

**Watson Township Board Meeting
January 4, 2018**

Called to order: 7:01 P.M.

Present:

Kevin Travis, Sue Jones, Chuck Andrysiak, Michelle Harris, and Kelli Morris

Agenda:

Trustee Andrysiak made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, Treasurer Jones supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Minutes:

Treasurer Jones made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected for December 6, 2017 and December 7, 2017; Trustee Harris supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Public Comment:

David Benac (candidate for 6th District U.S. House of Representatives) attended and gave the board a short introduction to his campaign, mentioning that he believes there is too much money in politics. He let the board and audience know that he would be at the next "town hall" type meeting for the county which will be held on January 18th at 7:00 P.M. at the Plainwell City Hall location.

Reports:

A. Planning Commission:

Trustee Andrysiak mentioned that the board was present at the last planning commission meeting. The main focus of that meeting was being the discussion of a medical marijuana ordinance for the township. He also expressed that he was pleased to see the turnout for tonight's board meeting.

B. Fire Chief:

Supervisor Travis read the report of Fire Chief Tim McKinnon for the benefit of the township board and audience members.

C. Sexton:

Mark Simpson reported that there were two funerals this month.

D. Libraries:

None.

E. Supervisor:

Supervisor Travis reported that the new website is up and running, and invited everyone to log on to www.watsontownship.org and take a look. He also mentioned the township logo contests and mentioned he had sent a letter of invitation to neighboring schools and also would like to invite any local individuals that are interested to submit an entry to the contest.

F. County Commissioner:

None.

Bills

Trustee Andrysiak made a motion to pay the bills in the amount of \$6,903.09, Treasurer Jones supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Treasure's Report

Treasurer Jones gave the Treasure's Report.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

A. Planning Commission Appointment-

Supervisor Travis made a motion to re-appoint Barb Wroblewski to the township planning commission for a 3 year term ending February 1, 2021, Treasurer Jones supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Public Comment: (Subject: Medical Marijuana)

Robert Kengis (Prosecuting Attorney for Allegan County) - gave a short opinion to the board and members of the audience pertaining to his professional opinion of idea of having medical marijuana facilities. Mr. Kengis has three main factors for the basis of his opinion, it is illegal according to federal law, he believes it is a “gateway drug” for young people, as nearly every felony case he prosecutes has some connection to substance abuse, and lastly since the change in law allowing for medical marijuana growth and use in Michigan, his office has prosecuted numerous cases of assault, theft, breaking and entering, and home invasion involving facilities that contain medical marijuana.

John Caras- mentioned that 64% of adults support the use of medical marijuana. He also added it is currently legal and the mentioned the fact that the planning commission has been directed to develop an ordinance for medical marijuana.

Scott Hershberger – made comments with regard to the safety of the product. He believes that with the current law and situation the quality of product is at risk. He believes us should be tested and grown in regulated manner. He also mentioned the “not in my backyard mentality”, indicating he does not believe it will be the type of structure everyone is expecting.

Jim Lautenschleger (21st Street) - Asked the gentleman proposing the facility if the plants can be tailored to have more of one component (e.g. CBD) than other components in the plant? Matthew Beaner (who is in attendance with Mr. Caras and Mr. Hershberger) answered the question mentioning that there are some that can produce high levels of CBD and are not as high in THC for instance. He indicated that there is a full spectrum of engineering with the plants and products.

Jodie Dembowske (20th St.) - Asked where the location for the facility that is being proposed at this time? John Caras answered her question- telling her it is on the corner of 123rd Avenue and 15th Street, which currently does not have a physical address number.

Rod Zeinstra (121st St.) - Questions who directed the planning commission to develop an ordinance. Trustee Andrysiak answered Mr. Zeinstra telling him, in August after many presentations to the board with parties interested in beginning a medical marijuana facility in the township. The board asked gave the planning commission direction to begin gathering information for the development of an ordinance in the future. They were also instructed to take all the time necessary gain information and education on the subject. Mr. Zeinstra further added that it is his belief that members of the community have shown up to debate the idea of Medical Marijuana being good for Watson Township.

Alan Henrickson (24th St.) - Believes it is coming whether we want it or not. He also does not think we should let Jeff Sessions dictate what we do.

John Andrysiak (115th Ave.)- Believes that we are in an Ag area and we do not judge on any other crops. Therefore, we should not single this one out.

Jodie Dembowske (20th St.) - Questions why the waste cannot go back on the fields as it does with most other crops. Mr. Hershberger answered her question- telling her it is mostly salt and that is why it is contained in an enclosed septic. He says it is generally easier to keep it in a septic and have it taken to a waste treatment plant, then to try and treat it onsite.

Jim Lautenschleger (21st Street) - Asks about a marketing plan? Mr. Caras explains that they are a smaller operation and there are strict restrictions as to whom they are allowed to sell to. Some places include provisioning centers or other processors.

Jodie Dembowske (20th St.) - Asks who they are planning to hire and if there is a process for hiring secure employees? Mr. Hershberger says they do have a process for hiring which includes background checks and drug screens for prospective employees.

Tim Berrage (120th St.)- Questions the Security of the facility. Mr. Caras explains that the security plan is about 70 pages now and there will be cameras covering every square in of the facility. Also that any actual valuable materials will be housed inside the vault in the facility.

Blair Davis (M-222/116th Ave.)- Asks if they are planning a 24 hour operation? Mr. Caras explains that they are not currently planning on running 24 hours a day.

Beth Johnston (122nd Ave.)- Has concerns with ventilation, property values, and zoning (number of facilities). Mr. Caras answered the question about ventilation, explaining that there will be a HVAC system in place with carbon filters and there will be no outside odors to be concerned about. There is no clear answer about property values available. The board does explain however that the township board decides how many of these facilities are allowed in the township.

Jim Lautenschleger (21st Street) - Asks them to talk a little about revenue contribution. Mr. Hershberger explains that the township can collect up to a \$5,000.00 licensing fee and also a percentage of the revenue goes to the local municipality. Trustee Andrysiak adds that the License fee may not always be \$5,000.00 and that those fees must be justified (by cost of the application process) to the township.

Blaine Kurzmann (118th Ave.)- Questions if currently they are only planning on one building on the site? Mr. Caras explains that each expansion (different building) would mean getting a “new” license. At this time there are no plans for multiple buildings or licenses on the property. However the law does allow for the “stacking” of licenses on one property. He adds that there is no reason to have multiple buildings to house the same number of plants that one building is designed to house. If this was done it would only make things like air quality control, and other aspects more difficult.

Tim Cornish (21st. St.)- Made a statement about standing for the flag and reciting the “Pledge Of Allegiance” with regard to the principals that we (board members) have been elected to uphold. He believes that the State of Michigan is at the very beginning of the developing regulation procedures for medical marihuana. He does not have confidence in the State getting anything “right” at the beginning stages. He does not believe in going against federal law.

Paul Henderson (116th Ave.)- Asks if there are more requests than the gentleman here? Supervisor Travis suggests that we do have at least one more legitimate applicant that is also in the audience tonight, and introduces Mr. Gary. Mr. Gary introduces himself and gives everyone a brief explanation of his plans and ideas for his property on M-222 (just west of 16th St.). His plans include growing hops and medical marihuana.

John H. (15th St.)- Asked how many grow operations are in the township currently? Supervisor Travis answered there were at least two currently. Mr. H asks how many grow operations would be put out of business by the larger facility? Mr. Hershberger responded that hopefully many of the unregulated operations would be put out of business by the larger facilities that are producing a quality, “tested” product.

Joyce McClellen (112th Ave. Property)- Mrs. McClellen had a question for Mr. Kengis concerning a facility near her with violations, she asks him what is going on with this case now? He explains that there have been several non-compliances and they are currently dealing with this case.

Doris Gifford (resident of Grand Rapids area) - Mrs. Gifford mentions she has several disabilities and is on medical marihuana for some of her issues. She has custody of eight children and does not want it around them, therefore she would like to see the larger facilities, and not have the smaller growers/caregivers that are a larger population. She does need to use medical marihuana and it definitely helps her with stability, and pain management. She also has not had the side effects and other issues associated with other drugs since she started using Medical Marihuana.

Dr. Richard Gosden (Family Physician) - Dr. Gosden started in the Marines and then had his main practice in Wichita, Kansas. In 2013 he attended a marihuana certification program. He spoke to the board about a twelve year old girl who was having 300 seizures a day and was forced to move to Colorado to begin Marihuana treatment, as it was illegal in her state. Since this time she has begun Medical Marihuana treatment and she has had no seizures. He also believes the Cotton industry is responsible for the illegalization of hemp and marijuana. He would like to be available for anyone with questions on Medical Marihuana- his direct phone line is 616-216-1771.

Sue Zeinstra (121st St.) - Appreciates and respects everyone’s perspective that is here. She is only here to dispute whether Watson Township is the “place” for this type of activity. She questions why we have to be “first”, she believes we should step back and make sure this is a “good” fit for Watson.

Al Helinski (Pleasant View Dr.)- Had a question about the survey sent out by the township with the newsletter in the spring? Supervisor Travis explained that of the responses the majority were negative or against it, but feared the return had something to do with the fact that the surveys were not anonymous.

Mr. Helinski also asked how many plants would be harvested each day. Mr. Hershberger explained that there would be a harvest approximately every thirteen weeks, but because there are many steps in the harvesting and processing, about 200 plants will be yielded every two weeks. Mr. Helinski further indicates that he believes money is the driving factor in this endeavor.

Curt Fontaine (15th St.) - Agrees with the prosecuting attorney and does not feel like the location proposed is a good fit. He also added that he was just forced to let an employee go for use of drugs.

Rod Zeinstra (121st St.) - Finds it disconcerting that the township board has directed the planning commission to work on this issue. He also does not feel that LARA even has the resources to regulate the laws in place at this time. Therefore, believes the township board should be patient and wait. He further asks if there is a time frame for an ordinance. Trustee Andrysiak lets him know it is likely well over a year and indicates that he and other board members were criticized for wanting to wait. The board then decided to get the planning commission involved. The decision to involve them was mainly because they will be involved at some point and it is in the best interest of everyone if all information gathered is shared.

Tim Cornish (21st St.) - Asked if the board's vote would be reported individually? The board assures him that when it is put to a vote by the township board, it will be an individual roll call vote.

Ricard Davis (16th St.) - Wanted to let the board know that currently on the national news there is a report of marijuana being seized in Squaw Valley that was being sold and distributed illegally.

Bill Holden (16th St.) - Believes we should really look at the Federal Government's position in reference to Medical Marijuana.

Mike Warner (16th St.) - Mr. Warner explains that he is a "safety director" for a company and that he has fired at least a dozen people for marijuana use. Further, he explains that most all reputable work places have a "zero" tolerance policy, and if this passes you would be saying this is an "ok" thing to do.

Paul Henderson (116th Ave.)- Asks if concerned persons would be better off attending the planning commission and voicing their concerns? The board believes this would be a good place to voice any concerns or questions on the subject.

Treasurer Jones asked where the list was obtained to send letters to township residents. Mr. Hershberger told her he obtained the list from the BS & software on the Allegan County website. There is some discussion on the completeness of the list, as well as the notification of board members that a letter would be sent to residents. Mr. Caras let the board know that he had contacted the supervisor about the letter and was informed that the board did not wish to see any such letter as the board was not involved in the creation of this letter in any way, nor did they endorse said letter. It is further expressed by Clerk Morris that it would have been beneficial to simply have knowledge of a mailing (not letter content), because concerned residents were contacting board members.

Joyce McClellen (112th Ave. Property) - Asks if the building has been constructed? Mr. Caras and Mr. Hershberger let her know that is has not been built, the drawings are just a replica.

Supervisor Travis asks for any more questions or comments.

Adjourn:

Supervisor Travis makes a motion to adjourn, Treasurer Jones supports, all in favor, motion carried.
Meeting adjourned - 9:20P.M.

Kelli Morris—Watson Township Clerk