

Wakefield Township

414 N. County 519

PO Box 164

Wakefield, MI 49968

Volume 19 Issue 2

December 2019



Manabezho Falls on the Presque Isle River

Wakefield Township Board Meetings: Dates and Times

Meetings are at 5:30PM on the first Tuesday of the month unless otherwise noted.

December 3, 2019

January 7, 2020

February 4, 2020

March 3, 2020



April 7, 2020

May 5, 2020

June 2, 2020

July 7, 2020

Supervisor:

John Cox
906 224-3721
PO Box 164

jcox@wakefieldtownship.com

Clerk:

Mandy Lake
906 364-0669
PO Box 164

mlake@wakefieldtownship.com

Treasurer:

Joan Dalman
906 224-8201
906 364-1742
PO Box 191

jdalman@wakefieldtownship.com

Trustees:

Jerry Niemi
906 229-5553

jniemi@wakefieldtownship.com

Jim Spencer

906 224-6649

jspencer@wakefieldtownship.com

Custodian:

Robert Drier
906 224-2751

FOCUS- NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

As you well may be aware, the state and national campaigns have already started for the vote in November 2020. At the Wakefield Township level we want to make you aware that there will be some changes in the make-up of the elected Township Board. Supervisor John Cox and Treasurer Joan Dalman will be stepping down and all positions are open. Their last day of work will be November 20, 2020.

The dates for next year's elections are:
March 10, 2020 Presidential Primary Election
August 4, 2020 State Primary Election
November 3, 2020 State General Election

To run for a Wakefield Township Board position you must file a Nominating Petition and Affidavit of Identity with Clerk Mandy Lake by April 21, 2020 by 4 pm, and to be listed on the ballot for our August 4 election. Any questions about the procedures can be answered by calling the Clerk at 906-364-0669.

Here are some of the statutory duties for all of these positions

SUPERVISOR

Moderates board meetings

Secretary to [Board of Review](#)

Township's legal agent

Must maintain records of supervisor's office

Develops township budget

Appoints some commission members

Member of election commission

May call special meetings

May appoint a [deputy](#)

[May administer the oath of office](#)

CLERK

Maintains custody of all township records
Maintains general ledger
Prepares warrants for township checks
Records and maintains township meeting minutes
Keeps the township book of oaths
Responsible for regular and special meeting notices
Publishes board meeting minutes (if taxable value is \$84 million in 2015, annually indexed, or a charter township)
Keeps voter registration file and conducts elections
Chair of township elections commission
Keeps township ordinance book
Prepares financial statements
Delivers tax certificates to supervisor and county clerk
by September 30
Must appoint a deputy
Must post a surety bond

TREASURER

Collects real and personal property taxes
Keeps an account of township receipts (revenues) and expenditures
Disburses township checks
Deposits township revenues in approved depositories
Invests township funds in approved investment vehicles
Collects delinquent personal property tax
Responsible for jeopardy assessments in collecting delinquent personal property tax
Collects mobile home specific tax
Must appoint a deputy
Must post a surety bond
Member of township elections commission (general law township only, not in a charter township)

TRUSTEE

Township legislators, required to vote on all issues
Responsible for township's fiduciary health

While some of these responsibilities may seem overwhelming, there is plenty of help for you if you are interested in these elected positions. The Michigan Townships Association provides training on line, on the phone, and on pod-casts. Our local Gogebic County chapter of the MTA is one of the best in the U.P. with local officials who have done these jobs, some for a short while and some for a long time. They are very helpful and you can reach out to them.

The best thing about holding public office is the people of Wakefield Township. If you do your job, the people are great. The current Board and many past Boards have accentuated the positive, not the negative, which tends to create unnecessary drama for the residents and Boards. It is important that all Board Members watch over the spending and realize what is important and not important in the operation of the township. That is why we have a good fund balance, clean audits, and provide the best services we can with the money we have. Raising taxes is sometimes necessary but the millage rates have never been raised in at least the last 13 years, and beyond that.

Economic Development

Northern Natural Opens New Compressor Station

The three pipelines and the electric power transmission lines that cross through our township account for about 52% of our total taxes which support our schools, county government and our township. In real dollars pipeline companies Trans Canada (natural gas lines), Enbridge (liquid petroleum products), and Northern Natural (natural gas lines) pay \$316,525 annually in taxes to Gogebic County, the W-M School District and Wakefield Township.

To meet customer demand, Northern Natural Gas has completed work on its Marquette Branch Line Expansion project which included a new compressor station in Wakefield Township on M-28 near Jackson Creek. The investment was over \$22.1 million.

Pipelines are the safest transportation method to transport natural gas, propane, crude oil or oil products. Our Township Board attends training sessions annually sponsored by the pipeline companies to make us aware of safety practices the pipeline companies are using. Residents who own property where pipelines cross, should be receiving safety information from the companies as well. If you pass by a pipeline and something is concerning to you, call 911 and they will contact the pipeline company.



Trails

It is with great pleasure to report to you that the \$225,000 supplemental funding for the completion of the trail from Korpela Rd west to the City of Wakefield has been approved. This appropriation was done largely through the efforts of Senator Ed McBroom and his staff. Without this funding the project would have faced continued delays. This is great news for the residents of that area who helped out the DNR by selling them permanent easements for the motorized and non-motorized trail. The trail should keep the vehicles off of the residential roads mainly Old-US-2, Pikka, and Sampson Roads. This funding will provide a safe trail for the residents as well as the users. The work is scheduled to start during the summer of 2020.

Logging

The market conditions for pulp and saw logs have been difficult to say the least for all of those employed in the

logging industry. George Dalbeck logging and Hilborn logging/Verso Paper, along with other smaller companies in our township continue to keep their employees working at historic levels despite the market prices. Wakefield Township supports these small businesses as they face the changing market conditions. We are impressed by their perseverance and continuing commitment to the community.

Big Snow Resorts

The casino approval, as well as many others across the county, has been halted for an undetermined time at the federal government level. It is not what we hoped for, but we are fortunate that we have the Big Snow Resort ski hills in our communities. There were a number of repairs and improvements over the summer season. Last winter was a good year for Big Snow Resorts, after many years of challenges, and we hope that this trend continues with more sales, with seasonable temperatures and adequate snowfall.

Highland Copper Company Inc

The commodities market price for copper has been very low for the past several years. The copper exploration in Wakefield and Ironwood Townships began in 2006 with a market price well over \$3.00 per pound. The current price as of this writing is \$2.61 per pound and has been fluctuating. Our sense is that the demand for copper is low because of the declining use of copper in many of our homes, automobiles etc. According to Highland's feasibility study, a break-even price of producing copper would have to be over \$3.00 per pound. Therefore a huge challenge faces any company who decides to build a mine from the ground up. The township board continues to support their efforts in building a mine. Highland has nearly all of the permits to start construction, has a very rich copper deposit to mine, but until market conditions change, we do not see any construction taking place.

Extreme Tool and Engineering / Westfall Technik Inc.

Extreme Tool now owned by Westfall Technik, has added over 20 jobs since the new company has taken over, employing over 100 people. These are good jobs that can support the employees and their families with decent income and benefits. We have worked well with Extreme Tool over the past 20 years and continue to fully support Westfall doing business in our township and welcoming any further expansion.

Western U.P Recycling

This diverse operation in our township has been very successful since its opening. The owners Joe and Cory Hilborn have faced huge challenges due the falling price of all metals. Despite that, year after year our residents are able to come to this facility and bring their metal, vehicles and refuse for our annual spring clean-up. It has been a very successful effort for our community and we are grateful to have them here.

Northland Basement Waterproofing

Located at 111 Commercial Lane, just off Highway US-2, Northland Basement Waterproofing offers the following services: Basement Waterproofing, Crawlspace Repair, Foundation Repair, Commercial Foundations, Concrete Lifting and Leveling, Sump Pumps, Radon Gas Mitigation, and Insulating Services.

[OTHER TOWNSHIP INFORMATION](#)

Burn Barrels, Burn Permits, and Spring Cleanup Dates

Spring Cleanup-Friday, May 15, 2020- 9 am.-4 pm. and Saturday, May 16, 2020 from 9 am.-12:00

The state law allows you to use burn barrels for items like paper, brush and wood, but you may not burn household waste that contains plastic, rubber, foam, chemically treated wood, textiles, electronics, chemicals, or hazardous materials. Please use common sense when you burn, and if you have a neighbor close by, please cooperate with them by selecting a time to burn. The township has not adopted an ordinance banning burn barrels, has no plans to do so, but be aware that the Michigan DNR can enforce the law concerning burning the banned substances. There are no formal written permits required for open burning, but you should check out the MDNR website to see if burning restrictions are in force-www.dnr.state.mi.us/burnpermits/, or 906-353-6651



Blighted Properties and Building permits

Wakefield Township blight enforcement is done by the Supervisor. Donald Saari and the Supervisor share Zoning Administrator duties. Donald is also our long time building inspector. We also would like to remind those who are building or adding on to their existing homes to call the Clerk 364-0669 or visit our website

for a permit application and to contact Donald Saari. Our permits are the most reasonably priced in the state and we are asking for your compliance in this matter as well. Failure to obtain a permit may result in enforcement of our zoning ordinance which authorizes up to a \$100 per day fine for not obtaining one.

Website

We encourage everyone to view our website. It is constantly updated with information important to living in our township. You can find applications for building permits, absentee voter forms, phone numbers, zoning ordinances, economic development information, links to businesses in Wakefield Township, recreational sites, a calendar of events, meeting minutes, some nice pictures of our area and township demographics. Our web designer and updater is Tom Ruppe who is doing a fantastic job. Our website address is www.wakefieldtownship.com

Finances

Our audit this year had no findings to report and no budget violations. Our audited F-65 financial summary indicated that our fund balance as of 3-31-19 was \$521,836. This was about \$40,000 less than our 2018 budget year. During 18-19 we spent more funds on roads. The auditor reported that the Board has done a good job of budgeting and monitoring the budget. The Board has been able to reduce expenditures by removing street lights where there are unoccupied houses and roads; reducing the township hall utility expenditures by using advance technology to reduce utility expenditures; and installing energy efficient windows, doors and insulation. In addition, the Board has held the line on salaries and eliminated benefits for the past several years for all Board Members.

Assessments, Board of Review Dates

The December Board of Review will meet on **Tuesday, December 10, 2019 at 6 p.m.**(Please note the time change) The Board will consider errors and omissions, principal resident exemption and to consider poverty exemptions.

The March Board of Review which will hear tax appeals will be on the following dates:

Tuesday, March 3, 2020-4:30 pm. Bd of Review (Organizational—not for public tax appeals)

Tax Appeals Dates

Monday, March 10, 2020- 9 a.m.-3:00 p.m

Tuesday, March 11, 2020-3:00 p.m- 9:00 p.m

The State Tax Commission is requiring that local governments reassess at least 20% of the property in their jurisdiction each year. Therefore, all parts of the township are subject to reassessment which includes pictures of your buildings. Our assessor is Melissa Priske and if you have any questions about your property assessment please call her at 906-364-2910. If you are planning to build and are wondering approximately how much your tax will be, she can help you with that important information or you can visit our website and link to the State of Michigan Property tax calculator.

Forestry Assistance Program

If you are a private forest owner wanting to know more about the management of your property for forest products, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, tax and cost-share incentives and overall forest health you should contact Conservation District Forester Winona Grieshop for a free onsite assessment.

She has valuable information about the Qualified Forest Program for folks who own 20+ acres of non-homestead forestland. You may be eligible to reduce your property taxes! The Qualified Forest Program will reduce the land taxes as well as prevent the uncapping of the land's taxable value. To enroll you must have, and follow a forest management plan written by a qualified forester. If you are interested in these programs or services, Contact the Gogebic Conservation District at (906)667-1100 ext. 632, email our forester winona.grieshop@macd.org or visit their website at gogebicntonagonfap.com



Roads

Road repair costs have increased greatly. This year the township spent about \$39,452 in partnership with the road commission who spent about \$26,301 for a total of \$65,753 on local township roads. Also the Road Commission authorized an additional amount of \$31,000 which was spent on ditching, tree and brush removal on the township local roads. County Roads, i.e. 519, are

the total responsibility of the Road Commission and no townships funds are used to maintain them. We are very pleased with the partnership we have with the Road Commission Board, Administration and the workers of the Road Commission. When we work together, things get done. Township residents know that the roads are far from perfect, but they are in better condition than many around the state.

Broadband Internet

We are now able to provide Broadband Internet service for those who currently have service through Gogebic Range.Net. The township has an agreement with Merit Inc. and Gogebic Range.Net to provide internet service to customers within the tower ranges around our township. Service is now available in most areas where you have a line of sight to the towers. You can call Gogebic Range.Net at 906-842-3394 for more information if you are interested in signing up for this new service.

Ambulance Service

As a reminder your tax bill will increase this year, with the passage of the 1 mill tax levy for the taxpayers of Gogebic County.

Master Plan

Many of you participated in the door to door and on-line survey this summer. Thanks for your efforts and comments. In general most were satisfied with how the township is operating. The two areas that drew a lot of response were the lack of internet service and road conditions. The Board is well aware of this. We are increasing our focus on these two areas. The lack of internet is generally caused by the hills and valleys for wireless service and the cost to hard wire the internet service to resident's homes. We are hopeful that with the advances in technology internet service will reach all of our areas at a reasonable price. As for roads, you are well aware that the State of Michigan has been and still is far behind on road repair because of the lack of funding over the years. It is hard for our Board to understand why the State and Federal governments can't compromise on an infrastructure plan for our great country.

The master plan draft and your comments and concerns will be reviewed by both the Planning Commission and the Township Board on Tuesday, December 10 at 4 p.m. at our township hall The final plan will be released to the Board for final approval and public in early 2020.

XCEL Energy Power Poles

With the holiday season approaching you are reminded by XCEL Energy that ornamental attachments such as holiday lighting, banners, flags and planters cannot be placed on their power poles, due to safety concerns.



Need More Information?

Our website is continually adding more information for you. Visit it at www.wakefieldtownship.com

Contact Information ---*Clip and Save*

- Assessor - Melissa Prisbe - 906-364-2910
- Blight Officer - Call Supervisor John Cox - 906 224-3721
- Boiler Inspector - (517) 241-9334 (Call State of Michigan office for appointment)
- Building Inspector - Donald Saari - 906-364-1277 (cell) 906-364-1277
- Building permits – Clerk, Mandy Lake - 906-364-0669
- Burn Permits - www.dnr.state.mi.us/burnpermits/, or 906-353-6651
- Electrical Inspector - Steve Bachelor - 906 295-1355, W4398 County Rd. 388, Powers, MI 49874
- Garbage collection – Gogebic Range Solid Waste Authority at 906-932-0600 or the clerk at 906-364-0669. Monday is collection day.
- Indianhead Subdivision Sewer Hookups - Paula Koruga - 906-224-1092
- Plumbing Inspector - Ken Raupp (906) 280-3906
- Power and Street Lighting - Xcel Energy Outage-**800-895-1999**. Street Light Outage www.xcelenergy.com/ODL/OUTAGEREPORT or call-**800-628-2121**. If you prefer, you can call the supervisor at 906-224-3721.
- Road Commission - 906-667-0233
- Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control - Jim Finley - 906-663-4512
- Wakefield Public Library ([free to township residents](#)) - 906-224-5236
- Website and Facebook-www.wakefieldtownship.com
- Western U.P. Health Department (Well and Septic Permits) Phone: 906-667-0200
- Zoning Administrator - Donald Saari - 906-364-1277 or call John Cox 906-224-3721

WAKEFIELD TOWNSHIP TAXPAYER:

If you pay your taxes by mail, please enclose payment stub or the real estate index number(s). We are no longer automatically sending a receipt. If you wish to receive a receipt, check the box indicating this on the stub of your tax bill and return it with payment. Payments must be postmarked by February 14, 2020 to avoid penalties.

If you prefer to pay in person, I will be available:

Friday, December 27, 2019 9:00 AM--12:00 PM at the Twp Hall and
12:30 PM—5:00 PM at my home office

Friday February 14, 2020 9:00 AM—12:00 PM at the Twp Hall and
12:30 PM—5:00 PM at my home office (**last day before penalties are added**)

Friday February 28, 2020 9:00 AM—12:00 PM at the Twp Hall and (**last day before tax roll is turned over to county**)

You may pay your taxes at my home office anytime that I am available. Call first: 224-8201

Joan Dalman, Treasurer