

Reading Township - Hillsdale County - Michigan

A summary of the 2004/2005 year

(The Township Year begins on April 1 and ends on March 31)

This past year more than \$151,000 of Reading Township's General Fund Budget was spent on Roads. This was more than has ever been spent by the township on roads in any one year. The biggest single item (\$82,208) was the paving of Quackenbush Road from M-49 to Sand Lake Road. Another \$34,453 was paid for paving the hills from Long Lake Road to the bottom of the hills on three drives. (RusDic, Rustic and Lakeside Drives.)

The Township joined with the City of Reading in the purchase of a new fire truck for the Reading Community Fire Department at a total cost of \$220,066. The City and the Township each financed \$100,000 of this purchase, which will be repaid over the next 10 years. Prior to this purchase the newest truck in the department was 20 years old.

Replacement of the double doors on both the front and on the south entrance of the Township Hall building have been part of the Township's building improvement program.

The Township joined into a Countywide GIS (Graphical Information System) project. The Township now has all of its parcels of real property digitized. The Township Zoning Map has also been digitized (although this has not yet been approved as the official zoning map). Also the Township joined in with the County to have new aerial photographs made. This was done in the spring of 2004 and in addition to being much more current, they are of a much higher resolution and are more accurate than previous aerial photographs. Training was provided to a number of township people on the use of this GIS system

The Planning Commission had a lot going this past year. A Township Resources Inventory was conducted. This provides a foundation for the development of a township master plan, which the process for this was just recently started. Township Planning Commission Chairman, Gary Lovett, obtained financing of the "Township Resources Inventory" through a portion of a 319 grant that was a result of much work on his part. A lot of training was taken advantage of this past year as eight township people participated in a "Citizen Planner Series" put on by the MSU Extension Service and five people took advantage of a training program on the use of the GIS system. These alone amounted to over 200 hours of training.

During this past year the Berry Lake Inlet Soil Erosion Project finally came to fruition. This project addressed major soil erosion that was flowing into Berry Lake, located at the headwaters of the Hog Creek Watershed. The Reading Township Board, community members, Hillsdale Conservation District and many others worked more than four years to address this problem by creating sediment traps and removing sediment in the Berry Lake Inlet. Funding for the project came from a Great Lakes Commission Grant, the Reading Township Board, community residents, the Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Services. Future plans to address other soil erosion in the watershed are planned under a Department of Environmental Quality grant during the next three years. Gary Lovett deserves the credit for being the driving force from the local level on this project.

In an effort to make township information more accessible the Township Board Meeting Minutes are now available on the Internet. This is part of the Hillsdale County CIS (Community Information System) website which Reading Township's place on the site also expanded to include zoning permit application information along with tax collection information.

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There were 41 Zoning Permits issued during the past year while there had been two Board of Appeal Hearings and two Hearings where a Special Use Permit had been requested. The value of all of the real property in Reading Township increased from \$166,716,740 to \$169,354,240.

Some changes in personnel occurred during the past year. Harold Farris became the Zoning Administrator in July. James Galloway became the new Township Supervisor following the November election. David Newell, who had served as Township supervisor for 20 years chose not to run for re-election. David is however still looking after the Reading Township Cemeteries and is now serving on the Township Board of Review. In November, Benjamin Wheeler was appointed to the Planning Commission. This was to replace James Galloway who resigned from the planning commission after being elected Township Supervisor. The other four township board positions remain the same.

Expectations for the 2005/2006 year

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The cost of road projects for the year may possibly reach a total \$88,000. These are for the most part seal-coating projects and repair projects. There is a possibility that Humphrey Road may be broken up and prepared for paving in the future. This would most likely happen at the end of the summer.

One of the biggest projects of the Township for this coming year is the development of a Township Master Plan. Either along with this or following this, the Township Zoning Ordinance will be reviewed for possible revisions or rewriting along with possibly the development of other ordinances.

The election process will change. The lever type mechanical voting machines that have been used for 30 years right up through last November's election will no longer be used. These will be replaced with an optical scan type of voting system that will be uniform throughout the county. While there are not any "Township conducted elections" scheduled for this year, the school's elections will now be held in the township hall using the townships new optical scan equipment. The optical scan equipment is being obtained through a federal grant that is being administered by the State. The Township will purchase some of the required ancillary equipment.

The Township Hall Building improvement will continue with the painting of the interior and replacement of a majority of the carpeting.