

Mecosta Township

Regular meeting

19729 11 Mile Rd. Big Rapids, MI.

August 9, 2022/ un-approved minutes

Prepared by: Lois Brennan, Mecosta Township Clerk

- 1. Supervisor Michele Graham, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm**
- 2. Pledge to the Flag**
- 3. Roll Call:** – John Johnson, James Cain, Mary Quinlan, Michele Graham, Lois Brennan- present.
- 4. Approval of the Agenda:** Motion made to approve the agenda by James Cain, Mary Quinlan 2nd. All aye, motion carried.
- 5. Approval of Minutes:** Motion made to approve minutes from July 12 with corrections, under A.) Roads: should read “use” not “sure”, under B.) Cemetery Sign: should read for “a” not “s”, under D.) Cemetery: should read “is in **for** the Ladner’s Cemetery”, by Mary Quinlan, James Cain 2nd. All aye, motion carried.
- 6. Treasurers Report:** Per Treasurer Mary Quinlan- reporting for the month of July 2022, fund balances are as follows: General fund checking: \$556,127.96, First Responders: \$8,292.23, Fire-Equipment/Building (mileage account): \$134,734.68, Fire Fund-Operations: \$25,787.58. Total funds: \$724,942.45. The Treasurer’s report was accepted and entered into the official record.

Treasurer Quinlan’s new deputy Kristin Bechaz is working out well and is catching on quickly to her job duties. Treasurer Quinlan offered her Deputies services to the Building/Zoning department once Treasurer Quinlan returns to work full time as a schoolteacher this fall and after

summer tax collection is complete. Her new Deputy would be able to assist in receipting payments in for Building/Zoning permits. Supervisor Graham also would like to use Kristin with a little bit of help in Zoning.

7. Approval to Pay Bills & Payroll: Report provided by Clerk Lois Brennan, motion made to pay the bills and payroll in the amount of \$71,322.44, by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. Roll Call: John Johnson - yes, James Cain – yes, Mary Quinlan – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.

8. Brief Public Comment: several residents were in attendance regarding the “no wake zone” portion of the agenda. Mike Fish 11061 Birch Park Dr. did speak regarding 4 points he would like addressed by the Township Board. 1)a sunken boat anchored to township property, 2) no wake necessity 11 Mile rd. north to township border. 3) perhaps a consideration for next spring would be a river cleanup of debris (i.e., blue barrels, trash) 4) the boat ramp condition at the end of 11-mile rd. on the East side of the river. Since the Township took ownership there has been nothing maintained, and it is currently unusable.

A resident that did not identify himself, asked questions related to Mr. Fish’s comment, mainly regarding the boat launch he was unaware existed and unaware that the township owned. Supervisor Graham explained that the launch was given to the township by the Mecosta County Road Commission. The resident did not formally address the Township Board and always remained seated.

9. Reports –

A. County Commissioner Report: Per Commissioner Tom O’Neil: reminded the Board of the meeting on August 25th which will be outlining the disbursement of ARPA funds 9:00-11:30am at the County Services Building.

Supervisor Michele Graham inquired of Mr. O'Neil about reports from different committees that he is a part of and asked if perhaps he could elaborate or report more on the contents of meetings of these committees to help keep the Township Board more informed.

Mr. O'Neil was also asked why First Responder pay within the County has not been increased with the passing of the increased mileage. Mr. O'Neil will inquire at his next meeting.

B. Assessors/Supervisors Report: Per Supervisor/Assessor Michele Graham: The Trust Fund Grant for The Dragon Trail has been extended for another year, there were some flaws on the bridge on 7 Mile that need repair.

Supervisor Graham attended a meeting today to discuss Broadband, there is another meeting scheduled in which Senator Peters will be hosting in Newaygo County next week, that Supervisor Graham will be attending. Mecosta Township does experience some "dead" spots especially on the West side of 131. The County Parks seems to utilize most of the currently available signal for those areas. Supervisor Graham did ask if anyone knows of a dead spot within the Township to please feel free to contact her to make her aware. There will be crews sent around to drive the roads of Mecosta County testing the broadband signals.

Supervisor Graham does have a scheduled meeting for The Dragon Trail on Thursday, she will report back on that meeting.

July Board of Review had 3 VA Exemptions, with a taxable value of \$286,700, that came off the Townships tax roll. Supervisor Graham attended the townships assessors meeting, there was more discussion of broadband at that meeting.

State Rep. Hoytenga went to the State asking for six million dollars towards broadband needs in this district, she was granted two

million dollars, which is a start. There is a need to get the entire Township covered as many people work from home.

Provided to the Board was also Enforcement Officer John Fribley's report for the past month. Mr. Fribley continues to be an asset to the township with working with residents to cure blight/junk issues on properties.

- C. **Clerk**: Per Clerk Lois Brennan: The primary election went well. There was also an employment change within the clerk's office with the hiring of a new Deputy Clerk. Training of the new Deputy will begin tomorrow.
- D. **Cemetery**: No reports were provided from Austin Township again; this is a chronic issue. Supervisor Graham is to contact Supervisor Vredenburg of Austin Township regarding receiving reports timelier.

The new sign for Ladner's Cemetery will be installed by the end of the week.

- E. **Budget**: Per Supervisor Michele Graham: Treasurer Quinlan posed a question on page 8 under Parks and Recreation, there is a \$42,000 entry. Clerk Brennan believes this is reimbursement to the County for funds paid toward the Dragon Trail. Clerk Brennan will confirm that with Treasurer Quinlan on Wednesday during office hours.
- F. **Planning Commission**: Per Trustee James Cain- A public hearing was held last week regarding re-zoning. Work also continued regarding the Master Plan, it was disappointing that we did not have more residents attend the workshop that was held, regarding the Master Plan.

Per Supervisor Michele Graham, there is a spot available on the Planning Commission, Tyler Huntley has applied to fill the empty seat. Motion made to accept Tyler Huntley to as a new member to

the Planning Commission, by James Cain, Mary Quinlan 2nd. Roll Call: James Cain – yes, Mary Quinlan -yes, John Johnson – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.

- G. Fire Department:** Chief Palmer was absent from the meeting but did provide reports via email to each Board member, included in his email was that Assistant Chief Kyle Vredenburg has been released from medical restriction and is back to assuming his duties, Tory Benson has also returned to the Fire Department after a leave of absence and has re committed to the fire department and his trainings.

On behalf of the Board, we would like to welcome both Firefighters back to duty.

Supervisor Michele Graham spoke on behalf of Chief Palmer, There was an incident on the Dragon Trail in which an experienced rider fell down a steep ravine, it took 18 people to extract an injured rider, Mecosta Township Fire/Rescue had to wait for another department to respond that had a “basket” to lift the person from where they had fallen.

Supervisor Michele Graham did engage in a question from an audience member (unidentified/informal) regarding what the “Dragon” is, Supervisor Graham went on to explain the trail and Mecosta Townships involvement. Discussion included information about a very steep ravine at the 7 Mile Rd./Base Line Rd. area, and about the bridge needing adjustment in that location due to underground springs and erosion. Once those repairs are made Mecosta Township will then tie into the Newaygo side of the trail. It was also explained/discussed that there are still engineered drawing being made for the Hardy Dam cross.

- There were 33 runs for the month (26 medical/7 fire).
- There are no injuries to report
- SCBA's are ordered and fit testing is completed
- New cell phone communication beta testing is underway
- First major rescue performed by the Dragon Rope Rescue Team 3/8 mile on the trail north of Stanwood Boat Club. It took 18 people to pull someone from the trail, the person is recovering well from their injuries.

Training Report:

- Rope Rescue Training
- Drafting and Replay Pumping between trucks at Rogers Dam
- Attended Brower Park for annual visit and boat training

Rescue: All is operating smoothly.

Chief Palmer requested, via his email, and provided a quote for a "rescue basket" to utilize on the Dragon Trail for extraction of victims down ravines. Discussion regarding the "cart/basket" needed, the company is about 8 weeks out for delivery. Discussion included which budget the cost would come from whether it be the Fire Budget or the Rescue Budget.

Motion made to accept the provided quote and order/purchase the required basket in the amount of \$2108.50 plus shipping costs, up to \$2,200.00 by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. Roll Call: John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Mary Quinlan – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.

10. New Business –

A. Rezoning of AG Land: The land in question is located on Old State Rd. behind the BP gas station located on 8 Mile Rd. Supervisor Michele Graham lead the discussion outlining Mr. Mike Stegewans' request. The request would include 5.4 acres, Mr. Stegewans petition for zoning amendment, maps, as well as a copy of the Planning Commission minutes from May 7, 2019, were provided to the Township Board. An exert of the meeting minutes was read into record regarding Mr. Stegewans being opposed to commercial property being allowed down Old State Rd as it is a residential road, these minutes reflect a request from another resident to have his property rezoned commercial in the vicinity of the current requested parcel by Mr. Stegewans. The property in question during this meeting and subsequent hearing was included in the future use map of Mecosta Township as agricultural. Mr. Stegewans property in question is not included in the future use map to be zoned commercial.

Discussion included a review of the workshop that had just been held regarding strengths and weaknesses of our township, and the fact that rezoning this area as commercial was not brought up by any member of the Planning Commission in attendance of the workshop. Also brought to attention that there is plenty of commercially zoned land not being utilized currently in that area. Setting precedence for "spot zoning" was also a voiced concerned.

Discussion continued with residential involvement and the public being unaware of requests being made within the township. James Cain did explain his position as a member of the Planning Commission. His decision had mostly been influenced by the fact that the parcel in question was directing adjoined to commercial property already, and that 4 persons in attendance of the hearing were in favor of allowing the change. It was also discussed that two of the persons who had supported the change, owned property but do not reside in the township.

The Boards position regarding business is favorable and would like to see more businesses come into the area but would like to see these businesses use up the already zoned commercial lands before trying to rezone other areas.

Supervisor Graham also commented that she had spoken with a representative of the Mecosta County Road Commission regarding this area because of the vehicles that would be using it. Old State Rd is not classified as a class A road, damage to the road is a concern given the weights of vehicles.

Trustee James Cain was asked how many members of the Planning Commission were available to vote during this hearing. There were two members absent during the initial hearing.

Discussion also included that a “gun range” had been once proposed in recent years along the Old State Rd. toward Brower Park area. Supervisor Graham has a signed petition from Mr. Stegewans as well as one of the property owners that spoke in favor of this proposed rezoning, not wanting to allow the gun range to set up business on the Old State Rd area.

Outlined was the procedure that would follow the vote whether it be a yes or a no by this Board.

Motion made to accept the rezoning and it would be 220001 for the parcel in question as recommended by the Planning Commission by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. Roll Call: John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Mary Quinlan – no, Lois Brennan – no, Michele Graham – no. Motion failed. The property will not be rezoned as commercial and will remain agricultural.

B. Capitalization Policy/Deficit Elimination Plan: Our auditor has asked us to update our plan, we have a policy in place that dates to 2004 the limit is \$500. It is believed that the limit needs to be updated. Discussion as to clarification of the auditor's request. It seems we are doing two different things. Read into record were the auditor's email as well as the accompanying resolutions. Motion made to accept provided resolutions for moving funds in July's meeting to balance the fire fighters/first responders budget as number 2022-004 by Lois Brennan, Mary Quinlan 2nd. Roll Call: Lois Brennan – yes, Mary Quinlan – yes, John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Resolution 2022-004 passed.

C. Muskegon River Watershed Assembly: Treasurer Mary Quinlan, called Scott Faulkner of the Muskegon River Watershed to set up a workshop with the Township after the October meeting. The main purpose of the workshop would be able to find ways to improve sediment issues in the river.

Treasurer Quinlan elaborated on her conversation with Mr. Faulkner. Outlining a question-and-answer session with the public trying to discern what the public would like to have happen with the river.

There are grants available to aid work on the river. The lease for Consumers Energy expires in 2034 so work should begin to extend this lease.

Clerk Brennan also spoke as to her conversations with the watershed assembly as well as a representative of Consumers Energy. Clerk Brennan spoke as to concerns from herself as well as a vast majority of residents along the River above the Rogers Dam area.

Supervisor Michele Graham also informed the Board that Consumers Energy on September 20th from 3:00p-9:30pm regarding the River and the Dam.

Informal question from unidentified resident regarding the watershed group, Treasurer Quinlan provided the website of the watershed assembly.

Trustee James Cain agrees the river is an asset to the Township. And mentioned Coffer dams. He also mentioned the ice damming getting worse.

Motion made to invite and work with the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly on October 11th after the regularly scheduled township meeting, by James Cain, Lois Brennan 2nd. Motion carried.

D. 2023 GIS Aerial: Informational only, Mecosta County is scheduled for a fly over in the spring of 2023 before the leaves come onto the trees, currently the County uses a resolution that is twelve inches per foot, there is a buy up available that would do 3 inches per foot. The cost would be \$12,700. Approximately. Supervisor Graham has a phone call into the company that does the fly overs. Supervisor/Assessor Graham likes the idea of the new system because she could assess half the township in one year and see property improvements more clearly as well as catch building on property that she is unable to access. If a property is gated or marked as no trespassing, she is unable to access that property. Catching buildings that are built without permits does add tax dollars to the township. This would be considered another tool for assessing. It also allows for better measuring of properties for a more accurate assessment of taxes.

E. Bank Signatory: Treasurer Quinlan has hired a new Deputy, Kristin Bechaz as well as Clerk Brennan has hired a new Deputy Shawn Bertl. Both the Treasurer and the Clerk are seeking permission from the Board to add the new Deputies as signatories on the bank accounts. Both the Treasurer and the Clerk are required by State law to have Deputies. Motion made to accept the new Deputies and add them both as signatories to the bank accounts, by James

Cain, John Johnson 2nd. Roll Call: James Cain – yes, John Johnson – yes, Mary Quinlan – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.

11. Unfinished Business -

A. Roads: Supervisor Michele Graham, per a request from a resident the Mecosta County Road Commission was contacted to quote 200th Ave from 8-Mile Rd. to 6 -Mile Rd. for paving. The quote came in at \$385,000.00. This is an estimate.

B. No Wake: all the paperwork is all set to be sent in for the no wake by River Ridge. The next section is a little harder because of the location. It would be easiest to start at 11-mile rd. and go north to the township's boarder, however part of that stretch of river is in Big Rapids township. Township would be responsible for signage as well as buoys. Supervisor Graham asked if the Board agrees to allow her to finish on this. She is requesting pictures of erosion along the rivers edge. There are several problems with high-speed boating along that area that residents complain about property damages, to both land and boats. Supervisor Graham asked if those in attendance has a problem with a no wake zone along that stretch of the river. A question was posed by an unidentified member of the audience asking to define the area again. She then provided a map to the audience. The Board agreed to allow Michele to continue her work requesting the no wake zone.

12. Brief Public Comment: Mr. Steve Lesiewicz – Riverside Dr. addressed the Board with opposition to the newly proposed no wake zone from 11 Mile Rd. to the northern border of the township. Sighting common courtesy, sportsmanship, and respect that he feels has been lost in our township.

Diane Kowal – Riverside Dr. spoke in favor of the no wake zone sighting safety issues. And property damage issues.

Mike Fish – Birch Park Dr. again spoke again saying for the record he is for the no wake zone in sighting several residents speaking up and raising their hands, that they are for the no wake zone in unison.

Bob Kowal – Riverside Dr. also addressed the Board that boats are forced to keep their motors up to navigate the northern part of the river. It is hard to not create a wake, but high speeding can and should be avoided. Also, spoke concern regarding the “charter boats” that speed close to the property at a high speed. Boats are supposed to be 100ft. off the shore/docks. Suggested taking pictures of the boats that are causing the issues. Mr. Kowal was advised to contact the local sheriff’s department with concerns as well, also suggested to attend a county commissioners meeting.

Doug Witte- Bayou Dr. spoke as to concerns of property values with how the rivers current condition and deterioration.

Discussed was the process of creating the no wake zone. Gathering pictures to present to the DNR, as well as thoughts on cleaning the river, suggestions made by James Cain regarding the boy scouts helping in the spring.

13. Announcements/Correspondences: nothing to share.

14. Adjournment: Motion made to adjourn meeting by Mary Quinlan, John Johnson^{2nd}. Supervisor Graham adjourned meeting at 7:35pm.

Lois Brennan
Clerk

