

**ONOTA TOWNSHIP BOARD**  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
JUNE 1, 2020

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm (*Note: This meeting was held via teleconference due to the pandemic, as permitted by the governor*).

Present: Terry Pihlainen, Supervisor                      Cheryl Lane, Treasurer  
          Brian Bresette, Trustee                              Catherine Kimar, Clerk  
          Connie Lacko, Trustee

Absent: none

**II. AGENDA**

A motion was made to accept the agenda as presented.

Motion: Brian Bresette  
Support: Connie Lacko  
Motion carried.

**III. MINUTES**

A motion was made to accept the minutes as presented.

Motion: Brian Bresette  
Support: Cheryl Lane  
Motion carried.

**IV. REPORTS**

**A. Financial Report**

A motion was made to pay the May monthly bills as presented:

- » \$6,999.21 for the general fund, checks #4725-4742;
- » \$60.00 for the fire fund, checks #1976; and
- » \$5,547.66 for the solid waste fund, check #1197.

Motion: Brian Bresette  
Support: Connie Lacko  
Motion carried.

A motion was made to approve the monthly balance sheet and profit & loss statements for the general, fire, solid waste, and tax funds as presented by the clerk.

Motion: Brian Bresette  
Support: Cheryl Lane  
Motion carried.

Roll call vote

Ayes: Connie Lacko  
Catherine Kimar  
Brian Bresette  
Cheryl Lane  
Terry Pihlainen

Gen: 639,351.82
Fire: 260,832.72
SW: 139,720.60
Tax: 106.05

**B. Assessor Report**

The clerk stated the assessor had reported minimal activity due to the pandemic; however, he planned to come to the township in June if travel restrictions were released.

**C. Zoning Administrator Report**

The Zoning Administrator reported that there were two pending public hearings – one for a conditional use and one for a variance. He also noted that a call-in protocol should be established for

the Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Commission for these hearings if necessary (*copy on file*).

D. Fire Department Report

Chief Kimar reported one call for a wildfire in May (*copy on file*).

E. Planning Commission Report

Trustee Bresette reported that the Planning Commission had held a meeting in May. They could not discuss nor take action on the conditional use permit as the Zoning Administrator had the only copy of the site plan/maps but was not present. Annual elections were held; the results were the same as previously.

F. Supervisor Report

The supervisor reported on the following:

- Cell tower – holdup was due to ground frost regulations. They installed the structure and are currently installing the radio equipment. The scheduled on-air date is November 1, 2020 (subject to change).
- Garbage
  - o Township hall dumpsters - Talked to Great American Disposal about garbage being overfilled. Options are (1) switching to 8-yard dumpsters from 6-yard (would need to find a set that has the bear-proof lids, as the township just paid for them to be installed on these) or (2) going to a third pickup day per week.
  - o Military Road – Complaint of garbage not being picked up – was due to non-household garbage. Explained to homeowners that they can only dispose of standard residential garbage – larger items can (1) be hauled to the dump or (2) held until the dumpster rolloff event.
- Blight issue – the supervisor could not find anything in the ordinance between fences and junkyards (or junk cars) – he said this is only mentioned directly in the industrial zoning district. The board was conflicted on the matter but agreed that without a Zoning Administrator, the attorney should draft a letter to be sent to people who were violating the zoning ordinance. When ready, this letter will be brought to the board for review.

G. Other Reports

**ORV trail** (Jarrod Biebel) – currently exploring the forest just in a early, preliminary stage of considering the possibility of a trail. There were not many connection points to North Pt / LW Pt road through commercial forest reserve lands and the terrain was swampy and poorly drained.

The supervisor added that he was talking to the DNR about holding a public hearing in combination with the township in July regarding this issue to get the input of all agencies and citizens. Jarrod added that he would ask Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands representatives to attend this hearing.

**Tyoga Trail** (John Highlen) – the DNR is working on the cost-share agreement regarding the shared management of the Tyoga Trail and campground site. A workday will be planned later this year – general trail maintenance, removal of trees, etc. Tentatively, the campground should be setup for operations by next spring.

V. **CORRESPONDENCE**

A. M. McHaney

An email was received from Mike McHaney, thanking the board for providing meeting access via teleconference during the pandemic, and requesting that the township consider continuing the practice of allowing the public to listen and participate in meetings remotely (*copy on file*).

B. J. Ekstrum

A letter was received from Janet Ekstrum, expressing strong concerns and opposition to the ORV trail route that was proposed at the May meeting (*copy on file*).

C. Laughing Whitefish Pt Rd residents

A petition (with 24 signatures) was submitted by residents of North Point / Laughing Whitefish Pt Road residents against the proposed ORV trail (*copy on file*).

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Opened: 7:42 pm

Comment was received from:

- \* Susan Schwemin on the negative impact of the proposed ORV trail on properties on the North Point / Laughing Whitefish Point Road;
- \* Terry Lane on the lack of garbage pickup on Peter White Road, the poor placement of the dumpsters obstructing vehicle turnarounds, the propane truck tearing up the lawn at the hall, and the Safety-Clean hazmat barrel; and
- \* Charlene McDonnell on the zoning administrator vacancy and the upcoming hearings.

Closed: 7:52 pm.

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*none*

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

A. 2020 Census Representative

Nathan Michels was present on the conference call to discuss the status of the 2020 Census. Over 50% of the township requires a dropped off form – these will be upcoming after the stay-at-home orders have been lifted. The census data is important for funding and planning of federal and state programs. The response rate of the township is currently below the state average (although this rate is determined by all vacant structures, not actual residents).

The supervisor clarified that census takers were already present in the area. The clerk asked about what to do if the census takers tell you that ‘it didn’t count’ when you filled it out previously and that you must fill out the form again. Mr. Michels explained this issue was coming up frequently. He said that the individualized number code assigned to each household was extremely important to use when answering – which was why census-takers were telling people to do this. However, if he received clarification on what people should do in this situation, he would pass it on to the township. He gave his info for the public to contact him with questions or concerns (phone: 715-615-9800, email: [nathan.d.michels@2020census.gov](mailto:nathan.d.michels@2020census.gov)).

B. Zoning Administrator Resignation

A letter of resignation was received from Mike Tietjen, as he is moving out of the area.

A motion was made to accept the resignation of Mike Tietjen as Zoning Administrator, effective as of his requested June 4 date.

Motion: Brian Bresette  
Support: Cheryl Lane  
Motion carried.

The clerk presented the board with the materials that had been used during the previous searches for a new zoning administrator (vacancy posting and detailed job description). The board did not see a need for any updates, so the clerk said she would contact the newspaper to list a job posting.

C. Michigan Township Association – online education

The clerk explained that Michigan Township Association (MTA) was offering various packages to township for continuing education of all township personnel. It would involve online versions of standard MTA courses and a yearly access fee. The options were (1) \$750 for 10 courses (2) \$1,000 for

15 courses or (3) \$1,900 for 20+ courses. A free trial of these courses is available for township board members (who have an email address on file with MTA) until June 30.

The board decided to wait on the matter until some of the board members had a chance to use the free trial to review the material available. The clerk reminded them that the items would be available to all township officials (Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning Administrator, Board of Review, etc.) that gave the clerk an email address to list with MTA. The board has most of June (until the MTA dues deadline) to decide.

D. Drop box

The clerk explained that she felt a drop box should be installed at the hall as soon as possible – tax season is soon and there will likely be record levels of absentee voting. The board agreed it would be better to install this on the kitchen side of the building (to avoid damage to the original hall). It must be able to fit absentee voter ballot envelopes (slightly smaller than a large manila envelope).

The township supervisor had been looking into the matter and asked for a budget – the board agreed that up to \$800 should be spent in order to get a high quality, locking unit.

**IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Opened: 8:11 pm

Comment was received from: Mat Watkeys appreciating the opportunity to listen to the meeting via phone.

Closed: 8:12 pm

**X. BOARD CONCERNS**

Cheryl – It is likely that contractors are leaving items in the dumpster, which is likely why it is being overfilled (the supervisor said he would turn the camera back on to monitor this).

Catherine – (1) Cemetery records update is complete except for the map of the oldest, unrecorded area – likely be in next month's packet for review. (2) Will distribute candidate petitions and forms next month to any board member wishing to seek office again.

Terry – Requested that residents please fill out the census, as it is important in government funding for local areas.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 pm.

Motion: Brian Bresette

Support: Cheryl Lane

Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Onota Township Clerk

Proposed: 6/1/20

Approved: 6/17/20