

## **FIFE LAKE TOWNSHIP**

**Fife Lake Township Hall, 134 Morgan Street, Fife Lake, MI 49633  
231-879-3963 Phone / 231-879-3146 Fax**

### **SPECIAL MEETING** **APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES** **Thursday, October 20, 2022, 6:00 p.m.**

#### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Supervisor Gerianne Street called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**ROLL CALL:** Supervisor Street called Roll.

**Present:** Supervisor Gerianne Street, Treasurer Cathy Sorrow and Trustees Dawn Zimmerman and Nicole Gibson. A quorum was established.

**Absent:** Clerk Leigh Gifford

#### **Also Present:**

Springfield Township Supervisor, Mr. Tom Gonyer  
Fife Lake Township Deputy Supervisor, Mr. Jeff Berthiaume  
Fife Lake Township Deputy Clerk, Mr. Tom Hempsted  
Fife Lake Village President, Mr. Dave McGough  
Fife Lake Chamber of Commerce President, Mr. Stan Patrick  
Recording Secretary Ms. Kay Held

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

##### **Board Action:**

Ms. Gibson made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented. Ms. Street seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sorrow-Y, Zimmerman-Y, Gibson-Y, Street-Y. 4-Yes, 0-No. Motion carried.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

Supervisor Street relayed to members of the public the structure of tonight's meeting with regard to Public Comment.

#### **CITIZEN COMMENT:**

Mr. Shane Lewis, 11744 East State Street, Fife Lake, MI 49633

Mr. Lewis stated he conducted some research. He stated in the July Minutes, it was reported stated that the Sheriff's Department said they are closer to having a Deputy in place at Fife Lake. At the September meeting, Commissioner Darryl Nelson reiterated this.

In a reference to the Minutes and comparing the number of calls for service, it appears we were getting far more police coverage without a dedicated Deputy. These are the numbers he compared:

With Deputy coverage in Fife Lake: August: 16, September: 14, October: 19.  
Without a dedicated Deputy: June: 32, July: 32, August: 37

He believes the Township should accept a Deputy from the County and retain & utilize the funds they are allocating for a Police Department for other Township projects while getting twice the coverage from the Sheriff's Department.

He isn't seeing Minutes from the Police Committee posted. He went to the Michigan Municipal League, and on their website regarding the Open Meetings Act it states what postings and Minutes are required. It was inclusive of local governing bodies; i.e., Boards, Commissions, Committees, Sub-committees and Authority.

What about the Police Committee? He hasn't seen any postings or Minutes from this Committee.

**GUESTS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**FLT Police Feasibility Presentation:**

The Police Committee is comprised of Fife Lake Township Supervisor Gerianne Street, Fife Lake Deputy Township Supervisor Jeff Berthiaume, Fife Lake Township Deputy Clerk Tom Hempsted, Fife Lake Village President Dave McGough and Mr. Roger Gibson.

Supervisor Gerianne Street stated the Committee has worked countless hours on researching this matter as well as preparation of the presentation. She introduced the backgrounds of Committee Members. Ms. Street and members of the Police Committee delivered a PowerPoint presentation.

**Note: Clerk Leigh Gifford arrived at 6:11 p.m.**

The structure of the presentation included:

- Due Diligence of Elected Officials
- Committee Members
- The History, Service and Schedule of the Grand Traverse Sheriff Department for Fife Lake Township
- Police Costs from 2015 through 2021
- Graphs with Breakdowns of Deputy Location, Incident Calls, and Hours July, 2021 through February, 2022
- Projected Budget for Fife Lake Township Police as of January 1, 2023
- Fife Lake Police Department Investment for First Full Year and Second Full Year
- Pros and Cons of Having a Fife Lake Township Police Department
- Prospective Timeline and Process for Implementation
- Investment in a Police Vehicle (Estimate)
- Public Risk Claim Service Report (from Insurance Agent Paul Olson)

Highlighted points from the verbal presentation accompanying the PowerPoint include:

The rolling contract with the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department has not been renewed/updated since 2015. The Community Police Officer (CPO) for Fife Lake Township was pulled in March, 2022 (as well as three months in 2021 due to the pandemic). Fife Lake Township has been without an officer for 11 of the past 24 months.

The County has always provided well-trained officers. The CPO Director has been easy to work with, and Ms. Street reported she remains in contact with the current CPO Director. There has never been any disciplinary issue with a County CPO.

Assistant Township Supervisor Jeff Berthiaume reviewed police costs the Township incurred between 2015 and 2021. The average annual cost was \$83k. Projected County CPO costs for 2023 are expected to be \$96k.

Ms. Street and Mr. Berthiaume reviewed several graphs outlining time spent in the Township and on what functions. A Top 10 list of activities is included, demonstrating the officer's primary areas of focus. Our CPO spent 66.4% of his scheduled time in the Township; other areas are also accounted for. Each of these charts and graphs provides multiple points of data and are available in the packet.

A six-year projected budget was presented in the packet to include expenditures such as Wages, Payroll, Insurances (Business, Payroll, Equipment), Equipment Costs, Capital Expenditures, etc. Expenditures also include contributions to Social Security, Workers' Compensation, Medicaid and other standard employee costs.

Annual budget forecasts are:

2023-24: \$116,875

2024-25: \$122,945

2025-26: \$125,832  
2026-27: \$132,405  
2027-28: \$133,672

The Township's fiscal year is January-June. Note: The budget slide references half way into the fiscal year, beginning January 1, 2023. The expected income for 2022-23 is \$113,767. Some of the expenditures are for the fiscal half year beginning 1/1/23; other line items indicate an annual expense.

With regard to initial vehicle costs, the purchase of a new vehicle is expected to be approximately \$41k plus approximately \$19k for set up and customization of a police vehicle. Additional expenses such as fuel, repairs and maintenance bring the first year vehicle expenditure to \$62,227.

The projected budget also accounts for uniforms, PPE, Firearms, Cell Phone and Computer totaling approximately \$8k. The \$6.2k listed (for the first half of the year; fiscal portion) account for Ammunition, Office Supplies, Drug Testing, Cell Service, Equipment Repair, Public Education, Training and Licensing & Permits.

Deputy Supervisor Berthiaume noted many line items assumed a rate of inflation in subsequent budget projections.

The slides on Pages 6 and 7 of the packet "Investment for First Full Year" and "Investment for Second Year 2023-24" are itemized. The first year investment is \$179,270. The second year investment is \$116,035. This is less as the first year included vehicle purchase. \$10k per year was allocated for future vehicle purchase. These slides outline employee costs, insurances, equipment and supplies equipment.

Please note: these figures are specified in detail and itemized in the proposal packet.

Committee Member Roger Gibson spoke to the group indicating the Township would receive State of Michigan pricing on the vehicle. Its anticipated life span is five years.

Ms. Street noted the Police Committee has met with numerous individuals including Grand Traverse County Prosecutor Ms. Noel Moeggenberg, the Grand Traverse County Sheriff, Insurance Agent Mr. Paul Olson, a Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS) representative, and Gerrish Township Chief of Police Mr. Brian Hill. They have interviewed and spoken with Chief Hill numerous times to explore challenges, procedures, and the success of a Township based Police Department.

Mr. Paul Olson has pulled the records of 1,300 municipalities in the Michigan Township Participating Plan to review the number of suits filed and paid out in the past 25 years. There are seven listed on the Public Risk Claim Service Report slide. Note, the one very large claim was regarding a civil rights claim and jail facility.

A "Pros and Cons" list was presented based on Michigan Township Association (MTA) feedback and Fife Lake Township online survey results. This slide presents several schools of thought on both sides of the issue.

#### Timeline:

Historical data regarding Police Committee efforts include initial discussions in November, 2021, formation of the Township approved Police Committee in February, 2022, a social media Public Survey in March, 2022, a Town Hall Meeting in September, 2022, and today's Public Hearing, October, 20, 2022.

The Committee hopes to have a decision at the next Fife Lake Township Board Meeting of October 27, 2022. If it passes, they would like to interview and hire an FLT Police Officer December, 2022, with a start-up of the Police Department January, 2023.

Mr. Gibson reiterated a great deal of research, information gathering and documentation has taken place to date. He and Deputy Supervisor had an extensive meeting with the Gerrish Township Police Chief in Roscommon. He has been with the Department for 40 years, 25 of them as Chief. He has been a great resource to the Police Committee. He stated interagency work will be integral to providing additional police response. Mr. Gibson stated they will have Mutual Aid agreements.

The Committee has been in communication with the State of Michigan regarding the departments to work with and documentation that will be required.

Supervisor Street stated an electronic copy of this presentation is available upon request.

Supervisor Street announced the Board would move into the Special Hearing section of the Special Meeting (7:04 p.m.)

**SPECIAL HEARING FOR PUBLIC INPUT CONCERNING A FIFE LAKE TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Ms. Mary Ellen Dilley, 8611 East Sparling Road, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Ms. Dilley referenced the budget for office supplies is \$100 more than the bullets expense. She thinks that's a good thing.

Mr. Shane Lewis: (2<sup>nd</sup> comment)

Mr. Lewis referenced the 7-month circle graph showing 133 calls. Divided by seven, that equates to only 19 calls per month. He reiterated his previous comment of 32, 32 and 37 calls for service in June, July and August, stating the Township is getting more service now than when they had a dedicated CPO.

He asked at a different meeting about an outside feasibility study. He stated the phrases "we think," "did our best guess," "try to be on the high side," and "guesstimate" are concerning as well as the mention of the cannabis monies. This would take funds away from other things we do. He stated the estimated \$83/week in fuel seems very low.

The Michigan Municipal League Handbook questions if there is a rule of thumb for fund balance amount. It stated you should have 5-10% over and above available. He does not see that built into this budget.

Ms. Debra Newell, 8927 Wil-Pet Drive, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Regarding a school officer liaison, we already pay for this through our general tax. The Superintendent is supposed to work with the County to make sure that Liaison is there. For the high school, you already have Kalkaska County, who comes in there. One parent on Ms. Newell's post to the community verified the Officer does come into the school (did not specify which school).

On the Committee's projections on Hours Spent for our Officer versus the County, they did not show what the County was providing. If we go the route of Township Police, only on an emergency basis will we get support from the County. She reiterated the serious accident on U.S. 131 where there was a 7-minute response time, with no Community Police Officer here.

She also stated she sees in the presentation the Committee got data from other counties, but did not see anything about data and communication with our own county, Grand Traverse County.

The Special Hearing portion of the Special Meeting closed and the Board returned to the Open Session of the Special Meeting (7:20) p.m.

**BOARD DISCUSSION:**

Supervisor Street stated that the Grand Traverse County Sheriff Department was at some of the Police Committee meetings. Therefore, they did have input from the County.

Sometimes in Grand Traverse County, there are two or three officers on duty; the Sergeant remains in the building. There are times with limited personnel. She, too, is concerned with the elementary school. If the Township has its own Officer, we are assured of a police response at the elementary school.

Trustee Gibson referenced the seven-minute response time to the U.S. 131 accident. While that response is very commendable, it is an exception. She stated in her 15-year professional experience with Fire and Ambulance, the response time from an officer in the County generally takes a considerable amount of time.

Mr. Roger Gibson noted that in his lengthy time with the Fire Service, the Department would typically be on scene for quite some time, and he was often asked by people involved in accidents if law enforcement was coming.

Clerk Gifford inquired if there was anyone here from the County to confirm the information in the presentation. She noted much of the data in the presentation is from 2015, 2016. A lot has changed since then. The \$116k for one uniformed officer and vehicle does not seem feasible. It is true we had our own Police Department in the past, but we switched back to a CPO through the County Sheriff for a reason. The same can be said with EMS. We are in the middle of the State Police posts in Kalkaska and Cadillac. She noted that 2019 was the last time a civil suit was registered; people are much more sensitive today. She asked who would be interviewing and hiring the Officer candidates, stating transparency is very important and goes a long way.

Ms. Street replied the Police Committee would be exploring who would be conducting the Officer search and interviews. This selection would go through the Township Board. Regarding concerns about older data; she believes there is data up to 2022 included; not solely older information.

Trustee Dawn Zimmerman spoke, stating she received this packet of information a week ago and that it had been the first piece of information she has been given. She is concerned that in a Township of 1,400 residents, there were only 30 survey responses. She also believed the questions were confusing in a way and that she garnered more insight from the comments, noting they were not negative toward the Grand Traverse County Sheriff Department. As a member of the community and a Township Board Member, she doesn't recall any complaints of the CPO through the County Sheriff.

She did thank the Committee for their efforts putting this together.

In looking at the cost sheet, she cannot tell exactly what the equipment/other expenses are. She wonders why there is such a fluctuation in the numbers. Mr. Berthiaume indicated the data was pulled from QuickBooks history.

Regarding the Expense Sheet, she stated the millage that was just passed is only through 2025. Therefore, we cannot project out past that time period in this budget as we cannot be assured of monies beyond 2025. Ms. Street stated when a millage runs out, most municipalities switch to a Special Assessment District where each resident would pay the same amount to fund the police.

Ms. Zimmerman believes the liability projections are very much on the low end across the board. Also, with inflation at a current rate of 8.3% there is no way these numbers can be accurate. These numbers do not work for her at all. Liability is a very big deal, particularly in today's age and climate, particularly with social media.

In the interview comments with Chief Brian Hill of Gerrish Township, he was asked how they are doing with recruiting and retention. His reply was "Tough." If Grand Traverse County is also having trouble getting us a CPO, how does the FLT Police Committee believe they are going to be able to do better than the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Berthiaume responded that not every police officer wants to work in a larger department. They may also be able to attract a retiree. He stated the liability figures were ones they gathered from an insurance source; they did not make them up themselves.

Ms. Zimmerman asked if anyone has done any recruiting to know of potential interest in such a position. He believes there may be people out there who would be interested in a small community and that it may be a challenge.

Ms. Zimmerman looked at the reported figures for other Townships and the rates they are paying; again believing that the Township figures are low. These were much larger communities with additional staff. She reiterated to the public the Township will not have an Officer 24/7. They will be 40 hours/week. We will still depend on mutual aid services and the County Sheriff. When she read the job description in the packet, she sees a description for a public relations person, not a law enforcement person. She believes there is too much fluff in it. She asked why Springfield Township was listed in the documents.

She inquired about the excess funds we have in the police account and whether we can legally keep that balance. Ms. Street indicated that we are allowed to because we don't entirely know what we need to provide to citizens. Ms. Zimmerman referenced a presence in the Community, otherwise there would be mutual aid with Grand Traverse County. In working 40 hours/week, we will still have a great deal of time without an Officer, which will require mutual aid. There are many scenarios affecting his time on duty.

She inquired about the coverage the current millage would provide. Ms. Zimmerman looked at the contract from 2015 that was in the packet. Why has there been no renewal since then? Do we just keep getting an invoice with increases each year? She discussed some of the Pro and Con items from the presentation. She has concerns about paying for an Officer who may be limited in his duties whereas we would still be reliant on the County for many needs. She reiterated she does not believe the proposed budget is feasible for Fife Lake Township.

In closing, she strongly believes the Township needs to get the word out to the 1,400+ residents much better. Thirty survey responses and 20 guests at a Town Hall meeting are not acceptable. She feels like the process is being rushed. She suggested including a survey in the tax bill to every taxpayer. We need to make a more concerted effort to reach every citizen in the Township and get a response.

She relayed an experience from the spring MTA conference. A police officer was presenting at a non-related class, and a participant asked what he thought about a township starting up their own police department. He replied "liability is a big issue, lots of money for training, car, computers, audits, etc." He highly recommended a non-biased consultant be hired to conduct a feasibility study. She suggested this matter be tabled until more information can be compiled.

Treasurer Sorrow stated the next tax bill goes out the second week of November.

Several Board Members discussed the methods and places for promoting citizen input, content in the employment application, the survey process, etc.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER INPUT:**

Village President Dave McGough appreciated Ms. Zimmerman's input; her comments have brought many things to light and given him much to think about.

Ms. Zimmerman calculated it would take 5.3 officers to provide 24/7 coverage.

Ms. Sorrow appreciates the work of the Committee and agrees with the discussion about the survey.

Deputy Clerk Hempsted stated a lot of time was put into this, but he is certainly open to an outside consultant. He is disappointed with tonight's Special Hearing turnout as well as the attendance at the Town Hall meeting. He felt Ms. Zimmerman's comments were great. He appreciated members of the public attendance tonight.

Deputy Supervisor Berthiaume stated the Committee has been meeting for quite some time. They are not rushing, but at some point, they wanted to give the public the information available to date and get input so this proposal could move forward.

There was Board concern that the Committee wanted action in a week at the next meeting.

Mr. Gibson appreciates the people being here tonight. However, it is disappointing to put a lot into something and have only 12 people show up. He agrees the response is low, given the 1,400 residents in the community.

In responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Street noted that some funds from the marihuana licensing fees can be put toward deputy wages. The Township must prove how those funds are being used. In her communication with the Sheriff's Department, there is a chance a Deputy may be available in January, but that is unknown.

**CITIZEN COMMENT:**

Mr. Shane Lewis, third comment:

Mr. Lewis stated the Committee says they are not rushing but they are asking for action and a vote in another week. That feels rushed. He didn't understand the elementary school comment. He believes Ms. Zimmerman made a great point on the survey; the questions were confusing and any response elicited a bias. The Millage states "Police and Emergency response." He is unsure what that means. It looks like the entire millage is being used for Police. What portion is set aside for Emergency response?

He spoke with the Sheriff's Department. They are hiring, certifying, and officers are leaving the area. What are the chances that could happen here? He agrees a feasibility study should be done. Otherwise, the Township could be putting us in a really bad spot.

Ms. Debra Newell, second comment:

Ms. Newell stated the earlier reference about going beyond the millage and looking at a Special Assessment District was a shocker. She believes the Committee hasn't done the budget well enough. The Deputy would only be here for 40 hours. This will not change current police response. Her own cursory cost projections at a prior meeting were \$145k; the Committee exceeded her figures.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Ms. Gifford made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Street seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sorrow-Y, Zimmerman-Y, Gibson-Y, Gifford-Y, Street-Y. 5-Yes, 0-No. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

**Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary**