

**Northfield Township Board Meeting
Notes of Regular Meeting
Public Safety Building; 8350 Main Street
June 14, 2011**

and Popovic will be exposed to all departmental activities. Mozurkewich asked about liability; Greene said interns are required to carry their own insurance.

Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

Senior Center. Director Laity reported that the driveway is repaired and the parking lot will be sealed soon. Dockett thanked Laity for getting this done, and noted that Northfield Human Services is supposed to pay for two-thirds of the cost.

Wastewater Treatment Plan. Superintendent Cox referred to his written report.

Building/Zoning. Written report provided.

Supervisor

Mozurkewich reported that the Realtor has given the go ahead for the Phase II environmental work at 75 Barker Road. In answer to a question from Iaquinto, Mozurkewich said it is expected that the lease for the building will be signed in the next month. She also noted that a house next to that property is for sale. Dockett said he would not be at all interested in purchasing the house.

**Downtown Development Authority,
Zoning Board of Appeals, and
Planning Commission**

No meetings held since the last Board meeting.

BUDGET HEARING FOR 2011-2012 BUDGET

Mozurkewich referred to the proposed budget and made a PowerPoint presentation concerning it. Her comments included:

- Ideally the Township's vision statement, statement of mission and purpose, and statement of values should be considered when making all decisions.
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.) should be kept in mind.
- General Fund revenues are down \$6,250, Police Fund down \$33,260, and Fire/Medical Rescue down \$14,900. These declines are smaller than in past years and are consistent with declines in home values which may have reached or be near bottom.
- There have been no cuts in Police or Fire services or increased taxes.
- The Township received grants in 2011 for the Barker Road Path project, a tire cleanup, and downtown façade improvements.
- It will take until 2016-17 to recover from the \$300,000+ costs of the Grand Sakwa lawsuit costs.
- Services have been maintained by reducing operating costs through continued bidding out of contracts, utility savings, increased efficiency, cost reductions in

insurance premiums, and maximizing grant opportunities.

- The Township has invested in roads and trails and in the community through DDA efforts and with clean-up days.
- The General Fund balance is about \$1 million, and expenditures are lower than revenues.
- \$4,260 of the \$78,293 of the revenue decline is due to decreases in home values.
- It is commendable that cost savings in the Police Department have been achieved without cutting services to residents.
- This year the trend of Police expenses being higher than revenues was reversed.
- Fire/Medical Rescue Fund revenue has declined \$22,377. The cost split for liability insurance and the Public Safety Director expenses has been corrected from 80/20 between Police and Fire to 50/50.
- Long range plans and capital improvements needs should be considered by the Board to replace the aging Fire Department fleet.
- A small increase in sewer fees was implemented to prevent expenses from exceeding revenue. Cost savings through reduced energy use at the plant were realized, and if that continues consideration should be given to reducing fees.
- One of the best decisions the Board made a couple years ago was to actively engage all department heads in the budgeting process.

Dockett noted that in addition to increased monthly fees, the cost for a sewer hookup increased. In answer to a question from Dockett, Mozurkewich said the decrease in the Fire Department fund balance would have been greater without the \$20,000 contribution from the General Fund. Dockett asked when the Department is going to live within its budget. Mozurkewich said the Department is \$3,000 over their budget, and she is happy to hear any suggestions for cost savings from anyone.

A member of the public thanked the Fire Department for their service and said it is well worth the \$20,000 contribution from the General Fund. In answer to a question from a member of the public, Chief Wagner said the Department has 9 full-time, 3 part-time, and 6 Reserve (unpaid) Officers.

ACTION ITEMS

1.

Discussion on Property Tax Parcel 02-21-100-007

Mozurkewich referred to her memo dated June 10th explaining the history leading up to late fees being assessed for the Gore property. Manning said the Michigan Township's Association told her that the Township paying these fees would not be a good use of its funds; Mozurkewich said the County Treasurer said the Township may choose to pay the fees.

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In answer to a question from Iaquinto, Mozurkewich said the Township did not err in sending the tax bill for this property to the prior owner (who did not forward it to the new owner, who is now requesting that they not be required to pay the late fees), but the Township did contribute to the total problem by not having someone available in the Treasurer's office to respond to the property owner's inquiries.

Iaquinto said he is concerned about setting a precedent. Dockett said he believes the formula used to figure taxes owed as part of a sale is flawed, and he would be in support of the township paying these fees as the fair thing to do if it is legal.

Manning said she worked in a title office for nine years prior to service as Township Clerk. She said as a taxpayer she does not appreciate the Township paying taxes on one person's behalf, and she puts more weight on the MTA's advice because they deal specifically with Townships. She acknowledged this is a unique situation, but she is definitely concerned about setting a precedent.

Mozurkewich said while the law states that not receiving a tax bill does not relieve a property owner from paying the taxes, she feels **the Township Board did not act to cover the responsibilities of the Treasurer who was out on leave.** She said the County Treasurer told her that, while it is rare, Townships do sometimes admit that they have made a mistake which leads to extra costs for a taxpayer. Iaquinto said the Township Board had no obligation to act to cover the Treasurer's duties until the Treasurer informed the Board that she was taking leave.

Magda said the Township has not made any mistakes or broken any laws, and while he has empathy for the taxpayer, it is their responsibility to pay the fees. Manning read a statement from Trustee Stanalajczo who is out of town stating that the Northfield Township Treasurer did not make a mistake, and State law requires that any request to the County for the Township to be billed for penalties must be made by the Township Treasurer by stating that an error was made, which is not the case.

Rebekah Gore, the owner of the property, said this is their first home in the United States, having previously lived in Australia, and she thought she had followed all of the closing instructions. She acknowledged that she was ignorant about the date taxes are due, but she thinks that if someone files their property transfer affidavit on December 3rd the Township might think to notify them of taxes being due since the Township knew that tax bills had just gone out. She recited the list of visits and phone calls she made to the Township and said no one ever returned her calls. She said she feels she has been treated very poorly by the Township. She said she understands this is a lot of money for the Township, but it is a lot of money for her, too.

Dockett said the Gores have been treated poorly by the Township. Iaquinto agreed, but said he cannot support paying this. Mozurkewich said it appears there is no support for the Township to pay these fees.

A member of the public said the Gores own property and are responsible for paying taxes, but the Township Treasurer also has a responsibility to perform her job, but that was not being done during the period when the penalties accrued. Manning said according to the MTA it would be an illegal expenditure of Township funds for the Township to pay these penalties.

**2.
Dog Park Resolution Amendment**

Mozurkewich referred to her memo of June 8th and explained that the State would like to see an amendment to the agreement between the Township and the school district which would require the Township to cover the costs of moving the dog park should the school district need to regain possession of the property before the end of the 20 year agreement. She this is an unlikely occurrence, but if it happened, it likely that volunteers could be found to move the fencing.

► **Motion:** Mozurkewich moved, Magda supported, that the existing resolution of support for the dog park be amended with the language presented.

Dockett said he did not vote for the original resolution, and will not vote for this. He said in a rural community everyone has enough property of their own for their dogs and this is a waste of money Mozurkewich noted that this is being funded through a grant and volunteer labor. Dockett said he does not want to commit to covering the costs of moving the park

Motion carried 4—1 on a roll call vote, Dockett opposed. Resolution adopted.

**3.
Agreement for Urban County**

Mozurkewich referred to the Cooperative Agreement for Community Development Block Grant & Home Investment Partnership Programs. She noted that the Township was eligible for the façade improvement funds it received through participating in this partnership. She added there is no cost for this participation.

► **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Magda supported, that the Urban County Cooperative Agreement be approved as presented.

In answer to a question from Dockett, Mozurkewich said the only drawback to being part of this group is that the Township cannot submit its own request for funding, but there is a staff working for the Urban County group who write grant requests on behalf of all of the members.

Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

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**4.
Planning Commission Resolution**

Mozurkewich noted that this is required by a change in State law and she referred to the proposed resolution.

- ▶ **Motion:** Mozurkewich moved, Iaquinto supported, that Northfield Township adopt the *Northfield Township Ordinance to Confirm the Establishment of a Planning Commission with Zoning Authority*.

In answer to a question from Dockett, Iaquinto said this is a formality to comply with the new State law and the Planning Commission did not review this. Manning said the Township actually adopted this in 1997, and this is a reauthorization which must be done by July 1st. Mozurkewich said the Planning Commission would be operating outside its authority if this is not done.

**Motion carried 5—0 on a roll call vote.
Resolution adopted.**

**5.
Consider Civic Event Permit Application
from Whitmore Lake 4th of July Committee**

Manning referred to the written application and noted that both Police and Fire have signed off on it and the fee has been received.

- ▶ **Motion:** Manning moved, Iaquinto supported, that the Civic Event Application for the Whitmore Lake 4th of July Committee be approved as presented.

Iaquinto thanked the Committee for all of the hard work the members of this committee has done. Dockett asked whether the Township has asked the Committee to pay for any of the costs of the Police and Fire personnel. Iaquinto said all of the people working on this are volunteers, and there is barely enough money each year to put on the Fireworks. Chief Wagner said the Township did not ask the Committee for money.

In answer to a question from Mozurkewich, Wagner said the Committee has spent a significant amount of time working with the Police and Fire Departments on plans for this event. In answer to a question from Dockett, Wagner said the Township general fund contributes about \$2,000 toward the cost of this event.

Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

**6.
Consider Permit for Fireworks Display**

Manning referred to the Permit request. Mozurkewich asked why the State has not approved this. Manning said only the Township approves these. Chief Wagner said the

State used to approve these, but no longer does, and the DEQ has approved this request.

- ▶ **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Magda supported, that the permit for fireworks display submitted by Robert Cortis be approved as presented.

Dockett questioned whether the bond for \$1,000,000 is sufficient should something catastrophic happen. Magda suggested that in future years the DEQ permit be included in the Board packets.

Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

**7.
Request for Help from Deputy Treasurer**

Manning referred to the memo of June 10th from Deputy Treasurer Pam Boegler requesting help with the Treasurer's duties. Boegler requested help for three days per week (eight hours each) with an option for a fourth day. Iaquinto asked what the salary would be. Manning said \$8-\$10 per hour is likely.

- ▶ **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Magda supported, that the hiring of a part-time person in the Treasurer's office be approved, with a maximum 32 hours per week and a maximum pay rate of \$12/hour.

Mozurkewich said if someone consistently works 32 hours/week they become eligible for benefits. Iaquinto and Magda agreed to amend their motion.

- ▶ **Amended motion:** Iaquinto moved, Magda supported, that the hiring of a part-time person in the Treasurer's office be approved, with a maximum 30 hours per week and a maximum pay rate of \$12/hour.
Amended motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No comments.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Community Events. Iaquinto announced that the movie *Tron: Legacy* will be shown this Friday, June 17th on a 20' x 25' screen near Whitmore Lake as a fundraiser toward purchasing a thermal imaging camera for the Township.

Mozurkewich noted that there will also be a concert on the lake on Sunday from 5:00 P.M.—7:00 P.M. by The Cats and the Fiddlers.

Mozurkewich also referred to the book *Dirt Road Washtenaw* by local area author Rob Pulcifer, and reported that he will be leading a ride on Monday, leaving from the Peaberry Bean at 5:00 P.M., followed by a