

## LWV Park Ridge Observer Report

**Meeting:** Maine Township Board Meeting (Regularly scheduled) **Date:** August 28, 2008

**Observer:** Mary Upson **Start/End Time:** Observation started at 7:30 during budget meeting. Regular meeting started at around 8:40pm

**Members Attendance:** Supervisor Morask, Trustee Jones, Trustee McKenzie, Trustee Carrabotta, Trustee Sweeney, Clerk Gialamas, Highway Commissioner Kazmierczak, Assessor Krey and Attorney Krefthefer were all present and stayed through the duration of the meeting.

**Budget Meeting for Amended General Town Fund:** This meeting was called due to the Township being nearly over budget for specific line items namely webmaster and attorney fees. At issue, when overages are over 10% of the budget, there must be an amended budget rather than wait until the end of the fiscal year to address overages on line items. Trustee Carrabotta was stressing fiscal responsibility, while he was talking, audience members shouted out “liar” and “not if you harass people” to which the audience applauded. Supervisor Morask stated that rather than pay for an amended budget every month, the board should vote on an amended budget one time, “it will save money” which was met with applause. This portion of the meeting became somewhat chaotic. Statements between board members included “and then he has the nerve”, “I don’t think Sweeney knows”, “This is stupid”, in addition to audience members shouting out during all of this. Supervisor Morask had to become stern with the gavel to regain control of the meeting.

The budget “as explained” was then voted on. It passed 3-2, with Trustees Sweeney and Carrabotta voting “no”. This portion of the meeting was scheduled to take 15 minutes, but took an hour and a half.

The meeting then temporarily adjourned to honor the winners of the Township’s National Night Out poster contest.

**Budget Meeting and Potential Action for Amended Road District Budget:** Highway Commissioner Kazmierczak is asking for an increase in the Road Budget as well as an establishment of a general road fund. He stated that many line items were based on last year’s numbers and that some line items are nearly over budget. Trustee McKenzie asked for clarification on several line items. Trustee Carrabotta expressed frustration and stated the needs are not justified and the budget should be respected.

**Public Comment:** One citizen spoke at this time stating the Highway Department does a splendid job, we have to be together to take care of Maine Township, we need money for the Highway Department.

The Board then voted on amending the Road District Budget. The amended budget did not pass with Sweeney, Carrabotta and McKenzie voting “no”.

**Regular Meeting:** The regular meeting was called to order around 8:40 pm. Approval of minutes for the 3 previous meetings were approved with Sweeney attaching an addendum which was approved.

**Public Comment:**

1. Speaker 1 stated support for Trustee Kim Jones. She provided statistics regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. She stated the investigation process was unethical and the official report did not include all the interviews and necessary redactions and felt the suggestion that the two trustees involved not stand next to each other during photos was offensive. She felt the August 6 meeting with only 3 trustees present was unethical and illegal. She stated that there were conflicts of interest with Ancel Glink as Carrabotta's personal attorney also works for the firm. She asked that the investigation be reopened with a third party investigating and that the Township revamp its sexual harassment policy. She received a standing ovation.
2. Speaker 2 agreed with speaker one, but takes due process seriously. She does not feel it's appropriate to ask people to step down before an investigation as false accusations do occur. She shared her experiences and Jewish Nation lore about lying and rape.
3. Speaker 3 stated we need to use our minds not our hearts, we need to process with our brains not our heart. We do not want pay for an investigation. She urged the board to find a solution, this is not helping us.
4. Speaker 4 questioned why the Township attorney suggested Trustee Jones confront Trustee Carrabotta.
5. Speaker 5 also questioned the decision to have Trustee Jones confront Trustee Carrabotta privately as it increased opportunity for victimization. She was given bad advice.
6. Speaker 6 expressed some frustration over how many people showed up to this meeting, but do not show up for other meetings. He discussed the budget and flooding problems in the area that haven't been addressed. He is exhausted from all the bickering from the board. He stated Carrabotta is always trying to reduce the budget. He felt that there is no evidence of wrongdoing and that there are more important things that the Township can be doing.
7. Speaker 7 reminded meeting goes that men are also at risk for sexual harassment. It can happen to anyone.
8. Speaker 8 stated that Carrabotta brought shame to himself and the Township. He should step down, he wasted tax payer's money.
9. Speaker 9 stated "how dare Kim Jones accuse [Trustee Carrabotta] and lie". He has a right to defend himself and a right to an investigation. "She has no right to lie" because he is trying to save the township money. There was booing and heckling from the audience.

10. Speaker 10 stated people were confused about what to think. “They are trying to break up these three seats” and to “crucify an innocent man”. She quoted a bible verse and was ashamed of the behavior displayed at this meeting.

11. Speaker 11 stated Carrabotta blew this whole thing up. Trustee Jones did not ask for this.

12. Speaker 12, State representative Marty Moylan: Rep. Moylan very passionately and loudly touched on issues of victim shaming and common decency. He questioned the process by which the investigation took place. He stated Trustee Carrabotta is a “bully and should resign now”.

13. Speaker 13 called for Moylan’s resignation – “let’s look into your record”. She stated Trustee Jones asked for the meeting – Trustee Jones replied and a heated exchange followed.

14. Speaker 14 cited the official report that stated Trustee Jones earnestly felt uncomfortable and did not want an investigation.

15. The first speaker appeared again to say lying about harassment is rare. Those that speak out put themselves at risk. “It is very clear to me” that Trustee Jones “is not lying” – read everything.

#### **Discussion/Action:**

The board had approved the increased budget line items for attorney’s fees during the budget portion of the meeting. Supervisor Morask made a motion to defer payment until all items were received from the investigation. There was some discussion as to whether or not Trustees Jones and Carrabotta should recuse themselves from the vote. The attorney present did not feel this was necessary. Supervisor Morask stated that the board should delay the check for two weeks until all the transcripts that were already paid for are received. The discussion then devolved into why the special meeting on August 6 took place when it did. Trustee McKenzie defended her positions on sexual harassment and the selection of the date. Supervisor Morask stated it was fundamentally unfair to have a meeting without everyone. The Supervisor continued to support her idea of holding off payment by mentioning FOIA requests with regard to emails and interview transcripts. There was a lot of discussion and talking over each other. It was very confusing as to what motions were made, amended and voted on during this portion of the meeting.

Old Business: A motion was made that all transcripts be ordered as they were already paid for, this would save money on FOIA requests. Trustee Sweeney asked why all transcripts weren’t included, the attorney stated there was no reason other than the firm thought some things were not necessary. There was some heated exchanges at this time. Trustee McKenzie asked the lawyer why she advised Trustee Jones to confront Trustee Carrabotta, to which the attorney then defended her decision. McKenzie amended the motion to include posting transcripts to the website. The motion passed unanimously.

There was some discussion regarding FOIAs of emails and whether or not some emails fall under attorney client privilege. And if there would be need to be a vote to waive privilege.

Again some tense comments occurred at this time. There was no vote taken. There was also mention of names of FOIA requesters being made public.

A motion was made to table the discussion of procedures and policies portion under old business. This passed.

New Business: It was determined that no vote was needed for the highway department to sell surplus vehicles. A motion to table discussion regarding policy/procedure for requesting attorney time and staff calling special meetings. This motion passed.

**Officials' Reports:**

Trustee Sweeney and Trustee McKenzie stated their feelings regarding the investigation and responses to it. Trustee Carrabotta responded to a question from the audience regarding his response to the allegation and acknowledged National Night Out. There were some tense exchanges between Trustees during this portion of the meeting.

Supervisor Morask informed everyone that the election board had requested to use the township building as a polling place. The Township building would be closed on Election Day.

Highway Commissioner Kazmierczak expressed disappointment on the vote for the amended road budget. He felt it was punitive.

The Board went into closed session for about a half hour. The board voted to table opening the minutes of the February 12 closed session meeting. The board voted 3-2 to table opening the minutes of the closed session of the May 22 meeting. There was some more back and forth between members and then the meeting was adjourned at 11:27pm.

**League Action Needed:**

None at this time.