

DRAFT - IRVING TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 15, 2023

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call – Present: Jamie Knight, Doug Sokolowski, Dean Bass, Sharon Olson. Mike Buehler Absent. Members of public (11).

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, to move Board Member Comments to the last part of agenda. All in favor, “Aye”. “No” none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Sokolowski, to approve agenda with the change. All in favor, “Aye”. “No” none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Motion by Knight, Seconded by Sokolowski, approved minutes of July 18, as presented. All in favor, “Aye”. “No” none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Public Input. Lorraine Bush, regarding better signage on West Sisson Road, by Sugarbush Lake. My husband spoke to Barry County Road Commission today and was informed that we need to bring this matter to township. Concerns, need better signage - no curve sign heading West bound on Sisson, and we have increased walkers due to lake housing increase. In addition, on the south side of Sisson, we own the field. We have two (2) entrance/exit on Sisson Road for farm equipment going in and out of field. We are approaching harvest, combined with walkers and a 55-mph speed plus, it is a dangerous situation. There is nothing that slows the traffic West bound. The shoulder of the road on the south side of Sisson continues to wash out with gravel over the middle of the road during heavy rains. These downpours increase the hazard as the shoulder becomes totally washed out. Looking for help from township to get better signage for the curve and agricultural crossing.

Dean Bass, this is regarding a comment that I made. I asked Bill Richardson to be here today. I would like to apologize for a comment that I made last month which I said was a personal reference to him. I apologize to him for that statement as well as the members of this board for the comment. Although apologies are never adequate to cover something awful said or done, perhaps it helps ... at the end of the day you own what you say you do. I put this out there. I hope that Bill understands, and the board understands. Thank you.

Unfinished Business

Parking lot and cemetery roads. Both Irving and German Cemetery roads are completed. Parking lot in progress.

Cemetery building – (2) quotes, Big L and Barry County Lumber. Lani Forbes, the project hasn't been chosen yet, but that doesn't mean it's not going to be. We have about 538 volunteer opportunities for people in the community. Honestly, we've never seen so many people calling to fill those opportunities. I have no doubt that it will be taken care of. Also, I'm going to change description not painting, to side. Date for day of caring, September 14.

Knight, cemetery building quotes, Barry County Lumber Company \$2,349.50, and Big L Lumber \$2,726.28. Buehler prepared these quotes before his vacation. It is his recommendation to use Big L because of quality of product even though there is a \$400 price difference. Big L will deliver to cemetery.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Bass, accept Mike Buehler's recommendation to go with Big L Lumber, cemetery project, \$2726.28. Knight to coordinate delivery. Roll call, "Yes" Bass, Sokolowski, Knight, Olson. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Knight, fiber Internet to the township Hall. Construction phase will start August 23, and it will take 90 days to complete, anticipating end of November for service to our building.

Sokolowski, Summer Tax bills due on September 14. You can file for a deferment from the interest, forms online. Today we recorded about \$261,000 and just received in another batch.

Sokolowski, Audit results, sited one (1) observation, and I made it. I disbursed the DNR payment incorrectly for Thornapple Kellogg Schools and Barry County. In the processing of securing a refund. That was the only error found for us. Sharon Olson deserves a hand for managing our General Ledger account.

BIRCH update. Introduction of new Fire Chief, Mark Jordan. I've had the pleasure of making it round most of most of the townships. Spoke with Doug and Jamie a week or so ago. We almost have a plan finalized. I plan to include a couple of motions for the board to make. Next BIRCH meeting is August 24, held at the BIRCH fire hall.

Sokolowski, in doing the contracts with BIRCH, and with the City of Hastings, it was found out that we have to provide a year notice if we choose to leave. We have made NO decision. There are several options that the board is looking at. A lot depends on the Chief's proposal and how much additional funds would be required from the township. We are sending a letter to BIRCH asking if we can be **exempted** from that year notification clause because a year would drag us into our next fiscal year. We would then need to make two contributions and that would not be beneficial for our township. We'll be presenting that letter on the 24th to all BIRCH members asking exception from the year clause.

New Business

Sokolowski, per new rules, any disbursement other than from the tax account must be approved by the board. Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight to approve the disbursement For Freeport Fire of \$64,777.05. Roll call, "Yes", Knight, Bass, Sokolowski, Olson. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Township Hall Main Floor repairs. Sokolowski a motion to replace the flooring in main area and any necessary repairs on the first floor and the stairs going down quote, \$26,435 with a \$2,000 contingency, total \$28,435.00. Reach out to an additional vendor for quote. Table to next meeting.

Sokolowski, provided to Board Members, Code of Conduct Policy and Cash Management Policy. Board to take and review. Both policies are recommended by township auditor and MTA. Doug to submit to lawyer for review, (1) hr. max. per document Added to September agenda.

New Parking lot light, Aaron Hartman, citizen complaint about new lights points directly into his house, and worse than the previous flagpole. Discussion regarding the new lights, safety, temporary on off, etc. Board accepts responsible for error.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Bass, approve payment to Lydy Electric for \$450.00 to adjust angle on new lights on flagpole. Roll call, "Yes", Sokolowski, Knight, Bass, Olson. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Tree by Township Parking lot drive. Reports of dead limbs falling, debris, limb overhang. Awaiting response from tree company. Added to September agenda.

ARPA Funds. Sokolowski prepared chart to showcase the amount and the expenditure thus far of ARP Funds. Approximately, \$24,666 remaining in the fund.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight to approve \$12,863 from ARPA fund for internet to township office. Roll call, "Yes", Sokolowski, Knight, Bass, Olson. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, to approve \$18,500 from ARPA fund for Hidden Hollow Drain. Roll call, "Yes", Bass, Sokolowski, Olson, Knight. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Bass, to approve \$4,588 from ARPA funds for Parking lot light. Roll call, "Yes", Sokolowski, Knight, Olson, Bass. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, to approve \$2,726.28 from ARPA funds for Big L Lumber for Cemetery Building project. Roll call, "Yes", Olson, Knight, Bass, Sokolowski. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Sokolowski, ARPA recap. Received two payments totaling \$309,000 from ARPA. The \$28,000 for the main floor is included in the total with approximately \$24,000 remaining.

Motion by Sokolowski, seconded by Knight, to approve purchase of a filing cabinet for assessor not to exceed \$500 from Staples. Roll call, "Yes", Bass, Sokolowski, Knight, Olson. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Fire reports. Freeport Fire, Lani Forbes. Anniversaries this week totaling 103 years of experience on our fire department. I think the fact that we have our volunteers that stay for such a long period of time is not the national norm. Generally, it's seven years is my understanding. We're out here, and the fact that we have a long-term commitment that we have, I think is awesome. The other thing, speaking of audits, our audit came back, came back clean. According to our auditor, we are financially in great

shape. Lani provided audit report to Township Treasurer. Pancake breakfast, a huge turnout and raised \$5978 between the breakfast and the fire department garage sale.

A recent incident our firefighters arrived on scene and took over for the family member doing the CPR, the ambulance got on scene, the fire department got on scene, we were able to transport that individual. And they are alive today. They're still in the hospital. We would still appreciate prayers for this Irving township resident. The way that we all work together, I think, is incredibly notable. Michelle coming from home, Michelle and Toby both coming from home, and being able to stop and get things rolling as the rest of us were rolling in. I can't say enough about the team that we worked with it at Thornapple, both Colin and Joe. I'm just thankful that we have the kind of responders that we have in our community for these kinds of outcomes.

Chief Richardson. Report included. A little slow month, but we're still maintaining a pretty steady average within their community. Heritage Day Festival, September 9, come and join us. Big turkey dinner with Otto's Turkey Farm providing the turkey.

Chief Jordan. Will provide whatever is needed to township. Total of 79 calls, 4 in Irving Township. Since coming on board, working on getting caught up on all the annual inspections. Most testing will be done on Friday. Excited to be here. Look forward to work with the members and move forward in a positive way.

Cemetery. Will need to purchase markers and rods to begin mapping of cemetery. Several months ago, board passed resolution at a prior board meeting to allow for a pet cemetery. Added to September agenda.

Assessors report attached.

Treasurer report.

Opened two accounts Union bank. The intent is to move the money from Huntington General Fund over to there. One account, a money market will pay us about 5%. The other a checking account for the Clerk, General ledger account. It will take a couple months to move from Huntington to Union.

It is worth mentioning the work that we have done with our banks, we have made over \$12,000 in interest since April 1. In addition, the banks are reaching back to us helping us to take advantage of higher interest rates instead of us having to find out last minute. Receipt pages attached.

Motion by Knight, seconded by Bass, to pay bills from Bill Pay list in the amount of \$44,897.71. Roll call, "Yes", Sokolowski, Bass, Olson, Knight. "No" none. Mike Buehler, absent.

Public Input. Lani Forbes, Village of Freeport – paving of Irving and Cressy Roads started. Water tower project is that ARPA project that was funded by the county at a cost of \$600,000 started on Monday. In addition, looking at new lighting for downtown. Working with City of Hastings who are

replacing their lights. Those lights recently inspected and approved and maybe beneficial for Freeport. A lot of things happening in Freeport.

Dan Lydy, I wished Mr. Hartman would have given us a bit more of his time, and I realize the Board has already decided what they are going to do ... I guess, it's not a lot of money, but I like to know where this \$450 is going to come from when it's unnecessary spending. When does one person stand out? And did they change and pick what's right for our whole community? Knight, I guess at this point, we're just trying to be neighborly. When we had the light put in, we had not considered all aspects. This was our error.

Lydy, I mean, Bradford White is a huge corporation in Middleville and that is the lifeblood of a community and there are parking lot lights, all over downtown. There are houses on Main Street, Grand Rapids St. Do they get light complaints every day? They might? Do they do anything about it? Because that is the lifeblood of Middleville.

Olson, we've had several people use our parking lot as a safety zone, because they see the cameras and see the lights and they feel like they're safe.

Just past Saturday prior to election, an older person of color in a nice car, lost, no cell coverage, exhausted, felt safe in this parking lot to wait for daybreak for help to arrive.

Sokolowski, I think your question is one that we struggle with all the time, right? We've made other decisions that affected a very small portion of the community. I think in this instance, we created the problem. We'll make this effort to try to fix this problem. To ask about the money. We do have money in the budget, Buildings and Maintenance, we haven't used, and we can take it from there. But I think at that point, if that doesn't satisfy the neighbor, then I think that we need to draw a line in the sand and say we can't do anything, because the light is an safety factor.

Sokoloski, pertaining to lighting across the road, we have not gotten to that yet.

Forbes, when you guys are talking about the platform on here, it would make a lot more usable space in this area to eliminate the platform. Highly recommend removing platform.

Lydy, Seeber's Flooring, a local company, Hastings to be considered for quote for the flooring job They did my home. Excellent, affordable.

Bush, to Lydy, very important to have you here, and I challenge you to bring your friends of this community to help guide this board to make the best decisions for us.

Olson, update on upcoming election. We get new information at least once a week, voting, machines, plans, etc. We are to put together a plan to submit to the county on how we plan to manage the 9 days of voting. It is a difficult challenge since the rules continue to be worked on. We hope to know more following MAMC meeting.

I propose to the Board to bringing on Shelley Lake as an election specialist to start preparing for the primary election in March. I'm not making a motion per se, I don't know that it's required, since we've budgeted for it already. It's nine days for (3) elections. Plan must be in place to county by September 30.

Sokolowski, it would still need to come and be approved by Board. We have allocated a \$20 rate at 10 hours a week beginning January. Knight, I will not support the motion until I know what the individual will be doing.

Olson, add to September agenda.

Sokolowski, quote for lighting in our office. Lydy, Consumers Energy offering new ballasts which bypass the lights. Mike Buehler capable. Knight to check with Buehler.

Knight, does Board want to pursue signage for Sisson Road with the county? Yes. Knight to investigate with Road Commission.

Next Board meeting, Tuesday, September 19 at 6:30 pm.

Motion by Knight to adjourn meeting at 7:40pm.

Minutes prepared by Lorraine Bush, Deputy Clerk for Clerk, Sharon Olson, August 17, 2023.