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## Townships at Risk of Losing Representation: Importance of the 2020 U.S. Census

In November, MAT held a conference where Township officials across the state came together to emphasize the next year's Census for a critical reason: a seat at the table in state politics. Elected officials at the annual Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) conference stressed the need to count as many township residents as possible to ensure they still have a voice at the Minnesota Legislature, as well as Congress. "There is concern about if rural areas are going to get the same degree of representation as they have in the past," shared David Hann, the association's executive director. When townships lose population, they risk losing representation, and then funding.

Township boards throughout the state handle revenues totaling more than \$325 million. They make decisions regarding roads, bridges, planning and zoning, tax levies and more. They're considered the oldest form of government in Minnesota and represent grassroots government at its *purest* level. Yet a lot of people don't know what they do, understand the scope of their importance, or realize their significant population sizes.

West Lakeland Township has a population of 4,046 — the 9th largest township in the state. Approximately 915,000 Minnesotans live in one of the state's 1,781 townships, yet those townships receive less state and federal aid than larger communities and urban areas. They have to work on thin budgets

since they don't have the sizable tax base that larger cities and metro areas command. According to MAT, despite making up a sixth of the state's population, townships deal with about 40% of the state's roads and spend about \$170 million per year on road maintenance. Mike Miller, an Oxford Township supervisor in Isanti County, pointed out that urban needs often align with rural issues as many goods and services are created in rural areas. "If you want to eat and live in a city, you pretty much need to depend on a farmer living in the country. No matter what it is, it starts in a township or on township roads."

The Census Bureau estimates that 17.7% of Minnesota's population won't self-respond to the census which is approximately 965,000 people. Even one missed person could mean forfeiting almost \$28,000 in funding for the next ten years. Census data guides approximately \$589 billion in federal spending allocated to local communities each year, including more than \$15 billion distributed to Minnesota communities.

**When and how do I complete the 2020 U.S. Census?** When it's time to respond, households will receive an invitation in the mail in mid-March 2020. Every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone. Please complete the survey by April 30; otherwise, census staff will come knocking at your door!



## Chairman's Corner

### There's a New Supervisor in Town



*Dan Kylo, Steve Ebner, Dave Schultz* At our November 4, Town Board meeting, Marian Appelt was appointed Supervisor to replace retiring Supervisor Steve Ebner. Marian is a long time resident of West Lakeland and a retired 3M employee. She will finish out Steve's term which ends in March of 2020. Steve retires after serving on the Town Board for about nine years. He was instrumental in overhauling our town code and worked many long hours with members from the Planning Commission to complete our 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Met Council. We wish Steve the best and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to the Township.

### Spring Flooding Projected

Last spring, several of our residents experienced water in their basements due to rising nearby ponds and streams, or backed up snow melt. There were also septic systems that temporarily failed, resulting from a tragic combination of frozen ground and an early snow thaw that allowed water to seep into and fill up septic tanks. This past summer's record rainfall has only exacerbated the problem by saturating our subsoils again and suggests a real possibility of reenacting last year's flooding potential. Washington County Director of Emergency Management, Doug Berglund, warns that there is a real threat of flooding for next spring and that residents should take preventative measures now before spring arrives. Residents can acquire sandbags now before they are in real demand and there becomes a shortage. Second, if you do not have flood or water-related damage insurance, it is suggested that you apply for and acquire it now. It normally takes a month or two before it takes effect. So if you wait until February it may be too late. Here is a link to FEMA that could help with insurance questions <https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program/How-Buy-Flood-Insurance>.

### LE Airport Expansion Update

The Minnesota Airport Commission's contractor has started excavation for the realignment of 30<sup>th</sup> St N. The new alignment will swing southward from the present 30<sup>th</sup> St and removing unfavorable soils and replacing them with favorable

around the proposed expanded runway. The contractor will be subbase soils for the road, allowing them to settle over winter. Trees in the area will also be removed. They intend to finish the new road by fall of 2020.

### Why should we keep our culverts and catch basins clean?

Each fall, with the help of my MS4 Inspection Partner, Dave Dupay, I go out to inspect and report on approximately 20% of the Township's 450 culverts, catch basins and holding ponds. This is a requirement of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as part of the MS4 (Metropolitan Separate Septic and Storm Water System) reporting program. I then put together a list of culverts, drainage ditches and other storm water structures that need to be repaired and/or cleaned out. This past year the township spent about \$20,000 repairing and cleaning just a few structures. Sediment, vegetation and debris, (i.e. leaves, grass clips and vegetation buildup at the openings and in drainage easements) clog up these culverts and catch basins. In turn, water backs up during sudden winter thaws or heavy rainfall events and potentially causes flooding, which can cause damage to our roadways. Much of this cost could be minimized if our residents could voluntarily keep nearby catch basins and culverts clear of trash and debris. Proactive cleaning of these structures ultimately reduces costs and taxes.

### Property Tax Statements Have Arrived

Many our residents should have received their property tax statement from the County by now. You may have noticed about a 30% increase in your 2020 Township property taxes. This increase was proposed by the Town Board and approved by the residents at the Annual Township Meeting last March. A \$200,000 per year increase was approved to step up improvements that we so desperately need for our failing roads. This extra revenue will be swept into the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) fund to pay for larger street improvements, such as the one this past summer, where a two mile stretch of the 4th/6th St. loop was dug up and repaved. Our township website has a Road Improvements Map which indicates the projected projects over the next ten years. The good news is that even with this increase, West Lakeland is still one of lowest taxed municipalities in the east metro.

Best Regards and Happy Holidays,

Chairman, Daniel Kylo

# Roads and Bridges

## **Snow Plowing Reminder**

Just a reminder, as I have mentioned in past newsletters, it is unlawful by state statute [Minnesota Statute 160.2715 \(A\) \(1\)](#) and township ordinance to plow snow across or into any street or right-of-way. Piles of snow left on or near the road can freeze into a solid mass creating a hazardous situation for vehicles and snowplows. Piles of snow can also increase the chance of drifting snow onto the roadway. Accidents and damages caused by piles of snow placed in the roadway may result in liability to the property owner. There were a number of areas that were particularly troublesome in previous years, so residents please remind your plowing contractor of this law. If you have questions regarding the township snow plowing policy, it can be viewed at our website: <http://www.westlakeland.govoffice2.com/>

As side note, as stated in our snow plowing policy, we plow main roads and school bus routes first, secondary roads next and because cul-de-sacs impact the fewest number of people, they are last. Depending on the amount of snow and its duration, we may open up a cul-de-sac and then come back later to clean them out. Lastly, our snow plow operators thank those of you that have placed reflective markers along the edge of the road. It sure helps them locate the edge of the pavement, especially on curves.

## **St. Croix Trail North (Highway 95)**

MnDOT will be resurfacing Hwy 95 from just north of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue N in Bayport to just south of I-94 in Lakeland in 2020. Construction is anticipated to start in early May and be completed by the end of October 2020. A public open house will be held next spring before construction starts. For more information and updates on this project, visit their website at <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy95bayport/index.html>

*Have a safe New Year!*

Supervisor Dave Schultz

## **NEW NEIGHBORS at GRANITE HOUSE**

Granite House recently celebrated their one-year anniversary since opening their doors on November 27, 2018. This new neighbor to West Lakeland Township is self-described as a “family-focused long term care residence”. The unique population served by this home is adults with severe, traumatic or acquired brain injury who have low recovery potential. The home has been designed to accommodate four permanent residents with a fifth bedroom currently undergoing final preparation to provide periodic respite care to families who are caring for their loved ones in their homes.

The concept for Granite House began with Carol and Tom Insley whose adult son, Aaron, had suffered a traumatic brain injury after a tragic car accident in 2007 which also took the life of his older brother, Richard. After faithfully caring for Aaron in their West Lakeland home for 6 years, the Insleys began exploring long-term care living options for Aaron. Top on their priority list was to keep their son nearby to maintain their close bond with him. The primary settings they found were nursing home facilities which did not seem to be an appropriate fit for a minimally-conscious, young adult. The Insleys wanted a place they, and other families in similar situations, could identify as home.

Thus began their journey to find a better option. Initially, the Insleys sought a residential home which could be renovated. But that plan brought with it a host of complications. When they literally stumbled upon this 4.5 acre piece of property on Stagecoach Trail, they discovered previous ownership by a local logger dated back to the mid-1800s. This wooded lot seemed the perfect spot to “pioneer” a relatively new concept in community living for adults living with brain injuries. With the help of a dedicated friend and registered nurse, Anna Bohnen, who offered to take on a critical leadership role, their dream was becoming a reality. The land was purchased in 2014, and the ground-breaking ceremony for the house occurred on April 29, 2017.

Granite House was, and continues to be, built by many hands with careful attention to detail. High quality and low maintenance siding, windows and flooring were installed. A high efficiency metal roof was chosen to minimize the need for future replacement. The shared spaces within the home have high ceilings and beautiful natural lighting. The décor is warm and welcoming. Private rooms were designed with built in wardrobe/shelving units and lifts to transfer residents from their wheelchair to bed. Special efforts were made to preserve the surrounding trees and vegetation. (cont' on next page)





Aaron Insley, resident and son of the Insleys

In just one year's time, this community residence is thriving. Four adult residents, including Aaron, are living happily in the home. These families, who have often faced enormous challenges, are encouraged to stay closely connected with their loved ones at Granite House and, as a result, members stop by regularly for visits. Three of the residents are from Washington County, two of them from West Lakeland Township. Most of the staff members also reside in the area or just over the border in Wisconsin.

The Saint Croix Valley community has been very supportive of their efforts. Local businesses and contractors have donated hours of labor and materials. Miller Excavating helped to build the foundation, and Aggregate Industries donated gravel for the foundation, driveway and parking areas. A neighborly veteran helps plow snow. Blackwood Nursery donates an annual Christmas tree. Care providers from Bluestone Physicians make house calls to the residence

once per month to reduce the need for doctor visits outside the home. A local music therapist brings joyful noises into the home twice per month. With great gratitude, Carol Insley described each person involved and each step of this entire process as "providential".

New, exciting ideas for Granite House are in the works. The Washington County Master Gardeners helped create the plans, which will begin work next year, for a sensory garden out in front of the home with a path for residents. A local Boy Scout, Spencer Baker, is raising money to build a 16' x 24' deck off the back of the house this spring for his Eagle Scout Award project. Following the installation of the deck, there will be a wheelchair swing for the enjoyment of the residents.



Christmas Tree donated by Blackwood Nursery

As a non-profit, Granite House always welcomes new donors. Inquiries can be made through the website at [granitehousemn.org](http://granitehousemn.org). In addition to monetary gifts, individuals may opt to purchase necessary household items from an Amazon gift registry. Those who would like to contribute specifically to Spencer's Eagle Scout project can simply make such a note with their donation. Occasionally, Granite House seeks volunteers for special projects. There is currently a part-time employment opportunity as a caregiver. For those interested in more information or to receive periodic newsletter updates, please see their website.

The name for Granite House comes from a place near and dear to the heart of the Insley family who once hailed from the state of Montana. Granite Peak, known for its challenging climb, is located just south of Billings, MT. Tom Insley reached the summit with both of his sons on separate occasions. Aaron's climb of Granite Peak occurred just three months prior to his accident. From his new home situated upon a hill in West Lakeland Township, Aaron's vantage point may be somewhat different now but there is still beauty to behold and life to be lived.

## PLEASE CONSIDER SERVING AS AN ELECTION JUDGE IN 2020!

West Lakeland is always seeking citizens to serve as election judges. Election judges are temporary, paid employees of local election officials trained to handle all aspects of voting at the polling place. Serving as an election judge is a chance to learn about elections, and is a great service to our community. Judges will be paid an hourly wage of \$10.00 per hour in 2020, which will include your training time as well.



### WHAT IS MY TIME COMMITMENT?

**Training:** You may either complete an on-line training module or attend a class offered by our township. Both training sessions are approximately two hours in length. A link to the on-line training module will be available January 3 and can be emailed to interested judges.

**Election Days:** You have an opportunity to work one or all of the 2020 elections (Presidential Nomination Primary, General Election and Township Election). In most cases, you will only be asked to work the General Election.

**Workday Schedule:** A typical schedule on Election Day is from 6:00 a.m. to around 9:00 p.m. In most cases, you will be asked to work a 5-hour shift or half-day.

**Time Off from Work to Serve:** Your employer is **required** to give you time off from work to be an election judge without a reduction in pay. To qualify, you must notify your employer in writing at least 20 days in advance of Election Day.