

Synopsis
Milton Township
Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2019

Members present: L. Bargy, S. Ball, L. Atkinson, T. Cole and B. Pharo

Also present: Attorneys B. Derman, C. Weinzapfel, Dan Butler, B. Hefferan, Sheriff Dan Bean, Brad Muma and 16 audience members.

Bargy called the meeting to order at 7 pm and the Pledge was recited

Agenda Approval by consent

Approval of regular meeting minutes of June 10, 2019

Public Comment: (Correction) Regional Land Conservancy offered to help the Township if they wanted to put in on the ballot.”

Motion to approve as corrected by L. Atkinson/S. Ball. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Jim McKimmy, Milton Township spoke favorably of farmland preservation and that farms are a part of a larger whole that comprises the township.

Ron Boals, US 31 Kewadin: Boals is a farmer and the he doesn't understand why you would pay people to farm. Agriculture nationwide is suffering. The two parcels sold recently have been sold to other farms. He doesn't see a threat from development in the next ten years. He talked about current programs through the state for farmers. He also objects to the idea of subsidizing his competition. This proposal is shortsighted.

Jim Knorling of Chippewa Trail discussed the fact that he's a taxpayer in this township, but he doesn't vote here. He looked at the question why he should care. When the township went out to the voters and asked what the people thought the township should look like, the people said it should remain rural with an active farming community. The master plan says it desires to keep the township's rural character. He would like to see the township achieve its goal of remaining a rural farming community.

Dick Crout has been a summer resident since 1946 and we too pay taxes but can't vote, so we are dependent on those of you who do vote to do what is best for the township. This is our family home through generations and we are part of the community. The purpose of the farmland preservation movement is to keep us from being a suburb of Traverse City. If you want to see what happens when a township takes on Farmland Preservation, look at Peninsula Township or the US 31 Corridor from Acme. There are several preserved farms there. Economically it's also an asset because it costs less to have farmland because you don't have to provide all of the extra services of fire, police, schools and such. Overall, it's less expensive to have farmland than development. When you look at your taxes, development will cost more over time than a proposal like this.

Bob Kingon of E. Elk Lake Drive said his family has paid taxes here for many years. When we lived in Atlanta Georgia, there was beautiful farmland. In 10 years half of the farmland had been developed. After 20 years, all of the farmland was gone, there is nothing left. You have to take the long view. Preserve the rural character.

Linda Spevacek of Chippewa Trail served on her town's planning commission for several years and faced this very thing. We took a hard look at the economic cost benefit to see if it made sense for people to pay more taxes for a preventative measure. We did the math and I'm hoping the Conservancy can provide some statistics. We found that it cost townships two times the amount to support residential amenities and infrastructure than farmland. What is the cost benefit of preserving farmland? If you look at gobbling up land and what you pay ultimately, it costs more for services over the long term to have development rather than farmland. It comes down to economics and there is an economic benefit to preserving our farmland.

Glen Chown and Laura Rigan: Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy:

Glen Chown is the executive director of the GTRLC and he's been in that position for 28 years. It's come to my attention that there are questions about this ballot proposal and I would like to discuss the conservancy's role.

In 2004, Antrim County adopted a development rights ordinance. Milton and Elk Rapids voted to support those ordinances. In 2004, five townships proposed a millage to fund open space preservation, at that time only Acme passed the proposal. Since then, Acme has renewed their millage.

Acme followed in the footsteps of Peninsula Township which approved it in 1994. That program has preserved more than 3,000 acres and has leveraged even more property. These programs have goals, it's not a permanent tax.

Protecting farmland is in our mission statement. Our fruit belt is one of the most unique in the world. We have provided technical assistance to those two townships, but there is a process of application and ranking the farms. It frees up capital for the farmer without selling the farm. That capital gets reinvested into the farming operation so it's more profitable and can provide more jobs.

Our technical support involves ballot language and also providing education. We can't tell you how to vote, but we can give you information so you can make an informed voting decision.

Another question is about the impact of farmland preservation and water quality for lakes and streams. This area is defined by our water and our agriculture. The vast majority of farmland is in orchards. Orchard farming is very friendly to water quality. Trees have deep roots and grass strips and buffers.

There are also questions about how this millage works. It's 1 mills for 10 years only. If taxable value is \$100K, it's \$100.

There are studies done generally for every \$1 for farmland in taxes they require \$.37 in services. This is an average. For residential development, for every \$1 in taxes, it's \$1.40 required in services. When Peninsula Twp., was looking at Farmland Preservation, they looked at what it would cost to run a sewer main. The cost was one million dollars per

mile, 16-20 million to service subdivisions up the peninsula. This was 1994. They chose farmland.

Please visit Maplehurst. We opened it three weeks ago and it's a treasure for this township and this region. We are happy to partner with this township on Maplehurst and would be happy to partner on farmland preservation.

Laura Regan added that if there are any questions, the proposed ordinance is on the Milton's website so you can see the information.

Sheriff's Report: Sheriff Dan Bean

A brochure was handed out about Smart 911. 214 calls for service for June. Deputy Skrobecki introduced K9 Bricko. His skills are narcotics detection and tracking. We are dedicated to providing the best in K9 services to this county.

Sheriff Bean commented on the sandbar activity over the holiday. For the most part, everything went well.

Fire Department Report: Deputy Chief Dan Butler

13 runs for June. 63 for the year. Discussion of budget purchase of a battery operated cutter. It's easier to deploy and faster to use. The cost is \$10,000 approximately. They are selling a few items to offset the cost for the tool. We have submitted DNR grants for new radios. Update on upcoming training and maintenance.

Zoning Report: C. Weinzapfel

Nothing to report.

Planning Report: B. Hefferan

There is a scheduled public hearing on the vacation rental ordinance August 13th at 7 pm here at the township. That language is also on the website. Tomorrow night we are talking about special event barns. We are also talking about small assembly buildings.

Ambulance Report:

9 runs for June

Attorney's Report: B. Derman

Update on Metro payment. Extension on the American Tower lease is still under negotiation.

Supervisor's Report: L .Bargy

Brad Muma

We received 1 Bid on the sewer extension project. Matt's Underground came in at \$233,891.

Request appointment of Rachel Nederhood of Chippewa Trail as deputy treasurer.
Motion by L. Bargy/S. Ball. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Joyce Grammar of Elk Tip Drive asked regarding the sewer, how many voted in favor or against. Bargy said it was about 50/50. Grammar said our church is being charged two units and we cannot understand that because much of the time, there is no one there. Brad Muma from Performance Engineering, said there is a criteria with the state regarding REUs for different venues for maximum daily flow. It all comes down to the flow that is generated during that time period. When we get to the individual units, the church is conservative at two. Muma said this is based on capacity of the church. Grammar said you are putting a hardship on the church. Now we are forced to hook on, but I would like you to reconsider that because it's unfair.

Cole said the township could make an argument that we are using the park 4 months of the year, but not the whole year, but we can't pay for just those four months. If you reduce them down, you are asking others to subsidize. Everyone has an average. You can't reduce the REU's for one place and not all the rest. Muma said they could possibly do a holding tank, if the health department will allow it, that would time dose it over several days.

Jerry Mensing inquired about improvement to the cemetery road. Bargy said they will look at it for next year.

Shirley Snare thanked Atkinson for the tour of Maplehurst. It would be great if there was a dog park there. Regarding the road-end access at Joe Marks Trail/Odell Road. People are launching boats and leaving equipment there. It appears to be a danger. Bargy said there is a concrete ramp there.

Robin Sims said she talked to the Blake Smith, financier for the sewers for rural development but he can't come outside of work hours. If you can accommodate him, he would come and talk.

Approval of Bills

Motion to approve the bills by L. Atkinson/S. Ball. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned by order of the chair at 8:20 pm.

These minutes are subject to approval at the August 12, 2019 meeting. A copy of these minutes are available on line at miltontownship.org

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Ball
Milton Township Clerk

