

Watertown Charter Township

Volume 25 Issue 4

Late Fall 2011

12803 S. Wacousta Road
Grand Ledge, MI 48837
Ph. (517) 626-6593
Fax. (517) 626-6405
www.WatertownTownship.com

Office Hours
Monday-Friday
9:00am-5:00pm

Township Offices Closed:

Friday, December 23
Monday, December 26
Friday, December 30
Monday, January 2
Monday, February 20

Newsletter Committee

George Weitzel, Chair
Ken Mitchell
Janice Thelen
Christy Sochay, Coordinator

WEBSITE COMMITTEE

MELISSA FREEMAN, CLERK | MARY JO KELLEY, BOOKKEEPER | KEN MITCHELL, TRUSTEE
CHRISTY SOCHAY, DEPUTY CLERK | JENNIFER TUBBS, TOWNSHIP MANAGER

NEW TOWNSHIP WEBSITE WWW.WATERTOWNTOWNSHIP.COM

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new and improved township website. The goal, mission and focus of this new website is to provide an efficient and informative site that provides timely and accurate information. As the official website of Watertown Township, you will find a wealth of information regarding the departments and services offered by the township.

Information and services available on the new website include:

- Calendar of events
- Meeting agendas and minutes
- Recycling center information
- Road and construction updates
- Holiday celebrations
- Tax, assessing and utility lookup
- Link to online tax payments
- Copies of township newsletters
- Permits, forms, applications and maps
- Legal notices
- Ordinances
- Election results and voter information
- Board of Trustees meeting packets
- Township budget, audit and financial information
- Cemetery information
- Fire department information
- Park and gym rental information
- Township fee schedule
- Freedom of Information Act policies and request form
- Directories of all township boards and committees, and office contact information
- Links to county, state and federal government

The new website works with all browsers and is available for you to log on at your convenience 24 hours a day. We hope that you will take some time to explore all of the benefits available and that you will come to depend on the site as the reliable source for all pertinent township information.

For more information visit www.WatertownTownship.com

FITNESS 4 YOU AEROBICS

JERRY MCNEILLY

Classes have resumed and will be held at 6:15pm on Monday and Wednesday evenings at the Wallace F. Watt Community Center (township gym). A 9am Saturday class may be added later.

A 45 minute aerobics-only class is offered, followed by a 25 minute toning and stretching class. You can stay for both classes, or leave after the first class. Classes are performed at low to medium intensity, and conform to the American Council on Exercise (ACE) recommendations for group fitness aerobic classes.

Here are a few things to consider:

- If you are diabetic or pre-diabetic, you know that exercise is usually recommended to help control it.
- Those with rheumatoid arthritis can often maintain or increase their flexibility and range of motion with regular exercise.
- If your doctor described you as being a “couch potato,” consider trying our aerobic exercise class (we have no couches!).
- If you would like to reduce some of your daily stress, try our class.
- If you have been advised to do weight bearing exercise to help maintain bone density, try our class.
- If you just like to move to golden oldies music, try our class.

Remember, you can try the class **free** until you decide whether it fits your needs.

For more information, or to be added to our notification list, call Jerry McNeilly at (517) 627-9570.



LUNCH WITH SANTA
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10TH
11AM—12:30PM

You are invited to enjoy a craft, decorate a cookie, and have pizza lunch at the Wallace F. Watt Community Center (township gym), located at 12803 S. Wacousta Road. Santa will stop by, though he is very busy this time of year and may not be able to stay the entire time. This event is sponsored by Watertown Charter Township and is free of charge. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy (no stuffed animals) for the “Toys for Tots” bin. Call Donna at (517) 626-6593*207.

TREASURER'S DEPARTMENT

JANICE THELEN, TREASURER

With the increasing popularity in the use of online bill payment centers, we are noticing two misunderstandings that are causing problems with the timely posting of payments.

The first misunderstanding is that often the payment is a physical check that is being created and mailed by your financial institution on your behalf, not an electronic transfer of funds. When using an online bill payment center and a check is being created and mailed, please allow at a minimum of one week processing time to allow sufficient time for the payment to be processed and mailed before the payment due date. If you are not sure if your online bill payment center is processing a check or an electronic transfer, please call them and ask for a clarification of the payment process.

The second misunderstanding is that when an online bill payment center advertises an anticipated delivery date, this is an estimated delivery date and not necessarily a guaranteed delivery date. If you believe this to be a guaranteed delivery date and the payment does not arrive timely causing you to receive interest or a late payment penalty, please contact your financial institution; they may stand behind their posted delivery of payment date and reimburse you for the additional interest or penalty assessed if payment arrives after the payment due date.

Remember...arrival of the payment into the office determines the date the payment will be applied to your account. Date the payment was processed, removed from your account, or postmarked will not be used to determine timely payment.

In response to the popularity of the online payments, the Treasurer's Department does offer two online payment options; the first is a Direct Withdrawal option. Included with your summer and winter tax statement is a Tax or Sewer Direct Withdrawal Authorization Form. Complete this form, sign, date, and return to the Treasurer's Department and we will accept responsibility for processing your tax or sewer utility payment on time. You will still receive a statement letting you know the amount of the payment and date that payment will be taken from your designated account. This form is also available on the new township website at www.WatertownTownship.com, Payment Options page of the Township Treasurer Department.

The second option allows you to use your online bill payment center and set up future payments to the township as an ACH (Automated Clearing House) transaction using the information provided below. When using the ACH payment process, normally within 24 - 48 hours, payments are electronically transferred from your account into the township account. With the ACH option, you are still responsible for setting up the payment and allowing enough time for the payment to transfer on or prior to the due date. Since each online bill payment center is different, please contact your financial institution for assistance when setting up future payments as an ACH transaction and to verify the time necessary to process the electronic transfer. The information you will need to provide is:

ACCOUNT NAME:	Watertown Charter Township
ACCOUNT NUMBER:	453-572-2161
ROUTING NUMBER:	072-400-528

INCREASED SCHOOL DEBT MILLAGE

As property values decrease, many are noticing that their taxable value, the number used to calculate property taxes, is decreasing as well. It is only natural to assume that as your values decrease, so would your property taxes. However, declining property values may cause your school debt millage to increase and this increase may actually cause your property taxes to increase as well. Funds necessary to pay the voted debt obligation must be raised in an amount to make the current bond payment. As property values drop, the millage may need to be increased to raise the amount of funds necessary to satisfy the debt payment.

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CLINTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

KATE NEESE, WASTE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Medication Disposal Programs

Protect your family, pets, the community, and the environment by properly disposing of unwanted or expired medications thru one of the programs noted below. Do not put medications "down the drain" or in the trash; they can end up in surface waters and negatively impact local ecosystems. The preferred disposal option is through special events which ensure safe disposal thru incineration. *Please keep your medications in their original containers but be sure to black out any personal information.*

Mercury Health Thermometer Exchange

Clinton County Department of Waste Management will accept old mercury health thermometers year-round at our office located at 1307 E. Townsend Road, Suite 102 in St Johns (MMDHD Building). Residents are encouraged to transport their old mercury health thermometers in a plastic zip lock baggie. The Department of Waste Management will exchange your old mercury health thermometer for a new digital thermometer. Limit one per person.

Mercury Thermostat Collection

Clinton County Department of Waste Management will accept old mercury thermostats year -round at our office located at 1307 E. Townsend Road, Suite 102 in St Johns (MMDHD Building). Residents are encouraged to transport their old mercury thermostats in a plastic zip lock baggie. This program is funded by a grant from Michigan Energy Options and the Thermostat Recycling Corporation.

The Clinton County Department of Waste Management is actively planning for 2012 recycling events. For more information or to learn about other disposal and recycling options that may be available, please call (989) 224-5186, send an email to conserve@clinton-county.org, or visit us on the internet at www.clinton-county.org and follow the link to Waste Management under Departments.

TOWNSHIP PARKS REMINDER

The gates to the township parks are now closed for the winter. Residents are still welcome to park outside the gates and enjoy the parks.

There is no hunting allowed on any township property.



GRAND LEDGE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

RUTH THOMPSON

WINTER PROGRAMMING

The Grand Ledge Area District Library invites parents and caregivers with their young children to come grow in their love for reading at the library. On Tuesday, February 7 through Tuesday, March 27, 2012 at 11:00am in the main library meeting room, Youth Services will provide our patrons with Winter Preschool Story Time. The programs are offered to bring children, parents and caregivers together in a supportive environment to grow and learn together. At the library we assist you in exploring the world of stories. We incorporate activities that interact with the story. We also provide all the arts and crafts for each preschooler. With each activity, your child has the opportunity to develop their fine motor skills. The love for reading begins early, so whether you provide a reading corner at home, attend early childhood community events or library programs, the goal is always to lead our little ones in an appreciation of stories and a love for reading.

Also, mark your calendars for Spring Preschool Story Time which begins Tuesday, April 10 through Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 11:00am. This program is in the main library meeting room. These programs are free and available to anyone with a 3 - 6 year-old child.

Youth Services also offers an After School Program on Wednesday, January 4, February 1 and March 7, 2012 from 4:30pm to 5:30pm in the main library meeting room. There are activities, crafts and games available for school age children. Siblings are also welcome to attend with their parents or caregivers. These programs are free.

If you have any questions, please contact the main library or check out the web site at <http://grandledge.lib.mi.us>.

GRAND LEDGE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY HOURS OF OPERATION

Grand Ledge Main Library

(517) 627-7014

Monday through Thursday – 10am to 9pm

Friday & Saturday – 10am to 5pm

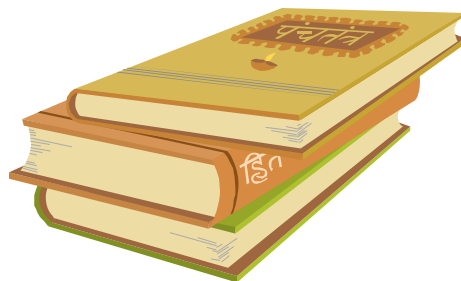
Wacousta Branch

(517) 626-6577

Monday & Wednesday—3pm to 7pm

Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday—10am to 2pm

Friday & Sunday Closed



TREASURER'S DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

WINTER PROPERTY TAXES

Winter property taxes are due and payable December 1, 2011 through February 14, 2012 without penalty. Payments received after February 14, 2012 and prior to March 1, 2012 will be assessed a 3% late payment penalty. On March 1, 2012 all 2011 winter property tax with balance due amounts will be turned over to Clinton County Treasurer for further collection, penalties and interest. See the back of your tax statement for additional information.

Watertown Charter Township offices will be closed December 23, 26, and 30, 2011; January 2, 2012 and February 20, 2012.

DEWITT DISTRICT LIBRARY NEWS AND EVENTS

CARRIE FRAZER

The DeWitt District Library is located at 13101 Schavey Road, next to the Schavey Road Shopping Center in DeWitt. Hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 10:00am – 8:30pm, Tuesday 1:00pm – 8:30pm, Friday 1:00pm – 7:00pm, Saturday 10:00am – 4:00pm, and Sunday 1:00pm – 4:00pm (September – May).

SELF-CHECK KIOSK MAKES DEBUT AT DEWITT DISTRICT LIBRARY

Patrons at the DeWitt District Library (DDL) may opt to expedite their check-out using the library's new self-check kiosk. The user-friendly kiosk's computer screen provides patrons with prompts leading them through the check-out process. Simply scan your library card, scan your material, print your receipt and you can be on your way!

"It's about providing our customers with better service and options," states Library Director Jennifer Balcom. "An added benefit is that staff will be able to focus on activities that will enhance collection development, programs, and services we are able to provide. Without this option we simply would not have the manpower hours to devote to these additional projects."

Library staff will still be available and happy to assist patrons with check-outs or reference questions.

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Registration is open for the 2012 Battle of the Books. Battle of the Books is a program designed to encourage the sport of reading and to give recognition to those who like to read. Children in 4th and 5th grade form teams with the help of an adult coach. Team registration is open through January 31, 2012. Over the course of approximately four months, teams read a selection of five books chosen by the DeWitt District Library. In early March, the teams come together for a "battle." Important dates to remember:

- Tuesday, December – Informational Meeting for Adult Coaches
- Tuesday, January 31 – Final Day to Register Teams
- Saturday, March 3 – 4th Grade Battle of the Books
- Saturday, March 10 – 5th Grade Battle of the Books

HELEN'S BOOK TALK: BOOKS MAKE GREAT GIFTS

Tuesday, December 6 at 6:30pm. A brief description of approximately 20 books that will make great presents for the book-lover(s) on your holiday shopping list. Helen will even tell you about a few to avoid.

POLAR EXPRESS HOLIDAY EVENT

Thursday, December 8 from 4:00pm - 6:00pm. Family event with stories, activities, crafts, and a visit from Santa! Please stop by the reference desk at DDL to pick up a ticket for this event.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional information on programs and services is available online at www.dewittlibrary.org, or by phoning (517) 669-3156 during business hours.

SOUTHERN CLINTON COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITIES AUTHORITY

The Southern Clinton County Municipal Utilities Authority (SCCMUA) operates and maintains the sanitary sewer system of Watertown Charter Township. If you have a sewer backup, immediately notify SCCMUA at (517) 669-8311, or call 911 Emergency Dispatch after hours. SCCMUA will respond for itself and the township. If a problem within the sewer system is found, SCCMUA will be the agency responsible for determining cause, coordinating claims, and keeping customers informed.

For those residents on the sewer system, please keep the following in mind:

- **Backflow Check Valves:** If you do not have sewer backup insurance, a backflow check valve is a good alternative. Contact SCCMUA at (517)669-8311 for a free home consultation and installation recommendation.
- **Dry Traps:** Some buildings still have floor drains connected to the sanitary sewer, which are no longer in accordance with local building codes. To ensure odorous and potentially dangerous gases do not enter inside the building, pour water into these drains on a regular basis. A water barrier/drain trap will block these noxious fumes.
- **Sump Pumps:** All sump pumps are required to discharge to either the Clinton County Storm Drains, or on the ground outside of the building premises. Sump pumps are not to be connected to and discharged to a sanitary sewer. Contact SCCMUA at (517) 669-8311 for a free home consultation and installation recommendation.
- **Disposal of Medicines and Prescription Drugs:** Disposal of pharmaceuticals into a floor drain entering a storm sewer, or disposal into sinks and toilets entering a sanitary sewer is a violation of the USEPA Clean Water Act. Many pharmaceuticals are not easily neutralized by standard water treatment processes, and can enter fresh water sources as harmful contaminants to wildlife and humans. Please contact SCCMUA at (517) 669-8311 or the Clinton County Department of Waste Management at (989) 224-5186 for the nearest location of drop-off sites for your unused and expired medicines.
- **Clogged Sewer:** In the event you experience a clogged sanitary sewer, please contact SCCMUA before contacting a plumber. Personnel are available 24/7 to respond for assistance at no cost. Upon arrival SCCMUA will determine where the blockage is and if it is within the mainline sewer we will jet-clean the sewer main, which may be able to relieve your blocked sewer.
- **Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG):** Disposal of FOG into garbage disposals can eventually build up and **block the entire pipe** causing sewage backups and overflows to your premises. Dispose of food waste directly into trash receptacles only. For disposal of cooking oils, contact the Clinton County Department of Waste Management at (989) 224-5186.

WACOUSTA CEMETERY

WINTER CEMETERY REGULATIONS

From November 1 to April 1, the cemetery is open between 8:00am and 4:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am to dusk on weekends. Artificial flowers, grave blankets and artificial wreaths are permitted at ground level on gravesites during the winter months, between November 1 to April 1.

For more information on the Wacousta Cemetery or to view the complete cemetery regulations, please visit the Wacousta Cemetery page of the township website: www.WatertownTownship.com

CLINTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S REPORT

DEPUTY SHARON WORTHINGTON

Clinton County continues to be the site of many home break-ins. Please remember to call 911 immediately if you notice suspicious behavior. Any information you can give to the police without placing yourself in harm's way, such as a vehicle description or license plate number, is very helpful. Recently, a neighbor alerted police after seeing an unfamiliar vehicle at a nearby home; due in part to that notification, the vehicle and driver were later apprehended, and some of the stolen items have been recovered.

Meth labs continue to be a problem throughout the county, and Clinton County officers have raided residences where meth was being produced. A strong chemical odor is present in the production of meth and the process can produce harmful fumes, fire, or explosions. Again, call 911 immediately if you notice anything suspicious.

A Clinton County officer recently handled a fraud complaint where someone was trying to rent out a home they did not own. The "landlord" said they were in England, therefore everything had to be handled via e-mail. The prospective renters were told to send a deposit and then they would be given the house keys. When they went to the residence they were to rent, they were told by the actual homeowners that the home was not for rent. Let this serve as a reminder to be cautious in business dealings, especially those over the internet.

The holiday season is upon us. Use care when sharing information with others and on social network sites about vacation plans, major purchases, or times your home will be empty. Additionally, remember that garbage days can be insightful to criminals - they love to see large, flat screen television packaging in the trash!

RENTAL OF TOWNSHIP FACILITIES

Applications for use of township facilities will be considered on a first-received, first served basis. Applications may be made at the township office during regular business hours no earlier than 12 months before the requested date. Applications are available at the township office or online at www.WatertownTownship.com, under the Parks & Recreation Department.

The gym is available to rent at the following rates: partial day (Sunday - Friday ONLY) 8:00am – 4:00pm (or) 4 pm - midnight for \$85.00; Full Day 8:00am - Midnight for \$210.00. Damage deposit, \$150.00. Non-resident fee, \$50.00

Note: Proper insurance documents must be provided before rental agreement is considered complete.

Contact (517) 626-6593*207 with any questions.

TOWNSHIP ROADS

Winter is approaching, which means slippery and dangerous roads are possible. All public roads in the township fall under the authority of the Clinton County Road Commission. If you are concerned with the safety and maintenance of your road, please contact the Clinton County Road Commission (CCRC) at (989) 224-3274 along with the Township at (517) 626-6593 to ensure that your concerns are addressed.

THE JOYS OF MULCH

RONALD V. OVERTON, PLANNING COMMISSIONER AND MASTER GARDENER

The most effective thing you can do in your landscape is to properly mulch your plants. It's not only great for your plants but it can greatly reduce maintenance. In nature, the soil is covered with a layer of fallen leaves and twigs, and this natural mulch helps the soil retain moisture. As it decomposes, it adds organic matter that improves the soil and provides nutrients for the plants and food for all the critters in the soil.

There are two basic categories of mulch: inorganic and organic. Inorganic includes rock, stone, plastic, rubber, and landscape fabrics. These do not break down or decompose like organic mulches, and therefore are more permanent and don't have to be replenished like organic mulches. There are many types of rock and stone mulches and when used in combination with a landscape fabric, can be almost maintenance free. Landscape fabrics will normally let air and water pass through, but will prevent weeds. That said, whenever I've used fabric, the weeds just got tangled up in the mesh and were harder to pull out.

However, unless there is some special need, I strongly believe organic mulch is best for the soil and plants and should be used if possible. It decomposes and in the process enriches the soil. Proper mulching can greatly improve the appearance of your home, reduce your maintenance, protect the plants from mower or weed whacker damage, and for lazy people like myself, it means that I don't have to get off my mower OR weed whack.

The various organic mulches break down at different speeds. If you want to add organic matter to the soil, you want one that will break down quickly like straw, grass clippings or chopped leaves. However, it will also have to be replaced more often. If you want something more lasting, you can go with various types of shredded or chipped wood or types of bark. When it comes to organic mulches, generally the coarser the material, the longer it will take to break down. Pine nuggets will last much longer than pine needles and chipped wood mulch will last longer than double shredded bark. I prefer shredded hardwood mulch, but some people really like cedar or cypress (i.e. cypress is very water resistant while cedar is aromatic).

Mulch should normally be 2" to 4" deep and not piled up around your trees like a volcano. That just gives critters a place to enjoy eating your tree in warmth and safety. Leave a few inches around your trees without mulch. Mulching deeper 4" can lead to problems such as too much water retention, matting that might prevent water from penetrating through to the soil, or even changing the acidity of the soil if you use too much pine needles or grass clippings.

Ideally, you should mulch a plant over its entire root structure. For a tree this would mean out to the edge of the drip line (i.e. the edge of the canopy of leaves or boughs). Most of us can't do this in our yards for lots of reasons but that's okay, do what you can. The larger the area of mulch under a tree, the happier the tree, the better the soil, and the less lawn you have to mow.

Most mulched beds will need some sort of edging to keep grass out and mulch in, particularly around your house. I hand cut the edge around most of my mulched beds. I've tried plastic edging but found it tended to pop out or it was run over by the mower. I use a flat spade to cut my edge and it takes me a day or so every spring. If you have a lot of beds and edging, you may want to consider renting or buying a powered edger. In addition to edging along your sidewalk, these can edge your beds. Every spring, I rake the mulch back from the edge, re-cut the edge with the spade, pull up the little strip of sod, and rake the mulch back to the newly cut edge. I try to slope the mulch down towards the bottom of the new edge which exposes the dirt face. This matters because grass spreads by rhizome and they only travel underground. This helps keep the grass out of the bed.

Lastly, because much of the reasoning for using organic mulch is to improve the soil, it's a good idea to minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides. Your soil is filled with living organisms and the greater the number, the healthier your soil. So do yourself and your plants a favor by mulching. It will enrich your soil, nurture your plants and save you hours of maintenance.

PRESORT STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND LEDGE, MI
PERMIT NO. 132

POSTAL CUSTOMER

GRAND LEDGE, MI 48837

OFFICE CONTACTS
(517) 626-6593

SUPERVISOR

Deborah Adams - Home (517) 626-2273
dadams@whiteschneider.com

TRUSTEES

John Maahs - Home (517) 669-5698
johnny@tir.com
Kenneth Mitchell - Home (517) 321-2452
tarzan30@aol.com
George Weitzel - Home (517) 626-2305
gweit10422@aol.com
Dale Westrick - Home (517) 626-2256
dale.trustee@yahoo.com, dwestrick@watertowntownship.com

TOWNSHIP MANAGER

EXT #207

Jennifer Tubbs, Township Manager
jtubbs@watertowntownship.com
Donna Case, Administrative Assistant
dcase@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning special assessments, sewers, roads, non-zoning ordinance enforcement, sewer and water permits

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

EXT #206

Janice Thelen, Treasurer
jthelen@watertowntownship.com
Amy Kinney, Deputy Treasurer
akinney@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning tax bills, special assessments

PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

EXT #205

Andrea Polverento, Planning Director
apolverento@watertowntownship.com
Amy Kinney, Planning and Zoning Assistant
akinney@watertowntownship.com
Questions concerning building/zoning/trade permits, zoning requirements, zoning & subdivision ordinances, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Planning Commission

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

EXT #201

Melissa Freeman, Clerk
mfreeman@watertowntownship.com
Christy Sochay, Deputy Clerk
csochay@watertowntownship.com
Mary Jo Kelley, Bookkeeper
Questions concerning the cemetery, Freedom of Information, elections, meeting dates, voter registration, subscription service, township records, accounts payable

CEMETERY

Weekdays (517) 626-6593 or (517) 626-6066
Andy Case, Maintenance Supervisor/Sexton (517) 490-1383

OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

EXT #210

Jeff MacKenzie, Assessor
jmackenzie@watertowntownship.com
Office hours: 9:00am - 5:00pm on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
Questions concerning assessing, SEV's, property listings, property splits

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Jeff Cranson, Building Inspector
Phone (517) 622-8822 Fax (517) 622-8833

LOOKING GLASS REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

(517) 627-9831 or (517) 627-9833
Fax (517) 627-9846
Chief Steve Fabiano
Questions concerning fire coverage districts, burn permits

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

George Weitzel, Chair
Ken Mitchell
Janice Thelen
Christy Sochay, Coordinator