

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustees of Sycamore Township
Sycamore Township, Hamilton County, Ohio
August 6, 2020

NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the issuance of guidelines to limit public gatherings to ten people or less by Governor DeWine and the Director of the Ohio Department of Health, and due to enabling legislation (House Bill 197) which permits Ohio governments to meet remotely during this time, this meeting was held without members of the public physically present. Members of the public were given the opportunity to participate live in the meeting remotely via Zoom audio. Video of the meeting was live streamed to the public on the internet.

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

The invocation from All Saints Church was read by Mr. Weidman.

Pledge to the Flag.

Present for the meeting were Chairman LaBarbara, Vice Chairman James, Trustee Weidman, Fiscal Officer Porter, Law Director Desai, Administrator Warrick, Superintendent / Assistant Administrator Kellums, Zoning Administrator Miller, Fire Chief Penny and Lt. Tarr from the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office.

The Receipts in the amount of \$479,690.25 and Disbursements of \$58,386.54 for August 6, 2020 were read by the Fiscal Officer and are hereby made a part of these Minutes.

I hereby certify that the money for payment of these bills is in the fund provided and duly and properly appropriated.

Signed: 
Robert C. Porter III, Fiscal Officer

A motion was made by Mr. Weidman seconded by Mr. James to accept them.

Mr. James requested clarification on the numbers as a disbursement amount was reported at the Workshop on Tuesday.

Mr. Porter said the disbursements noted this evening represent a second check run.

Vote: All Aye: James: Aye; Weidman: Aye; LaBarbara: Aye

Public Comments

Mr. J. Janus, Jr., of 4462 Daffodil Avenue, addressed the Board. Mr. Janus discussed the question of whether to hold or cancel the Annual Dillonvale Luminaria given the current COVID-19 public health crisis. He also commented on Mr. Petty's report during the August 4th

Workshop Meeting about the Parks Advisory Committee, saying he neglected to report that the committee would like to focus on both Bechtold Park and High Point Park. Mr. Janus commented Mr. Warrick spoke about updating the accounting software at the Citizen Finance Committee Meeting and he observed the committee to be interested in speeding up upgrades. Mr. Janus addressed the issue of wearing masks at the Township's public meetings and read the most recent recommendation for that. He said a notice of the mask requirement should be posted on the front door of all the Township Buildings as well as having the Director's Order on hand.

Ms. Kathy Kugler, of 7106 Tenderfoot Lane, addressed the Board requesting a separate budget for Parks and Recreation to verify expenses are allocated to the authorized purpose. She requested this be done as soon as possible so that the Parks Advisory Committee may plan for the future. She suggested the separation of the parks budget and the recreation budget. Ms. Kugler requested a response from the Trustees on this issue.

Mr. James asked if there was a line item for Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Warrick answered there is not because, in the past, the Township has identified a project and applied for grant money to fund the project. He said the playground equipment in Bechtold needs to be replaced and we'd like to follow that same path by applying for grant money. He noted it would be helpful for the Parks Advisory Committee to assist in the selection of the type of playground equipment. He said a good time to add a line item for Parks and Recreation would be when drafting the 2021 budget.

Mr. Kellums explained we do not have a parks and recreation line item noting, in the past, there have been line items for special events only such as the Festival in Sycamore and Luminaria. He said there is a parks budget to take care of the grounds and any necessary repairs, but as far as new programming or new things to add into the parks there is not a line item. He reported we are currently looking into grants for the playground equipment.

Mr. James asked if there has been any planning as to what the Township might do for Luminaria in light of the public health crisis.

Mr. Kellums stated there has not been planning yet but that if things continue as they are at present the wagon rides would not be possible.

Sheriff Patrol Report

Lt. Tarr reported the Sheriff's Office is continuing limited response protocol due to COVID-19 and noted he would have the district statistics to the Trustees soon.

EMS/Fire Report

Chief Penny reported the Fire Department had received a case of masks from the Bureau of Workers' Compensation. He said there were two new quarantine at home cases reported in the Township and two cases released from quarantine.

Chief Penny reported the new AED (automated external defibrillator) he had ordered for the

Trustee Meeting Room had been delivered and would be installed on the wall before the next meeting. He pointed out it uses Wi-Fi to send him reports.

Roads, Maintenance & Recreation Report

Mr. Kellums stated he had nothing new to report since the Workshop on Tuesday.

Planning & Zoning Report

Mr. Miller reported the Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals public hearings for the month of August will be conducted remotely via Zoom to comply with the Governor's current recommendations.

Law Director Report

Mr. Desai stated he had no report.

Administrator Report

The following purchase orders were presented for approval by Mr. Warrick:

Enzo's	Pressure Washer, Compressor	\$19,777.70
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Mr. Warrick said this is for equipment for the new maintenance storage facility that has already been budgeted. Mr. Weidman made a motion, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara to approve this request. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

McCluskey Chevrolet Inc.	Fire Chief's Vehicle	\$55,115.00
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Mr. Warrick provided background information on the need for the vehicle. Mr. Weidman made a motion, seconded by Mr. James to approve this request. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

Mr. Porter discussed the proposed change to the accounting software recommended by Mr. Warrick. He stated the accounting software is fundamental to the operation of his office. He said the Trustees received the draft of the recent State audit noting the Township had a clean audit again for the years 2018 and 2019. He stated the Township has a long history of clean audits largely due to the hard work of Debbie Campbell. Mr. Porter said the existing accounting software has been in place for 15 years and it can do anything Mr. Warrick needs done. He stated the proposed new software is a solution looking for a problem.

Mr. Porter addressed comments made about the Township spending over the appropriation amounts and that being against the law. He gave an example of how that happens using the line item Administrator salary and pointing out that the Trustees can easily adjust this by increasing the appropriation. He said BUCS can be set up to do a hard stop when spending gets close to going over the appropriated amount just as UAN does. He went on to give another example of a line item going over the appropriation due to unforeseen circumstances, noting Ms. Campbell alerts him if that is the case and this will be brought to the Trustees for adjustment.

Mr. Porter pointed out that the purchase of new accounting software would be an unnecessary expense and he will continue to use the current software BUCS. He stated he has served the

Township for 30 years and was just re-elected and will fulfill his term honestly and with the best interest of Township residents in mind. Mr. Porter said he and Mr. Warrick disagree on this but it is his office and his responsibility to report the financial status and compliance of the Township and the financial software used is his decision. He encouraged Mr. Warrick to take the time to learn BUCS saying he could get any reports he wants out of BUCS. Mr. Porter concluded by saying he would be happy to answer any questions and reiterating that he will use the software he chooses in the operation of his office.

Mr. James commented there is no question the Township has plenty of money, the issue is if it is legally appropriated. He said the money should be appropriated prior to the expenditure and the Township has not been doing that. Mr. James then had a conversation with Mr. Porter about his and Ms. Campbell's use of BUCS. Mr. James asked Mr. Porter if he had looked at UAN and he said he had. Mr. James stated 94.5% of Townships in Ohio use UAN.

Mr. Porter said UAN is not robust enough for Sycamore Township pointing out that 90% of those Townships are much smaller than Sycamore and have a fraction Sycamore Township's budget. Mr. James agreed. Mr. Porter went on to speak about the efficiency of the Township form of government. Mr. Porter stated he would like to see the Township's wealth benefit the residents saying there is no reason to buy new software and train staff when the current software works fine.

Mr. James said Mr. Warrick would like to speak about discussions he had with the auditor to get that clean audit.

Mr. Porter said his office contacted the auditor prior to Mr. Warrick's conversation. He explained the levy does not cover all police and fire expenses and what isn't covered is paid for with JEDZ funds. He explained the process used to lawfully transfer the money from the JEDZ to police and fire before the previous audit. Mr. Porter said the auditor did not mention it in the report for years 2016-2017 and the JEDZ funds continued to be transferred using the same process. During this year's audit, Mr. Porter said, the auditor says he doesn't want it done that way and from now on his office will do it the way the auditor requires.

Mr. Warrick said the issue is that the appropriations should be fixed prior to spending the money.

Mr. James noted the Federal government shuts down when they hit the point of limited appropriations until Congress approves more.

Mr. James asked what the licensing fee is for BUCS.

Mr. Warrick answered \$6,500.00 per year. He said UAN will be \$3,500.00 per year with no upfront cost unless we have to bring in some temporary labor to input data.

Mr. James listed a number of items that should be reported to the Trustees monthly, and that he would like to make available to the public, saying UAN would make it simple to generate with the click of a button. Mr. James said he recognizes it is hard to make a change but it's worth

looking at to see if it would be a better service and simpler in the end for the Township and the public once everyone is trained.

There was discussion about Symmes Township switching to BUCS and why Anderson Township uses BUCS and also UAN for payroll.

Mr. James said Chief Penny has a sophisticated system of his own and asked him to speak about it.

Chief Penny discussed the software the firehouse uses saying it is not intended to replace BUCS. He said he puts invoices into BUCS but there's a lot to it that he doesn't use.

Mr. Warrick said BUCS is older and dated while UAN software is specific to Townships. He said he used UAN in Hamilton Township and found it easy to use. He said he would like to improve the Township's budget management, have the department heads be involved in setting their budgets and have access to real time reporting. He said BUCS is harder to use and UAN would make us better operators as it reports directly to the State.

Mr. Warrick then reviewed some reports from Hamilton Township which he displayed on the screen. Mr. Warrick stated UAN will give real time information and will make it easier for the department heads to do their own budgeting. He said UAN is more modern, easier to use, and will be more helpful to him and useful to the department heads. Mr. Warrick noted, currently, the department heads do not see reports showing they are threatening an appropriation level or that they went over. He said historically, we have been doing this as described, but after the fact, by transferring large sums of money in December. Mr. Warrick said the audits in Ohio only look at December; if they had gone back to previous months, they would find us out of compliance just as we are right now in real time. He said we have the money but are not doing things proactively.

Mr. James asked if a report such as the one Mr. Warrick showed could be generated by BUCS and why the Trustees aren't getting those reports.

Mr. Porter answered yes and said any report the Trustees want they can get from BUCS.

Mr. James discussed the check register and how difficult it was to read before he requested it be changed by Ms. Campbell.

Mr. Porter noted the Township does not need a different software to generate a budgeted income statement. There was a discussion about the reports.

Mr. Warrick said, when he first started, he showed a representative from BUCS the UAN reports and asked if BUCS could produce the same report. He said the BUCS representative tried a few times to match the UAN report, but it wasn't even close. He said BUCS would have to write what already exists in UAN and it doesn't make sense to spend money having BUCS create new reports that exist in UAN, which costs less annually.

Mr. James noted Mr. Porter is responsible for reporting the numbers, but the Trustees and department heads need to be able to use the numbers for planning purposes.

Mr. Kellums added, as a department head, he doesn't want the Trustees to think we are just spending money not knowing what we are spending because that is not true. He said the department heads put numbers together and give them to the administrator, noting he does not have a levy to cover his department's expenditures. He listed some of the sources of revenue for his department noting those funds do not go far. Mr. Kellums stated the former administrator and Ms. Campbell would work with his numbers to create line items and the department heads work from a purchase order system.

Mr. James said the citizens put their trust in the Trustees to keep track of the numbers.

Mr. Porter discussed Mr. Warrick's experience with BUCS and the frustrations he must feel working with appropriations put together by the previous administrator. He said this December Mr. Warrick will have the opportunity to create his own budget for 2021 and his office can put reports together for the Board as they wish. He said BUCS could have a hard stop, but he doesn't recommend it because a vendor or employee could not get paid.

There was discussion about the hard stop, payroll, the budget for next year and UAN with Mr. Porter stating UAN has been around as long as BUCS has.

Mr. James asked why the majority of Townships use UAN.

Mr. Porter said if Sycamore were a small, rural township he would be more receptive to UAN.

Mr. Weidman said what he is hearing Mr. Warrick say is that the Township needs to be more proactive about appropriations that are about to exceed their limit. He said he thought Mr. Porter said that there is the ability in BUCS to put warnings or limits out so that we know when we are getting close to going over the amount appropriated. He said if BUCS can generate the kind of report Mr. Warrick used in his example, we would already know we were getting close to going over the appropriated amount.

Mr. Porter discussed the fact that townships receive a lot of their revenue only twice a year and said there are times, especially this year with the economic effects of COVID-19, when the Trustees' approval is needed to transfer money.

Mr. James suggested Debbie Campbell, as the primary user, be exposed to UAN by visiting another Township currently using that software. Mr. James said this is a preliminary discussion, but he thinks there is reason to look at UAN. There was a discussion about that between Mr. James and Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter said he was fine with looking into UAN more and he suggested we do.

Mr. LaBarbara reported on other townships and villages who use UAN and read their positive comments about the software and the quality of UAN's customer support.

Mr. Porter said this is his office, he would give BUCS rave reviews and can get the Trustees the reports they request.

Mr. James said BUCS couldn't generate the report Mr. Warrick requested.

Mr. Weidman said he does not think a survey of other Townships should be involved in this discussion because every township is a little bit different. He said the fact that other townships use it is not a good enough reason for him to switch. Mr. Weidman also pointed out Mr. Porter was duly elected as Fiscal Officer; rewarded with another term by the voters due to the excellent job he has done for 30 years. He said it is Mr. Porter's responsibility to report to the State Auditor and he has done an exemplary job. Mr. Weidman noted the one person who uses the software daily is Ms. Campbell and she doesn't want to change.

Mr. Weidman said it would be a good idea to put a warning in place when approaching the limit of the appropriation.

Mr. Porter said that has not been done in the past, but if that is what the Trustees want, it can be done. He recommended the warning option as opposed to the hard stop. There was continued discussion about this option.

Mr. Weidman said he is not going to tell Mr. Porter or Ms. Campbell how to do their jobs and this should be Mr. Porter's decision. He said he advised Mr. Warrick when he started as administrator that just because Hamilton Township does something differently than us, doesn't mean we are doing it wrong and let's not try to fix something that's not broken. Mr. Weidman said Mr. Porter's point that Mr. Warrick is trying to fix a problem that doesn't exist is legitimate and he is in favor of trying to get the necessary reports and warnings in place with BUCS.

Mr. James said nobody is trying to usurp Mr. Porter's authority and if it is best to stay with BUCS, switch to UAN or do something else in the end that's great. He said he is pleased Mr. Porter is willing to let Ms. Campbell take a hard look at UAN. Mr. James requested Mr. Warrick work with Ms. Campbell and get her exposed to UAN software.

Mr. LaBarbara said in life you go through changes. He said Mr. Porter doesn't know how to use BUCS and the big problem is Ms. Campbell learning a new software. Mr. LaBarbara then read an email that Mr. Porter sent to all the department heads. It read, "I will not use this software & I will not sign any check to pay for this unnecessary expense. Due to the environment in the office I am inclined to have Debbie work from home pending further notice. Rob Porter". Mr. LaBarbara said there are three other emails & Rob has created a crisis. Mr. Porter disagreed saying he is not the one creating a crisis.

Mr. LaBarbara said we have to move \$1.3 million over at the end of the year and we should get organized.

Mr. James said Mr. Warrick will work with Ms. Campbell to introduce her to UAN and the topic will be revisited after that.

Trustee Comments

Mr. LaBarbara welcomed Taste of Belgium to Sycamore Township which has opened in the former Ruby Tuesday space in Kenwood Square.

Mr. James encouraged people to respond to the 2020 Census. He also offered prayers for the Governor who has tested positive for COVID-19 but is asymptomatic, and expressed his hope that the test was a false positive.

A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.



Jim LaBarbara, Chairman



Thomas E. James, Jr., Vice Chairman



Thomas J. Weidman, Trustee



Robert C. Porter III, Fiscal Officer

08/06/2020