

ATHENS TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

August 27, 2014 7 PM

Chairman Cheryl Wood-Walter called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM. She announced that the Board held an executive session from 6:45 PM to 7:09 PM tonight for pending litigation. Supervisors also present were Susan Seck, Christine Vough and Ronald Reagan. George Ballenstedt was on vacation. Attorney John Thompson and Secretary Robin Smith were also in attendance.

On motion of Ron, second by Christine, it was unanimous to sign the settlement agreement with Gutelius Excavating.

Chairman Wood-Walter called for the opening of the bids. The legal notice had included the Galion roller in error, as that was taken by the insurance company after the accident. We received no bids for the 1988 Mack truck – as is. We received only one bid for the 1994 Ingersoll Rand vibratory roller – as is – from Michael Veneziano in the amount of \$2,100. We received two bids for the CAT 951C crawler loader – as is: Ralph Blowers in the amount of \$1251.51 and Michael Veneziano in the amount of \$2600. On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to award both bids to Michael Veneziano, and to re-bid the 1988 Mack truck, as is.

On motion of Susan, second by Christine, it was unanimous to have the old low-boy trailer scrapped at Suttys.

Voice of the Residents:

Janet Hoagland, 943 Macafee Road, said Macafee Road is “up over her head” now. She showed pictures to the Board that she had on her cell phone. She said the road is 17-1/2” above her driveway. The culverts are not cleaned out. She suggested guiderails as a possibility. She added that the mail ladies are concerned because this is already washing out. She wants to bring it up before the snow falls.

Ralph Blowers said they got the call from Susan about getting the brush cut at the Thomas Avenue bridge. He said the brush is too thick for the weed eaters and the areas are too narrow for the mower. Susan asked if they can rent a chopper of some sort. Ralph said no, because the bank falls off. Cheryl added that there is a branch hanging by the traffic signal and told them to do whatever they need to do to get this taken care of.

Cheryl introduced Commissioners Doug McLinko and Daryl Miller who will be giving a presentation on withdrawing Bradford County from the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau (EMVB), and Jean Ruhf – Executive Director of the EMVB who will

give a presentation on all that EMVB does for us. Doug started by saying he will give his presentation and will be happy to meet with any of the supervisors individually to discuss any questions or concerns.

Doug said we collected \$410,327 last year in room tax for Bradford County that we gave to EMVB. He said we just want to withdraw the money from EMVB, not withdraw from the bureau itself. Sullivan County collected \$23,000, Susquehanna County \$191,000 and Wyoming County \$192,000. You can see Bradford County contributed the lion's share of the money. Room tax funded grants for Bradford County non-profit businesses in the amount of \$99,067, and this will continue. The remainder of the funds is used by the EMVB to promote all 4 counties. We want to use that \$400,000 for just Bradford County and assure that ALL businesses in Bradford County are represented – all 4 corners of the county. It's not about punishing the EMVB, it's about using OUR resources in a more efficient way, to allow us to have one paid, full-time employee and an executive board. EMVB has been around for 53 years and has worked on paid memberships up until 2002 when the room tax was implemented. Doug stated he was against the room tax when it went in, but that was because he didn't understand it.

Doug said 40 other counties run their own visitors bureaus – out of 67. Bradford County contributes over twice as much as everyone else, but they all get equal representation. EMVB only has their members on their website. What about all the hundreds of other small businesses – shouldn't they be a part of this as well? In our plan, everybody will be represented. This is the right thing to do.

Daryl Miller stated that 'we', as Bradford County Commissioners, feel we have a fiduciary responsibility to spend Bradford County tax dollars wisely. EMVB has been in business 53 years and has been marketing us as a region. We are the largest county in that region, and we pay the largest share of the room tax. What we've gotten for that investment is that there are over 37 places to stay in Bradford County. Only 9 or 10 are listed. There are only 5 restaurants listed on their website for Bradford County. No grocery stores, no convenience stores. If you're an out-of-towner and you look on their website and see we have no gas, and no grocery stores, are you going to come here? Those of us who live here understand, but we're marketing to people from outside and we have to try to bring people in. You've gotta entice them to come here.

Daryl said there's all sorts of talk going around, that we don't have a plan, but we're going to create a board that will be responsible to market Bradford County tourism

and other businesses so that people who visit here will want to come here and live here and work here. We're going to get all the stakeholders in one room, ask for input and find out what's best for our county and we'll move forward. We want to use that money to benefit Bradford County and businesses who rely on this for their livelihood. We ask you for your support.

Jean Ruhf spoke for Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau, the designated tourism agency for Bradford, Sullivan, Wyoming and Susquehanna Counties. On July 9th a resolution was sent out by the Commissioners to the municipalities asking them to adopt it to take Bradford County out of the EMVB and let them establish their own agency just for Bradford County. This mailing had a lot of inaccurate information in it and she hopes this will stop tonight, as everything I will be saying will be backed up by documentation I have with me. We have been the tourism agency for Bradford County for 53 years. It is only now that we have to defend what we have done and what has been effective to bring people to Bradford County and all the Endless Mountains. It's been said that membership dues is what the EMVB has been run off of. Membership was and is very important to us, but it has never been or will be enough to run a bureau. Today we are at an all-time high with our membership. Last year EMVB decided to do away with municipal appropriations. Jean said even if Bradford County pulls out of the EMVB, they will still have members from Bradford County who will retain their membership, but pay a higher membership fee as others outside of the EMVB. They will receive the same attention as everyone else.

Jean showed a map of the EMVB region that is included in the center of their Visitors Guide and then showed a map without Bradford County in the picture to show what will remain if Bradford County pulls away. EMVB's work will go on if Bradford County pulls away, but they will only market Sullivan, Wyoming and Susquehanna Counties as the Endless Mountains region. It has been said that Bradford County sends their room tax dollars 60 miles away. There was a special committee set up to determine the location of the Endless Mountains Visitors Center and office. It was chosen on traffic counts of people coming into our region. When voted upon by the board, there was representation on the Board from Bradford County, and a Bradford County Commissioner, and it went through unanimously.

A few years ago when our Board was hearing rumblings that Bradford County was considering pulling away, we met with the three commissioners. We were told we weren't doing anything wrong – we were doing a good job. We asked if they wanted

an office in Bradford County and they said it doesn't matter where the office is located as long as the information is getting out. It sounds great on the surface to take the Bradford County money and spend it on just Bradford County, but our organization was founded to provide a cost-effective approach for the 4 counties and to promote the "Endless Mountains" brand and region.

Questions were raised about the Bradford County grant program. Last year Bradford County collected \$404,000 in room taxes. The inaccurate information that is being said is that Bradford County only received \$98,000 in grant funds, when in reality \$121,370 was put into a restricted account for Bradford County grant programs. The actual total of room tax grants that were awarded last year were \$99,047, which was decided by the Bradford County Room Tax Committee. The remaining money still stays in the Bradford County grant account. EMVB does not determine who in Bradford County receives a grant or how much. That is done by a committee designated by the Bradford County Commissioners and includes Commissioner McLinko. Questions were also raised if the requirements of the grant program will change. I cannot answer that for Bradford County, but the money collected can only be used for tourism as listed in the legislation. In the packet of information I gave everyone tonight, a copy of the legislation is in there along with a letter from the PA Association of Travel and Tourism which goes over how that money can legally be spent.

It is implied that Bradford County has a bad reputation because of the gas industry. This is how we portray the Endless Mountains (showed pictures). These are the images we are putting out there on a daily basis through our marketing and sales efforts. It has been said that the only way the hotels are going to be full is if the price of natural gas goes up. There is a lot of development in Bradford County, but the number of hotels that have been built far exceed the demand. Yes, when the gas industry first came the rooms were in high demand, but the wells are drilled and the infrastructure is in place. Even if the price of natural gas goes up, occupancy will never be at what it was at the height of the drilling. What is needed now are other reasons to visit. Being a part of a REGION gives people more reasons to come and stay in the hotels. We hired a sales consultant a few years ago. We are out there promoting this region as a vacation destination, a reunion destination, a meeting and retreat destination and a wedding destination. We are doing shows to get buses and large groups of travelers here as well as the AAA offices both in the US and in Canada. We are working with travel writers to do stories about our area. We recently had a Toronto journalist come through and

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write a story about the wineries and breweries. We have another from Ontario coming to write about the French influence in Bradford County.

What will the new organization do for Bradford County?? If you listen closely to what is being said, Bradford County was told by their solicitor they cannot form an organization, they cannot create this organization, and that they have a plan but they can't enact it until they get 51% of the vote. All this is true. They cannot ENACT the plan, but they can SHARE the plan. How can you as elected officials vote for something you don't know? The Commissioners have been saying all County Chambers of Commerce are on board with their plan. That's not true. I will ask you contact your own chamber and see if they are behind pulling away from EMVB. What I've been told is they cannot side with Bradford County until they know what the plan is.

What will the structure of this new tourism agency be? They say they will have one employee. If that is the case, it will be the ONLY tourism agency in the state that will have only one employee. Even Potter County has gone from one employee to two. Bradford County has a lot more going on.

What will Bradford County's 'brand' be? You will no longer be part of the Endless Mountains. Immediately you have two hurdles to overcome. Bradford Co., PA? Bradford Co., FL? Bradford, PA in Tioga County? A new branding of Bradford County will be very hard to explain to anyone outside the area. Even people in Harrisburg and Lancaster think that Bradford County is in northwest PA. It is being proposed that people in Wyalusing don't know what is going on in Canton, etc. – I agree, but this is not tourism. This is not what room tax money can be used for. It does not bring new money into the region. It recycles a limited amount of money already here. This is why the EMVB was created.

Will this new plan or organization have a Visitor's Center? Produce an annual guide? An annual calendar of events? Will it have members? How will it be governed? All those answers should be known before you decide to end your relationship with the EMVB. When first proposed, the Commissioners said they had nothing against the EMVB or the job we were doing, but it was all about the money. I am here to tell you there is more to tourism than the money. It is about the brand. It is about the small businesses. It is about making a sound decision. You need to be able to compare apples to apples – what EMVB does for Bradford County vs. what the new agency will do. It's impossible to do that without a business plan or an outline.

It's also being said other counties in our region are watching what is going on and may possibly also pull away. She has correspondence that shows that they intend to stay with Endless Mountains. Even if a municipality has approved the Commissioner's resolution, it can be rescinded and another resolution adopted to stay with EMVB. I speak for myself and the Board of Directors in that we welcome the opportunity to work with the County Commissioners, the Chambers and the local businesses to build a stronger tourism agency as opposed to working in opposite directions. If changes are needed to keep Bradford County a part of the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau, why not bring them to our Board – the one that Commissioner Miller sits on – and at least give us a chance. I ask you to keep the EMVB functioning as the tourism agency for the entire Endless Mountains region, including Bradford County.

Ron asked Jean that with the amount of hotels that are going up in Bradford County, will there be more money coming into the grant program? Yes – 30% or whatever funds are collected goes into the grant program. If you look in your packet at the sales report, because of the amount of rooms in Bradford County they feel the new person they have brought on board is doing a great job selling the region, and Bradford County. 30% of the money goes to the grant program and the 70% goes to EMVB per the agreement with Bradford County. That can change.

Ron asked who sits on the Board. Jean said 4 business owners, 4 people representing tourism, 1 County Commissioner from each county, 3 'at-large' positions: a representative from Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development, Endless Mountains Heritage Region and the Lycoming State Forest.

Cheryl said she has a couple questions for the Commissioners. She said Daryl stated that he has a fiduciary responsibility, but a couple things strike me with that. The by-laws for EMVB state that if you sit on the committee and you don't show up to meetings, the commissioners can remove you for not coming to the meetings. But yet you as public leaders, have not been going to those meetings. If you don't go to the meetings, you're not representing Bradford County. The room tax is not new. Now there is this big pot of money, - this is just my opinion - but it's like you want to take your money – 'take your toys and go home'. We don't want to talk to anyone with constructive criticism as to what we'd like to see, we don't go to the meetings, we don't go to the Bradford County subcommittee meetings, we don't renegotiate the percentages the County has put in... This is your fiduciary responsibility. You GO and you say we've got more hotels now or go through whatever the process is. Maybe the numbers have changed since the decision was

made to locate in Tunkhannock. You haven't gone to the meetings to even discuss this. If you have meetings where no one comes, or an election day where no one votes,... but afterwards everyone complains. That's not constructive – it doesn't help our government. We look at this as Athens Township and all the hotels here. We have people coming through here all the time. If I go to the website, it shows Bradford County events. I don't know why this needs to be reinvented. From what we hear tonight, there has not been any kind of outreach to EMVB, yet now you want to reinvent the wheel. One employee cannot handle this. I travel a lot, and I'm also a teacher who teaches people how to find information. The information is fine on the website, and it's easy to find. I'm a little reluctant, because I don't think government should always be taking on more things. We have enough to do governing. Why haven't you been going to the meetings?? Why haven't you been renegotiating some of these issues?? Why are you delving into this now, when this is not a new thing?

Daryl said he sits on the EMVB board. He sat in on meetings for 1-1/2 years, but he's just one Commissioner on the board. He can't change anything – he's just one vote. We want to take this money and promote Bradford County. We are not going to reinvent the wheel. There are already 40 visitors bureaus that are just one county. We may have to look at the number of employees. We may have to hire a consulting firm to get a brand all in place.

Doug said the County is not doing it. They will create a board. He has lost all faith in EMVB. The County needs to have a vested interest. It's time that we take control of our future.

Cheryl stated that Daryl said one vote doesn't count, yet you are going around to all the municipalities for their "one vote". We will vote, and our one vote will count. Why weren't you attending the meetings? You need to look at the bigger picture. I don't know Minnesota. I don't know the county my cousin lives in, in Minnesota. I'm going to look up the town, or an event, or a region, and I know that will be linked to something larger. I think it's great that you want to promote our county, but I'm not convinced we should be going alone. You still have to hire an outside consultant – how much will that cost?? You say you have a plan, but I don't even see a flow chart, and I'm concerned.

Susan agrees there's not a lot of 'the Valley' in the booklets. She thinks EMVB has a little more responsibility to include all businesses including the small businesses.

Jean said EMVB has reciprocal memberships with those who are members of the Chambers. All lodging will be represented. Jean added that there has been no representation at their board meetings since January of 2013. EMVB has not been asked to do anything differently. Starting up a new organization takes years to establish. EMVB now has 3 people in the office. They have bus tours coming in – some for fall foliage. For Maple Weekend.

Ron asked about the listings in the brochures. Jean said the Guide to the Endless Mountains is for members. The Calendar of Events is a free publication and anyone can list their events in that. They just go on the website and enter their event. You also don't have to be a member to be listed on their website. Every business can have a free line listing on the website. EMVB also advertises in national magazines, does press releases, etc.

Chuck Howard, owner of Sugar Creek RV Park, said his business has become a regional business and that was made possible by the EMVB.

Danny Stark of Clinton Street asked why everyone isn't mentioned in the brochures. Jean said that can be brought to the Board by our Bradford County representatives.

Dan Burgess said he owns a well drilling business. He has had contact with a lot of people who come to build hunting camps. He sold the business to his son 10 years ago and started a business selling sheds. He said Bradford County has been very good to him. He has been in other states and has heard people talk about the Endless Mountains. He has been blessed to do a lot of traveling. He has heard a lot of talk about the Endless Mountains Region.

Ron made a motion to NOT pass the Commissioner's resolution; and recommends we stay with the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau. Cheryl seconded the motion. Ron and Cheryl voted yes, Susan and Christine voted no. The vote is a tie, and the motion fails. Cheryl said we will have to revisit this at another time.

Clif Cheeks presented the Sayre Health Care Center, LLC Phase II land development on Keefer Land. This is a 40-bed expansion to their 50-bed Phase I project. All deficiencies have been met. John Thompson and Ed Reid have reviewed the stormwater agreement and are okay with it. On motion of Ron, second

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by Susan, it was unanimous to grant preliminary approval only to Phase II; to approve the stormwater agreement and have Cheryl sign the agreement.

Next was the George/Michele Owczarski 2-lot subdivision for a lot addition on Wolcott Hollow Road, Lot A to become part and parcel to the adjacent lot of Jason E. Kellogg. There were no deficiencies. On motion of Cheryl, second by Ron, it was unanimous to grant preliminary and final plan approval to this subdivision.

On motion of Cheryl, second by Christine, it was unanimous to accept the withdrawal letter from Dresser Rand for their proposed land development in the Valley Business Park.

Last month we had approved a reduction in the bond amount for the Walmart project. Robin has received the necessary paperwork and Cheryl signed for the Board.

Ron advised the Board that we have started getting the completed surveys back that were sent out for the Comprehensive Plan.

Richard Bean reported for the Parks and Recreation Commission. They have not heard from the Fish Commission on their grant request. They will work on the fencing along the south side of the Jim King Memorial Park over the winter. Another trash can has been ordered as well. Richard has found a couple more grant sources, one of which is Land O'Lakes. This requires a sponsor. Ron Reagan is with Land O'Lakes and has agreed to be the sponsor. The grant submitted to M & T was denied. Chesapeake has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the project. Sayre Elks is having a 5K walk on Round Top October 18th. The Commission will be placing a banner at the pond to make people aware of the pond project. They have a little over \$90K saved for the project. They are pricing out lumber for the picnic tables and hope to build those over the winter. Ron asked if they are eligible for grants from Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau and Richard said they are. They may submit for signs when they're ready.

No one was present for Athens Township Authority.

On motion of Ron, second by Christine, it was unanimous to ratify the renting of a portable toilet for the gravel pit so we will be in compliance.

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Robin requested permission to amend our gravel pit permit application to 7 acres from 10 acres, as they are requesting a more precise map of the property. Without having to have it surveyed, we can include 7 acres easily in the leased area. On motion of Susan, second by Christine, it was unanimous to have Robin amend the permit to 7 acres.

On motion of Ron, second by Christine, it was unanimous to have Robin sign up all the public works guys for the LTAP classes to be held here October 20th (Winter Maintenance) and October 21st (Road Surface Management).

John Thompson discussed Murray Creek Road with the Board. If we decide to abandon the section we are looking at for “No Winter Maintenance”, it would be up to the landowners to maintain it as a private road. Christine said she thinks we should meet with the affected landowners if we decide to do this. Discussion was held. No action was taken.

Josh from Five Star Equipment was present to discuss the John Deere grader he had quoted for Randy. Randy told him what he needed in a grader. This is on state contract, and the cost would be \$207,511.20. This price includes maintenance every 500 miles by Five Star; a 5-year/1500 hours warranty; a 5 year/3000 hour extended warranty; and a trade-in of \$60,000 for our grader. Two of their technicians live in Athens, so they would be readily available. It will take 8 – 10 weeks to get it here, and the quote is good for 30 days. No action was taken at this time.

Ruth requested a change to the minutes of July 30th in her Treasurer’s report. Cheryl said the minutes as written reflect what actually happened. No change was made. There were also requests for clarification on a few other issues, but the Board made no motions as they were unclear what Ruth wanted. On motion of Susan, second by Ron, it passed to approve the minutes of July 29, July 30 and August 13, 2014 as written. Christine voted no. Christine thought it would be helpful to have Ruth attend our meetings. Ron thought that would be helpful, too.

On motion of Christine, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to allow Ruth to attend the Bradford County Township Association’s meeting in the fall.

On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to have Keith, Ed and Robin attend the webinar “Documenting Your Emergency Response Costs” on October 1st from noon to 1:30.

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On motion of Cheryl, second by Christine, it was unanimous to have Eddie attend the PAFPM Annual Fall Meeting September 30th to October 2nd, and to pay his necessary expenses.

The time clock was discussed again. Ron asked how we deal with clocking in/out for lunch and breaks, etc. Robin said you need to draft a policy to spell that out. John said he will draft a sample policy for review. Christine said everyone should be required to use the time clock, and that is the intention.

On motion of Ron, second by Christine, it was unanimous to adopt Floodplain ORDINANCE 2014-01.

The road cut ordinance was tabled until next month.

Ron said they had a speaker on document storage at the COG meeting. We need to look at doing something about that. He also would like the Board to send a letter to Tina Pickett and Gene Yaw in favor of the use of radar by local police. Robin said she sent a letter years ago and included a lot of pictures of accident areas, etc. She will try to find that. On motion of Cheryl, second by Ron, it was unanimous to have Robin draft a letter for review.

Discussion was held as to when we should hold our first budget workshop. Several dates were discussed. The budget workshop was set for September 9th at 6 PM.

On motion of Ron, second by Susan, it was unanimous to accept the monthly reports as presented.

On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to approve the payment of the monthly bills as presented. A complete list of revenues and expenditures is on file in the office of the Treasurer.

Correspondence/Information was as listed in the meeting agenda.

Ralph Blowers commented that it was a nice thing the Board did getting all the committees together for the joint meeting with refreshments. He feels it helps us all work together better.

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Discussion was held on the Component II for Consolidated Resources. We are not sure this is necessary. John Thompson will talk with Mary Neiley before our next meeting and will get an answer for us.

Chairman Wood-Walter took the Board into executive session for pending litigation at 9:32 PM and the Secretary was excused. The remaining minutes were taken by Ronald Reagan.

On motion of Cheryl, second by Ron, it was unanimous to have John Thompson send a letter to Glenn Aikens to address his concerns over Potter Road.

On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to have John Thompson send a letter to Attorney Agnellino and have the Chairman sign the letter.

There being no further business, on motion of Christine, second by Susan, it was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 10:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Smith
Secretary