

PINE GROVE TOWNSHIP MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 7, 2022 7:00 p.m.

1. **Meeting was called to order** at 7:00 P.M. by Smith
2. **Pledge of Allegiance.**
3. **Roll Call: Present:** Richardson, Meert, Smith, Sell, Hephner -Attorney Catherine Kauffman
4. **Agenda: Motion made by Richardson, supported by Smith to approve the agenda. All yes, motion carried.**
5. **Consent Agenda: Motion made by Meert, supported by Richardson to approve the Consent Agenda. All yes, motion carried.**
6. **Monthly Bills: Motion made by Smith, supported by Sell to pay the monthly bills as presented in the amount of \$17,200.57. All yes, motion carried.**
7. **Public Comment:** Diane Rigozzi, Senior Services Director, stated that their millage is up this year and presented a packet regarding their services and what the renewal proposal language will look like on the ballot. VB Senior Services are requesting PGT increase on the august ballot from a .25 mil to 1 mil and from a 4 year to an 8 year term as they would like to increase programming in the Paw Paw area. A resident stated that the branches hanging over into the parking lot on the east side need to be trimmed as it makes it difficult to get around when the parking lot has a lot of cars parked. Smith stated that he will look into getting that done.
BCI stated that Broad Ban Expansion Plan Reconnect Round 2 has about 550 homes that are in Pine Grove Township area. BCI has hired contractors and residents have probably seen the survey crews out, construction is staring in the Geneva area and then heading to the Kendall and Timber Ridge area. Residents that live in that area should be encouraged to call or get on the BCI website and give BCI permission to run lines from the road to the house and at this time, that would be at no charge to run these lines to the house.
8. **Correspondence and Reports:**
 - A. **Library:** Nothing at this time.
 - B. **Sheriff:** Submitted. 18 complaints. Recommends residents become more diligent in locking their vehicles. A large increase in Car/Deer accidents this time of year.
 - C. **County Commission:** Submitted. Copy on file.
 - D. **Road Commission:** Submitted. Stated the RC is underway grading the gravel roads, boom mowing in Columbia and Bloomingdale, de-berming, sealcoating roads. Some culverts are being replaced. Dust control contracts have been issued. Weight limits have been lifted.
 - E. **Fire Chief:** Expecting a busy year, up to 54 calls so far this year.
 - F. **Fire Board:** Starting the new budget this month.
 - G. **Ambulance:** Submitted. 14 responses for February. March's report is not ready yet.
 - H. **Treasurer: T&A:** \$9,941.78 **Checking:** \$763,117.52 **Savings:** \$199,925.69
Tax: \$40,7123.13.
 - I. **Planning Commission:** Special Land Use for Farrell on CR 388 approved. Mtg 4-28-22 6pm
 - J. **KABA:** Submitted. Smith stated that \$10,266.00 in fees from building permits were collected
 - K. **OEO:** none OEO Smith resigned, no report submitted
9. **Committee Reports: ARPA FUNDS:** VBCRC has filled out an ARPA application to receive \$50,000.00 from Pine Grove Township towards the road project to rebuild CR 388 from CR 653 to the county line. **Motion made by Smith, supported by Richardson, to allocate \$50,000.00 of the ARPA funds to the VBCRC for the rebuild and revitalization of CR 388 from CR653 to the County Line. Roll Call: Richardson – yes, Smith – yes, Sell – yes, Meert – yes, Hephner – no. 4 yes, 1 nay, motion carried.**
Hephner stated that the fire department has a fire truck that is 23 years old and has to be retired at 25 years and it takes approx. 2 years to build and outfit a fire truck so Pine Grove Twp. need to start now deciding how to get a down payment made and find the funding to purchase a new fire truck. It was the advice of Attorney Kaufman that ARPA fund cannot be given to the Fire Board. If Pine Grove Twp. allocates \$100,000.00 towards a fire truck, there would need to be some type of agreement with the Fire Department that differentiates the monies from ARPA and fire department monies. Attorney Kaufman stated that a way could be figured out how to do this. **Motion made by Hephner, supported by Sell, for Pine Grove Township to fill out an application for \$100,000 of ARPA funds towards a fire truck and to allocate the remaining funds of**

approx. \$106,000.0 toward a fire truck. Roll Call: Richardson – yes, Smith – no, Meert – yes, Sell – yes, Hephner – yes. 4 yes, 1 nay, motion carried.

10. Old Business:

1. **Appoint Alternate to the ZBA:** Meert stated that the position was advertised and there have not been any applications received.
2. **Charter Township:** Smith stated that he believes Pine Grove Township Board should vote to become a charter township or that it be put on the ballot for the citizen to decide. Sell stated that with the discussion with attorney and several citizens, she does not believe that Pine Grove Township should become a charter township. Hephner stated that in looking at the rural population etc., Pine Grove should not be a charter. Richardson stated that it should be on the ballot for the residents to decide. *Motion made a Richardson, supported by Smith to place the question on the ballot of becoming a charter township on the August ballot. Roll Call: Richardson – yes, Smith – yes, Meert – yes, Sell – no, Hephner – no. 3 yes, 2 nays, motion carried.*
3. **Computer Upgrades:** Smith stated that last month the board discussed going to a server and getting the equipment to scan all the paper documents including the large construction documents from downstairs. The Township's IT company developed a list of equipment that they recommended that would be needed, a server, cabinet to store equipment, a firewall (including the license), UPS (power supply), a large format 36–38-inch scanner, a duplex image scanner for documents. Smith stated he would like to put this out for bid. Sell stated that there is a lot of stuff downstairs that wouldn't need to be scanned, that she would like to see the boxes sorted and cleaned up before purchasing all the equipment first. Sell stated that she would support getting the server first and then the scanners when the township is closer to being ready to start scanning. Smith stated that buying the package would be more cost effective. Hephner stated that she needs to clarify that not all files are shared, being that the clerk, treasurer and supervisor have their own files that are not sharable. Smith stated that was indeed part of being connected to a server and that they would create what would be in shared files, such as postings for the public, and it would allow the township to put all the ordinance as well as the Zoning Ordinance on the server and eliminate the expense of Municode. Meert stated that she did not think the township should go forward with this until it's decided if they are going to go forward with a new building. *Motion by Sell, supported by Richardson to put a request out for bids for a server, cabinet, firewall, scanners, USB, Smart Connect or comparable. All yes, motion carried.* Smith stated that he would like the bids to be in by May 2nd and will be opened at the May 2nd Board Meeting.
4. **New Building, Approval to advertise for Bids for Cleaning the property, Preliminary Engineering:** Hephner stated that she believes the property needs to be surveyed before the clearing begins. Smith stated that if it not cleared and they can't see what they are doing it will cost a lot extra money. Hephner stated that it had to be surveyed first so that someone else's property isn't cleared. Hephner stated that a perc test should be done as well before clearing. Don stated that it will be clear cut except for anything the township designates to stay. Richardson stated that he would like to see it put on the ballot to see if the residents want to spend money on a new township hall. Attorney Kaufman advised that you cannot put an advisory question on the ballot, but the township could put out a survey to the residents. *Motion made by Hephner, supported by Sell to perform a boundary survey and a perc test on the proposed new township building site. All yes, motion carried.*

11. New Business:

1. **Roadside Cleanup:** Hephner asked what the process would be for a request that comes in regarding trash on the side of the road that needs to be picked up. It was decided that these requests will go to Supervisor Smith and he will contact Brian Kronk who the Township contracts for hauling junk, etc.
2. **Website Upgrade:** Smith stated that the current website is sorely deficient, it is unsecure and if anyone wanted to go in and tac on any malware, they could. Smith stated that he has talk to two different web design companies and is currently getting them to prepare quotes. Smith stated that if the cost is under \$5000, it does not have to go out to bid. Sell stated that she would prefer a

local company that works with municipalities. Smith stated that he could continue to look and tabled this topic for now.

3. **New OEO (Ordinance Enforcement Officer):** OEO Smith resigned as of April 1st. Supervisor Smith stated that the township would need to advertise for a new OEO. Meert asked if the township Deputy could take this role on. Smith stated that the township Deputy is only available one day a week and believes that it should be a separate person so that the Deputy is available for calls for service and traffic control. Hephner stated that until a new OEO is hired, perhaps the township Deputy could handle some of the complaints. The township currently pays up to 10 hours a week for the township Deputy. Smith stated that he will speak with the Township Deputy to see if he is interested in doing the OEO duties, if he isn't, an advertisement will be put out for a qualified OEO.
4. **Auditor Contract Renewal: *Motion by Hephner, supported by Smith to retain Siegfried Crandall for the annual audit in the amount of \$7910.00. for 2022. All yes, motion carried.***
5. **Approval of VBCRC Road Maintenance: *Motion made by Sell, supported by Smith to approve \$167,908.00 for 2022 VBC Road Commission projects as presented: Roll Call: Richardson – yes, Smith – yes, Sell – yes, Meert – yes, Hephner – yes. All yes, motion carried.***
6. **Preparing and Mailing of Tax Bills:** Richardson stated that he had received several phone calls regarding the Treasurer's duty of preparing taxes i.e., printing, placing in envelope, stamping and mailing and was this being done by the Treasurer or was it being contracted out. Hephner stated that as the prior Treasurer, she would speak on the history: Years ago, the state decided to do two tax billings per year, a summer tax and a winter tax as the schools wanted their money twice a year instead of once a year. The State Tax Commission made a caveat that the townships would receive monies with the Summer Taxes (SEC) to help with the cost of the Treasurer preparing and mailing taxes twice a year, using the equation of the number of parcels in the township x (times) \$2.50 per parcel (the \$2.50 Administrative Fee on every Tax Bill), which at the time was somewhere between \$3,600 and \$4,500. The Board, in approximately 2013/14, for accounting purposes, voted to roll those monies into the Treasurers salary, rather than make a once a year lump sum payment to the Treasurer because they were now preparing the taxes twice a year. The once a year administrative fee was to be deposited directly into the general fund. Hephner stated those funds have been going directly into the General Fund ever since, not as an extra payment to the Treasurer. Hephner also stated that per the advice of someone on the Board, she worked out the cost of the paper, envelopes and stamps for sending out a tax season of Property Taxes and found that it was much more cost effective to contract it out as they get supplies at a bulk rate which made it much less expensive. Sell stated that she has been encouraged to send out all the property tax billing by the County Treasurer and the Township Assessor. Sell stated that since she has been Treasurer, she does all the multi-parcel billings herself. Sell stated that it is a savings of \$250 just on postage per tax season, the contractor's postage is .425 cents vs. .58 cents for township, \$50 per 1000 envelopes vs. \$100 per 1000 envelopes for township, and Sell did not have the cost savings for the paper. Sell and Hephner stated that since 2013/2014 the Treasurer does not receive any extra monies from the SEC, it all goes directly to the General Fund, which pays for contracting of sending out the Property Tax billings which was \$1,232.00 for the Winter Taxes out of the \$4,600 SEC monies.
7. **Reappointment of Planning Commission Members that Expire April 31, 2022: *Motion made by Hephner, supported by Meert to re-appoint the 4 Planning Commission members whose terms expire 4/31/22 for another 3-year term: Jesse Richardson, Ed Hill, Craig Yaple, Jim Kehoe. All yes, motion carried.***
8. **Income Statement Adjustments for 2021-2022:** Meert stated that on the end of the year Income Statement which ends on March 31, there were certain accounts that were in the negative, the total Income Statement is in the positive, it is just a few individual accounts that are in the negative so a motion needs to be made to amend the budget to account for the negative balances in some of the account for the auditors. ***Motion by Hephner, supported by Richardson to amend the budget to account for the deficit of \$25,154.33 in the negative balance accounts. All yes, motion carried.***

12. **Public Discussion:** Jim Kehoe asked about policies regarding publishing Public Notices. Attorney Kaufman stated that per state law and statutory requirements regarding the paper to publish public notices for Pine Grove Township, the paper has to have a certain percentage of news content, how often it is published, the circulation, etc. so we generally find that the Van Buren Reminder or similar papers do not meet those requirements, therefore the Paw Paw Courier Leader is used. Smith asked if it could be posted in both papers and Attorney Kaufman advise that it could, the only draw back is being the cost of publishing twice. She stated that the application fees could be increased to cover the cost of two notices. Attorney Kaufman stated that there has been a lot of legislation to end that requirement and use websites for posting public notices but the newspaper lobby is very strong and they do not want to lose that aspect of the newspaper.
13. **Member Comment:** None

Motion made by Smith, supported by Hephner to adjourn. All yes, motion carried.
Adjournment: 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Meert, Pine Grove Twp. Clerk