

# **BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP**

## **STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP-2025**

Happy New Year and our best hopes for a blessed and prosperous 2026! Your board has worked hard to provide the best representation for the residents of the township. Our focus has been on transparency and communication, addressing current issues, and planning for the future.

Below you will find some of the highlights of board action and township activity in 2025:

- In keeping with the spirit of transparency and communication, one of the first actions of the board in January was to pass a resolution that prohibits any board member from signing a non-disclosure agreement; residents that we heard from strongly oppose secrets agreed to by elected officials
- A new model for greeting and helping residents at the township office was implemented- we hired three very experienced part time clerical staff, and they greet, problem solve, and coordinate services to the public. This has greatly improved the office operations, and allows the elected officials to focus on other issues and efforts
- Your clerk and treasurer have implemented their own unofficial version of government review and efficiency, which includes reviews of leases, printing and administrative costs, and utility costs, improvements in investment strategies for township fund balances, digitizing records, etc.
- We have implemented the option to view and pay utility bills, building department fees and property taxes online by bank or credit card, and in-office by credit card
- We implemented a new digital office phone system, improving communication for employees and residents
- To advance the marketing and sale of the established Industrial Park property on 18 Mile Road, we first had to re-establish the original Intent and Purpose of the Big Rapids Charter Township Airport Industrial Park- this was an in-depth process and re-established our authority to sell the property
- The board then went through a process to select a realtor to handle the marketing and sale of the Industrial Park property- we limited the applicants to those realtors who live and do business in Big Rapids Charter Township
- When a company expressed potential interest in building a factory in the Industrial Park, the board required an Economic Development Due Diligence report, to ensure that such a factory would be an appropriate partner for the community. A substantial amount of time was invested in this process, and a very favorable report was presented to the

board. At this time, the company who had interest in this project is seeking funding for the factory

- The board approved the review and recodification of our ordinance book by a legal firm- this process is almost complete, and it will also result in the updated ordinance book being available on the township website, in an electronic 'searchable' version for any person to view
- An electronic gate was installed at Highbanks Park, which will eliminate paying a part-time employee from opening and closing the gate year around, eventually saving the township money for many years
- In 2023 Michigan passed PA 233, which gave authority to the MPSC to make zoning determinations regarding wind, solar and energy storage- essentially giving applicants the ability to go to the State for approval, rather than approval at the township level. Although the board strongly opposes any legislation that reduces or eliminates local determination of township issues, a decision was made to pass our own wind, solar, and storage ordinances, which are very similar to the state ordinances, with a few adjustments to give the township more control. These local ordinances give local applicants the choice to pursue local approval, rather than state approval
- The board approved receiving two small parcels owned by the Mecosta County Development Commission, which are adjacent to the Industrial Park property- we are grateful to the MCDC for the transfer of these properties
- The board approved a \$5000.00 donation for the July 4<sup>th</sup> community fireworks- the board is committed to this type of community support for local events
- The board approved \$30,000 to hire a local tree removal service to begin the process of cutting and trimming trees at the Highlandview Cemetery and VanGuilder Cemetery; this maintenance is long overdue and additional tree removal will be required in the future
- The board hired a new grounds supervisor, and approved the purchase of a year-old Gator to replace the old Gator that needed several thousand dollars of repair
- After the board approved the merger with the city of Big Rapids for providing fire/rescue services to the township, we completed a remodeling project in the existing fire hall- this space will be used by the Big Rapids Fire Department for training and other purposes
- The board approved the purchase of replacement and back-up pumps for the busiest waste lift stations at Gilbert and Perry Streets, to ensure consistent and emergency operation of the system
- A new office security system was designed and installed, which includes a secure/emergency entry door, and the creation of "safe rooms" for employees in the event of an attack

- The fall clean-up program was conducted, and the board approved hiring a local waste disposal company for the project- the help provided by Sam's Disposal, and the help of township employees, ensured the best clean-up day ever. This service is provided at no cost to township residents
- The board approved amending the ordinance regarding permissible business development in the Industrial Park, to ensure compliance with the Intent and Purpose of the Industrial Park property
- The board approved a restrictive covenant for the deed to the Industrial Park which requires any business that purchases property there to connect to the existing township waste removal system, and to the existing township water system
- Several important road improvement projects were completed, ensuring that township roads are being maintained with a proactive repair and maintenance program that has provided the township with some of the best roads in the county
- The board approved exploring a partnership with Green Charter township concerning the development of shared properties along the 18 Mile corridor; the goal is to establish communication and collaboration with the Green township board, and eventually communication with the residents of both townships, to determine the interests and desires of not only the township residents, but of the greater Big Rapids community

The Big Rapids Charter Township board feels privileged to serve our residents, and we remain committed to transparent, collaborative, efficient administration of the business of the township. Together we wish you a blessed, safe, and productive 2026!