

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

REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2014

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Township Supervisor Terry Hofmeyer called the regular monthly Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Terry Hofmeyer, Wendy Van Huis, Ed Stielstra, Linda Howell
MEMBERS ABSENT: Gary Dewey
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Trustee Ed Stielstra opened the meeting with prayer and led the pledge of allegiance.

ARTICLE III. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board members reviewed the minutes of the August 13, 2014 meeting, **a motion was made by Wendy Van Huis and seconded by Ed Stielstra to approve the minutes as submitted. Supervisor Hofmeyer called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE IV. FINANCIAL REPORT / REVIEW & APPROVE THE BILLS

Supervisor Terry Hofmeyer reviewed the bills for the month of August 2014. Following discussion, **a motion was made by Linda Howell and seconded by Wendy Van Huis to approve and pay the bills as submitted. Supervisor Hofmeyer called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE V. CORRESPONDENCE – None

ARTICLE VI. REPORT OF OFFICERS

- A. STATE REPRESENTATIVE GENETSKI – None
- B. COUNTY COMMISSIONER KAPENGA – Dean Kapenga

Dean Kapenga stated he has been busy working on the budget – 10 contracts – take all directors of all groups and work with the commissioners to understand the allocation. The General Budget is 5-year plan and the Capital Budget is a 15-year plan. EOC (Emergency Operation Center) training took place and included emergency response agencies in an exercise on the method of handling a catastrophic event. LEPC works with the fire departments on how to coordinate information on the handling of hazardous materials in local businesses should it be necessary to do so. Information on the plume rate and storage locations is critical to the control of a hazardous spill or fire situation.

Kapenga reported that cameras have been installed in the Allegan County Transit buses. The buses are available to support the transportation needs of anyone in the county. The Allegan County Road Commission has asked the commissioners to consider bonding for a new facility.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION – Linda Howell

Linda Howell reported that the Planning Commission met on September 3 and the following items were discussed: Grasman Special Use Request to split a parcel was approved and Prince Special Use Request for an oversized out building was also approved.

D. ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS – Ed Stielstra

Ed Stielstra reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals met on August 29 and approved a variance request from Richard Bullock for a deck roof construction.

E. PARKS COMMISSION – Michelle Sall

Michelle Sall brought attention to the new recreation facility and invited residents to visit the site noting that walking trails are part of the future plan. The United Way Day of Caring will take place on September 18. There will be crews from local businesses working in many of the township parks to do landscaping, trail maintenance and general clean-up.

F. DEPUTY SHERIFF – No report.

G. FIRE CHIEF AND FIRE BOARD – Chief Cal Haverdink

Chief Haverdink reported the response calls for the month of August were as follows: 35 calls total, 28 calls from Laketown, consisting of 23 rescue and 5 fire, 5 calls from Fillmore, consisting of 5 rescue calls and 0 fire calls. There were 2 fire assist calls to Saugatuck.

H. DDA – No report.

ARTICLE VII. CITIZEN COMMENTS ON OLD AND NEW BUSINESS - None

ARTICLE VIII. OLD BUSINESS - None

ARTICLE IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. POLICE SERVICES S.A.D. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION #2

Supervisor Terry Hofmeyer introduced the proposed Resolution 2014-11 #2 to support the police service plan for two deputies from the Allegan County Sheriff's Department for the 2015-16 year. Terry cited the Headlee Amendment, Proposal A and decrease in support from the County for reasons to support this request. Current funding for the service comes from the General Fund but due to declining grant funding and revenue it will be necessary to create its own funding for the single officer and the addition of a second officer for the township. The special assessment would be an approximate cost of \$65 - \$70 per year per parcel.

Supervisor Hofmeyer opened for public hearing.

Ray Buursma of 6529 145th Avenue stated that he has lived in Laketown Township for 20 years and think it is a great place to live. He expressed appreciation for the Board and the good work that they do for the residents. He pointed out that the millage to support additional officers has been voted down twice by the residents and that is a very important point but on the other hand Board members are to be leaders for the township. Buursma asked that the Board members provide justification for the additional officer based on data collected. In the years he has lived in the Township he has had to

call 911 only once and is unsure why it is necessary to have additional coverage.

David Vander Sluis of 4242 Beeline Road stated that he does not believe the number of service calls warrants an additional officer. He does not like the idea that it will not be taxed equally and feels the residents' decision to twice turn down the millage to support his should be respected. He would like to know the number of calls not promptly being responded to. He also noted the proximity of the Michigan State Police Post.

John Kruid of 6380 144th Avenue stated that the Township currently pays \$100,000 for one deputy to supplement the County and that would double for two. Maybe we should begin negotiating with the County and not the people.

Rich Vanhaver of 837 Claremont Court asked if residents are calling for an additional officer. He does not see a need and asked if property values are on the rise, doesn't that bring in more revenue?

Karen Kerwacker of 4585 Arlene Lane stated that she is opposed to the addition of an officer. The Michigan State Police Post and Saugatuck/Douglas Departments are just down the road so it is not necessary. Maybe Allegan County should put a satellite office nearby instead.

Mark Bruinsma of 6441 Sandcastle Drive stated that a great portion of our taxes go to Allegan County so maybe we should begin to negotiate with them to fund this additional officer. Maybe we start thinking out of the box and look at volunteers or something like that. We voted this down twice and we get it rammed down our throat again. We don't want another ticket writer. Police are reactive not proactive so let's look outside the box for things that don't cost money. People cannot afford more taxes. Maybe money spent on the parks should be used for this instead.

Bob Terpstra of 3356 Meadow Lane stated that trying to use a special assessment for this is going through the back door and it should come out of the regular budget. Millage votes are not confusing and residents understand that. If you go through with this what are the perimeters to measure the success? In business there would be measurements in place, do you have anything? I am against it.

Ryan Bosscher of 967 Laketown Drive stated that he appreciates the officer that we have. The millage to add an additional officer was voted down twice. The \$65-\$70 per parcel assessment is not equitable giving the example of a single family homeowner, farmer and Springbrook Apartment Complex would not be fair assessments. A second concern is the lack of a time limit and the potential for cost of living increases. If the Township needs more money for parks and matching grants then put a parks millage before the residents.

Larry Den Uyl of 845 Claremont Court stated that he does not see the need for an additional officer and does not support it.

Thelma Castaneda of 3995 Beeline Road asked if there is a time limit for the S.A.D. and whether or not cost of living increases would be considered. Terry Hofmeyer stated that it approved, the Board would determine a time limit and any additions for cost of living would be open for comments at a public hearing. Castaneda also questioned the need for a second officer. She also noted that perhaps the assessment should be made on the property value since more expensive homes may need more patrolling.

Steve Bruinsma of 6357 Reserve Way asked why this isn't decided by the vote of the Township residents. He added that four years ago there was an incident in his area and the State Police showed up in a timely manner.

Jim Stark of 4190 Beeline stated that he has been a resident for 45 years noting that when he first moved in law enforcement was virtually nil in this area of the county. He instituted his own method by owning two Dobermans. He feels one deputy in the Township is adequate enough. Residents have turned down the vote twice and that should be respected.

Herb Klemm of 6502 Creekwood Drive stated that he appreciates all that is done in the Township. He asked how many hours per week would be added if an additional officer is hired. Terry Hofmeyer

responded that the officers work 12-hour shifts on a rotating schedule which includes court time and back up to other units in the County. Klemm stated the Township is so beautiful and the nicest people live here so he does not feel an additional officer is necessary. We cannot afford any more dollars to spend and we don't need a heavier burden to pay taxes.

Tom Crum of 6295 144th Avenue stated that he wants to be assured that all comments and correspondence are included in the official record. Terry Hofmeyer assured him that is standard process to do so. Crum asked how people can respond to something when they do not have all of the facts.

Carlos Esteves of 1044 W. 32nd Street stated that he has officers from five different departments going by his house and does not feel that an additional Laketown deputy is necessary.

Marcia Terpstra of 4356 Meadow Lane stated that residents voted against this and now you are going against that vote by trying to get it passed through this S.A.D.

Bob Slikkers of 6553 Creekwood Lane stated that the purpose of a special assessment is to deal with unforeseen things and the fact that there have been two votes on this tells me that voters do not want it and you have not made a sufficient case. If you give us the information to justify the need then maybe we can make an intelligent decision. Slikkers is not in favor of the S.A.D.

Michael Gentry of 4085 65th Street stated that we can be here all night listening to people say the same thing. Let's just see a show of hands – we don't want it!

Cal Haverdink spoke as a resident of the township and also as the Fire Chief. He asked Dean Kapenga to explain what happens when we go to Allegan County for more funding. Commissioner Kapenga explained that the County has lost \$6 million in revenue and many other cuts have already been made and the County cannot fund the current officer or the addition of a second officer. A private business owner has contracted deputies through the County to provide coverage for their properties but it is not funded by the Township or County budget. You have less than deputy coverage than before and the County is only obligated to provide the jail but not road patrol.

Mark Verbena of 6397 Hidden Ponds Drive stated that officers are timely in ticketing for speeding and illegal parking at the beach. He does not feel there is enough crime to support a second officer.

Cal Demaagd of 3719 64th Street wonders how many times citizens have to explain to the Board what no means. It looks like the Board is trying to run around the vote of the citizens. There are enough officers in the area with the Michigan State Police, Saugatuck, Douglas, Allegan County and at times Holland City. We do not need more police patrol. The citizens have made it clear what they want. Maybe we should look at the cost of salaries and everyone who works in this office and how much does it cost each citizen.

Frank Delhaye of 3970 64th Street asked if someone from the Board's family or friend needed a job. Please we do not need more police.

Shelley Woodall 4736 65th Street asked for clarification of the S.A.D. at \$200,000 for two deputies. What happened to the \$100,000 that covered the one deputy? Terry Hofmeyer said there are a number of people who do believe that we need additional coverage and we are already cutting into our fund balance and we cannot continue to do this. The \$100,000 would remain in the General Fund to support other projects that have received requests to fund such as the Holland Historical Museum that we have had to say no to. The General Fund may not be able to fund even one deputy after next year. The Michigan State Police Post closes at midnight so the Township would have to depend on the County to respond to calls.

Howard Bouwens of 6630 Halycon Hills commented that when asked what the \$100,000 in General Fund would be spent on, the response is it would be allocated to other projects at the Board's discretion.

Chris Knowlton of 3939 Beeline Road stated that this is not the federal government but a small local

government. We said no twice and we do not want this.

Gene Berghorst of 6468 Spruce Lane asked why it was not put up for vote, because you knew it would be turned down. You have all been appointed to these positions and Wendy Van Huis corrected him stating that all Board members were voted in for their positions. Gene noted that the Commissioner said the County was laying people off so maybe the Township staff should be reduced to cover the cost of a deputy.

Jerry Zachary of 1748 W. 32nd Street asked why the residents are not specifically asked about the funding of the other projects this General Fund money would be put to.

Don Walters of 1740 W. 32nd Street stated he has lived here for 40 years and only once called 911 and the Holland City officer came. Allegan and Ottawa Counties have wonderful fire departments so what else do we need. If this gets approved without a resident vote there should be a recall.

Andrew Geurink of 4457 64th Street asked what the General Fund brings in. Al Meshkin responded that there is about \$200,000 in the operating millage, a special fire, roads and drains for \$700,000 and revenue sharing of approximately \$425,000. Geurink asked about the taxes and Meshkin responded that the majority of collected tax dollars goes to the County and school districts. There is a detailed report available for public review.

Ed Menken of 6341 144th Avenue asked for clarification of how the Township funds the deputy and Allegan County. He also asked about the work shift hours and if they could be five 8-hour shifts per week. He does not see a need for patrolling during the daytime hours. He would like to see the statistics to back up the need for additional patrol.

Karen Massengil of 6470 147th Avenue did not feel questions were being answered tonight and asked what the next steps are in the process.

Terry Hofmeyer explained the hearing tonight is a hearing of necessity to determine if we have a need for the S.A.D. and also to hear citizen input. Once the hearing is closed the resolution would be reviewed and then move on to at a future date to actually accept the set amount. S.A.D. are not designed for Township vote.

Terri Toner of 6188 Standing Stone Drive spoke against the S.A.D. stating it should have been put on the ballot for vote along with statistics to help educate the residents. She also asked how success would be measured. Hofmeyer said one additional officer would provide a general feeling of protection in the community and be a detriment to crime.

Gord Gruppen 4209 60th Street asked what hours the deputies work. Hofmeyer stated that the schedule is set to coincide with that of the County deputies to ensure most effective coverage. Gruppen stated that he would like to see officers on patrol from 9:00pm to 5:00am. He does not agree with the S.A.D. and feels it should be put to vote.

Ray Buursma stated that it is fine to voice one's opinion about this topic but residents should not be critical of the Township staff as they are nothing but top notch workers. He is offended that people would say otherwise.

Barry Klynstra of 3947 64th Street commented that we really do not have a Township deputy if the County schedules the hours and they are expected to cover the other needs in the County. He would be interested to know what the response time is for a Township deputy.

Eric Mosier of 3896 65th Street asked for details of the data to justify the need for another deputy. Hofmeyer explained that the Sheriff reports are open for public review. An additional officer would be a deterrent to crime.

Bob Slikkers asked for clarification of what the Allegan County budget has been reduced by. Commissioner Kapenga said about \$7 million was reduced. Meshkin stated there were severe cuts on the State revenue sharing and things cost more now than they have in the past. Slikkers encouraged

residents to attend more of the Township meetings to better understand the workings of the local government. Slikkers reiterated that residents have voted against this twice and is there really a need for additional patrol. Meshkin said things are happening out there that you wouldn't believe; people don't see it but it's out there. For example gang members taken off of Creekwood Drive included collaboration from the Township deputy.

David Slikkers of 6460 Legacy Woods Drive stated that he is disappointed with the Township officials and the way they are deceiving residents about the General Fund and lack of transparency fund is pure deception.

Pat Trattles of 6446 Kingswood Court asked for statistics to sell residents on the fact that we need this additional officer. Doing this with an S.A.D. is just wrong.

Gene Berghorst said you have a group of people here and no one wants it. If the Board goes ahead and approves the resolution, the residents can do a referendum vote for petition drive.

Crum said the squeaky wheel gets the money and Allegan doesn't get the same money from other townships.

An unidentified resident asked how many of the 704 calls were responded to by the Township deputy. Meshkin stated this information is available from the Sheriff's Office. Meshkin stated that on a good night there would be 3-4 deputies in the entire county. If a domestic violence call happens in Plainwell that requires two deputies as that type of call requires two to respond.

An unidentified resident stated a lot of good things have been done in the Township and he is disappointed with how this issue is being handled. The Board needs to understand that we are saying no.

Lee Bloomquist of 6621 142nd Avenue said he really appreciated when he needed the deputy when people were shooting out near his property. He is in favor of an additional deputy.

Andrew Geurink asked if Fillmore and Overisel have been approached about sharing deputies. Meshkin responded this option has been explored but was not successful.

Mike Larson, Investigative Affairs for Allegan County Sheriff Department addressed the residents and Board. He explained how the scheduling is done and offered an open door to anyone who may have had an issue with response time or specific to an officer in the past. The Department believes in full transparency. Due to inadequate systems it is difficult to provide the statistics you are asking for. Deputies are not to go out of jurisdiction if it isn't an emergency. The County was divided into 6 sections with 4 townships per section. Now there are only three sections. In a perfect world there would be one deputy in each township but funding has decreased so that is not possible. Shift relief factor is also a factor with scheduling of court time and other duties. The prescription drug use in Allegan County including Laketown Township is a huge problem. The Sheriff's Department is open to answering any questions residents may have regarding the need for additional coverage.

Gene Berghorst said you are not a resident or a salesman and you have talked longer than the 3 minutes. Wendy Van Huis said we also wanted information. Berghorst stated that no one is disagreeing with what the officers are doing but what is bothering me is we are able to deal with what is provided with us now. What he is trying to present this information, why doesn't the Board know these things? You should already have these answers before this meeting started. Allegan Sheriff Department is doing an excellent job you guys have let us down not the Sheriff.

Eric Mosier said he feels safe in his township. I think if there are people in the township that do not feel safe maybe you need to step up and talk to each other.

A motion was made by Linda Howell and seconded by Ed Stielstra to close the public hearing. Supervisor Hofmeyer called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION MOTION APPROVED

A motion was made by Linda Howell and seconded by Wendy Van Huis to put Resolution 2014-11 #2 before the Board.

Ed Stielstra stated that he looks for a positive in all situations and he feels respect for his fellow board members and also the residents.

Linda Howell stated she read every letter we received and noted that approximately 52 people spoke tonight which is phenomenal appreciating that you came tonight to help us make a decision. I pulled the Allegan County report to review the calls and the budget which are all on the website under the annual report. I have been in the Township for over 20 years and have talked to the residents and have mixed reactions. I think overall making sure that Laketown stays safe is a task I take very seriously.

Wendy Van Huis stated that it is important to be proactive and not reactive which is what we are trying to do. The General Fund balance is constantly going down and we should take serious consideration as to whether we can continue to afford the one officer that we have. The comments were that they did not like the method and maybe they do not want two. If this passes we are secure in the fact that we will keep the one and maybe two and if we don't pass we may have to do away with the one we do have.

Ed Stielstra said the proactive approach to problems is always preferred. I would not want to be accused of not being proactive but should examine the methods we use.

Terry Hofmeyer said I like to think we are being proactive and realistically I am concerned about our budget with the General Fund at a little over half a mil. We talked about becoming a charter township and people didn't want it but if I look ahead in 2-3 years we are very frankly running out of money. The millages were turned down and it was a clear message. I take a look at what we were asking for and in terms of myself; the flat rate is less and a modestly small amount of money. We are happy to have the one deputy and I heard you do not want two deputies and I don't want to lose the one we have which I can see that happening in the next few years. Project Clarity is an important project that would affect the township and I feel strongly about things historic and they are changing how they fund that. We could put a lot of things on the ballot but it is clear that people do not want a special assessment and I can live with that. The project of putting it on the ballot again is a reasonable request but it would be August of 2016 for the next opportunity. We may be running out of funding prior to that. We could table it but it seems everyone is waiting for a response.

Wendy Van Huis said it is a tough thing to consider. One other thing to look at is the operating millage of .5 and City of Holland is 9 mils.

Linda Howell stated we heard people just do not want a second deputy is it possible to amend the motion to cover just the one deputy. Meshkin said the way the resolution is structured we have one in this fiscal year and the proposal is to go to two in the next fiscal year. That portion could simply be struck out reducing the approximate per parcel cost to \$35 annually.

Supervisor Hofmeyer called for a roll call vote on the motion.

Ed Stielstra – Nay

Wendy Van Huis – Nay

Linda Howell – Nay

Terry Hofmeyer - Nay

MOTION DENIED

ARTICLE X. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS - none

ARTICLE XI. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Linda Howell and seconded by Ed Stielstra to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 P.M. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTON APPROVED

Wendy Van Huis, Township Clerk

Diane Ybarra, Recording Secretary