

Approved April 21, 2021

WATERSMEET TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING/BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 31, 2021
6:30PM
Community Center
www.watersmeet.us

The March 31, 2021 regular monthly meeting of the Watersmeet Board of Trustees was call to order by Supervisor Rogers at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Mike Rogers, Paul Kemppainen, Alan Piel, Julie Mathiesen. Yvonne Clark attended virtually.

Members Absent: None

Virtual Attendance: Dan Hance and David Sherrill. Also in attendance: Zoe Coleman

Minutes Changes/Approvals: Motion by Paul Kemppainen to approve the minutes of the January 20 and February 17, 2021 regular meetings. Second by Alan Piel. Motion carried with all in favor.

Appearances: Dan Hance presented an update regarding the progress being made for expanding broadband internet access in Watersmeet Township. The main points of his presentation are as follows:

John Oliver, Bob McGuffin, Greg Clark and Dan participated a meeting featuring the President of AEG (Atlantic Engineering Group), which is focused on broadband development, along with other officials throughout the Upper Peninsula and State of Michigan.

They were told that close to 98% of residents will potentially receive speeds up to 100/20 mps and 85% of those folks will potentially receive speeds up to 1000/500 mbps (2 Gig download speed) with 2TB data cap. As part of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RODF), the FCC has awarded funds to a number of companies throughout the nation that are underserved. The awards were based on a competitive auction process. AEG won the award for These providers are tasked to provide 40% buildout within the first three years, 60% by year 4, and 80% by year 5. They are required to be fully built out at the end of 6 years and provide broadband level internet directly to every household in their areas.

The AEG group does not plan to wait for the RODF Funding, but anticipates their group to begin buildout this Spring. The speed of getting to our area will be dependent on access and availability to Fiber Optic Trunks which currently exist, most of which are owned by Merit and/or SBC. We are told there is “a ton of fiber” running down US2 in the Upper Peninsula. AEG expects it will be Spring of 2022 when they begin service to the first customer in the UP. In order to do this, AEG will be looking for local contractors to assist with buildout, identifying locations for local offices, and employees to work in the offices and field.

In this same meeting more was learned about the FCC Emergency Broadband Fund and the American Rescue Plan recently signed by President Biden. There are subsidy programs to assist in lowering the cost of high speed eligible households, schools, and state and local agencies during the Covid-19 pandemic. After the bill was signed, the agencies involved will have 60 days

to determine how much and how these funds will be disbursed. The FCC will provide a list of providers to state, county, and local officials.

Residents can access the map of areas covered at this link: <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/r dof-phase-i-dec-2020/>. This map will be updated over time.

Supervisor Rogers questioned who would pay for the cost of running fiber optic lines from the main trunks to more remote areas of the Township. Per Dan, the cost is to be borne by AEG, who would be doing the actual work. Julie Mathiesen asked what the Township can do assist Dan's ad hoc group and the effort as a whole, including getting the word out about potential employment opportunities? Dan responded alerting him or other group members of permits or related information that the Board might see would be a big help. He also indicated Gogebic Community College has been involved in discussions and would likely be providing training to future workers.

There being no further questions, Supervisor Rogers and the Board thanked Dan Hance for his detailed update and expressed appreciation for the planning work of the committee on this issue, which has become very important in the Township.

At 6:43 p.m. – Alan Piel motioned, with support from Paul Kemppainen to go into a Public Hearing for the FY 2021-2022 Budget. Motion approved with all in favor.

Supervisor Rogers and the Township Board summarized the budget for the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year, noting any significant changes from prior years. The floor was opened to public comments. None were received. There being no public comment, at 6:47 p.m., Alan Piel moved, with support from Paul Kemppainen to return to the regular Township Board meeting. Motion was passed with all in favor.

Agenda Changes/Approval: Motion by Paul Kemppainen to approve the agenda. Second by Alan Piel, Motion carried with all in favor.

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. Ratify Budget: A motion was presented to ratify the budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, per resolution 2021-03-31-02, by Alan Piel, with support from Paul Kemppainen. Roll call vote: Alan Piel, yes – Paul Kemppainen, yes – Julie Mathiesen, yes - Mike Rogers, yes. Motion carried.
2. General Appropriation Act Resolution: The contents of the resolution were summarized by the Board, emphasizing the millage for the operating budget remains at 4.43 mils. Motion by Alan Piel to approve Resolution 2021-03-31-03, General Appropriations Act. Second by Paul Kemppainen. Roll call vote: Mike Rogers, yes – Julie Mathiesen, yes- Paul Kemppainen, yes – Alan Piel, yes. Resolution adopted.
3. Resolution in Support of Enbridge Pipeline: Supervisor Rogers requested approval from the Board to send a letter to Governor Witmer demonstrating Township support for the Enbridge proposed tunnel replacement project for Pipeline 5, Resolution 2021-03-31-01. Motion by Alan Piel to adopt the resolution and send the letter to Governor Witmer. Second by Paul Kemppainen. Roll call vote: Mike Rogers, yes – Paul Kemppainen, yes – Alan Piel, yes - Julie Mathiesen, present. Resolution adopted.

Approval of Bills: Clerk Mathiesen indicated there were no bills awaiting approval by the Board, as the Supervisor with support from the Board had requested bills be paid throughout the month for fiscal year end records and budget planning purposes. She did present a listing of the bills that had been paid since the last regular Board meeting. All bills paid resulted from typical operating expenses.

Reports:

Supervisor: None

Treasurer: Treasurer Kemppainen indicated that financially, the Township is basically the highest point for the year relative to the General Fund, having received the lion's share of monies we'll receive from taxes. Our fiscal year is typically the Apex as far as funds and then we dwindle down until we start creating some equity in December. Overall, the Township is in great financial shape, as reflected by the budget. We're trying to make some adjustments to accommodate equipment purchases and other larger expenditures that are necessary for operation. But overall, everything is good.

Clerk:

1. Clerk Mathiesen informed the board there will be a site visit by a representative from the Par Plan Insurance Risk Control group on April 8th. The representative has requested to meet with the Clerk, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Union Foreman, and Zoning Administrator during the visit. She will ask if other Board members need to be available that day.
2. A request to have The Computer Doctors proceed as quickly as possible with the approved IT upgrades was presented by Clerk Mathiesen. The request was focused on ordering necessary equipment and securing licensing for the upgrades, which are expected to increase security and efficiency. The Board agreed to have Computer Doctors proceed on an expedited time frame.

Fire Chief Jim Pittsley gave the monthly report for the Fire Department. Runs are down somewhat; there have only be 8 to date. Additional discussion was held regarding the search for a fire truck.

Supervisor Rogers read a monthly report from Police Chief Leuzzo. Clerk Mathiesen requested a meeting be held soon to discuss a review of Chief Leuzzo and the contract with LVD tribal police. Yvonne Clark requested a copy of the contract to review.

A motion to adjourn was made by Paul Kemppainen, with support from Alan Piel. Motion carried with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Mansfield, Deputy Clerk