

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

WALNUT TOWNSHIP, FAIRFIELD COUNTY, OH - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

11420 Millersport Rd. NE, Millersport, OH 43046

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 7, 2023 - 7:00 PM

Township Officials present:

Trustees Terry W. Horn, William R. Yates, Trustee Doug Leith and Fiscal Officer (FO) Pam Underwood were present.

Department Heads/Staff present:

Roads & Parks Supervisor - Nate Wagner; Fire Chief - Robert Price; Zoning Inspector - Mike Berry; Property Maintenance Inspector - Kelly Smith and Secretary and Fiscal Accounting Clerk - Tammy Oliver were present; Regional Planning Commission Representative - Robert W. Slater II was absent.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Trustee Chairman Yates and the Pledge of allegiance was cited.

Invited/Special guest(s) present: Fairfield County Sheriff's Office Sgt Sean Burke

Number of members of the public present: 30 as recorded on Sign-in sheets.

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Sgt. Burke - Shared that the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office has purchased a K-9 therapy dog. The dog is currently with a school resource officer. And will be utilized at various events. Also, the department recently put two officers into service that are K-9 handlers. The department is currently on 12-hour shifts. The department would like to have a K-9 on each shift. A third dog has been purchased.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes for the Hearing on October 3, 2023 were presented for approval. Trustee Horn made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Trustee Leith seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

The minutes for the Regular meeting on October 3, 2023 were presented for approval. Trustee Horn made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Trustee Leith seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

The minutes for the Continuation Hearing on October 24, 2023 were presented for approval. Trustee Horn made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Trustee Leith seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

The minutes for the Special meeting on November 2, 2023 with the Fairfield County Commissioners were presented for approval. Trustee Horn made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Trustee Yates seconded the motion. The motion passed with 2 yes votes. Trustee Leith abstained because he was not in attendance at the meeting.

Financial Reports – Fiscal Office, Pam Underwood:

Approval of Checks and Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT's):

Trustee Horn made a motion to approve checks # 29011 through # 29141, and Electronic Fund Transfers #540-2023 through #587-2023. Trustee Leith seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

Trustee Leith made the motion, seconded by Trustee Horn to approve the following reports which include: Investment Listings, Appropriation Summaries, Cash Summaries, Fund Status, Payment Detail Listings and the Bank Reconciliation Reports for September 2023. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

Trustee Leith made the motion and Trustee Horn seconded the motion to approve the renewal of the Township's healthcare coverage with United Healthcare. The renewal rates are a 30% decrease compared to our 2023 rates. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

Trustee Leith made the motion and Trustee Horn seconded the motion to approve the renewal of Township's Insurance Coverage with Benistar for 2024. The renewal rates are a 4.75% Increase. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

The Fiscal office has not received the 2024 Dental Insurance renewal rates. The life insurance rates with Medical Mutual are not changing, and the vision insurance with Vision Service Plan (VSP) was renewed and approved in 2023 for a two-year period.

There will be no change to the employee/elected official contribution rate of 20% of the Township provided health Insurance for 2024.

The Township will pay for the OTA Winter Conference Registration for 2024 for all Department Heads and Supervisors who commit to attending the conference for at least one of the scheduled days. The fiscal office will get the commitments and register all those who plan on attending.

Comments from the public:

There were comments from the public that the Township needed to invest in Public Address System (PA System) for large meetings.

There were members of the public who spoke in favor of the short-term rentals (STR) and the benefits to the community.

There were Walnut Township Residents who stated they were against the short-term rentals and described problems with those people who were renting the short-term rentals.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Property Maintenance Inspector – Kelly Smith;

Maintenance Violations logs were distributed to the Trustees prior to the meeting, updating her progress with the Township's Property Maintenance Violations. Kelly noted that she had 39 written violations this year and that most residents have come in to compliance. There was public concern for residents with disabilities being given violations. Kelly explained the procedures she follows for determining violations and that the Township tries to work with Residents as much as possible with helping them to get in to compliance.

Parks and Roads Supervisor – Nate Wagner;

Parks:

Port-a-johns have been pulled for the winter in the parks.

Roads:

Two new snow plows have been installed.

Crack sealing has been completed.

The guard rail on Bateson has been repaired.

The Village of Thurston did not contract with Walnut Township to provide salt and plowing this year.

Columbia gas is doing a project on South Bank Road and they are digging up 700 feet of the road that was paved 2-3 years ago. Nate has met with the Engineer and construction crew on the site. The prosecutor's office is drafting a maintenance agreement for Columbia Gas to make repairs to the road.

Trustee Horn made the motion to authorize the Roads Supervisor to sign the roads use maintenance agreement with Columbia Gas for South Bank Road. Seconded by Trustee Leith. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

A citizen alerted Nate that there was a need for Nate that there was no traffic control on Crescent Cove and Spring Run Road. Nate spoke with the County Engineers office who gave their opinion that the Townships should install stop signs. Nate recommended that the Trustees approve resolution # 31-2023 to authorize installing stop signs at Spring Run Road and Custer Point and Crescent Cove and Spring Run Road. Trustee Leith moved to approve Resolution #31-2023 and Trustee Horn seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.

Township Fire Department - Chief Robert Price;

Chief Price stated there were 112 Total Runs in October 2023.

Chief Price and Nate Wagner met with a BWC representative and discussed the availability of BWC grant funds that are available to both the Fire Department and the Roads department. Nate and Chief Price will be working on the application in the coming weeks.

The water well problems at Station #2 have been corrected.

There will be another DEA Drug Take Back event in April 2024.

Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Representative – Robert Slater II;

Mr. Slater was not present.

Zoning – Mike Berry;

12 permits issued in October 2023: 2 home, 1 addition, 2 sheds, 2 Decks, 3 variances, and 1 Ag-exempt. No outstanding fees.

Letters issued: 21 letters issued, 2 citations (3224 Shepard Avenue) and 19 variances.

Returned 97 phone calls.

OLD BUSINESS

- 1. North Walnut Township Storm Water (Phase One/OPWC Application)** - Trustee Horn updated the Trustees on the status of the North Walnut Township Storm Water Phase One. We are waiting to hear from the Earmark which is a Federal Grant of \$1,000,000.00 for Lakeside Phase 2. If we get the OPWC grant we will use that as our matching funds for the Federal Grant.
- 2. BLRC/Walnut Township logo/identity** – Trustee Horn updated the Trustees on where the Logo Committee stood. There is a committee meeting on November 15, 2023 at 6:30 pm. The consultants will present logos for Walnut Township and for Fairfield Beach. The public is invited.
- 3. Bike Buckeye Lake** - Terry Fisher was in attendance representing Bike Buckeye Lake. Mr. Fisher updated the Trustees with a copy of the LPA Purchase Agreement. Mr. Fisher explained that their grant will pay for the signs and the cost of the installation of the signs. Trustee Leith moved that the Trustees agree to have Chairman Yates sign the current LPA Agreement with the included modifications that the Township is not be responsible for any money to be expended for the Bike Buckeye Lake Project. The motion was seconded by Trustee Horn. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.
- 4. Salt Storage Facility** – Trustee Horn updated the Trustees with his research on effective cost savings alternatives with regards to the construction of the Salt Storage facility. Trustee Horn explained that the Township may be able to use asphalt instead of concrete for the flooring to save money.
- 5. Property Maintenance issues** – The two properties that had violations for high grass, one property in New Salem and a property at Lakeside, were taken care of by the property owners with minimal expense for the Township.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **County Land use plan** - Trustee Yates announced that there would be a meeting with Fairfield County commissioner Fix on November 8th at 7:00 pm at the Walnut Township Building.
2. **Fire Levy Information and a “Resolution of Necessity”** - Chief Price explained that the Township is asking for a 2.6 Mill Levy to assist with funding the hiring of 6 additional Full-time Fire Fighters and assist with additional expenses. The 2.6 Mill levy will generate approximately \$913,000.00 per year. The first step in putting the millage on the ballot is passing the “Resolution of Necessity” that the Fairfield County Prosecutor drafted for the Township. Trustee Leith made the motion to approve the Resolution of Necessity # 32-2023. The motion was seconded by Trustee Horn. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.
3. **Solar Resolution Request** – Trustee Yates expressed his desire for the Walnut Township Trustees to get legal opinion/advice on compiling a resolution stating that Walnut Township is not in favor of Utility scale solar within Walnut Township and presented it to the Fairfield County Commissioners. Walnut Township’s residents oppose the Solar fields and losing a vast amount of the Township’s farmland. A Motion was made by Trustee Leith and seconded by Trustee Yates to have Trustee Yates move forward with getting a legal opinion on a resolution. The motion passed with 2 yes votes. Trustee Horn abstained.
4. **Full-Time status of the Fiscal Accounting Clerk effective November 1, 2023** - A motion was made by Trustee Leith and seconded by Trustee Horn to approving the Fiscal Accounting Clerk, Tammy Oliver, as a full-time salaried position effective November 12, 2023 for an annual salary of \$53,000.00. The motion passed with 3 yes votes.
5. **New Phone System** – The Fiscal Office requested guidance on how the Trustees would like their new Telephone System lines to be set-up by our Internet consultants, Innovative Technology Support (ITS). The fiscal Office will have ITS have the Chairman’s extension be the lead extension followed by an alphabetical Listing.
6. **Datto Workplace Access/Facebook Page** – There was discussion as to the access that will be available to the Trustees and the various Supervisors in Datto. Trustee Leith suggested that the Trustees have “Read Only” access to the Datto files. The Trustees will not be able to make any changes to any documents or records. The Zoning Secretary, Trustee Recording Secretary, The Fiscal Accounting Clerk will direct ITS to set-up/transfer the Township’s Facebook page to not be associated with any individual’s personal email account. The Township will work with ITS on how it would be best to set-up the Facebook page. ITS will be scheduled to come in and discuss the Cyber Security Requirements that are being mandated in 2024.
7. **Culvert Permits** - There was discussion that Culvert Permits will be required and should be approved by the Zoning Inspector.

Comments from the public:

A representative from the public expressed his concern with property owner’s rights being undermined in the state of Ohio. He asked that the Township show the property owner’s respect.

A resident voiced their opposition to Solar and explained their research and how wasteful it is to turn thousands of acres of prime farmland to solar fields.

Trustee Leith moved that the Trustees move into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter under ORC 121.22 G(1) at 9:37 pm.

Trustee Horn left the meeting before the executive session.

The Trustees returned to Regular session at 9:38 PM

Adjournment: At 9:39 PM, Trustee Leith made a motion to adjourn. Trustee Yates seconded the motion. The motion passed with 2 yes votes.

Minutes Recorded By: Tammy Oliver

Pam Underwood, Fiscal Officer

William R. Yates, Chairman

Terry W. Horn, Vice Chairman

Douglas G. Leith, Trustee