

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP

Township Board

Notes

October 8, 2013

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Supervisor Engstrom at 8350 Main Street.

PLEDGE

Supervisor Engstrom led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Marilyn Engstrom, Supervisor	Present
Shelle Manning, Clerk	Present
Kathy Braun, Treasurer	Present
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
Public Safety Director William Wagner
Police Sgt. Jeff Davidson
Township Attorney Paul Burns
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble
Members of the community

CONSENT AGENDA:

- **Minutes: July 23rd and September 10th**
- **Bills**

Dockett asked that bills be pulled for discussion.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Thomas supported, that the consent agenda be approved as amended.

Dockett said minutes and notes of the September 10th meeting were not in his packet. Fink explained that was an error this time.

Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

ADOPT BALANCE OF AGENDA

Fink asked that approval of hiring of a police officer be added to the agenda.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Otto supported, that balance of the agenda be approved with the addition of Discussion of Bills and Hiring of a Police Officer.
Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

FIRST CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Mary Devlin, 9211 Brookside, made comments about how to encourage new businesses in the community, questioned how salaries of elected officials can be changed in the middle of a term, and objected to unedited, draft minutes being posted on the website. Manning said State law allows salaries to be increased—but not decreased, except in an election year.

REPORTS

Department Heads

Wastewater Treatment Plant. Superintendent Hardesty reported that the driveway culvert project at the plant is complete. He referred to the PM Technologies proposal to maintain generators for an annual cost of \$3,555. In answer to a question from Dockett, Hardesty said the note "Prices & Contract good from 8-1-13 to 12-31-2015" indicates only that they will not raise prices during that period, but the contract is only for one year at the state price. Otto suggested removing the wording "& Contract" to make this clear.

Hardesty answered a question from Chick about maintenance of the Eagle Gardens pump station.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Chick supported, that the PM Technologies contract be approved with the deletion of the wording "& Contract."
Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

Fire. Chief Wagner reviewed his written report.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Engstrom supported, that the resignation of William Buchinger from the Fire Department be accepted with regret.
Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Engstrom supported, that the resignation of Bryon Cooley from the Fire Department be accepted with regret.
Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

Dockett asked if these resignations are an indication of a problem. Wagner said one of these people moved out of town and the other cannot maintain this position with his

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Notes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
October 8, 2013**

full-time job. He said it is difficult in a better economy to find Firefighters.

Regarding new hires, Wagner asked that Jonathan Ewerts be removed from the list. Manning said start dates are usually included in motions. Wagner said he will provide those later.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Thomas supported, that Charles Smith, Brooke Thompson, Michael Michino, Jeremy Soerries, and Kevin Pollins be hired as Firefighter trainees pending background checks and physicals. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

Wagner noted that the Police and Fire Departments will be hosting an open house this Sunday, and this Friday Main Street will be closed for about 45 minutes starting at 4:00 P.M. for the homecoming parade. Manning said road closures are supposed to come through the Board. Dockett asked that information about both of these be put on the website; Wagner said he will use the electronic, portable billboard.

Police. Sgt. Davidson reviewed Lt. Greene's written report. In answer to a question from Dockett, Davidson said the Washtenaw County Prosecutor is considering charges in the animal cruelty case listed in the report.

Other

Township Manager. Fink referred to his written report and added:

- Grant proposals are being submitted for the Senior Center.
- Change orders will be coming for the Barker Road non-motorized pathway due to a variety of issues including a blockage in a culvert under a driveway.
- Following the resignation of the Senior Center Direction he and Public Safety personnel have been opening and closing the Center to allow programs to proceed. He is also working with someone who would like to expand art classes in the Center.

In answer to questions from Dockett, Fink said the change order for the Barker Road pathway project was to cover the cost of additional paving material for increasing the width from 8 to 10 feet, and he is operating under the assumption that these additional costs will be covered by the grant. Dockett commended Fink and Hardesty for the work they put in trying to solve the culvert problem.

Dockett said he does not think there will be support from the community for a municipal water system and he asked why Fink is looking into this. Fink said it was the Board's decision to investigate this and at this point there is no idea what the location, feasibility and costs would be.

In answer to a question from Dockett, Fink said the additional funds that will be added to the Police Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) will come from the Police budget and their fund balance if necessary. Fink explained that

this change is required due to dental and vision coverages not being separated from health coverage which is subject to a hard cap. Wagner said he believes the budgeting for this was done properly and there will not be an effect on the budget.

Engstrom asked whether Lew Kidder, the person mentioned in Fink's report who helped Scio Township establish a township-wide sewer assessment district, could be scheduled to speak to the Board. Fink said he has already arranged for that at the next Board meeting.

Financial. Braun referred to the Revenue and Expenditure report and graphs and described how funds will be invested in staggered term certificates of deposit (CDs). In answer to a question from Dockett, Braun said no funds will be invested in these CDs for longer than 90 days. He asked who in the Township was responsible for \$297,536 of the people's investment funds being lost previously. Braun said she is looking into this, but it appears people were making the best decisions they knew how to within the Township's investment policies. Dockett thanked Braun for her work on this.

Otto said she feels the email address referred to on financial documents should be the Treasurer's, not the Township Manager's, because this is a statutory duty of the Treasurer. There was a brief discussion about this; Fink said he will have that change made.

Chick said the reports provided by Braun are much better than the Board has received previously and noted the graphs are especially helpful.

Parks and Recreation. Thomas reported work will begin—and hopefully be completed—on the Dog Park this weekend, and the next effort will be finishing the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Zoning Board of Appeals. No meeting held this month.

Planning Commission. Chick reported that the Commission heard a request for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to expand a landscaping business on Earhart between 7 Mile and 8 Mile Roads, and the Commission postponed action to allow additional information to be submitted. She noted a public hearing on adding definitions to the sign ordinance is scheduled for October 16th. Dockett said he believes the Planning Commissioners are extortionists and make it too difficult for businesses to operate in the Township.

Engstrom asked what can be done about old, non-conforming signs being left up along the highway when businesses close. Chick said she does not know what can be done about these. Dockett said these signs are very expensive, the property owners are paying personal property taxes on them, and they should be allowed to remain.

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Notes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
October 8, 2013**

BUSINESS ITEMS

**1.
Senior/Community Center Position
Job Description**

Engstrom referred to the proposed job description prepared by Fink. Dockett asked that attendance at Township Board meetings be added to the requirement for this position. Fink said he has no objection to that. Manning said that is not included in other job descriptions and she has never felt department heads need to be at the meetings.

- ▶ **Motion:** Dockett moved, Thomas supported, that the requirement that the Senior/Community Center Director attend Township Board meetings be added to the job description for that position. **Motion carried 6—1 on a voice vote, Manning opposed.**
- ▶ **Motion:** Engstrom moved, Otto supported, that the Senior/Community Center Director job description be approved as amended. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

Fink said he will place advertisements for this position tomorrow.

**2.
Township Manager Assistant
Job Description**

Dockett said he will not be supporting this because hours for deputies have been increased, raises have been given, and he believes there is enough help in the office.

- ▶ **Motion:** Manning moved, Thomas supported, that the job description for the Assistant to the Township Manager be approved as presented.

Chick noted that human resources functions are listed in the description. Fink said the full responsibility for human resources matters is assigned to him, and this person would handle the related day-to-day work and administration. There was a discussion about whether 32 hours/week would entitle the person in this position to full-time benefits. Fink said the description says "Part-time, up to 32 hours" and part-time employees do not receive benefits. Township attorney Paul Burns suggested removing the wording "up to 32 hours."

- ▶ **Amended motion:** Manning moved, Thomas supported, that the job description for the Assistant to the Township Manager be approved, removing the wording "up to 32 hours." **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

**3.
Code Enforcement Officer Job Description**

Dockett asked if the hours of the zoning administrator will be cut when this position is filled. Fink said he does not believe many hours are spent on code enforcement, and Kurt Weiland current spends most of his time on building issues. In answer to questions from Dockett, Fink said he hopes this person will be paid to use his/her own vehicle, but he does not want to rule out other options. In answer to a question from Otto, Manning said the Township currently pays \$.56½ per mile.

- ▶ **Motion:** Engstrom moved, Chick supported, that the job description for the Code Enforcement Officer be accepted as presented. **Motion carried 6—1 on a voice vote, Dockett opposed.**

**4.
Amendment to Benefits Ordinance**

Otto said worker's compensation insurance is a disability policy; therefore, there cannot be a statement that the premium for such benefits cannot increase. It was agreed that the wording should be changed to exclude worker's compensation. Dockett said he will not vote for this because he does not believe any insurance company will provide \$250,000 in accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance for elected officials at no cost. He said the Board voted to eliminate all benefits for elected officials. He said a bid from another insurance company should be obtained to see if it would be less expensive without that \$250,000 coverage for Board members. Fink explained that the insurance company does not believe including AD&D coverage for the seven Board members adds significant risk in addition to the coverage it provides for Township's employees. Dockett said he ran on Board members not having any benefits. Otto said when the Board voted on the matter of benefits for Board members no research had been done about coverages of this type.

Fink said while he agrees that another quote would be a good idea, it is not a simple thing to accomplish.

- ▶ **Motion:** Otto moved, Manning supported, that the Northfield Township Benefits Ordinance No 12-17 be amended as presented, with the wording in new Section (2)(a)(i) amended as follows [underlined words added]: "Elected township officers and officials, and dependents of those officers or officials, so long as provision of such benefits to elected township offices and officials, and dependents of those officers and officials, excluding worker's compensation, does not increase the cost of the premium paid by the Township for the provision of such benefits." **Motion carried 6—1 on a roll call vote., Dockett opposed.**

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Notes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
October 8, 2013**

5.

**Resolution on the Policy and Procedures for
Public Inspection and Copying of Public Records**

Township attorney Paul Burns asked that this be tabled to allow him to consider the proposed policy.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Thomas supported, that the *Resolution on the Policy and Procedures for Public Inspection and Copying of Public Records* be tabled. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

6.

9142 Main Street Title Insurance

- **Motion:** Dockett moved, Thomas supported, to instruct Howard Fink to obtain title Insurance for 9142 Main Street.

Engstrom said the real issue is that cleaning up the title is needed. Fink agreed and said the cost for doing that would be at least \$2,000. Paul Burns explained that the owner of the property is in jail, the Township received the property through tax foreclosure, and the title insurance company is requiring that there be clarity that the legal process used to accomplish the foreclosure was proper before they will issue a policy.

- **Amended motion:** Dockett moved, Thomas supported, to authorize Howard Fink to engage in the legal process necessary, with expenses not to exceed \$5,000, to prepare for the issuance of title insurance and to obtain title Insurance for 9142 Main Street.

Otto asked why this needs to be done now rather than waiting until the Township decides to sell it or keep the property. Dockett said it is better to do it now. Engstrom said the title has to be cleared at some point and it would be easier to do it now. Thomas said if nothing is done the Township would probably not experience a problem because of this title matter between the passage of time and the statute of limitations, but he agrees with Dockett that this should be taken care of now. He added it might be more expensive in the future. Manning said this is probably the most valuable property the Township owns other than its buildings, and she agreed with Thomas.

Dockett requested a roll call vote.

Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

7.

Procedures on Taping and Televising Workshops

Thomas said members of the public have expressed interest in being able to watch the workshop sessions on cable TV.

- **Motion:** Thomas moved, Chick supported, that Township Board workshop sessions be televised.

In answer to a question from Dockett, Burns said when Townships videotape meetings they often keep those tapes only until minutes are approved to assist the Clerk in preparation of the minutes, but the minutes are retained. In response to comments, Thomas clarified that his motion is to televise workshop sessions, not to videotape them or change the way anything is done regarding presentation of meetings to the public or to minutes.

Burns said the Board cannot modify rules about minutes which are set by the State Legislature. Dockett said he does not see why the Board does not simply return to having two regular meetings per month because that would allow the Board to vote on matters as necessary. Thomas said he does not see a reason to delay a necessary vote, but respect must be given to Board members who say they are not ready to vote on issues that were brought for discussion. Fink disagreed. [See further discussion under Board Member Comments].

Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

8.

**Zoning Ordinance Amendment:
Section 10.01.D, Accessory Uses and Buildings**

Chick referred to a memo from Douglas Lewan, the Township's planning consultant.

- **Motion:** Chick moved, Otto supported, that the amendment to Section 10.01.D, Accessory Uses and Buildings be approved as provided in the October 8, 2013, Board of Trustees packet. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

Dockett said he is glad to see that some restrictions are being eased.

9.

**Zoning Ordinance Amendments:
Section 2.03, Definitions; and
Section 3.19, Water and Sewage Facilities**

- **Motion:** Chick moved, Otto supported, that the amendment to Section 2.03, Definitions; and Section 3.19, Water and Sewage Facilities be approved as provided in the October 8, 2013, Board of Trustees packet.

Manning said she thought the Township's zoning ordinance had previously been amended to allow these. Chick said the Planning Commission has been working on this since 2010.

Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Notes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
October 8, 2013**

**10.
Bills**

Fink and Manning answered several questions from Dockett about payments for expenses, bond payments, and a tax tribunal case. Dockett asked why a contractor who owes thousands of dollars in personal property taxes was hired to do work for the Township. Wagner said he was unaware that contractor owed the Township money and will not use him in the future.

- **Motion:** Thomas moved, Otto supported, that the bills be approved. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

**11.
Hiring of Police Officer**

Wagner asked that the Board approve the hiring of Michael Larkin now to avoid additional overtime expense. In answer to a question from Dockett, Wagner said Larkin will replace one of two part-time officers who recently left.

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Otto supported, that Michael Larkin be hired as Part-Time Officer for the Northfield Township Police Department effective October 9, 2013, pending results of a physical, at the union contract rate. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Chuck Steuer, 760 Six Mile, said the florescent bulbs in the Township Board meeting room need to be replaced. Wagner said he will do this.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Congratulations. Chick congratulated Wagner for being invited by Rep. Gretchen Driskoll to attend 911 remembrances in Lansing. She said he is very deserving of that honor.

Otto commended three members of the Northfield Township Police Department who were given victim assistance awards from the United States Department of Justice.

Tax Repayment. Dockett asked if the Township has repaid a taxpayer for an overpayment of personal property taxes.

Fink said it is his understanding that this can be done only by the State Tax Commissioner.

Thank you/Buy Local. Dockett thanked servicemen and servicewoman and urged everyone to shop locally.

Property Assessment. In answer to a question previously asked by Chick, Engstrom said assessment of Township property is scheduled on five year basis, and while the Assessor is trying to maintain the pace of reviewing 20% of the tiles each year, he needs an assistant but there has been no interest in the job posting. She said recommended increasing the hourly wage that is being offered. Chick said she would support that.

Board Workshop Sessions. Regarding Board workshops, Fink said he believes from a process standpoint he believes it is important to set an expectation for the outcome of any meeting for the benefit of both the Board and the public. He said there is value in discussing, going away, then voting later or even having another discussion first. He said if there is something that needs to be voted on between regular Board meetings that a special meeting be called an hour before the workshop to deal specifically with that issue because it is important to have a clear delineation between regular sessions and workshops.

In answer to a question from Dockett, Fink said it is legal to hold separate workshop sessions. Otto said the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) recommends using workshop sessions.

Clerk. Manning said she wants the public to know that she is no longer keeping regular office hours, but the public is welcome to leave voicemails for her.

Election. Manning noted that on November 5th there will be elections for Ann Arbor and South Lyon school districts, and both precincts 1 and 2 will vote on the 2nd floor of the Public Safety Building. She invited questions to be directed to Julie at 449-2880 ext. 17.

ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion:** Manning moved, Chick supported, that the meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 P.M.

Submitted by Lisa Lemble.

These notes are an expanded version of the official meeting minutes adopted by the Board of Trustees. Minutes and notes for all meetings are available on the Township's website at http://twp.northfield.mi.us/boards/twp_board

