

**West Branch Township
Regular Meeting
April 10th, 2024 MINUTES**

Regular meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:00 pm.

Board Members Present: James Morris, Jeremy Hickmott, Diane Philbrick, Mike Selinski & Mike Durfee

Public Present: Thirteen Citizens in Attendance

MOTION BY DURFEE, SECOND BY PHILBRICK TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. VOICE VOTE: YEA – MORRIS, PHILBRICK, HICKMOTT, SELINSKI AND DURFEE. NAY – NONE, ABSENT - NONE. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY DURFEE, SECOND BY MORRIS TO APPROVE THE MARCH 26TH PUBLIC HEARING / SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. VOICE VOTE: YEA – MORRIS, PHILBRICK, HICKMOTT, SELINKSI AND DURFEE. NAY – NONE. ABSENT – NONE. MOTION CARRIED

REPORTS:

County Commissioners – Three County Commissioner provided the board with some information about the upcoming County related mileages that will be on the ballot in May including the Headlee & Animal Services millage. Commissioner Simmons also told the board about a digital program that has been development were citizen are able to calculate on the Ogemaw Counties Website how much the Headlee millage will cost each resident based of taxable values. There was some discussion about the severity of the budget and what will happen in the county if the Headlee does fail.

Clerk Hickmott - provided the board with information regarding the upcoming May Election and that's about 340 absentee ballots has been sent out by the time of the meeting.

MOTION BY MORRIS, SECOND BY DURFEE TO APPROVE THE BILLS TOTALING \$30,490.33 ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA – MORRIS, HICKMOTT, PHILBRICK, SELINSKI AND DURFEE. NAY – NONE, ABSENT – NONE. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Morris – provided the board with information on road construction projects that he had been in contact with the Ogemaw County road commission about. He also mentioned that one of those projects was already on the evenings agenda.

Treasurer Philbrick – Gave the board information that property taxes and the fact that 94% of the winter taxes have come in and that 95% of the summer taxes have come through. She also mentioned that she is 100% balanced with Ogemaw County Treasurer.

Trustee Selinski – Mentioned overall the accounts look good and nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary. He did mention that the account balances remain high in the accounts. It was also mentioned and stated for the record that no further lease changes were being worked on for the Ogemaw Hills recreation facility and that everything as it stands will be remaining the same.

Trustee Durfee –He mentioned that he will continue seeking out reps. to come in and discuss the August millages at the June of July Township Board meeting.

Correspondence – NONE

OLD BUSINESS:

Township Police Options – The board was presented with strategic analysis for Police coverage in West Branch Township. The analysis covered things like amount of call in the township, traffic data, options costs, development statistics, response times, and the amount of coverage that the township gets from the surrounding departments that are allowed to cover the township. Cost estimates were also detailed in the strategic analysis which ranged from \$104,000 up to \$170,000 for services including another \$300 to \$400 thousand for the development of a township established department. It was discussed at length about the practicality of contracting for services from an established department in an effort to provide the most service at the most cost effective rates.

MOTION BY DURFEE AND SECOND BY MORRIS TO ENTER IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND CREATION WITH THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH TO PROVIDE TOWNSHIP WIDE POLICE COVERAGE. ROLL CALL: YEA – HICKMOTT, PHILBRICK, SELINSKI DURFEE, AND MORRIS. ABSENT – NONE. NAY – NONE MOTION CARRIED.

Marketing Proposal – The board was presented with a marketing proposal from Tommy Dault Jr. The plan detailed services in implementing the township marketing plan at a cost of \$91,000 annually. Mr. Dault detailed some of what would be offered in the plan and how he believed it would align with the townships established marketing plan and also the townships continued work in the State of Michigan Redevelopment Ready program.

NO MOTION WAS MADE ON THE ABOVE SUBJECT.

Resolution for Closing Signature – The board was presented with a resolution for the Township Supervisor to sign off on the closing papers with the title company for the property on M-76 that the township has an active purchase agreement on. The township board called into question why the purchaser wanted to close on the property without municipal approvals for the proposed project. It was mentioned that the purchase agreement did clearly state that closing is contingent on municipal approvals of the proposed project. It was also commented on that there was a lack of information regarding possible contractors and just overall details regarding funding and the project in general.

MOTION BY PHILBRICK AND 2ND BY DURFEE TO TABLE THE RESOLUTION UNTIL THE PROJECT HAS SECURED MUNICIPAL APPROVALS THROUGH TOWNSHIP ZONING INCLUDING CONCEPTUAL REVIEW, SITE PLAN REVIEWS, AND TOWNSHIP APPROVALS. ROLL CALL: YEA – HICKMOTT, DURFEE, SELINSKI, PHILBRICK, AND MORRIS. ABSENT – NONE, NAY – NONE. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS:

Millage Discussion – The board had representatives for each of the upcoming May millages which included the headlee, library, school, and animal services.

- **Headlee Millage** – County Administrator Tim Dolhanty provided the board with a good bit of detail regarding the counties financial situation and how the headlee would help close the funding gap that the county has. Charts were presented on how the funding gap has increased over the past decade.
- **Animal Service Millage** – The county administrator also provided details on how the animal service millage would be structured and while there is only one shelter currently, the money could

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be used for other shelters if they were to open in the future or in other parts of the county. The money in short would be used to cover the cost of housing animals in shelters.

- West Branch / Rose City Schools – Gail Hughey with the West Branch rose city schools gave the board details about the millage renewal they are seeking. It was mentioned while there renewal is at 17.9532 mills that does only apply to non-homestead property. It was also mentioned that this is for the operating millage.
- West Branch District Library – Terri Barnhart with the West Branch Library gave the board details of why the library is seeking an increase in their millage. She provided details of the decrease in State revenues and also provided details of services that the library provides which is just more than books. They provide internet services and historic research services as well. She also details inflation and repair costs over the recent years that the library has had.

Election Workers May 2024 – The board was provided information regarding the suggested list of election workers for the May 7th 2024 election. Clerk Hickmott mentioned that the majority of the people on the list are the same as the February election. He had mentioned that things worked well then so it seemed logical to have the same people return.

MOTION BY PHILBRICK AND SECOND BY MORRIS TO APPROVE THE ELECTION WORKER LIST AS PRESENTED. ROLL CALL: YEA – HICKMOTT, PHIBLRICK, DURFEE, SELINSKI AND MORRIS. ABSENT – NONE. NAY – NONE. MOTION CARRIED

Campbell Road Project – The Board reviewed a cost estimate for the wedging and overlay of 1.1 miles of Campbell road from Finerty to the township cemetery. The total cost of the project will be \$117,344.50 which the township portion of that would be \$58,672.25 which would make it a 50 / 50 split with the Ogemaw County Road commission.

MOTION BY PHILBRICK AND SECOND BY HICKMOTT TO APPROVE THE ROAD PROJECT ON 1.1 MILES OF CAMPBELL FROM FINERTY TO THE TOWNSHIP CEMETERY WITH THE OGEMAW COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION TOTALING \$58,672.25 . ROLL CALL: YEA – HICKMOTT, PHIBLRICK, DURFEE, SELINSKI AND MORRIS. ABSENT – NONE. NAY – NONE. MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENT: One Citizen asked how many position the township clerk has and he detailed that it was three position two of which appointed positions with no voting authority and one is elected with a one vote voting authority (it has been checked multiple time with attorney’s and is legal to have multiple positions in government according to MCL 15.181). The same citizen also called into question about the township contracting for police coverage even though it’s within township budget. An additional citizen also thanked the reps. for the millages for coming out and explaining them in details but also mentioned that there may be too many for them all to pass.

MOTION BY MORRIS, SECOND BY DURFEE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VOICE VOTE ALL YES. MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm