

# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS



## PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MAY 31, 2023 - REGULAR MEETING 7 :00 PM 23 MAPLE DRIVE, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43228

Trustee Doug Stormont called the meeting of the Prairie Township Board of Trustees to order on May 17, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall with Trustee Cathy Schmelzer, Trustee Rod Pritchard, Fiscal Officer Natalie McKay, Township Administrator James Jewell, Road Superintendent Dave McAninch, Recreation Director Michael Pollack, and Fire Chief Allen Scott present.

### Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Stormont opened the meeting and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 7:00 p.m. Ohio Public Works Commission ( OPWC) Guardrail Application Presentation (Res. 21-23) -

On April 19, 2023, the Board of Trustees authorized Mr. Jewell to move forward with pursuing OPWC funding for new guardrails. Tonight Mr. Jewell presented the OPWC project and asked the Board to adopt Resolution 21-23, authorizing the Franklin County Engineer's Office to prepare and submit the necessary application documents and execute the necessary additional documents and contracts as needed during this process. The cost to the Township for this work, Mr. Jewell said, would be \$5,000 while the OPWC grant would cover close to \$40,000.

Mr. Jewell explained the guardrails to be removed, replaced, and updated are located along Mix Avenue, Frost Avenue, Garden Heights Avenue, and Bolingbrook Drive. He said Mix Avenue will have 525.5 feet of guardrail removed and 456.5 feet installed with compliant end treatments. Frost Avenue will have 201 feet of guardrail removed and 163 feet installed with four rounded end sections. Garden Heights Avenue will have 38 feet of guardrail removed and installed with two rounded end sections. Bolingbrook Drive will have 75 feet of guardrail removed and 25 feet installed with two rounded end sections. These improvements will have the township compliant with current ODOT standards.

Comment sheets were available near the sign in sheet by the door, for anyone to share additional feedback following the presentation.

Discussion: Mr. Pritchard asked if the proposal includes all guardrail within the township in need of being replaced and Mr. Jewell said that it did.

**Mr. Stormont made a motion that the Board adopt Resolution 21-23, "A resolution authorizing the Franklin County Engineer 's Office to prepare and submit an application to participate in the Ohio Public Works Commission State Capital Improvement and/or Local Transportation Improvement Program(s) and to execute contracts as required ".**

**Ms. Schmelzer seconded. The Roll Call votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes** - May 17, 2023 regular meeting minutes and May 23, 2023 special meeting minutes

Comments/Issues: None

**Mr. Stormont made a motion to approve the May 17, 2023 regular meeting minutes and the May 23, 2023 special meeting minutes. Ms. Schmelzer seconded. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Franklin County Sheriff 's Office**

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Mr. Jewell gave the Sheriff's report for the last two weeks as follows:

05/17/2023 - 05/31/2023	Total	Change since last report
Total Calls for Service/Self-Initiated Runs	616	-11
Total Reports Taken	59	-6
Arrests/Citations	30	+3
Thefts	8	-2
Suspicious Activity Stops / Calls	79	+1
Traffic Stops	49	+1
Stolen Vehicles	4	+4
Recovered Stolen Vehicles	0	
Drug Related Arrests	4	+3
Overdose	2	
Burglaries	2	+1
Sexual Assault	1	

Mr. Jewell shared the following comments provided by Deputy Haren via email before the meeting:

- Deputy Haren noticed an increase in thefts from sheds and outbuildings recently. Many of the things reported stolen are mowers, equipment trailers and other power tools. The Deputy reminded residents to make sure they are locking these structures when they are done using them, and he advised it may also be a good idea to add lighting to areas near these structures as well.
- Deputy Haren had the FCSO speed trailer placed on Feder Rd. near Alton Darby Creek Rd. He will collect it next week and complete a speed study with the data collected. He expects he will be able to provide the results of that study at the next meeting in June.
- Deputy Haren offered thanks to the deputies on scene and investigators from our traffic bureau; the traffic crash that caused extensive damage to the shopping center at 4896 W. Broad St. has been solved and charges have been filed.

### Comments/Issues:

Mr. Pritchard asked Mr. Jewell to schedule a meeting with Deputy Haren, because he is troubled by the lack of response he is hearing about from our residents. Mr. Pritchard also expressed concern about the lack of continuity in officers assigned to the Township, mentioning that the officer who was introduced to him as "our officer" (assigned to the Township) last year has disappeared. Mr. Pritchard said he doesn't want the positions the Township is paying for to be revolving doors for new trainees. He stressed that the Township is paying a lot of money for the services and it doesn't sound like we're getting the support we're paying for and we need.

Marie Gooslin of 330 Mix Ave said they've been hearing a lot more gunshots on Grener around Stiles. She said that tonight before coming to the meeting, she could hear pistol shots off Emmit. Kate Martinez of 445 Emmit said she has heard gunshots on Taft. Mr. Pritchard asked if we've ever looked into the shot spotter technology, or if the Sheriff has looked into it and Mr. Jewell said he would look into it.

Ms. Schmelzer posed a question to the residents in attendance: Have any of you called the Sheriff in the

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last 90 days and if so, what was their response?

Ms. Gooslin said she's called the Sheriff in the last 90 days, recently, and after being transferred a few times, was asked if the situation was still active and by then it was not so the Sheriff didn't respond.

Paula Self of 372 Fernhill Avenue said her experience is that the sheriff just doesn't show up.

Bob Voss of 249 Emmit Ave said he doesn't typically call the Sheriff after dark because he fears for their safety, and that he called earlier in the day around 5am. The sheriff was onsite within 5 minutes.

Ms. Schmelzer thanked the residents for sharing the feedback.

### **Fiscal Officer 's Report**

#### **Approval of Warrants and Payroll**

Ms. McKay reported this week's warrants list detailed payments to 75 vendors totaling \$278,291.85. She requested the Board's approval to pay all items on this week's warrant list totaling the same, along with the 5/25/23 payroll of \$200,434.25 for a total cash disbursement of \$478,726.10.

Comments/Issues: None

**Mr. Stormont motioned "so moved". Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Fiscal Assistant:** Ms. McKay asked the Board's approval authorizing her to sign a contract with Darby Creek Business Services, LLC, to obtain part-time Fiscal Assistant support at a rate of \$45.00 per hour. She expects the consultant to bill 10 hours or less per week and provide support on various fiscal tasks delegated to her by the Fiscal Officer.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board authorize the Fiscal Officer to sign a contract with Darby Creek Business Services, LLC for part-time Fiscal Assistant support at a rate of \$45.00 per hour. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

Comments/Issues: None

### **Standing Business**

#### **Fire Department**

**Hiring of Part-Time Firefighter :** Chief Scott asked the Board to approve the hiring of Evan Golden as a part-time FF/Medic effective June 1, 2023. He will serve a 1-year probationary period.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve hiring Evan Golden as a part-time firefighter effective June 1, 2023 with a one-year probationary period. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

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**Resignation of Part-Time Firefighter** : Chief Scott asked the Board to accept the resignation of part-time firefighter Joseph Martin. Joseph has been unable to commit time here at the Fire Department.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board accept the resignation of part-time firefighter Joseph Martin effective May 31, 2023. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

### Community Center

**Personal Service Contract (Res. 22-23):** Mr. Pollack asked the Board to approve Resolution 22-23, authorizing the Community Center to enter into a contract with the following:

Contractor	Instruction	Effective Date	Rate
Jodi Shealy	Day Camp Behavior Specialist	6/1/23 - 12/31/23	\$25 per hour not to exceed \$4,000

Discussion: When asked what a Day Camp Behavior Specialist is, Mr. Pollack responded that the Specialist will be training the day camp staff, teaching techniques geared toward better integrating kids with special needs into the group. He said that they are getting more kids in camp who require special needs, and training the staff will lead to making camp a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution 22-23, "A Resolution authorizing a Personal Service Contract for Contractors in the Recreation Department". Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The Roll Call votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Bag Policy Proposal** : Mr. Pollack asked the Board to consider adopting a new policy beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>. The policy would state that bags will not be permitted in the gymnasium or on the fitness floor. All bags must be stored in lockers or left in vehicles.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve the new bag policy proposal as presented. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. The votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

Discussion: Voytek Zaleski of 4756 Hilton Avenue asked what type of problems bags in the gymnasium have caused in the past. Mr. Pollack replied that he's proposing the new policy as a preventative measure and believes it is an action easily taken to increase safety. When asked if this policy is consistent with other area recreation centers, Mr. Pollack said it is.

### Roads, Cemeteries, and Parks Department

Mr. Pritchard offered thanks to Mr. McAninch and his staff crew for the work they did getting ready for the Memorial Day services this past Monday. Mr. Pritchard encouraged everyone to consider attending a future service, especially if you haven't attended in the past, because the service is really well done.

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Debra Kurtz of 217 Evergreen asked Mr. McAninch what work he did on Evergreen Terrace earlier in the day. Mr. McAninch said that the top of the catch basin had eroded away over time, and they were putting a new top on it.

Mr. Pritchard asked about the status of the open hole behind 348 Mix, which Ms. Gooslin reported at the 5/17 meeting. Mr. McAninch said he investigated the site the day after it was reported, and called in the Franklin County Sanitary Engineers who put a barricade around it until it could be fixed. Ms. Gooslin said she believed it had been repaired and the barricades were gone.

### Commercial Building and Zoning Department

Mr. Voss reported that there is an abandoned house up for sale in his neighborhood, and there are problems there. The front door was kicked in and has been open for months, and he's seen people with backpacks going up on the porch.

Ms. Schmelzer reported that a resident had reported high grass at 130 Darrien Avenue. Mr. McAninch said he would take the complaint to the Zoning Department tomorrow.

A resident asked about the high grass at 400 Fernhill and Mr. McAninch said he cut grass on Gladys earlier in the day and will go to Fernhill tomorrow.

Ms. Schmelzer also offered a response to an inquiry from Tony Self of 372 Fernhill Avenue, saying that the Zoning Department is working on the complaints for the northeast corner of Evergreen & Owen Street. Mr. McAninch offered to follow up on this issue too.

### Administration

#### Nuisance Assessments :

None

Nuisance Resolutions presented tonight:

#### Galloway Village Refuse and Debris :

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	4820 Medfield Way	240-004847

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-25-23 , "A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with refuse and debris. " Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion . Roll Call Votes: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms . Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.

#### Uncontrolled Vegetation (Grass/Weeds):

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Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	275 Buena Vista Avenue	240-000726
	81 Maple Drive	240-000357
X	4832 Annhurst Road	240-003205
X	326 Danhurst Road	240-003682
X	368 Danhurst Road	240-003688
X	4930-4936 West Broad Street	240-005196
X	8465 Dovercrest Court	240-005782
	692 Infantry Drive	241-001049
X	130 Evergreen Terrace	240-004906
X	140 Evergreen Terrace	240-006529
X	193 Fernhill Avenue	240-002585
X	197 Fernhill Avenue	240-002586
X	5041 Mt Royal Avenue	240-002706
X	5030 Sullivant Avenue	240-002193
X	307 Woodlawn Avenue	240-001988
X	1279 Maple Park Drive	240-005477

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-26-23, "A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with uncontrolled vegetation ." Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion . Roll Call Votes : Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms . Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.

### Refuse and Debris (Trash):

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	4852-4904 West Broad Street	240-004285
X	205 Fernhill Avenue	240-002587
X	4637 Hilton Avenue	240-004324
X	4655 Hilton Avenue	240-004321
X	4669 Hilton Avenue	240-004320
X	4773 Hilton Avenue	240-004309
X	4875 West Broad Street	240-001798
X	6447 Hunter Street	240-001731
X	6325 O'Harra Road	240-001725

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-27-23 , "A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with refuse and debris. " Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion . Roll Call Votes: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms . Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.

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### Uncontrolled vegetation and refuse and debris :

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	6800 Alkire Road	240-002553
X	6539 Birch Park Way	240-005594

Comments/Issues: None

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-28-23 , "A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with uncontrolled vegetation and refuse and debris. " Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Roll Call Votes were as follows : Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Bidding Process Schedule :** Mr. Jewell asked the Board to approve the bid process schedule for the sale of Parcel # 240-001467 and 240-001468 on Emmitt Avenue. He said the bid packet has been prepared and he proposed the following schedule:

- Wednesday 5/31 - Board approval to proceed with schedule.
- Week of 6/12 and Week of 6/19 - Advertise 2 times in Daily Reporter (once per week)
- Week of 6/26 - Open bidding
- Wednesday 6/28 - Board approval for sale of property

Mr. Jewell said there are conditions attached to the parcel purchase—first, the parcels must be combined and second, the Township will waive the required fee for a setback variance which will be required because of the creek running through the property and the easement.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve the proposed bidding scheduled for the sale of parcel numbers 240-001467 and 240-001468 and authorize the Township Administrator to proceed with the bidding process. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Votes were as follows : Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Set 2024 Budget Hearing :** Mr. Jewell asked the Board to set a Public Hearing for the 2024 Budget for July 12, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. and approve the advertisement of said hearing. A copy of the draft budget will be available in the Fiscal Office by the end of the day on July 1, 2023, as required by the Ohio Revised Code.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board set a hearing to hear public comment regarding the proposed 2024 Budget for 7:00 pm on July 12, 2023 and authorize the Township Administrator to advertise the hearing as per requirements of the Ohio Revised Code. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Votes were as follows : Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

**Court Case:** Mr. Jewell recommended that the Board approve starting the legal proceedings for an injunction against Richard & Michelle Byers at 163 Lawrence Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43228, and giving

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Brosius, Johnson, and Griggs permission to represent this case on behalf of Prairie Township. This injunction would be for the removal of the driveway extension/parking pad that was constructed without permits.

A Variance application was applied for and denied at the October 11, 2022 Board of Zoning Appeals meeting. Due to weather conditions, a time extension was granted through April 30, 2023 to allow for the removal of the portion of the driveway/parking pad that was not permitted. A second extension through May 31, 2023 was granted by the Board of Trustees in April.

**Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve moving forward with a legal process for an injunction against Richard and Michelle Byers, and all occupants at 163 Lawrence Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43228 and granting Brosius, Johnson and Griggs permission to represent this case on behalf of Prairie Township. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Votes were as follows : Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.**

### Old Business

Ms. Gooslin asked the Trustees if they thought a community garden would be a great way to welcome people to our Township and they responded that it would.

Mr. Pritchard asked Mr. Jewell for an update on the rebranding initiative. Mr. Jewell said that a number of interviews had been set up with a variety of township representatives—residents, business owners, and Township employees. He also said a lot of work is going on right now to finalize the questionnaires which will be used to collect feedback. Ms. Martinez asked if the questionnaire could include a question about the community garden, specifically, to gauge interest in having, supporting and volunteering in a community garden. Mr. Jewell suggested there should be a place for comments on the questionnaire.

Ms. Martinez expressed again the importance of having a community garden and the value of bringing neighbors together and having green space. Ms. Schmelzer spoke up, recognizing Ms. Martinez's passion for the community garden and that the conversation about it has been going on for a year. Ms. Schmelzer said that following the last Trustee meeting, she did some homework on her own and arrived at a decision: she said she wants a community garden, but not in the location where Ms. Martinez is asking to put one, because "that area is too big for you to start", and she wants to sell it and have homes built there. Ms. Schmelzer offered to sit down with Ms. Martinez to talk about other locations.

Mr. Pritchard said, "We disagree on the location of the green space." He said that the Board has said multiple times they are looking to develop the Clarke property into a park in Ms. Martinez's neighborhood while Ms. Martinez continues to insist on a different parcel. The difference between the two locations is the Clark property isn't buildable. Mr. Pritchard said he is not willing, at this time, to commit to developing a community garden on the buildable parcels Ms. Martinez is requesting.

Mr. Pritchard reminded the assembled that the Board made a commitment to look into developing the Clarke property into a park. "Give us an opportunity to come with a proposal and provide feedback." He said the way to get what you want in the park is to participate in providing public input. Mr. Pritchard said the Board has been going through the process with the proposed park development at Dellinger and Hubbard for about six months now. They're listening to the feedback from the residents and trying to give them everything they have asked for.



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Ms. Kurtz said that she's tried to create community on her street—her yard has become the green space in her neighborhood. She said "children will play where we allow them to play," and described arrangements she's made with her neighbors in allowing their children to play in her yard. Children need a place to play, and Ms. Kurtz said that we have allowed growth to happen without allocating green space. She said thefts are up, and we are perpetuating it if we don't provide green space.

Ms. Schmelzer agreed that the Trustees want to give the kids a place to play.

### **New Business**

None

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Zaleski commented that he agrees with the residents' opinion that we need more green space. He said doesn't know how to address the location issue, but agrees we need a place where the young people at Stiles can learn about food.

### **Announcements**

None

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Stormont declared the meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

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Chairman Doug Stormont

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Fiscal Officer Natalie McKay