



From Your Associate Director

Annual Town Meeting
scheduled for April 14, 2009

MARCH IS AN EXCITING time of year. Spring is in the air and the annual town meeting is right around the corner. Now is the time to plan for this annual event. If you are looking for information on the powers of the electors at this annual town meeting, I encourage you to review the information included in the 2007 Laws and Duties Handbook, as well as the article in the February *Township Perspective*. If you have specific questions, you can contact the TOI office at 866.897.4688 or e-mail me your questions at jerry@toi.org.

Many townships hold their annual town meeting and their regularly scheduled township meeting on the same evening to eliminate a second meeting and to further interest of the practices of the township board. This is legal. However, remember the importance of adjourning the annual town meeting prior to the initial start of the regularly scheduled April board meeting. Additionally, as financial pressures continue on streamlining government as well as the cost of having meetings, many townships may take to this coordinated effort of holding both meetings annually on the second Tuesday in April.

Is it time for some spring cleaning with the Township Files? Is there really a file 13?

As springtime comes, you may be thinking of completing some office file cleaning that is overdue. However, what do you do with old township records?

What are the proper steps to dispose of township records?

What can be legally destroyed?

What is mandated to be kept?

Thinking of performing some spring housecleaning of township records? Running out of room in the canceled checks box? You may want to reconsider the thought of filling the dumpster out back of the office. However, remember that tampering with public records, or destroying any kind of government papers

without documentation from the state is a class 4 felony.

Only about one-third of all local government units (about 6,800) are actively involved in the state's local records retention program. And our townships are among the poorest performers. The process is simple, easy and convenient.

The Local Records Act became law in 1861, and affects not only townships, but also the courts, counties, municipalities and schools. Record retention is a sensitive issue with regard to preserving historic events in township government. Yes, it is the responsibility of the township clerk as the designated chief record keeper. It is the responsibility of the township board to be aware of what is mandatory to be kept on file and what is considered to be optional. The Secretary of State's office can provide this information to you.

How do you know if records can be purged?

The local records unit has seven staff members statewide and will visit your township to inventory the records, free of charge by appointment, then the township receives a retention schedule as to what can be purged. Utilizing the local records disposal certificate (available on line at www.sos.state.il.us), the township notifies the local records division of what they are intending to dispose of. A common rule of thumb is that you do not throw away anything until you get a receipt from the Secretary of State's office. Township officials will benefit by asking for approval prior to purging any information.

Proper monitoring or the establishment of a record retention program ensures adequate historical record-keeping of township practices and procedures. It also provides more space for the filing needs of the township.

For specific information and to obtain forms you can contact the Secretary of State's office at 217.782.7075.

Common themes include the following:

- Board minutes are permanent—never to be destroyed

- Cancelled checks may be destroyed after seven (7) years
- The state must be contacted prior to documents being destroyed
- There are no preferred methods of document destruction
- The state recommends that townships be sensitive to information regarding general assistance and other confidential matters

The state of Illinois (state archives) may ask a township to exchange documents for microfilm copies or request loan of the documents for microfilming, to be placed in one of the Illinois Regional Archival Depositories located at Illinois college campuses. According to staff, this is primarily for voting records and road work taxation lists for (1860-1900). Most importantly, examine your township's needs and develop a record retention strategic plan for your township. Contact the Secretary of State's office and utilize their efficient services.

It is recommended that you adopt the philosophy of asking prior to destroying. If you are unsure about what can be destroyed—call the Illinois Secretary of State's Index Department at 217.782.7075.

Question of the Month

QUESTION: Does the township budget and appropriation ordinance have to be adopted at the public hearing?

ANSWER: No. The budget **MAY** be adopted at the public hearing or a board meeting thereafter as long as it is adopted by the end of the first quarter of the fiscal year. However, the road district budget **MUST** be approved at the hearing.

“The township board at the public hearing may adopt all or part of the tentative budget and appropriation ordinance, as the board deems necessary.” [60 ILCS 1/80-60]

TOPICS DAY – April 21

Don't forget to register for the 27th annual Topics Day scheduled for Tuesday, April 21. Registration information is in this issue and can be downloaded at www.toi.org. It is important to carry the message of township officials across the state. As we all continue to struggle with the economic hardships, it is township government that many will call upon for help. Together we must promote the importance of the government closest to the people—Township Government!

Sign up for the Northwest Illinois Highway Commissioners Association Spring Seminar May 22

The Northwest Illinois Highway Commissioners Association will hold its annual Spring Seminar Friday, May 22. The conference will be held at Westwood Sports Complex, 1900 Westwood Dr., Sterling, 61081.

There is a \$50 registration fee that includes yearly dues. Guests are more than welcome for an additional \$20. This year's meeting should be as educational as well as enjoyable as those in the past. The event will begin with registration at 7 a.m. and go throughout the day with informational guest speakers, as well as time to visit the wide array of product supplies. Questions may be addressed to Jeff Winders at (815) 777-3577. Please send your RSVP to NWIHCA, 13205 E. Blair Hill Rd., Stockton, IL 61085.

Person(s) attending _____

Township _____

County _____

Address _____

Attending _____ Total \$ _____