

ATHENS TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS
September 26, 2018 6:00 PM

Chairwoman Christine Vough called the meeting to order at 6 PM. Supervisors also present were George Ballenstedt, Tressa Heffron and Kirstie Lake. Susan Seck was absent because of a death in the family. Solicitor John Thompson and Secretary Robin Smith were also in attendance. Christine led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Voice of the Residents: None

Richard Bean was present for the Parks and Recreation Commission. Ms. Chilson will be building a Gaga Pit on Round Top for her Girl Scout Silver award. Caleb Horton is installing new guard rail by the entrance gate. Mikala Horton will be building picnic tables for her Girl Scout Gold award. John Spencer has completed building and installing new signs on Round Top for his Eagle project. Ian Lynch has replaced the guard rail at pavilions 7 & 8 parking lot. Robin is working on the DCNR paperwork for the rest of Phase II and all of Phase III. Hoping to start ATV trail grant engineering December 3rd, with bid opening for the February 2019 Supervisor meeting. Still working on the Yamaha grant. Forester has inspected the timber on the Dunkley Hill property. He believes there is about \$6,000 of timber. Our share would be 50% and that would take away from the value if we sell it. The forester also asked about the ash on Round Top. He said now is the time to log it before it dies out. Richard walked some of the trails and all the ash he saw was dead. The forester stated there may still be value in it. He also stated there is walnut at Tozer's Landing and if we plan on selling that, now is the time to do it as the value is at its peak.

George reported for the fire company. Their bingo attendance has been down. The Sportsman's Night was a success. They are also going to hold a Super Bingo on October 20th, and will have their annual Fall Ham and Turkey Party in November. On motion of George, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to table the fire police applications until they have met any training requirements and have completed their background checks. Once that is complete their applications can be approved and they can be sworn in.

On motion of George, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to adopt RESOLUTION 2018-06 in support of the current earned income tax collection and in opposition to legislative initiatives to mandate centralized services.

On motion of Christine, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to approve Ruth's attendance at the Quickbooks class on October 18th in Towanda (\$30).

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

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Scot Saggiomo presented the Donald/Maureen Wright 2-lot subdivision off Reagan Road. All deficiencies have been met. On motion of Tressa, second by George, it was unanimous to grant preliminary and final plan approval to this subdivision, and to execute the sewage module.

Next was the Richard/Rita Morgan 2-lot subdivision on Murray Creek Road. There were no deficiencies. On motion of George, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to grant preliminary and final plan approval to this subdivision, and to execute the sewage module.

Last was the Hunt Engineering proposal for consulting to update both our zoning ordinance (\$9,500 plus disbursements capped at \$600) and our subdivision and land development ordinance (\$8,600 plus disbursements capped at \$600). John said everything is in order. On motion of Kirstie, second by Christine, it was unanimous to accept both proposals.

Discussion was held on the possibility of implementing a Local Services Tax (LST) and/or a Fire Tax. John Thompson had contacted our EIT collector, Berkheimer, to get an estimate of how much revenue these taxes would bring in. He was told the LST tax would bring in between \$94,000 - \$99,000 in the first year (would only be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year) and between \$125,000 - \$132,000 the following year. The Fire Tax would bring in approximately \$120,000. The LST tax would be only on people who work in the Township.

Danny Stark of Clinton Street asked how you can put a Fire Tax on people on Social Security who get no raise at all? Christine said we are trying to come up with funds so we don't depend on Act 13 Funds, which are less and less each year. Danny addressed George directly and said, 'You weren't elected in that chair to punish seniors'. George replied that we were elected to represent all residents. He said the fire company is a challenge to fund. Christine said \$200-\$400,000 of Act 13 funds were used to pass the budget. We have nowhere to come up with the money, except raising taxes across the board. Danny said when they first moved here Athens Borough was our fire company. It's too bad we went to our own company. What about consolidating? Christine told Dan we certainly appreciate his service. Danny said he is really upset. George said we went to a new health plan that saved funds. He added "you all who work here want raises, too." He suggested maybe defer the Fire Tax until next year.

Coy Gobble from the Daily Review asked if we are looking at any other types of taxes. George said we are the only fire company with a tower. The fire company is going to Masco for false alarms all the time. They need to start paying. He doesn't know if Walmart pays or not. On motion of George, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to direct John Thompson to take whatever actions as may be necessary to implement the LST to include advertising compliance and provision to DCED for intention to pass.

George said the township gives \$96,000 to the fire company every year. The fire company is concerned about losing funds in their donation drive if a fire tax is implemented. Christine asked if the board wants to further discuss the fire tax. Robin reminded the Board that the salaries alone for the 3 part-time officers they just hired is over 1 mill of tax revenue. Christine asked if we can raise taxes 3 mills plus a fire tax? John Thompson will have to check to see what our limits are. Discussion continued. Tressa said people are okay with a fire tax because because they feel the fire company will come if their house is on fire. She would like to see more of a solution between the 4 Valley fire companies – including looking at consolidation. She said state aid for regional departments would bring in more money from the state. Kirstie said the part of the fire tax she doesn't like is that it is limited to fire. Christine said the LST tax will only pay for a portion of our 3 part-time officers' salaries. On motion of Christine, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to table the fire tax at this time. George said Fire Chief Bryan Farr was worried about the optics of a fire tax.

George asked Gary Nittinger why he was here and if he wanted to speak. Gary said he thought our meetings were at 7 PM, but he was here about the water issue. He purchased property behind Masco – 28 Merrick Lane. It's mostly swamp and wetlands in that area. He has been there since 2008, but didn't own the woods until later. Some of the drainage was improved when King Road went in, but his pond is at the point where the sediment has built up and now the water runs across Wilawana Road into the yards there. Gary would be willing to try to help out with this water situation by digging out the pond so it will hold more water. He asked the Board how he would go about that? Robin told him that she would get him the contact information for Bradford County Conservation District and they should be able to walk him through the process. Gary gave his phone number and Robin will contact him tomorrow.

John Thompson did not have the draft of the Purchasing and Credit Card Policy with him so he will send it to the Board via email for review.

On motion of Christine, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to appoint Earl Carney to the Athens Township Authority to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Jason Rogers, for a term to expire December 31, 2020.

On motion of Tressa, second by George, it was unanimous to reappoint Jason Rogers to the Planning Commission for a term to expire October 30, 2022.

The next budget workshop was set for October 15th at 5 PM.

On motion of Tressa, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to cast our vote for Shirl Barnhart and Lester Houck to fill the 2 open positions for PSATS Trustee.

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On motion of Kirstie, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to ratify George, Ruth and Robin's attendance at the Bradford County Township Officers Association Annual Conference in Wysox on September 27, 2018.

Robin presented the 2019 MMO to the Board. The Minimum Municipal Obligation to the Police Pension Plan for 2019 is \$74,843, and to the Non-Uniformed Pension Plan for 2019 is 93,221. On motion of Kirstie, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to adopt RESOLUTION 2018-07 eliminating employee contributions to both pension plans for 2019.

On motion of Tressa, second by George, it was unanimous to ratify the road crew's attendance at the Bradco luncheon and equipment show on September 20th.

On motion of Christine, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to set Trick-or-Treat night as October 31, 2018 from 6 – 8 PM. Tressa will let the school know.

On motion of Christine, second by Tressa, it was unanimous to approve the minutes of August 29th and September 22, 2018 as written.

On motion of George, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to accept the Fire Report and the Building Permits Report as presented. There were no Police or Road Reports for the meeting.

Correspondence/Information was as listed in the meeting agenda.

Chairwoman Vough took the Board into executive session at 7:47 PM for personnel, pending litigation and real estate. The regular meeting reconvened at 9:27 PM.

On motion of Tressa, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to hire Pernel Trollman as Heavy Equipment Operator to replace Kent West; at a rate of \$15/hour; to be enrolled in the new pension plan, contingent upon his background clearances and his employment paperwork being complete and in place.

There being no further business, on motion of Tressa, second by Kirstie, it was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Smith, Secretary