

# Bear Lake Township July 2020

198 E Bear Lake Rd. NE - Kalkaska MI 49646—231-258-4871

## NO GUARANTEES! *By Mark Laskowski, Fire Chief*

I hope this letter finds you and your families well and safe. I have an important message I want to convey to all the taxpayers of Bear Lake Township. As your Fire Chief, I can no longer guarantee that you will receive service from our fire department when you call 911.

The Bear Lake Township Fire Department is a part-paid volunteer fire and rescue service that responds to an average of 95-110 calls per year. We provide fire protection for both structural, wild land, off road vehicle rescue, water rescue, vehicle extrication, downed power lines, downed trees blocking roadways, mutual aid to surrounding township fire departments and medical first response rescue to all of the residents and visitors in our 72 square mile township.

We currently have six (6) members (firefighters/medical personnel) on our department with a combined 100 years of experience of doing this job. This number can change at any moment. We are volunteers with lives, families, full time jobs and personal obligations. Up to this point we have done an incredible and



amazing job of not missing any call for emergency service. This was accomplished by communicating on almost a daily basis to ensure we have emergency service personnel coverage for our township each and every day.

As stated previously, we only have a total of six firefighters on our department. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) writes all of the fire standards that all fire departments in the United States adhere to. NFPA 1710 last revised in Sept. 2016, states for an initial alarm deployment (number of firefighters including fire officers) for a low hazard incident = 15 firefighters, for a medium hazard incident—23 firefighters and for a high hazard = 43 firefighters. The first arriving truck/company responding to an incident requires a minimum of five personnel.

If you have attended any of the township meetings in the last five years my officers and I have echoed this same topic over and over. It

is a problem all over the world even for busier more populated areas.

This letter is to serve as my first notice to all the residents/taxpayers in Bear Lake Township that we need to find a solution together to ensure that we can get one truck with at least two (2) personnel to respond for every emergency at a minimum. We do not feel as though we can continue providing this level of service without more personnel. Currently as a department we are gathering facts and options for what the future of our fire department may look like. In the near future we plan to present this information to the township board and taxpayers to help find a solution.

**Why is it this way?**

**What happened?**

Volunteerism in America is essentially dead in my opinion. Especially for the fire service. The amount of time required for members to attend meetings, trainings and even include responding to the emergencies themselves.

Life is busier for everyone these days, people have

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**Bear Lake Township**

**OFFICE: 231-258-4871**

**SUPERVISOR:**

**George "Bud" Banker Opt. 3**

**Cell: 231-624-1019**

**Hours: Monday 9 to 11 am**

**TOWNSHIP CLERK**

**Delanna David Opt. 1**

**Email: bltclerkddavid@yahoo.com**

**Hours: Wednesday 9 am to Noon**

**TOWNSHIP TREASURER**

**Shirley Havens Opt. 2**

**Email: shavensbltt@yahoo.com**

**Hours: July thru March**

**Tues. Wed. Thurs. 9 am to 1 pm**

**2nd Sat. of month 8 am to Noon**

**TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES:**

**Robert "Bob" Dixon**

**Cell: 989-710-0093**

**James "Jim" Knight**

**Cell: 989-513-0138**

**TOWNSHIP ASSESSOR**

**Sally Akerley**

**231-499-7682**

**sallyannakerley@yahoo.com**

**TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETINGS**

Meetings are held at the Bear Lake Township Community Center the second Tuesday of each month and begin at 7:00 pm. **Winter Meetings are held at 4 pm from Nov. to Apr.** All other meetings or changes in the regular meeting will be posted on website and Twp. Board.



**No Guarantees** (continued)

multiple jobs, children and family obligations. For someone to do this job they have to do it and be interested in fire/rescue or they won't stick around. In addition we are in a difficult geographic location with a small population.

**What is the answer?**

Many jurisdictions have had to find ways to combine and collaborate with other departments to provide service. Our neighbors to the north in Blue Lake Township have been trying to solve the same problem and they currently have a preliminary plan. This plan will pay their new fire chief \$35,000 a year to be in the township and available for emergencies 235 days a year and to include additional part-paid staff. Bottom line is money but it is not necessarily the answer.

You could give me an unlimited amount of money and it doesn't mean because of our location, and a lack of trained or even interested people that we would be able to fill any new paid or part paid positions.

Bear Lake Township currently contracts with Frederic Township Fire Department to provide Advanced Life Support ambulance coverage to our area. In our service area when you call 911 for an ambulance this is what happens. First Frederic ambulance is dispatched along with our Bear Lake Township medical first response unit. In a perfect world our rescue unit would arrive first to your emergency and the ambulance would arrive shortly thereafter. In a true emergency time is critical and minutes can make the difference. If we are not able to respond with our rescue unit that means you will wait until the ambulance arrives to receive any emergency care. My point in telling you this is to assure you that an ambulance is

coming to your medical emergency regardless of our staffing levels at the fire department.

This letter is not a scare tactic with some ulterior motive, this is honesty and transparency. These are the facts that affect all of our personal safety, the safety of our families and visitors. This is a very complex issue that will not be fixed overnight. This is the start of a strategic plan for our future that we can all be part of if you so choose to participate.

The future care and well-being of our community is important. Please consider investing in our community and share your possible solutions as we move forward in this process. In addition; share this information with your neighbors, talk to them and help ensure we are getting the word out to everybody. Please try to participate in our monthly township meetings. You can visit [bearlaketownship.org](http://bearlaketownship.org) for the meeting schedules. Please feel free to call me anytime regarding any questions that pertain to this subject or the fire department in general.

Thank you for your time and continued support.

Mark Laskowski, Fire Chief  
Bear Lake Township Fire Department  
231-384-5785

Laskowski2011@yahoo.com  
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**Clerk Notes:**

I have lived at Bear Lake for 5 years and had been coming to the Lake almost every weekend for the previous 15 years. My husband's family was one of the first settlers here at Bear Lake, he tells us the stories his grandfather told him about how they brought in sand for fill using horse drawn wagons. We actually own the property that had the old hotel on it. You can still see the foundation where it was built.

I became the Twp. Clerk on May 31st, 2019, when Carol Rosenberg

resigned due to health issues, I was her deputy at that time. Carol is doing fine and I have the best support as Carol has agreed to be my Deputy while I am learning the job. Thank you Carol!

During these challenging times with COVID19, things are in a constant state of change. The state made a decision to send every registered voter in the state an absentee ballot for the August 4th, 2020 State Primary Election. If you are on Bear Lake Township's permanent absentee voter list, your application will still come from Bear Lake Township. The state is sending and requiring us to send dual applications again. This means if you check a specific box on the application you will automatically get an absentee ballot for the November 3rd, 2020 Presidential Election. I know many of you that received applications for the last election marked it to be used in the November election and this can be confusing, please mark it again on the new ballot request form just to cover you and me.

You may have heard talk about the polls not being open to vote on Election Day. As of today this is only speculation, I have not been notified of this. My hope and prayer is everything will be stabilized by August and we can vote as we normally have. As things evolve and possibly change, we will post how Bear Lake Township will be handling the voting process on Election Day on our website. If you would like to use the absentee ballot application mailed by the State of Michigan (continued on page 3)

**Clerk** (continued)

or Bear Lake Township, I will send you a ballot in the mail as soon as I receive them. Remember when mailing the absentee ballot request form or your ballot back to the township think about the time it takes to get from you to me. If I receive your ballot after the election it will not count (and we don't want that), so keep that in mind and mail them early rather than late.

Have a wonderful summer, stay safe!  
*Delanna David, Township Clerk*

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**Bear Lake Township Assessor RETIRES**

Michael VanHorn Bear Lake Twp. Assessor for the past 15 years has decided to retire. We wish him well in his retirement although his wife Karen has decided to continue working for 1 more year. Mike will probably have a list of things to do in his spare time for the next year. Enjoy your retirement Mike!

The Township Board held interviews for a new assessor at a special board meeting on June 2nd at 7:00 pm. Each candidate was given 45 minutes, each board member was given the opportunity to ask questions of the candidate. After the interview the contract, job duties, hours available to the township and salary for the position were given by Bud Banker, Supervisor. After interviews were completed, candidates exited, discussion from the board began and a candidate was selected.

After much discussion the Board chose Sally Akerley as the new Township Assessor. She has a very impressive resume and is currently working with other Townships in Kalkaska County. We are looking forward to working with Sally.

Welcome to our Township!

**Note from the Treasurer:** Newsletter has been inserted in the Summer 2020 Tax bills to save on postage to the Township. **Summer taxes will be due on Sept. 14th** and will accrue interest starting Sept. 15th. I will be in the office on Sept. 14th from 9 am to 5 pm. Call the office or email me with any changes that have taken place since last tax season. Due to COVID-19 we are asking for a limit of 2 people in office at one time, masks or you may use drop box on front of building to pay your taxes and a receipt will be mailed. Thank you for your cooperation!

Stay safe and enjoy your summer!

Shirley Havens, Treasurer

**Bear Lake Twp. Firefighters' Association**

- **Our Year in Review** 2019 was another very successful year for the Firefighters' Association. The annual Chicken BBQ was a great success due to tremendous community support. We also sponsored a successful Community Yard sale in June. 2020 will be a very different year for our association. We have cancelled the June Community Yard sale as well as the annual Chicken BBQ. This saddens us greatly, but the safety and well-being of our supporters and volunteers is our primary concern.

The Fire Department Well project continues to progress. We have tested the well and it passed with flying colors. The concrete slab will be completed in June and then the shed will be set in place. The brick well wall will then be started with bricks purchased from our Buy A Brick Fundraiser. Bricks are still available to purchase if anyone wants to be a part of the initial wall. Please contact any member of the Association or Fire Department for details. Forms are also available in the Township Office. Please follow us on Facebook at Bear Lake Twp. Firefighter's Association to keep up with developments. We are a 501C3 organization, so all donations to us could help you on your taxes. Thanks to you all.

**2020Notes from the Bear Lake Association**

Whether you live on the lake or not, everyone of us who enjoy the lake can help keep it beautiful and clean. There are so many ways to participate; all of them easy. We have listed some of the items below but just using common sense is the best way to help.

- New 2019 Boating Law which prohibits the launch or transport of watercraft or trailers unless they are free of aquatic organisms, including plants and much more.
- Remove all fireworks and all debris from the water.
- Do not feed the ducks or geese—they bring swimmers' itch.
- Do not bathe yourself or pets in the lake—soap chemicals are toxic to lake life.
- Keep all high-speed boating far away from the shoreline—help prevent erosion.

**IF YOU LIVE ON THE LAKE:**

- Keep your septic tanks functioning well—have them cleaned and inspected regularly.
- No beach fires—the carbon remains leach into the water, which is toxic.
- If you fertilize, use one with ZERO phosphate—it's like steroids to aquatic plants and algae.
- RAKE THE LAKE—removing organic material (e.g. leaves) helps reduce weed fertilizer and algae.

Additionally, please, no high-speed boating before 11 am and after 7:30 pm. **IT'S THE LAW!** Help protect our loons by staying 200 feet away from them. The Bear Lake Association monitors the quality of the water through regular testing and treatment of invasive plants. We appreciate donations to the Bear Lake Association of any amount to help us continue our mission to maintain and, perhaps, improve the quality of the water. Please visit our website for much more information: [www.bearlakeassoc.com](http://www.bearlakeassoc.com) or contact us through email: [bearlakekalkaska@gmail.com](mailto:bearlakekalkaska@gmail.com)

### ***Bear Lake Township Improvement Association News***

Your Bear Lake Township Improvement Association was established 59 years ago to support the township community through projects which maintain and improve the well-being of the residents, its beautiful lakes, pristine rivers, and expansive forests. Through the financial resources donated by its 150 members, we accomplished the following during 2019.

- Purchased and installed new backboards, rims, and nets in the basketball court.
- Made several donations to the Fire Department by providing refreshments for the volunteer firefighters, purchasing a brick to support the new well, and a donation to the chicken BBQ.
- Picked up trash and debris on township trails through the Adopt-A-Forest Program
- Participated in the Adopt-A-Highway program by picking up trash on M-72.
- Educated the township community about maintaining a healthy septic system by featuring a speaker at our annual meeting and sending a pamphlet to the entire township with maintenance advice about septic systems.
- Attended Kalkaska County Board of Commissioners meetings to advocate for the Point-of-Sale Ordinance requiring cleaning and inspection of septic systems.
- Provided flowers for the Community Center and planted new perennials around the building.

By becoming a member with a \$15 annual donation, you benefit from the projects we support and you receive timely notices (through the internet) keeping you informed about events happening in our township. You will receive a 2020 membership form in your summer tax bill.

**Annual Meeting is on Saturday, August 1, 2020 at 10 am.** Due to COVID19 restrictions, it is undetermined how the meeting will be conducted at this time.



### **Smokey the Bear Missing**

Smokey the Bear has been missing from the lawn of the Fire Station, giving you FIRE BURN ALERTS for the area.

Due to a stray tire that came off of a vehicle on M-72 Smokey was damaged. He is being repaired and hope to be making an appearance very soon.



## **Bear Lake Twp. Clean-Up Day**

At the June 9th Township Board Meeting the Board voted to go ahead with our clean-up day on August 29th from 8 am to Noon. Located at the Blue Bear Trail Head, M-72 and Sunset Trail.

**PROOF OF RESIDENCY REQUIRED: THIS NEWLETTER , LAST PROPERTY TAX BILL , PROOF OF PROPERTY OWNERSHIP or UTILITY BILL.etc.**

First load is free, each additional load will be \$5.00 (a load is considered to be one (1) pickup truck, utility trailer or equivalent). **DUE TO COVID-19 WE WILL BE FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES. PLEASE BE CONSIDERATE OF WORKERS AND TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEERS.**

#### **ACCEPTABLE ITEMS:**

Limit of two (2) major appliances, refrigerators and freezers must be tagged "FREON FREE". Household rubbish, building materials (nothing over 6') - furniture—chairs—couches—mattresses—carpeting (cut to 6' length and tied) - scrap metal, etc.

#### **UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS:**

Household garbage—Tires—Batteries—hazardous chemicals—Paint—Oil—Explosives—Yard waste—Brush—Asphalt—Broken Con-

crete—Glass—Burn Barrels filled with trash—Hot Tubs .

**WE ASK THAT IF YOU ARE BRINGING BUILDING MATERIALS THAT ARE ACCEPTED, PLEASE SECURE MATERIAL IN CONTAINERS OR BAGS FOR SAFETY AND FASTER UNLOADING. NO LOOSE MATERIALS.**

**Just a reminder: Workers are Volunteers, so help with whatever you are able, to make things move quickly. Thank you!**

**This is a courtesy to the property owners and to help maintain our woods from debris, your cooperation is appreciated.**

### **Yearly Recycle**

Bear Lake Township also has a recycle bin located at the community Center for Homeowners. Please observe the signs on what can and cannot be placed in the recycle bins. Do not discard garbage or leave boxes etc. on the ground if they do not fit in the bin. Someone has to clean that up! Thank You!

You can also Recycle at the:

Kalkaska County Recycle Center  
Island Lake Rd.—231-384-1304

8 am to 4:30 pm (closed Friday) Sat. 8 am to Noon