

# TOWNSHIP 101

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SCALE

APRIL 10 2015



# Brief History of Townships in the US

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## 1. Drafting of US Constitution – 1787

## 2. Northwest Ordinance – 1787

- - laid out plans for developing the country west of the original 13 colonies
- - key to the plan was surveying and dividing land into 36 square mile sections (6 miles x 6 miles) called townships
- - townships were first identified by number and later took on names as settlers arrived. As more settlers arrived some townships became cities. When there was enough population, the area(s) became states
- - today in MN there are approx. 1780 townships ranging in size from less than 50 residents (to more than 12,000 (White Bear Township)

# WHAT IS A TOWNSHIP?

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## GRASSROOTS GOVERNMENT

*adjective, Also, grass-roots*

*relating to, or involving the common people, especially as contrasted with or separable from an elite*

# TYPES OF TOWNSHIPS

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## **Two Types of Townships – Urban Towns and Non-Urban Towns**


Urban Town –

- 1) a town that has 1,200 or more people residing in platted areas, or a town that has a platted area within 20 miles of the City Hall of a city of the first class with a population of over 200,000, or;
- 2) a town with a population of 1,000 or more where the electors have affirmatively voted at the Annual Town Meeting to adopt the powers of an urban town.

# TOWNSHIP POWERS

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*Powers held by **all** towns include:*

- Exercise eminent domain
  - Adopt ordinances regulating dogs or domestic pets
  - Regulate gambling
  - Bond for road and bridge improvements
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# TOWNSHIP POWERS

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*Powers held by both urban towns and non-urban towns, but which require the consent of electors in non-urban towns:*

- Construction of acquisition of structures for town purposes (ex: a town hall)
  - Purchase and operate a town cemetery
  - Establish a fire department
  - Purchase and establish a town park
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# TOWNSHIP POWERS

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*Powers held by urban towns which are **not available** to non-urban towns*

- Exercise economic development authority
  - Define public nuisances and provide for their prevention or abatement
  - Vacate all or part of a public street or other public ground, without petition.
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# SCOTT COUNTY TOWNSHIPS

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- 11 townships in Scott County - \*2013 Met Council
  - Blakely (448)
  - St. Lawrence (489)
  - Belle Plaine (897)
  - Louisville (1323)
  - Jackson (1575)
  - Sand Creek (1592)
  - Helena (1771)
  - Cedar Lake (2926)
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# SCOTT COUNTY TOWNSHIPS

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- New Market (3477)
- Spring Lake (3789)
- Credit River (5432)


# Town Board Structure

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- Town board are comprised of its supervisors (elected) and a township clerk and treasurer
  - Board may have either 3 or 5 elected supervisors (New Market and Credit River)
  - Clerk and treasurer either elected or appointed (Credit River and Spring Lake)
  - Electors (residents) must approve any change in the form of government
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# Township Elections

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- Can be held in March prior to Annual Meeting or in November with federal and state general election
  - March elections: Board terms are staggered three-year terms
  - November elections: terms are staggered four-year terms
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# Annual Meeting

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- By statute -second Tuesday in March
  - Moderator selected/elected by residents – typically **not** a Board member
  - Agenda includes reports by Board members on township's business from prior year and anticipated priorities for upcoming year
  - General public may raises issues or direct board to take action on issues, but these are advisory and not binding upon the Board
  - March meeting is often continued until August/September for the purpose of setting the next year's levies. The Board establishes/presents a budget, but **electors set the levy**
  - Separate levies for General Fund, Road & Bridge, Fire & Ambulance (some towns)
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# Township Operations

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- Primary concern: construction, maintenance and improvement of town roads
  - Establishment/maintenance of town parks (Jackson, New Market, Spring Lake)
  - Managing federally mandated storm water permits (MS-4) – Louisville, Jackson, Credit River, Spring Lake)
  - Manage community septic systems (Spring Lake and Credit River)
  - Planning and Zoning authority by statute. However, all Scott County townships have delegated authority to the County, but are consulted as a “recommending body” for planning and zoning issues
  - Administration of Wetland Conservation Acts as LGU
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# Township Operations, con't

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## **Township Authority which Trumps County Authority**

- **Park Fees** – if township has a Park Plan with a related park fee, the County may not also charge a park fee for new development
- **Liquor License** – if the township supports the granting or renewal of a liquor license, the County may choose to either grant or deny the request. **However**, if township does not support the granting or renewal of liquor license, the county may not issue the license.

# Questions??

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