

**Whitewater Township Board
Minutes of Regular Meeting held July 22, 2014**

Call to Order

Supervisor Popp called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. at the Whitewater Township Hall, 5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, Michigan.

Roll Call of Board Members

Board Members Present: Benak, Goss, Hubbell, Lawson, Popp

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: 14

Set/Adjust Meeting Agenda

Goss noted that Rural Fire Request for Vehicle Titles should be listed under Tabled Items.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None

Public Comment

Phil Knapp, 8784 Palaestrum Road, stated he has been here for 34 years and complimented the township on its recreation. There have been a lot of improvements since he has lived here, stating he enjoys Lossie Trail and Battle Creek. He enjoys the part where it is cold and has brook trout in it, but toward Elk Lake there is a swamp created by a manmade plug at the mouth of Battle Creek. There is a 5-year Recreation Plan in the Board's hands since April. He would love to see the Battle Creek plug put on the Board's agenda. He stated he knows where some money is available. He has three names to submit of people who have the expertise to tell us what to do about the plug. He hopes the Board will consider it.

Benak added that Knapp has turned in his resignation from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee and the letter was handed to the Clerk earlier today.

Popp thanked Knapp for his service.

Pete Dimercurio, 8062 Cram Road, stated he represents the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association. He has been there about 42 years. They have no dog in the fight relative to the plug. However, it appears that it is an aberration relative to the way it was. He stated they will assist the township with the DEQ and DNR to take a look at that and requested that the Board let the process begin and let the scientists determine what the impact would be relative to the plug. The process typically is that if there is any potential change that would take place, they have opportunities for public input. They will be looking at it essentially as a project and working with the DEQ and the township to see what, if anything, needs to be done. The intent is not to affect any of the riparian rights or anybody that lives adjacent to it along Miami Beach, but they would like the scientists to take a look at that to see what the impact would be.

Correspondence

As listed on agenda; not discussed.

Public Hearing

None

Reports/Presentations**Jim Cook – Grand Traverse County Road Commission**

Cook introduced himself as the manager of the road commission. He stated their board regularly attends township board meetings and he circulates and hits all the townships a couple times a year. He stated they went through their annual audit process; it was a normal audit. They have had a lot of pavement and culvert failures related to the severe winter. They normally see about 4 feet of frost in the roads. This past winter, they saw anywhere from 8 to 12 feet of frost in the roads. Coupled with heavy rains last fall, it created issues as far as frost heave in the pavement and a lot of culvert failures. They have culverts in the ground that are 30 to 50 years old that they have no record of. Now they know where those culverts are and they were replaced and they have data. Currently, they are at about \$300,000 in emergency repairs. They did one on Supply Road about a week ago.

As far as project updates, they have about 50 miles of roads under construction, with another 10 miles to start which are chip/seal projects. A couple developments were approved at the last board meeting. They had a logger who accidentally took out 200 trees; now they are paying the road commission for the trees.

Acme Township officially submitted a request to do a special assessment district in the Holiday Hills area. It is about a \$1.4 million project. They are asking for a match from the road commission for about \$250,000 next year. At this week's board meeting, they will be talking about a couple more requests that have come in.

Last week, there was a joint meeting with the County Commissioners and Garfield Township regarding LaFranier Road. They are being given \$1.1 million for total reconstruction of LaFranier Road. It is a \$2.2 million project. The road commission, the county, and the township have agreed to split the balance three ways. The road will be totally reconstructed from South Airport to Hammond. The hill, which is currently a 12.5% slope, will be cut down to about 8%. The road will be widened to three lanes, adding a turn lane, from the top of the hill to the south property line of the county property. Any new developments along the vacant property will be required to widen the road and extend the turn lane. There will also be an 8-foot wide pedestrian/bicycle path coming up the hill from South Airport. They are also redoing the whole intersection with new sidewalks and ADA ramps. About 13,000 cars per day travel on LaFranier.

Cook listed projects they have completed and some which are yet to start. During the last two weeks of August, Elmer's is scheduled to do an overlay on Supply Road and Fife Lake Road, about 11.5 miles.

Benak suggested Cook find a grant to fix Baggs Road.

Regarding Baggs Road, Cook stated that Kalkaska County has approached them with a request to maybe do a partnership project. There are agreements in place for roads that are shared with another road commission. The agreement says that the Kalkaska County Road Commission will maintain and receive funds to maintain the north half of Baggs Road, and the Grand Traverse County Road Commission will do the south half, so Baggs Road is under the jurisdiction of the Kalkaska County Road Commission. The KCRC receives funding to do all of the routine maintenance, filling potholes, mowing, chip/sealing, etc. When it comes to reconstruction, the agreement says we will try to partner on the project. They met with KCRC a year and a half ago and talked about a project on Baggs Road. They had several discussions; then the KCRC manager was no longer there. Three to six months later, GTCRC met with Popp out on Baggs Road. An estimate was put together. The issue is that it is not in Grand Traverse County's jurisdiction, but if Whitewater Township can initiate a project, the GTCRC would be happy to be partners. The Kalkaska County Road Commission is saying there is no money for a Baggs Road project.

Cook stated he met with Popp a couple weeks ago. Popp had some concerns. Cook came over to talk to him and they developed a list of concerns. The biggest reason for concern is that there is a gap in communication. Cook stated Whitewater Township is a partner of theirs; they need to be able to talk. Cook stated Popp does not want to talk to them anymore, does not feel that they care and that they are not providing good service. We need to fix that and Cook will work on that. Commissioner Mouser is here tonight and is assigned to this township.

Cook stated maybe there is concern about the Asset Management Plan and how they pick projects. Under the plan, they are trying to tackle all of the middle-of-the-road roads, the ones that rate somewhere between a 4 and a 6 or 7 on a scale of 1 to 10.

Benak inquired what happens to PASER roads rated 1, 2, and 3.

Cook stated while you are fixing 50 to 100 miles of road a year, you should be saving money to fix the 1s, 2s, and 3s. That is why they encourage special assessment districts, but they do not work everywhere.

Benak inquired when any Whitewater Township projects would be on the road commission's list.

Cook stated Elk Lake Road was on the project list. Every April, the board rebalances their budget and the budget is adjusted. They did cut out about 22 miles of chip/seal projects. He thinks they will do Elk Lake Road next year, but it is off the list for this year.

Hubbell asked what will be done in the near future about the gravel up against the road. He witnessed a Cherry Ke truck yesterday almost roll with 10 tanks on it.

Cook stated that was on the list to do last fall, but it did not get done because of all the rain and problems everywhere and they just could not get back to it. He stated it is on the list to do this year in late summer or early fall.

Cook explained that the road commission spends over \$3 million a year plowing snow and putting salt on the roads. That is \$3 million that is not put into roads. Where less money is spent on snow, their roads are in better shape.

Cook also stated that Popp asked if the township could take over county roads. Cook talked to their legal counsel. Cook would not say it is impossible, but it would be pretty unusual and pretty difficult. At one time townships maintained their own roads, but it became a financial burden.

Goss asked how many miles will be paved in Acme Township for the \$1.4 million SAD.

Cook stated it is around 5 or 6 miles and it is total reconstruction with ditching and reestablishing the right of way.

Goss inquired the last time Cook was on Baggs Road.

Cook stated last fall.

Goss asked who the people are who are determining the PASER ratings and where are they from.

Cook stated their staff does it, two engineers, a superintendent, and some assistants. They physically look at every road. They have to be certified to do PASER ratings. They are required to do it every 2 years by the state, but they actually do it once a year.

Hubbell stated somebody is going to get hurt on Elk Lake Road; there is going to be a bad accident.

Cook stated they have about 60 miles of projects going, but they have not had that many miles of projects going in one year in the last 20 years, maybe 30. He added that if anybody is interested in really understanding the Asset Management Plan, they would be happy to set up a work session. The most important thing is the model, which shows us how we are going to get there in the next 20 years.

Benak inquired, since it is raining, if there will be grading tomorrow.

Cook replied that Whitewater Township is slated for brining on Monday and explained how the brining process is better than it used to be.

Benak inquired why Bunker Hill becomes so rutted and washboard and Moore Road does not.

Cook explained that gravel wears out and goes off to the shoulders. They are working with their staff to get them to do a better job on grading, but you need to add gravel. They are now introducing clay on gravel road projects. They do offer a gravel road program. If the township wants to pay for the gravel, they will pay for the crews and equipment to place the gravel.

Popp indicated that the township has started its own fund so they can take advantage of partnership dollars.

Cook stated that a way for the township to ensure they are getting their fair share is to consider a road maintenance millage. In Antrim County, 13 of 14 townships have millages. That is a way to keep the money in your township.

Hubbell inquired when they will start work on M-72.

Cook indicated that will begin in 2015. They are going to do a reconstruct on Lautner Road this year from Bunker Hill to M-72.

Benak stated Bunker Hill from Lautner to 31 is more of a need.

Cook stated they have been working on special funding for that project; it is on their list for 2015. That will be a total reconstruct as well. Also, Lautner Road is going to have a roundabout. It is a requirement for the developer to put a roundabout there, and it all comes from the roundabouts that MDOT is going to do on M-72.

Goss suggested that at the end of the road commission's road projects this year, they should put on their website a complete financial report showing all the millage money they received and exactly how it was spent and where.

Cook stated they are tracking that information. Projects, PASER ratings, the Asset Management Plan are all on their website, and the state is going to require that they have a dashboard on their website showing how all the funding was spent. That will be this fall.

Audience member Dave Hauser asked whether a traffic light at Elk Lake Road and M-72 is a state issue or a county issue.

Cook replied it is a state issue.

Hauser asked whether the county was pushing for that.

Cook stated it is hard to push Big Brother.

Popp stated there is a roundabout planned there, too.

Unfinished Business

Master Plan Review – Possible Approval for Distribution

Popp stated that we have not received the Draft Master Plan to review.

Discuss Ballot Language Replacing Current Fire Special Assessment District

Popp noted that the Fire Special Assessment District funds are limited to fire only. Should it be abolished and replaced with a millage that can be voted on every so many years?

Benak said she does not want to abolish anything until we have something else pass.

Goss inquired what would replace it.

Popp stated many people wish they had a fire special assessment district. Most would recommend keeping it. Most ambulance services are funded through a regular millage; police the same way. Many of the recommendations are that each service have its own millage so the voters can opt for police, they can opt for fire, they can opt for ambulance. That is what Fife Lake does and they have over 3.75 mills levied for emergency services. We have 1 mill in this township. We are behind by a large margin both in funding stream and where we are going to take the service in the future. Most every township is struggling with these very decisions.

Popp stated that he thinks we are on board to support our emergency people and for local control rather than farming it out. He asked: How do we envision going through this? We really do not have time to wait another year. It has to be on the November ballot. There should be a good turnout in November.

Benak stated she would like to concentrate on the ambulance millage. If in a year or two you want to combine them, fine. She is not in favor of getting rid of a fire millage that guarantees our funding for a maybe. She does not know if legally you can ask for funding for fire without relinquishing the other. When a previous board looked at this, she believes the legal opinion was that you had to relinquish one before you could ask for another, and if it went down, you had nothing. She stated she is not willing to do that.

Popp stated he does not think our citizens would opt to not have a fire department.

Popp stated that, in the samples provided, Fife Lake has it all put together, fire, police, and ambulance proposals, and that is where he would like to ultimately be, but stated he appreciates Benak's opinion that for as much as we do have going on, maybe we should focus on ambulance and leave the special assessment district alone.

Goss said she would like to see the Fire Special Assessment District go away and be replaced by a millage that the people vote on and believes, with the assistance of the MTA and legal counsel, language could be crafted that would trade one for the other. Also, there will be a lot of things on the ballot in November and the critical issue is the ambulance, so we need to focus on that and see if the community will support an ambulance millage.

Lawson stated he thinks we need to focus on ambulance and get that resolved so we can maintain our ambulance service. The fire special assessment district could go on the agenda for next year when there is more time to research it.

Discussion turned to the millage language that would be used, the need for a special meeting to approve language, and how much should be requested.

Benak and Goss volunteered to work on language for an ambulance millage proposal. Popp will supply the numbers.

New Business

Review Four New Township Job Descriptions for Possible Approval (MFR, EMT-B, EMT-A, Pager Duty)

Popp asked if there were any questions on the new job descriptions. Popp invited Ambulance Coordinator Martin to the microphone.

Various revisions to the MFR job description were discussed, which are also applicable to the EMT-B and EMT-A job descriptions.

Motion by Benak, seconded by Lawson, that the MFR Job Description, as amended, be adopted. On voice vote, all those present were in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Motion by Lawson, seconded by Popp, that the EMT-B Job Description, as amended, be adopted. On voice vote, all those present were in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Motion by Benak, seconded by Popp, that the EMT-A Job Description, as amended, be adopted. On voice vote, all those present were in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Moving to the Pager Duty Job Description, Popp stated it was the most demanding to write.

Various revisions to the Pager Duty Job Description were discussed, including that the document will be named “pager duty,” even though the line item for these wages was created as “On Call Wages.”

Motion by Lawson, seconded by Hubbell, to approve the Pager Duty Job Description, as amended. On voice vote, all those present were in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Review Revised Whitewater Township Graded Wage Scale for Possible Approval

Popp stated he has questions for conversation at the bottom of the form. He inquired if Benak or Hubbell were around when this was adopted and what was the intent of the document. He inquired if the increases shown were guaranteed or merit based.

Benak replied that they were guaranteed. It is time served. If you did a poor job, you should be released from your duties.

Discussion followed concerning job performance reviews, annual raises or termination, and Benak’s concern of midterm policy changes.

Goss stated we are not finding a policy. There is nothing to be found that says how the existing graded wage scale is supposed to function. Is it merit based? Is it automatic?

Hubbell stated it is automatic.

Benak stated we voted on this every year at budget time.

Goss stated it was not voted on in 2012; it is not in the minutes.

Popp stated, moving on to number three, “if an employee gets promoted from one grade level to another, does he/she lose their seniority,” and posed an example of a 6-year employee getting a promotion to another classification, but the first-year wage of the new classification is lower than the 6-year wage.

Discussion followed concerning the scenario posed by Popp, the fact that nothing is being changed on the graded wage scale but positions have been added, the fact that on-call and duty crew shifts have already been worked and they need to be paid, possible deletion of the paramedic line, deletion of anything that was not preexisting and does not have a job description, specifically, Maintenance I, II, III, and paramedic.

Motion by Benak, seconded by Hubbell, to accept the Graded Wage Scale as amended 07/22/2014, removing anything not preexisting or no job description. On voice vote, all those present were in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Review Resolution #14-11, Ambulance Pager Duty Salary, for Possible Approval

Popp asked if there were any questions on the resolution. There were no questions. **Motion by Lawson, seconded by Popp, to adopt Resolution #14-11. Roll call vote: Benak, yes; Goss, yes; Hubbell, yes; Lawson, yes; Popp, yes.**

Tabled Items

Rural Fire Request for Vehicle Titles (tabled 05/13/2014)

Not addressed in the interests of time.

Board Comments/Discussion

Benak asked whether Popp will be in the office tomorrow as she would like to discuss a work bee that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee wanted to set up on August 2nd for putting the fencing in. It has to do with ordering materials, and they have a question about the last few Ts to be put in on Lossie Trail.

Goss stated that Carrie Saunders, 2nd grade teacher at Mill Creek Elementary, contacted her recently about a project her class will be working on related to the International Baccalaureate program. The objective is for students to learn about their township and community issues, how citizens participate, how the rights of citizens and the community good are balanced. They would like to get a list of the businesses in the township and obtain a township map on which to locate businesses and other landmarks. She inquired if someone might be able to come in and speak to the class about Whitewater Township, perhaps in November. Goss was asked to bring this information to the Board and get feedback regarding this project or any other ideas the Board might have to help the class with this project.

Brief discussion followed.

Announcements

Popp noted that the next meeting date is 08/12/2014.

Public Comment

Kim Halstead, 7923 Cook Road, asked: If the residents of the township are paying for the ambulance service and they are not going to be charged, what happens at the casino? Do all runs to the casino come under the heading of being in the township and paying taxes or not?

Benak replied that typically nonresidents do get billed, just like if there is a car accident.

Popp stated what he heard Halstead say is if a resident has a problem at the casino or federal trust land.

Benak stated they are still using our service, they are still a resident here, they would not get billed. If they are an out-of-towner and they do not pay the millage here, they get billed.

Popp noted that we will have to pick a meeting date to approve ballot verbiage.

Brief discussion followed. No specific date was chosen.

Adjournment

Motion by Hubbell, seconded by Lawson, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl A. Goss
Whitewater Township Clerk