

ATHENS TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

June 24, 2015 7 PM

Chairman Cheryl Wood-Walter called the meeting to order at 7 PM. Supervisors also present were Ronald Reagan, George Ballenstedt and Susan Seck. Christine Vough was absent. Solicitor John Thompson and Secretary Robin Smith were also in attendance.

George Ballenstedt led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Voice of the Residents:

Donald Jones of 117 Bressler Street was present concerning a sewer backup at his residence (and three other homes on Bressler) on May 14, 2015. He said the handling of this situation was completely botched. He called 911 to report the backup and 911 had no one to call. The residents went to two of Athens Township Authority's (ATA) meetings concerning this. At the first meeting they were basically told it was unfortunate, but good luck with that. At the second meeting they made some headway. ATA asked them for estimates to repair and for their personal losses. After this happened they invited the ATA members to come and see the damages, and no one came. Don said he and his wife did some research on this. ATA told them 911 was an issue. 911 told them the names on the emergency call list were Terry Cockcroft, who now resides in Florida; John Knowles who has not been on the board for several years; Al Teeter, who has not worked for ATA for several years now; and Valorie Huckabee. None of these names are current except for Valorie. They were then told the cause was an issue with high/low voltage with Penelec. When they contacted Penelec, they were told there was nothing reported for May 14th. Also, Pump Station #1 had a spill into the Lynch playground. ATA said they didn't know about it – their tech didn't report it. Don said there is also a sign at the pump station advising people that when the red light is flashing (with the word "red" in red letters), it is an alarm and to call the number on the sign. There is no red light on the pump station. He said it was astounding to him that ATA oversees multi-million dollar infrastructure and they can't handle an emergency. This caused a lot of damage in a very short time. Don said he sent a letter to ATA about this type of problem several years ago and said to watch that it doesn't happen again. Dr. Pat Musto, ATA Chairman, referred this to T & M Engineering (ATA's Engineer), who sent a letter to Don saying there were several fail safes in place with this upgrade. Don said the moment they turned it on it failed. ATA told him their tech pushed the alerts to "ignore", which continued for about 8 hours.

Steven Rogers of 294 Bressler Street said throughout this entire process, everyone was treated horribly. This has happened to Don Jones 3 times and has happened twice to them. The way they were dealt with was "wrong, wrong, wrong". ATA made them feel like it was their fault, not ATA's. As they were bring their issues to the ATA board, Dr. Musto and Valorie kept rolling their eyes. Dr. Musto became very angry. He kept getting angry with people. For a public official to be so angry that their (ATA's) sewage dumped into their houses was just wrong. They just played the bureaucratic blame game. All they want is their houses cleaned

and repaired. Steven said they had 5 perspective buyers, just by word of mouth. Then this happened. Who is going to reimburse them for the taxes and costs? It's ironic that ATA floods their house, which had been vacant for several months, with sewage and they have to pay a sewer bill. The water is not on because no one was living there. His great-grandmother's china hutch is over 100-years old and was going to his niece. He can't send it now. Steven also said ATA told them to get estimates. Estimates are not free – they're \$150 each, and ATA wants at least 2 estimates. He asked if ATA will pay for the estimates and no one answered him. Dr. Musto told them this happened because they are the lowest on the system. What is wrong with this system?? They asked ATA to put backflow prevention valves at their homes and they said they'd talk about it in executive session. Why don't they take care of this???

George Ballenstedt asked them to clarify that no one from ATA came to look at the damages and they did not come. The residents were basically told they won't come. Susan Seck asked if all the houses were in a row and/or on the same side of the street, and they are not. She asked how long it was from the time ATA was notified until they started cleaning. Steven said they called Thursday night and they had ServePro come that night. He will never let them in his house again. They never cleaned where the water softener was. The walls were not opened because there were heat runs on those walls. They drilled holes from the back and said it will dry out that way. Susan asked how long it's been since this happened and it's over a month – and working on 2 months now. It looks the same as the day after it happened. Cindy Jones called 911 twice. Valorie came 2 hours after the call and told them to call their own insurance company and call ServePro. ATA also told them that part of the problem was that they only have \$50,000 liability coverage for something like this, and they used up \$48,000 on ServePro. ServePro left and didn't come back for 3 weeks. Don Jones said they were out of their house for a while because of this. If you have a fire or a gas leak and call, the fire company or gas company comes right away. When ATA was called they said they "were working on it".

Steven said he has sewer gas leaking into the house now. He said ServePro just stuffed a plastic bag in the sewer pipe where the toilet was. When he called ATA about it, he was told to go out and buy a plug for it. Mark Smith told him to go out and buy a plug. A 4-year-old would know better than to just stuff a bag in the pipe.

Susan said getting this taken care of should be a goal. Ron asked when it was that they last heard from ATA and it was when they were at their meeting. They were told to give ATA an itemized list of their personal property. Steven said ServePro never inventoried anything that was taken out. There were boxes of stuff – his family heirlooms. He doesn't remember what was in each box. ServePro just loaded the boxes up and took them to the dumpster up the street. They are upset with the way this is being handled. They just want their houses fixed.

George said he will come and look at the damages. Don Jones will give him a disc of pictures. Steven Rogers said the whole board is invited to come and see. George asked them to give Robin their contact information and he will get in touch with them.

Cheryl said ATA needs to get a procedure in place for handling emergencies. Steven said when he asked Dr. Musto about the delayed response and the procedure for handling such, Dr. Musto got "SO mad!!". Steven also said they were told the pictures of the paneling they had in the basement will be matched to the 'year' it was produced and the reimbursement will be PRORATED! He is more concerned with getting the house ready to sell again, and will deal with the stuff that is gone later. Ron asked what the house smells like right now and it smells like you opened a septic tank. The upstairs is not as bad, but it smells. George asked when the next ATA meeting is and Robin said July 20th at 5:30 PM at the South Waverly Borough Hall. They also said they don't think Dr. Stillwell has lived in his house since this happened. They're not sure about Hutz's.

Ralph Blowers of Front Street said he had a tree fall on his house a while back and ServePro came. He would NEVER recommend them. He has heard stories about Athens Township Authority – how others have had to sue them to get what they want. ATA "think's they're 'god' and can do whatever they want". There is a manhole over on Meadowlark Drive that has caused flat tires since the sewer line went in over there. Ralph said the paving job is terrible as well.

Ralph said he asked about mitigation funds a while back for his creek bank and Susan told him she would get with Robin and Ed. Robin said that is something he would need to contact Bradford County Conservation District about. Ralph said thanks to Mr. Patton, the "Mayor of East Athens", issues just get thrown away.

The Board reviewed Ruth's Treasurer report. On motion of Ron, second by George, it was unanimous to pay the monthly bills as presented. A complete listing of revenues and expenditures is on file in the office of the Treasurer.

Robin presented Richard Bean's Park Commission report. They have several corporate grants outstanding for the Round Top Park Expansion project. Another DCNR grant was submitted for Phase II in the amount of \$351,096. They should hear about that in October. If they get that grant, they will begin Phase II in the early spring. The groundbreaking for Phase I was held June 23, 2015 at the site at 1 PM. Andy Solock is still working on getting the wood out of there. The township highway department will move the wood chips prior to the contractor starting. If the bonds are received from the contractor by June 28th, he will begin work then. The commission will also be installing 5 or 6 memorial benches in the park. They are \$1200 each, and if

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someone would like to purchase one as a memorial, the park commission will pay 50% of the cost. They have drawings for the tables and a Bill of Materials. They are looking for a warm place to build the tables this winter. Fencing will be installed at East Athens Park in the fall. They are also purchasing the 4-wheeler and trailer from the police department for \$5000. They have also submitted an application to the Bradford County Impact Fee Grant Program.

Ralph Blowers asked if the taxpayers will have to foot the bill for the shortfall for the park expansion. The board told him all the money was there. He asked for a breakdown of the \$208,000. Robin said the DCNR grant was for \$100,000. She said she thinks we've received about \$20,000 in donations/other grants, and the parks account has the remainder of the money. Ralph asked again who is going to pay the shortfall – the taxpayers? Robin reiterated that all the money is there for Phase I.

On motion of Ron, second by George, it was unanimous to reappoint Dave Hafer to the Parks and Recreation Commission for a term to expire July 1, 2020.

On motion of George, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to approve the Guthrie Walk From Obesity to be held in Round Top Park on September 26, 2015 from 10 AM to noon. The Park Commission has approved this as well. They will be using the entire upper level.

No one was present for Athens Township Authority. On motion of Ron, second by George, it was unanimous to appoint Arlene Lantz to ATA for the remainder of Terry Cockcroft's term ending December 31, 2018. Terry has resigned effective June 30, 2015.

Robin presented a Best Technical Guidance agreement from Bradford County Sanitation Committee for Chris Sutton. The Sutton property has an existing well and an existing septic system, however they do not meet the current setbacks. This agreement will be recorded to show this, as well as to release the township from well contamination liability. John Thompson explained that this is basically a 'hold harmless' agreement for the township. Susan said there is no specific address for this property on the paperwork. On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to approve, sign and execute the agreement contingent upon the inclusion of the property address on the paperwork.

Susan reported on the roads. Cole Street has a lot of issues. They are also finishing up Murphy Road. Ralph said they are clear up to Vough's landing and should finish by Friday with the DSA and the approach. Susan said she has received complaints about the township doing that road instead of other, more traveled roads. She tells them we had grant money to do that project. She has applied to the County for a grant for a couple roads in town. They will do temporary patching on Cole Street tomorrow. Once the drainage is in place, it will be nicer.

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On motion of Susan, second by George, it was unanimous to appoint Dannielle Kinner as Deputy Real Estate Tax Collector to replace Robin Pane, who is no longer a resident of the township.

On motion of George, second by Ron, it was unanimous to adopt RESOLUTION 2015-05 to allow the Real Estate Tax Collector to charge a fee of not less than \$5 or more than \$10 for service requests from mortgage companies and attorneys.

Discussion was held as to whether or not to pay for the Elected Tax Collector's annual 6 credit hours required for her position in the amount of \$240 total. Chairman Wood-Walter asked the Board for a motion, but no motion was made, therefore the request fails.

On motion of Ron, second by Susan, it was unanimous to send Robin, Ruth, Elaine and George to the Right-To-Know/Sunshine Law class to be held here at our building on 9/22/15.

On motion of Susan, second by George, it was unanimous to have Keystone Communications do our 10-year renewal for our FCC highway frequency at a cost of \$160.

On motion of Cheryl, second by Ron, it was unanimous to give our plotter to Bradford County Sanitation Committee. Robin will notify Mary to come and pick it up.

George had a proposal for computers and printers for our police cars. Sayre has them. In addition, the County will be purchasing software for all the county police departments. This will allow the officers to be more visible. The total cost would be \$28,411. Dan Reynolds is working with Larry on this. Cheryl asked who will do the training and Ron said it's not much different than what they do now – it's just mobile. They are asking for the funds from our Act 13 funds. George noticed that they had included the server in their request, but he thought they were going to purchase that from their budget. Susan asked if they will have time to input all this. They will, because they can do it in the car instead of having to come back to the office. They can also run background and criminal checks when they are conducting a traffic stop. The Board will table this until George gets clarification on the money for the server.

George asked that the minutes of May 20th be corrected to read that Cindy did most of the work on our newly launched Facebook page. On motion of Cheryl, second by Susan, it passed to approve the minutes of May 20th with that correction, and also approve the minutes of May 27th as written. Ron abstained from the May 20th minutes because he was not at that meeting. George and Susan abstained from the May 27th minutes because they were not at that meeting.

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On motion of Ron, second by George, it was unanimous to accept the monthly reports as presented. Susan asked about reporting on the highway occupancy permits she issues and it was decided she will add them to her monthly report.

Correspondence/Information was as listed in the meeting agenda.

Chairman Wood-Walter took the Board into executive session at 8:53 PM. The secretary was excused and the remaining minutes were taken by Ronald Reagan. The regular meeting reconvened at 10:13 PM.

On motion of Susan, second by Ron, it was unanimous to have Robin order a plaque for Bill Campbell to thank him for his 40 years of service to the Athens Township Volunteer Fire Co.

On motion of Ron, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to ratify the payment of Susan's expenses for her attendance at the 2-day Dirt and Gravel Road training class in Williamsport.

On motion of Cheryl, second by Susan, it was unanimous to have John Thompson respond to the letter from Nixon Peabody concerning the Verizon tower.

On motion of Susan, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to have John Thompson contact our drug testing company to clarify the drug and alcohol policy.

On motion of George, second by Cheryl, it was unanimous to allow Susan to rent a paver from Douglas Brothers for no more than \$800/month.

There being no further business, on motion of Ron, second by George, it was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 10:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Smith
Secretary

