



Cascade Connections

Spring 2010

A Newsletter from Cascade Charter Township

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Department Phone Numbers:

Manager:

Bill Cousins 949-1500
bcousins@cascadetwp.com

Assessing:

Roger McCarty 949-6176
rmccarty@cascadetwp.com

Building / Grounds:

Amy Waugh 949-4836
awaugh@cascadetwp.com

Building Inspections:

Butch Visser 949-3765
bvisser@cascadetwp.com

Clerk:

Ron Goodyke 949-1508
rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com

Fire:

John Sigg 949-1320
jsigg@cascadetwp.com

Planning:

Steve Peterson 949-0224
speterson@cascadetwp.com

Treasurer:

Ken Peirce 949-6944
kpeirce@cascadetwp.com

Sheriff / Non-Emergency:

632-6100

East Precinct Office:

635-6394

Supervisor's Message...

Dear Cascade Residents,



This past year all of us have probably experienced changes that have challenged us in different ways. The uncertain economic climate, especially in Michigan, has given many of us pause for concern about our stability and well being not only as individuals but also as members of the township we live.

It is more imperative than ever that we maintain the fiscal strength of Cascade Township through sound decisions and practices that will help ensure the quality of life that makes Cascade the special place it is to live and work.

The current and past Township Boards, along with the many committee and commission members, dedicated employees and numerous community volunteers have helped build a solid foundation on which to operate our local government. Our

commitment is to continue to be responsive to our residents by maintaining high standards of service while operating within a balanced and realistic budget.

Public input has proved invaluable in many of the challenges that we faced this past year. That information helped us in our decisions we have made as a Board. I encourage everyone to continue with this communication and also to look to the Board and staff at the Cascade Township offices as a source of information.

I encourage everyone to visit the Cascade Township website at www.cascadetwp.com and utilize the many resources available. Please don't hesitate to also stop in or call the Township offices during regular business hours for information. Also, all Board meetings are public and everyone is welcome to attend. Regular meeting dates for the Township Board and Commissions are on the website and posted at the Township offices. Any special meetings will also be posted on the website and noticed at the offices.



Cascade

PROPERTY TAXES: HOW DO WE RATE?

By Bill Cousins, Township Manager

Property taxes are due February 14th (about the time you receive this newsletter!). Have you wondered just where your tax dollars go? And, how do we in Cascade compare to our neighbors? This article will help answer these and other questions regarding taxes. Millage rates will be used as they are easier to compare between communities.

First, an explanation of how millage rates equate to how your tax dollars are paid. The general operating tax rate in Cascade Township is 0.9716 mills. That means for every \$100,000 of the taxable value determined for your home (remember, this is 1/2 of the market value of the home that is your principal residence), you pay the township \$97.16 per year for the following: the township office, wages for the employees, planning and zoning functions, answer questions about taxes, collect taxes, fencing issues, water and sewer items, provide twice-per-month board meetings, take passports, rent out the Wisner Center and park pavilions, clean pathways and sidewalks, clean public restrooms, assist the county with road paving ...the list goes on and on.

“One hundred bucks!”, you say. “But my bill was over \$1,000 (for a \$200,000 home) or “\$2,000 “ (for a \$400,000 home) this winter and over \$2,000 last summer!! Where did the rest of the money go?” In total, for that \$200,000 home, you were assessed a millage of over 30 mills and paid over \$3,000. Here is the breakdown (in mills):

Note: *The breakdown includes taxes all homeowners pay, Special assessments and hydrant charges are not shown.*

Cascade Township Special Millages: Cascade residents have voted additional millages to provide specific products and services. The township assesses these millages on the December tax bill; no township millages are collected on the July tax bill. The township collects the money, then distributes it to the proper taxing authority. The following areas are funded by township taxes:

Police (East Precinct)	0.4591 mills
Fire	1.3152 mills
Library	0.3882 mills
Pathways.	0.3985 mills
Open Space	0.2300 mills
Sub-total for Cascade	2.7910 mills
Add the operating millage.	0.9716 mills
Grand Total for Cascade Twp.	3.7626 mills

For that \$200,000 home, the annual township tax bill is about \$376.26.

Schools: Forest Hills has millages to pay off debt (buildings) and recreation totaling 8.05 mills. The district splits this in 1/2 and levies it on both the December and July bills. If you are in the Caledonia

School District, the total is 7.0 mills and all of it is levied on the July tax bill. And, if you are in the Lowell School District, the total is also 7.0 mills, but, like Forest Hills, is split between the July and December bills.

Other school taxes are levied in July and are due to the Kent ISD (4.6903 mills), Grand Rapids Community College (1.7865 mills) and to the State for education (6.0 mills). Total for schools – 20.5268 mills (Forest Hills).

Kent County: Kent County collects its operating millage on the July bill (4.2803 mills) and the jail millage (0.7893 mills) on the December bill. Additional millages collected at the county level include the Kent District Library (0.88 mills – December) and Kent County Seniors (0.3244 – December). Total for Kent County – 6.274 mills.

To summarize, the total millage for a residence in Cascade Township (in the Forest Hills School District) is about 30.5634 mills for the year. Again, of this amount, 3.7626 mills is attributed to Cascade Township, 6.274 to Kent County and 20.5268 for school funding. Shown as a percentage, 12.4% of the bill is retained by Cascade Twp., 20.5% of the bill is paid to Kent County and 67.1% of the bill is paid for schools.

Lastly, let’s look at how Cascade compares to our neighbors for the local portion of the millage. County and state millages are the same and schools are all close to ours (except Grand Rapids which-- is at 2.5 mills). Below is a chart showing the various millages levied by our neighbors:

Type Millage	Ada	Grand Rapids Twp	Caledonia Twp	City of Kentwood	Lowell Twp	Cascade Twp
Operating	0.9144	0.7500	0.6962	2.9946	0.7942	0.9716
Fire/police	0.9955	0.8495	1.500	4.2620	-	1.7743
Parks	0.6396	-	-	0.0998	-	0.2300
Trails	0.4965	-	-	-	-	0.3985
Library	-	-	-	0.3500	-	0.3882
Totals	3.046	1.5995	2.1962	7.3564	0.7942	3.7626

It appears the millage differences between us and our township neighbors are that we provide a staffed 24-hour fire department and have a millage for our library complex. The City of Kentwood has a higher millage that is most likely due to the owning and maintaining their own roads, a city police department and a larger fire department.

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Overall, Cascade seems to be doing a good job of keeping costs down and the voters have provided for additional millage to be able to enjoy the results of the additional taxes paid (such as two open space parks, 17 miles of pathways and a fabulous library)!

If you have any questions after reading about the various millages in Cascade, please call (Manager Bill Cousins – 949-1500). I will do my best to find you an answer!

Cascade Business Association

The Cascade Business Association is one of Kent County's oldest business groups, founded in 1956.

We are dedicated to improving the Cascade business experience by meeting the dynamic needs of the community.

The Cascade Business Association is in early planning stages for its participation in the annual American Cancer's Relay for Life, scheduled for May 21-22.

Last year, the association hosted a shredding (personal papers) fundraiser and silent auction in connection with the event. The group is looking for co-captains, volunteer workers, and walkers as well as donations for auction items.

Anyone interested in helping or joining the local business group, can visit www.cascadebiz.com.

The Cascade Business Association meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. The meeting times vary from morning, noon and after hours. Current meeting topic information and membership roster can be found at www.cascadebiz.com.

To stay informed, become a fan of Cascade Business Association on Facebook!

MOVIE NIGHT

CASCADE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Monday, February 15, 2010; 6:00 pm
Kent District Library - Cascade Branch - Wisner Center
2870 Jacksmith Avenue SE

FREE!



POPCORN!



www.Cascadecommunityfoundation.com



Cascade

From the desk of your Assessor...

Assessment Change Notices will be mailed on or before February 25, 2010. If you are a new homeowner and do not receive your notice by March 1st, please call our office. Registration of deeds and taxpayer name changes at the county level can take up to eight weeks.

In addition to change of assessment, the notice will indicate:

- if there was a transfer of ownership in 2009;
- if there is a Principal Residence Exemption on your property for 2010.

Board of Review will hear assessment appeals on March 8 and 9, 2010.

- Appointments will be made beginning on February 26. An appeal application and instructions will be mailed to you when you make an appointment.
- Sales data and comparative information will be available in the Assessor's Office and in the Cascade Township Library beginning February 26.
- Letter appeals are acceptable if you are unable to attend a Board of Review hearing. Four copies of your letter and supporting documents must be received no later than March 8, 2010. Please send them to:

**Cascade Township Board of Review
2865 Thornhills Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546**

- An appeal to the Board of Review, either in person or by letter, is a prerequisite for an appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal for residential properties. Commercial / Industrial properties do not have to appeal to the Board of Review to appeal to the State.

PROPOSAL A Reminders...

Property Transfer Affidavits must be filed with the assessor for any transfer of ownership that occurred in 2009.

Principal Residence (Homestead) Exemptions...

Filing deadline for new exemptions is May 1, 2010. Exemptions in effect January 1, 2010, stay in effect for the calendar year.

You must **rescind** your exemption within 90 days of the date you no longer either own or occupy the property as your principal residence. Exemptions expire on December 31st of the year you move out.

Taxable Value Cap ...

It is the **taxable** value that is capped by Proposal A – not the assessed value. The taxable value is used to calculate your taxes and is capped at 5% or rate of, inflation unless there was a transfer of ownership in 2009, any new construction, field work, reappraisal changes or any other omitted real property. If there was a transfer of ownership on

your property in 2009, your assessed value and taxable value will be the same in 2010 because the taxable value was uncapped.

.997 % is the inflation rate established by the State for 2010.

A special note to those who have purchased property in Cascade Township during the last year... Proposal A does not authorize the assessor to automatically set the assessed value of a property which has sold at one half of the sale price. An individual sale price may or may not be a good indicator of the true cash value of the property for a variety of reasons. Section 27(5) of the General Property Tax Act states that *"the purchase price paid in a transfer of property is not the presumptive true cash value of the property transferred."*

Did you know?

- Annual changes of assessment are based on sales in the neighborhood. We have at least 75 sales neighborhoods in Cascade. Your neighborhood rarely consists of just the homes on your street.
- Your taxable value can never exceed your assessed value.
- The May 1st filing deadline for Principal Residence Exemptions applies to new applications only. You do not need to reapply each year.
- It is your responsibility as a taxpayer to review your property record card periodically to be sure you agree with all the information that is currently of record.
- The assessing staff is available Monday thru Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Feel free to come in or call 949-6176 if you have any questions on your property. The assessing system is quite complex, and we are always willing to help our taxpayers understand how the system works.
- **The assessor is not permitted by State Law to automatically set your new assessment at one half of your purchase price.**

BOARD OF REVIEW MEMBERS

Barbara Manus - Averill
John Meyer
Sara Fazio

Your Farm May Be Qualified for a Tax Exemption...

A parcel that is being farmed on at least 50% of its area is eligible for a farmland exemption (Qualified Agricultural Exemption). The exemption does not require the property to be classified Agricultural, only that the land be used for a qualifying agricultural use. The exemption applies to the taxable value of the area being farmed. Non-agricultural property on the site is not exempted. The property is exempted from paying school operating millage, the same as the Principal Residence Exemption. Please contact the Assessing Department at 949-6176 if you have any questions.



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Be counted!

Census 2010 helps determine how much federal money comes into your community

No fooling. Answering 10 simple questions on Census Day—April 1, 2010—can create a better future for you, your family and your township.

In March 2010, more than 130 million addresses in the United States will receive a U.S. Census 2010 questionnaire form either by mail or from a census worker. One of the shortest census forms created since the census was first conducted in 1790, this year's form should take only 10 minutes to complete. The form will ask for name, gender, age, race, ethnicity, relationship and whether the householder is an owner or renter. People with more than one residence should be counted only at the residence where they spend the largest part of the year.

By filling out your census form accurately and returning it by the deadline, you and the members of your household will be counted in the national census, which is used to determine representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, allocate seats in the state Legislature, and influence how the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to states and communities.

Census data is also used to:

- guide planning for new hospitals, roads, job training centers, schools and more;
- determine the need for additional social services, block grants and other grant programs essential to many communities;
- provide information to ascertain the need for local initiatives, such as after-school programs or community action projects; and,
- help businesses identify where to locate factories, shopping centers, banks and offices, which often can lead to new jobs.

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census be conducted once every 10 years. In accordance with law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's questionnaire responses with anyone.

For more information about Census 2010, contact Ron Goodyke, Township Clerk, at 949-1508 or go to www.michigan.gov/census2010.

CASCADE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

You can help preserve the Heritage of Cascade.

A membership in the Cascade Historical Society is a great idea. When you purchase a membership, or purchase a gift membership for someone, you are also giving an important gift to the Community. With your membership, you help support the Cascade Historical Society as well as a variety of projects aimed at preserving a rich and lasting heritage.

Cascade Historical Society is dedicated to ensure that present and future generations will know the significance and learn from the past to recognize the need to preserve the historical heritage which makes Cascade such a wonderful place to live.

CASCADE HISTORICAL SOCIETY meets at 9:30 a.m. on the 1st Thursday of each month at 2839 Thornapple River Drive. Also, our Cascade History Room located in the Cascade Township Library is manned by a CHS member between 1 and 3 every Thursday.

Help ensure that the past is kept alive and that future residents of Cascade can experience the unique history of our community. Show your support by joining a committee for a sponsored event; bring family and friends to enjoy CHS programs and select your personal level of membership for 2010 listed below.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR 2010

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Home: _____ Business: _____

Email: _____

Please make check payable to:

CASCADE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

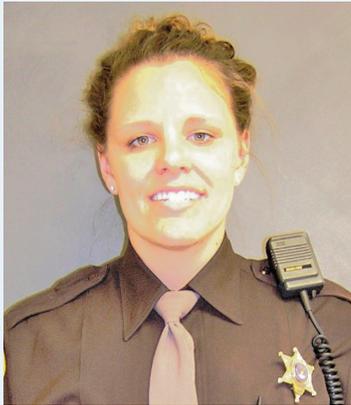
Corporate	\$100	Business	\$50	Friends	\$25
Family	\$15	Individual	\$10	Senior	\$5
Student	\$5	Lifetime (10x membership category)			

Mail your application to:

**CHS c/o Mary J. Carpenter
5588 Buttrick Ave. SE
Alto, MI 49302**

Cascade

East Precinct News...



My name is Deputy Julie Vogelzang and I recently took over the community police position (Cascade and Grand Rapids Twp.'s) vacated by Deputy VanDyke.

I worked with the Grand Rapids Police Department and the 61st District court as a Domestic Assault Response Team member for 3.5 years and worked as a cadet with the Kent County Sheriff Department

while attending the academy at GRCC. After completing the academy I was hired by Kent County Sheriff Department to work at Millennium Park as a park police officer.

After one season I was hired on the road and have been on the road working nights for 5 years. I worked Central (Alpine, Plainfield, Cannon, Grattan) for one year. I worked the Cascade car for one year and I worked South (Byron, Gaines, Caledonia, Bowne) for the past three years.

I am looking forward to working in the East Precinct. I have missed working out here and look forward to serving the residents once again. If you have questions, please contact me at 632-6435.

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS:

Here are some things families can do to encourage today's computer-savvy young people to be computer-safe.

- Do speak with your child about their internet habits and your safety concerns.
- Do set a limit for how much time your child can spend online.
- Do keep the computer in a public place, "not in your child's bedroom"
- Do install safety hardware and monitoring software and keep it updated.
- Do Not overreact or threaten to take away the internet if your child tells you about something bad that they experienced online.
- Do encourage your child to teach you what they know about the internet.

- Do Not allow your child to have an online profile.
- Do Not hesitate to get help if you think a predator may be targeting your child.
- Do get to know your child's online friends as you would their real-life friends.

Talk to your kids. Keep the line of communication open. If a child tells you about an upsetting event experienced online, don't blame him or her. How you react will affect how much he or she shares with you in the future.

Problems? Report them!

Kent County Sheriff Department: 632-6100

Federal Trade Commission

www.ftc.gov

U.S. Department of Justice

www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/reporting.htm

CyberTipline, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1-800-843-5678, www.missingkids.org

Is your Child ready for a lap/shoulder belt?

Kids under 13 should ride in the backseat always!

If you can answer "yes" to all of the Five Step Test questions, your child is ready for the lap/shoulder belt.

- Is your child 4'9" AND 80 lbs?
- Does the lap belt sit low-across the upper thighs?
- Does the shoulder belt lie across the collar bone—not touching the neck and not off the shoulder?
- When the child's bottom is scooted all the way back against the seat
- back, do their knees bend at the edge of the auto seat?
- Can the child stay seated that way for the entire trip?

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WINTER HEATING SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOME

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many Americans to search for alternate sources of home heating. The use of wood burning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling rapidly, or coming out of storage. Fireplaces are burning wood and man made logs. All these methods of heating may be acceptable. They are however, a major contributing factor in residential fires. Many of these fires can be prevented. The following fire safety tips can help you maintain a fire safe home this winter.

KEROSENE HEATERS

- Be sure your heater is in good working condition. Inspect exhaust parts for carbon buildup. Be sure the heater has an emergency shut off in case the heater is tipped over.
- Never use fuel burning appliances without proper room venting. Burning fuel (coal, kerosene or propane, for example) can produce deadly fumes.
- Use **ONLY** the fuel recommended by the heater manufacturer. **NEVER INTRODUCE A FUEL INTO A UNIT NOT DESIGNED FOR THAT TYPE FUEL.**
- Keep kerosene, or other flammable liquids stored in approved metal containers, in well ventilated storage areas, outside of the house.
- **NEVER** fill the heater while it is operating or hot. When refueling an oil or kerosene unit, avoid overfilling. **DO NOT** use cold fuel, as it may expand in the tank as it warms up.
- Refueling should be done outside of the home (or outdoors).
- Keep young children away from space heaters—Especially when they are wearing night gowns or other loose clothing that can be easily ignited.
- **When using a fuel burning appliance in the bedroom, be sure there is proper ventilation to prevent a buildup of carbon monoxide.**



WOOD STOVES AND FIREPLACES

Wood stoves and fireplaces are becoming a very common heat source in homes. Careful attention to safety can minimize their fire hazard. Although proper maintenance, cleaning, and care should reduce the chance of a chimney fire, it's always smart to be prepared. To use wood stove and fireplaces safely:



- Be sure the fireplace or stove is installed properly. Wood stoves should have adequate clearance (36") from combustible surfaces, and proper floor support and protection.
- Replace the batteries in your home's smoke and carbon monoxide detectors annually. Check your fire extinguishers on a regular basis and recharge or replace them if necessary.

- Have the chimney inspected and cleaned annually. The Ponderosa Pine wood found in our area can create a lot of soot, ashes and creosote that build up in the chimney. When this residue gets hot it can easily catch fire.
- Wood stoves should be of good quality, solid construction and design, and should be UL (Underwriter's Laboratory) listed.
- Do not use flammable liquids to start or accelerate any fire.
- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace opening, to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out, unwanted material from going in, and help prevent the possibility of burns to occupants.
- Never burn charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide.
- Keep flammable materials away from your fireplace mantel. A spark from the fireplace could easily ignite these materials.
- Before you go to sleep, be sure your fireplace fire is out. **NEVER** close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper will help the fire to heat up again and will force toxic carbon monoxide into the house.
- If synthetic logs are used, follow the directions on the package. **NEVER** break a synthetic log apart to quicken the fire or use more than one log at a time. They often burn unevenly, releasing higher levels of carbon monoxide.

IF YOU SUSPECT (OR KNOW) THAT YOU HAVE A CHIMNEY FIRE:

- Call the Fire Department by dialing 911.
- Never try to remove burning logs from your fireplace. Use water or a fire extinguisher to put them out. Fire extinguisher is best. Be careful with putting water on the fire. On one hand, the steam created with a glass or two of water may put out the fire - or at least cool it down significantly. However, there is a possibility that the sudden cooling could crack any glass door/screen, or cause damage to mortar or other components. Ask a certified fireplace inspector or consult your factory stove / fireplace manual.
- Get everyone out of the house immediately and call the fire department. If you can do so safely, put out any fire in the stove or fireplace and close the damper. (Some fast-burning chimney fires produce dense smoke and flames shooting out the top of the chimney, often accompanied by a rumbling sound inside the chimney. Slow-burning chimney fires are much harder to detect but can also cause serious damage to the chimney and, possibly, to the house.)
- Do not use the fireplace again until a chimney sweep has checked it for any hidden damage.

Cascade Inspection Services

Cascade Charter Township

2865 Thornhills Ave SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546
phone: 616.949.1500
fax: 616.949.3918
www.cascadetwp.com

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Township Board

Supervisor Rob Beahan
rbeahan@cascadetwp.com

Clerk Ron Goodyke
rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com

Treasurer Ken Peirce
kpeirce@cascadetwp.com

Trustee Jim Koessel
jkoessel@cascadetwp.com

Trustee Cindy Fox
cfox@cascadetwp.com

Trustee Jack Lewis
jlewis@cascadetwp.com

Trustee Fred Goldberg
fgoldberg@cascadetwp.com

4th of July...



While it may seem to be months off, planning has begun for the Cascade Township 4th of July celebration. This year the festivities will take place on Saturday, July 3rd. As in the past, the Township is seeking sponsors to help support the festivities. If you are interested in being a sponsor for the parade and street fair, please contact Stephen Korhorn at 949-1320 or via email at skorhorn@cascadetwp.com. The sponsorship information is also on our website at www.cascadetwp.com.



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