

**Whitewater Township Board
Minutes of Regular Meeting held June 28, 2016**

Call to Order

Popp called the meeting to order at 7:01 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: Rural Fire Chief Theo Weber, Paradise Township Supervisor Tim Trudell, Fife Lake Township Supervisor Linda Forwerck, Grand Traverse County 911 Director Jason Torrey, and 5 others

Set/Adjust Meeting Agenda

No adjustments.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Goss declared a conflict on New Business #1, park stairway.

Public Comment

Popp noted that it will be an open forum under Emergency Services Discussion.

Correspondence

None

Public Hearing

None

Reports/Presentations/Announcements/Comments

Gail Parsons, Director, Traverse Area District Library

See Page 2738.

Unfinished Business

Review Ordinance 22 Pension Plan

This agenda item was not discussed.

Review Whitewater Township Planning & Zoning Fees

This agenda item was not discussed.

Review Emergency Services Building Renovations

Popp stated he generated a memo on 6/17. MDOT is taking their time deciding whether we can purchase the land behind the fire station. It could take an additional two months for them to approve it. Popp does not think we can wait anymore and maybe we have to make decisions tonight without that additional land.

Popp noted we have received revised plans, including an updated site plan. Captain Arbenowske had previously brought to the board's attention that there might be easement issues or something awry with the property. Warranty deeds from 1868 were obtained to verify this information. The parcel had a lot of activity and at least one lawsuit involving easements. However, the building is perfectly placed and there are no setback violations with the exception of the last stair step leading up to the main entrance. The only thing holding us back at this point is where to put the drain field.

Lawson suggested we call the health department and have them tell us where to put it.

Popp stated we could also apply for the land use permit.

Discussion followed.

Motion by Lawson, seconded by Hubbell, to authorize the clerk or supervisor to sign the necessary application forms for the health department and the land use permit. There was no further discussion. **On voice vote, all those present voted in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.**

Chief Weber expressed concern that the plan does not meet today's needs and is not going to meet tomorrow's. There is equipment Rural does not have here, specifically, the ladder truck.

Popp stated we are hoping to alleviate some of the congestion that is in the building now. We are not looking for this to be a replacement for a future station. Looking at 2-3 years down the road, we see different uses for this building outside of the fire department. We would still very much like to entertain a new building.

Rural Fire 06/15/2016 Meeting Update

Popp stated there were three major bits of action. The Chief's employment agreement was extended to 12/31/2016. Grant Township notified the Rural Board of their potential departure on 12/31/2016. Popp stated he made a motion to begin the hiring process for Chief Weber's spot. There was no support; some of the members thought it would be improper to post for a job that did not exist yet. There was a motion to review the job description.

Tim Trudell, chairman of the Rural Fire Board, commented that when we hired Chief Weber, the organization turned around. Our roster has done nothing but grow. We are going through a very bumpy time. We have hired a consultant. Now is not the time to change your CEO. A substantial dollar amount is being invested to find out where we need to go. We need to listen to what the consultant says. Now, more than ever, we need the leadership of Chief Weber.

Goss expressed her concern with Act 57.

Chief Weber noted that, after the study, Rural Fire will have a master plan and a strategic plan, something the organization has never had. Weber read a list of what the consultants are going to do.

Discussion followed concerning mutual aid.

The study is expected to be completed in early November.

Update on Junk Complaint

There were no questions on the Zoning Administrator's report.

Gail Parsons, Director, Traverse Area District Library

Gail Parsons introduced herself and her colleague Rosie, co-manager at the East Bay branch. Parsons stated the library system is funded by a county-wide millage which provides operational support for the main library, two branch libraries, and three member libraries. There are 63,000 cardholders in the system. In 2015, they circulated 1.4 million physical and digital items throughout the system. In Whitewater Township, 917 residents have active TADL library cards. Parsons provided information about the summer reading club and digital resources. Their website is tadl.org.

On 8/2, all residents of Grand Traverse County will vote on a ballot proposal to renew a levy of .9548 mills to provide funding for the library system for 10 years. Since 1996, the library has levied this millage, originally 1.1 mill but reduced to .9548 by the Headlee rollbacks. That millage was for 20 years and expired in December 2015. This levy represents 86% of the \$4.8 million library operating budget in 2016. Based on median value of a home in Whitewater Township, residents pay about \$92 per year. In 1996, voters also approved a facilities bond for construction of the main library on Woodmere. The bond will be paid off in 2017; the last levy will be in December 2016.

Rosie May, co-manager of the East Bay branch, provided information about the East Bay Township Library branch.

New Business

Whitewater Township Park Stairway – Change Order Approval

Goss reiterated her conflict of interest with the contractor.

At about 7:52 p.m., Goss left the board table.

Popp stated we have a post engineer review of the drawings and an updated quote. As a result, we need another stringer underneath the stair and the handrail has to be 42” rather than 36.” There is also an option for a vinyl graspable handrail.

A sample of the vinyl handrail was made available to the board.

Discussion followed.

Motion by Popp, seconded by Benak, that we approve the additional material and labor of \$700 for the additional joists and stair stringers. Popp noted the issue of the handrail would

be a separate motion. **Roll call vote: Benak, yes; Goss, abstain; Hubbell, yes; Lawson, yes; Popp, yes. Motion carried.**

Popp inquired if there was interest in the upgraded handrail, to which there was no response.

At about 7:58 p.m., Goss returned to the board table.

Emergency Services Discussion

Popp provided a list of topics and stated this discussion will take place in an open forum fashion.

Ambulance and fire response times were discussed.

Audience member comments were heard from Andrew Jeurink regarding his expectations and from Jeremy Jennett with respect to response times.

Chief Weber noted that statistics regarding response times are available in the Firehouse Management system and stated the only way to control response times is to pay responders to be in your station.

Chief Weber provided further explanation as to how Central Dispatch records time of dispatch, etc.

Central Dispatch Director Jason Torrey provided some history of Grand Traverse 911 and further explanation of response times. He noted they had 165,000 phone calls last year, with 18 people to answer the phone. They have a very scripted process to try to keep the times as accurate as possible.

Fife Lake Township Supervisor Linda Forwerck provided details of their ambulance authority and EMS service. They have three 3 millages, one for ambulance, one for fire, and one for police. She stated they do have established cooperation with Boardman and Garfield townships in Kalkaska County, as well as being part of Rural Fire. Their building in Fife Lake Village houses township offices, meeting hall, fire station, ambulance bay, and a training room.

Minimum firefighter staffing for a single family home fire was briefly discussed.

Forwerck also stated they have received several grants from the Grand Traverse Band. With the change in tribal council, she urged that Whitewater Township ask to meet with them.

Popp asked for ideas on how and when we approach the public and ask them what their wants and needs are.

Weber believes the study is going to do that through the holding of public forums, charrettes, social media surveys, etc.

Jeurink reminded the board that there was a big meeting at the school in support of the fire department.

Audience member Kim Halstead expressed his disappointment that the tribe did not send anyone to this meeting and recapped some of the history of efforts with the tribe to build a new station.

Goss stated the tribe is not paying the township for fire and ambulance service, and certain statements have been circulated as fact when they are not.

Audience member Makenzie Jeurink accused Goss of personally attacking Andrew Jeurink and racially profiling him because she (Goss) is talking about the tribe.

Benak stated the tribe has parcels in the township that they pay property taxes and the ambulance millage and the fire millage on. As far as providing services to the casino, we have to provide equal services for ambulance and fire to all businesses.

Popp requested that somebody explain the box alarm system.

Weber noted that box alarms only apply to the fire service, not to EMS.

Weber and Torrey then provided a lengthy explanation of box alarms and how resources are dispatched.

The desirability of manned fire stations was discussed, as well as perceptions of the public.

Whitewater Township station location was briefly mentioned. Popp noted the existing station is near the middle of the township.

Moving on to operational needs, apparatus, building, other equipment, Popp stated he sometimes feels our equipment is too large to navigate some of our early subdivision roads with narrow easements.

Weber responded, citing mistakes in equipment purchased and lack of inspection and enforcement of building codes and local fire ordinance. He stated he has a plan to replace 20-year-old tankers with pumper/tankers, which can be used as a frontline engine or to haul water.

Popp noted Whitewater Township has set aside money to build underground cisterns.

Weber stated the placement of those should be data driven.

Options for improving access to water were discussed, i.e., the TurboDraft tool, extension of hydrants.

Weber stated he personally does not support the dry hydrant unless it is maintained by someone who is accountable. Rural Fire now has the TurboDraft to do the same thing, which takes one person and 14 inches of water to deploy it.

Popp introduced Gregg Bird, Emergency Management Director for Grand Traverse County.

Bird stated he has over 26 years in the fire service and noted this kind of information and meeting is exactly what the board needs to do to help educate the citizens. He thinks the consultant will provide great information. With Rural, even though there has been some turmoil, there is strength in solidarity and strength in numbers. Being a rural community, there are challenges for the township, lack of tax base, lack of volunteerism, etc. That's where you can use this consulting and hopefully form a solidarity with Rural, or if you are on your own, figure out what is the best model for your fire department to serve the citizens. He offered his assistance going forward.

Bird provided some information about upcoming emergency management training.

With no further comments, Popp declared the emergency services discussion closed.

Tabled Items

Review Administrative Policy Section 5 (tabled 10/14/2014)

This item will remain tabled.

Rural Fire Station Lease (tabled 08/11/2015)

This item will remain tabled.

Board Comments/Discussion

None

Announcements

Next meeting is July 12, 2016.

Public Comment

Kim Halstead, 7923 Cook Road, stated they are doing a fine job with road repairs on Skegemog Point Road. It seems to be holding up real good. He would like the township to look into trying to do more for some of the roads that need this.

Popp noted the process being used is durapatching. He has expressed appreciation to Mr. Cook for the durapatch crew in the township.

Adjournment

Motion by Lawson, seconded by Hubbell, to adjourn. On voice vote, all those present voted in favor, none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl A. Goss
Whitewater Township Clerk