

**THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF OSHTEMO**  
**Township Board Meeting**  
**August 24, 2010**

The Oshtemo Township Board public comment session was held at the Township Hall. Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 Township Engineer Marc Elliott, and 2 interested people.

**Fire Department Job Descriptions**

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell presented a proposal for re-organization and revision of job descriptions for the Fire Department, consisting of revised job descriptions for the ranks of Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain, and Lieutenant, re-titling and re-writing the job description of "Community Fire Safety Specialist" to "Training and Safety Officer", elevating the rank of Lt. Chip Everett to Captain, move the Equipment and Fleet Maintenance to a position reporting directly to the Fire Chief and promote Firefighter Troy Lull to Lieutenant.

Motion by James Grace, second by Borgfjord to approve the revised job descriptions and re-organization as presented. Carried.

**Employee Handbook – Section 9.13**

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell presented a recommendation from the Personnel Committee to revise Section 9.13 of the Employee Handbook to provide membership dues for any department head to join a community service organization up to \$500.00 per year. Trustee Borgfjord, Clerk Everett and Treasurer Culp were not supportive, consensus was to table this item to the September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Board Member Comments**

Trustee Bushouse commented he would like to invite neighboring jurisdictions to either the Board work session or public comment session for discussion of mutual items of interest.

The public comment session was adjourned at approximately 7:40 p.m.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell called the regular 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 Township Engineer Marc Elliott, and approximately 30 interested people.

Motion by Borgfjord, second by James Grace to approve the August 10<sup>th</sup> regular meeting minutes as presented. Carried.

Income to the General and Fire Funds of \$10,415.90 and disbursements of \$216,349.89 were reported. Motion by James Grace, second by Borgfjord to accept the receipts and disbursements report. Carried.

## **CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Jeff Leonard, 3144 Bramble Drive, inquired and was advised H Avenue will be paved with a base coat before winter.

Stan Rakowski, 7151 West G Avenue, commented he observed the Township's Ordinance Enforcement Officer at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and G Avenue, and suggested 10<sup>th</sup> Street and H Avenue would be a better location for monitoring traffic that is prohibited; Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell advised he was following up on complaints.

Al Geresy, 10491 West L Avenue, inquired and was advised all elected officials salaries are public information, how the landscaping project at the Oshtemo Community Center was funded and the reasoning for handling lawn maintenance in house.

Mari Beth Mauer, 8353 Gibbs Avenue, inquired and was advised traffic signals on Stadium Drive are under the jurisdiction of the Kalamazoo County Road Commission.

## **DISCUSSION – TRUSTEE BENEFITS**

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell reviewed information and discussion from the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting on this issue. She also commented she felt statements made that the Board is not taking public sentiment seriously are wrong; approximately six months was taken to conduct a comprehensive review of all benefits, the purpose not being to avoid discussion, but to furnish the Board with current information. She also commented she felt trustee compensation should be proportional based on some estimate of average time spent and would support benefits at the trustees own expense with the exception of health care, which she would prefer to see available for the trustee only at 50% of their expense. She further commented the discussion would center on should a compensation commission be established or if not, how should the Board proceed.

Marv Block, 9789 Springwood Drive, commented he is a former Trustee, the salary has doubled in 10 years and with unemployment at the current rate, the Township should not be paying for any benefits.

Mari Beth Mauer, 8353 Gibbs Avenue, commented she is not convinced compensation means both salary and benefits and she will pursue this for clarification.

Stan Rakowski, 7151 West G Avenue, commented he is not in favor of a compensation commission, the Board was elected to make decisions and should take the responsibility, when he ran for the Board he did not ask what the benefits were and he favors a flat salary amount.

Marvin Darling, 7210 West H Avenue, commented he agreed with Mr. Rakowski, and inquired and was advised that in case of a recall, any new incoming officials would receive the same compensation.

Rene Adrian, 9657 West Main, commented he has concerns about the compensation for trustees, would hope the compensation commission would have a representation of citizens and feels the benefits are excessive for the position.

Jeff Leonard, 3144 Bramble Drive, commented compensation is different from additional benefits, many residents have expressed costs could be cut, he owns his own business and pays his own insurance and retirement, draws a parallel with this issue and the consideration of mandatory sewer connections in being asked to leverage, and while the Board should be compensated, it is wrong for employees to receive lifetime benefits.

Jim Sterenberg, 4110 Oak Harbor Street, commented he has worked closely with this and the previous Board, found them to be very competent and professional, does not want to see a gut reaction, applauds them for looking at the issue, does not feel the County or State care or hear his voice, appreciates all the Board has done and feels they will do the right thing.

Neil Sikora, 9643 West KL Avenue, commented he has worked with most of the Board members, but has to disagree on this issue, term limits at the State level were enacted because of attractive salary and benefits, the trustees could refuse the benefits awarded to them in error, he did vote for the compensation package while on the Board but did not think abuse would occur and is disappointed.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented some board members are donating back some benefit costs and this Board cannot bind any future actions.

Clerk Everett commented she felt the Board could conduct a review and reach consensus on the issue, it was not being ignored, and would have been discussed during upcoming budget workshops, the discussion is now difficult due to the manner in which the issue has been brought forward in a hostile atmosphere.

Trustee James Grace commented he felt the Board should handle the matter.

In response to Treasurer Culp's question of why is a compensation commission needed, Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell stated that while she believes the Board could handle the matter a more long term solution is needed; reasons in favor of a commission would include the board would not be voting on their own salaries which can be awkward, and the commission made up of citizens allows for public involvement providing objectivity.

Trustee Bushouse commented he has never backed away from an issue, feels he is elected to do a job, the public has made their point and he has faith in the Board.

Trustee Borgfjord commented she sees pros and cons of a compensation commission, but other input would be welcome, this is an emotional issue that has become adversarial and perhaps a commission could help the Board move forward.

Treasurer Culp commented the Board was elected to do a job and should not establish a compensation commission.

Trustee McCormick commented he has paid more attention to the benefits in the last month and the Township is paying for benefits he may not need and he would be willing to drop some, he does not count both sessions of the board meetings as two, and is not in favor of a compensation commission.

#### **Health/Dental/Vision**

Trustee James Grace commented he felt all benefits should be eliminated; there should be a small base salary and per diem or just a per diem.

Trustees McCormick, Bushouse, and Borgfjord, and Clerk Everett felt trustees should be able to purchase health insurance for themselves and family at 100% their cost.

Treasurer Culp commented she felt health insurance should be available for purchase at 100% of their cost for the trustee only.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell reiterated she would be in favor of offering health insurance for the trustee only at 50% of their cost.

#### **Life Insurance**

Trustees James Grace, Bushouse, Clerk Everett, Treasurer Culp commented this benefit could be eliminated.

Trustees Borgfjord and McCormick commented they would support making it available for purchase at 100% by the trustee.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented she could support eliminating the benefit but noted the current plan may require a certain number of people.

#### **Pension**

It was noted there are no legacy costs involved with the benefit since it is a defined contribution plan.

Trustees James Grace, McCormick, Bushouse, Clerk Everett, and Treasurer Culp commented this benefit could be eliminated.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented she could support eliminating the benefit provided the salary was sufficient. Trustee Borgfjord concurred.

#### **Long Term Care**

Trustee James Grace and Treasurer Culp commented this benefit should be eliminated.

Trustees Borgfjord, Bushouse, McCormick, Clerk Everett, and Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented they would support making it available for purchase at 100% by the trustee.

**Salary**

All Board members commented they felt the current \$2,400 annual salary was not unreasonable and the \$50.00 per diem was appropriate with the clarification of what constitutes a meeting.

Justine Hertzell, 2484 Isle Harbor Court, inquired how many other township boards are conducting such a review and their current information may be out of date.

Dan Thompson, 105 Echo Hills Drive, commended the Board for their efforts.

Mari Beth Mauer, 8353 Gibbs Avenue, thanked the Board for showing leadership and doing what is in the best interest of the Township.

Neil Sikora, 9643 West KL Avenue, thanked the Board for having the discussion but is skeptical of the per diem; perhaps there should be a maximum dollar amount or number of meetings.

Jeff Leonard, 3144 Bramble Drive, commented he appreciates the Board's discussion, do not use a back door method of more meetings to make more money to make up for benefits.

Al Geresy, 10491 West L Avenue, commented 99% of the people would not be at the meeting had it not been for the article in the newspaper.

**RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT  
KALAMAZOO RIVER VALLEY TRAIL**

Jack Urban, representing the Board of Directors of the Kalamazoo County Parks Foundation presented information on the past, present and future efforts of completing the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail which will encompass 35 miles of trail through the county with links to Lake Michigan, Battle Creek, and Portage. The Board is being asked to adopt a resolution of support of the efforts of the Parks Foundation to help with fundraising and construction efforts; the resolution does not ask for financial support on the part of the Township.

Motion by Everett, second by Borgfjord to adopt a resolution supporting the efforts of the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County to seek charitable gifts for completion of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. Roll call showed McCormick-yes, Bushouse-yes, Everett-yes, Culp-yes, Borgfjord-yes, James Grace-yes, Heiny-Cogswell-yes.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Trustee Borgfjord provided a brief update on the Oshtemo Sunburst 5K; there were 217 participants, a good time was had by all and all proceeds will benefit the Township parks.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commended Ms. Borgfjord, Ron Martin from Consumer Credit Union and Deputy Clerk DeAnna Janssen for their many hours devoted to this event.

Trustee James Grace also commended Trustee Borgfjord for her efforts.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

**DEBORAH L. EVERETT**  
Township Clerk

**Attested: LIBBY HEINY-COSGWELL**  
Supervisor