

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of

MUNSON TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES REGULAR

Meeting

BEAR GRAPHICS 800-325-8094 FORM NO. 10148

Held Tuesday, November 14, 20 23

Chair Irene McMullen opened the Trustees Regular meeting at 6:30pm. Those in attendance joined in recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. McMullen made a statement thanking the voters of Munson Township for supporting and passing both the Fire levy and the Road and Bridge levy in the previous Tuesday’s election, and she welcomed Trustee-elect Nathaniel McDonald who was present in the audience. Trustee Jim McCaskey made a statement thanking the residents who formed the Friends of Munson, a citizens group that worked to help pass the levies. He specifically called out Steve Hairston and Glenn Kinter for their efforts.

The Trustees signed warrants 19788 through 19825 dated 11/14/2023, totaling \$359,949.74, bi-weekly payroll EFT vouchers 406 through 413 totaling \$9,244.52, and Trustees monthly payroll EFT vouchers 417 through 419 totaling \$1,965.01.

Cemetery Deeds

The Trustees signed cemetery deed #5-381 dated November 14, 2023 to Paul A. Jr. and Julie Balazs for Fowlers Mill Cemetery, Section 2, lot 113, grave 7.

Minutes

Jim McCaskey moved to approve the minutes of the Trustees Regular meeting October 24, 2023 as presented. Andy Bushman seconded. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Elected Officials’ Comments

Chair Irene McMullen invited the elected officials to offer comments before starting the regular agenda.

Trustee Jim McCaskey provided a summary of the real estate property reevaluations situation that resulted in significant increases estimates of property taxes for property owners around the county. He reported on the meeting hosted by the Geauga County Budget Commission for elected officials that laid out a process for townships to follow to offset inside millage tax increases by reducing collections on voted levies.

The Trustees discussed options for reducing collections on a Fire and EMS levy. Trustee Andy Bushman expressed his opinion that the Board should reduce collections to offset the entire \$248,000 inside millage windfall. Jim McCaskey advocated for reducing the collection by \$200,000 and pointed out that the Township’s operating expenses have already been increasing with inflation, and keeping a portion of the windfall was justified by those increases. After more discussion Jim McCaskey moved to have the Township rollback the 2021 1.95 Fire levy by reducing collection on the levy by \$200,000. Irene McMullen seconded the motion. Mr. Bushman stated that the township is still maintaining a surplus, and he believes a full offset was the right thing to do. The vote was called: Mr. McCaskey “Yes”; Ms. McMullen, “Yes”; Mr. Bushman, “No.” Motion carried.

Chair McMullen explained the next step, with the auditor’s office and the prosecutor’s office providing support in preparing a resolution that the Trustees would have to approve to execute the intended reduction in tax collections. The Trustees agreed to expedite the process by scheduling a special meeting rather than wait until the next regular meeting November 28. Jim McCaskey moved to schedule a Special Meeting for Tuesday November 21 at 9:00am for the purpose of taking action necessary to execute the reduction in tax collections. Mr. Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Public Comment

Resident Nate McDonald thanked the residents for voting, and had words of appreciation for those who supported the levies. He noted the positive effort contributed by Steve Hairston and the Friends of Munson group, and praised Glenn Kinter for a positive campaign. Dave Partington thanked all of the elected officials for attending Protect Geauga Parks 8th annual “Heroes of Conservation” event at the Town Hall.

Executive Session

At 7:00pm, Jim McCaskey moved to have the Trustees go into Executive Session to address pending litigation and certain personnel matters, and to invite Assistant County Prosecutor

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Susan Wieland and attorney Todd Petersen to join the session. Andy Bushman seconded. Roll call vote: Mr. McCaskey, "Yes." Ms. McMullen, "Yes." Mr. Bushman, "Yes". Motion carried. The Trustees resumed the regular session at 7:38pm.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Vatty was not available to attend the meeting.

Chair Irene McMullen called attention to a draft amendment to the Fire Contract that the Fire Department had sent to the Trustees on April 20, 2023. It included numerous edits and revisions to the current contract that the Fire Department administration would like to see in an amended contract. Ms. McMullen listed several of those proposed changes, including unilateral changes to the Fire Department by-laws, removal of a Township Trustee-liaison role, and changing the Department’s geographic service area. She asked the other Trustees to review and consider these proposed changes for discussion at the next meeting.

Ms. McMullen also addressed the ongoing litigation between the County Prosecutor and the Fire Department regarding public records. She asserted her position that township residents are entitled to full transparency and she would expect all Fire Department records would be open and available to residents just as the same or comparable records of Township government would be available to the public when requested. She pointed out that the Fire Department currently exempts records from their accountant when they submit financial records to the Township, and they would like to include this in their bylaws. Ms. McMullen went on to note that the working relationship with the fire Department has typically been amicable and in some ways informal, and not like that with other contractors. She described a typical arrangement in which the Fire Department will call a vendor to repair something in the fire station and then direct the vendor to give the bill to the Township. The Township always pays these bills without dispute.

Trustee Jim McCaskey noted for the record that Munson Fire Department has planned and is hosting a live training practice burn at a structure on the Covia property on Saturday. He offered appreciation that Covia was collaborating with area fire departments to allow this practice burn, because the business does take on some costs when they allow it on their property.

ROAD DEPARTMENT

Future Road Resurfacing Projects

The Trustees revisited the discussion around potential roads to be included on a list the County Engineer’s office has requested for preparing estimates for 2024 and beyond. Road Superintendent Kirk Walker presented the Trustees with a revised list of roads. The Trustees reviewed the list, and elected to designate Rockhaven Road, from Mayfield Road to Sherman Road, for inclusion as the next Ohio Public Works project for Munson Township.

Sherman Road Widening and Repaving Project

Superintendent Walker reported that he is working with the Engineer’s office to update the signage on the recently completed section of Sherman Rd., with some old signs being eliminated and some new signs to be installed. The County Engineer may pick up the cost of the new signs if they are currently in their inventory.

Mr. Bushman reported that he is still working with the assistant prosecutor to determine if the vendor for the International truck on order and delayed in delivery since 2020 can be required to deliver the truck at the contracted price. He would like two more weeks to resolve the question.

Ms. McMullen reminded the Board that the Diesel Mitigation grant awarded for the purchase of the International truck had been approved to be reassigned to the new Western Star truck on order, but the requirement that the old truck still must be documented as “scrapped” and unable to be put back on the road. Superintendent Walker will confirm with the vendor that they are still documenting the scrapping of the old truck.

TOWNSHIP BUSINESS

Resolution 2023-39: Commendation for Heroes of Conservation

Jim McCaskey made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-39, a resolution recognizing residents Todd and Mary Ray. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

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The Rays were recognized for the honor they received being named Heroes of Conservation by the conservation group Protect Geauga Parks.

Jim McCaskey moved to approve the Trustees signing and submitting a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, The Geauga County Maple Leaf, thanking Munson residents for their support of the two levies. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Mr. McCaskey asked the Board to allow him two more weeks to research and explore a solution to an unresolved problem concerning a concrete driveway apron that was replaced with an asphalt apron.

Sherman Road project

Jim McCaskey moved to accept two easements that were recommended by the County Engineer's office as part of the Sherman Road reconstruction work. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Jim McCaskey moved to approve the change orders and the final invoice that were prepared by the County Engineer's office to complete the Sherman Road project. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Baseball Field Lease

Trustee Bushman reported that he has one more change he wants to incorporate into the agreement.

Open Checkbook

Fiscal Officer Mr. Ray reported that he discussed Open Checkbook with other fiscal officers who are using it, and they indicated that it is simple to engage and has not created any problems. He also asked the Trustees to visit the Russell Township website and review the various financial reports that Russell posts monthly as a measure of financial transparency that exceeds Open Checkbook. He feels the reports would be useful and simple to prepare and post.

Volunteer Board appreciation gifts

Jim McCaskey moved to approve a total up to \$1600 for appreciation gifts (gift cards), for each volunteer member of the Township Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Park Board. Andy Bushman seconded; motion carried with a unanimous vote. (Each volunteer will receive a \$100 gift card.)

OTA Winter Conference 2024

Jim McCaskey moved to approve attendance by Township elected officials at the 2024 Ohio Township Association Winter Conference, including the conference fees, up to \$500. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

US Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 42

Fiscal Officer Todd Ray reported for the Park Board that they had approved a motion requesting the Trustees move forward with an application for a US Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide permit 42. The permit would authorize the Township to fill a small area wetland adjacent to the parking lot at the Scenic River Retreat access on Auburn Road. The wetland is dominated by the invasive plant phragmites, and filling the low spot will allow mowing, enable control and possibly eradication of the phragmites. Jim McCaskey moved to authorize Mr. Ray to proceed with and sign the application for the Army Corps Permit 42. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Other Business

Andy Bushman moved to approve application by the Township for a Bureau of Workers Comp grant to pay for installation of a hydraulic lift unit for the Road Department. Jim McCaskey seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Other meetings

Andy Bushman attended the Safety Council meeting November 10.

Irene McMullen attended the NOPEC annual meeting.

Jim McCaskey attended the Planning Commission meeting earlier in the day.

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Encumbrances

Jim McCaskey moved and Andy Bushman seconded to approve the encumbrance sheet as presented:

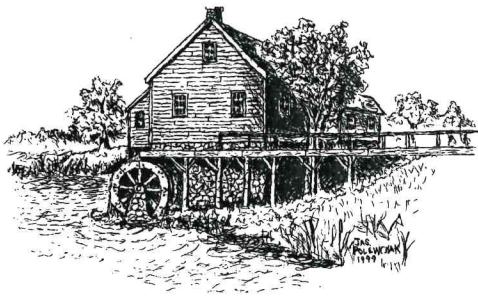
Direct charges	Salaries, parks maintenance	\$2,090.05
Ronyak Paving, Inc.	OPWC disbursement/ Sherman Rd.	\$200,000.00
Ohio Bureau of Workers Comp	2023 premium adjustment	\$104.00
Citicards	Volunteer Board appreciation gift cards	\$1600.00

The motion carried, with a unanimous vote.

Motion to Adjourn

Jim McCaskey moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:37pm. Andy Bushman seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

James H. McMillan Chairman Todd R. Ray Fiscal Officer



No. 2023-39
A Resolution of
Commendation for
Todd & Mary Ray
Heroes of Conservation

WHEREAS Todd and Mary Ray were honored November 12, 2023 by Protect Geauga Parks for their foresight and hard work making a lasting contribution to conservation in Geauga County; and

WHEREAS Todd was a former trustee of Foundation for Geauga Parks and spearheaded fundraising for Observatory Park in Montville; and


WHEREAS Todd campaigned for and became a Township Trustee when he saw developers buying up property with no regard to conservation of watersheds, woodlands or habitats. He, along with his fellow Trustees, was instrumental in acquiring what is Nero Park on Bean Road and Scenic River Retreat on Mayfield Road, both of which are under conservation. Although unsuccessful, Todd worked diligently to establish riparian setback requirements. He also worked with the Cleveland Foundation to establish a special fund for land preservation in Munson Township; and

WHEREAS Todd and Mary Ray, who have resided in Munson Township for many years, have a conservation easement on their property on Bass Lake Road;


NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the duty and the pleasure of this Board of Trustees to hereby recognize Todd and Mary Ray on behalf of all of Munson Township and extend gratitude and congratulations for their dedication to preserving the natural character of Geauga County as Heroes of Conservation.

Let this resolution be recorded and forever be a part of the permanent record of our Township from this day forward.

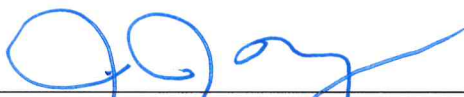
Unanimously approved, this 14th day of November, 2023, by the Munson Township Trustees.



Andrew J. Bushman, Trustee



Irene H. McMullen, Trustee



James J. McCaskey, Trustee

Attest: 

Todd R. Ray, Fiscal Officer

November 14, 2023