

Packet
December 12, 2023,
Township Board Meeting
Packet Addition

Becky Chown

From: PJ Kelley <team.dog.59@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 10, 2023 3:39 PM
To: rudy.peninsulatrustee@gmail.com; dave.peninsulatrustee@gmail.com; maura.peninsulatwptrustee@gmail.com; armen.peninsulatrustee@gmail.com; Marge Achorn; Becky Chown; Isaiah Wunsch
Subject: Charter Township

PLEASE INCLUDE IN PACKET ADDITION FOR THE NEXT REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING.

Dear Town Board Members,

I am writing concerning the discussions that are underway regarding making Peninsula Township a charter law township. At this time, I do not feel that proceeding with reorganizing as a charter township is in the best interests of the residents for the following reasons:

1. This is budget season for the township. The township should be focusing on an in-depth examination of expenses and be discussing - preferably at town board meetings for transparency - where savings will be implemented;
2. The township is currently embroiled in an extremely large and contentious lawsuit that could have an enormous impact on the peninsula. Proposing a switch to a charter township may be one too many changes at this time;
3. 2024 is an election year for the current town board. The timing may not be right to put the charter issue on the ballot when there may be new board members coming in who might have different ideas on how to manage the finances of the township;
4. After the recent Town Board meeting in November, it is readily apparent that trust in the township is arguably at an all time low. (However, public feelings have been somewhat soothed by the fact that the zoning issue did not pass and a committee was formed to further investigate);
5. In the public comments that followed the charter township presentation at St. Joe's Church, it would appear that the majority of residents do not feel comfortable with a charter township at this time and would like more opportunities for public input.

I am pleased by the fact that there is a study group to review this subject - are local residents part of that group or is it just the town board members? I would strongly encourage the study group to explore ALL options for funding for the short term (ie: 1-4 years). As mentioned at the meeting at St. Joe's, some residents spoke up in favor of special millages. Purely hypothetically, a special millage could be used for funding for parks/cemeteries, capital improvements to the township hall(s), hiring a grants manager or business manager or HR manager, just to name a few options.

The assessor will be able to give you more accurate numbers, but 1/10 of a mill would garner the township somewhere around \$100,000. Utilizing a funding mechanism such as special millages would additionally gain the township & residents several immediate benefits:

- Giving the residents a voice over what they want to be taxed on, as opposed to giving the township carte blanche to tax up to 5 mills under the charter situation;
- The township could regain some credibility with the residents by recognizing citizen comments and desires;
- Give the township time to further study expanded financial projects over the next 5, 10, 15 years;
- Hold public discussions throughout the next year or two to continue to gather resident input, present to the public expanded financial projects, and to discuss alternate funding options. Parenthetically, I believe it is required by statute that the supervisor present at least quarterly to the town board the budget vs actuals YTD;
- Depending on what the special millage(s) might be for, this funding might be more apt to pass a taxpayer vote and thus gain the township almost certain funding. For example, there has not to my knowledge been a special tax for park lands that has not been passed by the voters in the last 30 years;
- If the township puts the charter issue on the ballot and it fails to pass, then the township will have no additional funds and is back to square one.

Thank you for your service to our township and for considering the opinions of this letter.

Sincerely,

Paula Kelley