

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



UMMER 2013

SUPERVISOR:
TREASURER:
CLERK:
TRUSTEES:

TIM WITTENBACH
JEAN HOFFMAN
MARI STONE
RICK GILLET
ALLAN BAIRD

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

I hope this finds you enjoying this lazy summer season. I am determined to enjoy it this year, as it is an off-year for elections. Frankly, it has been pretty quiet around the township, and I have taken the opportunity to freshen up and clean out work areas before things gear up again. I have served on the steering committee of a community project for the last year and thought I would give you an update on that for my twice-yearly musings.....take care, and be safe this summer!

Greater Lowell Community Vision - Preliminary Report

In 2012, Vergennes Township, Lowell Township, The City of Lowell, Lowell Area Schools, and the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hired consultants, with funding from the Lowell Area Community Fund, to conduct a project that would determine what the residents of the Lowell Community wanted to see for the future of the area. There were approximately 1,000 voices participating in the process, which included: community-wide surveys; events at community gatherings; governmental and non-governmental leaders at consensus workshops; workshops with groups such as Alto Lions, Lowell High School Interact Club, Rotary Club; and 3 Community Café events. This resulted in a report that detailed and compiled each opinion.

The consultants compiled the feedback from the numerous community engagement sessions and identified five themes. The Steering Committee took the 5 themes from the Community Input Report and refined them into 4 Focus Areas, all centered on a core culture of "Collaboration."

Economic Development

- Jobs, Safety, Tourism, Agriculture

Quality of Life

- Arts, History, Recreation, Churches, Clubs and Organizations, Wellness

Education/Talent Development

- Schools, Continuing Education, At-Risk

Populations, Volunteerism Infrastructure and Planning

- Growth/Land Use, Roads, Utilities (water, sewer, electric, gas, internet), Marketing

The consultants also provided "best practices" used in other communities and/or organizations as examples of options Lowell could take. For example, the steering committee has already visited Hastings, which employs a "community director" who oversees and advocates for the various groups and activities that exist in the Hastings area. These examples will be used to further the development and implementation of our plan.

The following recommendations have been identified by the steering committee and are under process:

- A Memorandum of Understanding should be adopted by the five entities representing the Steering Committee which commits them to implementation of the Vision.
- "Action Groups" should be established representing each of the focus areas of the vision plan, and made up of community members and other stakeholders.
- The five entities making up the Steering Committee should continue to monitor the action groups based on the needs resulting from the priority areas of the Greater Lowell Community Vision.
- The five entities should determine the need to create and fund a position to assist in implementing the Vision.

Lowell – the Next “Trail Town”

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority has been working on plans for the connection of the north and east sections of the abandoned railroad beds extending out of town, now officially known as the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail. This trail will be part of a statewide system funded by the Department of Natural Resources, and will extend from Alma to Owosso in a big “C” pattern. Lowell is smack dab in the center of it.

Because the rail bed has not been abandoned within the city, the FMRVRT developers, along with the MDNR, has asked LARA to determine the best route through town. There are many challenging

factors to be considered. Crossings needed to be made include Main Street/M-21 (which is also a state highway), Hudson Street (the main north/south route through town), the Flat River, AND the Grand River. Determining the safest crossings for pedestrian/bike use is the primary focus, but the cost of bridgework will also play a role in deciding how this section of the trail will be developed.

There will be opportunity for public input later this summer, so please stay tuned to local news sources for more information. You can also email me at clerk@vergennestwp.org and I can give you the latest update.

KENT DISTRICT LIBRARY UPDATE

Kent District Library has been awarded the Excellence in Business award from the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. The EPIC Awards (Entrepreneurial, Progressive, Innovative and Collaborative) recognize those who support the community, demonstrate growth, are innovative and have worked with others as mentors and collaborators.

KDL gives the Vergennes Township Board an annual report/update that focuses on the Engelhardt Branch, as most of our residents head to Lowell to use the library. Here are a few of the highlights they would like to share.....

Last year KDL completed installation of KDLville™ “play, grow, read” early literacy spaces in all 18 branches, and grew its list of adult computer literacy classes. They have developed the largest collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks owned by a single library in the state (now over 30,000 items). In 2012, KDL was the first library in Michigan – and one of the first in the nation – to offer eMagazines. KDL has also trained its entire staff on eReader and tablet technology so they can help patrons download materials to their devices. As a result of its

proactive efforts, KDL’s circulation of eMaterials is the highest among all public libraries in Michigan.

Automated material check-in and check-out systems have been installed using RFID technology, which has helped keep staffing costs stable while smoothly circulating over 6 million items to customers in 2012. They also transitioned branch collections to the “DeweyFree” method, which makes finding library materials similar to finding items in a bookstore.

KDL considers libraries as community hubs. They partner with dozens of community, civic and school groups to offer space and programming, such as tutoring with the Literacy Center of West Michigan and classrooms for the Kent Intermediate School District.

So head to the library this summer and “check out” what’s new!

Kent District Library is a millage-supported system encompassing 18 branch libraries in 26 governmental units throughout Kent County. KDL serves 395,660 people in all areas of the county except the cities of Grand Rapids and Cedar Springs, the village of Sparta, and Solon and Sparta townships.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Remaining community event dates for 2013 from the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce. More information can be found on the chamber website at www.lowellchamber.org.

- Lowell Showboat Sizzling Summer Concerts, June – August, Thursday evenings, 7 pm to 9 pm
- Lowell Area Farmers Market, June – August, Thursdays, 11 am to 3 pm, Tractor Supply Parking Lot
- Lowell Riverwalk Festival and Cruise-in, July 11,

12 and 13

- Membership Golf Outing, Friday August 9, Location TBA
- Harvest Celebration, Saturday, October 12
- Girls’ Night Out, Thursday, October 17
- Christmas Through Lowell, November 15, 16 & 17
- Christmas Festivities and Annual Santa Parade, December 7
- Santa Visits on the Lowell Showboat, Month of December

FROM THE TREASURERS DESK

SUMMER TAXES – 2013
Jean Hoffman — Treasurer

Taxes are due on September 14th. Since this is on a Saturday, you may pay taxes through the 16th without interest. Please mail early, 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.

If you would like a paid receipt, please enclose the entire tax bill with a self-addressed envelope. We will return the top portion of the bill with a dated paid -stamp on it.

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 hour are Monday and Wednesday - from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Thursday – from 9 a.m. - noon. For your convenience, there is a mail slot in the door for after-hour payments. Be sure to place a check or money order only through the slot—please no cash.

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 page is usually updated every two weeks. 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.



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 1st through September 14th. The deferment period covers one year only, so you must re-apply each tax year.

WHAT DO YOUR PROPERTY TAXES SUPPORT?

FOR EVERY \$1.00 YOU PAY IN PROPERTY TAXES

\$.76 Goes to education (includes lowell area schools, kent intermediate & community college & state education)

\$.21 Goes to the county operations (Includes general operations, jail, senior citizens & district library)

\$.03 Goes to the township (For general operations)

Collected for the 2012 Tax Season \$5,090,314.73

And how they are distributed

Education:	\$3,872,789.62
Lowell Area Schools	\$1,751,670.95
Kent Intermediate School	\$799,938.77
Grand Rapids Com. College	\$ 304,701.63
State Education Tax	\$1,016,478.27
County:	\$1,069,676.68
Kent County Operating	\$ 919,644.57
Kent District Library	\$ 150,032.11
Township:	\$ 147,848.43



FIELD REVIEW NOTICE



The Assessor is required to appraise, for tax purposes, all real and personal property within the Township. Michigan Statute requires that all property be evaluated annually based on current market conditions. This evaluation requires an inspection of each property in the Township.

This includes measuring all buildings and other property improvements on the property, taking current digital photos of the property, verifying the buildings current physical condition reviewing the amenities present, and interviewing the property owners to determine bedrooms, baths, and type of basement, etc.

The State of Michigan has recommended that 20% of properties in a governmental unit be visited each year

to review assessment record accuracy and to ensure that properties are being appraised and assessed at 50% of the market value. In efforts to continually improve our excellent standards, the Assessor's office strives to enhance the annual review process and better meet or exceed the State of Michigan's expectations. The goal is that the Assessing office will review at least 20% a year of the Township, then every single property is visited at least once every 5 years.

If one of the inspectors from the Township arrives wearing a Township issued I.D. badge and carrying a clipboard and digital camera and knocks on your door requesting to review your property, please welcome them. Accurate assessments benefit everyone in the community.



GRATTAN TWILIGHT CANCER WALK



The tradition continues with the 5th annual GRATTAN TWILIGHT CANCER WALK! Many people in our small community and surrounding areas have been affected by cancer of all types. We wish to raise funds and distribute 100% of the profits to GILDA'S CLUB OF LOWELL. Gilda's Club is a FREE cancer and grief support community for children, adults, families and friends.

A donation of \$10.00 includes the walk and a t-shirt.

The event consists of a 2 mile walk around the track, silent auction and music. Hot dogs and ice cream treats will be available for a donation. Bring a lawn chair and enjoy the music from 6:00-9:00 pm. This is a fun event for the whole family.

Please visit our website at www.GrattanTLCWalk.com for more information about our cause and for registration forms.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2013
GRATTAN RACEWAY PARK
7201 LESSITER, GRATTAN TWP

Registration begins at 5:30 pm
Walk begins at 7:00 pm



911 REFLECTIVE ADDRESS SIGNS



The Lowell Area Fire Department will make you a 911 reflective address sign to help locate you in an emergency. These signs are made of aluminum coated with a highly reflective material with large numbers. Double-sided, these signs help us find you! Please send the completed form below along with payment to:

Lowell Area Fire Department
315 S. Hudson
Lowell, Michigan 49331

1st Sign = \$15

Each additional sign = \$11.50
(Funds raised are used for fire prevention and education)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Best time to call _____

V
E
R
T
I
C
A
L

1
2
3
4
5

1 2 3 4 5

HORIZONTAL

Placement instructions: When you receive your address sign, be sure to punch through the pre-drilled holes that are covered with the green reflective material and attach it to a post or sturdy structure. Be sure to place it on the same side of the road as your driveway. Once you've placed your sign be sure to drive by from all directions to ensure that it is highly visible. (Keep in mind snow depth and plow damage.) If you have questions, comments or concerns, please call 616-897-7354 or 616-893-0521.