

CLT Newsletter

Winter 2018-19

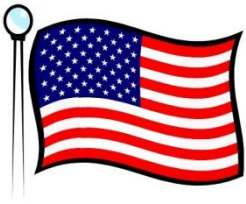
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CEMETERIES: Many will soon notice that we've done some impressive cleanup of the landscape in both North and East cemeteries. This cutting of many overgrown bushes and cutting back of limbs was long overdue. Many previously covered gravestones are now once again visible to family and visitors, and the overall look of the grounds is less unkempt. Also, we are tweaking the Cemetery Ordinance, soon to be in its third printing, to reflect changing needs of the community. For example, it is said that for the first time in the State of Michigan overall there were more cremations than traditional burials. We found this to be true for CLT, as well. In 2018, out of the 23 burials in our two cemeteries, only two were "full" burials and the rest were burial of ashes. Since there has traditionally been a minimum space requirement for purchase and for subsequent burial, namely that amount of space which would accommodate a coffin and a vault, CLT is considering no longer requiring that minimum. Instead, we would allow purchase of burial rights of smaller spaces, with pricing set accordingly, to accommodate the increasing need for cremains burials. This is for folks requiring *only* enough space for ashes. Another example is the number of requests for so-called "green" burials. CLT is also considering updating policy to reflect those who wish the most ecologically sensitive burial methods that CLT perceives will be favored by more and more persons in the future. Stay tuned for details.

2019 CLEAN UP DAY: The township-sponsored Clean up Days for 2019 will be 8 to 11 a.m., Sat., May 4 and Aug. 10. It will be located at the Frankfort Dow Memorial Airport, 650 Airport Rd., in Frankfort, Mich. We will not accept tires, electronics, or hazardous waste. CLT Board members in charge are Brooke Trentham Popp and Tammy May. For information on county sponsored recycling and waste disposal, visit www.benzieco.net, and look for "Recycling" under *Departments*.

ELECTIONS: Thanks to everyone who voted this last election. 722 ballots were cast and 322 (45%) of those were absentee ballots. Since we only have 1067 registered voters, those are very commendable numbers. We welcome your comments about what worked well, what did not work, and your suggestions for making things better next time. Please send election-related comments to Sue Sullivan at clerk.clt@gmail.com. Special thanks goes out to all the election workers who make the fair and transparent election process happen in our township. Several of these people stayed until 3:30 AM when the last of the reports were finally completed: Dawn Olney and Tammy Bowers (Benzie County Clerk and Deputy Clerk), Harold and Molly Comer, Alice Farr, Evelyn Griffith, Joyce Kirshner, Darlyne Leete, Kathy Picklo, Janet Rivera, Laurie Rivera, Judy VanMeter, Cathy Wilkinson, and David and Janet Wynne. And our own, Sue Sullivan, of course.



ROADS: CLT has requested bids for asphalt resurfacing for 2019: .484 mi/Thomas Road East; .696 mi/ Thomas Road West; .82 mil/Figg Road; and .026/Bridge Street. If terms and amount of bids are found satisfactory and the Board votes to proceed, payments for this work would begin in December 2019 and be paid in full by April 2020. Thus, we would be at the end of our 5-year millage passed in the township back in November 2015. The overwhelming response with the millage results thus far has been positive. Whether the township constituency decides that it wants to go for another millage in 2020 will be a subject brought up next year for discussion. The CLT Road Committee currently consists of Rick Nielsen (Board member), Bruce Walton and Al Popp.

WEBSITE AND I.T. DEVELOPMENT: The CLT Board has resolved to spend money on "I.T." or Information Technology. This was thought necessary to best serve everyone involved with the township: residents and visitors, taxpayers/property owners and renters, those who work in our small government entity and those who seek our services and want information, especially after hours. These improvements include a new website, new machines, new infrastructure, state of the art storage of data, and –at least for one year– overall managed services.

ZONING: If you are developing or altering your property around Crystal Lake, at the water's edge, a permit from the (DEQ) is required as is also a zoning permit from the Crystal Lake Township Zoning Administrator. Retaining walls on your beach, at the water's edge, are prohibited. It is evident that most property owners are unaware of this and its adverse impact on the water quality. This kind of development also may promote the growth of invasive species. Please check with our Zoning Department for further information including alternatives.

UNDERSTANDING PROPERTY TAXABLE VALUES VERSUS ASSESSED VALUES AND STATE EQUALIZED VALUES

Michigan handles property taxes in a very different manner than most other States. Buyers especially need to be aware of Michigan's property taxation process. Here is some important terminology to know:

"Taxable Value" – the value used to calculate property tax bills. "Taxable Values" will only increase by the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is the lesser of the two, *unless* a property has new construction, *or* value that was missing from the tax roll (50% of true cash value of improvements will be added as new taxable), *or unless* the property had a non-exempt transfer of ownership recorded in the prior year. If a *non-exempt* transfer of ownership occurs, the Taxable Value will be equal to the Assessed Value the year *following* the transfer.

"Assessed Value" – estimated 50% of True Cash Value (Market Value). "Assessed Values" are required by law to be recalculated annually at an estimated 50% of the "market value", or the most likely price a property would sell for if sold in the current real estate market. The real estate market is rarely stagnant, which is why Assessed Values will increase/decrease to adjust to the current market conditions. It is illegal for assessors to set individual property values based on an individual sale. Visiting every property annually would be cost prohibitive, which is why Assessor's use a "mass appraisal" process to set assessed values. This process involves looking at a collection of valid arms-length sales (arms-length meaning the property was available to the general public on the open real estate market to all buyers, and that both the buyer and seller were aware of current market conditions for the area) to determine the estimated values of properties in a taxing unit.

"State Equalized Values (S.E.V.)" – values that have been determined through the county and state equalization process to ensure that properties are being assessed at the approximate 50% of their True Cash Value. With the passing of Proposal A, we no longer pay property taxes based on S.E.V. values.

To help further your understanding please go to our website for "Frequently Asked Questions." You'll find answers to such questions as:

- **How are my property taxes calculated?**
- **My neighbor's house is bigger and they have more property, so why do I pay more in taxes?**
- **My Assessed Value jumped 30%, but I thought it could only go up so high?**

Please don't hesitate to contact the Assessing office if you have questions or when our Assessors Jill and Dave Brown can be of assistance. They can be reached at 231-881-4000, or email, assessing.clt@gmail.com.