



CLT Newsletter December 2014

1651 Frankfort Hwy/POB 2129 #231-352-9791 www.crystallaketwp.org

Blight: It is fortuitous that the subject of blight comes alphabetically first in this edition of the newsletter, as it is one of the foremost topics in recent township business. We'd like your response to the following, to the "rub" we are experiencing, so that we might better serve you as your local government representatives.

Here's the problem: For many years, CLT has received a bevy of complaints regarding certain properties, objecting that they are either unsightly or unsafe. These objections come from all different sources, from adjoining neighbors to those living outside the township. What's at play here involves heightened sensitivities surrounding an age-old point of tension: the friction that persists between an individual's rights versus the community's rights. Is it a "right" to do anything with one's own property, regardless of how it affects the guy living next door, and what are the situations where collective rights trump? Many think that creating and enforcing community standards equates to an intrusive, overreaching government. Some say pleasant aesthetics cannot be measured nor a standard enforced; it is just too subjective. What happens when, looking at the exact same scene of articles stored on a given property, owners seriously consider themselves 'collectors', but their neighbors label them as 'hoarders'? Or what to do when some insist their accumulations, whether it be a pile of old mattresses or old cars parked for sale on the lawn, amount to their livelihoods in a tight Michigan economy?



On one given day this past summer, these are a handful out of more than 25 questionable situations readily seen from our major roads.

As we drive through our valuable northern territories (valuable if measured both monetarily, and in terms of our immeasurable wealth of natural beauty) do we want our roads to look like one continuous garage sale? Do we want to live with or next to junk piles? Should start up entrepreneurs be able to throw up little signs on the highways instead of paying for the well-regulated commercial highway signs that established businesses must budget for? So many questions, and many difficult answers.

Here's what we did: In response to citizens' concerns, the Board discussed whether we were serious about tackling this apparent problem and acknowledged this wouldn't be cheap to do. The Board unanimously agreed it involved the good of the community, that it did fall in our purview of safeguarding the health and welfare of our constituents, and that we would start by cleaning up the wording of the existing Junk Ordinance, then we readopted it. We also wrote a job description and hired a Junk Enforcement Officer. Over the spring and summer, a combination of the Board, the Officer, and/or citizens identified "hot spots" where accumulated and/or abandoned stuff was deemed a problem and, when possible, the Officer visited the property's owners/occupiers. Cooperation and common community goals were stressed. However, after 6 months, only one property owner was willing to respond, and she immediately cleaned up a situation that was possibly injurious to neighbors. The rest did not. The Board is now in the process of issuing citations.

We welcome your feedback: supervisor.clt@gmail.com , 231-352-9791 or PO Box 2129, Frankfort MI 49635

Buildings & Grounds: The CLT Board continues to move forward in assessing the needs and exploring the solutions to the less-than-optimal township facilities. The current hall layout is not spacious enough for all the business being transacted, nor for the adequate storage of records with the efficiency, privacy and security both required and desired. The driving force is to make better space for elections, but we are also looking at such things as better ADA access, structural reinforcement, a cosmetic facelift, and energy efficiencies. This will not be an inexpensive endeavor, but we believe it is a necessary one.

Cemeteries: The long awaited updated Cemetery ordinance was recently adopted and published. It is available online, with hard copies available upon request. The public is urged to become familiar with any new (or the now-clearly-stated longstanding) rules and regulations that govern our two cemeteries, *including the ban on all plastic and severe limitations placed on decorations*, or the reminder that there is absolutely no hunting on cemetery properties. Supervisor Amy Ferris welcomes those who make appointments for a “records” check up, and for pre-planning purposes. This fall, major cleanup efforts saw copious trimming and cutting, as well as new signage and some structural repairs. Thank you ***SUPER VOLUNTEER, BRAD HEYWOOD***, for a new door/frame and a new pump house cover at East! And thank you Carol & Bob Beidler, Laurel Heywood and Leslie Butt for all their assistance in clearing away debris both on the Clean Up Day and at season's end.

Elections: We had a reported 56% turn out for the mid-term elections. Out of a total of 579 votes cast, 212 of them were by absentee ballot. Since there is not a more important reason for our local government's existence than running elections, we would sincerely like to thank the hard working team that helped Clerk Sue Sullivan, including the Deputy Clerk Darlyne Leete, Elections Chair Judy Van Meter, and Inspectors Alice Farr, Kathy Fishburn, Joyce Kirshner, Kathy Picklo. Also, hats off to County Clerk, the incomparable Dawn Olney.

Planning & Zoning: We want to publicly acknowledge the great contributions our Zoning Administrator, Tamara Buswinka, has made to our township in her year and a half tenure. With great regret, we accepted her resignation as she is moving on to a position which speaks more to her first love, that of planning without the day-to-day zoning administration. We wish her the best in future endeavors! CLT is very happy that the person who was hired to assist her, Tom Kucera, will step into her job to fill out her contractual year for a consistent and smooth transition. Our hard working and amazing Planning Committee (Greg Wright, Jess Carland, Bill Herd, Sharron May and Tammy May) are to be commended for all their work in not only updating the Master Plan but updating our Zoning Ordinance. Emphasis is on keeping CLT rural, scenic and “user friendly.”

Roads: Bruce Walton is a lifelong CLT resident, former CLT Board Member and retired Benzie Road Commission employee. Lucky for us, he is also continuing his community service by volunteering to be our special representative to the Road Commission's expenditure committee, which advises on the distribution of funds raised by the recent county road millage. Unlucky for us, there is still a significant shortfall of monies to repair our township roads. The price of repairing/reconstructing pavement is going up, up and up. Residents should be aware what's coming down the road, no pun intended: the Board will be discussing the merits of putting a township road-specific millage on the ballot in 2015 to fill this gap.

Website: No foolin', after many years, we've actually made some significant strides in this area. After countless false starts, check it out. Special thanks to ½ of our tax assessment team, Jill Brown, for being smart, young, and computer/website savvy in a way none of the rest of us here on staff are, regrettably, not.

Workers: We're looking for the following volunteers/compensated workers to help out the township. We need you! Consider serving on one of the following committees or commissions: 1. Cemetery 2. Planning 3. Zoning Board of Appeals 4)Tax Assessment Board of Review 5) Fence Viewer 6) Personnel 7) Communications