

## ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

2011 was a light year for the Planning Commission. With the economy slowing development down, they only met four or five times. They did recommend a few minor zoning ordinance amendments, and a summary is below. For the complete Zoning Ordinance, you can visit our web site at [www.vergennestwp.org](http://www.vergennestwp.org) and click on the ordinance link.

As a reminder to residents considering a home based business, there are provisions for various types under the zoning ordinance. The process involves an application, review of property and proposed uses, and results in a permit being issued upon meeting requirements.

I would also like to remind Flat River property owners of the natural river preservation strip of 25 feet required under the Michigan Natural Rivers Act and enforced by the Vergennes Township Zoning Ordinance. If you are considering any alteration to your riverfront, please contact my office prior to working.

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Ordinance 2011-1 amended Chapter 3, the Flat River District, Section 201.307 (B), (b) and (c) adds the wording "and a building permit" for river access stairs and boardwalks, as required by building code. In the Industrial District, Section 201.309 (E) (1) changes "202.005 (e)" to "(d)" to correct a reference letter error. In the Private Road Ordinance, Section 202.004 (f), removes the word "residential" in the last sentence and in section 201.005 (d), changes reference letter of "subsection (d)" to "(c)" in middle of paragraph for reference letter correction.

Ordinance 2011-2 amends Chapter 3, the Rural Agriculture District, Section 201.304 (C), (16), Agritourism Business section regarding management, employees, event capacity numbers and dining facilities. The definition of agritourism business has been amended to remove the word proprietor and change to owner or resident manager.

Ordinance 2011-3 amends Chapter 4, General and Special Regulations, Section 201.402 (A) Accessory Buildings, and adds more application requirement details and review process by the Township Board for constructing an accessory building before the dwelling.

Ordinance 2011-4 amends Chapter 4, Section 201.415 Mobile Homes, subsection (C) Accessory Dwelling - deletes this section and adds a reference to a new section of 201.441 Accessory Dwellings where other types of second homes will be permitted by special exception use permit with standards such as compatibility to the neighborhood, one permitted, acreage, size, height, setbacks, square footage, Health Dept regulations, occupancy, no renting-no business use, parking, and recording the permit and its conditions. A new definition of accessory dwelling has been added to Chapter 2, section 201.202, Definitions, to describe this type of dwelling. Also in Chapter 3, the use "Accessory dwelling" has been added as a special exception use permit option on parcels with a primary home on at least 2 acres in the districts of R-A, R-1, R-2, R-3, L-R, C-O and F-R.

Jeanne Vandersloot, Zoning Administrator

## INTERESTED IN GOVERNMENT?

### Why not consider helping your community and becoming more politically active by becoming an Election Inspector?

If you are interested in the political process, there is an option other than running for an elected office. Election inspectors are people who are paid to assist voters at the polls on election day. I am looking for several new election inspectors to serve in 2012. Candidates must be registered voters, and must submit an election inspector application. In addition to your name, address and date of birth, applicants must include their political party preference and qualifications to fill the position such as education or experience. Training is provided.

A precinct inspector cannot be a poll challenger, candidate, member of a candidate's immediate family or a member of the local Board of Canvassers. Anyone convicted of a felony or an elections crime may not serve. High school students (ages 16 and above) can be appointed to be an election inspector and do not need to be registered voters, but must declare a political party and can be paid. Students cannot, however, be Election Inspector Chairpersons.

Local election commissions appoint inspectors at least 21 days, but not more than 40 days, prior to an election. Election inspectors are covered by the Federal Minimum Wage Act.

If you are interested in applying for this important service to your community, you can call the township offices at 897-5671 to request a form, or go to the township web site at [www.vergennestwp.org](http://www.vergennestwp.org) and click on "Election Info". After filling it out, return to Mari Stone, Vergennes Township, PO Box 208, Lowell, 49331.

Mari Stone  
Vergennes Township Clerk

*Vergennes Township*  
*A Place Where People Like to Live*  
[www.vergennestwp.org](http://www.vergennestwp.org)



10381 Bailey Dr., P.O. Box 208, Lowell, MI 49331

897-5671

Hours: M, W, F – 9 A.M.–3 P.M.

**W**INTER  
2011-12

*Township Board Meetings are held the third Monday of every month at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Hall.  
Planning Commission Meetings are held the first Monday of every month at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Hall.*

## CLERK'S CORNER

*by Mari Stone, Vergennes Township Clerk*

### Elections

Here we are on the brink of another busy election year. At the time this article was written, it is looking like we will not have a May Election for school board seats, as state legislation will be requiring all school board candidates run in the November elections. So that means there will be three in 2012. (I am looking for several new Precinct Inspectors to help run these elections – see another article in this newsletter for more information on this important role.)

First, we will have a **Presidential Primary** throughout the State of Michigan on **February 28, 2012**. For this Primary, **there will be two ballots to choose from – one containing Democrat candidates and the other Republican**. Your choice of ballot will place you on a list that is available to the political parties. If you will be needing an absentee ballot you will also need to state on your application which party ballot to have sent. Send me a note at the hall, e-mail me at [clerk@vergennestwp.org](mailto:clerk@vergennestwp.org), or give the office a call at 897-5671 to be sent an Absent Voter application. The deadline to register to vote (if you have not already registered in Vergennes) in this election is January 30.

The other elections in 2012 include the **August 7th Primary** for local, state and non-partisan candidates to be placed on the General Election ballot, and then the **November 6th General Election**. The deadlines to register to vote (if you have not already registered in Vergennes) in these elections are July 9, and October 9.

And finally, I am also looking for an elections assistant to help with the added work load prior to an election. This role would require the candidate to be in the office during our regular business hours for several weeks before an election and all day on Election Day. Knowledge of computer programs is essential. If you

would be available and are interested, I would love to talk to you. Send me an e-mail at [clerk@vergennestwp.org](mailto:clerk@vergennestwp.org) and tell me the best way to contact you.

### Lowell Area Trailway News

As you have probably noticed, the first section of our community trail system was completed in September! It is being heavily used by residents with all levels of fitness. From runners and other athletes to families out for a walk, I see and hear from many who are just so glad to have someplace safe to exercise. The 2.5 mile section that is open goes from Cherry Creek Elementary on Foreman Road to the Wittenbach/Wege Center across from the High School. This section connects with the future Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail as well as the Middle School, Cherry Creek Elementary, City sidewalks, Creekside Kingdom, High School and Wittenbach/Wege Center where there are additional opportunities to experience their nature trail system. The trail incorporates several nature overlooks along the Alden Nash/Wege Property Section.

The Board of the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) is now working on signage, landscaping, benches, marketing and recognition for donors. Over the past 3 years they have raised just over \$1 million for this section of Phase I. There is a "buy-a-brick" program being offered to remember loved ones and families. You can contact Mari Stone at [clerk@vergennestwp.org](mailto:clerk@vergennestwp.org) for more information if you would like to support this effort.

More about LARA – The City of Lowell, Vergennes Township, Lowell Charter Township are working cooperatively for the purpose of developing, acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining trails for the use and enjoyment of the residents of the Townships and the City.

## CLERK'S CORNER CONTINUED

The board was established in 2004 and consists of 7 members. Andrew Schrauben (City of Lowell councilmember), Perry Beachum (City of Lowell rep), Linda Regan (Lowell Charter Township Board Member), Al Halbeisen (Lowell Township rep), Mari Stone (Vergennes Township Board Member), Betsy Davidson (Vergennes Twp rep), Gary Goff (At Large Representative). Dave Austin of Williams and Works, who also happens to be the designated Vergennes Township Engineer, is a City of Lowell resident and key member of the project.

LARA is an active board involved directly with the planning, fundraising and construction of the trail system that they have developed in a Trail Master Plan. The Trailway is designed to connect several important community elements such as the North Country Trail, Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail, Wittenbach/Wege trails, parks, schools, public facilities, and businesses with a non-motorized trailway. The Trailway will benefit the health, safety, and general welfare of the entire Lowell area with while improving non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities.

Beyond Building Phase I.....

**Trail connection to the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail.** The LARA Board has come up with several proposed routes within the City of Lowell to connect Foreman St to the Grand River Rd sections. They have submitted a grant to the Frey Foundation for a portion of the funds needed to plan/design the trail. The planning part of this is under \$10,000. They will be submitting another grant to another funding source to match. As far as the trail construction, that has been incorporated with another grant through the FMRVRT. The goal is to establish a route that is beneficial to our community, organizations and businesses.

**Friends of the Lowell Area Trailway.** LARA is currently working to establish a group to support and maintain the trails through donations and volunteer work. Having a Friends group is a huge need – filing the initial paperwork, establishing criteria & members and implementing. They do have an email list that will receive further information and if you would like to join, again you can contact Mari Stone.

**Lowell Rotary Club Pavilion.** LARA is working with the Lowell Area Schools and Lowell Rotary Club to establish a pavilion along the trail. The pavilion would have picnic tables and the recognition wall of donors of Phase I.

**Cooper Woodland Preserve.** LARA currently leases the Cooper Woodland Preserve from the Lowell Education Foundation. Currently there are trails on the property but no easement to get to the property. We are working with the land owner.

### High Speed Internet Update

Many of you have come to expect an update here on the progress of high speed or broadband internet providers in the township. I recommend you check the web sites (counter-intuitive if you have slow speed dialup, right? Sorry) of two local providers who are making progress with new offerings. Ryan Peel is constructing two towers in the township which should be ready to serve around the first of the year. His web site is [www.countdowntobroadband.com](http://www.countdowntobroadband.com), and has all the latest regarding his efforts. Current Lowell area provider REDfrog also has new information on their services. They are at [www.redfrogtech.com](http://www.redfrogtech.com).

## OAK WILT

### Oak Wilt in Vergennes Township

There have been several cases of Oak Wilt outbreaks reported in Vergennes. This tree disease is a rapidly spreading fungus that is carried by sap-feeding beetles. As the fungus invades a tree's water conducting system, the leaves turn dull green, bronze or tan, and wilt from the top of the tree downward. Leaves fall rapidly after wilting, and infected trees are bare in 4-6 weeks. One of the primary ways you can avoid this disease is to refrain from pruning or cutting your oaks during the warm months, when insects are active. More information is available on the following web site at MSU Extension Services: <http://www.extension.org/pages/35172/how-can-i-determine-if-my-oak-tree-has-oak-wilt>. If you have a tree you suspect has the disease, you can bring in a sample to an MSU Extension Services office and for \$5 they will diagnose for the homeowner. The gardening hotline number at our local extension office in Grand Rapids is **(616) 336-3881**.

## FROM THE TREASURER

### WINTER TAX 2011-12

Jean Hoffman, Treasurer

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year – The office will be closed on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> for the Christmas holiday. For your convenience, the office will be open on December 28<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup>. The last day to pay your tax bill in 2011 will be the 30<sup>th</sup> of December.**

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Taxes are due Tuesday, February 14, 2012. **IMPORTANT:** Because the township does not have office hours on Tuesday, we will accept your tax bill on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> without penalty. Please mail early. Postmarks are not accepted for due date!! We are not responsible for delays in the postal system. Please use the return envelope provided with your tax statements. If you would like a receipt, please enclose the **entire** bill and a self-addressed envelope. We will stamp the upper part and return it to you.

**Remember that you can make partial payments from the first of December through February 14<sup>th</sup>.** You will then only have interest added to the unpaid balance. Payments received after February 15<sup>th</sup> must include the penalty and interest. State law prohibits the township from waiving these charges. You may pay summer and winter 2011 taxes at the township through February 29<sup>th</sup>. All unpaid taxes will be turned over to the county treasurer on March 1, 2012.

**Make checks payable to: Vergennes Township Treasurer.**

**Please do not include dog licenses in the same check.**

**ONLINE PAYMENTS** must have the parcel number printed on them.

## DOG LICENSES

### PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO KENT COUNTY TREASURER

Dog Licenses will be available at the township hall from December 1, 2011 - March 1, 2012.

Rabies vaccinations and dog licenses are required in Michigan for all dogs four months of age or older.

### YOU WILL NEED:

1. PREPRINTED APPLICATION FORM FROM THE ANIMAL SHELTER
2. UPDATED RABIES VACCINATION (IF NEEDED)
3. PROOF OF SPAYING OR NEUTERING (IF NEEDED)

If you do not have preprinted form from the animal shelter, you must have a rabies certification and proof of neutering. Call the shelter at 616-632-7300 if you have any questions.



### \*\*\*\*HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS WISH LIST\*\*\*\*

Request from the Kent County Animal Shelter

- \*New bags of dog/puppy food
- \*New bags of Cat/kitten food
- \*Bleach
- \*New collars and leashes
- \*Laundry detergent
- \*Brushes and pet shampoo
- \*New Holiday Volunteers
- \*New or gently used blankets & towels
- \*New dog or cat treats (bring them in personally and hand them out to the animals)
- \*Pet store gift certificates
- \*Pet toys (new or gently used)

\*\*\*\*PLEASE CALL AHEAD 616-632-7300\*\*\*\*