

# Muskegon Charter Township

## **Michigan's economy is recovering. Why not local government budgets?**

Larry Merrill  
MTA Executive Director

In spite of a much-improved Michigan economy, townships and other local entities lack money for roads and many other unmet needs—obsolete public safety equipment, aging infrastructure, archaic technology, noncompetitive employee compensation, to name a few.

Chronic and widespread local government fiscal weaknesses undermine Michigan's economic competitiveness, threaten the quality of life, and deny communities the means to comply with a myriad of unfunded state and federal mandates. But because Michigan communities have little control over their fiscal destinies compared to local governments in other states, their fiscal health and economic vitality is highly dependent on the priorities of state leaders. Local government fiscal stress is no secret in Lansing, but policymakers are torn between two very divergent views on the causes and remedies.

One perspective is that draconian laws restricting revenue sources and growth disconnect local resources from Michigan's economic recovery. Consequently, local governments cannot afford services and amenities taken for granted elsewhere. Solutions offered include eliminating statutory and constitutional property tax growth restrictions, authorizing new regional taxes, and restoring revenue sharing that was diverted to fund other areas of the state budget. However, removing property tax growth caps faces massive constitutional and political challenges and Michigan already over-relies on the property tax. Regionally imposed taxes are widely distrusted by voters and it has been decades since state leaders fully funded statutory revenue sharing.

The alternative viewpoint is that local governments have a spending problem. While there is general agreement that \$15 billion unfunded local government pension and retiree health care liabilities must be eliminated, some pundits continue to make the unsubstantiated assertion that Michigan has too many local governments. Advocates for consolidation, regional service authorities, or moving assessing and other functions to county governments claim these actions will save money and improve services. Most of these suggestions at best only nibble at the problem, and some arguably betray a misunderstanding of local government service delivery. When state government has tried micromanaging local governments, the results are usually at best absurd, and at worst disastrous. Cookie-cutter revenue or expenditure reforms will not work everywhere, given differences in community characteristics. Severe fiscal crisis is not a matter of being a city, county, township or village, but is caused by declining manufacturing sector-related property tax revenues.

Compounding local government fiscal headaches is state government granting generous property tax exemptions that further erode local property tax revenues, mandating higher spending on property tax assessing and election functions, or purchasing more land in northern Michigan communities contrary to local land use plans. Returning revenue sharing to its prior importance as a state priority is singularly the best solution to Michigan's local government fiscal woes and is supported by almost 70 percent of township officials. A fresh look at how and who gets funded—or not—is long overdue.

## Fireworks

No person shall ignite, discharge, or use any consumer fireworks, pursuant to Public Act 256 of 2011, as amended, except on the day before, the day of and the day after a national holiday, unless prior approval was obtained from the Township Board. Igniting, discharging, or use of any consumer fireworks between the hours of 1:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. shall be prohibited.



## We Want Your.....Trash!

Are you tired of paying high prices for inferior service? Are you tired of paying extra for yard waste removal? Are you tired of paying a fuel surcharge? Are you tired of paying an administration fee? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to sign up for the trash removal service provided by your Township.

Our customers enjoy weekly trash removal, recycling, yard waste collection and removal of large items (sofas, recliners, mattresses, etc.) without any additional fees or surcharges. We bill quarterly, i.e. every three months, and the cost is only \$49.00 per quarter. We have two sizes of garbage totes, 64 gallons and 96 gallons. You choose the size that is right for your family. Additional totes are available for \$3 per bill.

To sign up for our service, stop in and fill out a contract or go to our website and get the form there. You can print it out and mail it in, drop it in the night deposit box, email it or bring it in in person. As soon as we receive your contract, we will begin garbage service on the next scheduled day for your area.

If you have any questions, contact the Billing Clerk at 231-777-2555 X1134.

## Board Members

The 2016 - 2020 Board members are:

### Supervisor

David A. Kieft, Jr.  
dkieft@muskegontwp.org

### Treasurer

Jeffrey B. Wood  
jwood@muskegontwp.org

### Clerk

Ann D. Oakes  
aoakes@muskegontwp.org

### Trustees

Jennifer Hernandez  
John Hughes  
Joe Kemp  
Bill Ream

Township Board Meetings  
First and Third Monday of the month.

## Holidays

The Muskegon Charter Township Hall is closed on the following holidays:

New Years Day  
Martin Luther King Day  
Presidents Day  
Memorial Day  
Fourth of July  
Labor Day  
Veterans Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Day after Thanksgiving  
Day before Christmas  
Christmas Day  
Day before New Years Day