

**Unapproved Minutes of the Whitefish Township Board  
December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
7052 N M-123, Paradise MI 49768  
906-492-3452**

Supervisor Forrester called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:** Present: Glen Gomery, Earl Skeans, Edson Forrester, Katie Becker, Kim Bean  
Absent: None

Citizens present: 18

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**C. AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA**

**D. REVIEW OF MINUTES:** (Regular Meeting November 2nd, Special Meeting December 5<sup>th</sup>, Closed Session December 5th) Motion by Becker to approve, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Gomery 5 YES, Motion Carried.

**E. CLERK'S REPORT:** The Clerk thanks the township for their attendance to the Tree Lighting (Thank you Dena Allen for allowing us to use your property!), BINGO Night, and the Thanksgiving meal. The Website is up and running, still looking for input there! To continue being transparent with our information, the Township did start a Facebook page entitled "Whitefish Township", lots of information will be provided there. Clerk Becker did present sample Blight Ordinances at December 5<sup>th</sup>'s meeting, she encouraged the board to look those over and provide feedback. Background Checks have not been run on employees as there should be. Clerk Becker is looking for an agency that meets proper standards for Background Checks. She will continue to investigate this issue. Employee Files are in poor condition, several employees have not filled out the necessary information (W-4, I-9, personal information etc.). This information will be provided to Department heads next week. Please try and have those back to the Clerk by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The Policy handbook is very out of date and is not followed properly. Employee Evaluations are an area of concern. Please be on the look out for Policy reminders. Our Township Accountant is willing to help us out with tax forms and proper tax payments. The F65 form was submitted timely. Trustee Gomery stated that at one time there was a complete Employee File, Clerk Becker stated she has found nothing complete – but will keep looking. The board did instate a Payroll Policy on December 5<sup>th</sup> giving specific pay dates for each pay period within our month cycle. Departments will be responsible for the additional payroll fee if they fail to abide by the set timeline.

**F. TREASURERS REPORT:** Winter Tax collection is in full swing. We have collected Several payments already. Summer taxes are still trickling in as well. This Tax Collection is more efficient than our Summer Season was. The Treasurer reminded the public that only her and her Deputy are bonded to collect taxes. No one else in our Township office can complete that task. Please use the Black drop box if the Treasurer is not here. If your Tax bill goes to a mortgage company, you will still receive a tax bill for your records.

**G. SUPERVISORS REPORT:** There was concern over the date of the Public Hearing (11/15/2023). The Planning Commission sets their dates a year in advance. The Board chose the next available Planning Commission Meeting to set the date. Unfortunately, there was not a Quorum at the public hearing, so the New Ordinance has not been approved. EGLE approved the baseline assessment for Township on the adjacent Chippewa County Road Commission Property. Once complete, the Township will pursue ownership of said property. Most of the paperwork will be reviewed this winter with a site visit in the spring. MDOT completed their initial driveway recommendations for the TAP grant project. The Supervisor will meet with any property owner to review. He stated he is aware of parking concerns, looking to have those resolved by 2026. The Northern Medical Authority elected their board, articles of incorporation are with the state and bylaws were passed. The Feasibility Study will be completed in February. There was a Special Meeting Tuesday December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 9am concerning an EMS Millage for our Township. Discussion on EMS Service has been taking place publicly for over a year. We did sign onto the Northern Medical Authority however the upcoming election will give our voters a choice. The Presidential Primary is slated for February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. We will still be able to withdraw from the Authority by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, if the vote of our Township is in favor of a stand-alone millage. There will be informational meetings to answer EMS questions. The schedule has been posted throughout town and on Facebook. Efforts are underway to address property cleanup of the burned down building.

**H. PRESENTATION OF BILLS:** BILLS: \$20,085.13, PAYROLL: \$42,170.96 TOTAL: \$62,256.09 Motion by Becker, Second by Gomery. ROLL CALL Gomery Y, Skeans Y, Forrester Y, Becker Y, Bean Y. 5 YES, Motion Carried

**I. CORRESPONDENCE/ RECOGNITION/ ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Special thank you to Josh Winkler for being a vigilant Citizen and saving a man's life last week. There is a Special Consolidated election notice posted throughout town, on Facebook and on the Website.

**J. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Janeen Hall shared her take on our current EMS Situation with a suggestion to cross train FIRE and EMS providers to be able to work both departments. Janeen Hall shared that if answers are not provided, the next step could be a recall of all Township officials and Department heads. Supervisor Forrester shared that finding employees has been the largest issue. She also suggested hiring a professional Grant Writer. Roland Bell shared his concerns on Blight and that he turned in Blight Violation forms in 2021 and 2022 and no action was taken. He shared sections of MCL 125.72 and 125.39 concerning Blight. Debi Skeans inquired if the money from the Tourism council was secured by the Township for the TAP Grant? Supervisor Forrester confirmed it had not been secured but the Council is meeting Wednesday 12/13 at 1pm. Clerk Becker and Supervisor Forrester will attend that meeting to ask about those funds. Debi also asked about the Fire Clean – Up and for more information about the complaint filed against Township Officials. Clerk Becker shared the contents on the Complaint that was filed with The Michigan State Police against herself and Supervisor Forrester. Clerk Becker also shared blight information she found concerning Ruth's Gift Shop – Building burnt down in Paradise. Clerk Becker was able to find out that Ruth's gift shop was Foreclosed upon and as of June 2023 the owner's family could no longer lay claim to the property. The attorney for Fannie Mae is looking into the next course of action for cleanup. Clerk Becker did state that this does not in any way mean the cleanup is guaranteed. Joann Cook thanked the Fire Department for their swift action in fighting the Gift Shop Fire. Joann also asked what is happening with the open septic tank behind Ruth's Gift Shop. Supervisor Forrester stated it is a well pit not a septic tank. Rick Brockway thanked Greg Crampton for having security cameras on his properties. Rick also asked why all department heads are not present at the township meetings to deliver a report on their department. Lem Becker asked what data the 5 mills is based on? Renee shared the number is based on BLS service (Basic Life Support) on 1 truck /rig staffed by 2 providers at \$20.00 an hour 24/7/365 in addition to building costs. Joel Hall shared his opinion that 5 mills for an ambulance service is very high.

#### **K. DEPARTMENTAL/ COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**FIRE:** No Report this month. Motion by Gomery to not pay the Fire Chief next month unless he begins attending the meetings and provides a report. Motion failed for lack of support.

**EMS:** 6 calls this month, 2 went unanswered. Struggling to find providers as we had to reduce the hourly rate of pay. Director Gray is reporting to the State weekly as we are not meeting the requirements of the law. All EMS Employees have had a background check completed. Director Gray shared where to find your home's taxable value on your tax bill.

**LIBRARY:** Library apologizes for their absence lately from meetings. 378 visitors this month, Boiler is working fine!

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS:** No Action Report

**PLANNING COMMISSION:** No Action as last meeting was cancelled due to lack of Quorum.

#### **L. GUEST SPEAKER: NONE**

#### **M. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **1. Vacancy of Ordinance Enforcement Officer, ZBA Appointments, PC- Alternates and BOR remain unfilled:**

Motion by Becker to give Blight Enforcement Powers as a Non-Statutory duty to a member of this Township Board, paid at the hourly rate of the Ordinance Enforcement Officer, Second by Bean. There was discussion on our current Blight Ordinance and that changes may need to be made. Trustee Skeans volunteered to take on this Duty. ROLL CALL Gomery Y, Skeans Y, Forrester Y, Becker Y, Bean Y. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

Motion by Edson Forrester to accept Don Kalfayan's resignation from the Planning Commission. Second by Gomery, 5 YES, Motion Carried.

Supervisor shared the duties of being a member of one of the Boards/ Commissions for those interested.

Motion by Forrester Second by Skeans to accept Carol S. Bowden's letter of interest to join the planning Commission. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

**2. Housing Project Update:** Glenn received an E-mail from his contact at MICHDA to contact a grant writer as grants are available for this project. Newberry's Housing Manager was in our Office and shared that he would be willing to talk to us concerning this topic however.

**3. Zoning Ordinance Fee Schedule for Discussion:** Zoning Administrator West shared the Zoning Fee Schedule for review by the board.

**4. EMS Wage Schedule:** Motion by Forrester Second by Gomery to accept the Revised Emergency Medical Service Wage Schedule as presented. ROLL CALL Gomery Y, Skeans Y, Forrester Y, Becker Y, Bean Y. 5 YES, Motion Carried

#### **N. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Tap Grant Retention Fee:** Motion by Forrester, Second by Becker to pay Grant Writer \$350.00 per month for our TAP Grant. Clerk Becker stated the money promised by the Tourism Council should be in our bank account before we take this project any further. Supervisor Forrester shared the Tourism Council meets Wednesday Dec 13<sup>th</sup> @1pm. Clerk Becker will attend to inquire on the status of this pledge. Clerk Becker and Treasurer Bean both inquired about the actual Dollar amount needed to fulfill our portion. Treasurer Bean stated she is still unaware of the extent of this project and would like more information.

ROLL CALL Gomery Y, Skeans Y, Forrester Y, Becker N, Bean N 3 YES, Motion Carried.

**2. 2024 Whitefish Township Meeting Schedule:** Motion by Becker, Second by Forrester to adopt the Township Meeting Schedule for 2024 as presented. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

**3. Accountant Engagement Letter:** Motion by Becker, Second by Bean to accept the engagement Letter from Hammerbacher and Co including the Monthly fee of \$1,500.00 for his accounting services. Clerk Becker shared that we are not required to have an audit this year based on our township size. ROLL CALL Gomery Y, Skeans Y, Forrester Y, Becker Y, Bean Y. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

**4. Cooperative Mutal Aid Fire Control Agreement MDNR:** Motion by Forrester Second by Bean to accept the Mutal Aid Fire Control Agreement with the MDNR. Clerk Becker asked if the Fire Chief was aware of this document? Supervisor Forrester shared the Fire Chief had signed it the last few years but could not speak for him. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

**5. Transfer Station Fee Schedule for Discussion:** Supervisor Forrester shared we do continue to be in a deficit at the dump. Clerk Becker asked if the Transfer Station Employee was made aware of the expectations of the Fees. A Charge for Shingles and Concrete were added to the Fee Structure. No action was taken.

**6. Ordinance Discussion:** Clerk Becker again urged the Board to look over the sample Blight Ordinances.

**7. Closed Session Township Employee Discussion:** Motion by Forrester second by Becker to Recess to Closed Session at 9:12pm. 5 YES, Motion Carried.

Motion to Return to Open Session by Gomery, Second by Bean 9:33pm

ROLL CALL: Glen Gomery, Earl Skeans, Edson Forrester, Katie Becker, Kim Bean

#### **O. SIGN AND RETURN MINUTES TO CLERK**

**P. ADJOURNMENT:** Motion by Skeans to adjourn at 9:33pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Skeans. 5 YES, Motion Carried