

Charter Township of Portage  
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

July 11, 2022

The Charter Township of Portage held a Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday, July 11, 2022. The board of trustees attended in person at the Township office and the public logged in via zoom.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Bruce Petersen at 6:00 PM.

**In attendance** were Supervisor Bruce Petersen, Clerk Amy Skewes. Treasurer Betsy Smith and Trustees Peggy Anderson, Bill Bingham, Bill Fink and John Ollila as stated by roll call.

**Additions or Changes to the Meeting Agenda:**

Correspondence – Catelino – white line painting, DNR properties

New Business – Planning Commission email, Township founded March 16, 1847

A motion was made by Fink, seconded by Ollila to approve the meeting agenda. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Approval of the Bd. of Trustees Previous Minutes:** A motion was made by Ollila and seconded by Anderson to approve the June 13, 2022 regular meeting minutes. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Approval of the Bills:**

Anderson commented that the sewer bills for the City of Houghton had 12 days of penalties in the amount of \$2710.38

A motion was made by Anderson and seconded by Bingham to approve the bills as audited. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**Review Clerk's Report:**

- 298 Absentee ballots have been sent out
- Public Accuracy Test scheduled for 7/13/2022

**Review Treasurer's Report:**

- What is the follow up from Water/Sewer and Cemetery Meetings regarding my request to increase fees and look at budget deficits for both areas? I'd asked for an update monthly regarding these challenges so we don't have surprises at year end...
- Summer taxes are committed and sent out
- Cemetery expense account creation and budgeting? Tree maintenance? Related to Julie Riolo request
- Creation of new accounts in chart of account for SSI; it is linked to Portage Sewer for RD minimums, the actual account in the bank is

- In our Incredible Bank accounts, the actual bank only holds \$250,000 of our monies as that is what is protected by the FDIC; the rest of the monies in those accounts are sent/"Swept" to other banks that also hold it up to \$250,000. The good news is that the previous interest rate on the "sweep" accounts was .05%, as of 7/1/22 the interest rate for the "sweep" accounts will be .5%, so this will increase our interest income in all of our Incredible Bank accounts, including:
  - o 1000 Common Checking/General Fund
  - o 1102 Savings for HTFD and General Fund Money Market
  - o 1700 Perpetual Care Savings

Not including:

- o 1712 Sanitary Sewer Improvement (our newest Rural Development Account) – this was set up as a non-interest-bearing account

#### Review Zoning Administrator's Report (John) for (June 2022)

##### Zoning Applications:

6/10 – New greenhouse, 17804 Chassell/Painesdale Road, approved,  
 6/16 – Move an existing storage building to 17573 Askel Road, approved,  
 6/22 – New Habitat for Humanity home on Green Acres Road, approved

##### Zoning Correspondence:

6/6 – U.S. Bureau of Tobacco & Firearms, permit requirements for Sound & Vibrations site, 6/7 – Follow up questions on same issue, 6/7 – Future home on Superior Road, reminded to stake out the site prior to inspection, 6/9 – Inquiry about permit process for garage on Otter Lake, 6/11 – Inquiry about finding the zoning application on line, 6/13 – Inquiry about location of P.C. minutes, 6/21 – Rules for setbacks for future home in condominium plat, 6/23 – Inquiry about fee for new business sign, 6/28 – Inquiry about possible variance for 75' setback rule from Portage Lake, 6/30 – Setbacks required for Hurontown lot.

**Correspondence:** SEMCO Energy – New Project Notification, NCS – Core & Main Bond Notice, EGLE- Closed Landfill Inspection, MRWA – Cross Connection Training. Catelino – white line painting, DNR properties

**Review Fire Departments:** No reports

**Review Assessor's Report:** Assessor Erhart asked for the website to be updated with the correct Board of review dates and create a tab on the meetings/minutes for the board of review. She will also contact opus web to eliminate the BOR tab on the website.

Assessor Erhart requested that only the Assessor is to give any assessing advice to the public.

Rest of report attached

**Trustees Reports/Updates:** Anderson commented that the office's cement steps are in bad shape. Bruce will call a couple of places and get quotes to fix, she also asked for letters to be sent out to the residents on Green Acres rd. regarding the dates for the sewer project. We will get a schedule and post at the office.

Fink asked the board why the Township is managing the cemetery for the City of Houghton and suggested that we ask the city to contribute in some way to help pay for the costs. He would also like to see if WUPPDR has a detailed map of the history of the annexed property from the City.

**Public Comments:**

A resident was unable to find the credentials on the website for the zoom info, the board asked Bruce to post to the meetings/minutes tab

A resident asked for an update on any zoning application for the Onagaming property, Ollila replied that he is expecting to get a zoning application soon for parking lot improvements, a new septic, and rental cottages.

A resident reported that her home was shot at and that she has received threatening letters. The board says she should work with the sheriff and the state police.

**Old Business:**

- A. Green Acres Rd. Sewer Project – 5th Draw – Green Acres Rd. Paving & Huron-town Center Drainage Ditch (EGLE Permit Good For 5 years)  
The project is scheduled to begin the week of July 20, 2022
- B. New Address Signage Issued for Pump Stations – Houghton Co. Bldg. Dept and new road signs were ordered for Dodgeville and Pilgrim Rd.
- C. Neil Ahola Request – Perpetual Care – 15 more families. The board denied the request
- D. Hydroshere Cleaning and Inspection – Liquid Engineering  
A motion was made by Bingham to accept the contract in the amount of \$3190.00, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

**New Business:**

- A. Sand Purchase from Bacco Construction for College Ave in the amount of \$2.50 per yard
- B. Varum LLP and SteepSteel, LLC FOIA Requests Submitted.
- C. Needed a New “Outlook” Registration to Keep Program Functioning.  
Bruce had to update his home computer for Outlook to be able to work from home.  
A motion was made by Ollila to reimburse Bruce ½ of \$350.00 for the update to Outlook, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.
- D. Cemetery Deficit Reduction Plan – Response sent to MI Dept. of Treasury.  
A motion was made by Ollila to follow the cemetery reduction plan, seconded by Fink. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.
- E. Need a New P.C. Member  
A motion was made by Fink to accept with great regret Melanie Watkins resignation, seconded by Bingham. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.



A motion was made by Fink to appoint Melissa Boerman as the new Planning Commission member, seconded by Bingham. Motion carried by a roll call vote. Aye: Anderson, Bingham, Fink, Ollila, Petersen, Skewes, Smith. Nay: none.

- F. Water Line Extension Down Fredrick St. – Clay Palosaari is seeking to purchase 2 lots that are not on County roads, Ollila inquired if Palosaari builds the new road to county specs whether the township would run water/sewer lines to the homes. Developer will be responsible as occurred in Copper Ridge.
- G. Planning Commission email. The township has set up an email for the planning commission, we will assign it to the new chair
- H. Portage Township was founded on March 16, 1847

**Meetings:**

- A. July 7, 2022 – Public Info. Mtg. for Sewer Project – Township Office.
- B. June 30, 2022 – PAAR Plan Review with Lori Burton – Township Office.
- C. June 21, 2022 – 5 Yr. Rec. Comm. Meeting with Rachel Pressley – Twp. Office.
- D. June 29, 2022 – Council Meeting to Discuss Z Manual Mod. Request – L'Anse.
- E. July 12, 2022 – Cemetery Meeting with Cemetery Improvement Group.
- F. July 18, 2022 – B.O.R. Meeting @ 10:00 AM – Twp. Office
- G. June 17, 2022 – water/sewer committee meeting

Bingham commented that there will be a large deficit in the sewer unless we tackle the infiltration/sump pump issue. There will be a water sewer meeting on July 14, 2022 to discuss the issue.

**Public Comment:** none

**Other Business:** The board went into closed session at 8PM and returned to open session at 8:19PM

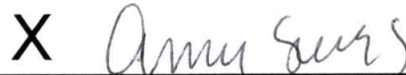
**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

**Public Attendance:**

Carol Sowards  
Chris Holmes - UPEA  
Susan Schwenk  
David Aittama  
Melissa Boerman  
Roy Britz  
R Sowards  
Laura Erhart – Assessor

X 

Bruce Petersen  
Supervisor

X 

Amy Skewes  
Clerk

## July 2022 Assessor's Report

### THE ASSESSOR SHOULD BE THE ONE TO GIVE ASSESSING ADVICE

(for the sake of public discussion, the date of the emails have been substituted for the names of the persons given uninformed advice by other than the assessor)

I'm sure that the treasurer was well intended when she gave advice with regard to assessing to "June 3<sup>rd</sup>", however, the implications of the conclusions she shared are incorrect and seriously misleading.

At the last Township Board meeting (June), the giving of assessing advice, disseminating information to the public, was discussed, and the treasurer spoke out that the assessor should be the one to handle assessing questions. There was a reason I brought the subject up, significant negative feedback from taxpayers. I had no direct evidence available at the time.

Since the meeting in June I have 2 documented instances where the Treasurer gave out incorrect assessing information. June 3 and July 1 disinformation was provided by the Treasurer to members of the public.

Instead of consulting the assessor, the treasurer googled the answer to the question; by the way, there is a website that says Moose eat Lemmings ... Seems since the Township has an assessor - the assessor's knowledge trumps google. The issues are quite egregious with the June 3<sup>rd</sup> answer. Assessed value is not as simple as 50% of market value (by most this would be price paid) this isn't correct. And - in the treasurer's email "the PRE sometimes gets removed" the PRE is ALWAYS removed in a sale, since a PRE is granted to a person who resides at a property, they sell, PRE is rescinded.

Please do not go into such detail with people - when a Township official says things are a particular way, and they are not, it makes for an angry taxpayer.

In the June 3 email market value is defined in one manner, in the July 1 email in yet another by the treasurer.

You left this taxpayer 'knowing' that her taxes would be based on what she paid for the property. You left the July 1<sup>st</sup> taxpayer expecting taxes based on prior ownership values (history)... misleading, bad information.

Please leave answering assessing questions to the assessor.

M

On Fri, Jun 3, 2022 at 11:31 AM Betsy Smith <treasurer@charterportagetwo.org> wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

I think I remember you mentioning that you are interviewing today, good luck! Also here is what I found, the most recent prop tax info.

In Michigan, the assessed value is 50 percent of the market value of your property. The taxable value is the assessed value with an adjustment factor applied, to make sure everyone pays a fair rate of taxes. (from a quick google)

I've attached the history for your parcel.

I've looked at my Assessor's software and the Assessed value of the new property is 198,890 for 2022 with a taxable value of 126,191. Be sure you have the PRE when taxes come also, this is something that sometimes gets removed during a sale and then added back on.

Let me know if you have other tax questions.

Betsy

Betsy Smith