

Regular Meeting
Homestead Township Board
November 13, 2024

A regular meeting of the Homestead Township Board was called to order at 6:04 pm by Supervisor Tia Cooley.

Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Present by Roll Call: Tia Cooley, Beverly Holbrook, Mike Mead, Shannon Purchase, Kit Wilson

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Cooley, Support by Purchase to approve the agenda amended to TKS Security bid to old business. All ayes, no nays, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Moved by Cooley, support by Purchase to approve the consent Agenda as presented. All ayes, no nays, motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Reports:

Assessor: Gunnar Brow reported that 38 parcels had been inspected from 2023 and older permits. 31 additional inspections will be performed for permits issued through 10/31/2024. There may be additional permits prior to year end. One land division is being processed. There are no pending Tribunal cases. There are no issues to date for presentation at the December Board of Review but the date will be reserved pending receipt of any appeals. Gunnar congratulated in incoming elected officials and expressed his appreciation of the opportunity to work with the new Board.

Parks: Paul Schulte reported that 10 people attended the grooming at the blueberry patch. While there is an issue with invasive species in the patch, Harp is trying to prolong the life of the bushes for as long as possible. Harp wants to extend the walk path to the Village to make the park more assessable. The commemorative benches will be ordered in April at a cost of \$2500 to sponsors.

There was discussion that the Board and Harp would like to accept the offer for signage at the Platte River Park in regards to invasive species at the kayak launch. Motion by Cooley, support by Purchase to notify the DNR of the Board's acceptance of signage. The clerk is to notify the DNR.

Shannon Purchase remarked that the bathrooms at the ballfield are getting little use and that he will be winterizing the plumbing and closing the park for the season very soon. It was discussed that we should request bids for mowing on a two-year basis in February, 2025.

Mike Mead brought up the fact that Priority Health will provide outdoor workout equipment for adults. The Board set this as a topic of interest for future development of the ballpark.

It was discussed that the Township may need to establish a Parks Board or committee to research development and define maintenance of our parks. It would make it easier and more efficient to apply

for grants and to do long term planning for growth and development if we had a committee/board. This will be pursued at future meetings.

Planning Commission: Mike Mead said the planning commission is hoping to approve the updated maps for the 20-year master plan at their next meeting. The plan will then be presented to the public. He noted that his compensation for the meeting should be the same as the commissioners make and not based on the per meeting rate of the trustees. That has been noted and will be corrected from this point forward. Tia Cooley made a motion that was supported by Mike Mead to appoint Beverly Holbrook as the recording secretary for the Planning Commission. All ayes, no nays, motion carried.

Concerns about the damage being done to the Township paving in proximity to the recycle bins was discussed.

Clerk's Report: Kit Wilson reported on the voter turnout for the general election and commented on the amazing election workers the Township is fortunate to have. She requested a new set of text books from Michigan Townships Association to add to the Townships library of manuals. She will be attending a seminar sponsored by MTA on December 19 in Thompsonville. There was discussion of some of the payroll issues that were found during the audit. A motion was made by Wilson, supported by Holbrook to waive the over-payments made to the trustees in the amounts of \$685 and \$400 respectively. Roll Call vote: Wilson, yes; Holbrook, yes; Mead, yes; Cooley, yes; Purchase, yes. Motion carried.

Motion by Wilson to make whole monies owed to the trustee who was not paid for attendance at multiple meetings that were properly reported in the amount of \$515. Support by Cooley. Roll call vote: Wilson, yes; Cooley, yes; Holbrook, yes; Mead, yes; Purchase, yes. Motion carried.

The issues with payroll taxes and other payroll inequities have been referred to the Township attorney. Both Cooley and Wilson have researched these matters and will be working together to provide the corresponding documents to the attorney in the near future. The accountants have been notified of the payroll tax issues and will be working with the Clerk to resolve these matters by the end of the year.

The State Police are in the process of vacating the front office at the Township Hall. We will be revamping the office space to provide an office setting for the fire chief and his deputy and a work area for the trustees.

A collaboration occurred to prepare a newsletter that will be sent with the December tax bills.

Officials were notified that they should be sworn in by November 20 when the term of office begins but must be sworn in by January 1, 2025 or forfeit their position. We are awaiting confirmation from Benzie County that the oaths can be administered.

Treasurer's report: Bev Holbrook reported that the diversification of funds and investment in CD's has earned \$435.57 in just 4 weeks. Bev will be attending a MTA sponsored Treasurer's class in Gaylord on November 20. She is gearing up for December taxes, has balanced the 2024 summer tax season and is working with the auditors to resolve some account reporting issues. Bev has also been researching cemetery programs for managing the sale of lots in Champion Hill and Homestead cemeteries. She has found one that is highly recommended by other local Townships.

No reports were presented by the Zoning Administrator, County Commissioner or Fire Chief.

Cooley moved and Mead supported to accept the reports as presented. All ayes, no nays. Motion carried.

Finance:

Payables: Wilson presented the payables report with some corrections. Due to the check issue dates, some of the accounts that were approved in October showed as November debts. General Fund Checking required an adjustment of \$16,983.54, with disbursements being corrected from \$51,927.63 to \$34,944.09. Parks and Recs Account required an adjustment of \$40,497.60 with total disbursements going from \$43,549.10 to \$3051.50. Late filed invoices from multiple vendors added \$2236.43 to monies to be dispersed.

Motion by Cooley, support by Purchase to accept the bills as adjusted and to include the late filed invoices in the amount shown above. Roll call: Cooley, yes; Purchase, yes; Mead, yes; Holbrook, yes; Wilson, yes. Motion carried.

OLD Business:

Snow Removal Bids: Two bids were submitted, they were opened by the Supervisor and presented to the Board. The bids were very close in regards to the dollar amount per plow. After much discussion, Holbrook moved and Cooley supported to accept the bid from Mark Gokey. Roll call vote: Holbrook, yes; Cooley, yes; Purchase, yes; Mead, yes; Wilson, yes. Motion carried. Clerk is to notify both bidders. There was concern expressed that the ad appeared as requested, the Clerk is to research this.

Ballpark Repairs: There was a lot of confusion over the original bids as they were not inclusive of the same repairs. It was determined that Shannon Purchase would reach out to the bidders to present revised bids that addressed the same items.

TKS Security: An additional quote was requested while workers were installing the security system to add an intercom and buzzer system to the front door. The quote had not arrived at the time of discussion so a motion was made by Purchase with support by Mead to allocate \$2000 for the additional items. Roll call vote: Purchase, yes; Mead, yes; Holbrook, yes; Cooley, yes; Wilson, yes. All ayes, no nays, motion carried. The Board will address this matter in December if additional funds are required to complete the project.

New Business:

UpAhead Proposal: The Board reviewed a proposal from UpAhead for a texting delivery service. There would be a charge of \$1900 for the first year setup and \$249 per month for the texting service, with a two to three year initial term required. The Board did not feel this was cost effective and that we would have to add temporary staff to build a library of local phone numbers to be efficient. It was agreed that this is not something we wish to pursue at this time.

Cemetery Duties: With the change in regime as a result of the election, it was felt that the Board needed to discuss which official would perform what tasks in regard to the management of the Township. The cemetery records need attention and will require quite of bit of time to bring them up to date. Bev Holbrook has been researching cemetery programs and will get a quote from Pontem. We will be looking at the fee for cemetery lots as it has not changed in many years, reviewing the cemetery ordinance and cross-training the Treasurer and Clerk to manage the sale of lots and record keeping.

Hall Rental Requests: Currently, The hall is only rented to residents of the Township with a rental fee of \$75 (with \$50 being returned if the hall is clean after use). It is felt that the rates may be too low as the cost of cleaning and utilities has increased. There was discussion that we might want to expand the rental market to non-residents but at a higher fee. This will be discussed again in the near future. The clerk will oversee hall rentals.

FOIA Requests: Currently, the Supervisor is handling FOIA requests. It was determined that this should be a shared task between the Supervisor and the Clerk as the Clerk has regular office hours and more access to historic records while the Supervisor has more experience with the process. The FOIA policy/guidelines will be reviewed and amended as needed.

Outdoor Lighting: The outdoor lighting has been deemed inadequate from a safety standpoint. There were issues during the election with inadequate lighting and inadequate supplies. Mike Mead will pursue this matter with Glen Lake Electric to see if grade level lighting can be added near the sidewalks and stairs and how the entrances can be better illuminated for safety.

Drop Boxes: There has been a lot of confusion over the drop box for general Township documents vs the Ballot Box for election purposes. It was suggested that they be placed next to each other &/or that a shelter be built over the gray drop box to keep moisture out &/or that signage be added to clarify proper usage. Further discussion to follow.

Supervisor Cooley advised that she will be starting the budget process for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. There was discussion as to allocating more funds for deputies to encourage participation in Township governance.

Public Comment:

Mr. Haan discussed the grading at the recycle center, asking whose responsibility it is to maintain the area. He stated that he would like to see the speed limit reduced on US Hwy 31 entering and exiting the Village. He believes the Township may have input on this matter and would like us to look into it. He asked for clarification on our earlier discussion about a parks committee and how that would affect HARP.

Mrs. Haan stated that she would like to see the Township compete with the Village for playground area and that she felt the ballfield would be a good location for a childrens playground.

Motion by Cooley, support by Purchase to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.