

DRAFT
COVERT TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.
Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake St, Covert, MI 49043

The Regular Board Meeting of the Covert Township Board was called to order by Supervisor Harrington at 6:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Supervisor Harrington.

Members Present: N. Barnes, D. Cook, M. Rendell, K. Harrington, L. Taylor

Absent: None

Also Present: Attorney Brian Knotek; Randy Allen, President of IT Right; Diane Rigozzi, Executive Director of Senior Services of Van Buren County

Public Comment

None

New Business

IT Right Cyber Security Bundle Proposal

Randy Allen, President of IT Right, joined the meeting virtually and presented an IT Right Cyber Security Bundle. Covert Township has contracted with IT Right for IT services and cyber security since 2013. IT Right is expanding their cyber security services and have not increased rates since 2013. The presentation included overview of the importance of cyber security and their success rates, as well as the increase in the annual fee for their services. Mr. Allen is offering a gradual increase over three years to soften the impact if we choose to renew. Mr. Allen also supplied an RFP for us to use if we choose to seek quotes from competitors. If IT Right were to respond to the RFP the gradual increase would no longer be an option for Covert Township.

Questions regarding security services and the justification for the increase in the annual fee were answered. A contract was sent to the Township Clerk and will be shared with the board for the next Regular meeting.

Senior Services of VanBuren County & Millage Proposal

Diane Rigozzi, Executive Director of Senior Services of Van Buren County, presented a request to place a senior millage proposal for up to 1 mill on the ballot in August. The term of the millage would be for eight (8) years and fund a contract with Senior Services of Van Buren County. Ms. Rigozzi also presented a tentative contract that would allow Covert Township to

retain current services in-house by contracting with Senior Services of Van Buren County should the millage pass.

Covert Township Board members asked questions about services provided, communication to the public, terms of the contract and whether Senior Services of Van Buren County would enter into a contract if certain terms of the millage were changed. Ms. Rigozzi also answered questions from the public regarding the services and the cost per senior. Attorney Knotek clarified options to the board and discussion ensued on the term length, millage amount and ballot language regarding contracting with a provider.

Motion by M. Rendell, seconded by L. Taylor, to approve a resolution to adopt ballot language to increase the Services for Older Persons millage to up to 1.00 mill with Senior Services of Van Buren county named as the recipient for a period of eight (8) years.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: 2, No: 3 FAILED

Motion by D. Cook, seconded by N. Barnes, to approve a resolution to adopt ballot language to increase the Services for Older Persons millage to up to 1.00 mill with no recipient named, for a period of eight (8) years.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: 2, No: 3 FAILED

Motion by D. Cook, seconded by N. Barnes, to approve a resolution to adopt ballot language to increase the Services for Older Persons millage to up to 1.00 mill, for a period of four (4) years, with language detailing that the millage will be levied for the purpose of providing funds for Covert Township to contract with and pay a provider or providers for providing activities and/or general senior services.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: 4, No: 1 CARRIED

Park Advisory Recommendation and Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Grant

Trustee Cook presented an opportunity to participate in a regional application coordinated by Market VanBuren. Ms. Cook is requesting the board approve an application to complete the development of the Covert Community Park as detailed in the Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan, and commit to a 50% match. A proposal from Wightman and Associates was presented to help with updating the conceptual plan, estimates and completion of the application.

Discussion on the General Fund budget, fund balance and other sources of revenue were discussed. Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) have not yet been spent and will be considered to help fund the 50% match. The loss of tax revenue from Palisades Nuclear Plant's closure was also discussed. Due to the long decommissioning process and having already decreased the taxable value of the plant over the last five years, the Township does not anticipate a big additional decrease in revenue due to the decommissioning for up to 15 years. Other grant opportunities to fund the match will also be explored. Questions regarding the details of the plan and costs were answered, as well as the timeline of the grant program and whether we would want to pull any portions of the project out to complete earlier.

Motion by D. Cook, seconded by M. Rendell, to approve contributing to a regional application to the Revitalization and Placemaking Grant offered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to complete the development of the Covert Community Park and commit to a 50% match, as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: 5, No: 0 CARRIED

Motion by M. Rendell, seconded by D. Cook, to approve the proposal from Wightman & Associates, Inc to assist in updating the master plan and grant assistance for the Covert Community Park as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: 4, No: 1 CARRIED

Fire/Police Budget

The board discussed the expiration of Chief Allen's Interim Fire Chief contract and next steps. Trustee Cook suggested we entertain a one-year contract as the township has no active applicants for the Fire Chief position. Discussion ensued about the desire to have two chiefs and reopen the position, as well as the progress Chief Allen has made in the last three months as interim Fire Chief.

Discussion was had on how to retain employees and the efforts Chief Allen has made to retain employees. Trustee Taylor recommended that the chief's liaison be tasked with speaking with him directly on terms to include in a one-year contract. The board discussed that Chief Allen currently does not have an appointed liaison and asked that such a liaison be decided in a future meeting.

Motion by D. Cook, seconded by M. Rendell, to approve the creation of a committee to speak with Chief Allen on any terms the Chief may request in a one-year contract, consisting of Treasurer Rendell and Trustee Cook.

Roll Call Vote: Yes:4, No:1 CARRIED

Sewer Funds

Trustee Cook asked about the rates study performed by Fleis & Vandenbrink that detailed a schedule to increase rates over time to support the municipal septic system. Treasurer Rendell shared those numbers. Supervisor Harrington gave an update regarding the request to Van Buren County to grant ARPA funds to projects needed to maintain the septic system, as well as the USDA grant application.

Palisades Closure and NCG Impact

Attorney Knotek spoke about recent developments regarding cost sharing of attorney fees. Palisades closure was already discussed earlier in the meeting.

Other Business

Supervisor Harrington presented a Performance Resolution for Municipalities needed to periodically apply to the Michigan Department of Transportation for permits. This is necessary to apply for a closure permit to conduct the Memorial Day Parade.

Motion by D. Cook, seconded by L. Taylor, to approve the Performance Resolution for Municipalities as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Yes:5, No:0 CARRIED

Public Comment

Barbara James, Covert resident, requested the Township include more equipment for older children and consider improvements to the old Bicentennial Park next to the library, such as plants and other installations, for families to gather in an open space.

Meeting adjourned by L. Taylor at 9:40pm

Next Regular Board Meeting Tuesday, May 10, 2022 @ 6:00

Submitted by Cynthia Colombel-Singh, Deputy Clerk