



TOWNSHIP TATTLER

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Spring 2014

Above the Fold: A Stinky Problem

Yes, the sewer system's drain field has an odor issue, but that is the least of its problems. The drain field has a plumbing problem that grew over the past year. Last spring, the drain field began to overflow because of: (1) pump failure, (2) snowmelt saturating the field, and (3) sump pumps from residences illegally pumping into the system.

The pump failure prevented lifting of sewage into the drain field. The reason for failure may be a switch, a valve, or a plugged drain field. Replacing a switch or valve is inexpensive compared to the costly repair of a drain field.

A contractor is addressing the problem by working on the least expensive potential prob-

lems first. The contractor set a goal this winter of having both pumps running to specifications by snowmelt. He will complete long-term repairs by early summer.

The second problem, water from snowmelt flooding the drain field, results from a high water table at the field. Melting snow saturates the ground and water entering the field has no place to drain.

Sump pumps contribute to the excess water problem by raising sewer water levels above capacity, further flooding the field. This problem is the hardest to fix, because human behavior causes it.

Sump pump connections to the sewer system are ille-

gal! Engineers do not design drain fields to handle this high volume of water. Sump pumps generate up to 100 times the normal water volume into the sewer system. This massive amount of water will cause the sewer system to fail, which will result in users paying to replace the field through increased sewer bills. Illegal sump pump connections continue to cause serious damage to our drain field that shortens the life of the system.

For many homeowners, a sump pump keeps their basement from flooding during snowmelt and large rainfall events. Your sump drain should direct water out of your house and onto your yard (see illustration). For

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Straight from the Board: Budgets

Sound fiscal health of a Township depends on proper accounting and budgeting with audits meeting Michigan Public Act 2, 1968, mandates. Budgets establish annual financial plans for Township operations.

For Sherman Township, this includes general operations, water & sewer departments, fire department, and community hall restoration. The process begins with the Supervisor, Treasurer, and Clerk agreeing upon an outline for the fiscal year budget, based upon anticipated expenses, balanced by projected income. The officers present a draft budget at the

January Board meeting for review and revision by all Trustees. A second budget discussion occurs at the February Board meeting. The Trustees finalize the budget for public hearing in March, where they vote on the budget to take effect for the next fiscal year, starting on April 1.

The officers balance the prior year's budget at the end of the fiscal year to ensure that expenses did not exceed available funds. An independent accountant audits the income and expense transac-

tions for each budget every other year.

Income originates from property tax revenues (90%) and State revenues (10%). The General Operation budget covers expenses for Township governance, tax collection, property assessment, elections, and property maintenance. Expenses break-down to about 35% Trustee salaries, 21% property insurance and maintenance, 19% utilities, 14% accountant and assessor services, 6% Board of Review and elections and 5% office supplies and incidental

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Fireside Chat: New Equipment

The Volunteer Fire Department added to its equipment this winter. The department purchased a new portable, wildland-fire pump and a 900 feet of light hose. The pump can float on top of a water source, sucking water from a pond or stream. The flexible hose will transfer water from the pump to a tank or truck that will transport the water to the fire. This will assist fire-

fighters in locations with no hydrants, which is all of the Township outside of Gay.

The large garage door lifter on the fire hall gave up the ghost this winter. The Township had a new opener installed.

The department will engage in its usual fund-raising efforts this summer. Firefighters will sell raffle tickets at the Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar and it will sell tickets

for the special raffle on July 4. Additionally, fire fighters will sell hot dogs, popcorn, and drinks at the School House Park for the July 4th parade.

The department needs volunteers! A Volunteer Fire Department consists of trained men and women, willing to offer a few hours of their time monthly to a community cause. Please consider joining!

Board of Review

The Board of Review accepted several property owners' petitions at sessions, March 10, 9:00-3:00 and March 11, 3:00-9:00. The Board of Review accepts new petitions in March, and may address old business in July and December meetings.

The reviewers and the assessor, Mark Erhart, made adjustments on all of the petitioned properties. The assessor attended a portion of each session and explained the assessment algorithm to petitioners.

Erhart will continue to reassess properties as soon as the weather permits. The state requires reassessment once in five years, but Erhart has created a three-year schedule. The

previous assessor did not reassess on a schedule. Therefore, some homeowners may be surprised by changes to their assessments that had not been reassessed for several years. If you have questions about your assessment, please contact Mark Erhart, P.O. Box 13, Watersmeet, MI 49969.

There were a few changes to tax laws this year. One of the most important changes involves passing property to heirs or family members. The state will not uncap property given to a family member, thus keeping the taxable value limit where it had been before transfer. Also, Veterans with 100% disability are exempt from property taxes, but must file the exemption forms annually.

**"Sherman
Township —
a great place
to live.**



(Budget: Continued from page 1)

costs. The Trustees designated \$5,835 for unanticipated expenses and equipment depreciation in this account. You can see this budget on the Township's web page.

The water and sewer budgets operate outside of normal Township functions since both serve a specific subgroup of residents, rather than the entire Township. Both services function strictly on user fees with the two systems managed independently. The water budget breaks out to 43% maintenance and repairs, 31% operator salary, and 26% utilities. The lending agency requires the annual input of \$2,750 to a special fund for long-term equipment replacement and major repairs. Sewer expenses break out to 38% utilities, 25% contracted operator (mandated by law), 23% maintenance and repairs, and 14% local operator salary. As with the water budget, we must allocate a sum, \$1,000 in this case, for

long-term equipment replacement and major repairs. You will find these budgets on the Township's web page also.

The Volunteer Fire Department and Community Hall budgets rely entirely on fund raising, donations and grants, instead of local taxes. The fire department earns income from sales at the Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar and 4th of July, each year. It also receives donations from the Auxiliary and State grants. Expenses break out to 52% equipment repairs, 37% supplies, and 11% for education, dues, insurance, and legal fees. The Community Hall renovation has come entirely from the Auxiliary. This year, hall renovation funds cover the cost of replacing basement windows. You can find the budgets for the fire department and the Community Hall Renovation account on the Township web page.



Recycling Your Waste is Still Easy!

Although we lost our curbside pickup of recycling, you still have an alternative!

Rural Garbage Service (RGS) provides curbside refuse pickup, but discontinued recycling pickup. It had used the Goodwill recycling site at the airport as the transfer station until its closure on March 1, 2014. Therefore, having nowhere to take recycling,

RGS stopped recycling services.

However, you can still take recycling to the *Waste Management* recycling center at 1108 Enterprise Drive, Houghton, located just south of Sharon Avenue. Single stream recycling at that station includes cardboard, paper, metal, and #1 PETE and #2 HPDE plastics. You might consider coordinating with neighbors to combine recycling runs and reduce trips into Houghton. It is still easy to be green!

New Basement Windows for the Hall and Office

We will enter the next phase of renovations for the Community Hall and Township Office this summer. The basement windows have needed replacement for some time, as many have missing or broken glass and the wood frames have rotted. At ground level, mowing and snow removal can easily damage the windows, making proper window selection important. After research, we chose the nearly indestructible Decora® glass-block modular units, each with a 8" by 16" closable vent. The water plant, located in the Community Hall basement, currently has similar units without vents. Vents allow airflow for moisture control and ventilation during summer months.

The hall has nineteen windows that require 32" by 32" units (as pictured). The office has three windows that need smaller units (32" by 16"). The installation includes removing old windows and surrounding wooden frames, preparing the openings,

mortaring the modular units in place and adding sealant.

We sent a request for bids to four local contractors and the Trustees approved the lowest bid in March. LR Contracting, Inc. will complete installation of 21 windows for \$7,680. The Community Hall Renovation account, funded by Auxiliary donations, will cover \$6,735 of the cost. The Township's General Operations account will pay \$945 for the office windows.

The Township's 2012-2016 Capital Improvement Plan calls for repair and sealing of the Community Hall foundation in 2015. We scheduled no further renovation projects for the Township Office in 2015.



First Full Year of Having a Park!

The new School House Park, completed last year, will open for its first full season on May 1. Community members and visitors may use the park and pavilion during daylight hours May through October. The restroom will open on May 1 if temperatures remain above 40° and snow has melted.

Community members may reserve The School House Park pavilion at no charge by calling the Township Office at (906) 296-1211 or by email at shermantwp@pasty.net. Please provide your name, purpose of the event, requested date and time, and contact information, including phone number. We will confirm your reservation by either phone or email. A sign indicating "Reserved" will be

placed on the pavilion the day of the reservation. We have a carry-in / carry-out policy for trash with no trash cans available.

The annual expense to maintain the park covers servicing the restroom, estimated to be \$700. We accept donations from park users to cover this cost. The Township will continue to cover grounds maintenance from General Operation funds. So please enjoy your new park in Gay by having a picnic with your friends at the pavilion with all the beautiful carvings!





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. The Gay Schoolhouse reminds us of an important heritage. The Community Hall provides handicap accessible meeting space and houses the Auxiliary's Sale and Bazaar. Visit the memorabilia on the stage of the Community Hall to learn more about our community's history. The Township Office houses the Sherman Township government offices.

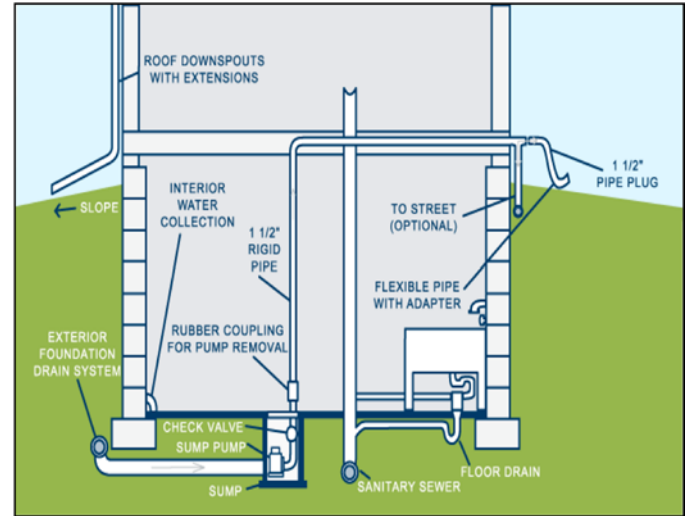
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proper design and installation of sump pump system discharges, you should contact a licensed contractor.

Supply Line Leaks?

Bob Strykowski monitors daily water volume, distributed to residents of Gay. This winter, volume varied dramatically with it doubling within 24 hours in one day. Strykowski feared chilling conclusion: a large leak from a broken pipe. He began a long and arduous search on snowshoes in sub-zero weather with a shovel to dig out around vacant homes, where connections could freeze and break, but found no leaks.

With frost depth reaching 12 feet in the Keweenaw, broken water mains became a real possibility. After an exhaustive search, Strykowski found no breaks. So, he explored an alternative theory. Rumors circulat-



A properly installed sump pump connection.

ed of homeowners leaving faucets running to avoid pipes freezing. Strykowski confirmed the rumors and breathed a little easier. One faucet, running a pencil width for 24 hours, can use over 800 gallons of water. Just five homeowners running a single faucet for 24 hours can double water use in Gay.

Although this solved the mystery, the incident caused a

lot of panic at the water plant. Running a faucet protects your pipes from freezing and can help prevent a water-main breaks. It is a very good practice in sub-zero weather. Therefore, we ask you to notify the plant operator when you run your faucets. Please call the office at 296-1211 and leave a brief message or send an email to shermantwp-water@pasty.net. Thank you.

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

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

Newsletter editor:
 Sherry Middlemis-Brown,
 Sherman Township resident

Sherman Township, located in



Auxiliary, Back to Work!

We hope we will not need to shovel the Community Hall stairs for the first Sale and Bazaar! Please snip out the schedule and keep it for your reference.

Events 2014

May 19 — Setup; Monday mornings throughout summer. Setup is from 9 AM to noon or later.

Donations accepted at Monday morning setup or Monday evenings, 6-8 PM

- June 9 Auxiliary meeting, Community Hall, 6 PM
- June 21 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, 12-3 PM
- July 4 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, 12-4 PM; Gay Parade 2 PM.
- July 19 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, 12-3 PM
- Aug 2 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, 12-3 PM
- Aug 16 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, 12-3 PM
- Sept 1 Auxiliary Sale and Bazaar, last sale with bag-sales and 1/2 off select items.
- Sept 8 Auxiliary fall meeting, Community Hall, 6 PM
- Sept 10 Potluck, Community Hall, 6 PM

