

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Trustees of Sycamore Township
Sycamore Township, Hamilton County, Ohio

January 2, 2020

The special meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Present for the meeting were Trustee James, Trustee LaBarbara, Trustee Weidman, Fiscal Officer Porter, Law Director Desai, Superintendent / Assistant Administrator Kellums and Planning & Zoning Administrator Miller.

Mr. Porter opened the meeting and requested a motion to organize the Board for 2020.

Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. Weidman, for Mr. LaBarbara to serve as Chairman of the Board. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

Mr. Weidman made a motion, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara, for Mr. James to serve as Vice Chairman of the Board. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

A motion to enter into **Executive Session discuss Personnel – Employment, Dismissal and Compensation of a Public Official or Employee** was made by Trustee Weidman and seconded by Trustee LaBarbara. Mr. Porter called the roll.

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

End regular session: 10:06 a.m.

Begin Executive Session: 10:07 a.m.

End Executive Session: 10:14 a.m.

Back in regular session: 10:15 a.m.

Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. Weidman, to amend the order of the items on the agenda to move the approval of minutes to the end of the agenda. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

The resolution "Approving a Separation Agreement" was presented. A motion was made by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara, dispensing with the second reading.

Mr. Weidman stated he wanted to explain his position on this resolution. He stated the separation agreement orchestrated by his two fellow Trustees is terminating the best employee we have in Sycamore Township. Mr. Weidman noted Mr. Bickford's knowledge and understanding of complex issues has led to the growth and prosperity of Sycamore Township.

Mr. Weidman pointed out the Township will be paying up to \$240,000 in salary and accrued sick and vacation time, plus the cost of health care, in order to terminate Mr. Bickford's employment with one year left on his contract. In addition, the Township will be paying salary and benefits to his successor. Mr. Weidman noted the money spent under the separation agreement could have been used to hire additional safety services personnel.

Mr. Weidman stated the separation agreement was prepared in a backroom deal by his two fellow Trustees without any formal discussion with the entire Board. He went on to say it does not make sense to spend \$240,000 in taxpayer money to terminate the employment of the Township staff's leader, therefore, he opposes the resolution.

Mr. James stated, while expensive, this is a necessary move to implement change in the Township noting the contract was foolishly lavish due to prior action by boards of trustees in adopting an automatic renewing contract that made the payment inevitable at some point in the future. The earlier contract should not have been implemented by the Township and these contracts will not happen in the future. He agreed Mr. Bickford has done a lot for the Township but said it is time for a change.

Mr. LaBarbara agreed saying the Board is going in a different direction and expressed his concerns about the employment contract being a perpetual contract that would never end. He stated employment contracts were rushed through prior to the beginning of his term in 2018 for a couple of employees by Trustees Weidman, Connor and Bishop. At the time he sent a letter to the Township's law director voicing his concerns. Mr. LaBarbara said he is glad that it is now public knowledge. He added, there is probably not an administrator in the history of Townships in Ohio who will walk away with a "Golden Parachute" like this. He went on to note that the contracts were totally irresponsible and he is 100% in favor of the resolution.

Mr. Weidman stated the salary was discussed publicly and noted the contract was put in place not to pay out Mr. Bickford, but to retain him as a very valuable employee.

Mr. LaBarbara responded, there is nothing that indicates Mr. Bickford had other offers. You were irresponsible and just padded his and another employees' contract.

Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: James: Aye; LaBarbara: Aye; Weidman: Nay
Resolution No. 2020-01 passed this 2nd day of January, 2020.

The resolution "Approving an Employment Contract" was presented. A motion was made by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara, dispensing with the second reading.

Mr. Weidman stated that the employment contract in question was negotiated by his two fellow Trustees to hire a person he has never spoken with about the job. He said he has no knowledge of his qualifications and his requests for Mr. Warrick's resume went unanswered. Mr. Weidman pointed out his fellow Trustees should have provided him with Mr. Warrick's resume and candidates should have been interviewed by all three elected members of the Board. He noted he had invited Mr. James as Trustee-Elect to sit in on interviews with candidates for the Zoning

Administrator position. Mr. Weidman stated without an open interview process there is no transparency and he is unable to make an informed decision.

Mr. James responded he had lunch with Mr. Weidman as a Trustee-Elect in early December and informed him of his intent to have Mr. Warrick assume the position of Administrator. He stated he had a copy of Mr. Warrick's resume and could have provided it had Mr. Weidman asked for it. Mr. James noted that Mr. Weidman knows Mr. Warrick and that he did have time to communicate with him during that time knowing that he was the intended appointee. Mr. Weidman noted he had asked Mr. Bickford to request a copy from Mr. LaBarbara as a sitting Trustee.

Mr. LaBarbara stated Mr. Bickford never asked him for a copy of Mr. Warrick's resume.

Mr. LaBarbara called on a member of the public to speak about the resolution.

Mr. J. Janus, Jr., of 4462 Daffodil Avenue, Sycamore Township, OH 45242, addressed the Board stating his concerns about the titles of resolutions not providing enough information for the public and with his thoughts on employment contracts. He added, the contract benefits were never discussed in a public meeting. He said he is glad Mr. LaBarbara and Mr. James have changed the employment contract for Mr. Warrick to be fiscally responsible.

Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: James: Aye; LaBarbara: Aye; Weidman: Nay
Resolution No. 2020-02 passed this 2nd day of January, 2020.

The resolution "Setting the Rate of Pay for a New Township Employee" was read. A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, dispensing with the second reading.

Mr. LaBarbara and Mr. Desai noted the salary proposed in the resolution for Mr. Warrick.

Mr. Desai then addressed Mr. Janus' comments noting instead of reading only the title of a resolution, the resolutions may be read in their entirety if the Trustees like. He said the title could also be expanded to include more information.

Mr. James stated he would like the resolutions read in their entirety when feasible and noted the draft legislation has been posted on the Township website for the past year. He suggested also printing paper copies for those present at the meetings to review and displaying resolutions on the screen in the meeting room.

Mr. Standish Fortin, of 12137 McCauley Road, Sycamore Township, OH 45241, addressed the Board. He suggested a paper packet be made available with the agenda and all supporting documents for the Trustees and any citizens present at the meetings.

Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: James: Aye; LaBarbara: Aye; Weidman: Aye
Resolution No. 2020-03 passed this 2nd day of January, 2020.

There was discussion about Mr. James voting on the December 5, 2019 meeting minutes since he was not a Trustee at the time. Mr. Desai reviewed his recommendation for approving the minutes and the signature pages.

The minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held December 5, 2019 were presented for approval. Mr. LaBarbara made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, to approve version one of the December 5, 2019 meeting minutes which noted only that Mr. Weidman read a prepared statement and Mr. LaBarbara responded.

There was a discussion about the minutes. Mr. LaBarbara brought up some issues from past minutes as to what was included and what was not. Mr. Desai explained that anything submitted to the Board during a meeting becomes part of the record.

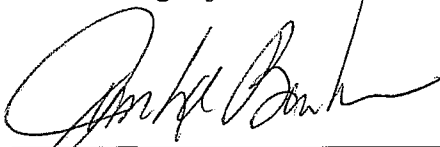
Mr. James stated political statements should not be part of the meeting but noted he doesn't have a problem with documents being part of the record. He noted several comments were left out including Mr. Weidman's motion to direct Mr. Bickford to check into videotaping the meetings.

Mr. Weidman noted some of his comments about Mr. Connor were not included.

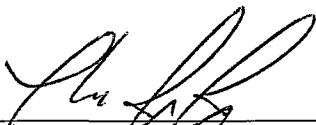
Mr. LaBarbara withdrew his motion to approve the minutes pending revisions being made.

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 10:48 a.m.



Jim LaBarbara, Chairman



Thomas G. James, Jr., Vice Chairman



Thomas J. Weidman, Trustee



Robert C. Porter II, Fiscal Officer

01/02/2020