



Crystal Lake Township Newsletter Winter 2024-25

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DEMOCRACY WINS

ELECTIONS: Clerk VanMeter writes that five elections were held since Nov. 2023, three of which had the requirement of nine days of Early Voting (EV). The success of the elections wouldn't be possible without the hardworking election inspectors. Special thanks go to those who worked the most recent General Election: Anne Burt, Jesse Burt, Harold Comer, Sonya Dykehouse, Brian Halliday, Sondra Halliday, Melissa Hamp, Penny Herd, Wendy McDaniel, Charles McDaniel, Ruth Paris, Sarra Paris, Maryellen Paull, Elizabeth Rodgers, Amy Schindler, Elizabeth Shrake, Cathy Wilkinson, David Wynne, and Janet Wynne. The absentee ballot process was streamlined with the expertise of Deputy Clerk Sondra Halliday and AVCB Chairman Cathy Wilkinson—the clerk's "right hand" women. CLT votes tallied for the General Election: 241 EV, 448 Absentee, 153 Election Day for a grand total of 842 or 81 % of our total registered voters. Outstanding turnout!! Next stop: 2026 Midterms.

FORMER & NEW TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS: A fond farewell to county "rep" Karen Cunningham for her capable service representing both CLT and the City of Frankfort. Newly elected Christine Trigg will be taking her seat as liaison between our board and the Benzie Board of Commissioners. As for changes on the Township Board, Rick Nielsen, came to town set up his medical practice and that same year was also elected a trustee. 37 years on the board may be a record in CLT history! Among other things, Rick advised us in the areas of township roads and Fire & Rescue. Bill Northway dedicated 4 years, served as the board's representative to the Planning Commission and is now looking forward to his retirement project. (Google: "Barkle Canine Dental") In their stead, we welcome local business owner, Sue Webber and Greg Wright, a retired psychologist who has also served as Planning Commission Chair for many years. We give thanks to all who step up to the plate to serve. We're looking forward to productive future of service to you, our friends and neighbors.

MEETINGS: A reminder that the township board now convenes at 6 p.m. each third Wednesday of every month. We now provide video-recorded Township Board meetings on a YouTube channel. While we encourage in person attendance, the monthly videos are available post-meeting as another useful option. Link to the channel here at <https://www.youtube.com/@CrystalLakeTownship-BenzieCoun>.

WEBSITE: CLT is always working to improve communications with our constituents. The CLT website is full of relevant information in an easy-to-access format. The most recent news, updates, meeting notices, and meeting minutes are posted on the homepage for quick access to "the latest." From the menu banner across the top of the home page, the alphabetical drop-down boxes are loaded with information regarding zoning, assessing, property taxes, cemeteries, our planning commission, FOIA, roads, township history, fire & rescue and more. The Staff page is popular for quick lookup of contact information, office hours, and picture ID of your elected/hired/appointed staff members. Have suggestions? Supervisor Ferris is responsible for both the newsletter and website. Give her some feedback through the website's "CONTACT" link.

TOWNSHIP ISSUES OF SPECIAL NOTE

~ feedback welcomed ~

BLIGHT: The Board has recognized this problem in our area, but has been slow to take action, and in some cases even hindered from doing so. The Board's new makeup will address the issues that surround blighted properties, to make a concerted effort to work with owners to come into compliance with our ordinances. As a result, we hope results will protect the environment and make sure everyone's health and safety is secured.

BROADBAND: In 2023, the Township Board voted to financially support the "open access" fiber optic cable that has been installed along M-115 and elsewhere in our area by granting its \$100K+ in America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for connecting our under-served and the un-served constituents to broadband services. Cherry Capital Communications is getting close to connecting homes to the newly constructed Crystal Lake Twp fiber to the home network. CCC is estimating the first homes will be activated in December. If you are interested in sign up or would like more information. Please go to <https://portal.cccfiber.com> or call 231-264-9970 option 1 for Sales. After sign up, there will be several more steps to getting your home connected.

CLEAN UP DAYS: Mark your 2025 calendars now. Summer "Junk" Days in 2025 will be Saturday, May 10th and Saturday, August 2nd, 8-11 a.m. or until trucks are full. Events will again be held in the Graceland Parking lot (thank you, Graceland!) and more information about what is allowed/not allowed will be on the website.

IRONMAN, BELLOWS TOWER AND BETTER COMMUNICATION: The City of Frankfort has signed a contract with Ironman, a for-profit private company, for the 5th & 6th years of hosting this popular event of competitive swimming, running and biking throughout our area. The race affects our township and general transportation. The City has also contracted for a new 190 foot cell phone tower located in the back of the 7th Street Public Beach area. While the City owns this 7th Street property, the property is located in CLT. Many residents have expressed concerns that we have little or no say in these and other decisions made by other entities. The CLT Board has reached out to the City of Frankfort on our residents' behalf. We have indicated that CLT strives for better communication between the City and the Township, asks for inclusion in decisions affecting both communities, and supports government policies that make good neighbors for all our residents.

SHORT TERM RENTAL POLICY: As this newsletter goes to print, there is no such ordinance yet adopted. But in response to constituents' concerns, the Board asked the Planning Commission to draft one and it was presented this last summer. As of 11.15.24 it is currently still a work in progress. There are two driving forces for adopting a STR ordinance. One is to give an avenue to remedying nuisances that may appear in conjunction with short term residencies such as noise, trash, pets, vehicles and more. Another is to preserve as much of our township's rural character traits, ones which welcomes visitors yet preserves a cohesive nature of a permanent community that considers this home. Check the website for updates on this topic.

ZONING: Here's a friendly reminder that ANYTHING property owners want to do to their land or house or other structures STARTS HERE at CLT's Zoning office. Our administrator will help by letting you know 1) no permits are needed; 2) you need to initially fulfill any township requirements; or 3) you can move directly on to whatever permits you might need from Benzie County. Crystal Lake Township is zoned, and adheres to the Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay. Let's work together to assure everyone is operating from the same rule book for the good of the entire community.