



WALKER

City News

Winter 2008

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Holiday Food Barrels

The Walker Police Department, teamed up with the Walker Volunteer Patrol Unit and the Chaplains Unit, are again embarking on the food in-gathering endeavor for needy families. Soon you will see our barrels positioned throughout businesses and public buildings in the City, advertising the collection point for non-perishable goods. In lieu of food items, cash donations are being accepted (payable to the Walker Police Department) and will be used to purchase non-perishable goods. These barrels will be in place until approximately the week before Christmas, at which time the collected goods will be separated and food baskets will be prepared for many needy families within our community. Please make a point of donating to this very worthy cause and make the holiday season special for all of our neighbors! For information on barrel locations or making a cash donation, contact Officer Gil "Butch" Redzinski at 791-6835.



Senior Programs

Beginning in the first part of 2008, the City of Walker will be welcoming the Senior Neighbor and Senior Meal agencies to the AJ Stehouwer Community Room located in the upper level of Standale Fire Station #2. These agencies will help provide essential services to our residents sixty and older. Services provided include health screening, noontime meals, home delivered meals, assistance with tax preparation, prescription assistance and much more. Please watch for further details or call Commissioner Cyndy Stek at 791-9381 for more information.

Christmas Tree Recycling Locations

From 12/26/07 through 1/21/08
 Walker City Hall ~ 4243 Remembrance Rd. N.W.
 Walker Community Park ~ 650 Cummings N.W.
 Walker Fire Station #3 ~ 1470 Three Mile Rd. N.W.
 Trees Only No Plastic Bags Walker Residents Only



Dear Citizens of Walker,

Best wishes from your City Commission.

As I am writing these lines, we have just concluded the election of November 6, 2007. You have re-elected three City Commissioners and a new City Clerk, Sarah Bydalek. The three Commissioners (Dan Kent, Barb Holt, and Steve Versluis) are not strangers to you, having served many years

in their respective offices. Given the economic challenges facing Michigan, there is no doubt that these Commissioners will face a number of difficult issues over the course of their terms.

Thank you to all who participated in the election. By voting you remind elected officials at every level of government that we serve only with the approval of the voters.

I have noticed an increase in the number of emails that I receive from residents. Email is a wonderful means by which you can share comments, suggestions, and concerns. All of the Commissioners monitor their email closely and welcome your input. It is very helpful to us when we hear from you and I encourage you to use this tool. My email address is rverheul@ci.walker.mi.us.

I also encourage you to visit the City website, www.ci.walker.mi.us. The website contains much useful information regarding the City and its government. Copies of City Commission, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals agendas and minutes are contained on the website. Descriptions of the various City departments, the budget, items of community interest, and resource materials are included on the website. In addition, the site contains items of interest such as the 2007 Emerald Ash Borer Field Report, a report regarding the South Walker Water System, and the plans submitted for the Orchard Park development (Cabela's).

It is our hope that use of email and the website will enhance communication between the City and its residents. We understand that decisions we make will not please everyone. We also understand that it may be difficult to attend commission meetings in person. Electronic communication is an easy means by which you can share your views on various issues that come before the commission. We also welcome phone calls and letters if you prefer to avoid electronic communication.

We extend our very best to you this holiday season. Please feel free to call or write if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Best Regards,
Rob VerHeulen, Mayor
City of Walker



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; arent@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 Deschaine - 453-4032; cdeschai@ci.walker.mi.us

THIRD WARD COMMISSIONERS:

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

City Services:

CLERK'S OFFICE

Hours: M-F -- 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Sarah Bydalek, Clerk
Phone: 791-6865 -- sbydalek@ci.walker.mi.us

TREASURER'S OFFICE

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

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Kelly Smith, Assessor
Phone: 791-6862 -- ksmith@ci.walker.mi.us

BUILDING/ZONING DEPARTMENT

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

CITY MANAGER

Cathy VanderMeulen
Phone: 791-6859 -- cvanderm@ci.walker.mi.us

DISTRICT COURT - 59TH

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

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Scott C. Conners, P.E., City Engineer
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: 791-6866 -- jblok@ci.walker.mi.us

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Frank Wash, Planning Director
Phone: 791-6787 -- fwash@ci.walker.mi.us

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Catherine Garcia-Lindstrom, Police Chief
Phone: 791-6800 -- bhaynes@ci.walker.mi.us

PUBLIC WORKS OFFICE

Mark Koning, DPW Director
Phone: 791-6854 -- mkoning@ci.walker.mi.us; tmuilenb@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 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.
- If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

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 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. Flameless candles have become very popular. If you are a candle lover, you should consider this alternative.

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. And remember to practice your escape plan.

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.

City of Walker Building Department

SIDEWALK REMINDER

The owner or occupants of any property located within the City are required to clear any accumulation of ice or snow from the public sidewalks adjoining the property within 24 hours of accumulation or placement of snow or ice on the sidewalks. (City of Walker Ordinance Section 70-68). Sidewalks that are not maintained may be subject to civil infractions.

Sidewalks not in compliance may force pedestrians to walk in the streets. School children use the sidewalks to get to school and bus stops. Many people also use the sidewalks to access public transportation.

If you have a neighbor who is unable to clear their sidewalks in the allotted time, it would be appreciated if you could assist them. Those who are unable to clear your sidewalks, or maybe out of town for an extended time, may wish to make arrangements with a neighbor or a service to keep them clear. Many schools, churches and other groups may also be willing to provide assistance.

Your efforts will be appreciated not only by your neighbors, but also from everyone who uses the sidewalks.

Thank you for your cooperation - City of Walker Building Department



City of Walker Police Department

SNOW RELATED MATTERS

The winter season is upon us once again. All the City parks buildings have been ‘winterized’ for the season. During the winter season we have several issues that seem to reoccur every year. We typically see two common problems during the winter season.

The first is the failure of property owners to keep the sidewalks clear of snow. There are many people who depend upon the sidewalk for safe travel. When sidewalks become obstructed by snow, people in wheel chairs, pedestrians and others cannot navigate safely. The snow on the sidewalk usually prompts them to move out into the roadway where they can navigate. This mix of pedestrian and vehicle traffic is very dangerous any time of the year but in the winter it is extremely dangerous. Within the City, the property owner has a ‘duty to clear’ the sidewalk of an accumulation of ice or snow within twenty-four hours. Failure to keep the sidewalk clear may result in a municipal civil infraction citation with a penalty of a \$50-\$500 fine. Chapter 70 of the City of Walker Code of Ordinances has all the details for snow removal.

The second common problem involves the movement of the snow accumulation. Plowing snow across the public roadway, depositing snow in the roadway or onto someone else’s property are not permitted. All these examples are violations of the City’s ordinance. It is not uncommon to see people clearing their driveways with their snow blower and blowing the snow into the street. This can create a major traffic hazard. Please be mindful of your neighbors and keep the snow on your property. These violations are also subject to the \$50-\$500 fine.

DONATE YOUR OLD CELL-PHONES

The Walker Police Department has joined forces with a private firm to recycle your old cell phones for re-distribution to those that are in need of reliable communications, such as victims of domestic violence. The police department will have a collection barrel located in our lobby for anyone wishing to make such a cell phone donation.

The company that we have teamed with will then ‘purchase’ these recycled phones by forwarding a monetary donation to the Children’s Assessment Center, located in Grand Rapids. The Children’s Assessment Center is a “safe location” for young children (ages 1-12 years old) that are victims of sexual assaults and serves all young sexual assault victims in Kent County. At the Center they speak with professional staff members (doctors, social workers, law enforcement personnel and prosecutors) in a very supportive environment following such a traumatic event. This type of setting, where the professionals come to the child instead of a child having to go to several locations to report such a crime, has been shown to speed up their emotional healing process. Please drop off those old cell phones and help a child!

FRAUD CRIMES AND YOU

Fraud crimes are on the rise all over the United States. Financial crimes against the elderly are common among criminals that prey upon our society. Elderly people are commonly targeted because they have grown up in a society that was much more trustworthy than the society that we are living in today. Tracking fraud against the elderly is a difficult proposition. The greatest difficulty in surveying the extent of fraud is the failure of the victim to report the incident. As a result the Department of Justice has provided the following information on this problem.

If you are a victim of fraud please contact the police department. Many fraud victims are embarrassed to report the crime or think that family will interpret their victimization as an indication that they can no longer take care of themselves living on their own. If you don't report the crime, the criminal can remain at large and victimize more people. For the sake of those potential victims please report the crime. Some researchers estimate that as few as one in 10,000 victims of fraud report the crime to authorities. The failure to report these incidents also results in the inability to activate the assistance of police, adult protective services, family members and other resources that may be available to the victim. Reporting these incidents creates a database of information. The more information we can gather about targets, methods and perpetrators, the better able we will be to identify, locate and prevent future criminal activity.

Telemarketing is a common form of fraud. The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging reported that consumers lose approximately \$40 billion dollars per year to telemarketing fraud. They estimated that approximately 10 percent of the nation's 14,000 telemarketing firms are fraudulent. Keep that in mind the next time you answer your phone and someone is trying to sell you something or convince you to donate money to their 'cause'. You are not required to listen to their story unless you choose to listen to their story. If you wish to terminate the call, just hang up the phone. It really is that simple. I am surprised how many telemarketers get rude when I have politely tried to terminate the call.

The old saying 'If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is' certainly applies to telemarketing, mail solicitations and any other proposals that may be presented to you. If you have the smallest doubt about anything, run it past someone that you trust. Contact a friend, a neighbor or a relative and have them review the information. Contact the police department and talk to an officer. The chances are good that we have heard about it if it is a scam or at the very least we can evaluate it from an unbiased perspective. As a general rule do not send any money to anyone. If someone is asking you for money with the promise that you will receive more money, it is a scam and they are committing a fraud. Use common sense and please contact us if you have any questions.



City of Walker International Relations

TRAVEL TO AUSTRALIA OPPORTUNITY

Are you an adult living in the City of Walker or associated with the City in some way? Do you like to travel? Are you interested in meeting new people and learning about other cultures? The International Relations Committee of Walker may have an opportunity for you! We have been contacted by our Sister City, Colac, Australia, expressing interest in having an adult exchange! This exchange could include time spent touring some of Australia as well as time staying with a host family in Colac to truly experience life "down under".

If you are interested, please contact Rachel at City Hall at: 791-6862 or email us at walkersistercity@hotmail.com.

DETROIT RED WINGS BUS TRIP

The Walker Recreation Department is offering a bus trip to a Detroit Red Wings hockey game. The Red Wings will play the Colorado Avalanche. The game will be on Friday, February 1, 2008 in Detroit. The bus will leave from Walker City Hall, at 4243 Remembrance Road N.W., at 3:30 p.m., loading will begin at 3:15 p.m. The cost for the bus trip will be \$90.00 per person. This will include a box dinner and drink to be served on the bus. Also included is a coupon for a slice of pizza or a hot dog plus a regular size soda at the game. Dinner will be a sub sandwich from Subway, a bag of chips, a cookie, and a drink.

Seating is limited and reservations will be taken on a first come first served basis. To register for the trip, send your name, address, business and home phone numbers, along with your check or money order made payable to:

WALKER RECREATION DEPARTMENT
4243 REMEMBRANCE ROAD N.W.
WALKER, MICHIGAN 49534

For further information please call the Recreation Department at 791 – 6890.

2008 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 \$28.00 for City of Walker residents and \$33.00 for non-residents of the City of Walker. Practices will begin the week of April 14 and games will begin on Saturday, April 26, 2008.

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

- Tuesday, February 5 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
- Thursday, February 7 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
- Wednesday, February 13 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

For further information, please call 791-6890.

2008 SENIOR CITIZEN’S BOWLING TOURNAMENT

The Walker Recreation Department is having their 17th annual Senior Citizen’s Bowling Tournament for men and women 55 years of age and over. The tournament will be held at Lincoln Country Club, 3485 Lake Michigan Drive NW on Thursday, January 17 and Friday, January 18, 2008. The cost will be \$10.00 for 3 games of bowling. Pre-registration is required. Entry blanks will be available at all area bowling centers. Deadline for registration is Friday, January 4, 2008. For further information call the Walker Recreation Department at 791-6890.

WALKER SENIORS GROUP

Come join the Walker Senior Group for a fun time!! We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at Fire Station #3, located at 1470 Three Mile Rd., N.W. We offer free blood pressure check starting at 10:30 am, bingo from 10:00 am to 11:30 am on the 4th Tuesday of the month, followed by a short meeting at 11:30 am and potluck lunch at noon. Bring a dish to pass and your own place setting. Following the potluck lunch we have speakers or entertainment. The meeting concludes at approximately 1:30 pm. We would love to have you join us!! Remember the Walker Senior Group is open to all seniors, so pass this information along to anyone who may be interested. Please call the Walker Recreation Department at 791-6890 for a list of upcoming events.

2008 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 \$30.00 for City of Walker residents and \$35.00 for non-residents of the City of Walker. Practices will begin the week of April 14th and games will begin on Tuesday, April 29, 2008. Registration forms will be sent home with the students at area schools and will also be available at the Recreation Department. Registration will be at the Recreation Department, located at 4243 Remembrance Rd., N.W. during the following dates and times:

- Tuesday, February 5 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
- Thursday, February 7 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
- Wednesday, February 13 3:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

For further information, please call 791-6890.



City of Walker Library

NEW AND IMPROVED LIBRARY TRAIN!

We are happy to report that \$450 from library contributors will be used to repair and lay new track for the Library Train in the Programming Room. Always a favorite with kids, the train has been out of commission since last spring and its return has been anxiously anticipated – hopefully soon! Meanwhile, a huge thank-you goes out to all who contributed to its repair bill – especially the individual who very generously donated \$300!

NEW PUBLIC SERVICE DESK

Thanks to the City of Walker, the library has purchased a wonderful new public service desk. Installed three weeks ago, the new desk is attractive and spacious – a joy to library staffers and library users alike. The Library is constantly changing to address current trends and services and we know that the service desk improvement is a winner for everyone!

LIBRARY CHANGES

Speaking of library trends and changes, Kent District Library, of which Walker Library is a branch, has made changes in its print management system as well as in its delivery practices. In response to recent State budget cuts the Walker Branch is only receiving delivery 3 days a week instead of 5. This is an inconvenience to all, but much better than having no delivery at all! In addition, KDL has instituted a “floating collection” amongst its branches. This means that KDL materials will remain at the KDL branch where they have been returned. Our collections have become quite interesting!

In addition, to curb the rise of unclaimed printing jobs (\$25,000 worth last year!) all KDL branches are selling and utilizing print/copying cards to retrieve print and copying services. Library staff will be happy to explain the service and hope that you will understand that we must stretch our precious taxpayer dollars.

FRIENDS OF THE WALKER LIBRARY

The Friends of the Walker Library are always looking for a few more Friends! If you are interested in promoting library services and working with wonderfully dedicated people, this is the group to join! The Walker Friends raise several thousand dollars a year to improve programs as well as the collections. Their money is also spent on building furnishings like rugs, throw pillows and lamps, primarily raised through our very popular Friends of the Library Book Sales. If you think that you might like to join this group, please give the library a call at 647-3975.

WINTER PROGRAMMING

The Winter Calendar of Programming is available online as well as in the library. Please check www.kdl.org for more information with regard to Walker Library and all of the 18 KDL branches.



City of Walker Festival Committee

WALKER FESTIVAL 2008!

Plan ahead! We may only be entering into the winter season, but wanted to remind you to save the date for our summer 2008 Walker Festival!

The Walker Festival will be held Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14th.

Looking for a fund raising or team building event? Consider hosting a food or activity booth at the Festival!

If you are interested in participating in this year's Walker City Festival or have any questions, please feel free to contact Roxanne Deschaine at (616) 453-4032.

CABELA'S AND ORCHARD PARK UPDATE

The Planning Commission continues to wait for a revised preliminary site plan from the developers. The preliminary site plan is very important, as it should implement the concepts and designs found in the City's new master plan. The preliminary site plan should also provide for infrastructure improvements, such as roads, sewers, drainage and water mains.

Staff members continue to work on road design details with the developer, the Kent County Road Commission and MDOT. We are getting close to an approved Walker Avenue redevelopment plan. Work will soon begin on the North Ridge Drive design plans, which may include several modern roundabouts.

Staff members also recently met with the construction management team from Cabela's regarding the City's planning and building permit process.

ROUNDAABOUTS

Many of us have driven through traffic circles in places like Boston or the campus of Michigan State University. Modern roundabouts are different than traditional traffic circles. Modern roundabouts are specifically designed to handle the types of vehicles that will be using the intersection. Modern roundabouts also require a yielding to oncoming vehicles. A good website that explains modern roundabouts in layperson terms can be found at <http://www.roundaboutsusa.com/intro.html>.

A new roundabout is now open at the intersection of 68th Avenue and Randall Street in Coopersville. This roundabout was designed to handle a large volume of traffic that frequently includes tandem semi trucks and hefty pieces of farming equipment.

I have driven through this roundabout many times, occasionally towing a trailer. It was confusing at first, but with practice, the benefits of the roundabout over a traditional traffic signal become apparent.

The main problem I have witnessed is that people drive too quickly through the roundabout. The design speed is 15 mph. Anything over 20 mph feels like you are driving on two wheels and this causes you to drift out of your lane. I recommend giving the roundabout a few spins. Just yield upon entry, keep your speed down...and drive defensively.

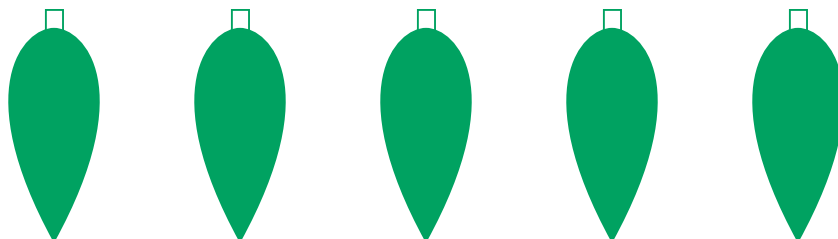
WEBSITE UPDATES

The City of Walker website is located at www.ci.walker.mi.us. We continue to upgrade the planning and zoning information available to the public through this website.

We have added a new category called "Forestry Issues" on the planning department page. There you can find the 2007 Emerald Ash Borer field report, a link to Emerald Ash Borer information, a link to the DNR urban forestry page, Consumer's Energy vegetation management information and the City's street tree planting guide.

We have also added a new article that lists planning and zoning milestones since World War II. Please take some time to download the article. It outlines how we have arrived at the current state of land use planning in this country. It also explains that planners are attempting to correct mistakes of the past while avoiding mistakes in the future. The article can be found under the "*Time Line of Planning Issues Article*" tab on the Walker planning department web page.

If you have ideas for ways to improve the website, please let me know. You can email me at fwash@ci.walker.mi.us.



ESTIMATED PAYMENTS

The fourth quarter estimated payment for 2007 Walker Income Tax is due January 31, 2008.

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 2007 return, you must make quarterly estimated payments. The 2007 Quarterly Estimated payment vouchers with instructions can be found:

- In the 2006 Resident Forms and Instructions booklet
- On our website at www.ci.walker.mi.us/incometaxforms
- By mail--call us at 616-791-6880

You must pay in at least 70% of your current or prior year liability (whichever is lower) through estimates, credits or withholding to avoid receiving a bill for penalty and interest for underpayment of estimated tax.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

It is very important that all annual returns, extensions and estimate vouchers have your complete social security number legible on the form. We cannot apply payments correctly to your account without a complete social security number.

FORMS

Individual resident and non-resident tax form booklets will be mailed during the last week in December to taxpayers that filed a hand-written return for tax year 2006. We will no longer be mailing forms to taxpayers that filed computer-generated returns. If you need forms, they are available:

- On our website at www.ci.walker.mi.us/incometaxforms
- At local public libraries
- At the Internal Revenue Service office in Grand Rapids

We are able to waive penalties on late or unfiled returns under very limited circumstances. Taxpayers that do not file or file late because they did not receive a mailed form will not be eligible for a penalty waiver. If you need forms, it is your responsibility to obtain them from one of the sources listed above.

Walker Engineering & Public Works Departments

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO COLD WEATHER PRACTICES

Winter means mounds of snow to shovel and layers of ice to remove from our sidewalks and driveways. We often make the job easier by applying deicers like salt, but besides sodium chloride, many deicers also contain chemicals like cyanide. When ice melts, the salts and chemicals dissolve and flow into street drains that lead directly to nearby streams and lakes, endangering aquatic life. By following a few tips, you can reduce your salt use and prevent water pollution.

1. Try an alternative.

Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) was developed as a deicing alternative because it has fewer adverse environmental impacts than salt and doesn't cause corrosion. Although CMA is more expensive than rock salt, it is recommended for environmentally sensitive areas.

2. Reduce your salt use.

By limiting the amount of salt you use on sidewalks and driveways, you can reduce the amount of polluted snow melt washing into waterways.

3. Use that shovel!

The most important step in deicing is to physically remove as much ice as possible before applying salt. Use a shovel to break up the ice before you add another layer of salt to your sidewalk. Adding more salt without removing what has melted can result in over-application, meaning more salt and chemicals end up in nearby streams and lakes. You can also reduce salt use by limiting access to your home to one entrance. For every doorway that is not used, there will be less salt running into the catch basin in your street, and ultimately the Grand River.

Our Department of Public Works uses these practices to minimize their use of salt to the greatest extent possible. Our experience let's us reduce application rates and choose the most effective techniques for deicing. Additionally, we explore alternatives to salt and additives to reduce the total amount of salt that must be applied. We continue to look for ways to reduce overall salt usage while maintaining safe roadways and minimizing the impacts to our local environment.

City of Walker Department of Public Works

WINTER REMINDERS

Occasionally, our operators will hit a mailbox. If the post or mailbox is not in good condition, the heavy snow load will take a mailbox down easily. If you feel that a City 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, or playing in snow banks, please have them stay back and give the snowplow driver plenty of room. When the snow is coming off the plow, it may throw ice chunks and other debris that was in the road. Our concern is for the children and we watch out very carefully for them. Most of our drivers have children too. We do not want any of the children to get hurt.

City Clerk's Office

The Clerk's Office provides assistance and information to our residents in the following areas:

- Responsible for all elections held in the City of Walker.
- Passport Acceptance Agent. (Passport photo service available).
- Voter registration, absentee voting.
- Cemetery plot information.
- Business licensing. (Including snow plowing and trash hauling).
- Placement of items on City Commission agendas and minutes of all City Commission Meetings.
- Maintains the official City records including Ordinances and Resolutions.

Please note the following information:

1. Effective January 2008, passports will be required to travel abroad. We encourage you to apply for your passports early. The City Clerk's office is open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday to process your passport applications. We also take passport photos.
2. Effective November 2007, every Michigan voter who chooses to vote at the polls will be required to show a picture ID or sign an affidavit stating they are not in possession of picture ID.
3. Starting January 2008, the following polls will have new locations:
 - Cummings School voters will move to Standale Reformed Church located at 202 Cummings Street N.W.
 - Kenowa Hills Intermediate School voters will move to the Walker City Hall City Commission Chambers located at 4243 Remembrance Road N.W.
 - Please watch your mail for new voter ID cards.
4. Did you know anyone over 60 years of age qualifies as a permanent absentee voter? If you wish to be on the permanent absentee voter list, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 791-6865.

Would you like to become an election worker? If so, we need you! We are currently seeking City of Walker residents to become election workers for 2008. If interested, please call the City Clerk's office at 791-6865.

I would like to thank the Citizens of Walker for your support in the Primary Election. I was sworn in as your new City Clerk on November 13th. If you ever have any questions, concerns, or would just like say "hello", please feel free to stop by the Clerk's office or contact us at 791-6865. We are here to serve you!

Sarah Bydalek, Walker City Clerk

2008 RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENTS AND MARCH BOARD OF REVIEW

As mentioned in the last newsletter, due to the declining housing market there would be some changes to how we develop the residential assessments for 2008. The Kent County Equalization Department has completed their one-year sales study and has told us that our residential assessments (overall) must be decreased 3.2%. Now we have to take this information and conduct our own smaller studies in each neighborhood to see if this decrease is appropriate. Some neighborhoods may decrease more than 3.2%, some may decrease less than 3.2%, and some may even increase – it all depends on what the sales show in each individual neighborhood. But as a whole, the entire residential class in the City of Walker will see a 3.2% decrease in their assessments.

The confusion comes into play when we discuss the taxable value, as opposed to the assessed value. Since Proposal “A” passed in 1994, we have had to deal with two figures – assessed and taxable values. The assessed value is 50% of market value. This is the figure that should be decreasing (on average) the 3.2%. The taxable value is the figure that is used to calculate your property taxes. Taxable value can only increase at the rate of inflation, unless the property transfers or there is new construction (or something is removed). To figure your taxable value, we simply take last year's taxable value and multiply it by the Consumer Price Index (CPI – also known as inflation rate) – unless there is that new construction or the property transfers. The state has determined that the CPI for 2008 is 2.3% - this means that almost everyone will see their taxable values increase by 2.3%, which means that your property taxes will increase by 2.3% (assuming no extra millage would be approved). The way Proposal “A” is laid out, as long as there is room in the gap between the assessed and the taxable values, the taxable will increase by the rate of inflation. We realize that it is hard to understand why your assessment decreases but your taxable value still increases. What you should keep in mind when looking at these two figures is that if your assessed value is still more than your taxable value (most of you will be in this scenario), you are paying taxes on less than our estimated market value of your home. If you have questions on this or any other assessing issue, please feel free to contact our office (791-6862) and we will do our best to help.

At the end of February or the beginning of March, you will receive your Assessment Change Notice. This notice will state how much your assessed and taxable values have changed for 2008. Also on this notice, it will tell you how to appeal your valuation at the March Board of Review, if you do not agree. If you feel that we are off in our estimate of value for your property, please make an appointment to appeal or you have the option of appealing by letter. We must assess over 9,000 parcels each year, so some are bound to have errors or be over-assessed. Again, please look at this notice closely, call us with any questions, and appeal the valuation at the March Board of Review if you take issue with our figures.

Due to a recent news story on Channel 8 that had to do with the City of Grand Rapids and folk's Homesteads (or Principal Residence Exemptions - PRE), I wanted to bring up something else to look for on your Assessment Change Notice or even a recent property tax bill. To qualify for the Homestead / PRE exemption you must own and occupy your home. If you meet this two-prong test, then look on that recent tax bill or assessment notice – somewhere on either of these documents it will have “Principal Residence Exemption” and then it will have a percentage. If it has 100%, then you are all set – you have the full exemption. If it has 50%, then more than likely you own a duplex and rent out half of the property. If it has 0%, then we do not have you listed for any exemption. If you have 0% and do qualify, please give us a call and we can get that fixed for you. Depending on when you purchased your home and moved in, we are able to go a few years back on this exemption, so verify this information as soon as possible.

City Manager

COMMUNITY ROOMS AVAILABLE FOR RENT

If you are searching for a clean, affordable location for an upcoming family event or business meeting, the City of Walker might be able to help.

Community rooms are available for rent at Fire Station #3 located at 1470 3 Mile Rd, and at the new Fire Station #2, located at 4101 Lake Michigan Drive.

Please contact Walker City Hall at 453-6311 for further information.

CITY OF WALKER
4243 Remembrance Road NW
Walker, MI 49534

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US POSTAGE
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT #1



“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 49534
Phone: (616) 791-6860
E-Mail: newsletter@ci.walker.mi.us

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

Thank you!

City of Walker Board Appointments

The City of Walker is looking for citizens interested in volunteering their time by serving on various boards and commissions. Most groups meet only once per month in the evening. If you would like to be considered for an appointed position on one of these boards, please stop by the City Clerks office and fill out an application or you may find an application on our web site, www.ci.walker.mi.us.



Meeting Dates & Times

City Commission Meetings:

Meets 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 8:00pm.
Walker City Hall Commission Chambers

Board of Zoning Appeals:

Meets 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00pm to hear appeals on the City's zoning regulations.
Walker City Hall Commission Chambers

Planning Commission:

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

Recreation Committee:

Meets one Wednesday of each month.
Walker City Hall Conference Room

Festival Committee:

Next meeting January 8, at 7:00pm.
Walker City Hall Conference Room

Neighborhood Watch:

Meets 3rd Tuesday in March, June, September, & December
Walker Ice & Fitness Center

Historical Committee:

Meets 1st Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm to discuss museum displays and preservation of artifacts for the Edison House Museum.
Walker City Hall Commission Chambers

Community Relations / Volunteer Committee:

Meets 3rd Thursday of every month at 7:00pm to identify individual & community needs. (Veterans, seniors, etc.) Also recognizes and awards special achievements in the community.
Walker City Hall Commission Chambers

International Relations Committee:

Meets 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm 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 and traffic related matters.