



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

November 14, 2008

MTA Phone: 517-321-6467

MTA FAX: 517-321-8908

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

TAX COLLECTIONS FIX

A recent informal opinion from an assistant attorney general concluded that all local treasurers were required to be in their offices to collect property taxes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28. This opinion is contrary to past practice, which set the date for the following Monday. HB 6623 was introduced this week and approved by the House Tax Policy Committee. The legislation introduced by Rep. Steve Bieda (D-Warren) clarifies that in a year that the last day property taxes are due and payable without penalty falls on a weekend or holiday, the due day is extended to the next business day. This legislation has good prospects of being enacted into law before the end of the year. If enacted, treasurers would not be required to hold office hours on the weekend.

MINORITY PARTY LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS DETERMINED FOR NEXT SESSION

Democrats in the Michigan Senate and Republicans in the Michigan House of Representatives held elections this week to determine who their leaders will be in the 2009-10 legislative session that begins in January. Sen. Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming Twp.) was elected by his caucus to lead the minority party in the Senate. He replaces outgoing Minority Leader Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) who won a seat in Congress. Sen. Buzz Thomas (D-Detroit), who fell short in a challenge against Prusi for the top slot for Senate Democrats, retains his position as Senate Minority Floor Leader. All other leadership posts in the Senate, including those in the majority party remain the same. The only cause for Senate Democrats to meet was to fill the leadership vacancy. House Republicans, who had 20 of their 43 votes coming from freshman gearing up to begin their service in the House next year, elected Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer (R-Custer Twp.) as House Minority Leader. Elsenheimer edged out Rep. Brian Calley (R-Portland) for the top GOP spot. Rep. David Hildenbrand (R-Lowell Chtr. Twp.) was retained as House Minority Floor Leader while Rep. Arlan Meekhof (R-Olive Twp.) was chosen as House Assistant Minority Leader. Three GOP freshman were elected to leadership posts as well; Rep.-elect Bill Rogers (R-Genoa Twp.) as Assistant Minority Floor Leader, Rep.-elect Eileen Kowall (R-White Lake Chtr. Twp.) as Caucus Chair and Rep.-elect Larry DeShazor (R-Kalamazoo) as Assistant Caucus Chair. House Democrats held their leadership elections the week prior and unanimously re-elected current Speaker of the House, Andy Dillon (D-Redford Chtr. Twp.), to that position. Also elected to leadership positions were Kathy Angerer (D-Dundee Twp.) as House Majority Floor Leader and Pam Byrnes (D-Lyndon Twp.) as House Speaker Pro Tempore. Other Democratic leadership positions will be selected in the future but will apparently be named by the three leaders elected by House Democrats instead of by the traditional voting process.

BUDGET WOES CAUSES MDOT SNOWPLOWING POLICY CHANGE

Old man winter is just around the corner and the typical weather related issues that go along with winter will be on Michiganders minds shortly as well. No one knows how severe our winter season will be but Michigan motorists could be facing a few more snow covered roads than in previous winters. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) announced new approaches to how they will apply salt and snowplow Michigan roads for the upcoming winter season. In short, MDOT is being forced, due to budget shortfalls, to use less salt and can no longer afford previous levels of overtime pay for extra snowplowing. Price increases in salt alone have skyrocketed by almost 25% in the past 18 months. Officials at MDOT want motorists to understand that using salt most effectively is relevant to temperatures (changing temperatures) and snow fall levels. MDOT will be prioritizing their winter maintenance on state highways into routes of international, national and statewide significance. Factors such as passenger and commercial traffic volumes, population density, employment locations, tourism destinations, and connections to other transportation facilities are considered in this process. Orange routes, representing 34% of state highway miles, will receive top priority status. For more information and maps go to <http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615-202824--,00.html>.

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