

Benton Township Board Meeting

March 13th, 2019

7606 E State Rd 45, Bloomington, IN 47408

Attendance

- Michelle Bright, Trustee
- Joe Husk, Chair
- Hans Kelson, Secretary
- Lynn Stevens, Board Member

Meeting called to order at 6:31 PM

Approval of Minutes

Minutes were received and reviewed before the meeting.

Motion to approve Minutes: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Approved unanimously

Financial Report: Bright

Fund Balances:

- **Rainy Day Fund:**
YTD Expense: \$0
Current Cash Balance: \$104,580.66
- **Township Fund:**
YTD Expense: \$5,534.04
Current Cash Balance: \$195,574.08
- **Township Assistance Fund:**
YTD Expense: \$1,670.67
Current Cash Balance: \$92,905.81

- **Firefighting Fund:**
YTD Expense: \$2,212.85
Current Cash Balance: \$403,381.58

- **Cumulative Fire Fund:**
YTD Expense: \$0
Current Cash Balance: \$281,942.19

- **Recreation Fund:**
YTD Expense: 260.58
Current Cash Balance: 17,112.98

Deposits:

- **From Heather Cohee:**
Amount: \$46.52

- **Local Income Tax:**
Amount: 10,959.00
Divided evenly between Township Fund and Firefighting Fund

- **Trust Indiana account:**
Accrued \$1,730.89
Divided as shown in the report between its 6 funds

Kelson asks if there are updates on the state's case to get more than \$46.52 a month from Heather Cohee; Bright says that any updates will likely come in April or May and that getting larger installments is unlikely.

Motion to approve Financial Report: Kelson

Second: Stevens

Approved Unanimously

Trustee Report: Bright

Legislative Update:

Bills that made it through their respective house and are going to the other one:

- **HB 1177:**
Capital Funds account cannot exceed 150% of an annual budget without a determined plan; applies to our Cumulative Fire Fund which we always have a plan in place for - this year we will buy or refurbish a tanker

- **SB 221:**
Board member matters for merged townships; did not research further as we are not a merged township

- **HB 1182:**
Increases the benefit amount for workers comp; this would result in better financial protection for our firefighters should there be an accident and would also likely increase premiums

- **SB 156:**
Fire Protection District Per Diems; we aren't in a district so this doesn't apply

- **SB 248:**
Distribution of Public Safety Income Tax revenue:
 - States that entities such as Fire Territories, Fire Districts, and Townships are eligible for a distribution of that fund
 - Currently we have to go through a grant-type process
 - Would make things easier for us, and fairer for our taxpayers

Solicitation for bids for mowing service:

- Was sent out to over 10 entities and also posted on facebook
- Added task to blow leaves out of storm drain at end of season; not something we had asked for in the past

Danny Smith Park:

- Starting registration for 2019 season
- Reached out to Ryan about projects we discussed; got no response

Senior Center:

- AA continues to meet weekly; accumulates a small donation which is given to the unionville seniors association

Township Properties:

By law, a township can maintain a cemetery that is considered abandoned if it was established before 1939. We have two cemeteries left unmaintained:

- One on City property on the west side of the trestle at Shuffle Creek Road
Hasn't been a high priority due to difficulty of access (creek in the way).
- Richardson-Fleener Cemetery
There was some uncertainty about whether it was legally a cemetery, due to lack of documentation about the Richardson Cemetery Association which no longer exists. Eventually found an 1860 deed and survey establishing that it is a cemetery and we have a right-of-way easement for a road on the neighbor's property. We will have to go to court and ask a judge to transfer that property to us.

Fire Department:

- SCBAs which were purchased in December are now on the trucks
- Have been working with Zach to document expired equipment, not sure what we can do with disposal (this depends on original cost of the equipment)
Have asked Zach to create a listing of all the turnout gear- who has it, and where it is
- Discovered that on Feb. 25th, there was a report from the Times-Mail Newspaper that the Orange County Rural District 1 is asking officials to set aside money to fund a core group of 12-15 paid firefighters to serve the county. They do not have enough volunteers to adequately support the residents.

Misc:

- Our next upcoming meeting is April 10th
- Will be discussing a vegetation complaint policy to expand on the state's very vague definition of what can be considered unacceptable

Township Assistance Report:

- Received 6 application requests, four of which actually applied
- One person was denied due to lack of information which we asked for twice
- One person was approved for \$254 for electricity
- One gentleman came to us who lives in a primitive mobile home with no utilities on someone's property. He came to ask us for 5 ricks of wood to heat his home, and for some shoes. This was approved.
- One person was still pending after not supplying all required information
- Food pantry was used 5 times
- One person came in to complain about a neighbor's house which was trashy and asked us to do something. He was referred to County Planning, and the problem was resolved.

Motion to approve Trustee Report: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Approved Unanimously

Fire Reports

NMFT Report

February:

- 14 Dispatches, 2 of which were disregarded.

BTVFD Report

February:

- Total Runs Made: 8
- Spillman reported runs: 14
- Average responders per run: 1.25
- % of runs made: 57.00%

Motion to approve Fire Reports: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Approved Unanimously

Township Assistance Guidelines

Changes:

- Updated dates, page numbers
- Changed language in non-discriminatory statement to be more gender-inclusive
- Changed “Needy Families” to “Individuals and Families in need”
- Indicated that we will be closed on occasion for us to participate in trainings and/or meetings
- Made it more clear that applications are always available
- Updated who our deputy trustee is
- Removed duplicate text from section V-B
- Added clothing, footwear, etc to the non-food items list, this reflects state law
- Section VII, Paragraph Three now reads “All utility bills must be in the name of the applicant or an adult member of the household; an emancipated minor who is head of the household; or a landlord or former member of the household if the applicant 1.) received the services as a tenant residing at the service address at the time the cost was incurred; and 2.) is responsible for the payment of the bill.”
- Updated the application process to be more in line with what we actually do- these are guidelines, so this was fine, but would like it to be more accurate
- Updated to the 2019 poverty guidelines
- Changed format of the Income and Expense form to be more intuitive
- Fixed grammatical errors

Motion to approve: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Approved Unanimously

Emergency Services Discussion

Options before the board

- 1. Join a Territory**
- 2. Wait for the District to expand to border us, then try to join it**
 - We have not heard of any concrete plans for Salt Creek to join the territory. Until and unless that happens, this isn't an option, as the townships in the district must be contiguous.
- 3. Rely on Volunteers**

Territory Discussion

Positive points for joining the territory:

- People would be available to respond 24/7
- We wouldn't have to keep having this discussion over and over
- Reduced cost due to streamlined purchasing
- Sensible continuation of existing relationship with NMFT
- Faster solution than other options (waiting for district)
- Faster response time for calls
- Possible lower insurance rates
- Choice that we're making, we aren't being forced
- We will still be involved in leadership
- Increased ability to get grants
- More centralized equipment (reduced maintenance costs, increased consistency)
- More jobs for firefighters
- Better career development opportunities for firefighters
- Mentorship from more experienced firefighters
- More people for fire prevention/education opportunities in the community (going to schools, etc.)
- More unified training
- More staffing for community events
- More people who can respond to a given call
- Better communication between fire departments
- More people able to arrive immediately- currently sometimes one person will get there and then have to wait for backup
- Single point of contact for residents
- Not permanent- if things aren't going well, we can get out of a territory. You can't get out of a district.

Negative points for joining the territory

- Tax increase
- Somewhat less control- we're still at the table, but others are there as well
- Could be differences to be resolved if our volunteers have to merge with NMFT

Dealbreakers for joining the territory:

(Things which, if required, would make the board absolutely not want to join. Currently, these are not in place.)

- If we had no control (In the current system, we would have 1/3 of the votes on the executive committee)
- If votes were based on population or assessed valuation & Washington left (we wouldn't have the ability to block Bloomington from doing whatever they wanted, because our population and assessed valuation are both lower than theirs. With Washington in, the two smaller townships could band together and block Bloomington.)

Misc. Notes:

- Washington Township Station (where they might build it, maybe) probably wouldn't impact our insurance ratings that much, but would be faster response to parts of the township
- Barb Ooley has been contacted by "many people" who say their insurance rates have gone down since the Wash. Twp. Temporary station opened.

Resolution to engage in conversations about joining a territory

This expressly states that the board is supportive of the trustee meeting with the fire territory as well as other trustees to discuss the possibility of us joining.

Motion to approve: Kelson

Second: Stevens

Approved unanimously

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Stevens

Second: Kelson

Adjourned at 8:01