

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 June 19, 2024

Members Present:

J. Daryle Spiller, Trustee

Corey Kirschhoffer, Trustee

Mike Wells, Trustee

Debbie Spurgeon, Clerk

Frank Kaiser, Trustee

Randy Whitmore, Supervisor

Jerome Berens, Assessor

Call to Order: Supervisor Whitmore calls the Regular Township Meeting of the Board of Town Trustees to order at 7:01 p.m.

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

Roll Call: In attendance, Daryle Spiller, Corey Kirschhoffer, Jerome Berens, Mike Wells, Frank Kaiser, Debbie Spurgeon and Randy Whitmore.

Also present, Rodger Edmonds, Highway Department Director.

Approval of Minutes: Supervisor Whitmore requests a motion and a second to approve the May Regular Meeting Minutes.

Motion by Kirschhoffer, second by Spiller to approve the May 15, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes, Spiller, Kirschhoffer, Wells, Kaiser, Whitmore. Nays, none.

Motion passes, 5-0.

Supervisor Whitmore requests a motion and a second to approve the May Budget Hearing Minutes.

Motion by Wells, second by Kaiser to approve the May 15, 2024 Budget Hearing Minutes.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes, Spiller, Kirschhoffer, Wells, Kaiser, Whitmore. Nays, none.

Motion passes, 5-0.

Reports:

Supervisor's Report:

Supervisor Whitmore has a call into Eric Wagner at Lake County, regarding proposed solar farms in Newport and is awaiting a callback.

A brief discussion occurs on a number of solar projects in various stages of discussion or activity in the vicinity: 1) Weiler Nursery property, Route #173, east of Kramer's Campers. 2) Reiser Farm property, Kilbourne Road at 9th Street 3) Connell Farm property, west side, Route #173 near Green Bay Road and possibly a fourth, near the Spanish-style house, located west of Kilbourne Road. Trustees Kirschhoffer expresses concerns about fire protection precautions and wonders what the county is gaining from pushing these projects on the Newport area. Trustee Kaiser is concerned about the properties remaining under the AG zoning classification, rather than a more appropriate change to Commercial zoning. Whitmore and Assessor Berens express similar concerns regarding zoning. Berens adds that it is typically the municipality that makes the zoning classification decision. Whitmore comments that Eric Wagner tells him that Governor Pritzker has protected the solar farm companies in legislation at the state level that allows them to circumvent some degree of county development requirements.

Whitmore continues with his report, stating he spoke with Village of Wadsworth President, Fred Witte. Although Witte tells Whitmore the village board has approved the solar farm project on the Weiler Farm, he assures Whitmore it can be revisited. Witte and Whitmore plan to meet tomorrow to discuss the matter further.

Lastly, Whitmore reports he met with Benton Township Supervisor, Larry Booth, who plans to retire at the end of his current term. Whitmore says he talked Booth into running for another term as supervisor, saying that Newport will need him if the county begins actions forcing the townships to combine at some point in the future.

Highway Department Report:

Highway Department Director Rodger Edmonds reports he got involved in a general assistance situation through the Newport Fire Department, when a resident on Edwards Road was found on the floor of her residence for the second time. Trustee Kirschhoffer comments that the person has

Parkinson's and other health ailments. Edmonds suggests that Newport Township pay for a Life Alert system, including monthly maintenance, for the woman. Whitmore will investigate the situation further.

Edmonds notes the Morton Salt contract has been renewed. The contract price is \$86.71 per ton over two years, although the pricing can change somewhat at the second year. He has purchased 200 tons for the township.

Director Edmonds notes the bill for Kazmer Road paving is in, totaling \$74,902. MFT funds will cover 50% (~\$37k) and Lake County (Scott Stelesky) will reimburse the remaining 50%.

Regarding the culverts at Russell Road, which have been discussed at previous meetings, the county has rebuilt flares and straightened out the cave-ins. Stelesky still needs to advise the township on ultimate long-term maintenance expectations for the culverts as well as, whether the county will re-pave the township section (Old Russell Road to Russell Road) during the N Delany Road project with the Village of Wadsworth.

Finally, Edmonds suggests using the township's remaining Rebuild IL Funds on a culvert west of Delany, calling it the last remaining deep culvert in the township.

Assessor's Report:

Township Assessor, Jerome Berens, says the county has come out with the tentative multiplier. He is doing the best he can to spread it over the township. He reminds the board that taxes will undoubtedly be going up, as the real estate market is humming along in the area.

A brief discussion occurs regarding assessments and housing in Wadsworth, Newport and the surrounding area. Supervisor Whitmore says he is looking for a house to purchase in Newport Township, and hasn't been able to find one. Berens says it continues to be a seller's market, noting that the area's low stock of houses is driving up home prices. Trustee Kirschhoffer says there are two houses in her neighborhood that are vacant and discusses the corporate takeover of residential housing in communities across the country. She comments that companies such as Vanguard and Black Rock are purchasing residential housing and then renting them out, driving up rental rates and effectively turning property that has been owned by single families into rental property without municipality awareness.

Clerk's Report:

The supervisor, on behalf of the full Decennial Committee will need to provide a signed copy of the final Decennial Report submitted to the county, and signed copies of all of the committee's minutes to the clerk.

The annual financial audit is underway with the township's audit firm.

The township's approved final budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year was filed with the county in May.

Trustee Comments:

Daryle Spiller—No comments.

Corey Kirschhoffer—No comments.

Mike Wells— No comments.

Frank Kaiser—Trustee Kaiser notes the Senior Luncheon is tomorrow, June 20th. Kaiser and Trustee Wells delivered tables to the fire department. Gift baskets are arranged and ready for the festivities.

Township Business:

No new business.

Finances:

Supervisor Whitmore requests a motion to approve the township's bills.

Motion by Kaiser, second by Wells to approve the June monthly bills.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes, Spiller, Kirschhoffer, Wells, Kaiser, Whitmore. Nays, none.

Motion passes, 5-0.

Public Comment:

Stan Williams – Resident Williams comments that the tax base for property is arbitrary, and that intrinsic value is only when you buy or sell property. In his opinion, the rest is made up.

Motion to Adjourn:

Supervisor Whitmore requests a motion to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting.

Motion by Kaiser; second by Wells.

Voice Vote: Ayes, all. Nays, none.

Meeting adjourns at 7:57 p.m.

Dated the 19th day of June, 2024.

 s/Debbie Spurgeon

Debbie Spurgeon, Township Clerk