

Minutes Board of Town Trustees

STATE OF ILLINOIS

LAKE COUNTY

TOWN OF NEWPORT

August 24, 2016

Members Present:

Beth Hartford, Trustee

Ronald Miller, Trustee

Diane Crittenden, Trustee

Corey Kirschhoffer, Trustee

Randy Whitmore, Supervisor

Debbie Spurgeon, Clerk

Rodger Edmonds, Highway Commissioner

Call to Order: Supervisor Whitmore called the Special Meeting of the Board of Town Trustees to order at 7:00 p.m. The Special Meeting was necessary to accomplish the regular August business of the board, due to the supervisor's cancellation of the August 17, 2016 Regular Meeting.

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

Roll Call: In attendance, Beth Hartford, Ron Miller, Rodger Edmonds, Diane Crittenden, Corey Kirschhoffer, Randy Whitmore and Debbie Spurgeon. Also present, Ancel, Glink, Diamond, Bush, DiCianni & Krafthefer, PC attorney, Tiffany Nelson-Jaworski. Absent, Jerome Berens.

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

Approval of Minutes: Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion and second to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from July 20, 2016. No discussion.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Hartford to approve the Regular Meeting minutes as presented.

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

Reports:

Supervisor's Report:

Supervisor Whitmore reports he and Highway Commissioner Rodger Edmonds met with Neil Palmer of ATC, regarding a compensation package to allow easement for American Transmission Company's (ATC) power lines on the township property on Russell Road. He says he and Rodger are making a deal with ATC on 6 acres of easement for ATC. Trustee Kirschhoffer inquires about incremental payments and whether this is a lease situation. Whitmore says it is a one-time, lump sum payment. Attorney Nelson-Jaworski says it sounds like a lease. Whitmore notes it is a permanent easement. Nelson-Jaworski is attempting to determine whether action on this matter will require a Special Meeting, she believes it will, indicating the Newport electorate should have a chance to weigh-in on the matter. Whitmore asks how the board feels about a permanent easement. Kirschhoffer says it is a unique situation, noting we don't have anything to compare it to (value of granting a permanent easement). A brief discussion occurs on hiring an independent appraiser to assess the property, and on the alternative plans ATC also considered. No consideration has been extended to the Newport residents who will be affected by the current ATC proposal. Edmonds noted ATC's alternative plan would affect his area and the R&R Tavern.

Highway Commissioner's Report:

Highway Commissioner Rodger Edmonds reports the road district employees will begin paving and culvert repairs on Kaiser Road in the coming days. He also comments on recent gravel work completed through IGA for the Village of Wadsworth.

Commissioner Edmonds further reports road district employee, Michael Albers will be retiring after a 16-year tenure with the road district. Edmonds notes Albers' controversial tenure and indicates his last day of employment will be September 2, 2016. Edmonds says he does not intend to replace Albers with another full-time employee. The district has a part-time employee (Steve) who does not receive benefits, who will effectively take the place of Albers.

Supervisor Whitmore inquires on whether payment has been received from Tim Smith and the Village of Old Mill Creek for the outstanding monies due to the township which are grossly overdue. Edmonds says no payment has been received.

Assessor's Report:

No report. [Assessor Berens, absent.]

Clerk Comments:

The clerk inquires about the status of the township's Annual Financial Audit, noting its lateness, and the requirement that the township's Annual Financial Audit be filed with the county by the end of the month. [Supervisor Whitmore will check with his employee, Nancy Lech.]

Trustee Comments:

Beth Hartford – No report.

Ron Miller— No report.

Diane Crittenden—No report.

Corey Kirschhoffer—No report.

Attorney's Report:

No report, however, Attorney Tiffany Nelson-Jaworski comments she will look into the public hearing requirements surrounding the ATC power line matter.

Township Business:

Citing discussion at the previous meeting, Supervisor Whitmore says Newport elected officials are the most underpaid officials in all townships. The board needs to set compensation and benefit levels for all board positions, for the term beginning May 15, 2017. Supervisor Whitmore put forth a salary and resolution proposal.

Trustee Hartford comments that Newport's compensation is lower than other townships, because Newport's budget is lower than most other townships. She suggests it is inappropriate for the board to spend roughly half of the entire township's budget to pay the board's salaries.

Trustee Miller says the percentage of the budget (salaries to budget) is actually one of the highest, noting the only township which is higher in the area is Benton. Miller says the math of Whitmore's proposal would bring salary percentage up to 39.71% of the township's budget with the supervisor and assessor salaries alone. Additionally, factoring in the road commissioner's salary, the percentage would be roughly half of the township's annual budget. Supervisor Whitmore suggests the township could raise the budget. He feels it is important to attract good people to run for public office. Trustee Hartford inquires as to how much time Supervisor Whitmore spends doing township business on a monthly basis. Whitmore says he spends one day a month devoted to township business. Hartford asks if a \$30,000 annual salary (as proposed) is necessary for a one-day a month job. Whitmore feels the elected officials in Newport should be compensated similarly to other townships. Hartford notes other townships have million dollar budgets, while Newport's is significantly lower.

Whitmore asks for comments on the Highway Commissioner's current and proposed salary. Trustee Hartford believes the road commissioner probably spends the most day-to-day time on township business, and believes an increase is probably justified. She does not agree with tripling the current salary, as the proposal on the table calls for. Trustee Kirschhoffer agrees some increase is appropriate.

Whitmore asks for comments on the Assessor's current and proposed salary. General comments are that the current assessor spends very little time performing his job himself, including supervising the Office of the Assessor. He relies on hired employees to do the majority of the assessor's duties. Trustee Kirschhoffer feels the assessor's personal plea that he should make \$42.00/hour for what he self-describes as "3 days a week, 6 hours a day" position is not appropriate. She suggests a slight increase may be warranted however. Supervisor Whitmore notes Assessor Berens was making more money in his prior term, before the previous board reduced salaries for all elected officials. Hartford reminds the board it is not Jerome Berens' personal salary under consideration tonight, but the salary of the Office of Township Assessor, adding that Berens chose to run for the elected office knowing what the compensation was, and if he chooses to run again, he will know before-hand what the compensation level will be. Hartford suggests the township cannot afford to pay huge salaries as we simply do not have the money. Kirschhoffer agrees, but comments the proposal brought forth tonight intends only to restore compensation levels similar to what they were prior to the previous boards' reductions. Hartford reminds Whitmore he has a hired employee, Nancy Lech, performing his bookkeeping and treasurer functions. Whitmore states the previous supervisor had 13 hired employees on the payroll working for him. Hartford says this is simply not true. Whitmore asks about the functions Michelle Eymmer performed during her tenure with the township. [She was elected as Township Clerk.] Hartford notes Eymmer also performed bookkeeping duties for the road district and township for some period of time until improprieties were discovered and Eymmer resigned. Following this timeframe, the supervisor's wife assisted him with the treasurer duties at no charge to the township.

Trustee Hartford says she feels that elected officials are positions of service to the community and a person should not come to an elected position looking for a livelihood, or even having the expectation of a salary that a person might expect in a normal job situation. She notes the Trustee positions took the largest reduction of all and the ~\$50 per meeting she receives as compensation will not change her life one way or the other. Hartford adds that residents should not come to an elected office at the township level of government expecting to make a full-time position out of it. Newport is not a rich community and she does not want to pay more in taxes for the purpose of increasing the salaries of elected officials. She concludes it is tax monies that pay all township salaries.

Whitmore asks for comments on the clerk's current and proposed compensation. Trustee Hartford states that like the highway commissioner, the clerk is underpaid and spends a lot of hours outside of a meeting situation writing minutes, handling FOIA requests, etc. Kirschhoffer agrees, and notes some townships such as Fremont, have career people in these jobs making significantly more money.

General consensus is that it is difficult to compare Newport with too many other townships, noting our budget and population density is significantly lower than many other townships—especially those in the nearby area.

Whitmore asks if trustees are open to providing insurance to all township employees and elected officials as a payroll deduction, noting as a municipality the township is able to procure cheaper rates.

Trustee Miller inquires whether a resolution will need to be voted on as part of the compensation package with any salary adjustments the board intends to make. Attorney Nelson-Jaworski says yes, and it still needs to be passed 180 days prior to the next term of office. General consensus is mixed on whether this is something the township should take on.

Supervisor Whitmore indicates he will take tonight's comments under advisement and will put forth a proposal for the board to vote on at the next Regular meeting.

Finances:

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

Motion 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 Assessor/General Town Fund bills.

Motion 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 Road & Bridge Fund bills.

Motion by Crittenden; seconded by Kirschhoffer.

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

Public Comment:

Millie Corder – Mrs. Corder agrees that some level of salary increases is probably appropriate, particularly with the highway commissioner’s salary, but asks if the township doesn’t have the money, how does the board expect to support salary increases and still be able to fix the roads, support the assessor’s office, and do the other things the township is responsible for.

[The supervisor replies he is looking at all of this to see if we have the money, noting tonight’s resolution is only a proposal and the board will vote on the matter at the next meeting. Trustee Hartford asks how the supervisor intends to handle the consideration of the matter at the next meeting---will there be a discussion, or will a proposal be tossed out for a vote without opportunity for discussion. Whitmore says he needs to talk to Nancy Lech to determine what level of increase the township can support, adding there will be time allowed for further board discussion prior to a vote.]

Mrs. Corder also asks why the Regular Meeting scheduled for August 17, 2016 was cancelled last week. [Supervisor Whitmore says he had an issue with his back.] She asks why the meeting couldn’t be held anyway/why someone else couldn’t have facilitated the meeting.

[Whitmore says, probably not. Trustee Kirschhoffer says the bills would not get paid. Trustee Miller notes there is a resolution in place allowing the supervisor to pay bills under \$1000 without board approval and adds there are only two bills this month that exceed the \$1000 limit. The 2 bills could have been voted on separately. Trustee Hartford indicates, in her opinion, this is how the situation should have been handled, instead of inconveniencing everyone.]

Unfinished Business:

None.

Executive Session:

No closed session.

Motion to Adjourn:

Supervisor Whitmore requested a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting.

Motion by Hartford; seconded by Miller.

Voice Vote: Ayes, all; Nays none. Motion passed 5-0.
Meeting adjourns at 7:55 p.m.

Dated the 24th day of August, 2016.

_____ s/Debbie Spurgeon

Debbie Spurgeon, Township Clerk