

**ALMENA TOWNSHIP BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**JULY 10, 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:**

A few items were added to the agenda. Under unfinished business, add Underwood issue and Kopper's issue (questions for Attorney), and also 23<sup>rd</sup> St. request and Parshall Rezoning. Additionally, delete, under new business, review Mattawan Fire Department agreement.

**MOTION: Motion** by Doug Stiles to approve the agenda as amended, **second** by Mark Roman. **Motion approved.**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL:**

There were corrections as follows: On page 2, The first line, delete the statement: *No neighbors seem to be in opposition to this, except for one*; on page 2, under Treasurers report, the second line, delete the word *equally* and add: as per millages, following etc..., also delete the fourth line words *or interest will be added*, and add legal action will be taken. Finally on page 4, under Unfinished Business, (#1)Road Projects 2013, the ninth line, dust control will be \$6,431.18, *delete \$120,211*.

**MOTION: Motion** by Mark Roman to approve the meeting minutes of June 12, 2013 as amended, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

**PRESENTATION/APPROVAL OF BILLS:**

**MOTION: Motion** by Sandra Rickli to approve bills in the amount of \$120,315.28, **second** by Sheri Manning. **Motion approved.**

**CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Clerk Rickli shared the following correspondence: Reminder of the Van Buren Conservation District Annual Meeting/Director Elections, Summer Farm Day and Picnic on July 24, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.at the Rainey Farm in Bangor; RSVP by July 17<sup>th</sup>.

**REPORTS**

Commissioner: Dick Godfrey distributed his monthly report from the County Commission. The Commissioners approved an enhanced 911 program; a voluntary program which will allow for a detailed profile of family members and floor plan for their dwelling. This information would be relayed to first responders. Judge Paul Hamre is retiring from his duties at the Court House; the Governor will select a replacement judge.

Sheriff's Department: Deputy Wilton in attendance. He apologized as he does not have a report for calls for service tonight. He will have the June and July reports, both, at the August meeting.

**LIMITED PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Valerie Lowe, CR 653, again questioned her vacant property located at 34415 Whiskey Run Rd, she inquired of the blight situation of the neighbor property, a trailer, which is half sitting her

property. She would like to know the status of compliance of the neighbor in regards to the court order. The court order deadline was July 6<sup>th</sup>. Attorney Gary Stewart explained that the judge will hold him in contempt of court and the blight bid process will begin. Gary will send a letter out requiring removal within 10 days, if not removed he will be billed for the removal. Sheri Manning will put together a bid package and put it out for bid requests for the removal of the trailer.

**REPORTS:**

**Treasurer:** Sheri Manning reported on the following: The Township has received the state revenue sharing check for \$58,917.00. The Township has also received the State of Michigan check (revenue) for \$4,390.87 for Public Act 48-Metropolitan Communication. All delinquent personal property tax has been cleaned up through 2012 with the exception of Championship Construction. They have until the end of next week to pay. The next step will be to seize property, through the services of Viper. Four certificates of deposit for \$50,000 each, for a total of \$200,000 are up for renewal, which will be rolled over and renewed. We will receive an interest earning check for \$12,378.48. Sheri is suggesting the township use this to pay interest on the principle of the loan for this building.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sheri Manning to use the interest earning check of \$12,378.48 to make a principle payment to Keystone Bank on the principle of the loan for the building, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion passed.**

Website update: Sheri has updated all the new forms, and is currently working on creating a list serve for the community for email. The board should forward any corrections and items for the calendar, to Sheri. The Planning Commission has two public hearings scheduled for August 5<sup>th</sup> that involve two different requests by residents, which should be posted on the PC page and the calendar.

**Supervisor:** Doug Stiles gave the following report: SWMI Planning Commission has responded to our request for a traffic survey for 30<sup>th</sup> St. It will be done ASAP. Larry Hummel has also communicated with Doug in regards to 30<sup>th</sup> St.; they are possibly looking into turning this into a County Road. Van Buren County drug treatment program is being put together. August 16 there will be a 4 person golf scramble put on by Tonya Schuitmaker, \$65/pp due by Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Parks and Recreation:** Sheri reported for Bill Van Tassel in his absence. The Farmers Market has had its two best weekends to date, recently. Things are really beginning to pick up and have also added new vendors.

Update on the relationship of our township properties and ducks unlimited as follows: Van Tassel had a very long conversation with a Ducks Unlimited Grant writer in Ann Arbor. He was very excited about this opportunity as opportunities such as this are very few and far between. This man was looking at the Almema Woods and the back half of the township hall properties on google earth and said that this is one of the most promising proposals he has ever seen. Before going any further, Bill wants the board to understand that this would mean selling the development rights of Almema Woods and the back half of the township property to Ducks Unlimited; what is referred to as a Conservation Easement. Meaning Almema Township would still retain ownership of these properties, and would dictate activities and land use policy, such as hunting, fishing, logging, trails, parking lots, signage, etc....Our options would be many, but Almema Township would give up the rights to put buildings or commercial development on them. Other than that, Almema Township makes the decisions. Ducks Unlimited threw out a fictitious number of one thousand dollars an acre. So, between the two areas of land the township owns, it would be about four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This money would

not be given directly to the township, though, it would be applied with other money as matching money for a one million dollar grant. The Township would receive money from that grant for Almena Township projects, habitat development, trails, signs, forester, parking lots, fencing? Lots of options exist. Almena Township would make those decisions.

First, a small committee should be formed, which would have more conversation with DU and have DU people come talk with the board as well.

It was suggested that Bill Van Tassel and Steve Manning be potential members of the committee.

**MOTION: Motion** by Sheri Manning to establish an exploratory committee in regards to the township properties in conjunction with Ducks Unlimited, **second** by Jim Manning. **Motion passed.**

If the board chooses to pursue this development opportunity there would need to be a public hearing just to begin the process. The board should ponder this and it will be discussed again at the next board meeting in August.

Trustee: Sheri reported for Bill Van Tassel in his absence. The Paw Paw Fire Board meeting was recently attended by Bill Van Tassel. PPFD has started in house training for new fire fighters as opposed to county fire training. The first two trainees have passed their state tests with flying colors. This will save the Fire Department thousands of dollars in training monies. The Paw Paw Fire Department bill for equipment is due in August, the invoice should be coming soon. In regards to Mattawan Emergency Services Agreement; Bill sat in on a meeting with Sandra Rickli, Doug Stiles, Jim DeGroff, Paw Paw Fire Department Chief, and Theron McLean, Mattawan Fire Department Chief, and a member of the Paw Paw Emergency Response Team in Doug's office. The meeting was requested by Jim DeGroff after he read last month's meeting minutes that referred to a Mattawan Fire District Proposal, and after receiving many phone calls in regards to a potential "proposal." Mr. DeGroff was assured that no new proposal was prepared and that no changes were being considered at this time, and that the Almena Township Trustee was only seeking information from a meeting earlier this year between Chief McClean and Supervisor Stiles; nothing new! It was all just a misunderstanding. Trustee Van Tassel realized afterwards that he had never seen turnout times and distances that had been originally provided to Supervisor Stiles by Chief McClain for comparison. Bill Van Tassel's goal is to make sure that all agreements and contracts are reviewed by the board in the future, this was not a problem with the Fire Departments or Emergency Services whatsoever.

Planning Commission: No report as the July meeting was cancelled, again, due to lack of business. The August 5<sup>th</sup> PC meeting will have 2 public hearings, one will be a Rezoning Request and the other will be a request for a Special Use Permit.

Attorney: In regards to the Kopper's judgment, an enforcement officer will be sent out, and will take pictures and forward them to the attorney. Attorney Stewart will then put him in contempt of court. He will also call the Road Commission to inquire of any violations.

Clerk: Sandra Rickli reported on the following: Rickli is requesting board approval for additional training fees for Colleen Draves, our new PC and ZBA Recording Secretary, she has been previously paid for training for PC in the amount of \$60. The board was in agreement which resulted in a motion:

**MOTION: Motion** by Mark Roman to approve up to \$120 in funds for training for her job, **second** by Sandra Rickli, **motion passed.**

Senior Services has finally gotten back to us after repeated attempts by Sheri and Sandra, in regards to a representative from Almena Township to sit on their board. Sandra explained the

interest and qualifications of a member of our township. He inquired after reading about it in the minutes. The board was in agreement, which resulted in a motion.

**MOTION: Motion** by Sandra Rickli that the Almena Township Board recommends to Senior Services the appointment of Greg Francisco to the Senior Services board as an Almena Township representative, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

Sandra will let Jennifer Carver know, as well as send a copy of the minutes and also inform Greg Francisco of his recommendation for appointment to the Senior Services board as the Almena Township representative.

Doug also shared that Jennifer Carver, of Senior Services will be in his office on July 24<sup>th</sup> if Sheri and Sandi would like to sit in on the meeting. She will be in to give an update/report.

The Township's annual audit was conducted June 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> by Siegfried Crandall, which appears to have gone well. We just received the report today and it will be reviewed and distributed.

The Fire Departments will be paid this month, as they are paid each year in July; Sheri and Sandi are working on the amounts.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Adopt the Principles of Governance as submitted by MTA:**

The board will review completely, and wait to have the entire board present to adopt these at the August board meeting. The adoption is tabled until August.

2. **Cemetery Projects:**

The Township has received a quote from Kalamazoo Fence Co. for considerably less than the quotes from the other 2 companies as they would really like to work with the township and contribute back because they operate their business in the township, as well. This quote has not been taken to the Cemetery Board first for their recommendation to the Township Board, due to the fact that this price is only good for 30 days, not enough time for a turnaround from the recommendation of the cemetery board.

**MOTION: Motion** by Sandra Rickli to accept the bid of \$5542.57 from Kalamazoo Fence Co. for the new fence at the Almena Cemetery across the front, **second** by Jim Manning. **Motion passed.**

Two (2) bids have been received for cement work as well; Jim Manning suggested we also get a bid from Scott Flick, as he lives in Almena Township. The Clerk will try to contact him.

The Clerk also received a letter and price quote back from PJ's Cemetery Mapping Service, Jeffery McKenna from Horton Michigan. He specializes in providing up to date mapping services for cemeteries, which an extensive helpful service option. The board recognized the service and price quote, which is good for a year. This will also be presented to the Cemetery Board as well. This will be researched more by the Clerk as a potential consideration for inclusion in the budget for next year, as the monies budgeted for this year, will be exhausted with the new fence across the front of the cemetery and a cement pad under the information center.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Road Projects for this year:

It was the consensus of the board to not prep or pave the dead end dirt road of 38<sup>th</sup> Ave, from 30<sup>th</sup> St. west, and to roll over the \$91,372.50 (\$128,000) back into the budget to go towards next year's road projects.

2. Request for Special Use Permit (23<sup>rd</sup> St.) and Rezoning Request (M-43 Hwy.):

These two requests will be heard at a public hearing of the Planning Commission on Monday, August 5, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. The Special Use Permit is being requested by Edward Santora (23<sup>rd</sup> St.) and the Rezoning Request is being requested by Robert and Margaret Parshall (M-43Hwy.).

**OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT** – Offered

**ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

ALMENA TOWNSHIP

Sandra B. Rickli  
Almena Township Clerk

cc: Township Board (7)  
Planning Commission (8)  
ZBA (5)  
Attorney Kelly Page  
Attorney Gary Stewart  
Jennifer Carver  
Greg Francisco