

FOCUS ON DANBURY TOWNSHIP - 2021 YEAR-END REVIEW

By Dianne Rozak, Danbury Township Trustee

www.danburytownship.com

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A review of 2021 confirms another busy year with many accomplishments to improve the quality of life here in Danbury Township. We have re-opened buildings, ballfields and parks. As we quickly move forward into 2022, our staff continues to excel at meeting the needs of residents and visitors. Road Superintendent Brett Waldron currently has three full-time employees and one part-timer. We are searching for another full-time person for the road department. Information about the position is on the township website. This department does an exemplary job of keeping parks, roads and township property in superb condition especially given this past hot, wet summer when the grass seemed to never stop growing. The department attended to 31 funeral services, assisted with unloading and delivery for the annual Wreaths Across America program and mowed and trimmed Sackett Cemetery forty times. Township resident "free mulch days" were able to be held at the brush drop-off site and will continue this year. Brush and leaf drop-off has been well-received and one professional brush grinding was completed. Two township residential clean-up weeks were highly successful and will be held again in June and September. Township employees will alternate assisting staff from Cyclone Services during these Tuesday through Saturday clean-ups.

Vegetation control was again applied to the Phragmites at Meadowbrook Marsh. Dike repair plans at the marsh in the area fronting Bayshore Road on the west end of the property will move forward. The department spent 516 hours mowing township properties exclusive of many hours of trimming. Dead or hazardous trees as well as brush in the township road rights of way and parks have been removed and ditches were monitored and cleaned as needed and as a preventative maintenance measure. Meter Road and Mystic Bay Point were paved. Reclamite was applied to Lightner Road, the cost of which was shared with Portage Township. A township stimulus grant was applied for, a new salt hopper was purchased for one of the trucks and delivery was taken on a new Chevy Silverado and a new International snowplow. Crack sealing was regularly applied where needed. An additional 300 tons of salt was obtained through the ODOT state purchasing program and was added to the 200 tons remaining from 2020. Construction of a salt/material storage building was completed at the rear of the police/maintenance facility on Bridge Road. Two standby generators were purchased, one for the police station and one for township hall. Lastly, the Brownhelm Historical Association and the maintenance staff worked together on a stone restoration and rejuvenation project at the Wolcott Cemetery.

The Police Department, managed by Chief Michael Meisler, has eight full-time officers, one part-time officer and one K-9 named Kalahan who is handled by Officer Kyle Scott. Our officers provide protection 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with eight marked and two unmarked vehicles. The officers drove 139,511 miles patrolling during 2021. Total incidents were 3,696 which was up by 361 incidents from the previous year. The department handled 20 incidents inside the Village of Marblehead and 160 within Lakeside. K-9 Kalahan assisted

with 9 drug searches, 10 training events, 13 assists to Danbury Township and 7 assists to other agencies. Police incidents with high amounts of attention included alarm calls, theft and trespassing, lockouts, suspicious persons or vehicles, property damage, traffic complaints and warnings, animal complaints, assisting other agencies in the county and assisting Danbury Fire and EMS. The department has a regular presence at Danbury Schools where a patrolman is available at certain times in an office provided by the school. The DARE program is taught by Officer LaMarca who conducts the classes with elementary students throughout the year. The department is located at 419 S. Bridge Road. They offer secure document shredding and unwanted prescription disposal services as well as house watch and senior watch. Call (419) 732-2549 to make arrangements for these free services. The township's recycling bins are located on the south side of the police department property.

The Danbury Township Fire Department led by Chief Keith Kahler reported 980 incidents in 2021, up 132 incidents from 2020. They were detailed as 825 EMS calls, 43 fire calls, 17 motor vehicle accidents, 78 fire alarm activations, 10 carbon monoxide activations and 7 mutual aid calls. 533 people were transported. The department roster totals 40. Fire and EMS staff meet Monday evenings for training, department updates and continuing education sessions. Our new fire station is well under construction on East Harbor Road just west of North Shore Blvd. It is anticipated the building will be completed by June. A public open house will be held after the finishing touches are in place. The department is in need of additional staff. Township residency is preferred, but not required. Full training and all equipment is provided and no experience is necessary. Contact the station at (419) 798-5219 for more information.

The Danbury Township Zoning Department, singularly overseen by Kathryn Dale, AICP, continues to be the center for residential and business growth and expansion. 288 permits were issued resulting in 12 fewer than 2020. Between 2011 – 2021, the average number of permits issued per year has been 234. This past year more permits were issued January through April and August through October than in previous years when the flurry of activity occurred during the traditional summer months. Some of this likely was due to supply chain issues and the massive inflation of lumber pricing. Single family home permits totaled 34 which was 3 more than the prior year. Commercial activity compared to 2020 was equivalent. Permit fees were down by just over \$2,000 but were still more than what was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Residential improvements continued in large numbers (147) and included additions, fences, porches, decks, docks and accessory buildings and pools. This continually points to the never-ending trend of relocation and retirement to our area with improvements versus starting anew. The Board of Zoning Appeals heard 35 cases (4 less than 2020) with about one-third of the cases occurring in Lakeside where a large number of properties are nonconforming and require a variance for improvements. In October the BZA determined cases would again be heard remotely via the Zoom platform. The Zoning Commission heard 3 cases, two less than in 2020, and that included substantial work for a good portion of the year on the residential rezoning study discussed below. Mrs. Dale responded to 7,952 calls, emails and in-person inquiries, went on 1,087 site visits and sent 57 violation letters. This averages 94 inspections and 663 calls and emails per month. The department experienced an 11% decrease in phone volume from the prior year and a 3% increase in inspections. One of the major goals, and subsequent accomplishments, during the year was the rezoning of twelve areas from recreational-commercial to high density residential. The trustees requested the Zoning Commission move forward with this study to

protect residential areas, both old and new, from adverse recreational-type activities and development. Additionally, the intent was to prevent creating a problem for existing commercial uses. Two open houses and continual publicity in newspapers and social media ensured residents were aware of this proposed change. Feedback was positive, public hearings were held and the map amendments became effective in December. In January the township's complaints and violations policy was updated to allow more proactive enforcement of tall grass violations without necessarily a formal complaint. The process to enter the property of a tall grass violation was also shortened if the property owner refused their first warning letter or if they were deceased. A process was also established to allow potential proactive enforcement of nuisance properties located near a property that already experienced a complaint. Mrs. Dale assists businesses seeking to locate or expand in the township and works closely with commercial and residential developers, business owners and residential property owners to design projects that will add to the township's economic, environmental and social well-being. In addition, she is in regular contact with the trustees to recommend and research the abatement of abandoned and dilapidated structures as the general fund budget allows. During 2021 action was taken on five dilapidated structures and three abatements were pursued for repeat violations. For 2022 the department's goals include continual implementation of the Land Use Plan, reviewing accessory building height and size ratio to lot size and conducting training for Board of Zoning Appeals and Zoning Commission members.

Township newsletters are published twice each year in late spring and late summer. They are mailed several weeks in advance of township clean-ups and are available for viewing on the website after they are produced. Current news and pertinent information along with all contact information is on our website www.danburytownship.com. Elected officials and department heads are available to the public via phone or email.

Our staff continues to review all expenditures closely to provide the best service at the most reasonable cost to our residents. Trustees John Paul Dress and Dave Hirt join me in wishing everyone a very safe and productive 2022. Fiscal Officer Carolyn Adams and Assistant Fiscal Officer Susan Dress continue to work diligently to keep the financial side of township business up to speed and in compliance. We are currently searching for a full-time employee to replace Susan Dress as she will be leaving the township within the next few months. Information about this position can be found on the township website. We were fortunate to receive funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. Projects planned for use of those funds include repairs at township hall, reconfiguration of the dike at Meadowbrook and upgrades to the dog park. We all work very hard to meet the continual growing needs of your township. Please do not hesitate to call any of us with your questions and ideas.

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