

FOCUS ON DANBURY TOWNSHIP - 2024 YEAR-END REVIEW

By Dianne Rozak, Danbury Township Trustee

www.danburytownship.com

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The Danbury Township Trustees report that 2024 was a successful, productive year. An overview of our work follows. Road Superintendent Brett Waldron and his staff continued with their commendable work in maintaining parks, roads and all township property. The department has one part-time and three full-time employees. The department assisted with 21 funeral services, mowed and trimmed Sackett Cemetery forty times and contracted with Gravestone Restoration Services to level, straighten and preserve headstones at Sackett. Residential “free mulch days” were held, the brush and leaf drop-off programs were well-received and one professional brush grinding was completed along with a professional clean-up of unusable vegetation that had accumulated over the years. Two township residential clean-up weeks were highly successful and will be held again June 24 through 28 and September 16 through 20.

The department spent 405 hours mowing and many hours trimming. Dead or hazardous trees as well as brush in the township road rights of way and parks were removed and ditches were monitored and cleaned as needed and as a preventative maintenance measure. Crack sealing was applied where needed and Pavement Technology applied reclaimite to Northern Avenue, Park Lane, Columbus Avenue and Regatta Passage. Von Glahn Road was paved and a crossover pipe was replaced. 250 tons of salt was obtained through the ODOT state purchasing program and added to the 600 tons remaining from 2023. The new fuel depot at 419 Bridge Road is now operational as is the new salt shed. A building located at 434 Bridge Road, directly across from the Police Station, was purchased for use as a maintenance facility. Extensive restoration was completed on the baseball and softball fields in addition to the fields being prepped 100 times for events. It was recently announced that Lions Park at Lake Point received the prestigious designation of Scenic Park Vista. This was awarded by ODNR to only a handful of local parks within the State.

The Police Department, managed by Chief Michael Meisler, has nine full-time officers. Officer Brad LaMarca is assigned to Danbury Schools as a full-time Resource Officer during the school year and he also conducts the DARE program. K-9 Kalahan has been trained as a certified public facility therapy dog and accompanies Officer LaMarca at least two days each week and attends all athletic events. Our officers provide protection 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with nine marked and two unmarked vehicles. They drove 181,496 miles patrolling during 2024. Incidents totaled 4,036, up by 198 in 2023. The department handled 7 incidents inside the Village of Marblehead and 169 within Lakeside. Those with high amounts of attention included alarm calls, animal complaints, lockouts, suspicious persons or vehicles, house watch requests, assisting other Danbury units, assisting Danbury Fire/EMS, verbal traffic warnings and welfare checks. 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 is led by Chief Shawn Hunsicker. The department reported 1,089 incidents in 2024, up from 68 incidents in 2023. They were detailed as 943 EMS calls, 44 fire calls, 29 motor vehicle accidents, 62 fire alarm activations, 6 carbon monoxide activations and 5 mutual aid calls. The department held 4 community CPR events. The department roster consists of 33 members with 5 of them being full-time. The department holds different levels of emergency certifications; 16 EMT-Basic, 4 EMT-Advanced, 8 Paramedics and 5 Fire-only certified. Fire and EMS staff meet Monday evenings for training, department updates and continuing education sessions. Contact the station at (419) 798-5219 for more information. The station is located at 7870 East Harbor Road and staff is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Danbury Township Zoning Department is overseen full-time by Kathryn Dale, AICP. Mrs. Dale is assisted seasonally by part-time inspector Marcel Sorgi and daily by Zoning Assistant Dawn Connor. The department continues to be the center for residential and business growth and expansion. A record-breaking 327 permits were issued resulting in 25 more than 2023 and the most ever since zoning began in 1975. As a general comparison, between 2020 – 2024, the average number of permits issued per year has been 304. This past year permit activity was highest in February, May, August, September and October. An interesting note is that in July 2023 permits spiked at 52 and in July 2024 only 17 were issued. Single family home permits totaled 30 compared to 26 in the prior year. Commercial activity totaled 25 permits compared to 17 during 2023 but had a comparable total square footage for both years. Zoning fees were \$37,816 compared to \$41,200 in 2023. Residential improvements including additions, fences, porches, decks, docks and accessory buildings and pools, continued in large numbers (187) and were 20 permits higher than 2023. This positive, never-ending trend continues to point to relocation and retirement to our area with improvements versus starting anew. The Board of Zoning Appeals heard 26 cases (46 were heard in 2023) and the Zoning Commission heard 6 cases, two more than 2023. Mrs. Dale responded to 7,013 calls, emails and in-person inquiries, went on 1,322 site visits and sent 88 violation letters. 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. The department's goals for 2024 included a formal storage building study in conjunction with Miami University. This was completed and the Zoning Commission continues to discuss storage building regulations for implementation. Mrs. Dale will again prioritize and create a plan for dilapidated structures. Since 2013 the township has had success in having more than 15 blighted buildings removed by property owners without having to abate the removal with township funds. She will also be planning a 2025 update to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as well as completing continuing education requirements to maintain her AICP certification.

During 2024 our part-time Zoning Assistant Michelle Teresi left our employ as she was unable to move into the full-time position the department required. We sincerely thank her for her diligent service with us. On November 3, BZA member Loretta Grentzer passed unexpectedly. She had served for sixteen years. She and her expertise are deeply missed.

Residents are encouraged to visit the Zoning page on the township website where all forms, maps, plans and hearing notices are available and up to date.

Township newsletters are published twice each year typically just prior to spring and again in 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.

Township hall has a meeting room available for property owners' associations and group organizations to utilize for meetings. The grounds at township hall offer softball, baseball and soccer fields along with a basketball court, playground equipment and a large shelter house with grills. Lions Park at Lake Point has a shelter house, grills, expansive lake views, a covered bridge and shore fishing opportunities in the lake and quarry pond. The Keeper's House and Battlefield Park, both located close together on Bayshore Road, are designated historic sites. Reservation forms for the meeting room and shelter houses are on the website. You may also call township hall to coordinate reservations.

Our staff continues to review expenditures closely to provide the best service at the most reasonable cost to our residents. Applying for grants to various organizations is an ongoing process here at the township. We were fortunate to again receive funds from the Ottawa County Park District for improvements to Meadowbrook Marsh including much anticipated new paved trails, completion of our entrance drive and parking area, a new shelter house, trail drainage repairs and sealcoating on all the trails. Meadowbrook is heavily utilized year-round and hosts warbler walks in May for the public and local organizations. The very successful annual pumpkin walk is held here in October. The park has just over one mile of ADA accessible paved trails, an observation deck and a lengthy scenic marsh vista offering prime opportunities to see shorebirds, waterfowl, eagles and osprey.

Our risk management insurance carrier provides annual grant funding for safety equipment. The police and fire departments actively apply for available grant funding and have been regularly awarded funding. The trustees approved a reinstatement of 1.1 mills of inside millage to fund the purchase of the new maintenance building, perform resurfacing on several township roads and purchase new maintenance equipment. It is the intent of the trustees to drop back this amount of millage once these projects are completed. Fiscal Officer Brinkley Paul joined our staff in 2024. She and our Township Assistant Lynne James work diligently to keep our financial and day-to-day township business up to speed and in compliance. John Paul Dress, Dave Hirt and I work very hard to meet the continual growing needs of your township. Please do not hesitate to call any of us with your questions, concerns and ideas.

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