

CRYSTAL TOWNSHIP

Board Meeting
January 15, 2024

This meeting was called to order by Supervisor Hyslop at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Roll call: Board Members Present:

Cathy Walker, Treasurer
Lee Hyslop, Supervisor
Bethany Seymour, Clerk

Kyle Oomen, Trustee
John Stevenson, Trustee

Township Employees Present:

Al Purdy, Fire Chief
Ron Smith, Zoning Administrator

Absent

None

Guest present

Marcos Seymour, Lynn Gardener, Gary Gardener, Paul Erickson, Chief Allen Purdy

Approval of Previous Month's Minutes

The December 18, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes were presented.

**Motion by Walker and supported by Seymour approve last month's minutes.
Voice Vote. Motion Carried.**

Changes to the agenda

None

Citizen comments

None

Letters and communications

Letter from Congress of the United States House Representatives:

Mr. Lee Hyslop,

I'm writing you to thank you again for making me aware of your concerns about your efforts to secure funding to address the need to upgrade the roads in support of agriculture and business in the community. Your thoughts and comments are fully noted, and I value your input on an issue of importance to you. Again, thank you for contacting me. If I may be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to call or write, and know I will.

Signed: John Moolenaar, Member of Congress

Fire Department Report

Chief Purdy inquired about the status of insurance, mentioning a lack of significant on goings with the fire department.

Lee Hyslop reminded the board of last month's VFIS quote, highlighting an increase in the total disability benefit maximum from \$100.00 to \$300.00. The policy remains otherwise unchanged, with a new premium of \$701.00. Another VFIS quote offered higher life, accident, and death benefits at \$1,005.00.

Facing a decision, Lee Hyslop presented the options to Chief Purdy: stick with the \$701.00 premium for increased disability benefits or opt for \$1,000.00 for substantial life benefits. Chief Purdy deferred to the board's preference, expressing contentment with the first option.

Lee Hyslop proposed a motion to raise the Accident & Sickness Insurance package to \$701.00, emphasizing the tripled disability benefit. The board approved the motion, and Chief Purdy thanked them.

Additional discussion covered fire and medical calls, with Lee Hyslop mentioning that the next insurance packet review would include building values. Chief Purdy expressed a desire to explore pricing for truck replacements.

Motion by Oomen and supported by Stevenson to raise the fire department's insurance package to \$701.00. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Zoning Report

Ron Smith issued three zoning permits so far this month, one of which was for a 32 by 48 pole building constructed by the Amish.

On January 3, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., Ron Smith attended court, but the individual who received the citation failed to appear. Consequently, the court date was rescheduled for Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 1:15 p.m. at the courthouse.

Another permit was issued to a licensed builder who Ron Smith suspected of attempting to bypass regulations. The builder added a 2,100 square foot extension to his house. If the building permit is not obtained promptly, Ron Smith will be required to attend court on January 26, 2024.

Clerk's Report

All members of the board are up for election: Bethany Seymour distributed a packet containing a Partisan Nominating Petition form, an Affidavit of Identity form, and a Statement of Organization (for individuals not previously on a ballot). She explained the guidelines for completing the nomination petition form and offered assistance to those needing further instructions. The deadline to file with the County Clerk is April 23, 2024, but since the forms must be submitted to the township clerk, she requested everyone to submit them by April 18, 2024.

Cathy Walker added a helpful note that she is a notary and can aid in certifying Affidavit of Identity forms.

Lee Hyslop does not intend to run for office. Although, he plans on running through his term, and he hopes he does an outstanding job for everyone — leaving a well documented path, on the path forward. He shared that he will work harder this year than the year before, as he thinks

we have a pretty-darn good chance of accomplishing quite a bit. Possible a park, a dam, and \$5 million dollars of road work.

Absentee Voter Drop Box: Bethany Seymour distributes a handout featuring images of Absentee Voter Drop Boxes to the board members. She clarifies that these drop boxes are legally mandated for each township. Fortunately, the government has offered to cover the entire cost of the drop box and also reimburse the installation labor expenses. During the discussion, Lee Hyslop inquires about the actual number of absentee voters in the township, and Bethany Seymour estimates around 65. He suggests selecting a drop box that can be securely bolted to concrete and has the option to be covered for longevity. The board members engage in a conversation to decide on their preferred drop box, considering a backup option as well.

Motion by Hyslop supported by Stevenson to approve the order of ASE M450 drop box. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Voter Supplies: Bethany Seymour asked the board to review and approve the purchase of voter supplies from ElectionSource, totaling \$622.50.

Motion by Oomen supported by Hyslop to approve voter supplies. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Review and Pay Bills

January's bills were presented in the amount of \$7,205.29.

Motion by Oomen and supported by Stevenson to approve the payment of claims as presented. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Treasure's Report

Cathy Walker presented the December 2023 treasure's report.

- Beginning Balance: \$304,602.71
- Cash Receipts: \$21,574.90
- Cash Disbursements: \$13,372.01
- Bank Fees: \$35.00
- Current Balance: \$300,770.60

Cathy Walker proceeds to inform that a Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Furthermore, Cathy Walker mentions that the Planning Commission is seeking replacements for Paul Hamlin and Chairman Richard Greiner, who are considering retirement.

Supervisor's Report

Senator Peter's Office: Lee Hyslop mentioned having an extensive conversation with Kelly Lively from Senator Peter's office. The discussion revolved around the Farm Road Project. With a background spanning over 10 years in the agricultural sector and a five-year tenure with the senator, Kelly Lively expressed a keen interest in participating in Farm Road development and economic initiatives for Crystal Township.

Dam Update: Lee Hyslop presented a soil test diagram, as requested by Mr. Tiffany from Soils Instructors. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Erickson, Mr. Oomen, and Mr. Hyslop, who spoke and attended the Oceana Planning Commission Board Meeting on January 11, 2024, the board unanimously approved a charge order of approximately \$20,000.00 for drilling holes. Lee Hyslop mentioned that the drilling is scheduled for February 15 or 16, 2024. Additionally, he noted that Mr. Tiffany emphasized the need to drain the water to prevent any hazards from spill waves.

Farm Road Update: Lee Hyslop presented a newly crafted Farm Roads Map, skillfully developed by WMSRDC using their GIS program. On Friday, January 19, 2024, Lee Hyslop has a scheduled meeting with the Road Commission, US Commerce Department, USDA MDARD, and others. The agenda includes discussions on prioritizing roads for improvement and determining the phases of the project. They are collaborating on a \$2.5 million grant with the US Economic Department. The Road Commission has committed some funding, and the US Economic Department is considering contributing, contingent on gaining traction. WMSRDC has committed to handling the grant writing.

Economic Development: The auditor alerted Lee Hyslop to activities beyond his statutory duties. Lee Hyslop sought approval to either continue these actions or cease them. On Thursday, January 18, 2024, he will be engaged in a day-long meeting in Shelbyville with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Arbor Farms.

Motion by Oomen and supported by Walker to approve to approve Hyslop to continue the additional work for Crystal Township. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Old business

Cemetery: Lee Hyslop mentioned that cemetery pricing is currently on hold. After thorough research and analysis, they have gathered valuable data. While acknowledging that the cemetery's pricing is competitive, Lee Hyslop is intrigued by the substantial investment made by the township to maintain its pristine condition. Further discussions on this matter are planned for next month.

New Business

Grenier Farms Inc: Three promised checks did not materialize, prompting Lee Hyslop to ask Bethany Seymour to refund Scott Grenier with a \$4,000.00 check. Lee Hyslop intends to express gratitude by sending a thank-you letter. In response, Mr. Grenier promptly sent a \$5,000.00 check, covering the grant writing expenses and various other costs to initiate the project.

Board Member Compensation: Lee Hyslop passes the conversation to Bethany Seymour, who has generated a Salary Compensation Report and distributed copies to the board. The initial chart outlines salary increments from 2015 to the present day, crafted by Lynn Gardner. The second chart provides instances of baseline salary increases influenced by Cost of Living Adjustments during the years when board members did not receive a salary raise. The baseline salaries report specifically addresses adjustments for the Supervisor, Treasurer, and Clerk, as information previously conveyed suggested that other positions either did not seek a raise or were entirely content with their existing compensation.

Millage Rules and Rate: Lee received misinformation from a former clerk stating that the township does not pay mileage, but this was incorrect as there is a resolution in place supporting mileage reimbursement. Ron Smith confirmed having received mileage payments in the past.

Lee Hyslop presented a Milage Reimbursement Policy draft to the board, emphasizing the importance of covering travel expenses, especially given the significant mileage he covers personally. For instance, a trip to Shelbyville at today's rate of \$0.655 per mile, totaling 116.8 miles, would cost \$153.00, which Lee Hyslop has been covering himself. The IRS increased the standard mileage rate for 2024 to \$0.67 cents per mile, up 1.5 cents from 2023. Lee Hyslop highlighted the tax advantage of mileage reimbursement as it is not considered taxable income.

Bethany Seymour suggested having a policy in place as best practice, and Lee Hyslop mentioned Doug, the auditor, sent a 186-page document of the Michigan Department of Treasury Uniform Chart of Accounts for Local Units of Government. Lee Hyslop discussed the benefits of tracking funds and expenditures using this chart of accounts.

Lee Hyslop expressed the hope of knowing about the Farm Road funding and dam repairs by November 20, 2024. He mentioned the possibility of compensation to offset expenses, suggesting it as a favorable approach, if we continue to follow the current resolution that's already in place for milage.

Kyle Oomen inquired about raises, specifically for the Clerk, Treasurer, and Supervisor and asked if everybody get a raise? Lee Hyslop clarified that any position can get a raise, but it must be discussed.

Lee Hyslop shared insights from a conversation with Steve Fleming from Benona, mentioning periodic discussions on raises is best practice to avoid the misunderstand of a 20% raise vs 2-5% raise. Kyle Oomen suggested knowing the hours worked by each position before deciding on raises. Bethany Seymour noted the challenges of quantifying hours for the clerk position due to varying responsibilities.

During the discussion, Kyle Oomen inquired about the payment frequency for trustees. Bethany Seymour responded that trustees are paid once a quarter. Kyle Oomen then calculated that he made \$100.00 per hour and stated that he doesn't need a raise for an hour's worth of work. Jon Stevenson shared he thought it was fair. Kyle Oomen reiterated the importance of knowing the number of hours worked for each position before making any decisions.

Lee Hyslop reminded the board of the requirement to establish new compensation raises must be established 30 days before the annual meeting.

Appointing a New Trustee: Lee Hyslop extends a welcome to Jon Stevenson, the new trustee of Crystal Township.

Introduce Michael Beach: Lee Hyslop conveyed that Michael Beach, residing in Mecosta County, couldn't attend the meeting due to inclement weather and road conditions. Lee Hyslop explained that Michael Beach is the assessor, and the Service Contract with him would be reviewed. Lee Hyslop mentioned that Jared Litwiller expected to finish the Board of Review, making his position available on April 1, 2024, aligning with Mr. Beach's start date as the new assessor.

Concerns were raised about field cards, with Lee Hyslop asking everyone to review page 2 of the contract. Ron Smith stated he doesn't believe Jared Litwiller has field cards, given his flat salary and the potential doubling of expenses for field visits. Lee emphasized the importance of assessors visiting properties according to rules, filling out field cards, and ensuring the Supervisor oversees this, as it was previously a state responsibility.

Regarding the BS&A Software, Michael Beach clarified that Crystal Township has the license but was sold to the county assessor in their name. Mr. Beach would obtain the new license agreement electronically from BS&A. If Jared Litwiller possesses any field cards, hardware, software or any licenses, Lee will request by letterhead its return by April 1, 2024.

Lee Hyslop leads us to point 4 in the contract: A Current Apex Sketch Assessor from Apex Software. Although uncertain about its specifics, it appears to be software potentially accessible through BS&A. Michael Beach told Lee Hyslop, If the township prefers not to include it, we can remove it from the contract.

Lee Hyslop requested the board's review of the contract. If everyone agrees, the Supervisor and Clerk will sign it, and operations with the new assessor will commence on April 1, 2024. The contract is effective until March 31, 2025.

Unknown brine contract: Lee Hyslop inquired with the board about the possibility of expediting the approval of the brine contract, regardless of the cost, as it is a necessary task. Typically, Crystal Township is 13th out of 16 counties on the list for brining.

Kyle Oomen asked if Lee Hyslop had an estimate of the cost, to which Lee Hyslop mentioned it would be around \$35,000. Kyle Oomen noted it's a similar amount to last year's price.

Lee Hyslop proposed making a motion to approve the 2024 brine contract with the Oceana County Road Commissioner for two brines.

Motion by Lee and supported by Oomen to approve the county's contract for the 2024 brines. Voice Vote. Motion Carried.

Public Comment

Paul Erickson commended Kyle Oomen and Lee Hyslop for attending the Oceana Planning Commission Board Meeting on January 11, 2024. Lee Hyslop contributed to the conversation, and Kyle Oomen was acknowledged in the room. Paul emphasized the importance of township representation on such issues, especially in front of commissioners, praising Lee for his excellent representation of Crystal Township.

In return, Kyle Oomen expressed his appreciation for Paul Erickson's advocacy for Crystal Township in those meetings, acknowledging that without Paul's dedication, the township wouldn't be where it is today.

Paul Erickson delved into the rich history of the dam, highlighting its significance to the community. He shared that the dam, built in 1937 under the Works Progress Administration (WPA), served as a means for people to clean up after agricultural work. He reminisced about family reunions and childhood memories associated with the dam. Paul Erickson noted the

potential loss of this historical site and the Department of Interior's recognition of the dam as a kneel barrier, emphasizing its low hazard classification.

Lee Hyslop transitioned to discussing changes in representation for the park, mentioning that Adam Chandler would no longer be the representative. He invites others to join the Parks & Recreation Committee, emphasizing the need for someone willing to manage the park, contribute to maintenance, and possibly offer time and labor.

Lee Hyslop acknowledged the community's significant role in park development, both in donating the land and contributing to the majority of the work. Paul Erickson expressed disappointment in not securing a grant for the park, but also expressed the hope of future enhancements, such as new walking trails and improved access to the pond, could make the park a local attraction.

Lee Hyslop stressed the importance of developing a five-year plan for the township's future to qualify for grant funding. He emphasized the potential financial benefits of having a comprehensive plan and emphasized the need for a planning commission, as they would be in charge in facilitating the process.

Motion to adjourn by Oomen, Hyslop second. Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bethany Seymour