

Charter Township of Portage  
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

October 14, 2024

The Charter Township of Portage held a Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday, October 14, 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, Bill Fink, John Ollila and Keith Wanhaaho as stated by roll call.

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

Correspondence – White Water, CTVRS Article, Alexis Learner – Nat'l Fitness Campaign

Meetings – Planning Commission meeting 10/3/24

A motion was made by Fink, seconded by Ollila to approve the meeting agenda. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, 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 Sept. 9, Reg. & Sept. 20 Special meeting minutes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

**Approval of the Bills:**

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, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

**Review Clerk's Report:**

- Sent out 570 absentee ballots
- Attended local clerks meeting at Franklin Township on 10/4/24
- October 11, 2024 at 12PM - Election committee meeting to approve election inspectors
- October 18, 2024 at 12PM – Accuracy test
- Election day is November 5, 2024

**Review Treasurer's Report:**

- **Assessing and Taxes:** Had productive/positive meeting w/new assessor to confirm process; new assessor is utilizing our technology/tech support, assessor data transferred more frequently. She is working with Chris on the filing project.
- **Cemetery Fee questions:** (1) For a Portage Twp Resident plot + perpetual care of \$1500/plot, what is the amount internally needed to code to perpetual care vs lot sales? They have different bank accounts w/different rules and the treasurer needs this. (2) Why is perpetual care for an existing burial for residents also \$1500, when they have already purchased the plot? This doesn't need an answer today, but can the cemetery committee follow up and give any fee change recommendations and communicate with the Treasurer regarding fee coding in accounting?

- **BSA Transition:** BSA training shed light on issues w/onboarding and initial training. Working w/BSA to remedy these issues to get year-end totals into place. More training is set up for a week in November.
- **RD accounts:** see balances on the next page
- **Deficit Reduction Plan and issues with payback transfer:** According to the plan, we need to transfer \$25,000/year starting 2024 from Portage Sewer – our account funds are not in the position to do this - this is why I voted no to approve this plan. Balance is negative; it will have future “hits” in December for USDA/RD pmts of \$5500 & \$19,000.
  - o What needs to be reported (by the Supervisor?) regarding this plan if we are not actually following it or if we need to adjust to avoid future hits to our audit regarding portage sewer?
  - o If I do this transfer in 2024 with negative funds available, we will create more expenses of \$25,000, putting the account further into the negative, this throws the income/expense in the budget, and then at year end we need to re-do a transfer from general fund to portage sewer, increasing *again* the “due to general fund” at year end to get the account in balance (duplicating all work - it really worth it?)

### Review Zoning Administrator’s Report for (September 2024)

#### ZONING APPLICATIONS:

9/3 – 37090 Tapiola Road, pole barn, approved. 9/4 – Frederick Street, Hurontown, storage building, approved. 9/6 – 46904 Green Acres Road, new decks, approved. 9/7 – 22048 Applewood Drive, River Trails, new home, approved. 9/7 – Golf Drive, new home, approved. 9/16 – Maple Street, Dodgeville, new home, approved. 9/25 – 21327 Lahti Road, small barn, approved. 9/28 – 18175 Elsie Road, addition to home, approved.

9/29 – 43960 Baltic/Onkalo Corners Road, storage building, approved.

9/30 – Elsie Road, greenhouse and garden shed, approved.

#### INQUIRIES & COMPLAINTS:

9/4 – Zoning rules for remote 40 in FF District, 9/5 – Illegal business signs, 9/9 – Types of buildings allowed on 20 acres in RUR, 9/10 – Illegal business signs again!, 9/18 – Rules for agricultural buildings, 9/25 – How to obtain a demo permit for a dilapidated house, 9/27 – Is a permit required to replace a collapsed roof, 9/30 – How does a person get a culvert, 9/30 – Can a mobile home or manufactured home be placed in LAR, 9/30 – What are the permitted uses in R-3 on Green Acres Road, 9/30 – Constable Britz talked with the business owner who had refused to remove illegal advertising signs.

#### OTHER ZONING ACTIVITIES:

Continuing conversations with MTA for guidance in correcting shortcomings in the Zoning Ordinance and other township ordinances. Met with new assessor to discuss zoning/assessing coordination. Prep for October 3<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission meeting.

## **Correspondence:**

MRWA – UP Conference, GOGov – City Hall Software, Sandy Manninen – Noise, Higher Love License – Matt Treado, Amanda Massaway – School Millage – 10/21/24 School Board Meeting, White Water – increase rates, CTVRS Article, Alexis Learner – Nat'l Fitness Campaign

**Review Fire Departments:** OLFD – 4 EMS, 1 fire call

**Review Assessor's Report:** None

**DPW Report** – Kody Maki - Weekend On-Call DPW Rotational Access, & Duplex Sewer Line Extension. – completing projects that have been backlogged. Repairing and replacing water and sewer lines.

Received some plow estimates – A motion was made by Ollila to purchase a new plow from Mayo Collision Clinic, seconded by Wanhaaho. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

A motion was made by Fink to purchase a live tapping tool from Core and Main for \$3500.00, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

Valve for Dakota Water has not worked for over a year. Repair scheduled in conjunction with the City of Houghton

Working with Danielson with the potholing project

**Trustees Reports/Updates:** Keith was approached by Roy Duquette, who wants to rename the Tapiola field for Harold Filpus. A motion was made by Fink to rename the Tapiola field in honor of Harold Filpus and purchase a sign, seconded by Ollila. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.

**Public Comments:** none

## **Old Business:**

- A. Green Acres Rd. Sewer Project – (11) Well Owners on M-26 – Water Meter Installation (Twp. Action for Non-Cooperative Landowners) & Survey Shots for Hurontown Center Ditch Cleanout and Green Acres Road Ditch Drainage?  
DWAM Grant – Danielson Potholing Bid - \$118,965.00.  
A motion was made by Fink to approve the potholing bid in the amount of \$118,965.00, seconded by Anderson. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none.  
Anderson commented that we picked up 48 new sewer customers, 2 residents are refusing to hook up to the sewer system, we have 13 private well residents and 2 are refusing to put a meter on their well. We will continue to bill the customers \$100.00 per month. Bruce will talk with the attorney about the water meter issue.
- B. Need New B.O.R. Member – Chuck VanKarsen will be Leaving.
- C. 5% Sewer and Water Rate Increase? Commercial Rate Increase? A motion was made by Ollila to automatically increase each water/sewer residential and commercial account (including the base fee) by 5% every January 1, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Fink, Ollila, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: Anderson, Petersen
- D. General Maintenance Worker (DPW) – New Hire or Wait? The board decided to wait until spring to hire another DPW worker. We will post the position in February.

**E. New Business:**

- A. Budget Meeting in Preparation of Dept. of Treasury SLF Reporting and Year End? Will schedule a meeting for late Dec.
- B. New P.C. Member Replacing Connie Sherry – Heather Wendel. A motion was made by Petersen to appoint Heather Wendel to the Planning Commission, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith, Wanhaaho. Nay: none. Petersen will write a letter to Connie Sherry thanking her for her many years of service.
- C. Personnel Manual Update – Review the Changes for Next Meeting.
- D. DNR – Chassell to Houghton Forest Road - SOO Line Right-A-Way Delineation. The DNR will be accurately marking the old rail line easement between Houghton and Chassell to highlight violations of the easement

**Public Comment:** none

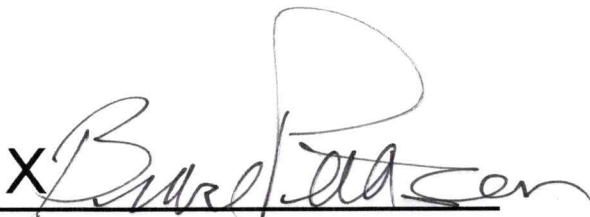
**Meetings:**

- A. July 11, 2024 – MDOT Corridor Meeting – City Center.
- B. September 11, 2024 – Assessor Interviews – Twp. Office.
- C. September 19 & 25, 2024 - PA 233 Renewable Energy Permitting - Franklin Twp. in Preparation for October 12<sup>th</sup> Public MTA Local Meeting.
- D. September 26, 2024 – Anders Hill (Superintendent) – TWP Tax Increase & Millage Extension.
- E. October 3, 2024 – P.C. Meeting
- F. **Personnel Committee Meeting scheduled October 22, 2024 at 2PM**
- G. **2025 Budget meeting scheduled November 18<sup>th</sup> at 2PM**

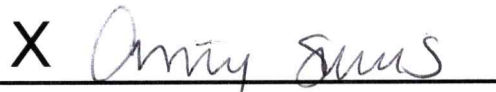
**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM

**Public Attendance:**

Karen Timonen  
Roy Britz  
Ted Sohlden  
Marty Raffaelli  
Chris Holmes – UPEA  
Randy Malone

X 

Bruce Petersen  
Supervisor

X 

Amy Skewes  
Clerk