

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

DECEMBER 2020

simstownship.org

For December 2020, we will do a **YEAR IN REVIEW** with the highlights of the previous eleven months. Before we get into that, let's step back a few years to 1939 when The New York Times "predicted that television would fail because people wouldn't have time to stop and stare at a screen." But that screen has gone from 5 inches to 80 plus inches and puts us right in the middle of the action, be it sports, news, action flicks or Hallmark. That television is and has become a lifesaver for many and helps keep us connected to what is going on around us, particularly with this pandemic stuff. It's hard to imagine life without TV, or without an iPhone or without an iPad, or without navigation in the car, or without ...? Many would say this year has been bad from nearly every angle, but a little more on that later ... it's not all that bad, is it?

So the really high points for us was, of course, the pandemic and Covid this 'n that, followed by a county-wide flood that damaged a lot of properties, roadways and bridges and then the November election that will keep getting crazier even into 2021 and maybe beyond.

For January 2020, there were some water plant and water tower issues and all have been resolved. *"The water plant has been working well except for the outlet pipe to the lake froze and they had to get an excavator to re-open it ... to prevent this from happening in cold weather, an in-line pump may be installed in the line to push the water out under pressure rather than rely on gravity. Also, there have been no lead issues whatsoever indicated at any residence and the PFAS levels are at a very low level, well below any action level standard. There is a huge valve leak of water in the base of the Whitney tower and two new valves had to be manufactured by Dixon Manufacturing. There is no such thing as getting a valve off the shelf as they are unique to the tower. On 1/20 they were draining the tower via a hydrant in the front of the tower so the valve could be replaced on 1/22. The same valve will be replaced soon on the Sims tower due to extensive corrosion issues."* **NOTE:** Both valves for both towers have been replaced.

For February 2020 ... No more recyclables processed at the Transfer Station. *“As you may or may not know, for the last few years we have had the services of both Waste Management and Sunrise Disposal servicing the needs of residents at the S/W Transfer Station. WM took care of the garbage and Sunrise took care of recyclables for paper, plastic, cardboard and metals. Last Fall, the Board was informed by Sunrise that effective the beginning of 2020, they would no longer be doing any recycling. The bottom line is, the world-wide demand for plastics and cardboard is no longer the way it was 10-15 years ago and with no demand, recyclers can’t make enough money to make it profitable. Regarding metals, that’s a little different story as there is a little money that can still be made, and it’s all driven by the market. For instance, two weeks ago, steel was about \$115/ton where last week it was about \$95/ton and those prices are nowhere near where they were say, ten years ago. In addition, the board still pays about \$40 to dump each of those small dumpsters and the townships get no fees from Sunrise on the recycle profit. It’s the same price to dump garbage from the same size dumpster. Since our contract with Sunrise was only for recycling, we will not be renewing that contract and are looking for a different source to handle the metals portion of recycling. We will amend the WM contract to include an additional six dumpsters to replace the ones that Sunrise will remove, hopefully this week. The townships are limited on what we can demand from vendors, and if they can’t provide the service, there is nothing the townships can do about it. This is both a state-wide and national problem that started off as a good way to protect the planet, but like many other things, has fallen on hard times and changing policies. **NOTE:** We contracted with Rifken Steel in 2020 for metals disposal.*

For March 2020 ... *“The tag ID program went into effect on March 2nd and seems to be working quite well. We had Kevin’s shed moved to the middle of the driveway with the intent that everyone should stop so Bonnie can check for a tag. Please keep in mind, those without a tag will be turned away. There is no recycling offered, other than scrap metal and broken-down cardboard must be placed in specific dumpsters to keep it from plugging up the compactor. SunRise Disposal is no longer on site and WM will provide an additional six dumpsters to replace the ones removed by SunRise.”*

Also, there was the now infamous lawsuit that we brought against Whitney Township regarding the cemetery ... *“On Feb 26, Judge Riffel ordered Whitney Township to pay their share of the cemetery expenses of over \$11,000.00. In*

addition, the 2010 Quit Claim Deed where Whitney Township claimed ownership of the cemetery was declared null and void and an order so stating must be filed by the attorneys with the Register of Deeds. The 1957 deed giving each township a 50/50 interest in the cemetery remains unchanged. Both townships return to court on March 25 at 1:30 p.m. to hear Judge Riffel's final ruling on the bylaws the townships were ordered to create by that date. A check was received from Whitney Township for the full amount of \$11,875.00 on March 7th. **NOTE:** A final hearing is scheduled with Judge Riffel in Feb 2021.

For April 2020 ... This is our reference to everything in our lives changing ... "The Era of Social Distancing ... We are living through a surreal moment, and some days it feels like we're staring down the apocalypse and when the dust settles, who has any clue of what our new normal is going to look like. Early on, most figured out that if they had enough toilet paper, Dasani and frozen pizza, they could last for months, or maybe years. So there are changes coming and we may not like them, but they are coming anyway."

For May 2020 ... "FILL OUT THE CENSUS ... OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT ... There are two important issues facing all Michiganders: COVID-19 and the 2020 Census. We as Michiganders are doing our best to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and to keep each other safe. It's how we are helping each other now. The 2020 Census is how we are helping each other for the future."

Also, there was some interest for the purchase and/or lease of the Cemetery Hill portion at the south end of the cemetery. That offer was eventually withdrawn.

For June 2020 ... This month was very busy for us. "ROAD AND DITCHING PROJECTS ... The Board was hoping that we could take care of the drainage and ditching issues with Ann and Nancy Streets this summer. With all the flooding a few weeks ago, the Road Commission has had to direct their efforts to repair damage to roads and bridges in Arenac County, so have not had the time to put together Contractor Bid Packs for our project. Another matter of concern regards the availability of contractors to do that work, as our local excavation contractors have become very busy repairing and re-building sea walls and have no time at the moment for our ditching project. The Road Commission believes that the ditching and contractor availability may improve later in the summer

and some work could be completed, so we have to wait and see.” **NOTE:** ‘A’ Street was paved in October

TRANSFER STATION UPDATE ... *The tag system is working well and Ms. Bonnie continues to turn folks away that do not display a tag. She gets the same excuses as “I forgot it, it’s in my other car,” has become a classic, followed by “I forgot and left it at my house in Florida” (or wherever), “I didn’t know I needed one, as I’ve been coming here for 40 years and never needed one before,” and finally, “I never received one.” Bonnie tells them to call the township and they’ll fix you up. We ordered a new 10’ x 12’ “Worker’s Retreat Center” from the Omer Rifle River Market and it should be arriving within the next four weeks. The original WRC was moved to the center of the drive so Bonnie could check tags and stay out of the weather. The new one is custom built, having a 36” window/screen on each side and a 36” glass entry door. It also will sport vinyl clay siding and a dark green steel roof, so matches the color of the dark green compactor! This new WRC will keep our employees out of the cold or heat or rain or snow and will be a huge improvement to what they have now, which is nothing! **NOTE:** The shed arrived and is in place.*

ANOTHER ELECTION IN AUGUST ... *“Judy is busy preparing absentee ballots for mailing soon and how the election will be run is still a mystery, not only for us, but over the entire country. It’s all tied with the Corona issues and safe distancing and touching things and sanitizing and when answers and procedures will be available, no one knows.”*

TRIBAL 2% DISTRIBUTION ... *“The distribution will take place at the Tribal Center in Standish on June 26th and for this year, it’s not one big happy get-together as previous years, but is by appointment only. Once again, this “by appointment” format is due to the virus and safe distancing issues. Our Board members, Sam and Mike will accept the award this year on behalf of Sims Township at 1:40 p.m. Our grant request of \$3800.00 was for two digital announcement signs for the front of Sims Hall. If we do not prevail with the sign, we will still receive a \$1000.00 check, but with the signs, would give the township a \$4800.00 total grant.”*

For July 2020 ... *“Bridge Out in AuGres ... I was told by a Road Commission Foreman on July 6th, the bridge suffered structural damage to the piers due to the recent flooding. A state bridge inspector on 7/6, sent divers in to inspect the*

structure's integrity, and after the dismal report was reviewed, the bridge was immediately closed. I was told it will be at least a month, and possibly more, before repairs can be made. From 7/6 – 7/9 we were stuck with dealing with a six-mile detour using Court St., Bessinger Rd and the gravel and paved portions of Mackinaw Rd as continuing on Bessinger was prevented due to another bridge-culvert that had been damaged and was luckily put back into service on 7/10. All of the bridge damage in the county was all related to and caused by the recent flooding. There are two bridges on M-65 that will be out of service for a year to a year-and-a-half is what I was told by the Road Commission on 7/10. A bridge on Turner Rd, 7 miles west of 23, that has been out for over a month, was repaired and put back into service on Friday, 7/10. The week of July 6th has been a very busy and productive time for the Road commission! With Bessinger repaired, we now have access to 23 using Tonkey and Delano Rds or continuing on Bessinger until it eventually joins 23. Returning into Au Gres, we still must use Court St, or continue on the gravel portion of Bessinger, south of Court St, to find yet another gravel road to get back on US-23. So far, this year has proved both unusual and difficult with the flooding, interruptions to traffic flow, flooded homes and property damage including shore-line damage and all capped off with a pandemic that has taken lives and livelihoods. So we do our part and wear the masks in public places and do the social distancing thing, and hopefully, within the next few weeks, things will begin turning around for the better and we can return to some form of normalcy in whatever form that may take.”

Changes to the Front of Sims Hall Coming ... “We have contracted with Jesse Gordon to remove the lilac bushes and Spruce tree on the corner of the property of the parking lot. They have become not only an eye-sore, but actually inhibit the line of sight when either entering or leaving Delano at the hall. Also, the two dead bushes on each side of the Sims Township sign at the front of the hall were removed on 7/10. Also to be removed soon is the wood structure that supports both the current signage and the bell. The bell may be located on a steel post-platform closer to the hall. All of this is being done to pave the way for the new digital sign. We are optimistic that by the end of this year, we will have a new digital sign with appropriate landscaping, new windows and new carpeting plus a new garage. We'll see!” **NOTE:** The digital sign was received and has been installed by Mike Fil, Sam Proulx and myself and Goyette did the electrical; Wallside installed the new windows. The carpeting and garage are on our future “to do” list.

For August 2020 ... "Proposed millage increases ... "On November's ballot, Sims Township is asking for an increase for both 1) roads and 2) mosquito & gypsy moth. Two years ago, the Sims Board reduced the mosquito and gypsy moth millage to .5000 as we had a sizable account balance for that expense and thought it only fair to reduce the taxpayer burden. Since then, there has been, what can only be described as, a tremendous gypsy moth infestation in our area and that once healthy account is now not that healthy. We have had to expend those resources for a significant increase in gypsy moth treatment and are asking the voters to re-instate the 1.000 mill so we can continue with the aggressive treatment required.

In regard to the roads, in the last 3.5 years, Sims Township has converted four gravel roads to paved roads. In addition, Mclean Rd required the removal of over 100 huge trees that had grown in the ditches. That required re-ditching three-quarters of a mile on both sides of the road and add steel drainage tubes to control flooding. When that was completed, the Road Commission re-built the entire road. A road that was virtually impassable in the spring, is now high and dry. All this to state, Sims has been very aggressive in the last 3.8 years and we have more to do and for that to happen, need greater financial resources as costs continue to climb. We are asking the voters to approve a millage increase from .4916 to 1.000 so we can continue to make the roads in Sims Township the best they can be." NOTE: The millage vote will be on the Spring 2021 ballot.

FEMA ... "On August 13, 2020, FEMA In Arenac County offers us the following on Flood Risk Communication and the entire document can be found on our website, www.simstownship.org ... This information is particularly significant in light of the extensive flooding we experienced a few months ago."

For September 2020 ... "my2020census.gov ... There is still time to complete the 2020 Census. Your response helps to direct federal funds to the communities for schools, roads, and other public services. Results from the 2020 Census will be used to determine the number of seats each state has in Congress and your political representation at all levels of government. It's mandated by the U.S. Constitution in Article 1, Section 2: The U.S. has counted its population every 10 years since 1790. By law, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about you, your home, or your business, even to law enforcement agencies. That's protected under Title 13 of the U.S. Code. You will need the 12-digit Census I.D. that

was mailed or was left at your door. You can still participate without an I.D. by answering the question of where you were living as of 4/1/2020. You can respond online, by phone at 844-330-2020 or by mail. All counting efforts end on 9/30/2020.” Also in this month’s Comments, we had a need for election workers, and we provided voting information for the November election.

For October 2020 ... “NEW TOWNSHIP HALL WINDOWS ... A Wallside Windows crew arrived on 9/25 at 8:30 and completed installing all 12 energy-efficient windows by 1:30. These windows will definitely be a huge improvement over the aluminum window frames that were removed and we would hope to see an energy savings and greater comfort level, especially during the winter months, where previously, the winds blew easily through and around those old windows. Also, we will receive an energy credit of about \$20 per window from Consumers Energy. The cost of the windows was about \$5800.00 installed.”

DIGITAL SIGN ... “Our new digital sign is working well in it’s future island setting of rocks and we hope it continues to serve us well for many years. It’s quite an improvement to the overall look of the hall combined with the new windows. We’ll continue to make incremental improvements to the Sims Hall property in the time we have remaining. As you recall, the sign was made possible by a grant from the Saganing Tribe in Standish and was part of their bi-annual 2% distribution to the townships within Arenac County. We are definitely both thankful and grateful for that program and for what it has done for the communities, including the schools, in Arenac County. Without that program, I believe all the townships and schools would be struggling to keep up and that program gives all of us in Arenac County a huge boost. Please continue visiting the Casino, as your losses are actually helping others in a big way!” Also included in the Comments, we provided information on Short Term Rentals.

For November 2020 ... “ARENAC COUNTY STATEMENT OF VOTES CAST BY % OF REGISTERED VOTERS ... City of AuGres, 71.95; Omer, 73.14; Standish, 57.64; Adams Township, 75.59; Arenac Township, 70.27, AuGres Township, 71.79, Clayton Township, 64.56, Deep River Township, 65.91, Lincoln Township, 67.89, Mason Township, 64.48, Moffatt Township, 77.10, Sims Township, 79.03 **[THE WINNER!]**, Standish Township, 68.72, Turner Township, 68.75, Whitney Township, 73.62, Arenac County Total, 69.50.

KUDOS TO OUR ELECTION WORKERS ... Mike & Deb Fil, Jack Evans, Linda Lewis, Jim Sears, June Ogden, Joanne McDonald, Sharon Nestell, Marci Prueter, Patricia Roche, Dianne Lamm and last and certainly not least, my young Bride Judy who served as the Maestro for this madness! Actually, things went quite well, everyone got along great, we had more than our share of good laughs and a little good-natured ribbing and we had good food. All good.

Election day did not sputter or stutter to a start by any means, as there were a dozen folks in line at 7 a.m. after Marci did her "Hear Ye, Hear Ye, the polls are now open" speech. We logged in our first 100 voters by 8:50, like in the morning! We have always been able to count on Dennis Stanley being the first in line to vote. Not this year, as Dennis came in at #9! Dennis is just going to have to get moving earlier in 2024 to regain his 1st place in line status! Sims has 968 registered voters of which 765 voted. It was a long and tiring day for all the workers, and two of us returned from Standish at 130 a.m. Wed morning.

We did not have too many hiccups throughout the day, but we did have over 400 absentee ballots to process after the polls closed at 8 p.m. Overall it went well and we did not end up being the last to get the results to Standish, as that honor went to Omer ... However, we were next to last ...! But to be fair, we had more absentee ballots than any other township in Arenac County at 487 and Judy picked up two more jars of jam from Ricky Rockwell's wife for taking 1st place. Again, for the third time. What an honor and better than nothing! By the way, Ricky is retiring after 20 plus years as County Clerk, and we thank him for his service plus all the help he has given Sim's Township for all these years. We wish him the very best in his retirement journey.

ADDITION TO THE TRANSFER STATION ... Finally, after being in operation for 40.3 years, our employees have a Porta-Potty on site. Daniels Septic is providing the unit for \$100.00/month and they will service it every Monday. A natural question ... "But won't it freeze up in the winter?" The really short answer is 'NO' as they use a brine solution to prevent freezing. Another question, "Is it heated?" Again, 'NO,' but it is still better than our employees being really outdoors with an Arctic blast blowing through their knickers! You can only imagine how the employees took care of business all these years and the sad answers will never make it to a documentary for prime time and that's a really good thing. Also, it is officially posted EMPLOYEES ONLY ...!"

For December 2020 ... And there you have it, our year in review. If it were not for the pandemic craziness and flooding, many might venture to say this has been a very good year. On the other hand, many would say this year has been bad from nearly every angle, but there are some bright spots possibly. One writer offers, *"Don't cancel the year that made you see how strong you are. Don't cancel the year that made you go through ups and downs and still show how incredible you are. Don't cancel the year that brought answers that you have long been looking for time. Don't cancel the year that made you see the thorns that were being watered. Don't cancel this year, because there are plenty of reasons to be thankful."* Felipe Pimentel

I've heard many express that everything is so difficult and not normal than pre-pandemic and they just don't have the energy or drive to do anything. I interact with students and the feeling is that they seem very "subdued" to the point where they are projecting a lack of enthusiasm, energy and even interest in what's going on around them. But this being "subdued" phenomena affects more than just students and is more universal than we think.

All this mask-wearing is making us a faceless generation and is adversely affecting all personal interactions at all levels, including with family members. It's just not normal and the majority are sensing this lack of normality. This pandemic has smacked us upside the head and created a new unnatural normal that's not normal by any standard. I think most folks would love to return to the old normal and who knows if that will occur any time soon.

The reality is that life events and experiences seldom have a back-space feature, so we are left with adjusting and having to cope with stuff that is turning out to be too different than what we left behind and most are not liking it and just want to return to the way things were. But the good news is, they're still in the game and still adjusting!

Ultimately, everything revolves around having hope and always trying to move forward and not becoming weary and energy-less. "Do not be weary in well doing for in due season, you will reap if you faint not" the scriptures remind us ... Being tired and down will always win if it goes unchallenged and can get to the point where one shows up but is still missing. This tired is different than being loss of

sleep tired, but more lack of energy tired. More often times, it is simply a lack of a goal tired. One sometimes need to force, endure and push forward to become more fit for the the challenges ahead, and just keep pecking away at what one knows they should do and at some point, one is rewarded with a renewed spirit and renewed energy. Hope. Maybe it's just a matter of re-adjusting our HOPE index and charting a new course for the future and that future and charting starts like really, really soon ...!

FINAL THOUGHT ...

As the hero of your own adventure, you now stand at a crossroads. The decisions you make from here on out will determine your destiny—so choose wisely.
Andy Andrews,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2021 from the Sims Township Board and Staff ...!