

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS



PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JULY 26, 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 July 26, 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, Fire Chief Allen Scott, and Zoning Assistant Cassidy Critchfield present.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

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

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Stormont asked if there were any changes or corrections to the July 12, 2023 regular meeting minutes previously shared.

Ms. Schmelzer asked for clarification about something related to the Budget Hearing. She also voiced a few changes she wanted recorded in the minutes, and asked Ms. McKay to update the minutes. Mr. Stormont confirmed the changes would be made outside of tonight's meeting and the minutes would be presented for approval at the next meeting on August 9, 2023.

Franklin County Sheriff's Office

No update tonight

Fiscal Officer's Report

Approval of Warrants and Payroll: Ms. McKay reported this week's warrants list detailed 77 payments to vendors totaling \$337,243.33. She requested the Board's approval to pay all items on this week's warrant list totaling the same, along with the 7/25/23 net payroll expenditure of \$201,157.71 for a total cash disbursement of \$538,401.04.

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont motioned "so moved". Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

Voytek Zaleski 4756 Hilton Avenue commented that he had never witnessed the Trustees question the minutes in past meetings, and he asked whose responsibility it was to prepare the minutes. The Board informed him that keeping the minutes is the responsibility of the Fiscal Officer.

Standing Business

Fire Department

No items tonight.

Community Center

Farmer's Market: Mr. Pollack announced the next Farmer's Market will be held at Westland High School on July 31st from 4-7pm.

Mr. Pollack spoke about the first concert held at the sports complex and called it a "great event." Mr. Pritchard commented about how nice the event was, while Ms. Schmelzer described it as "a nice evening."

Cheryl Cornelius of 203 Sturbridge Rd asked if building a Columbus recreation center in the area would have any impact on the Township Community Center. Mr. Pritchard said he's not aware that Columbus has any specific plans for a recreation center to be built in the area right now.

Mr. Zaleski asked for a clarification of the Farmer's Market schedule and Mr. Pollack replied that they are held the last two

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Mondays in June, through September 18, from 4-7pm, at the Community Center, unless it is a partnering event with WIC, and then it would be held at Westland. Mr. Pollack said there is no Farmer's Market on Labor Day or any Monday when the Community Center is closed. Mr. Pritchard asked Mr. Pollack to consider the Sports Complex as the alternate site for the WIC events going forward, suggesting it is a very visible location, and may draw in more attendees.

There was some discussion about the bus routes in the area and whether one includes a stop at the sports complex. Mr. Jewell said there is a bus route nearby to the Community Center but not to the sports complex.

Roads, Cemeteries, and Parks Department

Hiring Part-Time Road Laborer: Mr. McAninch recommended the Board approve hiring William C Fooce to a part-time road laborer position, contingent upon Mr. Fooce passing a pre-employment drug screen. The starting pay would be \$15.00 per hour based on the part time scale approved by the Board of Trustees on December 15, 2021, and the start date would be August 1, 2023.

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve hiring William Fooce as a part-time Road Laborer at a starting pay of \$15.00 effective August 1, 2023 upon successful completion of a pre-employment drug screening. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

Pick Up Truck Purchase: Mr. McAninch recommended the Board approve the purchase of a 2024 F-250 4x4 Super Duty Pick-up Truck, from Byers Ford, to be purchased through the City of Columbus purchasing agreement, at a cost of \$49,144.00. Mr. McAninch will update the Board on any trade-in amount given by Byers, or seek approval at a later date to sell the truck on GovDeals. Mr. McAninch said the new truck would replace the Township's 2016 F-250. He also said these trucks are taking longer and longer to get delivered, and our window of opportunity to order is shorter because of the demand.

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve purchasing a 2023 Ford F-250 4x4 Super Duty Pick Up Truck from Byers Ford, at a cost of \$49,144.00, and authorize the Road Superintendent to execute the necessary documents. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

Mr. Pritchard asked for an explanation about why the Township goes thru city purchasing. Mr. McAninch said it is a cooperative purchasing agreement where smaller entities can join together for competitive bidding. Mr. McAninch said the Township's cost is better through the agreement than what they would get on their own.

Ms. Cornelius asked if the truck to be purchased is electric and Mr. McAninch said no. She then asked when the traffic lights will go up at Beacon and Rome Hilliard. Mr. McAninch said he didn't know the timing, because it's the County, not the Township, putting them up.

Ms. Cornelius asked what was going on with the traffic circles and that she noticed the yield signs are down. Mr. McAninch mentioned the recent study done by the County traffic engineer and said the changes residents are seeing are a result of the Board approving the traffic engineer's improvement recommendations. He said the Township put up the yield signs in the past, but not at the recommendation of the traffic engineer. Mr. McAninch said the yield signs were replaced with new signage.

Debra Kurtz of 217 Evergreen Terrace commented that drivers seem to be paying more attention at the newly paved intersections on Evergreen Terrace where the white stop bars were added, though she said people are still flying down Evergreen Terrace. She also expressed concern about the children on her street who don't speak English and who dart out into the street, calling it "terrifying." She called it a community problem and asked what can be done to take care of it. Mr. Pritchard

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agreed it is a shared problem and said the Township is doing what it can. Ms. Kurtz asked if she can personally invest in a speed strip for her street. Both Mr. Pritchard and Mr. McAninch advised against it because the Township has a traffic calming policy. Ms. Kurtz, reiterated how important it is to solve the problem before something bad happens. Several Board members and staff personnel agreed they don't want to see anyone get hurt on the Township roads.

Tony Self of 372 Fernhill Avenue agreed that the signs help a bit but said too that people still fly (drive fast). Mr. McAninch agreed that even the even the traffic circles don't solve the speeding problems.

Ms. Cornelius spoke of problems in Carl Frye Park and asked if there are any plans to put in cameras or lighting or something else to deter crime. Mr. McAninch said there are no immediate plans and they don't want to encourage people to be back in there after dark.

Bob Voss of 249 Emmit Ave offered thanks to Mr. McAninch and his mowing crew for the work they did at Bunker and Emmitt and commented that it looks so much better.

Mr. Pritchard asked for an update on the Lakota Park incident. Mr. McAninch said that he got the report but didn't have it with him tonight; he didn't know who the individual involved was.

There was some additional discussion about various hazardous intersections and streets, and Mr. Zaleski asked why we're working so hard on traffic circles instead of making them just like Beacon Hill. Mr. McAninch said many of the intersections being discussed used to have 4-way stops and people hated them. Then they put in the traffic circles and people hated them. Ms. Cornelius said she sees cars bottom out between Sturbridge and Murray Hill, because they are going so fast.

Commercial Building and Zoning Department

Annual Spring Clean-Up Report: Ms. Critchfield shared the final report from the 2023 Spring Clean-Up, and the costs covered by the Township for the services offered to its residents.

- 2-30 Yard Trash Dumpsters (Rumpke)
 - Total Trash Dumped – 65.86 tons
 - Total spent on trash - \$6,776.21
- 2-30 Yard Tire Dumpsters (Liberty)
 - Total Tires Dumped – 17.66 tons
 - Total spent on tires - \$7,415.36
- Shred Day Event (Black Ops Destruction)
 - Total spent on shredder - \$2,000.00

Mr. Pritchard asked for a status of the zoning changes and Ms. Critchfield said there will be a special meeting on August 23, 2023 at 5:00 pm located at the Township Hall. Mr. Pritchard asked why a special meeting was required and Mr. Stormont and Mr. Jewell both said they believed it was a Home Rule requirement.

Mr. Self asked for an update on the Fernhill property. Ms. Critchfield said that accompanied Ms. Scott on a visit to the resident and heard they are going to remove the gravel.

Administration

Nuisance Assessments: None

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Nuisance Resolutions: Four Nuisance Resolutions were presented tonight:

1. Refuse and Debris at Galloway Village:

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	4951-4973 Eastham Way	240-004822
X	4820 Medfield Way	240-004847
X	4960-4982 Medfield Way	240-004837
X	4984-5006 Medfield Way	240-004838

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-39-23, “A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with 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.

Ms. Schmelzer said the Galloway Village case went to court last week and it was continued until August 29th. Ms. Critchfield said the reason for the continuance was because Galloway Village retained legal counsel very close to the court date and wanted more time for discovery.

2. Uncontrolled vegetation:

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	318 Danhurst Road	240-003681
X	326 Danhurst Road	240-003682
X	183 Topsfield Road	240-003938
X	4960 West Broad Street	240-006572
X	465 Amity Road	240-004310
X	240-006424 Fairbrook Avenue	240-006424
X	120 Gladys Road	240-002492
X	4801 Hafey Avenue	240-004863
X	5080 Maple Valley Drive	240-006660
X	122 Norton Road	240-003088
X	260 Postle Boulevard	240-002767
X	4695 Stiles Avenue	240-004463
X	6624 Maple Park Way	240-005710

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-40-23, “A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with uncontrolled vegetation.” Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Roll Call votes were as follows: Mr. Pritchard, Aye; Ms. Schmelzer, Aye; Mr. Stormont, Aye. Motion passed.

3. Refuse and Debris:

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
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X	8582 Abbot Cove Avenue	240-005234
X	4637 Hilton Avenue	240-004324
X	334 South Murray Hill Road	240-004487

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-41-23, “A Resolution declaring nuisance and ordering abatement at properties with 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.

4. Uncontrolled Vegetation and Refuse and Debris:

Declared	Address	Parcel Number
X	486 Lennox Avenue	240-000424
X	445 Deerfield Road	240-003234
X	8627 Brookville Road	240-006417
X	8744 Hubbard Drive South	240-000489
X	74 Postle Boulevard	240-002788
X	326 South Murray Hill	240-004488

Comments/Issues: None

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board adopt Resolution NU-42-23, “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.

Liability Insurance Renewal: Mr. Jewell asked the Board to approve a proposal from OTARMA for property and liability insurance coverage for an annual cost of \$84,801.00 from August 2023 to August 2024. This cost represents an increase compared to last year’s costs of \$74,480.00. This increase is 13.9% higher than last year.

Mr. Jewell explained that the last review was done in 2018 and since then, the Township has acquired more property. He explained the increase in cost is because the Township has more property and it’s more expensive to replace. Additionally, Mr. Jewell said, he and the Fire Chief found a few more assets which need to be covered and he’ll come back to the Board at a later date with ideas on covering those.

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board enter into an agreement with OTARMA for property and liability insurance for August 7, 2023 through August 7, 2024 at a total premium of \$84,801.00, authorize the Township Administrator to execute all necessary documents and authorize the Fiscal Office to issue a warrant on Thursday, July 27, 2023 for the premium. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

ROW Vacation: Mr. Jewell presented a vacation of right of way on O’Harra Road west of Galloway Road surrounded by parcel #240-004137. He said the parcel is owned by Today’s Church who acquired these now combined parcels back in May 2023, and they plan to build a church there. He said the right of way runs directly in the middle of this parcel. Per the Recorders Office, Mr. Jewell said this was originally supposed to be Rosanna Terrace subdivision and this ROW reflected the proposed street Rosanna Drive and Dallas Drive. This land and right of way is currently undeveloped. Mr. Jewell recommended the Board vacate the right of way as presented.

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Mr. Pritchard asked if the property to the north will be landlocked as a result of the vacation. Mr. Stormont said no.

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board move forward with vacating the right of way located on O’Harra Road west of Galloway Road as presented and authorize the Township Administrator to move forward in the vacating process. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

Sports Complex Cameras and Equipment: Mr. Jewell asked the Board to approve a \$5,062.03 quote from SCI-Integrated for cameras to be installed at the sports complex. He also asked the Board to approve a \$6,425.00 quote from Jess Howard Electric Company, to cover installation of poles and camera power boxes and running the electric for the cameras. Mr. Jewell said the Township would be doing the trench work for the conduit and backfill to help control costs. He also said the servers for the cameras will be housed inside the concession stand and that he would come back to the Board later with a proposal for the server install.

Mr. Pritchard asked how tall the poles were. The answer was they will be 40 foot poles; 6 feet will be underground and 34 feet will be above ground. Mr. McAninch commented that the Township has a major investment out there and this will help to protect it. Mr. Jewell said that he will be able to watch the camera feed from his laptop at all times.

Mr. Stormont moved that the Board approve purchasing cameras for the Prairie Township Sports Complex from SCI-Integrated at a cost of \$5,062.03, approve associated electric and equipment from Jess Howard Electric Company at a cost of \$6,425.00, and authorize the Township Administrator to execute the necessary documents. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the motion. Voting followed and the motion passed.

Old Business

Ms. Kurtz spoke about her recent water bill conversation with Steve Renner, sharing that she learned the quarterly surcharge was \$118.92 per quarter, but was unable to out the rates so that she could compare them to Columbus. Mr. Jewell said he would get them for her. Ms. Kurtz said Mr. Renner explained to her the rich tapestry of government preventing a conclusion from being reached on the high water bills for the area, including annexing water from Columbus, etc. Ms. Kurtz said she’d like to know how we can expedite this because water is essential. Mr. Jewell suggested she talk to the Franklin County Commissioners about her concerns, while Ms. Schmelzer said the water problem is worse on the other side of West Broad. Mr. Jewell reminded everyone that the water rates haven’t been raised for two years. He also said that he reads the Commissioner’s agenda every two weeks to make sure the topic doesn’t get added to the agenda. He said that if he sees it, he would go to the meeting and speak against it. When Ms. Kurtz asked if she could go to the meeting with Mr. Jewell, he said she could. Ms. Schmelzer stressed the importance of residents getting involved and described a time she went to a meeting early on and zero residents were in attendance. Mr. Stormont recalled a meeting at the firehouse where the water issue was discussed, and afterward a letter was received from the Franklin County Commissioners asking the Board to stop pressing the issue. As a government entity, they don’t fall under the PUCO.

There was some discussion about residents having their water turned off and occupancy permits being lost when water is turned off.

New Business

None

Public Comment

Mr. Zaleski asked Mr. Jewell if it was possible to shut off the sanitary services and Mr. Jewell said that if the water is turned off, then, because no water is going in, the sanitary services are also turned off because water can’t go out. Mr. Zaleski described a time in the past where his neighbor’s water was shut off and he was able to provide water from his home to his neighbor’s via a garden hose. Someone pointed out that Mr. Zaleski was also paying for his neighbor’s water during that time.

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A resident said the band playing in Prairie Township on August 12 is playing at Amanda this weekend.

Announcements

A resident spoke about his recent experience with nTherm Inc. after getting electric bills in recent months for \$248 last month, and \$282 this month. He thought the bills were high since he has a household of two, and when his wife called to inquire about it, she was told by nTherm Inc. that his wife agreed to having nTherm Inc. handle the electric instead of the Township's aggregator (Archer), and they had a voice contract as proof. Then the resident called nTherm Inc. and asked for a copy of the voice contract and was told they were unable to provide it. The resident advised others to be careful when speaking to electric providers, especially when asked Yes/No questions. He said they will ask, "Can you hear me?", and if you say "Yes", they've got you. He advised others to contact Mr. Jewell if they find themselves in a similar situation.

Adjournment

Mr. Stormont declared the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Chairman Doug Stormont

Fiscal Officer Natalie McKay