



Fruitland Township E-News

4545 Nestrom Rd
Whitehall, MI 49461
Phone: (231) 766-3208
Fax: (231) 766-3027

www.fruitlandtwp.org

Township Board
Sam E. St. Amour, Supervisor
Karolyn Rillema, Clerk
Melissa M. Beegle, Treasurer
Trustees
Mary Ann Bard
Jan Deur
Terrie Hampel
Val Rissi

July 2, 2015

“The government closest to you, governs best.”

Township Office Closed

The Fruitland Township offices will be closed Friday, July 3, 2015 and the Sustainability Center will be closed Saturday, July 4, 2015 so our employees can celebrate Independence Day.

Parks & Recreation Commission Survey

Now is the time to let your voice be heard! The Parks & Recreation Commission is conducting an on-line survey to help us update our Master Plan. Input from you is paramount in helping us determine where to focus our efforts and resources towards our three township parks: Duck Lake Road Park, Nestrom Road Park, and Marcus Park. Please have one member of your household go to the township website at www.fruitlandtwp.org, and fill out the questionnaire between July 1st and July 26th. If you do not have internet access, please contact the township office at 231-766-3208 to obtain a printed copy. We appreciate your input!

Noise Ordinance in Fruitland Township

Just a reminder to everyone that Fruitland Township does have a noise ordinance. Please remember that from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., loud noises, loud music, fireworks, gunshots, and any loud or excessive noise is prohibited. Please be respectful of your neighbors.

2015 Summer Taxes

The 2015 Summer Tax season is upon us. Tax bills were sent out Tuesday, June 30, 2015.

All payments must include the bottom portion of the tax bill in order to appropriately post payments to the correct parcel. Payments received without parcel numbers could result in processing delays. Make all checks payable to: FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP.

Methods of Payment:

- **Mail** a personal check, money order, or cashiers check to 4545 Nestrom Rd., Whitehall MI 49461. We do **NOT** accept postdated checks.

- **Night Deposit Box** located at the Township Hall. Place payment and the bottom portion of the tax bill in an envelope and drop in our deposit box. **No cash payments in the night deposit box!**
- **In person**, at the Fruitland Township Hall, Monday-Friday. See hours and holiday closing dates below.
- **Online**, at www.fruitlandtwp.org. There will be an additional fee for this option.
- **Partial payments** will be accepted. Each payment amount will be spread equally to all levied taxes.

Note:

- **NSF (non-sufficient funds) checks** will result in the reversal of the original payment until a cash payment can be made and the NSF check fee will be charged at that time.
- If you request a receipt for payment, a self-addressed, stamped envelope **must** accompany payment.

Payment Dates:

- Payments due to Fruitland Township, July 1, 2015 until September 14, 2015 without penalty. **Postmarked payments and payments in the Night Deposit Box on September 14, 2015 will be accepted without penalty.**
- Normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Fridays.
- **Closed Holidays:** Independence Day (celebrated July 3, 2015) and Labor Day (celebrated September 7, 2015)
- **Payments made after September 14, 2015, will include a 1% penalty per month (as mandated by the State of Michigan) also an additional 3% if not paid by February 15, 2016.** Call (231) 766-3208 for calculation before mailing.

Deferment of Summer Tax: Applications are available to qualifying individuals. All forms must be presented to Fruitland Township Treasurer NO LATER than September 14, 2015.

Melissa M. Beegle
Fruitland Township Treasurer

Information from the Clerk's Office

There is a special election scheduled for August 4, 2015 to renew a current millage for the Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1.

Ballot language reads:

Shall the total constitutional tax rate limitation in the County of Muskegon be renewed the amount of up to .30 cents (\$.30) per one thousand dollars (\$1000) (.30 mill) against all taxable property in the County of Muskegon for a period of 7 years beginning with December 1, 2016 levy and ending with the December 1, 2022 levy so as to provide funding for the operation of the "9-1-1" Central Dispatch? If approved and levied in its entirety on December 1, 2016, this millage would raise an estimated \$1,250,000 in the first year.

If you would like to obtain an absentee ballot for this election, please contact either Clerk Rillema or Deputy Clerk Dion if you meet one of the following qualifications:

- I am 60 years of age or older.
- I expect to be absent from the community in which I am registered for the entire time the polls are open on Election Day.
- I am physically unable to attend the polls without the assistance of another.
- I cannot attend the polls because of the tenets of my religion.
- I have been appointed an election precinct inspector in a precinct other than the precinct where I reside.
- I cannot attend the polls because I am confined to jail awaiting arraignment or trial.

The Clerk's office can be reached at (231) 766-3208.

White Lake Ambulance Authority

Dear Fruitland Township Residents:

There has been a great deal of coverage lately concerning Fruitland Township's decision to withdraw from the WLAA. Many thoughts have been floating around about the sequence of events and the reasons for your board's actions.

The following information addresses the background and will help clarify the reasons.

Included with this E-News are the adopted Resolution; the press release; and a Question and Answer section addressing some basic questions.

As you know, the health, safety and welfare of our residents and others in Fruitland Township is the board's utmost concern.

This unanimous action in no way is reflective of the professional expertise of WLAA medics and EMT's.

If you wish to obtain further information, please email me at supervisor@fruitlandtwp.org or call 231-766-3208.

Regards,

Sam St. Amour, Supervisor
Fruitland Township

**FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP
RESOLUTION NO. 2015 - 18**

WHEREAS, Fruitland Township is currently a member of the White Lake Ambulance Authority ("Authority") which Authority shall cease to exist on December 31, 2018 by the terms of its Articles of Incorporation; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has had ongoing financial irregularity and mismanagement that has resulted in years of ongoing deficits and an inability of the Authority to adequately account to its constituents with respect to its revenues and expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Fruitland Township Board's first priority is the health, safety and welfare of its residents and with that priority in mind Fruitland Township in 2013 informed all of the governing bodies of the Authority's member units of the looming financial crisis at the Authority, however the Township was repeatedly rebuffed and ignored; and

WHEREAS, as a result of Fruitland Township's inability to convince the governing bodies of the Authority's member units to require the Authority to get its fiscal house in order, Fruitland Township, in 2013, was compelled to bring legal action to force the Authority to comply with its legal obligations, and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 2014, concerns grew over the Authority's failure to pay over employment taxes, including its employees' social security withholding to the IRS and had failed to pay insurance premiums for health insurance that resulted in the lapse of coverage for the Authority's employees;

WHEREAS, In November 2014, the Authority's auditor resigned because of the Authority's inability to correct past audit deficiencies and potential errors in pension calculations could not be verified or quantified; to date no audit for 2014 has been filed as mandated by law; and

WHEREAS, In March 2015 following a police investigation an arrest warrant was issued for the former Authority's Director charging her with two separate criminal acts in connection with non-payment of employee insurance, social security withholding and non-payment into retirement accounts which shook the confidence of our community; and

WHEREAS, Fundamental changes made in the past few years have caused the sustainability of the Authority to be at risk and it continues to suffer from structural operating deficits. From the 2011 fiscal year until the end of the 2013 fiscal year the Authority's auditor reported operating losses in the amount of \$633,775.00; and

WHEREAS, by continuing in the Authority Fruitland Township residents are at increased financial risk as the Authority is currently considering an increased millage proposal for the fall ballot that will impose an annual tax on Fruitland Township residents in the approximate amount of \$256,600.00. The increased tax, if levied, will add to the current financial burden on Fruitland Township residents who already pay a disproportionate amount of the debt incurred by the Authority; and

WHEREAS, Fruitland Township cannot ignore reality and put the health, safety and welfare of Fruitland Township residents in jeopardy by going without a responsible and financially sound ambulance service operating within Fruitland Township; and

WHEREAS, Pro Med has a proven track record, is financially sound and has professional management with the necessary credentials to provide quality ambulance service for our residents for years to come and is able to provide ambulance service without the need of a community wide millage and without taxpayer funds,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Fruitland Township hereby withdraws from the White Lake Ambulance Authority effective as of 12:00 am on August 1, 2015; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that Fruitland Township withdraws further support for the White Lake Ambulance Authority.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that Fruitland Township's attorney is hereby authorized to commence negotiations with the White Lake Ambulance Authority to determine any sums properly due to the Authority from Fruitland Township.

This resolution offered by board member Trustee Bard, supported by Supervisor St. Amour, **ADOPTED**, Resolution 2015 -- 18 to approve the withdrawal of Fruitland Township from the White Ambulance Authority.

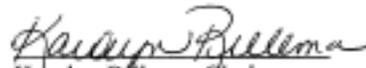
Upon a roll call vote, with all members present, the members voted as follows:

"AYE": Trustee Hampel, Trustee Bard, Trustee Deur, Treasurer Beegle, Trustee Rissi, Clerk Rillema, Supervisor St. Amour

"NAY": None

"ABSENT": None

I hereby certify that the Board of Fruitland Township adopted Resolution 2015 -- 18 for Fruitland Township's withdrawal from the White Ambulance Authority at a Special Meeting of the Fruitland Township Board at 2:00 PM on June 22, 2015.


Karolyn Rillema, Clerk
Township of Fruitland

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION**

After years of financial irregularity plaguing the White Lake Ambulance Authority (“Authority”), its lack of transparency and its failure to properly manage its business, Fruitland Township has made the decision to withdraw from the Authority effective as of August 1, 2015 and to look to Pro Med as its ambulance service provider.

Fruitland Township Board’s first priority is the health, safety and welfare of its residents. With that in mind, Fruitland Township in 2013 sought to shed light on the looming financial crisis at the Authority however, the Township was repeatedly rebuffed by members of the Authority as well as by members of the Authority Board. Consequently Fruitland Township was forced to bring legal action to compel the Authority to get its financial house in order. Despite the Authority’s promises to do so, fundamental changes made in the past few years caused the sustainability of our Authority to be at risk and it continues to suffer from structural operating deficits. From the 2011 fiscal year until the end of the 2013 fiscal year the Authority’s auditor reported operating losses in the amount of \$633,775.00. The Authority is now in the midst of considering a millage increase of .45 mils which if approved will impose an annual tax on Fruitland Township residents in the approximate amount of \$256,600.00 to subsidize the Authority. The increased tax, if levied, will add to the current financial burden on Fruitland Township residents who already pay a disproportionate amount of the debt incurred by the Authority;

In November 2014, the Authority’s auditor resigned because of the Authority’s inability to correct past audit deficiencies and potential errors in pension calculations could not be verified or quantified; no audit for 2014 has been filed as mandated by law. In March 2015 an arrest warrant was issued for the former Authority Director for two separate criminal acts in connection with non-payment of employee insurance, social security withholding and non-payment into retirement accounts which shook the confidence of our community.

Fruitland Township Supervisor Sam St. Amour issued the following statement: “After a long and thoughtful process in arriving at a decision, the Fruitland Township Board was unanimous in the adoption of its resolution to withdraw from the White Lake Ambulance Authority. Due to financial mismanagement our Board believes it is extremely unlikely that the Authority will be able to manage its finances without increasing the burden on local taxpayers. We cannot ignore reality and we refuse to put the health, safety and welfare of Fruitland Township residents in jeopardy by going without a responsible and financially sound ambulance service operating within our Township. Pro Med will be building an ambulance service facility in our township closer to our residents and without any additional financial impact on our taxpayers. Pro Med has a proven track record and has professional management with the necessary credentials to provide quality ambulance service. The Township’s decision is not an indictment of the professional work of the Ambulance Authority’s medics and medical staff whose efforts have served our community well. Rather, the decision was compelled by the mismanagement of the Authority and management’s inability to correct longstanding and repeated financial transgressions.”

Once the Authority’s audits are completed, Fruitland Township’s attorney has been authorized to commence negotiations with the Authority to determine any sums that are properly due to the Authority from Fruitland Township which it intends to pay. To date the Authority has been unable to completely quantify its financial liabilities or its structural deficits.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WHITE LAKE AMBULANCE AUTHORITY

- Q.** Why did the Fruitland Township Board vote to withdraw from the White Lake Ambulance Authority (WLAA)?
- A.** **WLAA is a poorly run and debt ridden ambulance service. From the 2011 fiscal year until the end of the 2013 fiscal year the Authority's auditor reported operating losses in the amount of \$633,775.00. Last year the Authority's auditor resigned due to the Authority's inability to correct past audit deficiencies and potential errors in pension calculations could not be verified or quantified. Earlier this year the former Authority Director was criminally charged for non-payment of employee insurance, social security withholding and non-payment into retirement accounts. WLAA is broken and Fruitland Township can't afford to be without a stable and sound ambulance service provider for Township residents.**
- Q.** Is it true that WLAA is a better ambulance service provider than Pro-Med?
- A.** **The assertion is False. The fact is, all EMS providers in Muskegon County are subject to oversight by the West Michigan Regional Medical Consortium (WMRMC). All EMS providers in Muskegon County are subject to the same protocols.**
- Q.** Will it cost Fruitland Township Residents more money to be serviced by Pro Med than WLAA?
- A.** **The answer is no. Pro-Med has agreed to build an ambulance service facility in Fruitland Township and will station an ambulance in our Township without any tax support.**
- Q.** Why do we have to keep paying the millage for another year?
- A.** **Once a millage is voted on the law requires it to be paid. However by withdrawing now Fruitland Township will not be responsible for the additional millage that WLAA is seeking to put on the ballot this November. In addition Fruitland Township will not be responsible for new debt incurred by WLAA. New debt will be the responsibility of the remaining members.**
- Q.** Why didn't Fruitland Township pay their share of the deficit that the other townships/cities paid?
- A.** **As a result of the poor record keeping and lax accounting procedures WLAA has been unable to accurately quantify its deficit and identify Fruitland Township's share. Once that number is quantified Fruitland Township has authorized its attorney to commence negotiations with WLAA to determine any sums properly due to the Authority from Fruitland Township.**
- Q.** Who is running WLAA now?
- A.** **The WLAA is run by a board of directors made up of an appointee of each unit of government who is a member. Since the prior director has been charged with criminal conduct a full time replacement director has not been named.**
- Q.** Why did WLAA lose so much money?
- A.** **The business model of having a volunteer board run an ambulance service is not sustainable. WLAA had no real oversight by its board of directors and WLAA is not run**

like other professional ambulance services. Invoices were either not sent or not sent out timely nor were there proper attempts to collect outstanding accounts. When Fruitland Township brought the financial concerns to the attention of WLAA, no action was taken by the board to correct issues.

Q. Are you sure there was no fraud/theft?

A. **The answer is no. Given the status of WLAA's lax accounting procedures it cannot be certain that there was no fraud/theft.**

Q. Are any other governmental units going to exit WLAA?

A. **Fruitland Township is unaware of other members seeking to withdraw.**

As always, supervisor@fruitlandtp.org
Sam E. St.Amour
Supervisor