Blue Lake Township

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Kalkaska County, Michigan

Minutes

Special Board Meeting

Wednesday, October 20, 2022

20 Present

1. Meeting Call to Order at 10:00 am (also on Zoom). Pledge of allegiance
2. Roll Call of Board Members – Almose, Shaw, Shearer, Shoemaker, and Nichol all present.
3. Adoption of Agenda – **Motion** to adopt agenda by Shaw, supported by Almose. Motion carried.
4. Call for Conflict – Shearer – Roll call, Almose, Nichol, Shaw, Shoemaker, and Shearer all stated no conflict of interest. Question from Newpower: conflict of interest for Shoemaker, Almose and Shaw; her researched indicates conflict. Shearer: Per MTA, no conflict.
5. Camp Grayling - Resolution
   1. Guests: Mike NcNamara, Curt Kehoe (each are Lt. Col., Retired Military). Lt Col McNamara spoke regarding Camp Grayling being #7 in the country for Army training. Should the expansion go through, they would be in the top 3. The other two training facilities are desolate lands. There are no studies for electronic warfare and there is no oversite. Lt Col Kehoe spoke of different articles stating vendors are awaiting the opportunity to use the expanded Camp Grayling areas to test their devices. The public will not be privy to what types of devices will be tested. The public has also experienced massive closures of the trails due to training. Hundreds of feet of Concertina wire was left out in the area. and explicit pictures shown of dogs being maimed by it. The question then becomes, what about all the wild animals? Just one of several questions that concerned public is asking. For people looking for more information, there is a website: 230isenough.com and can check out the Facebook page: Camp Grayling Expansion which has 5,000 members. Both Lt Col’s answered questions from the audience and board. The board appreciated their time, perspective, and information conveyed.
   2. **Motion** by Shearer to rescind the motion put forth by Shaw to express our opposition of the Camp Grayling expansion and draft resolution language to execute in the October 5, 2022 meeting (which was subsequently tabled until October 20, 2022), supported by Almose and duly passed by a roll call vote of 3 yeas, 2 nays. Shearers motion to rescind supported by Shoemaker. Roll call vote: Shearer, Shoemaker yea, Almose, Shaw, and Nichol Nay. Motion failed. **Motion** by Nichol to pass Resolution 10202022 opposing Camp Grayling increased expansion into Kalkaska County, supported by Almose. Roll Call: Nichol, Almose, and Shaw yeas. Shoemaker and Shearer both nays. Resolution passed.
6. Fire Chief Contract
   1. List from Board Member Shaw: A list was not handed out but Shaw discussed frustrations within the Fire Department (FD) command. Why all the issues and can it be fixed. States originally wanted a full-time Chief but could only afford part-time. Dickens and other officers recommended we hire Brierley. Pluses to his hiring: in house training-genius, technology; very impressed. Stumbling blocks that caused problems: 1) celebration party for certified firefighters but then retirements rolled into that. 2) lights/sirens was an issue but got through that 3) Facebook page she did not know about that she felt was selling T-Shirts. Profile picture as inappropriate 4) Mutual aid, beat it to death. When Chief is here it is one way, another way when he is not. Needs to be settled. 5) Everybody liked Jaws of Life but not internally; lots of training for something we seldom use; core paid-on-call average age of 66 and Jaws too heavy. Shaw stated no one complained to her but something this board should consider 7) Policies/Procedures: new hire, attendance, how accurate is our roster 8) the boat (too windy when used) what about training. Shaw states she has spoken with every single officer, not firefighters. We can let officers get so frustrated they quit and it impacts the volunteers. What if we don’t address the Chief’s frustrations and he leaves. Everything Chief did was to fit his vision, the biggest, bestest, badest fire department in all of Kalkaska County. He is about the FD not the township as it had always been, in her opinion. Use to be everything was decided by officers and had to be justified. There was conflict but it got handled. They used teamwork and had the same culture, taking egos out of it. Board can’t force teamwork. Chief is not lazy and a good worker and he has a vision. Lots of damage to Chief and Officers and don’t know if we can overcome it. Chief: the Facebook page mentioned is a personal page, not the Fire Departments. It was posted for a “hot minute” on the FD page and took it off. I was hired to bring and prepare the FD for the future. I’m sure it does not sit well for everyone, those who have been with the FD for many years. Our FD must follow the same rules as large FD’s. Newpower: I wrote a letter and it has been sent to all board members. I do not agree with Shaw, I want the Jaws. If I am stuck in a car, I want my FD to get me out. Discussed grants and donations received, Ipads, wildland gear, firefighting gear, radios, jaws, etc. Complaints: where are they. Policy’s and procedures, this board has had 2 years to accomplish that. This man has done a lot for our FD and community. Chief: grants were submitted and received by board and fire department member(s). Shaw: I wanted to bring up things all may not be aware of and hopefully we can resolve them. Dickens: Jaws, issue of representing this FD that can handle the Jaws. We have an aging FD. Chief: we have to work with the volunteers we have. Fletemeier: I have had zero interaction with Chief besides these meetings. 2 observations, 1: why a full time chief for BLT and 2: fiscal responsibility 3: never go into a meeting saying, “I reviewed with the officers” as it conveys vagness. Higgins: mutual aid, Chief does it one way and when he is not there it is done another way. The statement says those in charge when the Chief is not there are not following proper procedures, orders. Problems within, curious, how does it get to the board? All the officers should be taking issues to the Chief and they should be solving their issues, not this board. We have over 100 new voters, volunteer fighters will be changing, all the time. Micromanaging the FD is out of control. May: “There is no one better qualified to serve as township fire chief than Greg Brierely. That he is willing to work full time for less than part time wages and no benefits is amazing. Randy Dickens is the problem. At the October 2019 township board meeting when Greg was hired, Christine Almose stated that the intention was to micromanage the fire department and has attempted to do so ever since. It needs to end and end now.” JB: (Zoom) I agree with the speaker, we do not need a full time chief. Nichol: just to set the record straight, the Chief is 204 days per year, not full time. Shoemaker: Greg has done a lot of goods things for the FD and has qualifications I don’t have. Leadership and training: integrity, trust, and truthfulness. You say one thing and do another. You threw out all my training records. Now you ask me to recreate them. Fire I & II are not fully trained. Tell everyone the same. Develop people to get them qualified. You need to lead the change, think critically and make sure people understand. Create accountability, be consistent, be fair and avoid favoritism. Desire for recognition. Use skills of people on hand. In officers meeting when someone brings something up, you change it after. Chief: all training records are stored digitally online. Shearer: Chief has a whole lot of accomplishments and I am happy. Almose: Hired Chief with completely different personality then Barr and Dickens; not a good or bad thing. Greg just does things differently. And Greg is proud of the work he has done. And he has had many good accomplishments and I probably haven’t said anything about the good things. Its not the good things, it’s the lack of teamwork that really concerns me. You choose to do what you want instead of what you are counseled. IE: I handed out paperwork on establishing a FD Association. Mutual aid: people do not understand. I’ve learned over the years from Randy (helping him study and helping with replacement equipment after the fire barn burned down. Does he come home and talk to me? Absolutely. I try not to act on what Randy has told me. That’s a hard thing. I know there is two sides to every story. Did Randy and Bob have problems? Probably. I’m still mad at Bob (regarding a past event) but they grew past it. You (chief) received enough information regarding appropriate expenditures, did you learn anything from that? Ask, not just act. You have support from your fire department. Mutual Aid: you don’t empty out the township. Greg’s eagerness to showboat, not a good thing. Mary has talked to you several times about emptying out the fire department. I’m not sure what you tell the firefighters, do you let them know about our wishes about mutual aid. I think you’ve gotten away with that. I’m not sure you are interested in following policy or procedure. Chief: reiterated the Mutual Aid policy, (it) was discussed and accepted by the board and fire department. Outside the “L” shaped area just stated, me and one other take the tanker. In September 2022 township board a motion was made regarding the FD Association and it was read back in its entirety. Then in the October meeting things changed. Therefore, no association was created. Shearer: I’d like to hear from volunteers. Kevin: too many cooks in the kitchen. Old regime vs new regime. Teamwork applies to everybody and there needs to be openness to change. That is not happening. Change Management is hard. Hierarchy and authority break down. There is a reason why we have a Chief, Asst Chief, Captain and Lieutenant. Why does the Chief have to report to everyone? In a lot of townships, the chief reports to the supervisor. Robertson: Chain of command. Chief will go to his Assistant Chief. If there is anything for the board, he will come to you (Supervisor) and let you know what’s going on. All the backstabbing, I am amazed the FD is even working. Mutual Aid: if my business is burning down, Randy and Greg are going to need mutual aid to put out the fire at my business. Greg works diligently at mutual aid. I don’t see why there is a conflict. Wife of firefighter: lately I am concerned with my husband’s safety because of all the knit picking, backstabbing, non-teamwork. I attend these meetings and they become a personal attack on Greg. They don’t resolve anything. I am concerned with teamwork and the lack of…he’s the Chief, he is in charge. I am glad he does all the training with these guys. Fletemeier: treat each other with respect. Randy: When the tones go off, I watch over everybody and I would hope Rick would tell you that I am always concerned about him. Mrs. Rick: my concern is you will stand back, are you going to prove Greg doesn’t know what he is doing? To have his back, that is my concern. Dickens: I always ask Greg to go slow. I will put myself at risk before I would ever put Rick at risk. Nichol: I’ve listened to all. My concern is the statements of lack of teamwork. Unless you are working with the FD how do you know about the lack of teamwork. And, if you’ve known about the lack of teamwork, why are we just hearing about it now? I am putting that out there for you all to think about. If you are a board member and you are listening to command staff, and you have been listening to command staff or volunteers, and you’ve known about issues for months and when you are asked by me “what do you want”, I get no answers from board members. You knew but you did not share that information with this board. Some board members say “well you know”. I don’t know. I have been asking and haven’t been told. I have a problem with members of the board talking to whomever and not having a place to go. If conversation is with anyone but the Chief, there is a chain of command. If you then don’t get what you need, come to the board. It should come to the board in writing so we know what it is we are looking at. Getting things at the last second at a board meeting is difficult to look over, try to come up with solutions or even questions with the information that we get. This ties into MTA Fire Chief job description. I found updated language and one difference: the Chief with report to the Supervisor. It is hard to come to five separate people and be instructed by each. But individually we are 1/5, the whole board must instruct, not each individual. We should discuss it at our November meeting. In speaking with our attorney about the chief’s contract, he states we are not unusual. Most townships here do not have a written contract. I called around and was unable to find one. Not saying we shouldn’t, just that they seem nonexistent. Let’s move forward with that today. I bought to our last meeting what we presently agreed to with the Chief. Can we move forward with that schedule?
   2. MTA Fire Chief Job description (handed out at last board meeting – Nichol) Policy #31 is a very old job description. Shaw: do we want to use Paid on call. Sometimes we call them first responders. Almose: they are Paid on call. Shaw: ok. experience. There is a difference in the MTA and Policy #31 regarding credentials for the job. Reporting to the Supervisor is not what Shaw, Almose and Shoemaker agree to. In the end, this board is still working on a job description. We will continue to work on the Chiefs contract in the upcoming month(s). **Motion** by Nichol to renew the Chief’s verbal contract through December 31, 2024 at the current rate of $31,500 plus pension ($35,000 annually), 204 days/17 days per month for administrative, trainings, meetings, fire and rescue calls, stipend for on-call days beyond the 17 days currently paid at $50/day, missed days are to be made up within 4 months of absence, no insurance benefits, sick, personal or bereavement days and reports hours for payroll as non-exempt employee, hours over forty are payable at time and one half. Support by Shearer. Roll call vote: Nichol, Shearer, Shaw, and Shoemaker, all yeas. Almose nay. Motion carried.
7. Road Work 2022/2023 Decision
   1. **Motion** by Shaw to put (trade name known as Afton) Afton stone on shoulders of future paved road projects, support by Almose. Roll call: Shaw, Almose, Shoemaker, Shearer, and Nichol all yeas. Motion carried.
8. Public Comment
9. Adjournment – Next meeting November 2, 2022 at 7:00 pm
   1. **Motion** to adjourn at 2:15 pm by Nichol, supported by Shaw, motion carried.