

Scio Township

Summer 2010

COMMUNITY REPORT

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FROM THE SUPERVISOR'S DESK – BY SPAULDING CLARK, SUPERVISOR

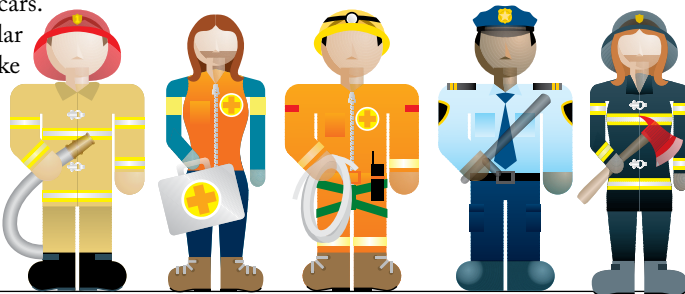
Township Issues

Public Safety

As you know, we have increased Sheriff's Department staffing in Scio, and the results have been encouraging. Response times have dropped, in some cases by one-half. The added deputies have been able to turn their attention to investigation and resolution of some open criminal activities, like home invasions and folks who were stealing catalytic converters from cars. One of the largest numbers of calls relate to burglar alarms. I would encourage all who have them to make certain that accidental alarms are minimized. In similar fashion, the needs of the Fire Department are being reviewed, both in staffing and equipment. You probably read earlier that the Fire Department acquired a Tahoe, which now serves as the primary

response vehicle to all non-fire incidents, thus saving the wear and tear upon the fire trucks. A new fire truck is on order and currently being constructed to the Township's specifications and intended to replace an existing and aging fire truck. Informal discussions continue with representa-

From The Supervisor's Desk continued on page 2



RECYCLING NEWS BY CHARLIE NIELSEN

Change Is Coming To Scio Recycling

At one time or another most of us have feared change, but change can be a good thing. In this case it is definitely a good thing. As many of you may have heard, Recycle Ann Arbor is switching to a "Single Stream" process for curbside pickup in Ann Arbor. This new system will expand the types of containers that may be recycled and allow mixing of items. For example, paper can be in the same container as cans. While we can take advantage of the expanded item list, we will still have to separate our items because Scio's recycle program is not curbside. The roll-off containers are marked appropriately so please be sure to place your recyclables in the correct bin. Also, because our program is not curbside, we can still take batteries. However, oil, fluorescent bulbs and other toxics should be taken to the

All recyclable containers except #3

Starting with the July 17, 2010 recycling date, we will be able to collect all recyclable containers except for #3's. Previously it was just #1's and #2's. Also, it will not matter if it is a liquid container or otherwise. Now we can accept any food or liquid container, unless it is #3. For the first year or so of our recycle program we mistakenly took non-liquid containers. At first, Recycle Ann Arbor said nothing. When they did bring this problem to our attention, we had to start telling our recycle users that we could not accept those items much to the disappointment of everyone. But starting in July, that inconvenience is over.

You can help

Recycle Ann Arbor and Scio Township thank you for your participation in our very successful recycle program. The volunteer help we have been getting is deeply appreciated, but we can always use more help if you are interested in joining us. Our events continue to be held on the third Saturday of every month from 8 a.m. till noon except for the semi-annual cleanout events in May and September, which run until 1 p.m. We set up in the back parking lot of Scio Township Hall (827 N. Zeeb Road). We look forward to helping you help the environment.



Home Toxics drop-off station. They set-up next door to Township Hall on the first three Saturdays of April through November. Go to <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org> for more information. Also, go to: www.Dontflushdrugs.com for information on what to do with discarded medications.

In short, there is not enough money to maintain and fix our roads, unless of course, we pay for it.

From The Supervisor's Desk continued from page 1

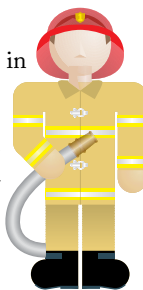
tives of those municipalities that participate in the Dexter Area-wide Fire Department, with the long term goal of investigating a possible consolidation of services and determining the benefits which could be expected to flow from such a consolidation.

Road repair funding in gridlock

Unfortunately, as we move into the warm weather months, concerns about the condition of the roads in the Township continue to mount. As you may have noted in an earlier article by Lew Kidder, the Chair of the Township's Local Roads Committee, answers to road problems are not readily available. While the County Road Commission has the sole responsibility for the maintenance of all public roads in the Township, their only funding source is the state gas tax, which has not only been static for the past 15 years, but its revenues have steadily decreased. In short, there is not enough money to maintain and fix our roads, unless of course, we pay for it. However, because of the current structure of state laws, at the moment our hands are tied as there is no mechanism for the Township to fund road improvements. Thus several local subdivisions have funded their own improvements. That may have to continue to be the case until the state either addresses the funding issue or changes the laws to allow local communities to find their own funding mechanisms. It's a long story with no end in sight. For more details, see the related story in this issue.

Development in the Township

Now that the third phase of the Jackson Road Boulevard is complete, except for some remedial and new landscaping work, the Township is trying to focus on efforts to encourage economic development. In addition to existing entities such as the Downtown Development Authority and the Economic Development Authority, an Economic Development Advisory Committee has been established to provide input on how we might best go about attracting



new businesses to the Township. I believe that the long-term improvements that have been made to the Jackson corridor have, and will continue to have, a positive impact on business and commercial activities in the Township, given a steady improvement in the economic climate in this country. On a related note, you have probably heard enough about Costco's development proposals in the Township over the past several years and you might wonder what Costco's intent really was. I know I do, as they very clearly represented that their absolute criteria was to be on an expressway. However, you will now note that they are moving to a site in Pittsfield Township that is not only not on an expressway, it can't even be seen from an expressway. And I would also note that Costco withdrew its proposal several years ago, before the current Board was elected, and they have not returned or resurrected their proposal in any official capacity. One wonders why they wouldn't even consider locating on Jackson Boulevard, a major thoroughfare with access to multiple expressway exits.

Public Utilities discussions continue

Closely related to prospective development issues will be an eventual resolution of the Township's need for additional sewer capacity, which is being reviewed internally in conjunction with the Ann Arbor Utilities Department which currently serves the Township's water and sewer needs. Hopefully, our direction will be clearer within the next month or so.

Promoting Commerce and Community on the Boulevards



www.wwba.biz 734-668-1482

SCIO TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER BY DAVID READ

Go Paperless!

We are now able to offer a paperless delivery system for this newsletter, saving the Township money and resources. Over 425 of you have taken advantage of this feature and I hope it is working well for you.

Subscribing is easy

If you choose to have the newsletter electronically "delivered", your household will no longer receive a paper copy, saving money and resources. To subscribe to this service, all you'll need is your email address and the Mail Code from the address label on this quarter's newsletter. The Mail Code is comprised of parts of your name and address. For

instance, if your last name is Smith and you live at 1234 Main Street, your Mail Code would be SMIT123MAINST (it is necessary to enter the mail code using all capital letters.) With this information at hand, go to:

http://www.twp.scio.mi.us/newsletters/scio_newsletter_subscribe.html and follow the instructions. Please note that the above address uses underscores (_) not spaces. If you have any problems or questions, let us know at newsletter@twp.scio.mi.us. It is possible to subscribe multiple email addresses from the same household. Just be sure to use the correct Mail Code when subscribing.

Over 425 of you have taken advantage of this feature

Emergency Sirens



With the recent spate of tornadoes (watches, warnings and actual), the Township has had several inquiries regarding the County's warning system. The countywide warning system is operated by the Washtenaw County Emergency Management Division whose website is http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/emergency_management.

Map

A map of all of the warning sirens in the County can be found here:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/emergency_management/em_Siren_Info

The sirens cost approximately \$20,000 to install and about \$350/year to maintain. Only one of the sirens is in Scio Township,

located on Jackson Road near Scio Farms Estates. It was placed there due to the proximity to a densely populated

area that is at high risk in the event of a tornado. As a consequence, those who live at some distance from these sirens may not hear them. For those beyond the range of these sirens, NOAA weather radio, free text messaging services (weather.com for example) and local radio stations are the three best supportive warning options. For more information, contact the County's Emergency Management Division.

House Calls for your ailing computer

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CLERK'S CORNER BY NANCY HEDBERG, CLERK

Elections

Election Dates for 2010:

August 3, and November 2.

VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARD		Polling Location:
City/Twp: SCIO TOWNSHIP		WASH. CO. RD. COMM.
County: WASHTENAW		555 N. ZEEB RD.
Ward: 00	Precinct: 008	School District Polling Location:
	Date: 12/28/2009	WASH. CO. RD. COMM.
Listed below are the various districts in which you reside:		555 N. ZEEB RD.
US Congressional:	07	
State Senate:	18	
State Representative:	052	
County Comm:	01	
School District:	ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ISABEL DALHOUSIE
		1000 SCIO COURT
		ANN ARBOR, MI 48103

NANCY HEDBERG - CLERK

Precinct Polling returns

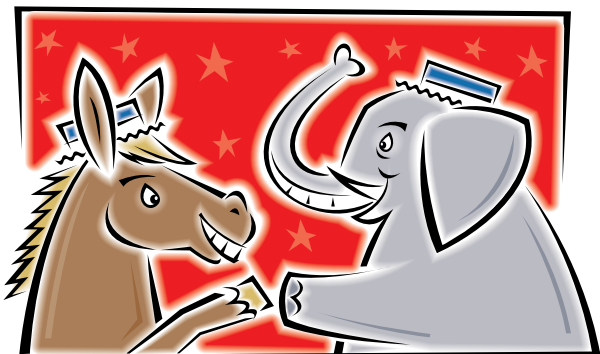
All Township precincts will return to their permanent sites in August and November. Do you remember where your polling place is? Check your Voter Identification Card for your precinct number:

- Precinct 1—Dexter Senior Center
- Precinct 2—Scio Township Hall
- Precinct 3—Scio Township Hall
- Precinct 4—Scio Community Church
- Precinct 5—Scio Farms MHP Clubhouse
- Precinct 6—Scio Township Fire Hall
- Precinct 7—Washtenaw Intermediate School District
- Precinct 8—Washtenaw County Road Commission
- Precinct 9—Polo Fields Clubhouse

Be sure to register

In order to participate in each of these elections, you must be registered to vote at your current residential address at least 30 days prior to the election. Registration cutoff date for the August Primary was July 6th, but you still have time to register for the November General Election. Cutoff for November's election is October 4th. To check your registration status, go to: <https://webapps.sos.state.mi.us/mivote/>

Do you
remember
where your
polling
place is?



Yet another
example of the
pay-me-now
or
pay-me-a-lot-
more-later
syndrome.

If you build it, they will come

Recently, we've tossed around a number of issues affecting our Township's public roads. We know the size of Scio's system: 108 miles in total, 33 of them gravel. We know their current condition: overall, subpar, with nearly 50% of the total mileage receiving failing grades in either surface quality or drainage capacity. We know what it takes to keep our roads in good condition: about \$950,000/year if we had kept to a rigorous maintenance schedule – which we have not – otherwise, closer to \$1.4 million/year. Yet another example of the pay-me-now-or-pay-me-a-lot-more-later syndrome. We also know the amount of funding currently received by the Washtenaw County Road Commission that is allocated to Scio Township: about \$650,000/year. That brings the investment gap into sharp relief: somewhere between \$300,000 and \$750,000 per year. So, assuming we want a well-maintained road system, what are the alternatives for additional funding?

The feds.

Can we expect to address some of the funding gap with money from Uncle Sam? On a scale of 10 being “yes, all of it” and 1 being “no, none of it”, the answer is probably pretty close to the bottom of that range. Why? Well, aside from a program for bridge repair, traditional funding from Uncle Sam has generally been limited to major thoroughfares (like the interstate highway system). The stimulus package of 2008 did provide some funding for other public road projects, but Washtenaw County's share was “just” \$3.5 million. That money was earmarked for blacktop overlay, which costs \$70,000/mile. For Washtenaw County, that translated to 50 miles of pavement overlay. Divide that by 20 (the number of townships in the County), and Scio's share equates to about 2.5 miles of overlay. This will be completed later this summer, with the repaving of the stretch of Huron River Drive between Tubbs and Zeeb. The stimulus funds will be gone at the end of this year, and with the national debt a huge issue in the upcoming elections, chances of help from this source are somewhere between slim and none (and as the saying goes, “slim ain't home”).

State of Michigan

That's where the Road Commission's money comes from nowadays, through distribution of money collected from vehicle registration fees and a tax on fuels (primarily gasoline and diesel) otherwise known as “Act 51”. Michigan's “gas tax” is 19 cents per gallon compared to 28 cents in Ohio, 32 cents in Wisconsin, and 35 cents in Pennsylvania. This explains the shortfall seen by the road commission – but why does a gallon of gas cost more in Michigan than it does in Ohio? Because Michigan also imposes a sales tax on gasoline, while Ohio does not. However, the revenue raised by our sales tax goes into the State's general fund and is used for purposes other than roads. Michigan's legislature has long talked about the need to invest more money in the state's road system, but talk is all we've seen. Bills have been introduced through the years – the most recent one would raise the gas tax by four cents per gallon immediately (on

passage) and another four cents within a couple of years. What would that mean for Scio? Best guess is between \$15,000 and \$17,000 per year for each penny increase – so if the entire eight cents got immediate approval, that would increase Scio's hypothetical “fair share” by somewhere between \$120,000 and \$136,000 each year. Nothing to sneer at, of course, but it still wouldn't do the job.

Road Commission

The Washtenaw County Road Commission does have jurisdiction over all Scio's public roads – but what they don't have is their own money tree. Aside from a few dollars here and there from the Feds, for bridges and the like, the Road Commission only gets what the State provides. Some people do argue that the local Road Commission has been wasteful over the years – but without trying to address the historical record, it is this writer's personal observation that they are doing an exemplary job in the here and now of getting the most out of what they have. And at any rate, it's pretty clear from a simple money in, money out analysis, (see above), “waste” at the local level is not the problem.

County

What about Washtenaw County itself? Since all 20 townships in the County face a similar problem (decaying roads), could there be a countywide solution? Legally speaking, yes – and in fact, 17 counties in Michigan have countywide road millages. But a more telling statistic is that the remaining 66 counties, though all faced with equally difficult problems, do not. Most veteran observers of Washtenaw County politics are pessimistic about a countywide solution here. Not necessarily pessimistic about the results of an election, though that too, but rather whether the county board of commissioners would even put the proposal on the ballot in the first place. Keep one fact in mind: the western 3/5's of the County, which includes Scio, has but two seats on the 11-member County Board Of Commissioners.

The Michigan counties with road millages include Allegan, Baraga, Chippewa, Emmet, Gladwin, Houghton, Huron, Leelanau, Midland, Ontonagon, Sanilac, Tuscola, and Van Buren. What do these counties have in common? Well, for one, they are all primarily rural counties, with only one (Midland) having even a single moderately sized city (the city of Midland has a population of just over 40,000). That fact matters, because most cities (where a significant portion of the voters reside) have their own road millages, which means their voters tend to be less enthusiastic about millages for someone else's roads.

Township Millage

How about a township-wide millage? Again, that's permitted under Michigan law, but hasn't yet been attempted in Scio. What do other townships do? Statewide, about one-third of all townships have a special road millage, most in the 1.0 mil range. What would a 1.0 mil levy raise in Scio? Since



the total taxable valuation in the Township is around \$1.4 billion, such a levy would produce nearly \$1.4 million each year. As one might expect from a township on the edge of a major metropolitan area, however, there are a couple of asterisks. One is the Village of Dexter, which already levies around three mils on its residents to pay for investment in village streets. And the other is the Scio Township DDA, which is funded by a split in certain portions of property taxes levied in the Township. There are a number of options for dealing with both complications, but those subjects probably deserve an article of their own. If, however, we backed out the amounts that would be raised from residents of the Village and the relevant part of the DDA, a 1.0 mil levy for roads in Scio would bring in about \$1,000,000 per year. So, though the bad news is that our current under-investment in the Township road system is likely in the area of \$750,000 per year, the good news is that we have the resources to fix it with relatively modest pain.

Township Special Assessment District

The voters of Scio recently approved a Special Assessment District (SAD) for public safety. The SAD imposes a 0.95 mil levy on all property owners in a district that includes the entire Township except the Village of Dexter. Why, one might ask, could we not use a similar SAD for roads? Because, the experts tell us, the Michigan constitution forbids it. Here's their argument. To use the SAD process, the benefits received by the property owner must be identical to the amount the property owner pays. If it isn't, then it's a "tax" and in Michigan, a township tax must apply equally across the entire township. And since villages are part of the township (cities are not), a township "tax" must apply to all Scio property owners, including those in the village.

But how is a superior township-wide public safety system different from a top-notch township-wide road system? The answer, again say the experts, is that the former has

already passed constitutional muster through the courts, while the latter has not. Cases of first impression are almost always very expensive – so if Scio enacted an SAD for roads and was challenged in court, we would be forced to wage a costly legal battle with no certainty of the outcome. If we won, we'd have our road SAD and every other township in the state would be happy because we would have set a precedent for them to use. If we lost, lots of wasted money and nothing to show for it.

Neighborhood Special Assessment Districts

The SAD process is proving useful for specific neighborhoods, however. In Scio, it worked for Wing Meadows in 2010, with the 32 property owners imposing a \$3,000 per household levy on themselves to fix their own roads. And this year, 94 homeowners in Scio Hills will do something similar. The problem with neighborhood SAD's, however, is that they are unwieldy instruments for addressing roads used by segments of the public other than adjacent property owners. Solving the periodic flooding problem on West Liberty Road, for example, would be expensive (somewhere between \$600,000 and \$2,000,000 for a 800-foot stretch over a wetland) – but how would you draw the district for that SAD? Just the people who live on that section of the road? There are none. Include property that isn't on that stretch? Well, yes, but where do you stop? A quarter-mile? A half-mile? A mile? And remember the "benefit must equal burden" conundrum imposed by the constitution.

In Conclusion

In the end, each person needs to answer two basic questions. First, where does a quality road network in the community rank on your scale of priorities? Do you value a quick response from law enforcement and the fire department when you need them? That is dependent, at least in part, on the quality of the roads between you and them. Do you get package deliveries at home? Same. Would you like your car to last a little longer? Worried that a rutted toad might be a little too much for a beginning driver? Like your home to sell for a little more when the time comes? Same, same, same.

Second, who is going to pay the tab? If your answer is the "feds", or the "state", or the "road commission", aren't you just dodging the real answer? In the end, it's always us who pays – and this is not an argument for blank checks. It is, rather, an argument for clear thinking. If the roads are worth it to us (see question #1), then we are the ones who will have to pay for them. Some way, some how, it will be up to us. We could pay more to the feds and hope to see 90 cents on the dollar returned to us (that's Michigan's track record – other states do better). We could pay the state and still not get enough. But if we raise the money ourselves, we get to spend every dime of it on ourselves for a purpose we determine. And if we had a great community road system, wouldn't that give us a competitive advantage over neighboring communities who did not? If you build it, they will come.

Land Preservation Photo Contest Ends

The Land Preservation Commission would like to thank all photographers who submitted entries and congratulate all the winners.

The photography contest held by the township Land Preservation Commission ended on June 1st. The contest ran for one year and attracted approximately 10 resident photographers and 46 eligible photographs. Not surprisingly, the most popular sites for the photographers were the Fox Science Preserve and the Scio Church Woods, both now County Parks.

First Place photo unique

Ed Wegren took First Place for his photo entitled, Up High. Ed was born and raised in Ann Arbor, but has lived in Scio for approximately 10 years. He stated, "[Scio] has changed a lot over the years, so it is nice to see a program like the Land Preservation one stopping the area from turning into endless suburbs. I am just a hobby photographer, but was inspired to enter the contest by walks with the family in the Fox Science Preserve. It is such a unique place compared with the relative flatness of the Ann Arbor area. I was simply trying to capture the various landscapes all encompassed in the preserve. I wanted to take a picture that nobody would believe was taken in Scio Twp."

All photos now online

Second Place went to Thomas Myers for his photo at the Fox Preserve. Third Place went to Sherry Parks for her photo from Gordon Hall looking into Scio. Honorable Mention went to Ed Wegren for another photo from the Fox Preserve, Thomas Myers for a photo from the Scio Church Woods and Maurice Snyder for his photo from

Scio Church Woods. All the photos may be viewed at www.ScioWatch.org.

Judges were locals

Judges for this contest were two established Scio-resident photographers. Howard Bond and Rich Lawton are well known to Ann Arbor area photographers. As active members of the Ann Arbor Camera Club, they were pleased to serve as judges and help advance photography of our beautiful Township. Speaking on behalf of himself and Howard, Rich stated, "Scio residents should be very proud of the beauty of their township and we are glad to be a small part in helping communicate this beauty to all residents. We are pleased to support the Township land preservation efforts." Township Supervisor Spaulding Clark added, "Scio's historic land preservation millage has successfully resulted in protecting and conserving the Township's natural resources while maintaining the Township's open, green and rural character. The continued protection of areas of natural beauty is a quality of life issue for all of the residents and businesses in Scio Township. I am pleased some of our residents documented a small part of this beauty and shared it with the rest of us."

Everyone is a winner

The Land Preservation Commission would like to thank all photographers who submitted entries and congratulate all the winners. Of course, all Scio residents are winners by virtue of having these wonderful preserved lands in our township.

We encourage you to get out and view the beauty of your township. We hope to be able to continue to add preserved land within the Township for many years to come.





Get involved in your community

Scio Township Information

Scio Township Hall
827 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
(734) 369-9400; info@twp.scio.mi.us
visit us at: www.twp.scio.mi.us

Township Office Hours

Monday to Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Utility Department Hours:

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Utilities emergency: (734) 651-4770
Utilities Administration: (734) 369-9350

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Board meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Township Hall. E-mail sent to townshipboard@twp.scio.mi.us will be forwarded to all members of the township board.

Scio Township Department Heads

Carl Ferch, Fire Chief
Scott Martin – Utilities Director
James Merte – Assessing

Other Phone Numbers

Emergencies 911
Fire Department Administration (734) 665-6001
Sheriff's Department,
Zeeb Road Sub-Station (734) 994-8105
County Building Inspection Services . . . (734) 222-3900

The Scio Township Community Report

Is published quarterly by the Scio Township Board of Trustees for the residents of Scio Township.

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David Read

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(734) 222-6860

County Road Commission

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(734) 663-0927; ouimetm@ewashtenaw.org

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(734) 686-4445; schwartzk@ewashtenaw.org

District 3 – Jessica Pin
(734) 260-7844; pingmillsj@ewashtenaw.org

District 9 – Leah Gunn
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District 10 – Conan Smith
(734) 662-0268; smithco@ewashtenaw.org

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District 18 – Liz Brater
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Governor:

Jennifer M. Granholm
(517) 373-3400; e-mail via www.michigan.gov/gov

Federal Information:

U.S. Representatives:

District 7 – Mark Schauer
(202) 225-6276; www.schauer.house.gov/contact

District 15 – John Dingell
(202) 225-4071; www.house.gov/dingell

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Debbie Stabenow
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By DARRELL FECHO, MANAGER

Who will stop the rain?

The Township is often contacted by property owners about problems caused by storm water flows after major rain events. However, the Township has no jurisdiction over these flows. By Michigan law, the owner of each parcel of land is responsible for its storm water run-off. The issue is a delicate civil matter between property owners who have the responsibility to maintain flows and defend their drainage solution. Storm water may travel through a natural course over a number of properties or may be directed through a public drain system. On most developed parcels, run-off is stored in a retention area and allowed to percolate into the water table or evaporate over time or held in a detention pond where it is slowly released at a rate that the down stream environment can handle.

Rules vary by type of site

The Washtenaw County Road Commission controls road drainage in the Township. Public drains and drainage assessment districts are the jurisdiction of the County Water Resources Commissioner (formerly known as the Drain

Commissioner). Condominiums or site condominiums are recognized as a single parcel where the owners must collectively deal with any flow problem. The procedure is spelled out in the condo documents and usually rests with the condominium board. A traditional platted subdivision creates individually owned parcels, making each property owner responsible. There are some exceptions where a subdivision association exists or where a drainage special assessment district has been created through the County. You should review your circumstances to see what applies to you.

Work with your neighbors

One thing is sure, storm water run-off patterns change over time. Major impacts include development, natural erosion, sedimentation, maturing plants and human intervention. The drainage solution often includes a number of parcel owners, requires extensive research with professional engineering support and may end up being a civil matter settled by the courts. An alternative may be to create a drainage assessment district to address the problem through the County Water Resources Commissioner.