

Village of Paw Paw

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“Notes From Larry”

FROM: Larry Nielsen, Village Manager

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Talking Taxes: Taxpayers and residents always want to know if their tax dollars are put to good use. You have every right to expect that your local government; whether it is a Village, City, Township or County, is spending your tax dollars wisely and efficiently. Local officials try very hard to provide the best services at the best cost because they know taxpayers and residents expect this. Paw Paw Village officials are no different.

While every local unit of government is different, a look at the charter millage rates and extra voted millage rates of all 11 City and Villages in Van Buren County shows tax rates in the Village of Paw Paw are not the highest – nor the lowest. Of the 11 Cities and Villages in Van Buren County, the Village of Paw Paw ranks 7th lowest with a combined 15.5881 mils levied (11.3252 for operations and 4.5299 for streets and roads). Those with a higher local tax load than Paw Paw are Bangor City, Bloomingdale Village, Hartford City, South Haven City, Decatur Village (counting their DDA millage) and Gobles City. Those with a lower tax levy are Lawrence Village, Lawton Village, Mattawan Village and Breedsville Village. This is based on the 11-6-08 publication of the Van Buren County Property Tax Report.

When looking at any community’s property taxes it is important to look at the levels of services a community offers. For example, in the Village of Paw Paw your taxes support 17 different things, all of which provide services. Paw Paw Village has just two of these 17 taxes - the operating millage and the road millage. In fact, of every dollar a Village tax payer pays, just under 34 cents goes to the Village. The other 66 cents goes to the other 15 parties. So, just who gets your tax dollars? The other 15 are the Paw Paw Fire District millage, the Paw Paw Schools Debt Retirement millage, the Paw Paw Schools Operating millage, the State Education Tax, the VB Intermediate Vocational Education millage, the VB Intermediate Special Education millage, the VB Intermediate Operating millage, the Paw Paw District Library millage, the Paw Paw Township Operating millage, the VB County Public Safety millage, the VB County Ambulance millages (2), the VB Public Transit millage, the VB County Road Commission millage, and VB County Operating millage.

With most of these millages, you got what you wanted. ‘You,’ being a majority of voters. Most every one of the 17 different taxes are on by residents.

The report shows a difference between tax levels in townships and cities and villages. Townships typically have a lower operating millage than cities and villages. That is because of the difference between the level of services needed or wanted by residents. Most townships

don't pay for their own police department preferring to let the County public safety tax provide their law enforcement via the County Sheriff's Department. Most City and Village residents have wanted their own dedicated police department. Another difference is the levels of support provided in town maintenance and in operating and maintain local parks and recreation. Townships usually don't have downtowns to maintain while cities and villages usually do. Most townships pay little for parks and recreation. In Paw Paw Village, parks like Tyler Field, Maple Island, and the lake front parks require much more care and, therefore, more funding. These three examples account for the big difference between tax levies between townships, cities and villages.

Snow, Snow and More Snow! I hope those who ski and have snowmobiles are happy. You certainly have plenty of snow to enjoy. On the other hand, Village crews have been battling the snow. We have had a lot more snow than usual. Many say we'll surpass the 1978 snow levels. Regardless, our crews are busy plowing and hauling. If we plow at night, we haul during the day. If we plow during the day, we haul at night. It's a task to keep up.

Our sidewalk plow (bombardier) recently tipped over while trying to navigate a ridge of snow left by a resident who plowed or had the driveway plowed and left a big ridge across the sidewalk. Luckily, the driver was not hurt and the plow was not damaged. Residents can help by knocking down these ridges after taking care of their driveway.

With so much snow, we have to push it further back off the road way which means pushing it further into the right-of-way. This makes room so we have a place to push the new snow fall. Your cooperation with plowing efforts and parking regulations is greatly appreciated.

Until Next time, I'm Larry Nielsen.