



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

March 27, 2009

MTA Phone: 517-321-6467

MTA FAX: 517-321-8908

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

EXTENDED UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS IMPACT TOWNSHIP OPERATIONS

Both the House and the Senate have been working on legislation this week that would extend the time period that individuals would qualify for unemployment payments. The cost of the extended benefits, for most employers, is covered by the federal economic stimulus package. The state legislation simply implements the benefit plans created at the federal level. While this package is great for the unemployed and for most employers in the state, townships are not part of the "most employers" that will see this federal subsidy. Governmental units, including townships, are fully responsible for paying any unemployment costs that exceed the normal 26-week time period. If a township becomes liable for an unemployment claim and that person exceeds 26 weeks of drawing a benefit, the township must reimburse the state for all sums paid out after that period of time. When the federal and state government extended benefits, this extension may have a direct financial impact on township operations. This could also become a critical issue when evaluating budget cuts that may include layoffs. The legislation is expected to be signed into law.

NEWSPAPER CLOSINGS LEAVE NOTICE REQUIREMENT QUESTIONS

Earlier this week, the *Ann Arbor News* announced that it would soon cease publishing a newspaper and would instead create a new electronic news media source. Other major newspapers that are under common ownership have also announced plans to switch from a daily newspaper to printing only certain days of the week. The *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* are also making major changes in publishing, beginning next week. As a result, significant discussions amongst township officials are taking place about how to publish all of the required notices if your local paper is nothing more than an Internet site? What is evident is that the concept of publishing notices is taking on a new meaning in the age of the Internet. MTA firmly believes the state law needs to evolve as well.

HOUSE PASSES REFORM PACKAGE INCLUDING FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE BILL

This week, the House finalized legislation to bring greater transparency to members of the Legislature, and in some cases, local officials and candidates. The package includes HB 4378, introduced by Rep. Tim Bledsoe (D-Grosse Pointe), which would require a one-year waiting period before a legislator could become a lobbyist. HJR N, introduced by Rep. Lisa Brown (D-West Bloomfield Chtr. Twp.), would amend the constitution to dock the salary of a legislator who misses session without an appropriate excused absence. The final bill in the package is HB 4381, legislation to require state and certain local candidates and officials to provide financial disclosure of assets and liabilities similar to what is required for members of Congress. The bill, introduced by Rep. Kate Ebli (D-Frenchtown Chtr. Twp.), would require candidates and officeholders for virtually all state offices and those local offices where the compensation is greater than two times the statewide median gross income (or over \$87,040 for 2009) to report financial information to the Bureau of Elections by May 1 of each year. The three-bill package now moves over to the Senate for consideration.

FORUMS ABOUT THE INTERACTION OF RIGHT-TO-FARM AND LOCAL ZONING

MTA in cooperation with the Michigan Farm Bureau and State of Michigan is offering panel discussions on Right to Farm and State Construction Code issues in April. The three remaining sessions will focus on the Right to Farm Act in on-farm and local government planning, including educating the public on the act and agriculture's role in the construction code. The meetings are free and intended for local officials, those involved in agriculture and the general public. The meetings begin at 7 p.m. and no pre-registration is required. Here are details about the final three meetings: Wednesday, April 1--Star Commonwealth, 13725 Starr Commonwealth Rd., Albion, MI 49224; Thursday, April 2--Alpine Twp. Hall, 5255 Alpine Ave. Northwest, Comstock Park, MI 49321; and Monday, April 6--Knights of Columbus Hall, 212 South Broad St., Harrison, MI 48625.

END