

Meeting Minutes

Meeting of the North Township Advisory Board

Held at the Fire Station in Lapaz, IN

November 6, 2024

North Township Advisory Board Members Present:

Steven Davenport, President

Steve Barber, Secretary

Carmen Megonnell (Virtually via Zoom)

Emily Haskins, Trustee, North Township

Mathew Haskins, Fire Chief

Keara Kelly, EMS Assistant Chief

For other community members present, please refer to the attached sign-in sheet.

Mr. Davenport called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting consisted of the following:

1. Approval of October 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes *(6:00 on digital recording)*
 - a. Ms. Haskins indicates that a copy has been placed at the back of the room for the public to review. Mr. Davenport indicates that members of the board were provided with a copy to review, prior to the meeting. Mr. Barber adds that the time this meeting ended was 7:22pm. Mr. Davenport moves to approve the minutes with the correction noted. Mr. Barber seconded. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Megonnell, yes; Mr. Barber, yes; Mr. Davenport, yes. Motion passes 3-0. Ms. Megonnell gives permission to Ms. Haskins to sign her name in her absence.
2. Discussion regarding employee policies
 - a. Mr. Haskins indicated that he emailed a draft of the policies to the board members. One member responded that they had received the document. Another member responded with comments. No action is requested at this meeting tonight. It will be presented to the Fire Territory Executive Committee and an attorney for review.
 - b. Mr. Barber indicates that the document identifies the employees are employees of the Territory. He thought that they were employees of the Township. Mr. Haskins and Ms. Haskins indicate that the attorney will be consulted. It is noted that the policies do refer to the employees of the Territory several times. If this is changed it should be changed in each case.
 - c. Mr. Haskins addresses another, related item Mr. Barber included in his written response.
 - i. "the need may arise and the Territory reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portion of the employee handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion."
 - ii. Mr. Haskins suggests that perhaps the Territory and Township are interchangeable.
 - iii. Mr. Barber is under the impression that the Territory can make recommendations, but that the Township makes the final decision about the policies.
 - iv. They will ask the attorney about this also.
 - d. Mr. Barber asks if the public can have access to draft of the policies. He believes it would be helpful for them to have a copy to refer to as we are discussing it. Mr. Davenport wonders if it could be posted on the website along with the minutes. Mr. Haskins believes releasing the draft

is way too early. Mr. Barber prefers more transparency which could elicit helpful input from the public. Mr. Haskins is concerned about having different versions floating around and people responding to different versions, rather than the current version. The public suggest that the versions should be identified as first, second, etc. Mr. Barber moves that we make the draft available to the public with the posting of the minutes. Mr. Davenport seconds the motion, identifying them as first, second, etc. draft. Ms. Haskins says that they will be available on the new Township website: northtownship.org. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Megonnell, (screen was frozen and no vote registered); Mr. Barber, yes; Mr. Davenport, yes. Motion passes 2-0.

- e. Mr. Barber references the following sentence (under Introduction): "No employee handbook **may** anticipate every circumstance or question about policy." He suggests that "may" be replaced with **is able to**.
- f. Mr. Barber references a portion of the Introduction discussing "At Will" policies. He states that he is not fond of At Will policies and explains his understanding of At Will policies. Employers are permitted to dismiss employees for little to no justification. Ms. Haskins adds that Indiana is an "At Will" state. Mr. Haskins indicates that the policies set forth steps and procedures for dismissal for cause. He adds that the "At Will" policy allows the process to include dismissal with little to no cause. He believes that this was included because Indiana is an "At-Will" state. Mr. Barber is under the impression that the law **allows** employers to exercise dismissal by means of "At-Will" policies, but does not require all employers to adopt these policies. Mr. Haskins speaks in support of an "At-Will" policy. The attorney may be consulted by this.
- g. Under Organization and Responsibility, Mr. Barber references the statement: "However, in general, the Territory Board is charged with the development, promulgation, and **adoption** of the provisions of this manual. He believes that the Township is responsible for adopting the manual.
- h. Under Policy Manual Administration, #5, Mr. Barber references the following: "The Department Fire Chief maintains the **ultimate** right to manage their work forces, consistent with the policies set forth in this manual and all applicable State and Federal laws. Mr. Barber says he understands the need for the fire chief to fully manage the staff. However, he is uncomfortable with the word "ultimate" stating that it implies too much power.
- i. Under Policy Manual Administration, #6, Mr. Barber references the following: "The policies of this Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual superseded all previous policies." Since this is the first, there is nothing to supersede. Mr. Haskins points out that this is included so that it will be applicable for all future revisions.
- j. Under Discrimination/Sexual Harassment, Mr. Barber references the following: "The North Township-LaPaz Fire Protection Territory will actively **investment** all discrimination and sexual harassment complaints." "Investment" should be changed to "investigate."
- k. Under Discrimination/Sexual Harassment, Mr. Barber believes that an appeals process should be included for all reporters of alleged discrimination/abuse. If the reporter disagrees with the determination made by the Fire Chief and/or the Fire Territory Board, the reporter should be able to appeal to the Township Advisory Board. Mr. Haskins indicates that every employee has the right to push their grievances up the chain, even to the Township Board. Mr. Barber asked Mr. Haskins if that can be explicitly stated in the policy. Mr. Robertson asserts that it is an employee's right to speak with the people above them if they disagree with something. He wonders if this is necessary since it is their right already. The public indicates that these appeal

policies have been written into their manuals. The public also reminds the board that our policies will mature over time.

- l. Mr. Barber asks if our drivers are required to have CDLs. Mr. Haskins indicates that our staff are not required to have CDLs.
- m. Mr. Barber asks for clarification about whether employees are required to report being arrested. Mr. Haskins discusses the possibility of being arrested and charges subsequently being dismissed or reduced. He discusses the risks involved for disciplining an employee too soon. He wonders if this could be a situation where an "At-Will" policy could be beneficial.
- n. Under Vacancies and Appointments, Mr. Barber states his preference that new employees should submit to drug testing. Ms. Megonnell offers her support for this. Mr. Haskins asks if this should be done with the part-time employees being brought on January 1, 2025. While no vote was taken Mr. Haskins says that he will proactively add this to the job description.

3. Discussion regarding part-time employees.

- a. Mr. Haskins reminds the board that they have settled upon \$16/hour for the part-time employees. He reports that there are a couple of individuals who drive, but are not fully certified EMTs. Both have been driving ambulances for a long time. This would be for day shift, Monday through Friday. \$14/hour was tossed out as a possible rate. The public reported that Argos pays \$30 for a 12-hour shift and must be in town 5 minutes away from the station, including able to sleep at home. EMT is constantly at the station. After January 1, 2025, it is \$30 per shift and \$25 per call. An EMT makes \$15-20/hour.

4. Additional Appropriations Presentation and Vote by Board

- a. Ms. Haskins reviews and explains all the appropriations. Please refer to the handout describing each of these appropriations.
- b. Ms. Haskins anticipated a question about the additional appropriation for the Territory Study & Hearing and offers the following:
 - i. The Township paid the full price for the Territory Study and Hearings, in anticipation that LaPaz would pay 1/3 of the cost. When LaPaz reimbursed the Township, those monies had to be put in the general fund. The appropriation today will simply move those monies from the general fund to the Fund for the Territory Study and Hearings.
 - ii. Public asks about the formula whereby LaPaz paid 1/3 of the cost. Mr. Davenport responded by saying that this has been a formula that has been used for decades for shared expenses. Mr. Haskins believes this is related to the rather consistent ratio of emergency calls going to the township (2/3 to ¾) vs those going to the town.
- c. Mr. Barber moves to approve the additional appropriations as outlined above. Mr. Davenport seconds the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Megonnell, yes; Mr. Barber, yes; Mr. Davenport, yes. Motion passes 3-0.

5. Schedule Next Meeting

- a. In anticipation needing an earlier time for the Territory to meet as well as an earlier time for the Township to meet. **Tentative** dates are as follows:
 - i. Territory Committee: Monday, November 25
 - ii. Township Advisory Board: Wednesday, December 4
 - iii. Meeting times will be put in the paper and on the web page: northtownship.org

6. Good of the order announcements or updates from UNAS or Fire Department

- a. Ms. Kelly reports that the second ambulance is now in service.

- b. Mr. Haskins reports that the leaking tanker was taken to a place in South Haven to have the tank removed. We have not yet had confirmation that the tank has arrived at the repair facility.

7. Public Comments

- a. Public asks if we are currently involved in any litigation. Ms. Haskins responds that North Township is not currently involved in any litigation.
- b. Public asks if the ambulance service is part of our township, or when does this happen? Mr. Haskins responds saying UNAS is not going to be part of the Fire Territory. The Fire Territory will be assuming ambulance coverage/service on January 1, 2025. UNAS will not be providing ambulance coverage/service for North Township/LaPaz as of January 1, 2025. Mr. Haskins continues:
- i. The Fire Department has applied for a Transport License. This has been approved as a first step.
 - ii. We have met with the Medical Director and EMS Coordinator which have taken us on board and under their wing.
 - iii. The ambulances will not have to be inspected again until sometime after the first of the year. The second ambulance was recently inspected as one of the processes of placing it into service.
 - iv. The Fire Department still has their Tax ID and 501(c)(3) status intact and up to date.
- c. Public asks will all employees be employees of the Fire Department? Ms. Haskins answers by saying that all employees will be employees of the Township. Mr. Barber adds that this is not an automatic process of moving people from UNAS to be employees of the Township. They have to apply and go through the process. There may be some who do not seek to be a part-time employee of the Township. Mr. Haskins confirms that there have been 5 UNAS providers who wanted to join the volunteer side of the Fire Department. They were brought on board about 6 months ago.
- d. Public asks what is the purpose of the Territory if the Township is paying for it all? Ms. Haskins reports that the Township is the identified Provider Unit. The monies from the Fire Territory pay for all the staff, etc. The Township is responsible for managing all the funds of the Fire Territory. Mr. Haskins clarifies that the Fire Territory Committee may make recommendations, but the Township Advisory Board has the final responsibility.

8. Mr. Davenport calls for adjournment. Mr. Barber moves to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Davenport. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Megonnell, yes; Mr. Barber, yes; Mr. Davenport, yes. Motion passes 3-0. Adjourn: 7:16pm.

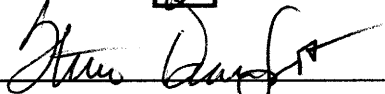
Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen Barber, Secretary


Approved: ☒ As Written/Printed

☐ As Amended

☐ As Corrected


Steven Davenport, President

12-4-25
Date


Stephen Barber, Secretary

12-4-25 24/95
Date


Carmen Megonnell, Member

12/4/24
Date

North Township, Marshall County Public Meeting
Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 6:00pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

Sign-In Sheet

Kenly Nery

1. *Chris*
2. *Hukelung*
3. *Ann Smith*
4. *Sandy Robertson*
5. *AD Robertson*
6. *Dana Buehler*
7. *Doris Barden*
8. *Wab Cox*
9. *Robert Lumbert*
10. *Don Buyer*
11. *Janet Wright*
12. *Gerald Wright*
13. *Steve Murphy*
14. *Joe DeLoach*
15. *R. Jr.*
16. *Curtis Drenth*
17. *Lisa Thrupp*
18. *Steve Barber*
19. *Ken Bickner*
20. *Mark Vogt*
21. *Joely Davis*