

# Milton Township

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## MILTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING June 11, 2012

A Special Meeting of the Milton Township Board was called to order on June 11, 2012 at 6:30pm, at the township hall with Supervisor Robert Benjamin presiding. Pledge of Allegiance Recited.

### **PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS:**

Supervisor: Robert Benjamin  
Treasurer: Linda DeBroka  
Trustee: Don Kronewitter  
Trustee: Sharon Ward

### **ABSENT BOARD MEMBERS:**

Clerk: Eric Renken

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Deputy Clerk: Sue Kronewitter  
Township Attorney : Catherine Kauffman

### **ANYONE WISHING TO SPEAK TO THE BOARD:**

Mr. Spaulding of Spaulding Lake Campground, spoke of his struggle with the address change and was thankful for Robert's (Robert Benjamin's) efforts and all his work.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

By Supervisor Benjamin: Mapping data release with Milton Updates to include Points of Interest: Campground, Township Hall and Smith's Chapel. PC Chair Kelly Sweeny, the Zoning Administrator and Supervisor met with SMR Communications. On July 9<sup>th</sup> at the Planning Commission meeting the members will be looking at wired internet to include broadband and cable in the northern part of the township. Hess Industries has ceased operations and if anyone you know is impacted direct them to the township. Milton is working with Cass County and the Economic Development Department.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Agenda approved item 1 – Milton's Fire Coverage.

Agenda approved item 2 – Milton's Ambulance Coverage.

### **MILTON TOWNSHIP FIRE COVERAGE.**

Supervisor Benjamin stated this meeting is to gather information to assist the board in making a decision on where we want to go with Fire and Ambulance coverage. The township Attorney reviewed the Edwardsburg & Niles Charter Fire Department contracts with Milton. She advised the board of their obligations, coverage areas, how much notice would be needed to terminate the contract by written

notice, and automatic renewals. If the contract was terminated, with Edwardsburg Fire Department, an asset and liability analysis, to include debts would be necessary. The Edwardsburg Fire Department is jointly owned by Ontwa, Milton and Jefferson Townships with each township represented by 2 board members.

Supervisor Benjamin asked how the contracts were put together and how they were negotiated as we pay differently than what is covered. Only Trustee Ward and Treasurer DeBroka were on the board when these contracts were negotiated and or renewed, and schools were not involved back then. The Headlee factor is not referenced, Treasurer DeBroka did not have the Headlee figures available nor was she able to explain how the bills are calculated. Fire Chief Stack had the Headlee amounts and gave them to the Supervisor. The amount we collect for property tax and what we do and what our contracts say are not the same, we need to have them match. We have paid \$10,000.00 more than we have collected. No one knew future projections and we pay from past estimates. 100% of Milton's tax collection, dollar for dollar, goes to provide Fire protection.

Answers were asked but unavailable for when a Board of Review decision is made, how does that information get back to the fire department for refunds. Treasurer DeBroka said we do not bill them back. No one at the township level is keeping track of over or under payments. A process needs to be put in place for checks and balances. Trustee Ward and Treasurer DeBroka said the last review of the contracts was in 2007 when Whitfield was Supervisor. Fire Chief Brovold, of Niles Township said the contracts were done in 2005 or 2006 with additions in 2007. Fire Chief Brovold said Supervisor Benjamin is the only one ever to bring up the issue of contracts and coverage.

Supervisor Benjamin announced we need to re-address our contracts, and it is not necessary to wait and see if the fire millage is approved. At the board meeting on Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup> the board will have four choices. 1. Make no changes to fire service. 2. Contract with Niles Charter Township Fire Department to cover all of Milton. 3. Contract with Edwardsburg Fire to cover all of Milton. 4. Have no contract and no coverage for fire in the Township, as it is not required by the state.

Supervisor Benjamin asked what the response times were. Niles Fire Chief Brovold said they have paid staff in the station and before the 2<sup>nd</sup> ring they are out the door and en-route in less than 2 minutes. There are firefighters living in Milton who can make it to the alarm site OTHER than those on the truck. Edwardsburg Fire Chief Stack said they are an all-volunteer fire department and time en-route is 7 to 11 minutes.

Supervisor Benjamin told Edwardsburg Fire Chief Stack that Milton's fire board members, nor are people at Milton being notified of community events by the fire department.

### **MILTON TOWNSHIP AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Discussion began at 7:23pm. Township Attorney reviewed the Edwardsburg Ambulance contract and advised the board of their obligations, coverage area, how much notice would be needed to terminate the contract by written notice. It was determined prior to the board setting up ambulance districts there was no concrete way to figure how we paid for ambulance. The current ambulance contract with Edwardsburg is not clear, specifically on how to terminate the contract and to understand the accrued liabilities. Last month the board set the districts as to who will pay for ambulance with all the monies going directly to the Ambulance service.

Southwestern Michigan Community Ambulance Service (known as SMCAS) offer is to Milton is to renovate the community building, and provide staff accommodations having a 24 hour station 7 days a week. The drive thru bay will continue to allow Cass County sheriff to ~~be~~ park THEIR CAR. SMCAS hopes to be adding a 4<sup>th</sup> truck to their service and will want to utilize part time staff. Tim Gray stated the GPS issues have been addressed for ambulance as they have been working with mapping in Cass County and the surrounding areas. SMCAS and Edwardsburg Ambulance both assured the public they have methods to respond to situations of hard to get to patients.

SMCAS covers 70 square miles and Edwardsburg covers 72 square miles. SMCAS has a \$45.00 membership fee for citizens who do not have insurance, or use the service frequently for transport. This membership fee is not mandatory. Edwardsburg does not offer a membership service. Fees for transport were discussed by Ambulance services. If SMCAS service is approved, the cost of the township's assessment will be paid from the assessment fees. The township and SMCAS would share water and internet. A separate meter for electric and propane can be installed. Sue Kronewitter asked if being they were staffed 24 hours were they in a Safe Place program. Ambulance Director Tim Gray said SMCAS is approved for a drop off infant program. SMCAS invited anyone to visit their sites and look at their ambulances.

The clerk has determined we can still have elections in the community center. SMCAS has agreed to work out of the Niles station for the 2-3 days needed as well as Southwestern Michigan College would allow us to use their facilities if an alternative site was necessary.

Questions were asked by the public and answered by Edwardsburg Fire Department, Niles Charter Township Fire Department, Edwardsburg Ambulance Service and SMCAS.

Supervisor Benjamin said this will be a tough decision as the township has worked with both in the past. It would be a great benefit to have AN ambulance in the community center. The intent is to make a decision at the next board meeting on June 18, 2012. We would have to give notice by October to Edwardsburg Ambulance if SMCAS was approved. Public asked if contracts are available to see. Our board packets are on the township web site and all documents can be requested with a FOIA request.

#### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

None.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made to adjourn by: Trustee Kronewitter, Seconded by: Treasurer DeBroka. All in favor: Yes. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Kronewitter  
Deputy Clerk