

WATERSMEET TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
February 19, 2020
6:30 PM
COMMUNITY CENTER
www.watersmeet.us

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

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: 13

Supervisor Rogers proposed two changes to the agenda. The first to remove approval of the minutes from the February 10, 2020 meeting (they have not yet been posted), and the second to add approval of a new EMT under New Business. Paul Kempainen made the motion, with a second by Alan Piel to accept these changes to the agenda. Motion carried.

Minutes Changes/Approval: Motion by Paul Kempainen to approve the minutes from the January 15, 2020 regular meeting and the January 27, 2020 special meeting. Second by Bill Neumann. Motion carried.

Appearances: Gogebic County Emergency Manager/911 Coordinator Heide DeRosso appeared before the Board to inform them of the upcoming changes for the 911 service. The current charge of \$1.65 per cell phone and landline will be increased to \$3.00. The proposed increase is on the ballot for the March 10, 2020 primary. There are several reasons for the increase:

- AT&T is eliminating copper phone lines and upgrading to fiber optics. They will no longer install new lines and as of 2020, will not maintain existing lines.
- The County's contract with Central Dispatch ends this year and will need to be renegotiated.
- The County will be updating 12 portable radios for use with the 800 MHz paging systems, costing \$60,000 to \$70,000.

Radios will be provided to emergency services, fire and police departments. The County will also be testing the 800 MHz paging system (offered by the State since 2016) to determine whether it will work in Watersmeet. The VHF radios will be maintained as back-up during testing. Watersmeet Fire Chief James Pittsley commented that the 800 MHz paging system does not work in Watersmeet and he would rather see the money invested in VHF towers. Heidi DeRosso indicated the towers are becoming too costly to maintain. If the 800 MHz system does not work for Watersmeet, the VHF system will remain.

Public comments:

Yvonne Clark informed the board of the upcoming Art Uncorked Festival to be held this August. They are planning to have local artists, music, and local food trucks. Yvonne inquired about the availability to use tables as the plan is to have the event outside. Supervisor Rogers assured her there are tables available. He also stated any food trucks must have their own permits. Ms. Clark assured the board she would be

looking into this. Building Inspector Dan Kline indicated he could help coordinate food permitting requirements with the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department.

Captain Rich Burke came before the board to again express concerns about the interaction between Tribal Police and the Township police department. He stated the tribal police are still assisting frequently with police calls, which is not necessarily a problem as they are happy to provide service to the community and they will continue to do so. However, he questioned the availability of the Township Police Chief. He also expressed concern regarding a lack of respect shown by the Township Police Chief to his department when assisting on calls; it seems more respect was shown to LVD Officers when they were deputized. Captain Burke alluded to an incident over the weekend in which an LVD Officer was assisting a resident who had locked themselves out of their vehicle at Nordines Plaza. When the Township Police Chief responded, there was an exchange between the two officers, which should be unnecessary. Supervisor Rogers informed Captain Burke that he has spoken with Tribal Chairman, James Williams, and a meeting was to be held this following week between all parties involved. He further expressed a belief that this situation can be resolved.

Jim Pittsley informed the board of an upcoming fund raiser for the Watersmeet Township Fire Department to be held at Northern Waters Casino and Resort on March 14, 2020. It will be between the hours of 5 to 7pm with the theme of "Cabin Fever Cookout". There will be an all-you-can eat buffet, raffles and door prizes. Cost is \$10 per person. Tickets can be purchased from Nordines (Angie or Dawn), Tangles Salon (Peggy) or the Township Offices (Jill). He provided a copy of the poster advertising this event and Julie will put it on the township website.

Troy Nordstrom, an officer with the LVD Tribal Police, introduced himself to the board and stated an interest in assisting the township with anything as would be needed. He is politically neutral and has many law enforcement credentials. The board thanked him for his willingness to assist in the community.

Old Business: None

New Business:

The following language for the township millage, to appear on the ballot for the August primary election, was read by Paul Kempainen:

Shall the previous voted increase in tax limitation imposed under Article IX, section 6, of the Michigan Constitution on general ad valorem taxes within Watersmeet Township be renewed at up to 4.43 mills (\$4.43 per \$1000 of taxable value) for the period of 2020 through 2024, inclusive, for general Township operating purposes, and shall the Township levy, in whole or in part, such renewal in millage for said purpose, thereby raising in the first year, if levied in the whole, an estimated \$759,188.

It was explained to the audience that a millage of 4.43 is the same as last year and will not result in an increase in taxes. The millage covers the day-to-day operation of the Township, including the fire department, first responders and the police department. There is a cap of 5.27 mills on the total that can be levied, and the township is still below that cap. After questions from the audience, Supervisor Rogers and the Board assured that unless something unforeseen happens, there would be no increase.

Paul Kemppainen moved to send the approved language to the County Clerk to be put on the ballot. Bill Neumann seconded and the motion carried.

Supervisor Rogers indicated Jacob Misegan, an officer with the LVD Police Department, has expressed interest in joining the Township Fire Department as an EMT. Jacob is a fully qualified EMT and will be a welcome addition. A motion by Bill Neumann with a second by Alan Piel to approve Jacob Misegan as a new township EMT. Motion carried.

Approval of Bills: A motion was offered by Alan Piel with support by Paul Kemppainen to accept the bills as presented for payment. General Fund checks 39508 through 39531, Wastewater Fund checks 4210 through 4212, and Water Fund checks 3407 and 3408.

Reports:

Supervisor Rogers gave an update on the status of the Old Fish Hatchery transfer from the County Road Commission to the Township. Ed McBroom is introducing a bill to transfer this property and informed Mr. Rogers that while not a guarantee, it is a possibility. There would be a plan to make an RV park, and a picnic area on this site. Julie Mathiesen added the property transfer would be on the condition the property is only used as a park, and that would need to occur within 10 years of the transfer.

Supervisor Rogers also informed the attendees that Jack Bergman will be at the Township Community Center on the afternoon of March 6th, at 3:00 or 3:30 if anyone wishes to meet with him.

Treasurer Paul Kemppainen gave his report and stated that the accounts are all balanced, with approximately 90 % of the tax revenue in. He also brought up having blood drives at some future point at the township hall and expressed to all the importance of carbon monoxide detectors in their homes.

Clerk Julie Mathiesen reported the clerk's office is gearing up for the upcoming primary and once again reiterated anyone interested in running for office under a party ticket needs to submit their applications to her office by April 21st. Candidates running as independents need to submit applications by July 16th. Independent candidates will not appear on the August Primary ballots but will appear on ballots for the November General Election.

Fire Chief Jim Pittsley reported 25 total runs, with 24 medical and 1 fire. There were no snowmobile accidents. He submitted a spreadsheet documenting the type and location of runs, number of personnel involved and whether transport was required. This will be useful information for the County Ambulance Committee.

Police Chief Runcie reported the following:

Patrol miles: 1929

Traffic Citation issued: 6

Misdemeanor Complaints: 2

Misdemeanor Arrests: 2

Calls for Service: 11

Hours Worked: Combined – 206

Non-Criminal Complaints: 9

Felony Complaints: 0

Felony Arrests: 0

Assists: 3

Chief Runcie also expressed to the board an interest in attending paramedic training with a grant that would be available for the cost of training. The grant could be available through the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program.

There was some discussion about the hours of availability of Chief Runcie and how the public could reach him, as the Township Office has been receiving a number of calls from individuals or entities wanting to contact the Police Department. Julie Mathiesen noted the April 2019 Board Meeting Minutes indicated his direct office number was to be called for non-emergencies Monday – Friday, 8 – 5, implying he would be in the office or on duty during those times. Non-emergencies evenings and weekends were to be reported to Central Dispatch. For all emergencies, call 911. Supervisor Rogers indicated most incidents occurred on weekends, so those hours were not realistic. Chief Runcie indicated he could not be available 24/7, as he was an hourly employee. He further elaborated he had identified a candidate for a second, full-time officer, which would increase the department’s availability. The candidate is a certified EMT and would be willing to attend the police academy to become an officer. However, “certain Board Members” did not approve of Chief Runcie’s candidate. Paul Kempainen noted that matter would be better discussed in a different venue. Both Julie Mathiesen and Paul Kempainen stated Chief Runcie is a salaried employee, not hourly. Chief Runcie asked where that was stated in writing. Paul Kempainen further explained the Township payroll system and how it differentiates between hourly and salaried employees. Chief Runcie has been in the system as a salaried employee since April 2019.

There being no further discussion, Bill Neumann moved to adjourn, with a second by Alan Piel. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mathiesen, Clerk