

**ALMENA TOWNSHIP BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MARCH 11, 2015**

The Almena Township Board met at the Township Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Supervisor Van Tassel.

Roll call: Jerry Lentz, Sheri Manning, Deedra Rhoa, Jim Manning (telephonically), Sandra Rickli, Mark Roman, and Bill Van Tassel.

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** Three additions were made to the agenda; Under New Business, #5 Budget: to schedule a special meeting for budget work, and schedule the public hearing to adopt the budget; and #6 South entrance door to meeting room for elections; also under Unfinished Business, to add #3 Commercial Committee.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Jerry Lentz to approve the agenda as amended, **second** by Sandra Rickli. **Motion approved.**

**MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL – February 11, 2015**

Two corrections were suggested by Deedra Rhoa. On the first page, under Reports, Road Commission; after the words current situation add the following: *The Road Commission has always had control over primary and local road funds; the township has not had the control but has always had input. The Road Commission has no intention of actually exercising that right of control. They have the ability of taking those monies if the township does not use them in a timely fashion, however, that has never been their policy.* The second suggestion was on page three, item #5, Assessor's Contract, second sentence, replace the words: ~~seek outside bids with~~ *open the bidding process.*

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sheri Manning to approve the meeting minutes of February 11, 2015 as amended, **second** by Deedra Rhoa. **Motion passed.**

**PRESENTATION/APPROVAL OF BILLS:**

The Clerk presented the monthly disbursements for the period of February 12, 2015 through March 11, 2015 in the amount of \$26,303.75

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sandra Rickli to approve bills in the amount of \$26,303.75, **second** by Sheri Manning. **Motion approved.**

**REPORTS:**

**Road Commission:** Al Svilpe was in attendance to answer questions from residents and the board. Al explained that, due to a policy change, the township will no longer be getting primary road funds, but will still be getting local funds.

Ron Hurst, resident of Trestle Creek Subdivision, asked what the process is to dissolve the Road Commission.

Deb Hurst, resident of Trestle Creek Subdivision, questioned why, during the last snow fall, the snow was pushed way back off the road into yards with a loader, which took about 7 hours; hopefully the township did not pay for such a long waste of time.

**Commissioner:** Dick Godfrey was in attendance to present his monthly report. Commissioners approved placing a .248 millage renewal request for Van Buren Public Transit on the May 5,

2015 ballot. The county gave approval to purchase BS&A software for a total cost of \$436,575, which will provide a consolidation and tracking of financial activities for the County.

Sheriff's Department: Deputy Wilton reported there were 51 calls for service in Almena Township with 62 responding units. A reminder was also given to sign up for the smart 911 service if you haven't already done so.

### **LIMITED PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ron Hurst, Trestle Creek Subdivision, again questioned how the township would go about disbanding the County Road Commission, in order to place people in these positions that would be accountable? To possibly begin from scratch? Dick Godfrey explained that he would need to talk with the County Clerk. It would begin with a petition to change the law. If successful it would then go to the county commissioners. The County Road Commission members are appointed by the County Commissioners. All the townships within the county must also agree on any proposed disbanding and a certain amount of signatures would be needed to qualify for the question to be placed on a ballot.

### **REPORTS:**

Clerk: Sandra Rickli reported on the following: The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is again offering free traffic counts for May and November. MTA is holding a workshop entitled, "Learn strategies for negotiating contracts and agreements." It will be held March 24 at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Kalamazoo from 1 to 4 p.m. An email was received from Ted Thar of Van Buren County Land Management, explaining that he is getting requests from McKenna & Assoc. for GIS mapping information in order to create a zoning map. Ted explained in the email that he has already created our zoning maps for us and it wouldn't be necessary to pay McKenna to recreate what Almena already has using Ted's data. Almena has always operated on a shared agreement with the County, in regards to mapping services, to save money. It was questioned why McKenna may be doing this when we already have maps? Mark Roman, PC liaison, did not know why there was a request for this. The Clerk and Supervisor will now contact McKenna in regards to this.

Treasurer: Sheri Manning reported that Almena has received our state revenue sharing check in the amount of \$65,004. Tax collection has finished but she still needs to settle with the county; however, there is \$200,000 in delinquent personal property tax that needs to be turned over to the county for collection.

Sheri mentioned she would like the board to consider purchasing a laptop computer for the counter to enter payments or to look up tax bills for the resident when they forget them. She suggested that another use would be for Board of Review access during appointments. Sheri thinks it would be more convenient and improve productivity. Mark mentioned potential security issues in regards to having it at the counter, which could probably be remedied.

Supervisor: Bill Van Tassel reported on the following: We have received 2 bids for the potential new election entry located at the South East corner of the meeting room for precinct 2 voters to enter. Original bids were provided for very high-end, fire resistant doors but have now found out that it does not need to be a fire-resistant door. The high-end is not needed because it is just another entry option and not an outside exit door. New bids are now being obtained.

A Supervisor's meeting for all Supervisors of Van Buren County was held here at the Almena Township Hall on February 26<sup>th</sup> for information sharing. It was very well attended and they were very impressed with our town hall.

Consumers Energy will be upgrading their systems, which will improve customer service and provide new tools and information. They will be installing smart meters, which are similar to existing electric meters, but have two-way communication capabilities. They will be visiting each home in the township that has Consumers Energy electric to upgrade the systems. They will

send a postcard 30 days before, then a letter 14 days before and leave a door hanger the day of the install. They will wear identification when on-site working. This upgrade will improve meter read accuracy and automatic notification of power outages so that crews can be dispatched sooner, which means power will be back on faster.

Fire Board Report: No decisions were made at the last Paw Paw Fire Board meeting but bills were approved.

Planning Commission: New PC member, Jim Horton, was introduced and welcomed to the PC. Jim will take the place of the recently resigned member, Brian Rumsey. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the PC held a public hearing to hear a request for a special use permit for a Verizon Wireless cell tower on 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. The Township's professional planner, McKenna Associates, recommended tabling the decision as additional information was presented the night of the hearing. The public hearing will reconvene at the April 6, 2015 regular Planning Commission meeting held at the township hall at 7:00 p.m.

Parks and Recreation: Jerry Lentz presented the following: In regards to the members previously appointed to the parks and recreation department (committee), Rob and Julie Courter are no longer interested in serving on this. Jeff and Theresa Klan are considering it at this time and Jerry is still trying to connect with them.

In regards to the Parks and Recreation survey, it was suggested that the Farmers Market should possibly be removed from the survey, and also the question of the desire for a sledding location. It was suggested to possibly add a section in which interested persons can indicate their desire to be on the Parks and Recreation Committee. Liability coverage needs to be considered with all the potential ideas as well. It was the consensus of the board to begin the process to finalize the survey and pass it on to the residents of Almena Township. The board will review the postcards for final approval before the mailing. Jerry will follow up with Chris Khorey of McKenna Associates.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Emergency Siren, Mattawan Fire Chief, Terron McLean: Terron McLean addressed the board. Terron shared that, the Mattawan Fire Department, after hearing of the desire of Almena Township to have an emergency siren, for weather and natural disasters, which warns of weather or nuclear emergencies, have decided to fund this at no cost to the township, which will benefit both entities. The cost is roughly \$25,000. This will benefit both entities. They will budget, fund, and maintain the siren. The Mattawan Fire Department will determine the location, which will either be placed on CR 652 or 24<sup>th</sup> St. McLean explained that the coverage area is about 2-3 miles. Almena Township thanks them for their generosity.

McLean explained that their fiscal year budget for Mattawan Fire Department runs from July to July for budget purposes. A support vehicle has been purchased as a result of the fire fighters death that happened while responding to a fire. Their oldest truck is a 2003' everything else has been updated at this time. Their station is sufficient. They have added a secretary to their entire volunteer crew. McLean also shared of their very successful cadet program for young adults 15-18 years of age, which is currently training their 6<sup>th</sup> group. He thanked the board for their continued support.

2. Construction Board of Appeals Reappointments:

Joe Alexander, Building and David Cole, Electric:

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Jerry Lentz to reappoint Joe Alexander (building) and David Cole (electrical) to the Construction Board of Appeals for another 2 year term, until 3/2017, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**

3. Cemetery Board Reappointment:  
**MOTION: Motion** by Mark Roman to reappoint Shirley Huffman to the Cemetery Board for another 2 year term, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**
  
4. Township Board Meeting Date Schedule 2015-16:  
 It was determined that the first meeting date of the new fiscal year will be April 15 instead of April 8 due to Spring Break. Also, a correction of the years will need to be made.  
**MOTION: Motion** by Mark Roman to approve the Almena Township Board 2015-16 Fiscal Year Meeting Date Schedule as amended, **second** by Deedra Rhoa. **Motion approved.**
  
5. Scheduling of Special (budget work session) meeting and Public Hearing (budget adoption):  
**MOTION: Motion** by Sheri Manning to set a Special Meeting (to discuss 2015-16 budget) for Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. and to set a Public Hearing (to adopt the 2015-16 Fiscal Year Budget) on Tuesday, March 31, 2015 at 6:00 p.m., **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Almena Road Projects. VBCRC Highway Engineer, Barry Antilla:  
 Proposals were received from Barry Antilla prior to the meeting and distributed by the Supervisor. The estimate for 46<sup>th</sup> Ave., which includes 1600 ft. is for \$41,000 plus a 10% engineering fee, to mill and completely repave the road. We will need the estimate in writing before complete approval. The Road Commission will then put it out for bids. This is the most affordable option. The bid for the engineering portion of 30<sup>th</sup> St. from 48<sup>th</sup> Ave north to CR 652 (Almena Road) is \$8500; and the complete estimate for re-doing 30<sup>th</sup> St. for the area of 48<sup>th</sup> Ave. north to CR 652 is \$606,216  
**MOTION: Motion** by Mark Roman to approve the Preliminary Proposal from the Road Commission for the 30<sup>th</sup> St. Preliminary Engineering and Survey to prepare for possible 2015-16 construction not to exceed \$8,500, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved by a 6-1 vote.**
  

It was the consensus of the board to proceed with getting written bids for the 46<sup>th</sup> Ave. project.

  
2. Farmers Market:  
 The Supervisor shared with the board the letter previously received from Risk Management in regards to the Farmers Market on township grounds. The Township could possibly sell them the area for \$1 to help them get up and running on their own. The Supervisor will discuss this with the township attorney. We may need to dissolve this farmers market from the township for liability and auditing purposes and allow the group of vendors to attempt to make a go of it independently.
  
3. Commercial Committee: This committee was initially put in place consisting of PC and Township Board members. Since there is no work to be considered or done, due to lack of utilities and broadband, this committee should be considered disbanded.

The Supervisor suggested giving the Site Plan Review Application to the Planning Commission to review to make it more streamlined for the applicant.

**OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Jeanne DeRyke, CR 375, explained that when the Almena Farmers Market was first formed it was very successful for the first few years. The parks area was discovered because of it as it brought more people out to the open space area and pavilion. The Almena Farmers Market was begun and operated for a good cause.

**ADJOURNMENT** –

**MOTION: Motion** by Jerry Lentz to adjourn the meeting, **second** by Mark Roman. **Motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Approval date: April 15, 2015

ALMENA TOWNSHIP

CC: Township Board (7)  
Planning Commission (8)  
ZBA (5)  
Attorney David Lewis