

**ALMENA TOWNSHIP BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**OCTOBER 9, 2013**  
(Approved 11-12-13)

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:**

Additions were made as follows: Add Receiving of bids-Underwood under New Business, and add Road Commission Response-Trestle Creek under Unfinished Business.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Doug Stiles to approve the agenda as amended, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

Corrections were made as follows: Page 2, last paragraph, first sentence, the word cheap should be chip; page 4, New Business, item number 2, add to the end of the first paragraph, "*this was later referred to the Planning Commission for an interpretation.*" Also under the same item number 2, to further clarify, the last portion of the last sentence, to read, "Which would not be compatible with *current zoning for that area.*" Page 5, under item number 6, in the motion the last portion should read Township Subdivision *Street* regulations and Road Commission *New Road Standards Booklets*.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Doug Stiles to approve the meeting minutes of September 11, 2013 as amended, **second** by Sandra Rickli. **Motion approved.**

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL – September 9, 2013:**

Two corrections were made as follows: Under item #1 Proposed new legal counsel,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the paragraph, the word contact should be *contract*, and per say should be *per se*.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Jerry Lentz to approve the special meeting minutes of September 9, 2013 as amended, **second** by Jim Manning. **Motion approved.**

**PRESENTATION/APPROVAL OF BILLS:**

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sandra Rickli to approve bills in the amount of \$25,225.24, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

**CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

It was suggested that this portion of the agenda be eliminated with any correspondence or announcements to be made under each board members individual report. There was consensus of the board to eliminate this portion beginning with this meeting agenda.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Doug Stiles to eliminate this correspondence and announcements portion of the agenda beginning with this October 9, 2013 agenda, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

Agenda items must be added to the agenda (given to the Supervisor) to prepare for inclusion on the agenda, by the Friday before the board meetings.

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**REPORTS**

Road Commission: Al Svilpe, Commissioner, was in attendance.

Discussion began regarding the Road Commission's (Larry Hummel) response to the Township Board and resident questions in regards to Trestle Creek Farms Subdivision. Mark Roman stated that he disagrees with much of the responses.

Too much loose gravel remains. The residents would like this swept and vacuumed. The cost for this will be \$1964.77 per the estimate.

**MOTION**: **Motion** by Jim Manning that the board approve the proposal for sweep and vacuum of Trestle Creek Farms Subdivision, **second** by *Bill Van Tassel*. **Motion approved**.

Public comment:

Richard Jager, 25925 Emerald Circle, questioned if the township was still planning on doing the fog seal in Trestle Creek?

Deedra Rhoa, 25580 Trestle Creek Ave., would like to be contacted by the Road Commission, as she has questions and has not heard back from them yet. It is not acceptable to not return phone calls, as was done to many of the neighborhood residents.

The board asked of Al Svilpe, again, questions in regards to the future of 30<sup>th</sup> St. in Almena Township. Is funding the issue? This road is in need of serious attention, but will be very costly, a potential five year plan. The Road Commission has no plans to make it a County Road at this time. Al will take this back to the office, have Barry Antilla contact the township to possibly provide some options, and to begin the process of figuring out a solution, or a multiple year plan. The Road Commission is having their annual township meeting and the call for 2014 local projects on October 28 at 6:00 at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence, with dinner provided, for all township board members; board members are urged to please RSVP as soon as possible.

Commissioner: Dick Godfrey distributed his monthly report from the County Commission.

Sheriff's Department: No representation at the meeting.

**LIMITED PUBLIC COMMENT**:

Debbie Hurst, 46141 Finch St. questioned if the township can look into applying for grants, possibly state or federal grant monies. Possibly a matching funds situation?

Cindy Allen, 25946 Trestle Creek Ave., would like someone to contact her in regards to the planned date to do the sweep/vacuum job. Her number was given to Al Svilpe, of the Road Commission.

Richard Jager, Emerald Circle, questioned if fog seal is still an option now? Could we possibly further explore if it would still be an option in the spring? He urged the board to please not give up on this yet.

Residents can contact VBCO.org to get a copy of the Township Transportation Partners Booklet.

**REPORTS**:

Treasurer: Sheri Manning reported on the following: There is no update on Championship Construction-delinquent personal property tax; she will have to contact our new law firm in

regards to this. Also, in regards to the ELC reduction, the new attorney will be given copies of everything we have in regards to this, to review, and advise as to appropriate action to take.

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ZBA: Ron Marvin, a member of the ZBA, reported on the variance request denied to Ed Santora, in the absence of Chair, Kristen Garceau. He read the certification of the final decision.

Planning Commission: Mark Roman reported on the Planning Commission beginning work on three issues: 1) Storage facilities in the township - are they needed, possible surveys, public input, 2) Commercial Overlay on M-43, and 3) Roads requirements in subdivisions, possibly change to add new wording to require timing of response, possibly a surety bond placed in escrow to ensure completion and/or maintenance.

Parks and Recreation: Bill Van Tassel reported that the Farmers Market completed the 2013 season on September 28. They are looking at end of year projects, would like to replace dying tree east of the historic hall parking lot, and purchase mulch to rework many areas including front of new township hall in the spring.

A meeting was held with Ducks Unlimited, at which Bill, Sheri and Jim were present. A very informative meeting was had with Dane Cramer, a grant writer out of Ann Arbor. Discussion progressed of the possibilities of conservation easement. Mr. Cramer was satisfied with what he heard and saw. The township is now moving forward in this process; the very beginning stages of it.

Bill has also been working with Mattawan Little League looking into Pure Michigan designation for promotional purposes. This could also be good for Almena Township to promote our blueberry growers, golf course, fish hatchery and historic township hall. This would possibly be something for the future.

Jim Manning has been talking with a forester, to hopefully be able to mark and eventually remove the ash trees from Almena Woods. He will have more on this at the next meeting.

Fire Board Report: Bill reported that October 15 is Fire Prevention Day for kids; Freddie the Fire Truck goes to local schools to talk prevention; to stop, drop-n-roll. This program was started in the 80's and they feel it has been very effective and has helped to reduce incidents with children. Replacement hose for the outdated hose is now in use, cost for this years' purchase is \$3,559.

Clerk: Sandra Rickli reported on the following: She attended the MTA conference in Kalamazoo on October 4 which covered two topics: Money Matters and Awesome Board Meetings, thanks to the township for paying for her to go. Cemetery update: The new fence along the front of the Almena Cemetery has been completely installed, very nice job by Kalamazoo Fence. The three pine trees being donated by Eric Lantz to be moved by Breitenbach Tree Farm will be moved to the opening of the east tree line before winter.

Covey Hill Cemetery had a clean-up done by the Van Buren County Jail Crew on October 2, mostly cleaning up brush along the North side fence, and cutting down 2 trees. They made a pile that the sexton will burn. Thanks to the efficient, hardworking crew.

Supervisor: Doug Stiles gave report on the following: Township Clean-up day is October 19 from 8am-2pm. Potential Almena Township Flag development to be considered by the board. It will cost about \$200-\$250. Precision Asphalt of Lawton has been contacted for a quote for the cracks in the parking lot; it would be 2000 linear ft. at \$.65 ft. Pea gravel with hot mix over, the board was asked to consider the process for approval.

The annual Road Commission meeting/dinner with local officials is scheduled for October 28 at 6:00 at the Van Buren Conference Center with all Township Board members invited and highly encouraged to attend as road planning will be handled differently this year. Attendance is important to work and maintenance continuing to happen in a cost-effective manner.

Lights in parking lot need attention and bulbs are needed for under the soffit along the outside of the building. Doug will look into these things.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Resolution Determining 2013 Special Assessment Costs:

The Treasurer reported that in all 6 districts, all special assessments, remain the same as last year, with the exception of Rose Lane. An adjustment was made to Rose Lane's special assessment, as they showed negative amounts; each of the units has been increased by \$5 apiece.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sheri Manning to adopt the Resolution determining 2013 Special Assessment Costs, **second** by Jerry Lentz.

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

**Motion approved.**

2. Attorney terms of acceptance:

The attorney engagement letter was received from Lewis Reed and Allen P.C. and reviewed by the board.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Mark Roman to approve the agreement with Lewis Reed and Allen P.C. as per the engagement letter as presented, **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**

3. Building Department Agreement:

The current agreement expires November 19<sup>th</sup>. Almena should meet with Texas Township to renegotiate the agreement, and details of it, for another year.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Mark Roman to appoint Sheri and Sandra to renegotiate the building department agreement with Texas Township for another year, **second** by Jerry Lentz. **Motion approved.**

A meeting will be scheduled for Sheri and Sandra with Texas Township.

4. Receiving of bids – removal of structures: Whiskey Run:

Unfortunately no bids have been received for the removal of the structures on Whiskey Run, but we must actively look for companies ourselves, at this point, to obtain bids so that we can get this cleaned up and completed.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. PC/ZBA Secretary Compensation:

The Clerk shared that she has spoken with Colleen to get her opinion as to a fair amount of increased compensation for her work. It was suggested by Colleen that she receive an extra \$10 for meetings lasting more than 2 hours and \$25 flat rate each time that she comes in. It was the consensus of the board that this was a fair amount for her work.

**MOTION:** **Motion** by Sandra Rickli to compensate the PC/ZBA secretarial position, an additional \$10 for any meeting lasting more than 2 hours and a \$25 flat rate each time that she comes in to do her prep work (not including minute preparation), **second** by Bill Van Tassel. **Motion approved.**

**OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Charles Underwood, 34541 Whiskey Run, spoke to the board about the judgment issued to him earlier in July 2013, and his difficult year. He shared that his project in that location is ½ done, he urged the board to please let him keep the trailers there and continue his project.

Marv Strong, CR 653, urged the board to repair 30<sup>th</sup> St., or at least make it a top priority.

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Juris Kaps, 35430 23<sup>rd</sup> St., is before the board with the same question as last month, why the 96% reduction in tax rate for ELC? Is there a possible impropriety? He believes that, unless there is a reasonable explanation, a serious violation of public trust has occurred. As per MCL 211.116 it would be considered a misdemeanor of 1 year in jail or fined. It appears to be a criminal matter.

James Martemucci, 46884 Woodfield Dr., had additional questions regarding the ELC reduction. Also questioned the fact that files were missing, but are now back, due to a random audit; shouldn't copies be made of files, not original files removed from the office? Is the board going to find out why this happened as well? Will the board make changes to tighten up policy?

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: Motion** to adjourn by Jim Manning, **second** by Mark Roman. **Motion passed**. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

ALMENA TOWNSHIP

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