

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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

April 2, 2020

NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the issuance of a Stay-at-Home order 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 via remote video with all participants joining in by videoconference. Video of the meeting was live streamed to the public on the internet. To ensure compliance with HB 197, the Township provided the following public notice in advance of the meeting, along with links to the meeting agenda and to where the public could watch it:

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill 197 which provides for relief to Ohioans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill also allows local governments to conduct meetings remotely in order to carry out Township business while complying with the Stay at Home Order and social distancing recommendations.

Below is the link to the live stream of the regularly scheduled Sycamore Township Board of Trustees Meeting taking place Thursday, April 2nd at 7:00 p.m. Because of the electronic format of the meeting, there will not be an opportunity for in-person public comment. However, we invite members of the public with any concerns to submit them to the Board of Trustees in advance of the meeting by email to rwarrick@sycamoretownship.org or by mail to Ray Warrick, Administrator, 8540 Kenwood Road, Sycamore Township, OH 45236. You may also drop off written comments in the bin located in the Fire Department lobby at 8540 Kenwood Road. [Agenda & Video Links followed the notice.]

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present remotely for the meeting were Chairman LaBarbara, Vice Chairman James, Trustee Weidman, Fiscal Officer Porter, Law Director Desai, Administrator Warrick, Superintendent/Assistant Administrator Kellums, Planning & Zoning Administrator Miller, Fire Chief Penny, Lt. Smith from the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office and Beth Gunderson.

Mr. LaBarbara explained that Ohio House Bill 197 provided several measures of emergency relief for Ohioans during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic including allowing local governments to hold meetings remotely. He stated due to the electronic format of the meeting, there will be no in person comments from the public, however, he noted the public was informed how to submit comments or questions to the Township prior to the meeting.

Mr. LaBarbara then said he gives permission for his signature to be added electronically to any documents approved at the meeting. He asked Trustees James and Weidman and Fiscal Officer Porter if they also give permission for electronic signatures. All answered yes.

Approval of March 17, 2020 Trustee Workshop Minutes

The March 17, 2020 Trustee Workshop Minutes were presented for approval. Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara, to accept them. Mr. Weidman noted he would abstain from approving the minutes since he was present remotely prior to House Bill 197. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: James: Aye; LaBarbara: Aye; Weidman: Abstain

Pay Bills and Read Receipts

The receipts, in the amount of \$485,374.01 and disbursements, in the amount of \$668,514.12, for April 2, 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: /s/ Robert C. Porter, III
Robert C. Porter III, Fiscal Officer

A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, to accept them. Mr. Porter called roll. Vote: All Aye.

SHERIFF PATROL ITEMS

Lt. Smith reported things had been quiet as the Sheriff's office is not responding to as many runs to limit exposure. He said there have been a few complaints about people congregating in yards or parks. He noted there is a misconception that the police can enforce social distancing saying they cannot enforce but can suggest. Lt. Smith said they make face to face contact for complaints such as these and most people are cooperative. He reported two officers had tested negative for COVID-19 and that they have a surplus of supplies and PPE.

EMS AND FIRE ITEMS

COVID-19 Update

Chief Penny reported the Fire Department's run volume has dropped in half. He then shared a document on the screen. The document listed online resources for COVID-19 information. He noted the virus' peak is expected in two to three weeks which could cause a spike in run volume. Chief Penny shared a photo of the Jewish Hospital tent set up for COVID-19 testing noting a rapid test has been developed but is not yet available locally.

Chief Penny reported the Department is tracking expenses for possible Federal and State reimbursements once the Township declares a state of emergency. He went on to address the departments supplies noting which ones are of limited number.

Chief Penny said four forehead thermometers were ordered to take employees' temperatures daily. He then pointed out there is a bin in the Fire Department Lobby for mail and deliveries to the Township. He said the lobby is in between two sets of doors.

Chief Penny addressed staffing issues noting if the department loses a firefighter to illness, he may have to take a unit out of service.

Chief Penny reported the department is documenting every run and have had 11 patients meeting the criteria for COVID-19. He then reviewed the safety and sanitizing practices and social distancing protocol the department has instituted. Chief Penny went on to give a list of things people touch often noting the public should be aware of these, wash hands often and avoid touching the face.

Mr. Weidman requested the Chief's list of safe practices be posted on the Township website.

Mr. LaBarbara reported on information he had received from Hamilton County Public Health, giving statistics on COVID-19 cases and deaths in Hamilton County and Ohio. He stated the peak is predicted for April 26th. He noted the County is working on acquiring more ventilators.

Mr. James asked Chief Penny for his thoughts about the public wearing masks.

Chief Penny answered firefighters wear them on runs and often must have their temperature taken before entering nursing homes. He said it can't hurt for the public to wear masks although he thinks sometimes having a mask on makes one more inclined to touch one's face. He also pointed out the masks are not sealed to a person's face, so he is not 100 percent sold on the idea.

ROADS, MAINTENANCE & RECREATION ITEMS

Mr. Kellums thanked Chief Penny and his staff. He went on to review safety, social distancing and sanitation procedures put in place by the Maintenance Department to protect employees and the public from COVID-19.

Mr. Kellums reported on the 2020 Curb & sidewalk Replacement Bid Results. He said there were three bids from R.A Miller for \$537,000.00, Adleta Construction for \$489,280.00 and Prus Construction for \$519,630.00. He recommended the Board award the contract to Adleta Construction.

Mr. James asked Mr. Kellums if this is something the Township should hold off on given the uncertainty of the times and the fact that the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County are making dramatic cutbacks.

Mr. Warrick stated it is premature to hold off on this planned project noting the Township has substantial reserves.

Mr. Kellums said he is not concerned about moving forward with the project saying it is a budgeted item.

Mr. James asked if the Township could choose to suspend work if at some point that became necessary.

Mr. Desai stated he has not seen the contract pointing out it would be wise to have a provision for unknowns due to the current situation.

Mr. Warrick stated the resolution allows the Township to negotiate the contract.

Mr. Desai said the resolution awards the contract to Adleta Construction but the agreement itself still must be put together. He then asked if the Board had agreed to electronically sign the resolutions and was told they had done so earlier in the meeting. Mr. Desai consented to an electronic signature as well.

A “Resolution Awarding the Contract for the 2020 Curb Replacement Program to Adleta Construction, Dispensing with the Second Reading and Declaring an Emergency.” was presented by Mr. Kellums. A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. LaBarbara, to approve the resolution. Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: All Aye.

Resolution No. 2020-29 passed this 2nd day of April, 2020.

Mr. Kellums stated he had a resolution for the Board to approve a new hire. He said this is not a strain on the budget as the new employee would be replacing someone who had left. He noted the start date for the new employee had been pushed back to May 1st.

Mr. Warrick noted the Township would typically be hiring three temporary employees this time of year but are not doing so since the ball fields do not have to be play ready.

Mr. LaBarbara questioned the message we would be sending by hiring a new employee at this time.

Mr. Weidman noted while the city is bloated with workers, the Township runs a lean machine and this is a replacement, not an additional employee.

Mr. James read the resolution title and part of its contents out loud for the public as it was presented on the screen.

Mr. LaBarbara stated the start date could be pushed back further if necessary.

A “Resolution Establishing the Rate of Pay for a New Township Employee, Dispensing with the Second Reading and Declaring an Emergency.” was presented by Mr. Kellums. A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, to approve the resolution. Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: All Aye. Resolution No. 2020-30 passed this 2nd day of April, 2020.

Mr. Kellums reported Sycamore Road will be closed from Blue Ash Road to Plainfield Road beginning April 3rd through June 4th to allow for the installation of storm sewers and curb. He also reported the Montgomery Road Sidewalk Phase IV had begun and traffic control was in place.

Mr. James stated he had heard from residents concerned about construction workers using PPE and thus taking that PPE away from medical needs.

Mr. Kellums stated he has not seen that at all, and Chief Penny said he does not have a concern about that.

PLANNING AND ZONING ITEMS

Mr. Miller reported his department is still accepting applications for zoning review, issuing permits and following up on complaints. He stated he and Jessica Daves are primarily working remotely from

home while Kevin Clark, the inspector, is conducting his duties as he normally would since he is not in contact with others and has been provided a mask and hand sanitizer. Mr. Miller pointed out zoning applications for residential fences and sheds, which do not require building department review, may be submitted via email.

Mr. James asked Mr. Miller what his plans are to hold zoning hearings in the current climate.

Mr. Weidman stated he spoke to State Representative Seitz about this and the Township must hold zoning meetings within the required time limit and must also follow social distancing rules.

Mr. Miller said he needs to figure out how to hold the meetings and facilitate public input remotely.

There was discussion about how to hold zoning meetings and allow for comments and questions from the public. Mr. Miller will investigate holding the meeting online. Mr. James suggested a specific method which would allow for interactive public participation by video conference or telephone during any hearings.

Mr. James asked about the Kugler Mill Road property demolition agreement with neighborhood HOAs.

Mr. Warrick stated he will look into it with attorney Scott Sollmann.

LAW DIRECTOR ITEMS

Mr. Desai reported on the status of the appeal of the Board of Zoning Appeals decision in the Moeller High School parking lot case. He stated there will be oral arguments in that case once the courts re-open.

Mr. Desai reported oral arguments were heard in the House of Browns case and he is awaiting a decision from the court.

ADMINISTRATOR ITEMS

JEDZs Economic Impact

Mr. Warrick reported on the impact of potential economic downturn on projected JEDZ income. Mr. Warrick stated he is not fully comfortable with how the Township's accounting system is set up. He noted there is a disconnect between data from BUCS (accounting software) and the final numbers from the Township's CPA. Mr. Warrick reviewed a document for the Board in which he showed the JEDZ balances and expenses in 2018 and 2019, then the projected income in 2020 and the projected income showing a 17% decrease caused by two months of no revenue.

Mr. Warrick noted the JEDZ accounts have a healthy reserve, however, in the past expenses have been divided equally among the four JEDZ districts which could cause the Northwest and Southwest JEDZ to go into the negative. He said the 2020 Township budget actually projects those two JEDZs going into the negative, which is something that can't and shouldn't be done in the publishing of a budget. Mr. Warrick stated in the future, the Township will take less money from those two accounts, so no transfer of funds is needed in December as has occurred in the past.

Mr. Warrick went on to discuss the budget stating he will encourage department heads to become more involved in budgeting. He concluded by saying the Township has TIF and JEDZ reserves and is in very good shape financially, but he thinks the budget should be done differently.

Mr. Weidman asked why the Township does not divide expenditures more proportionally among the JEDZ districts. Mr. Warrick indicated that was not the Township's practice in the past and said it will be corrected.

Mr. Weidman noted the Central JEDZ could be significantly affected in an economic downturn, but the others he doesn't think will see a drastic change. Mr. Warrick noted the projections are worst case scenario.

Mr. James stated moving forward the Township should have public input in the budget over time noting other Townships have residents serving on finance committees.

Mr. Porter cautioned against using reporting to the state to make an operating budget as there are very specific items that must be reported to the State Auditor. He stated if more information is needed to develop the operational budget to let him know.

Bond Renewal and Conversion to Callable

Mr. Warrick reported on a resolution before the Board to renew a bond and make it callable for added flexibility.

Mr. Weidman asked if the bond was a one-year renewable bond and if it was at the same rate or lower.

Mr. Warrick answered it is for one year and he believes it is for the same rate.

Mr. James asked if it was possible to get a better rate.

Mr. Warrick stated he didn't think to negotiate it, noting the bond needs to be renewed.

Mr. Porter stated putting the callable feature in would allow the option to negotiate a better rate.

There was discussion about the details of calling the bond with Mr. Warrick stating the Board is under time constraints to renew. Mr. Warrick said once the resolution is approved to renew the bond, he and Mr. Porter will investigate calling it to obtain a better rate or retiring the bond since the Township has healthy reserves.

Resolution - Renewal of Building Improvement Bonds (Desai)

A "Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of Not to Exceed \$4,275,000 Various Purpose Bond Anticipation Notes for the Purposes of Refinancing Notes Originally Issued for the Purpose s of Road Improvements in the township of Sycamore, Ohio and Constructing a New Service Center in the Township of Sycamore, Ohio, Dispensing with the Second Reading and Declaring an Emergency." was presented by Mr. Warrick. A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, to approve the resolution.

Mr. Weidman commented part of the bond is for the new maintenance storage building behind the administration building and part is a rollover from a road project. Mr. Warrick said that is correct.

Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: All Aye.
Resolution No. 2020-31 passed this 2nd day of April, 2020.

Mr. LaBarbara presented a resolution for the Board's approval under home rule authority.

A "Resolution Declaring a State of Emergency in the Township of Sycamore, Hamilton County, Ohio, Due to the COVID-19 (Corona Virus) Pandemic, Dispensing with the Second Reading and Declaring an Emergency." was presented by Mr. LaBarbara. A motion was made by Mr. Weidman, seconded by Mr. James, to approve the resolution. Mr. Porter called the roll. Vote: All Aye.
Resolution No. 2020-32 passed this 2nd day of April, 2020.

Mr. Weidman noted the passage of the resolution is wise in order for the Township to recoup funds spent in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Mr. Warrick stated it also allows Chief Penny to set up an account for State and Federal reimbursements.

Mr. James noted many other municipalities have also declared states of emergency and pointed out he had suggested adding the text the adopted resolution which looks back to March 9th when the State of Ohio declared an emergency.

Mr. Warrick stated he had one comment sent in by a resident to read. He then read a comment from Mr. J. Janus, Jr. regarding documents posted on the website for a previous Trustees meeting that had been removed.

Mr. James stated he spoke to Mr. Janus about this and that the document was probably removed because it was a draft. He suggested noting if online documents are updated by listing a date.

FISCAL OFFICER ITEMS

Mr. Porter had no communications to report.

TRUSTEE ITEMS

Mr. LaBarbara noted Township residents have received the newsletter which was printed prior to Governor DeWine's stay at Home Order. He added that it went to press before the COVID-19 emergency and that several events noted within have had to be postponed or canceled.

Mr. Weidman thanked State Representative Bill Seitz, State Senator Bill Blessing, Governor DeWine and staff and George Glover of Focused Capital Solutions for their help getting HB197 passed last week to enable the Board to hold meetings remotely. He said, as President of the Hamilton County Township Association, the ability to hold meetings remotely was a top request by townships. He also thanked Rob Ebel and ESP Media for help in accomplishing webcast of Sycamore Township meetings on short notice.

Mr. Weidman stated our thoughts and prayers are with our residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 and encouraged residents remain at home unless absolutely necessary. He thanked residents for following social distancing and for looking in on elderly neighbors. He said Lt. Smith is working on addressing complaints from residents noting the virus is very contagious and not completely understood, therefore, we should all heed warnings from the State.

Mr. Weidman spoke about the Let There Be Light event held in northern Sycamore Township. He went on to report he had contacted Hamilton County EMA about Jewish Hospital's concerns about PPE supply and was able to have additional PPE delivered to the hospital. Mr. Weidman spoke about closures at the Kenwood Towne Center and the Kenwood Collection and said we are looking for guidance as to what businesses are essential. He noted the Township is leading by example with the administrative staff working remotely from home. Mr. Weidman reiterated EMS run policies put in place for safety and thanked the EMS and Sheriff's Officers for their service.

Mr. Weidman concluded by encouraging residents to stay the course and asking God to bless them in this difficult time as we quarantine at home.

Mr. James thanked Mr. Weidman for his statement. He then reported there had been an email issue causing some emails from Sycamore Township to subscribers to bounce back. He noted the issue has been resolved and praised Township staff member Beth Gunderson for her work in acting swiftly to make that correction happen as soon as the email problem became apparent.

Mr. James said he had a resident ask why there are cameras at Bob Meyer Park.

Mr. Kellums answered cameras have been put in place in parks in response to vandalism and for safety of those in the parks. He noted they are part of the fiber project that is not yet complete so not all cameras are operational.

Mr. Miller noted having the cameras in the parks reduces insurance premiums.

Mr. LaBarbara stated there was vandalism that took place at Bob Meyer Park.

Mr. James requested more information on cost of the fiber and cameras.

Mr. James reported voting by mail continues through April 28th for the Ohio primary election and encouraged residents to make their voices heard by voting. He noted he is not in favor of Issue 7 and suggested residents do research on that issue to make an informed choice.

Mr. James reminded residents to complete the 2020 Census. He then discussed things residents have been doing to increase morale during this time.

Mr. LaBarbara agreed with Mr. James regarding Issue 7 which he said is a huge burden on taxpayers.

He stated the Cincinnati Zoo is offering online Safaris live at 3:00 p.m. daily saying his daughter-in-law is involved in those. He gave kudos to the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office and said we will get through this together.

Mr. James showed a photo of musicians playing outside of a retirement home so that residents could listen from their balconies.

Mr. LaBarbara thanked everyone for following orders and spoke about residents exercising while social distancing and creating sidewalk art.

ANNOUNCEMENT CHANGES

Mr. LaBarbara reviewed changes in the calendar noting the April Trash Bash and document shredding events had been cancelled and would be rescheduled.

A motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Weidman and seconded by Trustee James. Vote: All Aye.

End regular session: 8:45 p.m.

/s/ Jim LaBarbara
Jim LaBarbara, Chairman

/s/ Thomas C. James, Jr.
Thomas C. James, Jr., Trustee

/s/ Thomas J. Weidman
Thomas J. Weidman, Trustee

/s/ Robert C. Porter, II
Robert C. Porter III, Fiscal Officer
Trustee Meeting Minutes 04/02/2020