

Rutland Charter Township

Regular Board Meeting

August 14, 2024 / 7PM

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

Roll Call - Members Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Doug Lectka - excused

Others Present:

Pat Sharpe, Lewis Anderson, Christine Kady, Andria and Marti Mayack, Will Schmidt, Michael Gonzales, Dean Rounds, Cindy Couzmen, Vicki Wright, Gilmar Guzmaal, Susan Bender, Bob Teunessen, Nickie Haight

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by James, seconded by Bellmore to accept the August 14, 2024 agenda. All ayes. Motion passes.

Guests:

None

Open Comments:

Marti Mayack introduces himself as the Republican Nominee for RCT Supervisor. He says he is a vet and raising his family in RCT. He asks for support from the board and the public.

Consent Agenda:

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

Supervisor:

Watson wants to reappoint Carl Lickley and Les Raymond to the ZBA because their term has expired.

Hawthorne makes a motion, supported by James, to reappoint Carl Lickley and Les Raymond to the ZBA for a 3 year term. All ayes. Motion passes.

Clerk:

Board Members have the Clerk's Report Voucher/Payroll and there are no questions. Hawthorne shares there was a 40% turnout for the election on August 6th. She also says there was a massive amount of money spent for about 200 voters during the 9 days of early voting.

Treasurer:

Greenfield says her report is in the board member's packets and on the back table.

Trustees:

Hall and Bellmore thank the voters for their support and for supporting the road millage. Hall also welcomes Jason Watson as a new board trustee.

Commissioners Report:

Commissioner Teunessen shares that Eric Sueska has been hired as the New County Administrator. He says Sueska is a great fit for Barry County.

Teunessen says the county now has a solar and wind ordinance that is more strict than the state's. Consumers has agreed to the ordinance.

Teunessen thanks the public for passing the renewal for COA activities. And he says the hope is that the new COA building construction will start this fall. He says the transit renewal will be on the ballot in November and is vital to the new COA at Harvest Point.

James says that Harvest Point is beautiful and the transit will be very busy. Teunessen is so proud that this new building will be built without raising taxes.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

Discussion on possible new retail development in the township

Hawthorne says the board members have copies of the proposed agreement that RCT sent to the city. The city and township board members will be meeting on August 26th. She says Meijer will not come without a water/sewer infrastructure. Greenfield thinks it is a great proposal and thanks Hall for writing it. Hawthorne says RCT will not be giving away any more land to the city because the loss of the property tax income would be a huge loss. Hall says it is a simple plan and that no property has to change hands. James asks if it is a super Meijer. Hawthorne says yes, it is a 20 acre lot, which is twice the size of Walmart and there will be a gas station. Hawthorne says nothing will be happening until maybe 2027 if at all and that it would take 18-24 months to build.

Hawthorne says Meijer wanted to build here in 2008 but the land ended up being protected wetlands. She says the board is certain they do not want another Urban Services agreement. They agree the building plans can change and that they will support an agreement with the city that does not include giving away RCT land.

An audience member asks what it means in the proposed agreement that "a 2 mil assessment will go to all RCT properties in the Meijer water/sewer district" and asks if they will really have to pay double. Hawthorne says that means from the property in question to the city. Any businesses along the way can opt to get city water/sewer right away or will be required to switch over in 3 years time. Every business that has hooked up to city sewer/water already pays double based on those previous agreements.

Open Comments:

William Schmit speaks out against a Meijer coming to RCT. He says big box stores outside of town will make small businesses in town suffer. Supervisor Watson says there is nowhere to build in the city.

Ken Kirsch is also against Meijer building in RCT. He says people live here for the small town feel. He does not like how Meijer runs their business and is worried about how it would affect Barry County financially.

Ines Straub says she supports Meijer coming to RCT. She assumes they have done their research and think it would be a good fit.

Marti Mayack says when he owned the vet clinic on Green St, they were forced to switch to city water and sewer. He does not want that to happen to other residents. The board members agree and see no other benefits. Mayack says he had to increase his vet bills to compensate.

Vicki Wright says she lives in the neighborhood just north of the property they are referring to. She prefers the small town feeling and supporting small businesses. Wright says Meijer does not pay well and usually only employs part time employees so they do not have to provide health insurance. She also mentions that businesses in the area are already having a hard time finding employees.

Pat Sharpe says there is no way small businesses will survive if Meijer comes to town. He asks if the board has told the Chamber of Commerce yet and Watson answers that it is too early in the process for that. He congratulates the August ballot winners and COA millage renewal. He thanks everyone for their hard work.

Terrick Smith lives on Penny Ave north of the property. He asks how it will be laid out on the property, and what screening or gap there would be between Meijer and the neighborhood north of it. He also hopes there will not be a driveway off of Tanner Lk Rd. The board says they have no say in the driveways, the Road Commission will decide that,

Dave Beckwith also lives on Penny Ave and wants to know how residents can stay informed as the process proceeds. Hall says it will be on the meeting agenda for the month if there is any information. He asks if the meeting with the city is open to the public, and the board says no. Beckwith asks if RCT has a non-disclosure with Meijer and the board says they do not. Supervisor Watson guarantees there will be no extra traffic coming into the neighborhood north of the property.

Brad Haight also lives on Penny Ave and is worried about the drainage ditch that runs directly from that property. Watson says Meijer would not have any drainage into that creek.

Michael Gonzolas says he grew up in Grand Ledge and does not see it as progress when a Meijer comes into town. He says small businesses will suffer and he worries whether the city will be able to handle all the septic. He does not want to see Algonquin Lake residents be the next area forced to join the city for sewer and water.

Hawthorne says the city has the capacity they need for a Meijer, but it could have been an issue if the hospital decided to build there. She tells the public that RCT has no control over who buys land here, but that Meijer will not do well and septic. She says that Algonquin Lake residents asked for and paid for the study to see about sewer and water in that area and RCT was just the banker in that case. Greenfield says the board has as many questions as the public does at this point and that it is too early in the process to have any details.

Jon Anderson asks if the board will hold onto the property tax income or will they give it away to the city like in the past. The board says they are not giving away any more land.

Amber Janssens is not a RCT resident but lives in Indian Hills and works for Meijer in Caledonia. She loves working there, she makes more money and has better benefits than when she worked for Barry or Calhoun Counties. She says Meijer contributed to signs and supplies for the youth golf league here in town. She is sad to hear the negative things residents think about Meijer. She also shares that a new part time greeter at Meijer would make \$16/hr and would be able to get benefits.

Adjournment:

Motion by Bellmore, seconded by Hawthorne to adjourn at 8pm, all ayes. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Nickie Haight, Recording Secretary

PROPOSED