

**FLORENCE TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
JULY 15, 2024**

Present: Supervisors Mike Blair (chair), Ed Hruska and Jim McIlrath, treasurer Tom Gnotke, clerk Pam Miller. About 15 citizens attended.

Mike called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and led us in the Pledge. The June 17 meeting minutes were approved as read.

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

As of May 31, the township's checking and money market fund balance was \$1,103,622.07. June receipts were \$2,064.50. June disbursements were \$10,700.03 (\$9,197.76 from the general fund, \$1,502.27 from the road and bridge fund). Thus our June 30 balance was \$1,094,986.54 (\$15,905.82 in checking, \$1,079,080.72 in our money market account).

Jim moved to approve the treasurer's report; Mike seconded. Tom answered a question from Steve Dietz about a Hill Avenue bridge construction easement fee the township must pay. Jane Webster-Urbach asked why flood cleanup costs aren't covered by the road and bridge fund. Tom said flood cleanup is not a yearly budget item because we don't have a flood every year; there are other ways to pay for flood damages, including state and county disaster relief. Ed asked what general government costs are and if flood cleanup could come from that. Tom said no; that's such things as election judge pay, insurance premiums, donations to the Goodhue County Fair and Historical Society, legal fees, postage, printing, dues and subscriptions. The treasurer's report was then approved.

Bill Bruce delivered the Planning Commission report:

One building permit was approved in June, for Kelsey Karrels and Brandon Kimber, new home, 30540 Royal Court in Heritage Acres. They have paid the \$75 permit fee. Ed moved to approve; Jim seconded. Passed.

Bill continued: Joel Cannon has resigned from the Planning Commission in the wake of his son's death; he may return in a few months. That leaves only three members: Bill, Justin Staker and Heidi Hartzell, who plans to step down when her term is up in September. Two people have expressed interest in joining, Nathan

Oppedahl and Cara Johnson. Bill urged the Town Board members to help recruit new Planning Commission members from areas other than Old Frontenac.

Bill then described Frontenac State Park manager Jake Gaster's presentation at the most recent Planning Commission meeting on **a proposal to add pedestrian access to the park from Lake Avenue Way via a strip of land Lorry Wendland would donate to the park**. Bill said the plan has been generally well received at the meetings where it has been discussed at, but concerns were raised about potential parking problems along Lake Avenue Way. He recommended that the Town Board place some no-parking signs in the area. (Township bodies do not vote on the plan itself, since no zoning changes are required.) In the next year, the state will decide if it will take possession of the property.

Jane then asked if Bill had information about the county's opinion on the matter. Bill read a communique from Goodhue County planning and zoning administrator Samantha Pierret that said donation of the land to the state means the county would not weigh in on rezoning because the land would then be under the control of the state. Paul Ekblad expressed concerns about traffic and Bill described the park's plan to keep the area somewhat private and off trail maps, saying that two well-attended informational hearings have been held on the matter, both advertised on the township's website and in the Graphic. Linda Buysse weighed in to call the land donation "a marvelous gift to the people of Old Frontenac, to our children and grandchildren," and Ben Boege said the meetings answered any concerns people at those meetings had about the plan.

Heritage Preservation Commission chair Jeff Bolin was not present to give a report.

Jane Webster-Urbach offered the Parks Commission report: The June 20 community potluck was a success, with 41 people attending. At the picnic, Jeneann and Nathan Oppedahl set up a survey board for people to comment on what they'd like to see in Wakondiotia Park in the future. A community bulletin board was installed at the playground shelter. Lots of flood cleanup needs to be done at Steamboat Landing, the dock is still out floating in the water, and the riprap/retaining wall is washing away. Jane asked how cleanup will happen; Mike said Luhman's will handle it. Jane continued: Two dead ash trees in the Frontenac Station playground should come down. Also, she talked to the Sportsman's Club

about donating for a new playground there; they said they'd donate but don't want to pay for the whole thing. Dennis Dick of Wabasha Tree and Samantha Pierret from Goodhue County tagged 17 Valhalla Park trees for removal consideration because they were dead, dying or overcrowding others. The Parks Commission's Aug. 14 meeting will allow citizens to comment on the tagged trees. Riverland funds will be used to remove the agreed-upon trees. In new business, the park commissioners all volunteered to keep an eye on various park areas for anything that needs doing. The Staker family is no longer able to maintain the township land area across Garrard Avenue from their home, so the grass will grow there like the rest of the park.

Jane, like others on the commissions and Town Board, is fielding lots of questions about all the dead trees in the township. She talked to the DNR and they recommended we apply for a **ReLeaf Community Forestry Grant**, ideal for local units of governments and nonprofits. No matching funds are required, and the work can take place on private or public land. **Jane offered to look into this grant** and the board thanked her, saying that would be helpful because they're all getting bombarded with calls and emails about problem trees.

Mike said the board is working with Luhman's to come up with a dollar amount to submit to the county for disaster relief. Washed-out culverts will be first priority. Janet Malotky weighed in to praise Steamboat Landing neighbors who have been voluntarily cleaning up flood debris. Mike seconded that praise. He said that in the future, flood cleanup costs can be budgeted, but they'll come out of the parks budget, not the road and bridge fund.

Old business

Blacktop issues: There have been complaints about how blacktop was laid down over concrete driveway aprons in the Heritage Acres development. Supervisors will meet with the contractor to talk about that. There also needs to be some cleanup of rocks and sand on Staehli Park Road. Jane asked when dust control will happen. Mike said they'll talk to Dan Fox of Luhman's about that.

Locust Lodge update: Ed said he's reached out five times in the past three days to Chuck Richardson, Margaret Anteblian's Red Wing attorney, seeking an update on whether Ms. Anteblian has sold her Boston property, which she has said would

allow her to repair her deteriorating Old Frontenac property. Mike said to tell Chuck to get back to us soon or the township's attorney will be contacting them.

New business

Nathan Oppedahl read his letter of application to serve on the Planning Commission. Ed moved to approve his application; Jim seconded. Passed.

A brief discussion followed on **the possibility of merging a couple of commissions**. Ed said he had wondered about it because it's been so hard to get commission members, but doesn't want to take away from citizens' say in township matters. Jane said she thought it would be hard to do it and keep up the level of citizen involvement. Janet Malotky said that the HPC, which she serves on, has talked about possibly proposing merging with the Planning Commission, but decided that too much would be lost. Ed said he's not pushing for it, has just been concerned that people aren't volunteering as much as they did in the past. Nathan suggested making the commission meetings more sequential to speed the process for permit applicants. Mike said, maybe the Planning and Heritage Preservation commissions could meet the same night so permit applicants don't have to come back twice, an idea Janet also endorsed. Ed asked commission members to think it over and bring forward ideas for streamlining commission business.

Other new business: Tom described **a large bill** the township was sent, more than \$7,000, from CenturyLink due to alleged cable damage along Hill Avenue during roadwork in June 2023. Tom said the township was inappropriately billed and will not be paying.

Paul Ekblad asked the township to consider finding some alternative to crushed limestone rock for township roads, saying limestone deteriorates quickly.

Bills were then paid. Ed moved to adjourn; Jim seconded. Passed. Meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Next meeting: 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 19, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Pam Miller, town clerk