

# THOMAS Township TODAY



## What's Happening In Our Township

*"Building Our Community Together"*

In this edition of the Township Newsletter, we thought it would be interesting to hear about some of the great things happening throughout our Township. Therefore, along with our normal articles in the summer issue, this Newsletter is full of stories about many of the projects and improvements occurring right here. Inside are

stories about a variety of private investments resulting in new housing options, manufacturing projects bringing hundreds of new jobs to the area, critical business growth, and some significant public improvements that will support our community both now and for decades to come. As you drive around Thomas Township, you will likely see construction in various areas and perhaps wonder what is being built. We hope this Newsletter will help answer some of those questions and also give you a sense of the exciting changes happening in our hometown. Of course, we are not able to cover every single project in this limited space, but we have tried to touch on a variety of representative activities around our community.

Most of the stories are covering projects that you will visibly see, but it's important to note all of the things that are also happening behind the scenes. For instance, the Fire Department has hired four full-time fire fighters to try to resolve some of the challenges of recruiting volunteer fire fighters. They have been an excellent addition to the department and are filling a critical need in order for the Township to provide the reliable emergency responses we all appreciate. Our full-time contingent now consists of a Chief and four fighters. You may not know that while our firefighters receive a minimal hourly wage, they are considered volunteer. Other than the five mentioned, all of the others have full time jobs elsewhere. When the department gets a call for service, over 900 calls per year, volunteers are expected to drop what they are doing at home and respond to the call, day or night, 24 hours a day, including holidays and weekends. By hiring four full time firefighters we are able to provide critical emergency services during daytime hours when most of our volunteers are working their full-time jobs.

It's also exciting to see the new faces in our Police Department with some of the recent hiring to fill the positions authorized with the recent millage that will eventually increase the department to 10 full-time officers. Another exciting change is the creation of the Swan Valley School Resource Officer position that will be filled by Officer Rafe Maxwell. This is an excellent example of the Swan Valley School Board working with the Thomas Township Board to provide a school campus officer. Meanwhile, the Clerk's department is continuing to make adjustments to comply with the variety of new laws that have changed many of our election practices. Plus we all received the new carts for trash and recycling recently.

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## Thomas Township Board of Trustees

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

## Departments

Municipal Office.....781-0150  
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 Department .....781-4141  
8215 Shields Drive  
Library .....781-3770  
8207 Shields Drive

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## What's Happening in Thomas Township? (Cont.)

The Township parks continue to grow and improve, providing many quality recreational activities. We have the community swimming pool, wooded trails, and a miniature train ride at Roethke Park. Roberts Park has grown considerably over the years, with the state class soccer field that Swan Valley High School calls their home field, to a Saturday with hundreds of youthful soccer players. Since last summer, Roberts Park is the location of the new Farmer's Market held weekly thanks to a local resident, Taylor Schomaker. There's a disc golf course and a catch and release fishing pond. The Thomas Trail offers nearly four miles of walking, biking, and rollerblading opportunities. Current plans call for some trail extensions that would not only link to the Great Lakes Bay Region, but to most of Mid-Michigan and vast portions of the state. At the end of this month, the Nature Center & Preserve will be opening, funded almost entirely by grants and donations. The Community Garden is proving popular in its first season, located on Frost at Lone Road, the home of the former township hall.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the newsletter and join us in our excitement for our community and its future. There are many amenities that have been added or improved in Thomas Township, which enhance our quality of life. What makes this even more special is the fact that most of them have happened, because residents and business owners have stepped up to volunteer or support the projects financially. Groups like Pay It Forward, the Thomas Township Business Association, Kiwanis, and Lions working side by side with many of our businesses and companies have all helped to make positive changes right here. Thomas Township continues to be a great place to live, work, and play that is supported by residents and businesses alike. So, stop and smell the roses and enjoy what we have to offer in the community we call home.

## New Township Municipal Office

One of the greatest challenges that face Township Boards is addressing the needs of today's community while preparing for and planning for the community's future needs as well. Overseeing a community like Thomas Township is much like managing a home and family only on a much larger scale. When do you build the addition on your home, replace the roof, or purchase that second vehicle, and of course, how do you pay for it? For nearly three decades now, our Township Board has followed a long-term financial plan that looks at the next seven years of revenues and expenditures. Adhering to this plan and following many other good financial management practices has enabled the Township to accomplish a large number of improvements without borrowing or increasing its 0.9437 millage rate. Thomas Township's practice has been to either save up funds over a period of years to construct a capital project or to acquire outside funding such as grants. For instance, over the past twenty years, the Township has acquired over \$20 million in outside funds from grants, donations, gifts, etc. Most recently, the State and HSC are providing over \$25 million to improve the Township sanitary sewer system.



New Township Municipal Office

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## New Township Municipal Office (Cont.)

### A little history.

Many years ago, the Township Boards started the process of creating a Township Campus along Shields Drive between North Miller Road and Meijer's Drive where facilities and services would be concentrated in a central area. The foundation of this concept originated with the municipal office building in the 1950's followed by the Fire Station in 1972. Once the new fire station was built, the two-truck garage area was converted to office space and a couple more additions were built over the following years to keep up with growth within the Township. The basketball and tennis courts were built in the 1960's. Later, in 1982, the library was constructed and then in 2000, the Elks Lodge was purchased and converted to use for public safety offices and a board room. In 2010, the DPW Building was built to replace the old Township Hall on Frost Road that had been used until that time for storing vehicles and equipment on the old oak dance floor. The Trailhead building along with the trail was added around 2013 and the parking lot between the library and municipal office was added in 2017. The new office building, along with the Community Park, and Training Room addition are the last of the planned long-term improvements to the campus. The Board thought that completing them all together would be the least disruptive approach; rather than doing them over a longer time period, and this way current residents would benefit from the improvements now.



Fire Station #1 in 1972

While the main office building of the Township at 249 North Miller Road has always been aggressively maintained, several aspects of the building have been steadily declining, while others simply do not meet current requirements such as the roof, heating/ac systems, phone system, bathrooms, safety provisions, storage, layout, etc. All of these things accentuated the fact that the building is a series of additions onto what was in part, a two-truck fire garage. Built on a slab and with no attic space, everything is on the first floor. This has meant that most of the files and paperwork that local governments are required to retain are stored in the pole barn next to the offices, which from time to time has rendered files useless from mice infestations and leaking roofs. Plumbing has always been a problem as bathrooms were added and the path for the piping did not permit adequate fall for gravity to play its part causing regular backups. This fact is particularly evident in the Parks Department operating from the pole building where we added a bathroom a year ago only to find that it was not functional for the same reason. Consequently, the Parks employees must come into the main office to use the bathroom. The main office has a dozen electrical panel boxes due to the various additions; it does not meet barrier-free rules as it's grandfathered in, the phone system does not comply with current laws and it does not provide safety for employees, along with many other issues. As a result of all these things and with an eye to the future, the Board hired Rick Keith, a very well-respected local architect in 2019 to inspect the building and to help guide the Board and staff with deciding how best to address all of the challenges. He developed three options for addressing the problems while trying to consider future needs as well.

### Option One – Remodel.

Remodeling the existing building would essentially be repairing several aspects of the building such as the roof, windows, siding, and parking lot. In addition, the electrical, plumbing, heating, phones, and ac systems would all be modernized and brought up to code. Some of these things would be particularly challenging, because of the way the building evolved as a series of additions. For instance, there are several load-bearing block walls that were at one-time exterior walls that still exist and prevent ductwork from serving multiple rooms without major reconstruction.

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## New Township Municipal Office

Or, the main line that services the bathrooms follow a longer than necessary path because the bathrooms were added to the building resulting in a very flat line that causes backups. The obvious problems with this option are that a lot of money would be spent on a building that still would not have any more storage so records would still be kept in the pole barn, there would not be room for future growth, it would not address safety concerns, the front parking lot would still be the same, the parks department would still be in the pole barn. In the end, to do it right, it would be close to a completely new build and we would still have to figure out how to operate for the better part of a year in trailers as the building is gutted.

### **Option Two – Build an Addition.**

The second option included most of the remodeling work, along with a second-story addition and a new parking lot to the north of the building, thereby changing the entrance to the north side of the building and making the existing entrance a back door. The second story would provide the added storage needed and allow for all of the mechanical, phones, servers, etc. to be located there in order to free up some space on the first floor for a better office layout. Problems with this option were that it would take a year to construct during which we would have to move to a temporary location such as trailers or another site altogether, all of which come with costs. It would improve the configuration of the offices, but it still would not provide for the future, so the investment would primarily be just to serve today's needs and then kick the can down the road for some time in the future to add on again. We did look at adding out as well, but then the costs became similar to that of an entirely new building.

### **Option Three – Build New.**

To be honest, this was not the initial direction that we thought we would gravitate to. Building the addition was probably the most favored option when we started to consider how to best address the shortcomings of the current building for now and the future. However, as we looked at all three options and compared them to one another in terms of benefits and costs, building new became the clear choice. For one thing, it permits us to continue serving all of you without interruption, and rather than spending the money to provide temporary offices at another location and to transport all of the office equipment and supplies, that money can be saved and put into something permanent. A second reason is that the new building will provide space for the long-term future. Upon completion, it will provide all services on the first floor; however, it is being built so as to have a 6,900-square-foot basement/lower level that can be converted as needed into additional office space with an elevator and two stairwells. It will allow for the Parks Department to move into the same building with bathrooms so that all of the general Township services will be in a single location. It will have a drive-up, drop-off window that in the future can be utilized as an actual drive-up window. This will allow physically challenged residents to be served without having to leave their vehicles. It will be far more energy efficient, thereby saving on electrical and heating/cooling costs for decades to come. The location does not necessitate any large changes in the parking lots, which saves money. We have been receiving numerous requests to improve the basketball/pickleball courts that were built in the early 60's and to provide a playground option on the north side of Gratiot so that children do not have to cross Gratiot. We are intending to accomplish all of these improvements as well with this project. Once completed, the existing building will be taken down and the land will be available for whatever future residents and business owners decide. The pole barn will not be changed other than to convert the park office space into a community room for groups to meet and for recreational programs.

### **How is it being paid for?**

So, going back to the opening paragraph in which I referenced our Township's use of a Seven-Year Financial Forecast in addition to an annual budget. The Board authorized to begin saving for this project approximately five years ago. Over that time, between the General Fund, Sewer Fund, and Water Fund, they set aside \$4.358 million. They then added the ARPA funds that the Township received of \$1.08 million to that amount for a total of \$5.438 million to pay for the proposed building without impacting any tax rates. The new building with furniture costs \$4.85 million with an additional \$500,000 earmarked for the Community Park improvements, totaling \$5.35 million. The project was bid out inviting over twenty contractors to submit a proposal. We received five excellent bids of which Three Rivers Construction out of Midland, had the preferred bid. Completion is expected to be in June 2024 at which time the plan is for the staff to move everything over to the new building on a weekend so that there isn't any interruption in services.



## Fire Station #1 Improvements

We are excited to tell you about the much-needed facelift that Fire Station One is undergoing. Located on the corner of Shields Drive and North Miller Road, you will see construction on both the front and back ends of the existing building. Built in 1976, Station One has served our community well maintaining its original design for the most part and having undergone only a couple of small interior renovations throughout the years. Rest assured that the ongoing construction will not interfere with our ability to provide you with continued 24/7 fire and medical service.



New Fire Station #1

Before we describe the improvements any further, let us try to briefly answer general questions about the funding as that is a very important aspect of all this work. First of all, we can tell you that this project has been budgeted and planned for many years. Our Fire Department has operated frugally throughout its existence. In the same way, the Township Board has set aside funds for many years to build up adequate savings to undertake the work. The Station One project was successfully combined with the new Municipal Office Building to get a more competitive price. We received five competitive bids from excellent contractors. By combining the two projects, the Township saved \$360,000. With the reserved funds and a small installment loan that will be repaid by the General Fund, we are able to complete the project without impacting your taxes. Furthermore, the Board annually updates and approves a seven-year financial forecast to monitor spending and capital costs such that we have contemplated the long-term impact of this investment as well.

### **Radio Dispatch Room**

In the front of Station One, there will be a small addition to house a radio dispatch room and command room. The radio dispatch room is utilized on almost every call we respond to. The room is used to “track” the calls we respond to and provide support to the incident commander. This support comes in the form of data collection, agency notifications, resource tracking, and disseminating additional calls within our Township. The current room is 91 square feet; whereas, the future room will be 135 square feet. During larger emergency events, we may need three dispatchers working in this space. In the present room, one dispatcher with all of their equipment can find it hard to function, let alone three in the same space.

### **Command Room**

The current Command Room is literally a converted closet measuring thirty-five square feet in size. This space is what five of our people work out of. Clearly, only one officer is able to work in this space at a time. The new room (169 square feet) will not only allow more than one person to work at a time, but it will allow them the space to have the tools they need to properly serve as officers in our department. We anticipate that our officers will be able to perform their administrative roles more functionally and professionally with a room properly sized and supported.

### **Training Room**

At the back end (west side) of the building is where most of the work will be completed. A 42' x 97' addition will be used primarily for fire fighter trainings, classes, debriefs, table top drills, meetings, and Command Center, as well as future elections. To comply with State requirements and more importantly, to stay proficient with life-saving and fire fighting techniques, fire fighters must participate in multiple trainings each month. With the new training room, our dedicated team of fire fighters will be able to learn in a true educational setting with the ability to then walk into the garage and apply their instructions to the actual equipment. Even though our fire fighters are paid-on-call, they must still complete the same training requirements as any full-time fire fighter in the State.

## Fire Station #1 Improvements

This new addition will also provide your emergency response team with an appropriate Command Center. Presently, we do not have a proper Command Center for community-wide emergencies. We learned this most recently with the 2020 Flood when we were forced to utilize the Chief's office to oversee all of the emergency operations. During such large-scale disasters, having the facilities and space to support your emergency response team is critically important.

### **Election Room**

During elections, the new Training Room will be converted into an Election Room. We realize that elections are an occasional occurrence, so that is why we have intentionally made elections a secondary use of this space. However, at the same time we recognize the importance of elections in our country and the intense scrutiny that they come under each time they do occur. For many years, the garage at Fire Station One has been utilized for three of our voting precincts. Overcrowding has been a significant issue, along with poor barrier free access and an open-air environment that causes paper ballots to jam in the tabulators during periods of high humidity.

The addition at the Fire Station is going to house two precincts instead of the previous three, as one precinct will be relocated. By having an area that provides ample spacing, the two precincts will be better situated and create more space between the two so as to reduce overcrowding when sharing your personal voter information and marking your ballot.

By hosting elections in the enclosed room, we will finally be able to provide a climate controlled environment to prevent the problems caused by ballots expanding and jamming in the tabulators due to high humidity in the fire garage where we host them now. This can cause serious delays in the voting process. While this may seem to be a small factor, it actually is critically important as this occurs frequently now and can be highly disruptive for both the voters and the workers. Every effort is made to run local elections efficiently and transparently. It can be very concerning when a ballot has to be discarded and a new one created just because the first one was destroyed due to the ballot expanding from humidity. It also unnecessarily raises subtle concerns about the integrity of the voting process in a time when everything is under intense scrutiny.

This construction project will include a new barrier free entry and bathroom for voters with physical limitations. Presently, most voters access the garage where the voting booths are located through a small stairway that can be difficult to manage or they have to go around to the front of the garage to enter. Less overcrowding also means wider access areas for wheelchairs and walkers, thereby making it easier for people to vote. Likewise, Voter Assist Terminals will be easier to use with the added space.

We hope that you can appreciate the importance of these improvements as we build our community together for today and future generations. To say we are excited about this project would be an understatement. We know that both our fire fighters and election workers will truly appreciate this new facility as all of them work diligently to provide the best service possible to all our Township residents and businesses.

Connie Watt - Deputy Clerk  
Mike Cousins - Fire Chief



## Fire Station #1 Improvements Continued

The fire department is pleased to welcome Sonya Coleman, our new Administrative Assistant. Sonya has taken over for Jean Lisee who served the fire department for almost three years. Jean decided to “retire” to spend more time with her granddaughter and tend to her garden. We thank her for her time with us.

Sonya comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and a friendly smile to match her welcoming voice. Sonya quickly learned the emergency service language and how the fire department operates. In her new role, Sonya handles all administrative tasks, issuing burn permits, and taking care of our customers at the Public Safety Building. Her position also includes collating all fire/medical reports, data entry, clerking payroll for our paid-on-call responders, and submitting reports to the County and State. Sonya will also cover for the Police Admin Assistant when needed and a plethora of other tasks.



Sonya Coleman

Fun fact about Sonya, she has authored two books and is in the process of a third. They are entitled “Sunni and the Birthday Bash” and “Sunni and the Ice Cream Caper”. She has kindly donated both of them to the Thomas Township Library if you would like to check them out. WELCOME SONYA!

As you all know, you the voters have spoken clearly in favor of supporting both the Public Safety Millage and Apparatus Millages. A major improvement coming from that was the ability to hire full-time first responders. In the past couple of Newsletters, we have introduced each of them to you. Nick Chad, Tyler Larsen, Gary Salo, and Ryan DeLong all of whom are providing daytime coverage. Nick, Tyler, and Gary all came from our paid-on-call ranks, while Ryan joined us from another fire department. They are all certified firefighters and licensed Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Their primary role is responding to calls. In addition, they each have different areas that they specialize in. Those areas cover many aspects of the department which in turn improves the services we provide to you and has already saved us money. Some of the maintenance or repairs we have typically had to outsource; these guys have completed in-house. The other benefit internally is, they are able to take on some duties which has lightened up the load on some of the paid on-call members and officers.

With us now having a person regularly scheduled 7 days a week, we can provide you with a rapid response in your time of need. We definitely still need and use our paid on-call members to provide the additional support needed to mitigate emergencies.

We continue to have a need for first responders both fire and medical, amongst our paid on-call members. If this is something you are interested in knowing more about, please call us at 989-781-4141.

Mike Cousins - Fire Chief

## Trash & Treasures Sales, Another Successful Year!

Thomas Township would like to thank everyone who participated in the 14th Annual Trash & Treasures Yard Sales and Business Sidewalk Sales, from the shoppers to the residents or business that held a sale. We had 120 sales registered on the map, along with 7 Business Sidewalk Sales.

It takes a lot of willing participants to pull off an event like this. We would like to thank Dan Hoffman from Saginaw GIS for producing the map, and both 7-Eleven locations for helping us get the maps distributed. Thank you to the MMWA team for getting the trash picked up early before the sales started and the staff that worked the donation trucks that were provided by Oldtown Christian Outreach Center and Goodwill. Their willingness to partner with us again this year is so much appreciated. This event couldn't be done without the help of everyone including some of the staff at Thomas Township.

**THANK YOU!**



## Thomas Township is seeing Growth in Construction

Thomas Township is seeing growth in all areas of construction. With residential, commercial, and industrial projects either under construction, or just completing development, it's hard not to see that things are picking up in Thomas Township. As an example, these are some of the interesting projects taking place within the Township that you may have noticed.

### Cobblestone Construction and Apple Mountain

If you have not been to Apple Mountain lately, you are missing one of the newer developments in Thomas Township known as the Greens at Apple Mountain. The owner of Apple Mountain has developed this condominium community within one of the foremost golf courses in the State. The condos are two-bedroom, 1.5 bath homes with about 1,400 square feet of living space located right on the course. The views are great, and for those who play the game it can't get any better. In addition, Apple Mountain has started another housing development on Dice Road that backs right up to the southern end of the golf course.



Dice Road Condos



Saginaw Control's Expansion

### Saginaw Control and Engineering

Saginaw Control and Engineering has started its second phase of construction on Sunshine Drive located within the Great Lakes Tech Park in Thomas Township. The \$28 million dollar investment is yet another sign that industry is booming in this area of Michigan. The facility is near the corner of Graham and Gratiot and sets on 35 acres of land. This expansion will add another 100,000 square feet to the plant with two more similar expansions planned for the future years.

### New Duplexes on N. Miller Road

Mark Wahl, owner, and CEO of Cobblestone Homes based in Freeland, is doing his best to move the local economy forward. One of his most recent projects are the new duplexes on N. Miller Road, across from the Thomas Township Offices. The two lots have sat vacant and underutilized for many years before Wahl began his construction in July of this year. Wahl, a graduate of SVSU, served 4 years on the State's Residential Builders' Maintenance and Alteration Contractors' Board, appointed by then Governor Rick Snyder. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Saginaw Home Builders Association. His latest project in Thomas Township is scheduled to be move in ready near the end of this year.



New Duplexes

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## Thomas Township is seeing Growth In Construction

### Dick's Last Resort

Customers should come with a sense of humor and ready to have a delicious meal from one of the newest restaurants in Saginaw County. Although the grand opening for Dick's Last Resort and Cat's Meow Bar, located at 8845 Gratiot Road, was in late 2022, you would not recognize the building after a major renovation was just completed this spring. The facility has been completely refurbished inside and out with a new façade and added game room and meeting area. This is the chain's first location in Michigan with other locations in Indiana, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Nevada.



Cat's Meow

### Gratiot Animal Hospital

Dr. Dwight McNally, owner of Gratiot Animal Hospital, has been practicing veterinary medicine in Thomas Township since 1985. Dr. McNally's business has been growing steadily over the years, and he chose to build a brand-new, state of the art building across from Garber Chevrolet on Gratiot. The new facility was completed in the spring of this year, nearly doubling the size of the old building and adding much needed parking for staff and customers. Dr. McNally, who works entirely with small animals, is a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Michigan Veterinary Medical Association, the American Heartworm Society, and the American Association of Feline Practitioners.



Gratiot Animal Hospital

### Water Quality Report from the DPW

In conformance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, Thomas Township is required to provide all users of the water system a Consumer Confidence Report each July. This report outlines the excellent drinking water quality that is delivered to your home or business. The 2022 report can be located by visiting the following URL:

<https://www.thomastwp.org/departments-services/public-works-2/>

Please take time to read this important information regarding your drinking water quality. To request a paper copy of the Consumer Confidence Report, please contact us at 989-781-6438.

Trevor Schultz  
Assistant Director of the DPW

Dan Sika  
Community Development Director



## Improving and Expanding Our Water and Sewer Infrastructure

It is said that there are only two seasons in Michigan, winter and construction and you certainly see a lot of construction going on around our community this year! Most of you realize that there is a significant sewer construction project happening across the breadth of Thomas Township, but what you're actually seeing is just the tip of the iceberg. Behind the actual shovels in the ground, you have tens of thousands of hours, over years of planning and design, budgeting, coordination, and engineering just to get to the point of construction. With the recent pandemic economy, everything has been adversely affected from getting materials to build things, to manpower shortages to construct them. Yet here we are now. For the Department of Public Works, there are multiple projects happening this construction season worth tens of millions of dollars. All of which benefits our community.

This type of work and planning didn't begin just recently. Over the last couple of decades, we have invested tens of millions of dollars in the community infrastructure from the rehabilitation of other sewer pump stations to making wholesale improvements to the drinking water system. Many of these projects are planned for over 7 to 10 years before they are constructed. Our work in Thomas Township has placed our community at the fore-front of providing efficient water and sewer services to our entire community and for the Great Lakes Bay Region; supporting jobs, enterprise, businesses, residential growth, community health, and ensuring the quality of life we all enjoy in Thomas Township.

### ***North Gleaner and Geddes Road Sewer Pumping Station replacement.***

This project replaces a 17-year-old pump station that services HSC, the DuPont Medical plant, and a few homes in the N. Gleaner area. This project doubles the pumping capabilities of the station and is being funded 100% with State of Michigan and HSC funds. The new equipment installed in this station will be highly energy efficient and will lower the overall operations and maintenance costs for Township users for decades to come. This project also supports the Gratiot Road corridor to allow for new commercial business development from roughly M-52, eastward without having to build additional pipelines through the already congested areas in Thomas Township. This Gratiot Road corridor upgrade is a no-cost benefit to the Township due to the Geddes Road sewer improvements.

### ***Geddes Road Sewer Project.***

This project brings new sewer service to an area not previously served in the Township while re-purposing existing, under-utilized infrastructure to increase sewage handling capacity to the Great Lakes Tech Park and HSC while also encouraging new residential development in the heart of Thomas Township. Once completed, there will be enough sewer service capacity to grow over 2,500 residential homes. Reusing under-utilized, existing pipes already in the ground to expand the sewer service to new areas, we saved an enormous amount of money, even though the project is funded 100% with monies granted to Thomas Township by the State and partnering with HSC.



*Aerial of the new wet well at Gleaner and Geddes*



### ***Madeline and Sue Sewer Pumping Station replacement.***

Replacing this station has always been in our long-term capital improvement plans and the Township has been saving money year to year to replace it. Originally put into service in 1972, the current station is energy inefficient, technically and mechanically obsolete, and operationally insufficient to effectively serve Thomas Township's future. The limiting factor to replacing this station has always been the multi-million-dollar expense. Applying for and receiving grant monies from the State of Michigan to replace this station now, saves our sewer users the very high cost of rebuilding the station on our own. Plus, the overall yearly operations and maintenance costs for this station will be much lower than current costs and that has a direct, long-term benefit to all our users.



House Demo in Rambling Acres

### ***Rambling Acres Subdivision Sewer Force Main project.***

Built in 1972, the current pipeline is obsolete and undersized to add capacity to the Township's system. Replacing this pipeline now allows us to use State money to offset the cost of outright replacing the pipe as it begins to fail.

### ***North River and State Road Sewage Pump Station project.***

The current pump station is entirely underground and within the now recognized flood zone. The equipment is located below ground, which with any flood would directly threaten to destroy this system. After the significant 2017 area-wide flooding, we began applying for a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant to floodproof this station. As the project request was working its way through the bureaucratic red tape, the devastating 2020 flood occurred. Consequently in 2021, Thomas Township was approved for a 75% reimbursement grant from FEMA to mitigate this problem. Construction is still ongoing with this project expected to be completed before the end of this summer. Valued at over \$600,000, Township customers are funding slightly less than \$150,000 to rebuild this station with energy efficient and flood-proof equipment, protecting the environment and community health from possible sewer overflows caused by flooding.

### ***Swan Valley High School Water Main project***

Working collaboratively with the Swan Valley School District, the drinking water system was upsized and looped around the High School Campus to allow the district to expand the high school and better protect the site in emergencies.

What's coming in the future? We are currently applying for additional federal disaster relief funding to replace a sewage pumping station located at Dice and North River Roads. The funding is allocated by the federal government as a result of the 2020 floods. This project is valued at over \$1 million dollars and if successful would be funded up to 100% of the project's costs by the grant. Construction could begin as early as this time next year if we are successful.

By planning ahead and strategically budgeting for projects under our capital improvement planning tools, we have been able to complete 54 different Public Works construction projects since 2007 alone. All while maintaining some of the lowest water and sewer rates in the region. Working together, for our future. Our commitment. Our promise.

Trevor Schultz  
DPW Assistant Director

## Improving and Expanding Our Water and Sewer Infrastructure



*Pump Station #4 - Madeline & Sue*



*Pump Station #6 Controls - N. River & State Rd.*



*Pump Station #12 - Corner of N. Gleaner & Geddes Rd.*



*Pump Station #12 - Corner of N. Gleaner & Geddes Rd.*

## Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve Grand Opening - August 26th!



*Thomas Township Nature Center - 6600 Gratiot Road*

After a lot of planning, fundraising, and determination we are excited to announce the Grand Opening of the Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve! Come and join us from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday, August 26 at 6660 Gratiot Road for a fun-filled day to celebrate our connection with the natural world. There is no entrance fee to use the Nature Center and Nature Preserve.

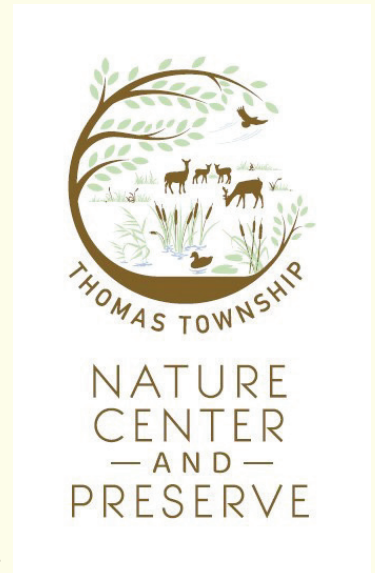
Continued on page 13



# Thomas Township Nature and Preserve Grand Opening (Cont.)

## Grand Opening Schedule:

- 9:00 am:** Doors Open
- 9:30 am:** Guided Preserve Hike
- 10:00 am:** Kristi Furtaw, Castle Museum-Logging history and children's activity.
- 10:30 am:** Guided Preserve Hike
- 11:00 am:** Voyageurs-Fur trading history and exhibit of a replica of an 1800's birch bark canoe.
- 11:30 am:** Guided Preserve Hike
- 12:00 pm:** T. M. Klein and Sons-Pollinators and honey.
- 12:30 pm:** Guided Preserve Hike
- 1:00 pm:** Heather Hart, Saginaw Conservation District-Insect story time & activity.
- 1:30 pm:** Guided Preserve Hike
- 2:00 pm:** Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve-Past, Present, and Future.
- 3:00 pm:** Done for the Day!



## Additional Activities throughout the Day (as long as supplies last!)

- Nature Bingo Card/Scavenger Hunts-Take cards into the preserve and see what you can find!
- Children's Interactive Area-Touch table, activities, books, and games!
- Observation Areas-Get comfy and observe the preserve or peruse reading materials!
- Train on use of I-Naturalist- (a plant identification app!)
- Rock Painting-Paint a rock with a nature-based theme and we will put it in the nature preserve!
- Free seedlings to take home and plant!
- Program and Rental information!
- Information about how you can support The Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve!

## A few other things to know:

We are still a work in progress. It will take a few years to get the Nature Preserve plants established and trail construction completed. We will be updating and enhancing the displays in the Nature Center periodically.

The mission of the Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve is “to enhance the quality of life and to provide opportunities for all generations to appreciate the natural world and its historical context, to instill a sense of stewardship toward the earth and its inhabitants, to preserve this unique natural island and the lands surrounding it, and to provide accessibility to the bountiful wildlife and natural features.”

With that mission in mind, the rules for preserve usage are slightly different than the other parks. No animals (besides service animals) will be allowed. We are providing habitat areas for native species that will be disturbed with the presence of other animals. If you want to take your dog for a walk, we suggest using the other Thomas Township Parks. Hiking will be the only way to experience the trails, and we ask that visitors stay on the trails and in designated viewing areas.

The goal is to have the Nature Preserve open from dawn to dusk like the Thomas Township Parks. The Nature Center open hours will vary as we figure out the optimal schedule. Patience is appreciated!

If you have any questions or comments about the Thomas Township Nature Center and Preserve, please contact Lynda Thayer via email at [naturecenter1@thomastwp.org](mailto:naturecenter1@thomastwp.org), or by calling the Parks and Recreation Office at (989) 791-0151. We are excited to open. We hope to see you there!



## Swan Valley School District Bond Improvements Update

The Swan Valley School District continues to work diligently with RC Hendrick & Sons, construction management, and Tower Pinkster, architect, to implement the August 2021 \$25 million bond that was approved by the voters. As you will recall, the bond was to improve the infrastructure of the school district and to provide a series of updates, renovations, and additions to the schools. A summary of the progress follows.

With a consistent and increasing enrollment in the school district, there was a need for additional space at our two elementary schools. To satisfy the needs of a growing community, four new classrooms at Havens and two new classrooms at Shields have been completed. The photo below depicts one of these new classrooms.



*A new classroom in the elementary schools.*



*Updated lockers in the elementary schools.*

Those who have had to do drop off or pick up at Shields Elementary can attest to the challenge it posed. As part of the work through the bond, a drop off and pick up loop and fenced area has been completed. This will certainly ease the burden of the previous issues faced on a daily school day basis.



*Photo shows the fenced area at Shields Elementary*

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## Swan Valley School District Bond Improvements Update (Cont.)

The Middle School concessions area in the front lobby has been completed and is now ready to serve those attending sports and other related functions at the school. A ribbon cutting took place at the February School Board meeting.



*Photos show the completed concession area at the Swan Valley Middle School.*

Along with the new concession area, the Middle School has also had new ceilings installed in the hallways as well as white boards, voice amplification systems and carpeting installed in each classroom. A new roof and LED lighting were also part of the improvements. Also, part of the planned upgrades were the new concession area and restroom buildings for the football stadium. These projects have been completed and are ready as the upcoming football season gets underway.



*Photographs show the new concession area and restrooms that are part of the Football Stadium.*

Bids for the last major project were approved at the February School Board meeting. This project includes the construction of a new 600 seat Performing Arts Center adjacent to the south end of the High School. Previously the Swan Valley auditorium could only seat 450 people with a stage that could not accommodate the entire band for concert performances. The expanded seating will allow the entire high school student body to attend events in the facility. Numerous district events will also be hosted in the new auditorium including: middle school band concerts, elementary music programs, K-12 drama performances, various school stakeholder presentations and many more!



## Swan Valley School District Bond Improvements Update (Cont.)



*The anticipated Performing Arts Center at Swan Valley High School.*

On April 4, 2023, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to kick off the construction of both the Performing Arts Center and the renovations to the Swan Valley Learning Center. The Swan Valley Learning Center, which provides daycare services to preschool and school age children, will be fully remodeled, two additional classrooms added (for six total) and a new lobby adjacent to the Performing Arts Center. This work will begin this spring with final completion to be summer 2024. Below are some renditions of these spaces.



*Front entrance of the Performing Arts Center and Swan Valley Learning Center to be completed in 2024.*



*Drop-off/Lobby of Swan Valley Learning Center.*

We will be working to prioritize the original project list based on what can still be accomplished with the remaining bond funds for future improvements.

We greatly appreciate our Bond Citizen's Committees hard work on this campaign and wish to thank them for their efforts and support.



## Hemlock Semi-Conductor Continues to Grow

Hemlock Semi-Conductor (HSC) is situated on the northeast corner of Geddes and North Orr roads. It has been at this same location since 1961. It is our nation's leading manufacturer of hyper-pure polysilicon used in the semiconductor and solar industries. Since 1961, it has undergone numerous expansions of varying size. Starting in the fall of 2022, it began another large-scale expansion that will continue to make it competitive on the world market for its polysilicon product. This is extremely important given the highly competitive market for their product.



Company officials say this expansion project will modernize the manufacturing process HSC uses to refine its semiconductor-grade polysilicon. The next-generation technologies HSC will deploy through the project will increase the purity of the company's semiconductor-grade polysilicon and improve supply to meet rising global demand, according to a company news release. HSC will be investing at least \$375 million into the new buildings and site improvements. The project is expected to create 170 new permanent jobs and more than 200 construction jobs.

The expected timeline for the project, which includes three new buildings, is 2022 to 2025. The State of Michigan through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation awarded \$17 million for building the sanitary sewer infrastructure needed to support the expansion, which is currently under construction along Geddes Road and elsewhere in the Township. Meanwhile, HSC is also adding several million more to the funds to complete the infrastructure work.

HSC has truly been a huge asset to our community. The leadership of HSC has always emphasized a strong community spirit that is exhibited in the numerous donations and volunteer efforts that they have provided through the years. In addition, HSC purchases roughly two-thirds of the water used within Thomas Township, which also means that it carries the lion's share of the water system costs. Thus, the continued success of HSC makes our community stronger and financially stable as we look to the years ahead.



Hemlock Semi-Conductor (HSC)

## Growth in our Parks

Thomas Township Parks and Recreation has developed a truly unique program philosophy where we maintain the highest standards of coaching and sportsmanship, while kids play in a distinctive, noncompetitive environment. We strive to provide the best programs and parks possible and are always looking at new and innovative ways to improve our recreation opportunities. Over the past few years, the parks and recreation department has seen a big rise in participants registering for all of its programs. In total over the past 5 years, program numbers are up 51%. If you take a look at some of the programs listed in the side panel (to the right), you can see where some of those increases have occurred.



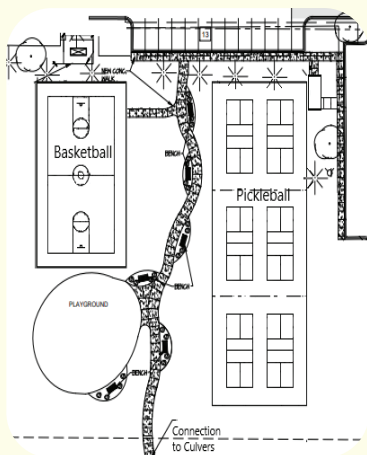
With the increase in program participation and park attendees, Thomas Township Parks and Recreation has been creating new recreation opportunities. In 2018, a little over three quarters of a mile of paved trail was added from Shields Ct. along the Consumers Energy right-of-way to Miller Rd. In 2019/2020, the Thompson Memorial Disc Golf course was created as a 9 hole

course with the hopes of adding an additional 9 holes in the future. In 2024, those hopes will become a reality as the expansion of the course will begin. Sand Volleyball has seen a huge increase in numbers over the past 2 years in Thomas Township to the point where the single volleyball court at Roberts Park has been turned into a 3 court complex where there are now 32 teams involved in leagues playing Monday through Thursday nights throughout the summer.



### Farmer's Market

In 2022, with the help from Schomaker Farms, the Thomas Township Farmer's Market was established and found a home in Roberts Park under the former "Men's Club Pavilion" which was restored by the Parks and Recreation department in 2018-2019. The Farmer's Market has plans for a couple events in 2023 to help grow the communities support and give families a place to gather and enjoy their time at the market. With the success of the Farmer's Market, the Thomas Township Community Garden was created and saw its first plants in the spring of 2023.



### Community Park

Thomas Township Parks and Recreation's latest project is at Community Park where the basketball and pickleball courts will be relocated to the greenspace between the current courts and Culver's. There will be a walking path connecting to Culver's picnic area along with a brand new playground. The renovated Community Park plan is shown in the image to the left. This work will begin in the summer of 2023 with the hopes of being open by late fall.

## Recreation Program Numbers are Climbing

### Winter Programs:

2019 - 290 participants  
2023 - 469 participants

2019 - 2023: ↑62%

### Spring Soccer:

2019 - 251 participants  
2023 - 278 participants

2019 - 2023: ↑11%

### Flag Football:

2019 - 40 participants  
2023 - 110 participants

2019 - 2023: ↑75%

### Sand Volleyball:

2019 - 15 teams  
2023 - 41 teams

2019 - 2023: ↑73%

### All Programs:

2019 - 2023: ↑51%

### Haunted Train:

2019 - \$18,014  
2023 - \$35,964

2019 - 2023: ↑200%



## Parks & Recreation Commission Members

Scott Branch, Chair

Craig Aimar, Secretary

Angela Alworden

Craig Blower

Dean Rusch

DJ Sova

Annie Hoffman

## Parks & Recreation Staff Members

John Corriveau,  
Director

Tyler Sutherlund,  
Asst. Director

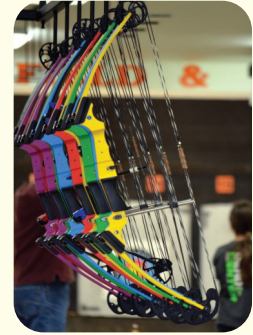
Susan Prevost,  
Receptionist

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.



## Archery Classes 2024

Archery classes will begin Thursday, January 11th, 2024 and will continue through May 2024. There will be three, six week sessions with classes being held on Thursdays. Registrations will begin in November of 2023 and run through December of 2023. Call the Parks and Recreation Office for more information about the program at (989) 781-0151 or check our website for updates, [www.thomastwp.org](http://www.thomastwp.org).



Classes for beginners work on safety, form, equipment, and the fundamentals to become a good archer. Classes for advanced archers are based on using their equipment, if they have it, or using advanced set up bows. We have both fully set up compound bows or longbows available for your use.

### **Sessions will be at the following times:**

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

Advanced: 7:30 - 8:15 pm

## Fall Soccer Leagues

Registration for fall soccer leagues for boys and girls in grades young 5's through 8th grade.

The fall soccer season runs for six weeks beginning September 9th and will continue until October 14th, 2023. For more information please call the Parks and Recreation office at (989) 781-0151.

### **Registration Fee:**

Resident: \$50

Non-Resident: \$55



## Movie in the Park

The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Department will be hosting FREE movies in the park this summer. The movies will be held at Roberts Park at 455 S. Miller Road. The movies will begin around 9:30 pm and the concession stand at the pavilion will be open to purchase snacks and drinks during the movie! **Dates to be determined.** Once selections have been made we will post on our website and on the Parks and Recreation Facebook page.



**ONLINE REGISTRATION** is available for Parks and Recreation Programming. You can access the online registration at [thomastwp.org](http://thomastwp.org). When using the online registration system to register for Parks and Recreation Programming, 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 not 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.



Thomas Township

249 N. Miller Road  
Saginaw, MI 48609-4896

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### 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 road. No stumps, leaves, grass or commercial brush of any kind will be accepted. The site will be open the entire weekend, Saturday and Sunday, and closed back up first thing Monday morning.

#### Drop Off Dates:

September 9 & 23

October 7, 14, 21, 28

November 4

*Yard Waste Pick-up will end November 30th*