

MECOSTA TOWNSHIP BOARD

19729 11 MILE RD. BIG RAPIDS, MI 49307

August 11, 2020/UNAPPROVED MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY CLERK, LOIS BRENNAN

1. **CALL Meeting to Order-** Supervisor, Michele Graham called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**
3. **Roll Call-** John Johnson, Mary Quinlan, James Cain entered meeting at 6:02pm, Lois Brennan, Michele Graham, all present.
4. **Approval of the Agenda-** Motion made by James Cain, John Johnson 2nd to accept the agenda as presented. All aye, motion carried.
5. **Approval of Minutes-** Motion to accept with adding “no hall rentals until further notice” under section 11-C. Made by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. Motion carried.
6. **Treasurers Report-** Treasurer Mary Quinlan reported for the month of July. The Treasurers report was accepted as presented by Supervisor Michele Graham and entered into the official record.
7. **Approval to Pay Bills & Payroll-** Motion made by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. To pay all bills and payroll reported in the amount of \$36,525.01. Roll Call: John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Mary Quinlan- yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.
8. **Public Comment-** Mr. Kenneth Draves is a 36-year resident of Mecosta Township, addressed the Board with concerns regarding a piece of property purchased on Old State Road, it is rumored that the new owner wants to open a “competition rifle/shooting range”. Mr. Draves inquired on the probability of such an establishment and informed the Board he is strongly against the idea of such a business operating so closely, Mr. Draves sighted noise issues as well as safety issues. Mr. Draves listed a few other areas that have the same type of businesses and explained that residents of those areas have described the noise as “living in a war zone”. Mr. Draves also inquired about putting the Planning Commission meeting minutes on our

website for access to the public. Mr. Draves was told this is already something that is being worked on, and that Planning Commission Meeting minutes will be placed on the website in the future.

Mrs. Larisa Draves also a 36-year resident of Mecosta Township, echoed the same concerns of a potential shooting range, as Mr. Draves. Mrs. Draves also thanked the Board for being proactive with creating and passing an ordinance regarding fireworks. Mrs. Draves also asked the Board to perhaps take into consideration the passing of a noise ordinance within the township. Mrs. Draves also asked the Board to consider passing a noise ordinance throughout the township. She has noticed that other townships close by have noise ordinances.

Mrs. Lisa McCarthy resident of Mecosta Township, also addressed the Board with concerns of the rumored shooting range and asked the location. The location is south of 8 Mile rd. the farmhouse and 40 acres of land that was just purchased. At this time the property is residential and zoned agricultural. Supervisor Michele Graham said there is a lot of work to be done by the new property owner before they could even present paperwork to the township for consideration of a shooting range in that location.

Mrs. Lynn Jutila, resident of Mecosta Township, voiced her concerns regarding the shooting range, sighting that the closeness of the highway, 8 Mile Rd is a state-owned road, with Mrs. Jutila speaking to a realtor she voiced concerns over property values and concerns of noise should all be taken into consideration before the projected business would be approved. Mr. Mike Stegewans spoke to the Board regarding his concerns of the shooting range as well, Mr. Stegewans owns property on both sides of the proposed shooting range, he cited concerns over the drive way in and out of the property and that accidents have been narrowly avoided in that area already, he also reiterated concerns of noise and property values.

The Board listened to each person's concerns, Supervisor Michele Graham explained that the purchaser of the property had inquired about putting a shooting range in, however has not formally submitted any paperwork towards a formal request to have such a business in the location in question. All concerns were noted by the Board. Supervisor/Acting Zoning Administrator Michele Graham also informed the residents that if formal

paperwork is filed as a request for a shooting range that all residents within a ½ mile radius of the proposed range would be contacted via postal mail before a hearing would take place by the Planning Commission.

9. Reports:

A. County Commissioner Report- Per Tom O’Neil- The work on the Ford Drain located between Mecosta Township and Austin and Aetna Townships will begin on August 19th. Residents along 200th Ave. are still calling Mr. O’Neil regarding wanting an overhead street light at the corner of 8 Mile Rd. and 200th Ave. Supervisor Michele Graham explained that it is a process and with the passing of the Resolution regarding the streetlight last month that the process has begun. Supervisor Graham went on to say that Mr. O’Neil could have the residents call her office and she would be happy to answer any questions. Supervisor Graham also informed Mr. O’Neil that she did contact Great Lakes Energy as well as Consumers Energy and she also spoke again to the Mecosta County Road Commission regarding the light installment.

Supervisor Graham went on to apologize on behalf of the Board (with the Boards support) for the misunderstanding of what type of light was being requested, The Board understood the original request to be a “stop light” which in fact was not the case. Our apologies to the residents along 200th Ave.

B. Assessor/Supervisor Report- Per Michele Graham – Assessors Report: Graham was finally able to get the property at 8 Mile Rd and Old State Rd cleaned up with no cost to the Township. The owner of the property is in a nursing home and a niece of the resident did clean the property up. Two other junk complaints Michele has been working on are slowly cleaning up, she is hoping with the upcoming “junk day” for the township that these two complaints will be finished as well. There has been one new complaint for junk filed, the property in question is a rental property, the land owner has been contacted and said that the tenant was given 30 days to clean the property up or the tenant

will be evicted. Junk day for Mecosta Township is 8/22/2020 from 8:00am-12:00pm. Supervisor report: there was no report given.

- C. **Clerk-** Per Lois Brennan- Election recap. There was an increase of over 3 times the normal amount of new absentee ballots for this election which caused significant delays in closing the polls and finalizing. Absentee ballots are processed throughout election day, but because of the overwhelming attendance of in person voting as well as the increased absentee voters a lot of the absentee ballots were processed after 8pm which took an additional 3 hours before being able to close the polls. There was also a “glitch” with the tabulator while closing the polls, the ballot count increased by 1. This is something nobody in the State as well as the creators of the machine has seen, it was witnessed by Clerk Brennan and 2 of her staff. On Thursday following the election Clerk Brennan and her staff did a manual recount of the ballots. The Manual recount matched the record in the computer for the number of ballots processed. Clerk Brennan has contacted Election Source which is where the tabulator was ordered and received from and has scheduled the pick-up of the tabulator for maintenance prior to the November General Election.
- D. **Cemetery-** nothing new to report.
- E. **Budget-** everything is in order and looks good at this time.
- F. **Planning Commission-** Per James Cain- Reviewed zoning ordinance changes so the list they have can be finalized and sent on to the township attorney. Sawmills was part of the discussion as residents were in attendance with several questions. A new sawmill in the area was listed as commercial. Public input is always welcome and appreciated as it does help with decisions. The Planning Commission provided copies of the changes for the Board Members.

10. Unfinished Business:

A. Fire Department: Per Chief Ron Palmer –

- **Reports-**

Chief Palmer was absent from the meeting while he recovers from an injury, The Board wishes Chief Palmer a speedy recovery. Chief

Palmer did forward via email a brief overview of the last months happenings at the Fire Department.

There were 29 calls for the month of 07/15-08/11.

The new grass rig is scheduled to arrive by 8/28/2020. Some of the wildland turnout gear order has arrived (helmets) still waiting on the coveralls.

Annual Rope Rescue Training class was held on 8/8/2020, we should be receiving an invoice from MUSAR.

All new structure turnout gear should be here in approximately 4 weeks.

- B. Policy**- No current updates as the Policy Committee has not met due to COVID19 and the upcoming election season.
- C. Resolution Change**- Last month we passed a resolution of 2020-002 regarding a streetlight at the corner of 8 Mile Rd. and 200th Ave. The resolution number was incorrect and needs to be corrected to 2020-004. Motion made to amend resolution number from 2020-002 to 2020-004 by Mary Quinlan, John Johnson 2nd. Roll Call Mary Quinlan- yes, John Johnson- yes, James Cain – yes, Lois Brennan- yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.
- D. Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant**- This is a grant for The Dragon, there are absolutely no costs to the Township for this Grant. Funds are all matched by The Fremont Foundation. Mecosta Township is just overseeing the Grant and its process. The total Grant is for \$205,400.00 and the Fremont Foundation is matching with \$205,400.00. The Grant has been passed through each step and has now been signed by the Governor, we need a resolution to enter into the agreement to the project development. Motion made in the form Resolution 2020-005 to accept and enter into the terms of The Development Project Agreement from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in the amount of \$205,400.00 with matching funds

provided by The Fremont Foundation in the amount of \$205,000.00, by James Cain, John Johnson 2nd . Roll Call: James Cain – yes, John Johnson – yes, Mary Quinlan – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Resolution passed.

- E. **Streetlight-** Consumers Energy does have the order to place a streetlight at the corner of 8 Mile Rd. and 200th Ave.
- F. **Roads-** The new Phaser report was provided by Supervisor Graham, and she also spoke with Tim at the County Road Commission, we can schedule a project yet this year except for repaving. Reith & Riley do not have to bill until June of next year. Discussion as to what project we would like to do. Discussion was 192nd between 11 Mile and 12 Mile Rds. This road would need a 2” overlay. Costs could be around \$115,000.00. Filmore Rd. was also discussed for a recap, as well as 11 Mile Rd. between 187th and Otahnagon. Supervisor Graham will gladly get more prices on roads for the discussion. It was suggested by the Road Commission to do through roads rather than side roads. Tim from the Road Commission also said he would be happy to attend the next township meeting in September. The Board agreed to drive through the township and suggest roads to Supervisor Graham, so she can gather quotes for the next board meeting.
- G. **Building Department-** New employee Amy Dahlman is due for her 90 day review, discussion as to who would conduct the review, it was decided that Michele Graham and John Johnson would conduct the review, it was also suggested that residents that have worked with Amy through the permit process be randomly called for their input. We also have a slight discrepancy with our building inspector. When he was hired his contract was for 6 hours a day. There apparently was a verbal agreement that he still be paid the 6 hours from a prior Township Supervisor. He is at the office only 4 hours. As we are currently going through the Building and Zoning Department making things more efficient and cost effective this is an issue that needs to be discussed. Discussion as to speaking with the current building inspector and requiring him to commit to his hourly rate be restricted to the hours he is working at the Township. The Board unanimously granted permission to Supervisor Michele Graham to address the

issue with the Building Inspector and give instruction to logging his hours for fair pay.

11. New Business:

- A. **Technical Support-** IT Right, has been the Townships support for several years. This year's annual contract renewal came in as double what it normally is. IT Right has not asked for an increase for their services, Clerk Brennan researched as far back as 2006. IT Right is also fluent with our accounting software and they handle all our anti-virus, firewalls, and any technical difficulty we experience. IT Right also does our website. Supervisor Graham did research regarding pricing of possible other companies that could support our needs as a Township Government. IT Right was in line with all other companies. We are happy with IT Right and choose to stay with the company and find that the increase is valid and acceptable. Supervisor Graham also discussed perhaps investigating Cassair telephone and internet services as opposed to Spectrum which is becoming pricy.
- B. **Direct Deposit for Various Boards/Commission-** The Treasurers office has been experiencing issues with certain commission and board members as well as employees that do not cash the paper checks they are given for per diems as well as mileage reimbursements. Motion made to move all Township employees pay in the form of per diems or reimbursements be paid out by electronic transfer by James Cain, John Johnson 2nd. All aye motion carried.
- C. **Rental Deposit-** We had a rental that once they had the key to the hall entered and began set up a day earlier than the contract allows. This was during election time and caused an inconvenience to the Clerk's office as it took away the polling area for absentee voters. The rental did have the air conditioning running and had been told that they were not allowed to enter the building until Saturday after 4 pm to drop some items off (the rental was for Sunday). Discussion as to whether to withhold the security deposit from the renter, because of the breach of agreement and because other renters have been told if entering a day early it would cost a separate rental fee. Although the Board did agree that the renter was well informed multiple time to multiple persons involved that this was not allowed, a partial

withholding of the security deposit will be kept. This situation is also a learning point for office personnel. Motion made to withhold \$25.00 from the \$100.00 security deposit and to refund only \$75.00 for the early entry, 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.

D. Treasurer & Clerk Computers – The Clerk is withdrawing request for a new computer for the Deputy currently. The computer is working and has been able to be updated. The Treasurers computer is very out of date and cannot operate equipment needed in the Treasurers office to perform her duties. Motion made to allow the Treasurer up to \$1,000.00 to purchase a new computer that is compatible with the scanner equipment 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. Treasurer Mary Quinlan Thanked the Board.

E. Election Equipment- Because of the large increase of absentee voters and the belief from the Clerks office there will be many more people signing up for absentee voting. The Clerk would like to implement an Absentee Voter Counting Board. The AVCB would work independently of the Election inspectors working the poll on election day, their only duty will be to process absentee ballots working from a list provided by the Clerk’s office. To establish and implement an AVCB the Clerk would like to purchase a second tabulator. The tabulator would be used strictly for processing absentee ballots and could also serve as back up in the event the other tabulator malfunctions. The Clerk provided a quote from Election Source for a tabulator from Dominion which is identical to the one the Township already has. Motion made to allow the Clerk to accept the bid from Election Source/Dominion in the amount of \$5,295.00 and order the new tabulator, by Mary Quinlan, John Johnson 2nd. Roll Call: Mary Quinlan – yes, John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham- yes. Motion carried. Clerk Lois Brennan thanked the Board.

F. Hallway Carpet – The carpet in the hallways of the office part of the hall are in bad shape, they are on a scheduled cleaning however the staining is becoming worse. The current flooring is 17 years old. It is also fraying at the seams. Supervisor Graham would like permission to get pricing on perhaps taking out the current carpet and replacing it with carpet squares. The Board agrees to collect samples and bids. The topic will be brought back at a later meeting.

G. Zoning Amendments- Pine Grove subdivision on 8-mile Rd. as well as Bucks landing which is Rivers Edge both are zoned RR. Which means each lot is 2 acres and they are not. This effects the residents by not allowing pole buildings on their properties. These areas need to be rezoned from RR to R1, R2 is not wanted as it would include two family homes. Supervisor/acting Zoning Administrator Graham would like to be able to take this to the planning commission to have the hearing done. Motion made to move forward with the Planning Commission to have the area in question rezoned, permission to schedule hearing by John Johnson, James Cain 2nd. All Aye. Motion carried.

Zoning Ordinance changes priorly presented in January had one final change were presented by the Planning Commission, motion made to submit the said zoning ordinance changes to the Township Attorney for publication, by Mary Quinlan, John Johnson 2nd. Roll Call: Mary Quinlan – yes, John Johnson – yes, James Cain – yes, Lois Brennan – yes, Michele Graham – yes. Motion carried.

H. Zoom Board Meetings- Next Door Neighbor is an app where communities can keep in touch and discuss local issues. It was posted by a resident of the Rogers Heights community questions as to why the Board does not conduct Zoom Meeting during these times of COVID19. Also asked is why election results are not put onto the website. Discussion by the Board as to conducting Zoom Meetings and what that would entail. The Township Board and Planning Commission members do not have all necessary equipment to conduct meetings via Zoom so it would be an additional expense to the township. Also purchasing access to use Zoom, and the time restraints would also be an additional cost. Discussion lead to the fact

that we could always move meetings to larger areas to allow for more attendance. Concerns over audio issues were also discussed. And members of the community that were in attendance of the board meeting were asked if they would watch Zoom Meetings. Some remedies offered included the Supervisor publishing all materials to be discussed to the website before a meeting. Minutes are published on the website and the clerk would be happy to also include materials provided during the meetings the Clerk has agreed to start putting election results on the website for area residents to see. The Board would welcome any question by a resident prior to the meeting stemming from information published to the website.

12. Brief Public Comment- small discussion by a couple of residents late to the meeting regarding the proposed shooting range, names were not provided, and they understood that the others in attendance had voiced their concerns. Supervisor Graham did reiterate that the earlier discussion was taken into advisement and that the Townships attorney has been contacted as well as research is being done. If the property owners do go forward formally with their request to open a shooting range, all residents will be contacted to take part in the hearing. More discussion as to the fact that the proposed sight is in direct correlation to flight paths for the airport located on Old State Rd. also discussed was contamination of lead as there is a stream that runs through the property. EGLE would need to be contacted. Possible FAA approval and MDOT as well.

13. Announcements/correspondence- The Board individually pitched in their own money and had sent retired employee Gladys Lenard a retirement gift to which she replied with a very nice Thank you card. Gladys we truly hope you are enjoying your well-deserved retirement.

A letter from Brooklyn Talbot from Consumers Energy regarding the inspection of the Dam everything looks good we had all good scores, except for one picnic table.

Mecosta County Road Commission has approved speed limit signs in Wedgewood estates. There are 25 mph signs installed. Speed limits are figured by how fast 85% of travelers on a road are going.

14. Adjournment- Motion made by John Johnson to adjourn at 7:40pm, James Cain 2nd. All aye, motion carried. Meeting was adjourned by Supervisor Michele Graham.

**Lois Brennan, Clerk
Mecosta Township**