

Approved 3/30/22  
WATERSMEET TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
February 16, 2022  
6:30 PM  
Community Center  
[www.watersmeet.us](http://www.watersmeet.us)

The February 16, 2022, regular meeting of the Watersmeet Township Board of Trustees was called to order by Supervisor Mike Rogers at 6:30 pm.

**Members Present:** Mike Rogers, Paul Kempainen, Julie Mathiesen, Yvonne Clark, and Alan Piel

**Members Absent:** None

**Virtual Attendees:** Arny Domanus, Mark Johnson, Chris Wegner, Rachel Wheeler, Jack Bergman and Mark DeGrave.

**Others Present:** Jim and Marge Marrs, Fire Chief Jim Pittsley, Moderator Zoe Coleman

**MINUTES CHANGES/APPROVAL:** Paul Kempainen motioned to approve the minutes for the January 26, 2022, Regular Meeting and February 3, 2022, Special Meeting. Alan Piel supported. Motion carried with all in favor.

**APPEARANCES:** Bruce Moore – CEO of Highline appeared virtually to provide an update on the installation of the high-speed internet in Watersmeet. The installation of high-speed internet in Watersmeet is likely delayed until 2023. Bruce explained build-out in rural areas is taking longer than planned in the first two counties Highline serviced, which in turn is causing the delay to the installation process in Watersmeet. Highline is continuing to pre-engineer and design for the Watersmeet area. It's estimated 80% of the build in the Watersmeet will need to be underground, which is another complicating factor. Highline has begun building two "cabinets" for Watersmeet, each consisting of approximately 1,000 homes. Each build takes 6-8 weeks, then the cabinets need to be tested and internet status confirmed. Bruce noted there is \$190 million obligated for high-speed internet development in northern lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.

Yvonne Clark asked Bruce how the Board can help move the process along, who responded permitting has been one of their bigger challenges. Ms. Clark volunteered to set up connections between Highline and the County Road Commission to start the permit process early.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Marge Marrs – noted there are near-term logging activities planned for some U.S. Forest Lands in the Watersmeet area; adjacent property owners have already been notified of those plans. She questioned how those activities would be coordinated with Highline's planned work, as both involve the use of heavy equipment and work schedules would likely coincide. She also expressed dismay at the reported delays for high-speed internet installation, indicating a number of residents need to choose between waiting for Highline to complete its work or sign-up for satellite internet with specified commitment times.

Mark Johnson – Watercraft traffic issues on the Cisco Chain are increasing and more areas are being affected. Problems are now encountered in almost all channel areas between the lakes, not just in the

Linsdley Lake channels previously discussed. The review and consideration of a “No Wake” ordinance needs to be placed at the forefront of Board-tabled items.

Jim Marrs – Questioned the status of fiber-optic lines being installed along US-2 and Highway 45 and asked if access could be made available to residents as an alternative to satellite or Highline’s project.

Rachel Wheeler – Noted land-based internet systems could be obsolete by the time Highline completes its work. Starlink may be a more viable option for residents. A number of residents have subscribed to the service and it works very well, at least in portions of the Township.

**AGENDA CHANGES/APPROVAL:** Two items were proposed for addition to the agenda; purchase of plat books and addition of regular meetings. Supervisor Rogers also requested personnel/contract discussions occur after approval of bills and all reports, as said discussion would require going into closed session. Yvonne Clark motioned to approve the agenda, as modified. Alan Piel supported. Motion carried with all in favor.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Approve Board of Review Dates - Supervisor Rogers presented proposed BOR dates & times: Monday, March 14, 2022, 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Friday March 18, 2022, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Motion by Yvonne Clark to approve the dates as proposed, second by Paul Kemppainen. Motion carried with all in favor.
2. Proposal for Cleaning/Inspecting Water Tower – Supervisor Rogers presented a proposal from Liquid Engineering for cleaning and inspection of the drinking water storage tower. Total cost would be \$3,175.00 Motion by Paul Kemppainen to accept the proposal as presented, supported by Yvonne Clark. Roll Call Vote: Mike – yes, Julie – yes, Paul – yes, Alan – yes, Yvonne- yes. Motion carried.
3. Purchase Plat Books - Rockford Map Company had distributed notice indicating plat books and plat maps for Gogebic County were available for purchase. Discussion ensued regarding needs for the Township Offices and whether additional plat books should be made available to residents through the Township. Zoe Coleman offered to contact Rockford to research costs for bulk purchases and to determine whether plat maps were available depicting just Watersmeet Township and not the entire county. Motion by Yvonne Clark to authorize purchase of plat books and maps based on Zoe’s research, not to exceed \$800. Alan Piel seconded the motion. Roll Call: Mike- yes, Yvonne-yes, Paul – yes, Alan-yes, Julie-yes. Motion carried.
4. Second Regular Monthly Meeting – Clerk Julie Mathiesen proposed the Board add a second meeting to its regular monthly meeting schedule, referencing the backlog of tabled items that still need to be addressed. Discussion ensued regarding the list of tabled items, possible dates for a second regular meeting and discontinuation of the second meeting once the backlog was addressed. Motion by Yvonne Clark to adopt a resolution to conduct a second regular meeting on the second Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m., beginning on March 9, 2022. Seconded by Paul Kemppainen. Roll Call: Yvonne-yes, Paul – yes, Mike- yes, Alan-yes, Julie-yes. Motion carried.
5. Personnel Matters (Closed Session) – see below.

**APPROVAL OF BILLS:** Clerk Mathiesen noted the presented list of unpaid bills does not include a recent invoice for the payment of \$10,000 to the LVD Tribe, per the cross-deputization agreement with

the Tribal Police Department. She indicated she would like to add that to the approval of bills. Paul Kemppainen motioned, with support from Yvonne Clark, to approve payment of the bills presented: General Fund check numbers 41342 – 41371, Water Fund check numbers 3528 - 3530 and Wastewater Fund check numbers 4344 & 4345. Motion carried with all in favor.

**REPORTS:**

1. Supervisor Rogers presented letters from the Land O’ Lakes Library and Santa’s Headquarters Committee, both thanking the Township for monetary donations to their organization and summarizing how the monies were spent.
2. Treasurer Paul Kemppainen reported regular winter property tax collection has ended. He will continue to collect taxes through the end of the month, with the application of a late payment penalty. After that, residents would need to pay property taxes directly to the County.
3. Clerk Julie Mathiesen noted the 2022 election cycle was beginning and would be shaped by several proposed bills in the State house and senate that, if passed, would provide more restrictions for issuing and accepting absentee ballots.
4. Supervisor Rogers presented the police report for January 2022 on behalf of Chief Ryan Leuzzo. There has been relatively little activity compared to summer months. In late January, Recruit Bailey Ribich began attending police academy in Kalamazoo.
5. Fire Chief James Pittsley provided the January 2022 monthly report for the fire department, expressing his ongoing concern about the limited staffing for both the fire and medical components of the department. He also again emphasized the need for a grant writer, noting he no longer had time to pursue grants. Chief Pittsley also noted 3 of the reported snowmobile accidents required a helicopter for the victims and the Township should have dedicated location for the medevac chopper to land. Nordine’s parking lot has been used in the past but regular traffic in that area poses logistical concerns. After some discussion, it was suggested the open field adjacent to Tim Duncan’s garage would be the most suitable location. Chief Pittsley indicated the chopper could land almost anywhere and there would be minimal site prep required, other than to regular clear the landing area during winter months.

At 7:30 p.m., motion by Paul Kemppainen, seconded by Yvonne Clark, to enter closed session for purposes of discussing personnel matters. Roll Call: Yvonne-yes, Paul – yes, Mike- yes, Alan-yes, Julie-yes. Motion carried.

The Board re-entered Open Session at 8:40 p.m. There being no further business, at 8:45 p.m., Yvonne Clark motioned, with support from Alan Piel to adjourn. Motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mathiesen  
Township Clerk

