

(continued from previous page)

there for 50 years, Gregs said. For 49 years DeVoe Road was maintained by the county and township jointly.

Werschem asserted that the prior administration had "overspent the township's revolving road fund last year by \$125,000." Further, he claimed, 20 taxpayers have complained about spending public money for "private roads" for every single "private-road" citizen asking for help.

At least eight citizens complained at the March 9 meeting that their "private roads" weren't being plowed and maintained. No one in the audience complained that these folks were wrong in asking for aid.

So I reminded Werschem that any road used by the public for 20 consecutive years is a public way, by state law.

"That is incorrect," said Werschem. Werschem's assessment — and the *Muskegon Chronicle* has editorialized praising Werschem for refusing to fund "private roads" — flies in the face of hundreds of years of common law rulings and statutes, including Michigan, where a private road may become a public way after only 10 years.

Werschem has taken the Farmer Bagley episode and stood it on its head. The problem, which he has in part correctly identified, is that half a century ago when the state wrested road control from Michigan townships and passed it to the counties, taxpaying citizens largely lost a voice in how their roads were maintained. Muskegon County has arbitrarily declared any roads it did not deem worthy of repair to be "private." The state legislature, in 1958, likewise declared that legal public rights-of-way should be termed "private," unless the counties choose to make them "public," which requires a minimum 66-foot wide right-of-way (ROW). This has caused endless confusion, since detractors repeatedly cite the supposed "private" status of these public ways to complain that their taxes are being wrongly used.

Oddly, taxpayers from both White Road and DeVoe say that their deed shows a 33-foot county ROW across their property.

MCRC's assertion that these roads are "private" — though no private citizen or group of citizens can legally claim them, evaporates like March snow when you realize that this is a battle of semantics intended only to avoid responsibility to meet the rights of taxpayers. Yet there is a solution:

1. The MCRC needs to admit that all roads that were in public use when it took control are in actual fact public. Deeded county ROWs, public records, and evidence that for years the county plows did travel down these streets, as well as the fact that houses were built prior to county control, should suffice as proof, if the matter comes to court.

2. The MCRC should at once survey and establish a legal 66-foot wide ROW on each of these roads and streets. Let's drop the silliness of calling them "private" for self-seeking purposes.

3. The MCRC must immediately commence (or recommence where roads have been maintained in the past — in one instance for 65 years, say citizens) basic road maintenance, including snowplowing, culvert replacement, and keeping boggy places filled with solid gravel.

4. Fruitport Township should aggressively pursue setting up assessment districts to bring each road up to minimum county standards for gravel surface (not sand). But citizens should not be forced to pay for asphalt on lightly-traveled streets in poorer neighborhoods. Nor should citizens be billed for plowing, since plowing must be paid out of the highway fund, like all other county roads and streets.

5. Fruitport Township should form a committee to explore making Fruitport (Village and township) a city. This would wrest road control from the MCRC and keep more tax monies at home. This is really the core of the whole problem: state and county government that are distant from citizen feedback.

Supervisor Werschem has taken a step in the right direction by promising a public meeting on the overall county road issue. He hopes to hold this March 30 in township trustee Chuck Whitlow's auditorium; details pending. Werschem wants MCRC's Ken Hulka to be present, along with Muskegon County Commissioner Marv Engle. Both men are from Fruitport.

Oh, yeah, Whitlow has had his own hassle with the undermaintained county road on which he lives. This meeting ought to be interesting. •

## Pine Rest and Mercy Health Partners announce partnership

(Submitted by Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services)

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services and Mercy Health Partners have reached an agreement for Pine Rest to manage inpatient and partial behavioral health services at the Mercy Health Partners' Hackley Campus. As part of this agreement, Pine Rest will employ or contract with the existing medical staff providing care within these programs. In addition, Katherine Jawor, DO, has agreed to become the medical director for inpatient and partial services.

Prior to the newest partnership with Pine Rest, Mercy Health Partners worked with a national behavioral health organization for the inpatient services at the Hackley Campus. That agreement was dissolved last fall.

Pine Rest and Mercy Health Partners continue to discuss options in which inpatient, partial and the outpatient services at Mercy Health Partners Life Counseling and Pine Rest clinics in Grand Haven and Muskegon can come together to provide a seamless continuum of behavioral healthcare for the community. •

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U.S. Strategy Report

## A LESSON FROM HISTORY

This picture shows annual returns from the stock market from 1926 to 2008. As you can see, the performance of the stock market this past year has been a rare event, not typical of most of our nation's history. Don't develop an investment strategy based on what has already happened or for something that rarely happens. Develop an investment strategy that will help you achieve your financial goals over the long term.

83 Years of Returns	
50% to 59%	1933, 1954
40% to 49%	1928, 1935, 1958
30% to 39%	1927, 1936, 1938, 1945, 1950, 1955, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1995, 1997
20% to 29%	1942, 1943, 1951, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1976, 1982, 1983, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2003
10% to 19%	1926, 1944, 1949, 1952, 1959, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1979, 1986, 1988, 2004, 2006
1% to 9%	1947, 1948, 1956, 1960, 1970, 1978, 1984, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2005, 2007
0%	
-1% to -9%	1929, 1932, 1934, 1939, 1940, 1946, 1953, 1962, 1969, 1977, 1981, 1990, 2000
-10% to -19%	1941, 1957, 1966, 1973, 2001
-20% to -29%	1930, 1974, 2002
-30% to -39%	1937, 2008 (-37%)
-40% to -49%	1931

59 positive (71%)  
24 negative (29%)

Source: Ibbotson. S&P 500 returns from 1926 - 2008. Returns include reinvested dividends. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged index and cannot be invested in directly. Taxes and commissions not included. Past performance is not an indication of future results.

Furnished by:  
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