

Approved February 19, 2020

WATERSMEET TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
JANUARY 15, 2020
6:30 PM
Community center
www.watersmeet.us

The January 2020 meeting of the Watersmeet Township Board of Trustees was called to order by Supervisor Rogers at 6:30 pm.

Members Present: Bill Neumann, Alan Piel, Paul Kempainen, Julie Mathiesen, and Mike Rogers.

Others in attendance: 9

A motion by Bill Neumann, supported by Alan Piel was made to accept the minutes from the Regular Meeting on December 18, 2019. Motion carried.

Appearances: None

Public Comments:

Tribal Chairman, James Williams appeared before the board to express several concerns regarding the Township police department, school discipline, and the proposed development of a gravel pit on Old US2 East by the Gogebic County Road Commission (GCRC). In the case of the gravel pit, Mr. Williams voiced concern about potential impacts to water resources and indicated the Township should take a more active role in reviewing GCRC's analyses of the project. Of greater concerns is the working relationship between the Township police department and the Tribal police department. Mr. Williams cited areas of tension and lack of professionalism in recent situations between the two agencies, including a stop 1/14/20 on the reservation by the Township police chief, while noting that personalities seemed to be a contributing factor. He further noted that a recent proposal to allow Tribal police to respond to school disciplinary issues involving tribal members is somewhat prejudicial and does not address the larger issue. Mr. Williams asked the Board to look at the situation from the broader perspective of the entire community. Supervisor Rogers suggested a future discussion involving representatives from both the Tribe and the Township in an effort to work towards a solution. There was an agreement to set a date for said meeting.

Agenda changes/approval: A motion to accept the agenda by Bill Neumann and supported by Paul Kempainen. Motion carried.

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. PA. 152 – Supervisor Rogers indicated this act allows the Township to require employees to pay a portion of their health insurance. However the Township can opt out of that requirement for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, as it has in previous years. A motion to opt out was made by Alan Piel, with a second by Bill Neumann. Motion carried.

2. Approve Poverty Exemptions: The Township application for requesting an exemption from property taxes was revised to incorporate the 2020 Federal Poverty Guidelines. Bill Neumann motioned to accept the revision with a second from Paul Kempainen. Motion carried.

3. Approve Auditor: Supervisor Rogers presented a proposal by the firm of Makela, Pollack, and Ahonen, P.L.L.C. to perform the township audits for the next three years. The proposed prices are: \$9100 for 2020, \$9200 for 2021, and \$9300 for 2022. A motion was made by Paul Kempainen, with a second by Alan Piel to accept the proposal and retain the auditing firm of Makela, Pollack, and Ahonen, P.L.L.C. Motion carried.

4. Supervisor Rogers presented a proposed list of job responsibilities for the Township Police Chief. Discussion ensued, during which Julie Mathiesen suggested the \$2000 cap on equipment expenditures (Item 2 on the list of responsibilities) should apply to all expenditures, not just equipment; any expenditure greater than \$2000 would require prior approval by the Board. A motion to accept the responsibilities with the suggested change was made by Alan Piel, with support from Paul Kempainen. Motion approved.

5. Write-off for Water/Wastewater account # 0117 in the amount of \$506.25: The property in question was recently acquired by the Township after it was auctioned for back taxes and failed to sell. The structure on the property will need to be demolished due to its condition. Motion to approve the write-off by Bill Neumann, seconded by Paul Kempainen. Roll call vote as follows: Bill – yes, Paul – yes, Mike – yes, Julie - yes, Alan – yes. Motion carried.

6. Correct Zoning Ordinance modification: At their January 2020 meeting, the Planning Commission approved a correction to Section 6 of the Zoning Ordinance. Language allowing multiple residential structures belonging to the same family on a single parcel was moved from Section 6.01B(1.a) to Section 6.02A(11). Discussion ensued during which Julie suggested the language would be better placed in Section 6.02A(1), explaining that section of the ordinance currently doesn't list residential dwellings as a primary use, despite actual practice. Julie noted the language originally had been placed in Section 6.01B at the specific direction of the Planning Commission, suggesting an unfamiliarity with the Ordinance. She further noted the Planning Commission needs to be held to a higher standard when presenting ordinance modifications to the Board. Motion made by Alan Piel to approve, seconded by Paul Kempainen. Motion carried.

Approval of Bills: A motion was offered by Bill Neumann with support by Alan Piel to accept the bills as presented for payment. General Fund checks 39423 through 39442, Wastewater Fund checks 4205 and 4206, and Water Fund checks 3399 through 3401.

Reports:

Supervisor: Heidi DeRosso from Gogebic County Emergency Services requested an appearance before the Board to update information on 911 services.

The community center generator is installed and will be connected on Friday.

Supervisor Rogers would like to discuss with the board during the next board meeting the possibility of making Kyle Chiochios a full time employee.

Treasurer report: Paul informed the board the property taxes are steadily coming in.

Clerk: Julie informed all that a third election has been added to the schedule for 2020. There will be a presidential primary election to be held on March 10th (in addition to the local primary in August and the general election in November). Anyone running for local office will need to have an application in by April 21st and should contact her for the proper paperwork.

Correspondence: No other correspondence.

Fire Department: Jim Pittsley updated the activities of the fire department and ambulance. There has been 14 runs thus far this month: 13 ambulance calls and 1 fire call. He also stated that many of the fire numbers are unreadable for multiple reasons (faded or inaccurate numbers, poor sign placement, snow cover), which is resulting in longer response times. Discussion ensued which emphasized the responsibility of the property owners to maintain legible fire numbers. The Board will consider including a notice regarding fire numbers with the Spring property assessments.

Police Department: No report provided.

As there was no further business, Alan Piel offered a motion to adjourn with support from Paul Kempainen. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:56pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mathiesen, Clerk
Watersmeet Township