

ANSWERS TO THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR TAX BILL

WHEN DO THE TAX BILLS COME OUT?

Your summer tax bill is mailed to you the first week in July and your winter tax bill is mailed to you the first week in December.

WHAT MONTHS DOES THIS TAX BILL COVER?

Both your summer and winter tax bill covers the whole year from January 1st until December 31st. These tax bills do not cover specific months, but rather, collect different taxes due for the entire year. The two tax bills together make up the total annual property taxes due. The summer tax bill collects the taxes for Kent Intermediate Schools District, Grand Rapids Community College, ½ of the Lowell Area Schools, State Education Tax and the Kent County general operating. The winter tax bill collects the taxes for Kent County Jail and Senior Citizens Millage, Kent District Library, Vergennes Township, and ½ of the Lowell Area Schools.

WHEN IS IT DUE?

Your summer bill is due on September 14th and your winter bill is due on February 14th. If the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the due date is extended to the next regular business day. **We do not accept postmarks.** All payments received in our office after the due date will be assessed interest. State law mandates that interest be added to any payment received after the due date. Exceptions cannot be made, so be sure to mail early to allow sufficient time to reach our office.

HOW CAN I PAY MY TAX BILL?

Payments may be made at the Township Office on Monday & Wednesday from 9a.m. to 3p.m and Thursday from 9a.m. to noon. There is a 24-hour mail slot located in the entry door. Please enclose your payment in a sealed envelope and never leave cash. If you are paying by mail, please use the enclosed yellow envelope. If you would like a receipt for your property taxes, please enclose the entire bill and a self-addressed envelope. We will stamp the top portion of the tax bill and return it to you. **It is very important that you know you may make partial payments. You may start paying on your bill as soon as you receive it.**

HOW IS THE BILL FIGURED?

The "Taxable Value" is multiplied by the "Millage Rates" to arrive at the "Total Amount Due".

WHY DO I RECEIVE A TAX BILL IF MY MORTGAGE COMPANY PAYS MY TAXES?

It is impossible for us to know who your mortgage company is and whether they are to pay your taxes or you are. Your mortgage company knows, so they request your tax information to be sent to them. We also send you a copy so that you: 1) know how much your taxes are, 2) know who requested your tax information (**mortgage company will be listed under your name**) 3) can compare your tax bill with the end of year statement sent to you by your lender and, 4) have information you may need to file your income taxes. If your bill does not indicate your tax information was sent to your lender, simply forward a copy of the bill to your mortgage company. **Please keep your copy for future reference.**

WHAT IF I RECEIVE A BILL THAT I DON'T THINK IS MINE?

Name/Ownership changes on real property are affected by the recording of the Deed, which is done at the County level and can take several weeks to process. If you receive a bill for a property that you no longer own, kindly pass it on to the new buyer, if possible, for timely payment or return it to the township so that we may redirect it. Personal property taxes are determined by the location of the property in the township on December 31st. For the purpose of **changing a mailing address only**, please correct the bottom portion and mail it in.

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE EXEMPTION (PRE) AND HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS IN PLACE ON MY PROPERTY?

You qualify for the Principal Residence Exemption if you own and reside in your home. This is a State of Michigan law, not a township rule. If you have a PRE you **do not pay** local school operating tax. Check your bill...if the Lowell Area Schools operating is \$.00, you are all set. If you are not receiving a PRE and think you qualify, please call the assessor.



Vergennes Township

A Place Where People Like to Live
www.vergennestwp.org



10381 Bailey Dr., P.O. Box 208, Lowell, MI 49331

897-5671

Hours: M, W, – 9–3, Th – 9–Noon

WINTER 2016

SUPERVISOR: TIM WITTENBACH
TREASURER: JEAN HOFFMAN
CLERK: MARI STONE
TRUSTEES: RICK GILLETT
DUANE RASCH

*Township Board Meetings are held the third Monday of every month at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Hall.
Planning Commission Meetings are held quarterly at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Hall.*

CLERK'S CORNER

by Mari Stone, Vergennes Township Clerk

Another election year is tucked away in the storage closet upstairs at the hall. (That's a line from a former newsletter, but I love it and couldn't resist using it again) It was a wild and busy fall ramping up to November 8th, and I'm glad to see it in the rear view mirror. No matter what your feelings are about the results, you can rest assured your vote counted in Michigan. Clerks across the state are committed to fulfilling our election laws, which have been crafted to ensure integrity and accuracy. I have full faith in our election process here, and hope it was a good experience for you.

Our Precinct Inspectors are a fabulous group of individuals, and I am so blessed to have such a dedicated group to work with. One of their most important tasks is balancing the numbers at the end of the night. They have just worked a 14 hour day, and are bone tired. The numbers in the poll book must match the numbers on the tabulators, and there are multiple checks and balances that must be signed and documented or that precinct can't be recounted, if necessary. I would like to thank them here for their service and commitment.

Precinct 1 – Chair, Janine Mork, and her team of Doug Wester, Sue Lindhout, Kathy Gruizenga, Courtney Ford and Eden Nethercott.

Precinct 2 – Chair, Shantell Ford, and her team of Barb Porter, Bev Anderson, Warren Johnson, and Kendra Ford.

I'd also like to recognize the much appreciated

support of my Deputy, Heather Hoffman. Heather rejoined me in January after a two year break to work in an assessing department in another township. I am blessed to have her back in Vergennes, and could not have made it through three elections this year without her assistance. Thank you Heather, for your attention to detail and devotion to our voters.

Finally, a big thank you goes out to the members and staff at the Vergennes United Methodist Church for their willingness to host our Precinct 2. It's great to have good neighbors.

NEW STUFF

There are lots of other things going on in the township. Many building permits, some new businesses, and one new Ordinance.

The Planning Commission finished a two year project to create a Noise Ordinance and recommended adoption to the Township Board in July. While we resisted adopting a noise ordinance for years, we were hearing more and more concerns from residents with problems that could not be resolved neighbor to neighbor. The Kent County Sheriffs Department recommended adopting an ordinance so that they could have something to enforce in these situations. We looked to what neighboring jurisdictions have done, and created what we think is a reasonable and fair set of standards. Nonetheless, an area of concern we have heard about is firearm target practice.

Continued on next page!

Gun owners have expressed an unease about the language and how it will be interpreted, and the Board has listened and is currently reviewing this section.

Bieri Industrial Park, behind the Lowell Congregational Church on Lincoln Lake, is home to a new business named Envision Engineering. They employ about 50 people using the latest in high tech equipment, making gas tanks and fenders for several motorcycle manufacturers. Another company is just starting to build a new facility for their business, which manufactures egg handling equipment for the poultry industry.

While the housing development Harvest Meadows, on the east side of Alden Nash near Lowell High School, has not broken ground yet, the developers tell us it won't be long. In the meantime, we are seeing many new housing starts on vacant land. This trend follows a pent up demand for homes in the Lowell Community, as our neighbors are also seeing growth spurts.

AN OPENING IN THE CLERKS OFFICE

My husband Jim and I have been working on a "five year plan" for a while now, with the goal to downsize and enjoy our impending retirement. A condo has been our ideal, and believe me I have been encouraging every developer and builder that walked through the township doors to bring a condominium community to Vergennes. This past summer we found our ideal, but sadly it's not in the township. Our home sold more

quickly than we expected, and I now find myself a non-resident of Vergennes, unable to take the Oath of Office for our new terms beginning November 21st.

So now the Board must fill this vacancy. By law, we have 45 days to appoint a Clerk to serve until the next General Election, which will occur in November of 2018. The Board has decided to make it an open process, taking applications and interviewing qualified candidates. Interested parties should submit a resume with a cover letter summarizing their qualifications by December 7th at 3:00 pm. The Board will review applicants, select the top three, and conduct interviews. The new Clerk will be appointed to serve in January. There is more information on our website for interested candidates.

I have offered to stay on in a transitional role, and the Board has graciously accepted. The Clerk's role has evolved greatly since I began here in 1994. The former Clerk Jean Hoffman, who then transitioned to Treasurer, was there to help me along and I was so grateful she was. I hope I can assist in a smooth transfer by bringing institutional knowledge to your new Clerk. It will be his or her choice to name me as Deputy, or have me play another role, but either way, I hope to stick around for a little while.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the people of Vergennes Township, for your faith and trust in me over the past 22 years. It has been a true honor to serve you. My prayers and best wishes are with you always.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS ON PLANNING COMMISSION'S AGENDA

Flat River District – A definition of structure will be added to mirror the State of Michigan Natural Rivers Ordinance, as well as other points.

Swimming Pools – Current language needs to be updated to meet new building codes. This mostly concerns fencing and pool covers.

Lake District Accessory Buildings – We have a few properties with accessory buildings without a house

on Murray Lake property. This is not allowed in our ordinance but Grattan Township allows it under certain conditions. The commission plans to mirror their ordinance.

Fairgrounds Language – due to the possibility of the Kent County Youth Fair seriously looking at property in Vergennes Township, we must add language to make it an accepted use. We currently have nothing allowing fairgrounds in our ordinance.



WINTER TAX REVIEW

BY JEAN HOFFMAN

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year – Peace and Blessings this holiday season. The Township Office will be closed on Monday, December 26th, opening again on Wednesday the 28th. The last day to pay your tax bill in the office in 2016 will be Thursday, December 29th until noon.

Taxes are due February 14, 2017. Because this falls on a Tuesday (a day we are not open), interest and penalty will begin on February 16th. Please mail early. Postmarks are not accepted for the due date, and we are not responsible for delays in the postal system. Please use the return envelope provided with your tax statements. If you would like a receipt, please enclose the entire bill and a self-addressed envelope. We will stamp the upper part and return it to you. You may also use the mail slot in the door if paying by check, but please do not leave cash.

Remember that you can make partial payments for Summer and Winter through February 14th.

You will then have interest added only to the unpaid past due balance. Payments received after February 14th must include the penalty and interest. State law prohibits the township from waiving these charges. You may pay summer and winter 2016 taxes at the township through February 28th. All unpaid taxes are turned over to the county treasurer on March 1, 2017.

Make checks payable to: Vergennes Township Treasurer.

ONLINE BANKING PAYMENTS must have the parcel number printed on them. Please allow 7 days for the payment to reach the office.

DOG LICENSES can be purchased at the City of Lowell. We no longer sell them at the township.

-Jean Hoffman, Treasurer



RADON

Surgeon General Health Advisory – *“Indoor radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and breathing it over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country. It’s important to know that this threat is completely preventable. Radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through well-established venting techniques.” January 2005*

Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas. You can’t see radon and you can’t smell it or taste it. It could be a problem in any home. Radon is estimated to cause many thousands of deaths each year. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR TESTING – when your house is closed up.

You should test for radon. Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon. Testing is inexpensive and easy—it should only take a few minutes of your time.

You can fix a radon problem. Radon reduction systems work and they are not too costly. Some radon reduction systems can reduce radon levels in your home by up to 99%. Even very high levels can be reduced to acceptable levels.

For more information contact the Kent County Health Department at (616) 632-7100. They have radon testing kits available for \$5.00. They are located at 700 Fuller Street NE, in Grand Rapids.