



Lincoln Charter Township Communicator

October 2009 Issue 61

Township Supervisor: Dick Stauffer

'Feeling the Pinch': How state budget cuts impact our township

Our township is not unlike any other person or entity dealing with today's economic realities - we're all "feeling the pinch".

While township government is accustomed to tightening its belt, the seemingly ongoing state budget cuts, along with federal or state mandated requirements, are creating unprecedented challenges for our township. Demands on local government are increasing while the amount of funding is decreasing and this will continue to make budget planning increasingly difficult.

According to state statutes, Michigan townships are responsible for carrying out three main functions: assessing property, collecting taxes, and conducting elections. In addition to these functions, our subdivision streets, other infrastructure (such as the sewer interceptor), police, fire, emergency medical services (Medic 1), ordinance enforcement and our twp. parks require additional sources of revenue to fund and operate. Fortunately, services such as water and sewer are funded by user fees and projects such as the Safe Routes to Schools sidewalk and non-motorized path near Roosevelt School were funded by grant dollars.

Approximately fifty one percent of our township's operating budget comes from state revenue sharing dollars---and state revenue sharing is tied directly to declining state sales tax dollars. In Lincoln Township, we're dealing with reduced state revenue by reducing staff, reduction in working hours in the building department, implementing energy reduction recommendations from our energy audits, reducing postage and use of office supplies by increasing use of email wherever possible. We made changes to our insurance coverage, and we will consider postponing purchases of all major equipment. To help us in our budget planning, we use a five year financial model to assess our financial condition, explore necessary actions and preferred options.

We will continue to seek innovative, cost effective ways to carry out essential functions. However, the bottom line remains: *You can only do so much with so little.* Further cuts, coupled with declining property values, will challenge how we continue to best serve our residents.

Township Clerk: Stacy Loar-Porter

Census 2010 "Be Counted"

The census is a count of everyone living in the United States every 10 years. Getting a complete and accurate count impacts our community in several ways, grants for educational agencies, head start programs, road development and rehab, programs for the elderly; these are just a few of the programs that are determined by the census count. Every person missed by the census results in roughly \$1,000 less federal funding for state and local governments. This past spring census employees began their door-to-door surveys to update the address list. In February-March 2010 census questionnaires will be mailed or delivered to households. If you do not complete and return your questionnaire a census worker will visit your home.

For any questions about the census or to verify if the questionnaire you have received is a valid census questionnaire please visit their website, <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>, or call 301-763-INFO (4636) or 800-923-8282. If you are interested in a 2010 Census Job please visit their website for more information: <http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs/>

Goodbye & Welcome

We would like to say goodbye to Tammie Simpson. She has worked at the Township since 2004. She will be missed. We all wish her the best of luck at her new job. We would like to welcome Jen Koeppel as the new Deputy Clerk. We are happy to have Jen joining our team.

2010 Elections

May 4, 2010 Local School Election
August 3, 2010 Primary Election
November 2, 2010 General Election

Please watch for more information about the upcoming elections in the spring and fall newsletters.

 **HALLOWEEN TRICK OR TREAT HOURS:**
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31ST 6:00 - 7:30PM 

Treasurer Department: Terrie Smith

Lincoln Charter Township residents will have a new look to their 2009 winter tax bills. The county has hired a new company to print the bills. One major difference is that we will be saving money by not mailing an insert with each tax bill explaining the deadlines, online payments, etc. Instead, this information will now be printed on the back of each bill. Also, if you have any changes to the name or address on your bill you will no longer turn the bill over to make those corrections. Instead, there will be a box located on the bottom, front left-hand side of the tax bill where those corrections are to be made. For taxpayers who use the online or mortgage services you will no longer receive the small white tax notice. In its place you will receive a copy of the actual tax bill for your information purposes. Furthermore, we will continue to save money by no longer returning the top portion of your tax bill when payment has been received from the mortgage companies because you will already have the valuable documentation needed for income tax use. The reason that we mailed the top portion to you was because we knew that you would need the information for your taxes. Should you desire a paid stamp on your receipt, feel free to stop in the office with your copy and we will be happy to mark it paid. The most common question that we receive when taxpayers walk-in with their tax bill is, "Don't I get a receipt?" Your receipt is the top portion of the tax bill. If you want a paid receipt, please bring in BOTH portions of your bill when making the payment and we will be happy to mark it paid. Taxpayers receive the only original tax bill. A common mistake that often occurs when payments are received is that the BOTTOM portion of the tax bill often does not accompany the payment. The bar-coded bill assures you, the taxpayer, that the payment was credited to the correct account. We cannot express enough how important it is for you to receive proper payment. It is so easy to transpose numbers or accidentally hit the wrong key when keying in the 15-digit numbers. **PLEASE RETURN THE BAR-CODED PORTION!** The tax bills will go out December 1st and must be **RECEIVED by 5:00 p.m. February 14, 2010** to avoid any penalties. In order for them to be deducted from your 2009 income tax return they must be RECEIVED in our office by 12:00 p.m., December 31st, 2009. **Postmarks do not validate payment. When making payments by mail or online, please allow seven days. DO NOT WAIT until the day before it is due. If you are running short of time, please use the drop box located outside the front door to avoid any penalties.**

Dog licenses will again be sold at our office this year. We cannot begin selling them until December 1st. Please remember to bring in your form from animal control when purchasing your license, and if you have had new rabies shots within the last year or had your dog spayed or neutered, please bring in the updated documentation. I believe the township will also will be selling the new three year license this year. Please be sure to read the valid vaccination date in order to purchase the three year license.

If you ever have any questions for the treasurer's department please feel free to call the office and we will be happy to help you. The treasurer's department is happy to welcome Jacquie Godush, who some of you may recognize from Chemical Bank. Jacquie is Deputy Treasurer. We are happy to have Jacquie join our team.

Lincoln Charter Township

2055 West John Beers Road
P.O. Box 279
Stevensville, MI 49127-0279
Phone: 429-1589
Fax: 429-0880
www.lctberrien.org

Office Hours 2009

The twp. office hours are
9 AM to 5 PM Monday thru Friday
Holiday Closed Dates

Nov. 26 & 27.....Thanksgiving
Dec. 24.....Christmas Eve
Dec. 25.....Christmas Day
Dec. 31... (close at noon)...New Year's Eve

Visit our website at www.lctberrien.org.
You can obtain the minutes for meetings, public notices, building permit applications and other helpful materials.

Board of Trustees: Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in regular session. Special meetings are held as posted. The fourth Tuesday is reserved for possible special meetings.

Street Light Outages: To report a street light out or not working properly, **copy down the pole number**, which is located on a metal tag on the pole and call the Twp. Office at **429-1589 Ext 24.**

Garage Sale Permits & Signs: Permits are required for garage sales and may be picked up at the Township Hall between the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM, Mon. thru Fri. **NO signs are allowed on public property such as street signs, utility poles, or ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY.** (The road right-of-way is 33 feet from the center of the road.) **Any signs found on public property will be removed, including property along the cemetery on St. Joseph Ave.,** 2 permits per household. (*Residents of the Village of Stevensville need to pick up permits at the Stevensville Village Hall.*)

American Flag Drop-off Box

Thanks to Eagle Scout Sam Jablonowski from Troop 607, the Township Hall now has a flag drop box. The box is available for residents to drop-off American Flags that need to be destroyed in a proper manner. The Red, White and Blue box is located in the vestibule of the Township Hall and can be accessed during our office hours.

Thank you Sam!

2009 Cemetery Clean-up Dates:

Remove floral decorations: **Oct. 16-23**
Maintenance Clean-up: **Oct. 26 - 30**
Put new floral decorations out: **Nov. 1**

2010 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Dates:

Go to www.berriencounty.org/recycle for collection dates and other recycle information, or call direct to **269-983-7111, Ext. 8234** for information by phone.

Sewer Backups: Make us your first call if you have a sewer backup. We will check the main line, which may save you from having to call a plumber. If available we can print you a copy of your sewer line & clean outs. Call Mon. - Fri. **9 AM to 5 PM 429-1589 after hours call 983-7141.** *Also, please call at anytime if you notice the red light on at any of our lift stations.*

Help with Fall Clean-Up:

Reliable Disposal is offering a discounted rate of \$18.00 per pick up or small trailer load for Lincoln Twp. residents. Trash will be accepted between the hours of 7:30am and 12:00pm on the following Saturdays: Oct. 10, 17, 24 and 31. Trash brought other than these days and time will be charged at the regular rates. Reliable may check addresses for residency to confirm that the discount applies. Please note that the bridge on Linco is being replaced and residents will be able to reach Reliable from only Red Arrow Highway. If residents have any questions about the items that are acceptable for trash, please call Reliable at 1-800-677-1083.

Assessing Department: Barb Cheek/Assessor

Every year in the State of Michigan, all properties are mass appraised by using the *sales comparison approach*, the *cost approach* OR the *income approach* to value to determine the following years Assessed Value. For most properties the use of verified sales comparisons works the best. Lincoln Township's Sales Study for 2009 Assessments included only good arms-length sales. No foreclosure sales were allowed. If you have recently purchased your home please remember that by law we are not allowed to "chase sales" which means automatically lowering the Assessed Value to 50% of the sale price.

The way the property stands on "**tax day**" will determine its Assessed Value for 2010. Tax day is always **December 31** of the prior year of the Assessment. If there are circumstances about your property that you think the Assessor's office should know then now is the time to call. This is also a good time to check your property record card to make sure that the information we have is correct. You can do this by either coming into the office and looking thru your record card file or by visiting the Township website under the assessing department to access the on-line link <http://directory.is.bsasoftware.com> to view your record card.

Principal Residence Exemption Review your summer tax bill to make sure that we have the correct address and the correct **Principal Residence Exemption % (PRE)**. If a correction needs to be made to the PRE we can do that at the December 15, 2009 meeting of the **Board of Review**.

New Businesses Please call the Assessor's office as soon as possible to make sure that we have the correct information and mailing address of your business. This will insure that you receive your **Personal Property Statement** in a timely manner. Statements are mailed in December and due back **February 1** of the following year.

Conditional Rescissions of Principal Residence Exemption If you are a property owner who has recently purchased a new home and are trying to sell your previous residence *and* you meet all of the requirements as set by law then you may be eligible for a Conditional Rescission. This Rescission allows you to keep the exemption on the home you are selling as well as qualify for an exemption on your new home. The Rescission Form is due in the Assessors' office no later than December 31, 2009. Anything received later than that day either by mail or in person cannot be accepted. It must be renewed annually on or before December 31, no late renewals are allowed by law and no reminder notices are sent out by the State.

To obtain these forms or for more information regarding assessments click on the Assessing department on the Lincoln Charter Township website at <http://www.lctberrien.org/> or call this office at 429-1589 ext 13 or 22.

Department of Building Safety James L. Pheifer/Building Official & Zoning Administrator

Many of our residents will be repairing, remodeling or adding on to their homes this fall, if you are unsure if a permit is required please call Jim at 429-1589 ext. 15, he will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please remember to have your contractors display the permit issued (if required) in a prominent place fronting the residence or structure that they will be performing the work. It is also important to make sure your house numbers are displayed on your residence and are readable from the street.

As you prepare for winter don't forget to check your gutters and downspouts, if they are full of debris this may prevent proper drainage and cause leaks in your eaves or roof. You may also want to check your furnace vent and filter, if the vent is stopped up or loose it may cause a build up of carbon dioxide that can cause sickness or even death. Changing your filter will help increase airflow. Now is the time for fall maintenance and clean-up, if you choose to burn leaves don't forget to get a burn permit, and please be considerate of your neighbors, smoke from your leaves may become a nuisance to them.

Please check all your smoke detectors, and don't forget to change the batteries if needed, if hard wired and the power goes off they will not work if the batteries are dead or not installed.

Thank you and have a safe fall and winter.

Lincoln Charter Fire Department Fire Chief: Ron Burkett 428-2385 Ext. 12

FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDRAISERS

Our Firefighters will again be participating in the "Annual Chili Cook-Off" at Dominion Chevrolet in Bridgman on the 24th of October. Time is 11:00 to 2:00. Come support your local Firefighters and eat some excellent chili!!

BURNING PERMITS

If you are planning to burn brush make sure you get a permit from the Township Hall! Any damages caused by fires are your financial responsibility. Be considerate of your neighbors when burning. Any fires without permits or that are a nuisance will be extinguished by the Fire Department and fines can be costly. BURN BANS WILL BE ISSUED DURING THE DRY FALL MONTHS AS REQUIRED.

ADDRESS SIGNS

HELP EMERGENCY SERVICES FIND YOU WHEN SECONDS COUNT!!! Purchase a reflective address sign for \$15.00 Ea. Our Firefighters can take the orders or you can place your order at the Township hall.

Fire Prevention week will be observed the week of October 4th. Watch for literature coming home with your children and REMEMBER- **Practice fire drills with a meeting place outside so everyone gets out and stays out.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firefighters Corey Teed and Richard Wing have successfully passed the State Of Michigan certification exams for Firefighters. Congratulations to them both.

Lost & Found: Check with Township Hall if you have lost anything at our parks

Lincoln Charter Township
2055 W. John Beers
PO Box 279
Stevensville, MI 49127

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE PAID
STEVENSVILLE MI
PERMIT NO. 279

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Lincoln Charter Township Police Department Chief of Police: Dan Sullivan <http://ltpd.org> 429-2444

The Lincoln Charter Township Police Department wishes to thank the citizens of the community for their continued support in our efforts to make this a safe place to live and visit. The members of this department strive to provide efficient and professional law enforcement services to Stevensville and Lincoln Charter Township.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind drivers that school is once again in session, please use caution around schools and be aware of busses making stops and reduced speed zones. Students will be walking in and around these areas, and with the daylight hours getting shorter extra caution should be used. Student crosswalks have been added to John Beers, South Roosevelt road and Cleveland Avenue.

The police department is continuing with organizing its business watch and neighborhood watch programs, if you would like to participate please contact the department during business hours and provide your contact information.

With current and proposed cutbacks in the Michigan State Police budget we anticipate increased call activity on I-94 in the coming winter months. Our agency has participated in a county wide traffic grant that has added in car computers with crash report software to expedite completion of those reports.

Daniel Sullivan, Chief of Police
Lincoln Charter Township Police Department
5599 Cleveland Avenue
Stevensville, MI 49127
(269) 429-2444
dsullivan@ltpd.org

Lincoln Township Recreational Parks & Beaches

Reflecting back on 2009 Lincoln Charter Township has truly been blessed with three fine young men in our community that have chosen Lincoln Township Parks to complete their Eagle Scout projects. As mentioned earlier, the Soccer Park received a face lift when Derrick Smith repaired and repainted the storage shed and concession stand building and Adam Harshbarger designed wooden garbage can enclosures at the soccer park to hide the large blue barrels and keep the trash from blowing outside them and built six new picnic tables to put in the picnic area. Zachary Tuller just finished restoring the gazebos at the Lincoln Township Beach. What a difference it made and I know that people have already used it in their photographs. If you know any of these boys or their families, thank them for jobs well done. It took a lot of hard work and time to do these projects and we ask that the residents help take care of them when using them.

The shelters at North Lake Park and the Community Center Park are receiving improvements. The shelters are being extended and roll-down doors are being added for protection during inclement weather. Remember that bookings to rent the facilities for 2010 will begin January 4, 2010. No reservations will be accepted prior to that date.

Finally, the Township Board would like to get community input as to what changes and improvements the residents would like to see at each of the township parks. Williams & Works has been hired to help facilitate this project. A public input meeting was held September 21st. Due to low attendance, another meeting will be scheduled in the near future to hopefully get more residents involved. Please watch for notices, newspaper publications or call the Township office to find out when the next input meeting will be held. If you want to see changes, we need your input! Don't wait until the plans are in place to start making suggestions, instead be part of the plans. We also need to complete a new five-year parks and recreation plan for Lincoln Charter Township by the end of the year. This plan is needed to apply for any grants that may become available to help complete projects that residents would like to see in the Township in the future.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL TRAIL PROJECT

The 10 ft paved safety trail was funded through a federal grant for Safe Routes to School. A new sidewalk along John Beers Road connects Wyndstone Subdivision and the non-motorized path at the end of S. Roosevelt Road. It meanders along side of the Library, Township Hall, Community Center and the Roosevelt School, the sidewalk continues along El Dorado Drive to Cleveland Avenue. There have been crosswalks installed on Cleveland Avenue and John Beers Road with solar powered caution signals to aid the safe crossing of pedestrians. The project is in its final stages of completion with restoration work being the final step. This project was made possible with the help of our schools and many individuals who worked together over the past two years to see this happen for our community. We thank them for their participation.

THANK YOU! For choosing Lincoln Charter Township

The Lake Michigan Land Sharks held their "Land Shark Beach Sweep" at the Lincoln Township Beach on September 19th. Their group picked up 50lbs of trash from the beach!

David Vandenburg and Gina Pellegrini and their students from Andrews Academy spent the day, Thursday the 24th, cleaning up around the Police Station, the Community Center, and the Township Hall.