



## Pittsfield Charter Township

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### *Office of the Supervisor*

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#### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Pittsfield Charter Township Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Mandy Grewal, Supervisor

**DATE:** February 10, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Pittsfield Township's 2020 Administrative Response to the Great Pandemic

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#### **Introduction**

The very first initiative I undertook after taking office as Supervisor, 13 years ago, was the master plan update process that is, even today, being replicated by other municipalities to provide for a broad-based and comprehensive public engagement process. Since then, public engagement - with the aim to listen and respond to resident concerns - has remained at the core of our work. Last year was no different. Our first step, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, was to compile the Pandemic Transition Protocol document to ensure transparency in our work process and outcomes, and made it available on our /covid19 webpage. As outlined in the document, I established a cross-departmental Committee with a BOT liaison, which has met each week since March, so we are well positioned to respond quickly and in a coordinated manner to the myriad of issues that arise constantly with the primary goal of responding, in a timely and effective manner, to the needs and concerns of Pittsfield Township residents and team members.

The second change I made was begin publishing Community Letters to, once again, provide for public engagement. Whereas, since 2009, the bi-annual newsletter, Pittsfield Post, has served as the communication platform with Township residents, I knew from the beginning that the Great Pandemic and its impact on our work products and processes would require a more immediate, comprehensive, consistent, and longer-term outreach platform. The weekly, now monthly, Community Letters have helped maintain a communication channel with everyone during a time of unprecedented and tumultuous change with which we continue to grapple, almost a year later.

Needless to say, what I term "emergent and urgent issues", consumed the vast majority of the Township's resources and time in 2020. As such, we never had an opportunity to take stock of the multitude of ways each one of our Township team members has adjusted and responded to the ongoing crisis. The intent of this memo is to outline Pittsfield Township's administrative response to the Great Pandemic. It will, I hope, highlight the commitment of each of our Township Team members to the Setting the Gold Standard in Public Service and the extent to which they went above and beyond to uphold that standard in 2020.

We provide you with this report as we hope to go back, in 2021, to being pro-active as we are accustomed to rather than reactive as we were required to last year because of the Great Pandemic. That said, I will conclude this introduction by quoting Congresswoman Dingell:

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“The problem is there is no time to take a breath, to process, because there are so many challenges facing us that you just have to keep going. Period. We have to charge forward. Too much to do and COVID doesn’t give up.”

This memo is organized in two sections. The first outlines the macro trends and the second is compiled by Department to provide micro details.

## **I: Macro Trends**

### Phase I: Lockdown (March-May)

- Much of the non-essential work moved, within the course of one week, from being fully in-person to being mostly remotely
- Walk-in’s at administrative offices continued; mostly for bill payments, drop offs, or general inquiries
- Clerk’s office remained fully operational to provide for full election participation
- Worked with a multitude of local and regional partners to gain access to adequate and sufficient personal protection equipment (PPE)
- Continual (re)adjustment of all administrative procedures – ranging from phone call responses and conducting inspections to code enforcement violations and conducting public meetings – based on the Governor’s Executive Orders
- Enforcement by police officers of the many, and often changing, Executive Orders
- Fire fighters responded to emergency calls, especially at senior living facilities
- Significantly increased call volumes as residents needed a place to vent their anxieties and concerns related to the pandemic; established a policy of 24-hour response time for all calls/emails with the standard set by Department of Community Development
- Set up a system to conduct one-on-one check-in’s with seniors and small business owners in an effort to assist them with questions, access to grants/resources, etc.

### Phase II: Transition (June – December)

- Implementation of Plexiglass infrastructure at all Township buildings to provide for employees’ and public’s safety by Director Weiland
- Increased activity within Building and Assessing offices as summer weather allowed for more outdoor, safer interactions with the public
- Working through the complex bureaucratic maze to access pandemic-related funding, particularly for Public Safety
- Enforcement by police officers of the many, and often changing, Executive Orders
- Fire fighters responded to emergency calls, especially at senior living facilities
- Resources and support provided to Clerk’s office to ensure an open, transparent, and fully accessible electoral process in Pittsfield
- Worked with local agencies and stakeholders to partner with residents and others participating in the social justice reform movement; Hosted the first regional public forum (organized by Survivor’s Speak) to promote racial equity at Lillie Park
- Began hosting public forums virtually, including one for improving the Michigan Avenue corridor for which Pittsfield received its largest-ever grant from MDOT for \$30 million
- Discontinued walk-in’s at administrative offices in November due to spike in positive cases amongst employees and transitioned to appointment-only schedule for public

## 2021

Even as we continue to be unclear about the timeline vis-à-vis the Great Pandemic, we laid a solid foundation to respond quickly and effectively to emergent and urgent issues in 2020, such that we are currently positioning ourselves to returning to being pro-active on implementing Pittsfield Township residents' priorities, including but not limited to the following:

1. Master Plan update that reflects our dual commitment to sustainability and equity through such steps as expanding neighborhood mixed-use destinations, maximizing open/green space preservation, and promoting local food access
2. Working with the Planning Commission to institute more stringent development standards that require natural area preservation, solar-ready units, electric vehicle parking, etc.
3. Implementing the Tree Canopy & Green Infrastructure program for residential neighborhoods, approved by the Board in March 2020
4. Implementing the Digital Speed Display program, approved by the Board in 2019, as another way to alleviate speeding and cut-through within residential neighborhoods
5. Finalizing the design and timeline for the Michigan Avenue infrastructure improvement project, to be constructed/implemented in 2022
6. Implementing the second phase of the Platt Road Greenway
7. Expanding the Green Corridors initiative in northeast Pittsfield through grant funding
8. Obtaining public and elected input on the Waters/Oak Valley park to determine and implement next steps
9. Installing additional street lights along major arterial roads to enhance safety for all modes of traffic, based on DTE recommendations
10. Implement racial equity and other outcomes within the Department of Public Safety, to reflect resident priorities as identified through a survey conducted in November 2020
11. Support and ensure timely progress for improvements being undertaken at Montibeller Park
12. Continue programs, established in 2020, to support the most vulnerable members of our community particularly for those needing access to housing, (healthy) food, domestic violence and sexual assault services, and small business grants/resources.
13. Research and identify funding and grant sources to assist with ongoing ambiguities related to local government financing, as outlined in Supervisor's FY 2021 Budget Memo.

## **II. Micro/Department Response**

### **Assessing**

#### *March-June*

Beginning March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and continuing forward, the closing of the administrative offices did not interrupt the public service provided by the assessing office. The duties and responsibilities of the Assessing Officers were immediately addressed and revised. New daily work schedules and procedures were implemented. Laptops were provided, allowing us to continue working from home. Daily work logs were kept. Work schedules were created with staggering shifts to limit direct contact in the office. Meetings were held via zoom. Plexiglass was installed in our office space providing a level of safety for our employees. Temperatures were taken and all were required to complete a health assessment form prior to entering the building. Tracking systems have been put in place for the health assessments and work logs. Our department procedures were revised and expanded several times throughout the year to make certain that we were meeting CDC guidelines and providing the best possible service to our property owners. All assessing employees continued to meet their annual certification requirements by attending virtual classes.

### *July-December*

The website was updated to include specific details on how to contact the assessing office. Instructions and various options to timely file documents were provided. Documents were accepted via e-mail, lobby drop box, or night deposit. Extra care was taken to make sure to provide responses confirming information was received in an attempt to eliminate property owner anxiety. With these new procedures in place the office was able to continue providing customer service and ensuring our gold standard policy. Over 1,500 property transfers and principal residence forms were processed last year. All phone calls were re-directed to the Department Head, to limit having to transfer calls. Responses were provided in less than 24 hours. The fieldwork was allowed to continue following CDC guidelines. To protect ourselves and the taxpayer's detailed property information questionnaires for both real and personal property were created. The new questionnaires help to limit direct public contact but allowed us to obtain necessary property information. Approximately 3,000 real and personal properties have been visited since March.

Property appeals at the Tribunal continued uninterrupted. The State Tax Commission held electronic meetings. The Township continued through use of emails and electronic meetings to work with taxpayers and their representatives on approximately 40 tax tribunals and 8 State Tax Commission appeals.

New Board of Review procedures and reporting were mandated by the State. Executive orders required many procedural changes for assessing. The July Board of Review authority was expanded allowing those that missed the March Board to appeal to the July Board increasing the number of petitions. Expanded taxpayer appeal rights required the website and hearing public notice postings to be updated. The assessing office reached out directly to taxpayers that had missed the March Board due to the pandemic to inform them of the changes. The December Board member's schedules were impacted. The Board's scheduled hearing date needed to be changed, which required Board of Trustee approval. State requirements for meetings to be held electronically impacted the December Board of Review procedures. Public Notices needed to be revised and timely posted with electronic meeting information. Immediate changes were implemented to conduct the Board of Review for the safety of our property owners and our Board of Review. The December Board was held both in person, following CDC procedures and as an electronic hearing.

The annual taxpayer information letter to be sent accompanying our assessment notices for 2021 has been rewritten providing our property owners with the new specific Board of Review appeal procedures. The Assessing Office has purchased a zoom account to conduct these meetings. Additional zoom training has been required to ensure Board meetings will be held successfully. In preparation for this year, due to new legislation, the Township's 2021 Poverty Application and Guidelines, including the Board of Review calculation worksheets were completely revised to meet new State requirements.

### *2021*

Moving forward for 2021 the assessing office will continue to provide outstanding customer service, following our newly implemented policies and procedures, revising them as needed. This past year we have all learned to be more flexible and open to new ideas.

## **Building**

### *March – June*

The Department of Building Services, along with a great deal of assistance from our Information Technology Department, was able to equip staff members to allow them to continue providing services from home. Telephones were transferred to cellular phones, and lap top computers were able to access our scheduling program to allow for the intake of permits, inspection scheduling, plan reviews, and any support services that were needed.

During the Governor's first Executive Order construction was limited to essential projects only, which for the Township was healthcare related construction. Since most builders felt their project was essential to complete, we spent time visiting job sites and enforcing the shutdown order with the assistance of the Department of Public Safety.

Once the construction ban was lifted, the Office Manager and the Director were in the office daily and the inspectors received their logs remotely, completed their inspections and returned results to the office. With the administrative staff and the Housing Inspectors continuing to work remotely, the office staff was limited to three.

The Department also started to plan and construct the Covid19 facility upgrades for the Administration Building and the Parks and Recreation Building.

### *July - December*

Even though the Governor's Executive Order maintained restrictions on how we were allowed to operate, the construction industry was moving full speed ahead. Our operations continued with the addition of rotating one administrative staff member in the building each day and we also rotated Housing Inspectors in and out of the office. We were also allowed to resume rental housing inspections and we were successful for a few months until the number of positive cases increased in Washtenaw County. Covid19 improvements were completed that included the installation of counter protective glass at the Administration Building and the Parks and Recreation Building, increased fresh air circulation, the construction of new cubicles, a new office near the parking lot side entrance at Parks, cubicle glass extension panels for existing cubicles, and new interior doors, jambs, and locks for the Parks Building. Last year we experienced the worst and the best month for the number of inspections and total revenue for a month in my twenty-seven (27) years with the Township. Even with operating restrictions in place, the Department of Building Services completed close to ten thousand inspections and had revenues of just under two million dollars for the year.

### *2021*

At this point our operations will stay the same. Once the number of new cases goes down, we will be able to resume the rental inspections of occupied units and hopefully someday be able to have everyone back in the office.

### **Clerk**

#### *March – July*

The Clerk's Office was in the middle of preparing for the upcoming Presidential Primary election when news of COVID-19 hit. The duty to remain available to residents for election purposes was critical and required the Clerk's Office to remain fully operational for voting and registration. However, there were

concerns about protecting staff, the election workers, and residents while maintaining the services necessary to conduct an election. We took steps to acquire PPE for workers and polling locations with the assistance of Public Safety and local partners, while obtaining small grants provided by the county and state. There was a serious concerted effort made to recruit more election workers since voter turnout was expected to be higher than normal and because several election workers were concerned with the health implications of catching COVID. While all of these things were going on, the Clerk's Office had to navigate how to handle remote meetings, adjust to new notice requirements, and generally manage all other activities that were impacted by COVID.

#### *July – December*

In July, we joyfully welcomed our co-worker's baby into this world (remotely of course) while preparing and successfully managing the August and November election. Concerns still centered on COVID issues, such as staffing and PPE, but there were additional moving pieces that the Clerk's Office was required to maneuver. There were several legal issues happening in the election arena that were changing on a daily basis all of which made things more challenging. Increased voter participation, especially in the November election, made for record turnout. After the election, the Clerk's office was able to strengthen our collaboration efforts and maintain high service levels.

#### *2021*

The Clerk's Office has reduced staffing levels since the November election but continues to provide timely services to the community and other departments.

### **Community Development**

#### *March – June*

From the moment that we received notice that we would need to limit operations and develop a plan to minimize exposure for employees and residents due to the spread of COVID-19, the Community Development Team switched into a mode of emergency operations. We reviewed existing protocols and began prepping and preparing for what we thought was going to just take a few weeks.

Much of this time was a blur as we helped to research, plan and prepare documents, create protocols and procedures, provide signage as well as health and safety flyers, and communicate with the public through the website, social media, press releases and more. We worked closely with the Supervisor and the Director of Human Resources in those early days to filter and disseminate the onslaught of information. We had to immediately determine what our "essential services" were and quickly adapt to find a way to provide those services remotely. Information and direction seemed completely fluid from the Federal and State levels during this period. We would receive information and guidance and move in a direction only to receive updated information and guidance that required us to move in a different direction. Moved to a 100% remote work environment so that we were able to provide for a seamless transition.

The Community Development team quickly became one of the centralized points of contact and customer service through the General Inquiries, Community Development, and Supervisor's Office phone lines; email; our website; and social media. Calls from residents with a myriad of issues and concerns flooded our phone lines and many of the early days of this Great Pandemic were spent answering back to back to back phone calls, following up on issues and concerns, and taking the time to be a point of human contact, especially for our seniors, that seemed to be in desperate need. Calls often

came in well before our traditional operating hours and well into the evening hours and we did our best to respond to each one promptly to maintain our commitment to providing the Gold Standard in Public Service. The days were long, and sometimes grueling but we reinforced, early on, our commitment to following up on any calls, voicemails, and requests within 24 business hours.

To provide a continuous stream of real-time updates we utilized social media and immediately developed the website, [www.pittsfield-mi.gov/covid19](http://www.pittsfield-mi.gov/covid19) which included the following categories and information:

- COVID-19 Updates & Information
  - News feed including the latest updates available from a variety of Local, State, and Federal Resources
- Managing Your Health
  - The latest health guidance and resources from Local, State, and Federal Resources)
- Township Info & Resources
  - Community Letters from the Supervisor, Pittsfield's Pandemic Transition Protocol, Information from Departments, Press Releases, Virtual Public Meetings, and other Township updates specific to COVID19
- Business Resources
  - Links to support for small businesses in the form of grants, loans, toolkits, webinars, and more
- Vulnerable Community Resources
  - Resources and information for homeless and undocumented communities, eviction and diversion programs and other housing resources, Utility and Rubbish payment deferments, and more
- Volunteer/Donate
  - Resources through the Health Department of Washtenaw County and the Red Cross
- Executive Orders / Health Department Orders
  - Links to State executive orders, MDHHS Orders and Washtenaw County Health Department orders
- Other Local Area Info & Resources
  - Local food banks and services, resources for seniors, emergency home improvement programs, wastewater resources, Wi-Fi availability and more
- State Info & Resources
  - Official State communications such as open burning bans and emergency services letters from the Secretary of State, EGLE, and more
- Federal Info & Resources
  - Direct links to Federal and World organizations who provide information and updates regarding COVID-19

In addition to providing communications via Social Media and the Website, we established a stream of direct communication with residents, senior living facilities, apartment complexes and mobile home communities, and small businesses. We maintained regular contact to share resources and information and link people and businesses to services, grant funding, and information to assist them during this unprecedented time.

Planning for projects, events, and special initiatives became incredibly difficult. At the onset of the pandemic, in March, we were in the middle of planning for our Annual Passport 2 Pittsfield Open House Event and developing a plan to host a Sustainability Event in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day; working on numerous road, non-motorized, and street lighting projects and had just received news about the SEMCOG TAP grant funding award for PRGII; we had just completed a youth-led racial equity forum in coordination with Saline Area Schools; coordinating with our Parks & Recreation Department to support the upcoming Community Garden and Farmers Market season; working with the City of Ann Arbor and DTE Energy on the Solar proposal for the Wheeler center. We were also reviewing the content and format of our website to plan for a website redesign. All non-essential services were on pause and as a result it shifted priorities, timelines, and in many cases feasibility of continuing with our “normal” operations. Events were cancelled and many of these projects, and others, would eventually slow or come to a halt as a result of the stream of measures implemented to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We decided to completely pause the redesign of the website due to the current circumstances so that there was no interruption of services and so that we could maintain the familiar navigation of our website during the pandemic. The primary goal was to have effective and immediate response to resident issues and concerns.

Despite the difficulties, we persisted. We continued working on essential services projects, worked on planning and preparing for projects, and coordinated across departments on a variety of goals and objectives. Our team officially met weekly and connected daily via phone and Zoom as necessary to maintain efficiency and keep the lines of communication open. Video Conferencing via Zoom and Teams became a new “norm”. We responded to the Governors Executive orders regarding public meetings and transitioned all Boards and Commissions meetings from face to face to the virtual setting, coordinating with the IT Department and the Clerk’s Office to prepare and publish the agendas and packets with the necessary information for virtual public access. We also maintained communications with consultants, contractors, and local/regional partners virtually.

#### *July – December*

In July we began staggered shift operations in rotation in the Administration Building to provide for safe physical distancing and a reduced workforce. We were also diligent to communicate and prepare for the possibility of illness, which could drastically impact the operations of our small team. This preparation came in handy as we faced a few rounds of quarantine amongst our staff. We coordinated with the IT Department to improve the stability of our remote work.

Discussions through the Pandemic Transition Protocol Committee (PTPC) helped guide and direct our team to assist with some of the transitional administrative and engineering issues and needs that arose. We developed electronic self-health assessment forms that route uniquely to each department for record keeping purposes, revised flyers regarding COVID-19 safety and social distancing for our field staff in both English and Spanish for increase accessibility. In our office where, physical distancing could not be initially maintained, wood cubicles were built to separate desks and support the installation of Plexiglass barriers.

In many ways, this phase was spent playing “catch-up”. We helped to host the first virtual public event, engaging with residents along Platt Road regarding the Platt Road Greenway II non-motorized project; applied and received additional funding for the PRGII project through the Connecting Communities program; assisted in providing a relaxing aesthetic for the online Farmers Market pick-up; pushed forward on the Textile Road Rain Garden project; completed the Packard/Hawks Mid-block crossing



project; worked with the Department of Public Safety to roll out the 2020 Community Survey for Public Safety Services; re-started projects deemed non-essential including multiple requests for the creation of special assessment districts for neighborhood street lighting; applied for a Green Infrastructure Grant for State Street; researched and prepared a proposal for street lighting to improve safety in pedestrian crossings along major roads; and created [www.pittsfield-mi.gov/shoplocal](http://www.pittsfield-mi.gov/shoplocal) to promote the support of local small businesses.

Our Community Development team continued to provide for that stream of communication with the public through the myriad of channels established at the onset of the pandemic and continued to provide for the best possible customer service throughout multiple transitions between remote work, staggered shifts, and appointment only situations. We worked closely with departments throughout the organization to coordinate communications and efforts to improve efficiencies.

In the beginning of October, we were notified that our website service provider had decided to “sunset” or discontinue the version of the platform that we used to update our website. Unfortunately, this was never mentioned in any of our previous discussions, as recent as March, and the expiration of the platform was set firm for December 31<sup>st</sup>. Typically, redesign efforts of this magnitude can take anywhere from 8 months to a year. We were required to upgrade our existing website to the new platform and migrate all content in less than 3 months. This information set the tone for the end of the year and the beginning of 2021 as we scrambled to work through the update and migration process, learn how to navigate the new content management system, train our staff, update content, and fix transition errors.

## *2021*

In 2021 we are working to re-gain our footing to take a solid leap into the new priorities and projects that lie ahead. The year began by wrapping up the loose ends to 2020 projects but the mental break during the holidays afforded us the opportunity to review our goals and objectives and look forward to what we can accomplish in 2021.

Our top priority is, and will always be, to provide exceptional customer service. Additionally, we will continue to utilize and expand the tools and resources that we have established for public engagement and outreach. We will support the implementation of the updated Master Plan; continue to assist in the implementation of sustainability efforts such as the Tree Canopy Program, Green Infrastructure, Green Corridors, and Energy Management; resume pre-pandemic “normal” operations; and continue to actively search for funding and grant sources so that we are able to continue to tackle our goals and objectives.

Overall, we are looking forward to continuing to push away from a mode of emergency operations and preparedness to a mode that is hopefully more consistent and predictable and affords us the opportunity to re-ignite some of the activities, events, and special initiatives that we take great pride in. Our team is incredibly flexible, resilient, and has proven to be steady and unwavering in our commitment to exceptional public service.

## **Finance**

### *March – July*

The Finance Department seamlessly made plans to reduce the level of staff in the main office and obtain necessary equipment to work remotely. Plans were made quickly to ensure the timely payment of invoices and manage payroll remotely. Working closely with the Auditor, the Finance Department was able to

successfully complete the 2019 Audit. In addition to making these adjustments, the Finance Department was able to provide the Clerk's Office with much needed support during the election.

#### *July – December*

The Finance Department continued helping with the elections while still maintaining all services in the department. Staff continued to learn new ways to maximize technology and move away from the reliance on paperwork. As always, the Finance Department continues to evaluate processes so they can be accomplished remotely.

#### *2021*

The Finance Department staff continues to alternate days in office and working remotely. The Finance Department has continued to provide all services in spite of all the challenges that were faced during this pandemic.

### **Human Resources**

#### *March-May*

- Federal, State and Local health expertise research and LUG peer review of pandemic issues and practices for safely operating during pandemic lockdown for first responders and essential workers; and development of engineering & administrative controls and protocols for when administrative functions reopen.
- Develop COVID-19 educational training for employees return to work.
- Ensure all internal operations continue without interruption, including development of virtual/electronic practices and protocols.

#### *June-December*

- COVID-19 Pandemic Transition Protocol Committee established for weekly review of issues/concerns and development of recommendations for organization needs/requirements.
- COVID-19 safety training for employees.
- MIOSHA safe workplace practices and record keeping compliance.
- FFCRA compliance.
- Partner with County Public Health to implement contact tracing protocols.
- Ongoing review and implementation of virtual/electronic practices to continue enhancement of gold standard of customer services.

#### *2021*

- Legal review of ability to mandate and track COVID-19 vaccination of employees.
- Ongoing MIOSHA safe workplace practices and record keeping compliance.
- Ongoing review and implementation of virtual/electronic of practices to enhance gold standard of customer services.
- Implement Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goal setting and training for non-DPS staff.
- Implement Mental Health goal setting and resources for all Township staff.

## **Information Technology**

*March to June*

Equipping and training non-essential personnel with devices to work remotely.

Time Spent:

- Setting up and training users to be able to work remotely
- Learning to use virtual meeting tools like Zoom and training others, including Clerk's office, to use them to conduct virtual meetings for the Board, Planning Commission, Park Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and others
- Helping users with options to answering phones and voicemail remotely to meet the 24-hour customer response mandate
- Helping users deal with technology issues remotely. A common issue being related to internet at home.
- Challenges related to device shortages and delivery issues by suppliers

*July to December*

As it became obvious that the change in work locations – remotely and staggering – would be longer than a few months, provided additional equipment and support to make that happen.

Time Spent:

- Transitioning even more people to working from home
- Dealing with newer challenges with answering phones and messages because teams are working staggered shifts
- Dealing with quarantines and employee changes

*2021*

The new norm is in place but other challenges continue to emerge including cybersecurity. Also, focusing on getting a number of projects back on track that were put on the back burner last year due to responding to pandemic-related emergencies on a daily basis.

Time Spent:

- Making up for lost time
- Securing systems that had changed in 2020

## **Parks & Recreation**

*March-June*

Challenges:

- Took immediate steps to make public parks safer including taping off play structures, closing restrooms and drinking fountains; posted signage requiring social distancing
- Cancellations of all in-person recreational programming – resulting in refund/credits, partial credits/refunds; personal engagement with residents to talk through issues
- Established new protocols for more intense cleaning and disinfecting at public parks
- Unknowns of having programs outdoors; camps and leagues

- Restructuring park maintenance daily operations to allow for new safety protocols while accommodating for lack of seasonal staff
- Engaging instructors to begin implementing and offering virtual recreational programs
- Working with Seniors to make the change from in-person to virtual programs/activities, introducing Zoom and Go-to-Meeting formats, working to increasing their usage confidence level
- Engaging Seniors through virtual programs, and making those virtual programs sufficiently interactive
- Adapting the Senior Newsletter to a digital-only format focusing on Zoom activities and educational articles, including games, puzzles, websites, craft projects, and listing contact information for local agencies providing support and resources

#### Farmers Market:

- Farmers Markets were deemed essential in the State orders, so staff needed to redesign the FM to offer safe food access, establish protocols, create signage, then communicate the redesign to vendors and customers.
- Mask compliance was 99% for the in-person FM season.
- Attendance was sluggish in June but increased as resident confidence with safety protocols increased.
- Some farmers weren't too savvy with technology especially with the digital health assessments, and the online sale listings. Internet connectivity/strength was also an issue for farmers in rural areas.
- Balancing staff safety, between the in-person Market and the online Marketplace distribution, since the online Marketplace was new, and the in-person Market had many new pandemic protocols in place to maintain.
- Pandemic protocols were time consuming, and FM Staff needed to consistently strive for a high level of efficiency, in order to maintain our high standards for service and safety.
- Creating some sense of normalcy, cultivating a welcoming atmosphere in spite of the many changes, and continuing community engagement was imperative during the pandemic.

#### Opportunities:

- Creating new schedules for mowing, park maintenance, and strict cleaning protocols that allowed the staff members to operate with additional efficiency and safety.
- With the public's mental health and well-being in the forefront of our minds, we were able to dedicate our efforts to providing clean and safe park environments for the enjoyment of all of our residents.
- Additional garden beds installed at the Community Garden helped provide opportunities for more residents to enjoy the outdoors, and feel a part of the community.
- Taking advantage of pandemic protocols, educational programs, and enrichment opportunities including Webinars/Zoom with other Camp Directors around the State of Michigan, Parks & Recreation Professionals and Senior Center Professionals
- Created new Virtual Programming for all age levels including: art, sports, STEM programs, and fitness classes

- Developed a schedule on Zoom to facilitate interaction and enrichment for Senior members
- Worked with Washtenaw County Senior Café Program to reformat lunch program for grab-and-go meal distribution, including additional meals for Seniors in need
- Assisted with FM in-person and online sales distribution on Thursdays
- Developed a system for registration of Pavilion/Field Rentals online rather than in-person
- Engaged with Pittsfield residents age 55+ by calling and sharing resources, answering questions, and performing overall wellness checks
- Created bi-monthly mass emails with inspiration, additional information, and promoting our zoom programs
- Developed a pen pal program with a local Girl Scout Troop, to encourage intergenerational engagement with Seniors
- Offered Medicare/Medicaid assistance via Zoom or over the phone, an invaluable resource for seniors who lack internet access or technical proficiency with computers, or needed one-on-one support

#### Farmers Market:

- Expansion of local food and safe local food accessibility by offering an online sale with curbside pick-up at the end of May, and continuing for 29 weeks. Staff participated in software training, then worked to develop the FM online Marketplace. Once the online site was created, staff quickly worked to support our farmers and vendors by assisting with all aspects of product listings.
- Safety protocol put in place included a mobile sneeze guard created by the Building Dept., an abundance of hand sanitizer available, and a rented hand washing station, which provided a safer experience for guests and employees. Colorful, upbeat signage was implemented to keep customers informed about current Market policies for health and safety.
- FM Staff established vendor display protocols to ensure safety of guests, including physical distancing, a table placed in front of product to create space, and encouraging customers to let vendors serve them.
- Diversified local product offerings in the online sale by adding over 12 new farmers and vendors which allowed us to provide increased local food access to the community including meat, eggs, yogurt, cheese, personal care items, and a variety of prepared food.
- Outdoor cooking demos were replaced with virtual cooking demos, to support cooking at home with local produce, further supporting regional agriculture, and connecting our community with the health benefits of eating seasonally.
- Developed youth craft take home kits for both the in-person and online Markets, to provide a safe replacement for our popular youth activities.
- Created a cheerful environment while supporting local musicians, contracting them to safely play background music at a distance outdoors, and also created a display of photo banners to provide an uplifting aesthetic as residents entered the Township campus.
- Expanded digital outreach as e-newsletter distribution increased from 300 persons to 595.

## *July-December*

### Challenges:

- Staff was heavily focused on maintaining our green spaces and park cleanliness for public enjoyment, especially in light of the increase in interest in outdoor activities and trail use. However, it was a challenge to coordinate our usual maintenance between our 5 full time staff members and 2 park rangers, while allocating equipment/vehicles to prevent cross contamination between users.
- Smaller class size requirement for outdoor programs; Tennis: 8 to 5, Instructional Soccer: 20 to 12, Quidditch: 20 to 12, Soccer leagues: 400 to 200 and T-Ball/Machine Pitch teams: 14 to 9 on a team.
- Lower revenue resulting from smaller class sizes, and canceled indoor programs.
- Changing the format of soccer leagues, no games to instructional only based on volunteers and staff
- Setting Covid-19 guidelines for all outdoor programs and ensuring compliance
- Cancelling re-scheduled trips.
- Uncertainty of Community Center re-opening due to State guidelines.
- Cancellation of Annual Health Fair.

### Farmers Market:

- Working with reduced staff availability from quarantining due to exposure or illness, without compromising safety, and maintaining our level of service to residents and vendors.

### Opportunities:

- Our challenges were turned into opportunities by giving our Parks Full-time Staff and Park Rangers additional responsibilities. This allowed the team to be more accountable for their work, and to work toward a common goal of making our parks as enjoyable and as safe as possible for our residents.
- Fine-tuned schedules for mowing, bathroom cleaning (increased to twice daily)/opening/closing, and park safety inspections to accommodate for the lack of additional seasonal staff.
- Our online system for pavilion/field rentals doubled the number of rentals in September-December
- Expanded outdoor programming and activities in the parks for all ages including:  
Interactive Scavenger hunt around the parks and greenway; Interactive outdoor Clue game; Creatures of the Night educational program and trail walk in partnership with Leslie Science &  
Nature Center; Art Programs: Color This and Crafty Crew for seniors; Lunch under the pavilion for Seniors, acupuncture under the pavilion. Adult Fitness Classes (cardio drumming, Zumba, Tai Chi, Funfit with Ann, yoga); Trail walk fun facts at Lillie Park
- Collaborated with Saline Rec Center, Ypsilanti Twp. Parks & Rec, Saline Area Senior Center to offer zoom programs together, providing participants with a wider variety of engagement options.
- Even though the Senior Health Fair was cancelled, two clinics were offered for flu shot distribution.

- Applied for the McCalla Grant to update the fitness room in the Community Center for our members.
- Received \$500 from AAA for promoting the census.
- Became a distribution site for Washtenaw Free Mask Program
- Received \$2000 grant from Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation in support of senior centers in Washtenaw County to work together to support re-opening with safety protocols

#### Farmers Market:

- Coordinated with a resident, to establish a collection program at the FM for donated surplus produce from community gardeners and FM vendors, that was then distributed to Food Gatherers, supporting food access to those in need.
- With the abundance of seasonal produce, and cooperative weather, we were able to expand food access by adding nine additional Pop-up Farmers Markets in October and November.
- With the expansion of food access, through additional markets, and additional federal food assistance funding, food assistance sales increased 66% over last year.

## 2021

#### Challenges:

- Winter/Spring: orchestrating indoor projects while maintaining physical distancing.
- Spring/Summer: maintaining high standards for parks with potentially only our full-time staff, considering recreation programs and rentals will most likely increase from last year.
- Ensuring continued mask and distancing compliance with all program participants.
- Preparing for the re-opening of the Community Center when appropriate and safe.
- Establishing and maintaining safety and cleaning/sanitizing protocol at the Community Center with a limited staff.
- Providing in-person and virtual programs for all interest and abilities that are engaging and enriching to our community members.

#### Farmers Market:

- Ensuring continued adherence of mask wearing and physical distancing at the summer in-person Marketplace while guests experience pandemic fatigue. Establishing protocol for consistency, for staff and vendors.
- Staffing both the in-person Market and online sale distribution beginning in June.
- Continuing to ensure safe, no/low contact food access for the community.
- Consistently remaining up to date with the best practices and safety protocols for markets in Michigan, as rules and information change with new developments regarding the pandemic, vaccines, and public health.

#### Opportunities:

- Continue our efforts to improve our green spaces, park cleanliness, and safety.
- Improve overall park aesthetics to benefit the residents' daily experience.
- Expand garden expertise gained by Parks Superintendent enrolled in Master Gardener Program starting in March, and Parks Staff enrolled in Master Rain Gardener Program

that began in January, will enable us to expand our level of care, and beautification of our gardens.

- Incorporate the Asset Management program, which aids in analyzing workflow productivity, into everyday duties, allowing for a more streamlined/productive work day.
- Collaborate with area Recreation/Senior Centers for programming and cost share; eSports.
- Expand nature-based programming in our parks; Nature in the afternoons, Nature Hikes, Pre-School Hikes, trail hike engagement, I SPY in the trails, and a stewardship program.
- Re-brand the Community Center to attract the newly retired population.
- Changing the culture of the Community Center by striking a more equitable balance between free and fee-based activities, to help support and promote a financially-sustainable base for offering quality activities and programs that will serve more diverse needs and continue to enrich our participating seniors.
- Coordinate the Community Center improvements with funding from the McCalla Grant.
- Offer classes we were unable to offer before due to prior set schedule of programs and exercise room flooring.

#### Farmers Market:

- Expansion of local food access to year-round, approximately 48 weeks, as the online Marketplace resumed January 16.
- Creating safe community engagement opportunities at the in-person Market, when it can be done safely.
- Evaluating task efficiency, and streamlining tasks without interfering with the overall customer experience.
- Purchasing single hand washing stations, instead of renting, to make the best use of budgeted funds.
- Continuing to expand opportunities for educating market patrons about ways to enjoy seasonal Michigan produce and foods, with engaging virtual and in-person activities, when they can be done safely.
- Connecting with new shoppers and expanding our customer base, with a focus on ensuring that patrons are aware on ongoing no-contact pick up, as well as the opportunities to use food assistance at the Market.
- Expanding our Market offerings with additional vendors – providing economic opportunity for new farmers and vendors to sell with us in-person and online, as well as greater selection of goods for customers.

### **Public Safety**

As a mandated emergency services provider/agency that must continue to provide police and fire emergency response services twenty-four hours a day, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) implemented a protocol that emphasizes a phased approach and response to the pandemic by scheduling and assigning public safety personnel based on the pandemic status, executive orders, and best practices related to safety and protection for all public safety employees, visitors, and the community/public. The phases specify requirements regarding amended work hours, employee separation, handling calls for service by phone, enhanced screening protocols, limitations to public lobby access, and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements.



### *March – June*

The coronavirus impacted public safety operations in several ways including methods for how the DPS interacts with the public, fellow coworkers, and responses to calls for service. Shift schedules, deployment locations, report taking processes, and required PPE are among some of the areas that were examined and adjusted to maintain safety and effective service delivery. PPE and sanitizing products have been purchased, stockpiled and continuously replenished as needed. Officers were separated and began working out of the three stations, to mirror fire operations, in order to limit potential exposures. Work shifts for police personnel were changed from 10 hours to 12 hours in order to achieve the greatest coverage and accommodate the splitting of shifts. Lockable storage boxes/foot lockers were purchased for officers to solely work from their assigned stations. Many calls were handled by telephone to avoid exposure. The main lobby at station 1 was closed and later reopened in limited capacity with an intercom installed to speak with and screen visitors prior to access. All efforts were made to maintain public safety's core responsibility of delivering the gold standard of service to the public.

Due to the state of emergency declared by the federal government, a FEMA grant request was submitted for reimbursement of COVID response costs, including reimbursement of expenses from police/fire overtime, the purchase of PPE, and disinfecting supplies and services. FEMA has since awarded the grant to the Township in the amount of \$95,730.02 .

### *July – December*

Following the governor's orders, and later those of the MDHHS, a phased-in transition and operational plan was implemented utilizing CDC and public health best practices for fire and police responses, including administrative and support functions. The phases determined DPS protocols and service delivery. This included daily employee screenings, PPE, and shift assignments which allowed for the separation of staff. Specific to the police department, officers assigned to station 1 remained as contact cars for priority calls, station 2 acted as high visibility patrols on roads and in neighborhoods, and officers assigned to station 3 handled reports by telephone. Furthermore, shift briefings were eliminated, Zoom meetings replaced in-person meetings, and non-essential services were halted.

By the end of the year, numerous personnel were placed into quarantine due to contact exposure or positive COVID test results, however, there was no significant impact on service delivery to the public. Due to shift structure, separation of personnel, and adherence to safety protocols, public safety personnel have been able to continue to deliver the gold standard of service to the community. Although fire and police shifts stabilized for the most part, some backfill overtime occurred due to the aforementioned quarantine situations.

Fortunately, additional grant opportunities were provided by the State of Michigan for first responder hazard pay reimbursement and payroll expenses, as well as a Burne/JAG grant which was offered for COVID-related costs. Expenses related to remote workstations for administrative/support staff, cell phones for officers conducting telephone reporting, COVID protection equipment and supplies for the three DPS stations, disinfecting services, backfill overtime, etc., were submitted, and the Township received approval for these grants for an anticipated amount of \$368,470.00.

In December, COVID vaccinations began for medical first responders, therefore, Fire Department personnel began receiving vaccinations. All COVID response protocols continue with necessary PPE utilized for all calls for service.

2021

The year started with all COVID response protocols continuing to be followed per the public safety operations guidelines and as ordered by the MDHHS. Police personnel began receiving vaccinations in mid-January, with the process continuing into the month of February when second doses will be administered. At this point, all public safety operations have continued unimpeded with all COVID protocols continuing to be followed and enforced. Updates to guidelines and operational protocols will be implemented when received from the CDC and MDHHS.

### **Treasurer**

#### *March – July*

As the initial news of Covid-19 hit, the Treasurer's office was completing the Tax Settlement for the year with Washtenaw County. We faced various hurdles of communication and access to the County office, since the County completely shut down. The department was able to complete and deliver the Tax Settlement on time. We received a wave of emails and phone calls from residents unable to contact the County regarding their taxes. We utilized both our BS&A data systems and the web to answer the residents' questions and reduce their anxiety.

Initially during the Pandemic, the Building Department was receiving permit payments through the drop box, however, it was causing issues with processing and scheduling. We worked with the Building Department to set-up online payments for permits. This has provided an additional no contact payment option to the contractors working on projects in our community.

As with all departments it was important that we have PPE and other cleaning supplies on hand and other safety measures for our staff. We participated in the Pittsfield Township Pandemic Committee to ensure that we were working with other departments to be consistent with the changing information.

#### *July – December*

In order to be available to our residents and continue to deliver a high level of customer service, while also maintaining staff safety, we implemented a hybrid schedule. This hybrid schedule consists of two teams alternating between in-office and remote work. This schedule reduces the chance of a complete office shutdown in the case of a Covid-19 exposure.

We continued to collect and process all of our daily transactions of Tax Payments, Utility bills, Building and other department transactions in a timely manner. We collected delinquent taxes and processed Tribunals (MTT), State Tax Commission (STC), and Board of Review (BOR) adjustments, making an extra effort to get the December BOR refunds out before the holiday closure due to the delay in the Board of Review meeting schedule.

Purchasing for the Township (administered through the Treasurer's office) has seen an increase in purchases of technology and accessories for remote offices. General purchasing has been reduced, however, there has been an increase in various issues with delivery delays, delivery of wrong items, deliveries to wrong locations, and out-of-stock issues since the pandemic started.

The Treasurer's office has been working with the IT department to provide our staff with computers, printers, and support to work more efficiently. We have also worked with the finance department to provide more electronic documentation.

#### *2021*

We began the year short staffed with a member out due to illness. Thankfully, having the hybrid and remote work schedule, we were able to maintain the functions of the office and continue processing the taxes and utility bills, and various transactions in a timely manner. Throughout this pandemic, with all of the challenges and changes to the normal daily operations, our team remains dedicated to providing a high level of customer service.

The Tax Season will come to an end as of February 16<sup>th</sup> and taxes will be turned over to the County on March 1<sup>st</sup>, as we prepare for Settlement. The County is working on very limited hours due to Covid-19, and we are expecting a high call volume as we continue to hear from residents that the County is difficult to reach.

At this time, we will continue to offer appointment only office visits to the residents and work with a hybrid schedule until there is more success against the virus and continue to follow the science to keep our residents and staff safe.

#### **Utilities & Municipal Services**

The COVID-19 related challenges have been a great opportunity for us to look at how we operate, not only as a department, but with others inside and outside of organization as well, ensuring efficiency of the operations we perform on a daily basis. It is clear that we rely greatly on the ability to have face to face interaction with customers and peers and to physically touch our work. COVID has challenged us to work smarter, not harder and continue to do so. Identified below are some departmental operations that have been modified to ensure customer service and work product is not jeopardized:

- Stronger coordination and follow-up amongst staff to ensure timely responses and completion of work, eliminating customer call back/additional phone calls.
- Developing new platform for ease of document filing and retrieval to enable quicker response time to residents and developers.
  - Provides a more consistent way of saving and retrieving data, cutting down on time it takes to locate files.
- Looking at work flows to ensure redundancy is only when needed.
- Cross training of staff
  - With staggered work shifts it is more important now than ever that all have a clear understating of departmental operations to ensure customers are not transferred to multiple people. Staff are able to obtain the answer or know whom the customer needs to be transferred to allowing for quick and satisfying experience.

#### *March-June 2020*

- Challenges
  - Immediate closure of office and only essential employees able to report to work.

- Current platform for operations found to be challenging for a work from home environment.
- Private industry seemed to be able to adapt quicker to a work from home concept resulting in a continued in-flow of project applications and reviews to be performed. At times seeming to be greater than normal.
- With stay at home orders, greater demand placed on Utility infrastructure requiring staff to monitor infrastructure more closely to ensure uninterrupted service.
- No entry into homes, deeming service work as emergency only
- Opportunities
  - Staff acknowledged work from home orders and were able to quickly identify areas of difficulty with working from home and began the process to revise the way work has been performed in the past to better adapt to current situations.
    - Phones – Use of technology, mobile phones and forwarding lines to ensure calls answered through-out normal business hours to provide uninterrupted customer service to our residents.
    - Applications – Identified multiple ways to accept documents and plan sets other than in-person drop off that are more sustainable and efficient.
    - Project Files – brought to light the need to have the ability, regardless of the information, plans, agreements, reviews, the need to have a full electronic platform that can be accessed and retrieved from anywhere.
  - Explore options and begin to institute new ways to improve inter- and cross-departmental communication and coordination.
  - Planning Commission & ZBA meetings have continued uninterrupted

#### *July-December 2020*

- Challenges
  - Brought to attention how all departments rely on one another in one way or another to perform daily tasks. With limited office hours and staff, process and procedures need to be reviewed to ensure productivity is not reduced.
  - Difficulty in training of new staff when we have relied so heavily on an in-person platform.
- Opportunities
  - Use of ZOOM, Teams and other virtual meeting platforms to bring people together and collaborate in a way that has never been done before. This also provided for a means of communication that has not been utilized before to ensure timely project turn-around.
  - Planning Commission & ZBA meetings have continued uninterrupted
  - Code Enforcement activities have not suffered due, in large part, to the strong partnership with township residents and having established good inter-personal communication channels with them over the years. This has also allowed us to further solidify those partnerships and develop new ones.
  - Attention brought to the importance of not only inter-departmental operations and changes needed to operate in an electronic society, but the opportunity for government operations as a whole to review joint operational processes to ensure the Gold Standard of customer service is not jeopardized.

2021

- Challenges
  - Due to continued staggering of staffing and resources, setting up operations in an electronic platform to access information in a quick and simplistic manner is susceptible to technology-related glitches, sometimes due to the magnitude of information.
- Opportunities
  - This is an opportunity for governmental organizations to re-think the way business has been done in the past to ensure we are providing the most efficient and productive way to service our customers. We are continuing to monitor the way we operate and looking for ways we can improve. This will result in quicker processing times for permits and applications, quicker response time for customer inquiries on the phone, and a more productive work environment.



## Pittsfield Charter Township

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### Office of the Supervisor

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#### *Pittsfield's Community-Centric Approach*

By embracing diversity – economic, demographic, land use, and otherwise – Pittsfield Township has, since 2010, traded away dichotomies in favor of a blended approach. Rather than choosing between development or green space preservation, we have deployed such tools as carbon emission studies to do both, i.e., provide neighborhood destinations that preserve natural features and are accessible via multiple modes of transportation. Rather than choose between road improvements or traffic congestion, we have implemented road diets and retrofits that allow safer road sharing by multiple modes. Rather than choose between apartments or single-family houses, we have permitted multi-generational housing developments that support apartments, condominiums, and single-family housing. Rather than choose between sprawl or no development we have provided for revitalization and redevelopment of large swaths of vacant parking lots through infill development.

This complex approach rejects black and white dichotomies; it is neither pro-development nor pro-preservation. It is wholly and completely pro-community. The Township Master Plan update, going on currently, intends to articulate this mission within the context of sustainability and equity.

To that end, the Board of Trustees is in the process of approving the revised Open Space Preservation Development Option that will allow for greater preservation of open/green spaces and natural features while, simultaneously, minimizing sprawl. This month they will also consider making recommendations for constructing gas-free buildings with solar-ready units and parking for electric and autonomous vehicles. The Planning Commission will review expanding two of the six existing neighborhood, mixed use destinations along Carpenter and State roads that will allow us to further manifest our decade-old vision of providing for walkable and transit-oriented areas close to diverse residential developments. This is so folks can meet their daily needs, ranging from groceries and health care to restaurants and retail, locally. Expanding existing neighborhood destinations in the parts of our community least likely to disturb natural features while also expanding the affordable and diverse housing stock and promoting multi-modal inter-connections between employment, housing, recreational and daily amenities helps us meet our sustainability and equity mandate.

On that note, this year the Pittsfield Farmers Market remains available, especially for food-insecure and vulnerable members of our community, online. You can visit <http://www.pittsfield-mi.gov/farmersmarket> to shop with such vendors as Planted Detroit, Kapnick Orchards, Nemeth Greenhouse and Farms, Earthen Jar, Fluffy Bottom Farms, Cakes by Penny, and Cheeky Spices. Contactless pick up is provided for at the Township Campus (6201 W. Michigan Ave.).

As the Great Pandemic continues to wreak havoc, our goal remains to use this moment in history to strengthen our resolve to address socio-economic and racial inequities. With your partnership, we are using this disruption to reimagine resource allocations to improve equity and sustainability. Let's keep our focus on the promise of that brighter future ahead as we face the challenges of today. Remember to be kind and patient with yourselves and each other - we are all in this together!!

*Mandy Grewal, Ph.D.*  
*Supervisor*

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January 31, 2021

Director Matt Harshberger  
6227 W. Michigan Ave  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

Dear Director Harshberger,

I am writing this letter to recognize and commend officers from your department. On 1-30-21 at approximately 11:30pm one of the neighbors was alerted by their cameras that someone was trying to break into their vehicles in the driveway on Dayton Dr. near Packard.

The suspects fled and the following officers responded to the area. They were Josh Howard, Lamar Gassaway, Sam Bradley, Matt Ritzler and Adam Hess. During the search of the area and follow up by these officers, they were able to locate, arrest suspects and recover stolen items from several vehicles in the neighborhood.

You and Pittsfield Township should be very proud of the dedication and professionalism of these officers and the way they represented your department. On behalf of one of the victim's Christy Taylor McCarley, myself and the entire neighborhood please take this opportunity to thank all of the officers involved.

Sincerely,

George Ralph  
Christy Taylor McCarley

cc. Mandy Grewal, Supervisor