

**Sangamon Township
Regular Meeting Minutes
And Decennial Meeting #3 Minutes
Held at Sangamon Township Building, 1264 Old Rt. 47 White Heath, Illinois
September 14, 2023**

The regular monthly meeting of Sangamon Township and the Decennial Meeting #3 were called to order at 7:00 pm by Supervisor Mike Nolan. Roll call was taken. Present were Trustees Kathleen Piatt, Bill Blickhan, Bill Olson and Tim King. Also present were Decennial committee members Leslie Heath, Tosha Valentine, Mark Sieja and John Foley. Highway Commissioner Lary Sebens, Township Clerk Kevin Duff were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

DECENNIAL MEETING #3 MINUTES

The Sangamon Township Decennial Meeting #3 was held Thursday September 14th, 2023 as part of the regular township Meeting. Present at the meeting were the following members: Mike Nolan – Supervisor, Kevin Duff – Clerk, Trustees Bill Olson, Bill Blickhan, Tim King and Kathleen Piatt, Road Commissioner Larry Sebens, at large committee members John Foley representing Road and Bridge, Tosha Valentine, Leslie Heath and Mark Sieja representing the town. The following five areas were covered during the Third Decennial meeting: Review of Decennial Meeting #2, Parks, Cemeteries, Community Involvement and Long-Term Planning. A summary of each area is covered below.

- 1) **Review of Decennial Meeting #2** – The committee was given the opportunity to review the minutes and process of the Second Decennial Meeting. The committee was in agreement that the minutes were representative and no further discussion of the areas that were discussed needed additional comment.
- 2) **Parks** – All aspects of the existing and future ball diamond and related facilities were discussed. The committee offered suggestions that the Township Park/Ball Diamond should meet the needs of the community with softball fields and playground equipment. The need for walking trails was not viewed presently as a priority but the work of the Heartland Pathways Organization to eventually reopen the former rail line through the township as a trail was noted. Heartland Pathways is moving toward merging their entity and existing right ways with the Kickapoo Trails. To open the trail to the public, bridges will need to be repaired/constructed on the trail. The hope is that the Piatt County Preserve would eventually take over and become owner of the trail. This would be of great benefit to the Township Community as it is located close to several subdivisions. The township might consider converting the abandoned road that leads to the iron bridge near Centerville as a trail that would be more accessible to subdivisions at the north end of the township. It was pointed out that the opening of these possibilities could bring bird watchers as well as hikers to the township. A suggestion was made to have a place in the Forest

Reserve Park on Shady Rest Road to launch kayaks into the Sangamon River. The township works with the White Heath Recreation League in the usage and maintenance of the existing field. Each year the two parties sign an agreement based on the following: The rec league maintains the existing facility, provides adequate insurance and pays the water and electric bills. The township provides mowing. After ascertaining the needs of the community, the township purchased an additional 10+ acres adjacent to the existing field in 2019. This decision included input from the general public based on informational meetings. Participation numbers in the WHRL have risen over the last few years to sixteen teams. Today's facility does not meet the needs for these participants. A new larger diamond will allow for older youth a place to play as well as adult softball teams. The Township Board in conjunction with the recreation league has determined that the 31 year-old lights and electrical service need to be replaced on the existing diamond. It was also decided to proceed with the ground work for a new larger diamond in the summer of 2024. The recreational league has begun fundraising while the township is looking at funding options for these projects. Volunteer involvement will be instrumental in the accomplishment of these goals and will come from the White Heath Recreation League. These projects are scheduled to be completed by September of 2024. The decennial committee was in agreement of the excitement to begin the work on the larger field. Public input has expressed interest in having other facilities added to the park such as pickle ball, additional playground equipment another pavilion etc. With the addition of park acreage there seems to be sufficient room for off street parking. It was proposed and agreed that no parking signs should be placed on Plum Street leading into the existing park. All the suggestions/plans could help Sangamon Township become a destination at a minimal cost to the township.

- 3) **Cemeteries.** A brief introduction was given into the five active cemeteries in the township which are: Madden, Mackey, Ross-Hughes, Ingram and Camp Creek. The township has one employee which also has the responsibility as cemetery sexton. The township voted two years ago to eliminate the Cemetery Board. Several reasons led to this decision. The Cemetery Board had not followed proper meeting procedures of posting agendas and minutes despite being directed by the Township Board. There was no communication between the Cemetery Board and the Township Board so the Township Board received information from the cemetery sexton which was a duplication of effort. Since there is no tax levy specific for the township cemeteries, the Cemetery Board had no authority for finances but only an advisory role which was not being communicated. That being said the Township Board gave the opportunity to the Cemetery Board to speak to the Township Board as why they should not be dissolved. No one from the Cemetery Board showed up to address the Township Board.

Availability of grave sites is not an issue at this time. Ingram Cemetery is the most popular cemetery and has the fewest available plots. All the cemeteries in the township are what are known as family cemeteries that have been deeded to the township. The township is presently in negotiations to accept a parcel of land adjacent to the Camp Creek Cemetery which will mean additional burial plots in the future. By Illinois law, Sangamon Township must be licensed by the state to operate cemeteries which includes records, internments and maintenance. Presently the township is upgrading its records into a computer program called CIMS which was purchased this year. By employing a part time college student existing data is being inputted into the CIMS system. The goal is to have the basic information of the five active cemeteries in the system by the end of 2024. This will include existing burials, sold but not interred and available plots. This system will enable the township to maintain an accurate up-to-date account of the cemeteries.

With the CIMS program it will allow the township to record deeds for the cemetery plots. Today the sexton maintains a book with this information. Presently cemetery salaries and expenses come from the general fund and are budgeted as such each year. A review of the sexton's compensation was made this year and found that it was not in line with similar cemeteries. The sexton's salary was adjusted to be competitive. Cemetery charges regarding burials are reviewed annually by the township board. The township provides the equipment and supplies that are used to maintain the cemeteries. The sexton works with the funeral home in outlining what services are required and the cost of these services. The sexton also has worked with the funeral home in acquiring temporary markers for graves. Once the guidelines for burials are reviewed this year, they will be published on the township website.

- 4) **Community Involvement** - The township has an open-door policy where constituents can communicate needs, concerns, opinions to the Township Board. At the beginning of the regular monthly meeting time is given for input from township meeting attendees. The Annual Town Meeting is another venue where members of the community have input. An example of this would be, allowing of the sale of alcohol at the Piatt County Trailblazers Rodeo which was a petition that was presented as an agenda item at the Annual Town Meeting. As before mentioned, the communication with the WHRL is the major area of community involvement. This relationship has been in existence for the last thirty years and has grown over the last few years. The president of the WHRL, Aaron Brown, provides excellent communication through the Township Liaison Trustee Bill Blickhan. The WHRL has been very effective in gaining volunteer participation.

The township in the past two years has supported a homecoming event at White Heath which has been successful in bringing present and former members of the Township Community together for a day full of activities and fun. The homecoming event this year included the Mid Piatt Farm Department hosting a pork chop dinner. The Decennial Committee was in agreement to see this continue next year. The township began a new program two years ago of acknowledging an individual that has made a difference in the community. It is anticipated that this program will continue. The township also has a working relationship with ambulance service, sheriff's office, board of health and the fire department. Fortunately, a township trustee is also a member of the Piatt County Board which allows the Township Board to keep up to date with happenings pertaining to the county as a whole. The road commissioner annually has a cookout on Halloween for trick or treaters of the township which has grown each year. For the past several years the Sangamon Township Maintenance Department has hosted a two-day cleanup event where residents can bring discarded items for removal at a small fee. Previously the Township provided a recycling program but that was discontinued by Knight Disposal. The Township has not been able to find a recycling replacement. The Township held a Senior's Fair a few years ago with partnership with Kirby Hospital with good resident participation. The fair was not repeated as Kirby did not renew their partnership with the township. Kirby Hospital has been an excellent partner of the township with participation of the Senior's Fair and the Homecoming events. The township currently has a Community Club in White Heath and the County has an active Historical Society.

- 5) **Long Term Planning** – Four areas were discussed: existing and future facilities, planned expenditures, utilization of financial history and community needs and expectations. It was expressed that the township needs to have an annual inspection of its facilities. This will provide

a blueprint for repairs and upgrades that can be budgeted and reviewed annually. The financial reports that are generated monthly will provide information of any surpluses so the township board can determine how they will be allocated. Thanks to the Board's efforts (particularly former Supervisor Piatt and former Trustee Foley) to have independent accounting through Kelly's Accounting Firm, planned expenditures and utilization of finance history in projections for the Township has greatly improved. Utilizing financial reports, the supervisor provides a monthly financial projection for the board. The township is making wise investments including CD's, interest on bank accounts and participation in the Illinois Funds program. The Road and Bridge Bank Account maintains a large balance as it is used to make large equipment expenditures. Members of the committee expressed interest in trails, additional handicap playground equipment, pickle ball etc. The township board will need to set up meetings for public input as to what the residents see as needs versus wants. It was suggested that if the public is interested in expanding the recreational areas in the township a referendum to pay for those additional programs would be appropriate. The township board needs a comprehensive plan to apply for grants to offset development costs of future projects. Presently the township is operating in the black. The following areas need to be considered when allocating any surplus funds: Park Improvements, Emergency Fund, Cemetery Improvements and Neglected Properties. The Insurance and General Assistance Funds have adequate reserves.

The at large members of the Decennial Committee were thanked by the board for their participation and insight into the execution of the purpose of reviewing all areas of the Sangamon Township Government. After a review of the Decennial Minutes Meeting #3 are approved, a Decennial Summary Report will be created by the supervisor and submitted to the Piatt County Board as required by statute. A copy of the report will be kept on file for public review at the Sangamon Township Office.

Windmill Update:

Before the Decennial Meeting adjourned, an update about the windmill project in the county was given by Trustee Piatt. The windmill project will be considered by the County Zoning Board on October 3, 2023. The Piatt County Board will then have 30 days to vote on the project. If the application meets the State's requirements, the County Board will face a lawsuit if they vote down the project according to the State's current wind farm regulations. This presents a Catch-22 scenario for the County Board. The County lost revenue sharing when the last proposal was not approved. The current proposal still has compensation for required road improvements.

Announcements and Communications:

A statement from the Illinois Fund for the Township accounts was distributed. \$150,000 from the Permanent Road Fund was transferred to the Illinois Fund. Additional funds from the Town Fund will be transferred when the next tax payment to the township is made.

A Certificate of Insurance from the Board of Education for the junior high baseball team using the ball diamond was updated that shows the WHRL and Sangamon Township as separate entities.

A statement from the State of Illinois regarding Corporate Replacement Tax was distributed.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Trustee King and seconded by Trustee Piatt to approve the minutes. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Invoices:

The current invoices were discussed and some items clarified. A motion was made by Trustee Piatt and seconded by Trustee King to approve the invoices. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. (Supervisor Nolan will check with Attorney Rupiper on her current charges to Highway Commissioner Sebens to confirm those chargers are not covered with retainer services).

New Business:

The ordinance to accept the cemetery donation and other related cemetery matters were deferred to next month.

Nominations for Out Standing Citizen were discussed. The board will finalize at the October Meeting. Clean-up days were announced as October 13th and 14th.

The board declined a request to make a donation for electronic recycling.

Old Business:

Supervisor Nolan provided a monthly cash flow projection for the township.

The audit for 2022 has not been completed.

There was no assessor report for the month because of Decennial Meeting.

Termite damage inspection was completed and no damage could be detected in the roof area. It was reported that there is an electrical problem in the hallway area that needs to be addressed. New ceiling tiles need to be installed and the porch posts will be needing replacement in the future.

Supervisor Nolan submitted a grant proposal to the IDNR for monies to begin work on the new ball diamond. The proposal included maps of the flood plain, topographical maps, a deed to the property as well as other documents and information.

A report on the Illinois Funds was given under announcements and communications.

Trustee Blickhan reported that another proposal on updating the lights at the existing ball diamond is being obtained that should reduce light bleed and have a reduced cost. Phil Davis is holding time on his schedule next summer to provide grading and tiling services for ball diamond #2. Projected costs are still at \$20,000 for lighting and electrical service upgrades on the existing diamond and \$70,000 for diamond #2 field preparation. The rec league and the township will consider proceeding with having a lime infield on diamond #2 at a cost of \$16,000 which is part if the \$70,000 estimate. There are plusses and minuses to having a lime infield. For the existing ball diamond, the township hauled multiple loads of clay on the infield before lime was added

A motion was made by Trustee Olson and seconded by Trustee Blickhan to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Supervisor Nolan and Clerk Duff