

**CASCO TOWNSHIP**  
**February 9, 2013**  
**Special Casco Township Joint Meeting**  
**Hosted by the Planning Commission**  
**9AM-12PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Bruce Barker, Dave Campbell, Dian Liepe, Dan Fleming and Judy Graff **ABSENT:** John Stroud and Paul Macyauski

**ALSO PRESENT:** Township Supervisor Allan Overhiser, Planner Patrick Hudson; Parks Consultant Pam Blough, Township Clerk Cheri Brenner and 6 interested citizens (signup sheet attachment #1)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Janet Chambers, Recording Secretary

Chairman Barker opened the meeting at 9:00 AM welcoming everyone and asked for introductions around the room. There were not changes to the agenda.

Supervisor Overhiser discussed his case for a high density district. He provided a copy of the "Township's Municipal Water & Sewer History and Timeline" (attachment #2), which explains how water and sewer, and its finances have evolved. Citizens requested water & sewer, and the township went into debt for it, adding a monthly debt retirement fee to water & sewer customers to make the payments. The debt retirement fee amount was set figuring a projected 10% future growth into the plan. That growth has not happened. The fees collected are not enough to cover the payments. The township has covered the shortfalls from township money, but now the money is not there to cover the shortfalls. People say that they would gladly pay more to avoid high density, but on the other hand, people continue to complain about the existing high water & sewer bills. Overhiser feels the only answer is more customers.

Liepe asked about the mandatory hookup, and the fact that some people are still not hooked up. Supervisor Overhiser said mandatory hookup letters have gone out, and those who have not hooked up will be required to hookup by the end of the year. Those presently not hooked up are approximately 100 or 150.

Graff questioned the possibility of requiring both water and sewer hookups to be mandatory (at the present time only sewer is mandatory). Supervisor Overhiser stated that as people have trouble with their wells, they eventually volunteer to hookup. In Miami Park there are only sewer hookups.

Campbell asked if there might be another way to look at this, such as refinancing or bonds. High density is more than just a financial issue. Police protection is already inadequate and high density would compound that.

Supervisor Overhiser said the debt is there. There is not enough money to cover that debt.

Campbell noted that water & sewer goes to 107<sup>th</sup>, and questioned why not develop further north and on the east side of the sewer line. With the new park and beach access, it could be a desirable place to build. Campbell said he would like to see what the cost projections were, and look at a combination of growth and increased millage.

Supervisor Overhiser said the market and demand will dictate where growth is. He added that millage is not an option because people will not vote to pay for someone else's sewer.

Campbell said he would vote for a millage to keep the city as we all enjoy (without high density). Campbell stated he does not think high density is the only option. Supervisor Overhiser said that a millage for police protection has been voted down. Campbell stated that not just one segment is going to take care of the debt.

Supervisor Overhiser said a decision has been made not to promote or condone sprawl (development basically all over, no order to it), but keep development by the City of South Haven. Graff added that the infrastructure is all ready there. She also has heard citizens question why they should pay for something they did not vote for. When bond payments were due it came out of Casco and South Haven Townships' general funds until the bonds were obtained. Graff stated that there is no money for the senior's program. She said she has been told by others, they don't want water and sewer in their neighborhoods after hearing about the cost to the existing water and sewer customers.

Campbell stated that the system has been paid for up to 107<sup>th</sup> Street, it should be used. Sprall is not going to be an issue. Overhiser stated that the Planning Commission and board want it to come out from the City, as opposed to having the city all over the place. Senior housing could be at 107<sup>th</sup> and Blue Star Highway.

Chairman Barker said that currently there is water and sewer on use both sides of Blue Star Highway, but there have not been requests to use the east side.

Campbell stated the utilities are there. They need to be utilized. If there is no interest in single family in that area, maybe multi-family should be considered there.

Chairman Barker thought senior housing should be encouraged throughout the township. Supervisor Overhiser said someone wanted to put senior housing around the golf course. Maybe text should be added to the Zoning Ordinance to allow senior housing in rural areas. Chairman Barker said that people should be comfortable with that.

Chairman Barker stated that Campbell has a good idea that needs to be looked at by the group.

Chairman Barker asked if there was 10% growth per year, (approximately 15 houses), how much more would it cost in additional dollars. Supervisor Overhiser stated that if the growth is only 10%, the debt retirement fee will go up to \$120. Chairman Barker said even if they only contribute the \$60 a year, combined with mandatory hookup, would be a significant amount.

Theo Ostermann, 7364 North Shore Drive asked why a developer gets a huge discount. Supervisor Overhiser said it is because the developer puts the pipe all the way into the infrastructure and gets a 45% discount. Janet Chambers stated that at her single family home, she too paid to run the pipes from the public road.

Chairman Barker said if you get 100 new customers at \$60 month for 20 years. The original numbers were based on making 5% or 6% on the money collected. That is nonexistent now.

Chairman Barker said we need ballpark numbers and dollar amounts. Chairman Overhiser said he will have that ready at the March 27<sup>th</sup> Water & Sewer Authority meeting.

Campbell said that there needs to be a diversified portfolio. A retirement village could generate more money than some others.

Fleming questioned the benefit zoning has for Casco, and if there is another way to get that benefit without zoning, it would free up money the township now pays for zoning. Zoning is a one way valve. You can zone development in, but can't zone it out. Restrictions make growth take longer. Trying to hold on to a picture of what we have is not going to happen. Things change. Fleming questioned if there could be land regulation without zoning. There is a lot of time spent on wind, high density, etc., as a PC we have to go through those steps. He wondered if zoning is economically a good thing.

Supervisor Overhiser replied that most of the people want zoning, unless it is them that want to do something not allowed in the ordinances. He stated that economics dictate everything. Nothing will have 100% support.

Theo Ostermann asked what the formula was if you have an acre on Blue Star and hook up to water & sewer. Overhiser said the formula is based on road frontage and REU (Residential Equivalent Unit). He added that in a development there is no risk. Graff clarified that when a pipe is run down the road, the township is paying for that pipe until someone hooks up to it. In a development, the developer pays the assessment and there is no risk to the township. Overhiser added that if the cost is too high, developers will build in Glenn or Saugatuck.

Pam Blough, Parks Consultant gave a Parks report for the past year. The south part of the Casco Township Nature Preserve (Stefan Property) is just about complete and is open. The Maple Grove property (north side of park) was purchased with donations, millage funds and Michigan Natural Resource Grants, and became a part of the same park. A split rail fence has been put across the front to identify the park. The yellow house and gate were removed. The north half of the park will not be open this summer. They are working on a Coastal Zone Management Grant through the State of Michigan to build the stairway to the beach. They have not yet determine what the northern half will look like. There has been strong input to be sure there is a stairway that will adjust to erosion. There was interest in looking into a ramp, but because of the slope, that will not be possible. The grant requires the project to be completed by March of 2014, which allows one construction season. There has been discussion of submitting a grant to Michigan Natural Resources Trust fund for the north end of property for additional parking, picnic and restroom facilities. The Friends group will support the nature preserve in many ways. There is a meeting being scheduled for Tues., May 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM. Campbell asked if acquiring grants will be more competitive because of Janowski's proposal to include dredging as a use covered by the grant. Blough said that dredging is not included at this time. It is a nice pot of money, and many people think it should be used for other things. Three or four proposals to change the trust fund have not been successful in the past. The trust fund was vulnerable in the beginning, but has been further defined and has a very strong base to protect it. Campbell questioned if there will be adequate parking when the stairs go in. Blough stated that parking in the north half of the park has been in the plan from the beginning. If the Blue Star Pathway is constructed, people will park there to get on the trail.



Blough said a 5 year millage was passed. Chairman Barker asked about the possibility of tapping the maple trees, possibly as an educational thing. Blough said the maple trees are not in great shape.

Rene Garrity, 1188 Cherry Drive, expressed concern about the stairs being open before adequate parking is completed. Bill Garrity, 1188 Cherry Drive asked about the hours the park will be open. Blough said they intend to open the park ½ hour before sunrise and close ½ hour after sunset. Rene Garrity notified the township that the gate was not closing when it should. Blough thanked her for notifying them, and said that once the township was aware of the problem, the gate closing time was adjusted.

Theo Ostermann inquired about the plans for the Maple Grove ½ of the park. Blough said the decisions have not been made. They would like a day use facility with some natural areas. The remaining part could be replanted, lawn area or natural area. Overhiser said they are currently mowing once a year until a decision is made. Ostermann said that trees are really good, and small saplings could be put in.

Rene Garrity asked if there would be a playground or just a picnic area. That decision has not been made. They are partly waiting to see what the South Haven Area Recreation Association does with the park on 103<sup>rd</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> Streets. Garrity said that when rules are enacted, she expects them to be complied with.

Supervisor Overhiser said that SHAES has been a success story. They have built a new fire hall in Casco, shutting down two halls and freeing up the back of the Township Hall. The cost is less than when Casco had its own fire department. There are 13 full time people.

Supervisor Overhiser stated that the seniors have moved from Casco Church to the township hall. Within last month a room was remodeled for seniors. Three individuals are doing care watch. Activities include exercise and crafts. Funding for senior transportation has gone away. The county may provide limited transportation for medical only. Chairman Barker added that this is a hardship and there is an immediate need for a grant. Volunteer drivers are needed. Contact Susan Katt if interested in volunteering. Diana Ostermann inquired about the senior's activity schedule. Graff said that there is card playing, crafts, pot lucks, Valentine's Day, etc.

Supervisor Overhiser said that the website quirks are worked out. Julie Cowie is turning in a proposal for maintaining the website. Township Clerk Brenner said that there are some limitations keeping the website up to date. The minutes must be approved before they are posted online. Graff said that without a full time person, keeping the website current is a problem.

Brenner said that with her 6 years experience in senior services, there is always a need for volunteers to run fund raisers and activities. Three employees is not enough.

Chairman Barker said there was an agenda for the February 20<sup>th</sup> WECS hearing available at the back of the room, along with copies of the Tourist Association Magazine. He thanked everybody who participated today and encouraged continued participation so that the township has a good understanding of what the citizens want.

Township Clerk Brenner said that being new to the township as an official; she has been impressed with the boards. She said serving on boards or committees is quite a commitment and she thinks it is awesome.

Chairman Barker said that the PC is constantly working on the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances. The Master Plan creates changes in Zoning Ordinance. The PC is now going over the permitted uses and special land uses in each of the current 8 districts. Discussion will get started March 6, 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Amendments will be made, and public meetings will follow. The whole idea is to be sure we get public input. Then a recommendation is made to the Board.

Theo Ostermann asked how he could express his opinion if he cannot get to a meeting. Chairman Barker said to send a letter or email. Public correspondence is always on the agenda.

Meeting ended at 11:35.

Minutes by Janet Chambers, Recording Secretary

attachment #1: Attendance list

attachment #2: Overhiser's Municipal Water & Sewer Timeline