



# CASCADE CONNECTIONS

A NEWSLETTER FROM CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP

# Winter



## From The Supervisor...



**SUPERVISOR  
ROB BEAHAN**

Every year the Cascade Township Board establishes goals. I'd like to take this opportunity to give an update of accomplishments in 2010.

One of our objectives was to re-design the Township website ([www.cascadetwp.com](http://www.cascadetwp.com)) to make it more informative and user-friendly. The website was completely redone and now offers easier access to more information.

Throughout the year Cascade Township continued to work on pursuing economic growth strategies with other area agencies. Staff and Board representatives met and worked with various entities such as The Right Place,

Grand Valley Metro Council, G. R. Ford International Airport, The Utility Advisory Board and the Kent County Road Commission to expand our opportunities for economic growth vital for the area. Bill Cousins, our Township Manager, was recently elected to The Right Place Board of Directors for 2011. Cascade Township was also recently recognized in the Michigan Township News as being identified as a "Four Star" entrepreneurial community by their *eCities* study.

Throughout the year all the Township budgets were closely monitored to make sure any reduction in revenues was met with a reduction in expenditures. Department heads, our Manager, and the Treasurer, Ken Peirce and his staff made sure that this was done and once again, all the budgets have ended up on the "plus" side.

A wind generator and solar panels were installed at the Cascade Library the third week of January. A power tracking monitor located inside the library itself will serve as an educational tool to visitors. The project was funded by Cascade Township and also with grants from The Cascade Community Foundation, The Friends of The Library, and Cascade Engineering.

We have worked to implement the master plans for both the Burton and Cascade Peace Parks. Both parks now have parking areas and trails throughout and Burton Park also has permanent restroom facilities open. Both parks are now open for the enjoyment of the visitors.

Staff is working on creating a master plan for future additions to our pathway system. This will include recommendations for funding, construction, and maintenance along with communication with neighboring municipalities about connecting pathways. While funding for pathway extensions is not available under the current millage, maintenance will continue to be done to keep them in good shape throughout the year.

We identified a responsible option for replacing our current Go! Bus service with a comparable service at a reduced price. In July of 2011 we will use Hope Network to provide our residents with transportation at a savings of 18%.

Throughout the year we continued to review and evaluate all of our Township services and considered ways to consolidate these services with neighboring municipalities to reduce expenses.

Cascade, along with Grand Rapids Township and Ada Township continue to share costs in the East Precinct for the Kent County Sheriff that serves our three communities. Jointly, we have looked at ways of cutting costs while still maintaining the coverage we have through this service.

Our spring and fall clean-up days are held in cooperation with Ada along with our sharing of expenses for the July 4th fireworks.



We continue to work closely with our neighboring Fire Departments in training exercises and also lending aid and equipment for emergency situations. We also share services for Fire Inspections with Grand Rapids Township.

Our Building Department continues to supply a number of area communities with inspection services in the building trades generating revenue for the Township.

The most important goal for Cascade in 2011 is to continue giving our residents the level of services that they expect while practicing fiscal responsibility through a balanced budget and a carefully managed surplus.

## Office Hours:

Monday through Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

## Department Phone Numbers:

### Manager:

Bill Cousins; 949-1500  
[bcousins@cascadetwp.com](mailto:bcousins@cascadetwp.com)

### Assessing:

Roger McCarty; 949-6176  
[roger@cascadetwp.com](mailto:roger@cascadetwp.com)

### Building / Grounds:

Amy Waugh; 682-4836  
[awaugh@cascadetwp.com](mailto:awaugh@cascadetwp.com)

### Building Inspections:

Butch Visser; 949-3765  
[bvisser@cascadetwp.com](mailto:bvisser@cascadetwp.com)

### Clerk:

Ron Goodyke; 949-1508  
[rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com](mailto:rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com)

### Fire:

John Sigg; 949-1320  
[jsigg@cascadetwp.com](mailto:jsigg@cascadetwp.com)

### Planning:

Steve Peterson; 949-0224  
[speterson@cascadetwp.com](mailto:speterson@cascadetwp.com)

### Treasurer:

Ken Peirce; 949-6944  
[kpeirce@cascadetwp.com](mailto:kpeirce@cascadetwp.com)

### Sheriff / Non-Emergency:

632-6100

### East Precinct Office:

632-6394



**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 meets monthly. The meeting dates and times vary. Current meeting topic information and membership roster can be found at [www.cascadebiz.com](http://www.cascadebiz.com).

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

## Upcoming events include:

- February 23rd** Open House/Networking
- March 19** Forest Hills Community Expo @ Ada Christian School
- April 16** Shred/Recycle Day
- May** Open House/Networking
- June 5** Triathlon
- July** Summer Break
- August 25** Metro Cruise Warm-up
- September 21** Kickoff Meeting

## A Cascade Township Cure for Outdoor Deprivation Disorder

Studies by the Kaiser Family Foundation and opinions by a consortium of physicians, health insurers, naturalists and government agencies have shown the need for people of all ages to engage in health-enhancing physical activity in parks and other natural environments. Advocates from the White House to the National Wildlife Federation encourage children and adults to combat the deleterious effects of “diseases of indoor living” such as: obesity, heart disease, vitamin D deficiency, osteoporosis and stress among others by getting out to enjoy unstructured play and interaction with the natural world.

The residents of Cascade Township have supported the construction and maintenance of a wonderful twenty-mile-long pathway system. This year we added the purchase of the beautiful nearly eighty acre Cascade Burton Park and the two hundred acre Peace Park. These two open space purchases, along with McGraw Park which covers 200 acres along the Grand River, offer unique opportunities for our residents to connect to the natural world right here in our township. Richard Louv in his best-selling book “The Last Child in the Woods” coined the phrase “nature-deficit disorder” and describes dozens of studies which demonstrate the benefits that wilderness outings can have on mental and physical health.

These Cascade Township open space areas are in addition to the Recreation Park, which

offers venues for sports and family fun with its tennis courts, the new and improved Cascade Community Foundation Soccer Field, ball fields, a frisbee golf course, a mile long paved trail, play areas for children, picnic tables, and a sheltered picnic area. Looking for a fishing spot, a place to put in a kayak, or something more contemplative? We have the Leslie E Tassel Park, a wonderful area to enjoy the natural beauty of the Thornapple River.

Our children need unstructured play time outdoors to combat the drain of an “indoor childhood.” Parents and grandparents need to stay active and fit to counter sedentary lifestyles and to help combat the symptoms of adult diseases that too often rob them of enjoying a full active life. Find our natural parks and recreation park and realize for yourself that getting outdoors has benefits beyond getting exercise. Whether it’s running, walking, bicycling, kayaking, canoeing, or participating in organized sports, let’s turn our public parks into public health resources and dovetail with Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move Outside” campaign so more residents will decide to take advantage of our open spaces and parks.

Thank you, Cascade residents for providing these facilities, with all they offer, let’s get out there to stay healthy and active... and best of all, it’s free!



## Farmland Preservation in Cascade Township

Cascade Township became a participant in Kent County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) farmland preservation program in 2003. The purpose of this program is to create a long-term environment for agriculture by permanently preserving prime and unique farmland. Agriculture is important to Michigan's economy as it is our largest industry and 1 in 4 Michigan jobs are connected to the food system. To date, 928 acres have been preserved through the Kent County farmland preservation program.

Each year, program staff sends out postcards to all farmland owners notifying them of the application cycle. From March 1 – April 30, interested landowners voluntarily apply. Applications can be found at [www.accesskent.com/pdr](http://www.accesskent.com/pdr) or can be mailed upon request. Each application is scored and prioritized according to the scoring system also posted online. The township board must approve each application every year. High scoring applications are then appraised

to determine a fair market value for the development rights. In 2010, development rights values ranged between \$1,000 per acre up to \$2,400 per acre.

Cascade Township has supported farmland preservation by reviewing applications and adding an area for farmland preservation on the future land use map of the master plan. In 2010, the Cascade Township Board voted to contribute \$1,500 toward the appraisal cost of the township's first farmland preservation program application.

For more information on farmland preservation, please visit [www.accesskent.com/pdr](http://www.accesskent.com/pdr) or contact Kendra Wills, staff person to the Kent County Agriculture Preservation Board at 616-336-2028 or [willsk@anr.msu.edu](mailto:willsk@anr.msu.edu).

## Cascade Historical Society

Spring into the Past with a Tour of West Michigan Small Museums

April 30th and May 1st, 2011  
Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm.

The Cascade Historical Society will participate in the tour of 22 Small Museums located along the Flat River, Grand River and Thornapple River. The museum will be open the days and times noted.

For details of other participating Societies and Museums go to:

**TRI RIVER MUSEUM NETWORK**

<http://www.commoncorners.com/images/springintopast2011.pdf>



## From the desk of your Assessor...

**Assessment Change Notices** will be mailed on or before February 25, 2011.

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 2010.
- If there is a Principal Residence Exemption on your property for 2011.

### Board of Review will hear assessment appeals on March 14 and 15, 2011.

- Appointments will be made beginning on March 1. 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 14, 2011. 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 2010.

### Principal Residence (Homestead) Exemptions...

**Filing deadline** for new exemptions is May 1, 2011. Exemptions in effect January 1, 2011, 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 2010, any new construction, field work, reappraisal changes or any other omitted real property. If there was a transfer of ownership on

your property in 2010, your assessed value and taxable value will be the same in 2011 because the taxable value was uncapped.

### 1.017 % is the inflation rate established by the State for 2011.

**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*



## House Numbers Critical in Emergency Response

Is your house number prominently displayed? The answer to this question provides an indication of the response time you can expect in the event of an emergency. Prominent house numbers can mean the difference between life and death.

Fire Department and ambulance response is generated based on an address. Your Fire Department personnel are the first on the scene. In addition to providing medical care in an emergency, we mark the property to make it easier for ambulance personnel to find the address. When we can't determine your house number, we can't provide emergency care and we can't guide the ambulance to you.

For residential buildings, numbers should be at least 4" tall and should be reflective or illuminated. Commercial buildings should use numbers at least 6" tall. It is crucial that the numbers contrast with the background to provide maximum visibility.

The Cascade Firefighters Association makes reflective, contrasting address markers that provide excellent visibility. They are designed to be used near the end of your driveway or mailbox and are available for \$15 with free installation.

## Winterize Your Home

Take the time now to get your home ready for the winter season by following these tips:

1. Have your heating system checked by a professional annually. This will ensure that your system is working safely and efficiently which, in turn, will save you money. If you heat by wood, clean your fireplace or stove. Have your chimney flue checked for any buildup of creosote and then cleaned to lessen the risk of fire.
2. Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary, insulate walls and attic. This will help you to conserve energy and reduce your homes power demands for heat.
3. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills to keep cold air out.
4. Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside. This will provide an extra layer of insulation, keeping more cold air out.
5. Inspect and flush your water heater.
6. Replace batteries of smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors. If you did not do it when you set the clocks back, do it now.

Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning:

- DO NOT operate generators indoors; the motor emits deadly carbon monoxide gas.
- DO NOT use charcoal to cook indoors. It, too, can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide gas.
- DO NOT use your gas oven to heat your home—prolonged use of an open oven in a closed house can create carbon monoxide gas.
- Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation.

Have a safe season.

*Cascade Inspection Services*

## Fire Hydrants Need Your Help

Winter has, again, made a strong appearance in Western Michigan. Blankets of snow have added a glistening beauty to our township. As we approach a record-setting season snowfall, we see mountains of snow building as plow operators work to keep our roads, parking lots and driveways clear.

This winter has also seen an increase in fires all across West Michigan, and Cascade Township is no exception. Fighting fires in the frigid cold brings its own set of challenges, but the Fire Department remains most concerned with water supply. Water supply is an issue where our residents have an opportunity to make a difference.

We are asking all residents to be aware of the accessibility of any hydrants located on their property. Keeping the snow shoveled from around each hydrant improves the accessibility of this critical supply. Clear and accessible hydrants make it faster and easier for the Fire Department to find and establish a dependable water supply.

In addition to keeping the snow cleared away from hydrants on your property, we are asking neighborhood associations to discuss this issue with their private snow plow operators. Plow operators should be reminded not to pile snow on and around the fire hydrants. Not only does this plowed-in snow make a hydrant almost impossible to use, it increases the risk of plow operators driving into, and damaging, the hydrants in your neighborhood.

Please work to keep everyone in your neighborhood safe. Keep the snow cleared away from all fire hydrants.



## Spring Break Safety tips...

If you are hitting the road or catching a plane during this spring travel season (or another time in the future) please read over the following tips to gain insight and gather ideas for safety for yourself and your property.

### On the road...

Buckle up! Also take turns behind the wheel, and whoever sits shotgun should stay awake to keep the driver company. Make sure everyone has a valid driver's license and the vehicle registration and insurance are in the car before driving off.

### In hotels...

Reserve a room that's above the 1st floor but below the 6th floor. Why? First floor rooms are easier to break into, and rooms above the sixth floor are sometimes too high for fire ladders to reach. If safes are provided, definitely use them for any valuables you may have. Keep doors and sliding doors locked, and don't let anyone into your room unless you can trust them. Make a mental note of where the nearest fire exits and stairwells are located in case you need to evacuate.

### At the ATM...

Try to go the ATM in groups, but avoid getting overly complacent about safety just because you're traveling in numbers. Also try to go during daylight hours. When you approach the ATM, do a full 360 degree scan, looking completely around you to see if anyone is hanging out where they shouldn't be. When punching in your pin number, use your other hand to cover the keypad. Always be on the lookout for anyone suspicious.

### Leaving the country...

First things first: if you're leaving the country you'll need a passport. These are not quick and easy documents to attain, so file your application about 6 months before going on a trip abroad. Safety has a lot to do with what you pack when traveling abroad. Don't bring flashy valuables (like expensive jewelry) and dress conservatively so you don't stick out too much. And do your homework beforehand about your

destination, keeping in mind you are subject to the laws of the country you visit. To get a full list of tips for traveling abroad (as well as travel warnings for certain countries) check out the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at the following location. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1747.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html).

### Going on a cruise...

Vacationing on a cruise ship is a blast, but there are a whole different set of rules when you have a few thousand people aboard a boat. Stick with your friends, and watch your pockets when you get off the boat for stops. There are many cases of people being pick pocketed by island residents who prey on tourists. For a whole list o' tips about cruise safety look at the following website. <http://www.cruiseknowledge.com/cruisesafetytips.htm>.

### Property Safety

Be aware that there are lots of people out there who see students on Spring Break as easy targets for theft. Don't prove them correct. When traveling, here are some precautions you should always take with your valuables.

- Take as few valuables with you on your trip as possible,
- Book hotels that give you access to a safe. Lock up anything of value. Do not leave money or valuables around your room.
- Always lock your hotel room door.
- If you are traveling abroad, keep your passport in a secure location at all times.
- Watch out for scam artists who try to rip off students. Avoid high pressure sales pitches, and never go off to a secluded location with someone who wants to sell you something.
- If your cell phone or credit cards are stolen, report this immediately to the companies so they can cancel your service.
- When booking your trip, watch out for Spring Break travel package scams (<http://www.suite101.com/content/spring-break-travel-scams-a38208>).

### Physical Safety

High profile cases such as Natalee Holloway—a high school student who disappeared during her Spring Break trip to Aruba—are uncommon. However, sexual violence and other violent acts during Spring Break are not. Neither are accidents. Use common sense and follow these simple safety tips.

- Always stay in the proximity of at least one friend, and preferably two or three. Adhere strictly to this "buddy system" and do not leave with someone other than your buddies. Be sure to choose buddies you can trust.
- Do not leave with strangers, even if it seems like a good idea at the time. Always err on the side of caution and trust your instincts.
- Watch your drink very carefully! Be aware of "date rape" drugs that people may try to sneak into your drink. Never accept a drink from a stranger or let someone else hold your drink.
- Never go to an isolated place with a stranger or someone you do not fully trust.
- Carry a cell phone with you in case of an emergency.
- Carry your identification and important medical information on your person in case of an emergency.

### Before you leave it is important to do a few things also:

- Set your alarm system (if you have one).
- Try to arrange for a house sitter or for someone to come by to check on the home.
- Tell a trusted neighbor or friend to keep an eye on your home. Do not broadcast this info to all of your neighbors and all over your social networking sites.
- Use timers for televisions, lights, radios.
- Make sure the house is locked tight before leaving. Double check all windows, doors, etc.
- Make sure your valuables are in a safe deposit box or another secured location.

- Have someone pick up your mail or have your mail stopped.
- Leave your contact information with a trusted person for contact in case of an emergency at the home.

And as always, if you plan on being gone for an extended period of time you can sign up for house checks online at <https://www.accesskent.com/HouseCheck/> or by calling 616-632-6220. If your trip doesn't meet our guidelines you can still let us know and we will perform house checks as time allows.

*Julie Vogelzang*  
 Deputy  
 Kent County Sheriff Department  
 (616) 632-6435  
[julie.vogelzang@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:julie.vogelzang@kentcountymi.gov)

# RELAY FOR LIFE OF FOREST HILLS



**Cascade Township Library Lawn**  
 May 20-May 21, 2011  
 2 p.m.—2p.m.

**Come join in the fight against cancer in YOUR community!**

**Relay For Life is your chance to Celebrate cancer survivors, Remember loved ones lost, and Fight Back together!**

**For more information contact:**  
 Alex Willey  
 616.551.4038 or [Alexandra.willey@cancer.org](mailto:Alexandra.willey@cancer.org)

**Visit our website:**  
[www.RelayForLife.org/foresthillsmi](http://www.RelayForLife.org/foresthillsmi)



AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE

**Celebrate.**

**Remember.**

**Fight Back.**

Relay For Life is the American Cancer Society's signature event to raise awareness and funding to fight cancer. A relay walk recognizes local cancer survivors and a family that remembers loved ones lost to cancer. Those who have faced cancer.



## Cascade Charter Township

2865 Thornhills Ave SE.  
Grand Rapids MI 49546  
phone: 616.949.1500  
fax: 616.949.3918  
[www.cascadetwp.com](http://www.cascadetwp.com)

## Township Board

Supervisor Rob Beahan  
[rbeahan@cascadetwp.com](mailto:rbeahan@cascadetwp.com)  
Clerk Ron Goodyke  
[rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com](mailto:rgoodyke@cascadetwp.com)  
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PRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
GRAND RAPIDS MI  
PERMIT No. 1

## Pathway News...

I know it seems silly to even think about picking up the Cascade trails in February, but there is still a considerable amount of trash that comes off the myriad trash trucks that somehow makes its way onto our wonderful trails. I walk Cascade road every day and sure enough I manage to find little surprises strewn along the path and on the road close to the trail. This may be the time to organize your neighborhood and see if you can find volunteers to help in our clean up endeavor. We live in one of the most beautiful areas in Kent County and I for one would like to keep as much of it as clean as humanly possible. As always, I appreciate the efforts of those that have taken the time to help pick up trash on our wonderful trail system. Remember, KEEP CASCADE BEAUTIFUL.

*Kris Taylor*  
*Pathway Coordinator*

