

ALMENA TOWNSHIP
27625 CR 375
PAW PAW MI 49079

ALMENA TOWNSHIP BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 14, 2013

The Almena Township Board met at the Township Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Supervisor Stiles.

Roll call: Mark Roman, Bill Van Tassel, Jim Manning, Doug Stiles, Jerry Lentz, Sheri Manning, and Sandra Rickli.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

MOTION: Motion by Doug Stiles to approve the agenda as presented, **second** by Jim Manning. **Motion approved.**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL:

Bill Van Tassel shared that he was absent at the last meeting, which would be a correction.

MOTION: Motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 10, 2013 as amended, **second** by Sheri Manning. **Motion approved.**

PRESENTATION/APPROVAL OF BILLS:

MOTION: Motion by Sandra Rickli to approve bills in the amount of \$179,629.95, **second** by Sheri Manning. **Motion approved.**

CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Clerk Rickli shared the following: Almena Township has received documents indicating that Andrew Breitenbach, of Almena Township, has completed contracts with the State of Michigan under the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act of 1974.

Also, we have received correspondence from MTA (Michigan Township Association) thanking us for continuing our membership with them for another year, and giving updates on their publications. In addition, the Annual Educational Conference and Expo will be in a new location in 2014, the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme Township (Grand Traverse Co.) near Traverse City.

REPORTS

Commissioner: Dick Godfrey distributed his monthly report from the County Commission. As in the past, the County will receive a grant from the Michigan Housing Authority of \$300,000.

This grant will be used to rehabilitate owner occupied homes. The new Michigan State University Extension District Coordinator is Ginger Heintz. A grant was received to continue the Community Corrections program, which permits prisoners to perform community service projects in place of jail time, which significantly reduces jail expenditures.

Sheriff's Department: Deputy Wilton reported 60 calls for service that were split between all three agencies. He is still waiting for the June report, which he will then deliver.

LIMITED PUBLIC COMMENT:

Deedra Rhoa, 25880 Trestle Creek Ave., has concerns about the roads in Trestle Creek, the procedure used on the roads. The residents of Trestle Creek Farms have circulated a petition requesting that the roads be put back to asphalt.

Samir Mazahem, 25960 Emerald Circle, feels this new road repair in Trestle Creek is unacceptable. He lives at the end of a cul-de-sac and the loose rocks/gravel are all pooled at his driveway/yard. The Township is fixing it with a bad fix!

Mike Hamilton, 25834 Stonebridge Ave. shared that the neighborhood is unable to use the roads as they are intended to be used by the people living here; cannot walk, push a stroller, or rollerblade/scooter. The residents hope to keep the value of their homes. The Road Commission has not answered any of the resident's questions/complaints.

Don Jacks, 25696 Emerald Circle, feels that no updates of intent were given, no communication was given, and no letters indicating the roads were to be worked on and with what materials. The neighborhood residents feel they produce a very high tax base there, so the choices made in regards to the method are very disappointing. The traffic flow is not heavy enough to pack down the stone. He requested that the Board please put the roads back to a paved status instead of a gravel road.

Jerry Lentz, Trustee, shared that the road committee is made up of 3 members of the board. This was not presented to the road committee as it has transpired. It is a newer process being used.

Charlie Porn, 26000 Stonebridge Ave., questioned the estimates given. He would like to know a timeline for a response. Safety for the children is the most important part.

Susan Mohney, 26402 Trestle Creek Ave., feels there is a real safety issue here, there is gravel flying everywhere; school will be starting very soon. They would like to be made aware, by email provided, of immediate plans and updates to remedy this.

Jim Manning, Trustee, said that he will contact Lynn Bointnott of the Road Commission to request a meeting.

Vincent Hendersen, 45885 Hayden St., questions the chip and tar procedure. This needs to be taken care of in a professional way. Not impressed with the lack of information.

Bill Van Tassel, Trustee, feels that the initial problems began with the developers. The initial layer of asphalt wasn't thick enough. He feels it may have not have been done right.

Alan Frasier, 44889 Hayden St., (also of Powell Custom Homes) shared that 5 years ago the patches were done, which were correct, as he assisted on them.

REPORTS

Treasurer: Sheri Manning reported the following: There is no update on Championship Construction because there has been no correspondence/report from the Attorneys. A bill is being debated, which would allow an unlimited look back in regards to personal property tax exemption.

There are several bills before the house that are being looked at to allow disabled veterans to receive a 100% exemption from property taxes.

Website update: The PDF zoning map has been found; Sheri is in the process of placing it on the website. Please let Sheri know of any corrections or updates for the website.

Sheri has been briefed on a very disturbing situation; which was discovered by the previous Treasurer. There was a very substantial decrease in personal property tax for a business, a 96% decrease. There was indication in the files that the personal property tax was protested by letter but there is no letter, and no explanation as to the substantial decrease, and the personal property file is missing for ELC Leasing. Of the 30 BOR appointments made in 2009, the largest

decrease was ELC Leasing at 96%, with no documentation or explanation as to why an entire file is missing completely. The previous Treasurer attempted to seek information from the Assessor. This occurred right at the switch between the previous Assessor and the new Assessor, so the new one had no knowledge of this. It was consensus of the board that since our current Attorney is also the legal council for ELC Leasing, meaning a conflict of interest exists, in our opinion. The Board must seek new legal council for the Township.

MOTION: Motion by Bill Van Tassel that Almena Township pursue new legal counsel from out of the area, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion passed.**

Trustee: Bill Van Tassel reported on the following. The \$10,000 bill for new truck, capital outlay, has been received from PPF, which will go towards a new squad truck purchase. A testing firm has checked all PPF ladders and hoses. A new law is in place, that makes all hoses made before 1993 obsolete and they must be destroyed. They will begin the process of replacing all hoses that were made before 1993 and implement a hose replacement program for the future. Paw Paw held their annual election; Jim DeGroff remains the Paw Paw Fire Chief, Gary Brown the Assistant Chief, and Trevor Carlson-second Assistant; they were all re-elected. They recently responded to a dryer vent fire in Walden Way Subdivision; their response time was 7 minutes, which saved the home; this is a reminder to everyone to clean out their dryer vents.

Planning Commission: Mark Roman reported the following: The August 5th Planning Commission meeting held 2 public hearings, Parshall Rezoning Request, which was recommended to the Township Board to deny. There was discussion about looking into the Zoning Ordinance language in regards to this request. Santora was a Special Use Permit application, which was tabled so the applicant can seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, as the property is nonconforming. If the variance is approved, Santora will return to the Planning Commission for a decision.

Farmers Market: Bill Van Tassel reported that the Farmers Market has been very successful with at least 5 anchoring vendors weekly that are doing well, with repeat customer base continuing to grow.

Clerk: Sandra Rickli reported on the following: The interest earning check, previously received, was paid to Keystone Bank in the amount of \$12,378.48 on the principle of the loan for this building, which leaves a balance of \$6041.61, with an interest balance that will change daily. The audit drafts have been reviewed and approved by the Treasurer and Clerk and will be signed and returned, the final bound copies will then be mailed to Almena Township for distribution to the entire board. The township has received a letter from the State of Michigan in regards to receiving state payments for protected state owned facilities. They are requesting that the questionnaire be returned to be eligible for consideration.

Supervisor: Doug Stiles reported on the following: In regards to the potential of turning 30th St. into a primary road, the Board of County Road Commission has decided to take no action at this time. The township needs to inquire what we need to do to make this happen; it is in dire need of repairs and is a main thoroughfare between M-43 and Red Arrow Highway through most of our township. The Van Buren County Road Commission has issued a news release, which states that a licensed commercial applicator has been contracted by the Van Buren County Road Commission to perform chemical vegetation control maintenance services along the right-of-way on various Primary Roads and Local roads throughout Van Buren County. The control of brush along the roadside is critical to maintain safe roadside vision. Senior Services has requested to be on the agenda for September. The Kalamazoo County Hazardous Waste program has been helpful as 21 families from Almena have participated in the program.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Mediacom Cable Franchise agreement (renewal):

It was discovered that a few pages within the agreement renewal are incorrectly labeled with Antwerp Township, which will first need to be corrected.

MOTION: Motion by Jim Manning to table consideration of a Mediacom Cable Franchise agreement renewal until the erroneous forms have been corrected, **second** by Sheri Manning. **Motion passed.**

2. Steensma Service agreement - Generator maintenance (renewal):

MOTION: Motion by Jim Manning to approve the generator routine maintenance service agreement for a minimum one inspection per year, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**

3. Cemetery Projects:

The cement project for the cement under the information center at the Almena cemetery was again discussed; the bids were again reviewed from Mollitor Construction, Bommersheim Construction and Scott Flick. It was the recommendation of the Cemetery Board to accept the low bid of Mollitor Construction at \$840, with Bommersheim Construction at \$850 if Mollitor is unable to complete the job.

MOTION: Motion by Jerry Lentz to accept the recommendation from the cemetery board for the bid for cement work for the cemetery information center slab from Mollitor Construction at \$840, with Bommersheim Construction at \$850 to do the work if Mollitor is unable to complete the job, **second** by Jim Manning. **Motion passed.**

The Tree moving project for the Almena cemetery was discussed. After cleaning up the tree line to the east of the cemetery, a few trees are needed to fill in the large gap, specifically for safety reasons in the winter, with snowmobiles. Two (2) estimates were received. Breitenbach Tree Farm to charge \$85/per tree to be moved, and Kobe Nursery to charge \$75 per tree to be moved.

MOTION: Motion by Sandra Rickli to go accept the recommendation of the Cemetery Board to have Breitenbach Tree Farm move 3 white spruce trees (donated by Eric Lantz) to the Cemetery for \$85/tree, as Andy Breitenbach lives in the township, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion passed.**

Sandra also shared that Sharon Lantz (Cemetery Board) suggested that an American flag be put in the Almena Cemetery at the front by the sign; Sandra will check into pricing.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Principles of Governance, adoption (tabled from the last meeting.):

MOTION: Motion by Sandra Rickli that the Almena Township Board adopt the Principles of Governance for Almena Township, which we pledge to our township, our State, and our country, **second** by Mark Roman. **Motion unanimously approved.**

2. Development Opportunity – Ducks Unlimited (DU):

As we begin the exchanging of information, email to the township, from Ducks Unlimited, will go through the Treasurer, Sheri Manning; Information about properties and programs. The next step will possibly be visit by DU National Representatives, to Alma for a walk about and a face to face meeting with the township community. Bill Van Tassel recently had a conversation with Paw Paw Village Trustee, Eric Larcinese, following a PPF meeting. Mr. Larcinese is a geologist, and ground water and wetland expert, and the owner of Holocene Environmental LLC. He was very excited about this potential opportunity. Mr. Larcinese explained to Bill that there are monies available for parks and recreation through state grants; this money has been earmarked for this and is available from profit sharing with oil companies and the state of Michigan. He suggested that the arrangement with Ducks Unlimited (DU) may take years to complete, that Alma Township should also apply for this money, and that we are in a great position to do meaningful things for the public and the environment. Potentially something very important for Alma Township to look into.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT –

Deedra Rhoa, 25880 Trestle Creek Ave, questioned the issue a few years back, in Woodfield Subdivision, to the south of Trestle Creek Farms, the concrete walls, and the moratorium. Have the walls been cut down to code? She also wanted confirmation there would not be anything allowed in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Motion to adjourn by Jim Manning **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

ALMENA TOWNSHIP

Sandra B. Rickli
Alma Township Clerk

cc: Township Board (7)
Planning Commission (8)
ZBA (5)
Attorney Kelly Page
Attorney Gary Stewart
Powell Custom Homes