

the review

July/August 2015

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

VILLAGE OF SEBEWAING IS MICHIGAN'S FIRST GIGABIT COMMUNITY!

Code for America
Mobile Apps
Bay City Live Chat
Sustainable Southfield

+ Convention 2015 Preview

**"We hope this
puts Sebewaing
on the map
as a leader in
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notch technology
to residents and
businesses."**

**-Village President
Alex Khoury**

GENERAL INFORMATION

HOW CAN I REGISTER?

Online

All credit card payments are to be completed online via My League (mml.org). My League is your secure, interactive online League account. It's available to all members and nonmembers, with a quick and easy sign-up process.

Via Printable Form

Visit mml.org to download and print a faxable registration form. Complete and fax to 734-669-4223, then mail with check payable to: Michigan Municipal League, PO Box 7409, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

HOUSING & TRAVEL

Host Hotel

Park Place Hotel, 300 E. State St.
Traverse City, MI 49684
Phone: 231-946-5000
Standard: \$129.95/night

Overflow Hotel

West Bay Beach—a Holiday Inn Resort
615 E. Front St, Traverse City, MI 49686
Phone: 231-947-3700
Single/Double: \$139/night
Triple: \$149/night; Quad: \$159/night

Group room rate cutoff is August 17 (West Bay) and August 25 (Park Place) at 5:00 pm (EST). Hotel rate is subject to applicable state and local taxes (currently 11%).

Reservation Process

Housing reservations will only be accepted for those who have registered for Convention. After registering for Convention, a confirmation email will be sent to you within 48 hours. The confirmation email will contain your registration information and your personalized housing registration code. The hotel requires that you provide your personalized code in order to make reservations during the League's Annual Convention.

We're excited to hold our Annual Convention in downtown Traverse City for the first time! The city has a delightfully walkable downtown, and that's just what you'll get to experience this year. Bring comfortable shoes as sessions will be held at several locations within a few blocks of the Park Place Hotel. We'll also provide shuttle service for those who prefer that mode of transportation.

Host City Reception

Wednesday, September 16, 6-8 pm, Open Space

Relax and enjoy an evening along the shores of Lake Michigan on West Grand Traverse Bay in the heart of Downtown Traverse City for a taste of the region's culinary and agricultural offerings. Come see why Traverse City is consistently voted as one of America's most charming small towns!

Parade of Flags Waves Goodbye

Our members have traditionally shown their community pride at Convention in the Parade of Flags. This year, we have something new in store. So keep your flags at home and keep your eyes open at Convention.

SPONSOR THE CONVENTION

Sponsoring the Annual Convention provides you with a unique opportunity to communicate with professionals from local government. When becoming our sponsor, we will do our utmost to satisfy your needs for involvement and exposure. Are you looking for networking and relationship building? Presentation opportunities? Company branding? Contact Terri Murphy at 734-669-6342 or tmurphy@mml.org for more information.

FOUNDATION FUNDRAISING

Tavern Tour

Wednesday, September 16, 8:30 pm / Cost: \$25

What better way to experience downtown Traverse City than enjoying a cocktail with your League family? This fundraiser will feature several of the outstanding downtown taverns complete with a chance to win prizes at the final destination. Join your League colleagues in exploring downtown while helping raise money for your foundation!

Michigan Wine Tasting and Tour

Thursday, September 17, 6:00 pm / Cost: \$100

The Traverse City region has become internationally known for its wine. As a matter of fact the Old Mission Peninsula sits on the globe's 45th parallel, ideal for growing wine grapes. Join us at the stunning Chateau Chantal winery for a strolling dinner and a tour of the winery while enjoying one of the Old Mission Peninsula's best locations. It's the perfect way to spend the last night of the Convention!

MICHIGAN'S FIRST GIGABIT COMMUNITY

Optic Network Positions Sebewaing at the Technological Forefront

By Lisa Donovan

Ziplining, swimming, and singing around the campfire are all part of the fun at faith-based Bay Shore Camp. But even as families are communing with God and nature and enjoying the camaraderie of fellow campers, their electronic devices are never far away.

As many as 700 Family Campers—and 3,000 guests at gospel concerts—want to text, email, and download videos as easily at the sprawling camp in the thumb community of Sebewaing as they do at home. Staffers, too, rely heavily on the Internet for everything from online registration to ordering food and supplies.

Jeff Parsons, executive director of the 100-year-old camp, was aware that their 100-megabit service from Comcast wasn't really doing the trick. So when Melanie McCoy, superintendent of Sebewaing Light and Water, told him that Sebewaing was now Michigan's first gigabit community and he could get the new fiber gigabit Internet service for only \$10 per month more, Parsons was hooked. Fast forward to February 20, when local, state, and federal representatives came to camp to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for Sebewaing's first gigabit business customer.

"The speed is remarkable," said Parsons. "We need to support WiFi service for cell phones, notebooks, laptops, and a whole host of devices over a 40-acre campground. It's been doing remarkably well handling the volume we have."

Getting Up to Speed

Gigabit service is approximately 100 times faster than the average high-speed Internet connection. At that speed, connections can handle multiple streams of large-format, high-definition content like online video calls, movies, and interactive educational experiences.

In 2013, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski issued the Gigabit City Challenge to bring at least one gigabit community to every state by 2015. He cited the ability of gigabit communities to spur innovators to create new businesses and industries, spark connectivity among citizens and services, and incentivize investment in high-tech industries. Sebewaing's gigabit service brings the U.S. one step closer to reaching that goal.

Indeed, economic development was one of the primary drivers for Sebewaing's construction of a fiber optic network. "We've lost some manufacturing jobs," said McCoy. "Companies of the future are small businesses that will benefit from a fiber network. We hope to wear out the big ribbon-cutting scissors."

Other small towns have already experienced tremendous gains from building a fiber network. Lafayette, Louisiana is



one of those towns, says Mike Watza, principal attorney for the Kitch firm in Detroit, who helped Sebewaing navigate all the telecommunications laws and regulations. Disney Pixar Studios was impressed enough with Lafayette's new fiber system to build a brand-new studio there.

"There's a huge advantage to having this type of service," said Khoury. "We hope this puts Sebewaing on the map as a leader in providing top-notch technology to residents and businesses."

Why a Municipal Internet System?

As valuable as Sebewaing's fiber system is to the community, it still raises an interesting question. Why is a municipality building such a system when private companies like AT&T and Comcast exist for that purpose? According to Watza, the answer lies in the monopoly those companies hold on the industry and their ability to neutralize government regulators. They tend to build only as much fiber as they have to. Small communities like Sebewaing are usually not on their radar.

"Their real incentive is that they're making tons of money with the old system," said Watza. "Unless we force them to do something, they won't."

Laying the Groundwork

For several years, Sebewaing's Light & Water Department had shared a T1 line, and then a fiber system, with a few local businesses. But neither system serviced residents who were clamoring for something better than the slow DSL service that was offered by the area's Internet providers.

In 2010, Sebewaing set out on a quest to find the best option for providing high-speed Internet that would benefit current and future residents and businesses. The answer turned out to be a Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) system, constructed by the village at a cost of \$1.5 million. The Light and Water Department had sufficient funds to loan to the village, so they were able to avoid the expense and risk of a bond. Village President Alexander Khoury credited the Light and Water Department with planning ten years ahead. "Technology is always changing," he said. "You have to take that into consideration."

The community's appetite for high-speed Internet was clear. More than 200 people were on the waiting list for installation before the system became operational in the fall. Price was certainly one of the appealing factors as the Light and Water Department had a goal of offering cheaper, faster service than the competition.

"One of the advantages of a municipal system is the value we bring to the community," said McCoy. "If we can provide electricity or Internet cheaper than other services, then that's more money that people can spend somewhere else in the community."

Their philosophy is reflected in their rate structure. Residential fiber Internet is available for \$35/month for 30-megabits up to \$160/month for 1-gigabit. Business packages start at \$75/month for 50-megabits, with customized pricing for 1-gigabit service.

Financial projections were based on connecting fifty percent of the village's residents and businesses to the new fiber system—about 500 customers. Almost 400 have already signed up, so they expect to reach their goal by the end of the year. At that rate, the village anticipates being able to pay for the project in 7-8 years.

"Everyone loves it," said Khoury. "That's the only subject I can bring up and always get positive comments."

James Jackson is one of those satisfied customers. He needs fast, reliable Internet for a variety of devices as well as for Extra Life, an online video game marathon that raises millions of dollars for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

"I love the service," said Jackson. "The bandwidth is very helpful for streaming video. This year, for the first time, I didn't have any problems for the whole 24 hours." 

Lisa Donovan is the communications coordinator for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6318 or ldonovan@mml.org

[FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski cited the ability of gigabit communities to spur innovators to create new businesses and industries, spark connectivity among citizens and services, and incentivize investment in high-tech industries.]



From top to bottom: 1. Ribbon cutting ceremony at Bay Shore Camp, Sebewaing's first gigabit business customer. 2. (left) Superintendent of Water and Light Melanie McCoy and (right) Village President Alex Khoury. 3. Pete Smith at the gigabit server. 4. Bay Shore campers