

Minutes – Shields Township Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting October 15th, 2020

STATE OF ILLINOIS,)
Lake County,) } SS.
Town of Shields)

THE TOWN BOARD OF SHIELDS TOWNSHIP met at the Shields Township office for its regular monthly meeting on October 15th, 2020 at 6:32 p.m.

PRESENT	Terry Darraugh	Supervisor
	Joy Gayter	Clerk
	Kathy Blahunka	Town Trustee
	Matt Garrity by Zoom	Town Trustee
	Jeff Urso	Town Trustee
	Kristin Strom	Town Trustee

1. Meeting Called to Order

Supervisor Darraugh called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call: Assessor Helton was also in attendance.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Supervisor Darraugh opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Presentation of Cash Balances: Cash on Hand by Fund,

Supervisor Darraugh presented cash balances by fund;

Town Fund - \$769,397.62

General Assistance – \$14,204.34

Road and Bridge - \$390,789.01

5. For Action – Motion to approve minutes from September 2020 board meeting

The minutes for the regular meeting held on September 17th were approved on a motion by Trustee Blahunka, seconded by Trustee Strom passed by 5-0 on a roll call vote.

6. For action – approve bills

Town Fund Bills – A motion by Trustee Strom, seconded by Trustee Garrity, to approve the payment of Town Fund expenses \$20,228.07 passed by 5-0 on a roll call vote.

Road and Bridge –A motion by Trustee Blahunka, seconded by Trustee Strom, to approve the payment of Road and Bridge Expenses \$2,114.90 passed by 5-0 on a roll call vote.

General Assistance – Trustee Blahunka questioned two amounts for COVID 19 income. One listed under GA and the other listed under the Township. The Supervisor explained that one is donations from the public for food for seniors and the other is the Chirp grant that is to be used for rent assistance. She said that she would discuss with the township accountant and how it should be correctly recorded. Trustee Blahunka also questioned the recording of the Unrealized Gain of \$10,294.53. A motion by Trustee Blahunka, seconded by Trustee Urso, to approve the payment of General Assistance expenses in the amount of \$8,519.68 passed by 5-0 on a roll call vote.

7. **Presentations by our Community Partners**

Mother's Trust Fund – Paula Turelli – spent \$17,000 assisting families in Shields Township. Majority of this was for stable housing, rent and utility assistance. Medical and safe baby items are another large expense. Seem to be the only resource in Lake County for baby items including car seats and pack and play cribs. One hundred and sixteen children have been directly served and 150 have been impacted. Two direct referrals have come from the Shields Township social worker in 2020. The annual Coat Drive is planned for November 14th at Foss Park.

Foss Park District senior programming Pam Johnson – Superintendent of Recreation. Programs for Seniors were cancelled due to the pandemic and the vulnerability of the participants. Fall programs have been published and are small gatherings offering movie day, game day, stretching and meditation. Monthly meetings are set to resume in November.

Dickinson Hall senior advocate Janet Fryer, Senior Advocate at Dickinson for 18 years, thanks Programs were adapted and presented virtually because of the pandemic Church of the Holy Spirit reached out to offer to deliver food to lower income seniors which was much appreciated. Many cannot afford to live in the area and need help with Medicare premiums, prescriptions, transportation, food and property taxes. Helped 70 people with Medicare enrollment in 2020.

Supervisor Darraugh anticipates that grants will remain at the same level but may be sent a little later.

8. **Public Comment** – Janice Schnobrich by zoom – Thanked the Township Community Partners for all their hard work in serving the community. She read from the attached letter regarding her FOIA requests.

Mike Darraugh – Thanked the board for holding down expenses but commented that property

taxes continue to increase each year, and therefore does not support the increase of salaries for either the Township Supervisor or the Assessor.

9. For Discussion and Action – Approval of Resolution setting Elected Officials Salaries for the Term 2021-2025

Supervisor Darraugh commented that the Township has remained financially stable over the last year, there was an overspend in the Assessors Department for new staff, but this was mostly offset by income from CD's, and resulted in going over budget by \$6,000.00. There will be extra money in the coming year with the elimination of the Highway Commissioner salary.

Assessor Helton - Agreed to run for office when the salary was \$50,000 but was reduced to \$30,000 before his term commenced. Comments from other Township Assessors have praised the job he has done. The position requires a lot of expertise. All his expenses are paid out of his pocket including credentials, milcage and computer equipment.

Clerk Gayter – Attends monthly board meetings, special meetings and annual meetings and prepares minutes. I feel like I am fairly compensated at \$3000 for the duties performed. If the incoming clerk is required to take on more duties then the salary should be increased but is satisfactory at present.

Supervisor Darraugh – Proposes the salary be increased to the former amount of \$30,000 from \$25,000. The duties will be increased due to Road and Bridge being incorporated into the position. Trustees Blahunka and Urso recommend getting the community involved in managing Road and Bridge decisions going forward

A motion by Supervisor Darraugh, seconded by Trustee Blahunka to approve the salaries for the Term 2021 – 2025 passed by 5-0 on a roll call vote.

They are set at:

Supervisor at \$30,000

Assessor at \$50,000

Clerk at \$3,000.

No benefits or pensions are included for any position and Trustees will not receive any compensation for their duties.

10. Reports

Trustees – no report

Highway Commissioner – no report

Assessor – Very proud of staff who have worked hard to deal with all the complaints received.

Supervisor – The Township is working with Giving Kind to hand out approximately 35 boxes of fresh food to Seniors on a weekly basis, and approximately 60 boxes will be given out for Thanksgiving.

A large freezer is missing from the pantry. The Phoenix Rising Foundation has been contacted as to its whereabouts but no response has been received at this time.

The audit will be ready for presentation by the November meeting.

- XI. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m. by Supervisor Darraugh, seconded by Trustee Blahunka .

Joy Gayter, Town Clerk

Shields Township Meeting October 15, 2020

I began watching Shields Township doings in 1996. There was an article in the Lake Forester stating how the Shields Township Board had approved between 30% to 40% salary raises for its elected officials. I did not even know what Shields Township did, but I soon found out once I began to attend meetings.

I was appalled by the demeanor of the Supervisor and the 3 of the 4 trustees in the conduct of the monthly meetings.

- Minutes before the start of a meeting, trustees would be perusing their meeting packets because they were unavailable to them until the meeting day.
- The audience participants were generally ignored unless they "dared" to ask questions.
- The Supervisor and fellow bullies threatened any in the audience who questioned their spending practices or decisions.
- The meetings were recorded on cassette tapes. **To gain a copy I began to submit a FOIA request after each meeting.**
- At one 1998 meeting, I questioned a money spending practice and was verbally bullied. The Supervisor stood up and came toward me pointing his figure. An audience member instinctually stood up to prevent a physical attack. **The tape of that meeting was altered "accidentally". Thus, my FOIA request had not been fully honored.**
- An attorney was consulted, and I was advised that I had the right to sue the clerk in civil court of the alteration.
- After notifying the Supervisor of my findings a meeting was arranged, and we agreed Shields Township would begin to video tape meetings for broadcast on LFTV. I would not pursue the civil court lawsuit.
- LFTV taped the meetings. A copy of the meeting was provided to the Township. **Each month I made a FOIA request to the township for a copy.**
- In 2002, the Supervisor decided to open a 501 (c-3) foundation. It was dubbed the Phoenix Rising Foundation. The Phoenix Rising Foundation opened a food pantry and made it accessible to any Lake County resident in need. The pantry was funded by the Foundation.
- During the 1997 – 2001 term the Supervisor also began the practice of granting taxpayer funds to other government and not for profit agencies. The practice was later found to be illegal.
- During a budget meeting an observant resident pointed out a budget flaw. The errors made by the township bookkeeper/administrator put the township fund close to being insolvent. It took a while for the township to recover.
- In 2001, a former trustee (1997-2001) was elected to the Township Highway Commissioner position. He tried to pass a referendum to increase Road District taxes above the legal limits. It was voted down. Subsequently, the Shields Township Board of Trustees held a poorly advertised public meeting and quietly voted to raise the Road District tax cap above the legal limits. [Note: Approximately \$300,000 in taxes is received yearly for maintaining the Road District's 9.32 miles of Road. The Shields taxpayers in unincorporated areas of Lake Bluff (Arden Shores North, Arden Shores South and Knollwood) pay only 5% of the funding, while taxpayers residing in the municipalities of Lake Bluff, Lake Forest and North Chicago pay the other 95%.]

- Two lawsuits were filed against the Shields Township Road District. A Lake Forest resident provided funding for court costs. The Lake County State's Attorney acted to defend the Road District. Both class actions were decided in favor of the Shields Township taxpayers. The extra funding collected had to be reimbursed in the form of reduced taxes to the property owners during the 2005-2009 term. This gave the newly elected Highway Commissioner less funding to do needed work.
- The 2001-2005 Highway Commissioner also filed a lawsuit against a family living in Knollwood. The family won the lawsuit. While the case was sealed, there is some evidence that the lawsuit cost Shields Township taxpayers \$12,000 to defend the Highway Commissioner.
- During the same term, there was a complaint filed with the Lake County Sheriff's Department by an Arden Shores' resident against the Road District's full-time employee. The Township carries a \$25,000 deductible liability policy and had to pay \$18,000 (taxpayers funds) in attorney's fees to defend the Township. The case was unreasonably prolonged and finally thrown out of court.
- In 2009 (-2013), the township voters elected their first real reform board of trustees. Meetings calmed. The bullying behaviors lessened. The supervisor was of the "old township school". She too held the premise that taxpayer money could be doled out at a whim to other government and not for profit agencies. A town meeting was held to decide the issue and the taxpayers voted to eliminate the grant funding program.
- The 2013-2017 board featured two residents of Knollwood elected to trustee positions. They reinitiated the bullying behaviors. They attacked other trustees and elected officials and controlled most portions of the monthly meetings. Fortunately for the taxpayers, meetings continued to be recorded and televised on local public networks. **I continued to make FOIA requests for copies of the video recordings.**
- The two Knollwood residents did not seek reelection to the 2017-2021 Board. One was re-appointed to the board to fill a vacated position midway through the term. **At a September 2019 meeting, that Board member verbally abused me for several minutes because I filed FOIA requests. Further, she stated that she was in possession of a bill for legal services that had to be provided due to actions taken by me against the Township.** Previously, I had (FOIA) made a written request for a video recorded copy of a meeting. When I handed the request to to the township's office manager, she balled it up and threw it back at me. I forwarded a well-documented complaint of the incident to the Public Access Counselor (PAC) in the State of Illinois' Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General ruled in my favor. The taxpayers footed the bill for the costs of legal services incurred in writing a remediation plan for the township that addressed needed actions to be taken when in receipt of a valid FOIA request.
- At the September 2019 meeting, the other past trustee, now a resident of Lake Forest, heckled from the audience for about 20 minutes and then made public comments which exceeded the 3 minutes limit. The Supervisor did nothing to stop the bad behavior.
- During a following meeting, the heckling former trustee put his angry face close mine as he exited the meeting. The Assessor's wife asked me if I was okay. I felt forced to file a complaint against him with the Lake County Sheriff and Court.
- At the September 2020 meeting, while trying to justify doubling her salary, the Supervisor looked over at my daughter, a current Trustee, and began to defame my reputation. Her comments are reprehensible and are subject to scrutiny in a civil action. I do not wish to burden

