

## GRATTAN TOWNSHIP BOARD

Regular Meeting of August 11, 2008

### Call to Order

Township Supervisor Frank Force called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### Pledge of Allegiance

F. Force led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Roll Call

D. Timmons read the roll call. Members present: Supervisor F. Force, Treasurer Sabrina Freeman, Clerk J. Fues and Trustee P. Knoerl. Members absent: Trustee D. Heffron. Fire Chief Lou Kirkbride also attended the meeting.

### Approval of the Agenda

P. Knoerl added a review of O & M costs, discussion of a replacement for Jan Breimayer and an update on the Satterlee park property to the agenda. J. Fues moved and S. Freeman seconded to approve the amended agenda. All ayes. The motion carried.

### Officers Report (Clerk's Report)

### Approval of Minutes

S. Freeman noted a minor correction to the July 14, 2008 minutes. J. Fues moved and P. Knoerl seconded to approve the amended minutes. All ayes. The motion carried.

### Budget Amendments

S. Freeman presented two budget amendments for \$243.00 from department computer support to cable computer support and \$2000.00 from annual audit to Clerk education and training. S. Freeman moved and J. Fues seconded to approve the budget amendments as presented. All ayes. The motion carried.

### Accounts Payable

J. Fues moved and S. Freeman seconded to approve accounts payable in the amount of \$48,050.79 (checks 32037 & 32098-32153 inclusive). All ayes. The motion carried.

### Consent Agenda

P. Knoerl moved and J. Fues seconded to approve the consent agenda. All ayes. The motion carried.

#### Working Agenda

#### Hearing of the Public

There were no public comments.

#### Department Reports

##### Fire Department

F. Force read the monthly fire department report. There were 5 personal injury accidents, 12 medical, 3 service calls, 3 non fire, 2 mutual aid, 2 training and 2 training meetings for a total of 29 in the month of July.

##### Fire Administration and Safety Committee

F. Force reported on the meeting. He said there was discussion regarding the Township's ISO evaluation and rating. A report on that matter should be available at the next meeting. The new well and hydrant should be completed soon. J. Fues said DNR grants have been filed and he is awaiting response from the DNR. L. Kirkbride said the Fire Department is considering a fundraiser for a future project. He also said he did an inspection of Green's Landing, made recommendations to the owners and all those recommendations have been taken care of.

##### Zoning Officer Report

F. Force said there are several complaints the Enforcement Officer will review when he returns from vacation. Mr. Force will also ask the Enforcement Officer to see if the requirement to erect fencing and a vegetative border on the north and east sides of Rox, LLC's development at Bryne and 4-Mile has been completed.

##### Safety Board of Appeals

There was no meeting.

##### Sewer Report

F. Force gave a brief report on flow meters. P. Knoerl said the Township should get a report on the accuracy for application, not just flow on mag meters in writing and also check references. F. Force said mission dialers can not measure flow on a one time basis. The flow measurements are an average. He also said he checked with Triple K Irrigation. That company only installs set in sprinklers and does not install center pivot irrigation. P.

Knoerl asked how the irrigation rates have been running. F. Force said those rates are close to 100% of allowable irrigation. J. Fues asked if Sierra Consultants is using the rain gauges. F. Force will ask Sierra.

#### Planning Commission

A. Berry said the Planning Commission reviewed ordinances for portable storage containers, outside wood burning furnaces and wind turbines. There was a discussion about how to inform residents of new ordinances. F. Force said ordinance amendments and new ordinances are noticed in the paper. Board members agreed to also include information in the Township's newsletter as well as posting information at the Township Hall and on the Township's website.

(D. Heffron arrived at 7:30 p.m.)

#### Zoning Board of Appeals

A. Berry said the ZBA reviewed 3 variance requests. One request was denied on the grounds that the proposed structure could be relocated and two requests were approved.

#### Building Department

There were 2 new and 8 other building permits, 6 electrical, 2 plumbing and 5 mechanical for a total of 23 in the month of July.

#### Old Business

#### PDR Update

D. Heffron said there are 3 farms in Vergennes Township in the next round of PDR farms.

#### Sewer

#### Grattan/Vergennes Permit Renewal-Soil Borings

F. Force explained that the Grattan/Vergennes sewer permit renewal requires soil borings to evaluate the clay layer at that system. He said there was some confusion in the initial letter from the DEQ and the deadline for the soil boring work plan has passed. Prein and Newhof had been working with the DEQ on clarification of their requests. The Township currently has a moratorium with Prein and Newhof to provide work only at the request of the Township. Mr. Force wrote a letter to the DEQ asking if installation of the new irrigation system would solve some of the problems. He has not received a reply as of today. The Township has received similar bids from Prein and Newhof and Sierra Consultants to provide a work plan. Prein and Newhof would first like to contact the DEQ to see if they will change some of the requirements.

There was a discussion about the high levels of sodium chloride in the sewer system from water softeners and ways to lower the amounts entering the sewer system. D. Heffron said he was not surprised that some, areas, especially low areas, have a higher concentration of sodium chloride because of the way the water was being distributed.

P. Knoerl moved and D. Heffron seconded to approve spending \$500.00 to have Prein and Newhof challenge the DEQ permit renewal requirements. All ayes. The motion carried.

It was suggested that the Kent County Health Department would have information on sodium chloride levels in private wells in the Township. The Township will request that information.

Sierra

F. Force said he and J. Fues met with Dave Ver Sluis, Sierra Consultants, to discuss ways to lower the Township's sewer costs. Mr. Ver Sluis said he would rewrite the contract, but to date the Township has not received anything from Mr. Ver Sluis.

Board members agreed that the Township could not afford to pay the steadily increasing costs of sewer operation and maintenance. Sierra has made a FOIA request for a copy of the Township's infrastructure proposal. It was agreed to send another letter to Sierra requesting a new contract by 8-31-08 and if that is not done by 9-1-08, consider taking bids for a new company to operate the sewer system. The current contract with Sierra allows the Township to terminate the contract.

Infrastructure-Complete Sewer Audit

F. Force said he received a bid of \$15,000.00 from Infrastructure Alternatives for a complete sewer audit. P. Knoerl said when the Township did the recent rate study a lot of that information was already gathered.

KCDPW- Work Estimate

Board members discussed KCDPW offer to provide a bid to the Township for a fee of \$850.00 and agreed the Township should not pay for a bid.

Kennedy

F. Force gave an update on the Kennedy lawsuit. He said the court ordered award for attorney fees has been withdrawn. An audience member suggested looking at attorney fees from the ticket. D. Heffron asked if there has been an annual inspection of the Kennedy and Nowak properties. F. Force said there have been no inspections. There was a discussion about this matter and it was agreed to have the Township Enforcement Officer and the County Sheriff do those inspections.

## FASC Transcriber

F. Force asked for opinions on transcribers who are also members of a committee “double dipping”, or being paid as a member and the transcriber. Board members discussed the matter. P. Knoerl moved and D. Heffron seconded to allow a person to continue to be on a committee and transcribe, but only be paid at the higher of the 2 salaries. All ayes. The motion carried.

## Committee Training-Planning Commission and ZBA

J. Fues explained the requirement for all new members of the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals to complete the Citizen Planner training offered thru the MSU Extension. The course is offered online and in a classroom setting. Computer access is provided at the Township. To date, some members have not registered or completed the course. J. Fues said if members do not register within one year the Township can consider that a resignation from their appointment. Board members agreed to send a letter to those members who have not registered for or completed the Citizen Planner course with a response deadline of 8-31-08.

## New Business

### Delinquent Escrows

J. Fues explained that the Township is holding escrows that are quite old. Those escrows were refunded, but returned to the Township by the applicant. Mr. Fues explained that the Township requires substantial progress on a project within 12 months of application. If that requirement is not met the applicant is refunded their escrow money and if they wish to continue the project they must reapply with the Township. He asked Board members for their support in another attempt to refund the old escrow money with the stipulation that regardless if the Township's refund check is cashed or not, the applicant must reapply if they wish to move forward with that project. Board members supported J. Fues request to refund that escrow money. The Township is also owed escrow money and it was agreed to try to collect that money before filing a claim in small claims court.

### Road Improvements KCRC

F. Force asked Board members to reapprove a \$10,000 Kent County Road Commission work order for repairs on Abrahams Drive and Jenks Street . D. Heffron moved and P. Knoerl seconded to approve those repairs by the county. All ayes. The motion carried.

D. Heffron said the county needs to trim overhanging trees and cut back brush on the sides of the road on many of the Township's back roads. He said some roads are so narrow another vehicle could not pass when he is driving farm equipment. He was concerned about safety issues.

## New Financial Audit

J. Fues said the new audit firm has completed their audit of the Township. Their audit report will be filed online. The audit firm has requested a 5-year forecast on capital projects. J. Fues and S. Freeman will create that forecast report. Mr. Fues said he was pleased with the new audit firm and noted that Township saved over \$12,000 in audit fees this year.

## Grattan Vergennes Meeting

J. Fues will schedule a joint meeting of Grattan and Vergennes Board members to discuss ways for the Township's to save money.

## Capital Improvement Program

F. Force provided information regarding a capital improvements program for public structures and improvements that alone or jointly with one or more other local units of government, own or operate a water supply or sewage disposal system. S. Freeman said most of the requirements were done when the Township did the sewer rate study. Board members agreed to discuss this matter at the joint meeting with Vergennes Board members.

## Board Member Communications

### Meeting Dates

The alternative Board meeting date is August 25, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. The next regular Board meeting date is September 8, 2008.

### Adjournment

There being no further business, F. Force declared the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Jim Fues, Township Clerk Date

Franklin J. Force, Township Supervisor

Diane Timmons

Recording Secretary