

# ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

## Union Township Trustee Advisory Board

### Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** December 16, 2023 – 9:00 AM, Trustee's Office

**Members Present:** Kelly Carrico, Mike Wozny, Ryan Schafer, Trisha Carrico

**Public Present:** No members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Trisha Carrico, Advisory Board President.

Ryan made a motion to approve the minutes from September 28th, 2023, and Mike seconded. All in favor.

Mike made a Motion to approve the minutes from November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Ryan seconded. All in favor.

#### **Old Business:**

##### *Parking lot project:*

Ryan reported that the majority of the work is completed, with the exception of the approaches, in which should be completed in the upcoming week. He has reminded the contractor Majority Builders the need to have project completed by years end. The landscaping will be done in the spring when the weather is appropriate. Kelly reminded Ryan that the invoice needs to be in her hand by the end of the year.

##### *Ambulance Service Contract:*

Kelly reported that a contract was received recently by Union-North Ambulance Service (UNAS). There are several items that need to be revised.

The contract is in front of the Township Attorney currently. He has asked for their budget for 2024. Also mentioned that the contract stated that we shall make quarterly payments, in addition to operating expenses. Kelly mentioned that it is open ended and not specific as to what the expenses may entail.

A copy of what was presented to the Township was handed to each board member.

Trisha asked how many ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulances UNAS has. Ryan responded none.

Ryan went on to explain that the big thing with the ambulance service is that the taxpayers in Union Township are being taxed twice. The County provides an ALS Service and the township, since 1974 the township has been supporting a BLS (Basic Life Support) service. This was before St. Joseph County began providing ambulance service. So, we are kind of grandfathered.

The Indiana Code states that you cannot double tax. If the County is providing Ambulance service, The township is not required to. The Township is the provider of last resort. Ryan stated that he believes we would be grandfathered in this case, and that we do enjoy the benefits of having our own ambulance close by.

Ryan expressed that the way that other townships like Clay Fire Territory, Penn Township, and New Carlisle Fire Territory is that they run the ambulance service as a part of the Fire Department and not separate. If UNAS were a Paramedic service, like what the county provides, then we would stand a chance to go to the county and ask for the monies that the Taxpayers of Union Township pay for county service.

Another problem with this is that Union-North Ambulance service, North Township is in Marshall County. Marshall County does not provide any ambulance service. North Township must provide ambulance service. So that is why North Township needs the ambulance service.

I would love to see it become a paramedic ambulance service (ALS) and run out of our building. South Bend is reluctant to put a Medic Unit in a building that is not owned by the city. If we could get over that hump it would change things.

Another consideration is that North Township plans to move ahead with their fire territory as of today. They approved the budget and will begin the public hearing portion after the first of the year. They passed an ordinance and resolution respectively to go ahead with the process. It comes with a hefty tax increase.

In that territory they plan on encumbering an ambulance service. The Union North Ambulance Service was chartered with Union Township, North Township as equal partners in this venture. Meaning we own 50% and North Township owns 50%. Glancing at the proposed contract, it does not reflect that agreement. If North Township funds full time personnel to operate the ambulance service, I would assume that Union Township would have to do the same.

Kelly expressed that she had a list of questions she sent to the Township Attorney, one of them being what would happen if North Township were to withdraw from the agreement to continue with the ambulance service agreement. What would happen to the assets of UNAS? He stated that the assets would be split 50-50. But according to UNAS it is theirs.

Trisha asked, "Isn't one of the ambulances ours (Union Township)?"

Kelly mentioned we own both ambulances jointly. They are titled in each township's name. The question is the funds, billing money, donations, contract payments, and monies not spent that currently is over \$200,000.

Another concern is item number six (6) in proposed budget. There is no guarantee of service. What is a contract if there is no guarantee? They could take the contract money and never provide ambulance service.

Also, if you look further, if we choose not to go forward with the contract, the proposed contract states, "we (Union Township) would not interfere with North Townships use of the equipment; and take no action to limit, impede or prevent. In other words, we just step out.

Ryan said that he compared the proposed contract to the last one that was signed from 2019 and it stated that we own equipment. Last year we purchased cardiac monitors at \$30,000 each. Union Township purchased one and North Township purchased one. Recently we were approached for monies for a stair chair. We cannot purchase anything since we do not have a contract in play. We own an ambulance and associated equipment as a unit. Computers, office equipment and so on. My takeaway is that we own an ambulance and all the associated equipment for an ambulance. This proposed contract does not reflect that.



Trisha asked if we were to split how would you go about that. Ryan suggested that everything be appraised, then divided accordingly. Somebody will likely have to write the other township a check.

Kelly mentioned that it seems that the townships have lost control of things, and that the board of UNAS seems to think everything belongs to them.

Ryan mentioned that UNAS is a publicly funded 501(c)3 that provides a public service, with public funds. They are receiving government funds and government grants. Their finances are posted for the public to view. Maybe he is wrong, and he welcomes proof otherwise.

Kelly asked the board to review the contract and make notes of any questions so we could sit down with the Township's Attorney with these questions. We must decide what we want to do. We do not currently have a contract. Trisha asked if UNAS uses our facilities. Kelly answered yes. We provide office space and a place to park an ambulance. Kelly further explained that according to legal counsel, without a contract there would be no reason for UNAS to provide or guarantee service to Union Township, or for the Township to provide office space, etc.

Ryan stated that we had been going along in good faith presuming that the township was to provide a contract, when we then discovered that it is UNAS that is to provide a contract for our review. This is in the by-laws of UNAS. That is what changed everything because in the past we have just rubber stamped a contract and went on. It is in their by-laws that UNAS provide the contract and somehow along the line it got reversed. We have been going along in good faith. Ryan's thoughts are that we still will be holding the monies for 2023; we can get the 2024 contract completed and then we can see what can be done for the 2023 year.

Another opinion Ryan stated is that UNAS needs to take their offices somewhere else. It is a problem, a big problem. Trisha asked why is it a problem? Ryan said personnel issues. It impedes the operation of the Fire Service with all the gossip and various things. Trisha asked from the fire side or the ambulance side. Ryan said it is both. He has had many discussions with ambulance service personnel, firemen and others. So and so is doing this or that, it's like a daycare.

Kelly mentioned that we spent over \$6,000.00 to re-key the fire station. The Operations Chief went through the station and had it re-keyed as necessary. Then it is discovered that a storage closet used by UNAS was re-keyed. The ambulance service's behavior during all of this was disrespectful. The problem was resolved regardless. It is a township owned building and the township should have a master key.

Ryan stated that we provide UNAS with office space free of charge in a township owned building. The township pays rent on an office for the trustee. That makes no sense. Why are we doing this?

Kelly mentioned that moving forward if we do have part-time people working in the department, it would be nice to have easier communication between the Fire Chief and Trustee. If the offices were in the same building it would make that better.

Mike asked if it meets the requirements of the grant that the Town of Lakeville got toward the construction of the Fire Station Building? Kelly stated that the town secured a grant, Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), to contribute to the building of new facility. The grant was for \$500,000 and was passed to the Union Township Building Corporation, along with a bond that was issued for funding the building project. There was a bond for approximately 1.8M secured through the Union Township Building Corporation that the township pays semi-annually since construction has been completed. The OCRA and bond monies were used to fund the addition to the fire station.

Ryan added that at the last Fire Territory meeting this was asked by Lori Kelly, Town Board President, to Pete Agostino (the attorney who drew up the Fire Territory agreement) and he stated that a grant was just that. It did not need to be repaid.

Trisha: This is why the Town thinks they own the building?

Kelly: The Township Attorney reached out to the OCRA grant people and there are no stipulations of ownership as claimed.

*Storage Container/Sale.*

Kelly plans to do sealed bids. What would be the best way to market this? It was discussed to advertise it on Facebook Marketplace and that sealed bids will be accepted until a date and then opened and awarded.

### **New Business**

*Nepotism policy* forms were presented and signed by all board members.

*A resolution* was presented for the position of Operations Chief for the Fire Territory.

*A resolution* was presented to amend the salary ordinance for compensation for the Operations Chief.

*Approval of Mileage Claim:* Kelly presented her mileage expense of \$729.12 for the past year using the Indiana guidelines. (It was approved).

### **Trustees Report**

*The November 2023 financial statement* was presented. Kelly mentioned that the State Board of Accounts is adamant that there is a second set of eyes on the expenses being paid.

Mike said that he will be stopping in more often to review things in the future. (Mike is the financial review person for the board.)

Kelly mentioned that with the Fire Territory the Chief can review those expenses. Since they are coming out of that office.

Kelly also mentioned that she is working on the compensation for the firemen. There are twelve fire reports that are incomplete, and compensation is difficult to calculate. The Chief has told the men that these reports need completed so they can get compensated. These reports are what get sent forward to the State Fire Marshall's Office.

Mike mentioned that when he was the secretary for the Volunteers that he had the same issue.

Ryan mentioned that the reporting system that is being used will track much more than how it is currently being used. It can track payroll, vehicle maintenance, and many other things that we are not currently doing now.

Mike made a motion to adjourn, Ryan seconded. Passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54AM

Minutes approved 10 Day of January 2024

Rusha N. Carver Board Chairman

Mike W. Guy Board Member

R. J. [Signature] Board Secretary

James M. [Signature] Trustee