

Big Prairie Township

JULY, 2008

From the Supervisor's Desk

Over the years I have always enjoyed these opportunities to just have a nice chat with all of you, the residents of Big Prairie Township. As you may have recognized, I tend to drift to the end of the philosophical spectrum. I love the Zen of raising bees, or the holistic nature of making maple syrup, and the "get to know God by gardening" thing is very cool. When our treasurer, who edits and organizes this newsletter told me to "focus, Dave. Tell the folks some of the projects we have going on", I had to take a different path this time and just cover the news.

Well, we do have some very cool projects going on and I would love to tell you all about it. Things are happening that should make everyone proud to be a part of the Big Prairie community.

After some years of saving, earning interest from investments, and a very welcome deposit of funds from Consumers Power the township board has approved the purchase of a new truck chassis. This is money that was ear marked by taxes as only to be used for fire department expenses. The new truck will replace our current medical first responder unit. This new purchase was accomplished without any request for additional taxes and is paid for from day one. The "box" from the old truck will be put on the new cab and frame and will give us years of future service.

If you have been out to the Big Prairie/Everett Cemetery lately, you have seen some big changes there. The forty acres that lie physically within Big Prairie Township are for future burial space, but won't be needed for approximately 75 years. And it is the last piece of the *big prairie* that gave us our township name. Now the first step has been taken to restore the prairie to its natural state by hydro-axing the invasive species that do not belong on the prairie. This is the start of a 15-year restoration plan written by the Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. This has been made possible through a grant from the Department of Agriculture for over \$38,000 and an additional grant from the Fremont Area Community Foundation for \$6,000. The joint cemetery board has made a statement of dedication to environmental stewardship and preservation of a rare ecosystem. The dry sand prairie is perhaps the third most endangered ecosystem in the world behind rain forests and cloud forests. When the settlers came to Michigan there were perhaps 60,000 acres of prairie and now there are less than 1,000. Well, now there will be 40 more.

At the same location, the joint board has also partnered with the Big Prairie Historical Preservation Society to preserve our first Town Hall and Grange. This project has been totally funded through private sources. The Society is hoping to have the old Town Hall painted this fall and work will continue through the interior as monies are available. Try and visualize the complete project with the original prairie out the back door of the original Town Hall to see it from. Environmental history and cultural history will be together in one place for all to enjoy.

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TOWNSHIP BOARD

Dave Wright, Supervisor

964 Cypress Ave.
White Cloud, MI 49349
231-689-1250

Judy Baker, Clerk

5160 Croton Hardy Dr.
Newaygo, MI 49337
231-652-7390

Jodie Ruchmeier, Treasurer

P.O. Box 127
White Cloud, MI 49349
231-689-1385

Marian Davison, Trustee

4743 Miramar St.
Newaygo, MI 49337
231-652-1960

Mary Anderson, Trustee

3298 S. Locust Ave.
White Cloud, MI 49349
231-689-6255

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Zoning Administrator

Bob Hall
231-689-1385

Building Inspector

Mike Crowe
231-856-7005

Electrical Inspector

Mike Califf
231-924-1992

Mechanical Inspector

Newaygo Co. Building Dept.
231-689-7216

Burn Permits

DNR Hotline
1-866-922-2876

Supervisor's Message (con't)

(continued from front)

I have had preliminary meetings with Consumers Power, the Big Prairie Park Board and the Newaygo County Parks supervisor to start the planning and eventual construction of a backpacking trail all the way around Hardy Pond. By using the existing infrastructure of campgrounds and parks a truly exceptional multi-day backpacking experience will be on our door step. Multi-day backpacking trails in the Lower Peninsula are all but unheard of and I expect to draw people from a large area of the Midwest to enjoy our beautiful landscape and forests. The good people with the Croton/Hardy Business Alliance have generously expressed a willingness to take on a large part of the project as it evolves.

The Park Board and Township Board have partnered to rewrite the Township Recreation Plan that is required by the state to access grant funds from the De-

partment of Natural Resources. By sharing this work we can keep the costs down and still have a quality document. Chuck Wimmer, a Park Board member, and I will be working with Don Holley to have this done, we hope, by September of this year.

The Planning Commission has almost finished the new zoning ordinance for the township and we should have this adopted by mid summer. This has been a lot of work and if you see any of the planning commission members please give them a pat on the back as it is much deserved.

Our assessor, Jackie Thompson has moved her office to the township hall and is keeping regular office hours there. With the assessor, treasurer, and zoning administrator all in the township hall at various times each week we are trying to serve you better every year. As of this writing everyone knows where I live and has my phone number so I'll stay away unless I see a need

DATES TO REMEMBER

Township Board Meetings
2nd Tuesday of the month
7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission
3rd Wednesday of the month
7:00 p.m.

Zoning Board of Appeals
July 10, August 14, October 9

Board of Review
July 15

Summer tax Deadline
September 15

Free Clean-Up Day
September 20

to try again to have Saturday hours.

Call me any time to discuss any of these projects or to find out how you can become a part of these exciting times. So get excited. Nothing was ever built by sitting on the couch except a blocked artery. Thanks for letting me serve you and I'll see you around the township. Dave

Summer Property Taxes

*Pay your taxes by mail OR
in person at the
Big Prairie Township Hall*

Mondays
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Thursdays
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Summer taxes due on September 15

Since the due date for summer taxes falls on a Sunday this year, you will be able to pay your summer taxes on Monday, September 15 without interest. In addition, you will have until September 15 to file a request for summer tax deferment.

Please review your tax bill carefully and report any mistakes to the assessor immediately in order to meet the deadline for July Board of Review. The assessor has begun to

hold office hours at the township hall on Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. During those hours, she can be reached at 231-689-1385.

I will continue to hold my regular office hours on Mondays and Thursdays at the town hall. If those times don't work for you, please feel free to call me so we can set up a time to meet. Jodie