

Minutes – Shields Township Board of Trustees

Special Meeting June 21, 2022

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

THE TOWN BOARD OF SHIELDS TOWNSHIP held a special board meeting in person and by Zoom on June 21, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Tammy Bryan	Clerk
Brady Andersen	Town Trustee
Kathryn Walker-Eich	Town Trustee
David Weil	Town Trustee
Jeff Urso	Town Trustee

I. Meeting Called to Order

Clerk Bryan called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

II. Roll Call – Also in attendance – former Assessor Scott Helton* and Attorney Mark Kimzey**

*The Township Board approved an agreement with Mr. Helton to fill the vacancy in the Office of the Township Assessor as an independent contractor at this Special Board Meeting.

**The Township Board confirmed the appointment of Mr. Kimzey’s firm, Airdo Werwas, LLC, as Township Attorney at the Rescheduled Board Meeting on June 30, 2022.

III. Clerk Bryan – Given the resignation of the Township Supervisor effective June 13, 2022, we need to appoint a Chairman Pro Tem to preside over this Special Board Meeting. Is there a motion to appoint a Chairman Pro Tem to preside over this Special Board Meeting?

Trustee Walker-Eich – I move to appoint Trustee Jeff Urso as Chairman Pro Tem for this June 21, 2022 Special Board Meeting

Trustee Weil – I second the motion

Clerk Bryan – I will now call the roll on the Motion to Appoint Trustee Jeff Urso as Chairman Pro Tem to preside over this Special Board Meeting. Passes with a roll call vote 4-0. The motion carries and Trustee Urso was appointed as Chairman Pro Tem to preside over this June 21, 2022 Special Board Meeting.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Pro Tem Urso opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance

V. New Business – Acceptance of Resignation of Township Supervisor

- a. The first item of New Business is Acceptance of Township Supervisor. As Clerk Bryan noted earlier, Heather Kerr resigned from the Office of Township Supervisor, effective immediately, on June 13, 2022.
- b. The Chairman Pro Tem sought a motion to accept Ms. Kerr's resignation. Motion is made by Trustee Walker-Eich, the motion is second by Trustee Andersen. Motion passes with a roll call vote 4-0.
- c. The motion carries, and Heather Kerr's resignation from the Office of Township Supervisor, effective June 13, 2022, was accepted.

VI. Appointment of Deputy Township Supervisor

- a. The next item of New Business is appointment of Deputy Township Supervisor. The Township Code provides that in the event of a vacancy in the Office of Township Supervisor until vacancy is filled. The Chairman Pro Tem sought a motion to appoint a Trustee as Deputy Supervisor.
Trustee Walker-Eich – I move to appoint Trustee Urso as Deputy Township Supervisor pursuant to Subsection (b-5) of Section 60-5 of the Township Code until the vacancy in the Office of Township is filled. Supervisor. Trustee Weil second the motion.
- b. The motion is made by Trustee Walker-Eich, seconded by Trustee Weil. Passes with a roll call vote 4-0.

VII. Approval of Independent Contractor Agreement to Address Vacancy in Office of Township Assessor

- a. The final item of New Business is Approval of Independent Contractor Agreement to address Vacancy in the Office of Township Assessor.
On May 19, 2022, the Board accepted the resignation of Scott Helton from the Office of Township Assessor.
The Property Tax Code provides that the Board may fill the vacancy by contracting with a qualified person to do the assessing at a cost no greater than the maximum salary for the Township Assessor.
Until such time as this Board has found a qualified, suitable replacement, the former Assessor, Scott Helton, has agreed, given the resignation of the former Supervisor, to perform the duties of the Township Assessor as an independent contractor. Mr. Helton is qualified for the position and has many years of experience as the Shields Township Assessor.
What is before us this afternoon is a year-to-year agreement to govern the relationship between Mr. Helton and the Township.
Therefore, the Deputy Supervisor sought a motion:
 - 1. To Approve the Independent Contractor Agreement between Mr. Helton and Shields Township as presented; And.

2. To authorize the Deputy Supervisor and the Clerk to sign and attest, respectively, the Agreement on behalf of the Township.
3. Motion is made by Trustee Walker-Eich, the motion is seconded by Trustee Andersen. Passed with a roll call vote 4-0

VIII. **Public comments:**

- a. **Janice Schnobrich** – In the Spring of 1996, I read an item in the Lake Forest which stated Shields Township had raised salaries of all 8 elected officials by 30 to 40 percent. I was not familiar with Shields Township as a government unit and wondered what that unit of government did. I became a regular meeting observer at the Lake Forest office on Deerpath Road and continued my attendance after the move to the Muir Avenue. I have an insatiable need to understand the workings of governments and other agencies which have direct impact on my life. I began to ask questions during Public Comment time. I was publicly bullied for doing so. I educated myself on FOIA requests and received much sound advice from local attorneys. I requested audio and later video recordings of all meetings. During public meetings Charles B. IV. (1995-2009) would periodically raise a handful of papers in his hand and loudly proclaim to all, I had cost the township a lot of money because FOIA requests had to be honored. This practice of berating me for requesting information to which I was legally entitled continued through 2009, 2013, 2017 and 2021 administrations. Both elected officials and township employees were involved in the bullying.

Despite the harassment, I learned a lot. I found that Shields Township spent on a yearly average, less than 1% of taxpayer funding on General Assistance Grants, the one mandated function required by Illinois Township Statutes, and less than 18% on non-mandated social services. The other 80% of Town Fund revenue went mostly to house and support salaries with benefits to their employed workers. I also learned that those most in need of social services had been denied them due to geographical distance from and lack of transportation to Shields Township office and aid workers. I have concluded that it would be best to outsource most social services to Waukegan Township.

In 2016, I wrote a documented paper on Lake County Township Assessors who twice sued Lake County and the Chief Assessment Officer. At the request of County Commissioner, the Chief Assessment Office researched, compiled data, and reposted that Lake County taxpayers could receive a \$4 million a year reduction in taxes paid if the 18 Lake County Township Assessors officers were closed and duties performed by them were transferred to the County. Taxpayer receipts were used to pay legal fees. Keri-Lyn Krafthefer was the attorney representing the Assessors. Both cases were judged to have no merit.

I found that Shields Township employees work less than 32 hours weekly, yet receive compensation for a fulltime work. Payroll services are now outsourced, Assessment Services are due to be outsourced. I have further concluded the taxpayers should no longer be forced to pay for facilities to house very few Shields Township workers and officials. An office space should be sought where necessary files can be kept and a person employed to answer the phones and make the necessary appointments for those who wish to meet in person with the Supervisor or Assessor. Regular meetings of the Board could be held free of charge at the Village of Lake Bluff public facilities.

- b. **Alderman Evans** - Just a few questions. I am up here; I was reading some about stuff. I am a native of North Chicago, I represent North Chicago and support North Chicago while were checking for more here for North Chicago. We are, you know part of the Shields Township and some people feel the city part of Shields, but after you understand that we say I am glad David's here. I hope to see you, but while I am up here. I want to ask the board for a little information, if I can have whether, today or sometime this week. I want to see because so many things that have been happening in the Township. I want to see for the past four year, the salaries, raises that the Township should give also want to see who's on a represent us more, not just here today, but throughout of any besides just for me. What you guys could do because I know it's hard to get a temperature here today. Let's hear whatever. But I also want to know how did you the get opponents. How did this boy? I don't know what you got, but you had a person working from Florida then you pay from, I mean for two years, so everybody should know. Another question, is sexual harassment and saying, because I am hearing and it's in the newspaper. It's insane. It's in the newspaper about the sexual harassment. And is that settled, is that going on? Then there's a rumor about whether this board is going to bring somebody back to get their IMRF. Don't just because you know, somebody trying to make them happy. Let them know if anybody is wrong with the court. Let me them know; they don't need that. You don't all that stuff that I thought Shields will be better than all this bad news. I mean I come down here. I work with a lot of people down here. It's been good. I've talked to several people from this area from the late lovely North Lake Bluff and Knollwood. It seems like everything is good but to find out the whole department, just walk out and leave people with the assessment and the people with tax bills. It just shows that nobody really cares. I hope the board cared enough to work with me and I work with everybody. You have to help this township program. So Ill teach everybody now. I'm here. Okay, guess who's on board. She's going and Scott, so when Kathy was on board, we all worked together, don't have to be a certain party, just be honest and work fairly and accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

Deputy Supervisor Jeff Urso-I will answer very soon about the Florida one. I would like to address the sexual harassment: The board in 2021 was made aware, investigation by former attorney and the conclusion In February, was no sexual harassment. Some of the things that you have been seen in the newspapers is just that, it's unfortunate. Making statements and talking without providing full context and I do hope in the coming says we can give you the full context. Thank you for asking. The raises for the last 4 years. Sure, you can FOIA all staff members' salaries and etc. Sarah will provide and send.

c. **Sue Skowronski** via Zoom – Yes, so I am sitting here listening to you guys, you should all should be ashamed. I have read everything reported about the assessor. And I cannot believe none of it is true. And then you can't play nice in the sandbox. So, Mr. Helton resigns because Heather Kerr didn't, now he wants his money. So, he's gonna be sitting on here until you get somebody else? I mean what kind of game are you playing with the resident of Shields Township? It is immature and pathetic, I have lived here for 30 years, and I have never seen it so bad. I'm done.

d. **Ms. McMillan** – I am from Shields Township. Now with the Assessor gone, who will handle homestead exemption?

Deputy Supervisor Urso – We are fortunate enough to enter into a contract with Assessor Helton and get all those things addressed immediately, very soon. The Assessor will be back to work tomorrow.

From the Audience – “Homesteads are already done. But if you have a senior exemption, exception, make an appointment.”

e. **Penny** – How can you help? Is Mr. Helton still under investigation by the Attorney General? I am not sure the State's Attorney's Office has accepted this case yet.

Trustee Weil: What you saw in the paper that Scott had given a discount to Kathy, ~~and that~~ actually didn't happen. The Chief County Assessor said, “No, that never went through.” And, the other piece of that was, it was not Trustee Walker -Eich who made the request. It was community member closest to the water pump station that actually sent in pictures—showing cracks in her house—and wanted something to be done because her house is ruined. And then, Scott asked the staff: “What do you think we should do?” And, they said, “well, there's a precedent for a ten percent discount of the value of your house.” It only lasts one year on the land. Only land, not the house, only the land. Scott asked, “What do you think we should do?” And, all three staff agreed and they agreed to asked the Assessor of the County. And the County Assessor said, “why, I suggest that you bring it before the Board of Review,” and that's actually as far as it went. Nothing actually happened. So, what ~~where~~ you heard in the paper was kind of a half-truth. there's other information that you go, “oh, all right that actually makes sense

Someone needs to let the residents know. So, there was no devaluation. So, the Board of Review did not review it.

Penny – Who’s the new attorney for the township? Mr. Kimzey identified himself.

- f. **Deputy Supervisor Urso** – Today the Board of trustees of Shields Township took a major step toward restoring integrity, honesty and fiscal practices for the people of the Township. The Board of Trustees is a part of a check on balance system of Township Government, one among other obligations. This volunteer board of Trustees reviews bills and operations. At the Board meeting in April three trustees and then the assessor called on discouraged to resign due to issues with their leadership professional practices that the three trustees and assessor Helton. Unfortunately, in the response for the request to step down. Ms. Kerr actually. So, I want to do, we recognize that Ms. Kerr caused a lot of confusion to our residents of our Township. These are over, the Board of Trustees hired back Scott Helton, once again to serve the taxpayers the Township and operate the Assessor’s Office composed of true professionals. We look forward to the commitment and continue to support and I’m sorry. We look forward to continuing support and we commit ourselves to serve you. We want everyone here to know we want to be very transparent, very open. We want to make sure questions are answered entirely informed. We are going to continue to work with all residents. And as for the other trustees, we have had different opinions, but I think we all had talks together and even though we don’t see eye to eye we all collectively agree to continue to do the best for the Township. So, this is a good time. I echo Trustee Weil’s thoughts. Just, thank you very much, sir. Appreciate all, thank you guys.

- IX. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m. by Deputy Supervisor Urso, motion to adjourn by Trustee Weil, and second by Trustee Andersen, and passed unanimously by voice vote.