center, 814 West River Center (behind the Wendy's) in Comstock Park. Classes focus on keyboarding, basic computer skills, and internet and e-mail use. Please call 784-2007 or check [www.kdl.org](http://www.kdl.org) for more information.

**E-books at KDL** – Check out our completely new, extensive digital collection just for KDL cardholders! Go to [www.kdl.org](http://www.kdl.org) to browse for titles in e-audio or e-book formats. They are now also compatible with your Kindle device! Complete instructions for downloading to any device is available here on our website – or just ask a librarian.

**Please note these dates!**

All KDL branches will be closed:  
December 24, 25 and 26, 2011;  
January 1 and 2, 2012; and  
January 16, 2011 (for a KDL all-staff meeting)

**Bring your whole family to the library for these free programs!**

**For Young Children  
(Registration is required).....**

**Babytime** – Join us at the library for a special one-on-one bonding time with baby while we enjoy songs, rhymes, stories, and play time. For ages birth-18 months with caregiver.  
Plainfield - Wednesdays, 1:00 pm

**Toddler Time** – Babies, toddlers, and their parents are invited to join us for stories, music, & rhymes. For ages 3 & under with caregiver.  
Comstock Park – Mondays, 10:30 am (closed Monday, Jan. 16th)  
Plainfield – Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:15 am

**Preschool Storytime** – Stories, songs, crafts, and other book-related fun with a different theme each week. For ages 3-1/2 to 6.  
Comstock Park – Wednesdays, 10:30 am  
Plainfield – Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:15 am

**Family Time** – Stories, songs, crafts & other book-related fun for the family with a different theme each week. For ages birth-6 with caregiver.  
Plainfield – Mondays at 10:15 am (Closed Monday, Jan. 16th)

**Rhyme Time Music and Movement** – Move and groove together with action rhymes and musical activities that will help children develop motor, listening and literacy skills. For ages 6 and under with caregiver.  
Comstock Park Branch - Tuesdays, 1:00 pm

**Evening Storytime** – Bedtime stories & night time fun. Bring your teddy bear or other snuggly friend; pajamas optional! For ages 6 & under with caregiver.  
Comstock Park – Tuesdays, 6:30 pm  
Plainfield – Mondays, 7:00 pm (Closed Monday, Jan. 16th)

**Drop-In Craft Time** – Drop in at the library for some creative fun with this self-directed activity.  
Comstock Park – Thursday, December 29, 1:00 pm

**Dance Party** – Join us for pure dancing fun as we rock out to tons of kid-friendly music! Come and go as you please.  
Comstock Park – Tuesday, Feb. 14, 1:00 pm



## For Teens Grades 6-12

**Teen Zone** – Help plan and promote great teen programs, work on community service and library projects, discuss books, movies, music, and websites, eat snacks, play games, and just have fun! Membership looks great on resumes, job and college applications.

Comstock Park – Thursdays, December 8, January 12 and 26, and February 9 and 23, 3:00 pm

Plainfield – Thursdays, January 19 and February 16, 4:00 pm

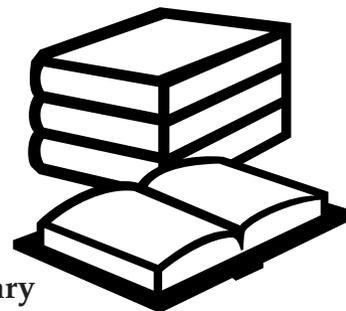
**6th Annual KDL Teen Filmmaking Contest** – Lights! Camera! Action! All Kent County teens, grades 6-12, are invited to enter Kent District Library's 6th Annual Teen Filmmaking Contest. Deadline for film submission is Monday, January 9, 2012, and selected films will be screened Saturday, February 11 at Celebration! Cinema North. Check [www.kdl.org](http://www.kdl.org) for more information.

## For Adults....

**Book Discussion for Adults** – Join us on for a casual, “no pressure,” discussion! No registration required, snacks provided. Ask at the branch for a copy of the next book.

Comstock Park – The 4th Thursday of each month, 7:00 pm

Plainfield – The 2nd Thursday of each month, 1:00 pm



## Friends of the Plainfield Library

The Friends of the Plainfield Library is a non-profit 501 c(3) group that continues to sponsor programs and raise funds for the Plainfield Township Library. Without the generous donations of gently used books, CDs, DVDs and other formats, this would not be possible. Thank you to the many patrons who continue to contribute items.

Some upcoming Friends programs:

**Gift-Quality Used Book Sale** – The Friends have selected the “best of the best” book donations for this special book sale. Stock up on great gifts for the holidays.

Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4 from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

**Winter Spectacular Book Sale** – Hardcover for \$1.00, softcovers for \$ .50, and paperbacks and children’s books for \$ .25.

Sunday and Monday only: Bag-of-Books for \$2.00.

Friday, January 6, 10:00 am - 4:00 PM

Saturday, January 7, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunday, January 8, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Monday, January 9, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

## Is Your Streetlight Out?

**D**id you know that you could report a faulty streetlight directly to Consumers Energy via the Internet? The website is [www.consumersenergy.com/bdisu/streetLightRepair\\_start.sap](http://www.consumersenergy.com/bdisu/streetLightRepair_start.sap) . You’ll be asked to enter the nearest cross street, the closest address to the streetlight, and indicate whether the light is burned out, fluctuating, or has been vandalized. If you do not have access to the Internet, you may call the Township’s main number, (616) 364-8466, provide the receptionist with the necessary information, and she/he will report the streetlight to Consumers.

# Tis the Season! Snowplowing in Plainfield Township

Anyone providing snowplowing services within Plainfield Charter Township must be licensed through the Township. Please contact the Township Clerk's office at 364-8466 to learn more about the rules and regulations as they pertain to snow removal and how to obtain a license.

## How will I know...?

Licensed snowplowers will have a pink 2012 Plainfield Charter Township license displayed on the rear driver's side window. You may also go to [www.plainfieldchartertp.org/pctsnowplow.htm](http://www.plainfieldchartertp.org/pctsnowplow.htm) for a list of currently licensed snowplow providers.

**Did you know...?**  
Plainfield Charter Township's Code, Chapter 10; Article VI; Section 10-345 states that no one shall place, deposit, dump or push any snow or ice upon or across any public right-of-way within the Township nor upon any private property without prior consent of the owner. A violation of the Township Codes can result in a citation issued by the Kent County Sheriff's Department.

## FROM THE SUPERVISOR

# Moving On

By the time you read this article, we may have had our first snowfall for the 2011/2012 season. The World Series is over,



the high school football games, as well as other outdoor sports will be history, and the winners will have the winter season to relish their accomplishments. Congratulations to all who have reached those goals!

Plainfield Charter Township has also had some accomplishments to appreciate when looking back over 2011. The winners in the Township successes are the residents of our community. Looking back over the past year, we can definitely say it was an active period. When traveling the roads in our area, one soon realizes the amount of road improvement work, the installation of new water and sewer lines, the

installation of some new sidewalks and the overall enhancements to the various parts of Plainfield Township.

All of this work was done with our Township citizens in mind. Thanks to a lot of people and circumstances, the Township Board was able to approve many projects for 2011, taking advantage of discounts, forgiveness of principal, low interest rates and the availability of a workforce to get the jobs done in a timely manner. Even though the Township did a lot of work during this year, there is still a lot of work to be done when the funding is available and the circumstances are right. An aging infrastructure network must be maintained and improved for health, safety and benefit of all.

A big THANK YOU for your patience goes out to all of the people who were inconvenienced in traveling around the Township. There is a relatively short window of opportunity to get all of this work done and we took advantage of it.

**Have a happy and safe Holiday Season!**

*George K. Meek, Supervisor*

**W**hen it rains, storm water flows over lawns, streets, and parking lots carrying with it road dirt, fertilizers, oil, and grease into storm drains. Storm drains carry this storm water to the Grand River without any type of treatment. Follow these steps to keep storm water clean and help protect the Grand River.

### Your Home

- Protect your family's health. Dispose of unwanted paints, solvents, and cleaners at your county collection center.
- Pump your septic system every 3 to 5 years to avoid costly system overflows.

### Your Lawn and Garden

- Avoid scorching your lawn. Use slow-release types of fertilizer only 2-3 times per year. Non-phosphorus fertilizers are best for the environment.
- Plant native plants in your garden. Native plants naturally need less water, fertilizers, and pesticides saving you time and money.



### Your Vehicle and Garage

- Recycle used oil and automotive fluids. Just one gallon of used motor oil dumped down a storm drain can contaminate one MILLION gallons of water.
- Wash your car at a commercial car wash or on your lawn. Otherwise, dirty, oily water on your driveway will flow to your storm drain and eventually to the Grand River.



[www.lowergrandriver.org](http://www.lowergrandriver.org)

## Flood Mitigation Update

**A**s part of implementing the 2007 Township Flood Mitigation Plan, the Township has been able to reduce flood insurance premiums by 5% through participation in Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System program. We fully expect to be able to reduce those premiums another 5% through our outreach activities in 2012. Some of these activities include maintaining a library of reference materials for the public, main floor elevations for homes in Floodprone areas and participation in FEMA's acquisition programs.

In regard to the acquisition program, the Township received a grant from FEMA to acquire

several homes in the Grand River floodplain. At this point, we have acquired two homes that will be demolished, weather permitting, by the end of the year. Once the homes are demolished, the property has to be used for open space or passive recreational uses enforced by a perpetual deed restriction. Participation in the acquisition grant program is strictly voluntary. If you are interested, please contact Peter Elam in the Community Development Department at (616) 726-8899. Your property must be in a floodplain; FEMA's first priority is homes that are considered to have a risk of flooding, and these grant programs may take several years to gain approval.

*See the next page for helpful tips.*

# Helpful Hints for New Homeowners or Folks Unaccustomed to Flooding

## 1) Prepare for flooding by doing the following:

- ❑ Know how to shut off the electricity and gas to your house.
- ❑ Make a list of emergency numbers and identify a safe place to go to.
- ❑ Make a household inventory, especially of basement contents.
- ❑ Put insurance policies, valuable papers, medicine, etc. in a safe place.
- ❑ Collect and put cleaning supplies, camera, waterproof boots, etc. in a handy place.
- ❑ Develop a disaster response plan – See the Red Cross' website for additional information <http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/FinRecovery/FinPlan/dplan.html>.
- ❑ Obtain a copy of *Repairing Your Flooded Home* from the Red Cross' website, too.

## 2) Consider some permanent flood protection measures.

- ❑ Mark your fuse or breaker box to show the circuits to the floodable areas. Turning off the power to the basement can reduce property damage and save lives.
- ❑ Consider elevating your house above flood levels.
- ❑ Check your building for water entry points. These can be basement windows, the basement stairwell, doors, and dryer vents. These can be protected with low walls or temporary shields.
- ❑ Install a floor drain plug, standpipe, overhead sewer, or sewer backup valve to prevent sewer backup flooding.
- ❑ More information can be found in *Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six*

*Ways to Protect Your House from Flooding* at [www.fema.gov/rebuild/mat/fema312.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/mat/fema312.shtm).

- ❑ Note that some flood protection measures may need a building permit and others may not be safe for your type of building, so be sure to talk to the Building Inspector in the Community Development Department.

## 3) Flood Insurance

- ❑ Get a flood insurance policy – it will help pay for repairs after a flood and, in some cases, it will help pay the costs of elevating a substantially damaged building.
- ❑ Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. However, because the Township participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, you can purchase a separate flood insurance policy. This insurance is backed by the federal government and is available to everyone, even properties that have been flooded. Because the Township participates in the Community Rating System, you will receive a reduction in the insurance premium.
- ❑ Some people have purchased flood insurance because it was required by the bank when they got a mortgage or home improvement loan. Usually these policies just cover the building's structure and not the contents. There is often more damage to the furniture and contents than there is to the structure. Be sure you have contents coverage.
- ❑ Don't wait for the next flood to buy insurance protection. In most cases, there is a 30-day waiting period before National Flood Insurance Program coverage takes effect.

# Local Government Takes Another Hit

**T**he State of Michigan is about to do a number on local governments. The Governor himself, in an interview with the press, has acknowledged that the Personal Property Tax (PPT) is on the chopping block. He isn't looking to "hurt" local governments... *but* the PPT has to go, he says, and local governments (that includes schools, libraries, cities, counties, townships, and any public entity that receives property taxes) shouldn't expect that they will be "made whole" or be reimbursed for the lost revenue. Most everyone knows that only businesses pay the PPT. Why do the Governor and his supporters want to get rid of it? The question is pretty much answered by the fact that the PPT is *a tax on business*, and these folks think that business in Michigan has been paying too much. The PPT has been targeted for elimination for some time. Those who think all taxes are bad, unfair, unnecessary, or illegitimate, will be supporters of this movement. Those who recognize that the loss of PPT revenue will be a huge blow to local government and will cripple or eliminate already compromised programs and services may want to pause and think about it a bit.

Here is something most people probably don't know: *Local governments don't like the PPT either.* The PPT is very complicated and expensive for local government assessors to administer. It is irritating and expensive for the business community, not only because they have to write the checks, but also because they have to spend lots of money just to figure what they owe and to report to the local assessor what they have to be taxed. If they don't report, their assessment is increased by an assumed factor. How do we determine what items of equipment and furnishings are not being reported and whether what is reported is correct? Just get rid of the PPT??

Is anyone thinking about **the revenue that will be lost** if we "just get rid of the PPT?" Cities, villages, townships, counties, schools, libraries, senior citizens, and public transit need that money to provide the services and carry out the functions that are expected of them. How much money will local governments be losing if the PPT is eliminated? The amount lost would be \$1,300,000,000 (BILLION!) **per year** statewide, \$10 MILLION for Kent County and \$3.5 MILLION for the City of Grand Rapids. For Plainfield Township, it's approximately \$260,000. That amount is about what Plainfield Township will spend in a tight 2012 General Fund budget to support senior citizens programs (\$75,000), the upkeep of our two KDL library branch buildings (\$142,000), and our Versluis Park summer swimming beach program (\$43,000). Using other examples: \$260,000 equals about 12% of our 2012 Fire Department operations or *half* of 2012's cost for Kent County Sheriff's deputies policing services in Plainfield Township exclusively.

In recent issues of *The Profile*, I have written about other serious declines in our ability to fund Plainfield Township's General Fund programs and services. This is beginning to seem like a broken record, but I am taking this opportunity to explain to the community that we have had a declining REVENUE problem for the past ten years. Not only have the economy and plummeting property values whacked local governments hard; the Governor and the Legislature are about to administer the *coup de grace* by giving away the PPT revenue to the business community for the sake of "making Michigan more attractive to business." How about keeping communities attractive to those who live and work there? Those now in charge of state government seem to be pointing the finger at local governments for being inefficient

and poor stewards of tax dollars. Seems a bit backwards, doesn't it?

The State of Michigan has been dumping on local government for the past decade in its desperate attempts to solve its own budget problems. Some would be delighted to see local government officials cut their budgets to the

bone – and then some, or even raise revenue locally – which doesn't appear likely. Diverting attention from the problems the state has created by telling the public that the locals need to get their houses in order is disingenuous at best.

*Robert Homan, Township Manager*

## Building Permits 101 – a reminder

**B**efore you take on those home improvement projects, please check with our Building Service in the Community Development Department to find out if permits are 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. 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 be able to help 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.

So, just by answering a couple of questions like: What are you planning to do? and, Where are you are planning to do it?, our staff will be able



to provide the information needed for compliance with the building and zoning codes, as well as the necessary applications for the permits.

After documenting the “who, what, where and how” of the job or project, along with providing any sketches or plans of the proposed work, a permit may be issued. Please keep in mind that separate permits are required for building, electrical, plumbing and heating and air conditioning work.

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 will be 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 when construction has been completed and code compliance is determined. We hope this information is helpful and we encourage you to visit the Township's website for more information regarding our codes and regulations.

*Building Services –  
Community Development Department*



## The 'Catch 22' of Our Township Fire Department

**B**alance the budget." That is a pretty simple statement and one that everyone strives for. "Chief, the Board has always provided the Fire Department with what it needs." Another simple statement made by a Township Board member in 1994, and, at the time it was made, it was correct. Unfortunately that statement was made in the booming days of the early 1990s. Now those two statements directly conflict with one another. The Township Board can balance the budget *or* replace equipment that is vital to the operations of the Fire Department, but we cannot do both without changing something. That "something" is finding or generating more money, eliminating services, or changing the way some services are provided.

Generating money becomes more difficult as the State finds more ways to return less of it to the locals. Additionally (a more accurate phrase would be "*subtractionally*"), the value of property in the Township is going down, generating less revenue for public services. We not only can't do more with less; we are approaching the point where we can't do *less* with less. By that I mean we may have to eliminate or severely change how we do business. The other means of increasing revenue in a failing economy is to generate additional funds from the property we currently tax.

Some may feel that we should downsize government; that maybe a smaller fire department providing fewer services would not be so bad. My house isn't going to catch fire, so having those people with their big equipment at the fire station is just a waste of my tax dollars. In 2008 & 2009, I wrote articles (here's a link: <http://www.plainfieldfire.org/chiefsdesk/chiefsdesk-Jun09.htm>) that explained that the fire department's Insurance Service Office rating potentially saves the taxpayer more than the cost of operating the department. I must also give credit to the Township's water department, as they are 40% of that equation. Add to that the benefits of our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response, and it appears that the fire department might just be a worthwhile investment.

The problem is we have reached our own version of Catch 22: we know that we need to put money aside to replace capital items like apparatus, computers, rescue equipment, SCBA (air packs for entering hazardous atmospheres) and protective clothing. However, because we haven't been doing so, there isn't enough money available to catch up.

In an attempt to provide some relief, I have been extending the replacement time for our apparatus from 17 to 20 years. We originally made our replacement schedule the same as

the Kent County Fire Commission's schedule. The Fire Commission represents participating units of government that are staffed by volunteer firefighters to purchase fire apparatus and provides a centralized bidding system for specialized supply items and insurance. These departments respond to far fewer alarms than Plainfield's Fire Department, and this way of purchasing capital equipment provided a conservative and dependable schedule of replacement. Based on a recent survey, fire engines (pumpers) are replaced on an average of 13-15 years. Aerials (rotating high ladders) are replaced at the 12- to 15-year mark. We currently have an engine that is twenty-two years old and two that will be twenty in 2013. Our aerial truck is nearly nineteen years old.

In a research paper, *Justifying the Purchase of New Fire Apparatus*, written as part of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, Chief Joseph Anderson wrote, "There were several reasons listed as to why fire apparatus should be replaced including the following: Personnel Safety, Obsolescence, Con-

dition of Major Components, Availability of Parts, Changes in National Standards or Federal Mandates, Maintenance Costs and Performance and/or Mission changes." Another research paper reached this conclusion: "In general, a 10- to 15-year life expectancy is considered normal for first-line pumping engines. First-line ladder trucks should have a normal life expectancy of at least 15 years. In almost no case should a fire department rely on any apparatus more than 25 years old."

How, then, do we adjust? There are really three options: (1) increase revenue, (2) decrease expenditures in some other way than simply cutting operating budgets, or (3) provide a smaller fire department commitment, risking paying more in homeowner's insurance and having a lower level of EMS service. See the benefit of the Township providing EMS service at this link: <http://www.plainfieldfire.org/chiefsdesk/chiefsdesk-Mar11.htm>. This article must end here, but the problem we face continues and must be addressed.

David R. Peterson, Chief



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# The Profile

Plainfield Charter Township  
6161 Belmont NE  
Belmont, MI 49306

PRESORTED  
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT NO. 657

# 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  
Catherine Bottema, Trustee  
Jack Hagedorn, Trustee  
Vic Matthews, Trustee  
Charles Weldon, Trustee



**MANAGER**  
Robert Homan

**TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETINGS**  
7:30 pm  
First and Third Mondays  
[www.plainfieldchartertp.org](http://www.plainfieldchartertp.org)

The seal of Plainfield Charter Township is circular. It features a central illustration of a person sitting on a log by a stream, with a tree growing from the bank. The text "PLAINFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP" is written around the top inner edge of the circle, and "COUNTY OF KENT" is written around the bottom inner edge. The year "1838" is centered below the illustration.