

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of **MIFFLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES** Meeting

Held

March 7,

2022

Chair Lynn Stewart called the meeting of the Mifflin Township Board of Trustees to order at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, March 7, 2022, with Trustees Richard Angelou and Kevin Cavener, Fiscal Officer Nancy White, Fire Chief Fred Kauser, Police Chief David Briggs, Service Director Roger Boggs, HR Director Becky Kadel, PIO Melissa Rapp, and IT Director Craig Main present. Accounting/Payroll Assistant Rick Duff and Administrative Services Coordinator Melanie Barnette attended virtually.

Chair Stewart led the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to a police emergency, Police Chief Briggs presented his agenda items first.

Chief Briggs requested Sgt. Dustin Hardway be removed from Sergeant probation and promoted to Sergeant Step 1, effective March 7, 2022.

Res. 70-22 Remove Sgt. Dustin Hardway from Sergeant probation and promote to Sergeant Step 1, \$29.22/hr., effective March 7, 2022.

Mr. Cavener moved to remove Sgt. Dustin Hardway from Sergeant probation and promote to Sergeant Step 1, \$29.22/hr., effective March 7, 2022. Mr. Angelou seconded. All voted yea. Motion carried.

Chief Briggs said patrol has been stepped up on Lindale Road. Narcotics were found at one of the residences. Mr. Boggs agreed to contact the prosecutor's office about attending the upcoming hearing on March 24th for the nuisance property on Lindale Road along with the junkyard at Denune Avenue and Baughman Avenue. Chief Briggs said his operations are compliant with all aspects of the CJIS audit. He said his budget has been submitted.

The Oath of Office was administered by Chair Stewart to Battalion Chief Scott Davis, Captain Anthony Torres, Lieutenant Brad Crosson, and Lieutenant Seth Penn.

TRUSTEES COMMENTS:

Mr. Angelou said the funeral ceremony for the late Joseph Spanovich was very nice. Chair Stewart agreed and said she enjoyed meeting the families at today's swearing-in ceremony. Mr. Cavener said it is good to see the firefighters moving up in the ranks. Fiscal Officer White said it is important to recognize them as they move up. Mr. Angelou said achievement is very important. Chair Stewart said it feels like a family here at Mifflin Township.

MINUTES & WARRANTS:

Chair Stewart requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 22, 2022.

Res. 71-22 Approve the meeting minutes of February 22, 2022

Mr. Angelou moved to approve the meeting minutes of February 22, 2022. Mr. Cavener seconded. All voted yea.

Chair Stewart requested a motion to approve the warrants of April 2022.

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Res. 72-22 Approve the warrants of April 2022.

Mr. Cavener moved to approve the warrants of April 2022. Mr. Angelou seconded. All voted yea. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A letter from Franklin County Engineer Cornell Robertson was referenced in the trustees' packet of information about the closing of the Agler Road bridge over Alum Creek. Chair Stewart said there will be guest speakers from the Engineer's Office speaking later in today's meeting to answer questions.

FISCAL OFFICER'S REPORT:

Fiscal Officer White said the General Fund Budget mirrors last year's budget with only a few deviations. She said she included funding for the part-time position in the Finance office. She said as utility expenses are shared at the Ops Center, some of the utility expenses are reduced.

Fiscal Officer White presented the credit card list which is required for review every six months. She said she would like to revisit the purchase limits in the future so that some items, such as vehicle repairs, could proceed without having to come before the Board.

Fiscal Officer White said she received notification we will be received an additional \$4,300 in ARPA funds.

Fiscal Officer White presented the Franklin Co. Public Health's mask advisory. Chair Stewart said we have always followed the Franklin Co. Public Health's health guidelines and will continue to do so. Based on the recent guideline changes, Chair Stewart requested a motion to rescind the office-wide mask mandate, effective today, March 7, 2022.

Res. 73-22 Rescind the office-wide mask mandate, effective March 7, 2022.

Mr. Cavener moved to rescind the office-wide mask mandate, effective March 7, 2022. Chair Stewart seconded. All voted yea. Motion carried.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Chair Stewart welcomed the Franklin County Engineer's Office (FCEO) representatives, Nick Soulas, Government Affairs Liaison; Fritz Crozier, Chief Deputy of Engineering; and Greg Thomas, First Responder Liaison, who were invited to speak about the plans to close the Agler Road Bridge over Alum Creek. Mr. Crozier reviewed their mission statement and said they are an agency of action, innovation, and collaboration. He said in 2015, inspections showed deterioration of the existing steel girders. The FCEO has actively sought and received funding for this project from MORPC and Ohio Public Works Commission Funds. The new superstructure to the bridge will include new concrete beams and bridge deck, 4 ten-foot lanes (2 in each direction), a 3-foot shoulder on the south including a 12-foot shared use path, two-foot shoulder on the north including a 5-foot sidewalk and a shared use path connection from Agler Road to the Alum Creek trail below. Mr. Crozier said that they have made every attempt to reconstruct the bridge

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using a phased construction process while maintaining vehicular and pedestrian traffic across the bridge rather than the full closure option. He said to keep the bridge open during construction, the reduction in travel lanes, lane width reductions, and pedestrian path reductions were considered with a construction duration of 285 days. Mr. Crozier said the bid estimate was \$5.429 million dollars. He said the lowest bid of the three received was \$6.99 million dollars, therefore it will need to be rebid per the Ohio Revised Code. He said he received safety concerns from contractors, including the safety for the traveling public during construction, safety for the contractors during construction, and concerns about the constructability of the project itself. He said due to the contractors' concerns and the timeline requirements set forth by the received funding, the FCEO determined the safest and most efficient way to proceed would be with a full closure of the roadway. He said this would also allow for the completion of the project yet this year. Mr. Crozier said meetings have been held with the affected agencies about the impact of the closure to their operations. He said the project will be rebid tomorrow with a bid opening on March 29, 2022. The FCEO's new project estimate, including the full closure, is \$6.6 million dollars, with closing the road on June 6th for 145 days. He said the contractor incentive on the project is \$5,000/day, up to 30 days for every day which the road is reopened under 145 days. Expected opening is October 31, 2022. The final completion is expected to be May 31, 2023. Connection to the trail could be completed this year also, but utilities relocation could impact this, he said.

Mr. Angelou asked questions about bridge closure safety. Mr. Cavener asked about bypass emergency traffic options due to the police and emergency first responders' response times increasing substantially with a full bridge closure. Mr. Crozier said this was considered but a bypass was not an option due to safety concerns and bridge construction timelines.

Chair Stewart said the safety concerns of the delayed response times of the police and emergency first responders far outweighs the safety concerns of the project. She has seen bridge repairs using a traffic light allowing alternating one-way access. Mr. Crozier said it is very challenging and not an option due to the safety concerns of the construction. Chair Stewart requested a recommendation to protect the citizens of Mifflin Township. Mr. Crozier said he believes the level of service can be maintained but it would require additional technology and staffing changes. There was discussion as to whether FCEO would compensate for the additional technology and staffing changes to which Mr. Crozier said it may not be legally appropriate and in doing so would set precedent for compensation for future projects. Chair Stewart requested Mr. Crozier reconsider the FCEO's impact statement of "innovation and collaboration." She said 150 days of reduced service from our first responders is a very big deal to us and the citizens of the township. If one of our loved ones needed a first responder and it required them not be able to use the bridge, it would make a big difference in everyone's' lives. She said she doesn't see how the project can be approved by the Board without collaborating on a way to get the first responders across the bridge. She said Mifflin Township does not have the finances to necessarily support the FCEO's bridge project. She said FCEO is asking Mifflin Township to carry the financial burden of additional technology and staff and the

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county is not willing to assist financially; this is not collaborative. Chief Kauser said the bridge splits our township, assets, and resources. Chief Kauser said he understands FCEO's pressures and vice versa, but we haven't been able to agree upon how to manage the negative impact. He said there has never been a project affecting the township of this size and scope, nor one with a fire station that sits at the bridge. He said due to the dispatching processing, we cannot meet our response time goals. He said this impacts the residents of the township, to which we are ultimately accountable. He said it is the Franklin County and Mifflin Township unincorporated residents that will be impacted, not Columbus. He said the pinch point is who is responsible to mediate this issue and how can it be mediated. He said Mifflin Township proposed a modest increase of one firefighter per shift on the fire company which drastically changes the operating parameters and provides the time needed to get the response from the City of Columbus or Clinton Township. Secondly, he said the township has requested assistance of equipment that allows the City of Columbus to deploy our resources without delay as a total response force. He said we cannot ask the City of Columbus to purchase equipment on our behalf. He estimated the total impact to be approximately \$50,000 for the equipment and hardware costs and approximately \$200,000 for the labor costs, dictated by our current staffing levels. He said our position is that we want to collaborate; there is a pathway to reasonable accommodations. He said the costs are reasonable considering the trade-off of not have access to the EMS companies that sit on the other side of the bridge. He said he has not submitted a letter of support yet. Mr. Angelou said Chief Kauser has defined our "Plan B". Mr. Cavener said the Board is looking for a way to keep its citizens safe. Chair Stewart said it is time to act and be innovative. She said 145 days is a long time to not deliver the level of response to our citizens of Franklin County and Mifflin Township. She asked that FCEO reconsider their decision. Mr. Crozier said he will have a conversation with the Franklin County Engineer about the Board's concerns. He said today's presentation is the formal communication that they are proceeding with the project in the manner described. He said the FCEO's formal stance is not to fund the impacts. Chair Stewart said she hopes to hear back and looks forward to reconsideration. Mr. Angelou said he hopes the new bridge last longer that the 40 years from which the original was built. Mr. Crozier explained there were problems with the steel girders that led to the rapid deterioration of the bridge. Chair Stewart requested Chief Kauser report back when he hears from the FCEO on reconsideration. She said we will then issue our formal opinion.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

Ms. Kadel presented the final draft of the new Physician Verification of Annual Visit. The trustees requested a couple changes be made. Ms. Kadel agreed to provide the form again with the requested changes at the next meeting. Ms. Kadel said the HRA/HSA deductible deposits should occur by the end of the month. She agreed to provide an update on this at the next meeting.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER:

Chair Stewart thanked Ms. Rapp for the book that she created about Mr. Spanovich's life. She said it was enjoyed by many in attendance at his memorial service.

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Ms. Rapp said there has been a lot of media attention over last couple weeks about the boy that went missing in Big Walnut creek. She said followers on Facebook increased by 300. She is posting updates on the website. Ms. Rapp provided a draft of the digital newsletter. She said she plans to get it finalized and sent out this week. Ms. Rapp requested contacts from the trustees to include on the distribution. Ms. Rapp provided the copy of an information-only postcard/flyer about the police levy. Mr. Angelou suggested a few changes be made. Mr. Cavener requested she provide the updated draft to the trustees no later than the next meeting on March 15th.

Chair Stewart requested Ms. Rapp and Mr. Boggs keep the cemetery committee in place and requested they add members.

SERVICE:

Mr. Boggs provided the budget for the Service Department and Cemetery for review. He said he has added \$100,000 to the gasoline tax funds for a salt bin, a 3-sided structure, to be utilized for salt, topsoil, and gravel throughout the year. He will contact the City of Gahanna Zoning as to the permitted location. He said having a dry location for the salt will reduce the over-the-road expenses and time currently spent driving downtown to get salt when needed. Mr. Boggs said he would also like to redo the stormwater drainage on Genessee Avenue. He said this will need to go out for bid. He said he can also use ARPA funds for the project. Mr. Boggs said he is seeking an administrative assistant. The position will be posted on the website.

Mr. Boggs said he has been making calls to resolve the confusion as to what agency is responsible for the sanitary sewer issues in the unincorporated areas of Mifflin Township. He said he was told by the City of Columbus to communicate to the unincorporated residents that they are in Mifflin – Area 1; they should state this when they call the City of Columbus to report sewer issues.

FIRE DIVISION:

Chief Kauser provided updates. (See Referral File.) Chief Kauser said Gahanna Police, Columbus Police, Franklin Co. Sheriff's Office, West Licking Joint Fire District, Plain Township Fire Division, Jefferson Township Fire Division, and New Albany Police along with our entire staff have been working together around the clock over the last two weeks to recovery the missing boy in Big Walnut Creek. He said if they were not in the water or woods searching, they were in a meeting room or on telephone calls planning and coordinating. He said the water level was reduced last Thursday to aid in the aggressive, yet unsuccessful, water search on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Chief Kauser gave special thanks to Assistant Deputy Dunlevy and Deputy Chief DeMooy, Battalion Chief Davis, Chief Lowe (who managed all the field activities over the last two weeks), Chief Brake, Rescue Captain Kaltenbach, and Acting Captain Fuhrmann of the MECC Dispatchers, all firefighters, and rescue company members who were staffing boats and wearing dive suits, going above and beyond to do our very best to try to locate the boy. He said the search is on-going at a lesser scale, but we will continue to work with our partners as weather conditions permit and as conditions and information become

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available. The full coordinating responsibility has now been transferred to the Gahanna Police.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

Mr. Main said New Albany Police has been cut over to the Solacom 911 system; this is the fifth and final move. There is a short list of loose ends to tie up. He said he is meeting with Solacom twice a week and overall, it is going very well.

Mr. Main said regarding the VIP software for Mifflin and MECC, a decision was made to move it to the Cloud. He said ContentCentral will move to the Cloud as well. He said Fiscal Officer White is awaiting the contracts.

Chief Kauser said he will be meeting with Dan Willis today about the Open House planning. He will also be attending a meeting today on the MECC Dispatch Center decommission project. Chief Kauser said although the 911 system is owned by the Regional Council of Governments, it was managed by Mr. Main and Mr. Kevin Schultz, IT Director at the City of Gahanna, along with Mr. Phil Rizzo, Mission Critical Partners, who was funded by the City of Gahanna. Chief Kauser said they were fundamentally responsible for the complicated and challenging five-agency, full technology cut over, including all hardware and network engineering necessary to process 911 calls of approximately 15 jurisdictions. Chief Kauser said this was a multi-year project that was condensed to less than a year. He thanked these gentlemen along with the City of Gahanna for the extra funding provided to utilize Mr. Rizzo from Mission Critical Partners.

Chair Stewart thanked Mr. Main on behalf of the Board, employees, and the many people whose lives he has touched by doing this project so efficiently and well. She said she appreciates Mr. Main's professionalism and all his efforts.

MECC Regional Council of Governments:

Chief Kauser provided updates. (See Referral File.)

VISITORS COMMENTS:

There were no visitors.

At 12:07 p.m., Chair Stewart moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Angelou seconded. All voted yea. Motion carried.

Lynn M. Stewart, Chair

Richard J. Angelou, Vice Chairman

Kevin J. Cavener, Trustee

Nancy White, Fiscal Officer