

**Watertown Township**  
2630 South Sandusky Rd  
Sandusky, MI 48471

Board Regular Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 6, 2024 –6:00 pm

PRESENT: Cambridge, Coats, Cole, Dixon, and Ross

ABSENT: Diaz

GUESTS: Dick Henderson, Scott Kenny, Mike and Christine Papp, Jeff Renaudin, Matt Cole, Don and Diane Ferguson, Jim & Josh Cambridge, Clint Stoutenburg, Jason Radloff, Gary Heberling, Rodney Potter, Matt Grabitz, Michael Homier, Lyne Stauffer, Bill Parrish, Steve Scribner, Matt Cole, Dorothy & Greg Thorley, Jeff Renadin, Michael Homier Foster Swift Lawyer and Colin Daning Samsung.

**1. AGENDA**

Bill Dixon requested that:

- CPS Schools Notice of Special May Election be placed under Correspondence 5A
- First Land Services Letter with respect to DTE be placed under Correspondence 5B
- 2024 Poverty Exceptions Guidelines be placed under New Business 6D
- Balanced Budget Amendment be placed under Treasurer's Report 8D
- Assessment Roll be placed under Tax Assessor 14B
- Dump Day Property Tax Bill Stuffer be placed under Other Good of the Order 15C

\*\*\* Motion by Coats supported by Cole approve the minutes as amended. All in favor. Motion carried.

**2. BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES:**

Dixon requested approval of the February 6, 2024 Minutes.

\*\*\* Motion by Coats supported by Cambridge to approve the minutes as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

**3. PUBLIC OFFICIAL**

County Commissioner, Gary Heberling reported that:

- The present animal shelter has several code violations from the State of Michigan. To bring the building up to code will be expensive. Also, the City of Sandusky leased the building for 75 years, but requested it back for their expansion. The City of Sandusky offered to donate some land for a new shelter, thus cutting expense. With using \$720,000 of ARPA Grant Funds, the Commissioners are hoping very little general funds will be used for this project.
- The Commissioners passed a policy to ensure that the cost allocation is fairly divided between each entity receiving services from the County Controllers' Office. Coats asked why tax funds aren't sent to each entity directly instead of through the Controllers' Office and isn't this duty under the County's umbrella of duties? Commissioner Heberling will look into it and get back to her.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Township Resident Lyne Stauffer Inquired about the status of taking care of the dangerous building on Sylvan Drive. Dixon said that this item is later on the agenda.
- Township Resident Diane Ferguson – Spoke about a possible conflict with the current Interim Zoning Administrator also serving on the Planning Commission.

- Mike Grabitz, Sanilac County Road Commission Foreman,
  - o Reviewed the current prices for limestone. The price increased from \$22.03 a ton last year to \$22.77 a ton. Mr. Grabitz wanted to confirm that, after considering the price change, the township would still like to purchase 4000 ton? Dixon confirmed that the township will stay with the current plan of purchasing 4,000 ton this year. The Board signed the limestone purchase agreement.
  - o He presented, for the Board's consideration, RDAs for ditching projects.
  - o Mr. Grabitz also advised the Board that he spoke with his supervisors regarding the possibility of improving Townline Road between Walker and Frenchline Roads. Townline is the dividing line between Watertown and Elmer Townships and therefore, approval would be needed from both townships. The project cost estimate is approximately \$30,000 for each township.
  - o Coats inquired about Gates Road between M-46 and Miller roads. Grabitz said this road has a small berm that will be graded down and new limestone will be applied.

## **5. CORRESPONDENCE**

- a) CPS Schools Notice of Special May Election
  - Dixon reported that the township received a letter from Doug Muxlow, Carsonville – Port Sanilac School Superintendent, informing the township that the school district will hold a Special Bond Election on May 7, 2024.
- b) First Land Services Letter with respect to DTE
  - Dixon reported that DTE is in the evaluation phase of a potential wind project in our area.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Foster/Swift: Attorney Michael Homier:
  1. Samsung Solar Special Land Use Permit Application: Legal Findings/Recommendations
    - Foster Swift Attorney Michael Homier who is assisting the township with the Samsung Special Solar Land Use Permit spoke about issues regarding the permit.
    - o Comments concerning the permit have been submitted to the Planning Commission.
    - o Dixon asked about Samsung's request to delay providing some requirements of the special land use permit such as decommissioning bonds. Homier – This can be a condition of the permit; however, it becomes a problem with timing. Such as do they provide the information before commencing construction, etc. Also, a new law passed in February mandates that if a special land use permit issued on or after January of 2021, with an expenditure of \$10,000 or 10% of the project cost, whichever is less, precludes the issuer from revoking the special land use permit. The only remedy, if the conditions of the permit are not met, may be litigation or an injunction action to stop the project until the conditions are met.
    - o Dixon asked how the new law giving state regulators the authority over renewable energy permits will affect Watertown. Homier – The zoning law will start on November 29, 2024. However, there are a number of petitions being distributed challenging the law. The deadline to submit these petitions is May 29<sup>th</sup>. Depending on the outcome of that, he will be able to guide the township on the next steps that may need to be taken.
    - o Dixon requested recommendations or next steps. Homier – At the next meeting he will have a discussion with the Planning Commission that will include the status of the new zoning law, that appendix H doesn't include bankruptcy or similar financial default or placing the cost of decommissioning on the property owner, lack of an emergency response plan, and that they didn't receive the SDS sheets.
- b) Master Plan: Begin the 63-Day Comment Period
  - Dixon reported that the Planning Commission is recommending that the Board approves the start of the 63-Day Comment Period for the Master Plan.
  - Cambridge added that the updates include:

- o Under Future Land Use – M-46 from Banner & Fitch Road and on M-19 from Cooper to Marlette Road is Zoned Commercial
- o Updating of the front-page picture
- o Updating of the agriculture equipment pictures

\*\*\* Motion by Cambridge, supported by Cole to approve the start of a 63-day comment period. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Dixon will notify Spicer of the start of the 63-day comment period

c) Thumb Electric Franchise Agreement

- Dixon reported that this agreement replacement has been reviewed by Township Attorney Kyle O’Mara and provides for internet over the Thumb Electric transmission lines for broadband delivery.

\*\*\* Motion by Cole, supported by Cambridge to approve the Thumb Electric Franchise Agreement as presented. Motion carried.

d) 2024 Poverty Exceptions Guidelines

- Dixon reported that these are the same guidelines passed in February with the exception that Public Act 191 of 2023 is the correct law to be referenced in regards to the Poverty Exception Guidelines.

\*\*\* Motion by Coats, supported by Cole to approve as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

**7. OLD BUSINESS**

a) Sylvan Drive Dangerous Buildings complaint (on-going)

- Dixon Reported – Township Attorney Kyle O’Mara is recommending that the township employ a Zoning Enforcement Officer. The Sanilac County Sheriff’s Office is offering to split a deputy position to accommodate township zoning enforcement needs. This would also relieve the Interim Zoning Administrator of the duty. Dixon presented an example of what the contract would look like and is in the process of getting an estimation on the cost of the service.

\*\*\* Motion by Coats, supported by Cole to approve moving forward with a Zoning Enforcement Officer as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

b) 11 Watertown Rd., Dick Henderson Zoning Complaint

- Dixon read the following opinion from Township Attorney Kyle O’Mara  
 “You have asked that I provide my written opinion of several alleged zoning violations regarding the property located at 11 Watertown Road, Sandusky, Michigan. It is my understanding that the complaints were made by a private citizen rather than the township zoning administrator. I have had the opportunity to review the written complaints and the Township zoning ordinance and, in my opinion, the complaints are without merit.” The letter continues to explain categorically his reasons for his opinion. The matter is now considered closed.

c) Insurance Audit Risk Control Recommendations (written policies in February 6, 2024 packet)

1. Disclosure Employment Procurement of Consumer Report Profile
2. FREE Human Resources Risk Management Services for Public Entities
3. Recommend ICHAT background checks for prospective employees
4. Liability Assessment & Liability Reduction Recommendations
5. Municipal Representative Concealed Firearm Prohibition Policy
6. Social Media Policy Recommendations

- Dixon enquired if there is any interest in the policies presented at the February 2024 meeting as part of the insurance audit. Discussion was held. No changes were made.

## **8. TREASURER'S REPORT/POSSIBLE ACTION**

### a) Approval of Checks Issued

- Coats requested approval of the February 2024 checks number 17493 thru 17528 for a total amount of \$21,768.70.

\*\*\* Motion by Cambridge, Supported by Cole to approve the February 2024 checks as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

### b) Front Door Repair/Replacement

- Ross reported that the latch on the South front door of the Township Hall broke. Mark Kaatz from Sanilac Glass secured the door temporarily, but it can't be used and will have to be replaced. Replacement of the broken part of the door on both sides is estimate at \$450. However, the doors are very old and it is his recommendation that both doors be replaced. A total replacement of both doors, with no grids, is \$4,400.

\*\*\* Motion by Coats, Supported by Cambridge to approve a total replacement of the Township Hall's front doors. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Ross will notify Mark Kaatz, Sanilac Glass of the decision.

### c) New Flag Needed for Township Hall

- Cambridge made the motion to approve a new flag. The motion failed due to lack of support.
- Dixon will message our State Representative to request a flag that has flown over the capital building.

### d) Balanced Budget Amendment

- Coats presented a Balanced Budget Amendment for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

\*\*\* Motion by Cole, Supported by Cambridge to approve the Balanced Budget Amendment as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

Dixon reported that the public budget meeting will be Tuesday, April 2, 2024. He will send the budget meeting newspaper ad for Ross' approval.

## **9. CLERK'S REPORT/POSSIBLE ACTION**

### a) Approval of current month claims

\*\*\* Motion by Cambridge, Supported by Cole to approve payment of the monthly claims as presented. All in favor. Motion carried

### b) Election Update

- Ross reported that 112 Absentee Ballots were received with 311 total voters, a 32% voter turnout. She received the Canvassers Report noting no issues with the election paperwork or results.

## **10. CEMETERY REPORT/POSSIBLE ACTION**

### a) Burials & Lot Sales

- No burials

### b) Headstone Repair

- No update

### c) Spring Clean-up Notice

- Dixon recommends putting out a Cemetery Spring Clean-up Notice. He will get the notice to Cambridge to put on the website. All graves must be cleaned up by April 15<sup>th</sup>. Anything left that is decrepit or broken will be removed. Coats also recommended hiring someone to plant trees. Dixon said Western's Tree Farm will be planting the trees. Dixon will reach out to Patterson's Tree and Lawn Service to discuss tree stump/root removal.

#### **11. SEWER REPORT/POSSIBLE ACTION**

- a) Rate Increase from the City of Sandusky 10% effective March 1, 2024
  - Dixon reported that starting on January 1, 2024, the Township raised sewer rates to be in line with what the City of Sandusky was charging the Township. However, the City is raising rates 10% starting March 1, 2024. Dixon recommends revisiting this at a later time, but Township residents using the sewer system should expect another increase in the months to come.
- b) Meters were read on February 27, 2024
  - Dixon reported that the meters were read on February 27, 2024 and turned into the City of Sandusky on time.

#### **12. PLANNING BOARD/POSSIBLE ACTION**

- a) February 15, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes/Summary
  - Cambridge reported - Seth Arthur, Attorney for Samsung was requesting a public hearing be held. However, it was the Planning Commission Board's consensus to not hold a public hearing until everything is in order with the paperwork. Cassi Meitl from Spalding and DeDecker Engineering Firm reviewed the issues and she will report back to Jim Hacker, Planning Commission Chairman.
- b) February 29, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes/Summary
  - Cambridge reported that the Committee reviewed the Master Plan and approved the recommendation referred to under New Business 6b.
- c) Foster Swift Mike Homier Scheduled Visit for March 21, 2024.
  - Cambridge reported that Foster Swift will attend the next Planning Commission meeting on March 21, 2024. Hopefully Cassi Meitl from Spalding DeDecker will also have the answers to the issues she is reviewing.

#### **13. WEBSITE REPORT/POSSIBLE ACTION**

Cambridge reported she:

- Added proposed and approved minutes as needed
- Archived minutes as needed
- Updated the calendar as needed
- Added the Planning Commissions Special Meeting Notice to the website

Dixon reported that the electronic sign was updated through the end of July. However, the May 7<sup>th</sup> Special School Election information will be added.

#### **14. TAX ASSESSOR/POSSIBLE ACTION**

Dixon reported on behalf of Tax Assessor, Jeannie Diaz that Board of Review Meetings will be held on March 11, 2024 from 3 pm to 9 pm. and March 12, 2024 from 9 am to 3 pm. The Board of Review Organizational Meeting was held tonight (March 6, 2024) and everything is organized for the meetings next week.

#### **15. OTHER GOOD OF THE ORDER**

- a) Watertown Brine Schedule 5-2-24, 7-9-24 & 8-20-24
  - Dixon reiterated the dates of Road Brining
- b) ParPlan Grant for Security Cameras in Process

– Dixon reported that, if granted, the ParPlan Grant for Security Cameras will cover 50% of the purchase of cameras up to a \$5,000 limit. He is working with Ben Kendra of Kendra IT for assistance with the grant. Deadline for the application is March 15, 2024.

c) **Dump Day Property Tax Bill Stuffer**

- Instead of having a tri-fold flyer, Dixon presented the Board with 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a page flyer for mailing with the tax bills.

**16. ADJOURN**

\*\*\*Coats made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 p.m. Cambridge supported. All in favor. Motion carried

**UPCOMING MEETINGS.**

Regular Board Meeting – Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Ross, Clerk