

PROPOSED MINUTES
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
4338 BEELINE ROAD
ALLEGAN COUNTY
HOLLAND, MI 49423

REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 11, 2020

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Linda Howell called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ARTICLE II. INVOCATION & PLEDGE

Treasurer Gary Dewey opened the meeting with prayer and led the pledge of allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Howell, Ed Stielstra, Michelle Sall,
Jim Johnson, Gary Dewey
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Kathy Stoike – Administrative Assistant/Finance
Sophie Poel – Administrative Assistant
Charlene Fields – Deputy Treasurer
Jenifer French – Deputy Clerk
Heather Jahr – Township Assessor
Doug Den Bleyker – Fire Chief
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE III. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 2/12/20

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Johnson and seconded by Dewey to approve the February 12, 2020 minutes as submitted. Supervisor Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE IV. FINANCIAL REPORT / REVIEW & APPROVE BILLS OF FEBRUARY, 2020

Supervisor Howell reviewed the bills for the months of February 2020. Following discussion, **a motion was made by Dewey and seconded by Johnson to approve and pay the bills as submitted. Supervisor Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE V. ANNUAL REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES

- a. State Senator – Aric Nesbitt

Senator Nesbitt reported that one of the big issues was the no-fault reform in auto insurance. Senate Bill 1 will reduce auto insurance rates. The new law will be effective July 2020 and 2021 providing drivers with choices on coverage, end health care price gouging, crack down on fraud and lawsuit abuse and create more transparency for the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association. The Governor proposed nearly \$3 billion in tax increases on families, seniors, drivers, and small businesses. Nesbitt believes government should live within its means and he worked effectively to reject the Governor's tax increases. Dewey asked about Pure Michigan funding and Nesbitt responded about \$15 million will be assigned for the fiscal year. Nesbitt reviewed some of the recently approved funding for

Coronavirus; GoingPro worker fund; Reconnect and local municipalities.

Meshkin said the \$3.5 billion road bonding is coming to West Michigan for road construction, many of which are in our township, i.e., U.S. 31 project. Nesbitt said he is not a fan of the bonding. Johnson said the Pure Michigan topic has been a hot topic in the hospitality industry. Tom Shuff asked about the new insurance rate, Nesbitt confirmed it is effective July 1, 2020. Udelis Kuiper mentioned Bill Schutte asking that he come to the annual meeting. Nesbitt provided his contact information.

b. State Representative – Kevin Whiteford

Kevin Whiteford on behalf of Representative Mary Whiteford provided a written legislative update report. He noted the House voted on \$5 million in grants for erosion, the Senate approved it and the Governor is expected to sign it this week. The Michigan Crisis Access Line is a hotline for mental illness intended to get immediate access to professionals. Whiteford is also working on Human Trafficking. The \$3 billion bond for roads may be an issue because MDOT is at capacity and even if money is provided, the timing of the work may be an issue. Meshkin said this has been discussed at MACC and contractors should be offered multiple year contracts to give assurance that the work is coming. Whiteford said the material for roads has also been discussed. Howell asked when the Crisis Access line will be available and Whiteford said he does not have a timeframe at this point.

c. County Commissioner – Dean Kapenga

Commissioner Dean Kapenga reported that the commissioners and legislative representatives work very collaboratively doing great work. Items prioritized are as follows: fee policies (300) in the county have not been reviewed for several years so a new matrix is in place; PILT and the Gun Lake Tribe pays 2% of the slots in place of taxes and they have been buying properties and paying their fair share of taxes; 20-year jail bond; partnership with Van Buren County to provide offense attorneys for those not able to afford them; Rock 10 has a buyer is going to renovate the whole area; the Allegan County Mental Health building downtown is for sale; focus on the Allegan County Court House to better serve all customers and utilize space; court house is the biggest expense with 400+ visitors every day, a centrally located entrance should be installed; reviewing options for a 3rd circuit court and a new jail in the court house. A millage is needed for the mental health facility as many seniors who are in need cannot afford private care. The Sheriff Department has been reduced to five officers and they are now asking for eight patrol officers and six detectives. There is also a need to increase public transportation as over 540 people are regular users and it is becoming more difficult to meet the needs. The Commission is going to review the Headley Reset to determine if funds would be available for more sheriffs and transportation. The millage request will be on the November ballot. Johnson asked the where the workers in the health department building went and Kapenga advised they relocated to a new facility. Kapenga discussed the retirement defined contribution that impacts the county budget. Meshkin asked about the need for renovation in the court house, are you thinking of moving some of those less dangerous offices out of the courthouse, like the Clerk and Treasurer? Kapenga said we are trying to relocate the non-court related offices. Meshkin suggested having it downtown Allegan. Jahr asked about the buyer for the paper mill and whether or not Brownfield was explored. Kapenga said yes and potentially state tax abatements. Kuipers asked why there isn't another sheriff in Laketown Township, especially on 142nd Avenue. Kapenga said he would mention it to the Sheriff Department.

d. Library Representative – Gary Dewey

Gary Dewey reported quite a few things have going on at the library, specifically new furniture in the lower level; the café moved out a few years ago and tried to find a new one but have not been successful. The LEGO play area is very popular; Ground Works is on the lower level with great program offerings such as computer and business skills classes. Ground was broken recently for the renovation to the North Branch which will double the size of the library. We are not a big library but we have the 4th largest distribution of materials which speaks well of the community. Stielstra asked what feedback is given from the lending library users. Al said not a lot of feedback but there have been a lot of users. Stielstra said he appreciates the Herrick Library and the book sales held in the basement. Dewey also noted the incredible Wizard of Oz display that was recently installed. Johnson asked if the North Branch will relocate during renovation and Dewey responded that it would temporarily move to the vacant mall space. The goal for re-opening is December 20, 2020.

e. Pool Authority – Director Jack Huisingh

Jack Huisingh thanked Precinct 1 and Holland Public School District for supporting the renovation project millage. Huisingh thanked the township for appointing Sarah Geisler as the township representative noting that she was elected chairperson of the board. Memberships are up for the 6th consecutive year and the budget is running in the black again. Bonds were secured bonds to renovate and expand with a triad of people responsible to oversee the expenditure. Greg Mayberry of Hope College has been hired for the project along with an architect firm from Grand Rapids and Lakewood Construction won the competitive bid. The renovation will include a 35,000 sf addition which will allow growth in all major areas along with a larger parking lot. The entire layout has been reviewed and approved by the City of Holland and will meet the community needs for wellness. There is a whole new community section for the members and space for large competitive events which will continue to drive growth in new dollars spent in the community. Over 3500 school children per year receive free swimming lessons. In April the bulldozers will begin to move dirt and by November the building exterior will be completed to prepare for 20 months of interior construction. The goal is to be open to the community by December 2021. The renovation will provide community space for 550 guests including a therapy and rehabilitation area. Visitors to the facility come from as far north as Muskegon and south to South Haven. One question is why the regular non-resident members are not allowed resident rate membership fees. This will have to be addressed in the future. We are on schedule within budget doing the right things. The millage supports approximately 62% of operational costs. The business has expanded greatly but the current space does not support sustainable growth. Huisingh said we rate nationally in the top 10 for such a community facility and turn out great athletes gaining generous scholarships for their achievements.

f. Planning Commission – Chair Randy Becksvort

Becksvort reported the commission has been busy this year working on a zoning amendment for detached accessory dwelling units and renewal of the Master Plan. The Master Plan has been reviewed by the Township Board, distributed to local governing entities for review and upon completion of that review will be noticed for a public hearing. Kuipers said there is a body shop on 142nd Avenue that should be checked out. Kuipers said there is also a resident that has no septic tank across the road from him. Howell said she will follow up on it.

g. Zoning Board of Appeals

Meshkin reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals met four times in 2019 addressing four requests for variance of which three were approved and one denied.

h. Parks Commission – Chair Tom Shuff

Shuff reported that three parcels of property at Laketown Beach were purchased with grant monies; the note for the Township Hall Park and bike path was paid off; fiber optic has been installed in three parks for WiFi; a partnership with Ottawa County and Holland Hospital was formed for a wellness initiative; United Way Day of Caring resulted in 30 volunteers working in four parks; new signage was installed in two parks; new friendly informational signs will be installed in all parks; the annual Meat and Greet was canceled and will be replaced with participation at the Annual 4th of July Graafschap Fire Department Pancake Breakfast; a questionnaire has been created for Parks Commissioners to survey park goers and embryonic discussions around a park millage have begun.

i. Friends of the Felt Estate

Meshkin reported that the renovation focus has been on the upstairs of the Carriage House; rentals have been very strong with record numbers this year; the summer concert series is set for the five Thursdays of July with a great selection of performers.

j. Graafschap Fire Department – Chief Doug Den Bleyker

Chief Den Bleyker reported the response calls for the month of February were as follows: 56 calls

total, 43 calls from Laketown, consisting of 30 medical/rescue and 13 fire calls, 6 of which were smoke alarm installs; 12 calls from Fillmore, consisting of 9 medical/rescue calls and 3 fire calls. There was 1 fire assist to Saugatuck.

Chief Den Bleyker reported the department responded to 757 calls for service in 2019, a 14.48% increase over 2018. There were 568 calls in Laketown; 116 calls in Fillmore. We assisted other fire departments 69 times and had assistance from others 50 times. Our average response time to all calls for service in 2019 was 4.90 minutes. In 2019 we installed 143 smoke alarms and 41 CO alarms, as part of our Community Risk Reduction Program. In 2019 we hired two fire fighters (Bretton Prins and Corey Capel) who have no prior experience and they are currently attending the fire academy. The new aerial tower pumped its first fire this month and was partly responsible for saving approximately 2000 hogs and numerous man hours at the fire. We had a garage fire this past week where the smoke alarms in the home woke the residents so they could safely exit the home. This year the vehicle exhaust removal system will be installed at the station, 95% of the cost for this project is covered by a FEMA Grant we receive last year. Because we were able to come in under budget with the exhaust system, we have remaining funds that will be used to purchase a turnout gear washer/extractor and a turnout gear drying cabinet. We will also be doing some maintenance at the fire station including some floor replacement, painting, etc. Howell said you under sell yourself. Johnson said he noticed 64th and 147th had another injury accident. Has there been any more thought about making it a 4-way stop to lower the risk at that intersection? Den Bleyker said we had no greater numbers in the recent traffic frequency audit. Stielstra asked if there is an end to the smoke alarm project and Den Bleyker said no, it is a program that started in 2014 that will continue as long as residents ask for replacements. The smoke alarms are good for about 10 years and the CO units for 7 years.

ARTICLE VI. PRESENTATION OF DE MULL AWARD

Howell explained the De Mull Award is presented annually to a resident that goes above and beyond to volunteer in the township. Howell presented the award to Diane Ybarra, Township Recording Secretary. Howell also recognized the entire staff and the great work they do. Howell recognized Al Meshkin for 30 years of service, Kathy Stoike who is retiring after 27 years of service and Charlene Fields for 20 years of service. Congratulations to all!

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

a. FY 2019-20 Budget Amendment

Meshkin reviewed the FY 2019-20 Budget Amendment noting revenues are up slightly and expenditures are up slightly due to unplanned culvert work for an additional \$35,000; end of year fund balance is \$516,719,000.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Dewey and second by Johnson to approve the FY 2019-20 Budget Amendment.** Howell noted that the fund balance has increased by \$20,000 and continues to grow. **Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a. FY 2020-21 Budget Hearing

Meshkin gave an overview of the FY 2020-21 Proposed Budget starting with a balance of \$561,719 with a total revenue of \$2.5 million and expenditures of \$2.4 million expecting a \$583,658 fund balance at the end of the fiscal year. There are several special projects planned for the next year: mapping of the cemetery to understand assigned burial plots; new sign for Huyser Farm; installation of cameras at Laketown Beach and engineering work on Blue Star Highway from 64th Street to 60th Street for 2023 construction plans.

Howell opened for public hearing. No correspondence was received on the topic.

Kuipers shouted that the township manager gets paid too much and the money should be given to the sheriff. He also said Dewey gets paid too much and isn't even in the office.

Jack Huisingh of 6450 Oakridge said there are a lot of trees leaning over the roads in the township. How does that get taken care of? Meshkin said they are primarily dead ash trees that are in the road right of way so Allegan County Road Commission takes care of that. When a report is made, we contact them. Huisingh said there are many power outages because of it. Meshkin said the Hemlock and oak trees also have issues with invasive species.

Sherri Circo of Hidden Ponds questioned the amount noted in the General Fund for the Township Manager. Meshkin responded that the Township Board has the option to award a merit bonus. Circo asked if the budget would be amended if it is awarded and Meshkin responded that it would. Circo said the bond on the Felt Mansion seems to have increased quite a bit. We pay for it but do not receive any of the revenue from it? Why can't it be zeroed out? Meshkin explained that the mansion is township property so the township must pay for capital improvements. The bonds are staged over a period of time at different levels. Circo commented that if the mansion is doing so well with the rentals, the bond payments should be paid from that. Meshkin stated that when the revenue exceeds expenses by 10%, money will come back to the township.

A motion was made by Johnson and seconded by Dewey to close the public hearing. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Dewey and seconded by Stielstra to approve the FY 2020-21 Budget.** Howell commented that the budget shows a favorable fund balance. **Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

b. PC AND ZBA Appointments

Howell said vacancies occurred mid-term on the Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Commission. Several residents applied and were interviewed for the seats. Howell recommends that Ross Lamar be appointed to serve as an alternate on the ZBA and Chad Nienhuis be appointed to serve on the Planning Commission.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Sall and seconded by Dewey to approve the appointment of Ross Lamar as alternate on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the appointment of Chad Nienhuis to the Planning Commission. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

c. Generator Financing for the Felt Mansion

Meshkin explained the Friends of the Felt Estate would like to install a generator to operate the mansion during times of power outage. The cost for an 80 kilowatt unit is \$56,000. The FOFE would make the down payment of \$10,000 and are making a request to the Township Board to finance the balance. FOFE would also make the annual payments. We have significant, high end wedding and event rentals. We have experienced power outages exceeding 30 hours which would be extremely detrimental for a client considering there would be no water, septic service, lights or air conditioning. It is something that would be totally paid for by the FOFE but due to its non-profit status, they need support from the township. Ultimately, the generator will be the property of the township.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Johnson and seconded by Stielstra to approve the Generator Financing for the Felt Mansion. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

d. Short-Term Rentals Zoning Text Amendment

Meshkin explained the Short-Term Rentals Zoning Text Amendment. The Township Board already approved a Rental Unit Regulation Amendment Ordinance to provide new rules and regulations for all rentals in the township ensuring units meet codes and requirements for the safety of tenants and neighbors. It will bring safety standards into compliance for all units and also noise regulations, parking requirements, and occupancy limits. The Planning Commission has recommended approval of this zoning amendment to the board. This zoning text amendment deals strictly with rentals that are less than 28 days and does not affect long-term rentals. There are approximately 50-100 short term rental units in the township, some of which are in need of improvement. There is currently a court case from Spring Lake Township stating that a short-term rental in a residential district is a commercial use and therefore illegal and prohibited unless the ordinance allows for it. Every short-term rental in the State of Michigan that is not permitted by zoning is in violation for now until the case goes to the Court of Appeals.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Dewey and seconded by Johnson to approve the Short-Term Rentals Zoning Text Amendment. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

e. Rental Unit Fee Schedule

Meshkin reviewed the Rental Unit Fee Schedule for regulating long-term and short-term rental properties which require application for a certificate that will be good for two years. The inspections will be done by the Graafschap Fire Department. The schedule includes fees/penalties for violations of several requirements.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Johnson and seconded by Sall to approve the Rental Unit Fee Schedule. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE IX. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Kathy Bright of 2090 W 32nd Street asked if there is a document available listing the rules and regulations for the rental units. Meshkin said the ordinance is on the website and the fee schedule and application will be added. Chief Den Bleyker said there is also a list of items to be inspected. Bright asked when it will be effective. Meshkin responded that a public notice will be published next Wednesday and it will take effect 8 days after publication which will be March 26. Bright asked how currently scheduled rentals will be handled and Meshkin responded that it will take several months to work through all of this.

Randy Becksvoort of 3930 Beeline Road asked if the generator will be on a lease agreement. Meshkin said yes, a capital leases and after 7 years it is owned by the township. Becksvoort asked if the solar array energy is held by a battery or does it go back to the grid. Meshkin said it goes back to the grid and we pay a reduced rate to Consumers Power so it does generate some cash.

Howell thanked resident for taking the CDC recommendations for safety regarding COVID-19. It is important to take precautions, washing hands often and maintaining social distancing.

ARTICLE X. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Dewey and seconded by Sall to adjourn the meeting at 8:42pm. Howell called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED