

# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

## THORN TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

### REGULAR SESSION

Held: February 11, 2015

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The Board of Trustees of Thorn Township convened in regular session from 6:30PM to 9:11PM.in the Township Hall. Robert Coleman called the meeting to order with the following members and visitors present:

Billie Dearlove	Absent	Robert Coleman	Present
Richard Wilson	Present	David Lyle	Present

**VISITORS:** Ed Corns, Ron Combs, Dave Cox, Dennis Lavender, Lee Morgan, Cheyenne Wells, Kurt Grindley, Gwendolyn Camp, Debra Camp, Tim Phipps, Angie Cooperrider, Jennifer Rusler, Elaine Moore, Rob Sands, Tammy Sands, Dale Factor, Andy Patterson, Dick Boring, Jeremy Weekly, Mary Wells, Bayden Chandler, Teresa Forson, Terry Forson, Jason Mitchell, Greg Short, Aaron Mackenzie, Jon Spohn, John McNeish, Pete Sands, Chris Ferris, Nash Ours, Kyle Sands, Mike Tolliver, Kelly Tolliver, Stacie Ours and Lindsay Barrett.

#### Reports

**Fiscal Officer Billie Dearlove** – Absent

**Trustee Robert Coleman** reported that he and Trustee Dave Lye met with Kevin Taylor of Lucas Truck Sales on February 2, 2015 and signed off on the new dump truck. He also met with Scott Hill and Dale Brusse regarding the appraisal on the old fire station building. Scott is working on that and will provide to Bob when complete. There are reports of cars again parking on the roadway in Robinwood. Bob reported this to the Perry County Sheriff. The pick-up truck received a recall and this will be handled within the next week or so.

**Trustee Richard Wilson** reported that the Trustees need to go to the County Engineer's office to sign off on the road mileage. They will go down there on 2-18-15 at 2:00pm to meet with Kent Cannon. Rick also reported that if an EMS levy is to be put on the ballot in 2015, this can only be done in November 2015 as there is no primary in May. ½ Mil would generate in \$57,000; 1 Mil would be \$114,000 and 1 ½ Mil would be \$171,000.

**Trustee David Lyle** attended a meeting with the Perry County Commissioners regarding the Clum property annexation. The Commissioners will sign off on annexing the property back into Thorn Township as soon as the Village of Thornville plugs the sewer lines at the property.

**Zoning:** Ed Corns provided a zoning update. He also submitted a January 2015 zoning report along with fees collected for the month.

**Fire/EMS:** Cheyenne Wells provided a Fire and EMS run summary update. Cheyenne reported that Justin Higley resigned from the department due to a new job. Cheyenne requested copies of meeting minutes from June where he was placed on probation for an additional 6 months. He was informed by Trustee Coleman that he did not have the minutes. Cheyenne demanded the minutes and he was again told that they were not available.

**Trustee David Lyle** read a statement from Fiscal Officer Billie Dearlove regarding Thorn Township funds and expenditures over the past several years. The statement read as follows:

There appears to be a misconception that the Thorn Township Board of Trustees is carrying over large amounts of money and not allowing funds to be spent by the Fire and EMS Department for the past several years. Being fiscally responsible allows the Board of Trustees to manage the township finances so that they are able to appropriate and spend monies for normal operating expenses, wages, equipment, supplies, maintenance, and new modern facilities. All budgetary and financial expenditures and receipts are reviewed and audited by the State Auditors' office as well as dictated by the ORC. In 2013 the total expenditures from the Fire Fund was \$370,789.97. This figure represents normal operating expenses including repairs and maintenance, utilities, supplies, etc. Included in this figure is

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\$155,700 for equipment and \$150,000 for payment on the new fire station loan. Expenditures from the EMS Fund were \$391,178.14. Again, this includes operating expenses as well \$86,569.40 for employee wages; \$84,288.02 for equipment and \$142,358.63 to pay off the loan for the new fire station.

In 2014 the total expenditures from the Fire Fund were \$352,842.88 representing operating expenses, supplies, repairs and maintenance, and \$244,252.83 for equipment and payments toward a new engine. Expenditures from the EMS Fund were \$214,126.87 which included \$92,658.06 in employee wages and \$57,075.17 for equipment. In the past 5 years, we have been able to add part-time Fire/EMS employees from 7:00am to 7:00pm Monday through Friday; paid off the loan on the new fire station; were able to add funds to a charitable contribution from a township resident which resulted in the purchase of a new squad; and paid \$250,000 towards the purchase of the new engine. We still have a balance due of \$179,925 on the new engine and approximately \$60,000 for the equipment required to be fire rescue ready. All financial records of Thorn Township are public records and review of those records can be made by contacting me at 740-246-4400.

Respectfully,

Billie Dearlove, Thorn Township Fiscal Officer

#### **Open Discussion**

Discussion was held around a complaint that had been posted on social media as well as in the Buckeye Lake Beacon against the Thorn Township Trustees. A copy of the complaint as it appeared on social media and posted by Kelly Williams Tolliver on the Thornville Treasure Trove Facebook page is attached. The statement was read by the Trustees with the request that comments and questions be held until the end. After the first reading of the complaint, resident Tim Phipps requested that the complaint be read again paragraph by paragraph and that discussion be held after each.

#### **Paragraph 1 was read by Trustee Robert Coleman – See Below**

To The Residents of Thorn Township

As volunteers/employees of the Thorn Township Fire Department we have endured countless setbacks at the hands of the Thorn Township Trustees. We have operated without the support of the Board of Trustees, proper equipment, and limited support resources. If we are to move forward and provide the citizens of Thorn Township with the quality of service that you deserve and pay for, we feel that it is important to keep you informed with what is going on within the Township, more specifically with the Board of Trustees.

**No discussion followed.**

#### **Paragraph 2 was read by Trustee Richard Wilson – See Below**

For the last several years the department has been staffed with an EMS crew of two individuals, Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM. We have tried unsuccessfully for the last year and half to extend these days to include weekends. With a dwindling volunteer force, stricter demands on training, and a growing community we miss many runs on the weekends, thus causing a delay in response times because personnel from surrounding departments are called to assist. We have taken this to the Trustees on several occasions, we have looked into the cost of adding weekend hours (last year the department carried over approximately \$450k) as well as other solutions (such as an on call rotation for the volunteers). To this point the Trustees have declined to act. At the most recent trustees meeting the Trustees proposed a \$1.00 an hour pay increase for the Fire Department employees. The Fire Chief and The Assistant Fire Chief countered this proposal and asked to add weekend hours instead of the pay increase. The Trustees turned us down on this proposal and approved the pay increase. Several of our volunteers work part time jobs at surrounding departments or for other part time employers on the weekends. This decreases our already thin volunteer staff. These volunteers have expressed the interest to work weekends at the Thorn Township Fire Department. We have also had several employees leave the department because we do not offer weekend hours.

**Discussion followed however, attendees did not consistently identify themselves before speaking making it impossible to prepare an accurate record of what was said by whom. Copies of the tapes of the meeting are available upon request.**

#### **Paragraph 3 was read by Trustee David Lyle – See Below**

The Chief's position has been filled over 10 times in the last 20 years. During the last Trustees meeting the Fire Chief was placed on six months' probation for the 4th time. The reason for this continued extension is because the Chief failed to demote an Officer and because of an insurance stipulation. The Chief did not demote the Officer because the demotion was not within the guidelines of the Thorn Township Employee Handbook (approved by the Board of Trustees on August 8th 2012 and amended January 21st 2013) the Officer had not been placed on any disciplinary action, has the appropriate qualifications per the Ohio Revised Code, and the department guidelines. Per the Township Employee Handbook – Any

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employee who is on probation can be dismissed at any time without cause and there is no appeal process. The decision to once again extend the Chief's probation continues to leave the department in limbo and prevents us from moving forward. This is not the first time that the Board of Trustees has tried to strong arm the fire department. Several volunteers have had to endure mistreatment and slanderous comments at the hands of the Trustees. They have removed or tried to remove several volunteers/employees from the department based on false allegations and they had not received any disciplinary actions regarding any of the accusations. Nor have the trustees made an attempt to adequately investigate or question any of the employees. At one point the Trustees removed an employee after the previous board of Trustees had cleared the individual of any wrong doing and verified that the employee met the requirements of the Ohio Revised Code. The Perry County District Attorney was contacted and he informed the Board to reinstate the employee immediately. The Board then made the decision to hire a lawyer to try to remove the individual. This went on for well over a year, until the employee had had enough of the mistreatment and the strain on family and the fire department. The law firm hired by the trustees was paid for directly out of fire department funds that come from the Fire and EMS levies that are meant to provide Fire and EMS protection to the

Township. Several Thorn Township residents are Firefighters and choose not to volunteer or work at the Thorn Township Fire Department because of the relationship with the Trustees. Why do the Trustees insist on trying to remove dedicated volunteers/employees?

**Discussion followed however, attendees did not consistently identify themselves before speaking making it impossible to prepare an accurate record of what was said by whom. Copies of the tapes of the meeting are available upon request.**

#### **Paragraph 4 was read by Trustee Robert Coleman – See Below**

The Township Insurance Policy has a stipulation that prefers anyone driving township vehicles to be over 23 years of age. The Fire Chief did extensive research on this, contacting other departments (who did not have this requirement) as well as getting quotes from other insurance companies. The trustees would not entertain an insurance change. Professional departments hire personnel under the age of 23 every day and do not have these restrictions. Fire fighters go through drivers training once a year to meet state requirements. Does it matter the age of the person driving the vehicle as long as they are trained to help you and your family in a time of crisis?

**Discussion followed however, attendees did not consistently identify themselves before speaking making it impossible to prepare an accurate record of what was said by whom. Copies of the tapes of the meeting are available upon request.**

**Motion:** A motion to hold a meeting between the Trustees and the Fire Department on February 18, 2015 at 6:30pm at the fire station was made by David Lyle. There was no second so the motion fell to the floor.

Due to a public outburst by the attendees, a motion to adjourn at 9:11pm was made by David Lyle and seconded by Robert Coleman. Votes were: David Lyle, Aye; Robert Coleman, Aye; Richard Wilson, Aye.

Absent

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Billie Dearlove

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Richard Wilson

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Robert Coleman

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David Lyle