



Minutes of **SPECIAL MEETING – JOINT
TOWNSHIP BOARD AND PARKS COMMISSION**

Held **JANUARY 14, 2014**

Township of Springfield

Laura Moreau, Clerk

Call to Order: Supervisor Walls opened the January 14, 2014 Joint Meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Attendance:

Board members Present

Collin Walls	Township Supervisor
Jamie Dubre	Township Treasurer
Laura Moreau	Township Clerk
Denny Vallad	Township Trustee
Judy Hensler	Township Trustee
Marc Cooper	Township Trustee
Dave Hopper	Township Trustee

Parks Commissioners Present

Jean Vallad	Chairperson
Lisa Christensen	Treasurer
Diane Baker	Commissioner
E. Roger Bower	Commissioner
Elena Danishevskaya	Commissioner
Angela Spicer	Commissioner

Absent

Dennis Omell Commissioner

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Vallad moved to approve the agenda as presented with the addition of “d. Other/Question and Answer.” Seconded by Trustee Vallad. Voted yes: All. Voted no: none. Motion passed.

Proceeded with Agenda as presented.

Supervisor Walls explained that the goal of tonight’s meeting was to improve the budget process and improve a working relationship between the Parks Commission and the Township Board. He described this relationship as a partnership. State Law requires park budgets be approved by the Township Board. He stated that there are federal regulations that put the Township Board, Library and the Parks all together such as the Affordable Care Act and working together is much better. These two groups have come together



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tonight with a common goal and the intent is to have a better understanding of their differences, expectations and to work towards an understanding that will benefit each other and the residents of the Township.

Supervisor Walls mentioned that Roger Bower had agreed to chair the meeting.

AGENDA:

1. Opening Remarks

- a.) The Goal – Improve the budget approval process and our overall working relationship

Commissioner Bower thanked Clerk Moreau for facilitating this effort between the two Township bodies.

Commissioner Vallad stated that Director Tucker is getting a MRPA Leadership Award at the Conference in Traverse City and the Parks Department is also getting two awards, one for the brochure and one for the tri-fold brochure done for the Heritage Festival. Commissioner Vallad thanked all who worked on these projects.

Commissioner Bower stated that this meeting provides them an opportunity to resolve some issues.

Director Tucker stated that with the millage they are now able to plan and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. As a young Department, they scrambled to provide a mandated service and now is the time for planning, evaluation and prioritization.

- b.) Meeting format and chairperson

Commissioner Bower opened the meeting.

2. Budget Review and Approval – Revised procedures and expectations

- a.) General Fund contribution requests

Clerk Moreau stated that her memo dated October 10, 2013 outlines the types of General Fund contributions that the Board will consider. This item seems to have caused concern in the past over not having complete materials or enough support for the request. She stated that this process has been a whole Board endeavor; her memo represents the input of all seven of the Board members. She stated that they are looking for any questions or thoughts on what was proposed in her memo.



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Commissioner Bower stated that his strategy was to take the memo and go section by section. He asked was he to understand that now Stewardship was going to be handled as presented in the memo.

Director Tucker stated that it is laid out well in the memo and she defined Stewardship as the Natural Areas and taking care of those natural areas.

Clerk Moreau stated that this continued to be discussed at the Board level and was a concern. If the Parks continues with their millage, then the ongoing Stewardship of the natural areas was a top priority and this was a consensus with the Board. There was a lot of discussion on what is an appropriate General Fund request and it came down to the Township Board setting aside a dedicated fund. This fund will depend on what is going on in the Parks, what is coming up for the Parks and other restrictions on the General Fund. They are advising the Commission that they value the preserves and realize stewardship is a long term need.

Director Tucker stated that if she is getting a grant and she has a shortfall of approximately \$5,000.00, is this something that she could approach the Township Board about.

Clerk Moreau stated that she was talking about contribution to a planned project. A planned effort could potentially be a General Fund contribution.

Treasurer Dubre stated that this was for planned projects, not for things that come up. Things always come up but if they are not in the long term plan for Stewardship, then maybe they really don't need that. This was one of the concerns that were discussed by the Board.

Trustee Cooper stated that seeing the five year plan of what will give them a basis by which to go on and to know where they are going.

Commissioner Baker stated that they talked about the differences between the Township Board and the Parks Commission at their meeting tonight. It would be helpful if they thought about Parks as a flowing river with different areas like rapids and rocks that is constantly changing. The Township Board is more like a spring fed pool which is more consistent with their duties. The Park's processes are very dynamic and some of the opportunities that they have for stewardship they do not know about at the beginning of the year so they have to remain flexible.

Treasurer Dubre stated that they have the same thing. They have an opportunity with roads that wasn't on their long term plan. As much as an opportunity may arise, it doesn't



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necessarily mean that they are going to take advantage of it because they have to look at fund availability for the long term.

Clerk Moreau stated that roads are a good example. If an opportunity comes along and it is something that they wish to do, they would evaluate it at that time. Parks might not be able to say what grants are coming, but if they know that a certain project is a priority and a grant comes that can facilitate it, that is different.

Director Tucker provided a Stewardship plan that Parks uses for history and the future. At a glance, they can see where they are and where they are going. The other management plan shows every item separated out. They took all of the facilities and create forms that would be helpful to Parks and the Board may find it helpful as well. Director Tucker passed the form around for review. These would be a summary of the five year plans and could include budget numbers.

Trustee Vallad stated that she should add a category “Other” to each form because something always comes up.

Director Tucker stated that it will be a work in progress. They also looked at Programs and events. During the budgeting process, Casey puts together a document that summarized the programs and determined the direct cost of each. Director Tucker passed around this document.

Trustee Vallad stated that he does not see staff time on this report. He stated that if they know where all of their staff time is going, then they know what they have to deal with and the numbers are all in one place and suggested adding a column on the form passed out. He stated that that is the problem with Comp Time; they do so much and then go back and have to make adjustments later.

Director Tucker concurred.

Commissioner Bower stated that this is a good time to start the comp time discussion.

Director Tucker stated that they have changed their policy to align with the Township Board’s policy of 80 hours. They have reduced their comp time substantially. They have added a part time clerical person and she is doing a really good job and this help with some of the stresses as evidenced by the comp time. They are putting measures into place to address these comp time issues.



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Commissioner Danishevskaya suggested that the Parks' positions were different from a regular job in that they need to be present for different programs and different events and this is where the comp time accrues. It is easy to see how this time accrues over a weekend.

Commissioner Bower stated that this year has been unusual in that staff members were gone and it is being addressed.

Supervisor Walls stated that Trustee Vallad's suggestion would help a lot. It would allow them to look at different programs and evaluate them and they would be able to start making priority decisions.

Treasurer Dubre stated that the Board is aware that it is a different setting with nights and weekends; they need to determine what is of value and prioritize accordingly.

Commissioner Vallad stated that if they know they are going to have comp time for an upcoming event, and then they have another event right after it, they need to spend that comp time before it accumulates. They have to issue the comp time to avoid time and a half, but they have to be able to spend that comp time too.

Clerk Moreau stated that the Board does understand these kinds of challenges and that is why they are concerned. They see how much time and effort are put into events. In the Clerk's Department when they had unexpected Comp Time that accrued due to four elections in one year, they had to pay it out because staff didn't have time to use it.

Commissioner Baker stated that once residents get used to a program and enjoy it, they can't just get rid of it. She wanted to make sure that there is a community demand for some of these programs. She believes that the new policy will make them more aware of comp time.

Treasurer Dubre stated that they also have vacation time and this is asking a lot of those employees to put in a lot of working hours during a short period of time. They need to consider how effective those employees are after long periods of work and they also have regular time that they need to take in addition to that.

Commissioner Bower stated that they have worked hard on this issue for the last 6 months.

Commissioner Vallad stated that they adopted new policies and they are moving on.

Supervisor Walls stated that they need to insist that employees go home when they need to.



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Clerk Moreau stated that they should possibly look at job descriptions. If an individual is taking on a lot of comp time, are they taking on responsibilities that are outside of their job description?

Ms. Richmond stated that adding the part time clerical has helped immensely. She stated that there are some days that she comes in later and she makes an effort to use comp time.

Commissioner Bower asked if there was any question regarding the \$6200 Civic Center allocation represented.

Commissions expressed concern that they do not know exactly what the figures are.

Supervisor Walls stated that he now has the year-end figures that he needs to make a new determination that is closer to the current actual cost.

Commissioner Vallad asked if she would have those figures by April 1st.

Supervisor Walls stated yes. The difficulty is instead of billing library quarterly, they now split the invoices when they come in on a monthly basis so it will require a closer look.

Treasurer Dubre stated that in the cost allocations, they did not include all of Mike Forst's salary.

Supervisor Walls stated that it was 2013 the last time that the Board actually looked at the specific allocations.

Supervisor Walls stated that the library is different because they are paying for a percentage of Mike Forst's salary for parking lot repairs, snow plowing and other shared expenses.

Commissioner Vallad stated that it was going to be about \$6200 and if it wasn't it would be adjusted and they would know that by April 30th.

Members concurred.

Clerk Moreau stated that they were asking for supporting documentation and more details for General Fund contributions.

Commissioner Bower stated that doing this by April 30th might be problematic because it is still early in the year and they are not sure what is going to happen in September.



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Clerk Moreau stated that the memo suggests that the Parks Commission can approach the Township Board at any time if the other conditions exist. If they have a planned need or project that requires a General Fund contribution to get it done, as long as they have the documentation to present, the Board will consider the request.

Commissioner Vallad stated that they can approach the Township Board and have not had to do this very often during non budget time. She confirmed that it needs to be a more formal and detailed request.

Treasurer Dubre stated that the Board's point of reference for making a decision and contributing might not be the same as the Commission's.

Commissioner Bower stated that Trustee Vallad made a good point about adding the column "other" to the 5 year plan and annual report and also they had a suggestion to add a staff time column.

Trustee Vallad stated that they need to know where they are spending their time.

Commissioner Bower summarized the comments made in the meeting up to this point.

b.) Prioritization and financial planning

i. Programming priorities and cost determination

Clerk Moreau stated that they wanted to have a discussion about cost allocations. She asked about the report that was handed out and if this was something that they already had.

Director Tucker answered that this is from 2009 and 2010.

Clerk Moreau stated that there is no cost listed for any programs that involve Parks and Rec staff.

Director Tucker answered that this is because the budget for staff are in other cost centers; she understands Trustee Vallad's comments about adding them and will do that for the next report.

Supervisor Walls stated that when they get in the habit of looking at all related costs, she will find additional costs that have been charged to a different cost center. He explained Worker's Comp as an example of this. They can make an educated and informed estimate if she looks at all costs. Supervisor Walls distributed a document to all meeting members



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which described all of the employee costs including all insurances, benefits and Worker's Comp.

Commissioner Bower asked why this is important because people that are being paid by Parks and Rec.

Supervisor Walls stated that it is important when prioritizing projects. They can only prioritize this when they know the exact costs.

Treasurer Dubre stated that they fully understand that not all programs are going to be self sustaining; they don't have to be. They provide services to the residents that are important and ultimately those decisions are made by the Parks Commission. This information is important when they start prioritizing programs.

Clerk Moreau stated that if they put the Heritage Festival on this list, it would look much different when they add the staff costs.

Supervisor Walls stated that in business they call it a Cost Benefit Analysis and the Heritage Festival would be an example of a program where the benefit far outweighs the cost. The Parks Commission made this decision about swimming lessons a long time ago.

Clerk Moreau suggested that the Costume Swap could be looked at in a Cost Analysis Benefit manner which would help them possibly make a difficult decision.

Trustee Copper stated that including staff time would tell them where their comp time was going.

Supervisor Walls suggested using volunteers for some of the program work.

Commissioner Vallad asked if the Board was aware that they do financial summary reports for each program that include staff wages but not benefits.

Supervisor Walls answered that he assumed they did but he has not seen one since 2007 or 2008.

Director Tucker stated that at that time there was a lot of disagreement and the Parks Commission made the decision not to share it because the communication was not there to explain it. She stated that they do add benefits in the calculation.



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Supervisor Walls stated that if they are already doing it, it would be simple to attach it to the minutes.

Commissioner Vallad stated that some of them were feel good programs.

Supervisor Walls stated that the Board understands that and if a program is a great enough benefit to the community as a whole, then the tax dollars can help support it.

Clerk Moreau concurred. She asked Supervisor Walls if he wanted to see these reports monthly, quarterly or in the annual report.

Supervisor Walls answered whatever is easier for them. The annual report would be fine.

Clerk Moreau stated that she anticipated that the program analysis would be a part of the annual report.

Trustee Vallad stated that he wants to be sure that they are using the analysis because he believes they are taking on too much.

Commissioner Vallad answered that they are using this information. They are implementing a new format. Casey is going to put together a report semi-annually, they will discuss the findings right before the brochure goes out and make decisions then.

Clerk Moreau stated that the Board wants to insure that they were looking at all of the costs that go into running each program including all staff time because this has to be a factor to determine sustainability.

Commissioner Vallad answered that this is why some of these programs get cancelled. They know how much it is going to cost to run each program and see if they can break even.

Director Tucker stated that they have a mandated halt on any new programs so if anything is added, something else must go which is comparable for time.

Ms. Richmond explained that these factors are used to evaluate senior programs.

Commissioner Christensen stated that it is also important to keep up with what is trendy and what consumers want to see.

Ms. Richmond agreed. If there is demand, they try to offer it.



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Clerk Moreau asked if this is used to add or create programs; do they look at what is hot and what is in demand or do they look at what is better utilized in their community.

Commissioner Christensen stated they look at both. At Independence Township, they look at the needs of the community, but they also add what is current.

Commissioner Vallad stated that Ms. Christensen helps with programming at Independence Township so her viewpoint is important.

Clerk Moreau stated that it's not always useful to compare Springfield with Independence. She stated that she assumes that their resources and staff are completely different.

Commissioner Christensen agreed and said that they have 4 people doing Casey Reed's job.

Director Tucker stated that they try not to duplicate programs with Independence Township; they try to fill open needs. She explained that they implemented a seed program with Davisburg Elementary and it was important because it connected them to the school and it connected the children to the park. There are also programs that they deem to be important like Massasauga workshop.

Clerk Moreau stated that in an annual report, the Board is looking for rationale and an evaluation of each program along with what it costs. This would facilitate understanding between the two groups.

Commissioner Bower stated that having a semiannual report of all activities would be an important part of this.

Supervisor Walls stated that this information is going to be important in the summer in preparation for the millage.

Ms. Richmond clarified that they will be providing the semiannual report two times a year to the Board.

Board members concurred.

Commissioner Baker stated that the Parks and Rec mission statement is more community driven versus having a mission statement that is revenue driven. She stated that she feels that over the years they are being driven towards revenue when that is not the service that they provide. They provide services and programs to the community. She stated that they keep this in mind because the mission statement guides this and speaks to this.



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Commissioner Bower stated that he believes the Board members understand this.

Clerk Moreau and Treasurer Dubre concurred. There should be no feeling that the Parks Commission needs to change their mission statement to be more revenue driven. It was put in the memo and many different people have said it in different ways. The goal should be for a program to cover its cost, but if the Park Commission could communicate to the Board that certain programs serve an important community need and are not expected to cover costs, that will be part of a decision making process.

Commissioner Baker asked them to keep their mission statement in mind.

ii. Staffing needs and comp time policies

Members agreed that this has already been covered.

iii. Contingency planning – total budget vs. cost center

Supervisor Walls stated that the best way for the Department to have contingency is to have a contingency that covers everything in their budget.

Commissioner Vallad stated that currently they have a contingency line to cover possible employee raises.

Supervisor Walls stated that the contingencies should be looked at as emergency funds and should be available wherever it is needed throughout the year. If they put it in cost centers, it is restricted and requires a motion by the Parks Commission and Township Board to move it and use it elsewhere.

Treasurer Dubre explained that they could have cost center named Contingencies and then have Salaries and General contingencies under that cost center

Commissioner Vallad concurred and suggested that they would reformat for 2015.

c.) Parks Feedback and joint discussion on suggested reports

Members concurred that this has already been covered earlier in the meeting.

Clerk Moreau stated that they would welcome open dialogue between now and April 30th to assist Parks and provide feedback as they prepare the planning reports.



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Commissioner Vallad and other members concurred.

3. Land Acquisition Procedure

Commissioner Bower stated that the process was straightforward as presented in the memo.

Members agreed that no additional discussion was required.

Director Tucker agreed that the procedure makes sense.

4. 2014 Millage Election

Clerk Moreau stated that she included materials from the previous millage in 2010 in the packets sent to the meeting members and she described those documents. She thought that it would be important to remember how the millage was presented to our residents and what their yes vote would mean. It was important to have some tangible and visible improvements to the Parks right away, but the millage was also about programs and events. She stated that she never thought, as a Parks patron, that the nominal fee paid for little league actually covered all of the costs and realized that the tax dollars were also going towards that. The residents voted yes not just to maintain open space and have parks, but to also have recreation. It is important to remember what was presented to residents and approved in 2010 as we prepare for the renewal.

Commissioner Vallad asked if the language would change; she would personally want them to stay the same. The other item to be decided is the length of time.

Clerk Moreau stated that the total collection would change.

Treasurer Dubre explained that it would be less dollars collected.

Members concurred that the term could be longer and the millage could still be a renewal. Members discussed the length of the time that it can be and the time limits that are present on the current millages in place. They agreed that the length of time could be 10 years and they discussed the current Police and Fire millages and their upcoming renewal dates.

Clerk Moreau stated that having Police and Fire together is an easier situation.

Members discussed current millage rates.



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Clerk Moreau stated that they had until May 13th to forward ballot wording to the County.

Commissioner Vallad stated that she is happy with the renewal amount but would like to see it extended out to 10 years.

Trustee Vallad concurred.

Director Tucker indicated that it passed last time due to a lot of hard work. She suggested keeping it the same. She stated that in the future she would suggest seeking a millage for Conservation to support the stewardship efforts. This is trendy and would be in addition to the Parks millage. She stated that they pay for these efforts primarily through grants and if the bucket is empty, they need to be thinking forward. They have a lot of property to take care of.

Members continued to discuss the current millage rates for all funds and the renewal dates for them. They concurred that if it does not pass, they can still put it on the November ballot, but it can't be levied until the following year.

Members agreed on the current millage amount and the ten year time period.

Trustee Cooper stated that they still need to come up with a budget and a plan in case it does not pass.

Commissioner Bower thanked all members for a successful meeting and members agreed that they would meet again in May.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Collin W. Walls, Township Supervisor

Laura Moreau, Township Clerk