

Negaunee Township Regular Board Meeting – February 11, 2021

***** Meeting Held Via Zoom *****

Call to Order

Gary Wommer, Township Supervisor, (in attendance at the Negaunee Township Hall office) called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Other Board members present via Zoom through Roll Call included Kathy Carlson (home), Thyra Karlstrom (home), Patrick Moyle (home) and Rachel Sertich (home).

Also in Attendance: Nick Leach, Township Manager; Jeff Kontio, Township Fire Chief; Andy Hall, Water Supervisor; Al Reynolds, Chairperson of the Planning Commission and Russ Williams, Chairperson of the Community Center Board.

Absent

None

Consent Agenda

Upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Thyra Karlstrom, the Consent Agenda was approved.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried.

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on January 14, 2021.

- Clerks Bills and Claims:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Item Numbers</u>
Brownfield	1026
GF Pooled Checks	3805-3873
Direct Deposit Payroll	DD537-DD572
• EFT Items	EFT 165, 170-171, 173-176
• Electronic (E)	263-271, 273-274, 281
Tax Collection	2397-2410
Trust & Agency	2421-2424
Water Checks	8601-8610
• Electronic (E)	74-78
TOTAL:	<u>\$ 887,274.77</u>

Regular Agenda

Upon motion of Kathy Carlson, seconded by Rachel Sertich, the Regular Agenda as presented was approved.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried.

Public Comment

None

Old Business

COVID-19 Update

1. The MTA has provided information noting all meetings can be held virtually through 3/29/21.

CCB / Recreation Recording Secretary Board members were updated on the status of someone to serve as Recording Secretary for the CCB Board and the Recreation Committee. Typically the

meetings are held the same evening, and there is one individual on each Board / Committee who does not serve on the other. At the present time Emily Pontius (Recreation Committee) will serve as Recording Secretary for the CCB, while Russ Williams (Chairperson – CCB Board) will serve as Recording Secretary for the Recreation Committee.

Records Storage & Maintenance Policy Upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Thyra Karlstrom, the Records Storage & Maintenance Policy was adopted effective immediately.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

MERS HCSP Board members discussed the MERS Health Care Savings Plan, and which group of employees would be deemed participants. In addition, a funding rate for employees (and the Township if applicable) needs to be determined. Upon motion of Rachel Sertich, seconded by Kathy Carlson, all full-time employees will be deemed participants in Negaunee Township’s MERS Health Care Savings Plan, and should the Township decide to contribute to the Plan the employees may be broken into two groups – full-time employees hired on or before 3/31/21 and full-time employees hired 4/1/21 and later – with contribution determinations to be reviewed during annual budget preparation to be brought before the Board at the March, 2021 meeting.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

New Business

Annual Salary Schedule Discussion was held regarding annual Board salaries. As in previous years and due to the continued strain on Township revenues, Board members once again felt it prudent to maintain current salary levels for the upcoming fiscal year. Upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Rachel Sertich, the following Resolution was adopted:

Whereas it is the obligation of the Township Board to establish a suitable salary schedule for its officials for presentation at an annual budget hearing, the Negaunee Township Board submits the following schedule for the fiscal year commencing April 1, 2020 and ending March 31, 2022: Supervisor \$20,000 per year, Clerk \$19,000 per year, Treasurer \$19,000 per year, and Trustee \$7,500 per year.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Annual Budget Hearing & Annual Meeting Discussion was held regarding the establishing the date and time for the Township’s Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting. Upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Kathy Carlson, the following Resolution was adopted:

Whereas, it is in the best interest of the Township of Negaunee to hold a Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting in 2021, the Negaunee Township Board resolves that such a Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting will be held. That Budget Hearing is scheduled to be held on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom) to be followed immediately by the Annual Meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be a review of various budgets, empowering the Township Board to buy and sell property, designation of a Township attorney, and such other business traditionally constituting an agenda for such annual budget hearing.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Poverty Exemption Appeals Upon motion of Kathy Carlson, seconded by Rachel Sertich, the following Resolution was adopted:

TOWNSHIP OF NEGAUNEE, MICHIGAN
BOARD RESOLUTION REGARDING POVERTY EXEMPTION APPEALS

WHEREAS, P.A. 390 of 1994, which amended Section 7u of Act 206 of the Public Acts of 1893, as amended by Act 313 of the Public Acts of 1993, being Section 211.7u of the Michigan Compiled Laws, requires the governing body of the assessing unit to determine and make available to the public the policy and guidelines for the granting of poverty exemptions under MCL 211.70;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that to be eligible for a poverty exemption pursuant to MCL 211.7u in the Township of Negaunee, Michigan, a person must be the owner and must occupy the property as a homestead, as defined, for which the exemption is requested; file a completed and notarized application; file copies of federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the principal residence, including property tax credit forms and/or Statement of benefits Paid from Michigan Department of Social Services or Social Security Administration; meet local (General Law Township of Negaunee) poverty income standards;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the applicant must have an annual adjusted income less than less than the annually published Federal Poverty Income Guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the applicant must have an annual taxable and/or nontaxable dividend income less than \$3,000;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the applicant's asset level, excluding the homestead, may not exceed \$50,000;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the applicant may not have ownership interest in any real estate other than the homestead;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a poverty exemption may be granted for only one year (1 year) at a time;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that for the 2021 tax year the Township of Negaunee, Michigan, Board of Review will begin its proceeding on Wednesday, March 10, 2021:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Review shall request identification of the applicant and/or proof of ownership of the homestead under consideration for poverty exemption request;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the completed poverty exemption application must be filed after January 1, but before the day prior to the last day of the Board of Review in the year for which exemption is sought;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Review shall administer an oath wherein the applicant testifies as to the accuracy of the information provided;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Review may deviate from the established policy and guidelines only for substantial and compelling reasons. The applicant will be notified, in writing, the reasons for deviating from the policy and guidelines for poverty exemption;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that to conform to the provisions of P.A. 390 of 1994, this resolution is hereby given immediate effect.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Poverty Exemption Standards Upon motion of Rachel Sertich, seconded by Kathy Carlson, the following Resolution was adopted:

**TOWNSHIP OF NEGAUNEE, MICHIGAN
BOARD RESOLUTION ADOPTING POVERTY EXEMPTION STANDARDS**

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is within the purview of the township board; and

WHEREAS, the homestead of persons who, in the judgment of the supervisor and board of review, by reason of poverty, are unable to contribute to the public charges is eligible for exemption in whole or part from taxation under Public Act 390, 1994(MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390, 1994 Negaunee Township, Marquette County adopts the following guidelines for the supervisor and board of review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household, including any property tax credit returns, filed in the current or immediately preceding year;

To be eligible, a person shall do all the following on an annual basis:

- 1) Be an owner of and occupy as a homestead the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) File a claim with the supervisor or board of review, accompanied by federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the homestead, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year.
- 3) Produce a valid drivers' license or other form of identification if requested.
- 4) Produce a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested if requested.
- 5) Meet the federal poverty income standards as defined and determined annually by the United States Office of Management and Budget.
- 6) The application for an exemption shall be filed after January 1, but before the day prior to the last day of board of review.
- 7) Any additional eligibility requirements as determined by the township board;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption, unless the Board of Review determines there are substantial and compelling reasons why there should be a deviation from the policy and federal guidelines and these are communicated in writing to the claimant.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Board of Review Dates Upon motion of Thyra Karlstrom, seconded by Patrick Moyle, the following Resolution was adopted:

RESOLUTION FOR BOARD OF REVIEW DATES

WHEREAS the General Property Tax Act, Act 206 of 1893 as amended, allows alternative dates for the Board of Review meeting; and

WHEREAS the Negaunee Township Board of Review wishes to meet on an alternative date in March;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED, Negaunee Township sets the Board of Review alternative starting dates as follows:

2021 Dates / Times

Organizational Meeting 3/2/2021 – 3:00 pm
Board of Review 3/10/2021 – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Board of Review 3/11/2021 – 3 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Resolution to Allow Board of Review Protests in Writing Upon motion of Kathy Carlson, seconded by Rachel Sertich, the following Resolution was adopted:

RESOLUTION TO ALLOW NEGAUNEE TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS TO PROTEST TO BOARD OF REVIEW IN WRITING

WHEREAS, the General Property Tax Act, MCL 211.30(4) states that, when appealing to the Board of Review, “a nonresident taxpayer may file his or her appearance, protest, and papers in support of the protest by letter, and his or her personal appearance is not required”; and

WHEREAS, MCL 211.30(8) states that “The governing body of the township or city may authorize, by adoption of an ordinance or resolution, a resident taxpayer to file his or her protest before the board of review by letter without a personal appearance by the taxpayer or his or her agent. If that ordinance or resolution is adopted, the township or city shall include a statement notifying taxpayers of this option in each assessment notice under section 24c and on each notice or publication of the meeting of the board of review”; and

WHEREAS, under the Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.263a, a meeting of a public body may be held electronically through March 30, 2021, and “a public body may use technology to facilitate typed public comments during the meeting submitted by members of the public participating in the meeting that may be read to or shared with members of the public body and other participants to satisfy the requirement under this subsection that members of the public be heard by others during the electronic meeting and the Requirement under section 3(5) that members of the public be permitted to address the electronic meeting”;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, in order to ease the burden on taxpayers, the assessor and the Board of Review, and to ensure that all taxpayers have an equal opportunity to be heard by the Board of Review, the Negaunee Township Board hereby resolves, according to provisions of MCL 211.30(8) of the

General Property Tax Act, that the Board of Review shall receive letters of protest regarding assessments from resident taxpayers from the first Tuesday in March until it adjourns from the public hearings for which it meets to hear such protests. Letters from both residents and nonresidents may include those submitted by handwriting, typewriting, fax, email, text, and in a chat or Q&A option provided by the Board of Review in an electronic meeting service

All notices of assessment change and all advertisements of board of review meetings must include a statement that the resident taxpayers may protest by letter to the Board.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

MERS Defined Benefit – Monthly Employer Contribution The Township Clerk noted with the closure of the Township’s Defined Benefit Plan effective 2/1/2020 the new Employer rate will change from 10% of employee wages to a flat fee of \$545 per month (increasing to \$610 per month effective 4/1/21). The Township is able submit additional Employer voluntary contributions and could use this method to maintain the 10% level. Upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Kathy Carlson, the Clerk was authorized to maintain an overall 10% contribution level for the MERS Defined Benefit Plan (Monthly Flat Rate + Additional Voluntary Contribution = 10% of Wages of Defined Benefit employees).

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Authorized Signers for MERS Contracts & Service Credit Purchase Approvals Upon motion of Rachel Sertich, seconded by Kathy Carlson, the following Resolution was adopted:

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING AUTHORIZED SIGNATORIES FOR MERS
CONTRACTS AND SERVICE CREDIT PURCHASE APPROVALS**

This Resolution is entered into under the provisions of 1996 PA 220 and the Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan ("MERS") Plan Document, as each may be amended.

This resolution is being adopted by the governing body of the participating entity and applies to all reporting units of said participating entity.

WHEREAS, **Negaunee Township** ("Employer") is a participating municipality with the Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan ("MERS") and has adopted one or more retirement, insurance, investment or other post-employment benefit products administered by MERS;

WHEREAS, MERS requires signatures of an authorized representative of the Employer to execute contracts with MERS, the entry of which is authorized by the governing body and permitted under the applicable MERS Plan Document(s);

WHEREAS, the Employer wishes to designate certain job position(s), the holder(s) of which may sign MERS' contracts relating to the adoption, amendment and termination of MERS' products, and defined benefit service credit purchase approvals on behalf of Employer to implement decisions and actions of the governing body;

WHEREAS, this Resolution is not intended to apply to MERS forms or any other MERS document except as specifically mentioned herein, Therefore, the Governing Body resolves:

The holders of the following job position(s) are hereby *Authorized Officials* that can sign: (1) MERS Adoption Agreements, Resolutions, Participation Agreements, Administrative Services Agreements, Withdrawal Agreements and any other contracts between MERS and the Employer with respect to Employer's participation in any MERS-administered product and any amendments and addendums thereto, and (2) MERS Defined Benefit service credit purchase approvals:

1. Township Clerk

Optional additional job positions:

2. Township Treasurer
3. Township Manager

This Resolution may be revoked in writing or amended by the Governing Body at any time, provided that it will not be effective until such writing or amended Resolution is received by MERS. The Governing Body agrees that MERS may rely upon this Resolution as conferring signing authority upon the holders of the above job position(s) to bind Employer with respect to MERS.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Reports

CCB Board Russ Williams, Chairperson of the Community Center Board, provided an update on the meetings held on February 1, 2021. He noted: 1) there was an issue with the circulating pump in the Township Hall due to the cold temperatures, with the Ice Rink attendants checking it every day, 2) the bid from Carpet One for the new gym floor was higher than anticipated and the Board may look into brushed concrete similar to the Fire Hall floor, 3) the Board continues to work with UPEA to provide designs to update the bathrooms in the Township Hall, 4) Russ Williams, Steve Olsen and Jason Makinen will be working on the annual budget, and 5) due to COVID their will be no hall rentals thru 6/1/2021. along with roof replacement, 2) Hall Rentals continue to be on hold for 2021 due to COVID, 3) ongoing discussion of a possible new storage building, and 4) status of work to repair the gym floor tile.

Recreation Committee Board members reviewed the minutes of the Recreation Committee meetings held on January 25th and February 1st, 2021.

Fire Department Report The February 11, 2021 Fire Report was reviewed by Fire Chief Jeff Kontio who was in attendance via Zoom. Highlights included 1) 10 calls for the month of January, 2021 (10 year-to-date), 2) training was sprinklers and sprinkler systems, 3) in-person meetings and training sessions have resumed, 4) the AED has been mounted in the hallway inside the front doors of the Township Hall.

Water Report The Water Report for January, 2021 was reviewed by Water Department Supervisor Andy Hall via Zoom. Highlights included: 1) 4 Miss Digs for the month, 2) water meters have been repaired, replaced and installed as needed, 3) the Township's Cross Connection Reports had been completed and field, along with the 2020 Annual Pumpage Report, 4) the approved Consumer Confidence Report had been sent out to water customers, and 5) due to 70" frost depth (Goose Lake location), let runs have begun at those locations which tend to freeze up first.

Clerk Report The Clerk noted: 1) final setup of the Defined Contribution Plan had been completed with all employee wage information having been uploaded to the MERS, portal 2) 2020 W2's and W3 had been filed, along with annual 1099's, and 3) all quarter end tax and benefit filings had been completed in January, 2021.

Township Manager Report Nick Leach provided the Township Manager update. Highlights included: 1) Planning Commission will be reviewing a Conditional Use Application for a Bed and Breakfast establishment at 110 CR 510, 2) looking to start the Master Plan process for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 3) starting work on DNR Trust Fund Grant for funding of the playground expansion project, and 4) with nearly 2 years as Township Manager he would like to work with the Board to schedule an evaluation.

Assessor's Report Cameron Fuess, Assessor, reviewed his report for February, 2020. He noted January is the busiest month for Assessors with various work being finalized in the lead up to the March Board of Review.

Treasurer's Report The Board reviewed Treasurer, Kathy Carlson's written report for January, 2021, including: 1) Ongoing work on the Policy & Procedure Manual, 2) Continuous collection and disbursement of 2020 Summer Taxes and 2019 Delinquent Personal Property, 3) work on delinquent garbage and tipping fees – with some delinquencies going to collection, 4) review billing question on MCRC bill for Hoist Road, and 5) attendance at various meetings (Township & MTA) via Zoom. In addition, Township bank account balances as of 1/31/21 total \$4,066,687.75. She also noted Holiday gas credit cards will be moving to the Circle K platform, which may allow for use at additional stations.

Supervisor's Report Gary Wommer, Supervisor, provided his monthly update. He noted: 1) the MTA online educational system is receiving a great deal of use, 2) he had contact the MCRC regarding possible Kivela Road traffic study, 3) ice rink construction resulted in a few issues due to COVID, weather and new employees – but the Township will be better prepared for next winter, and 4) the new glass trailer for recycling has been very successful.

Road Projects The Supervisor noted he is still waiting for information from the MCRC for possible work on Grimes Road.

Advisory Trail Committee The Township Manager noted the Iron Ore Heritage Trail is looking to purchase 200 acres near the trail (40 acres in Negaunee Township south of US 41 near Smith Paving). They wanted to Township to be aware of this in case the purchase is completed and the property is removed from the tax roll.

Personnel Committee Rachel Sertich, Chairperson, noted currently the Township’s health insurance coverage has a December 1st annual renewal date. While generally this does not create an issue, in 2020 because the Township had to change it’s BCBS Plan with an increased deductible (former Plan was no longer supported by the insurance carrier), this meant Township employees could (and did) run into a situation where they needed to pay an additional deductible expense. VAST noted with the 2021 renewal the Township could switch the renewal date to coincide with the calendar year. Upon motion of Rachel Sertich, seconded by Kathy Carlson, approval was given for Negaunee Township to change its next BCBS Health Insurance renewal date from 12/1/2021 to 1/1/2022.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Emergency Management Report Books are up to date and COVID precautions continue.

Correspondence

- None

Public Comment

- None

Informational Items

- Resolution to Allow Extension of Poverty Exemptions

Board Member / Township Manager Comments

- Kathy Carlson – Would like to see additional information on the possible land purchase by the Iron Ore Heritage Trail Authority put on the Agenda for the March, 2021 meeting.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled Township Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at the Negaunee Township Hall beginning at 6 p.m. with the Budget Hearing followed by the Annual meeting followed by the Regular Board Meeting

Adjournment

With no further business appearing and upon motion of Patrick Moyle, seconded by Thyra Karlstrom, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Aye: Carlson, Karlstrom, Moyle, Sertich and Wommer
Nay: None
Motion Carried

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Sertich
Negaunee Township Clerk