

Charter Township of Portage  
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

June 13, 2022

The Charter Township of Portage held a Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday, June 13, 2022. The board of trustees attended in person at the Township office and the public logged in via zoom.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Bruce Petersen at 6:00 PM.

**In attendance** were Supervisor Bruce Petersen, Clerk Amy Skewes. Treasurer Betsy Smith and Trustees Peggy Anderson, Bill Bingham, Bill Fink and John Ollila as stated by roll call.

**Additions or Changes to the Meeting Agenda:**

Correspondence – Garbage/Junk on Mill Road, Playground equipment request

New Business – FOIA request

Old Business – Rec Plan - WUPPDR

A motion was made by Fink, seconded by Ollila to approve the meeting agenda. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Approval of the Bd. of Trustees Previous Minutes:** A motion was made by Ollila and seconded by Fink to approve the May 9, 2022 regular meeting minutes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Approval of the Bills:**

Anderson commented that the sewer bills for the City of Houghton had 24 days of penalties

A motion was made by Anderson and seconded by Bingham to approve the bills as audited. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Review Clerk's Report:**

- Audit is complete –Betsy and I met with Christina to go over
- Sent out 680 Absentee applications
- Attended election training on 6/7/22 at Franklin Township

**Review Treasurer's Report:**

- Preparing for summer taxes
- Edward Jones Perpetual Care account has lost \$141,000 this year so far. Next, we will determine how this relates to amount of interest available to use for transfer from EJ/Perp Care to General Fund to eliminate cemetery deficits (already in the negative) at year end, Edward Jones correspondence follows.

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**From:** Riesgraf,Chris <Chris.Riesgraf@edwardjones.com>

**Sent:** Monday, May 23, 2022 12:07 PM

I would advise you to do nothing as of right now. There are two things happening that are hurting the account. The market being down is one, and that is not something to ignore, but also not something to react to in the short term. The second thing that is happening that is drawing down the return, is that when interest rates go up bonds also lose value. The Federal Reserve is raising rates to tackle inflation. In years when the best asset class to own is cash, there is nowhere to run too. Stay patient, give it time, and this will continue to benefit you.

If this portfolio would have continued like it has in the past without any equity (stocks), then you would still be down this year from bonds, and missed out on the return that stocks have given you over the past 5 years.

Stay patient and enjoy the summer.

-Chris

**From:**

**Sent:** Monday, May 23, 2022 11:56 AM

**To:**

**Cc:**

**Subject:** questions re: major loss on investment

Hi Chris and Becky,

I am going to report this to my board next month on the second Monday at our scheduled meeting. I was wondering if there was anything we can do about the extreme loss of investment I am observing? I realize we have 8 months left to input, but so far our year end totals at the bottom show about \$140,000 lost so far. I know the markets are not in a good place. Is there anything that is reasonable and prudent that we should do with our monies invested in these accounts in order to fix this? Let me know what you advise.

Thank you,

Betsy

2022	<u>Cash &amp; MM - #1711.3B</u>	<u>Certificates of Deposits - #1711.3</u>	<u>Bonds - #1771.3A</u>	<u>Mutual Funds #1711.3D</u>	<u>Total</u>
Beginning Balance	11,004.07	-	-	1,217,284.57	1,228,288.64
<b>January Activity</b>					
Transfers	219.29				
Transfers + Premium on Purchase					
Interest/Dividends	363.41				
Gain/Loss in investment				(60,973.26)	
Unrealize gain/loss					
<b>January Totals</b>	<b>11,586.77</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,156,311.31</b>	<b>1,167,898.08</b>
<b>February Activity</b>					
Transfers					
Transfers + Premium on Purchase					
Interest/Dividends	603.14				
Gain/Loss in investment				(4,179.47)	

Unrealize gain/loss	-				
<b>February Totals</b>	<u>12,189.91</u>	-	-	<u>1,152,131.84</u>	<u>1,164,321.75</u>
<b>March Activity</b>					
Transfers					
Transfers + Premium on Purchase					
Interest/Dividends	260.01				
Gain/Loss in investment				(9,331.05)	
Unrealize gain/loss	-				
<b>March Totals</b>	<u>12,449.92</u>	-	-	<u>1,142,800.79</u>	<u>1,155,250.71</u>
<b>April Activity</b>					
Transfers	(258.22)				
Interest/Dividends	1,410.05				
Gain/Loss in investment				(69,719.02)	
Unrealize gain/loss	-				
<b>April Totals</b>	<u>13,601.75</u>	-	-	<u>1,073,081.77</u>	<u>1,086,683.52</u>
<b>YEAR END SUMMARY</b>					
Transfers	(38.93)	-	-	-	(38.93)
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-
Interest/Dividends	2,636.61	-	-	-	2,636.61
Gain/Loss in investment	-	-	-	(144,202.80)	(144,202.80)
Unrealize gain/loss	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<u>2,597.68</u>	-	-	<u>(144,202.80)</u>	<u>(141,605.12)</u>

#### Review Zoning Administrators' Report (John) for (May. 2022)

##### Zoning Applications:

5/11 – Garage at 47616 Mill Rd., approved, 5/12 – Deck at 47748 McClellan, approved, 5/14 – U.S. 41 S, sun room & deck above existing boathouse, approved,  
5/16 – New home, 34560 Lake Ave., approved, 5/17 – Pole barn, 46569 Paradise Road., approved, 5/19 – Garage at 47190 Green Acres Rd., approved,  
5/23 – Storage shed, 19817 Haapapuro Rd., approved, 5/26 – 46553 Main Street Dodgeville, upgrade to U Haul facility, approved

##### Zoning Correspondence:

5/3 – Setbacks required on Mill Rd., 5/5 – Procedure for a variance request,  
5/6 – Inquiry about setbacks for future duplex on Huron & Horatio, Hurontown,  
5/14 – Setback from shoreline along Portage Lake, 5/18 – Inquiry whether a lot on Portage Lake can be built on, 5/23 – Inquiry about demolition of a building,  
5/24 – Construction yard materials stockpiled along M-26, 5/31 – Business sign guidelines on south 41. Ollila will now send every approved zoning app to the County, per County request.  
Ollila made a motion to charge a \$250.00 fee for any zoning amendment request to cover the cost of mailings and a newspaper ad and a \$20.00 fee to modify any sign at a business, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.



**Correspondence:** Mich. Rural Water Assoc. – Training Series & Serv Line Leak Protection, MTA – Live Webinar Series, State of Michigan Public Service Comm. – Hearing, Little Bros. Friends of the Elderly – Sweepstakes, Chassell Township – Intent to Prepare a Master Plan, Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce – Annual Dues

**Review Fire Departments:**

**OLFD:** 3 medical calls 2 fires

A motion was made by Ollila to approve the purchase of new hoses and suction line for the Fire Department, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

A motion was made by Ollila to approve the Fire Department to seek a DNR grant for fire gear, seconded by Skewes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**HTFD:** Hurontown grant application accepted

**Review Assessor's Report:** Assessor Erhart presented the regulations the Township must comply with to meet the Public Access law - Attached

**Trustees Reports/Updates:** Bingham commented that Portage Sewer is in the red for the year and needs attention ASAP. The water /sewer committee will have a meeting on 6/17/2022 at 9AM to discuss.

Ollila spoke to the City of Hancock regarding their spring cleanup and handed the guidelines they use for their residents for the board to go over and discuss at next meeting.

**Public Comments:** The new Library Director introduced herself and said the library holds their monthly meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month

Ollila was asked if he had received a zoning change request. Ollila stated that it's been forwarded to our Attorney and will be sent to the Supervisor and the Planning Commission if there are no modifications needed.

**Old Business:**

- A. Green Acres Rd. Sewer Project –5th Draw – Green Acres Rd. Paving & Hurontown Center Drainage Ditch (EGLE Permit Good For 5 years).
- B. 2021 Audit – Bound & Digital Copies Available. Christina from Rukkila/Negro presented the Audit report and noted that the Township should watch Dakota water, Dakota sewer and Woodland water because they had deficits, and have had for years.
- C. Dust Abatement – County Calcium Chloride Application.
- D. Blinking Light – Tapiola – Bay Electric -Has not started yet
- E. Fire Numbers/Addresses for (2) Sewer Lift Stations – On Building Permits.
- F. ARPA Funds and County Road Repair – Matching Funds Incentive Program.

Roy Britz notified the board that the township will get a commitment letter from the county to sign and will be able to use road millage money for the match.

- G. WUPPDR would like a rec meeting – rec committee meeting set up on 6/21/22 at 3PM

**New Business:**

- A. Two – Lift Station Pumphouse Heavy Duty Door Replacement Approval.  
A motion was made by Ollila to approve the Chassell Carpentry bid for the doors in the amount of \$17,300.00, seconded by Anderson. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.
- B. New Calendar Format on Web-Page.
- C. Darrel Coponen – July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration at Hurontown Recreation Area.  
Bruce will respond with a denial due to nearby private property and insurance concerns.
- D. Neil Ahola Request – (3) Family Financial Situations – Prior to Jan. 1, 2022.  
A motion was made by Smith to waive the mandatory perpetual care fee for these 3 people, seconded by Skewes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.  
Bruce will also notify the funeral homes of the new rates and that this waiver was a 1-time thing.
- E. Portajohn to be located at the Peepsock Courts.
- F. FOIA request – Varnum law office. The township has already received 2 similar requests and will comply.

**Meetings:**

- A. June 2, 2022 – 2022 Audit Meeting – Township Hall.
- B. June 3, 2022 - Ben Campione – Roadside Ditch Pilgrim Road.
- C. June 9, 2022 - Cemetery Improvement Committee Meeting – Twp. Office
- D. June 9, 2022 – MTU Public Works – Pilgrim Road Trail Crossings.
- E. June 9, 2022 – Planning Commission Meeting – Twp. Office.  
Anderson commented that about 20 people attended the meeting and the next meeting is on July 14, 2022

**Public Comment:**

David Aittama of Chassell said the board is comprised of elitists and recommended that members should give up their positions to a younger generation.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

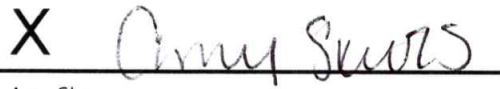
**Public Attendance:**

Carol Sowards  
Chris Holmes - UPEA  
Susan Schwenk  
David Aittama  
Jean Hachnel  
Roy Britz

Christina Smigowski  
Katrina Linde -Moriarty  
Randy Malone – OLFD  
Anders Kallungi - OLFD

X 

Bruce Petersen  
Supervisor

X 

Amy Skewes  
Clerk

The following items are required for each assessing district under Section 10g, Subsection (1), MCL 211.10g

1. Employ or contract with an assessor of record that oversees and administers an annual assessment of all property liable to taxation in the assessing district in accordance with the constitution and laws of this state.
2. Use a computer-assisted mass appraisal system that is approved by the State Tax Commission as having sufficient software capabilities and to store and back up necessary data.
3. Subject to State Tax Commission guidelines, have and follow a published policy under which its assessor's office is reasonably accessible to taxpayers. A policy under this subdivision must include, at a minimum, the items in subparagraphs (i) to (iv) and should include the item in subparagraph (v) as follows:
  - i. A designation, by name, telephone number, and electronic mail address, of at least 1 official or employee in the assessor's office to whom taxpayer inquiries may be submitted directly by telephone or electronic mail.
  - ii. An estimated response time for taxpayer inquiries submitted under subparagraph (i), not to exceed 7 business days.
  - iii. Information about how a taxpayer may arrange a meeting with an official or employee of the assessor's office for purposes of discussing an inquiry in person
  - iv. Information about how requests for inspection or production of records maintained by the assessor's office should be made by a taxpayer and how those requests will be handled by the assessor's office.
  - v. Information about any process that the assessor's office may have to informally hear and resolve disputes brought by taxpayers before the March meeting of the board of review.
4. If a city or township building within the assessing district is in an area with broadband internet access, provide taxpayers online access to information regarding its assessment services, including, but not limited to, parcel information, land value studies and documentation, and economic condition factors.
5. Include the name, telephone number, and electronic mail address of at least 1 official or employee in the assessor's office to whom taxpayer inquiries may be submitted directly by telephone or electronic mail in notices



to taxpayers concerning assessment changes and exemption determinations, including, but not limited to, notices issued under MCL 211.24c.

6. Ensure that support staff is sufficiently trained to respond to taxpayer inquiries, require that the assessor maintains certification levels, and require that its board of review members receive board of review training and updates required and approved by the State Tax Commission.
7. Comply with MCL 211.44(4) with respect to any property tax administration fee collected under section 44.
8. Have a policy in place for conducting the annual personal property canvass and sufficient personal property records according to developed policy and statutory requirements.
9. A Board of Review that operates in accordance with the General Property Tax Act, MCL 211.1 to 211.157. This includes ensuring that Boards of Review are acting within their statutory authorities.
10. An adequate process for determining whether to grant or deny exemptions according to statutory requirements.
11. An adequate process for meeting the requirements outlined in the State Tax Commission's publication entitled, "Supervising Preparation of the Assessment Roll", as those requirements existed on October 1, 2018.
12. Comply with any other requirement that the State Tax Commission lawfully promulgates under the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328, in the exercise of its authority that expressly states that it is intended as an additional audit requirement under MCL 211.10g(1).



## The Township Assessor's Office Published Policy is as follows:

1. *Who is the primary contact in the assessor's office, and the person to contact directly with questions relating to assessments?*

Assessor:	Laura Erhart, MAAO
Electronic Mail Address:	<a href="mailto:assessor@charterportagetwp.org">assessor@charterportagetwp.org</a>
Telephone Number:	(906) 482-4310 - Mondays (906) 358-0504 - direct dial T-F
Mailing Address	47240 Green Acres Rd, Houghton, MI 49931
Office Hours	Mondays, 9am to 3pm

\*Additionally, all Township Assessor's Office contact information is provided on the Charter Township of Portage's website at the following link <https://www.portagetownship.info>

2. *What is the anticipated response time for a request for information and how will records maintained by the assessor's office be provided to the taxpayer / property owner?*

The Assessor's Office estimates a response time for taxpayer / property owner inquiries submitted in accordance with MCL 211.10g not to exceed 7 business days from the date of inquiry. Records will be provided in the manner the request is received unless otherwise specified; ie;

- Email requests – email response
- Phone request – initially a phone response, documents sent by a mutually agreed upon method
- Written request – written response
- In person request – at time of request if immediately available, or by a mutually agreed upon method

3. *How can a taxpayer / property owner arrange a meeting with the Assessor to discuss assessing records in person?*

- Meetings may be scheduled by contacting the Assessor's Office.  
OR
- A taxpayer / property owner may visit the Township Hall during the Assessor's office hours, to meet the Assessor Office for purposes of discussing an inquiry in person.

4. *How should requests for inspection or production of records maintained by the assessor's office be made by a taxpayer / property owner and how are those requests handled by the assessor's office?*

- Inspection of records and record requests may be made by contacting the Assessor's Office.
- A taxpayer / property owner may visit the Township Hall during the Assessor's office hours to inspect records or make record requests of documents maintained by the Assessor's Office.
- If a request for inspection of records is made, a time will be scheduled during normal business hours, Monday through Friday between 8am and 5pm, as determined and agreed upon between the taxpayer / property owner and the Assessor.

5. *What is the Assessor's Office process to informally hear and resolve disputes brought by taxpayers / property owners before the March meeting of the board of review?*

- Taxpayers / property owners may have their assessment reviewed by the Township Assessor's Office at any time throughout the year.
- The Assessor is available by appointment throughout the year to hear and resolve disputes.
- A window of opportunity may exist between notices of assessment being mailed and the delivery of the roll to the March Board of Review. Informal discussions concerning values may take place by contacting the Assessor's Office.
- Unresolved disputes may be brought by taxpayers / property owners to the March meeting of the Board of Review before their last scheduled meeting in March.
- The assessment process is an annual process and information is gathered and assembled throughout the year to make changes for the following year's assessment.

# Real Property Annual Review Program

The Assessor's office reviews a portion of the properties in the Township every year. This process includes:

- Updating the exterior photo of properties
- Reviewing aerial photos
- Reviewing the condition of structures
- Verifying accuracy of record cards.

The Township Assessor may start by reviewing the property from the road. In areas where it is possible to see buildings from the road the Assessor may drive down the street and take photos on foot or from the car. The Assessor will always have identification. During this process, the Assessor will not request to inspect the inside of the home. *Note: If you see someone that behaves different from this description or if you are concerned, please notify the Police Department immediately.*

The Assessor's office also inspects a property when notified of new construction, remodeling or demolition.

## Why do we do this?

The Assessor's office has the responsibility to assess all property in the Township at 50% of fair market value. This includes homes, factories, commercial properties, vacant land and personal property. To meet the standards of the State Tax Commission, the Assessor's office reviews a portion of the properties every year. This allows the Township to keep accurate records.

## How are parcels to be reviewed chosen?

Although not limited to, the major impetuses for field visits are;

- Review of properties sold (*have there been physical changes to the property that may effect the sale price*).
- Sites issued permits (*measure and account for new construction*).
- Property owner request.
- Property in the current year's inspection plan.

*Assessor Laura E. Hart*

MCL 211.44 (4)

The governing body of a local property tax collecting unit may waive all or part of the property tax administration fee or the late penalty charge, or both. A property tax administration fee collected by the township treasurer shall be used only for the purposes for which it may be collected as specified by subsection (3) and this subsection. If the bond of the treasurer, as provided in section 43, is furnished by a surety company, the cost of the bond may be paid by the township from the property tax administration fee.