

Meeting Minutes

Meeting of the North Township Advisory Board

Held at the Fire Station in Lapaz, IN

June 23, 2025

North Township Advisory Board Members Present:

Steven Davenport, President

Steve Barber, Secretary

Dave Banicki

Emily Haskins, Trustee, North Township

Mathew Haskins, Fire Chief

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

The meeting consisted of the following.

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

1. Approval of 5-5-25 Meeting Minutes. Mr. Barber moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Banicki, and passed 3-0.
2. Territory Board Recommendations.
 - a. Streaming meetings: Mr. Haskins reported that the media board is scheduled to be delivered on Thursday which will enable the installer to make the necessary adjustments to the equipment. We should be operational for meetings in July, as required by the state.
 - b. Employee Hiring: The Territory recommended hiring Chad Robertson and Tony Shoemaker at an annual salary of \$50,000. Mr. Barber moved to adopt the recommendation, seconded by Mr. Davenport, and passed 3-0. Mr. Haskins asked how the board would like to proceed if the prospective employees want to negotiate. Mr. Davenport indicated that the board should be notified, and an executive session would likely be in order.
 - c. Employee Benefits (see attached handout): Ms. Haskins asked for consideration of one additional item. How should we handle a prospective employee who has scheduled a vacation prior to becoming a full-time employee, and which will take place prior to becoming eligible for vacation as a full-time employee? One proposal being discussed is: If the volunteer firefighter moving to a full-time position, with these extra days that they have earned (see handout) from serving the community, if they are willing to sign on to a contract that they will be employed for at least one year by the Township, that they will receive these earned vacation days after 30 days. Mr. Barber moved to adopt this proposal, seconded by Mr. Banicki, and passed 2-0, with Mr. Davenport abstaining.
 - d. Employee Manual: Ms. Haskins provided the changes related to the Employee Benefits (see handout). Mr. Davenport moved to accept the changes to the Employee Manual, seconded by Mr. Barber, and passed 3-0.
 - e. Commercial Policy: The Territory Board recommended payment of the commercial insurance premium for the Fire Department, which increased 50% (\$20,885). No action was required since this is within the amount budgeted.
 - f. County grant for department equipment: The Territory Board recommended that we replace all 20 of our aging Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBAs) at a cost of \$127,500. The County is expected to reimburse us \$50,000 of this expense. This would make the final price \$77,500. Ms. Haskins indicated that there are a handful of funds with sufficient combined

balances which can be utilized for this purchase. A discussion ensued about broader and related financial issues.

- i. At the request of Mr. Davenport, Ms. Haskins explained that at the end of the year, the State stipulates that we may only sustain a maximum balance of 20% plus our allotted budget. For example, our Fire Territory budget for this year was about \$984,000. Therefore, if there is a balance at the end of this year over \$1,180,800 then the State will lower our levy for the following year. Ms. Haskins clarified that this formula only applies to the Fire Territory. It does not apply to the Equipment Replacement Fund or any other funds of the Township. Ms. Haskins reported the Territory Operating Fund currently has a balance of \$1,170,000. Mr. Davenport stated, in light of these figures, "it probably behooves us to get the Territory up and running the way we intended it to, sooner rather than later...and that way we know better on expenses, we don't have any surprises."
 - ii. Mr. Haskins said he has been considering how to provide services 12 hours per day, during the day shift, 7 days per week. He shares that one way to do this is to utilize one full-time staff and one part-time staff on the premises for 12-hour day shifts. He said that this could be done with only 2 full-time staff members. He is also considering how to utilize and calling in "stand-by" staff in the event that the primary team is dispatched. This may provide for a second team which could respond as needed. He added that this may be one way to enable the ambulance to add a destination (such as St. Joseph Med. Ctr. – Mishawaka) they would be able to transport to.
 - iii. Mr. Haskins indicated that getting one of the ambulances remounted would cost in the vicinity of \$250,000-\$260,00 (which also includes a new chassis). To clarify, this would extend the life of the ambulance and improve some of the features therein. Mr. Robertson added that a remount/new chassis also takes a close look at anything else that needs attention, which could add to the cost. The turnaround time may be about 6 months for the parts to be obtained and then approximately 3 months for the work to be completed. So, the ambulance could be out of service for about 3 months. There is the possibility of leasing another ambulance during that time period.
 - iv. Ms. Haskins said that we have not yet requested the engineering feasibility study to look at the long-term housing option upstairs. She will work on this.
 - v. In response to Mr. Davenport's earlier statement, Mr. Barber clarified his position that "I'm wanting to go more slower than that, even if that means that we are forced (by the state) to lower our budget somewhat because we have too much in there. I don't necessarily see it as a bad thing. It would be a struggle trying to balance things out in future years. I don't consider that to be a reason for me to ramp up, full speed ahead."
 - vi. It should be noted that there is a separate concern about the effect of recently enacted legislation which requires the Township to establish a new fund for county roads. It is not yet clear to us how that will be applied and the effect that will have on our budgets. We hope to gain further clarification on that in the coming weeks.
 - vii. An additional expense in the future will be to put a fence around cemeteries.
 - viii. Mr. Barber moved that we approve the expenditure for the SCBAs, seconded, and passed 3-0.
3. Cathy Welch came representing the Town of LaPaz requesting use of the outside restrooms/building for the summer. They were not able to move forward with building their own restrooms in the park at this time. Ms. Haskins reported that the Township currently pays \$40.80 sewer bill to the town and requested that the town remove this fee for the time being. Ms. Welch indicated that the Town would be willing to negotiate. The question arose about the condition and potential repairs which may be needed. Ms. Welch assumed it would be used daily and for the festival.

- a. Mr. Barber moved that we enter into an agreement with the Town of LaPaz, that they be permitted to utilize the restrooms.
 - b. That they be looked at with a representative from each party.
 - c. That they only be open during park hours, except for special events.
 - d. That the Town be responsible for getting it fully operational and the Town be responsible for maintenance during this time.
 - e. And that the sewer bill be removed for the time being.
 - f. That the Township should also have access.
 - g. Ms. Haskins will check into any possible insurance issues and the motion was amended such that we ask the Town to cover any additional insurance costs.
 - h. The motion was seconded by Mr. Banicki and passed 3-0. (53:52)
4. Trustee Update
- a. Ms. Haskins informed the Board that apart from bona fide emergencies, she will only have office hours on Thursdays.
5. Good of the Order announcements or updates from the Fire Department
- a. Mr. Haskins reported:
 - i. There have been 243 runs so far this year.
 - ii. If Mr. Shoemaker accepts the offer of employment, he will need a set of fire gear. There are a couple of people who may also need new fire gear.
 - iii. Mr. Robertson has been doing a lot of administrative duties related to billing. Mr. Haskins is considering how we might compensate Mr. Robertson for this. A certain skill set, including experience, is required to perform these tasks. Furthermore, there is a level of authority that accompanies these tasks enabling them to seek information and/or correct billing errors. Therefore, these tasks are very important and those completing these tasks shoulder a great deal of responsibility. Ms. Haskins did point out that the budget does allow for administrative assistance.
 - iv. Mr. Haskins offered an observation about the advertisement utilized recently for full-time staff. The ad included a range of salary (\$48,000 - \$55,000). The ad also included qualifications such as mandatory basic EMT, preference to Firefighter I & II, and on to Advanced. In the case of our first two applicants, Mr. Haskins says that they "came in way above" the identified set of standards in the ad. This may have misled some people. One option would be for future ads to state that salary "starts at", without identifying the top pay.
 - b. Mr. Robertson reported having hosted an EVOC Course over the weekend with 9 participants. This is a certified driving course which was set up, in part, by our insurance company. Currently there are only 10-12 people who have not yet completed this course. They hope to run another class in the spring.
 - c. Out of the 243 runs, Mr. Barber asks how many runs were fire-related and how many were EMS-related? The conversation that followed led to growing awareness that this question is overly simplistic. In fact, there are between 750 and 800 options to title a fire report under NFIRS (National Fire Incident Reporting System). So, differentiating between EMS and Fire calls is quite complex. Mr. Haskins is working on supplying useful information to the Board and offers to sit down with anyone trying to understand this issue. This was unresolved.
 - d. To be transparent, Mr. Barber reported that he recently attended a meeting of the Marshall County Economic Development Corporation. He expressed thanks to Ms. Chelsea Smith for helping to facilitate this. Mr. Barber would like the Board to be aware that he is exploring ways to improve development prospects in North Township.

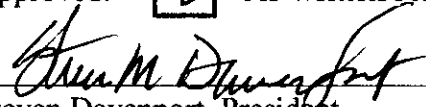
- e. Mr. Barber reported that he has been introduced to the landowner wherein the remains of the Conger Cemetery may be located. He has set up an excursion at 8:30am on Tuesday, July 1 and invites any interested individuals to join us. Representatives from the Marshall County Historical Society will be joining us. He also reported that with the help of staff at Oak Hill Cemetery in Plymouth it is believed that we have located the stones which were moved from Conger to Oak Hill in 1936.
- i. On a related item, Ms. Haskins reported having received a query about a baby who was believed to have been buried in White's Cemetery, and was wanting to erect a stone. Unfortunately, Ms. Haskins was not able to locate any information about a baby being buried there. Existing records are quite scant.
6. Public Comment: none at this time.
7. Next Meeting: Monday, July 21, 2025 at 7:00pm. We will begin discussing the budget.
- a. It was noted that the Fire Territory will be meeting on Wednesday, July 16, at 6pm.
- b. Ms. Haskins also reports that her DLGF meeting will be on August 18, at which time she will need to have budget numbers ready for presentation.
8. Mr. Barber moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Banicki, and passed 3-0. Meeting adjourned about 7:27pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stephen Barber, Secretary

Approved: ☒ As Written/Printed

☐ As Amended

☐ As Corrected



Steven Davenport, President

7-21-25

Date



Stephen Barber, Secretary

7-21-25

Date

Dave Banicki

Date

North Township Marshall County Public Meeting

Monday, June 23, 2025 at 6:00pm

LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

Sign-In Sheet

1. Al Roberts
2. Sandy Roberts
3. Steve Barber
4. Cathy Welch
5. Don Brink
6. Lisa Kopp
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North Township Marshall County Public Meeting
Monday, June 23, 2025 at 6:00pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

- 1. Approval of 5/5/25 Meeting Minutes**
- 2. Territory Board recommendations (Streaming meetings, employee hiring, employee benefits, employee manual, commercial policy, county grant for department equipment, and any other applicable topic)**
- 3. Roger Ecker**
- 4. Trustee update**
- 5. Good of the order announcements or updates from Fire Department**
- 6. Public Comment (Limited to 2 minutes per person)**