

**Charter Township of Ironwood  
Regular Meeting  
October 9, 2017**

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

**Roll Call:** Supervisor Steve Boyd, Clerk Mary Segalin and Treasurer Maria Graser

**Trustees:** Kevin Lyons, Bev Michaels, Bernie Brunello, Marlene Saari

**Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Scott Carlson-Fire Chief, Joe Rohde, Kim Pelkola, Laurie Soltis, Peggy Krone, Darrin Kimbler, Ron Jacobson, James Simmons, and Kelly Stanczak.

**Public Comment:** Agenda Items Only- None

**Amendments to Agenda:** A motion was made by Lyons supported by Graser to move the last public comment on the agenda to before the closed session. Motion carried.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Brunello supported by Saari to accept the minutes as amended from Sept 25 & 27, 2017. Motion carried.

**Bills and Salaries:** A motion was made by Brunello and supported by Saari to accept the bills and salaries as presented in the General Fund. Motion carried on a roll call vote. A motion was made by Lyons supported by Michaels to accept the bills as presented from the Water and Sewer Funds. Motion carried on a roll call vote.

**Appearances:** None

**Old Business:** Clerk Segalin reported on the September 2017 GRWA water usage; the usage is still considerably lower.

**Communications:** The plan submitted to AMAR in regards to the questions Mi. Dept. of Treasury has with the tax roll has been accepted and will be reviewed in 2018. Correspondence from Jean Verbos, GRWA Administrator, concerning if GRWA were to start handling the billing and collecting of utility billings, the cost would be much higher to the Township. Verbos stated she does not recommend contracting the utility billings out, to have the Township continue to do those billings and collections.

The Tall Grass Violations 2017 letter will be placed on file from Zoning Administrator Johnson.

Correspondence was received from UPCAP in regard to the PILOT agreement for Milltrace Apartments. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Graser to place all communications on file. Motion carried.

**New Business:** The new BC/BS Health Insurance rates are that are up for renewal in January renewal reflects a 2.17 % increase. This is informational only; no action needs to be taken at this time.

A motion was made by Brunello supported by Saari to adopt Res. 2017-16- General Fund Budget Amendment. Motion carried on a roll call vote. All ayes.

A motion was made by Brunello supported by Segalin to adopt Res. 2017-17- Water Fund Budget Amendment. Motion carried on a roll call vote. All ayes.

A motion was made by Lyons supported by Graser to adopt Res. 2017-18- Sewer Fund Budget Amendment. Motion carried on a roll call vote. All ayes.

**Reports:**

**Supervisor:**

- 1) Meetings attended included Road commission, County Board of Commissioners, Budget, Parks & Rec, Policy Committee, Cemeteries, and various individuals.
- 2) Roads:
  - a. Black River Rd at Maple Creek: Closed soon for 1-2 weeks with a detour. Large boats will probably not be able to make it.
  - b. New PAZER ratings will begin later this month.
  - c. M-28 Wakefield to Marenisco will be closed next year for about 3 months starting in May or June for a bridge replacement.
- 3) At the last meeting, several issues were raised that I responded by stating I would get more information and report back at the next meeting. I plan to make this a regular part of my supervisors report.
  - a. As per a request from a constituent, I made a change to the public comment to expand the second opportunity. The OMA requires only one opportunity for public comment, but I still feel that two makes more sense and allows the meeting to run smoother. So while the first one remains the same with agenda items only, the one at the end of the meeting will be unlimited in topics, agenda or non-agenda items.
  - b. Our assessor is on a month to month contract. This was changed when the job was split between the assessor and the previous supervisor. His pay has been unchanged for the past 8 years, and we are reviewing his contract now to see if any changes are needed.
  - c. A Question was raised about potential timber sales. I spoke with Green Timber, who we are contracted with thru 2018, and they said they will be making an inspection of a small potential area in the far north. They will let us know its status after the inspection.
  - d. A note was sent to the road commission about patching the road on East Sunset where the road was torn up to replace a broken main earlier this summer.
  - e. A question was raised about privatizing some of our work to save money. I checked on 2 different areas, maintaining the cemetery and lawn care around the township building and Sunset Park. Costs for our guys, including all wages, benefits, fuel, etc. Run about \$22-26 per hour. The lowest estimate I received

was for \$50-60 per hour. And this does not include the free work done this summer by our 3 workers thru the state program. And they almost single handedly maintained the cemetery this summer. Another bid for just the cemetery came in at between \$1200-1600. This was for a 4 man crew at \$200 per hour for an estimated 6-8 hours each time the work is done. Our guys do it with 2 men taking 10-12 hours. Again, this does include the free workers we had this summer. Generally, we do the same work for less than half the cost. Privatization would cost the township and its taxpayer's money. I will continue to look for other opportunities as they arise.

- f. The past meeting we discussed the cemetery and a policy on trees. I had an excellent discussion with Mr. Kimbler last week about types of trees and other options. We will be preparing cost options and will come back with a proposal in the near future.
- g. Just a reminder that all cut flowers and potted plants should have been removed from the cemetery by now.
- h. Questions have been raised about payment to elected officials for processing utility bills. The GRWA is the regional water authority encompassing Ironwood Township, Bessemer Township, Wakefield Township, and the cities of Bessemer and Wakefield. Prior to its creation, we received our water from the city of Ironwood. The water lines are wholly owned by GRWA....they own everything and the bonds are in their name. In other words, the Township does not own or have control over the water lines or financing. Here are the sources I looked at and their conclusions.
  - i. Our audits have consistently indicated this is normal and not an issue. No violations or findings were noted as a result of this procedure.
  - ii. This is common practice in the UP. A similar example is when supervisors are paid additional salaries if they are also the assessors.
  - iii. According to MTA legal counsel "Doing water and sewer billings is NOT part of the statutory duty of the offices. As water and sewer services is not something that is required by statute, if/when the township decides that it is going to provide those service it is also accepting the responsibility to provide all services. The functions described would be considered an "additional duty" under MCL 15.183 4C and are thus eligible for compensation."
  - iv. The administrator of the GRWA, a former township supervisor, has stated that this method is both legal and preferred. She further notes that should the treasurer and clerk NOT be paid for this and not continue their work; she would be forced to hire someone to do the work for the GRWA. The amount of work would require a significant increase in pay/cost, which would be passed on to every Ironwood Township resident in their water bills. An initial estimate is that the difference would result in each customer's water bill to rise between \$3 and \$5.30 per month, with no

change in service. Just a higher bill for no reason. And since we do not own any part of the system, we would have no control.

In other words, changing this would cause every water users bill to rise significantly each month. In summary: The state of Michigan says this is legal. Our auditor says this is legal. MTA says it is legal and common. It has been a consistent practice throughout the U.P. for several years with no problems, and similar examples are common. The effect of changing this policy would be a massive increase in water bills for no reason. If people really want this to happen, I ask for your help from those of you pushing this to assist me in explaining to our water customers why this is a good idea to pay more for less service. Keep in mind any questions would have to be dealt with at the GRWA offices in Ramsay, and the billing might change to quarterly, which would be a challenge to our customers on a fixed income.

I hope this resolves this issue. If you have further questions, feel free to stop by our office to discuss them, see our attorney, or contact Ms. Jean Verbos at GRWA.

- I) I was asked to notify the board if there was any emergency hiring of over one day. We did need to hire our seasonal worker for 2.5 days last week to help in replacing a fire hydrant. I have pictures of the work, which took place in a trench over 8-10 feet deep. The large pipes/sections required 2 people just to move, and the work in the trench required a third person as per MIOSHA regulations for safety purposes. This could not take place earlier due to weather, as water seeping into an 8 foot trench is inherently unsafe. They also had to jackhammer bedrock for over 4 hours to make the pipes fit correctly. Next week I may need to hire him again because our lead man is taking a weeks' vacation. Any work that requires 2 people, he will need to be utilized. Any needing 3 will be postponed. I'll have complete details if his work exceeds 1 day at the next meeting, but I'm letting you know that is a possibility.
- J) There were also questions raised about the retirement plan. I spoke with Mr. Synkelma, the plan administrator. He said there are ways to amend the plan effective January 1. He will come to the next budget meeting to explain further.

**Treasurer:** Treasurer Graser stated the garbage and utility bills that are past due as of October 31, 2017 will be placed on the Winter Tax Rolls.

**Clerk:** Segalin presented the August 2017 Financial reports for all funds. A motion was made by Lyons supported by Brunello to place them on file. Motion carried.

**Trustees:** Brunello reported from his meeting at the GIWWA, the sewer plant is in need of repairs.

Trustee Michaels reported the Parks and Recreation Committee met to discuss future improvements and come up with a plan.

**Fire Department:** Chief Carlson reported that there were no fires this past month. They did participate in a disaster drill at the local airport. Carlson asked the board for permission to hold the annual FD Fun Frolic, in the Township gym, for Halloween on Oct. 28, 2017, from 1-3 in the afternoon. A motion was made by Lyons supported by Segalin. Motion carried.

**Public Comment: (3 minute limits)** Non agenda items – Several citizens made comments and had questions which will be addressed at the next meeting. See Supervisor’s notes for answers from the last meetings questions.

**Closed Session:** A motion was made by Brunello supported by Michaels to enter into closed session, to discuss pending legal matters, at 6:07 pm. A motion was made by Brunello supported by Michaels to enter back into regular session at 6:25 pm. Motion carried.

**Adjournment:** A motion was made by Brunello supported by Graser to adjourn at 6:26 pm. Motion carried.

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**Steve Boyd, Supervisor**

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**Mary Segalin, Clerk**