



CLT Newsletter

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Blight: We wrote about blight in our previous newsletter and received many thoughtful responses to our concerns. Almost everyone agreed that blight is a hard thing to define (remember Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's memorable line when trying to define obscenity, ". . .but I know it when I see it" ? We think it's similar to that.) All who responded were in definite agreement, though, and were in favor of trying to 1) safeguard the environment, 2) preserve the scenic rural character of the area, and 3) protect property values, all through an enforced blight ordinance. Based on feedback, the Board feels that the township is on the right path in trying to regulate blighted properties, or "junk" situations. Troy Packard, regularly employed as a Benzie County Sheriff's deputy, was hired as our Ordinance Enforcement Officer. He also serves in that capacity in other townships, as well. After efforts last year failed to produce any clean up of identified hotspots, we will once again attempt to reach a solution with residents whose properties violate the community's health and safety standards. It will be a delicate and probably lengthy process to balance individual and property rights with the rights of a community as a whole.

Buildings & Grounds: Apparently the hall has been operating for an indefinite number of decades without a legal septic system. This was discovered by the current administration when the cold winter froze water and sewer lines; as a result, it was a big, unexpected expenditure to remedy the situation but we now sport an up-to-date septic system. Yea! We are also continuing to explore ways to have more operational space, and to come into compliance for election and ADA bathroom facilities. Instead of expanding the existing building, we are entertaining the idea of a smaller, attached new building adjacent to the current structure that would host just offices. Everything considered is with the lowest cost projections in mind.

Cemeteries: We are moving ahead with active enforcement of the CLT Cemetery Ordinance. (It should be noted that the newly adopted ordinance is mostly made up of the previous, well-established rules. There are only a few new regulations, such as banning anything artificial, such as plastic flowers and pots.) This enforcement has produced some consternation. However, we've received an overwhelming number of positive responses for how the cemeteries look, how they operate, and how records for sales/burials are being updated. It seems most persons are glad for the emphasis on keeping the graveyards natural and simple, as well as trying to contain maintenance costs. Unsure of the rules? The ordinance is available online, and in hardcopy at the office. Want copies of your family records, or help with any aspect of the cemeteries? The Supervisor is ready to help.

Cemetery Days: (As Lou Yock likes to say, they are of grave concern.) If you haven't already heard, we are working with the Benzie Historic Museum to bring you tours of Benzie County cemeteries on Tuesday evenings through the early summer. Mark your calendars now: our CLT cemetery historical tours are July 21st (North Cemetery, hosted by Carol Beidler and assisted by Amy Ferris) and July 28th (East Cemetery, hosted by sisters, Sharon McKinley and Barb Johnson) both at 7 PM. For more information, visit www.benziemuseum.org.

Clean Up Day: This year the township-sponsored "junk" day is Saturday, July 11th, 8-Noon. For details, call us, go online or pick up an information sheet at the township hall. Are you the exceptional case that needs help clearing up your blight situation but can't get your stuff to the drop off sites? Transport assistance may be available. Call us for some ideas well in advance of the July 11th date. But get this: on the very same day, the State of Michigan's DEQ is sponsoring a scrap Tire Collection 10 AM – 3 PM, (appointments required; call 882-0554) and Benzie County is sponsoring a Household Hazardous Waste and Electronic Collection Day, 9 AM – Noon (appointment required; call 383-1579) day at the Frankfort Recycling site, 404 Parkview Lane. Questions? Call us, or contact Marlene, Marlene, the Recycling Queen at 882-0554, http://www.benzieco.net/dept_recycling.htm.

Elections: It's been and will continue to be an exceptional year for the number of opportunities to vote. In the past, there have been four times a year slated for possible voting on candidates and/or issues. This year, ballot issues will appear three of those times. Looking ahead, voting on August 4th is for two millage renewals, one for Public Transportation System (known as "the Benzie Bus") and the other for the Jail Operations. Last day to register to vote is July 6th. Need an absentee ballot? Questions go to our amazing Clerk, Sue Sullivan. For the issues coming up on our November 3rd ballot, please see "ROADS". Additional voter information available at Michigan.gov/vote.

Planning: Our Planning Commission, made up of 5 dedicated residents, has been busy. Work continues on updating the zoning ordinance with an eye toward aligning it with the master plan that was adopted in 2014. Recent inquiries have been received for projects in the M-115 corridor, with one special land use permit application under consideration and one commercial use application expected for the gateway area. In May, the Zoning Board of Appeals heard a request for a variance regarding a driveway in a residential area. The Planning Commission is also discussing a zoning proposal from the new Lakes to Land non-profit corporation.



Especially Important



Roads / ISSUE A: On November 3rd, township voters will be asked to approve 1 mill each year for 5 years *specifically* for our *local township asphalt roads*. This is because our *local* --in addition to our county, primary, state and federal-- roads need maintenance, and there is no current funding slated for those roads over which the township has jurisdiction. You'll need the details that can't be covered here. **Public hearings will be scheduled on August 12th at 7 PM** at the township hall, plus another session either in September or October, the date to be determined. In addition, we'll put a lot of stuff to peruse on our website. And for the sake of getting information out there, do you have a civic group to which one of our CLT Roads Committee members could speak? Let us know. We may be able to oblige you. Until then, for our Roads Scholars, here's some background:

- We haven't had committed spending on our local asphalt roads for 20 years.
- In 2014, Benzie County Road Commission asked for and received a 5-year millage to be split 50-50 with all 12 Benzie townships, for the purpose of local road improvements, as well as primary road improvements, and general maintenance. With that ½ going to all 12 townships, the monies are given to projects meriting need throughout the county, not just our one township. (There is a committee that decides which projects and how much; the committee is made up of 1 rep from each township.) As with all monies these days, there isn't enough to go around for everything that needs fixing. Costs are higher than ever. Last year, CLT received approximately 5% of that available funding, hence, this proposed new funding to fill the void.
- In May 2015, unrelated to our county and local roads, the State of Michigan asked for and *didn't* receive funding for state road improvement and maintenance.

If this millage passes on November 3, it would levy 1 mill (\$1 for every \$1000 taxable property value) for each of the next 5 years. All those monies would be dedicated *only* to our local asphalt roads. These roads are too numerous to list here but will be on the website. As one of our Board members likes to clarify the situation, it boils down to a simple proposition: if you want our local asphalt roads repaired, the millage is necessary.

Roads / ISSUE B: In June, MDOT asked us to host an open house whereby they could inform the public and receive feedback on the proposed re-haul of M-115 from Frankfort to Benzonia. Although this is a state project, it affects CLT greatly and was well attended by concerned citizens. Here's the lowdown: Time-wise, Benzonia Township's portion will be done in 2016, and CLT's in 2017. No alternate-route detours are planned, and signal personnel will direct traffic. Basically, no highway features will be changed except for the addition of 8 foot paved shoulders (unofficial help for cyclists and pedestrians, resulting from the CLT Planning Commission's input) and a short east-bound turning lane for Lobb Road. The Arch will not/cannot be touched because of its historic designation, but the road grade going underneath it will be lowered about 12 inches to help with visibility issues. As a direct result of neighborhood petitions and generally voiced concerns about the dangerous traffic patterns of Martin/Sunset Drives intersecting near the Arch/on top of a hill, MDOT will recommend to the State Police that the east-bound 55 MPH speed limit sign be moved much further east. Whether this gets accomplished is still unsure. MDOT is also assisting with concessions to its right-of-way space should a bigger commercial store be built in the former Terry Argue property where Miranda Music/other offices are now located.

Signage: They're everywhere. All year 'round, but especially in the warmer seasons, its understandable that people want to get their messages out. Sometimes signage gets problematic, however, especially as signs get more and more eye-catching, and a plethora of them begin to encroach on the goal to maintain a rural setting. Our Zoning Ordinance (found on our website) has an entire section (Section 19) on regulating signage, twelve pages that cannot be reprinted here. So that your signs are in compliance, please review what signs need a permit and which do not, which are considered commercial and which temporary, how big signs can be and how long they can remain posted, etc. And as always, we're here to help.

Website: After many false starts with "outside" help, we turned to "inside" help. First, our own talented Assessor, Jill Brown, took major steps in setting up a website framework. Second, our own very capable Treasurer, Brooke Trentham, took over the job of fleshing out the different pages with pertinent material. More and more will be added for our constituents' ease of access to information. Read the meeting minutes. Peruse the ordinances. Download forms. Give us suggestions for improvement, and send us an email. CLT is joining the modern techno world, slowly but surely.

Yard & Garage Sales, Limited: We're talking about the limitations regulating the things folks are selling in their yards. You can call them what you will, anything from a moving sale to an estate sale, but for this discussion we're grouping *all* kinds of sales all together. It could be everything from your basement out on tables, or you could have singular items displayed, such as a car, boat or trailer. For residents who offer up *anything* visibly for sale on their properties, there is an ordinance. Why regulation? Because some folks have frequent --if not continuous-- sales going on, much to the chagrin of their immediate neighbors, as well as the community as a whole. It distracts aesthetically from the township, and it often violates commercial zoning. Yards sales are a tradition and they do sell our stuff, but keep in mind that our yards are not stores. **In a nutshell: no more than two sales a year (1 every 6 mos), maximum 3 days each sale.**

Zoning: Just a friendly reminder: EVERYTHING STARTS HERE. On your property, before doing anything, you need to talk to our knowledgeable and friendly Zoning Administrator, Tom Kucera. First and foremost, check out the CLT zoning regulations concerning your plans. A new structure? Renovation or replacement of an existing structure? A house or a shed? Thinking about building? Wanna start a business? DON'T EVEN MOVE DIRT without coming in and seeing if you first need a zoning permit. Suggestion: Do advanced homework by looking up our CLT Zoning Ordinance online.