

Established 1849

FILLMORE TOWNSHIP

February 2009

Township Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday
and Friday
8:00 a.m. to 12 Noon

Boards

Board of Trustees:

Keith Potter, Supervisor
Janella Hop, Treasurer
Ken DeWeerd, Clerk
John Kleinheksel, Trustee
Chuck Schaap, Trustee

Planning Commission:

Jerome Bush, Chair
David Brink, Secretary
Fred VanTubergen
Chuck Schaap
Dan Seymour

Board of Appeals:

Fred VanTubergen, Chair
Marc Tucker, Secretary
Robert Yonker

Fire Board:

John Kleinheksel
Mark Hop

Board of Review:

Jay Hop
Peter Yonker
Roger Zoet

Assessor:

Jim Bush

Secretary/Deputy Clerk:

Elaine Mokma

Cemetery Sexton:

Howard Lubbers

FROM THE SUPERVISOR

The Board of Trustees is now working on our 2009-2010 budget. At our February 10 meeting we will be discussing and fine tuning the budget to have it ready for the public hearing on March 10. Fillmore Township's 2008-2009 year end financial statement will be available at the April 14 Board meeting. If you have questions or concerns about the Township budget, you are welcome to attend these meetings, held at the Township Hall at 7 p.m.

I think we can all agree that we've had more than our fair share of snow this December and January. Even with all this snow I feel the Allegan County Road Commission has done a great job in keeping the roads in Fillmore Township plowed.

The cost of resurfacing a mile of road still remains approximately \$80,000 per mile. At our April meeting we will be looking at alternative ways to preserve our roads. Bridge and culvert replacement will be done on 141st Ave. between 52nd and 54th St. and on Fillmore Rd. just east of Russcher Rd. These projects will start late spring or early summer and will be funded with federal dollars.

In June of 2008, the Township Board circulated petitions to expand the Township water system from the water tower west to Blue Star Highway., where most of the Townships commercial and industrial businesses are located. The Board feels getting an ample supply of clean water to our business district would not only help with fire protection but also increase the economic development in this area, bringing more jobs and revenue into



Fillmore Township and the surrounding area.

As of this date we have not received 51% of the petitions for this project. The Board feels this is an investment which will help the economy in our area. We will continue to look for alternative ways to finance this project. I'd like to thank those that have shown support of this important project and for those who have come to the meetings expressing your concerns. Your input is appreciated for these difficult decisions during these challenging times.

I welcome you to stop in at the Township Office during business hours to voice any concern or comment you have as you see things happening and changing in the Township. In these challenging economic times we need to work together for the benefit and quality of life in Fillmore Township and the surrounding area.

We on the Board wish you the best in 2009!

FROM THE ASSESSOR:

The 2008 inflation rate has been determined to be 4.4%. This means that the Taxable Value of your property can increase no more than 4.4% for 2009 unless new construction or other improvements have been made. Tax day was December 31, 2008 and the assessed value is determined based on the status of your property as of that day.

Assessment notices for 2009 will be sent in late February and the Board of Review will meet on March 9 and 11 for those wishing to appeal their assessed value.

Just a reminder that to receive the Principal Residence Exception for a homestead that you purchased in 2008 you must submit a Homeowner's Principle Residence Exemption Affidavit to the Township Office.

Also, if you purchased an Agricultural parcel of property and plan to keep it as agricultural, you can maintain the present cap on the Taxable Value by filling out and registering for PA 260. Call the Township Office for details.

PROPOSAL A & YOUR HOME VALUE:

What is Proposal A and how does it impact me?

Proposal A was added to the Michigan Constitution in 1994 by a vote of the people to address how property taxes are determined. Prior to the enactment of the Proposal A, the state constitution required that every property owner pay property taxes based on the fair market value of their property. Whenever housing markets escalated quickly, it was not unusual for some homeowners in the community to see their tax bill jump by 20 percent or more in one year.

Significant changes to the property tax system.

When Proposal A was approved, it contained a provision that significantly limited how quickly individual property tax bills could increase from year to year. Proposal A stated that the value of property used to calculate property taxes could not increase each year by more than the increase in inflation, or 5 percent, whichever is less, until the ownership of the property changes.

Property owners have seen the benefit from this valuation cap for years. Each year every property owner receives a statement from the township that indicates the property's State Equalized Value. This amount represents 50 percent of the current value of the property. The value is determined by the township's assessor, who is required to follow procedures established and monitored by the state. However, the more important number is the Taxable Value, which is the amount used to actually calculate property taxes. Any difference between the State Equalized Value and Taxable Value shows how Proposal A has limited your property taxes.

Inequity in the system.

While Proposal A protected individual property owners, it has created inequities. When a property is sold, the new owner must pay taxes on the full value of the property, with the same cap on future assessment increases. This means a person who has owned the same home for the last 14 years is likely paying much less in property taxes than their neighbor who just moved in three years ago, even though both homes may be identical.

The state law that implements Proposal A directs that the Taxable Value must increase by the rate of inflation any time the Taxable Value on a piece of property is less than its State Equalized Value. This occurs even if the value of the property is decreasing. This continues until the State Equalized Value and Taxable Value are equal, at which point any further decline in property value results in real property tax reductions.

This leads to the question asked by many: Why did my property taxes go up when the value of my home just went down? As administrators of the property tax system, the township can only point to the constitution and the decision made in 1994 by the residents of this state that a predictable property tax assessment was more important than an equitable assessment. Some property owners, generally those who have owned their homes for years, will see an increase in their property tax bills and where others will see real declines.

RECYCLING

Recycling bins are available in the Township Hall parking lot. Because of the high participation of residents in recycling the Board is aware that the bins occasionally become full. During these times please hold your recyclables for another day instead of placing them around the dumpster. It would also be very helpful if plastic milk containers would be crushed, as this is the first bin that fills. Please remember that recyclable materials are limited to newspaper, glass, plastic and tin cans. All other material cannot be placed in our bins.

FROM THE CLERK

2008 was a busy year for elections. Beginning in January with the Presidential Primary, continuing in May with the School Election and in August with the Primary Election, and ending with the Presidential Election in November. Fillmore resident turnout was near record numbers in November, as approximately 85% of our registered voters cast ballots.

There was one contested Judge's race that received media attention because of the recount. Although many precincts were not able to be recounted because of various reasons, we are happy to report that Fillmore's results were recounted and found to be accurate.

We would also like to recognize two long-time election workers, Gerrit and Lois Schierbeek, who announced that they would be retiring following the November election. One of the reasons our elections go so smoothly is because of workers like Gerrit and Lois, who were both very knowledgeable and precise in election day procedure. We thank both of them for their many years of service.

There is only one election scheduled in 2009, the regular School Election in May.

ROADS

Fillmore Township continues to place a high priority on maintaining our roads. Although the Township has no mandate to maintain roads, as that is the responsibility of the County, you as citizens have said through millage renewals that it is important that Township funds be spent on local roads. Because of this, we budget approximately \$350,000 each year for improvements and resurfacing.

Last year we experimented with a system called seal-coating on a section of 139th Avenue. Engineering experts say this will prolong the road surface by 6 to 7 years, with resurfacing costs being reduced to approximately \$20,000 per mile. The Board would appreciate the input of residents on this process.

FROM THE TREASURER'S OFFICE

Due to Senate approved legislation, the Treasurer is required to be at the Township Office on March 2 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.. **NOT SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28** as was printed in your Winter tax insert. This is the last day to pay before the taxes are turned into the County as delinquent. However, **February 16** is the last day to pay the Treasurer without an additional penalty/interest being added to your tax bill. If you should have any questions, please call the Treasurer at 269-751-8303.

*The Fillmore Township
Transfer Station will be
open on May 2, June 6,
September 12 and
October 17
from 9 a. to 4 p.*

*The Fillmore Township
Board of Trustees meets
the second Tuesday of
each month at 7 p.m. at
the Fillmore
Township Hall.*

*The Fillmore Township
Planning Commission
will hold their quarterly
meetings for 2009 at
7 p.m. on
Feb 16, May 18,
Aug. 17 and
Nov. 16.*

Fillmore Township Hall
4219 52nd Street
Holland, MI 49423

Phone: 269-751-7655
Fax: 269-751-6065
Email: fillmore@macatawa.org
Website: fillmoretownship.com

GRAAFSCHAP FIRE / RESCUE

As we enter a new year, I would like to use this opportunity to review the activities of Graafschap Fire Department in regard to the number of runs we responded to, as well as monetary loss sustained. Also, I would like to address some winter weather concerns we as a Department have. The number of calls that we responded to in 2008 dropped from the 2007 numbers. In 2008 we responded to 356 calls for service. This compares to 371 calls for service in 2007, this is a reduction of just under 5% for the year. Although this is not a large reduction, it is good to see a drop in calls. The numbers per Township are as follows: Laketown Township had 206 rescue calls and 61 fire calls. Graafschap's area of Fillmore Township had 54 rescue calls and 21 fire calls. We also assisted neighboring departments on 14 occasions. Dollar losses for 2008 are estimated to be approximately \$60,000 in Laketown Township and \$16,000 in Fillmore Township. The dollar loss for Laketown is down considerably from 2007, when three lake front homes were destroyed in one incident. A more detailed report of the types of calls we responded to will be available at the Township Offices starting in January.

For those residents that live in areas that are serviced by municipal water systems (where fire hydrants are available) we are requesting your assistance in keeping the hydrants accessible at all times. With the heavy snowfall in December we noted several hydrants that were totally buried under snow.

In some instances, private snowplow operators were burying the hydrants, while other hydrants were un-accessible due to routine snow removal. It is extremely important that ALL fire hydrants are readily accessible all year around, as this affects what equipment is requested from our mutual aid Departments if a structure fire should occur. In areas that are not serviced with fire hydrants we rely on water to be trucked to the scene for fire suppression, thus additional tanker trucks are requested. Generally, if there are fire hydrants available our mutual aid would consist of another engine and additional personnel. Along with snow, landscaping sometimes becomes a hindrance for us. Shrubs, flowers, brush and weeds all serve to hide the fire hydrant or cause our personnel to struggle to make the connection in an emergency. We request about a two foot clearance around the hydrant.

All hydrants should also be marked with a flag or marker of some sort. Please discourage tampering with these markers and if you notice a marker missing let us know by calling the Fire Station at 616.396.4060 or the Township Office during business hours. Thank you for your help in making this a safer community!

Cal Haverdink, Chief