

Minutes Board of Town Trustees

STATE OF ILLINOIS

LAKE COUNTY

TOWN OF NEWPORT

THE BOARD OF TOWN TRUSTEES met at the office of the Town Clerk at the Village Hall on March 19, 2014.

Members Present:

Beth Hartford, Trustee

Ronald Miller, Trustee

Diane Crittenden, Trustee

Corey Kirschhoffer, Trustee

Jerome Berens, Assessor

Rodger Edmunds, Highway Commissioner

Randy Whitmore, Supervisor

Debbie Spurgeon, Clerk

Call to Order: Supervisor Whitmore called the Regular meeting of the Board of Town Trustees to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance: Supervisor Whitmore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: In attendance were Beth Hartford, Ron Miller, Rodger Edmunds, Jerome Berens, Diane Crittenden, Corey Kirschhoffer, Randy Whitmore and Debbie Spurgeon. Also present, Attorney Keri-Lynn Krafthefer.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was not called for approval.

Approval of Minutes: Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion and second to approve the February 19, 2014 Regular Meeting minutes. Diane Crittenden inquired about the recording of a figure on page 5 related to the line item transfer from Utilities- Relief to Building Rent-Relief. The clerk corrected the bookkeeper's mathematical error. No further discussion.

Motion by Hartford; seconded by Miller to approve the minutes from February 19, 2014 as presented.

Voice vote: Ayes, all; nays, none. Motion passed 5-0.

Reports:

Supervisor's Report:

Supervisor Randy Whitmore says he met with the Highway Commissioner and the Assessor and made some changes to the FY2014-15 budget to avoid running out of money. Whitmore reported that changes are being made, such as eliminating one township phone, training, travel, and mileage expenses. Whitmore added he no longer thinks attorneys are needed at every meeting going forward and says he intends to cut legal fees in the new fiscal budget.

Kirschhoffer asked whether Whitmore has had any contact with Newyear [former trustee Kathy Newyear] regarding the township's consideration of purchasing her property. The supervisor said he talked to her and let her know the township will not be pursuing her property.

Hartford says Whitmore's FY 2014-15 tentative budget being presented tonight still has \$13,000 for legal fees. Whitmore says we don't need an attorney at every meeting. Hartford notes this is as had been the case for 8 years prior to your administration.

Whitmore states he spoke with Kip Wilson at the county tax extension office regarding getting his budget [tax levy] back in order, adding Wilson says he can revert back to his budget [tax levy] of two years ago. Hartford clarified with Whitmore that he means the levy not the budget. [Yes.] Whitmore notes he has received the annual PTELL information from the county and says he intends to work with Kip Wilson to ensure his Truth in Taxation is done properly. Whitmore concludes Newport is in dire straits.

The supervisor again states the township is no longer pursuing the purchase of Kathy Newyear's property on Delany Road and notes he spent \$500.00 on an appraisal of the property. He says it makes more sense for the township to sell half of the property it already owns and build on the other half in the future.

Whitmore indicated he has closed the remaining funds at the US Bank and now has all of the township funds at Norstates' Bank.

Highway Commissioner's Report:

Highway Commissioner Edmunds presented budget copies to the board, saying the budget has been modified since the version emailed to board members in the days leading up to tonight's meeting. He also presented the Highway Commissioner's Annual Report to the board.

Edmunds indicates Payne & Dolan have completed the estimate of Mill Creek and Dilly's Road as discussed at the February meeting. He expects to have the information from the county very soon and anticipates the work will be done in the summer. Trustee Hartford questions Edmunds on the indication in his previous asset management report to the board that he intended to pave these roads in 2015, not 2014. Edmunds says this was his original intention but as the county

came to him offering to waive part of the engineering costs if he did it this year, he has decided to do it a year early. Hartford inquires as to what his intention is for north Delany Road, indicating it is arguably one of the worst roads in the district. Edmunds says it is in horrible condition, but he intends only to patch this year and then possibly do something there next year.

Trustee Kirschhoffer asks the commissioner what Lake County did differently on Kilborne Road when it was resurfaced last summer rather than the usual milling process. Highway Commissioner Edmunds says the county calls it micro-resurfacing and he says it is an experiment, adding that the road is already falling apart.

Whitmore asks if Edmunds did a comparison of road salt, man hours, etc. spent this winter versus last. [Yes.] Trustee Crittenden would like to have what is spent annually included in the budget. Hartford explains these figures [actual] are already part of the budget format.

Hartford inquires about salt totals Edmunds quoted at the February meeting and asks for him to further explain the numbers. Edmunds clarifies, adding he is confused about Dziekan's claims of salt use in previous years since he has not used as much salt as Dziekan during this especially bad winter. Hartford suspects this is because Dziekan didn't know how to calculate his usage. Edmunds adds he has been using sand since January and intends to purchase a sweeper to clean the roads off in the spring.

Assessor's Report:

Assessor Berens commented that the current assessor's budget is the lowest raw budget, the lowest assessed evaluation, the lowest per parcel and the lowest per people in the township, concluding we are the 'lowest'. Berens cited this as a positive, adding that when he took over a few years ago the annual assessor's budget was \$72,000, which Berens referred to as a lot of money. His budget is currently \$43,000, noting this is over a 30% decrease and adding that it doesn't happen by accident. He has cut salaries, cut people (2 part-time employees) and Berens stated he is picking up the slack despite the fact that he doesn't feel his current salary rewards him for the efforts. Berens says he, Whitmore, Nancy Lech and Toni Edmunds (wife of Highway Commissioner Rodger Edmunds) worked to hone the budgets for the new fiscal year. He concludes his budget is bare bones and hopes the trustees see the wisdom in accepting his budget as presented.

Trustee Kirschhoffer asks the assessor about the wisdom of continuing to lower the assessed evaluations, noting lowering values means the township gets less tax money to spend. Berens explains that when assessing bodies lower valuations, the state raises the tax rate to ensure that taxing bodies get the money they want. Hartford asks Kirschhoffer if her taxes have gone down. [Perhaps a \$40 decrease.] Kirschhoffer suggests the lower the valuation, the less each taxpayer is putting in. [No.] Berens expressed that finding the balance in this equation is what his office grapples with every day, noting the secret to lower taxes is for taxing bodies to ask for less money. Berens again offered his teeter-totter analogy to explain the correlation between values and tax rates. He further reviewed Newport's declining tax rate, .025 in 2012-13, from a high of

.087 in 2004-5. Berens calls the current tax rate ridiculous. Whitmore adds he intends to get the tax rate back where it is supposed to be.

Clerk Comments:

The clerk mentioned an item in the news regarding IMRF participation rules changing in June 2014.

Trustee Comments:

Beth Hartford—No report.

Ron Miller-- No report.

Diane Crittenden—No report.

Corey Kirschhoffer—No report.

Attorney's Report: No report.

Township Business:

Supervisor Whitmore introduced the tentative budget for FY 2014-15. Hartford questioned the number of detail line items included in Nancy Lech's budget format noting some of the detail appears unnecessary for our needs. Whitmore thinks she is probably just using a format that others have used.

Whitmore indicates he has had only one family seek General Assistance since he has been in office, noting the extent of the assistance [in December] was limited to \$200 in groceries.

Hartford comments that it looks like the supervisor is draining the town savings account in his new General Town budget. Whitmore confirms. Hartford notes Edmunds has \$15,000 in a line item for equipment and asks if he intending on purchasing something new.

[No.] She also indicates her concern over the budgeting of his TOIRMA insurance expense at \$3,000 in R&B and \$4,000 in Road Insurance, indicating Edmunds may have underestimated this annual expense, which was ~\$9,000 last year. She additionally comments that the Road Insurance Fund has an existing balance of \$5,000 which it should not. Toni Edmunds, seated in the audience, says she is unsure of what was done, and will confer with Nancy Lech regarding the line item. Hartford notes there is still \$28,000 in legal fees in the new budget.

Supervisor Whitmore requests a motion and a second to adopt the tentative budgets for The General Town Budget including Assessor, and the Road District Budget for display.

Motion made by Kirschhoffer; seconded by Crittenden

Voice Vote: Ayes, Miller, Crittenden, Kirschhoffer, Whitmore; Nays, Hartford. Motion passed 4-1.

The agenda for the Annual Town Meeting was reviewed. The location is confirmed to be appropriately held at the township offices. A motion is requested to establish the agenda for the Annual Town Meeting.

Motion made by Hartford; seconded by Miller

Voice Vote: Ayes, all; Nays, none. Motion passed 5-0

Whitmore says he spoke with Tim Smith regarding Edwards Road and says that he, Smith and Edmunds are going to lunch next week to discuss Old Mill Creek's desire to have Newport take over their portion of Edwards Road. Whitmore wants to know how much money Old Mill Creek is willing to give Newport to maintain the road. Attorney Krafthefer says the township would be better off not accepting the road into the township, which then puts the township in the position of

having to maintain it going forward. She notes as long as Old Mill Creek has it, they can continue to levy for it. Trustee Miller says the township needs to insist the road is brought up to code before any discussion of taking the road over, adding that Old Mill Creek has been accepting the tax monies for this portion of Edwards, while doing nothing to maintain it. Edmunds says the township cannot collect any tax monies on Edwards unless Old Mill Creek de-annexes the associated land. Trustee Kirschhoffer says it is time Newport starts pressuring Old Mill Creek to live up to the responsibility they accepted when they annexed the adjoining property. Edmunds indicates Old Mill Creek insists there is an existing IGA with Newport regarding this section of road, however no one has been able to locate a copy of it. Attorney Keri-Lyn Krafthefer says it is possible there was an IGA twenty years ago that was for maintenance for one year, or something along these lines. She notes it doesn't necessarily mean there is still an IGA in effect today.

Edmunds indicates the difficulty he has had in getting Mayor Smith to consider the issue, stating he wants to side-step any serious discussion on the roadway. A brief discussion is held on placing an advisory question onto the Annual Town Meeting Agenda. No action is taken.

Hartford brought copies of two resolutions regarding Newport township rules on benefits to be paid to road district and township employees and elected officials. She noted she has mentioned to the Highway Commissioner in the past that he is paying 100 percent of this employees' health insurance when she believed this was not consistent with the township's rules. The resolutions she provided, in fact outline a graduated scale for employees corresponding to service years. Hartford says Matthew Mitten is only entitled to get one half of his health insurance paid for by the taxpayers, not 100 percent as Edmunds has been providing. Each year he works, he is entitled to an additional 10% paid for by the taxpayers. Krafthefer says she will need to look at the resolution to make sure it complies with the Affordable Care Act, stating the act says you have to provide healthcare. Hartford counters that the Affordable Care Act does not require any business or entity to pay 100 percent of someone's insurance; it just requires it be offered.

The clerk brought to the board's attention the resolution passed at the February meeting setting the new fiscal year meeting dates, does not appear to agree with the stated intention of the board discussion at the meeting where it was passed. The intention stated for the schedule is: the fourth Wednesday of the month except for November and December; however the actual resolution has additional dates which do not conform to the fourth Wednesday. She indicated the annual meeting schedule has been posted as outlined in the resolution, but believes the resolution may not actually state what the boards' intention is. Hartford agrees the dates on the resolution are wrong. Whitmore suggests revisiting the meeting schedule resolution at the next meeting.

Finances:

The supervisor introduced the bills for approval by fund:

Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion to approve the Assessor- General Town Fund bills.

Motion made by Kirschhoffer; seconded by Crittenden

Voice Vote: Ayes, Crittenden, Kirschhoffer, Miller, Hartford, Whitmore; Nays, none. Motion Passed 5-0

Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion to approve the General Town Fund bills.

Motion made by Kirschhoffer; seconded by Crittenden.

Voice Vote: Ayes, Crittenden, Kirschhoffer, Whitmore; Nays, Hartford, Miller. Motion passed 3-2.

Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion to approve the Newport Township Road District bills.

Motion made by Crittenden; seconded by Kirschhoffer

Voice Vote: Ayes, Crittenden, Kirschhoffer, Whitmore; Nays, Hartford, Miller. Motion passed 3-2

Public Comment:

No public wishing to comment.

Executive Session:

No closed session.

Motion to Adjourn:

Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion and a second to adjourn the regular meeting.

Motion by Hartford; seconded by Miller.

Voice Vote: Ayes, all; Nays none. Motion passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Dated the 19th day of March, 2014.

s/Debbie Spurgeon

Debbie Spurgeon, Township Clerk