



CLT Newsletter

December 2015

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Buildings & Grounds: New windows! For years, visitors have probably thought –erroneously—that we didn’t try and keep a clean house here at the township hall. For years, no one could see out the old windows. However, we really did work on them, even calling in a professional window washer for advice. Turns out they were irreversibly etched and clouded. Thank you to Honor Building Supply’s Ray Vieau who helped us purchase and install new energy efficient windows that, lo-and-behold, folks can actually see through now. Also, thanks to our Board member/professional painter, Tammy May, we are getting the exterior trim re-painted. Our aim is to maintain township facilities and be good stewards of the taxpayer’s common property.

Cemeteries: We are continuing to emphasize the *simple* and *natural* in our cemeteries. To show the love and respect for those who have passed, we are convinced that keeping the grounds reflective of our beautiful northern environment will better serve everyone. The grounds are a work in progress, and we think they are looking better all the time. In the meanwhile, here are some gentle but firm cemetery reminders: All operations in the cemeteries must go through the township. Never bury ashes by yourselves. No plastic or other artificial decorations. Plant only with written permission. Hunting is prohibited within cemetery boundaries (which extend far north into the woods at both locations.) Help us to discourage vandalism and other mischief by being mindful of visiting hours: cemeteries are completely closed to all but foot traffic October 26-March 31st in the “off” season and closed dusk to dawn April 1st-October 25 during the “better weather” months.

Clean Up Day & Recycling: In case you want to start planning for next year, the 2016 CLT-sponsored Clean Up Day is the second Saturday in July. Do you need to transport unwanted junk but don’t have a vehicle to get stuff to the drop off sites? Transport assistance may be available, especially if you call well in advance of the date. Want to know about *all* recycling in the area? To learn more about the county-sponsored clean-up days, including disposing of appliances, hazardous waste, and more, check for a schedule and rules at http://www.benzieco.net/dept_recycling.htm.

Elections: 2015 was an exceptional year for the number of opportunities to vote. Next year will be similar, starting with the Presidential primary on March 8th. Are you registered? Need an absentee ballot? Questions go to our amazing Clerk, Sue Sullivan. Caution: the U.S. Post Office will not forward ballots, so it is important to return an Absent Voter Ballot Application *with your out-of-town address* as soon as you can after January 31, 2016. Additional voter information is available at Michigan.gov/vote. Thank you to our hard working Elections team Nov. 3rd, including Judy Van Meter, Kathy Picklo, Alice Farr, Joyce Kirshner and Kathy Fishburn. As always, special kudos go to our County Clerk, Dawn Olney.

Planning: Two new commissioners have joined the planning commission. Township residents Mike Pasche and Lee Irwin were appointed in September. We are continuing to update the zoning ordinance to incorporate changes that have occurred with the administrative shift from Benzie County to Crystal Lake Township and with Michigan zoning statutes. In addition, the zoning map is being updated to reflect changes in the township over the last fifteen years and the new master plan that was adopted in 2014. Also, the Planning Commission, on

behalf of Crystal Lake Township, continues to collaborate with MDOT regarding design for the rebuilding of M-115 in 2017, focusing largely on safety issues.

Roads: The recent CLT road millage vote passed 161 to 114. It will levy 1 mill (\$1 for every \$1000 taxable property value) for each of the next 5 years. Special thanks go to the Road Committee, made up of Board member Rick Nielsen, retired Benzie County Road Commission worker Bruce Walton, and dedicated volunteer, Al Popp. Those new monies will be dedicated to our local asphalt roads, although exactly which roads is yet undetermined. The bad news prior to the vote: Our Road Committee held three open houses whereby CLT taxpayers/residents could learn about and discuss the proposed millage, yet each hearing went *entirely unattended* by the public. Now, the good news: We're still a participatory democracy. YEA! And towards that end, we ask the public to help the CLT Road Committee further prioritize which roads shall benefit from this millage money. Share your opinions, share information, let your committee know what you think. Check our website or the local newspaper for hearing dates and times of these sessions, and we'll see you there.

Signage: Will *you* be getting a letter soon, regarding signage? We didn't have much luck with our last newsletter asking folks to self-regulate. Non-conforming signs, large and small, continue to be seen in the township. So we repeat here for your edification: our Zoning Ordinance, found conveniently on our website, has an entire section (Article 19) on regulating signage. So that all 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. If you need help navigating the sign ordinance section, give us a call and we would be glad to give assistance. NOTE: We do have plans to overhaul the sign ordinance in order to make it clearer, more easily read and understood. Stay tuned for this change.

Taxes: Tax Exemptions, actually. There are two in particular, of which the Treasurer would remind you. First, the *General Property Tax Act*, allows a "poverty" exemption, which assigns a 100% property tax exemption for the principal residence of persons who, by reason of poverty, are unable to contribute to property taxes. An eligible person must own and occupy the home and file an annual claim. Second, is the *Disabled Veterans Exemption*. In November of 2013, Public Act 161 was signed into law granting a 100% property tax exemption for qualified disabled veterans. Real property used and owned as a homestead by a disabled veteran who was discharged from the armed forces of the United States under honorable conditions or their un-remarried surviving spouse is exempt from the collection of taxes under the General Property Tax Act.

Website: Have some seasonal photos to share? Send them to us and we'll put them up on the website. We thank some of those who have already contributed, including Jay Burt and the Sheafors. Also, note new categories on the website: "Support Services" and "Supervisor's Pick" under the "Environment."

Zoning: Our Zoning Administrator reports that the number of residential permits issued this year is running about the same as last year and are expected to total in the low twenties. When is a permit issued? Although this was mentioned in the previous newsletter, it bears repeating: Before doing anything with your property, start by contacting us to see if a permit is required. Our knowledgeable and friendly Zoning Administrator, Tom Kucera, holds office hours on Wednesdays 9-Noon. Check with him, be it concerning a new structure or the renovation of an existing one, involving a house or a shed or an alligator mote, starting a business or adding to an established one. Check with him, perhaps even before you purchase a new piece of real estate with starry-eyed visions for its future. This means, even before you go to the county Building Department, see if you need a zoning permit from us first. (To save yourself the time and trouble of an office visit, we recommend some advanced homework by looking up our CLT Zoning Ordinance online.) Why this process? Because we're a zoned community. Everyone needs to adhere to our community-written and community-shared zoning regulations. This is for everyone's protection. Won't you be glad when your neighbor isn't allowed to pollute Crystal Lake, to build a pink castle on your property line, or move in 100 pigs next door?