The quarterly newsletter for the residents of Laketown Township

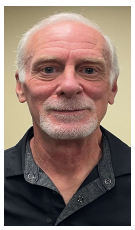
in Laketown

4338 Beeline Road
Holland, MI 49423

www.Laketowntwp.org (616) 335-3050

Summer 2025
Vol. 38 #2

Jollay



Partyka

Poel

Welcome new staff members

Three new people have joined the staff at Laketown Township.

Don Jollay is the new assessor, Jeff Partyka the new facilities operation staff member and Sophia Poel is the new admin. assistant/deputy treasurer.

New faces

Don Jollay is the new assessor, having started in June. He is a township employee contracted through Assessing Solutions Inc.

“Laketown Township has a great reputation — scenic views, a strong sense of community, and a

Continued on Page 5

Summer tax deadline

Summer tax bills are in the mail with a payment deadline of Sept. 15, 2025.

Questions, call (616) 335-3050.

August 5 election

Township millage proposals explained

No overall rate increase requested

Laketown Township property taxpayers pay for a variety of voter approved millages. Most of the property taxes paid, depending on where you live within the township, go toward services including schools, Allegan County, the State of Michigan, Herrick District Library, and the Holland Aquatic Center.

Of the total property taxes collected, 8 to 12 percent stay with Laketown. Most of the property taxes collected by the township are directed elsewhere.

Read the wording for each proposal: Page 6

The two proposals on the Aug. 5 ballot are to re-allocate 3 mills currently dedicated to: 2 mills for Fire, Roads, Non-Motorized Paths, and Drains and 1 mill for Fire, Safety & Emergency Services.

If approved, the two proposals will re-allocate the 3 mills over the next five years to: 1.5 mills for Roads, Non-Motorized

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Parks Commission

Work continues on beach stairs

By Brad Laninga

We've made it to summer here in Laketown Township and the work of the township and parks commission over the winter is beginning to blossom.

Beach stairs

The beach stairs from the lake to the top of the dune have been removed and we will soon go out to bid for replacing those stairs. The absence of stairs has made it much more difficult to navigate down to the water, but it is short term. The new stair section should be completed next spring.

Temporary fencing has been erected to protect the dune and grass plantings. The fencing is an attempt to prevent people from destroying the dune by climbing it. The fencing is ugly, but temporary. Once new stairs are installed, the fencing will be removed.

Huyser Farm

We are beginning conversations with the Land Conservancy and MSU regarding the blueberry field. This area has become overgrown and invasives identified by the conservancy and Outdoor Discovery Center. The parks commission will continue discussion with the agencies to find solutions to the invasives concerns and how best to maintain the blueberry fields in the future.

Participants in a hike led by the Outdoor Discovery Center at Sanctuary Woods Park look at birds on June 10 during a free event sponsored by the parks commission. For upcoming events at Laketown parks, see Page 3.

The commission

We continue to meet on the third Wednesday of the month and welcome township resident participation. In addition, you are encouraged to reach out to us by email at parks@laketowntwp.org.

Finally, I would like to thank each of the parks commissioners for their time, efforts, and dedication to the roles they have been elected to: Mary Jo Bertolino, Sherry Sirko, Michael Teekamp, and Tom Hoekman. Michelle Sall and Jim Hayden continue to support our commission well through their knowledge and understanding of the township and keeping a good record of our meetings each month. I appreciate Steven Ringelberg's leadership as our interim township manager and supervisor and his role with the township parks. We have a great team here.

Brad Laninga is chairperson of the Laketown Township Parks and Recreation Commission. He can be reached at parks@laketowntwp.org.

Turtles at Farview Park

Upcoming Outdoor Discovery programs

The Outdoor Discovery Center and Laketown Township Parks and Recreation Commission team up for **free** programs at township parks:

Blueberry Fields Forever
Monday, July 21, 11 a.m.-noon
Huyser Farm Park, 4188 64th St.

Learn about blueberries and how they have become a West Michigan industry. Bring buckets to take home some free blueberries from the u-pick patch.

Suggested age range: All ages welcome. Guardians stay with the class. Registration not required but appreciated.

Incredible Insects
Thursday, Aug. 21, 10-11 a.m.
Shore Acres Park, 6602 138th Ave.

Explore the dune trails of Shore Acres Township Park. Hunt for incredible insects hiding in the wild with nets and bug boxes.

Suggested age range: 5 to 13 years old. Guardians stay with the class. Registration not required but appreciated.

To register and for more information, visit outdoordiscovery.org.

Felt Estate

Celebrate the era of Gatsby

By Elizabeth McEwen

In 1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald published a slim novel that barely made a ripple upon its release. “The Great Gatsby” sold modestly, received mixed reviews, and faded from the spotlight as quickly as the Jazz Age it portrayed. Fitzgerald himself died in relative obscurity, unaware that the book he once called his best work would go on to become one of the most enduring (and beloved!) novels in American literature.

Now, 100 years later, “The Great Gatsby” stands as a towering cultural icon. It’s a staple in classrooms, a frequent subject of scholarly study, and a touchstone for every generation that confronts the complexities of identity, ambition, and the elusive promise of the American Dream. With its lush prose, unforgettable characters, and glittering vision of the 1920s, Gatsby has become more than a novel — it’s a lens through which we reflect on our own hopes, excesses, and ideals.

Set in a world of opulence, jazz, and moonlit longing, the story’s enduring power lies not just in its setting, but in its timeless themes: the yearning for something just out of reach, the reinvention of self, and the moral costs of unchecked wealth and desire. In many ways, Jay Gatsby’s lavish parties have come to symbolize an era, but they also mirror the contradictions of every era since.

At the Felt

As we celebrate the novel’s 100th anniversary, the Felt Estate is offering a nod to Gatsby’s world. This historic mansion's construction began the same year as Fitzgerald’s masterpiece was published, and it will come alive this holiday season with a Gatsby-inspired evening of music, dancing, and vintage charm. More than a festive affair, the **Nov. 29 Holiday Unveiling** event is a fundraiser supporting the continued restoration of the Felt Mansion, ensuring that future generations can enjoy and learn from this architectural treasure. Just as “The Great Gatsby” found its true place in history through the eyes of later generations, we are preserving the legacy of the past so its full significance can shine for years to come.

Elizabeth McEwen is the executive director of The Felt Estate. She can be reached at (616) 335-8982.

Township contacts

OFFICE: (616) 335-3050

HOURS
Mon, Tues, Thurs: 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

TOWNSHIP BOARD
Supervisor – Steven Ringelberg
steven@laketowntwp.org
Treasurer -- Jim Johnson
jim@laketowntwp.org
Clerk – Jim Delaney
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Trustee – Mark Timmerman
mark@laketowntwp.org
Trustee – Mike Koeman
mike@laketowntwp.org

PLANNING COMMISSION
Chair – Chad Nienhuis

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
Chair – Casey Kimes
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Chair – Brad Laninga
parks@laketowntwp.org

STAFF
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Assessor – Don Jollay
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Community Development/Zoning– Michelle Sall
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Admin. Assistant/Deputy Treasurer - Sophia Poel
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Admin. Assistant/Deputy Clerk -- Zoey Hallam
zoey@laketowntwp.org
Maintenance/Facilities – Jeff Partyka
jeff@laketowntwp.org
Public Information – Jim Hayden
jimh@laketowntwp.org
GRAAFSCHAP FIRE DEPARTMENT
Chief -- Doug DenBleyker
(616) 396-4060
chief@graafschapfire.org

Gibson Cemetery

Township honors veterans

Just ahead of Memorial Day, Michelle Sall, community development director, and Zoey Hallam, deputy clerk, refreshed the flower planters and placed flags on the graves of veterans at Gibson Cemetery, 6487 138th Ave. ***Photos by Zoey Hallam***

Legal Assistance Center services available to Laketown residents

The Allegan County Legal Assistance Center is a grant- and donation-funded initiative specifically targeting those Allegan County residents needing assistance with the legal process, but who cannot afford an attorney.

Laketown Township approved $1,725 for the group this fiscal year. The group assisted 27 Laketown residents from Jan. 3, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

The main goal of the center is to minimize the impact on justice involving children, victims of crime, and people with disabilities caused by inadequate paperwork, untimely filings, or confusion about service and notice requirements.

Legal Assistance Center **services are free**, but patrons may be charged a nominal fee for copying and printing.

The center is in the lower level of the Allegan County Courthouse in downtown Allegan.

For information, visit www.allegancounty.org/courts-law-enforcement/legal-assistance-center-aclac

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team of people who care deeply about serving their residents. I wanted to be a part of that," he said.

Jollay has been working in the assessment field with ASI for more than 4 years with experience in residential, commercial and agricultural assessments. His background includes a Michigan Advanced Assessing Officer (MAAO) certification from the State Tax Commission.

"I thoroughly enjoy getting out for fieldwork to meet the people we work for and hearing their stories," he said.

"I'm excited to be here — reach out anytime," he said. "Feel free to ask about the boat." Jollay has a 1979 Mastercraft. "More 'emotional support vessel' than functional watercraft," he joked.

Jollay can be reached at (616) 335-3050 or don@laketowntwp.org.

Jeff Partyka is the new facilities operation staff member who began June 23.

"My wife and I love the area and visit the township parks regularly," he said. "My love for working in parks drew me to apply for the Laketown Township position. I'm grateful to have been hired for the position and promise to do my best to care for the Laketown Township parks and facilities."

Partyka is a graduate of Northern Michigan University with a degree in natural resources and environmental conservation. He has a master gardener's certificate. He has managed three state parks and a landscape/design company, was facilities manager for a sports and recreation facility and worked at the Holland Aquatic Center.

Partyka can be reached at (616) 335-3050 or jeff@laketowntwp.org.

Sophia Poel is the new deputy treasurer, having started June 10. Poel worked part-time for the township from 2019-2021.

"When the opportunity arose to work at Laketown again and serve its residents, I was beyond excited, and I knew it was the right choice for me. I am very thankful to serve such a remarkable township," she said.

Poel graduated from Hamilton High School and Western Michigan University with a Bachelor of Business Administration majoring in Business Law.

"I'm extremely grateful to return to Laketown and learn how to best serve the residents and understand how the township operates," Poel said. "I'm excited to assist Treasurer Jim Johnson and fulfill the duties of deputy treasurer. The previous deputy treasurer, Charlene Fields, has been training me and she offers a plethora of information. The township has done a great job setting up this position for success." Poel can be reached at (616) 335-3050 or sophia@laketowntwp.org.

Hazardous waste collection

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day for Laketown Township residents is **Sept. 20** from 8-11:30 a.m. at Republic Services of Holland Westshore Recycling, 4368 60th St.

Voucher

To control vehicle traffic and quantities of hazardous waste to be disposed, vouchers are required. Vouchers may be picked up at the Republic Services of Holland scale house before the collection date. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

You will need a valid ID and a current account with Republic to receive a voucher.

Vouchers are only valid for the date noted, must be presented at drop-off and will not be issued on the day of the event.

For details, visit laketowntwp.org/trash-services

Here's what's on the Aug. 5 ballot

Voters in Laketown Township head to the polls on Tuesday, Aug. 5, 2025. All voters will see two proposals – Roads, Non-Motorized Paths, and Drain Millage Renewal and Fire Department Millage Proposal.

Voters in Precinct 1 will also have a bond proposal from Holland schools.

Here is the ballot wording as presented on the Allegan County Clerk's website:

ROAD, NON-MOTORIZED PATHS, AND DRAIN MILLAGE RENEWAL PROPOSTION

Shall a previous increase in property taxes of 2.0 mills on the total amount of taxes which may be assessed against property in Laketown Township, Allegan County, Michigan, as provided in the Michigan Constitution of 1963, be decreased to 1.5 mills ($1.50 per thousand dollars of taxable valuation) for three years, 2026 through 2028, inclusive, to provide funds for the repair, construction, reconstruction and/or blacktopping of roads and non-motorized paths in the Township; and to provide funds for the repair and maintenance of drains in the Township; and shall the Township be authorized to levy the tax?

(ESTIMATE OF REVENUE RAISED). The estimated revenue the Township will collect if the millage is approved and levied in the 2026 calendar year is approximately $984,700.00 which is approximately $388,900.00 less than if it was renewed at 2.0 mills.

FIRE DEPARTMENT MILLAGE PROPOSITION

Shall a previous increase in property taxes of 1.0 mill (reduced by required rollback to 0.985 mill) on the total amount of taxes which may be assessed against property in Laketown Township, Allegan County, Michigan, as provided in the Michigan Constitution of 1963, be increased to 1.5 mill ($1.50 per thousand dollars of taxable value) for five years, 2025 through 2029, inclusive, to provide operating funds, equipment, and apparatus for the Fire Department; and shall the Township be authorized to levy this tax?

(ESTIMATE OF REVENUE INCREASE). The estimated revenue the Township will collect if the millage is approved and levied in the 2026 calendar year is approximately $937,750.00 which is approximately $312,000.00 more than if it was renewed at 1.0 mills

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF HOLLAND BOND PROPOSAL

Shall the School District of the City of Holland, Ottawa and Allegan Counties, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed Forty-Nine Million Two Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($49,225,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, in one or more series, for the purpose of:

erecting additions to, remodeling, including security improvements to, furnishing and refurnishing, and equipping and re-equipping school buildings; acquiring and installing instructional technology and instructional technology equipment for school buildings; erecting school support buildings; purchasing school buses; and erecting, developing and improving athletic fields and facilities, parking areas, and sites?

The following is for informational purposes only:

The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2026 is .63 mill ($0.63 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation) for a -0- mill net increase over the prior year's levy. The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is thirty (30) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 1.03 mills ($1.03 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation).

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Paths, and Drains for three years.

- 1.5 mills for Fire Safety & Emergency Services -- Graafschap Fire Dept. for five years.

A “Yes” vote for both proposals on Aug. 5 would approve the re-allocation of the 3 mills as shown above. The total millage rate does not increase.

A “No” vote impacts each ballot proposal differently. Because the dedicated millages were approved by voters at different times, with different durations, they have different expiration dates.

- The current millage of 2 mills for Fire, Roads, Non-Motorized Paths, and Drains will expire at the end of 2026.
- The current millage for Fire Safety & Emergency Services -- Graafschap Fire Department has already expired.

A “No” vote on Proposal 1 (Roads, Non-Motorized Paths, and Drains) is a vote to keep the current 2 mill allocation in place without reducing and re-allocating a portion of it.

A “No” vote on Proposal 2 (Fire Safety & Emergency Services -- Graafschap Fire Department) would eliminate this funding.

The Laketown Township Board voted unanimously in May 2025 to separate and re-allocate how the 3 mills can be used in the future while ensuring there was no overall millage rate increase. This provides funding stability to the Graafschap Fire Department and increases transparency.

Questions? Please email or call township Supervisor Steven Ringelberg, (616) 335-3050, steven@laketowntwp.org or Graafschap Fire Department Chief Doug DenBleyker, (616) 396-4060, chief@graafschapfire.org.

From the clerk’s office

Ready for the August election

By Zoey Hallam

Preparations are underway for the Aug. 5 election. Precinct 1 voters will see three items on the ballot: a Holland City School District bond proposal, the fire department millage, and the roads, non-motorized paths, and drain millage. Voters in Precincts 2 and 3 will vote on the two township-wide millage proposals.

May election

Laketown Township successfully administered the May 6 Special Election, which featured a proposal from the Ottawa County Intermediate School District on all three precinct ballots and a bond proposal from Holland Public Schools for voters in Precinct 1.

By the numbers:

Registered voters: 5,411
Ballots cast: 1,101
Turnout: Just over 20 percent
Absentee ballots sent: 1,379
Absentee ballots returned: 834

Professional, accurate

This election also marked the debut of two new precinct chairs in Precincts 1 and 2: Nancy Jongetjes in Precinct 1 and Melonie Mattson in Precinct 2. Both did an outstanding job and contributed to a smooth and efficient Election Day.

Election days are long and demanding. I began my day at 6 a.m. and finished around 1 a.m. after delivering the results to Allegan County. I also attended the county canvass on May 8, where our office’s accuracy and professionalism were once again affirmed by county officials.

Zoey Hallam is Laketown Township Deputy Clerk. She can be reached at (616) 335-3050 and Zoey@laketowntwp.org.

Interurban starting strong

The Interurban Transit Authority picked up or dropped off 833 people in Laketown Township during the first month of a trial service.

About half of the riders were adults and the other half children during May.

“The first month of our pilot program was a great success. We provided transportation for several school children to and from Saugatuck Public Schools, as well as many residents traveling to Saugatuck, Douglas, and Fennville,” said Becky Carten-Crandell, executive director of the transit authority.

Popular stops

The popular pickup and drop-off sites include Sand Castle Estates off 64th Street, the Creekwood area on 65th Street and 66th Street north of 140th Avenue, 64th Street north of 146th Avenue, Sailview Drive, and the Shangrai-La Mobile Home Park, 6180 Blue Star Highway.

Bus service began in Laketown Township on May 1 for a trial period through Oct. 31. The goal is to collect data to provide the township board with a factual basis so it can determine whether or not the township will support continuing the service after the test period.

If the trial is a success, the township may look at permanent funding in 2026, possibly with a millage.

“We have received quite a bit of correspondence and public comments at meetings from residents who really appreciate the board of trustees for bringing the Interurban service into Laketown. The board of trustees would like all Laketown residents to send us your thoughts on the Interurban bus service in Laketown,” said Supervisor and Township Manager Steven Ringelberg.

Call (616) 335-3050 or send comments to office@laketowntwp.org.

Erica Shirey of Laketown Township boards the Interurban Transit Authority bus on May 1 during the first day of service in Laketown Township.

What you need to know

The fare for a ride during standard hours is $1 for adults and 50 cents for children, seniors and those with disabilities.

People who want a ride call **(269) 857-1418** and set a time for a bus to pick them up at their location and then take them to another spot in Laketown Township, Saugatuck Township, the cities of Douglas, Saugatuck or Fennville and the wineries in Ganges Township.

The Interurban also provides prescription delivery services from Saugatuck Drug Store, 201 Butler St., for $2 and food delivery services from many area restaurants for a $3 charge.

Regular bus service hours are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Extended hours in June, July and August include Friday and Saturday evenings until 11 p.m. $3 fare per adult.

For more details, visit Saugatuckinterurban.org.

Fire department

Check smoke alarm batteries

By Doug DenBleyker

The deadline for this newsletter was before the annual pancake breakfast so an update will be in the fall newsletter.

Please read the information provided in this newsletter about the upcoming election on Aug. 5. There is a question regarding funding for the Graafschap Fire Department.

Total calls, smoke alarms

To date we have responded to 438 calls for service and are on pace for a near record year.

If you recently replaced any hard-wired smoke alarms with the Kidde brand and have issues, please reach out if you have intermittent nuisance alarms.

If the Graafschap Fire Department installed smoke alarms for you more than 10 years ago, please contact us at (616) 396-4060. Those lithium battery alarms should be replaced every 10 years.

Grill safely this summer!

Doug DenBleyker is the chief of Graafschap Fire Department that serves all of Laketown Township and part of Fillmore Township. He can be reached at (616) 396-4060 or chief@graafschapfire.org.

Recycling, short-term rentals

By Steven Ringelberg

The township's contract with Republic Services is expiring in about a year and a half, and the township also has the option of terminating the contract early.

The township staff, with input and assistance from interested residents, continues to look at options for improving the overall services from our single-hauler provider, improving the yield of recyclable materials that township residents separate from their trash each week, providing flexible options for areas in our township with unique needs, keeping the number of garbage trucks on our roads as low as possible, and keeping the cost of materials handling services lower than surrounding communities.

Write or call the township if you have ideas or concerns.

Short-term rentals

The Laketown Township Board of Trustees implemented a six-month moratorium on new licenses for single-family homes as short-term rentals for the purpose of giving the township planning commission and the township board time to (a) review the township's existing short-term rental ordinances, and (b) seek input from residents about how they would or would not like short-term rentals regulated. The township board and the planning commission will hold a joint meeting on the subject in August for the specific purpose of getting input from interested residents. Meanwhile:

Long-term rental housing is not affected. Short-term rentals of attached accessory dwelling units are not affected. Short-term rentals of detached accessory dwelling units are not affected. Short-term rentals of free-standing single-family homes that were licensed by the township prior to May 19, 2025, are not affected and renewals of those licenses will be processed as before.

Prior to 2020, the township did not regulate rental housing at all – rentals were not mentioned in the zoning code or other ordinances. Prior to 2020, it was a zoning violation to rent out a house in any residential zoning district (unless the home was used as a rental prior to 1955, when the first version of the zoning code was enacted).

Write or call the township if you have ideas or concerns about short-term rentals.

Steven Ringelberg is Laketown Township supervisor and manager. He can be reached at steven@laketowntwp.org or (616) 335-3050.

LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP
4338 BEELINE RD
HOLLAND, MI 49423

Herrick District Library

Library busy with summer reading, makers

By Sara DeVries

Herrick District Library's summer reading program celebrating around the theme, "The Truth is Out There," continues through Aug. 9 with partners Ottawa County Parks and the City of Holland Recreation Department.

Visit herrickdl.org/summer-challenge.

Meet the author

Meet beloved picture book author and musician Eric Litwin, whose work includes the original four books featuring Pete the Cat, as well as "Groovy Joe," "The Nuts," and more. He'll read from his books, sing some original songs, and share the joyful reading and music that has characterized his work for many years.

Litwin and special guest character Pete the Cat will perform on Wednesday, July 16 at the Main Library, 300 S. River Ave., at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. with a book signing in between at noon. Another performance will take place at the North Branch, 155 Riley St., at 3 p.m. with a book signing to follow at 4 p.m. Litwin will be able to sign books.

Maker-in-Residence

Printmaker and illustrator Alynn Guerra of the Tanglefoot Artists Studio community in Grand Rapids and owner of Red Hydrant Press is the library's summer Maker-in-Residence. Stop by the Main Library beginning July 12 to view her work or watch her create art at one of the six drop-in sessions listed at herrickdl.org. Alynn will also offer two "Intro to Printmaking" workshops, one for kids on July 24 at 2 p.m. and the other for adults and teens on Aug. 7 at 5:30 p.m. Registration required at herrickdl.org/events.

Sara DeVries is community relations manager at Herrick District Library.