

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP

Township Board

Minutes of Town Hall Special Meeting

January 14, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Supervisor Chockley at 8350 Main Street.

ROLL CALL

Marlene Chockley, Supervisor	Present
Kathleen Manley, Clerk	Present
Lenore Zelenock, Treasurer	Present
Tawn Beliger, Trustee	Present
Janet Chick, Trustee	Present
Wayne Dockett, Trustee	Present
Jacki Otto, Trustee	Present

Also present:

Township Manager Steven Aynes
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble
Members of the community

TOWN HALL DISCUSSION

Chockley invited everyone present to sit informally in a circle, and she asked that questions be written on cards, to be put in a basket and pulled out to be read by Manley.

Questions were posed by members of the public, and Board members and members of the public made comments.

- *What can be done about the amount of dog feces in downtown Whitmore Lake?* Comments: The DDA may put in dog waste stations (trash cans; bag dispensers). Owners should be responsible. Plastic bag dispensers would be useful. Putting a note in the newsletter that goes out with taxes would be helpful.
- *How smoothly is the application process for marijuana businesses going?* Comments: No applications have been made. The Township may be inundated on the January 24th deadline for initial applications. Questions from the public are being handled by Aynes (who consults with Lippens if needed).
- *Are you okay with wastewater overflowing into our waterways?* Comments: No, which why the Board is investigating installing a wastewater detention basin. Waster that is not fully treated is occasionally released by older sewage treatment systems, and different jurisdictions have been addressing that, as has Northfield Township. During the recent storms the Wastewater Treatment Plant had its most catastrophic experience of untreated waste bypassing the plant because of the rain volume and frozen

ground, and this had to be reported to State and the Livingston County Health Department.

- *In light of the recent sewage overflow problem are you now interested in moving forward with pursuing an equalization basin?* Comments: We are looking into it. We are taking steps and it is just a matter of time. We should not jump to conclusions; this was a rare experience. There is a difference between expansion of the sewer plant and installing an equalization basin.
- *What would the Township like to see in the way of a marijuana retail store? What would be ideal or what would you prefer?* Comments: There are nice examples in Ann Arbor. A nice storefront, a modern-looking building (which could be a converted existing building), clean, neat. One that looks like a boutique would be awesome as opposed to something that looks like a party store. Obviously, it would follow zoning and comply with regulations. Would prefer to see them in Ann Arbor, not Northfield. There should be no rules; it is up to the business owner. Hope the Township has streamlined the process for getting a certificate of occupancy, because a recent experience was awful. That process has been and will continue to be worked on. A friend was trying to open a shop a couple years ago, but eventually gave up. Problems arise when there is a change of use, and, yes, the process needs to be streamlined to encourage new businesses. A zoning administrator has been hired, and duties in the Building Department have been switched around and staff hours increased. Sometimes people want to put something where it is not allowed, which creates problems or makes it impossible or leads to a lengthy conditional use process. The Building Department function should be turned over the County as many other small Townships do. Problems can be created by government offices (lack of clear information) or by applicants (not doing what they should), but the Township's process needs to be improved. If someone is experiencing a serious problem with an approval process they should email a Township Board member directly.
- *Why doesn't the Township put the Park issue on the ballot so everyone is aware of the opportunity? If you are putting out a survey about park benches, why not include the issue of the park? Why are you giving the park away at a low cost?* Comments: The Township can apply for grant funding for trails in the park from Washtenaw County Parks. A five acre park for 8,000 people is not big enough, and the Board is not asking the people what they want. The Township should not sell any property it owns. If someone is interested in getting this issue on the ballot, Dockett is willing to help. Before grant applications can be made the size

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
January 14, 2020**

and specifics about the park must be known. An offer to purchase part of the land has been made, but the Board has not taken action on it. People need to know the Board is considering selling 80% of the land, but most people do not know that; at least a postcard should be sent out. In two informal surveys 60+ percent of the public wanted to keep all the land for park, but from a visioning session a synthesis plan was developed. A loop path was created around the park and people use it and enjoy it, but few people have been observed using it; however, it is used for parking for special events. Selling off part of the land could provide funds for long-term maintenance of the remainder. There is nothing preventing interested people from buying the park and keeping it as park, but caution should be used in using taxpayer money to fund such things. The developer who has submitted the purchase proposal appears to be sensitive about how to use the land and the park.

- *Would you be willing to put the issue of keeping the park on the ballot, including the costs for development and maintenance?* Comments: Facilities will have to be ADA compliant, it will cost money to maintain any improvements, so people have to understand what the costs involved will be. Millages demand money from every property owner, with the penalty for not paying being forfeiting their property, and many people cannot afford more taxes. All parks cost money to maintain, and people have to decide if they are willing to pay for it with a millage. The Township has also been buying wetland lots near the Township offices with the goal of using it for park. When people were surveyed about whether to keep all or part of the park they were not told the cost of doing so or the benefit of selling part of it to help maintain the park. It's worth it to the community to spend the money on keeping the park rather than allowing it to be developed with houses. The public can get this issue put on a ballot if they want to. The Parks and Recreation Plan estimates a cost of \$3.2 million to make the entire North Village property into a park, and even though there are grants, matching funds are required.
- *In 2023 the Public Safety Building/Township Hall debt will be paid off. Won't that mean more money will be*

available to fund a park? Comments: The Township is currently spending \$250,000 annually for that debt. \$180,000 of that comes from the Police and Fire Departments, and their funds cannot be used for building or maintaining a park. That debt is in the form of a bond, and a similar financial process can be used to fund the construction of a park.

- *What is a Township Board needed for if every decision is put on the ballot?*
- *Can we hire a firm to find out what the cost would be to put in the desired amenities, and can that be put on the next Board agenda?* Comments: Hiring an architect to design a park so the costs can be developed can be placed on the next Board agenda. A plan that re-routed traffic and parking in the downtown area and proposed mixed-use development was proposed a dozen years ago. Maybe there should be a brainstorming session with the public.
- *When zoning is approved for marijuana businesses will you continue to jam up the process?* Comments: That is not our intention. If applicants have all their information in order applications can go quickly to the Planning Commission.
- *How can you pretend to represent the people when you do not listen to the public?* Comments: The Township spends no money on preservation, but a lot of money on development. If the public is saying they want a park-only on the North Village site the Township should survey the public. The Board does not even know if the property will support a beach, and things like that need to be known before a survey can go out or a vote can happen.

There were several comments about possibility of having more of these sessions on a regular basis.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 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 _____, 2020.

Kathleen Manley, Clerk

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