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Growing a Local Food Ecosystem

In years past, would-be farmers honed their skills on the family farm, but that's not an option for many today who want a career in agriculture. To fill the gap and help support local food system development, Ann Arbor Township maintains a unique operation: the Tilian Farm Development Center. The seeds for this agriculture business incubator were planted after a 153-acre parcel was donated to the Township as part of Northbrooke, a clustered residential development. Today the nonprofit Michigan Food and Farming Systems leases the land at 4400 Pontiac Trail from the Township and in turns leases plots to young men and women who want to learn modern farming and business methods. While there are other incubator farms in Michigan, it's the only one owned by a local government and managed via a public-private partnership.

Nearby at 4175 Whitmore Lake is the Washtenaw Food Hub, whose mission is to

strengthen and catalyze farm and food businesses. The Food Hub offers small scale local food processing for several local businesses in three commercial kitchens and storage and distribution services. Situated on a 16-acre historic farm in the Township, the operation includes a large-scale vermi-composting system and a 164,000 watt solar array. It's also home to native plant and landscape restoration businesses.

Just a half mile north on Whitmore Lake Road is a seasonal u-pick organic strawberry patch. Ann Arbor Organic You-Pick Strawberries opened this season on farmland preserved through the Township's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. This program is funded by a 20-year millage which more than 80% of Ann Arbor Township voters approved in 2003. More than 1,100 acres have been voluntarily preserved. The strong community support for farmland preservation has evolved into a number of projects and zoning changes that together have put Ann Arbor Township on the map for creating and supporting a sustainable, local food economy.

Township Board Reduces Tax Administration Fee

At its May 16th meeting, the Ann Arbor Township Board of Trustees reduced the fee to cover assessing, tax billing and tax collecting expenses to 0.8% of taxes collected.

State law allows a fee of up to 1% on taxes collected, which the Township had been charging.

Treasurer Della DiPietro told the Board that a decrease in tax appeals and Tax Tribunal cases, as well as process efficiencies, have reduced

costs. The Board unanimously voted to pass these cost-savings along to taxpayers through this fee reduction.

The reduction has been applied to the 2016 Summer Tax Bills which were recently mailed out. Payment is due by September 14 at 5 pm.

Taxpayers also can check their tax bills and tax payments online at: www.aatwp.org/treasurer. Select "General Tax Information" followed by "Tax Information Search." The easiest search method is to use only the numbers of a street address in the "Search by Address" box. (i.e., 130 to 130 for the address 130 Pontiac Trail.)

The Anatomy of Your Summer Tax Bill

Ann Arbor Township taxes are among the lowest in Washtenaw County and total less than 1/3 of the taxes paid by residents of the City of Ann Arbor for city services.

Ann Arbor Township is directed by state statute to collect taxes for all jurisdictions that levy property tax against Ann Arbor Township residents. Property tax bills are mailed out by July 1 (Summer Taxes) and December 1 (Winter Taxes).

The great majority of the money collected by the Township is forwarded to other jurisdictions.

Ann Arbor Township only retains about 15% of the total taxes collected each year.

All of the township taxes are on the winter bill: 0.7669 mills for general operations; 0.6712 mills for land preservation and 3.98 mills for public safety. That equated to 5.4181 mills collected out of a total 2015 tax levy of 34.6007 on township parcels with a homestead exemption.

Below is an example of a 2016 Summer Tax bill for a home assessed at \$140,000 (true cash value) and a taxable value of \$70,000. One mill equals \$1.00 per \$1000 of taxable value. The taxpayer owns this home and it serves as his/her primary residence. Therefore it gets a 100% Principle Residence Exemption.

DESCRIPTION	MILLAGE	AMOUNT	EXPLANATION
SCHOOL OPERATING	8.89760	EXEMPT	<i>Not charged for homes owned by taxpayer and is his/her primary residence</i>
SCHOOL SUPP	2.15130	150.59	<i>Extra millage for Ann Arbor Public School operations charged to primary residences. A taxpayer pays EITHER School Operating millage OR School Supplemental millage</i>
SCHOOL DEBT	1.22500	85.75	<i>Pays off debt for bonds levied for remodeling and equipping school facilities</i>
SCHOOL SINKING	0.49640	34.74	<i>Fund for building and property maintenance construction and remodeling</i>
STATE ED TAX	6.00000	420.00	<i>State Fund that allocates funding to local school districts based on # of students</i>
COMM COLLEGE	3.43600	240.52	<i>For Washtenaw Community College</i>
INTERMEDIATE SCH	5.45090	381.56	<i>For Washtenaw Intermediate School District</i>
AA LIBRARY	1.90000	133.00	<i>For Ann Arbor Public Library</i>
COUNTY	4.52150	316.50	<i>For Washtenaw County operations</i>
Administrative Fee		14.10	<i>Recently reduced by Township Board to 0.8%</i>
TOTAL		\$1,776.76	

We Want YOU!

Ann Arbor Township has made the movies! Well, almost...among the ads shown on local big screens is a 15-second recruitment ad for Ann Arbor Township paid on-call fire fighters. The ads are being shown at Cinemark's Rave movie theatres on Carpenter Road and Goodrich Quality 16 on Jackson Avenue before the feature movie starts on big screens and on smaller video screens adjacent to beverage and snacks lines.

This campaign is part of a four year effort funded by a federal grant to recruit and train paid on-call firefighters. Fire Chief Brian Thurston reports that our Township Fire Department currently has 15 paid on-call firefighters, compared to only seven before this initiative began last year. Three of the 15 recently completed an Emergency Medical Technician Course which is part of the process to become a licensed EMT.

Paid on-call firefighters provide flexibility and support for our full-time firefighters when additional coverage is needed. Paid on-call firefighters responded to about 68% of calls to date this year.

Being a paid on-call firefighter is a great opportunity to receive valuable training and make a huge difference in your community. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact Recruitment Coordinator Ed Swope through the Township website at: <http://aatwp.org/fire-department-hiring-paid-on-call-firefighters/>

Township Warning Sirens

As an added protection to our residents, Ann Arbor Township is funding the addition of six more warning sirens to assure complete coverage for all areas of the township. They will be added to the 81 sirens currently in the Washtenaw County Emergency Service

System. Except for scheduled testing at noon on the first Saturday of the month, these sirens typically are activated only when significant severe weather has been detected (a tornado or a severe thunderstorm with damaging winds confirmed to be 75 MPH or greater). The sirens also are activated when a hazardous materials accident occurs that requires immediate protective action by the public or for other critical events such homeland security emergencies.

In the event the sirens are set off, go indoors and keep informed through use of a battery powered radio tuned to WEMU 89.1 FM or WWWW 102.9 FM, the local Emergency Alert System radio stations. If you hear the sirens and threatening weather conditions are present, go to the lowest level of the building and stay away from windows. Refrain from use of the telephone or appliances unless it is a life threatening emergency.

Additional information will be available on the township's website at aatwp.org after siren installation is complete next month, and at http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/emergency_management

Dixboro Road Shared Use Trail One Step Closer

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) recently awarded a Local Area Program grant of \$726,229 to Ann Arbor Charter Township for the Dixboro Road shared use trail. "With this generous SEMCOG grant, Washtenaw County's Connecting Communities grant of \$250,000 and a Michigan Department of Transportation grant of \$1,174,000, our Township has been awarded more than \$2,150,000 in grant funding for this important project," said Michael C. Moran, Ann Arbor Township Supervisor. "This trail will serve residents in the densest part of Ann Arbor Township and provide a critical link for the region's extensive trail system and public transportation."

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Public Safety Millage Renewal

On August 2, voters in Ann Arbor Township will have the opportunity to cast their vote on the requested renewal of the Public Safety millage. A "yes" vote will extend for another five years township taxes for fire and police services at the same level as they have been. Voters first approved the 3.98 millage request for public safety ten years ago, and it was renewed by voters in August 2011.

This millage pays for our contract with the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Dept. for police protection, and it covers costs associated with the Ann Arbor Township Fire Dept. including the provision of emergency medical services.

This millage equals roughly 73% of the total taxes collected for township services. Should the Public Safety millage be renewed, it is estimated that the funds raised in the first year

will total \$2,013,000. All of these funds will go toward fire and police services; they can't be used for any other purpose.

In addition to funds raised from this millage, Ann Arbor Charter Township uses rental revenue from wireless service providers for a cell tower located at Fire Station #2 for the purchase of fire trucks, and funding from various grants for fire operations.



Ann Arbor Township Training Burn