

APPROVED BM 07/18/2023, WITH CHANGES.

IRVING TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 20, 2023

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call – Present: Sharon Olson, Mike Buehler, Jamie Knight, Doug Sokolowski. Absent: Dean Bass.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Buehler, approval Agenda. All in favor, “Ayes”. None “No”. Motion passed. Dean Bass, absent.

Knight, Clerk’s Minutes of May 17, revised with changes as of 6/19/2023. Motion by Knight, seconded by Buehler, approve minutes as presented. All in favor, “Ayes”. None “No”. Motion passed. Dean Bass, absent.

Public Input, none.

Unfinished Business

Freeport Volunteer Fire Department Contract. Contract submitted to township attorney. Sokolowski, we discussed this already and we voted on it. I do accept the vote. I do want to make one last comment ... by signing this contract we acknowledge that there is potential for us to have to pay out of the general fund if we are not able to collect the amount from taxes. The voters authorize us a certain amount of money for the fire contracts and the money for the general fund. We could be living beyond our means if we can’t do less than 1.25.

Knight, have we ever had to take from General Fund. Sokolowski. No. It is a potential. The percentage increases every year. The real problem comes when it comes time to do a millage. We can either renew it at current amount or we can do what they call renewal plus increase, which will take it back to 1.5. Contract expires 2026. It is a five (5) year contract.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Buehler, to approve the Freeport Fire Protection and Emergency Services Contract from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2028, (5) five-year contract. Roll Call, Knight, Buehler, Olson, “Yes”, Sokolowski, “No”, motion passed. Dean Bass, absent.

Basement Remodel Update, Sokolowski, will be completed by Friday, June 29. Asking the Board to approve payment for the completion of remodel. Sokolowski will do a final walk-through with vendor

when he is finished on Friday. Will give a check to him then. If we don't approve, then it is another month to wait.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, to approve payment of \$20,905.00 to Miller Custom Builders. This is listed in the line item for the current Bill Pay. The vendor will be paid in full for his services. Roll Call, Olson, Buehler, Sokolowski, Knight, "Yes". "No" none. Dean Bass, absent.

Parking Lot update: verbiage for posting. Sokolowski, a listing is in the packet. Based on what the board wanted from last meeting ... write something that would go into the paper called for sealed bids. This is the draft verbiage I came up with. I would invite all bidders to the July meeting to discuss the project. August 16, Board Meeting, we would approve vendor(s).

The Board recommends making a decision at the July 18, Board Meeting. The Board selects Sokolowski as point of contact for questions from potential bidders. The Board agrees vendor selection will be done at the July 18, Board Meeting.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Buehler, approve the ad with changes to run in the Sun & News. All in favor, "Ayes". None "No". Motion passed. Dean Bass, absent.

Township Roof update – Knight, our insurance carrier contacted us and indicated that there was not significant enough damage to repair or replace roof from hailstorm of April 8, and no further action required.

New Business – Street light corner of Solomon & Parmalee. Knight received a letter from Chris Pine asking for a light at Solomon and Parmalee.

I am Chris Pine. I drive up Solomon every day to work. And then Parmalee in. My wife, daughter and I moved into this area on July 4, last year. And between then and now, I've seen three accidents. They're all early in the morning. Now, to be fair, most of them were last fall, January, February, but there was no ice, no snow, but it's pitch black. Any direction you come to that intersection, you're going uphill, and it comes up very, very, very fast. For me, even now, I know what I'm looking for and I still sometimes almost miss it.

One time, there was a car that was coming down Parmalee eastbound, and he completely missed the intersection and put it in the ditch on the other side. As I approached there was a state trooper there and that's how I happened to see it, otherwise it would have been pitch black. The other two times someone would have been going northbound, missed the intersection, spun their car around and put it in the ditch.

If you look at the other end of Parmalee where it runs into Whitneyville, there is a streetlight and there's also a turn lane that runs north and south. I'm thinking that there's a different reason for a streetlight there, probably because of the turn lane. But all three roads come together there, that's all downhill so that that intersection is visible. But in this end, it's very difficult to see. I thought a streetlamp just an overhanging white light would help to prevent some of those people, including myself, from going in the ditch.

Olson, to Knight, did you reach out to Jake of Barry County Road Commission. Knight, no I reached out to Great Lakes and got a quote for \$3800. Sokolowski, we only have \$1500 in the budget for this year. If we do this for this intersection, we open ourselves to all intersections similar, Robinson and Garbo, and the safety of all intersections. If we do this, we will need a motion to increase the budget.

Buehler, recommend discussing with Jake. Board agrees to revisit on July 18 meeting.

Laurie, wife of Chris Pine, if a streetlight isn't approved, is there a way to have more reflective lighting? Board to reach out to our road engineer and road commission for recommendations.

Hastings Area Schools request community conversation at Irving Township Hall. Knight received a letter from the superintendent asking for use of the township hall, letter dated May 24. He was asking for early June, and I told him that we won't be able to approve this until our meeting tonight.

He wants to invite people out to learn about the bond proposal that's coming up in August. He's looking at either tomorrow night or Thursday, at 6:00 pm or 7:00 pm.

Sokolowski, so this is public purpose and is legitimate to allow the use. As discussed before, the use of a private organizations creates an issue for us. According to the MTA, if the board wants to use private uses, we need to consider what the worst-case scenario would be and understand that, yes, that group would be allowed to get in line to use our property. As we go forward, and when you get nonpublic uses, I think we need to have a policy about that. Sokolowski, would like on agenda to discuss at next meeting.

Olson, not comfortable to have groups in our work area, especially when we are not here. The downstairs available next week.

Sokolowski, I believe since this is for the public that we do our best to accommodate.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, approve Hastings Area School System to use township hall this week, but ask to delay for next, for community discussion. All in favor "Ayes". "No" none.

Summer Tax bills, Sokolowski, awaiting on file from county to send summer tax bills out. Bills will be mailed on July 1, and the last day to receive payment without a penalty is September 14.

Sokolowski, Siegfried and Crandall, auditors will be in our office on July 20, to conduct formal audit. Treasurer and Clerk are required to be in attendance. All Board members are welcome to participate.

Reports: Assessors Report attached. July Board of Review, July 20.

Smelker, at our meeting today we had interviews for partial terms on all these boards: Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Community Mental Health Disorder and Solid Waste Oversight committee. We moved applicants to the full board meeting next week. We went ahead with a contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield for the inmates. When someone is arrested, and they do not have insurance, the county is responsible for their health benefits and prescription drugs. Last year we spent over \$200,000 on health and drug benefits for inmates. We signed a contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield, we get their discount to the hospitals. We have to pay 13% above their discount to Blue Cross. It saves us quite a bit of money. It irritates me that we have to pay for health benefits, when I think they should be on Medicaid.

Fire report – Hastings, attached. Freeport, attached, also wrote a grant for \$10,000 for Fire Deer. Will not know for some time. G. Shaele celebrating 15 years with Freeport. Thornapple, report attached. Forbes, several porch fires. Tinder dry. Ban on all burning except campfires.

Sokolowski, discussed burning ordinance. Glad all three chiefs are here to discuss this potential need for burning ordinance. If someone doesn't get a burning permit what happens? We have no punishment if we don't get a permit. We have no punishment if you are a repeat offender. We wrote a draft of a Burning Ordinance.

By passing this ordinance as a board, we would give you, the Chief's, that authority, if you saw it necessary to issue a citation, which would be payable to us. If they didn't pay, we would put a fine on their taxes and that would be the ultimate outcome. This is what we talked about, I wanted to bring it back up anyhow, between us and the chiefs here just to get the fire department's opinion. We want to give you the tools to be able to do what you need to do. I think fire is a major concern for all of us right now.

Chief Richardson, one of the concerns that you brought up is growing communities like this. I'm gonna say it's not a big deal, we have acres and acres and acres of property. But when you start seeing more and more residential developments, you start seeing problems in the community. Where I used to serve, we had a very loose ordinance. Initially, when I started there, open burning was allowed and neighbors were catching other neighbors stuff on fire. And, and that's why we came up with the rules that we came up with. It was based on evidence. It wasn't based on, like, wanting to have our authority on people. It's based on protecting other people's property. It was not trying to take people's ability to burn stuff.

Sokolowski, it is not about having a fire pit in your yard. It's about burning big piles. Richardson, one person in Irving Township has been talked too and it seems to be resolved. Richardson, you hope that you can be good neighbors, but if you're not, you should have the ability to not just mitigate, but also enforce.

Sokolowski, if the fire departments want this ability, I think we should give it to them.

Forbes, I don't think that's true. I think you need to talk to your attorney. I think if you put an ordinance in place that it is not up to us as the fire department, it is up to the Township's. Then, that puts it on us to make sure that we're following through on what you decide. Sokolowski, I will check. MTA stated, as long as we define what the Fire Authority is, and that each chief would have the authority or discretion to enforce. We were giving you the capability to have a "hammer" in the toolbox. Forbes, I can't think of anybody that we've ever had that it's been a repeat offender. We haven't had that issue since I have been on in the last 25 years.

Sokolowski, we want to give freedom to our citizens for the right to do stuff. But we also have to keep safety in mind. We have a growing population. In my view, it is up to you Chief's.

Smelker, if there is a burn ban in place, the State Police will respond. Forbes, we call the DNR. The DNR have a lot of big hammers, and they can and will issue big fines, for example, for every truck that comes, all equipment, apparatus, and personnel that come all included in fine.

Knight/Sokolowski submit Ordinance to attorney for review. Limit (2) hours attorney.

Olson, cemetery, two trees completely decayed need to be removed. \$2,150.00. In addition, attached estimate for restoration of the white building in the cemetery that needs repair. In addition, add a rain barrel for people to have water for their plants. Sokolowski, we need to decide to save it or not. The contractor, Miller, is the same company who did the basement. They are offering a 10% discount because of the repeat. Olson, the building is a historical part of the cemetery. The building was used

as cold storage in winter to store bodies until the ground in the spring thawed when they could bury them. This is what cemeteries used to do.

Buehler, do we have other bids. Sokolowski, no. Lorraine took him out to the cemetery to look at it. According to MTA interpretation, we don't have to bid things out. If we choose not to if we have an established relationship.

Sokolowski, we have budgeted 7,500, but we have consumed \$1240 for cutting down one (1) tree already. The \$7500 will not be enough to cover this and the other (2) trees without increasing the cemetery budget.

Motion by Olson, seconded by Buehler, to approve the cutting of (two) trees in cemetery. Roll call, Sokolowski, Buehler, Knight, Olson, "Yes". "No" none. Dean Bass, absent.

Olson, cemetery building, we really can't approve this without increasing the budget first, correct? Sokolowski, correct.

Buehler/Knight, for the same money, you might get Dutch Barns to drop a building over there. Sokolowski, at some level, we are responsible for the preservation of our history. To me, that cemetery is a treasure. When you walk through there and look at some of the headstones ... and how far back they go, it really is moving in the number of veterans that are buried there.

Sokolowski, keep in mind, too, that this money can be allocated from the ARPA funds. We have used around \$150,000 of our allotted a \$300,000 of our ARPA Funds.

Knight, cemetery building tabled until next meeting. Buehler to secure alternative options and discuss with Sexton. Same size, no windows, plus door. Required rain barrel. Sokolowski, we should have a flagpole at both cemeteries. I like the fact that Lorraine has gotten together a group of citizens looking at things to aid in improving our cemeteries.

Treasurer report, attached. Sokolowski, these are the current balances of our accounts. You can see the changes. The amount you see in the top part in savings section is a big jump but in the checking section, it is a decline since April in the amount \$22,000. This is because we're moving into the tax season. We'll start collecting money and building the accounts up. Also, the reason for the big change between the investment (^) and savings because we have a checking account ~~called the~~ (^) at Union Bank ~~and the checking account~~, we had no checks for it, no ~~anything~~ (^) activity. I kept having to affirm

with that it was inactive, dormant. Otherwise, I had to pay a filing fee. So finally, I just took that money and moved it up into the savings account.

You can see in the interest section we got this month, \$2601.00 in earned interest. Fiscal year to date so far, we have around \$5,108.00 in interest in our accounts, we keep working with the banks every two months to make certain we are getting the maximum for our investments.

Attached are the receipts and the current interest rate that we get, and what we collect every month on the accounts and receipts.

Sokolowski, per auditor, anytime we want to disburse funds other than from a tax accountant, the whole board should approve. We should vote on the dispersion of those funds. We have the Thornapple Township invoice.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight to approve invoice for Thornapple Township, \$11,771. Roll call, Sokolowski, Knight, Buehler, Olson, "yes", "No", none. Dean Bass absent.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Buehler to pay the bills in the amount of \$29,067.80. Roll call, Buehler, Knight, Sokolowski, Olson, "Yes", "No" none. Dean Bass, absent.

Board Member comments, Sokolowski, each board member of Birch was tasked to address at individual board meetings. Mercy ambulance is asking \$145,000 for one year to help support their operations. Our share would be about \$14,000.

Sokolowski, I hesitate on this. I have been informed that every other board has approved contributing to this ... Hastings City has approved \$55,000 and the other townships have approved this, but I do not know the amounts. My concern about this is that in the meeting on June 1, Mercy did not commit that this would be a one-time ask. As a businessperson, they should be able to forecast at least three to five years what their needs would be. There's also rumors about Mercy's longevity in the business. I don't want to see the board approve something that may end up not benefiting our citizens. I am little bit skeptical of this right now. Other Boards seem to be okay with this.

Smelker, if I am correct, Irving does not use Mercy. Sokolowski, last year Mercy made 29 calls. Our contract with Thornapple does not cover the whole township right now. If we want to ensure coverage, we should increase our contract coverage in all those areas. Just because the boards have allocated the money doesn't mean ultimately that the board would approve that contract. My gut feeling is that they will approve it.

Sokolowski, do we want to vote to consider the \$14,000 contribution to Birch to pay Mercy or if we'd rather not and consider other options.

Forbes, JD was at the Carlton township meeting, and Carlton township did not approve. It was a draft and they did not approve it at the meeting. They said they wanted to see the books. Sokolowski, I agree about the books. Forbes, in addition, a couple of concerns that I have as a resident, one that you have contracted with Thornapple to provide coverage for your ambulance for all of Irving Township, Sokolowski, no, not all. Forbes, or a very large percentage.

I think they ran two calls in that bottom quarter that lives in your contract last year, otherwise they run mutual aid back and forth. I just want to mention in the last meeting about making sure the contracts are fair and equitable and that it's worth the value. And so, I think I would throw that back on you guys to consider for the small portion. Furthermore, Mercy is a for profit ambulance company.

Knight, I recommend that we with what we're doing and explore all options out there. Sokolowski, we don't know their true financial situation. I feel right now that we don't have enough data to make a qualified decision.

Knight, so we don't have to do anything. Right. Sokolowski, ultimately Birch does not have authority over us. Olson, we already contracted \$4,500 To cover the area. So why would we pay more. Smelker, I agree 100% what Sharon just said, you have already paid and you have a contract, do not take taxpayers money and pay to cover up again.

Sokolowski, just a reminder to sign up for the E-newsletter.

Olson, small Hastings School Board Election, Tuesday, August 8. We will be required a complete election staff for this small election. There are still a lot of things up in the air about Proposal 2. Everyday I receive something about Proposal 2. A lot is still being worked out through the legislature and how that's going to be implemented.

For the smaller townships it will be difficult. We will be required to work nine (9) days in August, March and November. I believe that you will see a lot of resignations across the board with clerks. Sokolowski, it was a hot topic at the recent MTA meeting. A lot of the clerks indicated that they would have to increase their compensation, etc. It is not something unique to us, it is across all initiatives in townships. Sokolowski, I understand that there will be costs that we will incur that will not be refunded.

Buehler, light pole for parking lot, vendor waiting on materials.

Any public comment? Smelker, our county clerk, Pam Palmer is retiring in October. Forbes, July 29, Annual Car Show in Freeport with a Pancake Breakfast in the morning and Car Show in the afternoon.

The car show brought in well over 100 cars last year. It was awesome. And people are really excited about it again this year. Last year had to expand out another block from what they had originally planned. Hopefully, this year will expand all the way down the entire street. The turtle derby is on. So that was an excitement for people. The Friends of Freeport have regrouped with some additional members and have some great things happening there.

Forbes, Highpoint Community Bank came out Monday for Juneteenth and painted the park structures. Before and after pictures of the structures are on the Village of Freeport Facebook page, the difference is amazing. Day of Caring is coming up on September 14. If you have projects that you need done at the cemeteries or wherever, they really do a lot of really great work. We have over 500 volunteers throughout Barry County.

Knight, next Board Meeting, July 18, at 6:30pm. Irving Township Audit, July 20 9:00am-5:00pm. Board of Review Meeting, July 20, at 6:00pm.

Motion by Knight to adjourn at 7:55pm, seconded by Buehler.

Minutes prepared by Deputy Clerk, Lorraine Bush, for Clerk, Sharon Olson, June 28, 2023