



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

November 10, 2011

Phone: 517-321-6467

Website: www.michigantownships.org

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

HOUSE COMMITTEE MOVES LEGISLATION ON ROAD COMMISSIONS

On Wednesday, the House Transportation Committee voted in favor of legislation to allow county boards of commission the option to abolish their road commissions. HBs 5125 and 5126, introduced by Rep. Jon Switalski (D-Warren) and Dale Zorn (R-Ida Twp.), respectively, would allow county boards, by a majority vote, to take over the powers, duties and functions of road commissions by passage of a resolution. The legislation would apply to both appointed and elected road commissions. Debate was intense in committee as Democrats tried to offer substitutes to the bills that would require public hearings and a vote of the people before county road commissions could be abolished. The effort failed mostly along party lines. The bills now move to the full House for consideration following the Thanksgiving break.

LEGISLATURE COMPLETES WORK ON FIREWORKS PACKAGE

Both the House and Senate have now completed action on legislation to make the sale and use of consumer grade fireworks legal in Michigan. HB 4293, introduced by Rep. Harold Haugh (D-Roseville), and SB 194, offered by Sen. Rick Jones (R-Oneida Chtr. Twp.), have both been ordered enrolled and will soon be sent to the governor. MTA was successful in maintaining a local unit of government's role in regulating the ignition, discharge and use of consumer fireworks except on the day preceding, the day of, and the day following a national holiday. In addition, the bills continue to allow local units of government to maintain authority to grant permits for the use of display fireworks and other related activities. Under the legislation, the new process for issuing permits for the sale of consumer grade fireworks will begin effective January 1, 2012, when signed into law.

COMMITTEE REPORTS BILL TO MOVE PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE FILING DEADLINE

The Senate Finance Committee reported legislation this week to deal with homes that are purchased after May 1 of any year, but do not have a principal residence exemption (PRE). This issue has become much more significant in today's market where many of the homes are being sold by the banks and they have been stripped of their PRE status. As introduced, SB 349, offered by Sen. David Hildenbrand (R-Lowell Chtr. Twp.), would have prorated the PRE for sales after May 1 and required the local treasurer to refund any taxes that were paid. MTA was opposed to this concept based on the significant problems that would occur for audit purposes as well as creating a paperwork chain that would eventually lead all the way back to the state. MTA is involved in discussions with the Legislature and the administration to deal with this issue. MTA is looking for a solution that does not require the treasurer to change the tax roll after the current May 1 date.

LEGISLATION FOCUSES ON CONTRACTING FOR BUILDING INSPECTIONS

The House Regulatory Reform Committee reported legislation this week that would solidify the process of using contracting with private companies to perform building inspections. HB 5011 was introduced by Rep. Mark Ouimet (R-Scio Twp.) in response to recent situations where the state has been resistant to authorizing these types of arrangements. Townships across the state have been downsizing their building departments in response to the poor economy and the lack of new construction that is taking place. In some situations, the townships have looked to county or state inspectors to pick up the slack and in some cases, townships have determined that private companies would provide the best alternative. HB 5011 establishes specific standards that must be followed in order to make use of this option. The legislation is now awaiting action of the full House.

MTA OFFICES CLOSED FOR VETERANS DAY

The Michigan Townships Association offices will be closed on Friday, November 11 in observance of Veteran's Day. The office will resume normal operations on Monday.

END