

Spring Arbor Township Board - August 11, 2008

The regular meeting of the Spring Arbor Township Board was held Monday, August 11, 2008, at 7:01 p.m., with the following members present: Supervisor Marston Fortress, Clerk Randi Holthouse, Trustees Scott Rogers, Patricia Short and Brent Williams. Absent: Treasurer Gloria Melchiori and Trustee Troy Ganton. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Supervisor.

Guests were: Russ Ratkiewicz, Tim McEldowney, Art Wierenga, Jon Wierenga, Ronald E. Addison, Earl Poleski, Jim Videto and others.

Public Comment: Public comment opened at 7:02 p.m.

David Cavender, township resident, asked if the board had addressed the issues raised in the letter from the County Press .

Trustee Rogers suggested it be taken up under New Business.

Trustee Short agreed that it should be handled in a public forum after it was researched.

David Cavender asked if there was a paper trail regarding the money used to build the fire station, and requested the information in writing. He also asked if any funds were missing regarding this issue.

Supervisor Fortress stated that there were no funds missing, that a clean audit was received on an annual basis.

Mr. Cavender asked about the money being paid back to the Sewer Fund since they have had increases in their quarterly bills and stated again that it should be addressed by the board.

Trustee Rogers informed the board that he spoke with Mr. John Bauckham, a municipal lawyer for the Michigan Townships Association. Mr. Bauckham informed him that the funds should not have been removed from the Sewer Fund and that the money should be paid back with interest, and that any increases in the billing rates could be reimbursed to the people who paid them.

Trustee Short stated that if the information the board had at the time was incorrect that the board would follow through on it and nothing would be hidden.

David Cavender asked that the board contact Mr. Bauckham for his opinion.

Trustee Rogers suggested that the board get a written opinion from Mr. Bauckham on this issue.

Trustee Short agreed that it needed to be taken care of.

David Cavender restated his request that all of the issues in the publicized letter in the County Press be addressed by the board and stated his intent to become more involved. He discussed his taxes increasing every year and how his appeal to the Board of Review didn't do any good.

Another gentleman echoed Mr. Cavender's sentiments regarding higher taxes.

Trustee Rogers asked if the issues raised should be discussed in a special board meeting.

Trustee Williams stated that the issue could be confusing with different opinions from attorneys and that it could end up in court. He suggested the possibility that repaying the Sewer Fund could result in a request for additional millage.

David Cavender suggested that an investigation be started to find out what happened.

Trustee Williams, stated that as a board, we haven't tried to do anything wrong and agreed that it should be investigated. He felt that the board had not tried to sweep anything under the table, that the opinion from the attorney at that time said the funds did not have to be paid back.

An unidentified man, stated that as a concerned taxpayer paying for the elected official's salary's, he wanted the board to understand his position.

Supervisor Fortress said after the board has their answer together it would be handled at either a special or regular board meeting.

Trustee Short asked that the residents leave their name and address if they wished to be advised of the meeting.

Earl Poleski, County Commissioner , reported that the taxable value for the county is on the decline and they anticipate about two million less in revenues in future years as well as the loss of state-shared revenues. In response, the county will be eliminating 33.5 positions, some through attrition. The Sheriff's department will experience the largest cuts. They have already had reductions in the county work force and they are hoping that the level of service will not be impacted by this. He stated if the money isn't there, you can't spend it. The county is looking at other initiatives to help with the level of service such as combining more offices in the county tower building. They hope to be able to use fewer people to perform customer service tasks with several offices in one location. They are also looking at how residents can pay their bills online as well as putting in kiosks for self-service. He also reported that the road commission has requested an ordinance be put in place to address road ends at navigable waters.

Trustee Rogers said that he heard positive feedback on the new fair manager's inaugural year and felt that the weather had cooperated well.

Commissioner Poleski stated that the shows were great at the fair, that the grounds were clean, and that he thought it was well done.

Public comment closed at 7:21 p.m.

Expenditures. Motion was made by Rogers and supported by Williams to approve the following expenditures for July 2008: General Fund expenditures #46653-46769 totaling \$53,806.42; Fire Department Fund expenditures #46654-46768 totaling \$13,219.52; Street Light Fund expenditures #46654 and #46738 totaling \$3,599.03; Building Inspection Fund expenditures #46653-46766 totaling \$2,707.42; Sewer O & M Fund expenditures #46652-46766 totaling \$38,052.50; Water O & M Fund expenditures #46652-46766 totaling \$36,548.80; Trust & Agency Fund expenditures #1915-1917 totaling \$1,150.29; and, Tax Fund expenditures #4325-4328 totaling \$130,422.23. Roll Call: 5 yes.

Minutes. Motion was made by Rogers and supported by Williams to approve the regular board meeting minutes of July 14, 2008; carried.

Consent Agenda. Motion was made by Holthouse and supported by Williams to approve the following items under the consent agenda consisting of the financial reports for July 2008; and, general ledger report of revenues and expenditures for July 2008. The financial report showed the following balances as of July 31:

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| General Fund Cash | \$59,293.36 |
| Certificate of Deposit | 259,313.67 |
| Fire Operations Cash | 24,624.23 |
| Fire Operations CD | 526,734.56 |
| Street Light Fund | 7,267.66 |
| Public Improvement Fund | 8,246.05 |
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| P.I.F. Certificate of Deposit | 59,140.27 |
| Building Inspection Fund | (3,656.04) |
| Falling Waters Endowment Fund | 25.00 |
| Falling Waters Endowment Fund CD | 31,034.38 |

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| Sewer Funds | 898,148.84 |
| Water Funds | 325,970.62 |
| Trust & Agency Funds | 0.00 |
| Current Taxes carried. | 178,553.28; |

REPORTS:

A. Police and Fire Reports. There were 52 medical rescue runs, four fire alarms, nine mutual aid calls, no fire runs, one Hazmat response, and no carbon monoxide incidents or bomb threats during July. Police statistics include: 181 complaints, six accidents, 17 tickets, seven verbal warnings, four arrests, and 19 back-up calls to other departments.

The Chief of Police reported that there were no major incidents the prior month. The department had a display set up at the Learning Fair and answered many questions by the attendees and gave them tips on protecting their homes. They also provided traffic assistance for the 10k run on the University campus during July. An incident at the Spring Arbor Free Methodist Church resulted in three juveniles being charged with breaking and entering and one adult charged with receiving stolen property. Chief Ratkiewicz reported that they are waiting for new patches for their shirts and will soon be using the department bike to travel the Falling Waters Trail and in local subdivisions, and around the village area. They have traveled approximately 1,000 miles less than the month before in an effort to reduce fuel costs. Trustee Williams asked where the police gasoline budget was at; Chief Ratkiewicz responded that there is around \$6,000 left in the budget. They are trying to only fill up once a week depending on the complaint load. Trustee Short asked if any of the firemen could look through the garbage that is dumped along the highway and roadways. Trustee Short wondered if we try to find out who is dumping their garbage. Motion was made by Short and supported by Rogers to accept the police report; carried.

The Fire Chief reported that July was busy for the department; they had a couple of mutual aid calls to Hanover and Parma-Sandstone townships as well as requesting mutual aid a couple of times. He stated that they are about where they were last year at this time although their total runs are down. The department is also incorporating ways to cut costs and have reduced practice time driving the trucks and keep the temperature in the station set higher than normal. The department also participated at the Learning Fair working with young kids on fire prevention. In preparation for Fire Prevention Week in October he will be ordering supplies and is making contact with the schools, estimating that about 800 children will participate. Chief McEldowney reported that he is working on developing a program to follow NFPA guidelines. He also participated in a military sendoff for troops going to Iraq. He spoke in favor of the township participating in the Hazard Mitigation Plan based on information received by Region 2 Planning Commission. He stated that he currently participates with the local emergency planning committee. He also reported that the 1991 aerial truck passed the five-year certification process. Trustee Williams asked if there was any news on the grant; Chief McEldowney said he is still waiting to find out. Trustee Rogers asked the Chief to clarify what the grant was for and a dollar amount. Chief McEldowney reported that the grant would upgrade all of the breathing apparatus the firemen are required to wear and provide additional bunker gear. Total grant request is for \$168,000.00. Chief McEldowney also reported that he is working on a new grant for upgrading radio equipment with the assistance of Trustee Rogers. The Supervisor stated that the cutting back of driving the fire trucks are not joy rides for the firemen, it is for training purposes as the trucks respond differently than a regular motor vehicle. David Cavender stated that Spring Arbor

Township has the best police and fire departments in the county. The Supervisor praised the efforts of the two Chiefs in providing assistance to an individual who was living in a vehicle and required medical care. Motion was made by Short and supported by Williams to accept the fire report; carried.

B. Building Permit Reports. The report of building permits issued during the month of July showed miscellaneous permits for a total value of \$565,200. No new home permits were issued in July. One commercial permit was issued. Motion was made by Williams and supported by Rogers to accept the building report; carried.

C. Supervisors Report . Advised the board: of the status of the storm water project; of the DEQ's progress in extending water west on M-60 to Mathews Rd.; of repairs to the Post Office and the removal of a tree; of the completed signage project by MDOT on M-60; of his recommendation to renew the township insurance for buildings, equipment and liability with the same insurance company; of his recommendation to change the health insurance plan; and, of committee appointments and reappointments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Renewal of Township Insurance. Motion was made by Williams and supported by Short to approve the renewal of the township insurance through the Michigan Townships Participating Plan at a cost of \$37,642.00, and that if the township can save 10% by changing the deductible to either \$2,500.00 or \$5,000.00 on the buildings to implement that change also; carried.

B. Health Insurance Change. The Supervisor recommended a change to the prescription co-pay as a cost-savings measure. Clerk Holthouse spoke regarding the process to implement this change and suggested that the township investigate a Health Savings Plan for consideration by the board. Motion was made by Williams and supported by Short to keep the existing health insurance coverage we have now and to investigate the health savings account and come back to board at a later point; carried.

C. Committee Appointments. Motion was made by Short and supported by Williams to approve the committee appointments as follows:
Randi Holthouse, Park Committee, term expiring 5/31/2011,
Gordon Holton, Park Committee, term expiring 5/31/2011,
Kay Dunckel, Park Committee, term expiring 5/31/09,
Todd Long, Park Committee, term expiring 5/31/11,
Troy Ganton, Sewer Board of Review, term expiring 2/28/2010,
Troy Ganton, Historical Committee, term expiring 6/30/2011,
Ken Melville, Public Safety, term expiring 6/30/2011; carried.

D. Hazard Mitigation Plan. Motion was made by Williams and supported by Rogers to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Plan through Region 2 Planning Commission at all levels, and to appoint the Fire Chief as the contact person for the process; carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Township Law News.

Letter from Comcast.
Project Review Notice.

PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT: Public comment opened at 8:08 p.m.

David Cavender. Mr. Cavender inquired about the Project Review Notice.

Patricia Short. Trustee Short commented on the policy for the Senior Center allowing for purchases and expense reimbursement requests.

Scott Rogers. Trustee Rogers thanked the people in attendance at the meeting for taking the time to be there. He stated that our residents who are paying our bills here at the township need to know that the board activities will be as transparent as possible. He expressed his appreciation for their time and participation.

Randi Holthouse. Clerk Holthouse asked the Supervisor how he intended to address the issues raised at the meeting tonight from the letter in the County Press . The Supervisor responded that he would be reviewing it.

David Cavender. Mr. Cavender asked why the money was never returned. He stated that his impression was that the money would be returned with interest. He asked for assurance that all of the issues would be researched thoroughly.

Patricia Short. Trustee Short suggested that it be discussed in a regular meeting, that this was just making a "mountain out of a molehill". She suggested that the attorneys look at it and be brought back to a regular board meeting.

David Cavender. Mr. Cavender discussed a previous business experience with the Township in which he had to close his business. He then stated that he felt the Township needed to check with the other attorney on the sewer fund issue, referring to Mr. Bauckham.

Scott Rogers. Trustee Rogers reiterated his request for a special meeting to discuss all of the issues. Motion was made by Rogers and supported by Williams to hold a special meeting for the purpose of discussing the issues raised in the letter in the County Press ; carried.

Marston Fortress. Supervisor Fortress discussed taxation and how it related to property values.

David Cavender. Mr. Cavender mentioned that he had his home appraised and it is now worth \$7,000.00 less than what he paid for it three years ago.

Jim Videto. Commissioner Videto said that the taxation system seems unfair and that over time, people have been allowed to manipulate it.

Alan Miltich. Mr. Miltich stated that the assessment records are public records and recommended that property owners review their own records for square footage, land area, quality of fixtures, etc. He stated that there are formulas the assessor has to follow.

David Cavender. Mr. Cavender suggested that anyone who comes into the Board of Review should be offered all of the information available, such as the right to

appeal to the State Tax Tribunal, so that property owners would know what their options were.

Adjournment. Motion was made by Williams and supported by Rogers to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.; carried.