

The Board of Liberty Township Trustees met in Regular Session at the township administration office on Monday, July 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance, Mr. Arnie Clebone, Mr. Devon Stanley, and Mr. Gregory Cizmar presiding.

Fiscal Officer Matthew Connely reviewed the Cash Summary of Funds. Mr. Connely mentioned the 2026 Alternative Tax Budget that the Board will approve this evening. Once approved, he will submit it to the County which is due later this month. Matthew reported the Township is currently being audited by Budget Management for grant funds received. He concluded his report by announcing the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter ended, and all reports have been submitted.

Residents Alan and Carol Friedkin presented a check for \$5,000 to be divided between the Police Department and Fire EMT Department as a sincere thank you for their kindness, understanding and professionalism during a very difficult time for their family.

### **Reports:**

Administrator. Martha Weirick said the Matter of Balance 6 -week class ends this week. She thanked the Girard Liberty Multigenerational Center for offering the event. Martha reminded everyone of Music in Churchill Park this Thursday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. and again on Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. She concluded that on July 23<sup>rd</sup> the Trustees are hosting the annual Liberty Township Senior Watch Open House event for all residents over the age of sixty. The event starts at 11:00 a.m. In addition to meeting the township staff, local agencies will be on hand to provide important information, and entertainment will be on hand. A light lunch will be provided.

Fire Department Chief Doug Theobald thanked the Trustees for the new squad which is now on the road and being utilized. He said they are working on preventative matters by inspecting air packs, fire hoses testing and testing other equipment. Chief said the State Fire Marshall has offered a \$5,000 reward for information that leads to a conviction on the recent arson fire. He reported that Mercy Health Hospital is scheduled to open around October. He concluded his report stating they continue to have above average runs.

Police Department Captain Ray Buhala presented his report and reminded everyone of National Night Out on August 5<sup>th</sup>. National Night Out is a community event. In addition to a parade, local vendors will be on hand, lively entertainment, food, and the evening concludes with fireworks.

Road Superintendent Mr. Wayne Hickman reported that a preconstruction meeting with Foust will be on Thursday held at the County. Wane said Phase 1 of the Sidewalk Project is to be bid out. Phase 1A, he added, he is waiting for news from the Governor. A meeting is scheduled for the Center Park progress report on Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. The 2025 Paving Project begins this week, he mentioned. He also said the Fredrick Street CDBG grant pre-application was submitted but we won't know until 2026 if we got the grant. He addressed some concerns residents had about the timeframe Lumos Fiber Company will restore people's yards. He asked them to give Lumos a few weeks to restore all properties. He concluded that the road crew are busy with catch basins, ditch cleanouts, pot hole patching and other road work.

Zoning and Code Enforcement Director Mr. Jim Rodway was absent.

### **New Business:**

Motion to approve the minutes of the Wednesday, June 18, 2025 Regular meeting and the June 24, 2025 Special meeting.

Trustees to hold this motion until July 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Motion to approve warrant/eft expenditures for the month of June 2025 in the amount of \$898,843.09 warrants #26978 through #27034 inclusive.

Motion: Mr. Stanley. Second: Mr. Cizmar.

Roll Call: Mr. Stanley, Yes. Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the Purchase Order Listing and any Then and Now Certificates for the month of 2025.

Motion: Mr. Cizmar. Second. Mr. Clebone.

Roll Call: Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Mr. Stanley, Yes. Motion carried.

25-95 Motion to hire Jennifer M. Hudson-Hightower as a probationary Police Officer per the terms of the bargaining agreement between the OPBA and Board of Liberty Township Trustees effective 7-14-25 at a rate of \$24.89. The increase is due to her qualifications, experience, and the local labor market.

Motion: Mr. Clebone. Second. Mr. Cizmar.

Roll Call: Mr. Clebone, Yes. Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Stanley, Yes. Motion carried.

\*\* At this time we would like to swear in Officer Hudson-Hightower.

25-96 Motion to approve the Alternative Tax Budget for the fiscal year 2026 and request the Fiscal Officer to forward the Budget to the Trumbull County Commissioners.

Motion: Mr. Cizmar. Second. Mr. Clebone.

Roll Call: Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Mr. Stanley, Yes. Motion carried.

25-97 Motion to accept the resignation of Firefighter Robert Shape as a full-time firefighter effective 7/18/25 but will continue as a part time employee.

Motion: Mr. Stanley. Second: Mr. Cizmar.

Roll Call: Mr. Stanley, Yes. Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Motion carried.

25-98 Motion to accept the resignation of Firefighter Alec Coman as a full-time firefighter effective July 23, 2025 but will continue as a part time employee.

Motion: Mr. Stanley. Second: Mr. Cizmar.

Roll Call: Mr. Stanley, Yes. Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Motion carried.

25-99 Motion in increase appropriations in the AARP Fund # 2273-230-700-1321 by \$3.34 to clear out account with the funds going toward the 2024 Road Paving Program.

Motion: Mr. Cizmar. Second: Mr. Stanley.

Roll Call: Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Stanley, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Motion carried.

25-100 Motion to pass the following resolution for grass abatements:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees hereby determines that the owner's maintenance of vegetation, garbage, refuse and other debris upon the following properties constitutes a nuisance:

Address:	Parcel No.:
632 Underwood	12-590600
4055 Belmont	12-762300
4249 Belmont	12-685750
3825 Belmont	12-733400

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that notice of this Board's intent to provide for the abatement, control, or removal of said vegetation, garbage, refuse or other debris constituting said nuisance be given to all owners of the land and holders of liens of record upon said land in accordance with Section 505.87 (B) O.R.C.; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that upon proper notice, and failure of the property owner to abate said nuisance within seven days, the Board of Trustees provide for the abatement, control, or removal of said vegetation, garbage, refuse or other debris constituting said nuisance in accordance with Section 505.87 (B) O.R.C.

Motion: Mr. Cizmar. Second. Mr. Clebone.

Roll Call: Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Mr. Stanley, Yes. Motion carried.

Citizens remarks: A resident expressed his concerns regarding a shooting that occurred at Pleasant Valley Church, near his home. Captain Ray Buhala reported he spoke with a church representative who informed him they have installed additional cameras, added other security measures, and will be turning off the lights earlier at recreational areas.

A resident offered another presentation regarding a former gas station located on Tibbetts-Wick Road. He shared his thoughts with the Board asking for their support and offered a resolution he composed on how to remove or repair the structure. Trustee Clebone thanked the resident for bringing it to everyone's attention. Trustee Clebone added blight invites crime and would deter

any out-of-town person looking to invest in Liberty. Trustee Stanley said the property in question does not meet the legal definition of an attractive nuisance. There is an agreement between the Trustees regarding abandoned political signs on the property. However, Trustee Stanley said, “the property has nothing structurally wrong, and it fails to meet the requirements for demolition. Adding “no one likes blight, and this area is a high traffic area, but the county performed a second evaluation on the property, and again, it wasn’t found structurally deficient.” It was agreed by everyone that they wouldn’t mind it looking better to be marketed; however it does not have the necessary amenities to attract some businesses. Trustee Clebone desires to have the owners cited to repair the overhangs and boarded windows. Trustee Stanley said, “my stance is not to let it get any worse.”

A resident expressed her concerns with blight inviting crime, abandoned cars and delinquent taxes.

A resident spoke on zoning changes “can be a slippery slope,” adding “it can hurt a lot of people struggling to put food on the table, including the elderly population.”

A resident claimed Trustee Cizmar is against property maintenance codes. Trustee Cizmar took exception stating, “that is not true, everyone has a different opinion.”

A resident spoke on code enforcement asking the trustees why they aren’t doing more. He understands people are dealing with hardships and hopes the trustee can work with people. However, he added, “the maintenance codes respect the rights of property owners who must be responsible neighbors.”

A resident suggested the Board establish a 9- or 11 member panel of residents and zoning officials to work together to develop an strong maintenance code.

A resident asked what happened to “Liberty Pride?”

A resident spoke “there is more than just one gas station issue” referring to other areas like Monteen’s, beggars on corner’s, the gas station on Belmont, high grass at motels, and sidewalks not being maintained in the winter by businesses.

A resident spoke of a home on Will-O-Wood that has an overflowing dumpster. Trustee Cizmar was aware of the home; a tree fell on the home and they are working on the repairs. Greg said the dumpster had been emptied but will follow up to see if it can be emptied again.

A resident asked now that the camera money will no longer be collected, will the Board put on a police levy? At this time, Fiscal Officer Matthew Connelly said we had adequate funding for the foreseeable future as long as we are mindful with the funds. Trustee Clebone said we will have to put a levy on in the next two years.

A resident spoke on the diversity of Liberty Township. He lives in a rural area and needs to park his vehicles on his property. He doesn’t want the codes to become so strict he cannot continue to live in Liberty.

Trustees’ remarks: Trustee Devon Stanley said the Trustees can’t agree on how far to go. He said Motel 30 has been a nuisance for years, even before he was elected. It took all this time to finally have it scheduled to be demolished this year. The Board has gone after those properties that are in violation. However if you adopt the strictest property maintenance codes now anyone can be selectively subject to enforcement. “The Board utilizes all the tools we have and will commit to continuing with discussion on what we can do and will do.”

Trustee Clebone wants clear, comprehensive codes. He said he realizes it’s not a one-man job, but we may not be able to afford more than one officer. We don’t have the strength in the existing codes to regulate properties, he added. Mr. Clebone would like to see garbage cannot be left at the curb and he would like to see no street parking. Arnie realizes we have aging structures, and people can’t afford to maintain them or don’t care to be proactive. He also wants rules for rental properties

Trustee Greg Cizmar said he reviewed Boardman’s property maintenance codes and had “no

problem with their codes – in fact they are “very similar to ours” – however, he said I don’t like the word opinion. He added, “Your opinion is different than mine or your neighbors.” He also reviewed Weathersfield’s property codes, but thought they were way to restrictive.

Motion to adjourn at 7:53 p.m.

Motion: Mr. Stanley. Second: Mr. Cizmar.

Roll Call: Mr. Stanley, Yes. Mr. Cizmar, Yes. Mr. Clebone, Yes. Motion carried.

Next business meeting Thursday, July 24, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.

There are no regular meetings in August. Should we need a special meeting during the month of August, we will notify the press in advance and put a notice on the township web page.