

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF DELTA
Public Meeting Room B
Delta Township Administration Building
7710 West Saginaw Highway
Lansing MI 48917

**TOWNSHIP BOARD COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES FOR
MONDAY, MAY 10, 2010**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Ken Fletcher called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Supervisor Ken Fletcher, Clerk Janice Vedder,
Treasurer Howard Pizzo, and Trustees Barb Poma, Jeff Hicks,
Cara Spagnuolo, and Jan Cunningham – arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Members Absent:

Others Present: Manager Richard Watkins, Financial Director Jeff Anderson,
Planning Director Mark Graham, Utility Director Tom Morrissey,
Parks Director Dick Benkert, and Deputy Manager Jenny
Wohlfert

III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA

TRUSTEE HICKS MOVED THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS SUBMITTED.

TRUSTEE SPAGNUOLO SUPPORTED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED 6 TO 0.

MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Richard Watkins
a. AAA Budget Rating

Mr. Watkins said the Township was now a fixed AAA rated community, but he didn't know what financial effect it would have at this point.

b. New Economies Class

Mr. Watkins noted that he had attended a class entitled "New Economy 101" which was the first of a three part training program presented by the Land Policy Institute of Michigan State University. The program covered the present situation compared to new and old economies, global competition, and ways to

restore prosperity in Michigan. Mr. Watkins said the State of Michigan had always relied on the auto industry in the past to help boost the economy however, this was no longer a viable option and that the State had to change its mindset and be proactive and think of different ways to improve the economy.

Treasurer Pizzo felt the Township may have to recognize the fact that the Township may also have a structural deficit as property values may not come back.

Mr. Watkins didn't feel property values would rebound to where they used to be and that they would level off and come back on a smaller scale. He noted that the Township wouldn't catch back up to where it was because of the Headly Amendment. The Headly Amendment kept tax increases low in the past which worked in a better economy, but in today's economy, the taxable values were where the assessed values were and those figures would not be improving very fast.

Treasurer Pizzo felt the Township may find that expenditures were increasing at a faster rate than revenue.

Mr. Watkins felt that would be the case for at least the next four to five years.

It was felt that the Township would need to consider what measures would have to be taken, not only to cut expenditures, but to also look at revenues, either by focusing on smart growth, or encouraging neighborhood development. The Township needed to be able to provide jobs in the region in order to create an environment that would encourage the younger generation to live here.

IV. DEPARTMENT REPORT

2. Chief Hilbert – Fire Department

a. Installation of a “New” Public Warning Siren

Mr. Hilbert said the new siren was one of 15 located throughout the Township and that the system covered approximately 80% of the Township. The areas not adequately covered at this time were those in the southernmost portion of the Township and areas north of the river. Mr. Hilbert felt the new siren would be especially beneficial for those living and traveling along the Saginaw Highway corridor. He noted that the original sirens that had been purchased by the Township were designed to cover approximately 4,400 feet of distance, but tended to have a cone effect and that the new sirens covered approximately 5,200 feet. Mr. Hilbert noted that the new public warning siren

provided better siren penetration in those areas that had not been adequately protected in the past. He noted that the "First to Warn" system had been made available to everyone who had provided his office with their contact information in order to receive storm warnings over their computer or cell phone. He announced that there would be an Emergency Management exercise held next week and he welcomed the Board to attend.

b. Fire Department Statistics Report

Mr. Hilbert indicated that the Fire Department's statistics were collected through the computer generated dispatch system. He said the information the Board had been provided with this evening was a breakdown of calls the county's police and fire departments had responded to on a month to date and year to date basis. He pointed out that the Township's Fire Department was the largest and busiest department in Eaton County and that the City of Charlotte's Fire Department had gotten very busy due to the fact that they were first responders in conjunction with their EMS calls. Mr. Hilbert indicated that the fire department responded to 322 calls for service for the month of April. He said one of the goals of the department was to get their response time under six minutes which he felt they were doing very well with and were well within that goal.

c. Training Report – Year to date

Mr. Hilbert noted that every firefighter had listed the classes they had taken over a four month period. These classes consisted of EMS training, firefighter safety training, and a number of other training classes that were all conducted in-house. Mr. Hilbert noted that firefighters would be involved in hazardous materials training this week, as well as confined space training. He noted that the department was also starting a series on professional growth and development. He said 85% to 90% of his employees were receiving training every week and that all of their certification requirements were being met.

A question was raised regarding the response agency for Oneida Township.

Mr. Watkins said the City of Grand Ledge and Oneida Township were part of a fire authority and that Oneida Township was actually part of the Grand Ledge Fire Authority. It was noted that the City of Grand Ledge also provided EMS service for Eagle and Watertown Townships. He indicated that the Township had an automatic aid and mutual aid agreement with everyone in the area.

d. Fire Inspection report – Year to Date

Mr. Hilbert said the Township's Fire Inspector conducted 460 inspections last year and had done several re-inspections and plan reviews. He noted that the Fire Inspector had also been assisting the Building Department with their rental inspections when needed. He mentioned the fact that the Fire Inspector had also written several grants for the department, as well as teach classes.

A question was asked whether the Township would be filling the positions of those who had retired from the department.

Mr. Watkins said at the present time, there were two openings in the Fire Department. He said this matter would be discussed by the Board in the near future in terms of funding and structuring before moving forward with filling the positions.

VI. ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

3. Delta Township Historical Society – Grange Hall Discussion

Clerk Vedder introduced Rita Lamoreaux, who is the President of the Delta Township Historical Society and Architect Don Hartwick who had donated his time and talent on this project.

Ms. Lamoreaux noted that the Historical Society had an opportunity to restore the old Grange building located at the corner of Webster and Delta River Drive. She said in doing so, the building would have to be moved to a more fitting location so that the building could be utilized as a gathering place for community and private events, as well as a museum to the history of Delta Township. Ms. Lamoreaux noted that the building had been vacant for several years before being purchased by a private owner in 1982. She noted that from 1904 to around 1926, the building was owned by the Grange Farming Union and from 1926 into the 1950's, the building was owned by the residents of Delta Mills as a center for community activities.

Ms. Lamoreaux noted that the Historical Society was looking for ideas from the Township as to how the project could become a full community effort. She noted that the estimated cost to move and restore the building was approximately \$500,000 which would be funded by private and in-kind donations, fundraisers, and grants. Ms. Lamoreaux said in searching for a suitable site to locate the building, they found that the closest and also the most complementary location was a piece of property owned by the Township located next to the community center at the northeast corner of Canal and Willow Highway. It was felt that the property next door to the community center would tie in nicely with the Township's rental facility, as well as the Township's parks system. Ms. Lamoreaux said what

they were looking for this evening was ideas from the Township on how they could work together on this project.

Supervisor Fletcher asked how the Historical Society felt the Township could help with this project.

Ms. Lamoreaux noted that the Township may consider a lease agreement with the Historical Society for the property. She said due to the fact that the Grange building tied in so well with the Township's rental facility, it was hoped that the Township may consider expanding the Community Center's parking lot to include the Grange building, as well as extend public utilities. Ms. Lamoreaux noted that the committee was also looking for ideas on how they could build an identity for the Township around the Grange building and whether it was felt the property next to the community center would be a consideration. She noted that Mr. Hartwick had designed additions to the building that included a bathroom and an emergency staircase to the second floor. She noted that an elevator would be very desirable, but would be a major expense.

Supervisor Fletcher questioned whether the \$500,000 included the cost of the parking lot and public utilities.

Ms. Lamoreaux said the \$500,000 included the entire project without any grants. She noted that the owner was asking \$10,000 to purchase the building and due to the fact that the building was now deteriorating at a rapid rate, the Historical Society would like to acquire the building as soon as possible. Ms. Lamoreaux proceeded to provide a presentation to the Board of pictures highlighting the interior and exterior of the building. She noted that the building was named after a farming union and that there were Grange buildings throughout the United States. She pointed out that the National Grange Association was one of the first major unions in the United States and one that was still very active.

Clerk Vedder noted that she had spoken to the President of Michigan's Grange who had informed her that grants were available through the National Grange.

Ms. Lamoreaux indicated that a purchase agreement was in place with the owner and that they would like to start fundraising. She indicated that it was her goal to obtain \$50,000 so that the building could be moved in time for the Township's 50th anniversary of the charter township in 2012. She said once the building was relocated, the restoration of the building could begin.

Trustee Cunningham questioned if the Historical Society was anticipating that the Township would donate the property and install the necessary site improvements.

Ms. Lamoreaux said the committee was looking at ways they could work jointly with the Township, whether it be a lease agreement, or a donation of the property

and site improvements. She noted that most importantly, the Committee was interested in getting the building moved to a suitable site. Ms. Lamoreaux said the building could be jointly owned by the Historical Society and the Township. She indicated that she had worked on the restoration of the Turner-Dodge house in Lansing which was a much bigger operation and that their yearly budget to staff and maintain the building was \$200,000. However, she felt the Grange building was a much smaller building and would cost much less to maintain. Ms. Lamoreaux said the committee was trying to make it a onetime expense for the Township and that the Historical Society would handle the long-term expenses.

Supervisor Fletcher questioned whether the rental fees generated would be enough to maintain the building.

Ms. Lamoreaux felt the building could be maintained by rental fees and that she had also looked at renting the facility to small groups and clubs on a long-term basis.

It was asked whether the Committee had considered the former Players Club site as a possible location due to the fact that a parking lot and public utilities already existed.

Ms. Lamoreaux said they had looked at several pieces of property, but the price increased the further the building was moved. She noted that they also wanted to keep the building as close as possible to its original home in Delta Mills in order to preserve the history.

Trustee Poma noted that if the Township were to participate in the project, she would like the Board to have some input on the project.

Ms. Lamoreaux didn't feel that would be a problem and that it was not just a Historical Society project, but rather they wanted it to be a community project.

Supervisor Fletcher said once the project was completed, he questioned whether the building would be owned and operated by the Historical Society or whether the Township would assume responsibility for the building.

Ms. Lamoreaux said the Historical Society originally looked at how they could place as little budgetary burden on the Township as possible. She noted that the Turner-Dodge building had a volunteer board that paid for the restoration of the building, but that the City of Lansing owned the building and paid for staffing and maintenance of the building.

Trustee Hicks asked if there were any other examples in the Township where there were non-township owned buildings on Township property.

Mr. Watkins said no and that the closest example was the Township Library prior to the facility being self funded.

Trustee Cunningham questioned if the owner of the building had any plans to utilize the building if it wasn't purchased by the Historical Society.

Ms. Lamoreaux said the owner had been trying for years to do something with the building, but had been unsuccessful. She indicated that the Historical Society had also attempted to make the existing site work, but the property was too small.

Treasurer Pizzo felt it was an excellent proposal in terms of the work the Historical Society had put into the project and the connection to the Township's parks facilities. Mr. Pizzo said the only reservation that he had was about fundraising and the fact that these were bad economic times for large corporations. He felt details such as ownership could be worked out, but he wanted to be assured that there was interest in the project.

Ms. Lamoreaux said she had talked to several people who were interested in donating to the project, but she had to have specifics before she started fundraising efforts. Ms. Lamoreaux said funds could be raised by grants, foundations, and corporate and private donations, but until she had a place to move the building, she couldn't obtain commitments for donations.

Supervisor Fletcher inquired about the Historical Society's time line.

Ms. Lamoreaux said their option to purchase the building was for two years and that a signed agreement would be finalized in the near future. She said in order to be able to move the building, the Historical Society needed to have a definite plan in place in order to start fundraising before the end of the year. Ms. Lamoreaux felt the Historical Society would need a commitment from the Township by mid-summer.

The Board instructed Mr. Watkins to research this matter further and report back to the Board at a future date.

4. Strategic Plan Review

Supervisor Fletcher noted that the Board had been provided with a report which provided the results of the Board's ranking for each goal listed in the Strategic Plan. He felt preserving a sense of personal security, peacefulness, and harmony for people living, working, or traveling in the Township was the #1 goal, with fiscal integrity, efficiency, and good government ranked as high priorities.

Trustee Poma inquired about the Township providing a sense of personal security.

Treasurer Pizzo felt this goal encouraged communication with the Township's residents in order to provide insurance that their community was safe. He felt there was a point where the Township had to take some initiative to say that the community was safe because of these reasons.

Trustee Hicks said he was surprised to see the goal for the continuance to provide and ensure high quality services, utilities, and facilities given a lower priority. He felt all of the other rankings were sufficient.

Treasurer Pizzo inquired about the term "smart growth" and the fact that the meaning had not been clarified. He noted that another term that he was concerned with was the preservation of existing business districts and neighborhoods which he felt could be construed as keeping things as is.

Trustee Hicks felt it referred to as having boundaries with respect to the fact that the Township had always kept business from encroaching into residential areas.

Treasurer Pizzo noted that he didn't like the word "preserve" and felt it was more about managed growth and responsible growth, along with economic development and smart planning.

Clerk Vedder felt the one thing that was important to remember was that the Township had made Broadbent Road as the boundary for commercial development west of the freeway. However, she felt extending sanitary sewers to those areas of Oneida Township who were experiencing problems would encourage further development. Ms. Vedder noted that she was also surprised to see a low priority given to parks and recreation which could be viewed as an area that would experience budgetary changes.

Supervisor Fletcher said the idea behind ranking the goals within the Strategic Plan was to help give guidance as the Township went forward in terms of setting priorities for the Township and where monies were spent during these economic times.

Mr. Watkins noted that in regards to the Sheriff Department's contract, he had encouraging the County to look at their budget over the next couple of years so that both the Township and the County could benefit by working cooperatively to determine where cuts could be made due to worsening budgetary problems.

Treasurer Pizzo commented on Ms. Vedder's concern regarding the extension of sanitary sewers to serve Oneida Township and the fact that it would promote further growth. He said from his discussions with the Township's Planning Director, Mark Graham, there had been precedence set for developing the property located at the Nixon/Saginaw Highway intersection and that there would be pressure to develop the property in the future.

Trustee Hicks noted that the former Utilities and Environmental Committee had discussed the issue of who should pay for the extension of sanitary sewers to serve Oneida Township and whether it was fair to balance it on the backs of the taxpayers as a whole.

Mr. Watkins noted that those discussions were based on Oneida Township's original proposal and that discussions were now being focused on servicing Oneida Township's developed areas and not their undeveloped properties. Mr. Watkins noted that he wasn't in favor of providing sanitary sewers to Oneida Township's undeveloped property due to the fact that it would encourage development. He said that was how Delta handled smart growth in that public utilities were required before property could be developed.

Clerk Vedder said once sanitary sewer was extended, it would be hard to deny new development.

Trustee Cunningham agreed with Ms. Vedder that extending sanitary sewers to Oneida Township would encourage development west of Broadbent, especially in light of the concerns the Board had expressed with the vacancies that existed along the Saginaw Highway corridor.

Treasurer Pizzo noted that in his discussions with Mr. Graham, there were ways to zone the property west of Broadbent that would encourage smart growth and the type of growth that the Township would find acceptable.

Clerk Vedder noted that the Township had also been approached by Oneida Township to provide sanitary sewer to properties located in the Willow Highway area adjacent to the river.

There was a consensus that the Board agreed with the rankings of the goals contained in the Strategic Plan and to move forward with this order of importance to provide staff with guidance when prioritizing future projects.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor Fletcher adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF DELTA

JANICE VEDDER, TOWNSHIP CLERK

KENNETH FLETCHER, TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

/as
M:\Comm. Of the Whole Meeting\BD\MIN\2010\May 10 2010
Minutes Approved: