

Johnstown Township Minutes

13641 South M-37 Highway. Battle Creek, Michigan 49017

Regular Board Meeting – January 10, 2024 – 6:30 p.m.

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Supervisor Barb Earl, Clerk Sheri Babcock, Treasurer Karmen Nickerson, Trustee Jeff Warren, Trustee Deana Powell

Absent: none.

Visitors: 26

Agenda: Motion by Powell to approve the agenda. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Public Comments (3 minutes per person):

- A resident spoke in support of a creating a Resolution for 2nd Amendment rights and making Johnstown a “sanctuary township.”
- A resident spoke in support of a creating a Solar Ordinance in the Township. Also in support of a Resolution for 2nd Amendment rights and addressed the use of the word “sanctuary.”
- A resident spoke against a Resolution for 2nd Amendment “Sanctuary” given her close work with victims of active shooter events in our state and other victims.
- A resident spoke against a Resolution for 2nd Amendment “Sanctuary” and stated the issue should stay nonpartisan.

Minutes: A motion was made by Powell to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023, Regular Board Meeting. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report – Karmen Nickerson

- Winter 2023 taxes are due by February 14, 2024, and will be collected by Township Treasurer through February 29, 2024.

A motion by Powell to accept the Treasurer’s Report as presented. Second by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Clerk’s Report – Sheri Babcock

- Working on February 27, 2024 Election and Early Voting.
- Awaiting delivery of the remainder of new election equipment.
- Ballots will soon be mailed to residents on the Permanent Ballot List and Permanent Absent Voter List.
- Many unanswered questions remain pertaining to the new election laws.

Assessor’s Report – Kara Dougherty, Deputy Assessor

- Absent due to illness.

Fire Report – Fire Chief Chris Jozwik

- 39 total calls for the month of December. Total calls for 2023: 424.
- 24 calls for the month of December were MFR calls. Total MFR calls for 2023: 268.
- Training completed: Group building.
- Personnel changes: Proposed New Hire: Derrick Jones.
Motion by Powell to hire Derrick Jones. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion Carried.
- Current Membership: 16 Active members; 2 on personal leave, 1 cadet;
- Department Activity: Volunteer of the Year: Amos Hicks. (Ran 180 of 424 calls, all unpaid.)
- SBCA Equipment Purchase: Request to move forward with purchase of SBCA equipment per the proposal with grant pricing provided to the Board and as discussed at a prior meeting. Motion by Powell to move forward with purchase of new SBCA equipment per proposal. Second by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Next Quarterly Board/Fire Meeting: April 1, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

Commissioner Report – Bruce Campbell

- Commissioner Campbell thanked Board members Earl and Babcock for their attendance at Commission meetings.
- Commissioner Campbell summarized the recent actions of the Commission during the January 2, 2024, Committee of the Whole.
 - Farmland Preservation Application approved
 - New Position/Reclassification for Assistant Public Defender
 - Reclassification Request for Public Defender Administrative Assistant
 - Reclassification Request for Senior Deputy Clerk
- Commissioner Campbell summarized the recent actions of the Board of Commissioners Organizational Meeting on January 2, 2024.
 - Resolution #24-01 for the election of Commissioner Jackson as Board Chairperson for 2024.
 - Resolution #24-02 for the election of Board Vice Chairperson David Hatfield for 2024.
 - Resolution #24-03 Adopting Rules of the Barry County Board of Commissioners, as amended.
 - Appointment of Committees
 - Adoption of 2024 Meeting Schedules for Committee of the Whole and Board of Commissioners.
- Solar Farms: The Commissioners will host a workshop in February to discuss Solar Farms in our community. It will include time for public comment, as well as a question-and-answer period. More details forthcoming.

Old Business:

Local Solar Ordinance: MTA is hosting another webinar on January 17, 2024, to inform Townships on the recent legislation.

Discussion about Solar Farms in our Township, including a possible Township Ordinance, seeking legal counsel to get fully informed on the new laws, what can be done at the local level, and residents who are engaging in a petition initiative to get the issue on the ballot for Michigan voters to decide. Also, County Commissioners actively working on the issue. Enforcement is also a consideration.

Resolution in support of Second Amendment (2A) Rights:

Discussion amongst the Board and community members in attendance (some in support and some against) the possibility of implementing a Resolution pertaining to Second Amendment in our Township. Motion by Warren to table the matter until next month to allow for more time to look at the issue. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.

Sylvan Court Paving Special Assessment:

Petitions were submitted to the Clerk to move forward. Next step is for the assessor to verify validity of petitions. Residents have selected a vendor from the estimates. Next steps are to have attorney prepare Resolution and publicize and hold required public hearings.

Winans Drive Special Assessment

Residents have one quote on the project so far; others are not expected until April.

Count 218 Agreement Votes

Ballots must have been submitted by 6:30PM January 10, 2024, to be counted. Secure ballot container was opened during the meeting, with Nickerson and Babcock each counting the ballots. Currently 22 members on the plan; 19 ballots were cast. Results: Yes-18 votes; No-1 vote; the issue passed by majority vote. Motion by Warren to certify the results of the ballot count. Seconded by Powell. All ayes. Motion carried.

New Business:

None.

Pay Invoices & Payroll: A motion was made by Powell to pay the invoices in the amount of \$50,605.73 as presented. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Additional Public Comments (3 minutes per person):

- A resident expressed her support of 2A rights; commented that many community members have spent many unpaid hours on the Solar Farm issue trying to make our community better; and invited any who are interested to attend the monthly Republican Party meetings.
- A representative from Consumers Energy invited residents to attend the Planning Commission meeting on Monday, January 22, 2024, where the RNG (renewable natural gas) rezoning in Nashville was on the agenda. Also, Consumers Energy is updating their website within the next day or so to include information on the RNG facility planned at Spring Creek Dairy.
- The Board expressed appreciation to Joyce Foondle for her many years of service to the people of Johnstown Township as Assessor, wishing her well in her retirement.
- The Annual Meeting with the Barry County Road Commission is set for January 11, 2024, at 8:30AM.


Adjournment: A motion was made by Powell to adjourn. Seconded by Warren. All ayes. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Next Quarterly Board/Fire Meeting: April 1, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Next Regular Board Meeting: February 14, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Attested to by:
Barbara Earl
Supervisor



Sheri Babcock, Clerk