

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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MI 49686

[www.peninsulatownship.com](http://www.peninsulatownship.com)

## Township Board Special Meeting September 7, 2023, 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Church Minutes

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

2. **Pledge**

3. **Roll Call**

Present: Achorn, Sanger, Rudolph, Shanafelt, Chown

Absent: Wunsch

4. **Citizen Comments:**

**Chown:** in the interests of efficiency, instead of holding citizen comments at this time, we are inviting everyone to write their questions/comments on index cards. Our township attorney Chris Patterson will collect them, and he and his colleague Bill Fahey will address them. At the end of the meeting, we will still hold regular citizen comments.

**Audience member requests comment because he has to leave for another meeting.**

**Curt Peterson, 1356 Buchan:** thank you to St. Joseph Catholic Church for allowing us to use the facilities here. I appreciate being allowed to deliver this out-of-order comment. The train has already left the station, folks. We are headed to charter township and some of us have got to stop this. What can occur in a charter township under Michigan law is that without a vote of the populace, they can increase the general operating budget from 1 mill to 5 mills. That's based on the Oshtemo Township judgment before the Michigan Court of Appeals, a charter township in Kalamazoo County. Zillow says we have a \$340,000 average home price in Peninsula Township. That will mean about \$700 more per year. We already know from the parks committee meeting last week that people are thinking of this in terms of raising our taxes. I quote from the minutes: "An informal information session on the pros and cons of charter versus general law forms of government will be held on September 7, 2023, 7:00 p.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church. If we want to raise the budget for parks, we can either vote in a parks millage or potentially become a charter township. There are many reasons to consider this form of government." That's what this is all about: potentially raising our taxes without us voting on it. Thank you very much.

5. **Approve Agenda**

**Rudolph moved to approve the agenda with a second by Sanger. Motion passed by consensus**

6. **Conflict of Interest:** none

7. **Consent Agenda:** none

8. **Business:**

1. Informational meeting with attorneys from Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes, on the pros

and cons of general law versus charter forms of township government.

**Bill Fahey:** we'll start off talking about charter township status and what it means. I'll go partway through and then Chris [Patterson] will finish up. This is an option for the township to discuss. This will not happen in the township unless the people of the township vote for it. The purpose of this meeting is to present the issue to get everybody comfortable with how they feel about it one way or the other. About 90% of the townships in the state are general law townships, which is what Peninsula Township is today. About 10% are charter townships. That's a choice every township has to make at some point. What is a charter township? I'll focus on three areas where charter townships are different than general law townships. The first is the area of annexation. Typically, annexation is the transfer of property from a township to a city. If you become a charter township, that will control how property might move from the township to an adjacent city. Second is the issue of taxation. That's a significant difference between charter and general law townships. Charter townships do have an increased ability to levy taxes. Third are organizational issues that are important in terms of efficiency and capabilities that a charter township would have that a general law township generally would not have. The concept of a charter township came into being after World War II in 1947. Before that, in our state, there were very rural areas that were generally townships, and there were urban areas that were cities or villages. What occurred over the first part of the twentieth century were sort of hybrid situations: more suburban with some aspects of rural, some aspects of urban. The legislature in 1947 decided to create another category that would recognize the intermediate level for municipal services that could be provided by an entity that was not a city but also not your typical rural township with only a few hundred or a few thousand people. They decided to create this new category of municipality called a charter township.

A list of things that absolutely will not change if you were to become a charter township: the assessing function would be the same, as would elections, tax collection, board meetings, the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, budgeting, and municipal finance aspects. As a matter of law, these are required to be exactly the same in a general law as in charter townships. There are some things that both charter townships and general law townships can do – aren't required to do but are allowed to do. Most of these you are already doing in Peninsula Township and could continue to do if you chose to become a charter township: law enforcement, police, fire, EMS, water and sewer, roads, sidewalks, libraries, parks and recreation, public transportation, land use and zoning, and various kinds of ordinances that are passed by the township in order to regulate the conduct and affairs of individuals within the township. Some other things that will stay the same are hiring additional township officials and employees.

One of the things that being a charter township would do is provide additional finances to hire more employees or more professional employees to manage and direct the affairs of the township. Other things that would pretty much remain the same: historical preservation, economic development, purchasing and leasing a property, youth centers, senior programming, newsletters, advertising, promotion, agricultural extension work. Also, there would be the usual sorts of transactional things that happen in townships: defending public officials in lawsuits, interlocal agreements with other units of

government, contracting with various third parties to do work for the township. All those things are happening now. They would likely continue to happen in the same way if you became a charter township.

Of the three main things that are different that we will focus on tonight, let's first talk about protection against annexation. There are some things about being a charter township that will protect you from annexation, but because of the way the legislation was written, there are also some things that will make you more vulnerable to annexation in certain ways.

Second difference, increased tax authority. Chris is going to talk about that in a few minutes.

There are also various organizational and structural differences between the two. You already have a seven-member township board; that wouldn't change. But you would have the ability to have more professional management of the township. You could have a superintendent, which is something a charter township can have.

Drilling down into annexation: as a township under the General Law Act, you are subject to annexation by an adjacent city principally through a process called the State Boundary Commission. It's a five-member board that consists of three people appointed by the governor and two people appointed locally in your county by your chief probate judge. Those people are responsible for holding public hearings when there are petitions for annexation, and they have the authority to decide whether or not property is going to be annexed from a township to a city. It's an administrative process, done with a public hearing. The decision is made by that body of individuals, not by the residents. It's a process that in my experience has been pretty well leaning in the direction of cities and allowing annexation. I would say more annexations in the boundary commission are approved than denied. Right now, you're subject to annexation as a general law township. That wouldn't be true if you became a charter township.

One of the things under the General Law Act that you would lose as a charter township is that if there are more than 100 people who live in the area that's proposed for annexation, and the boundary commission decides it wants to approve the annexation, you have a right with more than 100 people living there to have a referendum on that annexation. The people who are living in the area proposed for annexation would have a right to a referendum, and the people in the rest of the township would have a right to a referendum. Those referendum rights are lost if you become a charter township because you'll no longer be subject to the boundary commission.

Back in the late '70s when the legislature first approved the amendments to the Charter Township Act that gave certain insulation from annexation to charter townships, the legislation was held out as a great benefit for charter townships, that they would be effectively insulated and protected for annexation. After that, I started seeing my charter townships get annexed because that wasn't true. There are ways charter townships can be annexed. One particular exception in the law, and I don't know if this would be applicable in Peninsula Township or not, says that if there's a piece of property that is adjacent to a nearby city, and the people who own that property or the people who live on that property want it to be annexed to the city, the process calls for them filing a petition with the county clerk. If that petition is filed, then there's an election that takes place in the city

and the area proposed to be annexed. It passes if both of those areas vote a majority in favor of the annexation. This seems straightforward but it actually ends up being pretty devious in some situations.

For example, say you have a farm and it's adjacent to a city and the owners want to develop their land. The township is not particularly excited about the land being developed or they have requirements for development that Mr. and Mrs. Farmer don't like, so they petition the county clerk under the Charter Township Act. An election is held, and guess who gets to vote? Mr. and Mrs. Farmer and everybody in the city. The result of that election is that property is going to be annexed. That's a fast process, faster than would occur if you were a general law township. It takes about a year to do an annexation before the boundary commission. It requires a very specific piece of property, a specific situation. I'm not aware of properties [here] that might be in that particular category, but I point out that if you become a charter township, you will subject yourself to potential annexation that you may not be able to defend against easily.

Annexation standards: in order for you to be protected from annexation at all under the Charter Township Act from annexations in the boundary commission, you have to meet these particular requirements: have an SEV of 25 million, population of 150 people per square mile, provide fire protection service, have a zoning ordinance and a master plan, provide for solid waste disposal services, provide water or sewer service by contract or otherwise, and provide police protection through a contract. My understanding is the township would meet all those requirements. If you become a charter township, you would be protected from annexation in the boundary commission. You still would be subject to that other type of annexation I mentioned.

There are some technical annexations that could take place. If you had a piece of property in the township that was completely surrounded by the city, called a township island, that could be annexed pursuant to the boundary commission process. Another type of annexation would be a mutually accepted annexation between the city council and the township board. If the township board believed it was appropriate to allow a piece of property to be annexed, it could agree with the city to do that. Otherwise, I believe that you would be protected from annexation, absent this one little exception that allows people who live on the property to petition for annexation.

**Chris Patterson:** as we already heard in the early public comment, taxation is a relevant consideration with respect to the differences between a general law township and a charter township. For purposes of a general law township, the constitutional limits are what provide for your current millages. It's a form we call an L-4029. It's a request that develops Peninsula Township's current tax rate. It's relevant in this discussion to appreciate what your current millage is in addition to what properties in the township are being levied for purposes of taxes by all the taxing jurisdictions.

Many of the tax millages that show up on your bills are actually related to other local units, not just the township. For purposes of the limits for a general law township under the Constitution, there is a 1518 millage limit. That focuses on the general allocated millage rates, meaning those funds that are not purposely set forth, for instance, for police or a PDR program. Currently, the township has .61 mills because it's subject to a rollback for purposes of general fund expenditures and appropriations.

For most townships, including Peninsula Township, the 1518 mill constitutional limit doesn't apply. The voters have approved a fixed millage rate, and that maximum is to not exceed 50 mills. When we take a look at your actual property tax millages that are being imposed on property in the township, you're in excess of the 1518 mill limit because you've approved extra voted millages by various taxing authorities: counties, public school system, the township's millages.

One thing for a general law township: of that fixed millage for the township, at least 1 mill must be allocated for purposes of general operations. One mill on your state tax assessed value ends up being provided in the budget for purposes of being spent on general administration. There's no specific purpose for which you can use your general operation millage. The Charter Township Act itself and the Constitution actually exempt charter townships from those millage limits. Then you're subject to the limits that are set forth in the act itself, because you're now an incorporated township. For purposes of the charter township, they refer to half of 1 percent of the assessed evaluation and that becomes what we refer to in common parlance as "the 5 mill" for charter townships. It is still voter approved, to incorporate as a charter township. That incorporation allows you to go up to that 5-mill limit. That's important because when a vote is taken to incorporate as a charter township, it doesn't mean that 5 mills has to be imposed. What is provided in the act is that you are allowed to levy *up to* 5 mills based on a vote of the people to incorporate as a charter township.

A charter township is limited to a total of 10 mills for all millages levied by the township. Beyond 5 mills has to be specifically voted on. The vote to incorporate into a charter township is for purposes of 5 mills. It allows the township board through the budget process, setting revenue and expenditures, to levy up to that 5 mills on property in the township. That's one of the key distinctions with respect to the authority on getting an exemption from the constitutional limits and being subject to the act itself.

This slide is the township's Current Requested Tax Rate [in packet]. This isn't the other taxing jurisdictions. It's the millage that's levied by the township, not other taxing jurisdictions that levy mills on property. It'll give you an idea of what's currently being levied, relevant to this conversation. If the voters approved incorporating as a charter township, it's what that extra millage would be available for. Currently for annexation protection, one of the requirements is more than 25 million in taxable value. For your 2022 request, you're at 780 million. Your L-4029 indicates that you've satisfied the taxable value requirements. Rollbacks would change the numbers depending on the year. You currently have three tax millages that are levied on property and one special assessment.

The first line [Township's Current Requested Tax] is the "General allocated millage," what I referred to in the Constitution that says you have to have at least 1 mill for a general law township for operations. That started as 1 mill and then the Headlee Amendment rolled it back. That 1 mill is actually currently being levied at .615. You've rolled back on your general operating millage down almost four tenths to .61. The next one is your PDR millage for 2 mills, and given the year it was levied in, you do not have a rollback. That's good for 20 years; it will expire in 2041. It's being levied at the full 2 mills.

The third line is your special assessment [for fire]. That's not a tax millage. It's provided for

under a special state act. It happens annually with a notice and a hearing during your budget process, where you set the actual amount that you're levying in the given year. Currently you're at 2.6 as a special assessment, meaning the benefit charge that's being provided on individual property in the township.

The last one is half a mill for police. That was voter approved. It's currently rolled back almost half of what it originally was approved at and is being levied at .23. For purposes of your actual levied millage, you're talking 2.84 mills. That's your general operating millage plus your two specific extra voted millages, police and PDR. In addition, you end up with 2.6 mills, the equated value of that special assessment you're doing for fire. That total comes to 5.44.

We gathered some data with the assistance of the township assessor that looks at local units that are levying taxes in Grand Traverse County to give you some comparison of what's going on. This sort of L-4029 is important because you have some particular items like that fire assessment and your PDR program that set you apart. We'll want to take those into account when we look at what's going on in other local units, both general law and charter townships. What is interesting about township government is that we always [keep] the smallest piece, but we're the one who collect the taxes.

This is a property tax card [Township's Current Property Taxation] on a non-PRE, Principal Residence Exemption. The information I was able to get from the treasurer's office is a snapshot of a non-PRE property sitting in the township. The 18-mill exemption for principal residence or agricultural exemption is not applied looking at these numbers. If you are getting an agricultural exemption or PRE homestead, these numbers are going to be a little bit different. It does give you a good idea of the total mills. You get billed twice a year, summer and winter. The summer tax bill is mostly county and school tax and your area transportation. That's 36.22 mills. None of it goes to the township. The township levies its mills on your winter tax bill.

In the winter tax bill, the last four items are the same millage levies that I noted were on the township's L-4029. On your winter tax bill, you're getting 9.2 mills of taxes applied. The last four equates to that 5.44 mills relating to the township's current operations and its extra voted millages. One is a special assessment, and the other three are levied taxes.

**Shanafelt:** for Peninsula Township to operate, in this particular tax bill, \$65.85 goes to its operations out of a total of almost \$5,000 in taxes paid?

**Patterson:** yes. The 2 mills for your PDR program are to put a fund together to acquire development rights. It's not for purposes of operations, etc. Your fire special assessment, those are specific derived benefit charges for operating fire. You're required if you have a voter-approved millage for police that \$24.62 is dedicated to that portion of the service that residents receive. As you indicated, that line item is \$65.85 of that total tax bill.

**Shanafelt:** in contrast, the library gets 50 percent more to run than this township does.

**Patterson:** this case was already mentioned, *Oshtemo Charter Township vs Kalamazoo*, related to the 5-mill charter township limit. What the case did not hold is that you didn't need voter approval for purposes of establishing a charter township. That case concerned a charter township that had incorporated. It was a question of whether they could go up to the 5 mills without additional voter approval. What the court said is, if you've incorporated as a charter township, in that case it was before a specific date, then you are

entitled to go up to the 5 mills. The voters have to approve the question of incorporating, and the actual approval becomes the authority to levy up to 5 mills. What that court case says is, you would always be entitled to levy up to the 5 mills based on that voter approval at the outset.

Now, second question: charter townships have a maximum 10 mills. If you incorporate as a charter township, you would have an authorized levy of up to 5 mills. That would mean there's an additional 5 mills that could be extra voted millages. If you have voter approval to incorporate as a charter township, you could levy up to 5 mills. Then, under the act, you could for instance levy a special purpose millage for parks and recreation. That has to be voter approved. You could have an extra voted millage for roads; that would have to be voter approved, the key being that the total accumulation of those votes for taxes can't exceed the 10-mill limit and the act.

One interesting distinction is since that 5-mill levy is sort of inherent, it's provided and authorized in the act. When the charter township incorporates by vote of the people, that 5 mills becomes your ability to levy that indefinitely. As the township exists as a charter township, you have the ability to go up and down on that levy as you decide the appropriate amount for purposes of your revenue and your expenditures. Those extra voted millages up to the 10-mill limit are always for specific purposes, just like you currently have for purposes of police or PDR. Those extra voted millages cannot exceed 20 years. You currently have a police millage that was voted in for two years. Then you have a PDR millage that is at the statutory limit for purposes of what you can levy.

The next question is, what are others doing in Grand Traverse County? You can look at a lot of data, not just Grand Traverse. Looking at budgets and audits about what kind of services these other townships are providing, you can find the 2022 tax rates for those local units. School districts are relevant; different debt millages that they could have in place can make substantial distinctions related to the total PRE millage rates that might apply. Related to the PRE millage rates, that would be principal residence exemption, that 18-mill exclusion. Peninsula is at 27.3877. That's being reported with your 2.6-mill special assessment. Your actual millage being levied is 24.78. So as a general law township, you're at 24.78. If you go to the bottom [Township's Taxation v. Other Local Units], the average millage of those with asterisks [charter townships], is going to be 25.6 mills. Traverse City is all the way up at 36 mills, almost 10 mills higher than Peninsula Township. The median among those charter townships, meaning the most [common] millage rate, is around 25.5. If you take the levied mills for Peninsula Township, those charter townships are levying about one more mill than Peninsula Township from voter-approved tax mills.

Regarding the organizational differences, you already have a seven-member board, whereas some general law townships are at five. There's no difference between whether you're a general law or a charter township; the township board directs policy. Many charter townships will hire and appoint a superintendent or a manager. Policy still rests with the board. Those are the individuals who are elected. Whether it's charter or general law, they make the decisions. The statutory duties in a charter township for purposes of a supervisor can be delegated to a superintendent. As a general law township, you are allowed to employ a township manager. You could do that now if you desired to and had sufficient funds. The manager could be delegated any non-statutory duties. For instance,

you could have the manager do the FOIA work.

The one limitation a general law township board has for purposes of putting a manager in place is that you can't move statutory duties of an elected official to the manager without the consent of that elected official. It's one of the largest distinctions for charter townships. A charter township is allowed to have a superintendent, and it's the board's decision to decide the list of duties delegated to that superintendent. For those duties listed in the act, you don't need the consent of the elected official. It's a board decision. If you decide to hire a superintendent, you get to identify those specific duties to delegate to the superintendent. 4210 has a long list for the enforcement of laws and ordinances, overseeing that process, managing public works, looking at utilities, dealing with contract requirements, attending all the meetings, but not voting. This person is not a voting member of this board. They would attend the meetings, assist in the administration piece, the packets, probably help with the agendas. They could take over preparing the budget. They would be your purchasing agent. All of these duties could be assigned by the board to the superintendent in a charter township.

Other considerations: as a general law township, you only have to meet once every three months. You're currently meeting much more frequently than that. As a charter township, you are required to meet at least once a month.

Additional funding is really no different. Once you get past the taxation limits for purposes of bonding, special assessments, those are all provided by statutory acts. They're equally available to either. Police and fire are also permitted for both and equally available.

There's the list of additional standards that get you additional annexation protection, fire and police being on there, zoning being on there. For purposes of property, whether it's real or personal property, those items can be bought and sold, leased, just like you're doing now for purposes of budget appropriation and township board authorization.

**Fahey:** in summary, regarding annexation, the difference is now the township is subject to annexation via the boundary commission. If the township were to become a charter township, you would no longer be subject to annexation in the boundary commission except for township islands or to straighten boundaries. However, you would be subject to the potential of annexations based upon petitions by 20% of the registered electors in the area proposed to be annexed.

As regards millage, the difference would be after being approved as a charter township, you would be able to levy 5 mills. Then you would be able, beyond those 5 mills, with voter approval, to levy 5 more mills.

Organizational structure: the main difference is the township would be able to hire a superintendent and the township board would be able to determine what that superintendent would conduct and operate without having to get consent from individual members of the township board who otherwise would have those pieces of authority.

**Chown:** if there were public interest in pursuing the charter township form of government, what is the process? What may the township board do and what must the township board not do? My understanding is that this would have to be community driven, not township board driven. Is that accurate?

**Fahey:** there are two ways that this could be put on the ballot. One would be the township board could decide to put it on the ballot itself. The other option would be if members of

the community want to circulate a petition, the petition will then be accepted by the township board. And that petition will drive whether or not there's going to be a vote.

**Chown:** would township board members be allowed to advocate for or against moving to that form of government?

**Fahey:** township board members do not lose their First Amendment rights to express an opinion. That would not prevent a township board member from being an advocate for a particular position.

**Chown:** as a clerk running elections, I'm rather sensitive to that question.

**Fahey:** sort of related to your question is the extent to which the township board could spend township funds to advocate on its behalf. Sometimes the question comes up, could the township run advertisements or some sort of campaign that would involve the spending of township funds? The answer is, in general, no. You can spend your own money and you can spend your own time as a citizen, but you shouldn't be spending township funds campaigning or township employee time in that campaign.

**Chown:** I put out the newsletter. It's an educational tool. If we had something on the ballot, anything at all, I would write about it for informational purposes. As long as there's no advocacy position taken, that would be acceptable?

**Fahey:** as long as the newsletter doesn't have some sort of obvious "Vote yes," having a balanced presentation of what being a charter township means, what the advantages and disadvantages are, is totally okay like we're doing tonight.

**Rudolph:** on one of your slides, Township Taxation and Other Local Units, down in the bottom you had a note, homes built between 2000 and 2010, 394. Then the homes built between 2011 and 2020, 291. Is that homes in Peninsula Township?

**Patterson:** yes, that information was reported by Sally [Murray, township assessor].

**Rudolph:** homes built between 2021 and 2022, 292. This is one of the things that's been concerning me about what's happening in the township. We're seeing this tremendous growth. The reason I'm interested in learning about charter townships and how that might help us become a more professionally driven township operation is this growth rate. It's just been incredible out here.

**Ahorn:** in the discussion between manager and supervisor, between general township and charter township, you said that under the general law township, the elected official must consent to having a manager. But under the list that was provided a couple of pages later, it said that it would be delegated by the township board.

**Patterson:** yes, delegated by the township board on any non-statutory duties. The township board could also delegate statutory duties of an elected official, but that elected official has to consent. It's still a township board decision to have the manager to delegate the duties, but if you're delegating statutory duties of, let's say, the treasurer, the treasurer has to consent and be on board with that going to the manager.

**Ahorn:** in my mind there really isn't a difference between a manager and a supervisor, if they're doing non-statutory duties.

**Patterson:** when you said supervisor did you mean superintendent?

**Ahorn:** I meant manager under a general law township, and a superintendent under a charter. You could still have a professional assisting at a high level in a general township.

**Patterson:** absolutely.

**Achorn:** somewhere in my research, I came across the phrase “reset millage.” Is there a possibility or a process to reset the operating millage back to 1?

**Fahey:** right now, we have this allocated millage of 1, and it's down to .61. It would be possible to put a ballot question before the voters at an election to override the Headlee rollback to return to the original 1 mill. The voters would be able to vote on that, recognizing that it is a tax increase. If they vote on it favorably, then that particular operating millage would be put back at 1. Then it would start rolling back again pursuant to Headlee, but only in future years. You could use that with any of your millages that have had a Headlee rollback effect.

**Chown:** can you tell us how long it's taken to get from 1 mill to where we are today?

**Patterson:** well, you've been subjected to Headlee for some time.

**Fahey:** since 1979.

**Patterson:** we'd have to look at your L-4029. Have to look back at least 15 years and see what it was then.

**Fahey:** since 1979, if you haven't had any rollback or haven't had any override elections in that period of time.

**Chown:** I'm not aware of any.

**Sanger:** not in the last 25 years. Part of the challenge is that the demand for services keeps increasing. We have to spend more money to provide those services. At the same time, one might say property values are going up. The assessor works on taxable value, which is not exact in terms of property values. Because of this restriction of the Headlee Amendment down to .61, we're kind of hoping each year that the total taxable value of the township is increasing fast enough to keep pace for the demand for services. If the demand for services is such that we don't have the money to spend, we have a problem.

**Fahey:** the Headlee Amendment was in response to the inflation happening at the time. The idea was that townships shouldn't be able to ride the wave of inflation and increase their budgets every year, so they put an artificial limit on it, and that artificial limit was 5 percent. If inflation is higher than 5 percent, as it has been in the last few years, then townships and other local governments subject to Headlee are not keeping up with the changes in costs that are incurred. And even if your property valuations go up, you're still behind the curve. That's a problem we have with any properties that have been held for a long period of time. The increase in taxable value is artificially kept low until that property is sold to a new owner.

**Shanafelt:** you only have so much money to spend. If you need to spend more, you can't.

**Sanger:** in the charter township, we get out of this sometimes strangling effect of the Headlee restriction. It allows the township to adopt a budget subject to public input and public hearings, to adopt a budget for that particular 12-month period going forward, that meets the needs of the township. As opposed to a hope and a prayer that the taxable values are such that you can meet those expenses.

**Fahey:** there's this sort of implicit assumption a lot of people have, which is that growth in property value and growth in population pays for itself in terms of the services that are provided. The reality is, it doesn't. The proof of that is cities that have grown need more millage than rural townships that have not grown. Rural townships can exist on 1 mill. Cities typically levy 20 mils. It proves the point that growth doesn't pay for itself. Growth

requires additional resources to manage and operate your local government.

**Shanafelt:** to that point, we are not a rural township. We're something between. Were Traverse City to annex the entirety of Peninsula Township, we would be subject to city taxes. That's the very hard consequence of annexation without really understanding whether we get any services for that additional taxation.

**Fahey:** it isn't the issue before us right now, but if you were to be annexed by Traverse City and go to 20 mills, I don't think that would change the level of service that people in the township receive.

**Shanafelt:** when communities choose to go to a charter township, what are usually the big drivers?

**Fahey:** two things: professionalism in municipal management and the necessary money to operate an increasingly complex municipal corporation.

**Patterson:** it's not just the conversation about the superintendent but also revenue for purposes of additional consulting services, other employees, officers, staff, that charter townships have that general law townships typically don't have.

**Fahey:** one specifically is your assessor. As you get into higher levels of complexity of assessing, you need to have more qualified assessors who are going to command much higher fees or salaries. With growth, that's an additional cost municipalities have to bear.

**Shanafelt:** right now, our operational, actual cash from taxes is about \$400,000?

**Achorn:** about half a million.

**Shanafelt:** that pays for everything we're trying to do operationally. Even employee salary and benefits –

**Achorn:** no, we do have revenue sharing, which is probably around half a million also.

**Shanafelt:** regarding the point about professionalism, you can increase staff but for some things like the assessor or other activities, you need a different type of experience and expertise to be effective and to do it correctly.

**Fahey:** the township form of government was really designed to govern rural communities. Basically, it's government by volunteers. It works well at a rural level. But it begins to get harder to get volunteers who are willing to give their time or to find qualified people who can do the things that need to be done in a more complex municipality.

**Chown:** we are incredibly reliant upon volunteers to manage our park system, and they give countless hours. It isn't sufficient. We cannot keep up with the infrastructure needs at our parks. If you are among the residents who enjoy them, you know they are decaying. We have tremendous needs that we cannot take care of with our current funding mechanism. We are a grown-up community, and we need a grown-up funding mechanism. We have significant needs and expectations among the residents that we are struggling to meet because we don't have the resources to do it. I sit on the parks committee. I am well aware of the of the concern, the anxiety, the demoralizing impact of attempting to solve significant infrastructure needs that we don't have the money to tackle. We've got to do something to bring in more resources. I just don't know what it is. The purpose of this meeting tonight is to discuss with this community, "How shall we do this?" Because we must do something. We are wearing people out.

**Sanger:** I've heard people say, "If we want to talk about a higher level of professionalism, let's just become a city." I ask our two attorneys, why not just become a city?

**Fahey:** it's not a bad question. There are communities around the state smaller than you with less complexity that are becoming cities. I've seen communities of 2,500 people who incorporated as a city. They were willing to pay the extra money, which is as much as 20 mills, twice as much as what we're talking about here. I think the reason why not is, I would suggest you walk before you run. Because 5 and 10 are a lot less than 20, and I don't know if you need 20 yet.

**Sanger:** the previous planner told me we don't have the density. It's such a unique township. I keep saying we're really three townships stacked high. There's a certain amount of density of the population you have to have to be incorporated as a village. We've talked about services to meet the needs of the population. It's my understanding that a township is about as far as we can go based upon our density. We could take a third of the township and whack it off on the south end and meet the density limits, but that's not a great idea. I don't support that.

**Fahey:** it's not something I would recommend.

**Patterson:** the other thing we've seen in representing the townships adjacent to villages is, those villages decide to incorporate, and those are the smaller population of areas we've seen with 2,200 or 2,500 incorporated into a city. Typically, they are doing it to gain additional services. That includes a process that involves the residents just like this process does for a vote. A village will attempt to save money by incorporating into a city to provide all its own services instead of getting some of them from the township. And it doesn't end up being the truth in those situations where we've worked with those townships adjacent to villages that incorporate into cities. The overall tax revenue required to operate that city for those services is more than what they could have done as a village or as a charter township, etc.

The other reason we've seen general law townships discuss incorporating is, we do have a lot of general law townships with rural agricultural land adjacent to city boundaries who get concerned about annexation. Even the last couple of years as the economy has ticked up there's been concern about expansions of development and cities looking for additional property. I don't think that's the conversation here. Some have done it for purposes of zoning and planning, such as general law townships that don't even have zoning and planning. They're looking to generate additional millage to provide those services.

**Chown:** regarding our roads, when we don't get the degree of service from the road commission and the county that we need, it seems as though having more resources could get the road commission to come to the table and fix Bluff Road, for example.

**Patterson:** there was a question [from index cards collected from audience], "If you become a charter township, is there additional authority to delineate how the money is spent for purposes of working with the road commission?" I think the question is a calculation of the total revenue that you're paying into the road commission. If you're not receiving a justified benefit in exchange for what you're paying, does incorporating change that analysis?

**Fahey:** I've always thought it was an interesting dilemma that road commissions are given all the authority over the roads, but they aren't given money to do the job except for the Act 51 money, which basically comes from sales tax revenues. It's never enough in any road commission in any part of the state. You are not unique here. It's the way it is. The

amount of money we have from the gas tax that supports the roads is not enough. It's never going to be enough. There has to be a solution at the state level. We've been saying this for decades, and there still isn't a solution. Now we're going to have a bunch of electric cars on the road that aren't going to use gas. How are we going to pay for our roads? That is a huge issue for all of us in the state.

What becoming a charter township does allow would be an additional millage, potentially a road millage, as I've seen other charter townships do. That money can be used as seed money to negotiate with the road commission to say, "We're willing to put this money into these roads, assuming you put the maximum amount that you're allowed to into our roads." At the minimum, that's money that will be levied on property in Peninsula Township to be used for roads in Peninsula Township. You can't say that with respect to the rest of the of the money that's going to the county. That money is going mostly to other townships.

**Shanafelt:** that's where the question's coming from. We put in \$800,000; we get \$30,000 back.

**Chown:** do you have to be a charter township to do a road millage?

**Fahey:** no. You could have a separate voted millage as a general law township just as you have already with your police millage and your preservation millage.

**Patterson:** there are multiple [index card] questions on, "What was the initiative to have this conversation this evening?"

**Shanafelt:** a very specific reason. Our operational budget and how we run as a government in this very complex township is not even close to what we need to do it effectively in a professional manner. We're trying to get to a place where we can run an effective government structure, not a bloated government structure, but simply effective government structure that will meet the needs of the community at large. For me, that's the driving force.

**Chown:** I've been clerk for four and a half years. I think at the very first meeting I attended as a township board member, the concept of the charter form of government came up. We were already very concerned about the budget and the roads and the parks. I am asked somewhat regularly if we could please provide information about a charter township form of government. I think it's incumbent upon us to explore this because we are in trouble, financially, in Peninsula Township. Things are falling apart; we need more resources.

**Patterson:** there were two comments related to annexation and whether there is any specific knowledge of conversations about annexation between Traverse City and property owners in the township. We're not aware of any. Related was, "Does it have any relationship to the winery lawsuit?" Our understanding is no. Another question is, "Will this be on the next ballot?"

**Fahey:** it will be on the next ballot only if the board adopts a resolution to place it on the ballot or if the board receives a sufficient petition requesting it be put on the ballot.

**Patterson:** similar question, "Will this go on the November ballot?"

**Chown:** we do not have elections this November.

**Fahey:** when is the next election going to be?

**Chown:** the date of the presidential primary has not been finalized. It will be February 27

or March 12. Then we'll have a state primary. That date has not been finalized. It will be in August or June. Then we'll have our November election in 2024.

**Patterson:** the comment doesn't have a year so it could be November of 2024. This comment is for purposes of annexation: "The township does not provide water and sewer in a majority of the land area. What is the extent to which that causes a problem with the protections?"

**Fahey:** based on the cases that have been decided by the Court of Appeals in the Supreme Court, under the Charter Township Act, the township is providing water *or* sewer in a sufficient area in order to qualify for the Charter Township Act protection.

**Patterson:** "What type of professional expertise or services would the residents see if we became a charter township and hired a superintendent?" I think we spelled out the additional duties; I don't know if you have additional comments or clarifications to add?

**Chown:** we need a parks manager!

**Shanafelt:** how many employees do we have? 20 total?

**Chown:** not that many.

**Shanafelt:** we're pretty small. As I look at the structure, some basic management positions would be highly useful in helping things operate better, and it's all about operations. The strategy and legislative responsibility were made to the board and the elected officials, but the actual operations component is a big lift. Staff and officers of the board having to do everything that's well beyond the scope of their jobs is unreasonable. There are some specific professional hires that will make a difference. Adding more infrastructure into our government structure will make the township run more efficiently. Parks always come up; roads are important. I have this dream that one day we can go to underground electrical so we don't have to deal with power outages. If we can have some funding, we can figure out how to leverage what we can with the state to make that happen.

**Patterson:** "How many township employees would be supervised by the manager?"

There's really no distinction with respect to the hiring of employees; it's really the resources problem. One thing related to the manager role, the superintendent as listed in 4210, does make that individual the personnel director. It puts that person at the head of the hierarchy for purposes of managing employees, employees being different than elected officials.

"How much overlap would there be with the existing job descriptions of current employees if we were to have a township manager?" With respect to the duties listed in the act, they focus on things the supervisor or other elected officials are doing that the manager could do. For purposes of employees, it could be all sorts of things in a managerial role: personnel director, project management, consulting services. I don't know specifically on overlap with job descriptions of current employees.

**Fahey:** typically, the township superintendent ends up being the director of the employees within the charter township except for the treasurer's role and the clerk's role. Then the treasurer's role and the clerk's role get more confined to their statutory duties. It's different than what you have today, where your clerk and your treasurer are doing the statutory duties plus other things that need to be done that nobody else is doing. You have these departments, the treasurer's department and the clerk's department, that end up being sort of independent of the township manager.

**Chown:** I just counted; we have six full-time people, not counting the officers [treasurer, supervisor, and clerk]. We have four part-time folks who help out for about 20 hours a week each. That's not counting elections or the volunteers who sit on the planning commission, the zoning board of appeals, and parks committee [or the fire department personnel or CPOs].

**Patterson:** "How many current employees would be limited to help balance the budget that currently exists?" I don't know the extent that there's an issue with the current budget. I don't know if the question is if you would be reducing employees if you incorporated. Presumably, if you're looking for additional managerial staff, adding consultants, I would assume the answer is no.

**Achorn:** no, I think it would just reduce. If we did have someone at that level, a manager or superintendent who could take the heavy lifting out of the clerk's office and the treasurer's office, it would be very helpful.

**Patterson:** two related [questions]: general recommendations on the board's position on being a charter township. What I understand is, you're collecting information. I don't know that you're making a recommendation at this time. Then the question was, "What's the intended benefit of changing to a charter township?" Many of you have already expressed your individual perspective on the benefits. "Would the general 5-mill operating millage be subject to a rollback?"

**Fahey:** the 5 mills are authorized by law and would not be rolled back.

**Patterson:** "How would the funds be generated to pay a new superintendent or manager?" For purposes of the superintendent, incorporating as a charter township, that would presumably come under a tax levy for purposes of adding resources to your budget. We discussed that [a manager] could be available to the general law township now; you just have to have sufficient operating funds to do so. What we refer to as a Headlee override, a vote of the people to increase your currently reduced millage of .61, could take that back to 1 mill. It's potentially a way to generate revenue. The funds that would pay for that have to come from tax revenue and state revenue sharing. "How many townships does our law firm represent? How many are general versus charter townships?"

**Fahey:** it's hard for me to keep track of how many townships we represent. There are more than 150. Out of those, probably 20 are charter townships.

**Patterson:** "Have any townships recently voted to change from general to charter?" In the last three years, we had at least one that circulated petitions. They did not get sufficient signatures and it never went to a vote.

**Fahey:** one that I can think of in the last couple of years was Alpena Township, which went from a general to a charter.

**Sanger:** last year Long Lake Township moved from a general to charter.

**Patterson:** "What would our township gain from charter status?" I think we addressed the differences for purposes of annexation protection, the taxation piece, the structural changes. I don't know if we have anything additional to add.

**Fahey:** our intent is not to posture those things as being gains or advantages. It's up to the members of the public to decide if they think that difference is a gain or a loss.

**Patterson:** we did get three or four questions related to whether this presentation would be available. Yes, we can work with the township to put it wherever is most convenient.

**Chown:** it's on YouTube right now and will be available on YouTube on the township website for a month. We can probably make it available beyond that.

**Patterson:** the slides too. We can put those wherever you need them. The last question relates to changes in insurance and insurance coverage: "What is the limit of insurance available to cover a claim or judgment against the township?"

**Fahey:** the limits are specified in the insurance policy that the township purchases. That is not something that would change whether you are a charter or general law township.

**Patterson:** related question: asking about a judgment levy, to the extent that insurance coverage wouldn't fully cover a claim, how would that uncovered amount be paid?

**Fahey:** the process for a judgment levy is that a court would issue an order that would require that there be a judgment millage levied by the township in an amount sufficient over a period of years to pay that judgment levy off. Generally what you're talking about is a judgment for money damages. Again, the difference between a charter township and a general law township is nil with respect to that issue.

**Patterson:** that's all the questions. Does the board have any additional comments or questions based on the public's cards?

**Rudolph:** no. Thank you for coming tonight. I had a lot of questions as to what the pros and cons are. I'm still not sure I fully understand it, but I appreciate you coming and doing this for us.

## 9. Citizen Comments

**Chuck Knox, 14534 Bluff:** I keep hearing that we're running at a deficit. We need more employees, etc. Traverse City's not coming after us. We have a poison pill called "the winery lawsuit" that will never allow that to happen. What I need to know is the estimated amount of money you need to add an employee or a supervisor, etc., to get us to where we're at least at a zero-sum game? I'm not hearing any numbers. We could add a millage to make up the money you say you need instead of going through changing to charter. Instead of reinventing the wheel, why don't we take a look at what we need? And how to get it without having to go through this stuff?

**Louis Santucci, 12602 Center Road:** No, no, no, a thousand times no. This is another in a long line of bad ideas put forth by this township. If we get a town manager, what happens to the supervisor? Will he get a reduction in his pay or continue to receive his pay for basically doing nothing that he's doing now? It seems a lot of you by what you've said have already indicated that you would be willing to go to charter township. You've got to put 5 mills in real dollar terms. It's \$5 per \$1,000 of assessment. My tax bill, the first time that 5 mills would be put into effect, would go up \$750. That would be a 30 percent increase on my summer tax bill. We're talking real money. I'm one of the lucky ones, but not really lucky because I've only been here 15 years. The assessed value is limited. But the newcomers, we're talking million-dollar houses out here. That's a lot of money they're going to be looking at. One of my pleas to this board has been, we're now paying 1 mill [CORRECTION: 1 percent] as an administrative fee for the right to collect our taxes, which we never had before. The state allowed this because it was a way to sneak under the restrictions on townships to be able to get other tax money. We were promised when that was put into effect that we would get a report on whether or not this fee could be reduced. Two years have gone by, and we've heard nothing. I've gone to the board twice

and asked. They're not answering. I asked them to put it on the agenda for the next meeting. They didn't put it on the agenda. What are they trying to hide? I don't trust this board with any more unaccounted powers, especially not the ability to raise taxes without voter approval.

We talk a lot about the farmers. You already made their life more difficult when you passed the ill-advised processing ordinance. The real farmers warned you last year the processing ordinance was nothing more than a subtle way to stop more wineries. Well, as we predicted, the unintended consequence of that ordinance will be coming home to roost. The farmers are taking out their tart cherry trees. The market for sweets is dropping and many farmers just this week have been told that they can't sell their apples to the people they've been selling to –

**Chown:** your time is almost up.

**Santucci:** one more thing. The processing ordinance means they will most likely not be able to sell their grapes if they choose to grow grapes. So, you've lost cherries, you've lost apples, and you've made it difficult to sell their grapes they've decided to grow. I say no.

**Nancy R. Heller, 3091 Blue Water Road:** if there is a need for revenue in certain areas of the township, I would suggest the millage request. That way the residents would not be taxed in perpetuity for up to 5 mills. We all interpret a little differently. Peninsula could have a different township board running the township every four years. What would the priorities of the new township board be with up to 5 mills of revenue coming in? I urge every resident to educate themselves on the impact charter township will have on their personal lives. Peninsula Township continually says it wants to preserve agriculture. I have been a resident for 52 years. I have been in agriculture, plus I diversify. Thank goodness, because agriculture is becoming a tremendous challenge, just like running your township. The agriculture business is dictated not by the individual but by the law. Minimum wage. All the rules and regulations. What we can spray. I'm not saying you're going to tax the 5 mills. But if you do, I don't see how any agricultural property owner could afford to farm, even with our agricultural exemption. The agricultural community out here, we're getting hit every which way but up.

**Wes Cowan, 2849 Shore Wood Drive:** I want to thank everybody here for calling this meeting. It's important for us as residents and citizens to understand exactly what has been proposed here. I think I heard from you that you support charter. But I think what you need to tell us as residents is why we need to be thinking about changing. Everybody here has talked about taxes. Our taxes are going to go up no matter what. Change will occur. Change has certainly occurred here since I've been here. But if you need more money from the citizens to run the township efficiently, you must tell us why you need that money. Thank you.

**Jim Raphael, 14826 Mallard Drive:** this is becoming a very confusing and conflicting place to live. People have made comments about us wanting to maintain our rural agricultural characteristics and at the same time we're talking about becoming an urban form of government. If you need additional funds for operating, consider overriding the rollback. This township in terms of taxable property values is one of the highest in the state of Michigan. In 2019, MI did a study. We are one of the 100 highest tax-producing municipalities in the state. If you do it on a per-resident basis, we're number two after

Bloomfield Hills, which is a city. In Bloomfield Hills, at least 80 percent of their taxes come from citizens; 20 percent come from commerce. In our case, 95 percent of the taxes come from residential taxpayers. The idea of adding 5 extra mills at your discretion down the road is going to make us really unaffordable. I urge you to look at other options besides going to charter. Seems you have some flexibility in terms of hiring managers, additional staff. But we're already an expensive place to live.

**Garry Ingold, 1151 Londolyn Terrace:** everything I heard tonight, we have the ability right now to do this stuff. Years ago, we put in PDR. We ought to do the same thing for the parks. Put it on the ballot. If we find out that people want the parks, they'll come up with the money. We came up with money for PDR. As far as the Headlee Amendment, same thing. If we're short on money, we have to explain to people, "This is what we have coming in; this is what we have going out. We need to make up this gap." Maybe that isn't override Headlee for 1 percent, maybe it's override Headlee 2.8 or whatever it is we need. We have all the methods; we just have to do it. We have 2 mills going to PDR. We ought to be able to come up with .1 or something for the parks. If we need to hire somebody else, we can hire somebody else right now. Explain why we need it and people will either disagree or agree with you.

**Grant Parsons, 6936 Mission Ridge:** I don't know exactly what I want to do, but I'm going to make a pitch. The sentiment of the comments seems to be, let's have an election for millages if we need money. I'd like to consider the opposite. If we have an election every time we need money for a basic need... Well, we can either trust government or we can trust elections. If we think we have a good government, and I happen to think we do – I know there's some who don't – the idea of routinizing our governmental ability to govern, assuming we trust, assuming policies get set that have long horizons... Instead of being a reactionary government, maybe we could be a planning-ahead government and maybe we wouldn't run into some of these things where ordinances have to suddenly be written or moratoriums come up with. I've not decided. I think this is a good presentation. I want to consider whether we want to run on millages or whether we want to trust government and have the ability to spread the vision out, and we citizens then every few years have to make decisions instead of having to have issues about specific millages going on and on.

**Robert Stovall, 16190 Hill Rise Road:** I came here tonight trying to figure out what we were trying to do. I heard a lot of words like "professional," "more organized." The next thing I think you guys need to do is figure out what success is. What's your definition of success? What is your plan? Right now, I don't think you have it. You had an information brief here tonight. It was pretty good. I'm not sure you can make a decision off of this. You need to go through the decision-making process, come up with a definitive plan of what success is, and have that decision process drive you. Everybody here is getting worried about taxes. When you start talking to us about raising taxes, we're going to kick back a little bit. We need to lay this out a little. Come up with a plan. Get your definitions down, get your organization laid out, then present to us again and let us take another bite at the apple.

**TJ Andrews, 619 Webster Street, Traverse City:** I'm the Grand Traverse County Commissioner representing District Seven, which includes Peninsula Township and part of Traverse City. I too for the record have heard nothing about an annexation coming from

Traverse City. Thank you for having this meeting. I did look at how Peninsula Township stacks up with the other four townships in our region that are charter townships: Garfield, East Bay, Long Lake, and Elmwood. None of them are the same as any of the others. It's obvious this evening that Peninsula Township stands out in our region for its level of engagement in the community. People in this township care about this township; that extends to caring about how this township is governed. I'd like to thank you for starting this conversation with lots of notice to the public. You didn't have to do it this way. You could have had this conversation privately, without opportunities for all of us to know more about the process or the alternatives that should be considered. This is a community that's paying attention and wants to be engaged, and I appreciate as another representative of local government that this is a community that is engaged in local government. Thank you.

**Mark Nadolski, 10 West McKinley Road:** I moved here in 1973. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. That's what I thought of the Old Mission Peninsula. I currently live in the schoolhouse that was built in 1901 and was converted to a home in '57. I love the old schoolhouse. I love the fact that I'm on Old Mission Peninsula. I don't know another area in this part of the country that is as beautiful or as great a place to live. Everybody has their problems. Peninsula Township is struggling trying to keep its agricultural community; we're trying to help them as much as we can. I still feel strongly about the agricultural community; it's one of the reasons I moved here. We're trying to make sense of a balance between the residents, the agricultural community, and what each needs and wants. I'm president of Protect the Peninsula [PTP]. I've been involved with PTP since 1979. I was invited by the agricultural community that started PTP. I think the township board is doing everything possible to keep this peninsula on the right track. I don't know of any other township in this area that's doing what we're doing to keep the sense of the community. You look at Garfield Township, East Bay Township, Traverse City; the growth is exploding. That's going to come back to haunt us. We are trying to keep the peninsula a safe and pleasant place to live. And I think you folks are doing everything you can to do that. We appreciate it. Thank you.

**Ron Strachan, 15466 Old Bluff Trail:** don't call the question of charter township or not until after the elephant in the room is settled. Settle the winery lawsuit, get that behind the township, then look at this issue and others and how to fund them. That's the biggest thing the board has to deal with. Get it settled. Negotiate it, find the middle ground, or get it in front of a judge. Let's get on with it. Thank you.

**John Snow, 10605 Bluff Road:** I've lived here since 1997. In a variety of different ways, I've been actively involved with the peninsula. What I have consistently found is the town boards, not just this one, the previous ones as well, are dedicated citizens who really have our best interests at heart. I've been impressed with the integrity I've seen over the years. And when you get into this sort of, well, if you need more money for the parks, let's have a referendum or if you need more money for roads, have a referendum, we need to let the people we elected to govern, govern. What we're getting into is some people have the feeling that with increasing the millage to 5, they lose control. We have complete control over you. If we don't like what you do, we don't elect you again. But consistently I've found with boards that they're doing a good job and usually don't have opponents and are

consistently reelected. I think that is the testimony to the quality that we've had in government. Charter township lets you do what we have sent you here to do, and that is to govern. I think you will do a good job. Thank you.

**Dave Murphy, 6943 East Shore Road:** in the opening comment by Curt Peterson about the parks meeting discussing millage, I'm the person on the parks committee who made that comment. The reason is, we've been evaluating parks needs for several years. It's significant both from a capital standpoint and an operational standpoint. We need to address how we're going to fund the parks one way or the other. My suggestion to my parks colleagues was, "Come to this meeting. We're either going to have a parks millage, or we can undertake it through charter township with an incremental increase in millage." That's why the point came out in that meeting. It was not saying we're coming for your money. It was about how we're going to address [the deficit].

I don't know how many people in this room have led a millage vote or a ballot petition or a ballot question. I've been involved leading two and involved in two others. For the two that I led, you put your life on hold. You spend months of your life. You fundraise, you work with countless people, your phone is ringing off the hook, you're nonstop emailing. When I sit at parks committee meetings and we return to the subject of will we have a ballot initiative about a millage vote on parks, the question always is, who's going to do it? Who's going to lead it? I'm a little tired of it. I might have one more in me. I do trust this board. I understand differences of opinion, I really do, and I'm happy when people are here to express their differences of opinion in a civil manner. We need that, so thanks for this meeting.

We do need to address our deficits, our needs. I don't think we're ready. I think this meeting shows that we're not ready. I suggest an ad hoc committee be formed taking people from all sides of the issue and a couple of members of the planning commission or town board. Put a group together, work with our attorneys, come back and present the information again. What John Snow just said: not only do we elect you, but we can also recall you. We can have referendums to change things around. We have absolute control over what happens moving forward. We don't like it, we pull these people out or whoever their successors are. We maintain control. That holds whether we have a township manager or not. If you don't like them or we don't like them, we come in as citizens as we're doing now. We debate it in public. That's the process we need for all of this, including the discussion about settling the winery issue. Why is it in court? Why did it go that way? We have a process to settle it in public and it hasn't taken place.

Thank you for the job you're doing. Thank you for putting this meeting together. It was a great presentation. I've been asking for this for a decade. I've been on two master planning committees, and every time I ask, "Why are we not examining our structure of government?" These folks [town board] didn't ask for this meeting; people like me asked for it.

## 10. Board Comments

**Sanger:** thank you to the lawyers for your time tonight.

**Rudolph:** there's been a lot of comments that suggest the board is predisposed to this and that is not the case. We on the board are learning just as much as you folks out in the audience about how you feel, what our potential is, and what a charter township versus a

general township is all about. We're looking for input, so thank you for coming and providing that.

**Shanafelt:** I appreciate all the comments and perspectives. I agree with the comment about outlining what an ideal structure would look like and what that is going to cost. I think that is necessary, so thank you.

**Chown:** yes, thank all of you for coming tonight. I'm thrilled to see every one of you. I think the idea of an ad hoc committee is terrific. If there is interest out here, please feel free to send me an email at clerk@peninsulatownship.com. I'd like to get going on this because I'd like to have something on the ballot in November [2024]. That means we've got work ahead of us. I've only got two newsletters coming out before that November ballot, and we're going to need a lot of information in them. Perhaps another meeting as well once we figure out what we think we'd like to do so we can get some input from the rest of you. So thank you all; it's been a good night.

**Ahorn:** I have a comment regarding Louis [Santucci's] comments for the last two or three meetings: I have taken your question to heart. I have been in contact with our auditors and a report will be included in our audit report.

## **11. Adjournment**

**Ahorn moved to adjourn with a second by Rudolph. Motion approved by consensus**  
**Adjourned at 9:17 p.m.**