

BENZONIA TOWNSHIP BOARD

Approved

REGULAR MEETING

April 9th, 2025

Meeting called to order by Supervisor Barnard at 3:00 PM.

Present: Barnard, Rose, Orr and Heller

Absent: Burns

Staff: Haase, Adams, Nye

Absent: Hahn, Wilkinson, Pitcher

Guests: 19

Supervisor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Rose to approve the agenda as amended, Orr seconded. All ayes, motion carried.

Motion by Rose to approve the minutes from the regular meeting March 12th, 2025 as well as special budget meeting March 25th 2025 as presented. Orr supports. All ayes, motion carried.

TREASURERS REPORT: No report.

CLERKS'S REPORT: The Clerk presented the Profit and Loss statement for the General, Fire and New Building Funds along with a list of the payables for March 2025. Rose made a motion to accept the report and pay the bills. Heller supports, roll call vote taken, all ayes, motion carried.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:

Barnard updated the Board on clean-up day. It is typically held the 2nd Saturday in May, however after checking with Northern Disposal, a local company, they are approximately half the price of Republic services but were not available on the 10th of May. The board briefly discussed and agree to use Northern Disposal and have cleanup day on May 3rd from 7-10am at Memorial Park. The new building is progressing well, drywall up and painting almost done. The supervisor gave update on website and it should be ready in about 2 weeks. Our website and emails will change to .gov with the upgrade. The Forerunner disposition was denied, no more movement on litigation at this time. There seems to be activity at the recovery house even though no approval has been given. Barnard is looking into electronic signs for the new building.

STAFF REPORTS:

1. FIRE CHIEF: Chief Adams stated there were 25 fire and 34 medical calls for a total of 59 for February. YTD calls are 179. 2024 was 106. Chief stated that the crew physicals will be May 19th. Chief has been testing facemasks for the dept. Chief will be on vacation May 14th – the 21st. A basic certification class will be held May 3rd and 4th and the public is welcome to attend.
2. Commissioners Report: Nye stated she had just returned from the MAC Conferences in Lansing. April is National County Government month and the 13th-19th the county will recognize animal control and central dispatch. Dan Thorell, our public health officer, has concerns about their budget. The Maples is at 99.91% occupancy. County Treasurer stated there are no tax foreclosures this year making it 2nd in a row. Nye also states that the Chamber of Commerce is still working with the EDC on a Hybrid model. Commissioner Warsecki will be stepping down. Effective date will be known soon, then county has 30 days to fill the seat.
3. Zoning Administrator: 5 permits issued to date, several pending. The planning commission meeting will be May 8th 2025.

BRIEF PUBLIC COMMENT: A resident request meeting packets be put online like the commissioners do, they also have concerns with attorney use and who authorized their work. They also suggest watching the filming of the Forerunner case. A resident asked if any updates to the Sober House and the cease-and-desist order. Another resident asked why Hoadley Rd still isn't repaved as it's full of potholes. A resident asked about fixing Hanmer Rd, the supervisor stated we are waiting on an estimate from BCRC and hope for completion this summer.

COMMUNICATION: None

PENDING BUSINESS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Cemetery: Due to the wind we've had, trees are down and need cleanup, not open yet.
- Parks: Roof was torn off one dugout from the high winds, Hahn to work on replacing.
- Building and Grounds: No report
- Fire Department: No report
- Township Roads: Pat Gray spoke regarding the Lincoln Rd realignment, and is frustrated it has taken this long. It's a section approx. 1250' to Hidden Hollow. There is confusion by neighbors as to what all properties are affected.
- Community Activities: Spring clean-up day is the 3rd of May due to refuse company schedule. It will be held from 7-10am at Memorial Park.
- Finance: No report
- Personnel: No report
- Policy: No report

- ZBA: The most recent hearing was for a variance on Hidden Hollow and it was denied.
- Blight: Platte Rd property, nothing can happen until daughter is located or found to not be living. Narrow Gauge property went to court, Judge gave current tenants 6 months to clean up property.

NEW BUSINESS: Rebecca Huber from Benzie County Emergency Management gave us info on adopting a debris management plan for catastrophic events. Jon Throop with the Benzie Conservation District gave insight to their interest and the offer to purchase the existing township and fire dept buildings.

EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENT: A resident asked about whether we had the appraisal done that was approved. The supervisor stated that due to cost and timeline provided, it was not completed. A resident asked when the decision was made to not list the building and also asked who the other offer for our building was and how much the offer was. The supervisor stated it had not been decided to not list the building and declined revealing other offer details. A resident stated they love the idea of the conservation district buying the building but the Twp needs to do its due diligence. A resident asked about the speed signs and the status along with signs stating park hours. The supervisor stated that the costs approved were way more than approved so there is a need to re-evaluate. The signs for park need ordered but need others rehab too, so there are discussions with a local sign person. A resident and member of the CLWA asked to keep the runoff in mind as it goes toward Crystal Lake. A resident asked if a motion was needed to allow for a higher amount for appraisal as well as asked status of his intent to step down as ZA. The supervisor stated it is the plan to get the ZA position posted in near future. A resident stated that with the \$60,000 in change orders for the new building, and a prospective offer above the Conservation districts offer, may be in township interest to list the property. Also, brought up info regarding the Forerunner litigation and its timeline and fact of no notice to the twp on mediation. A neighboring twp resident and real estate broker stated that if the property is listed there are realtor fees that will be paid and that there are 2 offers that need to be excluded from said fee. A resident states she supports the suggestion of the entire packets being placed on the website. They also stated that there is no way to know what happened due to lack of detailed minutes being put in the paper. It was clarified that the minutes are not posted but a meeting summary. A resident stated that as offers are reviewed for this building that weight should be given to an entity that serves the community. A resident asked if it is the plan with the new website to film the meetings. The supervisor says that those options have not been finalized. They also asked if we have the updated attorney use policy.

Supervisor adjourned the meeting at 4:58 P.M.

Submitted by:

Diana L. Heller, Clerk

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ Motion passed to hire McKenna to assist with WBJPC zoning ordinance rewrite.
- ❖ Spring Clean-up May 3rd 7-10am at Memorial park
- ❖ Lincoln Rd realignment discussed with Pat Gray