

**ADA TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 10, 2008**

Meeting was called to order by Supervisor Haga at 7:30 p.m. Members present: Supervisor Haga, Treasurer Pratt, Clerk Ensing Millhuff, Trustees: Damstra, Proos, Sytsma and Westra. Also present: Planning Director Ferro, Recording Secretary Smith and 24 community members.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Westra, supported by Sytsma, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

GENERAL TOWNSHIP BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA:

Approval of Minutes

October 27, 2008, Regular Board Meeting

Receive and File Various Reports/Communications

1. Sheriff Report – East Precinct Quarterly Report – 10/23/08; 2. Comcast – 10/17/08 & 10/28/08; 3. MTA Legislative Update Fax -10/24/08.

Moved by Westra, supported by Pratt, to approve items on the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS AND RECEIPTS

Treasurer Pratt presented Warrants and Receipts in the following amounts: Hand Checks: #101 \$1,575.61; #205 \$1,709.58; #208 \$1,279.52; #590 \$2,920.21; #591 \$1,024.42; #592 \$75.24. Total Hand Checks: \$8,584.58. Warrants: #101 \$42,438.05; #205 \$4,597.59; #208 \$4,209.91; #211 \$32,907.09; #590 \$7,367.23; #591 \$12,120.24; #592 \$539.90. Total Warrants \$104,180.01. Total All Checks and Warrants \$112,764.59. **Moved by Westra, supported by Proos, to approve the Warrant Report of November 10, 2008, in the amount of \$112,764.59.** There were questions/clarifications regarding the expense to Organization for Bat Conservation and checking the audio system in the assembly room. **Roll Call: Yes – Pratt, Ensing Millhuff, Westra, Proos, Damstra, Sytsma, Haga. No – 0. Absent – 0. Motion carried.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nina Harrington, 911 Alta Dale, expressed her thanks and appreciation to Clerk Ensing Millhuff and Treasurer Pratt for their many years of service to the community.

BOARD COMMENT

Supervisor Haga thanked Clerk Ensing Millhuff, Treasurer Pratt and Trustee Damstra for serving Ada Township through their many board meetings, committee meetings, and unknown hours of work performed.

Trustee Damstra said it had been a fulfilling four years for him, and he highly recommended anyone with an interest in government to get involved by serving on committees and boards. Adding in the past few years many things had been accomplished and there was still much to be done; i.e. Village Charrette plan. Parks and trails had been near and dear to him, and he hoped they would continue forward. He stated it had been a pleasure to work with the other board members.

Trustee Westra congratulated those leaving the board for their service adding their contribution to the community was greatly appreciated. He thanked Clerk Ensing Millhuff for teaching him about the functions of the township. Trustee Westra referred to a communication from Comcast regarding the switch to digital television, stating many residents in the rural part of the township are not well serviced by anything except broadcast television. He encouraged the township to communicate with residents regarding the options available to them.

Clerk Ensing Millhuff stated she had learned a lot over the past 16 years and she had enjoyed the opportunity to serve the community; having worked with many different board members she believed the current board kept the interest of the community in mind for their decisions. Adding, she hoped future boards remember the identity Ada Township already holds: Ada was the first community in Kent County, and that history needs to be part of any plan for the future, stating many residents moved to Ada because they like the community and preservation needs to be part of any restoration.

Trustee Sytsma thanked Clerk Ensing Millhuff, Treasurer Pratt and Trustee Damstra for their work.

Trustee Proos thanked everyone, expressing appreciation for the work done, contribution to the community and also for the friendship of each member.

Treasurer Pratt expressed her thanks for the opportunity to serve and explained her 17-year history with the township. Treasurer Pratt added she had enjoyed getting to know a great number of residents in the community and the opportunity to make a few changes. She thanked everyone for their comments and wished the best to the new board members.

Supervisor Haga responded to a comment made by Frank Hoover at the last meeting regarding an early compensation commission, stating that he had researched with legal counsel who advised that the 1995 recommendations of the Compensation Commission were not effective because the

Compensation Commission recommends a two-year salary for elected officials. The commission cannot reduce the salary of current elected officials, adding when it meets in 2009 the commission can make a two-year recommendation to the township board, and if the board is not satisfied with that recommendation they can adopt a resolution to not accept it and the salaries would remain the same for the next two years. Supervisor Haga also reported he had received an e-mail from MDOT explaining that because of some DEQ and timing issues, the contract for the M-21 Bridge would not be let until 2009 with construction in 2010. He announced there would be a swearing-in ceremony in the assembly room on November 20 at 12 noon for newly elected and re-elected officials.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION R-111008-1 – SANTA PARADE, SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, 2008

Dave Murray, representing the Ada Business Association, stated the route was the same as the past 12-15 years, McDonalds to Thornapple River Drive, ending at the fire station with hot chocolate and cookies provided by the Firefighters Association and the Ada Business Association. Supervisor Haga noted that the insurance certificate had been received. **Moved by Proos, supported by Sytsma, to adopt Resolution R-111008-1, which is the resolution regarding the Santa parade on December 6, sponsored by the Ada Business Association. Roll Call: Yes – Haga, Ensing Millhuff, Westra, Sytsma, Damstra, Proos, Pratt. No – 0. Absent – 0. Resolution adopted.**

ORDINANCE O-111008-1 – ORDINANCE CREATING DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND BOUNDRIES

Moved by Westra, supported by Damstra, to adopt Ordinance O-111008-1, which is the ordinance creating the Downtown Development Authority and its boundaries.

Planning Director Ferro explained the boundaries had been revised since the original advertisement and Resolution of Intent as recommended by the board, noting there were deletions, but no additions. There were also a revised initial taxable value amounts and tables reflecting the revised boundaries.

Trustee Proos asked if Senate Bills 970 and 972 had any impact of concern. Planning Director Ferro explained that both bills added functions that could be carried out by a DDA, such as establishing a business incubator and creation of a revolving loan fund. Trustee Proos asked for clarification to the process of appointing members of the nine-unit board, and Planning Director Ferro explained the process. Trustee Proos stressed the need of making the public aware, having resident representation and seeking out qualified people. There was further explanation regarding the make-up of the DDA board. Trustee Proos asked for an explanation of the process of dissolving the DDA, and Planning Director Ferro explained one of the issues the county has addressed is the need for a "time limit" to be placed on the DDA. Supervisor Haga asked Planning Director Ferro to explain the tax increment financing. Planning Director Ferro added although a DDA is allowed to impose up to two mills on property within the DDA boundary, as requested by the board, it was excluded from the revised proposed ordinance. He further explained the tax increment financing process. Trustee Westra asked if there would be positions other than the DDA board to potentially be filled. Planner Ferro stated there could be resident advisory committees and officer positions. Adding a DDA also has the authority to retain staff, and a common practice is for a DDA to contract with local government or partner with an organization such as a Chamber of Commerce.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Betsy Ratsch, business owner at 584 Ada Drive and residence at 7653 Fase Street, stated she believed a DDA would provide a wonderful organizational element for linking all the events going on within "the village" and adding improvements as described in the Charrette Plan could be possible through a DDA, which would enhance the quality of life.

Frank Hoover, 700 Marbury, asked if all DDA board members were required to be residents. Planning Director Ferro responded the statute states a majority of members must be business or property owners and/or employees within the district. Mr. Hoover stated he believed anyone who chose to live in other communities and lease their business in Ada should not be appointed and could be considered a "carpet-bagger".

Jim Ippel, owner of Ada Bike Shop, 597 Ada Drive, commended the board for getting the project to this point and hoped the board would strongly consider how important a DDA is for "the village". Stating as a member of the charrette task force, he saw a DDA as the most logical body to put into practice what the residents expressed. Adding, as a resident of East Grand Rapids and a person with a very big building and high stakes and commitment in "the village" he resented being called a carpet-bagger.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

Trustee Westra thought it was imperative for Ada's competitiveness as a community to not only approve, but to implement the DDA. He requested a timetable for implementation be brought to the next board meeting. Trustee Proos believed it was important to get a good variety of residents on the proposed board and to get a good commitment from people throughout the community for all committees and boards. He wanted to make sure future boards would know (through the minutes) it was not now or ever the intent of the board to raise taxes, take property in any way, shape or form, or force change on the residents of the community. The intent is to find a funding source to put forth wealth in our community and follow the desires of all residents in Ada Township with the charrette process. Clerk Ensing Millhuff asked about the negotiations with taxing authorities. Supervisor Haga replied that negotiations had not taken place with Kent County or Grand Rapids Community College. Clerk Ensing Millhuff noted,

"If both continue to opt out, what would be the annual amount collected and captured through taxes paid now to the county?" Planning Director Ferro stated based on what Kent County has negotiated with other entities and other newly-created tax increment authorities; they have excluded from capture any inflationary increase, so the only revenue captured from county revenues comes from new growth/development. The Kent District Library has been exempted from any capture. The total amount is not known. Trustee Westra stated in his talks with county commissioners, their first position is to reserve the right to opt out, but once a DDA is in place they typically negotiate some percentage but not all. They have a concern regarding an indefinite abatement. Supervisor Haga stated they have a formal agreement that must be adopted by this board. Clerk Ensing Millhuff commented when the board was first presented with the DDA concept, it had been presented as if the vast majority of businesses within the boundary were in favor. However, through various communications with business owners, some of whom could be considered anchor businesses within the proposed district for many years were not on board. She Millhuff suggested between now and the completion of the district more "casual" meetings, specifically inviting the businesses who had expressed concerns. Clerk Millhuff stated it was the board's responsibility to communicate and to seek feedback. Trustee Proos stated if there were meetings or updates, he would like a regular report of the activity, funding and general report made to this board. Trustee Damstra clarified the vote tonight is not only the boundaries but to establish the DDA. Adding, there would not be any negative effect on any business. The business with the largest taxable value was Alticor, and they were supportive of the DDA. Supervisor Haga stated he had been engaged in the process from almost day one with the charrette process, that this was an important piece in order to raise funds, but more funds would be needed through other resources such as private funds, grants or other mechanisms. **Roll Call: Yes – Sytsma, Proos, Damstra, Westra, Haga, Pratt, Ensing Millhuff. No – 0. Absent - 0. Ordinance adopted.**

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

Supervisor Haga explained his recommendation for Planning Commission appointments as follows: Sara Easter to replace the Clerk-elect Susan Burton, effective November, 2008; Bob Lowry as the Planning Commission representative on the ZBA; Tom Korth to be retained for an additional year to expire October, 2009, and Mischelle Sytsma to be retained for an additional six months. **Moved by Westra, supported by Ensing Millhuff, to postpone the acceptance of this recommendation until the 2(two) board meetings from today so new board has had chance to meet once.** Supervisor Haga stated he felt the motion was out of order and suggested an up or down vote. **Motion carried.**

OPPORTUNITY FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Norm Rhoades, 571 Rookway, thanked Treasurer Pratt for bringing the township to its current good financial shape, Clerk Ensing Millhuff for her 16 years of service, the enhancement of the parks, the Adaview, and thanking Trustee Damstra for his time on the Personnel and Park Committees.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk**

RS: JS