

Madison Township Board Meeting
7047 E. Landersdale Rd. Camby In 46113
September 28, 2023
7:00 pm

Agenda

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 7:00 pm.

Present: Trustee Larry Ellis, Board Chairman Jim Johnson, Board Member Ronnie McClure, Board Secretary Nelson Hoggatt, Clerk Tina Turner

Absent: None

II. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Pledge was recited by board and audience.

III. **Prayer/Moment of Silence:** Observed by board and audience.

IV. **Adoption of Minutes:**

Ronnie made a motion to approve the August 31, 2023 minutes as written, 2nd by Jim.

Motion passed 3-0.

V. **Trustee Report – Concrete at Station 31:**

Trustee Ellis said the concrete in front of Station #31 is in poor condition as is the driveway as well. The estimate of the cost to replace it is approximately \$201,000. He said we need to decide if we are going to patch it or replace it and where we are going to get the money. He said he would like suggestions on how we would like to proceed. He said we want to do it right this time in regards to concrete tensile strength, proper base, rebar reinforcement, and an extension of the concrete pad in front of the bays to give apparatuses adequate turning room when pulling out of the bay area.

There was some discussion regarding the necessity of the ladder truck and the effect its added weight has on the concrete. Trustee Ellis responded that we would still need to meet our higher standards for the concrete work with or without the ladder truck which was purchased by the previous administration and we still owe money on it. We stand to lose a lot of money if we sell it.

An audience member asked if keeping the ladder truck makes a difference between patching the concrete or replacing it. Trustee Ellis said no, it has been in poor

condition for a long time and it needs to be replaced. The concrete work was not originally done properly so it will not hold up long term.

Trustee Ellis said we got one quote to get an idea what it would cost to do the job. If we decide to put it out for bids, we will begin the bidding process. He said the work would be monitored to be sure it is done correctly this time around. He said Station #31 has had a recent inspection and it is structurally sound.

Some audience members asked if we could possibly consider using hi-way grade asphalt or stone. Trustee Ellis said those are not good alternatives. It would not hold up long term. He said the work could be done in two phases. Trustee Ellis said some of these things were left undone by the previous administration and we are trying to get them up to speed.

An audience member asked how many stations we have and Trustee Ellis responded 2. The audience member asked if there is a need for two. Trustee Ellis responded that Station #31 is centrally located and station #32 is near Heartland Crossing and he thinks there is a need for both. The audience member asked how we compare to surrounding areas as far as the number of stations and the coverage area. Trustee Ellis said we could provide that information later.

Ronnie said he thinks we need estimates so we can see what is in front of us before we can decide which approach we want to take. Whether to do it all at once or in a phased approach.

Nelson said he would like to see the work done all at once because the damage is not centrally located. He said his opinion is that the damage is bad enough that it needs to be resolved soon. He said it is possible that someone could get hurt and we might have to deal with a lawsuit.

VI. **2024 Budget Hearing:**

An audience member suggested that the next time we have a Budget Proposal meeting, we provide a copy of the previous budget so that the proposed budget can be compared to it.

An audience member asked what the percent of increase for 2024 is over the 2023 budget. Another audience member responded 14%.

Chairman Johnson read the 2024 Proposed Budget line by line and then opened up the meeting for citizens comments.

Trudy Ellis.

Trudy Ellis said the Township Fund from 2020 to 2024 went down 10.3%, the Poor Relief Fund was down 23%. Regarding the Fire Fighting Fund, Trudy suggested the training and physicals amount could be lowered. She said she feels \$110,000 is too much for the Fire Chiefs. She said the Health Insurance can be cut down a little bit. She thinks we could purchase 5 sets of turnout gear each year instead of 10. Trudy said from reports she has seen we only had 269 runs from April 1 to July 20 which is 111 days which comes out to 2.42 runs a day. Fire runs are about 1 a week. From the proposed budget each run cost us about \$2,780.

Dawn Horock.

Dawn expressed concerns about money spent on Fire Department salaries and how some of them were moved out of Salaries and Wages into their own line items. She said she is concerned the \$72,000 allocated for Health Insurance is over stated. She thinks money for testing and maintenance of apparatus's should be in separate line items. Dawn also expressed concerns about the allocation of \$20,000 for software.

Gary Bynum.

Gary said a budget should always have a comparison to the previous year. There is no way for us to know how much the budget has changed and by how much just by looking at the proposed budget. He said we had a tax increase in 2022 payable in 2023 and his went up 53%, which 40% went to Madison Township and that seems to him quite a bit. He said we do not need an increase; we need to live with what we have. If there are things we do not need, we need to get rid of it. He said every time we have an EMS run, we have a fire truck behind it and he does not understand the reason for that.

Nancy Hoggatt.

Nancy said in the Fire Fighting Fund we have \$40,000 for a part-time Fire Chief and \$30,000 for a part-time Deputy Chief which is still \$13,403 over what we spent last year for a part-time Fire Chief and Deputy Chief. She said she does not think we need an Assistant Fire Chief. She said it did not work out having a Full Time Fire Chief so why consider having one now. Nancy quoted the amounts the township will pay into the 77 Fund for full-time firefighters and PERF for the full-time paramedics and said we are budgeting \$4800 more than we need. She said we are budgeting \$72,000 for health insurance for the full-time employees and we only need \$52,800 to pay the premiums. She said she was concerned about the large payments for turnout gear and the large allotment for clothing.

Debi Binkley.

Debi wondered why the clothing allowance was new this year.

Gregg Terhune.

Gregg stated the 2024 proposed budget is just over \$2,700,000 and that is a huge increase over the 2023 certified budget of \$2,377,000 or slightly over that. He

further stated the 2024 proposed budget is an enormous increase over the budget five years ago when it was under \$2,000,000. He said our budget is going up at an alarming rate. He said we are one of the most expensive townships in the state and we are on our way to becoming the most expensive in the state. He pointed out that Madison Township has very little industry compared to surrounding communities. He said we have been losing businesses because we are driving them away. As property taxes go up, they go away. He said they will not come back as long as we continue raising our taxes.

Pete Magnant.

Pete thanked the panel for their service. He said it is hard being public servants and it sounds like our job has been made more difficult by errors of the past. He said there are no solutions, only tradeoffs. That means you cannot have everything you want and doing the same things and expecting different results. He said he is not certain we have done some hard thinking on the issue of two fire stations. He said you need fire protection; you need ambulance service. He was wondering why you do not have your own heliport for a helicopter. There is no limit to your imagination. You need to focus on the need, not the want. He said he can see what is most important by where we spend our money. He questions that. He thinks we need to do our homework. He would like to see specific data. Not pie in the sky. Not scientific wild guesses. We need specific data on why we are doing things the way we are doing them. We cannot compete with other districts that have another sense of judgement. It is impossible. We have to work with what we have. He said, again, there are tradeoffs. You have to determine what is most important and go for it. Deal with the reality of today.

Carol Magnant.

Carol said just because someone gives you money does not mean you have to spend it. Especially if you are going to spend it on something you do not even need. She asked those in charge of our finances to not spend money they do not need to spend. It would be nice to have money in reserve. She said we need to tighten our belts if we can. She said just because there is money in the budget does not mean you have to spend it. You can keep some of it.

Dale I. Foutch.

Dale said he is a retiree on fixed income and he is against any new expenditures, capitol, or labor. He said he is for disposing of the property on kitchen road. He said if we start doing this and doing that, he thinks it is going to turn into a nightmare.

Eric Shields.

Eric said he is the outsider in this room and it is based on 30 years of experience. He said, in a sense, he has forgotten more about this than we will ever know. He said the reason it costs so much is because there are standards that say it takes a number of people to respond to a fire. He asked if we wanted people responding from

Station #32 down to Henderson Ford? He said those houses down there will burn down before we can respond. That is a fact. He said if you do not want the service, you are not going to get it. He said if you want the service you need to fund it.

Trustee Ellis displayed several pieces of equipment and explained the high cost of them. He said he is very opposed to loans and paying interest and gave some examples of the amount of interest we have paid in the past.

Gary Reichanadter.

Gary mentioned that someone at the August 31, 2023 board meeting stated that we average 2.3 runs per day. He posed the question of how you deal with 5 or 6 runs in a day and how you record that. That becomes a value proposition. He said it is much more complex than people recognize and it is expensive. He asked what is the difference between a proposed budget and a proposed levy. Trustee Ellis replied that the township can apply for excess money through the state. There will be a vote on that in October. If we have a certain increase in growth in censuses its extra money that does not apply to our tax rate. Its just extra money the state is handing out if you ask for it.

VII. Good to the Order:

Tina made some comments concerning a statement Trudy Ellis made about overtime during the budget hearing. She said the ratio of overtime hours to regular hours have been cut in half for 2023.

An audience member asked if it is cheaper to have more full-time firefighters than part-time and Trustee Ellis responded no.

Trudy Ellis stated that at the August 31, 2023 meeting she asked how much money of the EMS revenue was used to fund the budget and no one could answer that. So, she looked at some numbers from 2021 and 2022 and she has some concern because there was quite a bit of money left in the fund from the insurance for the roof repair. She cautioned the board that we can approve an amount for the budget but there is no guarantee that the DLGF will not lower that amount, they have done that before. She suggested moving money from the Fire Fighting Fund to the Rainy-Day Fund if money is left in there at the end of the year. She said the Rainy-Day Fund is not funded by tax dollars. She said if money is left in the funds, they are looking at that.

An audience member said he thinks getting rid of the ladder truck would be a mistake. He said he agrees with the budget and said we need to keep investing in equipment because that is going to save firefighters lives. He does agree with the Trustee that we should avoid incurring interest.

Jerry Binkley referred to Station #31 and said the people down there pay taxes like we do and he does not think they want to wait any longer than we do for service.

Nancy Hoggatt said at the 8-31-23 board meeting someone said we cannot keep spending like this and someone on the board said we have money coming in you do not know about. She asked where is that money.

Trustee Ellis said Harrison Township has a three-year contract with Bargersville, however there is a very big concern that after the first of the year, they are not going to be able to pay it. So, we reached out to them and asked what their situation is. He said unless someone stops it, the county is going to take over everything.

Nancy Hoggatt asked Trustee Ellis if he is planning to provide EMS service to Harrison Township and have Madison Township taxpayers pay for that. Trustee Ellis responded that we are not going to provide anything to Harrison Township unless they pay for it.

An audience member asked if our turn over situation has improved and Trustee Ellis said it has since we increased salaries and are going to provide health insurance.

An audience member asked if things are being done to control the overtime and Trustee Ellis said yes.

Adjournment

Chairman Johnson asked for a motion to adjourn.

Ronnie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30, 2nd by Jim.

Motion passed 3-0.

Minutes prepared by Nelson Hoggatt, Board Member Secretary

Dated this 12th day of October, 2023.

AYE

NAY

James John

Nelson Hoggatt

[Signature]

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Trustee Ellis, Madison Township Trustee

