

**Charter Township of Ironwood
Regular Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2020**

Call to Order: 5:30 pm Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Supervisor- Jim Simmons, Mary Segalin-Clerk, Maria Graser- Treasurer

Trustees: Bernie Brunello, Marlene Saari, Bev Michaels

Absent: Kevin Lyons

Also Present: LeRoy Johnson- Zoning Administrator, Ron Jacobson, Joe Rohde, George Kivi, Jay Kangas, Sandy Lahtinen, Brenda Aili-Angus, Scott Carlson-Fire Chief, Barry Bolich-GCRC, Kathy Maki, Vicki Nelson, Katie Nelson, Mike Nelson, Harvey Hulstrom, Dennis Slade, Cathy and Rudy Grbavacich, Heidi DeRosso, Donna Lipske, Jean Sgaggio, Arene Schneller, George Kivi, and Leanne Kangas.

Simmons read a statement before the meeting started: There has been some confusion as to what “qualifies” being placed on the agenda for a Township Board meeting. According to the MTA, regular Township meetings are “Business Meetings” and are not “Public Hearings”.

Simply requesting to be placed on the agenda does not automatically mean that an individual will be approved to appear on the agenda. There should be a written request stating the reason for wanting to address the board. The citizen’s request will be carefully reviewed, as the Board wants to remain consistent.

Recently, a Township citizen didn’t have a valid business reason to be placed on the agenda. I asked the Deputy Clerk to remove the person from the agenda. The citizen will be allowed to speak for three minutes during public comment just like any other person. There has been a lot of speculation concerning the administrative action taken by the Supervisor in regards to the Fire Chief. It is the position of the board that these actions are considered to be “Personnel Issues” and are being treated as such.

Please observe the Public Comment period with respect for others. Also remember that Public Comment is not a question and answer period. It is a period of time for the citizen to address the members of the Board unabated.

Public Comment: (3-minute limit) A citizen read: I, Vicki L. Nelson, would like to have my name included in the minutes. I would also ask to have this statement filed along with the minutes from this meeting. I am here as a concerned resident. I am not representing the views of any other township volunteers or residents. I find it very hard to believe that Mr. Simmons, appointed Supervisor of the Charter Township of Ironwood, has the power to fire a volunteer/employee of the township without approval of the Charter Township of Ironwood Board-especially when this individual was approved for his position by the board approximately 6 weeks prior. What could have possibly happened that required such immediate action? I have been reading Michigan Township Association articles and have read in many places that this would not be proper protocol. Can the board explain to me what the policy is regarding the firing of volunteers/employees? I am the wife of a volunteer who has been on the Fire Department for over 35 years and a mother of a daughter who has been on the fire department for over 10 years.

I would certainly hate to think that if Mr. Simmons could fire them overnight based on his feelings only. Also- I had asked to be put on the Charter Township of Ironwood Board meeting agenda for the March 9th meeting because I had concerns regarding the policies/procedures regarding the firing of the Fire Chief. Mr. Simmons directed Deputy Clerk Lynn Coron to put me on the agenda. When I saw the agenda on-line on Friday- I was not on it. I went to the office and asked Clerk Mary Segalin why I was not on the agenda. She stated that, "Jim said to take you off". I stated that I had not been asked if I wanted to be taken off the agenda and that I wish to be placed back on it. She said she would call Jim. She then said "Jim will be coming down to talk to you". Mr. Simmons arrived and asked what he could help me with. I stated that I wanted to be put back on the agenda. He said the matter was resolved. I said the matter regarding the procedure was not resolved and I wanted to be put back on the agenda. He again said, "no". I asked him if he felt he had the power to just take someone off the agenda without asking them and he said he did. I read in the MTA that Mr. Simmons should have left me on the agenda and then at the beginning of the meeting (during the time when the agenda is being discussed for approval) to ask the board to put me on the agenda. So- I did ask board member Marlene Saari to do so – tole her my concerns were regarding the procedure in which the fire chief had been fired. I was notified by her on March 9, 2020 that Mr. Simmons told her it was a personnel issue and I could speak during public comment. Again, I was asking to speak regarding procedures/policies- not personnel issues. So- I ask the board to explain who determines who gets on the agenda? Does that power also lay with the township Supervisor?

Another citizen commented on her request for the employee handbook and fire dept. policy and procedure books were denied and that she could request them in writing as a FOIA. She stated the website says it can be a verbal request. She also said she's concerned that the supervisor can fire anyone without an open board meeting. The fire dept. now has a 17-member roster, 7 of which live in the township. We can't afford to lose anymore fire dept. members. The IPSD does not have a tanker nor the jaws of life.

Another citizen wanted to thank the fire dept. for all they do and hopes this issue gets resolved. A citizen had concerns regarding the 911 surcharge. She said she doesn't even get 911 coverage at LGP- it goes straight to Ashland- bouncing off their tower. And in turn Ashland claims they can't transfer the call back here. I need this board to address this issue. "Why don't we get answers?"

Amendments to Agenda: A motion was made by Brunello supported by Saari to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda: A motion was made by Saari supported by Michaels to accept the minutes from the Regular Meeting, February 24, 2020, as corrected. Motion carried.

Bills and Salaries: General Fund-#45765-45818- \$68,771.36, Water Fund- #9083 & 9084- \$5,027.32, Wastewater Fund- #1935-1938- \$12,928.28. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Michaels to accept the bills and salaries as presented. Motion carried on a roll call vote. All ayes.

Appearances: Heidi DeRosso explained the 911 surcharge vote that is on the ballot for the March 10, 2020 election. She stated the surcharge may go up to \$3.00 as the copper lines need replacing by fiber lines, the current portable radio will not be able to be serviced in the future so an upgrade is necessary, and the increased cost of dispatch. Citizens questions why she was told her 911 call could not be transferred to Gogebic County. DeRosso said she will speak with

Ashland as she knows they have the capability of transferring the 911 calls locally, and will report back. Larry Grimsby is the Gogebic 911 contact for the emergency committee.

Barry Bolich of Gogebic County Road Commission, spoke about the Lake Rd Spring. He stated that the Road Commission dropped the ball as far as deeding it to the Township which was agreed upon back in 2016. He is asking the Board to reconsider owning the spring. Segalin stated she has been in contact with Senator McBroom's office and they would like to know how many residents use the spring on a regular basis for water.

Old Business: None

Communications: Tokio Marine HCC sent a letter regarding coverage of the sound system and wiring for the gym – they will not pay for these items, as they are not part of the damaged structure (gym).

A citizen had requested they not get a garbage bill at Powderhorn as they do not utilize the garbage pickup. They said their neighbors don't get a garbage bill. The Treasurer stated that if their neighbors either had a dumpster or is part of the Association, then they wouldn't get a garbage bill from the Township. A motion was made by Simmons supported by Brunello to deny the request. A citizen had pointed out that the Supervisor cannot make a motion. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Saari to allow the motion to be rescinded. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Segalin to deny the request. Motion carried.

New Business: A motion was made by Segalin supported by Brunello to re-appoint Joe Rohde to the Planning Commission board. Motion carried on a roll call vote.

The board discussed a tentative Spring clean-up date. Saari will check with the transfer station to see if May 16th, 2020 is an acceptable date. Saari will report back to the board.

Reports:

Supervisor:

- The scheduling conference was held March 3, 2020 in regards to the joint lawsuit with the insurance company regarding the embezzlement..
- Last Tuesday, we had the district meeting for MTA in Watersmeet. A lot of time was spent talking about the 911 issue on the ballot and its importance to Gogebic County.
- At the last township meeting, it was brought up that we are not up to date with AMARS. The facts are that we are up to date. This was confirmed with our Assessor Novascone.
- The auditor will be here on March 19,20,23, and 24th to work on the 2019 audit. We look forward to getting 2019 wrapped up asap.
- The video surveillance was hooked up last week and we are able to keep audio/video records of the activity outside the office and the hallway entrance right by the two office windows.

Treasurer: The last day to pay taxes here was March 3, 2020. The tax fund balanced with the County Treasurer. Graser requested a quote on the remaining balance of the new fire numbers- the amount is approximately \$14,200. She attended the Capital MTA conference in Lansing.

Clerk: Attended the Capital MTA conference in Lansing. Reminded everyone tomorrow is election day.

Trustees:

Michaels- Attended the local MTA meeting

Saari- Attended the local MTA meeting

Brunello- Attended the Solid Waste meeting. Questioned if the water infiltration problem is addressed in the new ordinance that Johnson is working on.

Lyons- Absent

Fire Dept.: Carlson stated the Frost Fest was successful. Carlson thanked the volunteers and attendees for making it a success. Chief Carlson reported they had 2 fire calls in February. He is requesting to purchase two sets of gear at \$3,000 each. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Saari to allow the purchase. Motion carried on a roll call vote.

Public comment: A citizen had wondered if the embezzling settlement is up to just the township board. Simmons stated it is not.

Several citizens had comments over the Supervisor's power to fire employees ex: Fire Chief Carlson, the general attitude of this office, the need for video cameras, if employee evaluations are being performed. Another citizen questioned why checks not getting cashed in a timely manner. A citizen encouraged board members to know their laws and to read the Charter Township Act. A citizen requested the Supervisor publish a formal apology to the Fire Chief.

Closed session: Scott Carlson wrote a request to go into Closed Session, subject to Section 8(a) of the Open Meetings Act, to discuss personnel issues. A motion was made by Saari supported by Brunello to enter into closed session to discuss a personnel issue at 6:20pm. Motion carried. A motion was made by Michaels supported by Brunello to enter back into regular session at 6:45pm. Motion carried. Simmons stated the board and the Fire Chief agreed there are issues and are moving forward to having better communication between the Fire Chief and the Board.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Brunello supported by Graser to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 pm. Motion carried.

James Simmons, Supervisor

Mary Segalin, Clerk