



# WALKER City News

## WINTER 2003

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[www.ci.walker.mi.us](http://www.ci.walker.mi.us)

### FOOD BASKETS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

*Dear Friends:*

We are approaching the time of year when many in our society think in terms of helping the less fortunate. In the community of Walker, the Walker Police Department has a tradition of assisting individuals and families experiencing special needs with food baskets for the holidays. In order to avoid duplication and to be most effective, we are trying to coordinate between the Police Department, our area churches, the Army Reserve Center, and Second Harvest Gleaners in obtaining and distributing the food. As wonderful as this effort has been to date we are still coming up short, therefore, we are asking for your help with this effort.

Specifically we are asking you to consider helping to "adopt" one of our sixty (60) families by putting (at least) one non-perishable food item in our donation barrels in the Police Department or City Hall lobbies (and at various businesses throughout the City). We will then prepare baskets that will be delivered to the families by December 21st.

If you would prefer to contribute financially instead, we will put together a basket in your name. Please send donations made payable to either "Westwood Community Church" or the "City of Walker Community Food Drive" in care of the Walker Police Department at 4343 Remembrance Road, Walker MI 49544.

Your help in making this effort a success is deeply appreciated by all involved. On behalf of the Walker Police Department, I wish to say a special thank you. All questions and information regarding this effort can be directed to Officer Dan Martinek at 791-6810 (Monday thru Friday).

Sincerely,

*Catherine M. Garcia-Lindstrom*

Chief of Police — Walker Police Department

### FROM THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Changes in the Homestead Exemption Affidavit: A bill has been passed at the state level changing the name of the Homestead Exemption Affidavit to the Principal Residence Affidavit. By changing the name of this form, the legislatures hope to clear up the confusion in distinguishing between the Homestead Exemption Affidavit (the form filed with your local assessor, claiming that you own and occupy your home – relieving you of 18 mils of property tax) and the Homestead Property Tax Credit Claim (that a lot of folks file with their Michigan income tax form every year). Also in the passing of this new bill comes a date change as well. In the past, to qualify for the Principal Residence (Homestead) exemption you had to own and occupy your house

[...continued on page seven](#)

### COST OF DRIVING VIOLATIONS INCREASING

It certainly pays to be a responsible driver, not only for your safety and the safety of other motorists on the roadway, but the cost associated with traffic violations is getting quite expensive. This fall the Michigan Secretary of State (SOS) has already instituted several fee changes that are associated with driving related matters.

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## Mayoral Message:

Dear Citizens of Walker,

Best wishes from your City Commission. We hope that you had a pleasant fall and wish you the best as we enter the Holiday Season. There are a number of items we wish to bring to your attention.

Auditors Report. In late October we received the Auditors Report from our auditors, Plante & Moran. We are pleased to report that for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003, we ended approximately \$70,000 ahead of our budget. Our year ending fund balance is approximately 13 percent of annual expenditures. If we are

able to meet our current budget projections for the current year (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004) we should show a small increase in the fund balance. This is very difficult to do in the current climate of reduced income tax revenues and state revenue sharing. We appreciate the efforts of our staff to reduce spending to insure that our fiscal position remains solid.

Visit From The Governor. On October 28, 2003 Governor Granholm visited Walker to attend a roundtable discussion on the manufacturing sector of our state economy. Congressman Hoekstra, Representatives Koetje and Kooiman, as well as representatives from organized labor and many West Michigan manufacturers attended this meeting at Irwin Seating.

The discussion focused on the problems resulting from the loss of manufacturing jobs. I was pleased to report to the Governor that I had attended groundbreaking ceremonies for two new manufacturing facilities in Walker that very morning. Rockford Acoustic Designs and Thierica Equipment broke ground on projects that will create over 200 new jobs in our City. This growth, located in two different industrial planned areas, will generate employment opportunities for our citizens and revenues to assist us in providing essential services. As we attempt to manage and control growth, it is important that we also keep in mind the positive aspects of growth.

Staffing Changes. As you may know, current City Manager Jim Hatch is retiring after many years of service to our community. We will miss him and are grateful for the contributions he has made. We wish Cathy VanderMeulen well as she assumes the position of City Manager. The Commission has appointed Darrel Schmalzel, our City Planner, to the position of Assistant City Manager. We have every confidence that Cathy and Darrel will make a fine team as we go forward. We also appreciate the fact that Cathy and Darrel have agreed to share the duties of City Planner for several months in an effort to keep our budget on track.

We are also pleased to report that Kelly Gibbs has been appointed City Assessor. Kelly recently achieved her Level IV Assessors certification. This is a major achievement, and we are proud of this accomplishment. We are now able to terminate a contract with Kent County and do all of our assessing work in house. Chris Trotter was promoted to Deputy Assessor. We wish both Kelly and Chris the very best as they assume new responsibilities.

Senior Meals/Senior Neighbors. As you may have heard, these important programs, which provide health care and food programs for our seniors were scheduled to end earlier this year. In response to this announcement, many in our community engaged in an effort to save these valuable programs. We were able to secure a grant from the Urban Cooperation Board. Kent County agreed to allocate funds from the Senior Millage. Several of our Walker churches have taken collections and contributed funds. City employees and other individuals have made contributions. These efforts have resulted in a reversal of the decision to disband the program. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to this effort, and ask for your continuing support to assist our senior citizens.

As a City Commission, we thank you for the opportunity you have given us to work on your behalf. We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Best wishes,

**2 Rob VerHeulen**

## City Commission:

### CITY HALL

453-6311

### MAYOR

Rob VerHeulen — 791-6860 Office; 453-2201 Home  
rverheul@ci.walker.mi.us

### FIRST WARD COMMISSIONERS:

Al Parent — 784-2860; aparent@ci.walker.mi.us  
Dan Kent — 784-5591; dkent@ci.walker.mi.us

### SECOND WARD COMMISSIONERS:

Barbara Holt — 784-5327; bholt@ci.walker.mi.us  
Chuck DeSchanine — 453-4032; cdeschai@ci.walker.mi.us

### THIRD WARD COMMISSIONERS:

Cynthia Stek — 791-9381; cstek@ci.walker.mi.us  
Steven Versluis — 791-9247

## City Services:

### CLERK'S OFFICE

Hours: M- F — 8:00 am - 5:00 p.m.  
Sandra A. Wisniewski, CMC  
Phone: 791-6865 — swisniew@ci.walker.mi.us

### TREASURER'S OFFICE

Dan DeVries, Treasurer  
Phone: 791-6861 — ddevries@ci.walker.mi.us

### ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Kelly Gibbs, Assessor  
Phone: (616) 791-6862 — kgibbs@ci.walker.mi.us

### BUILDING/ZONING DEPARTMENT

Jeff Nelson, Building Official  
Phone: 791-6858 — jnelson@ci.walker.mi.us

### CITY MANAGER

James Hatch  
Phone: 791-6860 — jhatch@ci.walker.mi.us  
Cathy Vander Meulen  
Phone: 791-6859 — cvanderm@ci.walker.mi.us

### DISTRICT COURT - 59th

Hours: M- F — 8:00 am - 5:00 p.m..  
Judge Peter P. Versluis — 453-5765

### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

City Engineer: Scott C. Conners, P.E.  
Phone: 791-6792 — sconners@ci.walker.mi.us

### FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Cindy Mielke, Finance Manager  
Phone: 791-6799 — cmielke@ci.walker.mi.us

### FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief: William Schmidt  
Phone: 791-6840 — bschmidt@ci.walker.mi.us

### INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT

Julie Blok, Income Tax Director  
Phone: 791-6880 — jblok@ci.walker.mi.us

### RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Marcy Kneibel, Recreation Director  
Phone: 791-6890 — mkneibel@ci.walker.mi.us

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Darrel Schmalzel, Planning Director  
Phone: 791-6787 — dschmalz@ci.walker.mi.us

### POLICE DEPARTMENT

Catherine Garcia-Lindstrom, Police Chief  
Phone: 791-6812

### PUBLIC WORKS

Mark Koning, DPW Director  
Phone: 791-6854 — mkoning@ci.walker.mi.us;  
or TCritten@ci.walker.mi.us

www.ci.walker.mi.us

## BE FIRE SAFE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Each year fires associated with the holiday season injure 1,200 individuals and cause over \$25 million in property damage.

We have some simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following these precautionary tips, you can greatly reduce your chances of becoming a holiday fire casualty.

### Preventing Holiday Tree Fires

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in your house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Bouncing the tree trunk on the ground can identify old trees. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to one of the recycling drop off locations provided by the Walker Department of Public Works.

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in

the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear when putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect the strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into an outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires—they should not be warm to the touch. **Do not leave holiday lights on unattended.**

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.

**Never put wrapping paper in a fireplace.** It can throw off dangerous sparks and produce a chemical buildup in the home that could cause an explosion.

If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

If you use lit candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning. Never put lit candles on a tree. Do not go near a holiday tree with an open flame—candles lighters or matches.

Finally as in every season, have working smoke detectors installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. Remember to practice your escape plan!



## WINTER SAFETY ALERT

Many people this time of year will look for just about any means available to stay warm. The Walker Fire Department would like to pass along some basic fire prevention tips to help you remain safe and warm during the rest of the winter.

### Home Heating Equipment

Wood burning stoves and fireplace chimneys should be inspected and cleaned.

Your space heaters should carry the label of an independent testing lab, and they should be equipped with an automatic shutoff. Combustible materials should be kept clear of all heating appliances.

When using kerosene heaters, the following safeguards should be followed:

- Kerosene heaters should be equipped with a primary safety control furnished as an integral part of the appliance by the manufacturer to stop the flow of oil in the event of flame failure.
- Provide adequate ventilation
- Do not place on carpeting
- Keep at least three feet away from combustibles, furnishings, or drapes.

- Use only approved type 1-K water clear kerosene.
- Wait for burners to cool before refueling.

### YOU SHOULD NEVER USE YOUR OVEN AS A HEATING DEVICE!

If you use an electric blanket, make sure that the wire is in good condition, and you should turn the blanket off and unplug it when not in use.

Using electric blow dryers, torches, or other homemade remedies to thaw out frozen pipes is extremely dangerous. Lives have been lost and property destroyed by not taking proper steps to thaw pipes. Prolonged continuous use of a blow dryer will cause it to overheat, and could easily start a fire. If you have a problem with frozen pipes, seek help from a professional to thaw pipes. If your pipes are susceptible to freezing, get advice from a plumber on how to protect your pipes against freezing.

Finally, as always, make sure your smoke detectors are in good working condition, and practice your escape plan.

## CITY CLERKS DEPARTMENT

### ELECTION WORKERS/CHAIRS

We are in the process of getting ready for the Presidential election and are in need of election workers and anyone who would be willing to be a chairperson for a precinct. You would be required to attend an election school for two hours. If you are interested in helping on election day, please contact the City Clerks Department at 791-6865 Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. We will send you an application.

### PASSPORTS




The City of Walker has recently become a U.S. Passport Agency. The City Clerks Department will be processing passport applications, Monday through Friday from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. If you have any questions please feel free to call us at 791-7878 or 791-6893. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

*Sandra A. Wisniewski, CMC — Walker City Clerk* 3

## COST OF DRIVING VIOLATIONS INCREASING ...continued from page one

For example, the blood alcohol limit has been dropped from .10% to .08% for the presumed level of being intoxicated. Ignition interlock devices have now been added to potential probation orders for all violations of operating while intoxicated. These devices prevent the operator from starting the vehicle if there is any presence of alcohol on the operator's breath. For the charge of operating a vehicle while impaired by alcohol there is no minimum blood alcohol count (BAC) anymore. Any presence of illegal drugs in the operator's system constitutes operating under the influence of drugs. The penalties for these offenses has remained essentially the same, but in addition to the fines and costs at the time of conviction, persons with these charges on their record will be required to pay the Secretary of State \$1000 per year for two consecutive years to maintain their driver license.

Other Secretary of State costs over and above court fines for tickets include:

-  Persons with certain convictions to **pay \$500** per year for two consecutive years if they are convicted of Reckless Driving, Child endangerment, Driving while suspended/revoked/denied and driving under 21 with a Blood Alcohol Conviction as well as several other similar offenses.
-  A **\$150 fee** will be assessed for two consecutive years for persons convicted of driving without a license, driving without the proper endorsement, no proof of insurance or driving on an expired license.
-  Drivers who accumulate 7 or more points during a two year period will be assessed a **\$100 fee and \$50 for each additional point on their driving record** until their point total drops below seven.

Officers would rather not have to address traffic violators. Each time an officer has to address a speeder or stop a vehicle on the roadway they are at risk. One of the most common reasons that police officers are killed or injured is because of traffic crashes or being out on foot in traffic areas. So please remember, when you see a patrol vehicle with the lights on, please slow down, move over and give them some room. The life you save may be an officer's, and the wallet you save may be yours!

## FIRE HYDRANT ALERT

Winter is here and we are faced with the chore of snow removal from driveways and sidewalks.

If you are lucky enough to have a fire hydrant in front of your home or business, the Walker Fire Department needs your help in keeping the hydrant clear of snow.

In the event of a fire emergency, an accessible fire hydrant

and a water supply is crucial for us to be able to successfully complete our job in a timely manner.

The Walker Fire Department would like to thank the many residents and business owners that currently take the time to clear the fire hydrant in front of their homes and businesses, and we urge all residents and business owners with a fire hydrant near their home or business to please help by keeping it clear of snow.



## AT THE WALKER LIBRARY

Saturday, Dec. 6

All day holiday shopping at the Walker Library! Book Sale, Friends of the Library Shop Sale, music and refreshments.

“Winter Snow People” at 11:00. A youth program completely about Snowmen! Songs, stories and a craft. Registration required.

Monday, Dec. 1

Registration begins for the adult reading club “Let It Snow.” Read 10 titles and get a mug or a book bag.

Monday, Dec., 8

Registration begins for winter Laptime and Storytime sessions.

Tuesday, Dec. 9

10:00 A.M. Adult Book Discussion - A Christmas Memory by Truman Capote. Additional adult book discussions will take place on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 10:00 A.M. Please call for details.

Tuesday, Dec. 23-Jan. 2

“Under Construction III” Back by popular demand! Junior architects can bring their Lego creations to the library for display. Awards Ceremony will take place on Saturday, Jan. 3 at 11:00 A.M. Please call the Library for more details. Registration is required.

Monday, Dec 29

Pajama Storytime at 7:00 P.M.

Additional dates are Monday, Jan. 26 and Feb. 23 at 7:00 P.M. Registration required.

Tuesday Jan. 6 - February 24

Family Storytime at 10:00 A.M. Ages 6 and under.

Registration required.

Wednesday, Jan. 7 - Feb. 25

Laptime and Storytime sessions at 10:00 & 11:00 A.M.

Saturday, Jan 17

“All Aboard with Thomas the Tank Engine” at 11:00 A.M.

For ages 6 and under. Registration required.

Thursday, Jan 22

“Introduction to Digital Photography” at 6:30 P.M. If you received a digital camera for Christmas and need some advice, this program is for you! Registration required.

Saturday, Feb 21

“Junie B. Jones Party” at 11:00 A.M. Ages 6 and up.

Games and crafts. Registration required.

The Walker Library is open 6 days a week

M-THUR 9:30 A.M. – 8:00 P.M.; FRI, SAT 9:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.; Sunday Closed

Please call the Walker Library at 647-3970 for more information on programming and services or visit the Library at 4293 Remembrance Road in the City Complex.



## EDISON HOUSE UPDATE

With the opening of Three Mile Road, passers by can now start to see the hard work being put into the Edison House restoration. The one hundred and thirteen year old farmhouse, which was a gift from the Edison family, was modernized quite extensively in the late twentieth century. As this modernizing was done, most of the character of a century old house was hidden away, but not lost. As the Historical Commission dove into the house looking behind wallpaper, lifting up carpet, and polishing tarnished doorknobs and hinges we were not quite certain what to

expect. What we have found are old wood floors, horsehair plaster walls, massive pocket doors, and old brass hardware that all seem to tell a story. As a matter fact, at one point a Liberty Head dollar coin from 1851 was found hidden in the old Edison family safe. Barely the size of a fingernail, one has to use a magnifying glass to read the date and inscriptions on the pristine gold.

The most recent efforts have focused around pulling up old carpet on

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# WALKER RECREATION DEPARTMENT

For more information contact the Walker Recreation Department at 791-6890

## EGGSTRAVAGANZA--EASTER EGG HUNT

On Saturday, April 10, 2004, the Walker Recreation Department will be having its 14th Annual Eggstravaganza (Easter Egg Hunt). The event will begin at 11:30 A.M. and be held at the Walker City Hall Complex, 4243 Remembrance Rd., N.W. The event is for boys and girls 7 years of age and younger. There will be three different age groups for boys and girls. They will be hunting for wrapped candy and plastic eggs, some of which may be redeemed for various prizes. Bags of goodies will be available for children under 2 years of age. The Easter Bunny will be available before and after the hunt for pictures.

FREE REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE!!

IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER, THE CANDY WILL BE GIVEN AWAY AT 11:30 A.M. FROM THE DPW GARAGE.

## 2004 GIRL'S SOFTBALL PROGRAM

The Walker Recreation Department will be offering a Girl's Softball Program for girls 7 through 12 years of age. Cost is \$25.00 per player. Practices will begin the week of April 12 and games will begin on Tuesday, April 27, 2004. Registration forms will be sent home with the students at area schools and will also be available at the Recreation Department, located at 4243 Remembrance Rd., N.W. during the following dates and times:

Thursday, February 5	3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
Tuesday, February 10	3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
Thursday, February 12	3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

## GOLF LESSONS

The Walker Recreation Department will be offering golf lessons for youth 7-15 years of age and adults 16 years of age and older. Lessons will be offered in May and June.

Information on beginning dates and times will be available in March by calling 791-6890.

## SOFTBALL UMPIRES

The Walker Recreation Department is accepting applications for umpires for their Adult and Girl's Softball Programs. The Adult softball season begins the week of June 7, 2004.

Leagues are offered for men, women, and co-ed teams on Monday through Thursday evenings. Umpiring classes are required. The Girl's Softball Program is offered for ages 7 through 12. The season will begin on April 27, 2004. Games will be played on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

If you are interested in umpiring, please contact the Recreation Department at 791-6890 for further information.

## Senior Citizens

The Walker Recreation Department invites all senior citizens to come and join the Walker Senior Citizens. They meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at Walker Fire Station #3, located at 1470 Three Mile Rd. NW. Social hour and blood pressure clinic is from 10:30 a.m.- 11:30 a.m. The meeting is from 11:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Potluck lunch begins at 12:00 noon followed by entertainment or speakers. Field trips are planned throughout the year. Come join the fun.

## AEROBICS CLASSES

The Walker Recreation Department will be offering cardio combo classes for men and women. The next 10 week session of classes will begin the week of March 8, 2004.

Classes will be held at the Community Building/Fire Station #3, located at 1470 Three Mile Rd., N.W.

Cardio combo, which includes hi/lo, kickboxing, step, toning, and pilates will be offered on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Cost for a 10 week session once a week is \$27.00, twice a week is \$43.00, and three times a week is \$59.00.

Pre-registration is required for the classes. To register, send your name, address, business and home phone numbers, choice of class, along with your check or money order payable to: WALKER RECREATION DEPARTMENT, 4243 Remembrance Rd., N.W., Walker, MI 49544.

The deadline for registration is Monday, March 1, 2004

## 2004 CO-ED SPRING YOUTH SOCCER PROGRAM

The Walker Recreation Department will be offering a Co-Ed Spring Soccer Program for boys and girls 7 through 12 years of age. Cost is \$23.00 per player. Practices will begin the week of April 12 and games will begin on Saturday, April 24, 2004.

Registration forms will be sent home with the students at area schools and will also be available at the Recreation Department, located at 4243 Remembrance Rd., N.W. during the following registration dates and times:

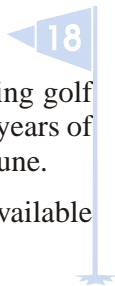
Thursday, February 5	3:00 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.
Tuesday, February 10	3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
Thursday, February 12	3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

For further information, please call 791-6890.

## 2004 ADULT SOFTBALL REGISTRATION

Softball teams interested in joining the Walker Recreation Department's Slo-Pitch Softball Leagues should contact the Walker Recreation Department at 791-6890 for an information packet.

All leagues will have an eight game schedule beginning on June 7, 2004. Registration will be on March 29, March 30, and March 31, 2004.



## WALKER ICE & FITNESS CENTER

### Public Skating Times:

All times are subject to change. Please call in advance to confirm times.

### Open Skating times include:

Mondays	12:00 pm
Wednesdays	12:00 pm
Fridays	12:00 pm & 8:00 pm
Saturdays	2:00 pm
Sundays	2:00 pm

### Drop-In Hockey times include:

Tuesdays	12 noon
Thursdays	12 noon
Sundays	8 am

### Senior Skating times include:

Tuesdays	8:00 am
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### Freestyle Skating times include:

Tuesdays	6:00 am
Thursdays	6:00 am

### Upcoming Ice Programs:

#### Learn to Skate January 10

Saturdays 9-9:50 am

#### Learn to Play Hockey January 10

Saturdays 10-10:50 am

### Party Packages:

We offer Birthday Party and Group Packages starting at \$5.49 per person. Call the Walker Ice & Fitness Center at 735-6286 to schedule your party!

### Blood Drive at the Walker Ice & Fitness Center:

On Wednesday, January 7th, the

Walker Ice & Fitness Center will be hosting a blood drive for the Grand Valley blood program. The blood drive will be held from 3:00-7:00 PM.

The Grand Valley Blood Program is the only provider of blood, blood components, and blood related services to all Kent County hospitals. They currently need to collect more than 100 units of blood everyday, year-round to meet local patients' needs. Each unit of blood donated can help as many as 4 patients.

Please help save a life by signing up today. Call the Walker Ice & Fitness Center at 735-6286 to schedule an appointment.

WALKER ICE & FITNESS CENTER

FREE

14 DAY  
TRIAL MEMBERSHIP!\*

Do You Qualify?\*

TRY before you buy!

The BEST fitness facility in the area and we want to prove it!  
NO hidden costs. Nothing to pay, just bring in THIS coupon with your work-out clothes!

#### \*TO QUALIFY, YOU MUST:

- Not have applied for this offer within a 1 year period
- Live in Grand Rapids area
- Limit of 2 trial memberships per household
- 21 years of age or older
- No previous membership with W.I.F.C.
- Show a valid Michigan I.D.

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Winter is just around the corner. This would be a good time to check the condition of your mailbox and post. Make sure the post is sturdy and that it will hold up to the heavy snow load that comes off the snow plow blade. If the post or mailbox is not in good condition, the heavy snow load will take a mailbox down easily. Occasionally, our operators will hit a mailbox. If you feel that the plow hit your mailbox and damaged it, call the Department of Public Works at 791-6854.

The City of Walker Mailbox Replacement policy is: *Any mailbox damaged by snow as a result of plowing or scraping the roadway, is the responsibility of the property owner. When the mailbox is damaged by direct contact with our equipment, the Department of Public Works will:*

a.) Repair, if possible or

b.) Replace with a standard mailbox and post, or

c.) Compensate owner for damage (\$15.00 for box, \$5.00 for post). Owner responsible to repair and replace.

Repair and/or replacement of mailbox by Department of Public Works may take several days depending on storm conditions and workload.

**We would also like to remind the parents of school age children of a safety issue with the snow plow trucks. When the children are waiting for a bus by the road, please have them stay back and give the snowplow plenty of room.** When the snow is coming off the plow, it may throw ice chunks and other debris that was in the road. *This is the biggest concern of our operators.* They watch very carefully for these children. Most of them have children too. We do not want to see any of the children get hurt.

To access more information about Public Works; visit the City of Walker Web site. [www.ci.walker.mi.us](http://www.ci.walker.mi.us)

## EDISON HOUSE UPDATE ...continued from page four

both the main level and the second level, which in most areas was glued to the floor, as well as removing modern shelves and cabinets that were not part of the original house. Additionally, we have also focused on three critical areas to get us through the winter months. Installing a temporary furnace, pouring the basement floor, and patching a troublesome roof that had been leaking have all been worked on so that not only is the house in good shape to get through a winter but that we may also continue on with the interior restoration uninterrupted. Our efforts also were given a large boost with the generous support at the first ever Historical Auction that was held at the Deltaplex back in September. The proceeds from the auction brought nearly twelve thousand dollars into the Edison House Preservation Fund. This is allowing us to get heat, water, and sewer run into the house, as well as pouring the basement floor. Our sense of accomplishment would not be where it is without the tremendous support that our Walker Department of Public Works has given us with various projects. We are very grateful for their assistance and efforts, and our community thanks them for this.

Our focus and drive moving through the winter months will not only be on the labor inside of the house, but it will also be centered on the private grant and foundation opportunities that exist through our community, as well as the public sources of state and federal funding. With the success of the auction, the Historical Commission is also looking at an annual fundraising effort of some type to ensure the long-term viability of the Edison House. Your thoughts and suggestions are welcome!

We have also been fortunate to have a number of visitors stop by the house while we were working to visit and enjoy a tour. Cub Scout Pack 3325 from St. Anthony's grade school recently visited us on a brisk Saturday morning for milk, doughnuts and the very first official Edison House group tour. The kids were even given a certificate acknowledging their outing, as well as a sincere appreciation for how cold an old farmhouse could get!

In the meanwhile, while we all wait for the official opening of the Edison House, please stop by if you ever see cars parked at the house and we would love to show our community's newest crown jewel off.



Cub Scouts from Pack number 3325 visit the Edison House on November 8, 2003, for the very first Edison House group tour

## INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT REMINDERS

### Estimated Payments

The fourth quarter estimated payment for 2003 Walker Income Tax is due January 31, 2004.

If you owe more than \$100 with your 2003 return due April 30, 2004 and you do not pay in at least 70% of your current or prior year liability, you will be receiving a bill for penalty and interest.

If your employer does not withhold Walker Income Tax or you have non-wage income (rental income, capital gains, premature pension distributions, etc.) that is subject to tax and you think you may owe more than \$100 with your 2003 return, contact the Income Tax Department at 791-6880. We will send you 2003 Quarterly Estimated payment vouchers with instructions.

### 2003 Returns

**Who must file:** Every resident or part-year resident of Walker (this includes renters) who have taxable income in 2003 of \$750 or more must file a return. Married persons may file either a joint return or separate returns. There seems to be quite a bit of confusion, especially among renters, over whether or not they are Walker residents. All Walker addresses have Grand Rapids mailing addresses which adds to the confusion. Visit the following link on the Walker website to check whether your address is within the city limits of Walker.

#### Walker street directory:

<http://www.ci.walker.mi.us/Services/Assessor/StreetDirectory.html>

### Employer Withholding

A company is required to withhold Walker income tax from an employee's pay if the company has a location in the City of Walker. A company must also withhold Walker tax if they are doing business in the City of Walker even though the company has no location in the city. Companies outside of the City of Walker are not required to withhold Walker tax but may voluntarily do so as a convenience to their employees. Call Nancy at 791-6869 or visit the following link on the Walker website to request a New Employer Package.

#### New employer package request:

<http://www.ci.walker.mi.us/Services/IncomeTax/DepartmentOverview.htm>

### Business Taxes

In addition to filing and paying withholding taxes on employees working in Walker, businesses are also subject to Walker income tax. Sole proprietors that file a Schedule C for Federal income tax purposes must also report this income on their individual Walker returns if the business is located in Walker or has activity within the city limits. Corporations located in or doing business in Walker must file form W-1120 to calculate tax due on the income apportioned to Walker. Partnerships located in or doing business in Walker must file form W-1065 to report the amount of partnership income apportioned to each resident or non-resident owner. Partnerships have the option to pay the Walker income tax on behalf of all owners as well. If you have any questions regarding filing requirements for businesses, please call Julie Blok at 791-6866 or e-mail [jblok@ci.walker.mi.us](mailto:jblok@ci.walker.mi.us) for more information.

## ASSESSOR'S OFFICE ...continued from page one

by May 1st to get the tax break for the year. Now that date has been changed to December 31st. So to qualify for the exemption for 2004, you must own and occupy your home by December 31, 2003. This date change has been made to correspond with tax day, which is December 31st every year. Property is assessed on its status on tax day – and now the Principal Residence is as of that day as well. The legislature is also working to switch the auditing of these Principal Residence affidavits from the Homestead Division of the State Tax Commission over to the local unit. If passed, this will give the local city or township, counties, and Michigan Department of Treasury permission to share information in order to determine if a resident is illegally claiming a Principal Residence exemption. To determine if you currently have this exemption, pull out your most recent tax bill or assessment notice, and look for where it says: % Exempt as "Homestead" or as "Qualified Agricultural Property" – if you have it, the percentage will be 100% (or 50% if you own a duplex). If the exemption is not in place and you believe you qualify, please feel free to give us a call at 791-6862 and we will mail a form to you.

**Name and Address Changes and Appealing Your Assessment:** As long as you have that tax bill or assessment notice out, check it over to see if we have your name spelled correctly and your mailing address is accurate. These items can easily have a typographical error and can be corrected very easily – just give us a call. If you have recently purchased your property and the previous owners name still appears on the bill or notice, then it just may be a matter of timing (when a deed is recorded, it may take a couple of months to get the name updated) – just give it time. If the next notice or bill still comes in the previous owners name, then give us a call and we will try to figure out why the change has not occurred. If you disagree with the valuation that appears on your assessment notice, then you have the right to appeal that valuation to the March Board of Review. Every year we send out an assessment notice, typically sometime in February, that tells you that year's assessment that we have placed on your property. Also in that notice it explains how to appeal the assessment if you do not agree with it, giving dates and times in which you can appear before the Board. March Board of Review is the only time of year that the assessment for that year can be appealed. If you appeal to the March Board of Review and you do not agree with the results, then you can appeal the assessment further to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. Once the March Board of Review is closed, the assessment cannot be changed. Keep in mind when looking at the figures on your assessment notice that: the Assessed Value and Tentative State Equalized Value is our estimate of 50% of market value –

depending on the economy and sale trends, this figure may jump a great deal from one year to the next; the Taxable Value is the figure that your property taxes are calculated against – barring any new construction or transfer in ownership, this figure can only increase by CPI (Consumers Price Index) or 5%, whichever is less. If you have any questions when you get your assessment notice, please do not hesitate to call us.

**2004 Assessment and Property Tax Increases:** Every year Kent County Bureau of Equalization determines the amount that the assessments need to be raised in each unit of government. By conducting sales studies and appraisal studies, the Bureau comes up with a ratio for each class of property in each City or Township. We take these recommendations from Equalization and we do some studies and analysis of our own to figure out where raises in assessment need to occur. For the 2004 assessment year, the following increases are needed: Commercial Class – 5.40%, Industrial Class – 2.80%, and Residential Class – 5.57%. Some properties may see these increases, while others may see their assessments rise by a lot more, or they may not see an increase at all – we determine where the increases need to go by conducting some studies and analysis of our own. The Consumers Price Index for 2004 is 2.3%, which means that if you have not built any new construction, or if the property did not transfer in 2003, then your 2004 property taxes will only be 2.3% more than they were in 2003 (if the millage rate remains the same).

**Digital Photography and Computer Sketches:** A year or two ago, we let folks know (through this newsletter) that we would be around to take digital photos of every building in the City of Walker, in an effort to modernize our assessment cards and computer program. Time has not permitted us to go out and start this effort, but we will be out there very soon. We have recently begun to sketch on the computer as well. It will take some time, but within approximately 5 years, we hope to have all the sketches computerized and the digital photography complete.

**Website:** As reported in previous newsletter articles, a lot of the information that we have available to the public in our office is also available on our website ([www.ci.walker.mi.us](http://www.ci.walker.mi.us)): Once on that site, go into "City Services", then go into "Assessor", and then go into "Assessor/Tax Data Lookup". From there follow the directions on how to launch into the link that hosts our property information. Then you can look up property by parcel number, owners name, and property address. This can be very informative and help you when comparing your assessment to others in your neighborhood.



## "YOUR" NEWSLETTER!

We value your communication. You may contact us with your comments or suggestions for "Your" newsletter at any time.

CITY OF WALKER  
Attn.: Newsletter  
4243 Remembrance Road NW, Walker MI 49544  
Phone: (616) 791-6860  
E-Mail: newsletter@ci.walker.mi.us

Also let us know if you need to correct your mailing address or need to add a new resident to our current list of recipients.

Thank you!

CITY OF WALKER  
4243 Remembrance Road NW  
Walker MI 49544

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT #1



## WALKER YOUTH COMMISSIONERS this year are:

Veronica Castro – Senior – Kenowa Hills  
Megan Disselkoe – Freshman – Calvin Christian Freshman  
Charles Frede – Junior – West Catholic  
Chad Giese – Junior – Kenowa Hills  
Jessica Gerke – Junior – Kenowa Hills  
Rebekah Karth – Freshman – Home School  
Samuel Karth – Junior – Home School  
Alana Magniant – Junior – Grandville  
Marianna Szczepkowski – Senior – Kenowa Hills  
Holly Zoe – Junior – Kenowa Hills  
Nate Zokoe – Senior – Calvin Christian

The Walker Youth Commission is getting started on another year. This year they are involved with a County Wide Youth Summit funded by the Urban Co-Operation board. The summit will take place in March and many area high schools will be involved. The youth also attend a committee meeting each month to learn about the different ways that citizens can be involved and make a difference in the community. Each month they have a meeting of their own to plan different events and consider how they can make a difference in their community. The youth are selected in September each year.

If you would like to participate in the Walker Youth Commission please call City Hall for an application at the beginning of September — 453-6311.

## CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING LOCATIONS

**12/26/03-1/19/03**

Walker City Hall • 4243 Remembrance Rd. N.W.

Walker Community Park • 650 Cummings N.W.

Fire Station #3 • 1470 Three Mile Rd. N.W.

\*\*\*NO PLASTIC — TREE ONLY\*\*\*



## Meeting Dates and Times

City Commission Meetings  
8:00 pm: 2nd & 4th Monday of each month.  
Walker City Hall/Commission Chambers

Board of Zoning Appeals  
7:00 pm: 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month to hear appeals on the city's zoning regulations.  
City Commission Chambers

Planning Commission  
7:00 pm: 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month to make recommendations regarding land use planning and zoning concerns.  
City Hall, City Commission Chambers

Recreation Committee  
Meets one Wednesday of each month.  
City Hall Conference Room

Historical Committee  
Meets 1st Monday of every month to discuss museum displays and preservation of artifacts.  
Walker Museum

Community Relations/Volunteer Committee  
Meets 3rd Thursday of every month to identify individual & community needs. (veterans, seniors, etc.) Also recognizes and awards special achievements in the community.

International Relations Committee  
7:00 pm: 2nd Wednesday of the month to discuss Sister City school exchange program with Colac, Australia.

Mineral Mining Review Board  
Meetings as needed. Reviews applications for mineral extraction in the City.

Traffic Committee  
Meetings as needed. Discussion on transportation matters brought by residents.