

Minutes
LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Special Meeting
Wednesday, August 10, 2016

Meeting called to order: 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present: Trustee Lynda Bowers, Trustee Michael Costello, Fiscal Officer Shirley Bailey, William Thorne-Medina County Assistant Prosecutor, Absent -Trustee Bryon Macron

Mr. Costello said the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the outcry from township residents regarding the August 2, 2016 special election in which the levy for the construction of a new fire and rescue facility failed. Mr. Costello said the trustees received numerous pleas from the residents and fire department staff requesting the levy be placed back on the November 2016 ballot. Members of the fire department went door to door seeking resident support via a petition to present to the trustees for consideration. Mr. Costello announced the deadline to file for the November ballot is today at 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Bowers was surprised by the calls she received prompting her to review the various ways the information was sent to the public which included; nine separate newspaper articles, a township newsletter, fliers distributed by firefighters and information was posted at every Lafayette Township pancake breakfast in February

Ms. Bowers had a conversation with Lafayette Township resident Mr. Emmitt Stark. Ms. Bowers said it was at that point the realization was not how many times information was sent but perhaps more attention and emphasis should have been placed drawing attention to the fact this was a special election in August. Ms. Bower's first reaction to the firefighters, when asked to place it back on the November ballot, was that she would not want to do that. She was asked if they presented a petition from the residents if she would reconsider. The fire department obtained more signatures on the petition than residents that voted on August 2nd. Ms. Bowers said if she recollects there were 548 votes total both for and against. Ms. Bowers received, as of last night, 564 signatures and that total doesn't include the signatures handed to her at the start of this meeting.

Ms. Bowers said there is sense in the community that if you go to an off ballot, it will drive people who wish to support it and there is talk that it is a sneaky way to get an issue passed. Ms. Bowers has been told that off ballots are not the time and she listed several reasons the trustees placed the levy on the August ballot opposed to waiting. Some of the concerns the trustees took into account are as follow:

- The main goal was to save money. Once funding is in place, and prior to construction, the township is required to follow a process. There must be a final design phase, prepare bid specifications, advertise, bid and award contracts before construction can begin. There are strict timelines in the ORC that must be adhered to. This was taking into the construction season in Ohio. Placing the levy on a November ballot will most likely push into a 2018 construction season.

- An August ballot approval would allow the township to apply for up to \$500,000.00 of the funding interest free. The application deadline for that funding is September 16, 2016, which will be missed. The potential savings of not having to pay interest on \$500,000.00 is \$162,342.00.
- An August ballot if approved could assure a 2017 construction project. Every construction expert out of the thirteen the trustees met with during an open meeting all said that by deferring a project until 2018 based on the way bids were coming in low at the time, we could expect approximately a ten percent hike. On this project you can expect the hike to be approximately \$300,000.00.
- An August ballot if approved would have most likely guaranteed an interest rate under four percent. Ms. Bowers personally met with lenders and the lenders estimated by deferring until 2018 there would be a difference of 1/2 to 1 1/2 percent hike in the interest rate. At a one percent hike that would be an additional cost of \$275,168.00.
- An August ballot issue also ensured the Technology Park site would remain available to the township. Without the cost of the land, there were several opportunities that can be identified such as not having to install a quarter million dollar commercial septic system because sewer is already present. Currently, the township operates on a temporary line that doesn't have the capacity and twelve years ago when the situation was reviewed the trustees were told in order to extend the line, the line would have to extend from Deerview and Lafayette Roads requiring a lot of pipe. Which could cost upwards of \$200,000.00.

Ms. Bowers said, "It was simply a matter of math, cost savings and good common sense and that's why we went for an August ballot and the only reasons we did it". She stated, "That all of the potential savings that we had available to us, would have been to the extent they materialize because we don't know exactly what the interest rate is until we are there. We don't know exactly what the final cost is until we're there. So the levy amount is designed for the worst case scenario and it also includes the township having some funds not included in the levy that we can go to. We've got the levy language such that it doesn't collect for a year because we won't be making payments for a year. We have some resources that we can rely on in the meantime because we know they would be paid back. The goal was to be able to roll the levy back, like we did with the police levy, rolling it back and not collecting as much. That was the goal. We may still have some of the opportunities and some are gone. The savings on the interest is gone. The trustees will continue to look for more opportunities". The trustees have been asked why they let the fire station deteriorate so badly and Ms. Bowers said they haven't it is an old building. The building no longer meets any codes, not even local fire and electric codes and is no longer large enough. The trustees have put approximately \$170,000.00 into the building in the past twelve years since the last levy failed.

The trustees have heard and seen a few comments they feel need addressed. One comment was the new station did not need sleeping quarters and shower facilities. Ms. Bowers said Lafayette Township fire department personnel have made it clear they are no longer willing to be covered in a variety of body fluids after responding to a call, taking that in their homes and nor do the trustees feel they should be expected to. There is nowhere for personnel to clean up. The NFPA standards and OSHA guidelines state if you staff, you will have shower facilities and sleeping quarters in a new facility. The trustees have proposed the minimal facilities necessary to meet the

standards. The special needs of the proposed facility have been designed by expert input over a two year period. The trustees have personally toured several fire stations and interviewed staffing throughout the state of Ohio gathering information regarding their stations on what they would have done differently in attempt to find every cost saving measure. Another comment was to construct a small pole barn. The trustees don't feel this is sensible and a pole barn doesn't meet the apparatus span requirements. That portion of the facility is designed to be steel construction recommended by the architects. Approximately 1/3 of the design is residential construction that doesn't require the span and is a much less quality construction but not bad quality not just high quality.

Ms. Bowers has a log of how this issue has been dealt with and what has changed in the past twelve years, the homework that has been done, the considerations that were discussed, the actions taken and this will be attached to the minutes and be part of the record. Mr. Costello added the trustees have planned for the future when designing the proposed station. Lafayette currently does not staff 24 hours but have taken into account when designing the bunk rooms. Allowing room for additional apparatus in the future as well as removing equipment that is currently being stored in other locations to be located in one facility which allows for time saving response and to prevent premature deterioration of equipment from the outside elements.

Ms. Bowers clarified a statement that the proposed fire department was thrown together in the past few months and went to the ballot in August. She said that couldn't be further from the truth. Ms. Bowers had in her possession the Request for Proposals (RFQ's) for architects to interview which occurred in September 2015 which took a year of work prior to sending out the RFQ's. The trustees have been working on this station a minimum of two years. Ms. Bowers said there have been several open meetings regarding the proposed station over the past two years.

Ms. Bowers stated, "Twelve years ago, there is always this conversation out there and there was this speculation that fireman contract cancer because of the environment they work in. Not just going into fires but the environment of the firehouse. When building a facility today, you have to have all sorts of very expensive air handlers and exhaust system removal and decontamination areas and things like that. We don't have any of that. Our firemen wash their faces and hands when returning from a fire in the same sink that they wash their pots and pans in. It's disgraceful, the conditions they function in (and we are certainly fortunate that they are willing to do that). But it is no longer speculation that firemen contract cancer at a higher level than others because of their environment. This is a fact! It is a fact that many states have recognized, including the State of Ohio, the senate recently passed a resolution supporting the federal legislation funding the policies to address firefighter occupational cancer. This is a liability as well and as a Board of Trustees not only do we owe it to our residents to pay attention to the signatures and phone calls and e-mails we have received, asking us to do this a different and better way, we owe it to our firefighters, EMT's and paramedics. We have an obligation to respect and protect those people who protect us". Mr. Costello responded to the comments on facebook regarding the sleeping facilities. He said, "What a lot of our residents don't realize is when we get bad storms whether it is winter storms or even severe thunderstorms in the summer time, it is not uncommon for a group of firefighters to come and staff. Sometimes they do it on their own accord and are not being paid for it. It is very difficult to get an ambulance and fire truck out in a sever snow storm

and could potentially take upwards of ten to fifteen minutes from their house to the station and then respond to the location of the emergency. By our folks coming in and staffing during hazardous nights enables us to be able to get equipment to our residents faster in a time of emergency". Ms. Bowers said not having the facilities is one reason we don't staff past 6:00 pm. Mr. Costello explained although it is not something that will be utilized daily, it is something that will be used and for the betterment of the community.

Ms. Bowers said if the trustees refuse to put this levy back on the ballot in November, there is another way it can go on the ballot via a referendum on their vote and that would take eight percent of the voters (3,284 people voted) from Lafayette Township and Chippewa Lake Village that voted in the last governor's election in 2012 which would be 263 signatures. They have received more than twice the amount of required signatures and there is no reason to not do what the residents are asking the trustees to do. Ms. Bowers stated that in order to get it on the November ballot it would require cooperation from the County Auditor's Office today. Ms. Bowers stated there are no changes other than the date.

Ms. Bowers stated that Mr. Macron asked that it be announced why he wasn't present at today's meeting and would like to express how extremely important he feels concerning this issue. He is out of state on business and the meeting was called within the last forty-eight hours. He had made every attempt to make it back for the meeting however, he was not able to catch a flight in time.

Ms. Bowers made a motion to approve a resolution requesting the Auditor certify the current tax valuation of Lafayette Township and the tax millage rate required to produce \$4,000,000.00 over a fifteen year period, for the purpose of buildings finance and construction pursuant to ORC 505.262 to be placed on November 2016 ballot. The levy is intended as an additional levy in excess of the ten mill limitation. Mr. Costello seconded the motion. All voting in favor.

Ms. Bowers contacted by phone, Marybeth Gunther, Deputy Auditor with the Medina County Auditor's Office, requesting the Certificate of Estimated Average Annual Property Tax Levy for Bonds of Subdivisions of the State prior to forwarding to the Board of Elections. Ms. Gunther agreed to prepare the document immediately.

Public Participation:

Lieutenant Josh Wilfong of the Lafayette Township Fire Department stated the levy is big issue for the fire department. He explained one reason shower facilities are necessary is the current temperatures we have been experiencing in the 90's with high humidity and when the firefighters respond to a call that necessitates them wearing turn out gear, it gets extremely hot in the gear causing the firefighters to experience body odor. He said it is unprofessional and not very hygienic to respond and serve other residents after not being able to shower between calls when necessary. Lt. Wilfong said it is part of his duty to look out for his crew and this department is reliable and dedicated and asks for the public's help.

Mr. Emmet Starks, Lafayette resident and asked the audience how many in attendance are opposed to a new fire station. No one was opposed. Mr. Starks would like to sign the petition to

place the levy back on the November ballot and has offered to help do whatever necessary to get the levy passed. He said there is stiff competition in November to get the levy passed. Mr. Starks pointed out a few issues with the recent newsletter he received and made recommendations for future newsletters when *important* information needs to be released opposed to ordinary information. Ms. Bowers stated it wasn't an issue with how many times the levy information was publicized, but perhaps there was not strong enough attention to the August date for voting. Mr. Starks feels what should be impressed upon the residents is what the emergency responders do for the residents of the township. "Risking life and limb for the residents and the least the residents can do is provide the staff a hot shower". Ms. Bowers has had extensive conversation with both the fire chief and assistant fire chief and it is everyone's job to get the information out to the residents in a better way. The trustees are not permitted to use any township resources in doing so.

10:39 am. Mr. Costello made a motion to recess the meeting and reconvene at 1:00pm after receiving the information from the Medina County Auditor's Office. Ms. Bowers seconded the motion. All voting in favor.

**1:15 p.m. Mr. Costello moved to reconvene to the Regular Meeting.
Roll Call: Bowers-yes, Costello-yes**

Mr. Costello made a motion to approve a resolution 17-2016 declaring it necessary to levy a tax in excess of the ten mill limitation. Ms. Bowers seconded the motion. All voting in favor.

1:20 pm. Mr. Costello made a motion to recess the meeting and reconvene once the filing is accepted at the Board of Elections. Ms. Bowers seconded the motion. All voting in favor.

**1:59 p.m. Mr. Costello moved to reconvene to the Regular Meeting.
Roll Call: Bowers-yes, Costello-yes**

Mr. Costello moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Bowers.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Approved: _____

Lynda Bowers, Trustee

Bryon Macron, Trustee

Michael Costello, Trustee

Shirley Bailey, Fiscal Officer