

WESTFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FEBRUARY 16, 2009
SPECIAL TRUSTEES MEETING
FIRE LEVY AND GENERAL BUSINESS-1:00 P.M.

As amended 3/16/09

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees Jim Likley called to order the special meeting of the Westfield Township Board of Trustees at 1:02 p.m. Trustee Sims, Likley and Kratzer were present as well as Fire Chief Jack Snoddy, Fiscal Officer Martha Evans, Lee Evans, Ron Oiler, and Heather Sturdevant.

Chair Likley stated the purpose of this meeting is to review and move forward to put a fire levy on the ballot. At the last regular trustees meeting a Resolution was approved to go to the County Auditor's Office for a certificate of estimated property tax revenue if the fire levy was passed. We have received that document back today and in lieu of the timeframe to put a levy on the ballot for May 5, 2009; (the next Regular Trustees Meeting was not scheduled until February 19, 2009) we would not have met the 75 day requirement to have it to the Board of Elections.

Fiscal Officer Evans read the Certificate of Estimated Property Tax Revue from the County Auditor's Office and the proposed Resolution for the Board of Elections to place the fire levy on the May 5, 2009 ballot. (Attached to approved meeting minutes). In sum the estimated property tax revenue for a 2.5 mil levy would yield approximately \$189,309. This would be a replacement of the existing 1.5 mil with an increase of a 1 mil.

Resolution 2009-07 would verify that the Trustees find it necessary to levy a tax in excess of the 10 mil limitation for the benefit of Westfield Township for the purpose of providing and maintaining fire apparatus, appliances, buildings or sites thereof...at a rate of 2.5 mil for each \$100.00 of evaluation which amounts to \$.25 for each 100 dollars of evaluation for a continuous period of time. This would be a replacement of the current 1.5 mil levy with a 2.5 mil levy (1 mil increase). This would be placed on the primary election ballot on the 5th of May 2009.

Chair Likley stated this levy was put on the ballot this past November and defeated. The Fire Dept. was currently running at \$75,000-\$78,000 which was what the current levy and expenses of the Fire Dept. from the General Fund.

Fire Chief Snoddy then addressed the Board. The need for the levy can be based on two points:

1. The study which reviewed response times and;

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2. Equipment needs.

The only way response time can be fixed is through staffing. Chief Snoddy stated he could be at the station 24 hrs. a day but could not respond by himself. Even part-time staffing would require extra money which we don't have. If we hire part-time the Township would not have to pay benefits, but the estimated cost for staffing would be \$30,000-\$40,000. That would be for two additional people plus himself. The current levy brings in approximately \$90,000 a yr. The budget including Chief Snoddy's salary and benefits amounts to \$216,000 a yr. Westfield Township's cost is 75% of this amount. With the figures Fiscal Officer Evans has provided to the Trustees the Fire Dept. will be out of money by next year based on the tax collected right now. The Dept. has repair bills. The squad that was just repaired cost \$11,500 and this was not an old squad.

Chief Snoddy continued that he spoke with Seville and they provide full-time staffing 7 days a wk. He was not proposing that but their total millage for Fire and EMS is 4.75. We would be asking for 2.5 mils and we can get the job done for that. The study confirms this. We have purchased the new truck and I believe that can support us for the next 10 yrs.

Chair Likley asked what the next scheduled piece of equipment that needed to be replaced? Chief Snoddy stated it would be the squad we just had fixed (#167-2) and that should be 3-4 yrs. off. We work the squads on a 10 yr. schedule. Chair Likley stated the 10 yr. schedule seems to be the most economical before large amounts of money would need to be expended. Chief Snoddy added that if he and Mark can work out the truck schedule we would not need a new truck for probably 5-7 yrs.

Chair Likley stated at the end of last year the Trustees organized all the fire dept. expenses under one fund category so it would be easier to track what money is received and what money is carried over and know where we are at in the capital improvement fund for the purchase of equipment.

Chief Snoddy stated Seville has a 1 mil and a 1.25 mil levy for Fire which leaves them with a 2.5 mil EMS levy and they bill all residents for EMS calls. Westfield Township only bills non-residents for EMS calls. Depending on the year we get \$40-60,000 a yr. The Fire Committee has spoken about billing all residents but that idea has not been popular. Chair Likley stated he was aware of that and added that an increase in Life Force (which bills for non-residents) has also been discussed but the decision was as long as we were able to cover the expenses through the collections that was not necessary but in the future this may be an option to the Dept.

Chief Snoddy stated regarding the facility there really are issues. We had furnace issues, some of the circuit boards have burned out, roof issues etc. We cannot put a smoke

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detector in the bays as there has to be a sophisticated system that will not detect the smoke of the trucks in the bays when you start them up. You cannot even do rate of rise because when those heaters are on in the bays it is 100 degrees at the ceiling and 40 degrees at the floor. This will all cost money and needs to be hard wired into the control panels. Chief Snoddy stated the trench drains are rotted out in the front bay and need to be redone. This all costs money to do and fix.

A reporter from the Gazette was now in attendance. Chief Snoddy reiterated the comments he made and added that a levy is needed to reduce response times through staffing and to upgrade and maintain equipment. The 2.5 mil levy proposed may still not in the short term provide for a new facility or all the equipment we need but it will keep us operating and providing a level of services competitive with NFPA and the American Heart Association require.

Chair Likley stated the study Fire Chief Snoddy referred to was done by a consultant-(TG Fire.) The Trustees and Village contracted with to them to do a full evaluation of equipment, staffing, facility, level of service etc. of the Fire Dept. Chief Snoddy confirmed it was an extensive evaluation with extensive recommendations and added he could not say that the Dept. won't ask for more money in the next 5 yrs. but right now compared to other departments Westfield Township Fire Dept. is a bargain at this millage and will be even at 2.5 mils if passed. Chair Likley interjected that the current 1.5 mil is running at 1996 evaluations. The year 1996 was the last year a levy was approved by the residents and that is the money the Dept. has been running on. Chief Snoddy commented that the Fire Dept. is still solvent but as Fiscal Officer Evans has pointed out in approximately 2 yrs. we won't be.

Trustee Kratzer stated that in reference to other community's fire levies, in Guilford Township they renew their levies every 5 yrs. The levy we are looking at today is a continuous levy so if nothing is done then it stays at 1996 evaluations. If we ask the voters to renew the levy every 5 yrs. or so then it would bring it up to current evaluations. This year is different in that evaluations went down but that is not the norm and hopefully it will turn around. This levy will need to be promoted to the residents. Chief Snoddy stated it would be promoted that there is a genuine need for this levy to maintain and provide the levy of services to the community. Chief Snoddy added that if we are not going to charge our residents for EMS service and he did not want to do that, then the passage of this levy is a bargain as 90% of everything we do is EMS.

Regarding staffing, Chief Snoddy stated he would like one part-time person besides himself in the station Mon.-Fri. The consultant actually recommended 2 people on weekends however most of our population doubles during the week between the schools and Westfield Companies. The staffing could probably be accomplished for about

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\$30,000 a yr. and he was trying to work out that figure in his current budget to reduce response time to 5-7 minutes.

Chair Likley asked if staffing would consist of existing individuals on the Dept. Chief Snoddy responded absolutely he would not go outside the Dept. unless he absolutely had to. The individual would have to have Fire and EMS capability to be able to participate with calls. He added that he had those qualifications in the Dept. in that currently all of the EMT's are certified to fight fires.

Trustee Sims stated that in the TG Fire report it reflected \$400,000 for capital improvements. It has been discussed that staff salaries i.e. the Fire Chief's in particular was coming out of the General Fund and cutting into the \$400,000 dollars earmarked for capital improvements in the budget. Fiscal Officer Evans has stated the majority of this money has come from inheritance tax that has accumulated over time. The Township has seen a decrease in that money due to a change in the law with trusts being able to be set up.

Trustee Sims continued that Chief Snoddy's salary and benefits are approximately \$72,000 a yr. Chief Snoddy stated that was why he changed his budget from \$145,000 to \$216,000. Trustee Sims stated the reality is, even though we have a \$400,000 cushion so to speak, with \$72,000 is taken out every year for Chief Snoddy's salary and that amount steadily is going to diminish. In doing the temporary appropriations the Trustees have attempted to categorize all the revenue and expenditures of the Dept. under the category of Fire Fund. As of today it appears there is enough money to operate the Dept. but a hard look shows the Dept. cannot budget for the rotation of aging equipment.

Chief Snoddy stated if we could increase the levy to 2.5 mils based on what the study says and based on those figures, we can accommodate my salary, rotation of equipment and staffing. It would be a slow process but it could be done.

Trustee Sims asked Fiscal Officer Evans how much money was transferred from the General Fund to pay for the purchase of the new fire truck? Fiscal Officer Evans stated \$150,000. Trustees Sims stated there was a contractual error with the Village in terms of the split of expenses. Fiscal Officer stated it would be another \$10-12,000 annually but did not have the exact figure.

Trustee Sims continued that these were hard economic times and felt the Fire Dept. did a good job in budgeting the money for operations but the ball has been dropped in understanding the finances for equipment rotation. She added she felt some of that was due to the fact the Trustees did not have a clear economic picture regarding the Township budgetary figures.

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Trustee Kratzer stated regarding Trustee Sims comments that the Trustees did not have a clear accurate economic picture; he did not believe that was correct the fact was that the numbers were in different parts of the budget and were difficult to locate, but now that all the financial figures were under one grouping it would be easier to locate and track the revenue and expenditures of the Fire Dept.

Trustee Sims stated that a fire levy was placed on the ballot in November 2008 and was defeated. In part it was discussed that the reason for the levy defeat was the levy language and in part there was an editorial from Mr. Kratzer about growth. Probably most important was the levy was not promoted. What has changed since November? There has been an economic downturn and maybe the worst in many years. Residents are dealing with job loss, foreclosures and delinquent taxes. On the other hand as Trustees we want to provide our volunteers with safe equipment and vehicles in providing fire and EMS service to the community.

Trustee Sims asked, "Have the Trustees and Fire Dept. done their due diligence regarding the fire fund? Should we consider insurance billing for EMS? Should we be looking at grants available?" The other thing to consider is that November elections generally have a large turnout but the May elections do not. Maybe waiting until November would give the economy a chance to turn around and second produce a larger voter turnout.

Chief Snoddy stated the Fire Dept. has not ignored any grant money and has applied for every dime they could. He added he would be asking for a Resolution at the next Trustee meeting for two more grants. Trustee Sims stated up until recently grants have not been sought after with the same intensity as they have been lately. Chief Snoddy stated that was not true but it was just not advertised. They apply for FEMA grants and EMS grants when offered. Chief Snoddy stated the Dept. would promote this levy and he would do so as far as he was legally capable of promoting as has been pointed out to him that Mon.-Fri. 8a.m.-5p.m. he could not promote the levy. Chair Likley stated that was correct that Chief Snoddy could not be out putting door hangers to promote the levy during paid business hours. Chief Snoddy asked if during those hours he could run to the Auditor's Office and the Board of Elections? Chair Likley stated it did not appear that would be permitted per legal counsel.

Trustee Sims stated she knew there had been discussions between the Township and the Village regarding expense sharing. Chair Likley stated those discussions have not been completed regarding the splits of the operating expenses of the joint venture of the Fire Dept. He added he anticipated the Village would be willing to sit down and review those expenses and cost sharing options.

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Chair Likley continued that he too took into consideration the hard economic times being faced by the Township, the State and the Nation in general. It is very tough to go to the residents and ask for more money but in review the currently levy is just covering the operating expenses of the Fire Dept. and nothing else. The levy does not cover salaries nor is there money for capital improvements i.e. aging equipment and vehicle rotation. Chief Snoddy stated that regardless of what happens with the levy the Dept. would continue to take of the residents to the best of their ability.

Regarding the issue of putting the ballot on May or November, Chair Likley stated that even if the levy was on the May ballot and passed the Township would not start collecting until 2010. If the levy does not pass in May it would probably be the intention of the Trustees to put it on the ballot in again in November. Trustee Kratzer stated if we wait until November we would possibly lose the ability for a second chance if the levy does not pass and also then not collect money until 2010. Chief Snoddy stated the levy would be promoted and added that a May election usually brings out a different voting crowd and hoped that would be a positive for the urgency of this needed levy.

Trustee Sims asked Chief Snoddy if there was anywhere in the budget where cuts could be made so that this levy is not necessary? Chief Snoddy stated no. Besides the truck there were other issues i.e. medical issues with the defibrillators that were going to be quite costly that were going to need to be dealt with. These machines cost \$17,000 a piece. He added there was fire dept. gear that needed to be replaced that was FNPA required. Chief Snoddy stated he was looking at \$50,000 in expenses just to keep the Dept. up to date regardless of operating expenses and or repairs.

Chief Likley stated there was concern at the November election of the language (Heading) that was on the ballot for the fire levy. He asked could; through the process of the Board of Elections make sure there is clarification of the language that the residents know the levy is for Fire and Rescue. Fiscal Officer stated this would need to be discussed with the Board of Elections. Chair Likley stated when he took the Resolution to the board of Elections; he would discuss this issue with them.

Trustee Kratzer made a motion to proceed with the Resolution for a Fire Levy to be placed on the May 5, 2009 ballot as presented and read. It was seconded by Trustee Likey.

Discussion on the motion

Trustee Sims stated these are hard economic times for our residents who are making difficult economic choices in their own lives. We can only put the levy out there and let them decide if they can afford the increase at this time. If not we will have to live within our means based on that decision.

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Trustee Kratzer stated if the Trustees would have done their due diligence in the past...if we get this passed we will have to do our due diligence as well as other Trustee boards in the future that may have to come back in 5 yrs. and put another levy on instead of letting this drag out for 10-12 yrs. we would probably not be having this conversation today because we would have brought the revenue up to current evaluations.

Trustee Sims stated not to be combative but Trustee Kratzer was the only Trustee who has been here during that period of time. Trustee Kratzer interjected that he did say that previous boards of Trustees have dropped the ball by not bringing this up. This is the first time since you (trustee Sims) have been on the board that this has been brought up. Trustee Sims stated there was discussion in 2007 about the necessity of a levy when Chief Snoddy brought forward his 2.5 million dollar capital improvement plan but the Township did not have a clear financial picture because of the previous Fiscal Officer. We are now just at the point to understand the budget appropriations and the hard figures and that is why we are where we are today.

Chief Snoddy stated the Dept. has only spent what we have needed to spend and trying to stay within that budget. Trustee Sims stated but the Dept. cannot do so by having inadequate equipment and aging vehicles that have required costly repairs and that is where we are at today. The timing is unfortunate.

**ROLL CALL-Kratzer-yes, Likley-yes, Sims-yes, with great hesitation.
Motion carried.**

GENERAL BUSINESS

Laptop Computer

Trustee Sims stated the computer guy she sent the laptop to has backed up any and all user documents. This disc needs to be picked up so we do not have to pay Staples to do this. When Kim Ferencz took the laptop to Staples the cost they quoted was inaccurate as it was going to cost more to load XP (laptop originally came with VISTA and re-load Microsoft Office 2007. She added the Township needs to see if we have the operating system discs for XP. Mr. Lee Evans stated that UAN put XP on the computers before they were sent to the Township. XP was installed on the laptop by The Geek Squad.

Kim Ferencz stated the bottom line is that the computer needs to be wiped clean and the operating systems and other software reinstalled. Nothing can be done without the operating system discs. She suggested that this work be done by The Geek Squad in house if possible so that individual can look at the e-mails/road runner internet service provider as well.

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Trustee Sims stated the individual she sent the computer to has taken a snap shot of the information on the computer including the operating system. Any information to be extracted there would be a fee for him to do it. For \$50.00 the individual has backed up all the user documents on the computer i.e. Word, PDF's, and Excel etc.

Chair Likley asked if XP could be purchased? Trustee Sims asked how much The Geek Squad charged to put that program on the laptop? Fiscal Officer Evans stated she did not have that information in front of her but thought \$200-\$300. Chair Likley stated it would probably be prudent to purchase XP so the Township had it. Trustee Sims stated she did not want to get into a situation where the Township is paying The Geek Squad more money than other the individual on the Square to back up the documents.

Trustee Likley stated that he has discussed with Kim that once the e-mails are hard copied and saved to disc they would be wiped off the computer to diminish the potential of excessive e-mail bogging down the computer. The e-mails then would be backed up electronically as well as by hardcopy. Kim Ferencz stated that was correct. She would get a price on XP and would then like to have someone from The Geek Squad come out and perform the work that needed to be done on the computer.

Trustee Kratzer stated he was concerned the Township spent \$400.00 for the individual Trustee Sims took the computer to take a snapshot of the computer and then now whenever we wanted to extract information it is going to cost another \$50.00. He added that if he would have known that last Thursday night he would not have voted to do that. We were instructed the individual would take a snap shot of the computer, wipe the computer clean and reinstall the programs.

Trustee Sims stated that was not the case. What was purchased was information preservation including the operating system. This individual backed up all the user documents onto a disc to be reinstalled. If we lose the information we have the insurance of having a backup of that information. Trustee Kratzer responded at a cost. You (Trustee Sims) stated that individual would do everything that now we have to pay Staples or The Geek Squad to do. Trustee Sims stated this came up at the end of the meeting Thursday and she was ill. Preservation restoration is not diagnosis of component issues. There is a loose screw in the computer needed to be addressed. There must have been a miscommunication if you (Trustee Kratzer) thought the gentleman on the square was doing anymore that what I stated.

Chair Likley told Kim to purchase XP for the Township and contract with Staples or The Geek Squad to have the computer up and running properly to have the office functional. Trustee Sims stated she would like to get a cost estimate from The Geek Squad. Chair Likley stated if Kim could get a cost for Thursday's meeting then we can move forward.

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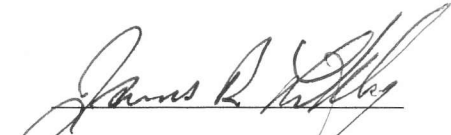
Having no further business before the Board, **Trustee Sims made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Trustee Kratzer.**

ROLL CALL-Kratzer-yes, Sims-yes, Likley-yes. Motion carried.


The meeting was official adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

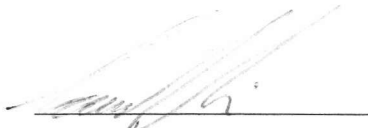
Kim Ferencz-Westfield Township



James Likley, Chairperson



Trustee Timothy Kratzer



Trustee Carolyn Sims