

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP

Township Board Workshop

Minutes

April 28, 2015

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

The workshop was called to order at 7:05 P.M. by Supervisor Engstrom at 8350 Main Street.

Trustee Otto led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Marilyn Engstrom, Supervisor...Present (arrived at 7:40 P.M.)
Kathy Braun, Treasurer Present
Angela Westover, Clerk Absent with notice
Janet Chick, Trustee Present
Wayne Dockett, Trustee Present
Jacki Otto, Trustee Present
Tracy Thomas, Trustee Present

Also present:

Township Manager Howard Fink
Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent
Tim Hardesty
Township Attorney Paul Burns
Members of the community

ADOPT AGENDA

- **Motion:** Thomas moved, Chick supported, that the agenda be adopted as presented.
Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

FIRST CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Citizen Survey. David Gordon, 5558 Hellner Road, said the Planning Commission should help develop questions for this that go beyond the broad issue of growth vs. no growth, and research should be done before money is spent on a survey.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Code Enforcement Presentation. Dockett recalled that on March 14th it was agreed that enforcement officer William Lenahan would make a presentation at this meeting. Fink said he will put this on the next workshop agenda.

Public Safety Millage Proposal. In answer to a question from Dockett, Fink said the proposal on the May 5th ballot will be for 4.5 mills, rather than the current 4.3 mills, as a result of a Township Board motion. He noted Dockett was the lone dissenting vote on that action. Dockett said the people should know that this raises taxes considerably.

CORRESPONDENCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fink said:

- In the matter of the \$109,00 assessment for the Earhart drain, the Probate Court has agreed to hear the Township's appeal on the issue of a bond, the Township will review the Drain Commission file on the matter, and he has spoken with a couple of County Commissioners. The Township's focus on the apportionment hearing will be on the total costs, rather than shifting the cost to property owners.
- Old files stored in the basement are being reviewed and organized.
- He has found records, including construction drawings, from 1988 for the Wastewater Treatment Plant retention basin.
- Letters requesting donations for community events are going out, and he anticipates that this fundraising will exceed last year's. Dockett said accepting donations from Township contractors who are hired without bids looks bad.
- He is working on creating a health care retirement savings plan for employees to use without affecting the Township's budget. He said this allows savings for this purpose to be made pre-tax and withdrawn untaxed.
- Mary Kendall has submitted her resignation, and he will provide details about finding her replacement later.

- **Motion:** Chick moved, Thomas supported, that Jacki Otto Chair this Board meeting.
Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

ACTION ITEM

1.

Authorization to ADD Deputy Clerk as Signer on Township Documents

- **Motion:** Chick moved, Thomas supported, that Deputy Clerk Cristina Wilson be authorized as a signer on Township bank accounts.
Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1.

Budget Overview

Fink reviewed budget information and said he and the Controller believe the fund balance will increase at the end of the current fiscal year to \$569,000 over the 85% minimum fund balance established by the Board even after

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Minutes of Workshop Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
April 28, 2015**

expenditures such as purchase of the Darleen Curtis property.

[Engstrom arrived at this point].

In response to a comment from Dockett, Fink said the projected \$109,000 Earhart Road drain expense will be shown in the proposed 2015-16 budget, although it would be financed for a number of years.

Fink noted the work the Planning Commission did on the Capital Improvement Plan has provided a very good, solid foundation, but it was based on maintenance and replacement rather than other things department heads want to do. He said he and department heads are starting to look further into the future and identifying funding sources for the next plan. He also noted that interior borrowing will be implemented to finance some projects.

**2.
Audit of Sewer REU Charges**

Wastewater Treatment Plan Superintendent Tim Hardesty explained that the REU schedule he distributed was developed after a lot of research, including what other governments charge. Fink explained that this shows what each business hooked up to the sewer system is paying compared to what the Township thinks they should be paying. He said this came out of a concern that REU (Residential Equivalent Unit) calculations for some businesses were incorrect, and while it will be different, a similar process will be gone through for residential properties.

Fink said there is probably not a legal basis for collecting additional fees from businesses that were undercharged, but they should be billed at the correct level going forward, and collection is appropriate for any business that was not billed at all.

It was agreed to put this on the next agenda for action.

**5.
Planning Commission Master Plan Citizen Survey**

[Heard out of order].

William SaintAmour of Cobalt Community Research said Cobalt is a non-profit and reviewed his proposal for performing a citizen survey for the Township and the experience he and Sharlan Douglas of Douglas Communications Group bring to the process. He said their proposal is to send paper surveys with individual ID numbers to insure each survey is responded to only once. He provided a sample survey and example of the type of analysis they provide.

Fink noted that sending the survey to the full voter list for the Township would cost \$6,000-\$7,000 more than the \$10,000 quote for sending it to 1,500 randomly selected people. Dockett said he prefers the smaller survey; Otto said she prefers using the full voter list to avoid any charges of people being left out, intentionally or otherwise. Engstrom agreed with Otto. Fink said the results will be analyzed scientifically according to various demographic

fields (age, income, gender, location, etc.) to provide a valid representation of the community's desires.

Chick noted that a lot of people in the community are asking for this survey to be done. In answer to a question from Thomas, Fink said while the Board makes the final decision, the Board, the Planning Commission, and the public will provide input about the content, but to be credible the consulting company will drive the wording of the survey to avoid any charges of undue influence about specific positions on subjects.

In answer to a question from Thomas, SaintAmour said quite a bit of precision would be gained from sending the survey to everyone on the voter registration list.

It was agreed to place this on the next Board agenda for action.

**3.
Washtenaw-Livingston Rail Line (WALLY)
Discussion**

**4.
Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority
(AAATA) Rapid Transit Discussion**

Fink reported that the US-23 improvement project was approved by SEMCOG last Friday, but it sparked a lot of interesting debate in the prior months about transit in that corridor, and there was a lot of discussion about the potential for the WALLY line being put into service. He said that will not happen for many years, but purchase and construction of a park and ride lot at US-23 and Eight Mile Road by MDOT—with bus rapid transit between it and Ann Arbor—is likely to be funded at least for the period of the US-23 construction.

Fink asked how the Board feels about this. He said he has been advocating for bus rapid transit, and at some point he will be asked how the Township feels about this specific project and about continuing bus rapid transit after the US-23 construction is complete. Chick said anything that helps alleviate traffic on US-23 is great. Dockett recalled that Northfield Township and many others opted out of the proposed county-wide AAATA proposal several years ago, and that was the right thing to do because it would have cost a lot of money. Fink said MDOT is proposing to fund the busses during construction using federal congestion mitigation funds. Otto said having this service during construction would be a type of pilot for public interest, and the Township should use it to its advantage while it is being funded by another agency.

Dockett said if MDOT buys this lot the Township will lose tens of thousands of dollars in taxes. Fink said he will research those figures.

**6.
Debt Analysis**

Braun said she thought this was a bit confusing in the audit so she prepared additional information.

7.
**Board Retreat Goals/
Economic Development Discussion**

Fink asked for direction from the Board about which of the goals discussed at the retreat he should be working on.

- Comments included:
 - The Township's Barker Road property is in a key position, and starting with redevelopment of that is a great place to start.
 - People in the community are interested in seeing the Van Curler property developed, and what happens with that property will have a major effect on the downtown.
 - Using zoning to control development does not always result in the type of development the public wants.
 - The Township cannot dictate what a private property owner does, and developers will do what they think is marketable.
 - The building at 75 Barker Road should be torn down and the entire property made into a parking lot.
 - Downtown development should not be done piecemeal; the area should be considered as a whole, perhaps with a "mini-master plan" for the area.
 - What do with 75 Barker may depend on what is done with other properties. Perhaps a question about it could be included on the community survey being developed for the Master Plan.
 - Another retreat could concentrate on the downtown area.

Fink said these comments help him, but it is not clear who will do this work—the Board, a downtown planning group consisting of representatives from various groups and constituencies? He said he would love to work on this, but he does not know how quickly the work could be done. He

noted his master's degree work concentrated on retail district revitalization work, and he will do some background work on this and provide a proposal for a subcommittee. Chick recalled that engaging in a charrette with the public was useful when the current Master Plan was being developed.

SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Green Infrastructure Workshop. Marlene Chockley, Planning Commission Chair, 2665 Five Mile Road, invited the Board to attend the workshop on May 20th with the Huron River Watershed Council regarding green infrastructure in the Township.

Community Survey. Mary Devlin, 9211 Brookside, said she and her husband have lived in the Township for 40 years and have never received a survey. She asked about the 2,000 people in the Township who are not registered voters. Fink said the Township is not trying to exclude those people, but there is no list available of who they are.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Façade Grants. Dockett said only one of the 5-6 façade grants awarded several years ago was actually used.

Millage Proposal. Dockett urged voters to reject the proposal on the May 5th ballot for the Township's public safety millages.

Thank you. Otto acknowledged the work of the Kiwanis raising funds for the 4th of July Parade with three fundraisers. Otto and Dockett thanked Mary Kendall for the work she has done for the Township.

ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion:** Engstrom moved, Chick supported, that the meeting be adjourned.
Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.

The meeting adjourned 9:07 P.M.

Submitted by Lisa Lemble.

Corrections to the originally issued minutes are indicated as follows:
Wording removed is ~~stricken through~~;
Wording added is underlined.

Approved by the Township Board on _____, 2015.

Angela Westover, Clerk

Official minutes of all meetings are available on the Township's website at http://www.twp-northfield.org/government/township_board_of_trustees/