

# PINE GROVE TOWNSHIP MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 03, 2024 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-absent. **Also Present:** Attorney Catherine Kaufman
4. **Consent Agenda: Motion made by Richardson, supported by Sell to approve the Consent Agenda. All yes, motion carried.**
5. **Monthly Bills: Motion made by Smith, supported by Richardson to approve the monthly expenditures for a total of \$209217.62 All yes, motion carried.**
6. **Public Comment:** Eric Mathis questioned the library millage of .40 mill the Township will be voting on May 7. He stated the language was confusing. He wanted to know what was meant by wording of, to the extent required by law, portion of the revenues from this millage will be captured within the district of and disbursed to the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of Van Buren county. Attorney Kaufman stated under law any one that has a DDA or taxing entity that is created by law can be captured. They have to put that ballot wording in the description. This language tells the voter that this will happen. Eric Mathis stated, what it boils down to is all this money is not going to the library. Attorney Kaufman stated that is correct.
7. **Correspondence and Reports:**
  1. None.
8. **Committee Reports:**
  - A. **County Commission: Submitted.**
  - A. **Road Commission:** Bret Witkowski was in attendance. He spoke regarding the road millage that is up for renewal this year. It has been rolled back because of the Headlee amendment. He reviewed projects and projections for maintenance. Crews have been cutting trees in preparation for the CR388 project. Actual road construction will not start until after May.
  - B. **Sheriff's Report:** 84 complaints for March 2024. Kathy Garrett complained of semi-trucks speeding through Kendall. Sheriff stated he would see if they could send extra patrol for the area. Sheriff also mentioned the Van Buren County Conservation District has free tire disposal if anyone is interested. Check their website.
  - C. **KABA: None submitted.**
  - D. **Fire Chief: None submitted.**
  - E. **Fire Board/Fire Budget:** Kehoe stated the Fire Board has discussed future funding of capital asset purchases and have decided to ask the Township and the City ask for an additional .5 mil to be put on the August ballot for capital purchases. It would provide an additional \$50000.00 per year, in addition to the \$50000.00 the Fire Department has been able to save. This would give them approximately \$100000.00 per year to put towards capital purchases. They would like this placed on the August 6, 2024 ballot. After some discussion, *motion by Smith, supported by Richardson to have Attorney Kaufman prepare ballot language for renewal of 1.5 mil for Fire Dept. Operating, and a new .5 mil proposal for fire department capital funding. All yes, motion carried.*
  - F. **Ambulance: None submitted.**
  - G. **Treasurer: As of 1-31-2024: Mercantile Tax: \$.01 Huntington General: \$519576.98 T&A: \$9,947.78 Mercantile General: \$173,090.22 Mercantile Cash: \$601,600.51 Huntington Tax: \$4,467.12 PNC Savings: CLOSED Consumers Xtra Protect: \$251,252.11 Consumers Money Market: \$252,512.05 ARPA: \$78,792.74**
  - H. **Planning Commission:** Meeting on Monday 4/15-24. 6:00 PM.
  - I. **Building Committee:** Next Meeting April 10 at 6:30 PM. Martin Environmental is scheduled to remove asbestos April 10<sup>th</sup> if we are able to get Cronk Services to move the file cabinets out of the way. Smith stated there was no asbestos on the one left side. Meert stated it was her

understanding it was on both sides. Smith stated it was in the report from Wonder Makers that had done previously. Meert stated she would review the report with Hephner and go from there.

9. **Old Business:**

1. **Whitman Engineering contractor:** Hephner contacted Whitman and was able to talk to the engineer who had submitted the previous for the building. Hephner would like Board permission to continue to work with Whitman on moving forward with the reconstruction project of the Township Hall. ***Motion by Meert, supported by Sell to move forward with Whitman Engineering on obtaining estimate for reconstruction of the Township Hall. All yes. Motion passed.***
2. **Asbestos removal:** Sell stated she thought there was asbestos in both sides of the Town hall basement. Smith stated the report done from Wonder Makers show there is no asbestos on the West side. Sell stated she will have Hephner review the report with Martin & Associates before they begin any work.

10. **New Business:**

1. **Road Project Bids for 29<sup>th</sup> St and 12<sup>th</sup> Ave:** Smith stated 29th is a gravel road that has water over the road down in a swale. People don't see it coming and has almost caused some serious accidents. ***Smith made motion, supported by Sell to approve the 29<sup>th</sup> Street road project. Roll Call Vote: Richardson-yes, Meert-yes, Smith-yes, Sell-yes. Motion passed.*** Smith stated the 12<sup>th</sup> Ave project was one he brought to the board 2 years ago. Sell stated she thought the project was supposed to be west of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Meert stated she thought it was supposed to be 12<sup>th</sup> Ave, between 26<sup>th</sup> St and 27<sup>th</sup> Ave. Brett Witkowski said he would find out about the project and get back with the Board.
2. **AT&T METRO ACT-PERMIT EXTENSION-** Meert stated this is a 5 year permit extension request from AT&T with no additional changes. ***Motion by Smith, supported by Richardson to approve the permit extension for AT&T. All yes, motion carried.***
3. **INSURANCE POLICY RENEWAL:** Meert stated the insurance renewal policy has increased approximately \$2000.00 because of an outstanding federal court lawsuit. The concern she has on the new policy is the amount of coverage on the buildings. Meert stated she did not feel the amount on the Township Hall was enough. Smith suggested renew the policy for now and have the insurance company come out and review the values on the Township Hall. ***Richardson made a motion, supported by Sell to approve renewal of insurance policy for 2024-25 with review of building amounts. Roll Call Vote: Richardson-yes, Meert-yes, Smith-yes, Sell-yes. Motion passed.***
4. **Blight:** Catherine explained blight reports. The property on CR388 has a demolition ordered filed against it. Someone is trying to purchase it. They are trying to get the Township to release the demo order. She recommends that the township does not do that. The building permit issued last year is about to expire. Next, The trailer on the side of the road. Deputy Turner wrote 2 citations. We have gotten the compliance orders back today signed by the judge on 3/29/24. Person now has until 4/29/24 to remove debris and not live in the camper. This is the person living in the camper not the property owner. To be able to remove the trailer, the property owner needs to be cited. This has not been done. Officer Turner stated that now with the order in place the owner of the property can now be cited. Attorney Kaufmann said wonderful. That needs done. After 30 days we have to decide if the Township wants to put out the money to clean it up if it is not gone. The person living there has to clean up the litter and not live in the camper any longer to be in compliance. Sell brought up that blight is out of control in the Township. Turner is in the Township approximately 10 hours per week. Sell asked if we could look for someone to dedicate approximately 20 hours per week. Meert stated she has contacted a company that had been highly recommended and will be bringing that information to the Board. Meert stated she would also still like to have Deputy Turner at least 5 hours per week doing blight and traffic. Sell said she agrees. We are constantly getting more and more complaints and with the overload on the Sheriff's department Turner could spend more time on traffic issues if he did not have to work on blight. I think the Board really needs to do something different. Nothing personal but maybe 20 hours a week until we get the blight under control. ***Motion by Sell, supported by Meert to look for a blight and ordinance enforcement officer that can dedicate more time to the Township blight problem. Roll Call: Richardson -no, Meert -yes, Smith -no, Sell -yes. Tie vote. Motion Not passed.***
5. **Public Discussion: Member Comments:** Jim Kehoe stated he lives on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave and the sand that flows across the road is a problem. Kathy Garrett has a petition for People's choice if anyone would care to sign it. It concerns restoring local government authority regarding land use in their Townships.

6. **Member Comments:** Richardson stated we have really been hit by blight the last few months. We have become overwhelmed. There is TV's and tires up and down D Ave. Can we have someone pick them up? Sell stated Brian picks up any debris we have. We have a contract with Brian. Sell stated she would like to remind you that you just voted no against hiring an extra person to help with the blight. Richardson stated yes, I did, but I don't totally understand the rationality of having two people. Turner stated Brian is very quick about picking things up when notified.
7. **Adjournment:** *Motion made by Smith, supported by Meert to adjourn at 8:36 pm. All yes, motion carried.*

*Adjourned at 8:36p.m.*

**Respectfully submitted,  
Michelle Meert, Pine Grove Township Clerk**