

Rutland Charter Township

Regular Board Meeting

October 11, 2023 / 7PM

Meeting called to order by Supervisor Watson at 7pm. Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call - Members Present:

Gene Hall, Sandy James, Doug Lectka, Sandy Greenfield, Larry Watson, Robin Hawthorne, Brenda Bellmore

Others Present:

Steve Pachulski, Dennis McKelvey, Pat Sharpe, Jim James, Jon Sporer, Bob Teunessen, Jamiee Desjardins, Nickie Haight

Approval of Agenda:

Hawthorne asks to have the Algonquin Lake Weed treatment be moved ahead of the Walmart tribunal issue. Hall wants to make sure the ADU discussion is on the agenda, and it is. Motion by Hawthorne, seconded by Watson to accept the October 11, 2023 agenda with the addition. All ayes. Motion passes.

Guests: None

Open Comments: None

Consent Agenda:

Motion by James to accept the consent agenda, seconded by Bellmore. All ayes. Motion passes.

Supervisor:

Watson brings up shepherd hooks that are being used in the cemetery. He says the ordinance states that nothing can be higher than the headstone, but they are. He says there is nothing in the ordinance that specifically talks about shepherd hooks. Watson and Hall visited Riverside and they are all over. James says they might be for a season or celebration and families need to mourn. Hall reads from the cemetery ordinance that says nothing can be higher than the headstone unless the flowers in an urn have grown/bloomed higher. Greenfield thinks it could cause a lot of issues if they decide to only allow them if they are small enough. Board members mention that people do not come back to throw away the plants once they are dead and discuss whether that is the sexton's job or not. Members think that shepherd hooks might not be a problem if they are right up against the concrete. Watson is worried about the safety of the workers and says the cemetery is not maintained after October. Bellmore thinks this is overkill and James agrees.

Motion by Bellmore, seconded by James, to have the RCT sexton maintain shepherds hooks in the cemetery as long as they are set right up to the footing or headstone. Hawthorne says this motion goes against the existing ordinance. Watson does not think this is Sexton's job. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - No, Greenfield - No, Watson - No, Hawthorne - No, Bellmore - Yes. Motion fails.

Lectka says these regulations are already clear in the existing cemetery ordinance and there is no need to make a change.

Motion by Greenfield, seconded by Hall, to leave the cemetery ordinance as is and not add details about shepherds hooks. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - Yes, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Clerk:

Hawthorne says that her Clerk's report and Vouchers/Payroll reports are on board members' desks.

She tells the board that there are new options for what the ARPA funds can be used for. She will have more information soon. Hall says there are many things the Road Commission could use the funds for.

Hawthorne has also given each board member replacement pages for the Master Plan Binder they each have. She explains the pages that should be removed and replaced by the new ones.

Treasurer:

Greenfield shares that a copy of her Treasurer's Monthly Report is on each board member's desks. She has also included the ARPA report.

She tells the board that the BIRCH fire fund has been depleted due to some expansion and purchase of a vehicle. She says BIRCH has made an administrative decision to charge the full mileage of 1.25mil. Since RCT has to have enough extra funds to cover one year, Greenfield proposes that she cash in the CD at Huntington and put those funds into the fire fund. She says the funds will slowly be replaced due to charging the higher mil rate. Once Headlee sets the rate, RCT will know exactly what the millage rate will be.

Lectka, Greenfield, and Hall all comment that RCT is now having to fix the problem that BIRCH made. Sharpe says they should ask for a new millage before the current one expires. The current millage is not enough to cover the bills and can renew in 4 years. Lectka asks if anyone is doing anything about the leadership of BIRCH and Hall answers there are some ideas about making some changes but nothing to share at this time.

Trustees:

Hall thanks Lectka for a great job on the cemetery sign. And board members agree it looks great.

Commissioners Report:

Bob Teunessen says they will have the county budget meeting on October 24th and all are welcome. He shares that the commissioners have been working on plans for the old FOC building, which is getting new windows and will possibly have the drain commissioner's office and meeting rooms there.

He shares that the state will likely take the decision making about solar farms out of local government hands.

He says the COA will be getting a new building located out by Thornapple Manor. Teunessen and board members discuss that there are many benefits of working with them, including major cost savings. However, members worry about the location and Teunessen says they will be working with the transit. There will also be a dialysis machine for public use. Jim James is on the steering committee for the COA project. He says working with Thornapple Manor is giving the COA the best of both worlds. They will be able to use the kitchen, water, sewer, and programs already available. They will do their best to make transportation work for people that will be further away now. Board members all agree this is a great plan.

2024 Algonquin Lake Treatment Plan

Pat Sharpe is the head of the Algonquin Lake Community Association (ALCA). He says they have been very happy with PLM. He introduces Jamiee Desjardins from PLM.

Desjardins says they have done many treatments during the year and have stayed within budget. She says the plan for 2024 is to stay the course and the budget is about the same as 2023

She shares that there is a new invasive species called Hydrilla, that has been found in 2 small ponds in Michigan. They are hopeful they can contain it to only those 2 ponds, it is very fast growing, but prefers warmer climates. PLM is treating it for the state and trying to get the roots. A 3rd pond did not have it, but is in the same area, and eventually flows into the Saint John River.

James says there are 2 private ponds that flow into Algonquin Lake and she wonders if they should be checked for Hydrilla. Desjardins says the private owners can contact PLM and they would come out to test them.

Motion by Lectka, seconded by James, to accept the PLM plan to stay the course on Algonquin Lake for 2024. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - Yes, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Unfinished Business:

Walmart Tax Tribunal Discussion

At 7:54pm, Watson says the board is going to move into closed session to discuss the Walmart issue.

At 8:18pm, the board opens up the public meeting.

Motion by Lectka, seconded by Greenfield to settle with Walmart and accept their offer of \$33.50 sq ft. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - Yes, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Ordinance 2023-190 for second reading

Board members comment that they have already discussed this and are ready to vote.

Motion by Bellmore, seconded by Lectka, to accept Ordinance 2023-190 for second reading and adoption. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - Yes, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Township Hall rental agreement discussion

Greenfield shares that Nancy Halifax would be on call to clean after an event and would charge \$150. She says a basic insurance rider from Buckland would cost \$295 per day. However, RCT has an insurance deductible of \$250. So it would make sense to have the renter be liable for the deductible. She has provided board members with samples of lease agreements she found. She asks if board members are in support of renting out the hall, that they review and decide which parts they would like included.

James spoke with Carol Sivhl who handles the rental of the ALCA Lodge. Sivhl told her that they charge either \$300 or \$600 depending on the size of the group, they have things like tape and staples used on the walls, they pay to have it sanitized before and after the event. James is very worried about potential damage to the hall and security. James suggests only renting it out to businesses and Hawthorne says they already do that at no charge.

Hawthorne says they can lock down all parts of the building except the kitchen and bathrooms. Board members discuss if they would charge for the rental or just for the cleaning.

Lectka says there will be wear and tear over the years. He thinks they should charge enough so that the fees build up over time to take care of those costs. But he thinks \$500 is too much and people will not pay it. Lectka said before they figure out the details, they need to decide whether they do or do not want to rent it. So he takes an informal vote and has 4 members that do not want to rent out the hall and 3 that do. They decide to stop working on an agreement since there is not the support.

New Business:

Accept Ordinance 2023-191 for First Reading - Accessory Dwelling Units

The board members discuss that the Planning Commission tabled this because they could not agree on if it is needed or not. Hawthorne says they have already paid the costs and fees for this. Bellmore says there are too many variables and no consensus.

Motion by James, seconded by Bellmore, to table this discussion as the PC recommended. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - No, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Lectka says since they have decided not to write an ordinance, compliance must be enforced. Board members talk about being complaint driven, but also being responsible as RCT employees and board members to report when they see things not in compliance.

Hawthorne says that she has learned that no ordinance is perfect and should be fluid so that the enforcement officers are able to look at each situation individually.

Hall hopes to readdress this at a later time and agrees it needs more definition.

Resolution 2023-296 the Early Voting Agreement

Hawthorne says that RCT will be working with Hope and Hastings Charter Townships to cut costs and share staff. She says the RCT hall will be the voting location. She is waiting for Pam Palmer to file the paperwork with the state. Lectka asks Hawthorne if she believes this partnership is what is best for RCT and Hawthorne does.

Motion by Lectka, seconded by James, to accept resolution 2023-296 for first reading. Roll Call Vote: Hall - Yes, James - Yes, Lectka - Yes, Greenfield - Yes, Watson - Yes, Hawthorne - Yes, Bellmore - Yes. Motion passes.

Bids for Janitorial, Sexton, and Hall Grounds Maintenance

Watson and Hawthorne explain that the 3-year contract with Nancy Halifax is going to expire. Board Members were given packets with the details. The same details will go in the paper.

James says that if the board and RCT employees are satisfied with Halifax, she is happy to approve signing a new contract with them. Hawthorne explains they have to make a choice to continue or post in the paper for bids.

Greenfield says there was never a detailed agreement with Halifax because Mike Halifax would always just take care of things because he took pride in the work. But now she thinks it would be a good idea to have more defined job duties for the grounds and Sexton jobs. Some RCT employees have not been happy with some things not getting done, but realize it is partly due to not having these defined job duties. James would like to ask Nancy Halifax to do some of those extra things. Watson says he has had conversations with her already.

Hawthorne points out that there are a lot more requirements for the Sexton job. They have to have the equipment to dig graves, pour footings, as well as being there for the service and lowering the body into the grave.

Lectka says “digging graves” is not listed as one of the Sexton’s responsibilities. Hall says there is nothing that says digging graves or fixing/replacing broken concrete is the Sexton’s job either. Watson says it is against state law for a township to spend money on fixing footing and headstones. Hawthorne will add details and explanations to the contract.

Steve Pachulski mentions that the City of Hastings fixes things in their cemetery. Hawthorne says the city has a millage for that.

James says she would support not putting a bid out for the Sexton position and just sign a new contract with Hallifax. She says there is too much detail and she has been satisfied with their work. Watson says he has not been happy with it and wants to get other bids.

Lectka asks if the board is required to ask for other bids. Hawthorne says not legally but it is good business practice. She shares that when Mike Hallifax passed away, they approved a 3 yr. agreement instead of the normal 5 year because they wanted to give Hallifax a chance.

Greenfield wants to add mulch area and sidewalks for weed removal. She also thought that RCT supplied cleaning supplies and paper products. Hawthorne says Hallifax provides some things themselves and RCT provides other things.

Hall thinks that any services the township is voting on, the public should have the benefit of seeing competitive bids. Bellmore agrees that all 3 should go up for bid.

Motion by Lectka, seconded by Bellmore, to put the Sexton, Janitorial, and Hall/Grounds Maintenance contracts out for bid. Board Discussion about how long to let the bid be opened. The new contract would start January 1, 2024, so the board wants to vote at the December meeting, and require bids be in by November 27. James asks if they have gotten bids like this in the past. Hawthorne says no, they just did a new contract with Mike Hallifax. Roll Call Vote: Hall – Yes, James – Yes, Lectka – Yes, Greenfield – Yes, Watson – Yes, Hawthorne – Yes, Bellmore – Yes. Motion passes.

Open Comments:

None

Adjournment:

Motion by James, seconded by Watson to adjourn at 9:23pm, all ayes. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Nickie Haight, Recording Secretary