



Minutes Special Board Meeting
ROSS TOWNSHIP
KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN
February 21st, 2023 @6:00pm

Attendee Name	Title	Roll Call Status
Christina Hutchings	Supervisor	Present
Alexander Harris	Clerk	Absent
Syndee Genung	Treasurer	Present
Diana Langshaw	Trustee	Present
Michael Bekes	Trustee	Absent
Lynn Harmon	Trustee	Present
Mike Sulka	Trustee	Present
Rob Thall	Attorney	Present

Also in attendance were about 10 interested residents.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda

Motion: To accept the Agenda as presented

Moved By: Harmon Seconded by: Sulka

Vote: Unanimous all Ayes

Result: Carried

Consent Agenda

Motion as Amended: To remove Draft minutes from January 17th, the packet does not reflect the most up to date version.

Moved By: Langshaw Seconded by: Harmon

Vote: Unanimous all Ayes

Result: Carried



Public Comment

Larry Stehouwer – Road Commissioner for Kalamazoo County, invited everyone to luncheon, talked about the struggle of finding staff, and future road projects.

Dave Rankowitz – was here for State Representative Minority leader Matt Hall. Who is busy with the caucus. Ever an issue, need to reach out to the state, call his office.

Mark Worden – Public relations Director for Kalamazoo County Road Commission, be patient bad weather and drive very carefully, projects in Ross coming up.

Mary Stage – Was impressed with Phoebe and how she prepared the budget.

Kevin Miller – Against GLSWA sewer rate increase. There is evidence a lot of resources going towards a water system and those paid consultants, that should be overseen by the Township of Ross to stop frivolous spending.

Mary Carol Wilkins – To add to GLSWA, they are all getting raises over there and then they raise our rates.

Fire Department Report

Fire department has restructured the staff title and the current positions are:

Dough Bogema – Fire Chief

Rob Leatherman – Assistant Fire Chief

Jake Leatherman – Deputy Fire Chief

Brandon Shirley – Captain

Lieutenant position is still open.

Supervisor Report

In Ross Township we have Test Wells that have been monitored over the past couple years. These exist in the northwest corner of Ross township, right on the border of Richland Township. EGLE has been monitoring these wells and all have come back clear until now. One test well has shown elevated levels in the last two testing's. So EGLE has sent out a letter to residents within the area of concern, asking for permission to Test the homes drinking water.

Tape Recorder inaudible after this point of the meeting.

Please see the attached document from Supervisor Hutchings minutes.

February 21, 2022: Ross Township Board Meeting Minutes as recorded by Christina Hutchings, Supervisor, for absent Clerk Alex Harris.

6:50 pm – tape recording ran out

Resolution to Vacate Sherman Lake Sewer Assessment Roll

The VanDeWalkers did not sign a voluntary contract for the Sherman Lake Voluntary SAD Sewer Project. Their assessed portion was bonded for by the Township, and they have requested to be removed. This removal requires a Resolution to Vacate the Assessment Roll. According to Attorney Thall, they are still responsible for connecting to the GLSWA sewer system by September 1, 2023.

Motion by Sulka, seconded by Harmon to accept the resolution to remove VanDeWalkers from the assessment roll. Roll Call vote: Ayes: Sulka, Harmon, Langshaw, Genung, Hutchings

Absent: Bekas, Harris

Police Services Agreement

Contract for emergency police response coverage on Chief Mel's off-hours. Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch requires Twp Board Approval that Richland Police Department will be contacted by KCCD in the event of an emergency in Ross Township, when Chief Melody Rugg is not on duty. This Agreement is in lieu of hiring a part time police officer under Ross Twp PD's expense, to help cover Bike Night, Weekends, Sandbar/Lake patrol and busy summer/fall nights when emergencies occur and she is not on duty. This matter was tabled to next Budget Workshop when we discuss the Agreement expenses for the Police Department March 1st.

GLSWA Rate Resolution: \$165/Quarter, \$55/Month – Effective April 1, 2023

GLSWA proposed rates, GLSWA list of unexpected expenses, Kalamazoo Water & Wastewater budget handouts provided for citizens. GLSWA is bound by legal concepts on the amounts they can charge for rates. Twps have been in litigation with the City for years over rates. Trying to work through a new sewer agreement at this time. Treatment rates have escalated by 17%, City will be increasing rates across the board for all users of the treatment system vs. increases by individual region.

Recent federal SAW grant instituted a long term asset management plan for maintaining the costs of the assets. Now, big rate increases occur because the past rates were not aligned high enough to maintain the assets. This means that the cost of repair and replacement outpaced the rates charged and currently saved for infrastructure improvements.

If the Township Board does not approve the Rate Resolution to increase rates, the Township will be forced to pay for the increase from the General Fund (alternative might be that Authority can just raise rates without Township input). This means for rural residents who do not use sewer, their tax dollars

will be used to pay for the difference in current rates and the proposed sewer rate increase. We are 1/5th of the GLSWA Board, even if we say no, the Rate Resolution will force Ross Township to make up the share of the budget due for the rate increases. The Ross Township Board cannot stop what GLSWA chooses to do. We are not in favor of the rate increase. We are not in favor of GLSWA giving employee pay increases of 5% and charging sewer customers higher rates at \$165/quarter, or \$55/month. We are not in favor of residents being charged the same as commercial customers. This is a good reason why public water is not financially feasible. The many factors outlined in "unexpected expenses" show incompetency in the leadership at GLSWA. The citizens are paying for employee raises, the pole barn correction, and massive spending over available income as noted by their auditing firm. There needs to be more oversight over budgetary expenditures by GLSWA leadership. The smaller townships with fewer REUs have the same vote as Ross Township has. Cooper has fewer customers because of their apartments. They have an equal vote. Richland, Ross, Cooper and Barry County, sizes of REU largest to smallest, have equal votes to give John Crumb what he wants. Citizens need to attend GLSWA and Kalamazoo Regional Water & Wastewater meetings to see and hear what the costs are for our residents.

Motion by Harmon, moved to accept the Rate Resolution with extreme disgust, out of feelings of being held hostage, with no choice but to vote yes, supported by Sulka.

Ayes: Langshaw, Genung, Hutchings, Harmon, Sulka Absent: Bekes, Harris

Vendor Contract RFP

Sulka, Langshaw, Hutchings have completed the RFP for Planning Commission support. To Include: Planning, Ordinance Development, Development Agreement, Master Plan. RFP will go out.

Clerk Recording Twp Business – Tabled

Budget Workshop – March 1st

Need to have Budget Hearing noticed at least 6 days in advance. We can hold Budget Hearing at the next Township Board Meeting March 21, 2023.

Closed Session: 7:37pm – See Attached

Open Session: 8:04 pm

With respect to the Resolution of Determination that was signed October 9, 2018 that granted authority to GLSWA to negotiate on our behalf for water.

Harmon moved, effective immediately, to resolve to repeal the Resolution of Determination, seconded by Langshaw. Ayes: Sulka, Harmon, Hutchings, Genung, Langshaw Absent: Bekes, Harris

Sulka moved to send letter from the Ross Township Board regarding GLSWA, as discussed in closed session. Supported by Genung.

Langshaw, Hutchings, Harmon, Sulka Genung Absent: Bekes, Harris

8:05 Adjournment: Sulka motioned to adjourn, seconded by Langshaw. All ayes.