

Johnstown Township Minutes

13641 South M-37 Highway. Battle Creek, Michigan 49017

Regular Board Meeting – March 13, 2024 – 6:30 p.m.

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Supervisor Barb Earl, Clerk Sheri Babcock, Treasurer Karmen Nickerson, Trustee Deana Powell, Trustee Jeff Warren

Absent: none

Visitors: 24

Agenda: Motion by Warren to approve the agenda with changes. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.

Public Comments (3 minutes per person):

- Resident commented that ballot initiative petitions to return control of solar projects to the local level were still available for signature. Additionally, T-shirts were available for purchase to help fund the initiative.

Minutes: A motion was made by Powell to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting & February 28, 2024, Special Board Meeting. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – Karmen Nickerson

- CDs are yielding good rates right now.
- February 29, 2024, was the last day to collect property tax payments at the Township. Treasurer provided a summary of taxes collected in the 2023 season. Motion by Warren to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.

Clerk's Report – Sheri Babcock

- **Presidential Primary:** Summary of February 27, 2024, Presidential Primary voter counts: 65 people used the nine days of Early Voting; 365 voters cast their ballot using Absent Voter Ballot; and on election day, 284 voters cast their ballot in the precinct. Total voter turnout was 28% of registered voters. Trustee Warren commented on the high cost to hold the nine days of early voting versus number of votes cast.
- **May Election:** Pennfield Schools is the only proposal on the special election ballot for May in our Township, so it is recommended that the 6 registered voters be consolidated to Pennfield Charter Township.
 - **Resolution 2024-03-01** was offered by Warren to consolidate the May 7, 2024 Special Election to Pennfield Charter Township. Supported by Powell. Roll call vote: Ayes: Warren, Powell, Nickerson, Babcock, Earl. Nays: none. Motion carried. The Supervisor declared the Resolution adopted.
 - Postcards will be mailed soon to inform effected residents of the change in polling location.
- **Summons RE: FOIA Request:** Work continues with the Attorney to resolve this matter.
- **Local Elected Officials:** Clerk reminded all that the petitions are available and due April 23, 2024, for those seeking local office this election cycle.

Assessor's Report – Kara Dougherty, Assessor

Absent.

Fire Report – Fire Chief Chris Jozwik

- 33 total calls for the month of February. Total calls for 2024: 71.
- 26 MFR calls for the month of February. Total MFR calls for 2024: 50. These totals are comparable to last year.
- Training: Winter drafting/Ice Rescue. MFR Trauma.
- Personnel changes: Recent hire Amy Tatham was introduced.
- Current Membership: 17 Active members; 2 on personal leave, 1 cadet. Looking for more people to join the Fire Department, especially cadets.
- Department Activity:
 - Pancake Breakfast is scheduled for April 27, 2024.
 - Golf Outing fundraiser is set for July 27, 2024, at Marywood Golf Club.
- Burn Permits are handled at the county level and can be obtained by calling 269-205-3208.
- Next Quarterly Board/Fire Meeting: April 1, 2024.

Commissioner Report –Dave Jackson

- Commission on Aging project is progressing with an architect being hired to design the new facility.
- The upcoming HR/Personnel meeting would include seeking an HR firm to help address several looming vacancies created by retirement of staff.
- Early Voting county-wide seemed to go well.
- Solar Ordinance: An ordinance is being drafted/edited with legal counsel. Greatest expected impact in Barry County is in Johnstown Township and the County Board desires to help in the process in the best interest of the people.

Legislative Update: Representative Rachelle Smit,

- Representative Smit introduced herself and gave an update of things happening in the Michigan House including: seats being vacated and upcoming special elections to fill the vacancies; issues of concern to our residents such as wind and solar ordinances, and upcoming issues like sand and gravel mining. She also touched on the budget process.
- The Board thanked Representative Smit for attending and providing an update on legislative issues.

Old Business:

Consumers Energy Solar Project: The Board thanked Commissioner Jackson for attending. Board expressed a desire to move forward with a Special Board Meeting in April with the Attorney present to lay out a plan to move forward and outline our options.

Commissioner Jackson reiterated that the County wants to be involved in the process of creating Wind and Solar Ordinance including Public Hearings and Planning and Zoning to preserve prime farmland; protect residents interests; and serve as a model for other townships.

Sylvan Court Paving Project:

Next public hearing set for April 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Website Upgrade:

Issues pertaining to the upgrade proposal were discussed. Motion by Powell to move forward with the Platinum Package and Option A maintenance plan as outlined in the proposal. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Fire Insurance Withholding:

Due to limited number of historical catastrophic structure fires in our community that would be impacted by having a Fire Insurance Withholding program in place, it was agreed this matter would be put on hold for now.

ARPA Funds:

- Discussion about line items within the Pavilion & Park & Community Garden budget as presented at February 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.
- Motion by Warren to allocate the \$9404 remaining ARPA funds to this project as outlined in previously mentioned park budget. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.

New Business:

Paper & Cardboard Recycling:

Recycling is no longer offered at the Township Hall. Residents can use the Transfer Station on Osborne Road, or take advantage of other opportunities at the County. Further information is available at JohnstownTwp.org.

Poverty Exemption Income Guidelines:

Guidelines are to be updated annually. Will request updated guidelines from new Assessor

Dowling Library:

- Andy Jerue provided an updated Dowling Library budget for next Fiscal Year, and recommended John Doyle to fill the Board vacancy left when Georgia Robinson resigned. Motion by Warren to appoint John Doyle to the Dowling Library Board to finish the current term. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.
- Jerue shared the resources available for residents' use including the physical space at the Library, the numerous book volumes, and electronic resources, as well as used book sale.

Pay Invoices & Payroll: A motion was made by Powell to pay the invoices in the amount of \$55,672.92 as presented. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried

Additional Public Comments (3 minutes per person):

- A petition drive for local control of solar and wind ballot initiative will be held Thursday, March 21 from 6:00-8:00 at Wild Mike's.
- Representative from Consumers Energy communicated that the renewable natural gas project as SwissLane Farms was approved. Also, equipment is being staged on Banfield Road for additional testing before any solar farm construction can begin. He reiterated that Consumers Energy will not begin construction until an ordinance with the Township is approved.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Powell to adjourn. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Next Special Board Meeting: March 18, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Next Special Board Meeting & Budget Public Hearing: March 27, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Attested to by:
Barbara Earl
Supervisor



Sheri Babcock, Clerk