

Charter Township of Portage
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

August 12, 2024

The Charter Township of Portage held a Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday, August 12, 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. Treasurer Betsy Smith and Trustees Peggy Anderson, John Ollila and Keith Wanhaaho as stated by roll call. Absent: Bill Fink

Additions or Changes to the Meeting Agenda:

Old Business -- sewer infiltration action, new church on Gundlach rd.

Correspondence – Road Commission

Meetings – Personnel committee meeting, insurance update

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

Approval of the Bd. of Trustees Previous Minutes: A motion was made by Ollila and seconded by Anderson to approve July 8, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

Approval of the Bills:

Anderson commented that the Township was over for sewer usage three days in April with a penalty of \$81.98

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

Review Clerk's Report:

- Supervised the Early Voting Center on 7/31/24
- Up and Running is not able to do extensive computer training for trustees. If you would like basic training, schedule time with Julie or Chris for some training.
- The election went well, total of Portage Township voters was 673. Attached are portage township election results

Review Treasurer's Report:

-BSA Transition: due to Covid BSA treasurer training for bank reconciliations was rescheduled from 7/18 & 19 to 9/5 & 6; there will be changes to balances once this occurs. Water/sewer balances are not correct as there is a discrepancy, we are working with BSA help desk to fix.

- Credit Card processing: move to go forward w/BSA CC processing and stop Paymentus; Paymentus has low fees to the customer, but isn't easy to administer; BSA processor has a smoother experience, slightly higher fees w/the customer, and it integrates w/our internal BSA online, creating less work
The treasurer will be changing over to BS&A for credit cards
- Move to purchase laptop for Treasurer
A motion was made by Ollila to approve the purchase of a laptop for the treasurer, seconded by Skewes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.
- RD accounts: how does the Deficit reduction plan include plans to decrease current year deeper deficits? See current negative amounts.

Review Zoning Administrator's Report for (July 2024)

ZONING APPLICATIONS:

7/1 – 46797 Lahti Road, new garage, approved. 7/5 – 18269 Elsie Road, storage shed, approved. 7/11 – 43784 Superior Road, storage building, approved. 7/26 – Green Acres Road, fire number to be determined, new home, approved. 7/29 – 21558 Broemer Road, new home, approved.

INQUIRIES & COMPLAINTS:

7/3 – Superior National inquiry about records for 2003 manufactured home, 7/4 – Complaint about storage shed w/o permit, 7/8 – Rules for sauna on Denton Road, 7/8 – Rules and dimensions for storage building on Superior Road, 7/15 – Complaint about RV parked along Portage Lake, 7/22 – Rules for future dog kennel business in FF, 7/24 – Guidelines for refurbishing an old garage in Dodgeville, 7/25 – Inquiry about building on Canal Road (site was in Stanton Twp.), 7/27 – Complaint about new decks built w/o permits on Green Acres Road, 7/29 – Inquiry about getting a fire number, 7/29 – Inquiry about legal easement width through LAR property, 7/30 – Can township help with Spectrum internet problems in Dodgeville.

OTHER ZONING ACTIVITIES:

Continuing conversations with MTA for guidance in correcting shortcomings in the Zoning Ordinance and other township ordinances. Assisted water/sewer committee with notification letters. Numerous phone calls from out-of-state individuals about purchasing land in the township.

Correspondence:

Correspondence: Mich. Rural Water Assoc. – Class Availability, WUPPDR – Annual Dues, Michigan PAR Plan – News, Recycling Information Sheet, Rate Increase Letters for Dakota Heights & Portage Sewer,

Review

Fire Departments: OLFD – 4 EMS runs

Ted updated the board on a response from MTA regarding clothing purchases for Fire Department members. The board will come up with a policy in the near future.

Ted updated the board regarding wind, solar and large energy facilities. The township can add to the zoning ordinance the Townships plan for these facilities.

Review Assessor's Report: Attached.

Ollila stated that he and Bruce met with the assessor regarding her job performance.

Smith questioned not getting an answer to assessor updating the server.

Trustees Reports/Updates: Keith stated that trees and stumps are removed from the Tapiola rec. parking lot, the slide is completed at the Tapiola rec, the entire playground is up to date. DPW checked manhole downstream of Pintar's on 8/6/24 and there was no ground water present. The sewage pump hoist has been delivered for DPW, the water leak was repaired in Hurontown.

Anderson stated she received a message from John Paul Pietela, he plans to come to the Sept. meeting to discuss water system costs they encountered.

Ollila updated the board on a conversation with MTA. We do not have the authority to check for sump pumps, or to charge less for customers who do allow inspections. Minutes from 3/2019 state a vote to add \$5.00 per month for portage sewer customers until the deficit was repaid was never followed through, if it had been done the deficit would have been re-paid long before today's date.

Ollila will propose at the next board meeting to increase all water/sewer rates by 5% every year and will meet with the attorney to make Section V compatible with current IRS rules.

Public Comments: updates on Denton Road – a resident stated the project will bid out in the spring for completion in 2025.

A resident would like an update regarding the energy meeting with the County.

Old Business:

- A. Green Acres Rd. Sewer Project – (14) Well Owners on M-26 - Survey Shots For- Hurontown Center Ditch Cleanout?

Dave from UPEA updated the board on the inspection of manholes in Dodgeville and Hurontown, there are about 15 problematic manholes which will be repaired. Tunnell Vision quoted the cost at about \$4400.00 per manhole.

A motion was made by Smith to approve change order number 5, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

A motion was made by Anderson to approve the 20th draw in the amount of \$4877.43, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

- B. Office Carpet "Plank" Replacement Scheduled - Sept. 12/13 – Thurs/Fri. - P.C. meeting on the 12th will have to be rescheduled.
- C. Kestner Park Annexation Resolution for the City. A motion was made by Keith to approve the resolution for annexation of Kestner waterfront park by the City of Houghton, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.
- D. Sewer infiltration action

New Business:

- A. Deficit Elimination Resolution for the Michigan Dept. of Treasury. Smith commented that the treasurer and clerk were not invited to the meeting.

On 7/17/24, the township supervisor held a meeting to discuss the Deficit Elimination Plan, the clerk and treasurer were not informed of the meeting.

The supervisor shared that the deficit elimination plan for this area included a payback schedule of \$25,000/year from Portage Sewer to the General Fund to eliminate the Portage Sewer "due to" the general fund, starting this year, in 2024.

- The treasurer questioned how we're going to make progress with the deficit when we're already in the negative and we have only 4 billing months left in 2024.
- The Treasurer asked if the payback plan could be put off to 2025 - 2027 rather than 2024 - 2026 because the payback schedule begins with only 4 months left in the year.
- The treasurer stated that with only 415 customers, a \$5 base rate increase for September – December would only yield \$10,375, which is not the \$25,000 touted in the plan.
- In addition, the \$5 monthly base rate increase with 415 customers for the entire 2025 year would yield \$24,900 which is still short of \$25,000 in the plan.

Because this plan did not consider current deficits, and because she was not informed of the meeting to give input, the treasurer voted no.

Skewes commented that she also was not informed of the meeting, had not seen the numbers and is therefore voting no.

A motion was made by Ollila to approve the deficit reduction resolution, seconded by Anderson. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Ollila, Petersen, Wanhaaho. Nay: Smith, Skewes

- B. Wayne G. Left Cemetery – All Remaining Staff are Full-Time to Finish Out Season.
C. New applicant for the DPW supervisor position – will be interviewed next week.
D. Brandon Scholie – FOIA Request for Hurontown Fire Dept. Meeting Minutes.

Public Comment: none

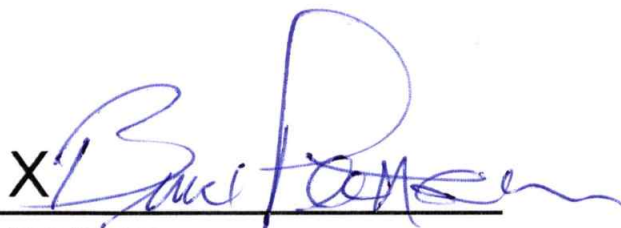
Meetings:

- A. July 16, 2024 - Personnel Comm. Mtg. – Twp. Office.
B. July 22, 2024 – Personnel Comm. Mtg. With Assessor & DPW Staff – Twp. Office.
C. July 15, 2024 – B.O.R. Meeting – Twp. Office.
D. July 11, 2024 – M-26 & US – 41 MDOT Corridor Meeting – City Center.
E. July 25, 2024 – Cemetery Committee Mtg. – Prices – Twp. Office.
F. August 2, 2024 – Personnel meeting
G. August 8, 2024 – Brian Miller insurance update

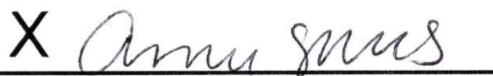
Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM

Public Attendance:

Roy Britz
Brandon Scholie
Ted Sohlden
Tony Laux
Marty Raffaelli
Bill Fink
UPEA

X 

Bruce Petersen
Supervisor

X 

Amy Skewes
Clerk