



TOWNSHIP TATTLER

Sherman Township Board of Trustees:

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**"Sherman
Township —
a great place
to live.**



Volume 4, number 2

Autumn 2014

Above the Fold: Sewer System Meeting

We talked about the sanitary sewer-system problems in the previous newsletter edition (page 4), but we have more information to share. The Township held a meeting for system users in July to discuss the drain field repairs and impacts from sump pumps on the system. Sump pumps contribute to flooding of the drain field in late winter and spring. Sump pumps may not legally connect to the sanitary sewers, but some in Gay do.

Homeowners had suggested an option of reactivating the retired sewers to receive sump discharge. The Township asked several engineers about this possibility. Activating the old sewers would require video analysis to find collapses and then correcting them. The

video analysis alone would cost \$15,000 to \$20,000. The costs out-weighed the benefits of this option.

The remaining option would 'daylight' sump water to the outdoors through discharge pipes. Homeowners raised concerns regarding freezing of those pipes. This problem is easily resolved by using perforated pipe at the terminal end, which spreads the discharge over a large area. Cover the discharge pipe with straw or other insulation in winter. The ground does not normally freeze under heavy snow cover. Therefore, the discharge pipe should not form an ice plug.

The question arose as to where water would go once

discharged from the house. Many of the road ditches in Gay hold water and do not drain. This contributes to mosquito breeding and saturation of soil in people's yards. We contacted the Keweenaw County Road Commission and the county engineer agreed to modify ditches in 2015 so they flow away from the community, draining standing water.

Everyone must ensure that their sumps do not connect to the sanitary sewer (see diagram in prior edition). Those paying for the sanitary sewer will also pay for repairs caused by sump-water overload. Thank you for your understanding and cooperating in caring of your sewer system!

Straight from the Board: More Improvements to Buildings and Grounds

We spent this summer making additional improvements to Township buildings and grounds. Early in the summer, we hired LR Contracting to replace the twenty-one original, 1930's basement windows in the Community Hall and Office. Many of the original windows were broken and leaking cold air into the buildings.

The new glass-block windows will not easily break, provide good insulation and can open to vent air during the damp summer months. The Township is

very grateful to the Auxiliary for a generous donation to the project, paying for windows in the Community Hall! The Township paid for windows in the Office from the General Fund.

Other activities included 1) volunteers sealing the new asphalt along Second Street in August, 2) quaint camouflaging of the boarded windows in the old fire hall, 3) spray painting the old fire



hall to match the color of the other Township buildings, 4) painting the garage door of the old fire hall, 5) mulching and planting flowers around the Old School House Park sign, and 5) painting the Community Hall front doors and the Fire Hall side utility door.

Thank you to all the volunteers who took the time to help maintain the Township buildings and property!



Fireside Chat: VFD gets equipment - the complete story!

Personnel Changes

After 18 years of dedicated service, Fire Chief Dudley Martin, resigned from his position in August 2014. Chief Martin oversaw improvements in the department over the years, including upgrading personal protective gear for firefighter safety, a training program that met national standards for new personnel, updating fire suppression equipment for vehicles, and recruiting personnel.

The Sherman Township Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) elected Bob Strykowski, formally assistant fire chief, as the new fire chief. The Board of Trustees approved the selection. Strykowski comes to the position with a career in public service, as a retired police officer and detective. He also served many years on the VFD. Mike Jarvi accepted the position of assistant fire chief. Mike also has many years of service on the VFD, as well as experience as a firefighter in the military.

Strykowski set his first goal as fire chief to look into potentially replacing an aging and deteriorating fleet of four vehicles with three reliable firefighting vehicles. The fleet, consisting of a primary pumper (39 years old), a secondary pumper (35 years old), a state-owned wildland tanker/tender (42 years old), and a wildland brush fire truck (the youngest truck at 30 years old), has chronic and costly maintenance issues.

After discussion with our firefighters and other nearby fire departments, Strykowski felt that replacements should consist of a reliable pumper, tanker, and brush truck, all newer than our current trucks. First he and the Township Supervisor, Rob Middlemis-Brown, looked for financial grants to replace fire vehicles. Their research found only one grant source, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). The FEMA vehicle grant application process opens each November and funds must purchase **new** vehicles. Therefore, Strykowski would need to find a local 5% funding match (\$15,000) for a new pumper costing about \$300,000. Chief Strykowski also met with Michigan Department of Natural Resources to get on a list for replacement wildland-fire vehicles (tanker and brush truck).

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Feet to the Fire

Researching grant opportunities made the Township aware of two very important factors associated with firefighting: the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) national codes and the ISO (Insurance Service Office) national fire protection rating. Coincidentally, the ISO agent contacted the Township about setting up its periodic inspection of the VFD for maintaining certification. The ISO had not inspected our VFD for 15 years, but rule changes required inspections every five years, henceforth. The inspection would determine, among other things, if the firefighting vehicles met current NFPA codes.

After going through the several hundred pages of NFPA code to understand the requirements for certification, Strykowski concluded that none of the four vehicles would

meet the minimum qualifications because of outdated design and safety features that could not be corrected. The violations ranged from simple items such as seatbelt design to more difficult issues such as automatic braking systems and pump pressure safety valves.

Non-adherence to NFPA standards would result in decertification of the VFD. The ISO evaluation uses a graduated rating system of 1-9 with '9' being the poorest rating. All fire departments must have at least one vehicle that meets the 1991 NFPA Code to achieve the minimum rating of '9', otherwise the department becomes decertified. Decertification causes the State Fire Marshall Office to remove the department from the state liability and personal injury protection program. This, in turn, alerts both the Township's insurance carrier that liability risk of the VFD makes it uninsurable and local property insurers that the local houses have no fire protection. What began for Strykowski as a goal to improve service became a dire need to uphold property values and to prevent enormous costs to Township residents, resulting from contracting fire protection and increases in homeowner's insurance rates.

The ISO scheduled the inspection for less than two weeks from notification. Status quo for the VFD would result in decertification, unless swift and decisive action improved the state of firefighting readiness. First, Strykowski and Middlemis-Brown developed a 35-page, 10-year strategic plan, addressing the necessary actions to meet NFPA codes and ISO rating qualifications. Second, they made plans to replace the primary pumper with a vehicle that would meet NFPA codes for at least two future ISO inspections in 2019 and 2024.

The Auxiliary to the Rescue

After looking on the Internet at several hundred used fire truck listings, Chief Strykowski figured that the minimum funds needed to purchase a vehicle to meet our needs would be approximately \$35,000. The VFD runs on donations, not on a property tax mileage as most departments do, making funding a critical issue.

The Gay Fire Department Auxiliary (Auxiliary) had just finished another very successful year of fund raising. Chief Strykowski went to the Auxiliary to ask for substantial support for a replacement vehicle. Strykowski explained his original goal, to find local match for a FEMA vehicle purchase grant, but also how that changed with the ISO inspection and immediacy of need.

The Auxiliary understood the crises of either quickly replacing a vehicle or losing certification. The Auxiliary members unanimously voted to provide the requested \$15,000. Chief Strykowski and the VFD are very grateful to the Auxiliary for their overwhelming generosity, confidence and support.

Next, Strykowski approached the Board of Trustees, requesting the Township match the Auxiliary donation with money from the General Fund. The Board of Trustees also unanimously voted (one abstention) to allocate \$15,000 towards the purchase. The other \$5,000 for the estimated \$35,000 cost would come from the impoverished VFD

fund. Finally, the VFD had secured funding and a plan for vehicle replacement just days before the ISO inspection.

Inspection and Results

The ISO inspection started around noon on September 17 and lasted until around 8:00 PM that night. The Township and VFD had submitted to the ISO a vast amount of paperwork, requiring hours to complete, prior to the on site visit. The forms included three areas of documentation:

1. Detailed, technical specifications about the water supply, including maps locating hydrants, water mains and valves, diagrams of wells and storage tank and a schematic of the booster plant in the Community Hall basement.
2. Information on VFD, including vehicle inspection forms documenting NFPA compliance, certified emergency-vehicle-technician maintenance and pump/hose test documentation, training records for each firefighter's required 12 hours of annual structural-fire training and information on the certified personal protective gear available to each firefighter.
3. Additional documentation on community fire-protection outreach programs, a history of all call-outs for fire or other activities and a host of other information.

The ISO inspector first inspected the Gay water supply system, including pressure and volume testing of hydrants. The water system impressed him with the large storage capacity, large mains (6" pipe) and abundant hydrants. The inspector then inspected each fire vehicle with a focus on those designated for structural-fire suppression. As we had expected, he could not certify any of the vehicles. However, Middlemis-Brown shared the VFD plan to purchase a replacement vehicle within the next 60 days and the long-range plans to meet NFPA code. The inspector agreed to modify his rating, based on the proposed plans and the VFD's excellent reserve of personal protective gear.

The inspector worked with the VFD to determine how to improve the rating further in the next inspection. He stated that we need to improve documentation, to use certified technicians to maintain and test fire equipment, to install fire suppression inside the Fire Hall and to do more community outreach. Although not official until January 2015, the inspector estimated an ISO rating of '9' for all properties within five miles of the VFD and a '7' for all properties within 1,000 feet of a hydrant. We could increase ratings to '7' and '5', respectively, in the future if the department makes the suggested improvements. Improved ISO rating reduces the cost of homeowner's insurance.

Fulfilling a Promise

After traveling over 1,000 miles across two states to look at potential vehicles for purchase, the VFD bought a 1993 GMC Topkick E-One truck from the fire department in Boyne City, Michigan on September 28, 2014 for \$30,000. With an additional \$1,000, Boyne City included some extra equipment with the vehicle. Remaining funds would go to minor equipment and detail work on the pumper.

According to Chief Strykowski, "We will put the new pumper into service on November 1, as our primary pumper. We need some time to make certain the vehicle is fully equipped, fully detailed, and properly marked with our identification."

Afterwards, the VFD will take the 1979 pumper out of service, to be sold or scrapped, and the 1975 pumper will serve as a tanker.

What's Next? Grant Applications

At the time of this newsletter, the VFD is submitting FEMA grant applications for three different funding sources. The first source provides for new (current model-year) vehicle purchases. We have little likelihood of obtaining this grant because of our lack of fire call-outs, small population served, and relatively low property valuation in the service area, but there is no harm in trying.

The second source is an equipment and facilities grant to cover new hoses, nozzles, a thermal imaging camera, and other required equipment, as well as a sprinkler system for the Fire Hall. We have a good chance of obtaining this grant because of the small amount of money requested (\$20,000), we never before received this grant and our economic hardship.

The third source of funding opens in early 2015. This small grant (less than \$2,000) funding source would support community fire prevention programs with the purchase of smoke detectors, chimney fire suppression sticks, and escape ladders for distribution.

The VFD recognizes that our equipment will require maintenance and testing by a certified emergency-vehicle-technician to remain certified. We have established a relationship with a technician and plan to increase fund raising efforts to fulfill this requirement.

Support Your VFD

Chief Strykowski expresses his gratitude to everyone who has generously supported the VFD. From firefighters to the Auxiliary, the Board of Trustees and residents, so many have contributed to this effort.

We have increased our roster with the addition of several firefighters joining or rejoining the team. Welcome back to Mick Jarvi, and welcome to new firefighters, Ed Burger, Chuck Bennetts, and Bill Melchiori, all of whom will take the Fire Fighting 1 course as soon as it becomes locally available.

Please consider joining the VFD. We are an equal-opportunity organization with no restrictions as to age or gender of our firefighters! If firefighting is not your cup-of-tea, consider joining the Auxiliary in its fund raising.

Please watch for announcements of our open house this next spring. We will show-off the new primary pumper and the rest of our apparatus at the Fire Hall. Chief Strykowski also stated with a wink and sly smile that the open house would, of course, also be a fund-raising event!



Our new recruit: a replacement pumper - 1993 GMC Topkick E-One replaces the 39-year-old primary pumper and meets NFPA code as a certified pumper.



Sherman Township -- a great place to live.

Nestled on the east shore of the Keweenaw Peninsula, Sherman Township provides a lovely spot for a permanent or a vacation home. The area has one of the lowest populations in the state, but the township offers the amenities associated with a community. The Gay smokestack, seen for miles, is a navigational aid by land and water. The School House Park offers a lovely gathering and picnicking spot. The Gay Schoolhouse reminds us of an important heritage. The Community Hall provides handicap accessible meeting space and houses the Auxiliary's Sale and Bazaar. Visit the memorabilia on the stage of the Community Hall to learn more about our community's history.

We are on the web at
<http://keweenawcountyonline.org/township-sherman.php>

Township Board of Trustees meetings are open to the public on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM (unless otherwise noted) at the Township Office. Agendas are posted on the bulletin board in front of the Township Office prior to meetings.

Newsletter editor:
Sherry Middlemis-Brown,
Sherman Township resident

Sherman Township, located in



Electrical Outage—\$8,000 in Damage to Water Plant

A tree branch fell on the power lines on September 10, 2014, causing a power outage that affected Sherman Township. As the branch hit the lines, electricity oscillated between 20 and 120 volts for several minutes. Shifts in voltage caused extensive damage to controls for the three-phase, 240-volt pump motors in the water plant. Bob Strykowski, water plant operator, worked with the contractor, Bay Electric, from midnight to late the next morning to make emergency, short-term repairs. Although his efforts made the plant minimally operational, running on a single pressure pump by late morning of September 11, the pump that serves the fire hydrants could not be repaired. Bay Electric immediately ordered replacement parts with expedited shipping to make the plant fully operational as soon as possible.



The parts arrived on September 14 and installation took several days to complete. The system was fully operational by late afternoon on September 17, including the fire protection pump for the hydrants. Insurance covered the damage with a \$250 deductible. A big thank you to Bob Strykowski for his dedication and to Bay Electric for working through the night to get water back in the pipes!

Please remember, during a power outage please do not use water. The plant is not operational, even though you may have pressure in the pipes. If pressure goes down then the system is susceptible to contamination. If you have questions regarding your water or the plant, please notify us leaving a brief message at the office (906-296-1211) or send an email to the operator at shermantwp-water@pasty.net.

Thank You!

The Gay Fire Department Auxiliary had a very successful Sale and Bazaar season. Despite the early Labor Day reducing our sales to six, instead of the usual seven, we had a record year. Thank you, everyone who worked, donated and/or shopped. The next newsletter will give our schedule for 2015. Please consider joining the Auxiliary next spring.

Meet Your New Wastewater Treatment Operator!

After years of great service, Nathan Martin decided to move out of the area in September and had to resign from his position at the wastewater treatment facility in Gay. We will miss Nathan as he handled several emergency situations at the drain field over the years, always faithfully took reported readings and cleaned those nasty filters at the drain field. Thank you and best wishes to Nathan on his move to Minnesota!

After advertising for a replacement, Chuck Bennetts, stepped up to the task, offering his services as wastewater treatment operator in Gay. Although Chuck recently became a permanent resident, he quickly saw the needs of the community and wanted to help.

Chuck will obtain an operator's license from the State of Michigan. He serves as the primary contact for facility issues and can authorize emergency repairs from the on-call contractor and operation engineer. The Township greatly appreciates Chuck's willingness to take on the position and will fully support his goal of obtaining an operator's license!

