



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

January 16, 2009

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

FEDERAL STIMULUS DETAILS RELEASED/MTA COLLECTING LIST OF PROJECTS

Yesterday, the U.S. House Democrats released preliminary details for the \$825 billion economic stimulus package. While a large portion of the funding will go for tax cuts, unemployment and Medicaid assistance to the states, another large portion is slated for infrastructure improvements. Among the infrastructure improvements, \$30 billion is planned for road and bridge construction and repair; \$20 billion for school construction; \$6 billion to expand development of wireless and broadband connections in rural areas; and \$4 billion for worker training grants, to mention just a few line items. The U.S. Senate and House are expected to act on the plan by mid-February in an effort to jump start the economy and put people back to work. MTA has been in contact with the governor's office to help coordinate township infrastructure projects that are "ready to go." It now appears that ready to go means shovels in the ground within 90 days rather than the original 180 days. MTA expects to have the state's application form available on the MTA Web site by early next week. Meanwhile, MTA asks that you forward any ready to go infrastructure projects to us immediately (if you have not already done so) so that we can relay those projects to the governor. Written documentation should include a brief description of the project along with the number of jobs it is expected to create. Project lists should be submitted to tom@michigantownships.org.

SPEAKER'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: CUT PROPERTY TAXES

On Wednesday, the new members of the Michigan House of Representatives were sworn into office and votes were held to elect the leadership of the House for the next two years. Andy Dillon (D-Redford Chtr.Twp.), to no one's surprise, was chosen as the Speaker of the House. Speaker Dillon's remarks to the membership focused on making Michigan more competitive in drawing in new jobs. In particular, he talked about simplifying the state tax codes and focused on the unfairness of having to pay increased property taxes when the value of the property was going down. The reference of course, was to the provision of Proposal A that increases the Taxable Value on a piece of property by the rate of inflation until such time as it equals the State Equalized Value. In later interviews, the Speaker did state that he intended to hold local governments harmless from a financial standpoint, should the change take place. It was acknowledged that the type of reforms the Speaker was suggesting would require a constitutional amendment.

NEW LAW ALLOWS LARGER MAINTENANCE FEES FOR DRAINS

The governor signed into law Public Act 509, which allows county drain commissioners to significantly increase assessments to property owners and townships for the maintenance of drains. Under prior law, the drain commissioner could assess up to \$2,500 per mile per year to maintain the drain. Under the new law, the amount that can be collected is doubled to \$5,000 per mile per year. The legislation also specifies that engineering costs are not included in the cap and that the money can be concentrated on any portion of the drain in question in any given year.

MTA LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD VOLUNTEERS

The MTA Legislative Department is conducting a comprehensive review of state statutes relevant to townships. The purpose of the review is to identify areas in state laws that are currently ambiguous, incomplete or outdated. Staff from the MTA Legislative Department and the MTA Information Services Department initiated the review and now would like to pull together a group of township officials who are willing to participate in the review process. MTA staff is hopeful that such an effort can be completed in no more than three meetings, much of which could be done via conference calls and other electronic means. If you would like to be involved, MTA would appreciate your input. The initial meeting is expected to take place in mid-February. To volunteer, please contact David Bertram by Feb. 6, at david@michigantownships.org or 517-321-6467.

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