

# CASCADE

## CONNECTIONS

Cascade Charter Township Newsletter  
November / December 2024





Grace Lesperance

# SUPERVISOR UPDATE

## Land Use & Zoning

### If You Fail to Plan—You Plan to Fail

Dear Cascadians,

Few communities offer the unique character and natural beauty of Cascade while being so close to a vibrant city with first-class amenities.

As one of the most desirable places to live and do business in West Michigan, Cascade faces intense pressures for growth and development. This intense pressure for rapid growth is not unique to Cascade, but unlike many suburban Grand Rapids communities, the die is not yet cast in Cascade.

As many successful communities have experienced—and a myriad of economic development studies have documented—*the best places to live, work, invest, and visit are those communities that are willing to uphold their standards in the face of pressure to allow the lowest common denominator development.* Successful communities consistently find that when they resist development that diminishes the health or character of their community, they encourage—and get—better development.

*The Township's leadership and staff are committed and working hard to ensure that development in Cascade enhances our residents' quality of life and preserves Cascade's character.* In this letter, I would like to highlight a current issue regarding land use around the airport.

**ISSUES & CHALLENGES:** Unrelated to its aeronautical operations, Gerald R. Ford Intl. Airport Authority desires to expand non-aeronautical industrial development—extending the warehouses, storage centers, and parking lots currently surrounding the west side of the airport—to the north, south, and east sides of the airport in Cascade. In fact, in its 2023 Airport Access Study, the Grand Valley Metro Council, in partnership with the Airport Authority, actually called for multiple new express way on/off ramps in Cascade Township—in anticipation of unregulated development in the impacted areas.

Such development would drastically change the orientation of the impacted areas and the neighborhoods east of the airport, as well as the Thornapple River.

The Gerald R. Ford Intl. Airport is an asset to Cascade and West Michigan. The Township however, cannot allow the Airport Authority to have unrestricted and unilateral authority over non-aeronautical land uses.

**BEST PRACTICES:** To preserve residents’ property values and quality of life, the Board adopted a new Master Plan earlier this year. It prioritizes smart growth that compliments and enhances safety, quality of life, and residential property values throughout all of Cascade. This Master Plan also exercises the Township’s authority to regulate nonaeronautical property uses in and around the airport.

**A CHALLENGE TO LOCAL ZONING:** Unfortunately, the Airport Authority responded to Cascade’s new Master Plan by filing a lawsuit against Cascade Township, alleging the Township has no authority to regulate development of *any* property owned or leased by the Airport Authority, even that which is completely unrelated to airport operations. Earlier this month, the Airport Authority unexpectedly prevailed in Kent County Circuit Court, taking the stance that *any* property owned or leased by the Airport Authority is *entirely* exempt from *any* local zoning or land use restrictions, *including storm water management*.

While we respect the Kent County Circuit Court Judge’s ruling, it is unprecedented. By eliminating any reasonable local regulation of non-aeronautical activities, it creates a loop hole for the establishment of a variety of activities completely *unrelated* to airport operations. As we did when the Airport Authority refused to accept responsibility for remediating PFAS contamination of roughly 400 homes in Cascade, we are pursuing further legal options.

We remain eager to work with the Airport Authority to equitably balance the Authority’s ability to successfully serve as a gateway to West Michigan with Cascade’s ability to successfully protect its residents’ homes, neighborhoods, safety, and quality of life.

**A PERSONAL INVITATION TO BE INVOLVED:** Please allow this note to serve as a personal invitation to attend our Board of Trustee meetings—in person or virtually.

All Board of Trustee, Planning Commission, and Downtown Development Authority meetings are recorded in full and posted on the Township’s website so residents can watch at their convenience.

Remember—in addition to regular business hours—I have “after hour” office hours the **first Thursday of each month from 6 - 7 pm** in the History Room of the Cascade Library.

It is an honor to serve as your Supervisor and fight on your behalf. I look forward to hearing from you!

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**Grace Lesperance**

Supervisor

Cascade Charter Township

glesperance@cascadetwp.com

616-949-1500



Sue Slater

# FROM THE CLERK

## Election Day is here!

If you have not already voted by absentee ballot or at our early voting site, be sure to vote at your precinct on November 5. Scan the QR code below to find your precinct by address using the Michigan Voter Information Center (MVIC) website.

Early voting will conclude on Sunday, November 3, and the last day to issue absentee ballots is Monday, November 4. You may also drop off your absentee ballot at either of our secure ballot boxes located at the Township Office at 5920 Tahoe Drive SE or at the Cascade Library parking lot at 2870 Jacksmith Ave SE until 8 pm on Election Day.

If you voted by absentee ballot, those ballots will be tabulated on Election Day. If you participated in early voting, your ballot was already cast in the tabulator. All results will be generated on Election Night.

In other news, now that the election is nearly over, availability for passport processing has increased. Appointments must be scheduled in advance on our website, [cascadetwp.com](http://cascadetwp.com). There are a few different options available for renewals, either by mail or online; please visit our website for details.

Contact the Clerk's Office with any questions at 616-949-1508.



## FIND YOUR PRECINCT

Not sure where to go?  
Scan here to find your precinct using MVIC.



### PRECINCT 1

Forest Hills Admin. Building  
6590 Cascade Road SE

### PRECINCT 6

Cascade Christian Church  
Centennial Hall  
2829 Thornapple River Drive

### PRECINCT 2

Cascade Fellowship  
Christian Reformed Church  
6655 Cascade Road SE

### PRECINCT 7

Cascade Library Wisner Center  
2870 Jacksmith Avenue SE

### PRECINCT 3

Cascade Fellowship  
Christian Reformed Church  
6655 Cascade Road SE

### PRECINCT 8

Thornapple Community Reformed  
3260 Thornapple River Drive  
(at Thornhills)

### PRECINCT 4

Buttrick Fire Station  
2990 Buttrick Avenue SE

### PRECINCT 9

Cascade Library Wisner Center  
2870 Jacksmith Avenue SE

### PRECINCT 5

Ada Bible Church  
8899 Cascade Road SE  
(South Entrance)

### PRECINCT 10

Ada Bible Church  
8899 Cascade Road SE  
(West Entrance)



Windy Korstange

# FROM THE TREASURER

## Fiscal Year 2025 Budget: Financial Accountability

At its October 23 meeting, the Board of Trustees approved Cascade Charter Township’s FY 2025 Budget, following a public hearing on October 9. The \$22.8 million budget includes \$5.7 million for capital improvements, ensuring the Township can continue providing quality services throughout 2025.

This final step followed a months-long process led by Manager Jade Smith, Finance & Budget Director Lorna Nenciarini, and the Personnel & Finance Committee (Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Treasurer Windy Korstange, and Trustee Timmy Noordhoek), which involved reviewing all Township funds, expenses, revenue, and internal process controls. The budget complies with state law, balancing 2025 expenses and revenues without depleting fund balances.

Notably, the FY 2025 budget maintains reductions in administrative costs, continuing the \$500,000 reduction of non-essential operating expenses from the previous year.



— “ —  
*This budget emphasizes efficiency, public safety, natural space preservation, and village improvements. We're especially pleased with the fresh perspectives of Manager Smith and Director Nenciarini, highlighting best practices and transparency.*  
—Trustee Timmy Noordhoek

Visit [cascadetwp.com/financials](http://cascadetwp.com/financials) to view the complete FY 2025 budget, as well as past budgets, audits, and financial statements.

## Winter Tax Info

Winter tax bills will be mailed at the end of November and can be paid starting December 1, 2024. Payments are due by February 14, 2025, to avoid penalties. If you don't receive your bill, check online at [cascadetwp.com](http://cascadetwp.com) (instructions below) or contact the Treasurer’s Office at 616-949-6944.

For mailed payments, please allow seven days for delivery—postmarks aren’t accepted. Be sure to include a phone number on your check. An informational letter with payment options and an E-Z pay application will be included with your bill.

Tax info is available 24/7 at [cascadetwp.com](http://cascadetwp.com):

- Click **Property/Parcel Lookup** on the homepage.
- From there, select **Property/Parcel Lookup Tool**, which opens a new window where you can enter your address. You can also search by name or parcel number using the drop-down menu.
- Double-click your **Selected Parcel** to view details in the **Tax Information** tab.

On **March 1, 2025**, all unpaid real property taxes will be forwarded to the Kent County Treasurer’s Office for collection.

## Assessing Tools

Assessing staff is available for assistance from 7 am – 4 pm, Monday through Thursday and 8 am – 12 pm on Friday at 616-949-6176.

Assessing tools are available 24/7 at [cascadetwp.com](http://cascadetwp.com) and [accesskent.com](http://accesskent.com).

### **cascadetwp.com:**

- Online Property/Parcel Lookup
- Assessing Forms
- Residential Sales by Neighborhood
- Residential Property Characteristic Report by Address
- Residential Land Studies

### **accesskent.com:**

- Kent County Register of Deeds Document Search
- Property Search with Mapping
- Parcel Viewer (iMap)

# Public Space Concept Plans



# Reimagining Cascade: Public Space Enhancements Along the Thornapple River

Cascade's community is set to embark on an exciting new chapter as plans for significant public space improvements along the Thornapple River come to life. These enhancements are designed to not only celebrate the natural beauty of the area, but also to promote a vibrant community that fosters connection, recreation, and enrichment for residents of all ages.

The vision for these enhancements was crafted by OHM, an architecture, engineering, and planning firm contracted by Cascade's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Township. OHM built on the Township's Strategic Plan and a series of public meetings held throughout the planning process. Residents are now invited to view the draft concepts, consider how they fit within the overall community, and provide feedback. This collaborative approach ensures that the improvements resonate with the desires and values of Cascade residents. Please visit [cascadetwp.com/projects](http://cascadetwp.com/projects) to view all of the concepts.

The creation of inviting public spaces that encourage outdoor activities and community gatherings is at the heart of these improvements. New walking trails and natural gathering areas will wind along the riverbank, offering residents scenic views, tranquil picnic spots, and multi-use public spaces.

The demolition of the aging Tuffy Building will pave the way for new, more functional spaces. In its place, plans are in motion to repurpose the old doctor's office into a community space available for a wide range of activities, enhancing residents' quality of life.

A standout feature of this project is the potential development of a new multi-purpose building. This facility will serve as a hub for community events, educational workshops, and recreational programs. With flexible spaces for art classes, fitness programs, and local meetings, the building aims to be a versatile asset that can adapt to the needs of the community. This space may host events, such as artisan markets and seasonal festivals, further enhancing community heritage.

## Reimagining Cascade cont'd

The park improvements are designed to cater to the diverse needs of Cascade residents. Passive play areas provide safe, engaging spaces for children, while green spaces will offer outdoor wellness classes. Quiet areas for relaxation and contemplation will ensure that everyone can find their own piece of tranquility amid the community buzz.

These transformative projects enhance the physical landscape of Cascade but also cultivate a sense of pride among residents. As the community comes together to enjoy these new amenities, relationships will flourish, creating stronger, more connected neighborhoods. Community involvement is encouraged throughout the planning and implementation phases, ensuring that the final concept reflects the desires and values of all residents.

It is important to keep in mind that, as Cascade Township invests in these improvements along the Thornapple River, the concepts also show major changes to private properties in the village. These changes are purely conceptual and will not occur unless private property owners redevelop their sites. Traffic pattern changes are also proposed to address ongoing safety concerns in the area. These changes will be coordinated with and contingent on approval from MDOT and the Kent County Road Commission. These enhancements strive to elevate the quality of life for residents of all ages, fostering an environment where everyone can thrive.

By encouraging public and private investments, OHM's concepts aim to preserve Cascade's character and create spaces for shared experiences. We aren't just reimagining Cascade's parks; we're investing in a brighter, more connected future for our community. As plans develop and residents come together to share their visions, the revitalization of Cascade will reflect the spirit of collaboration and pride that defines this cherished community.

## From Grass to Gardens: Exciting Upgrades in Our Parks

Have you noticed some grass missing from Friendship Park? This change is part of an exciting effort to enhance our community spaces! The Cascade Township Library is making way for new native plantings, which are essential for supporting local wildlife and improving the environment.



Rendering of the wildflower plantings surrounding the Cascade Library Sign, provided by Native Edge, LLC.



Phase I of updating the Virgil Nishimura Westdale Memorial Park is now complete, thanks to the helping hands of Kent County Garden Club!

Additionally, renovations are underway at Virgil Nishimura Westdale Memorial Park, focusing on the areas surrounding the historic Township Hall. Kent County Garden Club partnered with the Township to create a Victorian-style garden that aligns with the historical context of the museum. This project will remove concrete and replace it with period-appropriate plantings, offering a more inviting atmosphere for visitors. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) supports these improvements, which will be maintained by volunteers and Township staff to ensure lasting beauty.

For more updates on our park projects and community initiatives, visit [cascadetwp.com/projects](https://cascadetwp.com/projects).

## Christmas Tree Recycling

December 26, 2024 - January 10, 2025



Dumpsters are made available for the public to dispose of Christmas trees after the holidays.

### Location:

On the rear side of Fire Station #2, located at Buttrick and 30th Street

**REMINDER:** Bagged yard waste pick-up for residents in the restricted burn area (west of Buttrick Ave. and north of I-96) is every Monday from Oct. 14 -Dec. 2.



Winter holidays bring families together but also increase fire risks. By following a few simple safety tips, you can ensure a joyful and fire-safe season.

### In the Kitchen

Stay in the kitchen while cooking and keep children and pets 3 feet away from hot surfaces. Clear the floor to prevent tripping, and store knives, cords, and matches out of reach.

### Holiday Entertaining

Test smoke alarms by hitting the test button and share your home's fire escape plan with guests. Keep matches and lighters stored safely out of reach. Ask smokers to smoke outside and provide deep ashtrays. Be sure to wet cigarette butts before discarding.

### Decorating Safely

Choose flame-resistant or flame-retardant decorations and keep candles away from flammable materials. Follow instructions for hanging lights and avoid using nails that can damage cords.

### Quick Facts

Thanksgiving is the leading day for home fires involving cooking.

One-third of home decoration fires are started by candles; keep decorations away from heat sources.

For more holiday fire-safety tips, please visit [NFPA.org](https://www.nfpa.org).

adapted from:



**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**  
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards

**Cascade Township Fire Department**

Fire Station 1 | 616-949-1320

Fire Station 2 | 616-259-7020

# LIBRARY NEWS

The Cascade Township Library offers a wealth of daily and weekly programming designed to engage and inspire our community throughout the holiday season! Here's just a taste of what's coming up, but be sure to check the library's website at [kdl.org](http://kdl.org) for a full list of events and details.

## Care Ballet presents 'Twas the Night Before Christmas

Saturday, November 23 at 3:30 pm

## Let It Snow Reading Challenge

Starts December 2

For teens & adults. Cozy up with six books from different categories, and you'll earn a special mug to enjoy all your winter reads. It's the perfect way to stay warm and dive into some great books this season. To sign up or for more information visit [kdl.org/snow](http://kdl.org/snow).

## Holiday Shopping with Reindeer

Monday, December 2 from 5 - 7pm



Image courtesy of Rooftop Reindeer

Discover unique, handmade holiday gifts created by talented young artists in our community. From ornaments and jewelry to artwork and home decor, there's something for everyone. There will also be reindeer to pet and learn about from a local reindeer farm.

## Sled Dogs

Monday, December 9 at 6 pm

## Craft and Create

Monday, December 9 at 6:30 pm

## Gingerbread Lane

Tuesday, December 10 at 10 am

## Countdown to Happy Noon Year!

Tuesday, December 31 at 11 am

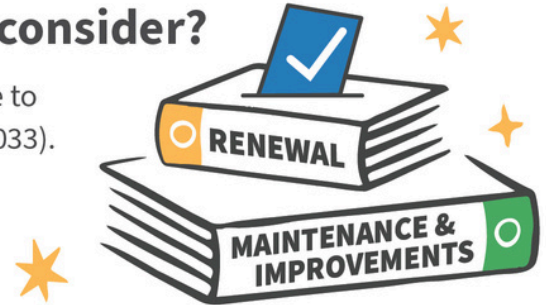


# Cascade Library and Wisner Center Millage Renewal FAQs

## What are Cascade voters being asked to consider?

Approve a renewal millage of **0.15 mills, adjusted 0.0021 mills** due to the Headlee Amendment that expired in 2023, for ten years (2024-2033).

This funding will support **essential operational and building maintenance needs** for the Kent District Library (KDL) - Cascade Township Branch and Wisner Center.



## What is a mill?

A mill is equal to \$1.00 for every \$1,000 of taxable value of a property. Traditionally, a mill is defined as 1/1000 of a dollar, or 0.001 cents.

## How much will it cost?

For a home valued at \$480,000, it will cost approximately \$36 per year under the renewed millage. This is **only a 50-cent increase** from the \$35.50 per year that homeowner paid under the expired millage.

## What will the millage pay for?

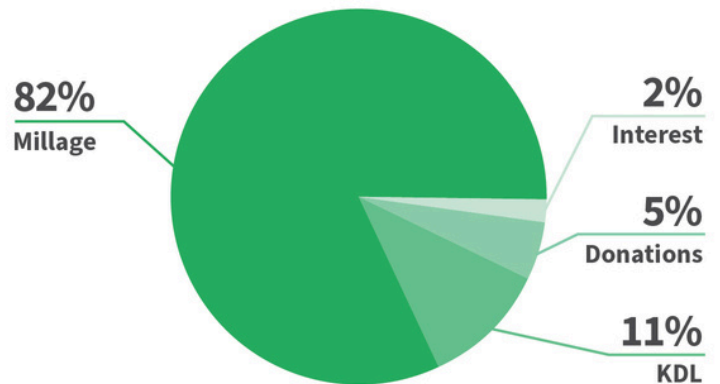
The millage will cover **essential maintenance and operational costs** for the KDL - Cascade Township Branch and Wisner Center, such as utilities, janitorial services, and overall building upkeep. It will also fund critical infrastructure updates, parking lot and underground infrastructure, HVAC improvements and a long-planned \$1.5 million remodel starting in 2025, which aims to enhance the facility for expanded community use. A portion of the revenue may be captured by the Cascade Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

If approved, the millage is expected to generate approximately **\$330,000** in its first year.

## How does this differ from the millage approved in August?

The previous county-wide millage covered **library operations** for the Kent District Library system, while this one focuses on **building maintenance, operational costs and improvements** of the Township-owned KDL - Cascade Branch and Wisner Center building.

## How is the KDL - Cascade Township Branch and Wisner Center building funded?



About **82% of the library's building operations and maintenance** is funded through the millage. The remaining funds come from a small contribution from KDL, donations and interest.

## What happens if the millage is voted down?

The KDL - Cascade Township Branch would **lose significant funding for building operations and maintenance**, severely impacting its ability to provide services. Additionally, the planned renovation and infrastructure upgrades to modernize the library would likely not move forward without this funding.



Scan here for  
more information

[cascadetwp.com/projects](https://cascadetwp.com/projects)

# “Michigan Fever” Comes to Cascade



1831 Cascade Township Survey Map

Michigan officially became a United States territory in 1805, but its population began to flourish after the War of 1812. With the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, “Michigan Fever” took hold, and by the 1830s, the territory was experiencing one of the fastest growth rates in the nation.

Cascade's history aligns with this trend, as many early settlers hailed from upstate New York (Lewis Cook, Horace Sears, Hiram Laraway, Frederick Marsh), Vermont (Erie Prince), and Massachusetts (Edmund Gove). Jefferson Morrison, a speculator from Saratoga County, NY also made his mark here. As these settlers—and others from places such as Ohio (the Whitneys) and Ireland (Edward Linen, James May, the Eardleys)—visited the Land Office in Ionia to purchase their land, they encountered survey maps that noted the size and location of available properties.

## About Cascade Historical Society

The Cascade Historical Society meets the first Thursday of each month (except July) at 10:00 am in the old Township Hall at 2839 Thornapple River Drive SE.

### Curious about local history?

The Society is creating a searchable database featuring more than 5,600 records, which includes photographs and family histories. You can explore this collection at [accessionary.com](http://accessionary.com) under the Cascade Historical Society.

Digitized editions of Suburban Life, a local newspaper from the late 1950s and 1960s, can be found at [archives.kdl.org/Suburban/](http://archives.kdl.org/Suburban/) or search by keyword at [accessionary.com](http://accessionary.com).

### Questions?

Email [cascadehistory@yahoo.com](mailto:cascadehistory@yahoo.com).



Presented by the Cascade Community Foundation

## YOU'RE INVITED

The Tributes & Triumphs Awards represents Cascade Community Foundation's marquee annual event designed to celebrate five honorees for their extraordinary impact in community philanthropy. This year, our theme incorporates the popular game show “Deal or No Deal.”

Enjoy an unforgettable studio experience for you and your guests as we eat, drink and make deals for amazing prizes. Tickets and sponsorship information available at [ccf.events](http://ccf.events).

Attire: Sneaker Chic with Gold

NOVEMBER 21, 2024 | 6:00 PM

Watermark Country Club



100% of funds go to Cascade Community Foundation

[www.CCF.events](http://www.CCF.events) | [justin@CCF.events](mailto:justin@CCF.events) | (616) 499-8122



# Board of Trustees



## Grace Lesperance (Supervisor)

616-949-1500 | glesperance@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Downtown Development Authority, Parks, PFAS Advisory, Pathways, Strategic Plan Implementation, Personnel & Finance, Infrastructure, Village Design Review



## Sue Slater (Clerk)

616-949-1508 | sslater@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Election Commission, Governance



## Windy Korstange (Treasurer)

616-949-6944 | wkorstange@cascadetwp.com

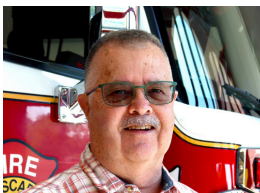
Committees: Strategic Plan Implementation, Personnel & Finance, Village Design Review



## Timmy Noordhoek (Trustee)

tnoordhoek@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Planning Commission, Personnel & Finance, Public Safety Advisory



## John Shipley (Trustee)

jshipley@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Infrastructure, Public Safety Advisory, Thornapple River SAD, Strategic Plan Implementation



## Tom McDonald (Trustee)

tmcdonald@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Zoning Board of Appeals, Infrastructure, Election Commission



## Jim Koessel (Trustee)

jkoessel@cascadetwp.com

Committees: Public Safety Advisory, Election Commission

# Contact Us

## Jade Smith

### Township Manager

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### Assessor

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jgenter@cascadetwp.com

## Andrea Hendrick

### Community Planning & Dev. Director

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## Adam Magers

### Fire Chief

616-949-1320  
amagers@cascadetwp.com

## Katie Murawski

### Human Resource Director

616-949-1500  
kmurawski@cascadetwp.com

## Lorna Nenciarini

### Finance Director

616-949-1500  
lnenciarini@cascadetwp.com

## Aric Thorne

### Township Engineer

616-949-1500  
athorne@cascadetwp.com

## Brian Wilson

### Building Inspections

616-949-3765  
bwilson@cascadetwp.com

## Dan Zwick

### Parks & Facilities Director

616-949-1500  
dzwick@cascadetwp.com

## Sheriff /

### Non-Emergency Dispatch

616-336-3113

## Kate Chase

### Community Policing Officer

616-430-7811  
katherine.chase@kentcountymi.gov

## Omar Dieppa

### Community Policing Officer

616-632-6435  
omar.dieppa@kentcountymi.gov

## Welcome New Parks & Facilities Director, Dan Zwick!

With eight years of experience at Holland Charter Township, Dan brings a renewed focus on enhancing community engagement through diverse activities and programming. His goal is to create inviting, accessible spaces that foster connections and strengthen the Cascade community.





PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT NO. 657

## Cascade Charter Township

5920 Tahoe Drive SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49456  
616.949.1500  
cascadetwp.com

### Township Office Hours

- Mon – Thu: 7 am – 4 pm
- Friday: 8 am – 12 pm

### Closed:

- Thanksgiving Day (November 28)
- Day After Thanksgiving (November 29)
- Christmas Eve (December 24)
- Christmas Day (December 25)
- New Year's Eve (December 31)
- New Year's Day (January 1)

# CELEBRATE THE SEASON

**Cascade Tree Lighting Ceremony  
December 1, 2024**

**2839 Thornapple Drive**

Mark your calendars and bring your family to Cascade's historic Township Hall for our annual Tree Lighting Ceremony!

Enjoy the holiday spirit as Santa takes time from his busy schedule to greet everyone.

Santa will arrive courtesy of the Cascade Township Fire Department.

