

GRATTAN TOWNSHIP BOARD
Regular Meeting of March 9, 2009

1. Call to Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

F. Force led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

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

4. Approval of the Agenda

Under new business a new fireman application was added as item 8, website software was added as item 9 and lawn mowing bids was added as item 10. D. Heffron moved and J. Fues seconded to approve the amended agenda. All ayes. The motion carried.

5. Officers Report (Clerk's Report)
Approval of Minutes

P. Knoerl moved and S. Freeman seconded to approve the February 19, 2009 special Township Board minutes as presented. All ayes. The motion carried.

P. Knoerl moved and D. Heffron seconded to approve the February 23, 2009 special Township Board minutes as amended. All ayes. The motion carried.

Budget Amendments

D. Heffron moved and P. Knoerl seconded to approve budget amendments (transferring a total of \$3637.00 from election accounts, landscaping and newsletter expense to general administration equipment/software and senior hall expense) as presented. All ayes. The motion carried.

Accounts Payable

J. Fues moved and P. Knoerl seconded to approve accounts payable in the amount of \$22,860.17, (checks 32514-32546 inclusive). All ayes. The motion carried.

6. Consent Agenda
Payroll
Treasurer's Report (all funds)
Correspondence

P. Knoerl moved and D. Heffron seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented. All ayes. The motion carried.

7. Working Agenda
Hearing of Public

Dave Benson asked what is going on with computer seizures at the Township. F. Force said the Board has been advised by the Township's attorneys not to comment on that issue. J. Fues said the Board will be able to answer questions when the matter is not an active file.

Tom Manikowski asked the Board to consider run off to Big Pine Island Lake from irrigation at the proposed new irrigation land west of Lincoln Lake Road and the close proximity of that land to a populated area. F. Force said he will bring that up at the next Sewer Advisory meeting. D. Heffron said runoff from irrigated water is cleaner than the lake water. J. Fues said most sewer operators agree that more area for irrigation is valuable.

F. Force briefly explained the 2008 overflow. He said Sierra inherited critical lagoon water levels 2 years ago. There was a discussion about the addition of new sewer connections. F. Force said there is limited capacity available. D. Heffron said there are potential new sewer customers within the sewer district.

An audience member asked if the Township is working on the Grattan/Vergennes sprinkler system. Board members said the Township has been working with the DEQ on this matter. D. Heffron explained how crops at the irrigation site help remove nitrates and phosphorous from the irrigated water. An audience member asked if harvesting those crops interferes with irrigation. F. Force said harvesting time is built into the irrigation cycle. Several audience members asked how the cost of repairing the Grattan/Vergennes irrigation site will be funded. Board members said the projected cost of that upgrade is between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Annual costs to maintain the sewer system are approximately \$250,000. Twenty percent of each customer's quarterly sewer bill is designated for capital improvements and eighty percent for maintenance. Improvements are proposed to begin in the fall of 2010.

M. Middlestadt asked if the Township was working with Prein & Newhof when the moratorium was in effect. F. Force said Prein & Newhof provided their services free of charge.

There was a discussion about Sierra Consultants annual budget. M. Middlestadt asked what that budget was. S. Freeman said the 2008/2009 budgeted amount

Draft: 03/14/09

Approved: 4/13/09

was \$159,000. P. Knoerl said although the Township has made improvements to the system, the cost of maintaining the system has increased. T. Manikowski said capital improvements to the system are inevitable and asked if they would be funded with a rate increase or special assessment. F. Force said the Board would like to get a consensus from sewer customers on how to fund the improvements.

Annette Beatty asked what the length of the new sewer contract will be. Board members said it will be a 2 year contract. A. Beatty said a new sewer contractor will have to learn the system. Board members said the bid packet included detailed information about the sewer system. There was a discussion about the Board's qualification to make the decision to award a contract. It was noted that that is the Board's responsibility. F. Force said the Board will consider references, background and staff. P. Knoerl said experience and in house engineer will also be considered.

J. Fues said for 30 years the Township has just collected enough money for operation and maintenance of the system. It was recommended to the Board last year that the quarterly sewer rate be increased to \$225.00 in order to fund capital improvements to the system. After hearing sewer customer concerns about that rate increase, the Board increased the quarterly rate to \$125.00.

D. Ver Sluis, Sierra Consultants, said the irrigation pond level is at 25 million gallons and not overflowing like Prein & Newhof said it would. He also said at the January 19, 2009 Board meeting the Board agreed to send him a contract and at the next meeting Sierra Consultants was fired.

Department Reports

Fire Department

Fire Chief Lou Kirkbride reported 1 brush fire, 2 structure fires, 1 personal injury accident, 4 medical calls, 2 non fire, 2 mutual aid and 4 training for a total of 14 for the month of February. He reported that the new well is fantastic.

Fire Administration and Safety Committee

L. Kirkbride said the FASC discussed the free fire alarm/smoke detector program, DNR grants, well grants and grants for water pumping stations at lakes. He said sensors have been installed on the fire department garage doors.

Zoning Officer Report

Board members reviewed the Zoning Officers February 2009 complaint status and updates report.

Safety Board of Appeals

There was no meeting.

Sewer Report

Draft: 03/14/09

Approved: 4/13/09

F. Force said mechanical upgrades should be completed by the end of 2009. F. Force provided a copy of the proposed timeline for the Grattan/Vergennes irrigation project. He will be meeting with D. Heffron to discuss the project. F. Force said Township engineers have submitted a request on behalf of the Township for stimulus money for the irrigation project. He said it appears there will be limited funding available.

J. Fues said sewer contractor bids are due March 19, 2009. Those sealed bids will be opened at the March 23, 2009 Township Board meeting. He suggested having Harold Bailey help with the bids.

Board members discussed the application/request to irrigate 83 acres west of Lincoln Lake Road. P. Knoerl asked if the Township can request early irrigation (04/01/09) at that site. F. Force said that would only be permitted if a grass crop has been planted at the irrigation site. D. Heffron asked if the ponds are okay. M. Middlestadt said the ponds are at 25 million gallons, 2.5 million gallons below the freeboard and 6 million gallons to overflow. He noted that this was the number of gallons at which Prein & Newhof predicted an overflow. D. Heffron asked where the overflow pipe is located. M. Middlestadt said that pipe is located close to the 2 foot freeboard. D. Heffron asked if the Township was provided a key to the new lock installed at the irrigation site. It was noted that the old lock is at the site now. D. Ver Sluis said Sierra put a new lock at the irrigation site because they were worried about sabotage.

Annette Beatty said about ¼ of the proposed irrigation property is in the County drainage district and tiles under the road drain to the lake. D. Heffron said the current irrigation site dumps into the ditch, but noted that the water being irrigated is supposed to be clean and end up back in the lake. D. Heffron said the proposed additional irrigation site would have to be approved by the DEQ. He said the County Drain Commissioner could provide locations of drains and ditches in that area. A. Beatty said the County ditch has not been maintained for a long time.

Jackie Vander Ploeg asked that the next sewer meeting be scheduled in the evening.

Planning Commission

There was no meeting.

Zoning Board of Appeals

There was no meeting.

Building Department

There were no permits requested in the month of February.

Old Business

PDR update

Draft: 03/14/09

Approved: 4/13/09

D. Heffron said there was nothing new to report.

Prein & Newhof Moratorium

P. Knoerl said the Prein & Newhof moratorium went into effect last year. He said the moratorium will remain in effect until the Board changes that decision. He noted that there is nothing in writing regarding the moratorium except the meeting minutes. The moratorium requires Board approval for any money spent for Prein & Newhof services. Before the moratorium Board approval was required for anything over \$500.00. Board members agreed that the moratorium does not have to be in writing. They will check to see when that moratorium went into effect.

8. New Business

Fire Millage Request

J. Fues said the fire department's millage request must be on a ballot again this year. He said there is currently nothing on the August ballot. If the fire department millage is the only item on that ballot the Township would pay the entire cost of the election. J. Fues said he would prefer to include that item on the November ballot. J. Brown, Township Attorney, has recommended that the Township either extend or decrease the time covered by the millage request in order to align that request with the Presidential election. Board members discussed the matter. P. Knoerl will discuss the matter with the fire department and report back to the Board.

Dates for FY 2009/10 Regular Board Meetings

J. Fues presented proposed 2009/10 regular Board meeting dates. F. Force asked that the November 2009 meeting date be changed to November 1, 2009.

Ashley Cemetery Flag

J. Fues said the American flag at Ashley Cemetery is not illuminated at night. Flags not illuminated must be taken down before dusk and put up again. Board members discussed the cost of illuminating the flag. It was agreed to look into the cost of installing a solar powered spot light.

Authorization for Special Permits

J. Fues said some special permits such as St. Patrick's recent request for signed documentation by the Township stating the Township was aware of St. Patrick's request for a one day liquor license; require approval at a Board meeting. He said some applicants are not always aware of this requirement and a special Board meeting must be called to meet deadlines. J. Fues recommended Township Board approval of an annual resolution allowing one person, or any Board member to review that type of application and give authorization. Board members discussed and agreed that the Township Clerk should have that authorization. J. Fues will prepare a resolution for consideration at the next Board meeting.

Township Liability Insurance

Board members reviewed insurance quotes from Burnham & Flowers (\$25,510.00) and Pinnacle Insurance Partners (\$13,691.00). It was noted that coverage on both quotes was close. Representatives from both insurance companies gave a brief statement. It was noted that Pinnacle Insurance Partners has been insuring both Courtland and Vergennes Townships for one year and both Townships have been happy with Pinnacle.

P. Knoerl moved and D. Heffron seconded to award the Township's insurance policy effective April 1, 2009 to Pinnacle Insurance Partners at the quoted cost of \$13,691.00. D. Timmons read the roll call. All ayes. The motion carried.

Township Server

S. Freeman provided 3 quotes for replacement of the computer tower that currently works as the Township's server. She said the Township has been experiencing difficulties with that method of backing up data.

Board members reviewed quotes from Addorio (\$3888.00), CPR (\$6239.00) and Specialized Computer Solutions, Inc. (\$6211.00).

J. Fues moved and P. Knoerl seconded to authorize S. Freeman to contract with Addorio Technologies, LLC in the amount of \$3888.00 for the purchase of a new Township server. All ayes. The motion carried.

Township Pension Policy

J. Fues explained that last year the Board agreed to exclude certain Township employees from the Township's pension policy. Those excluded were Committee members, fireman, temporary employees (6 months or less), transcribers and the Zoning Enforcement officer. Board members discussed this matter. P. Knoerl recommended excluding all those previously excluded except fireman.

J. Fues moved and P. Knoerl seconded that for employees eligible for the Township's pension plan the following be excluded: Committee members, temporary employees (6 months or less), transcribers and the Zoning Enforcement officer. All ayes. The motion carried.

New Fireman Application

F. Force asked the Board to consider adding Thomas Jacobs as a volunteer fireman. Township Fire Chief Lou Kirkbride said Fire Department officers and members of the FASC all recommend Mr. Jacobs.

J. Fues moved and D. Heffron seconded to approve Thomas Jacobs as a volunteer fireman. D. Timmons read the roll call. All ayes. The motion carried. Township Supervisor F. Force welcomed Mr. Jacobs to the Grattan Township volunteer fire department.

Website software

P. Knoerl said there has been a request to purchase Adobe Fireworks CS4 to facilitate loading color photos to the Township's website. The cost of the program is \$300.00. S. Freeman will present a budget amendment to cover this cost at the next Board meeting.

Lawn Mowing Bids

Board members agreed to send out per cut bids for lawn mowing service.

9. Board Member Communications

Meeting Dates

The next regular Board meeting date is March 23 at 7:00 p.m. (Open sealed bids for Sewer Operator contracts). The next Sewer Advisory meeting is March 26, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The Township budget public hearing is March 30, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The April regular Board meeting date is April 13, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, F. Force declared the meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Jim Fues, Township Clerk

Date

Franklin J. Force, Township Supervisor

Date

Diane Timmons
Recording Secretary