

Special Meeting  
Casco Township Board of Trustees  
March 1, 2014 @ 9:00am

Approved 3/17/14

Reason for Meeting: Public Meeting for input on the possible police millage.

Allan called meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Present: Josiah Jessup, Allan Overhiser, Lu Winfrey, Cheri Brenner, Judy Graff and 12 other people present.

Absent: None

Allan thanked everyone for coming and explained the boards need for input from the public because we are on a time schedule to get the information on the ballot for an August election. There will be another public meeting on March 22, 2014 at 9:00 am. We would have to have a millage to get Casco's own police protection.

We started looking for law enforcement when the state police stopped enforcement in Casco. Then 911 came in and all those calls went to Allegan. Allegan patrol has diminished because of budget cutbacks. Presently we have one Allegan sheriff deputy covering 4 townships, which are Lee, Ganges, Casco, & Clyde.

The State troopers work out of the Casco Township Hall but mainly cover the State roads. Sometimes they are called to assist in Casco. The purpose is need and basically how individuals feel about what the townships needs are.

The township has attempted a couple of times for a millage but failed. We are now trying again. Other communities in the county have enhanced their patrol call by contracting to have an officer for them. Allan discussed the report from Allegan County Sheriff's office showing the comparison of 911 calls for 2011, 2012, and 2013.

Allan discussed that the majority of the people in Casco Twp. have given up calling 911 because of the response time. Attached with minutes.

Mark Kolas asked is the primary reason for this millage is the response time? Allan said "yes", primarily. Paul Macyauski asked "What would the Allegan County Sheriffs say if you asked why the response time is so slow?" Allan explained that we don't pay any money that is directly for sheriff coverage.

The county is committed to what we have today and there isn't enough revenue to increase coverage. Tom Storr wanted to know where the Ambulance comes from? The ambulance comes from South Haven.

Martin Super stated that the response time for prime areas is really bad. Bob Baker said he asked Tom Jessup one time what is the amount that we pay for coverage. Bob feels the tax dollar is based on wealthy dollars, so who is actually getting the coverage? Bob also said he was expecting to see the Allegan Sheriff and South Haven Chief of Police here today battling it out.

Allan mentioned that Lee Township has contracted with Allegan County to have their own deputy, Laketown Township has their own deputy, and Door shares an officer. Martin Super asked what process did South Haven Charter Township go thru to contract with the City of South Haven instead of Van Buren County. Allan said he reviewed the history of law enforcement in South Haven Charter Township and they had a contract first with Van Buren County for two officers then the township contracted with South Haven, which has worked.

Paul Macyauski said he has called 911 twice and the response time was great but this was 15 yrs. ago. He said one was a B&E and another was a medical issue. Casco received some figures from the City of South Haven that would include two officers but Chief Martin looked at it and felt that it would take 4 officers to get 24 hr. coverage to get what we need.

Allan said that he would be the one that would manage the contract. The township has two options Allegan County Sheriff Dept and South Haven Police Dept. The State Police are not an option for us. They are called periodically if they are in the area and an officer needs assistance.

Tom Storr asked what kind of crime are we talking about B&E's? Cheri said that a township employee stopped at her house in the afternoon and there was a robbery going on. The response time was good because it was a robbery in progress but she they have not followed up with her yet.

Judy said that we are in the parks business now and with the stairs to the beach there is a concern on how we are going to serve the public issues at our parks.

Mark Kolas said he doesn't feel that the millage money is fair because property with higher values owners pay higher taxes. He asked is there another way to raise revenue other than millage?

Allan said he doesn't know any other way to do this other than through millage.

Joe Darby spoke and said his family has been in Allegan county for 108 yrs. and he has not had good experience with the Allegan County Sheriff Dept.

Allan said we have talked about not getting follow up calls and if we had our own officer it would solve the follow up problem.

Judy read four emails-

Judy Addison- is happy with the current coverage.

Barb Houlberg- is basically against contracting with Allegan County.

Randy Bartels- stated that he has had quick response when needed doesn't want the millage.

Eric Schlanser- feels we need better police coverage.

The township has a Senior Service Program here and we need to look after our seniors and protect them so they can safely stay in their homes.

Judy said from what she has heard there is a need and then she has had seniors say to her please no more taxes.

Tom Storr said he wouldn't mind paying more taxes if we hired a deputy for 40 hrs that was exclusively for Casco, our service would be diminished if our officer got called out of the township. Also, he doesn't think hiring a deputy would stop crime.

The questions that need to be looked at are:

#1 If there is a need and #2 how much do we pay for the need.

Joe Darby said the fairest way to do this is to put it on the ballot.

Allan made motion to adjourn. Judy seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.

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Cheri Brenner  
Casco Township Clerk

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