

Cascade Connections



2026 | EDITION 5
Cascade Charter Township Newsletter



from the **Supervisor** Grace Lesperance

Dear Cascadians,

Thanks to its abundance of trees, rolling hills, and the Thornapple River, fall is one of Cascade's prettiest seasons. Now, as the days shorten, temperatures drop, and we welcome

the holidays, I would like to highlight some ongoing Township initiatives—all of which serve to preserve Cascade's unique character and enhance residents' quality of life. **Thank you** to the many residents, volunteers and staff who are making these collaborative efforts a reality.

CREATING A MORE WALKABLE VILLAGE

Creating a more walkable village was a top priority for residents according to feedback received during the 2021-2022 strategic planning process. We actually have a mechanism to fund village improvements at no additional cost to taxpayers or local businesses--Cascade's Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

The DDA is an economic tool available to local municipalities to enhance and revitalize local business districts. It was created in the 1970s after the rise of expressways, suburban shopping malls, and big box stores changed how people worked and shopped, leading to the decline of traditional downtowns. DDAs capture a portion of property taxes within the DDA's geographic boundary which would otherwise go to other governmental units. State law mandates that those dollars can only be reinvested in the DDA district.

The DDA is currently funding several projects to improve the village area:

IMPROVING PUBLIC SPACES

Expanding Tassell Park to include the Tuffy & Verburg sites, with a boardwalk for pedestrians and bikers to safely cross Cascade Road, has finally begun! The goal is to create a unique, usable public space for all ages that emphasizes its proximity to and the beauty of the Thornapple River. This transformative project will highlight Cascade's unique character and serve as an anchor for the village area.

IMPROVING PRIVATE SPACES

Most of the property in the village area is privately owned and already developed. To kickstart creating a more vibrant village streetscape, and in conjunction with the new zoning standards, the DDA created a voluntary incentive program that provides a financial match to local businesses for qualifying façade and site



RENDERING OF FUTURE TASSELL PARK GATEWAY ENTRANCE



VIEW OF OLD 28TH STREET IN THE FALL

improvements to existing buildings. Beyond improving aesthetics, this program aims to strengthen locally owned businesses, keeping dollars in the local economy.

This grant program comes on the heels of the new zoning ordinance, which implements village design standards for future developments. Professional planning studies show that walkable, well-designed village centers with river access significantly increase surrounding property values--both residential and commercial.

PFAS REMEDIATION

Cascade Township recently received a \$12,150,383 grant from EGLE for the first phase of PFAS remediation in the Hillsboro neighborhood. This allows for the extension of 2.2 miles of new water main and the connection of 117 residences in that neighborhood. Construction is scheduled to start spring of 2028. The Township is partnering with EGLE to secure the funding necessary to complete PFAS remediation for the remainder of the homes in the Hillsboro site as well as the Aspenwood contamination site.

Why is PFAS remediation taking so long? Funding. Like other municipalities in similar circumstances in Michigan and throughout the country, Cascade requires the assistance of its federal and state partners. The remediation estimates for two Cascade neighborhoods alone identified by EGLE as needing city water at present total \$44 million (\$24 million for the remaining Hillsboro area not covered in this current phase and \$20 million for the Aspenwood area).

Obtaining the funding for PFAS remediation for the Burger/Goodwood neighborhood was easier for two reasons. First, it was one of the earlier PFAS sites identified by EGLE--there was less competition for funding at that time. Second, EGLE had linked the contamination to the Gerald R. Ford Int'l Airport. As the known polluter, the airport could be liable for remediation costs should state and federal funding fall short. This meant that the Township could pursue compensation from the airport if necessary. Because EGLE has thus far been unable to find the contamination source for the Hillsboro and Aspenwood sites, the Township cannot pursue compensation from the known polluter(s). Efforts to identify the source(es), however, will continue.

Despite these challenges, the Township-Board of Trustees, staff, legal counsel & others--will continue to work closely with EGLE to secure funding, as well as seeking other funding source(s).

I hope the upcoming holidays are extra special for you and your families. As always, please share any thoughts, concerns or suggestions you may have. It is an honor to serve as your Supervisor.

Grace Lesperance

Cascade Charter Township Supervisor
glesperance@cascadetwp.com



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-Grace Lesperance, Township Supervisor



DDA SECURITY GRANT

The DDA Security Grant was created in 2026 for businesses interested in enrolling their security cameras in the Kent Safety Network. This program allows businesses to voluntarily integrate existing security cameras to share the feed directly with the Kent County Sheriff's Office during an emergency. The grant helps cover any associated costs with enrollment. If you are a business interested in enrolling, please contact the KCSO or the Township Office.

Questions about the DDA or interested in getting involved in Township events? **Contact DDA Manager** rsennett@cascadetwp.com or call (616) 949-1500.

PLEASE WELCOME



DAN SWALLOW
PLANNING DIRECTOR



DEPUTY CHELSEA SCHAAP
COMMUNITY POLICING OFFICER

Help us give a warm welcome to Dan Swallow, Cascade Township's new Planning Director and Deputy Chelsea Schaap, the Township's new community policing officer.



from the **Clerk** Sue Slater

VOTE EARLY TO AVOID LONG LINES!

Election Season is here again! With expected high voter turnout and larger precinct sizes, we want to notify registered voters of your options to cast your ballot. If you received an absentee ballot, we are encouraging you to **return it by mail no later than Friday, October 23**. The drop boxes are available 24/7 and video-monitored by law; they are located at Township Hall and Cascade Library-Wisner Center. For all Cascade Township voters, those are the only drop boxes for absentee ballots. **We implore voters not to wait until the last minute to drop your ballots off;** absentee ballots CAN also be taken into the Early Voting Site or your Election Day Precinct to be

tabulated. In fact, that process is better than leaving them at home. The Early Voting Site will again be at Wisner from October 24-November 1 for all registered voters. Please remember that your Election Day precinct may be different. Please read on for additional details to inform your voting experience.

📍 EARLY VOTING LOCATION:

CASCADE LIBRARY WISNER CENTER

2870 JACKSMITH DR SE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49546

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM	7:30 AM — 3:30 PM

PRECINCT LOCATIONS

Precinct 1	Cascade Library - Wisner Center 2870 Jacksmith Avenue SE	Precinct 4	Ada Bible Church 8899 Cascade Road SE
Precinct 2	Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church 6655 Cascade Road SE	Precinct 5	Thornapple Community Reformed Church 3260 Thornapple River SE
Precinct 3	Cascade Christian Church 2829 Thornapple River Drive SE		

★ **REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT** ★



ONLINE
MICHIGAN.GOV/VOTE
OR SCAN THE QR CODE



BY MAIL
CONTACT THE CASCADE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP
CLERK'S OFFICE TO
HAVE AN APPLICATION
MAILED TO YOU



IN PERSON
VISIT THE CASCADE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP
CLERK'S OFFICE IN PERSON.



Once you receive your absentee ballot, there are multiple ways to make sure your vote counts!



RETURN TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE

Return your completed absentee ballot to the Clerk's Office by 8pm on Election Day.

Cascade Charter Township
5920 Tahoe Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

 **DEADLINE: ELECTION DAY BY 8PM**



BRING IT TO THE EARLY VOTING SITE

Bring your completed absentee ballot to the Early Voting Site during the 9 days of early voting and cast it.

Cascade Library - Wisner Center
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

 **OCT. 24-NOV.1**
7:30am - 3:30PM Daily



BRING IT TO YOUR POLLING LOCATION ON ELECTION DAY

Bring your completed absentee ballot to your polling place on Election Day.

You may:

- Insert your absentee ballot in the tabulator, OR
- Surrender it and vote a new ballot

 **ELECTION DAY**
Tuesday, November 3
7am- 8pm

**BEST PRACTICE:
TURN IN YOUR BALLOT
BEFORE ELECTION DAY TO
AVOID LONG LINES!**



from the **Treasurer** Windy Korstange

BOARD ADOPTS 2027-2032 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Though Cascade Township is not required by law to prepare a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), adopting an annual CIP is critical to successful planning and budgeting, as it fleshes out what major projects are coming and how they will be paid for. This helps us make disciplined decisions rather than simply reacting to the most urgent crisis.

Following several months of internal planning, the Board adopted the 2027- 2032 CIP at its September 9 meeting. The CIP includes all large (\$10,000 or more) capital improvements. All FY 2027 projects in the recently-adopted 2027-2032 CIP are included in the draft FY 2027 budget.

FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET PROCESS WRAPPING UP

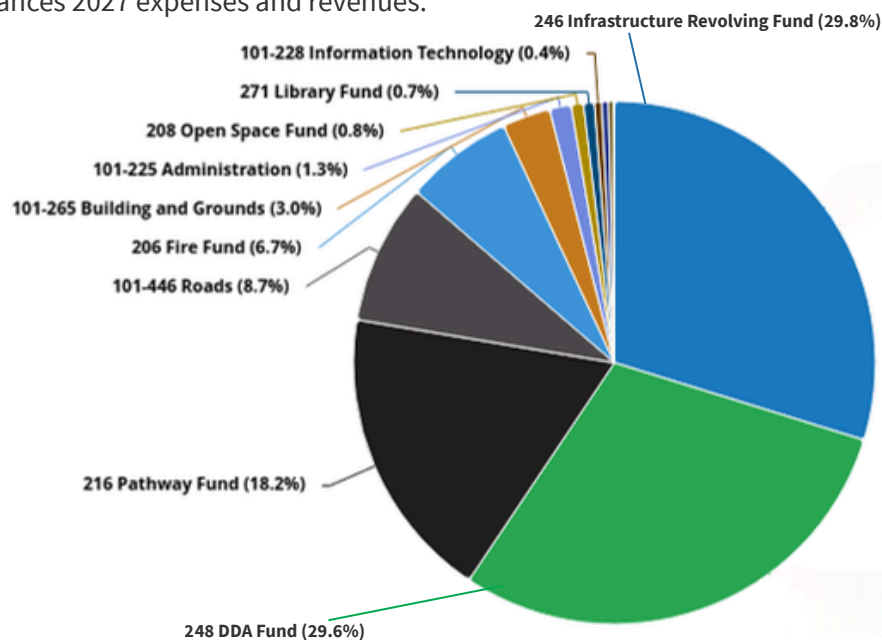
At its October 14 meeting, the Board of Trustees reviewed the Township's proposed Budget for FY 2027. A public hearing and adoption by the Board of the FY 2027 Budget as well as 2027 millage rates is scheduled for November 4.

The \$8.2 million budget includes funding for all capital improvements listed in the 2027-2032 CIP, ensuring the Township can continue providing quality services the community expects throughout 2027.

Adoption of the FY 2027 Budget is the final step of a months-long process led by Manager Jade Smith, Finance & Budget Director Lorna Nenciarini, and the Personnel & Finance Committee (Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Treasurer Windy Korstange, and Trustee Timmy Noordhoek), which involved reviewing all Township funds, expenses, revenue, and internal process controls. In compliance with state law, the budget balances 2027 expenses and revenues.

Highlights of the FY 2027 Budget include:

- Income from Parks rentals increased from \$6000 in FY 2025 to \$20,000 in FY 2026 to an anticipated \$40,000 in FY 2027. This is due to the athletic fields being rented more, which was the result of significant improvements as well as investing in better equipment.
- Creation of four new positions (Clerk's Asst, Bldgs & Grounds Maintenance Tech, Engineering Asst, & an Intern) to keep up with increased service demands.
- Receipt of a \$12,150,383 State Grant + \$1,215,000 from Township's Improvements Revolving Fund for PFAS remediation (city watermain installation) in Hillsboro neighborhood.



A Walk Through the New Zoning Ordinance

by Christopher Khorey, AICP, Vice President, McKenna

Christopher Khorey, AICP and Vice President with the state-wide municipal planning firm McKenna answers commonly-asked questions about the new zoning ordinance. In his capacity at McKenna, Mr. Khorey has worked with Cascade Charter Township on a variety of projects since 2021, including the creation and adoption of both the Strategic and Master Plans.

IS THE ENTIRE ORDINANCE NEW?

No. Most aspects of the Ordinance are completely unchanged and have been moved word-for-word into the new Ordinance.

WHAT'S CHANGING FOR HOMEOWNERS?

Not very much. Actually, the majority of the rules for single-family homes remain the same, including lot sizes, setbacks, and height. The boundaries of single-family districts also remain the same. However, changes that apply to homeowners include:
(Cont'd on page 7)

Accessory Buildings (Section 4.2).

Regulations on accessory buildings—sheds and pole barns - were simplified with the creation of a clear and objective set of rules based on lot size that apply to all property owners, rather than the previous system of special use approvals for those that could navigate a subjective approval process.

Regulations on Keeping Animals (Section 4.4).

Animals not considered pets (goats, chicken, bees) and not already regulated by the Right to Farm Act are now allowed in residential districts, subject to specific regulations, including minimum lot sizes.

WHAT' S CHANGING FOR LARGE LOT OR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY OWNERS?

Large lot and agricultural property owners are also not likely to experience changes to the regulations governing their properties, unless they intend to split or develop them. However, large lot and agricultural property owners should be aware of the following:

Purchase of Development Rights (Section 6.7). To preserve Cascade's remaining rural character, while still allowing owners of large agricultural or undeveloped parcels to monetize their land (without selling it for development), the new Ordinance creates a voluntary mechanism which calculates the value of the development rights for a given parcel and allows the County or Township to purchase those rights--limiting future uses to agriculture or very low density residential.

WHAT' S CHANGING FOR BUSINESSES?

The new Ordinance does not change any regulations on day-to-day operations for businesses. However, should owners of business properties choose to redevelop their properties in the future, there are specific revisions that affect what can be built.

WHAT' S CHANGING FOR DEVELOPERS?

There are changes that developers should be aware of. The purpose of the new Ordinance is to better guide future development in Cascade. Changes include:

To protect residents' health and safety, higher density development is now restricted in properties that lack water and sewer. **(Section 2.8).**

The new ordinance better defines the term "dwelling unit" so that if existing commercial buildings are turned into residential complexes, the new housing units retain their value and maintain adequate quality of life standards for their residents. **(Sections 3.2 and 6.1).**

New private roadways will be built wider than was required in the past. **(Sections 4.15).**

In the village area, new developments are governed by codified design standards, commonly known as form-based code. Unlike traditional zoning, which separates different land uses, codified design standards focus on the physical shape and look of buildings. This creates a consistent and attractive neighborhood look as opposed to car-dependent sprawl.

Changes include: no large-scale, high-density developments in the village core; village building heights are limited to 35 feet; new design standards prevent "corporate" architecture in the village; and bringing new buildings closer to the street with parking in the back. (Sections 2.5, 6.1, and 8.1-8.8)

ANY FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE NEW ZONING ORDINANCE?

It's been a pleasure working with so many residents, staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Trustees over the past two years. The new zoning ordinance ensures that short-term development decisions further the Cascade community's long-term goals and objectives, as well as maintains residents' quality of life. Again, it's been a pleasure working with the Cascade community.



Tassell Park

PHASE 1 HAS BEGUN!

In September, a groundbreaking was held to mark the beginning of improvements being made to Tassell Park and the surrounding village, including a new pedestrian crossing beneath Cascade Road to make walking and biking safer. Work officially began with the demolition of remaining pavement and building foundations at the former Tuffy and Verburg sites as well as new curb lines, road resurfacing and utility relocation. The majority of the work will begin in spring 2027 with the entire project slated to be done by the end of spring 2028.



The revitalization of Tassell Park aims to celebrate the natural beauty of the Thornapple River while enhancing connectivity, recreation, and enrichment opportunities for the community. The former Tuffy site will be converted into a vibrant public space, including a water feature and sunken plaza. The former Verburg's site will provide pedestrian crossing underneath the Cascade Road Pedestrian Bridge, to allow pedestrians to safely cross Cascade Road to access the park.

Other new features include:

- Sunken Plaza Area
- Natural Playground
- Flex Space (Food Trucks)
- Event Pavilion & Patio
- New Boardwalk
- Fire Pit
- Rubys Gazebo
- New Bench/Table/Seating Options
- Safe Pedestrian Crossing Under Cascade Rd



Temporary New Home for Spring Ballet Sculpture in Tassell Park!

The beloved "Spring Ballet" sculpture in Tassell Park is being temporarily moved to Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park while we prepare for exciting park improvements. Don't worry—it will return home as soon as the project is complete!

Want to keep up to date on what is in store for Tassell Park? **Check out cascadetwp.com/projects/reimagining-tassell-park/.** Stay tuned for frequent updates as this exciting project gets underway!

Join in on the fun, free events happening around Cascade sponsored by the Township's Parks & Facilities' team. For more information & details, visit cascadetwp.com.





LIBRARY UPDATES

Check out all the fun programming coming up at the Kent District Library - Cascade branch. **For more information, visit kdl.org/locations/cas/.**

Let It Snow

Anyone ages 11 and up, can participate in by reading six books to earn a mug. Choose to read an additional four books for a chance to win a gift card to a local bookstore! **December 1-February 28.**

Book Sale

Friends of the Cascade Township Library Used Book Sale - bargains galore! **Saturday, December 5th 10am-4pm**

Ready for Reindeer!

Visit live reindeer to pet and feed! **Saturday, December 5 | 10-11am**

Meet the Sled Dogs

Kids and Teens Craft Sale and Meet the Sled Dogs **Thursday, December 10 | 5-7pm**

Legendary Readers

Participants in grades K-5 - read, write or visit the library for 100 days throughout the school year, outside of the classroom to win prizes!

Learn more at kdl.org/legendaryreaders.

Write Michigan

Submissions are open for the annual Short Story Contest through November 15.

BURTON ST. BRIDGE UPDATE

Construction of the Burton St. pedestrian bridge over I-96 is expected to begin in late 2027. The project received permit approval from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and is currently pending review by the Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Cascade Township received a \$3.5 million state funding appropriation for the project, which has been extended to accommodate the updated timeline. For more information, visit cascadetwp.com/projects/burton-st-bridge/.



A Cemetery's Final Journey

Laraway Road, later named East 28th Street, was described by William H. Mulder as late as 1926, as a "dusty gravel and washboard, teeth jarring, auto rattling surface." It was on this road, about two miles west of the village of Cascade, that there was a small pioneer cemetery.

This graveyard was on less than an acre parcel, ascending a few feet higher than the roadbed and known as Cook's Cemetery. That once sacred land is today just vacant land on the north side of the street, between I-96 and the Drury Hotel.

Lewis Cook was the first settler in Cascade Township, which at the time was still part of Ada Township. In 1836, he built his home on Laraway Road, choosing this location as it was believed the soil was better for farming. Land in this area was selling for \$1.25 an acre.

It soon became apparent that a cemetery was also needed. Thus, the Cook Cemetery was established, so named because it was on land owned by Mr. Cook and was deeded to the township in 1849. The first burial was in 1850.

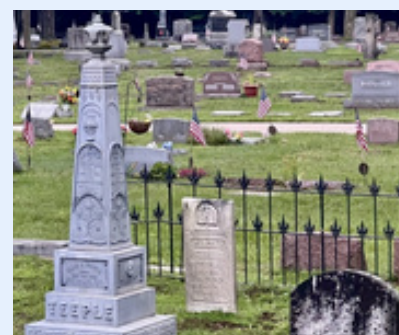
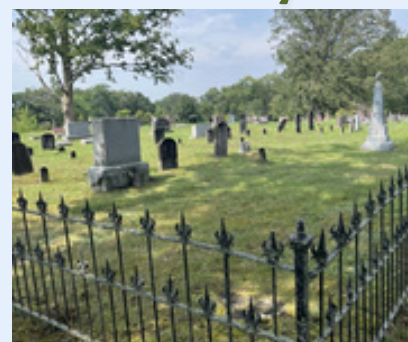
Cook's brothers-in-law, Peter and George

Teeple, were urged to move to Cascade from Wayne, MI by Lewis, which they did and eventually bought a parcel of land near Lewis and in some articles the cemetery is named the "Cook/Teeple Cemetery." The last recorded burial was in 1905.

Fast forward to 1966, 28th Street became one of the busiest roads in all of Kent County. All manner of commercial development soon surrounded this small eternal resting place, including the I-96 expressway. The difficult decision was made to relocate the remains of those interred to the Cascade Cemetery on 30th Street. Metcalf Funeral Home supervised the new placement of the remains and was lauded for the care and respect given during their efforts.

A section of the 30th Street Cemetery was set aside and the remains were placed exactly as they were in the old cemetery. It is a cemetery inside a cemetery.

This story was provided by the Cascade Township's Historical Society.



HELP REDUCE DEER IMPACTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Deer Connections makes it easy for landowners and hunters to work together to address local deer management challenges.

How It Works:

- ✓ Create an account
- ✓ Add your parcel information
- ✓ Browse local hunter profiles
- ✓ Select a hunter to connect with
- ✓ Develop a plan for your property

Your Participation Helps:

- 🚗 Reduce deer-vehicle collisions
- 🌱 Reduce landscape/agricultural damage
- 🦌 Improve local deer management
- 🍖 Provide nutritious venison to local families

Registering a property with 10+ acres can help create safe hunting opportunities, support healthier deer populations, and make a positive impact in our community.

deerconnections.com – support@deerconnections.com



OCTOBER 31

**6 PM | CARAVELLE VILLAGE: INTERSECTION
OF BECHALLA & PATAGONIA**

**6:30 PM | THORNAPPLE COMMUNITY CHURCH
3260 THORNAPPLE RIVER DRIVE**

**7 PM | HIDDEN HILLS: VINEWOOD,
BETWEEN ASPENWOOD AND CANDLEWOOD**

THANKSGIVING
safety



National Fire Protection Association
The authority on fire, electrical, and building safety

**Safety in the kitchen is important, especially
on Thanksgiving Day when there is a lot of
activity and people at home.**



Contact Us

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Parks & Facilities Director

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Cascade Township Fire Department

Fire Chief / Non-Emergency
Adam Magers
616-949-1320
amagers@cascadetwp.com

Kent County Sheriff's Department

Sheriff / Non-Emergency Dispatch
616-336-3113

Community Policing Officer

Chelsea Schaap
616-250-6760
chelsea.schaap@kentcountymi.gov



Cascade Charter Township

5920 Tahoe Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
616-949-1500
cascadetwp.com

Township Office Hours

Monday through Thursday: 7 am – 4 pm
Friday: 8 am – 12 pm



CHRISTMAS IN CASCADE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

5:30-7PM

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING | 6PM

CASCADE HISTORICAL MUSEUM
2839 THORNAPPLE RIVER DR.

**JOIN US FOR A
FESTIVE EVENING WITH
HOLIDAY MUSIC, COCOA, COOKIES
AND CRAFTS.
PLUS PHOTOS WITH SANTA!**



Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram! We share news, events and community highlights to help you stay involved and informed.