

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP
24725 Jefferson Center Street
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2024

Call to Order: Supervisor Hass called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Brunner-present, Bundle-present, Gillam-present, Hass-present, Mendenhall-present.

Additional attendees: Rhonda McCauslin, Pat McCauslin, Kelli Casey, Marty Heirzy, Mark Howie, Sharon Woods, Deborah Wood, Dale Wood, James Wierman, Jeff Locke, Dallas Austin, Mary Howie

Pledge to the flag: Led by Supervisor Hass

Correspondence: None

Public Comment:

James Wierman, resident of Dowagiac, introduced himself as a candidate for District 5 County Commissioner and handed out campaign materials to the board members.

Residents: Rhonda McCauslin, Pat McCauslin, Sharon Woods, Deborah Wood and Dale Wood addressed their frustrations with the ongoing blight at 65931 Hess Rd. Ms. Woods sent a photo to Supervisor Hass of debris on the property. Supervisor Hass shared the photo with Steve Allen, and both drove by the property for inspection noting that it appeared that the debris had been removed. Ms. Woods stated at the meeting that the photo was of the back of the property which was not mentioned at the time she sent it. Mr. Wood said there have been issues for over 20 years and that the township refuses to do anything about it. He stated that the house has no utilities and should be condemned. Supervisor Hass clarified that the health department is responsible for declaring a structure condemned not the township. He also asked how Mr. Wood knows there are no utilities. Mr. Wood and Ms. Woods said there is sometimes a generator running and often no lights. Mr. Wood demanded to know what the board is going to do. Supervisor Hass, Clerk Brunner, Trustee Bundle all shared that this complaint is new and that we would be in communication with Steve Allen to begin the process of notifying the resident that the debris needs to be removed. We invited the residents to attend the next BOT meeting in which we would have more answers for them as to next steps. They left the meeting.

Approval of Agenda: Supervisor Hass asked for the addition of the following agenda items: Use of the township hall for a property auction by Hahn Auctioneers and replacing sign at Rest Haven Cemetery. Clerk Brunner asked for the addition of the following agenda item: approval of closing out Wilson Channel Bond account. Moved by Brunner, supported by Bundle to approve the agenda with addition of new agenda items. Motion approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Moved by Bundle, supported by Gillam to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2024, BOT meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Moved by Brunner, supported by Bundle to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Payment of Bills: Moved by Gillam, supported by Bundle to approve the payment of bills as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Old Business:

1. Supervisor Hass addressed the continued tabling of discussion of Emergency Services millage increase as we still do not have a final contract and don't expect to have one until October or November. The issue will be addressed at that time.

New Business:

1. Kelli Casey and Marty Heirzy representing the Cass County COA asked for support of the upcoming millage renewal ballot proposal on the August ballot. Kelli shared many of the ways the COA supports our senior population at their 2 locations as well as community outreach through nutrition, transportation, and home care services as well as many other resources and programs. The funds generated through the county wide millage provides about 2/3 of their annual revenue.
2. Clerk Brunner provided an election update. County Clerk McMichael just completed 2 weeks of training for election inspectors for the upcoming elections. Clerk Brunner ordered 8 new polling booths instead of the 10 approved by the board.
3. As there are no plans for future dredging in the Wilson Channel at this time, we have been advised to close out the account with the remaining bond funds. Assessor Northrop provided Clerk Brunner with the individual parcel refund amounts. Clerk Brunner had checks issued by 5/3 bank to close out the account. Clerk Brunner asked the board to approve mailing out the checks to close out the account. Moved by Mendenhall, supported by Hass to distribute the refund checks and close the account. Motion approved unanimously.
4. Hahn Auctioneers approached Supervisor Hass about renting the town hall for a property auction within Jefferson Township on August 19 from 5-8 p.m. Supervisor Hass would coordinate and be present. Moved by Brunner, supported by Gillam to approve the request. Motion approved unanimously.
5. Supervisor Hass was contacted by a resident who stated that the sign that marked the Rest Haven Cemetery on Hospital St. is gone and asked if the township would replace it. Clerk Brunner did some research and a sign like the one that was originally there can be purchased for under \$100.00. Moved by Hass, supported by Gillam to fund a replacement sign. Motion approved unanimously.
6. The board reviewed and approved the Central Cass Inter-local Fire department budget. Clerk Brunner and LaGrange Clerk McCoy worked with the county equalization department and GIS to determine accurate fire district maps. We will be able to accurately pull taxable values going forward. Clerk Brunner presented the funding percentages with Jefferson's portion of the 2024-25 fiscal year as \$78,500.29. Moved by Bundle, supported by Mendenhall to approve the budget as presented. Roll Call Vote: Bundle-yes, Brunner-yes, Hass-yes, Mendenhall-yes, Gillam-yes. Motion approved unanimously.
7. Review and amend current township budget: tabled until budget hearing.

Inspectors Reports:

1. **Zoning/Code Enforcement:** Steve Allen, code enforcement officer, submitted his monthly report.
2. **Building:** No report submitted.
3. **Plumbing/Mechanical:** No report submitted.
4. **Electrical:** Clerk Brunner spoke with Attorney Senica regarding the Soltis property. We will have a meeting between the Supervisor, Clerk, Building Inspector and Electrical inspector to determine next steps.

Emergency Services/Utilities Reports:

1. **Cass Ambulance:** CCAA meeting held on June 6, 2024. Still working to get 2nd ambulance to 24-hour coverage instead of 12 hours. Chairmen Carter (CCAA) and Anderson (CVBAA) are working with SMCAS to try to get finalized long term contract. SMCAS has been reluctant to accept the City of Dowagiac's offer to house a full-time crew at the fire department or to update the ambulance building. Chairman Carter suggest that CCAA consider what options are available to us should the SMCAS agreement ends. Newberg township has sent invoices to some municipalities for mutual aid calls. They charge \$700.00 per call. CCAA members need to consider whether to pay the invoices, try to negotiate the cost, or send letter provided to the CCAA by an attorney stating that municipalities will not be paying for mutual aid as Newburg is able to bill the patient's insurance for payment just as they would their residents. Chairman Carter also pointed out when Pride Care provided ALS mutual aid, they charged \$250.00. Newburg is BLS service. There is also concern that other ambulance services providing mutual aid will begin charging. Jefferson Board members agreed to make our decision as to what we propose to CCAA at our July meeting. All member townships will need to agree on the response. Next meeting is scheduled for July 25th at 6:00 p.m. No joint CCAA & CVBAA meeting scheduled at this time.
2. **Central Cass Fire Department:** Chief Locke was present and reported 21 calls over the past month. The next meeting is scheduled for July.
3. **Edwardsburg Fire Department:** The next meeting is scheduled for August.
4. **CAUA:** Supervisor Hass reported no new information. Next meeting scheduled June 17th.

Township Board Reports:

1. **Planning & Zoning Commission:** Next meeting is scheduled for July 17th at 7:00 pm
2. **Zoning Board of Appeals:** Variance hearing scheduled for July 22nd at 6:00 pm
3. **Construction Board of Appeals:** No business.
4. **Board of Review:** No business.

Public Comment:

1. Dr. Wierman expressed concern about ambulance response times.
2. County Commissioner, Mary Howie, serves as liaison for the COA. She spoke about the benefits of the services provided by the COA.
3. Mr. Austin asked if the COA millage renewal is for Jefferson Township only. Ms. Casey clarified that this is a county-wide ballot proposal. Mr. Austin asked what the millage term is. Ms. Casey shared it is a 4-year millage renewal.

Next regular Board of Trustees meeting: July 11, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

With no other business before the Board at 7:42 p.m. Moved by Brunner, supported by Mendenhall to adjourn. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Brunner, Clerk