



THE OUTLOOK

SUMMER EDITION

“Citizen Driven”

July 2005

2005-06 Fiscal Year: A New Beginning

July 1 marked the beginning of our new fiscal year. Our new budget is available at the general offices or through the website. It contains the status of the 04-05 budget through June 30 and a detailed explanation of how the new year’s figures were projected.

Our annual audit will begin in August. The report must be filed with the State before December 31. While it is generally recommended that companies change auditors every 4 years or so, the Township has used Tobin & Co. for a much longer period of time. This year we will work with Plante Moran, which will expose our books to a fresh set of eyes along with an anticipated cost reduction. The audit report will be made available to the public, and will be used to adjust starting balances for the fiscal year as needed.

On a preliminary basis, it appears that 2004-05 General Fund expenditures exceeded revenues by roughly \$175,000, reducing the General Fund balance from around \$916,301 at the beginning of the year to roughly \$742,300 at the end. It appears that 65% of the

funding allocated for the fiscal year was spent during the first 4 ½ months before the current Board took office.

This year’s budget is based on conservative income estimates and notable spending cuts. Cost control measures include the elimination of surplus meetings and asking our attorney to attend only portions of meetings where his advice is likely to be required rather than paying for several hours of attendance that may be unnecessary. Our fee schedule was amended for the first time since 1988 to better reflect the current costs of providing services. In particular, Special Use Permit and Variance applicants are paying the full actual costs for processing their applications, including: staff/consulting/attorney time, notice publication, copy costs, notice mailing, meeting per diems and final document recording costs.

We currently project a modest revenue surplus of about \$13,000. Our fiscal status relative to the budget is reviewed continually to ensure we stay on track with our balanced budget.

Vote August 2nd on the Moratorium on Big Box Superstores

This spring the Township adopted a 9-month moratorium on “big box” stores (large-scale retail development over 50,000 sq. ft. in size). During this 9-month waiting period the Township can concentrate on study and potential amendment of its zoning ordinances regulating this form of development to align our zoning with our Master Plan and the wishes of the voters. The moratorium is up for a vote of township residents on August 2.

The moratorium is modeled on ordinances adopted by other communities, including Easton, Maryland and Fort Collins, Colorado. Like Acme, these communities face significant development pressure from big box stores, creating challenges related to traffic, protection of creeks and other natural resources, and quality of life issues.

The Board of Trustees asked the Planning Commission to consider this moratorium at the beginning of January, and adopted it in early April. At the end of January, 3 weeks after the moratorium was proposed, Meijer, Inc. applied for consideration of its 300,000+ sq. ft. “Lautner Commons” retail center. Meijer therefore opposes the moratorium, and its supporters collected enough petition signatures to put the moratorium on the August ballot.

Meijer is 1 of 3 large retail developments proposed in Acme in recent years, along with Wal-Mart and the Village at Grand

Traverse. Many other township properties could also be proposed for large-scale development under our current regulations. From the Board’s perspective, this issue is about the whole township and not just one store.

The moratorium seeks time for the township to focus on wise planning on our timeline rather than someone else’s. The township wants to use this time to bring the Zoning Ordinance into line with the Master Plan adopted 6 years ago. The first major step in this process will be public visioning. We hope you will attend and share your views on how Acme should look and function in the years to come.

A Meijer lawsuit seeking to prevent the Township from printing the election ballots was recently thrown out of court, allowing the moratorium vote to go forward on Tuesday, August 2. The ballot question will read:

“Shall Acme Township Zoning Ordinance #131, titled ‘Moratorium on Big Box Superstores’ and establishing a 9-month moratorium on retail buildings or combinations of buildings in excess of 50,000 square feet, be approved?”

A yes vote favors the moratorium; a no vote opposes it. Whatever your feelings, we hope you will vote on this very important issue.

Progress Report: A Message from Supervisor Bill Kurtz

In my last newsletter message, I told township residents about three of the major goals this Board of Trustees has for Acme: (1) smart growth; (2) fiscal discipline; and (3) open, citizen-driven government. I want to take this opportunity to let you know about our progress on these goals, and what we still intend to do.

Smart Growth

Acme is a special place, and keeping it special while we grow is a major challenge. The Board has taken several steps forward to meet that challenge. We have more to do, and we want your help with the planning.

As you may know, the township has been in litigation with the Village at Grand Traverse over the mall proposed for M-72 and Lautner Road. Earlier this month, Judge Philip Rodgers struck down the prior Board's approval of the mall. The judge ruled that the Village, a regional shopping mall, was contrary to the vision of a walkable town center set out in the township's Master Plan.

The judge also ruled that the prior Board improperly tried to stop the new Board from having a say about the mall's impacts on traffic, Acme Creek, and local businesses. "It is startling to learn," the court wrote, "that a rural township government rejected by its own citizens [in the last election] would approve a commercial project the scale of which dwarfs even the most intense commercial development presently within Grand Traverse County and do so in the absence of meaningful traffic, environmental and market studies."

The judge also dismissed personal lawsuits ("slap suits") filed against Board and Planning Commission members by the Village at Grand Traverse and Meijer. The Village and Meijer are expected to appeal.

The township is also busy with the farmland preservation program. Working with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Farmland Preservation Advisory identified agricultural lands which may be eligible for the purchase of

development rights (PDR) program. We are currently in the process of adding the Farmland Preserve Map to the Master Plan and applying for state matching funds to supplement the millage approved by voters last fall. The Farmland Preservation Advisory is working closely with the County Agricultural Preservation Board to develop a PDR scoring system and put all the pieces in place to enable us to begin purchasing development rights.

The Board of Trustees also passed a moratorium on big-box stores, which is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. The Planning Commission continues its 5-year review of the Master Plan and is beginning to update the Zoning Ordinance.

All these efforts have the same purpose: to bring development in Acme back in line with our residents' vision. We want your help putting that vision together. Soon you will be hearing about public visioning sessions, and we hope you will participate. This will be the first step in a citizen driven process to chart our future.

Fiscal Discipline

Last month, after 2 years of deficit spending, the Board passed a balanced budget for the 2005-06 fiscal year. Through aggressive belt-tightening and elimination of our predecessor Board's expensive agenda, we have put our fiscal house back in order in less than a year. More information on the new budget can be found earlier in this newsletter.

Citizen-driven Government

One of our first steps after taking office was creating 5 citizen advisory committees to help with the crucial work of the Township: budgetary, economic development, infrastructure, public safety and farmland and open space. These committees will meet regularly to formulate recommendations to the Board. The meetings are posted, the setting is informal, and public participation is welcome. Openings are still available on the budgetary and economic development committees; if you would like an application to join please visit our website www.acmetownship.org or stop by the township hall.

Vist Acme's Website at www.acmetownship.org

THE OUTLOOK - SUMMER EDITION

6042 Acme Road
Williamsburg, MI 49690
www.acmetownship.org
(231) 938-1350



PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TRAVERSE CITY, MI
PERMIT #568