

# news&notes

a compendium of noteworthy items

## WELCOME TO TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

### What every new official must know

Here are some tips to ensure a smooth transition for newly elected township officials.

**Take the oath of office.** All officials elected to township office at the Nov. 5 general election must take the oath of office no later than Jan. 1, 2025, or the office becomes vacant on Jan. 2. To qualify for office, each official must take the oath of office and, in some circumstances, be bonded.



If a township official elected in the November 2024 election does not become qualified until late December, for example, the official “holding over” would be paid a pro-rata share of the monthly salary. The new official’s compensation would be pro-rated to the day of the month that official qualified for office.

The oath may be administered by the township supervisor or deputy supervisor, township clerk or deputy clerk, or other qualified person, such as a judge, county clerk, deputy county clerk, state senator or representative for the jurisdiction, or notary public.

**Take custody of the records of the office.** An outgoing official must turn over to his or her successor all of the files, computer passwords, keys, equipment and other materials related to the office. This should be done after the county board of canvassers certifies the election and notifies the candidates. All documents, records or files created while in office are township property, and the willful withholding or destruction of township books, papers or records is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to two years in prison or a fine of up to \$1,000. (MCL 750.491)

*Note:* An “exit” audit of township finances is not required simply because township offices have changed hands. A township board may choose at any time to contract to have an audit done if there are concerns about financial irregularities, but it will be in addition to any regularly scheduled audit.

**Notify financial institutions.** New clerks and treasurers should notify each banking institution that does business with the township that the previous clerk or treasurer’s signature is no longer valid. Establish the new official’s signature as the one of record. The same applies to a new deputy clerk and deputy treasurer.

**Appoint a deputy.** The clerk and treasurer are each required by law to appoint a deputy as soon as possible after taking the oath of office. The supervisor has the option to appoint a deputy. A deputy must also take the oath of office. (*Turn to page 12 for more on township deputies.*)

**Contact the township’s bond representative.** A treasurer, deputy treasurer, clerk, deputy clerk, and constable if applicable in the township, must be bonded before taking the oath of office. Contact the township’s bond representative immediately after the election is certified to add new names to the bond. Some companies offer a “blanket” bond that covers all township employees who handle funds.

**Complete employee payroll forms.** For IRS and Social Security reporting purposes, all elected township officials are “employees.” If a new official is a new township employee, he or she should complete the IRS W-4, Michigan W-4 and U.S. I-9 forms, and file them with the clerk or township payroll department. The township must report new employees to the state on the State of Michigan *New Hire Reporting Form 3281*. If the new official will be participating in a township pension plan, he or she should receive the Social Security Form SSA-1945 windfall elimination provision notice.

**Learn about your new office and township policies.** Review the township board meeting minutes from the last few years to learn about current township issues and projects. Ask for copies of any written board policies and procedures, and make an effort to become familiar with parliamentary procedure. Because townships are only able to take actions authorized or expressly implied by law, take some time to learn about the most common township enabling statutes. Review the mission statements or minutes of township departments, committees or commissions.

## DATE TO OBLIGATE

### Deadline to obligate ARPA funds is Dec. 31

Townships have **until Dec. 31, 2024**, to obligate their allocation of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. If your township has not fully obligated the money, you should do so as soon as possible to meet this deadline. ARPA funds must be fully spent by Dec. 31, 2026. MTA has been told that the federal government may “claw back” the funds from townships that do not obligate the funds or continue to file their annual reporting each April. Townships may still choose the standard allocation option, which allows up to \$10 million to be used for general government services. For additional resources, visit MTA’s “ARPA Resources and Updates” webpage on <https://michigantownships.org> (under the “Advocacy” tab).

