

## **Update: WE ARE MOVING.....**

**Work is progressing** on the former Safari Sun building at 1950 E Us Highway 10 just west of the Village of Custer. This building was purchased last May to become the Custer Township Hall.

All townships are charged with duties that require care, custody and control of public records. Since our township records are being housed at previous and current officers' homes we aren't fulfilling those duties. The point is Custer needs to provide a centralized building to conduct its business and store its documents and equipment.

Because of some budgetary changes the Board was able take out a loan to purchase the building and remodel it without asking for any new taxes. We simply repurposed existing tax dollars and applied it to an area we felt needed to be addressed.

We are hopeful that the remodel will be completed enough for the Township Board to move in before years end. We will be keeping you informed as we move through this exciting addition to Custer Township!

**Original:** Last November Ann and Larry Larr presented to the Custer Township Board an idea for consideration. That idea was to consider a building just outside of The Village limits as a possible Township Hall. The Township of Custer has been holding their meetings and elections in the building known as Village of Custer Municipal Building for a very long time.

The Village of Custer Municipal Building is a very well used building. It houses the Village government, the Village DPW, Mason County Rural Fire Authority uses this building as their central location, Custer Fire Department and Custer Township Board. There are two offices, a conference room, two restrooms and the truck bays for fire equipment and the Village DPW equipment. Not a lot of space for a lot of residents.

It wasn't until the Township started to receive the new election equipment that the storage issues really started to be felt. As a Board we discussed the possibility of adding on to the current building. But that building doesn't belong to us and every idea presented seemed as if it would interfere with other building residents.

How did we get to be a Township without a Township Hall? I have been told this was not always the case. The story the way I understand it was something like this. The Village of Custer decided to build a new village hall. I don't know if it was always the intention of the of the Village to house the fire department or not. What I have been told that the Village ran out of money before the building was complete. Apparently, the Village approached the Township and made an offer to include the Township as a resident if the Township would provide the money needed so the building could be finished. The Township agreed and in return they received ten years residency rent free. After ten years the Township pays the Village \$1,200.00 per year in rent. Very reasonable rent!

Originally the Village retained the use of one office and the Township the second one. The Fire Department has setup space in the conference room for their use. Anyone involved with a fire department knows that the State of Michigan keeps adding more and more paperwork to their duties. MCRFA compiles reports for several local departments. Because these documents need to be retained for such a long time they grow in volume rapidly.

Today the main computer of the new election equipment is stored in a central site at the Mason County Courthouse. It is very reasonable to consider that the courthouse may someday have to address storing this equipment for the townships. I have two computers, two printers, some storage bins, a four-drawer file cabinet, cemetery maps, cemetery files, election files, various ring binders and miscellaneous office supplies and a couple portable file boxes. I have things in my garage, basement, laundry room. This doesn't include things still at the previous Clerk's house. You would have to ask the Treasurer and the Supervisor how much they have in their homes.

In December after considering the idea for a month the Township Board agreed to enter into a period of fact finding. We talked to attorneys to find out if was even a legal for a township to purchase a townhall. We talked to financial entities to investigate financing options. Next up, we had to decide if we wanted to proceed to purchase the building, our answer was yes.

We negotiated a sales price and entered into an installment purchase agreement. Now we were finally ready to consider financing. Oh wait! Let's not forget while 1920 square feet is ample size to meet the Township's housing needs the building

is not configured for that purpose. We have met with two architects and a local contractor for resolve those issues.

We have decided to work with a local bank for financing. They were able to provide rates comparable to USDA without the very costly hoops required by the USDA. Since both types of financing are limited by the State of Michigan to about fifteen years the easy of financing with the bank tipped the scales in their direction. The bank has provided us a very attractive bid package.

We are working to get a better estimate of the total project costs. We have a preliminary architect drawing. Our contractor is working to prepare the remodeling bid price for us. We are looking into a few sources for office furniture. Once all is complete I think we will be able to submit that to the bank.

Our target for the sale be complete is about the beginning of May 2018.