

Independence Township Times July 2017

To Hunt or Not to Hunt?

By Pat Kittle,
Township Supervisor

The Township Board voted unanimously on October 4, 2016, to create a special citizen committee to review the hunting ordinances and boundaries in the Township that had not been updated since 1982. The problem with the current 35-year-old hunting ordinance is that entire neighborhoods and schools have sprung up right in the middle of those ol' happy hunting grounds. Based on the way the ordinance is currently written, you could hunt with a gun right in the middle of the high school football field or where several big neighborhoods are currently located. Doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.



Township Supervisor Pat Kittle

Not being a hunter, we decided to run an article in the November 2016 issue of the *Township Times* asking for volunteers to review the current hunting ordinances and put a hunting plan together based on today's population density. A committee of 8 people was formed; 3 residents from the Northern portion of the Township, 2 from the Southern portion of the Township, and 3 appointed members (2 Trustees and 1 Sheriff Lieutenant). Not surprisingly, the committee was mostly made up of avid hunters and sportsmen. Non-voting delegates from Oakland County Parks and gun safety experts from the Oakland County Sportsmen's Club were also present. The meetings were facilitated by the Township Planning & Zoning Administrator. Three public meetings were March 9, March 30th and April 20, 2017 at which the committee members studied an extensive amount of information, discussed the issues, debated ideas, and worked toward a goal of making recommendations to the MDNR and Township Board about whether and how the existing hunting areas and ordinances should be updated. Time was allotted for any resident to address the committee to share their thoughts and information. (To be honest with you, we thought we were going to get bombarded in the committee meetings with folks voicing their opinions, but attendance was very light.)

After a couple months of work, the citizens committee came up with a new draft boundary map and plan for hunting that is mostly based on current Township density. That draft plan basically includes the following elements:

- It provides for bow hunting in the entire Township, as long as State laws and guidelines are followed;
- It provides for firearm hunting in restricted areas, as

long as State laws and guidelines are followed;

- It does not allow any hunting with center-fire rifles or handguns; and

- In areas where hunting is permitted, the draft plan would not prevent private property owners from adopting and enforcing more restrictive rules for hunting on their property.

So what are the next steps?

The Township Planning & Zoning Administrator will present the committee's recommendations to the Board of Trustees scheduled for September 5 at 7 pm at Townhall. In this meeting the Township Board will listen to the proposed plan, as well as take input from residents who would like to see modifications to the plan who for whatever reason did not make the committee meetings. **NO DECISION WILL BE MADE AT THIS BOARD MEETING TO APPROVE OR DENY THE PROPOSED PLAN.** The Township Trustees will decide in a subsequent Board meeting if the proposed hunting ordinance should be forwarded to the Michigan DNR for its review and consideration.

The revised hunting boundary maps and existing ordinances can be found on the Township website home page under the link HUNTING. With any change of this magnitude, there are some residents who will be pleased that there will be no more gunshot blasts from a neighbor hunting, while others may feel their right to hunt is being taken away. It is recommended to anyone who would like to ask the Board to consider a change to what is being proposed, to include a petition from the surrounding neighbors in your area who agree with the changes you would like to see considered. For a parcel of land, the neighbors bordering your lot should sign off on your petition. For a lake, the majority of households living on the lake you would like to see changed.

BOTTOMLINE: The Township is not trying to take anyone's right to own a gun away from them. This ordinance has nothing to do with owning, possessing or carrying a firearm. What the Township is trying to do is review and possibly update an old ordinance that is based on circumstances and conditions that existed in our community 35 years ago. Will keep you posted on future meeting dates regarding this matter.



Get involved! Part 2

By Barbara A. Pallotta,
Township Clerk

Part 2 includes summaries of the roles and responsibilities of the Township's boards, commissions and committees. Remember applications to apply are available on the Township's website at www.indtwp.com and in the Clerk's Office.

Boards, Committees, And Commissions Designated By Statute And/Or Local Ordinance

Several of the Township's boards and commissions are designated through State of Michigan statutes or by Township ordinance for specific purposes and/or for having administrative decision-making powers. One distinction separating some of these boards or commissions from advisory boards/committees is that members may receive payment for serving, such as the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Boards and commissions established to state statute or Township ordinance are usually appealable to designated courts of law.



Township Clerk Barb Pallotta



Board of Review (BOR)

Established: General Property Tax Act; Act 206 of 1983

Township Liaison: Director of Assessing; (248) 625-8114

The General Property Tax Act requires that real property be assessed annually by a certified assessor. The Tax Act also establishes a Board of Review consisting of local citizens who evaluate resident appeals regarding assessed property values annually and adjusts Township Assessor's values, if needed.

The BOR consists of 3 residents and 1 alternate member appointed by the Township Board of Trustees.

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