



## SPRING NEWSLETTER

### Township Government in Illinois

Township government has served both the rural and urban residents of Illinois since 1848. Although Illinois' 1,432 townships still function according to provisions of the Township Act of 1874, amendments to the act have kept township government as modern as any and more progressive than most. Township government is grassroots government, the closest level of government to the people.

By statute, three services are to be provided by townships: a general assistance program to qualifying residents, property assessment, and maintenance of township roads and bridges. General assistance at the township level provides immediate help to the destitute, according to local standards and needs and with local dollars.

Township road district commissioners are directly responsible for maintaining more than 53 percent of the state's total road miles and nearly half of all bridges. These roads and bridges provide access for police and fire protection, school buses and rural postal service.

The Washington Township Highway Department is responsible for the upkeep of over 70 miles of rural roads. This includes road repairs, paving, drainage, road signage, cutting roadsides, plowing snow and employing the necessary crew to perform the work. The Road District has 2 full-time employees and several part-timers who are utilized throughout the year but mostly during spring, summer and fall when the workload is heaviest. The Road District tax levy for this fiscal year was just over \$856,000, however \$66,000 of that total is dedicated for bridge repairs and the district must save these yearly funds until there is enough to pay for a bridge replacement project, which could be as much as a million dollars or more. Because the Village of Beecher is within the township, another \$261,000 of the districts levy goes directly to the village leaving the Road District about \$530,000 to take care of 70 miles of roads. If you consider it can cost \$15,000 to blacktop one mile of road, the district has to pick their projects carefully.

But beyond these mandated functions, many townships offer a variety of social services designed to improve life for their township residents, including senior citizen and youth programs, transportation, and cemetery maintenance. Washington Township has no "township" cemeteries but does provide many services for its residents including transportation, recycling and senior events.

Here's a quick look:

- Early Voting – nearly 1900 residents have voted early since 2008.
- Transportation – Utilizing Will Ride and Dial-a-Ride the township provided over 1100 trips for residents last year.
- Senior Events – over 6000 seniors have attended Washington Township sponsored events since 2006, however senior events were first started in the late 1990's.
- Offers a Medical Closet, Food Pantry and non-electronic Recycling Programs

The township has not raised the tax levy in four years and will receive approximately \$287,000 to provide these services and to fund the Assessor's Office, General Assistance and maintain the Washington Township Center.

Lastly, Washington Township accounts for only about 5.2% of your total tax bill if you live in Beecher and 8.5% if you live in the rural areas of the township. The township website offers residents the opportunity to review Public Information and all Boards (past & present) have believed in total "government transparency".

## From Supervisor Mike Stanula...

### *Hello Friends and Neighbors!*

I hope that everyone enjoyed the two days of spring that we had this year, as we look forward to the sunny days of summer. Speaking of the sun, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about Solar Farms. Solar technology has been around for at least 60 years. Originally developed by NASA for the space program, solar technology has trickled down to power everyday things like calculators and light fixtures.

There are mainly two types of solar power: active and passive. Passive solar uses the heat of the sun to warm things up. This is as simple as opening the drapes on your Living Room windows to let the sun warm the room up. Another example of passive solar is solar hot water systems. Solar panels on a roof collect the sun's heat that in turn heats up water that is stored until you need to use it.

Active solar technology uses the sun's radiation, which is collected by panels. This can be used even in the wintertime when the sun doesn't even feel warm. The process is done thru photovoltaic panels. The panels have what the solar industry calls thin film technology, which easily conducts electricity.

There has been a lot of talk about solar farms as of late. This is because of the recent Illinois New Future Energy Jobs Act, which has allowed solar companies to develop commercial and community solar farms. Commercial Solar farms or utility solar farms use active solar to collect and convert electricity to sell to utility companies. Community Solar Farms also use active solar, but let residential customers buy into or invest in the community solar farm and in turn would receive credit on their electric bill for the electricity produced by the farm. Solar Farms are about 20 acres in size and need to be near utility lines.

How is Washington Township involved? Recently two solar companies have approached the Township to develop Community Solar Farms, one off of Indiana Ave. and one near Corning Road. The properties are agricultural and would be leased from the owner(s) for a minimum of 20 years. Once the solar farm is no longer functional (average life span of the panels is about 20 years) the property would be renovated back to farmland. The solar farm would be surrounded by a secured fence as well as landscaping to buffer the view.

This is all very new to not only our area but also to the Will County. The Township has looked carefully into these applications and has expressed concerns to the county about such things as maintenance of the grounds, quality of the landscaping, environmental impact and feasibility of returning the land back to agricultural use. As of the end of this past March, Will County has delayed the approval of three solar farms (including Washington Township) until more information is obtained and the concerns of the agricultural community can be addressed. The Township Board will stay on top of this and will keep our community informed.

Beecher is a Great place to be!

**Michael Stanula**

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## From Road Commissioner Jerry Meyer...

Spring might be here to stay! Seeing snow after April 15th makes me wonder what kind of spring and summer we might have. As for winter it was average for the Township, we had 23 snow plowing or salting events. We did not have any big storms to talk about, but that is fine with me and the impact those storms have on the road budget. We used about 300 tons of salt this year at a cost of \$14,414.00 and we are already reloading the salt dome for next year's supply.

Now we start the other season in Illinois: **"Construction Season"**. Our construction plans in Washington Township are made, and if weather permits, all projects should get done. One major project this year is rebuilding Klemme Road, from Offner Road to Brunswick Road. It's gravel now, and we will be reworking the drainage and the base of that road and adding stone this year. If all goes well, we will tar and chip the road sometime next year. There are also plans to tar and chip South Park from Eagle Lake Road north one half mile. We will also be re-chipping roads throughout the Township based on their condition and how the winter affected them. Patching of the roads will continue all year and also drainage work will be done on trouble spots in the Township.

Cutting the road "sides" is done every year and the first 2 times we only cut 10 foot on each side of the roadways and all intersections. The purpose of this is to keep the intersections clear of weeds and grass for visibility and we cut in 10' so if you have to get off the roadway you can see the ditch. We leave the other grass areas for the wildlife to nest in. After the farmers harvest their crops out of the fields, we will come back and cut the roadway, fence line to fence line. By that time, the wildlife and their young have left their nests and are out in the fields. It's important that we cut fence line to fence line in the fall so the snow blows over the roads and is not stopped by uncut grass, which can cause snow to drift over the roads.

I hope your summer will be filled with fun and enjoyment with friends and family. Just be safe no matter what you are doing so you can keep enjoying life. And remember, road workers throughout the State are working to make your travels safer and more enjoyable. So if you see a road worker, please give them a brake and a wave thanking them for their work. We all want to go home at the end of the day.

Have a good summer and enjoy life; it is the only one we have!  
Thanks, Jerry K. Meyer

According to the US Dept. of Transportation, there were 96,626 crashes in "Work Zones" in 2015. **"Slow Down - Give Them a Brake"**

## Springtime Means Planting Season - Safety Tips for Sharing the Road with Farm Equipment

Washington Township is an agricultural township with hundreds of farms within our boundaries. We thank our farmers for all they do to feed our nation and ask everyone to use caution during the planting season. Farming equipment has become much larger over the years and according to the National Safety Council, approximately 1/3 of fatal tractor accidents occur on public roads. In order to decrease the chance of a collision, motorists should follow these five rules of the road:

1. **Slow down when you see a piece of agricultural equipment** - Most farm equipment is designed to travel at speeds of only 15-25 mph
2. **Watch for Slow-Moving-Vehicle (SMV) signs** - SMVs are required for vehicles traveling less than 25 mph.
3. **Watch for hand signals** - Just because a tractor veers right does not mean the operator is pulling over to allow someone to pass. The size of farm equipment often dictates the necessity of wide turns.
4. **Pass farm equipment cautiously** - Even when passing safely and legally, the turbulence created by a vehicle may cause the machinery to sway and become unstable. Do not always expect operators to drive their equipment onto the shoulder of the road. Driving with one set of tires on loose-surfaced shoulders substantially increases the risk of overturning.
5. **Watch for flashing amber lights** - This type of light often marks the far right and left of farm equipment. Also watch for reflective tape marking extremities and sides of equipment.



Remember that agricultural operators have a right to drive their equipment on the road. Please be alert and exercise patience when driving near or passing farm equipment on the roadway. Help us to make this year's planting season a safe one!





## **Be Safe – Don't Text and Drive it's an Accident Waiting to Happen**

The statistics show the dangers!

Every year in the U.S., almost a half-million people are injured or killed in traffic accidents attributed to the combination of texting and driving. The statistics are shocking, especially in view of the fact that this danger could be completely avoided. **With the latest statistics available, the Department of Transportation compiled statistics from 2015 and the report shows that 3,477 people died and another 391,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes caused by drivers who were distracted because they were texting or using cell phones.**

Anything that takes your attention away from driving can be a distraction. Sending a text message, talking on a cell phone, using a navigation system, and eating while driving are a few examples of distracted driving. Any of these distractions can endanger the driver and others.

Text messaging has become an integral part of life for most people in the U.S. In 2013, over 153 billion text messages were transmitted in this country, including Puerto Rico, the Territories and Guam. Young drivers, under age 20, not only are avid text message users, they make up 27 percent of the drivers in fatal crashes that were attributed to distracted driving. During daylight hours, about 660,000 drivers are using their cell phones or manipulating other electronic devices every moment. This activity increases the risks of becoming involved in an accident by three times over normal risk probability.

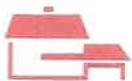
### ***Texting can make vehicle accidents 23 times more likely to happen.***

Distractions from texting outweigh distractibility from other activities, such as talking with a passenger, adjusting the sound system or talking on a cell phone.

Texting, by its very nature, involves at least three separate physical/mental actions, all of which take attention away from the road ahead and potential driving hazards.

- **Visual** – instead of watching the road ahead, your eyes are looking for a message, lights or other signals inside the car.
- **Manual** – to operate various controls, your hand or hands must be taken off the wheel while the vehicle is in motion.
- **Cognitive** - your mind is no longer on your driving but on manipulation of these other devices and understanding the messages and communicating to others.

To make matters worse, the urge to text is almost addictive; people tend to read and answer text messages and cell phone calls immediately. They leave their cell phones turned on so they do not miss any messages or calls. The problem here is that within the few seconds of time used to perform this activity, an accident can occur. *The average time taken away from watching the road ahead is just five seconds, but in that time period, a vehicle traveling at 55 mph will go the length of a football field.* With attention distracted, it is like driving blindfolded for those few seconds. The results can and often are fatal. Talk to your family about the dangers of texting while driving and **remember, it is illegal to be on a "hand-held" phone while driving in Illinois.**



Jeff Olthoff  
Owner

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Don't see what your looking for? Contact Clerk Joe Burgess at (708) 946-2026 Ext 1176

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Assessor Carol Ann Blume hours are by appointment only. Please call Carol at 708-231-1175 to schedule an appointment.



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**Your Township Officials:****Supervisor**

Mike Stanula

[supervisor@washingtontownshipil.com](mailto:supervisor@washingtontownshipil.com)

**Clerk**

Joe Burgess

[clerk@washingtontownshipil.com](mailto:clerk@washingtontownshipil.com)

**Assessor**

Carol Ann Blume

[assessor@washingtontownshipil.com](mailto:assessor@washingtontownshipil.com)

**Highway Commissioner**

Jerry Meyer

[commissioner@](mailto:commissioner@washingtontownshipil.com)

[washingtontownshipil.com](http://washingtontownshipil.com)

**Trustees**

Paul Goldrick

Tracy Heldt

Mark Herlitz

George Obradovich

**Office Coordinator / General Assistance**

Tammy Hitzelburger

[transportation@washingtontownshipil.com](mailto:transportation@washingtontownshipil.com)

**OR**

[ga@washingtontownshipil.com](mailto:ga@washingtontownshipil.com)

Newsletter Editor:

Clerk Joe Burgess

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[www.washingtontownshipil.com](http://www.washingtontownshipil.com)

### **Highlights from Recent Washington Township Board Meetings**

- Dec - Board received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Beecher Lion's Club for being a sponsor of "Summerfest"
  - Dec - Approved 2017 Road & Bridge Levy in the amount of \$856,571 - there was no increase from the previous year
  - Dec - Hired Tammy Hitzelburger as Office Coordinator
  - Dec - Participated in 2017 Toys-for-Tots program
  - Dec - Approved an additional GO Bond payment of \$23,333
  - Jan - Listened to solar farm presentation from Borrego Solar to build 2 solar farms along Indiana Ave near Cottage Grove
  - Feb - Will Ride Intergovernmental Agreement was extended for 2018
  - Feb - Approved "Special Use Permits" to Borrego Solar to build 2 solar farms - with the stipulations that (1) aesthetics surrounding the project are consistent with Will County's landscaping ordinances and (2) drainage studies for the project are verified.
  - Mar - Tentative budget for 2018-19 is completed
  - Mar - Approved Annual Town Meeting Agenda and the Washington Township Board's meeting dates for fiscal year 2018-19
- 

### **Washington Township History & Milestones**

Below are just a few notable milestones in the history of Washington Township! For a detailed history of our community, we suggest reading the "Beecher - Quasquicentennial 1870-1995" book published by the Beecher Area Quasquicentennial Commission and written by Beecher resident Shirley Biery.

**1836** - Will County created by State Legislature

**1856** - A petition was prepared and presented to County Board of Supervisors to separate from Crete Township, forming Washington Township

**1857** - Most of land in the township was sold to the original settlers or speculators for \$1.25 per acre. The main north/south road was called Hubbard Trail, later Vincennes Trail and then State Route 1. Route 1 was the most used thorough fare in the state and went through the township.

**1870** - The Village of Beecher, named by T.L. Miller in honor of Henry Ward Beecher was plotted by George Dolton. Beecher grew to the east toward Washington Center until Washington Center became part of Beecher.

**1929** - March 11, dedication of the new "Community Building" with nearly 1,000 people in attendance

**1941** - Beecher Volunteer Fire Department announces an extra truck is available for rural fires

**1948** - Community Building was paid off totaling \$35,000

**1970** - Beecher Area Centennial is celebrated

**1995** - Beecher Quasquicentennial (125 years) celebrated

**1997** - First Township Senior event held

**2000** - Plans for a new intergovernmental building to be located east of Beecher begins. The building will be occupied by Washington Township, the Washington Township Road District and a bus storage & shop for the Beecher School District.

**2002** - Intergovernmental Facility dedicated December 1 as the "Washington Township Center"

**2006** - Washington Township website goes "live"

**2008** - First "Early Voting" conducted at the Washington Township Center

**2008** - First Washington Township Newsletter is mailed



### Washington Township Food Pantry

Washington Township Food Pantry is open to any Washington Township individual or family that is in need of help. Offering canned foods, paper goods, cleaning items, frozen food and at times, fresh products, the pantry strives to provide quality items for those in need.

The pantry is open on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month from 9am - 10am AND from 6pm - 7pm. Please call Trustee Paul Goldrick at (708) 516-2594 for additional details or if you need assistance. Many thanks to the volunteers who assist at the pantry!

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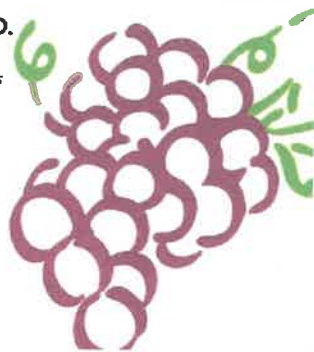
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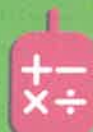
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## Washington Township Senior News

### BEWARE of Senior Scams

During the spring, seniors often fall victim to home improvement scams. There are increasing cases where seniors are approached by a contractor, who is in the area soliciting new business.

We urge our seniors to be extremely cautious when doing business with anyone soliciting door to door or by telephone. Scams include offers to clean the gutters while the contractor is in the neighborhood. A simple gutter cleaning can quickly turn into a major job where the roof needs to be replaced.

Other areas of fraud that target older adults include ATM use, Internet scams, sweepstakes, promotions, contests and other solicitations. ATM fraud may include a machine that has been tampered with or someone looking over your shoulder to retrieve personal information. Make sure the machine has not been tampered with and that no one is standing right over you when are using an ATM.

IRS phone calls - The IRS will **NOT** call you and ask you to pay your taxes over the phone. This is a popular scam and is very convincing and may be threatening. If you receive this call just hang up!

### THINGS TO REMEMBER!

- Avoid any contractor who approaches you claiming he was in the neighborhood and can give you a good deal if you agree today
- Do not share social security numbers, credit card information, or other personal data over the Internet or with others unless you **initiate** the transaction
- Never pay a contractor for the entire repair or job upfront
- Call the Better Business Bureau to see if the vendor is legitimate
- Finally, don't feel pressured! JUST SAY - NO "Thank you"

### Senior Bus Trips Planned

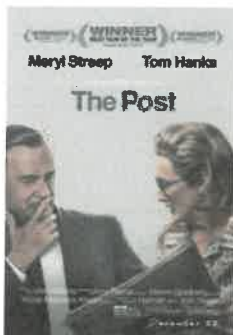
- **June 13, 2018 - Chicago White Sox vs. Cleveland Indians**
- **August 7, 2018 - Joliet Slammers Baseball - 7:05 PM**

The Joliet Slammers take the field at beautiful Silver Cross Field in Joliet. Tickets cost \$13 and include transportation, entry to the game and food.

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### SENIOR MOVIE NIGHT

#### "The Post"



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### Important dates for our Seniors:

#### August 15 - 6:30 PM

Senior MOVIE Night - Come and watch "I Can Only Imagine". Refreshments will be served!

#### September

Senior Breakfast and Flu Shot Program. Enjoy a free breakfast and schedule your "flu shot" at the same time!

#### September

Senior MOVIE Night - Come and watch "Lean on Pete". Refreshments will be served!

#### November 14 - 6:30 PM

Senior MOVIE Night  
Refreshments will be served!



## UPCOMING TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING DATES

The Washington Township Board meets on the FIRST Monday of every month (except on holidays or as noted) at the Washington Township Center located at 30200 Town Center Road. All meetings start at 7 pm and the public is urged to attend our meetings!

Public commentary is always welcome. Please call Supervisor Mike Stanula at 946-2026 if you need assistance.

- June 4, 2018
- July 2, 2018
- August 6, 2018
- September 6, 2018 - Thursday
- October 1, 2018
- November 5, 2018
- December 3, 2018

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