



DRAFT FOR APPROVAL 10-19-21

# Crystal Lake Township Newsletter

## Winter 2021-22

1651 Frankfort Hwy/ POB 2129 Frankfort, MI 49635  
#231-352-9791 and [www.crystallaketwp.org](http://www.crystallaketwp.org)

**COVID AND TOWNSHIP BUSINESS:** Our staff's expectations are to continue using Zoom (\*) to hold remotely-accessed board meetings through December, 2021. Depending on future state and local assessments of COVID factors, this practice may be extended. You may receive all our meeting updates by checking our website, or by contacting township personnel. Although officially closed, the township hall is frequently open, though without any official hours. The best way to reach us is to call, email, phone, or stop by if you see a car parked in the lot or the lights on. There is always a mail slot in the lower door to deposit payments and documents.

**VOLUNTEER NEEDED:** Interested in getting involved with the property assessment procedure? There is a check-and-balance on how our property assessments are decided, called Board of Review. It is a board comprised of township citizens that receives complaints from property owners and reviews assessments. If you are interested in being an alternate on this board, making a long term commitment, attending training, and meeting 5 days a year, we will remunerate your time and effort! Contact Supervisor Ferris.

### (\*) ZOOM MEETING SOFTWARE



Want to attend a meeting from afar and don't know how to use Zoom? Or have no computer or internet connection? Call the township personnel *well in advance* of any scheduled meeting for Zoom directions and/or practical suggestions for attendance.

**GIVE US FEEDBACK:** We serve you, but we can serve you better with helpful feedback on a variety of services: meetings, elections, general support, tax assessments and tax bills, blight, cemetery operations, roads, staffing, planning and zoning, communications with the public, fireworks and a myriad of other topics including local events that effect our residents (festivals, fundraisers and athletic events, such as Ironman.) Please share with us! What are we doing right and what have we missed? What and how can we do better? The easiest, official way to give meaningful feedback to us is to write –not call– via a letter or email. The contact link on the website might be the easiest way to communicate with us. Keep in mind your message doesn't need to be long or complicated –perhaps just a sentence or two– but keep it constructive, please. Here are some suggestions: "I would like to see improvement in the area of \_\_\_\_\_"; "Something that concerns me is \_\_\_\_\_"; "I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_"; and "I want to compliment \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_."

**If nothing else, please consider communicating on at least these two salient issues:**

- A) Adequate Broadband Coverage:** In attempts to solve this modern media problem, and in conjunction with the county, we are trying to assess who has current broadband coverage and who doesn't. Use this special code to send back so we can better assess where the "holes" in broadband coverage are in the township:
- B) American Rescue Plan Revenue:** The township expects to receive Federal funds from the Congress-passed American Rescue Plan Act, and then to commit the monies to expanding broadband in our township. Benzie County is currently conducting a feasibility study to facilitate this project. **HOWEVER, IF** in the end this isn't feasible, we would like to hear from you on what this money, approximately \$20K, should be used for.



**ELECTIONS:** Voters went to the polls in person and via absentee ballot to decide on a proposed school millage. The results were that a total of \_\_\_\_\_ voted and the proposal passed: \_\_\_\_\_ for and \_\_\_\_\_ against.

### **CHANGES TO ZONING**

Here are some important recent zoning changes you should know about. Township property owners within the Crystal Lake watershed drainage basin, as well as architects, building designers, and contractors working on projects within the watershed, all need to be aware of recent updates to the Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay.

**What:** Changes to the Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay Ordinance (Article 24), which defines requirements and generally imposes special conditions on land use and development on top of other existing township zoning regulations, became effective on September 10, 2021.

**Why:** Two major dynamics prompted the Township Planning Commission to approve recommended updates to the 26-year-old ordinance:

- New research gives more insight on what factors most affect watershed health and how best to mitigate those effects. It also reinforces the importance of protecting our waterways from getting polluted in the first place since it is almost impossible to restore a lake or river once it has been degraded.
- Escalating development in the area which removes natural vegetative cover makes it critical for regulations to keep up and continue to be effective in protecting the health of our watershed and the quality of our waterways. Removal of vegetation, especially on steeply sloped land, has become one of the major factors affecting the health of the lake's watershed.

**Examples:** Two important changes included in the ordinance update:

- **Vegetative Buffers:** All existing vegetation located within thirty-five (35) feet of the ordinary high-water mark of Crystal Lake and any stream, wetland or ridgeline shall not be removed and shall be preserved as a vegetative buffer in accordance with Article 24, Section 24.7.A and B.
- **Tree Removal:** With the exception of diseased, dying or dead trees and up to five (5) healthy trees (up to 12 inches in diameter at 4.5' above ground) outside of defined buffer zones, property owners must submit to the Zoning Administrator a plan for tree removal in accordance with Article 24, Section 24.7.C. This includes forestry/tree harvesting/logging activities.

**Key to remember:**

- Site plan approval/permits are required prior to **ANY** grading, excavation, and vegetation/tree removal. Check with Zoning Administrator prior to plans, including certain landscaping projects.

**Next move:** Property owners, architects, building designers and contractors need to review the entire Article 24 for other important changes. The complete and updated Crystal Lake Township Watershed Overlay (zoning ordinance article 24) is available online at [crystallaketwp.org](http://crystallaketwp.org).

### **In addition, Article 22, Environmental Provisions, has been updated:**

**What:** Article 22 protects ANY area of the Township considered to be environmentally sensitive from ANY alteration of land, including removal of vegetation/trees. Factors include soil types, drainage, vegetation, wildlife habitats, floodplain, slope erosion, wetlands, water bodies, for example.

**Impact:** Check with the Zoning Administrator prior to beginning any project, including Forestry/tree harvest/logging.