

Charter Township of Brighton

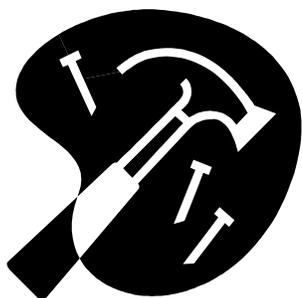
Volume VI, Issue 10

Winter 2009

Building Department Transfer - A Sign of the Times

As most of you know, the building industry has been greatly affected by the recession. Property values are down, foreclosures are at all time highs, developers have gone bankrupt at record levels, and credit markets have all but disappeared. Consumers are sitting on the sidelines waiting for any indication that the recession has reached its bottom. No one is building.

The Township has operated its own Building Department over the years. This allowed residents and contractors to obtain building permits through the Township. It is not a mandatory service for local government to provide; but an optional service. The department operated as an enterprise fund or self-sustaining meaning that the fund utilizes the revenues it generates to meet its expenses. So during good times the revenues received over expenses stay within the fund and cannot be used to cover general fund expenses and in bad times it means the fund's expenses cannot exceed the money available in the fund.



The decline over the past few years in the building industry has certainly impacted local building departments. For the past several years we have reduced expenses and explored other options including the concept of contracting out or "selling" our services to surrounding communities. Our neighbors have the same level of low activity and financially it would not work. We researched privatizing the services but each scenario required obligating other tax dollars to keep the service going. With continued declining revenues and because building is down, we had to tap into the Building Department's reserve funds. Based upon overall forecasts, it looks like the building industry will remain depressed for several years to come and the fund will not be replenished in a sufficient manner to cover expenses.

Faced with these financial realities, the Township Board directed staff to turn the building inspection, enforcement and administration responsibilities back to the State of Michigan while we researched other available options to still

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Regular Board Meetings are on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. The meetings are held in the Board Room in the lower level of Township Hall and are broadcast live on Cable Channel 15.

Meeting start time is 7:00 P.M.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT (Continued from Page 1)

provide the service at no cost to the general taxpayer. Some of the options include reverting the building permit and inspection activities back to the State of Michigan; asking Livingston County or another building department to provide the service; or developing a multi-jurisdictional cooperative effort where several communities would work together to provide this service.

The Township has narrowed the options down to two: transfer complete responsibility to the County or enter into an intergovernmental agreement with another entity. Either arrangement will result in a transition period and, in the future, the need to obtain a land use or zoning permit through the Township before obtaining building permits. Until that time, building permits will continue to be processed through the Township with the services provided through contractual arrangements.

Once a date-certain has been determined we will post the information on our website, local cable channel 15, at township hall and through the local media. We expect this to be in place sometime before the New Year.

For additional information, please contact Daniel Bishop, Township Manager, at 810-229-0550.

ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS ACCEPTED FOR UTILITY BILLS

The Township is now accepting electronic payments for utility bills via the internet *or* by phone. This service is provided through Official Payments, an online bill payment service, for a nominal fee.



Online visit:
Brightonmunicipalonlinepayments.com.
Enter jurisdiction code 7116.

By phone:
Call 1-800-272-9829.
Enter jurisdiction code 7116.



PROPERTY VALUES EXPECTED TO DROP

The poor economic climate has caused a downturn in property values in Brighton Township. Property values are expected to decrease for all classifications of property for the 2010 tax year. The four classifications are: agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential. At this time, we do not have final figures available to the public; however around the 4th week in February you will receive the 2010 Notice of Assessment, Taxable Value and Property Classification. This notice will tell you what your new 2010 assessed and taxable values are and if there has been a change in the classification of your property. Contact information for the Assessor's Office and the dates and times of the 2010 March Board of Review will be listed on the notice. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding your assessed or taxable values, please feel free to contact the Assessor's Office at 810-229-0558.

TOWNSHIP CONTINUES EFFORTS TO MEET SEWER BOND OBLIGATIONS

Efforts continue to ensure that the Township will meet its future legal and financial sewer bond obligations.

These efforts include approaching neighboring communities to see if they are interested in purchasing extra plant capacity; billing vacant parcels included in the original sewer assessment districts with a capital charge (collected for debt service for their reserved capacity); approaching neighborhoods adjacent to the main sewer line to determine interest in hooking up to sewers; and rate increases.

Due to the poor economy in Michigan, we are taking a very conservative approach. As we forecast future revenues and expenses, we are projecting zero new users and we expect our maintenance costs to increase as the system ages. The Township is legally obligated to make the annual bond payments and must budget for the shortfalls in revenues. It will have to come from increased rates; bond refinancing and General Fund loans until such time that the economy turns around and we realize new users.

The Board regularly monitors the revenues and expenditures and looks for opportunities to meet the bond obligations (stimulus money, grant funds, etc.). The decisions that will have to be made over the next several years will not be popular. Cutting services or raising rates are never popular but the Township has to and will meet its legal obligations.

Please contact Daniel Bishop, Township Manager, at 810-229-0550 or manager@brightontwp.com if you have additional questions.

CONDITIONAL / CONTRACT REZONINGS

Currently various options are available for applicants to develop/redevelop their property. They can submit a site plan and follow the zoning regulations for that zoning district; submit a traditional request for rezoning; submit a PUD (planned unit development) rezoning which allows for some flexibility to meet the required setbacks, lot sizes, density, etc., and soon another option will be available which is conditional rezoning. This is also often referred to as contract zoning.



A conditional or contract rezoning allows negotiation between the applicant and the Township. The applicant submits a proposal (conditional zoning agreement) to the Township and the Township reviews and either accepts or denies the proposal based on the master plan for the Township. The conditions in the zoning agreement must be voluntary and equally or more restrictive than

the regulations that would normally apply under the proposed zoning district. The applicant follows the basic process that a regular rezoning would follow but also includes a conditional zoning agreement and site plan. It is a flexible tool for those properties that cannot be developed utilizing other available options. The ordinance language for conditional rezoning will be incorporated into *Article 23* of the Zoning Ordinance.

For additional information contact Kelly Mathews, Township Planner, at 810-229-0562.

Charter Township of Brighton

4363 Buno Road
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Phone: (810) 229.0550
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TAXES AND TIDBITS

ONLINE PAYMENT AVAILABLE — This service is now available and allows payment **by phone or over the internet** for a fee for both tax and utility bills. Visit www.brightontwp.com or call 1-800-2PAY-TAX or 1-800-272-9829 (utility bills). Enter jurisdiction code 7116.

PARTIAL PAYMENTS ACCEPTED — For people who prefer to make payments rather than one lump sum tax payment, partial payments are allowed. No additional costs are associated **as long as the total cost is paid in full by the due date on the tax bill.**

WINTER TAX SEASON — The winter tax season begins each December 1st and runs through February 28th. As with most government due dates, if the date falls on a weekend, the next business day is the official due date.

PLEASE NOTE: After February 28th, the Delinquent Tax Roll is turned over to the County and **can no longer be paid at the Township.** The County imposes both penalties and interest on the tax bills that go to them for collection beginning the day after the final payment date at the Township.

For additional information contact the Treasurer's office at 810-229-0556.

ELECTIONS CORNER

2010 Election Dates:

Tuesday February 23	Hartland School District only
Tuesday May 4	Hartland School District only
Tuesday August 3	Primary Election
Tuesday November 2	General Election

For additional information contact the Clerk's office at 810-229-0560.

Please forward newsletter comments to the editor:
clerk@brightontwp.com

Please be sure to add "newsletter" in the subject line

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www.brightontwp.com

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*Regular Meeting Days and Times**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1st & 3rd Mondays of every month at 7:00 PM

PLANNING COMMISSION

2nd and 4th Mondays of every month at 7:00 PM

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

4th Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM

**Meetings are subject to change. Contact the Clerk's office for more information.*

***Phone messages may be left at (810) 229-0550 for all trustees.*