



Michigan's New Hands Free Driving Law

Even though Michigan's distracted driving law has been in place for more than a few months, I still receive questions from our Thomas Township residents regarding the terms of the law. It is amazing how often I still see people using their phones while driving. Recently, I was stopped at a traffic light in my patrol vehicle and the person next to me was on their phone, seemingly oblivious to the fact that what they were doing was in direct violation of the law. Below I have provided some of the details of this new law in hopes that it will clear up some questions or misconceptions of what the expectations are for those driving on our Michigan roads.



Michigan's distracted driving law (Public Act 41 of 2023) went into effect on June 30, 2023. It was an extension of the previous law which had banned the use of cell phones for sending and receiving texts. The new law, dubbed the "hands-free law" expanded the language banning the use of cell phones completely while driving, unless using the hands-free option. Signed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer on June 7, 2023, the distracted driving law made Michigan the 26th state to ban drivers from using any handheld device while behind the wheel (48 states have some level of limitation on texting and driving in force). Drivers are prohibited "from holding or using a mobile electronic device while operating a motor vehicle, commercial motor vehicle, or a school bus." The term holding or using means one cannot hold or support a phone or device with any part of their hand, arm, or shoulder. Using a device includes, but is not limited to, the following actions (unless it is through a hands-free option):

- * Using the device for a telephone or video call.
- * Sending or receiving texts or email messages.
- * Watching, reading, or sending video.
- * Accessing, reading, or posting to social media.
- * Browsing or using the internet.
- * Entering information into a GPS or navigation system.

Continue on page 2

Thomas Township Board of Trustees

Bob WeiseSupervisor
 Michael Thayer.....Clerk
 Steven Witt.....Treasurer
 Katie McDonald.....Trustee
 David Sommers.....Trustee
 Craig Monahan.....Trustee
 Tara DeLine.....Trustee
 Russell Taylor.....Manager

Departments

Municipal Office781-0150
 249 N. Miller Road
 Parks & Recreation ..781-0151
 249 N. Miller Road
 DPW Administration 781-6438
 251 Miller Court
 Police Department...781-1300
 8215 Shields Drive
 Fire Department.....781-4141
 8215 Shields Drive
 Library.....781-3770
 8207 Shields Drive

Inside this Issue

Sidewalk Safety 3
 Chimney Maintenance.... 4
 DPW News 5
 Haunted Train 7
 Archery Program 8
 Basketball Clinics 9

Michigan's New Hands Free Driving Law (Cont.)

There are a few exceptions to the new law for emergency responders (such as police, firefighters, or ambulance workers) if the use pertains to work. There is also an exception for utility workers. For others, not in these lines of work, the exceptions are limited to making an emergency call and reporting a crime in progress. These are the only times cell phone use is permitted while behind the wheel of a vehicle that is in use.

Police can use the new distracted driver law as a primary or sole reason for issuing a citation, meaning they do not need another reason to stop a vehicle other than seeing the driver using their cell phone or mobile device. The penalties for getting caught increase with each offense. The first offense is a \$100 civil fine and/or 16 hours of community service. For each subsequent offense, the fine increases to a \$250 fine and/or 24 hours of community service. Receive three violations within three years and the driver will be required to take a basic driving course or face a loss of their license. In addition, fines will be doubled if the offense occurs during a vehicle accident. Individuals need to realize the law includes drivers who are waiting at a traffic light. Also prohibited is the use of cell phones that are mounted to the dashboard. Anything beyond a "single touch" is prohibited when it comes to using a cell phone or mobile device by the driver of a vehicle.

Here are a few ideas to help you stay safe and avoid getting stopped by the police when on Michigan roads:

- * Use voice-activated commands to send and receive texts.
- * Enter GPS or navigation system information before the start of your trip.
- * Have an occupant in your vehicle send or read texts on your behalf.
- * Pull over if you must send or read a text.
- * Wait until your destination to review your phone activity.
- * Require that your teenage driver keep their cell phone in the back seat so they are not tempted to check their phone while behind the wheel.

Distracted driving is the leading cause of auto accidents in Michigan. In 2023, there were over 362,000 people injured nationwide in motor vehicle crashes that involved a distracted driver. The new law was created in the hope of curbing these statistics. By following the new law and the limitations regarding cell phone use, you will not be one of the more than 3,000 people who lose their life each year in a car accident because someone would not put their phone away to drive safely to their destination.



Go Hands-free. Just Drive.

Eric Cowles
Police Chief

Winter Tax Bills

Winter property tax statements are scheduled to be mailed out on or around December 1st, 2023. If the property tax statement hasn't been received by December 6th, 2023 please contact the Deputy Treasurer at (989) 781-0150 or you may request a copy through email at treasurer@thomastwp.org

A drop box is available near the entrance of the Thomas Township Municipal Office building for making payments after hours. The drop box is checked at 8:00 am each morning the Township holds business hours and all payments are considered received on that day. All payments must be received or postmarked no later than December 31st, 2023 to be considered paid in 2023.

Reminder: When paying in person, please bring the entire tax bill with you (both top and bottom portions) and we will stamp the top portion paid for you as your receipt.



Winter Sidewalk Safety Reminder

Although none of us want to admit it, winter will be upon us soon. Even during the frigid winter months, Thomas Township has a large number of walkers, runners, bikers, and four-legged friends who use the sidewalks daily. As Michigan residents, we all know that snow and ice can be extremely hazardous. With this in mind, it is important to address the responsibility of each property or business owner to keep the sidewalk in front of their property clear. The Thomas Township Ordinance requires that within 48 hours of each snowfall, the owner of a property with a sidewalk crossing their frontage must clear the sidewalk of snow and ice. During times when there are multiple days of snow at a time, it is very important to clear the sidewalk as soon as possible. The longer the snow is left to accumulate, the more it gets packed down by those using the sidewalk, and the more dangerous it can become, and the harder it is to clear. Thomas Township has over 10 miles of sidewalks that connect subdivisions, businesses, parks, libraries, schools, and more.



Keeping these walkways clear and maintained is a monumental task, so next time you're out making use of the sidewalks and see someone shoveling, make sure you thank them for their efforts. If you have any questions about the snow removal ordinance, call the Thomas Township Code Enforcement Officer at 989-781-0150.

Buying A New Home? Understand how the taxable value uncaps first.

Did you know your property taxes can (and most likely will) increase the year following the purchase of your new home? The reason for this increase is due to Michigan property tax law. A property's taxable value will increase from one year to the next by the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less until ownership of the property is transferred or a sale takes place. Once ownership is transferred due to a sale, the property's taxable value is uncapped and will increase to the same level as the assessed value the year following the sale. In most cases, home buyers will see a substantial increase in property taxes depending on the gap between the taxable value and the assessed value of the property.

You may ask why property taxes are uncapped following a transfer of ownership or sale. The answer goes back to 1994 when Michigan voters passed Proposal A. The formula under Proposal A ensures a property's taxable value does not grow as fast as the property's assessed value, which should be at or near 50% of market value. However, once the property is sold, the taxable value is uncapped and increases to the assessed value for the year following the sale. Unaware new home buyers can be in for a real shock if they do not understand this very significant law. Your real estate agent should be able to explain this to you, if they cannot contact the Thomas Township Assessor to explain what uncapping the property's taxable value will do after it is sold. The Assessor can be reached by phone at (989) 781-0150 or by email at assessor@thomastwp.org.



Community Development Department

Dog Licenses

Dog licenses are available at the Township Office from December 1st, 2023 through March 1st, 2024.

At any time outside of these dates, you will need to obtain the dog license from the County Courthouse or your local veterinarian's office.

P.A. 195 of 1969, Sec. 6 requires the owner to show proof of valid rabies vaccination with the expiration date to obtain a dog license. Dog licenses will not be issued without the required rabies vaccination information.



Chimney Maintenance

Having a fireplace can add value and an appeal to your home, add ambiance, and be a great method of alternative heating. With having a fireplace, comes the need to maintain it. Depending on how you use or maintain your fireplace/chimney, you may have an above-average build-up of creosote. It is extremely important to properly maintain a chimney and to properly dispose of the ashes. The chimney itself needs to be cleaned out regularly, depending on your usage. There are a couple of different methods of accomplishing this. One method is to contact a chimney sweep so they can clean and inspect your chimney thoroughly. You can find one simply by putting the words “chimney cleaning”, in your internet search bar. Properly disposing of your ashes can be another significant hazard. As hard as it may seem to believe, the ashes can hold heat for several days. It is absolutely dangerous to remove the ashes and place them in a combustible container (plastic trash can or trash bag). It is best to place the ashes in a metal container and keep them outside away from any structure. This may prevent the ashes from starting a fire in your garage, house, or any outbuilding.



Call the fire department immediately if you have or think you have a chimney fire. The Fire Department can respond and check it with a thermal imaging camera which detects heat. We use it to detect areas to ensure you don't have any “hidden” fires. The attic space is one of those forgotten areas where a fire can begin due to a small hole in the chimney which can allow creosote to “flow” out of. Please feel free to contact the Fire Department (989) 781-4141 if you have any questions regarding this issue.

Michael Cousins
Fire Chief

Thomas Township Veteran's Display

As Veteran's Day comes around this year, Thomas Township will be remembering our heroes with a Veteran's Display located at Owen Cemetery on River Road. This display was constructed by residents of Thomas Township, for the benefit of honoring those that have served in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The display was designed to be a living tribute, not strictly a memorial, where residents can honor their veteran with an engraved paver which is installed in the reflection area of the monument. You can honor your Veteran with an engraved brick by simply stopping into the Municipal Office Building located at 249 North Miller Road and filling out an order form. The cost for each brick is \$35.00.



An update from the Department of Public Works



As we move into fall, your Public Works will be busy flushing and winterizing fire hydrants located throughout the water system. This is a normal maintenance function that is extremely important to ensure the fire hydrant in your area works properly if needed in an emergency. As those flushing activities begin, you may see cloudy water from your home's water taps. This is a normal

occurrence and is typical of flushing activities. If your water appears discolored or cloudy, simply run your water taps for a short period to clear your home's water piping. This flushing activity also means there will be many areas with standing water or puddles, specifically within the road right-of-way and along curbs. In some cases, fire hoses or other piping is used to diffuse or direct water away from potentially pooling in areas and yards.

Additionally, you may or may not know your Public Works Department handles the installation of all Christmas-related decorations that adorn the campus and streetlights on M-46. Prep work has begun for Christmas lighting, and we intend to have everything lit up by the third week in November.

PUBLIC WORKS CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Currently, work continues on Geddes Rd. between Gleaner and Kennelly with contractors installing a new sanitary sewer pipeline. Two new pumping stations are being built at the corners of Geddes/Gleaner and Madeline/Sue roads. A new pipeline has already been installed through Rambling Acres and we are just waiting for the asphalt contractor to finish the new road. We are still forecasting that all pipeline work should be completed by the middle of October with road and yard restorations beginning immediately after.

We also have been hard at work re-locating all of the controls out of the flood plain for the pump station near River and State. By adding an on-site generator, installing immersible pumps, and moving all of the controls to State Street, we have essentially floodproofed this pump station. This work is nearing completion with only the asphalt work remaining. Please contact my office (989-781-6438) if you have any questions or concerns regarding these projects.



Wet well excavation - Madeline/Sue

Trevor Schultz – Assistant Director of Public Works

Trick or Treat Hours and Safety Tips

Trick or Treating in Thomas Township will be from **5:30 pm-7:30 pm on Halloween night** for all those ghouls, ghosts, princesses, superheroes, and more.



Halloween Safety Tips

- ☆Trick or Treat in groups, not alone.
- ☆Wear bright colored or reflective costumes or carry a flashlight.
- ☆Avoid costumes that impair your vision.
- ☆Avoid costumes that may cause a tripping hazard.
- ☆Cross the street at crosswalks.
- ☆Do not run in-between parked cars.
- ☆If your child is trick or treating without a parent, make sure that you know what areas they are going to and what time they will be back.
- ☆Don't talk to strangers.

An Evening in the Park Annual Fundraiser

The 2023 Evening in the Park Annual Fundraiser was held at Roberts Park on September 18th. It was a marvelous evening with local food catered by Swan Valley Banquet Center and music by the Jim and Tim Acoustic Show. This event is our biggest fundraising event of the year, and we truly can't thank our community and those who come every year to help support our parks and our recreation programs enough! THANK YOU!



HSC Donation to
Parks & Recreation

We would like to extend a special thank you to Hemlock Semiconductor, who has donated \$10,000 each and every year. Without support from businesses like HSC, we wouldn't be able to make the parks and programs what they are today!

The Parks & Rec Department depends on the work of so many people in our community who volunteer to coach, work the events, help raise money, or give back to their community in other ways. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has donated to the Parks and Recreation Department throughout the year and specifically thank everyone who donated towards the Evening in the Park Fundraiser:

Allan Vroman

Apple Mountain

Lisa Call

Bierlein Company

Bob & Mary Jo Wiese

Carla & Michael Zietz

Craig & Nicole Blower

Dana & Fred Raymond

Dave & Edith Sommers

Dean Rusch

Doug & Pam Bird

Ed & Nancy Brosowski

Eric & Janice Cowles

Hemlock Semiconductor

Jack & Elizabeth Visuri

John & Jody Corriveau

Kiwanis Club Saginaw

Russ & Sue Taylor

Mike & Lynda Thayer

Jim Theisen

Shields Lions Club

Steve & Debbie Witt

Tara & David Deline

Terry & Donna Ross

Terry & Margaret Rock

Thomas TWP Firefighters

Craig Monahan

Kluck Nursery

Parks & Recreation Commission Members

Scott Branch, Chair

Craig Amar, Secretary

Angela Alworden

Craig Blower

Dean Rusch

DJ Sova

Ann Hoffman

Parks & Recreation Staff Members

John Corriveau,
Director

Tyler Sutherlund,
Asst. Director

Susan Prevost,
Secretary

The Parks & Recreation Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm and can be reached at (989) 781-0151 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. If the office is closed for any reason, please stop into the main office for further assistance.

Thomas Township Farmers Market

The Thomas Township Farmers Market began on August 1st, 2022. The market is ran and managed by Schomaker Farms and the Thomas Township Farmers Market Association. The Market operates every Monday, July 10th through October 9th from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Each week has seen a different variety of vendors ranging from produce, bake goods, home grown goods, flowers, and crafts. Live music and food trucks are also present at the market each night. The market is located at the large pavilion at Roberts Community Park and parking for the market is designated in the grass field at the front of the park. The market averages 25 vendors per week and sees up to 1000 guests each week. The market hopes to continue to grow and keep bringing local farmers, growers, and makers to our community to enjoy. The last market of the year will be on October 9th and it will be a special market with a car show along with a Halloween themed trunk or treat event.



Volunteers Needed!

With running any event, we are in need of volunteers to help make the haunted train event a scary fun time for all who may want to attend. If you know anyone in need of volunteer hours or who may be interested in volunteering at the haunted train this year, please call the Parks and Recreation Office at (989) 781-0151.

Keep up to date by accessing the website.

To keep up to date with Thomas Township log into our website at www.thomastwp.org. View upcoming events and programs, Township information, Parks & Recreation programs, job postings, and more.



Haunted Train

For almost 50 years, the Haunted Train at Roethke Park has been scaring riders every October. The train is a landmark for generations of families who have rode the train as kids, parents, and grandparents. With the addition of a second train purchased 5 years ago and put on the tracks last year, riders wait times were reduced. This year we are adding an additional car to the end of the second train to send even more scare enthusiasts around the track. We have redone the train loading area to allow for easier loading and unloading of the two trains as well. Each night there will be 3-4

food vendors stationed in the parking lot as well, for your enjoyment. We look forward to seeing you all there for some scary fun times. Cost is \$10 per person and children under 5 yrs. of age is free.



2023 Dates: **October 13th-14th & October 20th-21st**

Winter Wonderland

The 2022 Thomas Township Winter Wonderland was a spectacular site to see. Local businesses, schools, and volunteers built sites in Roberts Park along the road so we could have a Christmas Light drive. Hay rides were given through the park for all to enjoy. Again this year, we are asking for the community to help decorate Roberts Park for our Winter Wonderland Event. Along with the lights this year, there will be food vendors, hay rides, a craft tent, bonfires n' smores, along with Santa and Buddy the Elf. There will be a 50/50 raffle drawing and tickets are on sale now until the drawing on December 9th. Contact the parks office at (989) 781-0151 or find a Winter Wonderland elf to purchase your tickets.



2023 Dates: **December 7th, 8th, and 9th**

Roenicke Light Show

The popular Roenicke Christmas Light Show will be setting up their display at Roberts Park again in 2023. Please park in the Soccer Complex parking lot to enjoy the show accompanied with music. The event will feature 15,000+ lights on the display!

The Roenicke show ONLY, will be free to anyone who wishes to see it any day from December 10th through 31st. Donations are welcome and will be used to support the local community.



Pavilion Rentals

Starting January 2nd, 2024 at 8:30 am Thomas Township **Residents Only** can begin renting pavilions for the 2024 year. Pavilion rentals will open up to **Non-Residents** beginning in February. Get your reservation in as early as possible because the pavilions rent out fast!



Thomas Township Parks and Recreation has developed a truly unique program philosophy where we maintain the highest standards of coaching and sportsmanship, while kids can play in a distinctive noncompetitive environment. We strive to give you the best programs and parks possible.

Archery Program

The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation program will continue to offer archery classes this winter. Thomas Township has three USA Archery and National Field Archery certified instructors on staff.

Registration is taking place now and will continue through December 1st, for both the Beginning Archery and the Explorer Archery (formerly known as Advanced Archery) classes. There is a class for everyone's personal skill level. Beginning Archery is for everyone from age seven through adult! Classes for beginners work on safety, form, equipment, and the fundamentals to become a good archer. Explorer Archery is for archers who have passed our beginner class and can shoot 20 yards with accuracy. Students in the Explorer group will still be honing their skills through games designed to offer a fun yet challenging experience in archery. Classes for Explorer Archers are based on using their equipment, if they have it or are using advanced set up bows. We have both fully set up

compound bows and longbows available for your use. Classes will be held weekly beginning January 11th at the Saginaw Field & Stream Club, located at 1296 N. Gleaner Road. Classes will continue for six weeks.

Classes available for this winter season are as follows:

Beginner: 4:30 pm - 5:15 pm
5:15 pm - 6:00 pm
6:00 pm - 6:45 pm
Explorer: 6:45 pm - 7:30 pm

Registration Fees:

Resident: \$55 Non-Resident: \$60



Fall and Winter Yoga

Mondays and Thursdays inside the Train Depot at Roethke Park, “Yoga By Kathryn” will be offering 60 minute classes for all levels.



Beginner and prenatal friendly. For more information or to register for a class, you can go to www.yogabykathryn.com or email info@yogabykathryn.com. You can also find out more information by calling (404) 539-2147.



ONLINE REGISTRATION is available for Parks and Recreation Programming. You can access the online registration at thomastwp.org. When using the online registration system to register for Parks and Recreation Programing, you **MUST** pay for the program you are registering for at the time you fill out the registration form or you will not be considered enrolled in that program. Registration is a two step process. Once you hit **REGISTER NOW**, you will register, agree to the terms and hit **SEND**. You will then be redirected to the payment options on the next screen. From there you should receive a confirmation email of payment. If you do not receive a confirmation, then your payment was unable to be processed and registration will not be completed.

Not all programs are available for online registration. If you have any questions feel free to call the Parks and Recreation office at (989) 781-0151 or stop into the Parks and Rec office at 249 North Miller Road.

Boys & Girls Basketball Clinic

This six week program is held at Swan Valley High School and is for kids ages 4-8. Our recreational staff, which consists of high school athletes, will run the kids through skill drills that will help them take the next step in basketball. We also like to encourage the participants in the basketball clinic to attend the local high school games and cheer their instructors on as they play. The deadline to register is November 10th with the clinic beginning on January 6th.

Registration Fees:

Resident: \$50 Non-Resident: \$55



Basketball Clinic Coach with team

Boys & Girls Basketball

Boys Basketball



Boys Basketball

Boy's basketball leagues are forming for the 2nd-4th grades and 4th-7th grades. Children in 4th grade can either play up or down. The registration deadline is November 10th. There will be a draft held for the 4th-7th grade division at Swan Valley High School. All kids will be assigned a coach who will set up practices during the week.

Games are held on Saturdays at Swan Valley High School. Volunteer coaches are needed for this program! To volunteer call (989) 781-0151 to coach a team.

Girls Basketball

Our girls basketball leagues are offered for 2nd-4th grades and 4th-7th grades. Children in 4th grade can play up or down. Registration for girls basketball opens in December and ends on January 12th. There will be a draft held for the 4th-7th grade division at Swan Valley High School. All kids will be assigned a coach who will set up practices during the week.

Games are held on Saturdays at Swan Valley High School. Volunteer coaches are needed for this program! If you'd like to volunteer please call (989) 781-0151 to coach a team!

Registration Fees:

Resident: \$50 Non-Resident: \$55



Girls Basketball

Community Calendar 2023

- October 13th & 14th
Haunted Train Ride at Roethke Park
- October 20th & 21st
Haunted Train Ride at Roethke Park
- October 31st
Trick or Treating from 5:30 to 7:30 throughout Thomas Township
- November 23rd & 24th
Offices closed in observance of the Thanksgiving Holiday
- November 25th
Delayed Trash Pick-Up day
Last day for yard waste pick-up
- December 1st
Dog Licenses available at Township Office
- December 1st
Winter tax bills begin arriving in mailboxes
- December 7th - 9th
Winter Wonderland at Roberts Park
- December 22nd & 25th
Offices closed in observance of the Christmas Holiday
- December 29th
Offices closed in observance of the New Year Holiday
- January 2nd
RESIDENT ONLY Pavilion rentals begin at 8am



Thomas Township

249 N. Miller Road
Saginaw, MI 48609-4896

PRSRT MKT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAGINAW, MI
PERMIT NO. 273

2023 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 sunset on the following dates:

Drop Off Dates:

October 7, 14, 21, 28
November 4

Yard Waste Pick-up will end Nov. 25th and begin again in April, 2024