

MINUTES - BOARD of TOWN TRUSTEES

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TYPE OF MEETING HELD: Regular

LASALLE COUNTY,

SS.

TIME MEETING BEGAN: 5:00pm

TOWN of BRUCE

TIME MEETING ENDED: 7:02pm

The September 14, 2016 meeting of the Bruce Township Board of Trustees opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Highway Commissioner John M. Barton was in attendance. The meeting was conducted by Mr. Henry Araujo as chairman and recorded by Clerk Sheryl Sedlock.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING'S MINUTES:

The first order of business was to read and approve the minutes from the August 10, 2016 Regular Meeting. Clerk Sedlock indicated that Assessor Mary Sullivan had asked that the minutes be modified to clarify that "Millis" in the Highway Commissioner's report section should read "the Millis property".

MOTION MADE BY: Trustee Jerry Christensen

2nd BY: Trustee Randy Baumrucker

That the minutes of the August 10, 2016 Regular Meeting be approved with the above stated correction to change "Millis" to "the Millis property". No further discussion was required.

Aye's: 5

Nay's: 0

Motion: Carried

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments raised at the meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT/APPROVAL OF BILLS

A summary of the bills was distributed for review. Trustee Steve Biroshchik asked for a clarification on the line item for Echols & Associates. Supervisor Araujo indicated that Echols & Associates is the Township's accountants and the bill was for the annual audit. Trustee Christensen noted that the Bruce Township Road & Bridge Vendor Balance Detail report was dated April 30, 2015. This report is a historical record for the board of the payments made and does not affect the motion for paying the bills for the current month. All the other reports were for the correct date of August 31, 2016. An updated report will be made available to the Board.

MOTION MADE BY: Trustee Christensen

2nd BY: Trustee Bob Harrison

That the bills be allowed and paid.

Clerk Sedlock took the roll call vote:

Trustee Bob Harrison: Aye

Trustee Jerry Christensen: Aye

Trustee Randy Baumrucker: Aye

Trustee Steve Biroshchik: Aye

Supervisor Henry Araujo: Aye

Aye's: 5

Nay's: 0

Motion: Carried

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

SUPERVISOR'S:

Supervisor Araujo had no specific report to give.

HIGHWAY COMMISSIONER'S:

Highway Commissioner Barton informed the board that he has been receiving calls from residents in the Eastwood area, including Helen Street and Irene Street, with concerns about the rain water drainage issues they are experiencing. This has been a long standing issue which has been discussed periodically at previous board meetings. He reported that he had Everett Wilkerson bring his small JetVac to the area to try to clear the problem. It worked for a short time but then blocked up again. Highway Commissioner Barton reported that he then had the JetVac Services come out with a bigger unit, including root cutters,

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which greatly improved the situation on the east side of Helen Street. However, the water on the property to the west of Helen Street could not be addressed. He has explained to the resident that the township's responsibility is to keep the roads cleared of water and to ensure the ditches are draining appropriately. The township is not responsible for addressing standing water issues on private property. Highway Commissioner Barton has talked to Jeremy Palm, Streator City Engineer, about the City's plans to redo all of Eastwood Avenue which includes putting in new storm sewers. Highway Commissioner Barton may try to tie in the ditches on Pine Tree Road to the City of Streator's storm sewers to address their drainage issues. He believes this might help resolve some of the issues of standing water in the ditches which can affect the stability of the roadways. He cannot make any promises or plans until further investigation of the option is complete and an estimate of the cost is available. Highway Commissioner Barton answered several questions the board members had on the topic.

Highway Commissioner Barton gave an update on the embankment stabilization along Marilla Park Road that has been ongoing. It has been about 3 weeks since the cement blocks and 28 loads of dirt were placed. The water level in the creek has been up several times since then and everything seems to be holding nicely. He still needs to add approximately a dozen more loads of dirt to complete the project. This effort will require some more precise placement of the loads to fill in specific areas between trees. Trustee Baumrucker asked if the embankment would need to be seeded. Highway Commissioner Barton indicated that he was not planning to seed the embankment this year but would revisit the issue in the spring.

ASSESSOR'S:

Assessor Mary Sullivan was not in attendance and no report was given.

TRUSTEE'S:

There were no reports given by the Trustees.

OTHER:

There were no other reports presented.

REPORTS BY SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

HEALTH BOARD:

Supervisor Araujo indicated that there has been no change in the situation on the 611 West 3rd Street property. Trustee Biroshchik indicated there are other properties in the area that need attention as well, specifically West 2nd Street. He again expressed his concerns that Bruce Township does not have any ordinances in place to handle situations like this. Supervisor Araujo indicated that the La Salle County ordinances supersede the Township. A brief discussion followed where the board reviewed the process the Bruce Township Health Board follows for addressing complaints and revisited the information provided by Mike Harsted, the LaSalle County Environmental Services and Land Use Director, at a previous board meeting in regards to this topic. The cost of creating and enforcing an ordinance in terms of labor, equipment and legal fees was also discussed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Supervisor Araujo opened the discussion on the Bruce Township Officials Salaries for the term beginning May 2017. He noted that the agenda topic is for the Township Officials salaries and is not intended to address the Township Employees salaries. He distributed copies of some supporting information on Social Security contributions, Medicare contributions and Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund contributions that had been requested by Trustee Biroshchik to help with the discussion. He also distributed copies provided by Assessor Sullivan of the answers to questions concerning the Assessor's duties which had been provided to Trustee Biroshchik in advance of the meeting. Trustee Biroshchik then distributed a summary of information he had compiled on current salaries, stipends, hours worked per week etc. from the various Township Officials. Shortly after the discussion began, questions concerning the proposed Tax Levy and subsequent Budget for 2017 were raised by Trustee Biroshchik. To resolve the questions concerning the proposed Levy, Supervisor Araujo suggested discussing the Levy proposal before the Salary discussion.

MOTION MADE BY: Trustee Christensen

2nd BY: Supervisor Araujo

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That the order of the agenda be adjusted to allow for the New Business agenda item of the Tax Levy for tax year 2016 payable in 2017 to be discussed prior to the Old Business agenda item of Bruce Township Officials Salaries for the Term beginning May 2017.

Aye's: 5

Nay's: 0

Motion: Carried

NEW BUSINESS:

Supervisor Araujo distributed copies of the proposed Tax Levy Ordinance Township (Ordinance No. 2017A) and the proposed Tax Levy Ordinance Road District (Ordinance No. 2017B) for tax year 2016 payable in 2017 for the board to review. The board members took a few minutes to look over the documents. Trustee Baumrucker noted that the proposed Township Levy was less than last year. Supervisor Araujo confirmed that the proposed Township Levy is levying less money this year than last year. He stated that the township has enough money in reserve to allow for this. Trustee Biroschik asked how much money the township has in reserve and was told approximately \$1.2 million total, including both the Town Fund and the Road and Bridge Fund. There was a brief discussion on the amount being held in reserve. Trustee Biroschik questioned whether the amount was needed and suggested it could be greatly reduced. Trustee Christensen stated that it had taken 20 years to build up the reserve to a level that could cover the Township expenses for 2 years without additional tax dollars, if necessary. Supervisor Araujo stated that having a 2 year reserve is what is recommended by the State for Townships. There was a brief discussion on the issues the Township had in the past before a reserve was established and the economic stability that the reserve provides. Further discussion on the topic was deferred to the October Regular Board Meeting to allow all board members time to review the proposed Levies in more detail and to come prepared to discuss the proposals line by line.

OLD BUSINESS - Resumed:

Supervisor Araujo resumed the discussion on the Bruce Township Officials Salaries for the term beginning May 2017. Trustee Biroschik was asked to walk the board through a review of the information he had summarized. This included a discussion on the use of stipends to provide an insurance benefit. It was noted that insurance benefits can no longer be provided in the form of a stipend but must be paid directly to the insurance provider. The board explored several options for addressing this for Bruce Township. First the insurance stipend could be eliminated completely, second the insurance stipend could be eliminated with the amount being rolled into the base salary of the Township Officials and third the stipend could be changed to an insurance benefit paid directly to the insurance provider for each Township Official. It was noted that every Township Official potentially has a different insurance provider. The travel stipend was then discussed. It was stated by Trustee Biroschik that in January travel stipends would no longer be allowed. The two options for addressing this included eliminating the travel stipend and rolling the amount of the stipend into the base salary of the Township Official or replacing the travel stipend with an expense reimbursement policy for all Township Officials. It was noted that the Trustees already follow an expense reimbursement policy for their travel. There was a discussion on the merits and issues associated with each approach.

Trustee Biroschik stated that he feels the current salaries are pretty fair and then presented his proposal to freeze salaries across the board for all Township Officials. He proposed eliminating the travel stipends and replacing them with an expense reimbursements policy. He recommended paying the insurance stipend directly to the insurance providers or eliminating them all together. Trustee Biroschik also stressed that in addition to salaries, the Township is responsible for the employer contribution to Social Security (6.2%) and to Medicare (1.4%) for each Township Official. For the Supervisor, Highway Commissioner and the Assessor, there is an Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (9.14%) contribution made for each official. These payments are percentages of the salaries; therefore, when the salaries increase, so do these contributions.

Supervisor Araujo then distributed a copy of the duties he as Supervisor currently performs. He proposed a 3.0% raise for all Township Officials. He further recommended rolling the insurance stipends into the salaries. Trustee Biroschik noted that the Supervisor's responsibilities are: to be the administrator for the General Assistance, to be the Chairman of the Board and to manage the finances of the township. Trustee Biroschik commented that when determining salaries, only the required duties of the office should be considered. The salary should not include compensation for work that is done over and above those duties.

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There is no guarantee that the Supervisor elected for the next term will perform those same additional duties. A brief discussion on the duties and responsibilities of the Supervisor and the concerns associated with it followed. It was noted that the current cost of living increase is between 2% and 2.5%. Trustee Biroschik compared the current Bruce Township Supervisor's salary to other townships in the area and noted that the salary is higher. Trustee Baumrucker commented that one difference between Bruce Township and other Townships in the area is the accessibility of the Township Officials to the residents. Bruce Township has an office building where regular office hours are kept in support of the community.

Trustee Christensen proposed rolling the amount of the insurance stipend into the salary of the Trustees with no additional raise for the 4 year term. He recommended keeping the existing expense reimbursement policy in place for the Trustees. When questioned on his proposal, Trustee Christensen noted that Trustees do more than attend meetings once a month. They prepare for the meetings, they follow up after the meetings to review materials such as Levies and Budgets, they are available to the residents for discussion of township business and they are on call for resolving township issues that may arise. When asked about his recommendation for other Township Officials salaries, Trustee Christensen indicated that the amount of the insurance stipend and the travel stipend should be rolled into the Township Officials salary.

When asked for her input on the Township Clerk's salary, Clerk Sedlock indicated that she felt that the insurance stipend should be rolled into the salary, the travel stipend should be replaced by an expense reimbursement policy and that no raise should be given for the coming 4 year term. She acknowledged that applying an expense reimbursement policy to all Township Officials may present a challenge for some of the officials. There was a brief recap of the discussion from the September Regular Board Meeting where Assessor Sullivan had stated the challenges she would face if the travel stipend was replaced by an expense reimbursement policy. The recommendation was to wait until Assessor Sullivan was available to further discuss this topic.

Trustee Harrison proposed rolling the insurance stipend into the salary for the Trustees in the first year and freezing the salary for the remaining 3 years of the term. He proposed keeping the expense reimbursement policy. When asked about the other Township Officials, he indicated that he would propose rolling the insurance stipends and travel stipends into the salary in the first year and then freezing the salaries for the remaining 3 years.

Trustee Baumrucker proposed a 2% salary increase for all Township Officials and rolling the insurance stipend and travel stipend into the salaries the first year of the term.

There was a discussion concerning the annual Township Officials of Illinois (TOI) conference and how to manage the payment for those expenses. A review of the way it has been handled in the past was followed by an agreement that changes need to be made to be in the form of expense reimbursement and a new policy needs to be drafted and approved.

When asked for his input, Highway Commissioner Barton recommended a 2.5% raise across the board. He also recommended adding the insurance stipend and travel stipend (where it applies) into the base salary of the officials. He was not in favor of eliminating the travel stipend in favor of an expense reimbursement policy primarily due to the time and effort that would be required for logging the many small trips the Highway Commissioner makes on a daily basis while performing the duties of the office. Trustee Biroschik noted that Bruce Township has fewer roads to maintain than other townships in the area but the Highway Commissioners in those townships make less than the Bruce Township Highway Commissioner. Highway Commissioner Barton cautioned that when comparing Bruce Township to other townships, you must take into consideration that rural road maintenance is different from in town road maintenance. Also, you need to consider the quality of the roads. Bruce Township has a higher quality of roads than other more rural townships. Supervisor Araujo felt he could agree to this proposal and withdrew his earlier proposal of a 3% raise across the board.

The board agreed that additional time was needed to review the various proposals and will conclude the discussion at the October 12th Regular Board Meeting. The Salary Resolution must be drafted, voted on and approved no later than November 16, 2016.

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NEW BUSINESS - Resumed:

Trustee Biroschik noted that Assessor Sullivan has moved outside of Bruce Township. He questioned whether the board needed to take action to fill the vacancy. Supervisor Araujo indicated that Assessor Sullivan is still a resident of La Salle County, and as such, has the right to finish out her current term as Bruce Township Assessor which will end on December 31, 2017. There was a brief discussion on the matter before it was noted that no immediate action was required. Further discussion on the topic was deferred until after the 2017 Consolidated Elections are completed.

MOTION MADE BY: Trustee Harrison
That the meeting be adjourned.

2nd BY: Trustee Biroschik

Aye's: 5

Nay's: 0

Motion: Carried

Bruce Township
216 N. Sterling St.
Streator, IL 61364