

**NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP
Township Board
Minutes
November 24, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 P.M. by Supervisor Dignan via tele-conference.

PLEDGE/INVOCATION

Supervisor Dignan led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance and provided a brief invocation.

ROLL CALL

Kenneth Dignan, Supervisor	Present
Kathleen Manley, Clerk	Present
Lenore Zelenock, Treasurer	Present
Janet Chick, Trustee	Present
Nate Muchow, Trustee	Present
Joshua Nelson, Trustee	Present
Jacki Otto, Trustee	Present

Also present:

Township Manager Steven Aynes
Planning Consultant Paul Lippens, McKenna
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble
Members of the community

CONSENT AGENDA

• **Township Manager Update**

- **Motion:** Chick moved, Manley seconded, that the consent agenda be accepted as provided in the packet.
Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

ADOPT BALANCE OF AGENDA

Dignan corrected the address in Item 3 of New Business to 8877 Main Street.

- **Motion:** Dignan moved, Nelson seconded, that the balance of the agenda be adopted as amended.
Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

No comments.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/
MANAGER'S CLARIFICATIONS**

Zelenock noted tax bills will be mailed Friday, November 27th, and payments will be accepted starting December 1st.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

NEW BUSINESS: ACTION ITEMS

**1.
Minutes of November 10, 2020**

- **Motion:** Dignan moved, Otto seconded, that the minutes of the November 10, 2020, Regular Board Meeting be approved as presented.
Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

[Muchow stated he was attending the meeting from Melvindale, Michigan. All others stated they were in Northfield Township].

**2.
Request for Rezoning; 168 Jennings Road
and
3.
Request for Rezoning; 8877 Main Street**

Township Planning Consultant Paul Lippens reviewed these requests and said he is recommending approval of them. He explained that both requests have been made by the Whitmore Lake Public Schools to bring the sites into compliance with requirements for the billboards on the properties. He said public hearings were held by the Planning Commission, which recommended approval of both.

Dignan disclosed that he was a school board member for eight years prior to being elected Supervisor, but he resigned prior to taking office as Supervisor.

Chick said there was some uneasiness at the Planning Commission because they had not previously seen a request for a conditional zoning. In answer to questions, Dignan said the Township attorney typically does not review rezoning requests and has not reviewed these two requests. He noted there is no other option to allow the billboards to remain other than rezoning to bring these properties into compliance with State law. Lippens said any property owner has the right to request rezoning, and the school district did that.

Dignan said both of these properties about other commercially-zoned properties, so this is not spot zoning, but it is contract zoning. Zelenock asked if there are other similar situations involving billboards in the Township. Lippens said there are many options for handling billboards along US-23 and the Township can decide if it wants to consider them, but he does not recommend that in

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relationship to these two requests. Zelenock noted that Board members requested and were provided with additional information that is not in the packet. At Otto's request, Lippens explained why "spot zoning" is usually undesirable, but said in this case the "conditional zoning" being used is a tool authorized by the State of Michigan, and the school district specified conditions that bring the properties more into line with the Township's Master Plan.

Lippens noted that the Board has the ability to set an expiration date for these rezonings to allow reconsideration in the future, although he does not recommend it. In answer to questions, Lippens said the conditions being applied go with the land, and any future owner would have to abide by them, including getting required approval for any new uses, including conditional use approvals and site plan approvals.

Manley noted marijuana uses would be allowed on the site under the zoning proposed. Lippens noted there are no additional marijuana permits available for use on these sites, and since no marijuana permits were issued for LC-zoned sites the Township Board could change the zoning ordinance to remove marijuana uses from the LC district. In answer to a question, Lippens said marijuana uses had not been codified into the Township's ordinances when these rezoning applications were made, and if the school district wanted to amend the conditions it applied to these rezonings the process would have to be started over again.

- ▶ **Motion 1:** Chick moved, Zelenock seconded, to postpone action on the request for rezoning of 168 Jennings Road for further discussion and to have the Township attorney review the request.

Dignan said the billboards on these two sites bring in \$50,000 annually to the school district, the school district made these rezoning requests more than a year ago and has worked hard with the Township on the proposals. He said the Township has to be a partner in the community, not a hindrance.

- ▶ **Amendment to Motion 1:** Otto moved, Nelson seconded, to amend the motion to have the Township attorney review and provide an opinion to the Township Board prior to the next meeting.

There was discussion about the cost of having the Township attorney review and research this request. Tom DeKeyser, Whitmore Lake Public Schools Superintendent, said the district has no intent to use the property for any purposes other than it is currently being used, and it was his intent in preparing the request to show the district's intent to use the property only for school purposes.

- ▶ **Motion 2:** Chick moved, Manley seconded, to call the question. **Motion 2 carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.**

Amendment to Motion 1 carried 5—2 on a roll call vote, Dignan and Muchow opposed.

- ▶ **Amended Motion 1:** Chick moved, Zelenock seconded, to postpone action on the request for rezoning of 168 Jennings Road for further discussion and to have the Township attorney review the request and provide an opinion before the next meeting.

Amended Motion 1 carried 4—3 on a roll call vote, Dignan, Muchow, and Nelson opposed

- ▶ **Motion 3:** Chick moved, Manley seconded, to postpone indefinitely the request for rezoning by the Whitmore Lakes Public Schools for 8877 Main Street pending review by the Township attorney in 14 days.

Motion 3 carried 4—3 on a roll call vote, Dignan, Nelson, and Muchow opposed.

There was discussion about why it took so long for these requests to come to the Township Board.

4.

Reappointment of Deputy Treasurer

- ▶ **Motion:** Zelenock moved, Manley seconded, to reappoint Emily Hofsess as Deputy Treasurer at her current rate of \$20.55 per hour.

Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

5.

Reappointment of Deputy Clerk

- ▶ **Motion:** Manley moved, Chick seconded, to reappoint Cristina Wilson as Deputy Clerk at her current rate of pay.

Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

6.

MTA Township Officer Training Materials

Dignan recommended that these materials be provided to Board members as needed.

- ▶ **Motion:** Dignan moved, Nelson seconded, to approve an expenditure not to exceed \$500 to purchase training materials for Township officials based on their current need.

Otto noted there is funding for such things in individual department training budgets.

- ▶ **Amendment to motion:** Zelenock moved, Otto seconded, to pay this expense from each department's training budget line item.

Amendment to motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

- ▶ **Amended Motion:** Dignan moved, Nelson seconded, to approve an expenditure not to exceed \$500 to purchase training materials for Township officials based on their current need, to be paid from each department's training budget line item.

Amended motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

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**7.
Board Assignments/Appointments**

Dignan said these appointments to Township boards, commissions, and committees are typically for one year, and they give Board members experience with different parts of the Township government. It was agreed that Board members will consider which roles they would like to fill and Aynes will send additional information to them about the positions in preparation for appointments being made in December.

Chick said it would be disruptive to have only one year appointments to many of these positions. Otto recommended having a personnel committee.

**8.
Emergency Closure Policy/
Pay for Non-Union Employees**

- ▶ **Motion:** Zelenock moved, Otto seconded, to allow employees to work from home as much as possible until December 8, 2020, under the recommendation of the Township Manager due to COVID, and to reinstate the Township's emergency closing policy to pay employees up to their scheduled hours during this time period based on the recommendation of the Township Manager.

Zelenock said the Township should make these decisions based on what is appropriate for the Township, so she did not refer to the State emergency order in her motion.

Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

**NEW BUSINESS
(Discussion only)**

Dignan said he is proposing that New Business items be discussed by the Board in preparation for decisions to be made at future meetings.

**1.
Resolution to Participate in
Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC)**

Dignan said he has done the training for this, and becoming an RRC community requires training for the Board, Planning Commission, building department, etc. He said he would like the Board to seriously consider this. Otto recalled the Board did not support this when it was previously proposed, partly due to the cost concerns, but quite a few changes have been made to Township policies and practices to be ready for something like this.

In response to questions, Dignan said the RRC would have to do an assessment of the Township's policies to determine what additional work is required, and he will ask for a brief presentation to be made to the Board. He said following that an RRC committee could be established to develop information for the Board, DDA, Planning

Commission, etc. Chick said there would be costs associated with this, and recommended that the Township's fund balance policy be reviewed.

Lippens supported participation and agreed the Township has already done a lot of work in preparation for that. Dignan said this requires a commitment from many people to do to the training, and he estimates the process would take 1-2 years. Chick asked if any of the participants would be paid for the training time.

Muchow said this is exciting and has support from the DDA and Planning Commission.

**2.
Appointments/Announce Openings**

Dignan urged members of the public to apply for Planning Commission, ZBA, Board of Review, and Land Preservation Committees positions. He also asked the Board to consider whether terms should be established for Land Preservation. Zelenock said she will discuss this with the current members. She also suggested that by-laws for all boards and committees be reviewed.

**3.
Streaming System Upgrades**

Dignan said audio in the Board meeting room is very poor for both those in the room and those watching on cable. He recommended upgrades to improve this. Nelson also said continuing to make Zoom participation possible after the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered.

Board members offered suggestions and resources. Dignan said he will work with Aynes on this.

**4.
Municode Meetings**

Dignan explained all of the Township's ordinances are stored using Municode, which also offers Municode Meetings which allows agendas to be built using an automated approval process which would save Board and staff time. He asked Board members to review the information in the link he provided.

In answer to questions, he said there are other companies that provide similar services at similar prices, although they are not as tailored as Municode Meetings for government.

**5.
Review Draft of
Agenda Request/Process Form**

Dignan referred to the preliminary draft of a process he is developing for preparing agendas and processing items. Board members offered suggestions and Dignan asked for additional feedback.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next regular Township Board meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2020.
- The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2020.
- Everyone is invited to decorate their property and be included on a Twinkle the Town driving map which is being prepared.
- The Kiwanis Christmas Tree Sale is open at 75 Barker Road, and sale proceeds support the 4th of July Parade.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Marissa Prizgint, 32 Schrum Drive, congratulated the new Board members and welcomed the others back. She commented on the agenda request form and made suggestions about Township “branding” to improve communication.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/
MANAGER CLARIFICATION**

- Parks & Recreation are working on putting up a sign for the Community Garden.
- The parking lot work at the Community Center is almost complete.
- Work is starting on resolving discrepancies for the DDA district.

- Dignan will be completing a survey issued by the Urban County Executive Committee regarding non-housing community needs, and he will make the future survey that community members can complete available when it is ready.
- Infuse I.V. Hydration is offering a rapid antigen test on November 25th at 218 E. Grand River in Brighton at a cost of \$60.
- The Township newsletter coming out soon includes a hard copy of the Parks & Recreation survey which is also available online.
- The Fireworks Committee is seeking donations.
- Work on the Communication Plan referenced by Ms. Prizgint which was previously underway needs to be revived.

There was discussion about whether the sign on the recently acquired property which was added to the Community Center site can be reused for Township purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

- ▶ **Motion:** Nelson moved, Chick seconded, that the meeting be adjourned.
Motion carried 7—0 on a roll call vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 P.M.

Submitted by Lisa Lemble.

Corrections to the originally issued minutes are indicated as follows:

Wording removed is ~~stricken through~~;

Wording added is underlined.

Approved by the Township Board on _____, 2020.

Kathleen Manley, Clerk

Official minutes of all meetings are available on the Township’s website at http://www.twp-northfield.org/government/township_board_of_trustees/