

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
JUNE 17, 2024

Present: Supervisors Mike Blair (chair), Ed Hruska and Jim McIlrath, treasurer Tom Gnotke, clerk Pam Miller. Sixteen citizens attended.

Mike called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and led us in the Pledge. The May 28 meeting minutes were approved pending addition of a couple of corrections. The meeting began during a power outage that continued until near its end, so we could not print out agendas for folks.

Tom presented the **May treasurer's report**. Highlights:

As of April 30, the township's checking and money market fund balance was \$1,115,822.77. May receipts were \$4,685.42. May disbursements were \$16,886.12 (\$4,477.05 from the general fund, \$5,909.07 from the road and bridge fund; plus, we're awaiting \$6,500 in reimbursement from the state for Valhalla Park Grant No. 3). Thus our balance on May 31 was \$1,103,622.07 (\$24,682.85 in our checking account, \$1,078,939.22 in our money market account).

Ed moved to approve the treasurer's report; Jim seconded. Approved.

Planning Commission report from chair Joel Cannon: One construction permit request, Mike Lowther, 30569 Airport Court, new home construction in Heritage Acres. Mike Blair moved to approve; Jim seconded. Passed. Mr. Lowther paid his permit fee and asked how long the permit is good for. Answer: One year.

Joel continued: The Planning Commission again heard from Paul and Sarah Freid about their plan to add a winery at the John the Baptist Catholic Worker Farm, 33292 County Rd. 5 Blvd., as well as from their neighbors, who continue to have placement and parking concerns. The

parties have had some discussions, and the commission urged them to keep talking in search of common ground, especially on the issue of where on the Freids' property the structure would go. (A reminder: This continues to be just a discussion; no construction permit request has been submitted.) Planning Commission member Bill Bruce continues to look into what sort of leverage the commission might have on this winery permit process; because it's an approved agricultural use, the short answer so far is, not much.

Mike reintroduced the issue of Dave and Mary Beth Amundson's patio, which extends a few feet onto township land down at the beach. Mike asked for final comments from board members and citizens pending a board vote. Ed described Planning Commission chair Joel Cannon's proposal that would allow the Amundsons to retain the patio if they paid \$657 in annual rent for 30 years, saying he supports that plan. Jeneann Oppedahl concurred, calling the proposal "an excellent remedy" because the land wouldn't be given away, just rented. Jane Webster-Urbach questioned whether the Planning Commission was the right place to craft a remedy for this issue, saying it never went to the Heritage or Parks commissions and repeating her contention that the rent proposal could set a problematic precedent.

Mike said he largely sees the patio placement as a mistake publicly admitted to by the landowner and that he believes the landowner should fix it, and that future town boards shouldn't have to be tied down having to remember to collect the rent for this mistake for 30 years. He moved to require the Amundsons to remove the patio portion that is on township property by Sept. 1, 2024. Jim seconded. Ed said he would vote against the motion, calling the Planning Commission proposal "a reasonable option." Motion passed 2-1; the Amundsons must remove the trespassing portion of the patio by Sept. 1.

Heritage Preservation Commission report by Jeff Bolin: The State Historic Preservation Office will finally consider our updated nomination for the Old Frontenac Historic District at a public and online hearing on Aug. 6. If approved, the plan will go to the Town Board. The Joyce Engstrom Memorial Lilac Giveaway/Plant Exchange on May 20 was a resounding success, with lots of participants and good community-building vibes. \$215 was collected in the donation box toward next year's event. Two-year HPC member Pam Miller has stepped down to focus on town clerk/upcoming election duties, and two new HPC members are needed. There's word that Margaret Anteblian, owner of Locust Lodge, may be selling her Boston Beacon Hill estate, which would give her the funds to restore Locust Lodge, as she has said she'll do. We're all keeping an eye on whether that actually happens.

The Parks Commission report was offered by chair Jane Webster-Urbach: The township potluck picnic will be held at 6 p.m. June 20 at Wakondiota Park. \$195 (\$169 plus tax and shipping) was spent on a new waterproof bulletin board to put up at the Wakondiota shelter. Any residents may post reasonable things there; just remember to remove outdated postings. Only seven of the 88 EAB replacement trees planted on park land died over the winter; all will be replaced by Cabbage Patch Garden Center of Wabasha at no cost. Jeneann Oppedahl is leading an effort to collect citizen ideas about what kind of updated/new picnic shelter we might want at Wakondiota Park, as well as what people might like to see in that park's future. The Park Commission got an update on the Wakondiota pollinator garden, in its first full year. The Steamboat Landing dock is out in the water but stranded due to flooding. Jane talked to the Sportsman's Club about whether it might want to help pay for an updated playground in Frontenac Station; they're mulling it and she's looking into possible grants. (Without boundary timbers, the cost would be \$42,000 to \$50,000.) Jane described the Valhalla Park walkabout with TJ Lenaerts of NRP and asked if she could submit a fourth park grant, which would go for park

maintenance. Jane, Steve Dietz and Nathan Oppedahl will be starting members of an ad hoc committee looking into a possible updated/new management plan for township parks. A few Valhalla Park trees have been tagged with yellow ribbons for consideration for removal (to be paid for by Riverland funds), and notice of them will be sent to all who subscribe to Parks Commission emails. The tagged trees will be announced at the commission's July 2 meeting. Removal will be discussed and voted on at the commission's Aug. 14 meeting (moved from Aug. 6 because of lack of a quorum for that date), when the public will also have a chance to comment on it. Tim Jonas will help Rick Landau with the many duties of parkland upkeep.

Old business:

Mike described the recent sealcoating of Lakeview Drive and Staehli Road, cautioning that these projects will take a big chunk of our now very healthy budget. Board members had no update on recent paving projects that inclement weather may have delayed.

Mike made a motion to approve a list of election judges submitted by chief election judge Janet Bruce/town clerk Pam Miller, some of whom will work at the Aug. 13 primary and the Nov. 5 general election. Jim seconded. Approved.

The conflict over a nonmaintained portion of Barton Street that lies between the properties of Dave and Kelly Pribyl and Thomas Fahnel will be let alone for a while because of the death of Tom's mother, Monica Fahnel. [Joel, along with town clerk Pam Miller, who knows Tom, will reach out to him soon to see if we can work out an amicable solution to the Barton Street conflict.]

Nathan Oppedahl reminded the board that there's a tree down by the entrance to the township's brush/compost dump. It's been pushed to

the side. Dan Fox of Luhman's is aware of it, as well as many trees down all over the township that should be removed. The brush pile hasn't been set on fire by anyone in the past month, all were glad to hear, but it's pretty filled up, could use a plow/official burn soon.

Ed said Pam has collected information on how to legally handle public comments on contentious issues and that the board might consider some of those measures, which would include time limits on public comments (all would get equal time) and a requirement that citizens offering comments address only the board, not their fellow citizens in the audience. Pam said she'll email board members some of those options for consideration as they wish.

There was a hearty round of applause for Ed and Kerby Rigelman, who repaired the long-rotting Town Hall steps, and for Jeneann Oppedahl, who transformed the Town Hall garden into a beautiful space. Thanks to all our good citizens for all they do!

Bills were paid. The meeting was officially adjourned near 7 p.m.

Next meeting: 6 p.m. Monday, July 15, 2024, at the Florence Township Hall in Frontenac Station.

Respectfully submitted,
Pam Miller,
Florence Township clerk