

MINUTES OCTOBER 17, 2023
IRVING TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
3425 WING RD, HASTINGS, MI

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance
Present: Doug, Sokolowski, Dean Bass, Jamie Knight, Mike Buehler, Sharon Olson and 15 members of the public

AGENDA

One addition to the agenda that was just provided tonight is under the last item under new business new business is going to be pest services for the township Hall. Are there any other corrections or changes to the agenda?

Pest Services

Rain barrels for the cemetery

Resolution for Early Voting Plan

The appointment of an election Specialist.

**MOTION Knight- that we approve the agenda with the additions All in favor say aye All “aye”
Opposed- none.**

MOTION PASSED

CLERK’S MINUTES from September 19, 2023

MOTION- Knight- to approve the minutes as presented.

SECONDED- Buehler, All “aye”. Opposed- none.

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC INPUT:

Lorraine Bush

I just have something very basic that just came across my communications says that very County has a deer carcass removal service. And I bring this to your attention, we'll have it now for the record, that you can call the sheriff's department for any of your carcass that may be in your driveway or alongside the road and then they will come by and pick it up. And the number is the sheriff's department for the record was 269-948-4801.

Shelly Lake

I was just going to talk about the solar activity. I know some of the other townships are working on ordinances.... The ordinances will least let us have some say over where they can be put... I can give you names of townships that are working on them.

And then the other thing is... there are four bills that were just introduced. It's 5120-5123. And it's regarding the renewable and different sources of energy and solar and wind farms. And those poor bills are to take it out of local control and give it all to the state... I personally think the state should not come into our township and say what, what our farmers can do with their land or can't do, and I

just think it should be the township board and the people that have that say, but it's one that you know, that was just read in for the first time. Thank you.

Pat Jamison-

Yankee Springs resident...Blue Zones. Barry County is activated as a blue zone. This has been going on since 2019... it's a business as part of the Chamber of Commerce in Hastings...I'm not against that they wanted to improve the health and well-being of the citizens. Where I draw a problem is they are getting their money from outside sources. \$1.4 million have been spent on Blue Zones in Barry County already. \$960,000 of that is from anonymous sources... And Blue Zones has policy that just got put in place in Barry County 2040 Master Plan. So, I'm just concerned resident. I am in Barry County in my district 2, my commissioner who is the Activate Barry County director, being paid by Blue Zones. Blue Zones is policy based and... you guys are local policymakers. They have something all throughout the county, policymakers putting Plans in place, they've been pushing these. I do not know if they have been here in Irving township. I'm just letting you guys know, maybe you got some questions about how outside interests have so much influence here. Thank you very much.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

repairs to the flooring.

Knight-Doug has reached out to the contractors to adjust their quotes.

Sokolowski- We start with John from interior. when we switch from wood floor to carpet squares, he lost interest in the project. In working with Miller. Miller also said they were not probably interested in carpet squares. But then he partnered with Jamie Seeber of Seeber flooring...his contact that he uses for carpet, which is Shuford, which in disclosure is Wanda's husband. Together, Miller and Schubert have submitted a modified quote, and that should be in your packet. And, by going to carpet squares, we are saving about \$8,000. It went down to \$20,508.52 is the current bid using both Miller and Shuford. And I think last month, we were at \$29,000. I remember correctly... The disadvantage with carpet squares is obviously you have a shorter lifespan than you do with the vinyl floors. But these will be heavy duty carpet squares, they will be going to glue them down to the carpet with the industrial glue.

MOTION by Sokolowski- My proposal is that we move ahead now we have gone back and forth with the different vendors. We had with a contractor with Miller and Shuford. For the \$20,508.52. Like to make that motion.

SECONDED- Knight

ROLL CALL VOTE

Doug Sokolowski, Jamie Knight, Sharon Olson- Yes

Dean bass and Mike Buehler -No

MOTION PASSED.

BIRCH UPDATE- the next meeting is December 7; the city of Hastings is considering options. The options range in variety, all the way from the City Hastings taking over and contracting directly with the townships and taking ownership of the apparatus to have emerged restructure itself into a different model that works a little bit better. So that can be prepared for the future. No decision has

been made by us and some talks are undergoing right now. And so, December 7 will be the time that the birch board would meet, plan, and then bring that back to their respective township board.

ELECTION SPECIALIST:

Since proposal two went through, and we have the nine days of early voting, more clerks are bringing on election specialists to help manage that demand of the extra 27 days of office time and somebody who can help to direct election workers manage election records, registered voters to vote. That is something that we talked about last year, and we've provided a budget that we all approved. I'm just asking that you consider allowing us to bring somebody in and get them trained before the February presidential primary.

There has been a lot of records from the Secretary of State's office, which is one of the bills you see for the ID cards that were printed. Clerks are required to do that. It is not an option to send them or not. It was less expensive to have them outsource to somebody that got lower postage rate to do that many of them at once. That means all these files must be updated manually updated with all those additional records that were brought in before February. As well as other records that continue in a normal cycle of change. On a year without elections, it is maybe four hours a week. Training time takes time. On election years, with those extra 27 days, which is really putting the pressure on little township offices.

Bass asked what are the qualifications and experience for election specialists?

Olson answered She did not see anything from the Secretary of State's that put qualifications out there. The Secretary of State will be the people who make them qualified through their training. The Bureau of elections trains them in the qualified voter file. They maintain our in-house hardcopy election files, they can register voters and they can assist with the conduct of the elections, which is now an extra 27 days on general election years.

Knight commented. She was under the impression from our attorney, this is not someone that the board would appoint. Right? because it's not a staff position. It is someone that that you (clerk) would appoint. Sokolowski asked if the compensation had been figured out as to if this person is paid as an employee or an appointee.

Olson.... My understanding from reading the law myself, which was my argument with the state when I came in here, is that if you are elected or appointed, you are not qualify for unemployment insurance. You should not be paying in for them. That is what the law clearly says. And I believe that this falls under that category because they must be appointed by whoever is the clerk at the time. I do not think that they qualify as an employee who can come back draw employment compensation. because it is not like a regular job sporadic. It is as needed, just like the deputy job as needed. And our election workers are sporadic as needed as well as our Board of Review, same thing. That is why we don't pay unemployment insurance. But my reading of the law says we should not have to pay into UIA for this.

position.

Sokolowski said Just to be clear. Blake Conklin from Bloom and Sluggett did not really commit either way, if we read his opinion, he vacillated on that topic. So I think it's not a clear thing.

Olson replied.... even the UIA wasn't clear about it when I came in here, because they were sending us fines for not filing that report. And I argued with them. And finally, I had to go back and undo every report one by one that had been submitted to them, and they agreed and then published a statement saying that elected and appointed people do not pay unemployment insurance because they're not qualified to draw.

Sokolowski stated.... And I think it's common not to put out requirements for getting the position. It's the same with the board. None of us had to meet any specific requirements. We just ran for the office. So, I don't think that's unusual that they didn't define any prerequisites.

Olson-And because we have less than 10,000 voters. I can't train my own election workers. The county clerk is the person who has the authority to train and certify the election workers. If you have 10,000, you can ask your county clerk for permission to do your own training. But it must be granted from the county to the local clerk to do their own training if they have more than 10,000 voters of their own. And this is not any different than that. This person will be trained directly by the Bureau of elections in a class conducted by their staff.

Sokolowski.... in the appropriations of a budget, we approved a \$20 per hour rate for this person.

Olson... Which is the same that we're paying our election workers.

Buehler... So, the need for this person is because we added days of voting not because the Township has grown so much? Do we just need labor to cover it?

Olson... correct. And that's one of the steps that other townships are looking at. Because they're small, they can't afford to pay somebody a full-time salary for every year that this person can come in, as needed to assist with getting those things done. That doesn't mean the clerk still doesn't have to be trained and QVF. And overseeing all of that, and capable of doing all that work to this is just another person who will have access to the state's system to register voters on the day of election. Which is now nine days longer. Other Clerks, like me, work a full-time job somewhere else and will not be able to get 27 days off from their employer.

When I started, 45 days before an election, you didn't have to do any more of that. All you had to do was focus on getting ready for the election, then they change that to same day. Registration. Well, that changes what happens in this office for those 45 days before election to pass that in there. And then election day when you have that's like the one day of the year is especially in urban township where you see your residents come in. And now besides that you're sitting in front of your computer and registering to voters as needed. And which by the way with our incredibly slow internet connection is painful for both the person trying to register to vote and person trying to register them to vote on election day. Because ours is so slow when I'm trying to interface to the Bureau of

elections. I get kicked back and everybody else gets in line before me because their internet is so much faster. For the same reason, I had to leave the building to download the electronic poll book for an election.

Knight... we're getting there! They're promising!

Olson...they have been teasing us for the last 6 years.

Olson... It just seems like the pressure in this office has just ramped up year after year. And this is one way to help spread that out a little bit.

Knight... Are you asking for a motion to approve this person or just providing information?

Olson... we put it in our budget, but now I need permission to actually allocate those monies by getting a person appointed now to use that money in the budget.

Knight... okay.

MOTION- Olson,

The Irving Township Board of Trustees approve the appointment of an election specialist with the purpose of election records maintenance and assistance with the conduct of elections.

SECONED by Sokolowski.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mike Buehler, Jamie Knight, Doug Sokolowski, Sharon Olson voted "Yes". Bass "No".

MOTION PASSED

CLEANING OF THE TOWNSHIP HALL:

Sokolowski... So right now, we only clean the township Hall once a month. And I don't think that's sufficient. I'd like to see if we can clean it twice a month. I would also like to ask permission of the board to shop around. We pay \$90 Every time they clean it. I think we could probably do better than that. So, in addition to upping the frequency, I'd like to look around to see if we can find a cleaning service or a little bit cheaper.

LIGHTING

Knight-a lot of our lights up here need light bulb replacements. We have had a resident who has offered to replace our upstairs lighting for us as a charitable contribution to the township.

IT ENVIRONMENT

I think if we can network the stuff, and we can stop doing double entry of information plus it also gives us a better security for our records. Because right now, the Treasurer walks around with two different computers with records out. We use a thumb drive to transfer information. I can't speak to the clerk's office, but I'm sure it's about the same kind of thing.

Knight... it's worth looking into price.

Sokolowski...That's all I'm asking for?

PEST CONTROL SERVICES

So those of you who are familiar, we've had a huge Bee problem. We also had a mice problem. We called in a bee person that cost us \$200. For one visit, they are willing to enter a year contract for \$625 with us to treat the building all year so we don't have this issue. You can see we failed to vacuum by that window, but you can just see the number of dead bees by the window there. That's this way every time we come in lately. Now of course they're getting a little more active inside because they're getting less active outside, but the proposal is to contract for \$625 for the coming year.

Buehler offered to shop for a better price for Pest Control.

RAIN BARREL FOR CEMETERY:

Tractor Supply has a rain barrel for \$134.99 that meets the requirements. It has an opening for the gutter to come down into it holds 50 gallons of water so and then there's a stand that elevates it a little bit so people can get to the spigot easier so grand total with tax and everything \$238.48 and I will pick it up and then drop it off so the guy has it.

MOTION- Sokolowski to purchase the Rain Barrell and Stand for \$238.48.

SECONDED -Knight

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mike Buehler, Jamie Knight, Sharon Olson, Doug Sokolowski- Yes

Dean Bass- No

MOTION PASSED

RESOLUTION # 2023-11

RESOLUTION APPROVING EARLY VOTING FOR EVEN YEAR GENERAL ELECTIONS

The foregoing resolution was offered by Board member, Sharon Olson and

SECONDED by Soug Sokolowski.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mike Buehler, Jamie Knight, Dean Bass, Doug Sokolowski, Sharon Olson "Yes"

Nays- None

Absent- None

FIRE REPORTS PRESENTED AND ON FILE

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT. COA building plans, Appointment of Diane Hoekstra and Susan Vleitstra to the County Board of Election Canvassers, Resolution for the retirement of County Clerk, Pam Palmer, Resolution on solar mining and letter to State Representatives on intent to pass the resolution to maintain local control of land. Cindy White was introduced as the new County Clerk appointed by the Judges.

TREASURER'S REPORT WAS PRESENTED AND IS ON FILE

MOTION – Knight- I will make a motion that we approve the bills in the amount of \$7,810.81.

SECONDED – Buehler

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mike Buehler, Dean Bass, Jamie Knight Doug Sokolowski, and Sharon Olson – Yes

No- None

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Sharon Olson- Received a \$450.00 bill from Mercy Ambulance after a car/deer collision and air bag deployment even though dispatch was told it was not need or requested. Olson was advised to contest the billing. Jon Smelker mentioned that he was with Thornapple for 10 years and they never billed if there was no transport. Olson was advised again to contest the billing.

Pat Jamison- I really appreciate having a second public comment for me, guys. For anyone who has kids that attend TK schools, they just voted down a second public comment period at the school board meetings, which was kind of disturbing. You know, they got one down for three minutes. I appreciate you guys having that extra public comment, just to hear your residents. That's my opinion. I'm going to take this time to talk a little bit more about Blue Zones.

One of my biggest things is they push a 95 to 100% plant-based diet. That's not good for Barry County you know, all the farmers and all that. Their biggest thing is policy. How do you get policy change? The people, they have a lot of people already on board. So, I'm just asking you guys, if you want to do a little bit of research, they have a Netflix series that just came out. You can watch that to see what It's all about and do a little bit more research. You know, don't just take it at its surface. Do a little bit research. There are three reports out there. If you go to the Activate Barry County website, which run by Blue Zones, that will tell you exactly what's going on with Blue Zones. Once again, I appreciate your guys' time. Thank you very much.

Shelly Lake-thank you for the mood tonight. You guys. I needed the laughs. Solar in Barry County, they are using at least 15,200 acres of farmland I couldn't remember if I said that. And the other thing I was wondering on the newsletter, which I love, if something is submitted to you that maybe would be helpful to people like saying, hey, this is going on with solar farms or whatever. I didn't know if that was an avenue to kind of get that word out to our residents. And the last thing, we got a call today from Miss dig through with MEI, and they're coming tomorrow to see where our staging area are. And where all the lines are going to go.

Jon Smelker- gave Jamie the resolution that was passed and moved to the full board on the solar mining. He asked the township board to reading it over, and maybe pass the same thing or something like it and move to the MTA.

John Lake- I wasn't going to speak but I threw this by John earlier and he said this might be a good idea... The attack on guns right now is second to none. It's just so egregious. They just, the Senate, assigned two more bills passed more bills the other day and they're going to the house and then that would be going to the governor. Right now, they have got 23 bills, and all of them are an attack, and the level that they're going after us, like I said, your jaws would drop... On April 18th, 50 of us

or so went in front of the Board of Commissioners... to make Barry County a second amendment sanctuary County. And along with that was our representative Angela Rigas. For whatever reason, Dave Jackson has refused to push this forward. 53 counties in Michigan, might be a few more now, have adopted resolutions stating that their county is a second amendment sanctuary county... This makes a statement... We were talking as representatives, constituents throughout the county, and it's been shouted out to commissioners, John and Bob Tunnessen are all for this. Dave Jackson will not bring it up again. So maybe the individual townships will draft the resolution stating that Irving Township request Barry County to be a second amendment, sanctuary county or Irving Township to be a second amendment sanctuary Township. We can get this passed because I'm telling them what's coming is bad. Senate bills that they just passed, it's basically, they call it, it's a misdemeanor, right? This is just the latest to if you have a verbal disagreement and you curse somebody out whatever, you can lose your firearms for eight years.

There's something that's going on. We are going to give another presentation in Barry County very soon and I would ask you to come because John's got the ability to give it to them, an outline. You guys are hunters? Standby, is going to get really bad... 4144, which is the red flag laws. They don't need due process to come take your guns, all they need is a state appointed judge or state afford a lawyer to go to state what a judge martial shoulder on your house to confiscate your guns.

Jon Smelker- Just a little bit more on that I come before us. It was not a resolution that they presented to us. It was watered down so bad. Because there was just nothing to it... that's the reason I didn't even make a motion to pass it.

John Lake- Dave Jackson said, well, we've got grant money coming in. We don't want to jeopardize that. My question is, so is this dark money that we're dealing with? Why the heck? You're elected by Republicans in this county, Republicans in this county stood up in front of you, and you would not honor our resolution? And so, the answer again, was... we've got grant money and we don't want to jeopardize that.

But you do what you want. I just thought of us tonight, we got to get this, because the guns, they're coming after them hard, and they're not stopping.

Jon Smelker-The State of Michigan handed out a lot of money for millions of dollars for unfunded pension liabilities. That's for the people that don't manage their money. Barry County doesn't get any because we're 85% funded. Because we manage our money.

Sharon Olson-I want to speak to John's concerns and everyone else's concerns regarding unalienable rights. This is a head-game war. This is the psyop war that's being conducted on our people through declarations, through declarations on their part of what they're telling us what their rules are for us, which is completely against our Declaration of Independence, and our Amendment rights. So unalienable rights, meaning that the government doesn't give them to us, the government doesn't take them away. It is part of our inherent identity as souls inhabiting the flesh on Earth. We are given one life to be a steward of, one, and they have no right to dictate how your soul inhabits your body. That was the whole point of the Declaration of Independence and the amendments. And the amendments were there for the government to put limits on them, not the people.

John Lake-There's one more point through these presentations that we've done, the middle of this month, and we've just taken this a lot. We're taking 150, L 91, criminal complaints to the FBI, and filing complaints against our legislators. And we don't know where it's going to go. We've been shot down to two levels. We've been shut down at Attorney General, the federal attorney general and another federal law, Western district. So, our sheriff has agreed to take these complaints that we've done a will and it's 42 per person of actual notarized complaints. Every page is notarized. So next week, I think their means to finalize if we're going to the Capitol, and having Michelle Smith and I think Angela will be there. And we're going to go around to all the legislators and have them sign on to this letter. Dar is writing one, John Molinar is writing one. so, we're finding it very hard. So, what I presented to these counties isn't the hand that's why we're meeting everybody. And what you touched on Sharon, this is all our rights. And so, the only way we win is if we stand up by doing nothing we're complicit

Olson-for evil to prosper, the only thing that must happen is for good men to do nothing. We do have to speak up.

Cindy White is making rounds and meeting the boards and has information regarding our coming expenditures for the new equipment. Pam Palmer started the grant process. And Cindy White will be completing that process. And we will be responsible for 60% of the cost of that yet.

Cindy White- So state has now decided that rants are still being reviewed, all the variants have been submitted, as all the counties that have some in the States still does not know what they're doing. They had this ball rolling, but they don't have their things declining. Yep. So, they put all the equipment orders on hold the election services resources include an old waiting to see what the state's going to do.

Olson-So we could still be on the hook for the entire bill that the grants are budgeted for it, but it ended up being a little bit more than what I thought it was going to be with the new equipment you're requiring. submitted to you and the previous estimate was 12,000 plus.

MOTION by Olson-to approve the purchase of election essential for early voting and upcoming elections, tables, chairs, and signage, not to exceed \$1,000 coming from election miscellaneous account 101-260-958.

SECONDED by Knight

**ROLL CALL VOTE Doug Sokolowski, Jamie Knight, Mike Buehler, Dean Bass, Sharon Olson
"YES"**

MOTION PASSED

Sokolowski- I was hoping the board would consider canceling the November meeting. It's the week of Thanksgiving. And we can, as a board, approve the clerk office to pay any recurring bills, or any bills that would require a penalty before our next board meeting in December. I want to see if we can discuss that option of canceling November's meeting... I'm not making a motion I just want to discuss it.

The board members agreed they could achieve a quorum.

Knight-So our meeting will be November 21, 2023 at 6:30PM. I will make a motion we adjourn at 7:51 PM