

Walker Township Board of Supervisors

Minutes of January 16, 2024 Regular Meeting

The Walker Township Board of Supervisors held its regular monthly meeting Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at the Walker Township Municipal Building. The meeting was called to order by Joseph Harford at 6:00p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Travis Norris.

Present: Joseph Harford, Matt Johnson, James Morris, Larry Lashinsky, Julie E. Johns, Sec/Treas.

Absent: Kirk States

Guests Present: Donald, Kim, and Roy Spickler, Tim Furlong, Josh Crownover, Jim Grissinger, Melanie and Travis Norris, Chris Linn, Tracy Gibson, Edna Querry, Scott Merrell, Scott Burnett, Sandra Kleckner, Paul Beck, Donald Heffner, Rodney Johns, Sue Himes, Mike Lang, Jonathan Webber, Ben Webber, Andrew Stanger, Todd Hamer, Warren Peters, Belinda Morris, William Leidy, Ryan Fisher and Rebecca Berdar (TDN).

Before the public comment on agenda items was addressed, Joe addressed the crowd and discussed the sunshine law requirements regarding public comment. He reminded the public that there was a policy in place that gave people five minutes to speak, and that scheduled guests would be allowed more time. He also mentioned that a reporter from The Daily News was in attendance, and that anything that was said in a public meeting could end up in an article in the paper. He also mentioned that there were members of the audience that were recording the meeting, and that everyone needed to be aware that this was happening.

Public Comment on Agenda Items: No public comment on agenda items

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the December 13, 2023 and January 2, 2024, reorganization meeting were reviewed. *A motion was made to approve the minutes as presented. (Johnson/Morris, motion carried).*

Treasurer's Report/Payment of Bills:

Treasurer's Report and monthly bills were reviewed, *A motion was made to approve and pay invoices (Johnson/Morris motion carried)*

Zoning Enforcement Officers report:

There was no December report from Jim, and as of the beginning of year, there is no zoning officer until another person can be hired.

Dec/January Progress Reports: Kirk was not in attendance due to illness.

Planning Commission:

The WTPC met on January 15th, and recommended approval of the solar fee schedule that Larry distributed at the December meeting. See Old Business...

There were several questions that arose from the guest at the P.C. meeting – Damien Zampogna with Coral Reef Partners, the solar contractor for the school district. The school district is moving forward with plans to place a solar field behind/beside the Southside school which will require either a couple variances from the ASES, or several for the PSES project.

Julie voiced concern at PC and at Supervisors meeting that if the zoning hearing board issued variances for either of these items, it would make the ordinance in its current state hard to enforce for anyone else that would come to the Township in the future. She asked if there wasn't any way that the Supervisors would consider modifying the

Planning Commission (con't.):

ordinance rather than allowing it to have holes poked all through it with variances. At that point, Jim mentioned that he'd seen on page 9 that there are modifications allowed by the Supervisors, and that this might work for the current situation with the school. Julie will contact Mr. Zampogna and let him know that they will need to propose their plans in their entirety to the planning commission and Supervisors, and that there may be some modifications made by the Supervisors to keep from having to issue variances through the zoning hearing board. Larry cautioned the Supervisors that they needed to make sure that if they vary from the rules and regulations that they have legitimate reasons for allowing this one specific use that would not affect other mainstream users.

Park & Rec Committee:

Chris Linn reported that they had a meeting last week that Jim attended. They discussed the possibility of adding rain gardens and other projects that would work with the wet areas of the park. Later in the week, Jim talked with Ilona Ballreich from the Penn State Sustainable Communities Collaborative (this is the person who headed up the project that Penn State students did for Cree Manor's water issues). She said she would like to take a look at the area, they would do an assessment and make recommendations. The students do the work as part of their studies, even as far as writing grants for the projects. She would need to put us on the list of projects for them to work on.

Chris mentioned again that they would like to look at some type of more permanent finish for the track at the park. Quotes from the local paving company will not be available until they start back to work in March sometime.

Also discussed was the possibility of getting quotes from local landscaping companies to do the park mowing and yard maintenance and compare the cost of us doing it vs. bidding the work out and giving our guys more time to do other work within the Township. The Supervisors asked Julie to get them a list of the costs to do the park maintenance for 2023.

Building Committee:

The Board was asked questions about the building committee and the engineers regarding the construction of the storage building and salt storage facilities. Joe reported that the committee was formed in August of 2020, consisting of Sandy Kleckner, Dale Myers, Steve Felton, William Leidy and Kirk States. In early 2021, Garret Hargenrader and Andy Arnold met with the committee and members of both Boards and discussed their requirements for the new building, including the height of the salt storage. Originally, they discussed a higher opening, but when the engineers came back with the structural changes that would be necessary to make those changes from the normal construction materials to steel beams and an estimated additional cost of \$75,000 - \$100,000, the employees went out to other neighboring salt storage buildings and talked with the people who were using them, including the highway department in Huntingdon, and felt that the height that they settled on, which was the max height that could be constructed without adding additional costs and changing structures would be similar to most of the structures they looked at and save adding that additional cost for 5 – 6 loads of salt and 10 – 12 loads of antiskid annually.

Discussed quote from Mt. Union Lumber to do a concrete refinishing job in maintenance garage central meeting area/breakroom and bathroom, \$5037.50. The Authority reviewed it at their meeting on the 15th and approved their half of the expenditure. *A motion was made to approve the expense and contact the contractor to be placed on the installation list. (Johnson/Morris, motion carried)*

They discussed expenses that were outside the Phase 1 bidding process. The original bid covered, new roof, windows and doors, insulation, metal siding, metal outside stairway, new gas heaters, the ADA bathroom required by Bureau Veritas (state codes), some electrical updates, new plumbing, the addition of the wash bay, and paint

Building Committee (con't):

and ceiling tile in the breakroom area and bathroom and other disturbed areas of the building. Items were intentionally left out of the original contract because they could be done more inexpensively by our own employees than they would have been if put through the bidding process and required to pay prevailing wage rates to complete. They left out any finish work in the garage area (clearing, cleaning, and painting walls and floors) and any installation of cabinets and sinks that could be done by our own employees.

Discussed updating the list that was started months ago on the items that need to be addressed at the new facilities, possible costs, and a potential date for an open house.

Old Business:

The Supervisors discussed the fee schedule, and made a change to the ASES fee, changing it to \$35.00 for 15KW or less. *A motion was made to adopt the fee schedule with the change to ASES fee. (Johnson/Morris, motion carried)*

Discussed establishing a name for the administration building access road as per 911 requirements.

Discussed updating rules and regulations for the P.C. & the Park & Rec committee. Would like Larry to look at formalizing the P & R Committee, developing rules, set board members and terms.

New Business:

Fire Department Report:

Tim Furlong attended with the Fire Department. He reported that as of end of 2023, they responded to 414 incidents, with 32 being in Walker. Their December expenses were \$43,992.28, with \$10,692.18 being for aging equipment maintenance in December alone. What cost them \$600,000 for a bare bones pumper in 2013 will now cost \$1.2 Million when built to their current specifications.

Tim invited the Supervisors to select a representative from one of the three members to attend the quarterly advisory board meetings being planned to start back up again after COVID.

Tim told the Supervisors they would be getting an invitation to the annual recognition banquet on March 2nd at the Mactown station. They are planning to recognize Gary Garner for his many years of service to the fire department as he will be, or has, retired from the fire department.

He asked if they would be able to have a monthly place on the agenda so they can give monthly updates.

The Board asked Larry if he would come up with an RFP for the codification of the ordinances – possibly to have a draft for the February meeting.

A motion was made to reopen the 2024 budget. (Morris/Johnson, motion carried unanimously)

A motion was made to set up a budget workshop on January 25th at 6:00 p.m. and reschedule the monthly meeting for February from the 20th to the 13th at 6:00 p.m. to meet the State regulations regarding adoption of the reopened budget. (Johnson/Morris, motion carried)

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Personnel:

Discussed hiring a zoning officer.

A motion was made to hire a new Township secretary by Jim Morris. Discussion ensued, with Rodney Johns listing the additional costs that will be incurred by the Township to hire another person in the office when Julie has been able to do everything they've needed by herself over the years. Taking into account that her hours would be less, the costs that he tallied were over \$17,000 to hire another person 20 hours a week at \$15/hour. He also mentioned that there was no other Township in the area that had two individuals working in the office. Eventually the conversation came back to asking Julie what her thoughts on the subject were. She remarked that – as she had in the past – she requested that they consider waiting until the new building was in place and the division of duties could be helped by having separate offices. She said she was perfectly capable of taking care of everything that was being asked of her, as she had been for years, even when she was absent for days at a time when her daughter was being treated for cancer. She made sure things got done and would continue to do so.

The original motion was reworded. *A motion was made to begin the process of hiring a part-time secretary for the Township. (Johnson/Morris, motion carried)*

Miscellaneous:

Jim brought up using the DOC work crew. He asked if they wanted or needed them in the area to do work. He felt that if no one had any issues with it, he had contacts at the institutions that would enable him to be able to get them to come back to help Walker Township.

Jim suggested putting a bulletin board on the front of the office building so that people could look at the posted paperwork when the office was not open.

The prospect of the Township having a Facebook page was discussed.

Public Comment on non-agenda items: None

Adjournment:

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. by Chairman Harford.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie E Johns
Secretary/Treasurer