

AUGUST 2017

## Your Township Board

Supervisor.....Roger Seely  
Clerk.....Patrice Rose  
Treasurer.....Dave Vonk  
Trustee.....Ed Meny  
Trustee.....Tom Milnikel  
Trustee.....Ron Griffin  
Trustee.....Melissa Hahn  
Manager.....Denise Cook

## Other Township Officials

Building Inspector.....Troy Gano  
Ordinance Officer.....Troy Gano  
Assessor.....Sue Rice  
Chief of Police.....Ross Bates

## Township Meetings

Township Board of Trustees  
6 p.m. 1st Monday of the month  
(Board Workshop at 12:00 Noon)

Planning Commission  
6:30 p.m. 2nd Tuesday Bi-Monthly

Zoning Board of Appeals  
7 p.m. 2nd Wednesday  
(As Requested)

**MEETINGS ARE HELD AT THE  
TOWNSHIP HALL AND ARE  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**Township Hours**  
**The Township Hall is open**  
**Monday-Friday**  
**8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

## FROM THE SUPERVISOR'S DESK

Roger Seely, Supervisor

You were probably surprised to see the fall/winter addition of Community Update in your mailbox today. Township officials are making good use of taxpayer \$\$'s by combining this newsletter with some frequently asked questions that surfaced at the rubbish assessment proposal public hearing which took place in June. The Board will be revisiting the rubbish funding issue again in the near future. Please see pages 9, 10 and 11 for more information.



In a few weeks we will be moving into another colorful autumn in southwest Michigan. When the leaves start to fall remember... all leaves must be bagged in large brown paper yard waste bags or placed in containers clearly labeled "Yard Waste". Plastic bags are not allowed. You may either purchase your own container and label it, or rent one from Best Way Disposal. (269-463-3232)

It is difficult to think ahead to winter when the weather is warm and kids are still on summer break but we would like to share a few winter reminders.



**SNOWPLOWING:** SJCT (St. Joseph Charter Township) roads are plowed by the BCRC (Berrien County Road Commission). MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) plows Niles Road and S. Lakeshore Drive. Village of Shoreham roads are plowed by a private contractor hired by the Village Council. The Road Commission plows in the following order: 1) primary roads are opened for emergency vehicles; 2) secondary roads are opened to link primary roads; 3) subdivision roads are opened when both primary and secondary roads are stabilized.

Remember:

1. Plan ahead. When bad weather is announced, stock up on food, water, flashlights, batteries and any other necessities.
2. Prepare your vehicle by maintaining antifreeze, motor oil, battery and tires. Carry flares, blankets, coats, hats, gloves, boots, shovel and any other item you may need if you should get stuck for any length of time.
3. Stay off the roads if a snow emergency is announced. This will ensure your safety and also the safety of the Road Commission crew.
4. Only lightweight aluminum or fiberglass markers are allowed to mark the road edge.
5. Do not run portable generators in your home or garage. Portable generators give off deadly carbon monoxide in enclosed places.

*Have a safe autumn and winter and enjoy the holidays!*



"Update" is published periodically in an effort to inform residents of the many activities in St. Joseph Charter Township. Inquiries or future articles should be directed to the Manager.



## FROM THE CLERK - Elections



Patrice Rose, Clerk

### November 7<sup>th</sup> Election Information:

Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m.

Lakeshore Public Schools Millage Election: November 7, 2017

Voter Registration Last Day to Register: October 10, 2017

Voting Precinct: St. Joseph Township Hall, 3000 Washington Avenue  
New Life Church, 3265 S. Cleveland Avenue

**A request has been submitted to Berrien County to consolidate the precincts into one location. If that request is granted, all voting will be at the Township Hall. If you normally vote at New Life Church, you will be notified by mail. Please be certain of your voting location prior to Election Day.**

If you have not already registered to vote, you may do so in person or by mail. The mail-in form can be found on the Township web-site at [www.sjct.org](http://www.sjct.org) under **Departments/ Elections/Forms**. You may also register in person at any Secretary of State office, or at the St. Joseph Township Hall, 3000 Washington Avenue. If you register in person at the Township Hall, you will be asked to present a picture ID.

### Absentee Voting:

You may vote by absentee ballot if you:

- Expect to be absent from the community in which you are registered for the entire time that the polls are open on Election Day.
- Are physically unable to attend the polls without the assistance of another.
- Cannot attend the polls because of the tenets of your religion.
- Have been appointed an election precinct inspector in a precinct other than the precinct where you reside.
- Are 60 years of age or older.
- Cannot attend the polls because of confinement in jail awaiting arraignment of trial.

Anyone meeting the criteria may obtain an application for absentee voting by:

- Letter
- Post card
- Federal Post Card Application. (NOTE: This is restricted to members of the armed forces and their spouses and dependents; members of the Merchant Marines and their spouses and dependents; U.S. citizens temporarily living or traveling outside of the territorial limits of the United States)
- In person at the Township Clerk's office or online at [www.sjct.org](http://www.sjct.org) under **Elections/Forms/Absentee Ballot Application**, fill out the application, and mail it to the St. Joseph Charter Township Clerk's Office.

### Out-of-town college students:

If you registered to vote by mail and are a first-time voter, you are not allowed to receive an absentee ballot unless identification is provided in person to the clerk's office. You may also go to the nearest Michigan Secretary of State Office and they will confirm your identity for us. Once your identity has been confirmed, an absentee ballot application will be sent to the address requested.

### Please Note:

According to Michigan Election Law, effective March 27, 2013, if a voter applies for an absent voter ballot in person at the clerk's office, the voter is required to present a photo ID or sign an *Affidavit of Voter not in Possession of Picture Identification* form. Listed below are the acceptable forms of photo ID. The photo ID must be current and not expired.

- Michigan driver's license or Michigan personal ID card
- Driver's license or personal ID card issued by another state
- Federal or state government-issued photo ID
- U.S. passport
- Military identification card with photo
- Student identification with photo from a high school or an accredited institution of higher education
- Tribal identification with photo

**Absentee ballots returned via the United States Postal Service MUST include additional postage. You may also drop them off in person at the Township Hall**, or slip them in the afterhours drop box located to the left of the front entrance door at the Township hall. Please remember that the ballots must be in our office by 8pm on Election Day to be counted.

## FROM THE CLERK, continued

### Frequently asked questions:

#### **Q. Who is allowed to return an absentee ballot or an absentee ballot application?**

**A.** Persons who may return an absentee ballot are limited to 1) the voter 2) a member of the voter's immediate family who has been asked to return the ballot 3) a person residing in the voter's household who has been asked to return the ballot 4) a person whose job normally includes the handling of mail (but only during the course of his or her employment) and 5) an authorized election official.

*\*(The Bureau of Election's definition of immediate family includes: father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild.)*

#### **Q. I am the Power of Attorney for a voter. May I sign the voter's absentee ballot application and/or absentee ballot envelope?**

**A.** No. Election law does not allow for anyone but the voter to sign his/her absentee ballot application and/or absentee ballot envelope. If the voter is physically unable to sign his/her name, he/she must record an X or other mark on the signature line as able or the State now allows the use of signature stamps. If the voter has been provided assistance, the person providing assistance must complete the portion of the absentee ballot envelope as required.

#### **Q. I am on the Permanent Absentee Voter List. Why do I need to complete an Application for Absentee Ballot for each election?**

**A.** Election law requires a written request for absentee ballot for each election you choose to vote absentee. It's the same as voting in a regular precinct; each time you vote, you fill out an application to vote form. The exception is in an election year that has an August Primary and a November General election. Voters on the Permanent Absentee Voter List are sent a dual application that covers both the Primary and the General election for that year.

#### **Q. How much will it cost to return my Absentee Ballot by mail?**

**A.** Cost to return ballots is dependent on the ballot size. After the Township receives the ballots (approx. 45 days prior to the election) we can determine the cost.

#### **Q. What is the deadline for requesting an absentee ballot application?**

**A.** If the ballot must be issued by mail, the application must reach the Township no later than 2:00 p.m. on the Saturday prior to the election. (The Township office is open on that day from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.) Absentee Ballots may be picked up by the voter in person anytime up to 4:00 p.m. on the day prior to the election but the ballot must be voted in the office, the voter is not permitted to leave the office with the ballot. A voter may make an "emergency" request for absentee ballot for reasons of 1) personal disablement or 2) a family death or illness which will require the voter to leave the Township for the entire time the polls are open on Election Day. The emergency must have occurred at a time which made it impossible for the voter to apply for an absentee ballot by the statutory deadline for "regular" applications. All absentee ballot requests must be processed on our computer that is linked to the State. This process includes issuing an application, receiving the application, issuing a ballot and receiving the ballot. We have a very small election staff; and the week prior to an election is extremely busy with preparations for the election. Although, not every situation can be planned, if you know ahead of time that you will need an absentee ballot, please request and return your ballot before the week preceding an election. Our staff will greatly appreciate your help. (Election law allows a voter to submit a request for an absentee ballot 75 days prior to an election.)

### **Election Workers**

We are fortunate to have dedicated workers that offer their time and abilities to ensure that our elections run smoothly. We highly value these individuals and would like to encourage even more of you to assist our residents in exercising their privilege to vote.

You may serve as an election worker if:

- You are 18 years old or older and a registered voter in the State of Michigan
- You are 16-18 years of age (Parent/School permission required)
- You complete an application and submit it to the clerk
- You attend training (You will receive pay for training and for working on Election Day)
- You have never been convicted of a felony or election crime

If you are interested in becoming an election worker, complete an Election Inspector Application at the Township Hall or you may obtain the form online at [www.sjct.org](http://www.sjct.org) under **Elections/Becoming an Election Worker**.



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**BUILDING DEPARTMENT***Troy Gano, Building Inspector*

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Everyone is trying to wrap up those outdoor projects before the weather turns, and just remember homeowners that most projects such as re-roofing, replacing windows or doors, adding or replacing decks or fences, etc. all require permits. If a contractor is doing the work they should be pulling the permit. You, as a homeowner, are allowed to pull permits for projects you do, but you must be aware that you will have to do the work according to the current building codes and zoning. If you pull a permit and hire a contractor, you are assuming the responsibility and liability of the project, this is why we encourage that the contractor be the one to hold the responsibility.

Thank you, and have a safe rest of the year with any projects you plan to accomplish. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact the building department at 269-429-7703.

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**ORDINANCE DEPARTMENT***Troy Gano, Ordinance Enforcement*

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As we approach the Fall, leaves will be coming down and yard waste will become an ongoing struggle. Just as a reminder all approved yard waste containers need to be kept on the side or rear of your property until your regular trash day. If we all do our part to keep our yards clean the overall appearance to us that live here and to visitors passing through will keep us as a sought-after community.

**As we move into fall, we have a few reminders:**

- **There is no burning of yard waste allowed in St. Joseph Charter Township.** All leaves must be bagged in the large brown paper bags or placed in containers clearly labeled “Yard Waste” (we have these stickers available for free in our office). You may either purchase your own container and label it or rent one from Best Way Disposal (463-3232).
- **We do not offer curbside leaf vacuuming.** Again, all leaves must be in paper bags or containers. ***Please - Do NOT use plastic bags of any sort for leaves—they WILL NOT be picked up!*** These bags get caught in and foul the machinery used to turn the compost piles.
- **If you don’t keep your property mowed and cleaned up (yes, even the back yard),** you will be contacted by the Ordinance Office and if there is no compliance, we will mow or clean up your property for you at your expense. You will be invoiced for the cost of this service *plus a service fee* and, if unpaid, the charges will be placed on your winter property tax bills. As a special assessment, these line items are not deductible and may increase your monthly escrow payments, if any. *Litter and debris left around a house creates rodent and insect harborage, which is a health hazard to everyone nearby.* **Landlords: You are responsible for your property!**
- **Vehicles, campers, trailers, etc. stored on your property MUST be licensed and on an improved surface,** and, if motorized, capable of moving under their own power. If these criteria are not met, they MUST be stored in your garage or offsite.
- **Dog barking** continuously is deemed a nuisance and prohibited. Dogs bark when they see a dog or people near their property and a reasonable amount is allowed.

**Questions?** Please call 269-429-7703. We have answers!

**PARKS / PUBLIC WORKS**

Dave Rindfield, Director

**Parks** Township parks officially close November 1st through April 1st. Water will be turned off and bathrooms will be closed by the second week in October. Please remember when the parks are closed for the winter, vehicles and snowmobiles are not allowed in the parks. Walking and cross-country skiing is allowed.



We will continue to take reservations for the pavilions until September 30th and start accepting reservations for 2018 on January 2nd. Pavilions may be reserved from May 1st through September 30th.

**Sewer** The Township owns and maintains roughly 64 miles of sewer line. We will be starting a sewer cleaning grant that will consist of cleaning and videoing most areas that are over 20 years old. We have contracted with Corby Energy Services. They will start in November of 2017 and will take approximately 8 months to complete. During this time please be cautious when driving in the township, since most of our sewers are in the middle of the road. We will be sending out notifications when they are going to be in your area, and Corby will also be putting out door hanger notices a few days before.

Disposable wipes continue to be a problem in our waste water system. These wipes are plugging sewer lines, getting caught in the pumps, and causing major damage to the pumping stations. **Please remember the only thing that should be flushed down the toilet is toilet paper.**



The Township has installed Permanent Generators on two more sewer pumping stations this summer. This will help considerably when we have many big storms and power outages.

**Water** The Township has had many volunteers painting fire hydrants again this summer, including a young gentleman who is an Eagle Scout. Any person or group who would like to volunteer to paint hydrants, please let us know as we will be starting again in the spring.

**Storm Water/Watershed Management** Just a reminder we all have to work together to prevent pollution of the surface water runoff to the rivers and streams. There are brochures located on the counter at the township hall showing how to prevent pollution to our storm water system.

**BERRIEN COUNTY RECYCLING EVENTS**

The Berrien County Parks Department has two Recycling Events left this year!

Saturday, September 23 from 9:00am to 1:00 pm for household chemicals and electronics at the Silver Beach County Park, 101 Broad Street, (below the bluff) St. Joseph.

Saturday, October 14 from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon for household chemicals, electronics and document shredding at the Southeast Berrien County Landfill Recycle Center, 3200 Chamberlain Road, Buchanan.

Household Chemicals accepted: Home, garden and garage chemicals, used motor oil and filters, yard and garden chemicals, antifreeze, gasoline, stain, oil-based paint, varnish, household & car batteries, cleaners, paint thinner, unwanted pills and other medications, medical needles/sharps, mercury items, compact fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, photo chemicals, pool chemicals, small 1-lb propane cylinders, adhesives, driveway sealer & more.

Electronics: Unwanted equipment that has a cord or is battery operated such as computers, monitors (\$10/monitor fee), televisions (\$20/TV fee), telephones, cell phones, printers, large/small appliances, window air conditioners, DVD/VCR players, power tools, dehumidifiers, cameras, etc.

For more information contact Berrien County Parks Department 269-983-7111 x8234 or [jadams@berriencounty.org](mailto:jadams@berriencounty.org).



## TREASURER'S REPORT



Dave Vonk, Treasurer

### DOG LICENSES WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE TOWNSHIP HALL BEGINNING ON DECEMBER 1ST.



Please bring with you the new license form that will be sent to you in November by Berrien County. If it will expire within the next 30 days (look at the vaccination date in the lower right corner), you will need to bring in a new "Rabies Vaccination Certificate" (NOT a veterinary receipt showing that you paid for one). There is information on the certificate that we need to copy onto the new license information. If you have a new dog that has not been licensed in Michigan before, you MUST bring in the rabies vaccination certificate and proof of neutering/spaying, if applicable. Fees are on the front of the license form that we will validate for you at the time that you pick up your new tag. Speaking of the tags: We see many people walk in and out of here with the previous year's license still taped to the paperwork. The tag is supposed to go on the collar - *even if it "clinks"*. Should your dog escape your yard or dash out the front door quickly, you will be grateful when that tag helps your pet be returned to you.

**SUMMER TAXES ARE DUE SEPTEMBER 14TH. TAXES PAID AFTER THAT DATE WILL HAVE A LATE FEE. YOU SHOULD RECEIVE YOUR WINTER PROPERTY TAX BILL DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER.** Please read all of the information carefully, both front and back. Property taxes in Michigan are written in statute (law) and there is very little that local units of government can do outside of those statutes. Also, in Michigan, the "Tax Lien Dates" are *always* July 1st and December 1st, so taxes are mailed just before those two dates. *We cannot take payments prior to those lien dates*, so please don't ask us to take early payments.

**LAST CALL TO PAY YOUR WATER/SEWER BILL!!** Delinquent water/sewer balances more than 60 days late will be placed on the winter property tax bill. This is NOT a deductible item, and the increased balance on your bill COULD affect your monthly mortgage payment, if any. Contact the water department at St. Joseph City (269-983-6324) to make immediate arrangements for payment of outstanding balances.



#### Things to remember:

- ... **If you have not received your tax bill by the 10th of December** (or, in summer, the 10th of July), **PLEASE - CALL US (269-932-0269)**. We can provide you with a duplicate copy. Please **plan ahead** if you are heading out of town for the winter because, **by law even if you never received a bill, you are responsible for knowing when your taxes are going to be billed and when they are due**. Sometimes things get lost in the mail, are mis-delivered or, more commonly, someone forgot to notify us of an address change. Please communicate changes to us that could affect your ability to receive your bill. It's easy to forget to pay if you don't have the bill in front of you to remind you.
- ...**PLEASE ALLOW 10 DAYS IF MAILING YOUR PAYMENT** *All of our mail now goes to Grand Rapids and back, so extra time is needed.* Late fees WILL be added to payments received after the due date. As the due date gets closer, and if you are in the local area, you can always drop off payments in the **drop box** to the left of our front door.
- ... **If your finances are a little "tight"** (and whose aren't?), you can make partial payments against your property tax balance *beginning on the day that you receive your tax bill*. Call 269-932-0269 if you have any questions on this.
- ...**Sorry but we do not accept credit/debit card payments.**
- ... **CHECKS: PLEASE make sure that we can read the numbers and words on your checks, that your check is signed, and that the date is correct** (*Banks do not accept post-dated checks*). Also, **please check to make sure that the words you write on Line #2 (the "Legal Line") match the numbers you wrote in the box**. Banks use the written line over the numbers in the box in case of a conflict between the two. If there is a problem and we have to return it for correction, you run the risk of having to pay late fees.
- ... **IF YOU HAVE DELINQUENT TAXES** (taxes due from a previous year), **please call the Berrien County Treasurer immediately** (269-983-7111, ext. 8569). They will work with you to get you caught up. You will be notified on the current tax bill if you DO owe past-years' taxes. Don't wait until it's too late and your property is in danger of forfeiture!

**Questions on what you paid or when? Go online to [www.is.bsasoftware.com](http://www.is.bsasoftware.com)** and set up an account for your property. Sign up, and you have unlimited access to your property tax information at any time! We also have pre-printed, step-by-step instructions for online inquiries at our front counter, or we can email them to you upon request. **Online lookup is free for you to look up your own property.** BS&A charges a \$2.00 fee for online inquiries by non-owners of any property. This service may be useful to those of you who help take care of your parents' financial affairs.

**...and finally: PLEASE HOLD ON TO YOUR PROPERTY TAX BILLS - BOTH THE BLUE ONE** (summer) **AND THE GREEN ONE** (winter). You *will* need these when you file your income taxes. If you know that you've lost or misplaced your property tax bills, we will gladly provide you with copies of your receipts. It only takes a couple of minutes to print them off.

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**ASSESSING DEPARTMENT***Sue Rice, Assessor*

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Fall is here and it has been a busy year with many homeowners making changes to their residences. If you are one of those homeowners, please remember... Tax Day in Michigan is December 31<sup>st</sup>... whatever percentage of new construction is done on that date – whether 10% or 100% - that value will be added to your Assessed and Taxable Value for 2018. Whenever a building permit is applied for, this department receives a copy of it so that any changes can be noted, and this also is true when a demolition permit is filed. The only way your record card can be accurate is by making sure that any changes you make (or have made in the past) have been accounted for. YOU pay property taxes based upon the information I have in my files – and if that information is not current, then neither is your assessed and taxable value. Doing work without getting the proper permits is dangerous – permits are your way of knowing the structural, electrical, plumbing and mechanical components of your new construction are done to code. Yes, permits cost you money but having to have the work re-done because of faulty work costs you more.

As of this date there have been 100+ property sales in St Joseph Charter Township. Please understand I **CANNOT**, by law, lower your Assessed Value to 50% of purchase price. This holds true for a foreclosure sale or a normal arms-length sale. That is called “chasing sales” and it is not allowed by the State Tax Commission. In order for you to have your Assessed and/or Taxable Value lowered you must submit compelling evidence to the 2018 March Board of Review for them to consider your petition. Physical items such as – needing paint, replacing carpeting or tile work, new roof, new furnace and/or air conditioning, new windows, i.e. cosmetic work – are not sufficient cause for lowering value, as they are considered normal repair and maintenance. But in any case, if you do purchase a neglected property, before you paint, paper, do carpeting, roof, etc – take pictures showing the condition at time of sale. Then, if you do decide to appeal to the March Board of Review, you have evidence of condition at time of purchase.

As always, if you ever have questions regarding your property, please feel free to contact me at 269-932-0272.

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**ST. JOSEPH TOWNSHIP POLICE / PUBLIC SAFETY***Ross Bates, Chief of Police*

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**TIPS FOR PREVENTING CRIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:**

Place bicycles, toys, and items of value out of view when not in use.

When vehicles are parked in driveways - lock doors and remove valuables.

Secure house doors, windows, and garage doors.

Utilize timer lights and outdoor security lights to give the appearance of an occupied house.

Keep bushes and shrubs around windows trimmed to avoid creating hiding spots.

Avoid placing an extra key in obvious hiding places.

Invest in a home security system.

Become familiar with people and vehicles in your neighborhood.

Consider becoming part of a Neighborhood Watch group.

If you see something, say something. Report suspicious activity to St Joseph Township Police Department. (Central Dispatch: 269-983-3060, Administration: 269-429-6890)

## PLANNING COMMISSION



St. Joseph Charter Township passed a big milestone in July when the Board of Trustees formally adopted the 2017 Master Plan. Many township residents as well as officials and staff contributed to preparation of the Master Plan with the guidance of Wightman and Associates. Michigan law requires that all municipalities that have zoning authority have a master land use plan and use it as the basis for zoning decisions. The plan should be reviewed every five years to make sure that it meets current needs. The master plan contains an implementation guide. Areas to be addressed include community/place, transportation/connectivity, natural areas/recreation, and economic development. The Planning Commission will concentrate on furthering implementation goals. A pdf copy of the plan can be downloaded from the township web site at <http://www.sjct.org>.

Another recent action for the township is involvement in the state's Redevelopment Ready Communities program. The township manager and two members of the planning commission attended two days of training in May and June, sponsored by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Municipalities may seek RRC certification by going through an analysis and review process with the state organization. Certification ensures that the community is ready to work with developers interested in making investments. MEDC will provide support to qualifying communities.

A transportation study is underway to combine the four public bus services in the county into a single entity with expanded services and greater efficiency. This was initiated by Berrien County and is being overseen by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. A second study, also managed by the SWMPC, is the Napier Corridor Non-motorized study. A planning/engineering firm has been hired to examine Napier Avenue between the St. Joseph River and I-94 with the goal of improving pedestrian and bicycle access and safety. Public transportation options may also be included. Township officials have been involved in the steering committees for both studies. There will be opportunities for community involvement in the Napier study in coming months.

### Need Help? Call 2-1-1

United Way of Southwest Michigan—Call 2-1-1

Every hour of every day, someone needs help. Whether it's needing help with providing food for your family to job training, 2-1-1 is here. 2-1-1 community resource advisors provide you with information and referrals for everyday needs and times of crisis. Best of all, it's as easy as picking up your phone and dialing 2-1-1.

Housing/Shelter — Emergency Shelter, Low Income Housing, Transitional Housing, Minor Home Repair

Food and Household Needs—Food Pantries, Hot Meals, WIC, Clothing, Diapers, Furniture

Employment—Employment Prep/Assistance, Financial Information/Education

Financial Assistance—Utility Assistance, Rental Deposit Assistance, Rent Payment Assistance, Bus Tickets/Gas Money

Health Care—Primary Care, Dental Care, Health Education Programs, Mental Health/Substance Abuse, Outpatient Substance Abuse Programs, Crisis Intervention Hotlines, General Counseling Services

Transportation—Local Transportation, Medical Transportation

Veteran, Elderly and Disabled Person Resources

Need Help? Call 2-1-1



## RUBBISH FUND



St. Joseph Charter Township has been providing trash pickup services for our residents for 50 years. In 1967 a Rubbish Fund was established with an annual millage of 1.5 mils on the taxable value of property. The purpose of the fund was to pay the rubbish collection expenses and build future reserves that could offset anticipated rising costs for this service.

In recent years recycling and yard waste pickup has been added, as these services help maintain our neighborhoods. Fifty years later our Rubbish Fund is no longer keeping pace with the expense and has been steadily depleted over the last several years.

The provider of the township trash collection services, Best Way, has served our residents well and with reasonable costs for this service. Best Way is the only trash hauling company with which the township has contracted services and, as such, the township has been able to achieve a very good value for our residents in terms of rubbish collection costs. Other townships and municipalities require their residents to individually contract with any of three trash hauling companies for variety of services. This means that three or more different trash pickups may occur each week in any one neighborhood, causing a great deal more wear and tear on the streets and creating a much higher frequency of heavy, noisy garbage trucks working in their neighborhoods.

The SJCT Board of Trustees thoughtfully considered various solutions to be able to maintain the high level of rubbish service for our residents. One option considered is to establish a new, additional millage on top of the current 1.5 mils. Another option is to create a Special Assessment that would modestly increase the cost of rubbish collection for trash services. Even with the increased cost to township taxpayers, the costs of the rubbish collection services remain well below the cost for individuals to pay for trash collection services, thus continuing to be a high value for our residents.

The Board of Trustees believes that the best approach of these two options is the Special Assessment. The assessment will be \$18.00 PER YEAR to all properties, including rental units in multi-family housing and non-profit users of the rubbish collection services. This method allows for more immediate response to any future cost changes in the rubbish collection services, thus protecting the future integrity of the Rubbish Fund for the benefit of the township.

The township board negotiates a contract with Best Way every four years. During the latest negotiations, the township board explored contracting with the other trash hauling providers. Only Best Way is equipped with the proper level of equipment (number of trash hauling trucks) to service the entire township. Further, Best Way remained the most competitive trash hauling provider for this township service.

On the following page you will find frequently-asked questions discussing the Special Assessment vs. the Millage approaches to finding a remedy for the depleting Rubbish Fund:

**Halloween Trick-or-Treat hours have been set for 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>.** Residents wishing to participate are asked to turn on porch lights as a welcome signal to trick-or-treaters.



## Special Assessment vs. Millage

1. The proposed assessment notice that was sent to property owners in June showed an assessment amount of \$18.00. How often would that amount be assessed?  
*The \$18.00 assessment would occur once a year.*
2. In the case of a special assessment, does every assessed parcel or unit pay the same amount?  
*Yes. Costs eligible to be recovered through a special assessment levy are to be apportioned (shared equally between those required to pay).*
3. In the case of a millage, does every taxable parcel pay the same amount?  
*No. Each parcel that receives a property tax statement is billed the amount due based on the taxable value of the property.*
4. Property taxes can be claimed for a tax credit. Can special assessment charges be claimed for a tax credit?  
*No. Special assessments cannot be included in property taxes that are claimed for a tax credit.*
5. Would a voted millage remain the same each year for the life of the millage?  
*A voted millage would be subject to Headlee each year (Michigan Constitutional change which occurred in 1978) and, therefore, could be rolled back which would result in a lower millage and less \$\$'s collected for that millage.*
6. Since 2010 how many Headlee rollbacks have occurred?  
*Two. One in 2016 and the other in 2017.*
7. Would the special assessment amount change from year to year for the life of the assessment?  
*The Township Board has the authority to examine the special assessment amount each year to determine if the current assessment will cover the upcoming year's expenses. The Board can increase the amount as needed up to 5% of the original assessment amount.*
8. Why is the Township seeking additional funding for rubbish services?  
*Township rubbish funding was put in place in 1967 and has remained unchanged. For the last six years the expenses have exceeded the revenue. The rubbish fund balance is expected to be depleted in 2018 or early 2019. The following chart shows the history for the last six years.*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Annual Revenue</u>	<u>Annual Expense</u>	<u>Beg. Fund Bal.</u>	<u>Fund Bal. Change</u>	<u>Ending Fund Balance</u>
2011	\$ 593,717	\$ 604,608	\$ 482,828	\$ (10,891)	\$ 471,937
2012	\$ 599,636	\$ 619,216	\$ 471,937	\$ (19,580)	\$ 452,356
2013	\$ 590,244	\$ 641,286	\$ 452,356	\$ (51,042)	\$ 401,314
2014	\$ 597,526	\$ 662,612	\$ 401,314	\$ (65,086)	\$ 336,229
2015	\$ 598,877	\$ 661,486	\$ 336,229	\$ (62,609)	\$ 273,620
2016	\$ 611,059	\$ 682,450	\$ 273,620	\$ (70,008)	\$ 203,612

**9. How does the annual taxable value of the Township compare to its rubbish rates?**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Taxable Value</u>	<u>Rubbish Rates</u>
2012	(1.705%) decrease	2.998% increase
2013	1.142 % increase	2.991% increase
2014	(.126%) decrease	2.983% increase
2015	1.958% increase	1.524% increase
2016	.397% increase	1.426% increase
2017	<u>1.901% increase</u>	<u>2.073% increase</u>
Annual Average	.594% increase	2.332% increase

**10. Did the Township Board do price comparisons or request bids for the rubbish contract?**

*In 2016 the Township Board requested that pricing and bids be explored. At that time, Republic and Michiana were contacted regarding bidding the Township contract. These companies explained that providing estimated costs for a Township-wide contract is a very involved process, as a Township-wide contract would require the purchase of additional equipment including trucks, additional personnel, and carts/bins.*

**11. What happens if a resident contracts directly with a service carrier?**

*In 2016, costs for residents to contract directly with a trash pickup service were also considered. Below are the results of inquiries to contract directly with residents:*

<u>Service Carrier Contracting Directly With Resident</u>	<u>2016 Annual Cost Including Trash Pickup, Recycle, Yard Waste</u>
Best Way	\$288
Michiana Recycle & Disposal	\$192
Republic	\$296

*With the current millage of 1.5 a resident would have had property with a taxable value exceeding \$125,000 in order to have paid total annual rubbish taxes of the lowest cost listed above (\$192). In 2016, only 10.7% of the homestead properties in the Township exceeded \$125,000 in taxable value.*

*When residents contract directly with a service carrier roads in the Township could see additional wear and tear due to the possibility of multiple trucks traveling the roads.*

**12. How does an assessment for rubbish compare to funding for other services in the Township?**

*The rubbish assessment proposed by the Board is similar in method to utility boards (water/sewer) that assess direct costs and increases to the users of the utility.*

**COMCAST:** The Township receives a franchise fee for each Comcast customer located in the Township, and your bill should reflect that St. Joseph Charter Township is the franchise authority. Under the *Additional Information* section of your bill *Your Local Franchise Authority* should be listed as *Township of St. Joseph, 3000 Washington Ave., P.O. Box 147, St. Joseph, MI 49085*. If your Comcast bill lists another community, please contact St. Joseph Charter Township to report the error.

## PHONE NUMBERS

**TOWNSHIP HALL** .....429-7703  
**Fax**.....429-2079  
(Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)

## POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**Emergency Only**.....9-1-1  
**Police Administration**.....429-6890  
(Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)  
**Non-Emergency**.....983-3060  
(Dispatch – 24 hr.)

**FIRE: Emergency**.....9-1-1  
Station #1 - 3000 Washington Ave.....429-4100  
Station #2 - 1750 Colfax Ave.....429-4100

**AMBULANCE**.....9-1-1

**Public Works - Sewer/Water Problems**.....429-8113  
**Water/Sewer Bills** .....983-6324

**Berrien County Road Commission**.....925-1196  
**Berrien County Animal Control** .....927-5648  
**I&M Electric** .....800-311-6424  
**Michigan Gas** .....800-401-6451

## BEST WAY DISPOSAL OBSERVES THE FOLLOWING HOLIDAYS

**Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day**

Usually, if a holiday falls on your regularly scheduled collection day, that day and every collection day after that day will be moved back one day for the remainder of that week. **Please call Best Way directly (463-3232) with any questions on holiday pickup or recycling schedules.**

**Arrangements for extra rubbish carts, yard waste carts, or recycling containers can be made by calling Best Way.** Please call Tami at 269-463-3232 with any questions or concerns on our rubbish/yard waste/recycling programs.

**STREET LIGHTS:** If you notice a street light that is not working, report it to Indiana Michigan Power on their website: <https://www.indianamichiganpower.com/> You will be asked for the pole number and the nearest street address or cross street. The pole number is located on a metal tag about eye level on the street light pole. If you do not have internet access, you may contact the Police Department at 429-6890 to have them enter your request into I&M's website.



**FIRE HYDRANTS** are a vital part of our overall community public safety. **Please try to keep them free of snow cover and easily visible.** Seconds can make a difference between saving and losing someone's home - or life. Please help us keep them readily visible for emergency personnel, even in winter. Our fire fighters thank you for your help!

## ST. JOSEPH CHARTER TOWNSHIP

3000 Washington Ave  
P.O. Box 147  
St. Joseph MI 49085

**YARD WASTE PICKUP ENDS THE WEEK OF  
DECEMBER 1, 2017  
AND RESUMES THE WEEK OF APRIL 1, 2018**

## Office Closures for 2017

Friday and Monday, September 1 & 4 for **Labor Day**

Thursday and Friday,  
November 23 & 24 **Thanksgiving**

Friday and Monday  
December 22 & 25 **Christmas**

Other Holidays Observed: Memorial Day Fourth of July  
Labor Day New Year's Day

Please plan visits to our office accordingly.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Your water service may be turned off if your bill remains unpaid 45 days after the date of the bill. There will be a fee to turn the water back on, so please call 983-6324 with any questions or problems before this occurs.

**Unpaid bills are added to December property tax bills,** and these additional fees, which raise the amount that mortgage companies with escrow accounts pay, COULD affect your monthly mortgage payment, so please keep your account current. Call 983-6324 to make payment arrangements.