



TOWNSHIP TATTLER

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“Sherman Township — a great place to live.”



Above the Fold: Planning for Our Future

Keweenaw County began updating its Land Use Plan this past year and invited Sherman Township residents to become part of the process. Zoning Administrator, Ann Gasperich, has held public meetings at each of the county’s four townships, to gather input as to what land uses residents want in their community.

Ann has met with Sherman Township residents three times with another meeting planned for January 19, 6:30 PM at the township office. Ann explained the history and process for land use planning, gathered input on key aspects of Sherman Township and collected ideas on land uses we envision in the township. About 25 people attended the first two meetings and a dozen residents attended

the third meeting. That is a very good participation rate in this important planning process.

The previous county-wide plan employed a simple approach to zoning in Sherman Township. Conservation/Environmental Protection (medium green on map, pg. 4) included state owned land. Basically, all of Gay fell into Residential 1A (R1A; single family residential) and nearly everything along the shoreline became Resort/Residential (RR) by default. Timber Resources (TR) covered the lion’s share of Sherman Township. These designations severely hampered commercial growth in Gay and building of new residences along major roadways. The Gay Bar in the

R1A may only remain a business until such time as there is a break in its commercial activity. If a break occurs, the “grandfathered” business would revert to single family residential under the existing land use plan. We also have one Resort Services zone along the Gay Lac La Belle Road (orange strip on map).

Sherman Township residents suggested that land use planning enhance the opportunities for small businesses, such as coffee shops, craft outlets and other services, within Gay. There are several ways to accomplish this and Ann will try to accommodate our wishes by crafting a plan that will allow a variety of future land uses within the town site.

Similarly, the Resort/Residential zone and exten-

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Straight from the Board:

The Auxiliary utilized the Community Hall basement for a second sales floor during their Sale and Bazaar this summer. Although the basement presented challenges, having minimal lighting, dirty walls and floor and scattered Township storage, the Auxiliary successfully used the space for “Basement Bargains”.

After a very fruitful sale season, the Auxiliary decided at their fall meeting to invest funds in minor renovations to the basement. The Auxiliary donated \$1300 into the Community Hall Fund to start

funding a 3-year project. The overall project will finish the front area, comprising approximately 70% of the basement; the remaining 30% in the back will retain water-plant operations and storage area.

The fire department initiated the renovation in fall 2015. They completed clearing many years of accumulated debris, cleaning the walls



Community Hall Adds Usable Space, Teamwork in Action

and floor, painting walls with a sealant to reduce water infiltration, painting the floor and stairs to seal the concrete, painting the doors and steel columns, installing 16 ceiling light-fixtures with two 100-watt-equivalent LED bulbs in each, adding two ground-fault outlets on the walls for dehumidifiers, mounting ceiling outlets for decorative lights around the poles and installing a handrail for the stairs to the front door. The firefighters contributed 200 hours of labor with an estimated value of about \$3000,

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Fireside Chat

The Sherman Township Volunteer Fire Department purchased a replacement pumper in 2014 with generous support from the Auxiliary, the township General Fund and fire department funds.

We are very pleased with the 1993 pumper. All firefighters have completed training on its operation and maintenance.

A successful grant application in 2015 resulted in \$25,000 of federal funds for replacing fire hoses, nozzles and drafting valves, and for acquiring a thermal imaging camera. We have already used the thermal imaging camera several times on callouts.

The township provided funds in 2015 for repairs to the fire station, such as repainting the exterior metal siding, replacing broken windows and upgrading ceiling lights to energy-efficient LEDs, which will improve illumination.

Mechanical issues put three old fire vehicles out of service in 2015, leaving us without a way to transport water or fight wildland fire. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had loaned two wildland-fire vehicles to us, and we felt that paying for their repair would be a fiscally poor decision at this time. We owned an old pumper, serving as a tanker, but costs of repair exceeded the value of the low-capacity truck. Instead, we felt it prudent to replace the old pumper with an actual tanker truck.

The Auxiliary gave a substantial donation (\$9200 in 2015 and, hopefully, an additional \$5000 in 2016) towards the \$19,000 purchase price of a gently used tanker from the Austin, Minnesota fire department. The department allocated \$4800 towards this tanker. Although the township did not give funds to the fire department, it lent \$5000 to us for

one year, allowing us to purchase the tanker at the end of 2015. We hope to pay back the township loan with the Auxiliary 2016 donation. This tanker with its 2000 gallon capacity will supply water to the pumper. Without the tanker, the pumper could only provide water to one hose line for 15 minutes — too short a time to suppress a fire.

We will rely on the DNR for wildland-fire protection through the mutual aid agreement. The fire department requested replacement wildland-fire vehicles for several years, but has not received anything. The DNR-owned, wildland-fire pickup remains out of service until either the DNR provides funding for or the department can afford repairs. We returned the low-volume, high-maintenance wildland-fire tanker to the DNR in November. Therefore, we can provide wildfire protection only to easily accessed locations, where we can drive our pumper and tanker.

The proposed fire protection millage on the August 2016 ballot only provides funding to sustain structural fire suppression services. These services are critical to homeowners, wanting to carry homeowners' insurance at a reasonable cost. The millage would fund apparatus maintenance and long-term replacement of the pumper and tanker. If the millage passes, we would direct future fund-raising proceeds toward matching funds for grants, replacement of personal protection equipment, specialized apparatus and wildland-fire equipment.

The department currently has 10 active members. Two members are likely to become first responders, which would transform our operations to fire and rescue. Please consider serving your community by joining the fire department and becoming a community hero!

Community Water Supply Requires New Fixes

The water supply for Gay faced a few challenges this past year. The first came during winter, when a power outage damaged one pump control in the water plant. During the same period, a leak developed at a shutoff valve, or curb stop, under the snow. The leak went unnoticed until water melted deep snow and a small lake appeared. The leak emptied the entire 40,000-gallon water-supply tank.

After regaining power, refilling the tank took five days of constant pumping from the wells. During this time, firefighters could not have used the Gay fire hydrants because of a lack of water.

The ongoing problem of leaking curb stops resulted from cost-cutting measures during the new water-system installation. The Board of Trustees developed and implemented a plan to replace most old curb stops in the summer of 2015.

Two other challenges face water plant operation: (1) water tests found high copper concentrations in water at household taps and (2) water levels declined in the supply wells. The unacceptable concentration of copper did not come from the distribution system, but rather it came from household plumbing. State regulations regarding

copper in drinking water make the water supplier responsible for copper concentrations not only in the distribution system, but also after the water flows through household plumbing to the faucet.

Our ground water is slightly acidic. This natural acidity can cause corrosion of copper pipes, releasing copper into the water. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) directed us to inject a chemical buffer into the water prior to distribution that will decrease acidity and reduce the amount of copper leaching from household plumbing. Required equipment, similar to the chlorine injection system already in place, will cost water users about \$600 with ongoing expenses expected for the chemical buffer.

The second recent challenge, a decline in water availability in the wells, has become worse over the past year.



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Sewer-system Changes

The sewer system in Gay got the wrong kind of attention from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in October 2015. A nuisance odor complaint regarding the drain field needed to be addressed. In addition to the odor complaint, the township needed to explain to the DEQ what actions it has taken to regulate sump-pump discharge into the drain field.

The nuisance odor has been an ongoing problem, because of the drain-field location in a residential area. Municipal drain fields commonly release offensive odors, and so should be located away from homes and businesses. We installed blowers that input oxygen into the system years ago, running them constantly to minimize anaerobic bacteria odor. Running the blowers uses electricity and can cost up to \$600 per month. The blowers help, but have not fixed the problem.

We investigated using charcoal filters on the exhaust vents, but they can only be used during the summer and are very expensive to replace. The other option we considered would extend the vent tube away from the residential area, moving the odor off site. The extension pipe could freeze in winter, as condensation collects in the tube. If we find a way to avoid the freezing of condensation in the extended vent, then we will install a pipe extension in spring 2016.

We have told you about the sump-pump discharge issue and its effect on the drain field in previous articles. This influx of water into the drain field will cause a premature failure of the sewage treatment facility, resulting in a significant cost to users. The township explained to the DEQ what actions we took to encourage homeowners to remove sump-pump discharge from the sewer system. Users were sent notices in their billing statements in both



July 2014 and July 2015, explaining that sump-pump discharge to the sewer system is illegal and system failure would likely cost each user an estimated \$3000. There was also a public meeting for all the sewer-system users in July 2014 to explain the problem and to encourage daylighting sump discharge to the road ditches. The Keweenaw Road Commission completed a road-ditch pump-improvement project in July 2015 to accommodate sump-pump discharge.

We attributed over 70% of the input to the drain field during April and May of 2015 to sump-pump discharge. The flooding of the drain field by sump pumps will eventually destroy the system and the field will have to be replaced with the cost transferred to the sewer-system users.

Thank You!

Gay Fire Department Auxiliary

The Gay Fire Department Auxiliary had an amazing Sale and Bazaar season with another record year. Our Silent Auction went well and contributed more than \$1200 directly to the fire department. Thank you, everyone who worked, donated and/or shopped.

You will find our sale schedule for 2016 in the next Township Tattler, or visit the Sherman Township website for information. Over the winter, we hope that the crafters among our township residents and friends will make some lovely items for Silent Auction 2016. Please contact Sherry Middlemis-Brown (906.296.8097) to donate one of your exquisite projects.

Please consider joining the Auxiliary. We work hard and have a great time.

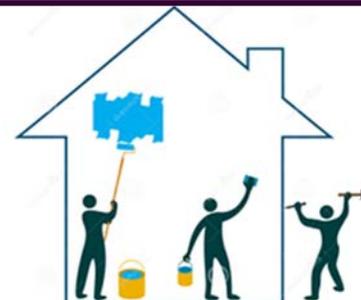
(Continued from page 1, Community Hall)

based on contractor estimates for the work. The firefighters did the work in September and October 2015.

We hope to continue renovations, which will go further to finish the space, in two subsequent years. The township greatly appreciates the funding from the Auxiliary and the

labor of the firefighters to make this project such a success.

Please stop by the Community Hall this summer during an Auxiliary sale and see the attractively transformed basement! When you enter the basement be sure to look for the scenic mural that is being painted by a very talented local artist.





Sherman Township -- a great place to live.

Nestled on the east shore of the Keweenaw Peninsula, Sherman Township provides a lovely spot for a permanent or a vacation home. The area has one of the lowest populations in the state, but the township offers the amenities associated with a community. The Gay smokestack, seen for miles, is a navigational aid by land and water. The School House Park offers a lovely gathering and picnicking spot. The Gay Schoolhouse reminds us of an important heritage. The Community Hall provides handicap accessible meeting space and houses the Fire Department Auxiliary's Sale and Bazaar. Visit the memorabilia on the stage of the Community Hall to learn more about our community's history.

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sive Timber Resource zone may not best serve the future of Sherman Township. Ann will look into different options, particularly for corridors along the major roads, that would meet our vision of the future.

Ann Gasperich will continue work on this plan over the next several months. She is very happy to send drafts to landowners for review and comment. If you would like to be part of planning for Sherman Township's and Keweenaw County's future, contact Ann at keweenawzoning@pasty.net or Keweenaw County Zoning and Construction Codes Department, 5095 4th Street, Eagle River, Michigan 49950.



We are on the web at <http://keweenawcountyonline.org/township-sherman.php>

(Continued from page 2: Community Water Supply)



The wells produced about 20 gallons per minute when initially installed. Now they barely pump 8 gallons per minute. The only feasible solution would redevelop the wells, basically cleaning out sediment. We hope to do this work in 2016, but the cost

of the project may range as high as \$10,000. The DEQ has recommended that we not try to deepen the wells, because we could introduce radium contamination from deep-water sources.

The water users will pay for these water supply fixes through the Repair and Replacement account, established when we installed the system to fund these sorts of situations. We transfer a set amount of money quarterly from the water-plant operation account, funded by user fees, to the Repair and Replacement account, as re-

quired by the Rural Development loan that funded the water supply system.

The Gay water system has reached an age when we can expect maintenance issues. The township has requested that water users form a committee to make decisions relative to water-plant maintenance and user fees. The township Board of Trustees tries to make reasonable and fair decisions on behalf of the water users, but feels that the users need fair representation in the decision process. Most of the trustees are not water-system customers. Please, if you are a water-system user, consider serving on the new water commission and help to make decisions that will affect you and your neighbors. Indicate your interest to serve to any of the Board of Trustees officers.

The township deeply appreciates the efforts of the water-system operator, Bob Strykowski, as he continues to deal with these complex issues. Bob has done an outstanding job of ensuring that water users in Gay get safe drinking water at a very reasonable cost.



Township Board of Trustees meetings are open to the public on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM (unless otherwise noted) at the Township Office. Agendas are posted on the bulletin board in front of the Township Office prior to meetings.

Newsletter editor:
Sherry Middlemis-Brown,
Sherman Township resident

Sherman Township, located in

