

# 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



## SUMMER 2017

**SUPERVISOR:**  
**TREASURER:**  
**CLERK:**  
**TRUSTEES:**

**TIM WITTENBACH**  
**JEAN HOFFMAN**  
**HEATHER HOFFMAN**  
**RICK GILLET**  
**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 Heather Hoffman, Vergennes Township Clerk*

Happy Summer, fellow Vergennes Township residents! I hope you are enjoying the sunshine, blue skies and endless activities that a Michigan summer has to offer. A lot has happened in our community since the winter 2016 newsletter. From the approval of a new cell tower that will bring cellular coverage to a long-standing dead zone near the Flat River valley to the resignation of a beloved member of our township board, we have been very busy in Vergennes Township.

### A Big Thank You!

What a gift this township has had. If you have not heard, Mari Stone, Vergennes Township's long standing Clerk, transitioned out of her role in November 2016. The Clerk's role in local government is most definitely NOT for the faint at heart and Mari held this position with integrity and the utmost professionalism. Mari Stone started her career 23 years ago when she was voted in by the residents of Vergennes Township to serve as their Clerk. Her loyalty and dedication to this community and the people of Vergennes was evident in her involvement in multiple community projects over the years. Mari was not only an active representative of Vergennes Township but a highly effective government official who served on multiple boards and committees for the betterment of the community.

If you have enjoyed the trail system through Lowell, you were reaping the benefit of Mari's dedication. She was of a founding member of the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) where she worked for years with a group of individuals to raise awareness and funds for the creation of a non-motorized trail system which offered residents a safe walking or biking path. That was only one of the countless boards Mari served on over the years.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Mari for over thirty years and working alongside her since 2011. Mari is a beloved mother, co-worker and friend. The evidence of her level of integrity and seeing a project through to completion is her willingness to help prepare me to fill the void of her departure. Mari agreed to stay on as my Deputy and help me transition into my new role as your Clerk. I cannot thank her enough for her dedication to not only this township, but to me. She has been an invaluable teacher. I cannot replace Mari's years

of wisdom and experience as an active board member, but through her guidance and teaching and my eagerness to learn, I have no doubt of the great things that are yet to be. As a resident of this township and as her friend, I say, 'Thank you, Mari! Thank you for your years of selfless service to this community. This township is a better place because of you!'

### A Little Bit About Me

Lowell is my home. It has been home since I was in first grade. I grew up in this community and have roots that run multiple generations deep. My husband Jeff and I both graduated from Lowell High School and after college chose to raise our family back in our home town. Who doesn't want to live where trees overhang the roads that guide the way home? With miles of trailway to explore, beautiful parks to enjoy, an award winning school district and an entire community that bands together every fall to show support for their friends and neighbors who have fought or are battling cancer, who wouldn't want to live here?

My husband and I have been married for twenty-one years. Twenty-one! When I write that number, I can hardly believe how fast those years have gone by. It has me reminiscing of what has happened in our life over those years and I have to tell you, we have been blessed. We were gifted with three great kids, Hayden, Gavin and Payton. Jeff and I have had the opportunity to serve our community in various roles over those years. Whether mentoring girl scouts, coaching multiple teams, serving on various community boards and organizations or cleaning rooms at our church we have truly received more than we ever gave. Looking back on the past twenty-one years also has me thinking ahead as to what is in store for the next twenty-one. I am a firm believer that great things happen if we listen to each other, communicate effectively and work together towards the same goal. In my new role as your Clerk, my plan is to do what I believe works. You are my neighbors and together, we can continue to create an environment that our children will want to come back to. I am a voice for you, the community that I live in and love, and I am very excited for the future.

Enjoy your summer!  
-Heather

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN YOUR TOWNSHIP

### LCTV Endowment Fund Grant Awards

Vergennes Township received two LCTV Endowment Fund grants which will bring welcomed updates to the Township Hall. One grant will cover the township's cost to run Vergennes Broadband Fiber Internet to the Township Hall. This improvement will greatly increase our internet speed and provide us the ability to update our obsolete phone system. Vergennes Broadband is covering the additional cost of the project. With the fiber internet upgrade, Vergennes Township will save over \$500 per month in internet and phone charges compared to the outdated service that has been provided by AT&T.

The second awarded grant was written by planning commission board member Robert Rogers. This grant will cover the cost of purchasing Audio Video Equipment for the boardroom. This equipment will provide the attendees of Vergennes Township meetings the ability to view or present materials or information electronically.

### Cell Coverage in a Long-Standing Dead Zone

Soon, residents and visitors near the Flat River Valley and the surrounding area will see a huge improvement in their cellular service. This area of Vergennes Township has been notorious for little to no cell service coverage. There was some opposition over the construction of the cell tower, but the Board's decision was upheld by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Once the cell tower is constructed, there will be a great improvement to the cellular service in and around Fallasburg Park and the Flat River Valley.

### May Special Election

On May 2, 2017 the voters in the Kent Intermediate School District voted on and approved the Kent Intermediate School District Regional Enhancement

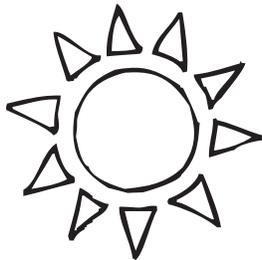
Millage of .9 mills for the next 10 years. Vergennes Township had just over 20 percent participation in this election. This is a low percentage, but a typical turnout for a special election. You will see this new millage added to your Summer 2017 tax bill.

### Township Hall Update

Last year, the board had asked for and received conceptual proposals and cost estimates to provide an addition to our aging Township Hall. What we received were three very good, but very different designs which came in at different price points. After brainstorming with a consultant and holding multiple meetings, it was evident that what we needed was the ability to compare apples-to-apples. Without this, we hit a road block and any hopes of moving forward on a much needed building update stalled. It became evident that we need a building design with specifications that can be sent to multiple firms and contractors for bid. This will allow us to get solid comparable figures. We are currently researching the cost of a design project that would provide us with a detailed set of blue-prints. If the design project is approved, we would have the ability to complete the first step of knowing the potential cost of a future Township Hall building project.

### Connecting With You

I am currently researching the idea of Vergennes Township having a social media presence. Social media is a popular form of communication and a way to increase exposure to our residents and create more transparency in government. Please check the Vergennes Township website [Vergennestwp.org](http://Vergennestwp.org) as there is a possibility you may see a link in the near future!

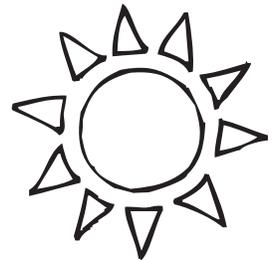


### Community Cleanup Day

**Saturday, September 30, 2017**

**Cleanup AND Recycling**

9 AM to 12 PM



*Kent County Fairgrounds, Lowell, MI – enter the at the Grand River boat launch and follow the signs!  
You must live in the Lowell Area School District. Please present a tax bill or voter's registration card and driver's license. One trailer/pickup truck load per household  
For more information on recycling visit [www.recyclekent.org](http://www.recyclekent.org)*

## SUMMER TAXES – 2017

**We have a new stand-alone drop box located between the lower and upper parking lots. You may drop your taxes here. PLEASE NO CASH IN THIS DROP BOX. We will no longer use the mail slot in the door.**

Taxes are due on September 14th. Please allow 7 business days for mailing your tax bills, as we do not accept postmarks as the due date. We cannot be responsible for any delays with the postal service. Please use the yellow return envelope provided for you in the tax statement.

**If you are having difficulty in making a one-time tax payment**, please feel free to make **ANY** partial payments from July 1st through September 14th or longer if need be. You will then only have interest on the total of the unpaid taxes. You have until February 28th before any portion of the unpaid bill will be turned over delinquent to the county.

**If you would like a paid receipt, include BOTH parts of your tax bill with a self-addressed envelope. We will return the top portion of the bill with a dated paid -stamp on it.** Otherwise, just include the lower part of your bill with your check and your cancelled check is your receipt.

**Credit card payments ARE NOT accepted at Township office.**

**Note for ONLINE BILL PAYMENTS:** Payments made through your bank **do not** arrive at the township on the date you pay them. Please allow enough time for **payments to be mailed** from your bank to the township. **Payments must be received at the township on or before the due date to avoid interest and penalties.**

Make checks payable to: **Vergennes Township**. Any payment received after the due date that does not have interest added will be applied as a partial payment. State law prohibits the Township from waiving these charges.

Office hours are Monday and Wednesday - from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Thursday – from 9a.m- noon.

**It is your responsibility to make sure your taxes are paid.** Pay early to avoid any interest being added to your tax bill. You can check periodically on the Vergennes Township website to see if your taxes have been posted. The web site is usually updated daily. If you click on tax and assessing information, you will be redirected to another web site. You can search by name, address or parcel number. [www.vergennestwp.org](http://www.vergennestwp.org).

Please check your tax statement for accuracy. If you have a mortgage company, please look under your name for the mortgage company to which the tax bill was sent. If the mortgage company is wrong, please contact me at the Township so that I can correct this.

Under "Tax Detail" on your tax statement, you will find your **Principle Residence Exemption**. Your **P.R.E.** will show you how much your tax bill has been reduced. If you feel you qualify for a P.R.E., please contact our assessor.

Have a wonderful and safe summer.  
Jean Hoffman - Treasurer

## SUMMER TAX DEFERMENTS

To Qualify:

\*Your HOUSEHOLD INCOME must not exceed \$40,000 and must be either:

- Senior citizen (62 years or older)
- Paraplegic, quadriplegic
- Eligible service person, eligible veteran, eligible widow or widower
- Blind person
- Totally and permanently disabled

\*Agriculture

The forms are available in the office from Treasurer Jean Hoffman from July 1<sup>st</sup> through September 14<sup>th</sup>. The deferment period covers one year only, so you must re-apply each tax year.

It does not exempt you from paying your taxes, only allows for summer taxes to be deferred until the February payment with no interest added.

## ZONING 2017

### Zoning Update

A new company was approved for a site plan to construct a new building in the OE Bieri Industrial Park. They build equipment related to the poultry industry. The Zoning Ordinance will be updated with recent approved amendments to allow a storage shed on lots without a dwelling on Murray Lake with setbacks and size restrictions; amending the swimming pool section to also allow a choice of the new non-fall through cover or the traditional gates and fencing and many clarifications and additions to the Flat River District section. The Planning Commission will be working on new language to allow senior housing types out in the country and add landscaping businesses as a use in the Commercial and Industrial Districts.

Call Jeanne Vandersloot, Zoning Administrator, for any questions or applications at 616-897-5671 or email to: [zoning@vergennestwp.org](mailto:zoning@vergennestwp.org)

### Property Owners with Flat River Frontage:

The Flat River is designated by the State of Michigan as a "Natural River". The purpose of a natural river designation is to preserve and enhance the area for water conservation, its free flowing condition, its fish, wildlife, boating, scenic, aesthetic, floodplain, ecologic, historic, and recreational values and uses. The Flat River Zoning District is designated as 300 feet out from and along the ordinary high water mark of the river. If you are a Flat River property owner and have

any questions about how the ordinance may affect you, you can see the entire ordinance online at the township website. You can also consult with Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot during regular office hours.

### Home Businesses

The Township provides in the zoning ordinance to allow various types of businesses that can be conducted within the home or using an accessory building. There are several types of regulated businesses. They include types that are completely within the home such as art, office work, architect, or within an accessory building such as woodworking or other types that are performed elsewhere like landscaping. Another type is renting out older barns for storage of RV's, campers and boats. The application for a permit is on the website or here at the Township Hall and an applicant checks which type they are applying for. Call the Zoning Administrator for any questions.

### Website

Be sure to visit the Township's website ([www.vergennestwp.org](http://www.vergennestwp.org)). Residents and applicants can save time, mailing, and driving for zoning and planning procedures by obtaining meeting schedules, meeting minutes, fee schedule and escrow policy, accessory building information and setbacks, application forms, zoning ordinance, other ordinances, public notices and Flat River information with your computer on the website.

## INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT NEWS

In March the Board passed a Resolution to establish an Industrial Development District that encompasses all of the land zoned Industrial within Vergennes Township. This action offers all current and future businesses in the township the opportunity to apply for tax abatements on new buildings and additions, which adds jobs and encourages economic growth in the community.

The first business to take advantage of this "blanket" district is Poultry Management Systems Inc. The company started on the grounds of Herbruck's Poultry in Saranac, but has since outgrown that site. PMSI recently broke ground on its new facility located in Bieri Industrial Park, which is behind First Congregational Church on Lincoln Lake, but accessed off Godfrey adjacent to the City of Lowell. PMSI manufactures equipment for the egg/poultry industry. The new building will house a two story office and a 15,000 sq ft manufacturing

facility where all of PMSI's products will be manufactured under one roof. The owners say it will enable them to create opportunities for new product development and increased outputs in assembly and testing processes.

Most exciting is that as a result of the expansion, PMSI will have the capacity to add personnel to manage the current and anticipated growth rate in their industry. They expect to add up to 27 additional employees over the next three years. PMSI joins other recent businesses in our Industrial District that have brought additional job opportunities to the community. Enworks, office furnishing specialists, and Envision Engineering, which produces fenders and gas tanks for motorcycle manufacturers, each built new facilities within the last several years and have added to the local economy through increased payrolls.

## HELLO FROM YOUR FORMER CLERK

I may have moved to Plainfield Township and left the role of Vergennes Township Clerk, but I haven't gone far! Your new Clerk Heather Hoffman named me her Deputy Clerk, and I am also staying on to help her in a transitional role.

The Township Statutes governing elected and appointed officials in Michigan require Elected Officials to reside in the township. The statutes also require the Clerk and Treasurer to appoint Deputies, but they don't have to be residents. I have been enjoying showing Heather the ropes. After 23 years as your Clerk, it feels a tiny bit strange to be in the office next door, but I must confess I am enjoying not having all of the responsibility. The job of Clerking tends to run in cycles – monthly,

quarterly, and yearly. As new things pop up on our calendar, I summarize what is necessary to do, and offer advice and assistance in any way Heather needs it. Heather is very talented, but above all, she loves Vergennes and will work her hardest to do what is best for all. I felt the same way during my tenure, and am so pleased to know she feels the same.

My new home is becoming all I hoped it would be. Downsizing is not for sissies! But I'm glad we did it while we still have lots of energy, and we're enjoying meeting many new people. The commute from Plainfield Township is not long at all. I plan to continue for as long as Heather will have me, and I look forward to seeing you sometime soon.