

**Minutes of Special Board Meeting
Crystal Lake Township Board of Trustees
7:00 PM, September 12, 2022
Crystal Lake Township Hall**

1. CALL TO ORDER at 7:00 pm by Supervisor Amy Ferris
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Ferris asked all in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. All did.
3. ROLL CALL: Of Elected Officials called by Deputy Clerk Sondra Halliday.

Elected Officials Present:

Amy Ferris, Supervisor
Brooke Popp, Treasurer
Dr. William Northway, Trustee
Dr. Richard Nielsen, Trustee

Staff present:

Sondra Halliday, Deputy Clerk
Brian Halliday, Office Assistant
Jeannette Feeheley, Temporary Recording Secretary

Visitors Who Signed in as CLT Residents:

Orlin Reed
Dean Michael
Cathy Wallace
Roland Halliday (no relation to the Hallidays on staff):
Martha Papineau
Brad Heywood
Jill Marble
Jane Dennison
Mary Lou Ellsworth Stanton
Karen Cunningham
Rick Doehring
Al Popp
Bruce Walton
Bill Herd
Penny Herd
Carol Beidler
Greg Wright
Dave Wynne
Jessica Ryan
Geoffrey Turner
Paul May

Visitor who signed in as not a CLT Resident:

Mike Jones

Visitor who signed in not a resident but as a land owner within CLT:

Tom Kucera

4. ADOPTION OF, OR AMENDMENT TO, AGENDA

Ferris explained that Township Attorney Bryan Graham made himself available by phone tonight to save the Township money from requiring his physical presence for the whole meeting. She asked that his phone call presence on the proposed agenda be moved from item 8 to item 6.

Ferris moved adoption of the proposed Agenda as amended by her proposed amendment. Northway seconded. All ayes. Amended Agenda adopted.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS: None declared.

6. EXPLANATION OF THE PROCESS BY CLT ATTORNEY, BRYAN GRAHAM

By prior arrangement, at 7:06 pm, Attorney Bryan Graham phoned in remotely and explained to all present the township responsibilities in the event of its Clerk resigning, the statutory process that governs an appointment, and the consequences and costs to be incurred if the Board does not appoint a replacement.

He said the current Clerk may not name or vote on the successor. The Township Board has a limited amount of days to appoint a Clerk, and if the Board does not do so, the Benzie County Clerk will have to call two elections on behalf of the Township: one a primary as the position is a partisan one, and then a special election between the primary winners. Those elections will not take place until sometime next year and well after the already scheduled November 2022 election has taken place. He said that if the Board does not meet the statutory deadline to appoint an individual to fill the term of a resigned Clerk, the Township will incur all the costs of a primary and special election for the Clerk position. He also briefly went over the duties of the Township Clerk position.

Graham explained that, in addition, if the Board does not act, the Benzie County Clerk will have to step in to handle the upcoming November 2022 election on behalf of the Township, and that there may be a fee to the Township from the County for those costs. He urged the Board to save the Township all the costs involved.

Nielsen asked for clarification about the two elections that would have to be held. Graham answered there must be opportunity for partisan parties to nominate a candidate, and then a special election between the primary winners. Nielsen asked if the dates are set by the County Clerk? Graham said they have to follow regular election dates. Ferris said Benzie County Clerk Tammy Bowers told her that the primary would be sometime next May to be followed by the special election next August. Popp asked if the Board appoints someone today, would not that person have time to get trained to hold the November election? Graham said he was not sure that could occur but that the new Clerk could always appoint a Deputy Clerk who was already trained to handle the duties. Graham summarized by saying it is important, if at all possible, for the Board to appoint a Township Clerk in order to avoid the Township the costs of a special election for this one position. Before concluding this phone session, Ferris asked if Graham would remain available by phone if further questions arose during the meeting that required his input, and he said yes.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

Ferris said she had been in contact with state and county officials about the situation. She had received a communication from Benzie County Clerk Tammy Bowers that outlined much of what must be accomplished regarding the upcoming November elections, the training involved, and the timing dates.

Bowers had also provided a follow-up communication explaining that it is the county election commissioners (County Clerk, County Treasurer, and Probate Judge) who would make an interim appointment and set the pay if the Township Board does not appoint a Clerk.

Ferris said that numerous correspondence had been received supporting either one or the other candidate, and that all must be read aloud at this meeting. She asked if the other Board members would help her read through them all. None volunteered. She then proceeded to read aloud each letter.

Letters or Emails received in support of Melanie L. Jensen-Doehring were from:

Kathy Picklo
Andy Miller
Jack and Barbara Drew

Letters or Emails received in support of Sondra Halliday were from:

Barbara & Ted Fisher
Judy VanMeter
Judith Stewart Rodes
Eric Potter Rodes
Elizabeth Ellen French
Martha Papineau
Mary Louise Ellsworth Stanton
Ginny Knutsen
Danae Lowry
Gregory Wright
Jill Marble
Tom Kucera
Cathy Boshier (received too late to be provided in tonight's handouts)
Monica Shultz (received too late to be provided in tonight's handouts)

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ferris opened the meeting for Public Comment, explaining the Public Participation Rules which was also provided as a handout. Not all those who spoke had signed the sign-in sheet, perhaps because of arriving late.

Mike Jones rose and said why he supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

Jessica Ryan rose and said why she supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

Geoffrey Turner, Jessica Ryan's husband, rose and said why he supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

Roland Halliday (no relation to Sondra Halliday) rose and said why he supports Sondra Halliday.

Janet Wynne rose and said why she supports Sondra Halliday.

Jill Marble rose and said why she supports Sondra Halliday.

Bill Herd rose and said why he supports Sondra Halliday.

Anthony Cicchelli rose and said why he supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

Bruce Walton rose and said he has no preference except for someone here all year round.

Tom Kucera rose and said why he supports Sondra Halliday.

Carol Beidler rose and said why she supports Sondra Halliday.

Rick Doehring rose and said he is Melanie's husband and why he supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

Dave Wynne rose and said why he supports Sondra Halliday.

Paul May rose and said why he supports Sondra Halliday.

Al Popp rose and said why he supports Melanie Jensen-Doehring.

As all who wished to speak had done so, Ferris closed this Public Comment portion of the meeting at 7:48 pm.

9. ACCEPTANCE OF CLT CLERK SULLIVAN’S RESIGNATION AS OF 5 PM, 9.15.22

Ferris said she had received Clerk Sue Sullivan’s emailed letter of resignation and her stated support for both candidates who had applied for the position.

Ferris moved acceptance of Sue Sullivan’s resignation effective Thursday, September 15, 2022. Northway seconded. Deputy Clerk Sondra Halliday was asked to take Roll Call Vote: Ferris, aye; Northway, aye; Popp, aye; Nielsen, aye. Motion passed; resignation accepted.

10. CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Ferris said no other applicants had applied for the position except for Sondra Halliday and Melanie Jensen-Doehring. Ferris began the Board’s interview process with Melanie Jensen-Doehring first. Board members asked and were answered a number of questions of the applicant, including questions about the training that will have to be taken and her ability and commitment to be present for all Clerk duties. Ferris began the Board’s interview process with Sondra Halliday. Board members asked and were answered a number of questions of the applicant, including questions about the training that she already has taken and her ability and commitment to be present for all Clerk duties. There was also back and forth among the Board members as each spoke on behalf of one candidate or the other. The interview process concluded at 7:58 pm.

11. APPOINTMENT OF NEW CLT CLERK AS OF 9.16.22

Northway moved to appoint Sondra Halliday as Clerk for the position vacated by the resignation of Sue Sullivan. Ferris seconded.

Board Deliberations: Ferris said nothing about the motion she just seconded reflects on the character of either candidate. She said she has been in contact with State election officials who have told her it is possible for Ms. Doehring to get trained but not full certification in time for the November election. She said that means the Township will have the entire process taken away from us. She mentioned Sept. 24 as the date military ballots must be out, and various other deadlines that must be met. She said we can get Melanie trained in very basic training but not certification. Nielsen said Sue Sullivan’s letter said she’d be available to help. Ferris said Sue is going through a lot of health problems. Popp questioned the importance of full certification. Deputy Clerk Sondra Halliday explained that every two years Clerks must take Election Cycle Training and that she had taken it for Sue as Sue had COVID at the time. Nielsen said even more important than the November election is the next decade and the incumbent will have the incumbent’s advantage by 2024, and that we have to think about the next ten to twenty years for the Township. Ferris disagreed, that how the Township runs the November election is actually very important, and that if Melanie wants to run for office in 2024, that would be fine. Nielsen said the Benzie County Clerk can take over and handle things and money for an election is not an issue. Ferris said that if we do not appoint anyone now, everything stops, no clerk to sign checks, etc. Popp said payroll will continue. Ferris said if there’s no Clerk for a second signature, there’s no payroll. Ferris said that the County will not give us a Clerk to run the township, only for the November election.

Roll call was taken: Northway, aye; Popp, nay; Ferris, aye; Nielsen, nay. Motion to appoint Sondra Halliday to the Clerk’s position failed.

Popp then moved to appoint Melanie Jensen-Doehring to the Clerk's position vacated by the resignation of Sue Sullivan. Nielsen seconded.

Board Deliberations: Northway said he thinks we have someone capable right on staff who has said repeatedly that she will be here whenever needed and who has earned the right to finish this term. There was back and forth among the members, some attacking and some defending Sondra Halliday, some expressing disbelief of Sondra Halliday's statements that she had talked with her husband and they both agreed about the need to adjust their schedule to allow her to be at the Township to fulfill all Clerk duties. There was also back and forth between Board members about some being absent themselves and refusing to hold regular office hours.

Roll Call Vote was taken: Nielsen, aye; Ferris, nay; Northway, nay; Popp, aye. Motion to appoint Melanie Jensen-Doehring to the Clerk's position failed.

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jill Marble rose to speak on behalf of Sondra Halliday and against the Board's inaction to support her. Roland Halliday rose to speak against the bickering of this Board and in support of Sondra Halliday. Jane Dennison rose to say if you are divided like this, we have to have a primary which will cost us all. Ferris said we have 45 days to change our minds, but the County will take over in 48 hours. Melanie Jensen-Doehring said would it not be good to have set hours for every official? Ferris agreed, saying that she herself had been advocating for such for a long time. Melanie Jensen-Doehring said she doesn't think it should be a scare tactic about her readiness or lack of it to handle the November election. Greg Wright said he agreed with Roland Halliday's comments about this Board. Bruce Walton asked Board members if they could have another meeting? Dean Michael said he goes by the Township Hall every day and always sees Sue Sullivan's car here, and that it is a 52-week job for all of you. Having heard from all who wished to speak, Ferris ended this Public Comment session at 8:22 pm.

13. BOARD COMMENT

Pursuant to Mr. Walton's request, Ferris asked Board members if they were willing to hold another special board meeting to try again. There was no response.

14. ADJOURNMENT: Ferris adjourned the meeting at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannette Feeheley
Temporary Recording Secretary

Handouts provided at the meeting:

Draft Agenda;

Instructions for Public Participation in a Twp. Board Meeting;

List of Core Competencies required of a Township Clerk

Two Emails from Benzie County Clerk Tammy Bowers;

Resignation Email from Clerk Sue Sullivan;

Letter & Resume of Sept. 1, 2022 from Melanie L. Jensen-Doehring applying for the Clerk's position;

Email & Resume of Sept. 1, 2022 from Sondra Halliday applying for the Clerk's position;

Letters/Emails from all supporters of either candidate as listed in these Minutes.