

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City  
MI 49686

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**Township Board Special Meeting**

**March 22, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

**Township Hall**

**Minutes**

1. **Call to Order** by Manigold at 7:00 p.m.

2. **Pledge**

3. **Roll Call**

Present: Sanger, Bickle, Manigold, Chown, Achorn, Wunsch

Absent: Wahl

4. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):**

**Nancy R. Heller, 3091 Blue Water Road:** the new township budget only has one column. In prior years, it was several columns, including the prior year budget, activities to date, and so on, etc. There's nothing to compare this year's numbers to. I know what the spending expectations are, but I know nothing else.

**Bickle:** I would be glad to provide the other version to you.

**Heller:** I would like to formally request that. The second thing I'd like to request is that the supervisor, under board comments, regularly bring us up to date. Of late, it's been very sparse. I learn things from the other meetings I attend, but I'd appreciate a quick synopsis. If I understand it correctly, the supervisor has \$10,000 to spend at his discretion. I don't know if it's being done but I'd like to know about it.

**Manigold:** that was a resolution passed by the board. It used to be less, but during the pandemic, when it was hard to meet, the board raised it to ten thousand. It's for emergencies and to fix things when we can't meet in a timely fashion with a quorum and it's tracked through the treasurer's office. I think we've used it for building security or fixing the furnace.

**Heller:** would like to know if and when it's used and what specifically it's used for.

5. **Approve Agenda**

**Chown:** amended the date of item E under Business to read "Resolution 2022-03-22 #1."

**Bickle moved to approve the amended agenda with a second by Wunsch. Motion approved by consensus**

6. **Conflict of Interest:** none

7. **Consent Agenda:**

A. Invoices (recommend approval)

B. Reports

1. Grand Traverse County Sheriff Daily Officer Summary for February
2. Peninsula Community Library Director's Report for March
- C. Minutes from February 28, 2022, Township Board Special Meeting; March 7, 2022, Township Board Special Meeting; and March 8, 2022, Township Board Regular Meeting
- D. Letter of resignation from Bernie Soutar as a regular member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and appointment as an alternate instead  
Correspondence
- A. Bill Beckett

**Wunsch moved to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Sanger.**

**Roll call vote: Yes-Sanger, Bickle, Manigold, Chown, Achorn, Wunsch passed unan**

**8. Business:**

- A. Public hearing on proposed May 28, 2022, Traverse City Track Club Bayshore Marathon, Half Marathon, 10K, and Kids Marathon (Deeren)

**Manigold: closed regular scheduled meeting and opened public hearing.**

**Deeren:** We had our pre-meeting today. The only thing that hasn't been done is to send out the postcards. The marathon organizers need to find an alternate area to run part of the race since Bluff Road is closed. They have to work with the city to approve this new partial route. We have representation tonight from the track club.

**Michele (from the track club):** I'd be glad to answer any questions. The route to make up is within the city. We have verbal approval as of today from the city.

**Deeren:** we will have an emergency services meeting prior to the race to make sure we have all the staffing and emergency services in place. Center Road being closed for work will cause some challenges, but we will work with the road commission and MDOT to get everything advertised correctly.

**Bickle:** [to the fire chief] has a plan been worked out? Do we feel we have adequate coverage?

**Deeren:** yes.

**Manigold:** the plan also includes Homeland Security and the city of Traverse City.

**Bickle:** will we have our boat out for this?

**Deeren:** no, this is strictly running, but we will have police and porta-a-jons and two electric bikes. More emergency services staff will be recruited to come in and help. We are in good shape so far.

**Bickle:** once or twice we have a resident who needs to get off the peninsula, and we have a plan in place as needed for that.

**Manigold:** does anyone in the audience have any questions?

**Manigold:** closed public hearing and opened the regularly scheduled hearing. It always seems to go without a hitch and then there's always a follow-up meeting afterwards. Board discussion.

**Wunsch moved to approve the May 28, 2022, Traverse City Track Club Bayshore Marathon, Half Marathon, 10K, and Kids Marathon with a second by Chown.**

**Roll call vote: Yes-Bickle, Sanger, Wunsch, Achorn, Chown, Manigold** passed unan

**Manigold:** Bayshore Marathon did donate an electric bike to our sheriff this year. Thank you very much.

B. Public hearing on proposed July 9, 2022, Festival of Races 5K, 10K, 15K, and Half Marathon (Deeren)

**Manigold:** closed regular scheduled meeting and opened public hearing.

**Deeren:** We will have a pre-meeting before the race. This is the same traditional race they've had for years. They have already sent out postcards. There will be rolling closures on Peninsula Drive as in the past.

**Representative from Festival of Races:** we are doing the same race and continuing our partnership with Old Mission Peninsula School. This will help improve traffic and allow us to get more of Island View Road open sooner. We will follow the same emergency plans as in the past. We will get the light boards out approximately two weeks or 10 days before the race to let people know about the Peninsula Drive closure. I will not put the sign board on Center to block the subdivision as was the case last year.

**Manigold:** does anyone in the audience have questions?

**Manigold:** closed public hearing and opened regular scheduled hearing. Any questions?

**Wunsch moved to approve the July 9, 2022, Festival of Races 5K, 10K, 15K, and Half Marathon with a second by Sanger.**

**Roll call vote: Yes-Wunsch, Achorn, Chown, Manigold, Bickle, Sanger** passed unan

C. Public hearing on proposed township general fund and special funds budget for fiscal year 2022–2023

**Manigold:** closed the regularly scheduled meeting and opened the public hearing.

**Bickle:** I'd like to give an overview if I may. I think it's important to frame the situation and this might answer a few questions. It might generate some too and everything is welcome. I'd like the record to show that I made an input error when working on the parks. Repairs and Maintenance is going to be \$22,500, not \$2,500. This will be corrected in the budget. Armen [Shanafelt, a member of the parks committee] has been fantastic. This is my sixth year of doing the budgets and it has been a collective effort with the clerk. I always tell people "We have no money" but it's meant to be a constant reminder to be careful and mindful about what is spent. Let's go back to when we became a general law township. It's very important because it leads us to understand where we are today and how we got here. In 1974, we along with many other townships became a general law township governed by the state of Michigan and MCL laws. In 1978, there was this fantastic idea of the Headlee Amendment or Headlee Millage Reduction Act. It made great sense 43 years ago. The intent was, as property values go up, this should equalize or normalize the taxable values. It was a great idea when we had 2,000 residents and this was a smaller township. Fast forward to today. The township is vastly different in every way than it was 43 years ago. We've gone from 2,200 people to 6,600 people. Same peninsula, same geography, but more people and a demand for more services and more robust services. The challenge remains. We started in 1974 with 1 mil times the taxable values at that time. Fast forward 43 years later, and we are operating with a millage of only .62. The

population is up 127% from 1974 to current and demand for services is up but taxable revenue is not keeping pace with the burgeoning demands. When we sit down to do the budgets, as with parks – we had a great meeting and they were very respectful and understanding – I explain how the budgets come together. I explain how much revenue we have and how we apply it to the various departments that provide services to the community. Then, whatever is left over is shared with parks and others. The growing challenge is the cost of everything and the demands on our parks system. It all needs a lot of attention but we don't have a bushel of money to throw at the needs. I want the board and residents to know that we are very mindful of every penny and every dollar. I think there's a misnomer that we are this wealthy township. I think that notion needs to be set aside. We work within our budget as best we can. Also, I'd like everyone to understand this business observation: we bring in x dollars and spend x dollars and whatever is left can help the other needs. The difference is, 43 years ago, there weren't all these lawsuits and other challenges that consume cash. Some people say "You're covered by insurance." Not every situation is covered by insurance. In the past couple of years, legal costs that weren't covered by insurance were approximately \$269,000. That comes from that remaining bushel of money that could go to parks and other needs. So the message is, you can sue us if you want, but you're really taking money away from residents and the services and things they want and this community needs. This is my statement and I want everyone to understand it.

**Wunsch:** for context, what's the park budget? Is that \$269,000 just for last year?

**Bickle:** no, for the last several years.

**Wunsch:** it would be helpful for us to know what percentage of our total budget goes to parks.

Discussion occurred.

**Bickle:** I have to hand it to the clerk's office. They spent a lot of time with our insurance provider in order to provide insurance benefits to our employees and fire department and were able to save \$40,000. In this day and age, that's huge. That's an example of what's being done. Not tonight, but Mr. Sanger and Marge Achorn and I need to look at going to a charter township. I want it on the table that we need to take a look at how we keep going in this township with the Headlee Reduction Act...It's not a perfect model. The budget that you have in front of you or that's available to you represents a very specific X number of dollars of revenue to operate the township and the key personnel we need to do those jobs in a growing township and how we're looking at other ways to get revenue for parks and Hessler Log Cabin and the Dougherty House...These are all the children in the family that we need to take care of. I think the other thing is that when we do the budgets, we need to be aware that we have an election coming this year and the budget is \$77,000. That's not our fault, and maybe there will be some funds coming from the state. If that doesn't happen, we're going to have to sit down and do some recalibrating.

**Sanger:** the question residents ask is, why aren't we raising taxes?

**Bickle:** because we're a general law township. It would take a vote of the people to turn the millage back to 1%.

**Sanger:** as time goes on, our taxing if you will is actually decreased and is based on the same taxation rate we had five, 10, 15, 20 years ago, so it's actually a lower rate of taxation. The township needs to understand that this township government has to live with what we have. Each year, the Headlee Amendment is going to reduce, so we have to rely on the increased value of properties to generate new tax dollars. And that increase is being offset by the greater demand for services in our township. All you have to do is look at the budget and see what has been generated in the zoning department in the last year in the way of land use permits. It's a fee, but it's also a large workload being placed on one department.

**Bickle:** we have been looking at every option for keeping things even keeled. We're very aware of the situation.

**Manigold:** Does anyone have any questions? We aren't going to adopt the budget tonight. This is just the public hearing. We have a meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning to adopt it and the fire budget. We usually do it the last day of the month but this year we're doing it tomorrow due to town board members being out of town next week.

**Mary Beth Milliken:** so the only way to bring in funds for usage such as parks is a millage?

**Bickle:** yes, it would have to be on a ballot such as was done with Pelizzari.

**Wunsch:** and even with a millage, the Headlee Reduction Act comes into play and reduces the amount that comes in.

Board discussion occurred.

**Manigold:** closed the public hearing. No action was taken.

D. Second public hearing for the Fire Special Assessment District for fiscal year 2022–2023 (Gilstorff)

**Manigold:** closed the regular scheduled meeting and opened the public hearing.

**Gilstorff:** spoke briefly about the fire department and its needs and the .6 mil increase, referencing his presentation at the last township board meeting.

**Manigold:** any questions? Closed the public meeting and opened the regular scheduled hearing.

There were no questions and no action was taken.

E. Resolution 2022-03-08 #1, To Declare the Boundaries of All Precincts Used to Administer the August and November 2022 Elections (precinct boundaries are unchanged) (Chown)

**Chown:** read resolution aloud.

**Chown moved to approve Resolution 2022-03-22 #1, To Declare the Boundaries of All Precincts Used to Administer the August and November 2022 Elections, with a second by Bickle.**

**Roll call vote: Yes-Sanger, Bickle, Manigold, Chown, Achorn, Wunsch passed unan**

## 9. Citizen Comments

**Nancy R. Heller, 3091 Blue Water Road:** I want to commend the preparer of the fire budget. It was beautifully done and very informative. The fire chief took the time to answer my questions. Secondly, on Next Door, there have been several positive comments on speeders and flashing lights behind those speeders. I noticed in the report

section that one officer is writing citations and the other isn't. I'm wondering about that. Cards need to be sent to residents on these races. I'm a little apprehensive that residents might think there are no races because COVID is overlapping. I'd try to communicate as much as possible with the residents on that.

**Dan Olson, 14795 Mallard Drive:** is here for the first time because he's been involved in the Bluff Road situation since August of 2020. Arranged for the site visit that October to get them to do the site study and has been attending every road commission meeting since. Wants to bring the town board up to speed on what's been happening in the last few months. Had a very contentious meeting [with the road commission] in March and the second report that was issued was wholly inadequate to address the issues. Road commission was searching for direction and leadership. Mr. Manigold stood up and offered to bring together the road commission, the drain commissioner, the township, and public involvement. There's a lot going on with the road commission. Having watched all their meetings and been present, a lot occurs that impacts townships. To be blunt, they need adult supervision and engagement with townships. Townships have to reach out and engage them. They aren't going to engage you. Al Neiman is our regional rep on that board. It could be meaningful for those relationships to develop so they aren't out there on their own making cost-sharing agreements and things like that. As we move forward with Bluff Road, there are possible solutions that warrant looking at seriously. There are possibilities with the non-motorized transit committee to make a bike lane or reduce speeds and funds that could be tapped. There is also benefit to exploring a drain district. Road commission would be happy to blame shift so there's a lot riding on the township. I encourage your involvement at their meetings. There are all sorts of shenanigans that go on.

**Bickle:** there was a time when the road commission used to show on their website their project list, date done, dollar amount spent, what's left to be done. All kinds of reports used to be available. Early on, Rob and I tried to figure out where the money goes. Maybe they kicked me off. I agree that we have to get in there in front of those commissioners.

**Dan Olson:** regarding their shenanigans, they just awarded a contract for repairing Bluff Road north of the closure to AJ's Excavating. I found out today they don't even have a permit to do that work. They don't even have a permit from EGLE. Out of the million dollars the residents of this township devote toward their budget, they're only carving off about 500,000 toward all the townships to be spent evenly among them. Divide that by 14 townships in the county and there's what you're getting back. Zero dollars toward reconstructing a local road. Having more control over the funds would be beneficial even if it includes having a separate millage so the township has a voice in how those funds are spent. Regarding transparency, they do not have a clear delineation between a local road versus a primary road project and you really have to search. Also, they're only taking 25% of the MI transportation funds for local roads. That's about four million dollars. Last year, they took a quarter of it to pay for all their equipment. So now you only have three million for local roads, and I haven't even gotten into how they allocate other expenses.

**Manigold:** the good news is that we have three new road commissioners. Gilman looked

at all the options and said the only one that makes sense is to fix the road. We are trying to arrange a meeting, but some people on Bluff Road like the closure, so I've invited those individuals to join our group so we have all sides represented. We are looking at all options and dispute the ideas the road commission came up with. Some are on deed-restricted farmland, one went through a lady's bedroom, and so on. We have to fix the road.

**Wunsch:** aren't charter townships able to claw back money?

**Meihn:** yes.

**Bickle:** if I'm not mistaken, if you become a charter, you're in charge of your own roads.

**Meihn:** just helped two townships become charter townships.

Board discussion occurred.

#### 10. Board Comments

**Manigold:** in April, Dan Wagner from MDOT will come out to tell us about the paving project on M-37. There's a lot going on at the intersection with the city and MDOT. TART and the city are all involved. Just a reminder, we're meeting tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. to approve the budgets and go into closed session to talk about the lawsuit.

#### 11. Adjournment

**Bickle moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Wunsch. Motion approved by consensus.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.**