

EXTERIOR RENOVATIONS COMPLETE!



The DeWitt Township Community Center has taken on a whole new look with the completion of exterior renovations and new parking facilities. The \$262,000 project was recently completed and marks the end of the second of three phases to complete the transformation of the old Township Hall into a first-rate Community Center. The recently completed work replaced the paved area in front of the building along Brook Road with a new drive access opening into a spacious 82 vehicle, lighted and landscaped parking lot. A new drive-under canopy will allow people to be dropped-off and picked-up at the main building entrance during inclement weather. The entire facility was landscaped and a new greenspace area was created to the west of the building. The project was topped off with new sidewalks connecting it to the Valley Farms Park and the repaving of Brook Road.

Work under the third and final phase of the Community Center Master Plan, adopted by the Board of Trustees in August of 2001, should begin in early 2004. This work will focus on interior renovations including new restrooms, installing air conditioning and new lighting in the gymnasium, new flooring and lighting in common areas, new emergency and exit lighting, and other general renovations. The Community Center is located at 16101 Brook Road and houses the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority, a dining site for the Meals-on-Wheels program, and the Clinton County Genealogical Society. The Community Center also has meeting and multi-purpose rooms, a gymnasium, and kitchen facilities available for rent.

NEWS BITES

NEW FACES - Welcome Aboard to our new Fire Department employees: William Kost, Donald Hunt, Christopher Grewe, Scott Cressman, Lauchlin MacGregor, Kevin Anderson, and Suzanne Henningson.

THANK YOU to Jean Heathman, Lora Mae Higbee, Helen Parker, Ilse King, Bob & Jean Gesler, Al Harrison, and Kathy Foley for their help labeling and sorting the Newsletter. Your help is greatly appreciated.

CAPITAL CHORDSMEN ANNUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT will take place on Tuesday, December 2, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. at the DeWitt Jr. High Auditorium.

ELECTION WORKERS NEEDED

DeWitt Township has a great crew of election workers. However, with the addition of a new precinct, increasing number of voters, and ever changing election laws, we could use additional help in 2004 for the Presidential Elections.

Election law requires a completed application, residency within Clinton County, registered voter status, and training, which is provided by the Township. Election workers are paid \$7.00 per hour. Workers are needed for both full days and part-time hours.

Election law also requires the Clerk to schedule both Republican and Democratic workers in each precinct, therefore, the application requires the worker to declare a political party. Workers also need to have their own transportation on election day.

If you have a desire to participate in the election process, or have recently discovered that you have election day off from your regular job, please consider working on election day. Give the Clerk's Office a call, and we can answer your questions and send you an application.

DECEMBER/MARCH SEWER BILLINGS

If your plans include traveling to warmer weather for the winter, please let us know so that your sewer bill can be sent directly to you. The postal service, not the Township, is responsible for handling forwarded mail. However, it does take extra time for mail to be forwarded. To be sure to avoid late penalties, it is helpful to do the following:

- a. Pay your sewer bill in advance; or
- b. Let the Treasurer's Office know your change of address. However, please note, you will need to change your address back to your home address when you return.

WINTER PROPERTY TAX BILLS

Winter property tax bills will be mailed by December 1, 2003 and payment is due February 14, 2004 without penalty. After that date, additional fees will be added. Delinquent property taxes are turned over to the County Treasurer on March 1, 2004.

DARA RECREATION NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

The DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA) is located at the DeWitt Township Community Center (DTCC), 16101 Brook Road, Lansing, MI 48906. Information regarding any event or program can be obtained by calling the DARA office at 482-5117. **You may register for programs in person at the DARA office (16101 Brook Road, Lansing, MI), DeWitt City Hall (414 E. Main Street, DeWitt, MI) or the DeWitt Township Hall (1401 W. Herbison Road, DeWitt, MI).**

Youth Basketball - Grades 3-12

This 10 week league, formerly offered through DeWitt Community Education, is available to boys and girls in grades 3-12. Games begin on Saturday, December 6th (no games during Christmas Break or Mid-Winter Break) and run for 10 weeks. All games will be played at DeWitt Elementary and Jr. High Schools. Registration runs from October 17th- November 14th. The fee is \$35 for grades 3-6, \$45 for grades 7-8 and \$55 for grades 9-12. Participant fee includes a team t-shirt and game officials.

Drop Your Kids Off

Drop your kids, ages 4-12, off at the DTCC for a night of fun and games. Upcoming drop your kids off nights will be held on October 24th and November 14th from 6:00-11:00 p.m. Pre-registration is required at least one week in advance. Kids will play gym games, complete arts and crafts projects, watch movies, and have pizza and pop for dinner. The cost is \$15 for one child or \$25 for two children. Your kids will be supervised at all times and will not be allowed to leave the building.

Big Truck Day

Big Truck Day is back!! This year's event will be held on Saturday, October 18th at the City of DeWitt Fire Station on Main Street next to McGuire Park. Stop by and check out area fire trucks, snow plows, tractors, and other service vehicles. The event will be held from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and is free to all kids and adults.

23rd Annual Arts and Craft Show

The 23rd Annual Arts and Craft Show in the DTCC will take place on Friday, November 7th from 6:00-9:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 8th from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Over 50 booths are available for vendors or for shopping. The cost per booth is just \$25, including one 8-foot table and the cost to shop is FREE! Concessions are available throughout the show. Support our local recreation programs by purchasing a raffle ticket for \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. A minimum of one prize per hour is awarded with a homemade quilt for the grand prize.

Youth Basketball Camp

A beginner skills camp for boys and girls ages 4-6 will be held at the DTCC and will begin the week of January 5th. This 5-session camp will teach your child the basic skills of passing, dribbling, shooting, defense and team work. The cost for the camp is \$25 for DeWitt City/Township residents and \$30 for all others. Every camper will receive a camp t-shirt and participation medal. Registration dates are from November 21st - December 19th.

Youth Indoor Soccer

The youth indoor soccer league, offered to boys and girls in grades K-5 is back for a second season. This 5 on 5 league focuses on fun and skill development. Games will be held at the DTCC and will begin on January 17th and run for 6 weeks (no games on February 14th). The cost is \$25 for DeWitt City/Township residents and \$30 for all others. All participants receive a team t-shirt and participation medal. Registration runs from November 20th through December 19th.

Open Volleyball

Open Volleyball is now available on Wednesday and Sunday evenings from 7:00-9:00 p.m. for those age 18 and up at the DTCC. The cost is just \$2.00 per person.

Dining Site

This year-round program is offered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the DTCC. The meals are brought in through the Tri-County Office on Aging Meals-on-Wheels program and are always nutritional. Prior to the meal, participants play shuffleboard, cards, exercise and socialize. After the meal, there is often bingo or special programming. This program is geared towards senior citizens, however everyone is welcome to participate. The cost of a meal is a suggested donation of \$2.25. Please call the DARA office to reserve your meal.

Park and Community Center Reservations

The DARA office will be accepting reservations for the DTCC. If you would like to make a reservation, please call the DARA office to check on available dates and to request the necessary paperwork.

CHANGES MADE TO HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

Beginning Jan. 1, 2004, the exemption from paying school operating taxes will be known as the Principal Residence Exemption. The change was made to eliminate confusion between the property tax exemption and the Homestead Tax Credit which may be claimed on the Michigan income tax return.

Another change that will affect many of our township residents who are in the process of buying or building a new home is the filing deadline. In the past, exemption affidavits could be filed as late as May 1 in order to receive the exemption for the current year. The new filing deadline is Dec. 31 of the previous year. To receive an exemption on the 2004 tax bill, a resident needs to own and occupy the property as of December 31, 2003. The affidavit needs to be filed with the Assessing Office by Dec. 31, 2003.

Changes have also been made to the denial/rescission process for improperly claimed exemptions. In the past, a taxpayer whose exemption was denied had a 30-day grace period to pay the school operating tax without interest. The grace period has now been eliminated. However, there is a one-time amnesty period until Nov. 1, 2003. Taxpayers who believe they are receiving an exemption in error should contact the Assessing Office to file a rescission form. They will be billed for the unpaid school taxes, but not the interest.

LOCAL HEROES!!!!

♪ *And the beat goes on...and the beat goes on.* Or in our case, we continue singing the praises of those firefighters and support staff that serve the DeWitt Township community.



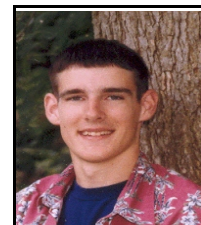
Tom Stone is a Captain and Medical First Responder with ten years of service to the Fire Department. As a Captain, Tom shares the responsibility of training the Department's firefighters on a bi-weekly basis. Tom recently received the 2003 Fire Department Employee of the Year Award at this year's Employee Appreciation Picnic. He and his wife, Betty, are the parents of two young boys who have caught the firefighting "bug" from their dad. In his free time Tom enjoys swimming, biking, playing softball, playing with his children, working with his dad on various projects, and working on his father-in-law's farm. Looking ahead to their wedding anniversary in 2004, Tom and Betty plan to return to Maui where they celebrated their honeymoon 10 years ago.

John Stone, retired from the State of Michigan, serves as the Fire Department's official photographer, a support staff position he has held since July of 2000. Pictures of an emergency scene serve as training tools for the Department and are used for fire investigation purposes. While John's role is that of photographer, he can often be found around the Department lending a hand with a variety of tasks. John and his wife, Genie, are the parents of three grown children and have two grandchildren. John's service to the DeWitt community extends over many years. John was a member of the DeWitt School Board for 12 years, was the past Awards Chairman for the DeWitt Cub Scouts, was the past Treasurer of the Boosters Club and was named the DeWitt School's Citizen of the Year in 1992-1993. John also lends his voice to the play-by-play action of the DeWitt Panther Football Team. In his free time, John plays golf and is a stained glass and woodworking hobbyist.



Adam Parrish is a Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician with six years of service to the Fire Department. Adam works in the Emergency Room at Sparrow Hospital and is looking forward to a full-time career in firefighting. Adam and his wife, Jen, have three young children that keep them busy. In his free time, Adam enjoys playing softball and watching football. Adam also serves as Treasurer of DeWitt Christian Church.

Kyle Kolka is a firefighter-trainee on the Fire Department and is working toward his Medical First Responder license and his Fire/EMS Associate's Degree at Lansing Community College. Kyle's introduction to the Fire Department began as a Boy Scout Explorer while in high school. Following his high school graduation Kyle was hired as a firefighter-trainee. Kyle is a 2nd year member of the MSU marching band's tuba line and, as a member of the MSU Spartan Brass band, traveled to Connecticut last spring with the women's basketball team for the NCAA Sweet 16. Kyle's other interests include hockey, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting and fishing.



WHO RESPONDS WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1 FOR AN AMBULANCE?

When you have a medical emergency and need help you call 9-1-1. Did you ever wonder who would come to your assistance should you have a medical emergency? This article should answer that question.

To initiate a medical response you must first activate the EMS system. Dialing 9-1-1 does that. Trained dispatchers receive your call and ask questions to determine your medical problem and to send the appropriate response agency. In DeWitt Township, medical response will include an ambulance from Mercy Ambulance (a private business), and DeWitt Township Fire Department.

Mercy Ambulance will provide either basic or advanced (paramedic) care for the patient and will transport the patient to the hospital. The Fire Department will provide medical first response services. Should an ambulance be delayed or not in the area, the Fire Department will evaluate, treat, and stabilize the patient until the ambulance arrives. When the Fire Department and ambulance arrive together, the Fire Department assists the ambulance crew. This is a cooperative effort to provide the best service possible to our residents.

DeWitt Township Fire Department personnel are trained and licensed by the State of Michigan as Medical First Responders, Emergency Medical Technicians, or Paramedics. While you may be charged for services by the private ambulance service, you will not receive a bill from the Fire Department. Your tax dollars cover service provided to you by the Fire Department. If you have any questions about service, please call the Fire Department at 669-0071.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Single family home construction continues to remain strong. In 2002, permits had been issued for 95 new single family homes compared to 114 for the same time frame this year. For those that may have noticed activity and wondered what's new:

1. Standard Federal Bank located at the northwest corner of US-27 and Herbison Road has recently completed a new 867 square foot addition and is in the process of resurfacing their parking lot.
2. The US-27 Mini Storage, 11373 US-27, is under expansion with the addition of three additional buildings totaling 8,700 square feet.
3. The Redeemer United Methodist Church, located at 13980 Schavey Road, is currently constructing a 5,585 square foot classroom/office/multi-purpose addition and remodeling an existing 7,386 square foot area that will be used for Youth Group Ministry purposes and other multi-purpose functions.
4. Calvary Baptist Church, 14769 Wood Road, is currently in the process of constructing a new 5,040 square foot Congregation Hall that will provide pastor's offices, meeting rooms, small and large multi-purpose areas, a work room, bathrooms and a garage for motor vehicle storage.
5. New plans have been submitted for the first of eight buildings to be constructed in the Ridge Rock Office Park. This office park complex will be accessed from a new road called Sedona Parkway that will extend east off of Airport Road between Herbison and Clark Roads. This project is expected to get underway yet this year.

WHAT IS A VARIANCE...WHY DO I NEED ONE!?!?

So you arrive at the Building Department counter, plans in hand, ready to break ground on your living room addition before the winter snow flies. Before you know it, all you are hearing is bad news...the addition is in the **setbacks**...your only hope is a **variance**...the Board of Appeals doesn't meet for another **three weeks**. Thoroughly overwhelmed, you make your way to the Planning Department counter to obtain an application for a variance and to try and make sense of all of this.

The planner explains that the Zoning Ordinance includes some minimum standards for the size and placement of buildings on lots within the Township. There are different standards for the various commercial, office, industrial, agricultural, and residential zoning districts. The planner explains that the Board of Appeals can grant special permission, or a "variance," to build on land in a way that violates the "dimensional" standards in the Ordinance. These standards include those that can be measured, like lot size or building height.

Let's say that in your case, the proposed addition does not comply with a setback requirement. This means some portion of the addition would be placed closer to a property line than is allowed in the Ordinance. For the addition to be constructed as proposed, you will need to apply to the Board of Appeals and request a variance from the setback requirement.

☞ **What the Board of Appeals Does...**

The Board of Appeals will consider a request for variance very carefully. Ordinances are written to make sure that buildings are placed a safe distance from the street and one another and constructed of a size that assures a reasonable amount of open front, side, and rear yard areas. The Board of Appeals will want to understand the *practical difficulty* that you have in complying with the Ordinance requirement. Such difficulties might include an odd-shaped lot, natural features such as water or steep slopes, or the location of structures built under earlier regulations. The Board of Appeals will expect that the difficulties are unique to the property and that granting the variance will not change the character of the area. The Board of Appeals will want to know that the variance requested is the minimum amount necessary to accomplish the project.

☞ **Before you Begin a Project...**

There are steps that you can take to avoid the time and cost associated with unnecessary variance applications. First, before you begin to design a project, call the Planning Department to learn about the standards that might apply. Remember that the rules can vary depending upon whether you are building a new home, an addition, a deck, a covered porch, a pole barn, etc. The more information you can provide about the type of project you are considering, the better the Department will be able to answer your questions. It can also help to have information about the size and dimensions of the lot and any buildings that might already exist on the lot. Having complete information about the standards that apply can help you to design a project that might not require a variance.

☞ **Applying for a Variance...**

If you find that a variance cannot be avoided, you will need to budget both time and money to complete the process. Applicants for a variance must pay a fee to cover the cost to process the application. Also, drawings must be submitted with an application to show the proposed project. It may be necessary to hire a surveyor to complete the drawing. Regular meetings of the Board of Appeals are held on the third Wednesday of every month. Complete applications must be submitted at least 15 days prior to the meeting to be placed on the agenda. This lead time is necessary to assure that the application can be processed, reports written, and notices sent to all persons who own property within 300 feet of the property subject to the application.

ESTIMATING PROPERTY TAXES FOR NEW OWNERS

Many changes were made to Michigan's property tax system by Proposal "A" approved in 1994 by Michigan voters. One of the changes was to add protection to shield the current property owners from large increases in their property tax base from one year to the next. The increase in taxable value is limited each year to the lesser of 5% or the inflation rate, unless physical improvements are made or a transfer of ownership took place in the previous year. The inflation rate has ranged between 1.5% and 3.2% per year since the passage of Proposal "A".

When a transfer of ownership takes place, the taxable value for the property becomes "uncapped" in the year following the sale. This means that the taxable value shall be revised, without limitations, to match the property's assessed value. Michigan law requires that assessments be at 50% of the properties true cash (market) value.

Purchasers of property that wish to estimate their future property tax bills should look beyond the tax amounts paid by the existing property owner. In most cases, taxable value increases have been limited to the inflation rate for several years, while actual property value has been increasing at a much faster rate. In the year following a transfer of ownership, the taxable value is "uncapped" and could result in a significantly different tax bill than what was paid by the previous owners.

The Assessing Department is glad to assist new purchasers on property tax estimates. Please call the Assessing Department at 669-6494 if you have any questions.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IS A SUCCESS

National Night Out was held on August 5, 2003, at the DeWitt Township Hall. Many parents and children joined the Township and City Police and Fire Department members to help make the event a success. Music, clowns with balloons and body paints, police cars, fire trucks, kids and cops dancing, hot dogs and refreshments, raffles and prizes all made for one of the biggest and best gatherings of residents to say "**We Stand Together Against Crime.**"

Special thanks to Steve & Jackie Mudget, and Jim & Diane Mosier for their help in organizing and furnishing refreshments and entertainment.



DeWitt Township K-9 Officer Heather Wright, Wito, and Elizabeth Hudson enjoy National Night Out.

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