

Charter Township of Portage
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

July 8, 2024

The Charter Township of Portage held a Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday, July 8, 2024.

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 and Trustees Peggy Anderson, Bill Fink, John Ollila and Keith Wanhaaho as stated by roll call. Absent: Treasurer Betsy Smith

Additions or Changes to the Meeting Agenda:

Old Business – Annexation of Church Property, water/sewer rate increase, Gundlach Road water line reimbursement

New business – Audit Letter, FOIA request, Wayne Goudge resignation

Correspondence – EGLE letter

Meetings – Water/Sewer committee meeting, BOR Meeting, Planning Commission Meeting

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

Approval of the Bd. of Trustees Previous Minutes: A motion was made by Ollila and seconded by Fink to approve June 10 meeting minutes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

Approval of the Bills:

Anderson said she expects 3 days of penalties for the June sewer billing from the City of Houghton

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

Review Clerk's Report:

- Audit is complete
- Attended clerk training on June 18, 2024
- Sent out 419 absentee ballots
- Election committee meeting and pre-accuracy test scheduled on July 12, 2024 at 12PM
- Accuracy test scheduled on July 19, 2024 at 12PM
- Water/sewer rate increases needed (See Betsy's water/sewer report)

One thing maybe not considered with these water/sewer deficits is the increase in cost of everything. Wage increases, repair/replacing items, insurance increases. These items are paid for partially from the water/sewer accounts and have gone up drastically in the last few years

Review Treasurer's Report:

- **Monthly Technology Report:** see attached, other technology information:
 - o **2 factor authentication for vpn:** Up and Running is working with elected officials for greater vpn security, two factor authentication protects from fraud when we dial in from home and our entire internal system is open at an external location/workstation
- **BSA transition** – still in process; training for treasurer's office on 7/18 & 7/19 regarding bank reconciliations
 - o **Utility billing errors in coding of income:** there is a glitch that needs to be fixed in utility billing; because of this, reports regarding where water monies are paid do not show it going into the appropriate budget numbers. This needs to be remedied with BSA Utility Billing. Due to taxes and other responsibilities, the Treasurer has not had time for this.
- **Taxes:** were mailed on 7/3/24, if not rec'd call the township office or email for a resend; address changes do not happen in live time
 - o Summer: available 7/1/24, due 9/16/24
 - o Winter: available 12/1/24, due 2/14/24
 - o Thank you to our deputies who have helped with stuffing the envelopes.
- **Audit:** see audit report
- **Rural development:** see balances on the balance sheet and the chart below
- **Credit Card processing:** BSA has a credit card processing option (see attachments) that we recommend transitioning to; the current processor has low fees to the customer, but is not easy to use on the back end; this processor has a smoother customer experience, slightly higher fees with the customer, and it integrates with our internal BSA system that is now online so it creates less work for the water clerk and the treasurer's office when it synchs (currently it takes up to 2 hours/month to balance and reconcile credit card transactions for bank statements)

Review Zoning Administrator's Report for (June 2024)

ZONING APPLICATIONS:

6/1 – 19571 Askel Road, new home, approved. 6/1 – 34391 Tapiola Rd., new pole barn, approved.
6/1 – 41987 Suo Loop, new home, approved.
6/3 – Golf Drive, new home, approved. 6/4 – 46557 Maple Street, roofed deck, approved. 6/6 – Askel Road, shipping container, approved.
6/10 – 36549 Tapiola Road, new home, approved. 6/11 – 43382 Superior Road, new pole barn, approved. 6/12 – 43960 Baltic/Onkalo Corner Road, storage building, approved. 6/14 – Lake Avenue, storage shed, approved. 6/21 – 21993 Woodland, new garage, approved. 6/26 – Frederick Street, shipping container, approved. 6/26 – 43999 Superior Road, addition to existing home, approved. 6/26 – 20988 Askel Road, pole barn, approved.

INQUIRIES & COMPLAINTS:

6/13 – Illegal signs, 6/16 – Complaint, construction begun w/o permits, 6/17 – Merging lots in Hurontown, 6/18 – Inflatable, above ground, seasonal, swimming pool request, 6/19 – Questions/complaints about duplexes by the high school (viewed them as low-income housing), 6/26 – Guidelines for chickens in R-3, 6/27 – Rental rules in Peepsock.

OTHER ZONING ACTIVITIES:

Continuing conversations with MTA for guidance in correcting shortcomings in the Zoning Ordinance and other township ordinances. Attended PC 6/13 meeting and prepared material to support the 3 site plans.

Correspondence:

Mich. Rural Water Assoc. – Outdoor Expo & Safe Drinking Water Act, Thank You for Denton Road Actions, Thomas Pintar Letter – Sermon Road, EGLE water contamination letter

Review Fire Departments: OLFD – 2 EMS, 3 Fires

Review Assessor's Report: Distributed

Trustees Reports/Updates: Keith stated there were drain improvements at the Tapiola baseball field, climbing wall installed. The south property line is surveyed at Tapiola rec. area, trees marked for future removal at same place. A new urinal installed at the Tapiola bathroom. He received negative feedback from the DPW staff regarding hiring a DPW supervisor. DPW needs a hoist for the lift station pumps and a power sewer vac. Pickleball lines have been painted on one Hurontown Tennis Court.

Ollila stated that the personnel committee met with the attorney regarding the municipal civil infraction ordinance.

Public Comments: updates on Denton Road – Bruce commented it's supposed to be going to bids

A resident asked what happened with the Township plans to borrow from a bank to fund Denton Road, Bruce stated that it is illegal for a Township to borrow money.

Old Business:

- A. Green Acres Rd. Sewer Project – Has been Completed This Spring – Clyde Archambeau Letter & If There is Start-Up & Hurontown Center Ditch?
A motion was made by Ollila to approve the 19th draw in the amount of \$161106.76, seconded by Anderson. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.
Anderson stated the project is not complete, 3 homes on Green Acres rd. and 1 on Sermon rd. are still not connected. As stated in the letter sent out in April, residents not connected by July 15, 2024 will be charged \$100.00 per month. Anderson will advise Vanessa of this policy.
- B. Sermon Road Infiltration – 4" to 6" Stub - Leaking Coupling MJO Repaired. Anderson asked if someone is going to receive a penalty for this bad sewer line fix.
- C. Office Flooring Kirkish Carpet "Plank" Replacement Scheduling?
- D. Rukkila/Negro 2023 Audit Report.
- E. Playground Equipment Delivery and Installation - Tapiola. Partial installation
- F. Audit Letter
- G. Water/sewer rate increase –
Fink recommended a minimum of a \$5.00 increase.
Wanhaaho agreed that it should be a \$5.00 increase in both accounts.

Chris Holmes of UPEA said the Township should raise rates but it must be the Townships decision

Ollila commented that many years ago the general fund bailed out the portage water/sewer fund by a large amount of money, which only benefits Portage water/sewer residents. It is unfair for more rural residents to subsidize Portage water/sewer customers.

Anderson stated that she knows that rates needs to be increased but, not that much.

Skewes commented that the rates have not been raised since 2020, expenses in these funds have increased dramatically in the last 4 years.

A motion was made by Ollilato to increase the base rate for portage water by \$5.00 per month effective 9/1/2024, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Fink, Ollila, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: Anderson, Petersen

A motion was made by Ollila to increase the base rate for portage sewer by \$5.00 per month effective 9/1/2024, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Fink, Ollila, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: Anderson, Petersen

A motion was made by Wanhaaho to increase the base rate for Dakota sewer by \$5.00 per month effective 9/1/2024, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: Anderson

The water/sewer committee and board will review the other accounts soon.

- H. Annexation of church property on Sharon Ave to the City of Houghton – The county is formally requesting the township finalize annexation.

A motion was made by Fink to finalize the process for annexation of the Sharon Ave. Property, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

- I. Water line reimbursement for church on Gundlach Road – water/sewer committee did not recommend reimbursing for the water line

New Business:

- A. Portage Lake Construction Bid – Pilgrim Estates Tennis Court Repair. No action at this time.
- B. Supervisory DPW Position Advertisement – Applicants Applied. The personnel committee will schedule a meeting.
- C. FOIA Request – Received a FOIA for the assessed value of a property.
- D. Wayne Goudge resignation
- E. Modifying water/sewer ordinance

Public Comment: none

Meetings:

6-13-2024 – Planning Commission Meeting – approved 3 site plans, Community Image Builders will review the Zoning Ordinance to highlight areas which need updating.

6-17-2024 – Water/Sewer Committee

7-15-2024 – BOR Meeting at 10AM

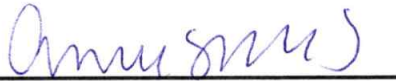
Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM

Public Attendance:

- Randy Malone
- Roy Britz
- Brandon Scholie
- Ted Sohlden
- Marty Raffaelli
- Chris Holmes – UPEA
- Dale Belanger

X 

Bruce Petersen
Supervisor

X 

Amy Skewes
Clerk