

THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF OSHTEMO
Township Board Minutes
Special Meeting
November 23, 2009

The Oshtemo Township Board held a special meeting at the Oshtemo Township Hall. Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Supervisor Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Clerk Deb Everett
Treasurer Nancy Culp
Trustee Grace Borgfjord
Trustee Dave Bushouse
Trustee James Grace
Trustee Scott McCormick

Also present was James Porter, Township Attorney and approximately 80 interested people.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell advised the purpose of the meeting was a public hearing on a proposed special assessment district for police protection which would include the balance of the Township not in the current special assessment district. She further advised a study committee consisting of herself, and Trustees James Grace and Bushouse had been working on this issue and compiling data.

Trustee James Grace presented information on the history of the current district, the study conducted and data compiled by the study committee, current and possible future KCSD staffing in the Township and calls for service statistics. Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell reviewed the Township budget components, and an overview of the Kalamazoo County and the Sheriff's Department budgets.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell advised letters received prior to the meeting:

Jeff Ford, 2410 North 2nd Street, in support
David Bickle, 3449 South 4th Street, opposed
William DeNooyer, 5800 Stadium Drive, opposed
Joan & Norm Ryan, 6537 Hollison Drive, in favor
John Brennan, 4702 Tropicana Drive, opposed
Harry & Therese Hall, 1765 Killington Drive, opposed
James Chilimigras, 7110 West H Avenue, opposed
Karen Gruss, 3795 VanKal Street, in favor
Darleen Burch-Clark, 1980 Partridge Lane, opposed
G. Evan Boswell, 1091 Josiane Drive, opposed
Patrisa Aidan, 5406 West GH Avenue, supportive
Brenda Kragt, 1537 Skylark Court, opposed
Steven Ryan, 7735 West G Avenue, opposed
James Sterenberg, 4110 Oak Harbor Street, in favor

Public Comment:

Tom Whipple, 2947 South 6th, commented he has worked with the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department through the National Guard and supports the special assessment.

Brian Pennings, 5829 West KL Avenue, commented as a small business owner, he appreciates the research but his income is down and he can't sustain further costs.

Mary Beth Mauer, 8353 Gibbs, commented she is always opposed to special assessments and why band aid with one more officer, has the Board looked at consolidation with perhaps Texas Township, could revenue be generated through enforcement or other fees, she is not against police protection, the issue should be voted on; not everyone can be at the hearing.

Dan Holmes, 10848 West Main, commented if the issue was voted on by the Township and passed he would be for it, the Township is now collecting an administration fee for collecting taxes, calls for service can be shared as with the Fire Department.

Richard Wolthuis, 6291 Torrington, commented is the Sergeant position an administrative position and have response times doubled as the number of calls have.

Char Schramm, 2001 South 4th Street, commented she owns several vacant properties and felt they should be exempt from the assessment, and there should be a vote.

Neil Sikora, 9643 West KL Avenue, commented he does agree with the Board and supports the proposed assessment but felt some information is missing, i.e., how will the Board insure 100% coverage, where is the Township budget being cut, are Board member salaries being frozen and why do trustees get insurance.

Debra Wall, 3763 North 2nd Street, commented she is opposed, her husband is in the retail automotive business, they have cut personal expenses, and there should be a vote.

Bob Janssen, 8670 Almena Drive, commented he supports the efforts to add additional officers, the Board was elected to do a job, no one comes to the regular meetings, and the Board is trying to do what is right.

David Campbell, 1973 Whitegate Lane, commented when he came in was opposed, one officer would bring more to the table, he has seen disturbing graffiti, sometimes things to need to pass but inquired where will the assessment stop; what is the destination; he has changed his mind and supports it.

Dan Thompson, 105 Echo Hills, commented he supports the special assessment district, the Board is elected as citizens to look at what the Township needs, have done due diligence and wondered if after hearing all of the information if the Township could be liable and it would be irresponsible not to go forward, of all the people he has talked to has encountered only one opposed.

Dan Wilkinson, 81 South Skyview Drive, commented he is against any tax increase without a vote, government needs to tighten the budget, his response from the KCSD to a stolen grill was a report and told to contact his insurance company, he pays to the County and Township and they should figure out how to support it.

Ray Pogliano, 1144 Wickford Drive, commented most people don't have an issue with the need, why is the process a special assessment rather than a vote.

Carl Benson, 9679 Almena Drive, commented he supports the special assessment, he attends about half of the Township Board meetings, there is a new Supervisor with unprecedented credentials, a Clerk and Treasurer well thought of enough that there was no opposition, Trustees who bring a variety of talents, representing the political spectrum but transcend politics to represent everyone, the issue has been well thought out, others are carrying the load for all and he commends the Board for their investment and character to propose the solution.

Jeff Ritke, 4551 North 8th Street, commented if the Board has known about this for a year why was it not on the ballot, and doesn't think one deputy will improve response times.

Richard Schramm, 7540 Stadium Drive, commented if schools want to do a project, they go to the public and pass a bond issue, dictating to the public is not right, can individual properties be exempted; the issue should go to an election.

Stan Rakowski, 7151 West G Avenue, commented elected officials are charged with the health and protection of the Township, the Board must have the vision and fortitude to act on the tough issues and he supports the special assessment.

Justine Hertzell, 2484 Isle Harbor Court, commented she attends 99.9% of the regular Township Board meetings and has the utmost respect for the Board; at the last work session, Sgt. Faulk presented a report of the types of calls and crimes, she supports \$50.00 per year; she could lose that and more in a robbery, and thanked the Board for the job they do.

Margaret Masuzawa, 331 West Ridge Circle, commented she is in favor of the special assessment district, many want to vote and she sort of agrees but this is a decision the Board must make.

Bill Hahn, 9193 Greystone Road, commented it equates to \$4.00 a month, less than a pack of cigarettes, and encouraged the Board to make a decision.

Gordon Lanker, 2524 North 2nd Street, commented he thanked the Board for their service, he has attended several meetings, people are critical but don't run, \$50.00 is a trade off, he's been a victim of crime and now has a security system; another deputy will shorten response time, he is very much in favor and would like to see the additional officer added as soon as possible.

Sheriff Richard Fuller commented this is a community decision, the Township has grown and continues to grow, the general patrol staffing is the same size as 30 years ago, no question calls are up, Oshtemo is the busiest Township the KCSD serves, the Sergeant's shift overlaps two others for more interaction.

Responses to the questions asked included, Sgt. Faulk is on the road 85% of the time, response time data has been requested, call data will continue to be collected and monitored, benefits for board members is on the work agenda for the November 24th meeting, the public hearing for the 2010 budget will be held at the regular meeting on December 8th, staff is being reduced through attrition and reduced hours, benefits have been reduced, no salary increases, under State law salary and benefits of board members cannot be changed during a term office, the same process was used in 1976 to create the special assessment for the Fire Department, special assessments can be up to 10 mills, Fire Department rate has never been raised, a Township Police Department would be very expensive; would be required to provide training, salaries, benefits, equipment, and vehicles, a special assessment can be appealed to the Michigan Tax Tribunal, a voted millage can be non ending, and the special assessment is reviewed each year.

Trustee Bushouse commented the Township has a track record of being conservative; projects have been accomplished without raising taxes, i.e., the Township Office building, sewer and water projects, and parks. Federal spending is in a deficit, the State juggles the books to balance the budget, the Board looks at what we can do in the best interest of the entire Township; \$50.00 is reasonable.

Trustee McCormick commented six of the board members live in the proposed new district, he lives in the current district, everyone will be paying, the fire and police special assessments will total 3 mills, Kalamazoo Township is at 8.1 mills for public safety, Oshtemo is twice the size and almost the same population, Oshtemo is one of the best places in Michigan to live, we need two more officers.

Trustee James Grace commented he is ready to move the issue forward as presented but would agree to put any future increase to a public vote.

Trustee Borgfjord commented she was glad to see so many people at the meeting and wished more would come to the regular meetings, this is a tough decision but providing police protection is part of the job the Board is elected to do, she would not vote in favor if she had not done her homework, and knows in her heart it is the right thing to do.

Treasurer Culp commented it is a difficult decision, she lives on the west side of the Township and does not see the presence, this is not the best time to be adding taxes, she will vote her conscience.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented she feels this is overdue, she had an experience with a delayed response, she does not take lightly the comments that is should have gone to a vote and will bank that information for the future but feels we need to go ahead, the special assessment is reviewed every year with public notice and the Board will monitor the program and revisit the issue.

Clerk Everett, commented she had favored a vote on the issue in the past but is committed to moving forward with the proposal due to the need.

Motion by James Grace, second by Bushouse to establish Police Protection Special Assessment District 2009-1. Roll call showed James Grace-yes, Borgfjord-yes, Culp-no, Everett-yes, Bushouse-yes, McCormick-yes, Heiny-Cogswell-yes. Carried 6-1.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.

DEBORAH L. EVERETT
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Attested: LIBBY HEINY-COGSWELL
SUPERVISOR