



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

May 6, 2011

Phone: 517-321-6467

Website: www.michigantownships.org

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

HOUSE COMPLETES FIRST PHASE OF 2012 BUDGET

Following Senate completion last week on individual budget bills for FY 2012, the House approved two "omnibus" budget bills (HB 4526 and HB 4325) on Wednesday and Thursday to fund the various departments and K-12 education. Further action is not expected on the budget until after the May 16 Revenue Estimating Conference, which is expected to show as much as \$500 million in additional money for the budget process. However, the Senate must tackle the very controversial HB 4361 and related bills to implement changes on how businesses and individuals are taxed. Included is the revised pension tax that has been opposed by Democrats. Senate Republicans will need to scramble to find 20 votes to pass the measure and move the budget process forward.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS BILLS TO ALTER PILT PAYMENT PROCESS

The House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee heard testimony from MTA and others in support of two bills designed to require the Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) to pay payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) on state land purchased by the fund. Currently, the state covers 50% of its PILT payment obligations on NRTF-purchased land from the fund and 50% from the state's general fund. HBs 4577 and 4579, introduced by Reps. Joel Johnson (R-Clare) and Frank Foster (R-Pellston) respectively, would make the necessary changes to state statute. The bills would save approximately \$515,000 from the general fund and strengthen the chances that the state would meet its PILT obligations at least for those lands purchased with NRTF dollars. The committee is expected to report the bills next week.

HOUSE FOCUSES ON SHEDDING LIGHT ON PUBLIC PENSION OPERATIONS

The House Oversight, Reform and Ethics Committee reported HB 4156, offered by Rep. Tom McMillin (R-Rochester Hills), which would require local units of government that provide defined benefit-type pensions (not 401k-type) to post certain information on the Internet. Any township that operates its own pension system must disclose the annual budget for the operation, detailed expenditures for its operation, including all travel reimbursements for the pension board members and the annual financial report. Any community that contracts for this type of pension service must have an Internet link to the provider website.

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE INCLUDES "PLACEHOLDER" FOR CAMPGROUNDS

On Wednesday, the Senate Appropriations Committee added an amendment to a supplemental appropriations bill (HB 4407) to fund the continued operation of 23 rustic state forest campgrounds scheduled for closure. The funding is viewed to help in the transition of the campgrounds to local control. Meanwhile, the DNR is negotiating with local units of government to provide use permits for the first year of local operation followed by negotiated long-term leases. In addition, SB 332 has been offered by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Fremont Twp.), which would require the state to sell the campgrounds for \$1 to either the township or county. Regardless, time is running short as the campgrounds are set to close May 19 if approved by the Natural Resources Commission next week.

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORTS FIREWORKS LEGISLATION

After years of negotiations, the House Regulatory Reform Committee reported two bills to allow the sale of consumer grade fireworks (i.e. aerial fireworks from out of state) and to help fund the Bureau of Fire Safety with proceeds from the process. MTA worked closely with Rep. Harold Haugh (D-Roseville), sponsor of HBs 4293 and 4294, to allow locals to continue to issue permits for display fireworks and to add back into the bill language that locals issuing display permits would retain the fee paid by the applicant rather than that fee going the state. Revenue to the Bureau of Fire Safety would be partially used for firefighter training. The bills would give locals the authority to regulate most tent sales with the adoption of a local ordinance. Final approval is not expected in time to impact 2011 July 4 activities.

END