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SPORTS, 1B

# Laketown Twp. preparing to enforce compost vote

**Mitchell Boatman**  
Holland Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK

After voting to terminate composting operations at 4368 60th St. in Laketown Township, officials have set aside up to \$25,000 for a potential legal battle to enforce the decision.

The Laketown Township Planning Commission voted June 3 to “terminate” the operation by Cocoa Corp. on property owned by Republic Services. The site is believed to be the source of intense foul odors that have generated numerous resident complaints and a citation from the state.

The Laketown Township Board voted unanimously in favor of the financial allocation June 10. The motion also ordered an interview of potential alterna-

tive attorneys by Supervisor Steven Ringelberg and Manager Stephanie Fox.

Currently, the municipality and the property’s owner are represented by attorneys from the same office: Dickinson Wright of Grand Rapids. All parties have agreed that — because they share the same goal of ending operations from Cocoa Corp. — there is no conflict of interest.

Ringelberg, himself a lawyer, noted a court order will likely be needed to enforce the planners’ decision and the lapsed business agreement between Republic and Cocoa. He also voiced the need for “backup counsel” in case the parties reach a point where they no longer share a common goal.

“If, at any point in time, we become

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After voting to terminate composting operations at 4368 60th St. in Laketown Township, officials have set aside up to \$25,000 for a potential legal battle to enforce the decision. PROVIDED BY JIM HAYDEN/LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP



Tim Johnson poses for a portrait inside Operation Laundry on June 11. ADAM VANDER KOOY/HOLLAND SENTINEL

# Operation Laundry opens with focus on clean, comfort

**Austin Metz**  
Holland Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Operation Laundry has officially opened in Holland, finalizing a dream for veteran Tim Johnson.

Johnson, who previously served in the Air Force, intended the business at 1012 Washington Ave. (the former Charcoal Grill Brazilian Steakhouse) to be

the “Buc-ee’s of Laundromats.”

“It’s all new,” Johnson said. “It’s safer, cleaner, easy to use, accessible, family-friendly and it’s quiet. We are 15 pounds lighter when the clothes come out of the washer, because all the water is out of them.”

The laundromat opened June 1, with 39 washing machines and 43 dryers capable of cleaning up to eight loads (80 pounds of clothes) at once.

Johnson prioritized cleanliness both inside and around the building, and his machines give users the capability to wash and dry their clothes in just 40 minutes. The business also offers pick-up and delivery, dry cleaning and commercial services.

The site has all-new restrooms, a children’s area with toys and a television,

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# Saugatuck FD takes huge step toward new station

**Austin Metz**  
Holland Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A major construction project that would relocate operations for the Saugatuck Fire Department received site plan approval during a meeting of the Douglas Planning Commission on June 11.

The department hopes to renovate an existing 6,612-square-foot office space and construct an 8,370-square-foot apparatus garage addition at 415 Wiley Road, which is already home to a medical care practice, Douglas City Hall and the Douglas Downtown Development Authority.

The addition will include four bays that can house up to eight trucks.

The Saugatuck Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency

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# Car owners can protect against theft

Cassidey Kavathas  
Holland Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Ottawa County Sheriff’s Office recently provided advice on how to protect your vehicle from theft, following several recent posts on the subject to local social media pages.

According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, vehicle thefts across the United States declined year-over-year in 2025 by 23%. Despite the decrease, one vehicle is stolen approximately every 48 seconds. In 2025, a whopping 659,880 vehicles were stolen nationwide.

## How to protect your vehicle from theft

The Ottawa County Sheriff’s Office recommends locking your doors, removing your keys, removing any valuables and parking in well-lit areas. Officials also suggest adding surveillance cameras and motion lights to your home.

The NICB reminds owners to roll up their windows and never leave vehicles running unattended. Automobile owners may also consider anti-theft technology, such as steering wheel locks, audible alarms and after-market GPS tracking — such as air tags.

## What should I do if my vehicle is stolen?

The NICB recommends writing down the make and model of your vehicle, the color, license plate number and vehicle identification number. This information will be needed to file a police report. The bureau also reminds owners to notify their auto insurance agency.

— Cassidey Kavathas is the politics and court reporter at The Holland Sentinel. Contact her at [ckavathas@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:ckavathas@hollandsentinel.com). Follow her on X @cassideykava.

## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is June 21. On this date in:

**1788:** The U.S. Constitution was ratified by the requisite ninth state, New Hampshire. Nearly two years later, Rhode Island became the last of the 13 original states to ratify the document, which would be amended.

**1864:** Martha Van Rensselaer, who with her life partner Flora Rose later helped popularize the field of home economics, was born in Randolph, New York. As department heads at Cornell University, the couple grew home economics studies there and shared their knowledge through articles that reached millions across the United States. Van Rensselaer became a leading voice on issues affecting women and families.

**1898:** Amid the Spanish-American War, the U.S. Navy cruiser USS Charleston’s crew easily captured the island of Guam as the Spanish Navy lacked the ammunition needed to defend it.

**1915:** Black Americans’ 15th Amendment right to vote was upheld in *Guinn v. United States*, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that declared Oklahoma’s Voter Registration Act of 1910 unconstitutional. It found the state law — one of numerous suppression attempts in various states that eventually led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — had disenfranchised Black voters through its “grandfather clause” that required passing a literacy test to register to vote yet exempted people whose grandfathers were entitled to vote in 1866.

**1923:** Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey, who organized the first important American Black nationalist movement in New York, was sentenced to five years in prison after his conviction on mail fraud charges related to the sale of stock in the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s Black Star Line. Garvey said the charges were political.

**1940:** During the roughly two-week Battle of the Alps in World War II, Italy launched an attack against southeastern France, but despite France buckling under Germany’s pressure as it made advances in the north, Italian forces advanced only a few miles and captured little beyond small border areas.

**1989:** In *Texas v. Johnson*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that burning an American flag is a form of protest that’s protected symbolic free speech under the First Amendment of the Constitution. The court found protester Gregory Johnson had been wrongfully convicted for burning a flag outside the 1984 Republican National Convention.

**2000:** Scotland repealed controversial Section 28 of the United Kingdom’s Local Government Act of 1988, which had prohibited local authorities such as school-teachers from teaching that homosexuality is acceptable.

— USA TODAY Network

# Fire station

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response services for Douglas, Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township. The department currently operates out of a building on Blue Star Highway, more than a mile north of the Kalamazoo River.

That location presents response time challenges for the southern half of Saugatuck Township and the southside of Douglas. The current station will continue to be used, but the new location will provide a more central space to serve and respond to residents in all three communities.

Commissioners unanimously approved the site plan with conditions. The project will need to obtain various other approvals before construction can begin.

According to a provided schedule, work is expected to start in September or October 2026, with completion in mid-2027.

— Contact reporter Austin Metz at [ametz@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:ametz@hollandsentinel.com).



A major construction project that would relocate operations for the Saugatuck Fire Department received site plan approval during a meeting of the Douglas Planning Commission on June 11. ADAM VANDER KOOY/HOLLAND SENTINEL

# Laundry

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and wireless internet.

“We’ve been told by more than 10 customers already that their clothes have never been this clean,” Johnson said. “It’s because of the high spin that throws that water out, pulls the stains out and gets the dirty water out.”

Operation Laundry utilizes reusable cards, rather than cash or coins. If there’s any confusion on operating the machines, customers can scan QR codes for targeted tutorials.

The overhaul of the space required the removal of 22 tons of debris, the installation of all -new lighting and security features, and the relocation of over 80 pieces of equipment with a box truck and a neighbor.

“We are trying to make it fast, efficient and easy because we care about these families,” Johnson said.

Learn more at [operationlaundry.com](http://operationlaundry.com).

— Contact reporter Austin Metz at [ametz@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:ametz@hollandsentinel.com).



A children’s play area provides entertainment for young visitors inside Operation Laundry on June 11. ADAM VANDER KOOY/HOLLAND SENTINEL

# Compost

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adverse to Republic, we are going to need to get different counsel,” Ringelberg said. “We should get ready to do a full-court press to do everything possible ... to remediate that site and move on.”

The funds and additional counsel

may not end up being necessary, but officials agreed it’s wise to have the option approved and ready to go.

**What’s happening with Cocoa Corp. in Laketown Township?**

Cocoa has used the location for composting since 2015, but complaints about foul odors intensified in 2025. Laketown Township sent a warning letter to Republic in March following frustra-

tions voiced by residents in October. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy issued an odor citation in April.

Tom Mahoney, general manager of the site, said June 3 that the company’s agreement with Cocoa expired in 2025.

“For the past six months we’ve repeatedly told Cocoa ... they were in violation of their business agreement and that they needed to cease operations and vacate the property,” Mahoney said.

Mahoney said the company issued a formal notice of default and filed a lawsuit against Cocoa on May 20, demanding they cease operations and leave the site.

The case is filed with Judge Matthew Antkowiak in Allegan County’s 48th Circuit Court. Cocoa filed an acknowledgment of the lawsuit June 11. There were no hearings scheduled as of June 16.

— Contact reporter Mitchell Boatman at [mboatman@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:mboatman@hollandsentinel.com).

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