



Title: **Take time to learn about township government**  
 Author:  
 Size: 28.83 square inch  
 Carlinville, IL Circulation: 4805

GUEST COLUMNIST

# Take time to learn about township government

Although I have lived in Carlinville township since 1970, I recently realized that I do not know very much about its operation. Yet it is a unit of local government that impacts our lives both directly and indirectly.

The Carlinville Township meets the last Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. at their office at 233 West Main Street in Carlinville. If you are employed full time and or raising a family you probably don't have the time or energy to look into such things. I didn't until I retired and now have the leisure to do so.

In my opinion the best functioning of democracy herein the United States is dependent upon an informed voter. I have undertaken to look into the form and functioning of my local township government and share my findings.

So what is a township? A

township can be described in two ways: a unit of surveying (survey township), and a unit of local government (civil township). Typically the survey township preceded the civil township. Both usually contain the same area: six square miles comprised of 36 sections each, one mile square.

This was the surveying system used by the U.S. government after it acquired the Northwest Territory from England after the Revolutionary War. The Northwest Territory included what are now the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and part of the state of Minnesota. The U.S. government sold these surveyed units of land at auction to raise money for its treasury.

This brings us to townships in the state of Illinois. There are 1,431 civil townships in Illinois functioning in 82 of its counties. Seventeen counties have no civil

township with the nearest being Calhoun, Morgan, Scott and Menard counties.

Macoupin County has 26 civil townships, 22 being six miles square and four being six miles by three miles. These four are Virden, Girard, Mt. Olive and Staunton townships. Carlinville township contains 35.37 square miles. Its boundaries are Lampe Road on the west, Hettick Road on the north, Nursery Road on the east and Barnett and Rinaker Roads on the south.

The 2010 census reported its populations at 6,605. After the state of Illinois was established in 1818, the constitution gave each county the opportunity to adopt civil government in its survey townships. It is written that by 1850, the first civil townships began functioning in Illinois. The earliest recorded civil government operation in Carlinville township was a meeting of township road and bridge commissioners in 1885.



NORM SEMROCK