

Special Meeting of the Crystal Lake Township Board

Meeting held at 1651 Frankfort Highway, Frankfort MI 49635

August 2, 2017

Meeting was called to order by Supervisor Amy Ferris at 12:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: Ferris, May (arrived at 12:10), Sullivan, and Trentham were present, constituting a quorum; Nielsen was out of town.

Purpose of the Meeting: To resolve communication problems about Board relations.

Agenda: Ferris moved that the agenda be approved; Sullivan seconded: all ayes. Motion passed.

Guest: Richard Figura, Attorney and certified mediator.

Public Comments:

- Jed Jaworski: reported a history of conflict he said he has had with the Supervisor;
- Bill Cleary: said the previous comments were inappropriate;
- Lee Mix: recalled previous problems elsewhere and from personal experience with the Supervisor;
- Carrie Aldrich: pointed out that all Board members must vote verbally on motion to approve agenda.

Discussion:

- Ferris explained that she had called the meeting because there had been another situation, one of a number of building, tense situations at the Hall that are escalating, that she doesn't know how to resolve, and that can't continue, so she thought it was important that the public know what was happening.
- Figura said he first became aware of problems the day before via email and learned that Board members were not satisfied with previous mediation; he said it was not uncommon for Board members who experienced personality conflicts to meet with a mediator to work out a method of working together going forward, not talk about the past; he said he did not believe it was appropriate for him to mediate in this situation because he already has working relationships with the Board members, but he is willing to help identify a mediator; the Circuit Court in Benzie County has a list of court approved Mediation Resources and the organization Conflict Resolution Services in Traverse City is another good source.
- Sullivan said May had spoken with Robert Bodell who has mediation experience and is willing to help; Figura described in more detail how mediators function; Sullivan and May agreed that Bodell's resume indicated that his experience was more in the area of counseling than mediation and he would be inappropriate for this situation.
- Sullivan pointed out that it had previously been recommended that because the disagreements and communication problems were most intense between Ferris and Trentham, that they participate in counseling without the rest of the Board; that Trentham agreed to do that but Ferris had reservations; Ferris said she did have reservations because she believed the whole Board had communication problems, but she agreed that the disagreements were most intense between herself and Trentham; she said she also had questions about the Open Meetings Act since she wanted to be sure it was legal; she said if Figura recommended the counseling be just the two of them she would agree as well.

- Figura explained that mediation and the Open Meetings Act were sometimes in conflict because the first requires confidentiality and the second requires public disclosure; Ferris asked if Figura would recommend that two individuals have mediation with the public present; Figura said “No”, because mediation requires candor, which cannot always be accomplished with others present.
- May said she did not believe the mediation should be public, because the problems were due to personality conflicts; she said the Township needed both Ferris and Trentham and needed them to resolve their conflict.
- Sullivan asked Ferris if she agreed to have counseling with just Trentham and Ferris clarified that she agreed to have conflict resolution with Trentham; Sullivan asked both if, until outside help was identified, they could work in the Hall at the same time; Trentham said she could work from home; Ferris said it was inevitable that paths would cross and wanted some kind of agreement that there would be no swearing, no name calling, no physical aggression, no provocation, and no invasion of each other’s space; Trentham said Ferris’ allegations that she had thrown a fan at her and sworn were not true and she wasn’t going to agree to stop doing something she already did not do; Ferris asked the other Board members if they would agree to the adult behavior she described; May said she hadn’t been involved in that; Figura said it was best to focus on the future, not the past and he thought that everyone could agree to make an effort to get along until mediation could be accomplished; Ferris said she would go on the record to say that her behavior would not include any (of the above); Sullivan said she had no problem saying it because she had neither engaged in such behavior nor been accused of it, but she resented being asked to make such a commitment in this circumstance
- Ferris said she was just trying to make sure everyone felt safe in their work environment and did not want anyone to feel resentment.
- Trentham said she had written a statement that she wanted included in the minutes; she read it verbatim; that statement is attached at the end of the minutes.
- Sullivan said she would agree to work with Figura to help identify the appropriate person to mediate; Figura agreed and explained that it was usual to identify a list of possible resources from which the participants could select the one they wanted.
- Ferris asked if she had ever asked for anyone’s resignation; no one responded.

Public Comment:

- Paul May: conflicts exist everywhere and people should just get their jobs done.
- Jed Jaworski: although it is best to let go of the past, sometimes you need to look at the history.
- Lee Mix: history is important; how much will the counseling cost; perhaps it would be better to recall.
- Ted Skierski: has watched Ferris push for many improvements, especially the cemetery; she is good to work with; the personal attacks should not be public.
- Ted Fisher: agrees with Skierski; it is good that Figura will help find a conflict resolution person; repeated personal attacks are a waste of time.
- Carrie Aldrich: MTA has very good resources with clear definition of roles; she knows of Trentham and has never heard anything bad about her; she has not heard anything about Ferris.
- Paul May: “Managing the Modern Michigan Township” is also an excellent resource.
- Greg Wright: the Board has worked very well for the past five years and residents are grateful for all the changes; maybe they have taken on too much and it has become stressful, but they should remember they are appreciated.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

Sue Sullivan, Clerk, reporting.

Addendum by Brooke Trentham attached as page 3.

ADDENDUM TO MINUTES BY BROOKE TRENTHAM

In the attempt to diffuse the drama created by Amy, I was advised to ignore the games and insults and to NOT defend myself. In doing so, a false impression may have been assumed.

I challenge the township taxpayers to do their due diligence. Contact my colleagues and employers. Contact BACN, Trinity Lutheran Church of Frankfort, First Congregational Church of Frankfort, Benzie County Community Chest, Benzie County Habitat for Humanity, the Benzie County Eagles, and Amy Plumstead of Frankfort. Determine for yourselves, what kind of person I am; determine my true work ethic. Am I really the person Amy would have you believe? Does she have another agenda? Would it benefit her to discredit me? Is she harassing and encouraging me to resign, so someone more to her liking would be appointed? Someone who would ignore State statutes and basic accounting principles, as she did to the prior treasurer and clerk and deputies? I vow to continue fulfilling my obligations that I was elected to do and I simply want what is best for our township and am not going to resign.