

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Supervisor and Board of Trustees of Wheeling Township, for February 22, 2022 was held in the Paula Ulreich Meeting Room, in the Township of Wheeling, 1616 North Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois. Supervisor Penner called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Clerk Gauza called the roll and the following members were present: Supervisor Kathleen Penner, Trustee Jeanne Hamilton, Trustee Patricia Kozicki, Trustee Joseph Murglin, Trustee Darrel Talken and Clerk Joanna Gauza.

Also in attendance: Wheeling Township Assessor Ken Jochum, Wheeling Township Attorney Kenneth Florey, and Wheeling Township Director of Finance and Administration Regina Stapleton.

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Supervisor Penner led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION #1: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING ON JANUARY 25, 2022

Motion by Trustee Kozicki, seconded by Trustee Hamilton, to approve the minutes of January 25, 2022 Regular Board Meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Kozicki, Hamilton, Murglin, Talken, Penner
NAYS: None....Motion #1 Carried.

AUDIT

MOTION #2: AUDIT FOR CEMETERY FUND

Motion by Trustee Kozicki, seconded by Trustee Murglin, to approve batch #2/16/22 and #2/17/22 against the Cemetery Fund, in the amount of \$2,120.00 to be paid.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Kozicki, Murglin, Hamilton, Talken, Penner
NAYS: None....Motion #2 Carried.

MOTION #3: AUDIT FOR ROAD MANAGEMENT FUND

Motion by Trustee Kozicki, seconded by Trustee Murglin, to approve batch #1/28/22, 2/17/22 and #2/22/22 against the Road Management Fund, in the amount of \$70,287.66 to be paid.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Kozicki, Murglin, Hamilton, Talken, Penner
NAYS: None....Motion #3 Carried.

MOTION #4: AUDIT FOR TOWN FUND

Motion by Trustee Kozicki, seconded by Trustee Murglin, to approve batch #1/28/22, #1/31/22, #2/11/22, #2/15/22, #2/18/22 and #2/22/22 against the Town Fund in the amount of \$284,929.63 to be paid.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Kozicki, Murglin, Hamilton, Talken, Penner
NAYS: None....Motion #4 Carried.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

None.

OFFICIALS' REPORT

ASSESSOR: Assessor Jochum reported:

- TAX BILLS
- First installment tax bills were mailed on February 1 and are due March 1, 2022.
- Our office issued a press release which was published in the Daily Herald describing the SENIOR DEFERRAL PROGRAM. This program allows some seniors to take a loan for a portion (up to \$5,000) of their property taxes, if they meet certain requirements. We are assisting seniors with this process which is administered through the County Treasurer's office. Filings must be submitted by March 1st. Please feel free to mention this program to qualified seniors as it is available each year. (see handout).
- APPEALS
- The Cook County Assessor is critically delayed on 2021 assessment decisions, which will have many negative consequences. Because the Assessor has not yet released the decisions for Wheeling Township, the Board of Review has been unable to schedule our hearing and submission dates. This may well push our appeals quite late causing budget impacts as well as service delays.
- There will likely be budget impacts for the next fiscal year. Normally our office handles one Assessor appeal and one Board of Review appeal in a fiscal year but it is probable that we will have two Assessor appeals and two Board of Review appeals in the same fiscal year which is also the first year of the triennial. Imagine our Township dealing with two Thanksgivings or Christmas seasons or two LIHEAP seasons. Our budget narrative describes steps we are taking to mitigate this potential problem

- Some good news. We are beginning to log our activity and performance during the appeal seasons beginning with 2019, the last triennial year, so that we can understand our performance. Currently we are about 80% completed with our analysis and I am proud to report that during tax year 2019 we saved Wheeling Township taxpayers from overpaying a considerable amount of money. I will report the final results next month. In addition, our success rate for appeals is 65% which is higher than success rate for Board of Review appeals. In fact, our success rate is higher than the success rate for tax lawyer assisted appeals. You can recommend our services with confidence. We have a terrific group of professionals helping our neighbors.
- EXEMPTION FORMS
- The purpose of reporting on this form is more about budgeting, staffing and taxpayer service than the form itself. The purpose of this form is for seniors to ensure they have the correct exemptions. The Cook County Assessor decided to make changes to this simple on-line form. However, the Cook County Assessor has missed all deadlines to replace the form causing considerable delay, upsetting seniors unable to complete the form before the changing deadlines, and creating additional work for our staff. We will end up with approximately 1200 cases that we will need to resolve within a two month period. This is the equivalent of one person working 2-3 weeks only on this project. This additional work was not anticipated. If we consider that all townships are facing this dilemma, it means the delay has caused the equivalent of one person working for two YEARS on this project. However, our staffing structure with two full-time and three part-time people allows us the flexibility to meet these increased demands without the need for additional people.
- WHO ARE WE SERVING
- Most Township Assessor offices will report that they service mainly seniors and elderly, assisting with their various property tax issues. Wheeling Township is no exception, but we are working to do more. We are beginning an outreach effort to educate other taxpayers about our services, especially as many taxpayers are now navigating the property tax maze. To that end we are beginning to send a welcome letter to each new home owner introducing our services and providing them with information which will help them understand their property taxes. I have included a sample packet for each of you and it includes the following: 1. a property identification card which provides important contact and reference information; 2. a twenty-year history of taxes and appeals for the property; and 3. a report which identifies the taxing bodies which the taxpayer supports and their level of debt load which impacts the property. This is a first step in helping taxpayers understand and manage their property taxes.
- You will note that the letter also references the Township website. It is intended that this initiative will expand our customer base and bring more folks into contact with the Township.
- UPCOMING ACTIVITY

- Attached you will find an executive summary developed by the County Treasurer which explains the impact of debt on property values. This is an excellent article and the complete study has comprehensive research which reviews all aspects of our property tax structure.
- It is my belief that many people elected to boards and municipal entities do not understand how debt impacts the property tax of individual citizens and I think we can educate people. I am in the early stages of conversation with the Cook County Treasurer's office to see if our office can co-sponsor a seminar for elected officials to help them understand the impact of their decisions on the taxpayer. This seminar could be offered by our Township office every four years after elections and I believe we can impact our taxpayers positively.
- For your information, Wheeling Township has zero debt impact on the property taxpayer, one of the few entities in such a positive situation.

CLERK'S REPORT: Clerk Gauza reported:

- Clerk Gauza will host the Clerks' Dinner Meeting on March 3, for all the Cook County Township Clerks. All the Wheeling Township Board members are invited.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: Administrator Stapleton reported:

- The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast has been rescheduled to May 12th at 7 am.
- Statistics for January 2022:
 - 1,354 rides – 567 non-medical, 787 medical
 - 1,148 meals delivered
 - 330 visits to the Food Pantry – 643 people fed

DISCUSSION OF STAFF SALARIES AND EMPLOYMENT MATTERS- Supervisor Penner reported:

- All employees will receive 3% raise with few exceptions. Julie Villarreal, Helga Genders and Lynndah Lahey will receive 4% increase. Our Administrator Regina Stapleton will receive a 5% increase.
- Polling was done with other Townships to see and compare their employee raises. The proposed raises are consistent with other Townships and private industry.

NEW BUSINESS:

TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR TOWN, GA AND ROAD - Administrator Stapleton reported:

- We approve budgets by line item. If we go over a line item's funding, we have to transfer the money between line items. As long as we do not go over the total budget, there are no issues about re-opening the budget.
- In the Town Fund, we went some \$3,400 over for equipment because the annual software fee was not budgeted, insurance was higher, and the telephone/internet provider had to be changed because the prior vendor's system was not working well. The Assessor's office needed to buy an additional computer. In Senior Services, the travel cost rose because of more meal deliver. Mobile telephone

costs also rose. Volunteer insurance and background checks were also higher than expected. We also needed uniforms for senior services drivers. The bad winter storms required more snow plowing for the cemetery. Unemployment insurance also rose. The Road District dues and subscriptions were higher.

MOTION #5: APPROVAL OF 2022-23 TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR TOWN, GENERAL ASSISTANCE AND ROAD MANAGEMENT FUNDS

Motion by Supervisor Penner, seconded by Trustee Murglin to approve the 2022-23 Transfer of Appropriations for the Town, GA, and Road Management funds.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Penner, Murglin, Hamilton, Kozicki, Talken
NAYS: None....Motion #5 Carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

2022 AGENCY FUNDING DISCUSSION:

Final reports and recommendations will be available next month. No new agencies were recommended. Catholic Charities decided not to apply so some additional monies may be available.

2022-23 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Next month we will begin discussing the 2022-2023 budget. Administrator Stapleton discussed the current budget and a proposed budget that would increase by 1.3%, mostly reflecting salary increases for staff. Salaries will also rise for the next budget because three bus drivers were out for significant periods without pay reducing the 2021-2022 budget expenditures. New drivers have been hired; therefore, raising the salary costs for next year. The pension liabilities have decreased. The 2021-2022 budget also had less expenditures than originally budgeted because COVID reduced bus transportation for seniors and prevented some projects. However, without COVID, expenditures for 2022-2023 will likely rise as senior ridership is returning. Vehicle insurance for the senior services buses fluctuates sometimes substantially so the budget anticipates some increases. The cemetery fund only spent some \$2500 rather than an expected \$42,000 because the fund was almost self-sustaining—a rare occurrence. Some maintenance at the cemetery is anticipated over the next few years. The General Assistance Fund by law must meet all needs so the proposed budget for General Assistance reflects a worst case scenario. The Road Management fund did not do a lot of projects last year, but this year we need to do some drainage work.

MOTION #6: ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Supervisor Penner seconded by Trustee Murglin to adjourn.

WHEELING TOWNSHIP MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING FEBRUARY 22, 2022

VOICE CALL VOTE: All Ayes....Motion #6 Carried.

The meeting for Tuesday, February 22, 2022, was declared adjourned at 8:45 p.m. The next scheduled regular board meeting is set for Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at 8:00 p.m.

Joanna M. Gauza
Wheeling Township Clerk