



2020 What a year so far.

This edition of the Township Newsletter is focused on reporting the challenges our community has encountered in recent months, our responses and some of the impacts that they have had on all facets of our operations here. As part of this coverage, I want to share some of the background as it relates to the staff. In the past few months, we have woven the safety measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic into our operations on an ever-changing basis, we have suffered through the worst flood in living memory of Thomas Township and battled with the remnants of a major wind storm. Meanwhile, we have also moved forward with revising some of our police policies to address many of the concerns with law enforcement raised nationally. And likewise, we have implemented several new operating and testing procedures to continue to ensure safe drinking water and to comply with all of the new State and Federal rules resulting from the Flint water disaster and PFAS concerns. Needless to say, I am very proud of all our personnel.

In light of all this, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the extraordinary efforts by all of your Township employees. Our small staff has and continues to accomplish so much. Most communities of 12,000 providing the full range of urban services would have as many as three times the number of employees. This is in large part because we monitor our spending closely, but more so it's because everyone is willing to wear multiple hats and perform a variety of jobs. Presently, the Township employs 28 full time personnel. This includes eight full time Police officers and 1 secretary providing 24/7 coverage, 7 DPW employees, 2 parks, 2 Fire and 8 office staff responsible for all other Township services and support such as billing, accounting, parks, sidewalks, inspections, code enforcement, assessing, elections, planning, zoning and more. The rest of our personnel are seasonal, part time or paid-on-call fire fighters. During these emergencies, every employee has had to assume more responsibilities to help our community recover.

As we've transitioned through the COVID-19 pandemic, office staff and emergency personnel have had to adapt in various ways. We are now in the midst of the primary election with the general election coming up in November, both of which have several changes for safety reasons related to COVID-19. Similarly, the entire office environment and service delivery to residents have undergone significant changes.

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249 N. Miller Road
- Parks & Recreation..781-0151
249 N. Miller Road
- DPW Administration781-6438
251 Miller Court
- Police Department ..781-1300
8215 Shields Drive
- Fire Department781-4141
8215 Shields Drive
- Library781-3770
8207 Shields Drive

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2020 What a year so far continued

Back in May, the east side of our community was devastated by the enormous rainfall in the area and the failure of the dams on the Tittabawassee River upstream from here. Roughly 400 homes were flooded with river levels reaching 500 year flood stages exceeding even the 1986 flood event. It was the worst flooding this community has experienced in living memory. Upon being notified that the dams had failed, all of our staff went to work preparing for the disaster that was sure to happen. No one knew just how severe the flooding would be or how quickly the waters would arrive at that point, since this was not a scenario that had been calculated, and with the heavy rains preceding it, no one could accurately calculate just how much water was behind the dams. Thus, with the help of the GIS Authority, we created a map that had expected flooding at 500 year marks. This map was then distributed to Fire, Police and Parks personnel who literally went out door to door to inform homeowners and business owners of the impending flood and to encourage them to evacuate. That same evening, plans were made for housing displaced homeowners and even for the eventual debris removal that would be a consequence of the event. Normally, we would have received help from support agencies like the Red Cross, but all of them had committed their resources to the Midland area already and the bridge closures prevented them from getting to us until much later.



S. River Road Flooding



Flood damage team

In the midst of the flooding, Township crews were out saving homeowners from their flooded homes who had not heeded the warnings. Additionally, crews were making sure that the sewer system was operating in spite of the exceptional flooding. As soon as the waters started to recede, our staff had to mobilize to conduct damage assessments that had to be submitted to the State in order to qualify for State and Federal assistance. With the Red Cross fully committed to the Midland area, we were left with creating our own assistance program. Our Assistant Parks Director, Tyler Sutherland, was reassigned and given this responsibility. He worked with the United Way and several other organizations to get items distributed and volunteers to homes needing help. On a couple of occasions, some of our team went door to door to distribute Home Depot gift cards and supplies.



Township Staff handing out water & Gift Cards



Holy Spirit flood drop off site

Meanwhile, we were the first community to offer debris drop off sites, throughout the flooded area of our Township to give homeowners a place to get rid of all the damaged goods and materials. A special thanks to Father Pete and his congregation for the use of the Holy Spirit parking lot for this purpose.

Throughout the flood event, several employees were working 16 hour days. Others were sleeping in their offices. The main office staff produced information for flood victims to get the assistance they needed, while answering countless phone calls and emails from residents with questions and needing help. Information was being sent out via Facebook, our website, Twitter and the notification system. They also prepared pamphlets and flyers to provide relevant information. As the saying goes, all hands were on deck.

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2020 What a year so far continued



Fire Department clearing storm debris

Then, just as we were recovering a little from the flood, we had a wind storm hit our community knocking out power to the majority of our community. Our Fire Department had 32 calls in a two hour time period that evening. We had fire fighters, DPW workers and Parks employees cutting trees up that had fallen across roads. Our crews in combination with the Saginaw County Road Commission and Consumers Energy were able to make short work of the trees. Electrical services were restored over the days thereafter by Consumers Energy, but our DPW team kept the sewer system operating and the water running with generators.

So, let me share on behalf of all the Township employees, that we appreciate the opportunity to work for the Thomas Township community. We try our best to meet the wide range of expectations of Township residents and business owners without exceeding our funding limits. We hope that we have been able to assist and support all of our residents through the years, though we particularly hope that we have been of some assistance or support to those of you who have suffered through these recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Russ Taylor,
Township Manager

Love & Support from a neighboring community

Tuesday May 19th 2020; The day the dams broke. A day, that those who live in Thomas Township will never forget. As the water levels continued to rise over the next 24 hours, our community began to see just how much devastation we were going to face. The water levels rose to that of the 500 year flood stage causing damage to roughly 400 homes in Thomas Township alone. When the flood first hit, everyone from the area began stepping up, offering help and volunteering their skills and time to those affected. Over the next couple of weeks, the outpouring of help, support and donations poured in. One group in particular that came together in support for their neighboring community was that of the Frankenmuth Bible Church in Frankenmuth, MI.



The congregation of the Frankenmuth Bible Church (FBC) wanted to do something special for their neighboring community of Thomas Township. The church has some connections to families here in the township and they wanted to help. FBC put together a special collection to help those affected by the floods, little did we know at the time just how much love and

support they had to offer. As donations came in, we began to see just how much our neighbors in Frankenmuth cared. After being contacted by the Pastor over a two week period, we were told that they had a large check waiting for the Thomas Township community. What came next was not expected!

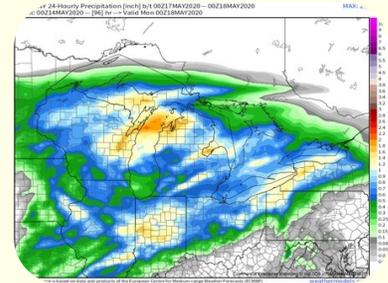
The Frankenmuth Bible Church raised \$25,603 for the flood victims of Thomas Township. In situations like the flood disaster, it's refreshing to see the best of people as exhibited by the Pastor and parishioners of FBC. The staff at the Thomas Township offices wanted to get that money into the hands of our residents as quickly as possible. In order to accomplish that, they purchased Home Depot gift cards and spent 2 days going door to door handing them out to residents with water and information on what's next and how to find more help. There are no words to describe the generosity given from our neighbors in Frankenmuth. All of us in Thomas Township thank you, Frankenmuth Bible Church, for your love, support and donations!

Flooding– May 2020 Timeline

To think, it all began with what should have been a typical spring storm that turned into a historic 500 year flood event. This one will surely go down in history due to a series of unprecedented events leading to a flood that surpassed even the Great Flood of '86.

Sunday, May 17th – Monday, May 19th, 2020

Michigan was supposed to experience a normal spring rain storm like we always see that time of year, however; it turned into a flood inducing downpour when it mixed with a tropical storm system on May 17th. The tropical storm created a mass of moisture that traveled west into Michigan from the East Coast. This allowed for the storm we were predicted to mix with the mass of tropical moisture and create a substantial increase in rainfall. The rain poured down leaving Saginaw with about 4 inches of rain while Midland County and north received anywhere from 7-9 inches. This is where the problems began.



Rainfall expected May 17th

Credit: WNEM

Tuesday, May 19th, 2020

The substantial rainfall produced too much extra water and at 12:22 am, Midland County Central Dispatch issued an alert to Edenville Township that residents needed to evacuate their homes due to an “imminent dam failure” at Edenville Dam. Residents left their homes for emergency shelters in the middle of the night.

At 6:50 am on Tuesday, Midland County Emergency Management determined that both Edenville and Sanford Dams were at this point structurally sound, however, they would not be able to contain the onslaught of rising water through the spill gates. Throughout the day, officials were evacuating residents and businesses, watching the dams, and making plans as fast as they could.



Edenville Dam Break

On Tuesday Evening, the worst that could happen, did. About 5:45 pm Tuesday, May 19, 2020 Thomas Township was notified that the Edenville Dam had given way, sending a rush of water south towards the Sanford Dam and residents all along the Tittabawassee River. The collapse prompted flash flood warnings from the National Weather Service that read, "Life threatening flash flooding of areas downstream from the Edenville Dam along the Tittabawassee River," the warning read. "The nearest downstream town is Sanford Dam...located about 7 miles from the Edenville Dam. Areas downstream from the Edenville Dam along the Tittabawassee River should be prepared for additional flooding."

The failure of the Edenville Dam prompted the Thomas Township Department of Public Works, The Fire Department and everyone in the area had to go into overdrive preparing for what was to come. Evacuating residents, sandbagging, you name it, they were on it. Roads and bridges were being closed, and an eerie tone set into the Township Tuesday night while we all waited to see if Sanford Dam would hold. Evacuation shelters were set up at Swan Valley High School, Hemlock High School and Freeland High School for residents who needed a place to stay and wait out the flooding. Midland County Emergency Management confirmed that the water was flowing over the earthen berm part of the damn, but it held and stood strong to the waters. This still left water continuing on down towards Midland & Saginaw Counties.



Command Post at Thomas Township Public Safety Building.

Credit: Dave Sommers

Flooding– May 2020 Timeline Continued

Wednesday, May 20th, 2020

By about 1 am Wednesday, May 20, 2020 residents had been evacuated, Sanford Dam had not collapsed and things began to wind down, awaiting daybreak. The flood wiped out roads and bridges and flooded roadways making them impassible for residents to return and see what happened to their homes throughout Saginaw and Midland Counties. The Tittabawassee River crested at 35 feet on Wednesday evening, which tops the Great Flood of '86 record of 33 feet.

Thursday, May 23rd, 2020

The bridges and roads are still closed, residents still can not enter their homes and everyone is wondering what's next. Thomas Township is in full survival mode with family, friends, neighbors and organizations donating time, money and resources to affected families.



*Overview of Gratiot Road in Thomas Township, evening of May 20th.
Courtesy of FrankFilms.*



*Wallace Drive
Courtesy: Dave Sommers*

Friday, May 24th to June 2020

On Friday, some residents were finally getting access to their flooded homes to see the extent of damages caused. Some homes faired well with little to no water while others lost everything. The clean up begins. Organizations were volunteering time and resources while Thomas Township stepped in and provided two locations to dump flood damaged items and added a special route for residents who couldn't make it to the dump sites. Thomas Township also went door to door handing out gift cards and water to those affected. Though it's been months since the flood, homeowners to this day are still battling the effects and repairing their homes.

Thomas Township Library

(The Library is an independent library operated under the direction of an elected board.)

It was a difficult task having to close the building to the public at the onset of the pandemic. The health and well-being of both the public and the staff continues to be a primary concern. Thank you to all the patrons that have expressed their understanding and support during this time as we continue to move forward.

The Thomas Township Library is offering curbside service by appointment. Requests for materials can be made over the phone Monday-Thursday from 10am to 8pm and Friday-Saturday from 10am to 5pm. To make online requests 24/7 go to www.thomastownshiplibrary.org. You may create an account by using your last name, library card number (including the letter "P") and composing a password. The outside book drop is open 24/7 for the deposit of materials being returned which will be quarantined for 72 hours before they are checked in.

To meet the evolving needs of patrons, new online services will be coming soon. Recorded Books rbdigital audio book collection will be added to provide a greater selection of downloadable audio books for adults. Top comics from major brands including Disney and Marvel will be available for downloading and viewing on your electronic device. For children K-6 the TumbleBook Library takes existing picture books, adding animation, sound, music and narration to produce an electronic picture book. You can read it, or have it read to you.

Keep up-to-date on library happenings by visiting our website www.thomastownshiplibrary.org or by phoning the Library at 989-781-3770 during regular business hours.

Tari Dusek,
Director, Thomas Township Library

2020– Fire Department Has Your Back

As this year is in full swing, we all have quickly learned the year of 2020 certainly has not been what we expected. From being excited about the “vision” themed year to one that will certainly go down in history, just not in the way we had hoped. We have all learned a lot from this and have made significant changes in our lives. Each of us can tell a story of how it has impacted us. While as negative as it has been, it is nice to hear a few of the positive stories. When I hear comments such as “this has brought our family back closer than before” I’m thankful for the silver lining. It is too bad this is what it took to bring families closer or to realize we all needed to slow down more. None the less we continue to press on.

I’d like to share the impact this year has had on your local first responders and how amazing they really are. As COVID-19 began, it forced us to re think how we operate as a Fire Department. We had to make some significant changes without negatively impacting on the service we provide you, our customers (residents). We modified how many responders would respond to calls and how many would interact with the patient or homeowner. We reduced the amount of times our members interacted with each other to include on-line training and limited exposures to people. We had to put a stop to the smoke detector installation program and limit fire inspections to high risk occupancies and significant life safety issues. As with many others, our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) grew to include N-95 masks on all calls to gowns and an increased amount of sanitizing once the call was over. A challenge we were confronted with was; our at-risk responders themselves. Some met the criteria established by the CDC which prevented some of them from interacting as much as possible. We also had some who cared for family members who were very high risk which put them and their families in jeopardy. We worked together to limit those concerns. We continue yet today with the implications of COVID-19 and adjust our operations to be cautious but still serve our community to the best of our ability.



Fire Department responding to flooding. Courtesy: Dave Sommers

As we dealt with COVID-19 we had another emergency event in our community, the 2020 Flood. We had been watching the river flow and measuring the depth and planning ahead. We were notified of the dam break and then we knew we would be receiving much more water; thus, we began the evacuation process. We established an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and assigned various tasks. One of the biggest tasks was communicating, to potentially effected residents, the need to evacuate. We utilized the Saginaw County Notification System which is funded by Hemlock Semi-Conductor to communicate these emergency messages to our residents who had signed up for this type of notification. Since we have never had a dam failure north

of us, we were working with an unknown situation. We had to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. At one point we were told to prepare for something greater than what we experienced in 1986. For many of us we knew it was going to be a long night and the following day would reveal much devastation. Included in this evacuation was St. Francis Home. We, along with their staff and MMR moved all of the patients to the Swan Valley Middle School which served as the shelter site for them. The Swan Valley High School was then opened up as a shelter site for all other residents and evacuees. (Thank you, Swan Valley Schools, for your support!).



*Volunteers at the Swan Valley H.S. Shelter
Courtesy: Dave Sommers*

2020– Fire Department Has Your Back Continued

To help accomplish the evacuation mission and then the subsequent rescuing of trapped residents, we called upon our neighboring Fire Departments to help us. We needed many of them and their boats to complete this task safely. We also utilized all departments within Thomas Township (Board, Manager, Finance, Clerk, Community Development, Parks, Water, and certainly our Police Department) to effectively manage this flooding event. During times of tragedy we often can see the best in people. While many were distraught, we had many more chipping in to help those in need. It is always refreshing to see people step up to help others when they don't even know who they are.

This was a multi-day event. As you know our Fire Department is made up of paid on call / volunteer responders. Some have asked me; “how does that happen when the emergency lasts so long?” I'll tell you, it is accomplished by people who care, people who serve a community with passion and do it for the sake of helping others. It is done by people who put others before themselves. It is done by a group of 30 members of this Fire Department, who in several cases used their VACATION days at their full time jobs to help our residents and community get through this disaster. How many people do you know that would do that? Think about that for a minute. We all know the value of vacation time taken with the family. These first responders took THREE days away from their families to help ensure the safety of the residents of Thomas Township! What an amazing group of men and women we have.

A couple of weeks later another storm came to our community. This one arrived in the afternoon and although not a tornado it came as “straight line winds” which brought a path of destruction to a community already healing from the flood. Our first responders were summoned to the fire stations to begin another long stretch of helping people. We had trees literally invade homes and many others bring power lines down. That created a very hazardous environment for the public and our responders. We once again called upon the inner Thomas Township departments for help. In addition, James Township Fire Department was called to assist us and did so in a quick and efficient manner. We achieved a new record according to our two local department historians, Gary Fuller and Lyle Cousins. This was the highest volume of calls we responded to in a six-hour period, which was 50 calls. The destructive path jumped around our Township and is visible yet today as you see trees uprooted.



Firefighters cleaning up storm debris on N Thomas Road. Courtesy: Dave Sommers

As we are now into August of 2020, we pray for calmer days ahead. Please know that your first responders are here no matter if it's a pandemic, flood or high winds. We are here to serve this community no matter what the emergency and count it as a privilege to do so. As your Fire Chief, I am very proud of the men and women who make up the Thomas Township Fire Department, all of Thomas Township Departments and you, the citizens, of this fine community.

Thank you and stay safe my friends.

Mike Cousins
Fire Chief

“Hard times don't create heroes. It is during hard times the “hero” within us is revealed.”

-Bob Riley

Staying Safe at the Office: Masks Required

Covid-19 has made an impact anywhere you look and Thomas Township is no exception while we re-open and navigate through these new safety protocols that have been put into motion. Safety is important for Thomas Township, and we've taken several steps to ensure the safety of residents and staff alike.

Walk-in traffic hours have changed, they are now 9:00 am to 4:00 pm to allow the staff time to clean and sanitize. Masks are required of both residents and staff while in the building. Employees are to wear a mask when they are in any area that is not their direct work station. Plastic guards have been installed and are intended to prevent the spread of germs, especially from sneezing or coughing. We are also practicing safe social distancing, no more than four people shall be in the office (outside of staff) at any time and we have social distancing spots on the floor to help keep everyone six feet apart. We still ask residents to continue to use the drop box to drop off payments or other paperwork to help limit in person contact.

Stay safe and stay healthy,
Thomas Township

Covid-19 and our Parks & Recreation Department

I am sure someday books will be written and stories will be told about the year 2020. We will all share our stories on how we survived it, lived through it and what we learned from it. As the Director of Parks and Recreation, my job is to provide locations and programs for all of you to enjoy, play sports and just find peaceful settings to relax. So how do we do that during a Global Pandemic? How do we provide recreation and keep people safe? What can we do and what can't we do? That has been my world since this all began.

With no landscapers allowed to work our first challenge was keeping the parks mowed and looking nice as the parks remained open for people to use and grass doesn't know about pandemics. So my Assistant Director and I started mowing grass everyday keeping our parks and bike paths looking as nice as we could. We put signage in the parks stating to maintain social distancing and not to gather in large groups, we blocked off play equipment, closed our Day Camps and pool and waited to see what the Governor would decide next to know how we would continue to adapt and adjust moving forward.

As I spoke to other Directors in other communities everyone seemed to be dealing with this Pandemic differently, what should we do? That was a million dollar question. We did not give up on sports programs completely and have been able to run a few that have very low risk of contact and keeping social distancing. We opened our play areas and clean them daily so kids can enjoy them. Men's slow-pitch softball and our Sand Volleyball leagues have been operating and we have not had any issues. The players have all been wonderful and understanding of what they need to do to be able to play. We have started registration for Fall Soccer and truly hope we will be able to start that program in September. We will likely be following what the MHSAA uses for guidelines for high school fall sports if they run.

We have a maintenance crew out working in the parks daily and our pavilions have been rented every weekend, it's great seeing people using the parks. We have completed the stone pillars, fascia and landscaping at the Roberts Park pavilion which has been a very large task. The new digital sign is also in at Roberts Park, the soccer fields are looking really good for the season to start. At Roethke Park we added a new addition to the garage so we can store the additional train cars, track and some Haunted Train supplies. We put a new roof on pavilion 3 and repaired all the fascia on all three pavilions. The maintenance crew has been busy doing tasks we would normally not be able to do and I hope the results show when you visit the parks.

John Corriveau,
Director, Parks & Recreation

Keeping the water and sewer running in 2020

The Department of Public Works saw many challenges during the Spring of 2020, just like most of you. With the pandemic, we had to devise new procedures to protect the public and our staff from the COVID-19 virus. And that caused us to rapidly think out of the box and quickly rewrite a new normal operations scheme to keep essential services, like water and sewer operating.

This was an unprecedented event for us all. Our main job is to make sure that when you turn a faucet on, you get drinking water, and when you flush your toilets, the sewage goes “away”. But how do you effectively do that while reducing the risk to our community and staff? Since water and sewer are so crucial to our everyday well-being, we actually created work teams so that if one of us became exposed or sick, it only affected a small portion of our staff. That way, the remaining staff can keep the water and sewer systems running. Eventually, at the height of the pandemic, we actually placed some of our staff in furlough status and kept a few of us actively working continuously. Our thoughts were if someone became ill, we would be able to backfill the operations position with someone who is healthy. For us that remained working, we attempted to keep apart as much as possible and limit the exposure to others. We used personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times. And we monitored for symptoms daily. We operated this way for the better part of two months. Fortunately, no one became exposed nor sick, and our full staff was called back up in mid-May. We are continuing to limit exposures, using PPE and monitoring for symptoms, and we realize that we must continue to work hard to keep water and sewer operating under these conditions for a while yet.

On top of all of the pandemic issues, we faced severe flooding in late May when the upstream dams in the Midland area failed after nearly 7 inches of rain. The flooding throughout the general area was catastrophic and impacted large areas of our community. Some of the township infrastructure lie within the areas that were flooded, and we had just enough time to protect those structures by sandbagging, pre-placing emergency power sources onsite and adding pumps and staff at critical water and sewer stations. Even though those areas flooded severely, all of these precautions protected every piece of infrastructure we have and we were able to escape major damages.



Pump station



Disposal Site: N River Road

Though there were some issues on account of flooding conditions, the DPW staff worked around the clock to quickly respond and keep the water and sewer system operating in conditions they are not designed for. Once the flooding receded, DPW staff began the tough task of assisting in disaster damage assessments to those areas that were damaged and later set up disposal sites and help manage the collection of flood debris.

The events of the past late winter to early summer have been unprecedented. I am extremely proud of the efforts of my staff to quickly adapt to constantly changing conditions. You are well served by their commitment to our community, their dedication to our residents and each other, and their actions that typically go unseen.

Rick Hopper,
Director, Department of Public Works

Police Chief: A Reflection on 2020

WOW! What can I say? We've experienced COVID-19, the flood of 2020 and a wind storm so far in 2020. As I reflect on what has happened so far, I think the flooding had the biggest effect on me as a person and as an officer. I wasn't here for the "Great Flood of '86" but I was here for the flood of 2017, which was in my memory, minor compared to the flooding we just went through as a community.



Gratiot Road Bridge closed off due to flooding

I remember monitoring this year's situation in the office and hearing that the possibility of our community being flooded actually became a reality. We deployed personnel to evacuate the houses that were going to be hit hardest with the flood. We were evacuating residents not only in the 100 year flood plain, but into the 500 year flood plain! With the evacuation came the question of "where are all of these displaced residents going to go?" Arrangements had to be made for temporary shelters along with cots, blankets, food, etc. to supply them. Officers had to be positioned to block off the bridges as they were closed to traffic. These were just the

tip of the iceberg of the things that we, as first responders, had to take care of.

It was a short lived relief when the river peaked and we learned it wasn't going to be as bad as it was predicted to be. However, that relief soon turned into heartache while I was driving through the neighborhoods and seeing all of the damage left in the wake of the flood. Piles and piles of residents' belongings put to the side of the road to be discarded. Life long memories, heirlooms, keepsakes, etc. damaged by the water now unable to be saved. Items that may have no monetary value but have sentimental value that is unreplacable. I've heard stories from residents about losing everything; stories from residents having problems getting the needed assistance from their insurance company.



Day Park overflowing from flood items



*Red Cross Disaster Cleaning Kits to be distributed to homes.
Courtesy: Dave Sommers*

What I found out though, when it came down to it, residents helped each other out, the community came together in a unity only a tragedy could bring. Businesses also came through to donate items and/or their employees to help move damaged items from the houses. Volunteer groups like Pay It Forward held several giveaway days and also supplied manpower to take away items from the affected homes. This restored my faith in humanity. This is why I love living in Thomas Township and why I love working for the residents of Thomas Township. Let's pray that we get back to what we believe is "normal."

Al Fong,
Police Chief

"The greatness of Community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of it's members."

-Coretta Scott King

COVID-19 and the Effect on the Election Process

The election process from candidate filings to absentee ballots has not been immune to the effects of COVID-19. Under normal circumstances those interested in running for office would circulate a petition for signatures as part of their filing process. This year that task has been nearly impossible with Stay At Home Orders, social distancing guidelines and the desire to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Candidates have chosen to pay a filing fee in place of garnering signatures to meet candidacy requirements. Through all of this candidates have been understanding of the situation.

Candidates were not the only part of the election process affected. The number of absent voter ballot applications has skyrocketed. The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 coupled with the State mailing absent voter ballot applications to all registered voters in the State of Michigan and the occupancy restrictions for indoor spaces has caused an influx of applications. In the Primary Election in August of 2018 just over 1,500 ballots were mailed to requestors. To date almost 2,500 ballots have been mailed for the August 4, 2020 Primary Election.

Absentee ballots are received in the system individually and stored in a locked room until the day of the election. Staff has been working tirelessly to process the applications to issue the ballots and then receive them in the system. Absentee ballots cannot begin to be opened or tabulated until the day of the election. This is done by the Absent Voter (AV) Counting Board starting at the opening of the polls at 7:00 a.m. Strict guidelines are utilized to maintain the secrecy of the ballot and ensure that all ballots are processed and votes tabulated as the voter intended. This arduous task is performed by dedicated election workers who must stay in the AV Counting Board room until all ballots are tabulated.

COVID-19 has also affected the polling places. Parameters will be in place to protect both the voters and the workers. Sneeze shields will be installed on the fronts of the tables to form a barrier between the voter and the election worker. Hand sanitizer will be available at the various sites for residents to use during the voting process. Sanitizing wipes will be used to wipe down surfaces. Masks must be worn while inside the voting facility. All election workers will be wearing masks and offered face shields or gloves to further protect themselves. The six foot social distancing rule will be utilized as mandated by the Governor's Executive Order.

We are asking for your patience and understanding while at the polls. The election workers and I are doing everything we can to provide the safest environment possible to exercise your right to vote. The procedures in place will only be successful if they are adhered to by all of those present. Election workers are putting their COVID-19 inhibitions aside to work toward making this a successful election experience. Please be respectful and conscientious while you are at the polls. We are all subject to the effects of COVID-19 in one way or another. The ultimate goal is to make every vote count in the safest way possible.

Darci Seamon,
Deputy Clerk

Fire Department- Around the Clock Protection

We at Thomas Township would like to take the time to thank the Thomas Township Fire Fighters, staff, and medical responders for their tireless effort and work during the flooding that occurred in May. These individuals are on call volunteers who respond to the call for help, no questions asked, no hesitation.

They worked non-stop to ensure everyone was safe during the flooding. Be it knocking on doors for evacuations, rescuing those stranded in the flood waters, covering accidents and more. They didn't stop until everyone was safe from harms way. If you know or see any of our volunteers on staff, please take the time to thank them for all they do for our Township and Residents.



Thomas Township Fire
Department

Thomas Township

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PERMIT NO. 273



2020 Brush Drop Off Dates

Brush may be taken by the homeowner to the Township brush drop off site located at the northwest corner of N. Gleaner & Frost Roads (access drive from N. Gleaner). No stumps, leaves, grass or commercial brush of any kind will be accepted. The site will be open from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm on the following dates:

Drop Off Dates:

August 1, 15 & 29

September 12 & 26

October 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31

Yard Waste Pick-up continues through November