



Whitewater Township January 2012

Questions, comments, ideas for future stories or to be added or removed from future mailings?

Contact:

Leslie at Zoning@whitewatertownship.org or
Della at Treasurer@whitewatertownship.org

Monthly Calendar

1/24	Township Board
1/25	Historical Society
2/1	Planning Commission
2/14	Township Board
2/21	Zoning Board of Appeals
2/28	Primary Election

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

As you are aware, the Planning Commission has been working on the Master Plan for the past several years. A Master Plan document (also known as a basic plan, development plan, township plan, land use plan, or any other term) is required by State Law IF zoning is to be in place within our Township.

The process initially began in 2004. In 2008, the proposed Plan and Zoning Ordinance was presented for public hearing. At that hearing, with 200+ residents and property owners in attendance, it was made clear that Whitewater Township wanted a Master Plan that was a grass-roots effort, not one written by professionals with no ties to the community.

The Planning Commission listened, the old plans were discarded and a new course of action was developed. It was determined that the public should be involved as much as possible. The Planning Commission is getting close to completion of a draft with hopes that it will be ready for review and comment late this winter.

The next several e-letters and the formal printed newsletter will be utilized to review this history and the course of action that was used. The Planning Commission understands that our residents and property owners are busy and cannot always make it to their meetings. Please take time to review the information in the e-letters, newsletters, the evolving draft document on our website and forward your comments.

In order to determine where we are going, it is important to determine where we have been. What follows is a brief history of how zoning came into being within Whitewater Township:

- 12/1966 - **Residents present Township Board with a petition to adopt zoning.**
- 12/24/1966 - Township Board adopts resolution to zone the Township.
- 2/25/1967 - Township Board adopts resolution establishing a 5 member Zoning Board to create a Zoning Ordinance.
- 4/15/1969 - Township Annual Meeting. Zoning Board requests \$1000.00 from the Township Board for printing, map making and publishing of the proposed Zoning Ordinance. Motion is approved by the residents.
- 4/26/1969 - Township Board passes motion for Zoning board to present an interim Zoning Ordinance.
- 6/27/1970 - The Township Board tentatively approved the Township's interim Zoning Ordinance but further recommended that the Zoning Ordinance be presented to the citizenry before final approval is granted.
- 7/25/1970 - Whitewater Township's interim Zoning Ordinance is adopted by the Township Board.
- 12/23/1972 - Whitewater Township Zoning Ordinance—Ordinance #6 is adopted by Township Board.
- 6/15/1976 - Township Board establishes a Planning Commission, replacing the Zoning Board.

Please take a moment to review the draft on our website. Our next e-letter will keep you abreast of the draft document as well as additional historical information.

New Home Occupation Rules

At their January 10, 2012, meeting the Township Board adopted new provisions regarding home occupations. The previous rules were quite strict and were not reflective of the needs of our residents and the changes that have taken place within our economic environment. Home occupations are now divided into two categories: minor and major.

Minor Home Occupations shall be conducted entirely within a residence, must be operated by the occupants of the residence and there shall be no visible external evidence of the occupation. This type of occupation requires no permitting from the Township. Examples – Internet Sales, Accountants, Artists, Engineers, Medical Marijuana Caregivers, Private Teachers/Tutors, Authors, and similar uses.

Major Home Occupations can be conducted within the residence and/or an accessory building located on the property. Signage shall be allowed on site and non-resident employees may be allowed. This type of occupation shall require a special use permit from the Planning Commission and must meet certain conditions. Examples – Hairdresser, Retail Shops (including antiques and gifts) and similar uses as determined. Contact the Zoning Office for more information.

Election Day Information

The last day of registration for the February 28, 2012 Presidential Primary is Monday, January 30th. The clerk will be in the office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on that day. Any registrations received after that date will not be eligible to vote on February 28th.

Absentee ballots will be available in the clerk's office after January 16th. An application must be completed to receive the absentee ballot; since this is a closed primary, the voter must select either a Republican or Democratic ballot. There are no other proposals on the ballot. The applications are available in the clerk's office or on the township website.



MDNR Fisheries Biologists Make Amazing Discovery

by Fred Sittel

“Five years ago, we were doing a large lake survey on Elk Lake, and pulled in some lake trout and they just looked different, like something special” said Jory Jonas, a research biologist with the Charlevoix Fisheries Research Station. The fish the DNR netted seemed more bullet shaped with the dorsal fin set further back on the body and they had a different coloration. These observations led Jonas to have genetic analysis performed on samples from 25 fish. The results showed these lake trout had more similarities to Lake Superior genotypes than to current hatchery brood stock or to lake trout stocked in Elk Lake during the 1980’s. They had other unusual traits as well. When water temperatures drop to 46-52F° in the fall, it’s spawning time for lake trout. Typically, lake trout prefer shallow rocky bars to drop their eggs which hatch in four to five months and require oxygen rich water. The Elk Lake fish laden with eggs, however, are in 100 feet or more of water along the western side in the lake’s central basin, leading to speculation that they may be related to one of the deepwater forms that used to exist in Lake Michigan. It’s believed that their Lake Michigan counterparts succumbed to over fishing and the sea lamprey and became extinct in the 1950’s. “Any lake trout that you catch in Lake Michigan today, with the rare exception, is from a hatchery,” said Jonas. Since Elk Lake was dammed off from the Grand Traverse Bay starting as early as the 1860’s, and fish passage was all but eliminated by the turn of the century, these trout may have remained genetically isolated for over 100 years.

With help from Laura Mathews, a Central Michigan University graduate student in biology, Jonas embarked on an extensive study of the lake trout in Elk Lake this Fall. “How do eggs survive in up to 180 feet of water on a clay bottom, where does the oxygen come from?” questioned Jonas. However, studying fish in very deep water is a difficult task. Current DNR long term temperature monitors in Elk Lake are located in water that is too shallow. Capturing fish with nets in water this deep is also difficult. The researchers want to avail themselves of underwater robotic technology being used to capture fish in the Great Lakes and plan to start bottom mapping with high tech sonar equipment that can differentiate bottom substrates starting next summer. So far 130 fish have been tagged and released. Subsequent net drops were successful but only two tagged fish have been recaptured, indicating the population size may be large. Jonas hopes to get help from local fishermen. If you catch a tagged lake trout, the DNR would like you to send the date, location of capture, length of fish and the tag (if kept) or tag number (if released) to the Charlevoix Great Lakes Station or report the information on the following website: <http://www.michigandnr.com/taggedfish/>

Great Lakes fisheries managers believe there used to be six to nine different strains of lake trout in Lake Michigan that disappeared in the 1950’s. The strains which have been planted since have struggled to reestablish themselves due to reproductive issues such as poor egg hatching and poor survival of fry. “A lot of fingers get pointed at alewives, round gobies and rusty crayfish eating lake trout fry”, Jonas said. “Bottom line is, we don’t know why they are having these issues.” Fisheries managers had been traveling to other States where historic Lake Michigan strains were exported in the past to look for reproductively successful populations and now they may have found one in their own back yard. Jonas recently submitted 50 additional samples from Elk Lake to a geneticist to be compared to scale samples from Lake Michigan genotypes. If sufficient similarities exist it may lead to an attempt to create a hatchery brood stock.



Possible relict lake trout from Elk Lake

“If that is successful, it would reintroduce genetic diversity that we can’t find anymore,” said Jonas. *Fred Sittel is a Three Lakes Association Board Member. The Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association brought the relic trout to his attention. Visit 3lakes.com and elk-skegemog.org*

TREASURER’S CORNER - Ardella Benak

Normal Office Hours at the Township Hall are as follows:

Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from 12:00 pm—5:00 pm, other days by appointment.



- ◆ Winter Tax bills are due without penalty if paid by February 14, 2012
- ◆ Summer 2011 Deferments must be paid (interest will be applied if not paid) by 2/14/12
- ◆ A 3% penalty will be assessed on delinquent property taxes starting 2/15/12
- ◆ Last day to pay your property taxes here at Whitewater Township Hall 2/29/12
- ◆ Delinquent 2011 Real Property taxes are turned over to GT County for collection on 3/1/12
- ◆ A 4% penalty plus a 1% interest fee will be assessed by GTC starting on 3/1/12
- ◆ Payments mailed must be postmarked by February 14, 2012 to not incur penalty & interest fees.
- ◆ When paying by **CASH**, please have the **EXACT** amount of your tax bill.
- ◆ Property taxes starting with the numbers: 28-13-900 will continue to be collected at the Township Treasurer’s office. These are Personal Property taxes and they do not get turned over to the County.