

Watson Township Board Meeting
1895 118th Ave. Allegan, MI 49010
September 5, 2024

Call to Order: 7:04 P.M.

Present:

Kevin Travis, Tera Davis, John Caras and Kelli Morris.

Arrived Late:

Michelle Harris

Agenda:

Treasurer Davis made a motion to approve the agenda, Trustee Caras supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Minutes:

Trustee Caras made a motion to approve the minutes with amendments, Treasurer Davis supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Bills:

Trustee Harris made a motion to pay the bills in the amount of \$15,802.34, Trustee Caras supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Davis gave the Treasurer's report of account balances. Trustee Caras made a motion to approve the report as given, Clerk Morris supported, all in favor, motion carried

Elizabeth Peterson:

Elizabeth Peterson (current Assistant Prosecutor for Allegan County) made a short presentation to the board and audience regarding her candidacy for 48th Circuit Court Judge. She outlined her background, experience, and priorities if she is elected to the position of 48th Circuit Court Judge. She would appreciate the support of Watson Township voters at the November General Election. The board thanked her for her attendance and information on her campaign for 48th Circuit Court Judge.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Open- 7:16 P.M.

Trustee Harris made a motion to move public comment to after the presentation from McKenna, Supervisor Travis supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Presentation: Chris Cory- McKenna Associates:

Chris Cory of McKenna Associates- began the presentation with the question that he had been asked about what could be done to better protect the rural community and how it relates to the housing demand. He gave a brief explanation of each home zoning district, including A-1, A-2, and Residential. He went over the basic land division laws and how they relate to each parcel in relation to the size of the parcel. Explaining that this is a formula that is used by assessors to determine the number of splits allowed on any particular parcel. He then explained that in A-1, they did not find many areas to change. In A-2 he explained that the proposed changes would include changing the current 5-acre limit to one acre, it would also lower the road frontage requirement to allow for more splits. The changes would allow residents to have more opportunities to split their properties. He explained a bit about the changes that would affect "private roads." One of these would be to limit the length of the private road from ½ mile to ¼ mile. A private road would also require a recorded road maintenance agreement. It is his (Chris Cory) opinion that this would preserve the rural culture and farmland.

The supervisor stated that he is in favor of these changes because it would give residents more opportunities for splits if the change was made from five acres to one acre.

Chris Cory then answered questions including what separates a long driveway vs. a private road, explaining that a long driveway would only allow for one residence.

One resident asked where these proposed changes could be seen or viewed. The supervisor advised that they would be available to view on the township website.

Another resident asked if they could change the zoning of their property if they wished to. The supervisor explained that is a possibility, but the proper process for this must be followed.

Gravel pits were mentioned by a resident and where these are allowed. It was explained that under current law (State), gravel pits are allowed in all zoning areas, and they (gravel pits) fall under state legislation and are state mandated.

Return to Public Comment:

Dave Lowman: mentioned that a permit for a pole barn was issued by PCI (Professional Code Inspections), the resident has now peeled approximately 225 yards of topsoil from his ground and is mining sand. This is causing erosion and water shed onto Dave's property. He asked how much he can haul out before something is done. The supervisor gave advice on steps Dave could take to have these problems addressed. He adds that he has contacted Bloom Slugget (attorney firm) for assistance with current gravel pit issues.

A resident asks if the township can regulate the closer costs, insurance, and other things for gravel pits. The supervisor explained that the township does have these options, however if the regulations implemented by the township planning commission are too stringent it still opens the township for the possibility of lawsuits (that would most likely be lost).

Mr. Melms asks the township where it stands on the paving of 118th from 20th Street to the township line, stating that there is terrible erosion on that section of road, and it was previously prepped for paving and was on list to pave at one time. Also, that there is a clear "dog leg" in the road that makes it dangerous.

The supervisor explains it can be put on the list, however the township is currently committed to 12th street, and 24th street (1/4 of the project). He goes on to explain that the current road millage is .6606 mills, and it takes approximately 2 years to save enough to pave on mile of road.

One resident asks if the gravel pit companies can be made to contribute to the gravel or paved road maintenance of a road their pit is located on. The supervisor indicates that this is exceedingly difficult to coordinate with gravel companies.

Mr. Melms suggested that a sign ("Dog Leg Left") be put on 118th Ave. between 121st Avenue and 23rd Street.

A resident asked how to get their road on the list to be paved. The supervisor suggested developing a township road committee.

Another resident asked if at least "Henasey Hill" can be fixed properly. The supervisor suggested contacting the Allegan County Road Commission, as this is a county primary road.

Scott Fenner mentioned that he appreciates the new ORV changes, however he is wondering about the policing, as currently much of the ORV traffic goes around the corner at 16th street and 121st Avenue where he resides much too fast.

Another resident added that he is having issues with ORV operators leaving the street and going across his private property.

The supervisor added that if the board and residents were in favor, he would support development of a "road committee."

Closed 8:26 P.M.

REPORTS:

A. County Commissioner Report:

Gave a report on the County Commissioners meetings for the past month. Minutes from these meetings can be found on the Allegan County Government Website. The supervisor asked that Mr. Dugan take the road issues back to the county commissioner's board. Mr. Dugan will do that. He also explains that there are funds dedicated to each township for their benefit and that the township could have a voice in where they concentrate these funds.

B. Planning Commission:

Trustee Caras gave the board a brief report on things concerning the park. He will have a report about the suggested changes in zoning from McKenna Associates next month. that there was discussion on Zoning to bring it into alignment with the Master Plan. This discussion is just in the beginning stages.

C. Hopkins Fire Department:

Tim Holmes gave a report from the Hopkins Fire Department.

D. WAEMS:

None.

E. Libraries:

Library reports have been emailed to the township.

F. Sexton:

Clerk Morris reported that Sexton Cory Irish has contacted her and given his resignation. She has been in contact with Mark Simpson, reporting that if the board agrees, Mr. Simpson is willing to be re-appointed as Sexton. Trustee Harris makes a motion to re-appoint Mark Simpson as the Watson Township Sexton, Treasurer Davis supported, all in favor, motion carried.

G. Code Enforcement:

Ordinance Code Enforcement Officer Jim Davis left an emailed report presented by the supervisor.

Old Business:

A. 123Net:

Trustee Caras explained that to get the service the township requires the cost would be \$150 per month, plus a static ID service for an additional \$10 per month. Currently, 123.Net has asked that the township sign a 5-year contract and pay \$160 per month. Trustee Caras is not in favor of the 5-year contract. County Commissioner Dugan offers to follow up on the contracting issue. Supervisor Travis made a motion to table the discussion, Trustee Harris supported, all in favor, motion carried.

B. Fire Department Phone Line Status:

Trustee Caras reported that the phone line in the fire department was completed.

C. HVAC Issue (cooling issues):

The supervisor reported that the cooling issues had been rectified.

D. Exterior Security Cameras (2 West Lot):

Trustee Caras reported that the camera in the West Lot had been repaired and one is ready for the "outside ballot container," when installed.

New Business:

A. EMS Special Assessment:

Trustee Harris made a motion to adopt resolution #09052024-1 Special Assessment Roll for Special Assessment District for Fire Department Operations and Equipment and Emergency Medical Service Operations and Equipment; Trustee Caras supported- Roll Call Vote: Harris-yes; Morris-yes; Davis-yes; Caras-yes; Travis- yes. The supervisor declared Resolution # 09052024-1 passed by a vote of 5-yes and 0-no votes.

B. 7 Generations Park Driveway Performance Resolution:

Trustee Caras explains the resolution that will eliminate the need for the township to obtain a bond for the driveway work at the 7 Generations Park, and the encroachment on the MDOT Right of Way. The resolution eliminates the fault of MDOT for any and all parts of the driveway. Trustee Caras made a motion to adopt Resolution #090524-2 Performance Resolution for Municipalities; Treasurer Davis supported; all in favor, resolution passed.

ROUND TABLE:

Trustee Harris: Indicated she would like to find a replacement for "Hall Cleaning." Explaining that with her current schedule it is becoming more difficult to find time for this responsibility. She will put feelers out for a replacement.

Trustee Caras: He has a meeting set up with BS & A to begin implementation of an electronic payment for the township.

Supervisor Travis: Plans on inviting representatives from Bloom Slugget to our next board meeting. He also adds that their current rates are \$225/hr. and \$195/ hr. for code enforcement.

Adjourn:

Supervisor Travis made a motion to adjourn, Trustee Caras supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Adjourn:

8:58 PM

Kelli Morris