

Huntington Township Regular Meeting  
February 14, 2023

President Gary Hopkins called the February 14, 2023, meeting to order at 5:35 P.M. at the Fire House.

|            |                |         |
|------------|----------------|---------|
| Roll Call: | Gary Hopkins   | Present |
|            | John Cottrill  | Present |
|            | Larry Kellough | Absent  |

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, second by John Cottrill to approve the January 2023 Reorganization and Regular meeting minutes.

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| Vote: | John Cottrill | Yes |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins to approve payment of January 2023 bills.

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| Vote: | John Cottrill | Present |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Present |

**GUEST:** President Hopkins asked Brett Clark if he wished to address the Board, but he stated that he would wait for the Twin Township discussion.

**GUEST:** TJ Oyer, Fire Chief, approached the Board with multiple items to discuss.

1) He asked for approval of ten (10) purchase requisitions, as follows:

|                            |            |   |
|----------------------------|------------|---|
| #1 Pike County FF Assoc    | \$50       | Firefighter Association Dues                    |
| #2 Breathing Air           | \$1112.71  | Air quality tests, SCBA Prev Maintenance        |
| #3 O'Reilly Auto Parts     | \$29.87    |   |
| #4 O'Reilly Auto Parts     | \$58.22    |   |
| #5 Sugarloaf Power Eq      | \$125.40   | 920 generator repair                            |
| #6 Combs Heating & Cooling | \$127.50   |   |
| #7 Ohio Fire Marshal       | \$150      | Volunteer FF Fund                               |
| #8 Ohio Health             | \$2,160    | Medical Direction in 2023                       |
| #9 VCNB Rural King         | \$26.68904 | Repair  |
| #10 Aladtec                | \$4065.00  | Scheduling and time clock subscription for 2023 |

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, seconded by John Cottrill, to approve the ten (10) purchase requisitions as requested by Chief Oyer.

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| Vote: | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |
|       | John Cottrill | Yes |

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- 2) Oyer presented the resignation of Tyler Wessel as the Assistant Chief for the department the past 6 months effective 2/14/2023. He felt that he was too busy to have the extra time to give the position. He will stay on as a part-time employee. Oyer requested that no one be appointed to the position at this time.

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins to accept Tyler Wessel's resignation from the Assistant Chief's position, and to leave it vacant at this time.

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| Vote: | John Cottrill | Yes |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |

- 3) Oyer informed the Board that we were not awarded the 2022 VFA grant this year through ODNR.

- 4) Striker completed the post 2021 accident lift cot inspection was completed. It passed and is in service. An invoice should arrive soon.

- 5) Oyer has started the inventory as requested by FO Snyder, but he shared that he is completely starting over, and is creating it in excel.

- 6) An application for Jeffrey Spires was presented to the Board by Oyer for a part-time paid crew member at \$13.67 an hour. He is a FF2/Paramedic.

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, seconded by John Cottrill, to hire J Spires to the paid part-time crew at \$13.76/hour.

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| Vote: | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |
|       | John Cottrill | Yes |

- 7) Oyer asked the Board to approve bringing on 3 people as volunteers: Adam Ball; Melissa Weaver; and Brooklyn Ball. Adam and Melissa had previously served our township as volunteers in the past. A resident at the meeting asked if those three people would be committed. Oyer feels they would be committed.

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, seconded by John Cottrill, to approve the applications of Adam, Melissa, and Brooklyn to the volunteer crew at HTFD.

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| Vote: | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |
|       | John Cottrill | Yes |

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- 8) The Board and Oyer continued the discussion from last month regarding the best way to use the 1 mill levy proceeds approved by the voters this past November. Under discussion has been adding back the 3<sup>rd</sup> position from 7:00AM to 7:00 PM versus giving \$3/hour pay increases to the current employees. Chief Oyer advocated for the return of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person because that was the specific promise made to our voters. Then, based upon how we are doing, we could reevaluate the possibility of a pay increase in August. Trustee Cottrill feels that is too long to wait, and reconsideration should be given in June for a pay increase.

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins to add back the third person for the first 12 hours, 7 days a week, effective March 1<sup>st</sup>, or when the advance on the 1<sup>st</sup> half real estate taxes has been received, and to not give a pay increase at this time, but to reevaluate our finances at the June 2023 meeting to see if we could give pay increase.

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| Vote: | John Cottrill | Yes |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |

**FO Snyder** then addressed the Board about several matters, as follows.

- 1) The budget commission /county auditor returned our 2023 amended certificate of estimated resources with considerably higher property tax receipts than previously approved. Snyder stated that this increase was due to the triennium revaluation of property in the county. Residents are seeing higher values and therefore higher taxes. FF Cuckler asked if we could spend this money, to which Snyder replied yes.

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| General Fund | \$24,433 |
| Road Fund    | \$48,867 |
| Fire Fund    | \$7,288  |

- 2) Snyder shared the 2022 ODOT Township Highway System Mileage Certificate. For the first time in recent memory it has changed from 47.105 miles to 46.614 miles. A reduction of .491 miles.
- 3) Snyder asked if we were ready to start the 2023 mowing bid process for our cemeteries and the fire station. Trustee Cottrill will be in charge of advertising and securing bids. No changes were made to the bid specifications. Bids are due Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> to be opened at the meeting Tuesday, April 11, 2023.
- 4) FO Snyder presented the need to advance funds immediately to the Fire Fund from the General Fund in order to meet the most recent payroll expense. She recommended an additional advance of \$2,700 that would be repaid once our advance on real estate tax revenues is received.

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**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, second by John Cottrill, to advance \$2,700 from the general fund to the fire fund.

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| Vote: | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |
|       | John Cottrill | Yes |

**Other Business:**

**Trustee Cottrill** discussed the David Mead Massie Grant that we were awarded in 2022 for the cemetery. The concrete work fell through; therefore, the money will be used for additional fencing from Endless Design for two more 6' of fence. We will install the fencing ourselves. In addition, Cottrill asked for approval to reapply for the 2023 grant of \$4100 for the cemetery. Snyder will finish the financial data requested on the application, and then Cottrill will submit it.

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins, to submit for a \$4,100 grant from David Mead Massie for the cemetery on Liberty Hill Road. .

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| Vote: | John Cottrill | Yes |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |

**At this point in the meeting, the discussion turned to the agreement in front of the board to provide EMS services for Twin Township from 3.1.2023 through 2.29.2024 in a specified area for reimbursement of \$350 for calls that require transport, or \$250 for calls where transport is not required.**

Trustee Hopkins began by stating that under the new agreement, Huntington Township would be responsible for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Twin Township, that it would not be mutual aid, and it would be shared by our Township, Scioto Township, and Paxton Township (Bainbridge)

Oyer gave some backstory. He shared that Twin Twp disbanded their EMS service effective 2.1.2023. It was noted that while a township is required to provide firefighting services, they are not required to offer EMS services. He said that we are asking Twin to pay \$10,000 up front, and we would apply our runs against that balance until it was gone, then ask for another \$10,000.

Resident Rodney Parker asked how many times we were out with Twin when we were needed in our own township. Oyer said he does not have that figure, but that for the past 9 months we have provided this service to Twin under agreement.

Resident Brett Clark said that means for 9 months we have been left uncovered in our township while our squad has been in Twin.

Hopkins continued to explain that our township dropped out of the countywide mutual aid contract, and while that action was not popular, it was the right one for us. We then offered our own agreements to surrounding townships. Those agreements were prepared by the RC Prosecutor Jeff Marks. He shared that some townships said they wouldn't help us if we don't help them.

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FO Snyder communicated that we are not doing anything too different from what we have already done in the past year. She said that we have an existing agreement to provide mutual aid to Twin Twp that expires 2.28.2023, that we receive \$350 per transport and \$250 per non-transport call. She said that we have averaged \$2,000 a month during the time of that agreement.

Resident Charlie Watkins asked how often we are out of our township on mutual aid calls and of that amount, how many were to Twin. Oyer shared that in January we were out 30 for mutual aid, and that Twin was for 5 of those.

Resident Brett Clark stated that mutual aid is good, but how do we keep our crew available at all times for our residents?

Trustee Cottrill replied that the new 1 mill levy passed in the fall is to add back the 3<sup>rd</sup> person to the first 12 hours of each day, 7 days a week. That position makes mutual aid calls possible, but with that said, he feels that our giving 30 mutual aid calls in a month is too much.

Snyder said that the third shift will take the majority of our 1 mill levy money; it is not adding 1 person, it is adding 4,380 hours in a year plus retirement contributions and Medicare, uniforms, etc.

Resident Mike Sams asked an assortment of questions such as how many squads we run, how a chase vehicle would work, and EMT run totals both fire and ems.

FF Nate Cuckler shared his opinion that we work well with Scioto Township as far as covering each other for mutual aid. We clear calls and head out to assist one another, but that we always give more than we receive.

FF Malone shared a situation about an accident on Potts Hill Road where 4 squads were needed. With both of ours tied up, 1200 covered for us. We share our resources to make it work.

Trustee Cottrill discussed a new fire station that Scioto is planning that will be located around North Fork Village and will help them respond to Twin Twp. He said that Scioto wants to be the 100% provider for Twin, plans to hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> crew, but there is no one to hire. N Cuckler responded that Scioto recently hired 6 people.

Oyer noted that Twin is legally required to provide fire emergency services, and that they have to have 5000 gallons of water. All townships do a good job supporting each other in fire emergencies. He also shared that we do provide mutual aid outside of our county, but it is for Pebble Twp, located in the Buchanan area, and that they do help us back.

Clark “There are lot of scenarios, but the answer I am looking for is if there is enough money from our levies to cover our residents 24/7”.

Oyer: Stated that yes, he had recommended that we add back the 3<sup>rd</sup> position on days as promised in the levy communication to our residents. There is only so much burden we can place on our tax payers with levies, and then we need to find a source of funding outside of taxes. Such as billing for EMS services like we have been for Twin. He would like to see a 3<sup>rd</sup> person added for the second 12, but there is no money for that option.

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Summer Miner, guest, said that the levy on the ballot for Twin is to cover what they will pay other townships to cover their EMS runs. She then introduced herself as the daughter of the woman who died in Twin Twp on Christmas. She asked those in attendance to imagine if someone they love that lives outside Huntington township were to die because no one would respond. She said that her mom lives 8 to 10 minutes from the VA but that ultimately it was the City of Chillicothe that responded. She said that Union could not respond due to their protocols and only had 3 people working, all paid people.

In referencing the new agreement, Oyer said that we would review it every 3 months to make sure it is working. Oyer also shared that he lives in Pike County, and it is scary for him to think that townships will not respond to mutual aid. He told the story of Tristen Carter's grandma.

Watkins said he knows that it is give and take, and everyone has to help. Agreed that Ms. Miner is 100% right. He asked if we have more calls during the day or not. Oyer said that Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday are high call volume days.

Sams asked if we could fund someone at night with the money received from Twin Twp, Snyder said no, that will only bring in about \$24,000. He asked how much it cost to run our squad out on a call. Oyer said around \$125/ hour. Oyer again shared that Scioto will take all of our share of Twin Twp if we decline to sign the agreement, but right now they don't have everything in place that will allow them to do so successfully.

Larry Cuckler stated Scioto promised the world, but cannot fulfill their promises. Yes, they are looking to open that station in the North Fork area, but they do not have a crew there.

Sams asked about private ambulance services, and if they have the ability to cover Twin. The answer was no, they also are experiencing staffing issues. He asked if we could just now and then get someone additional to cover the night shift. Or could we use the \$10,000 upfront payment from Twin to cover a 3<sup>rd</sup> person on the night shift.

Miner asked why we want dual carded people, and not EMT only. The importance of fire service was offered as a reason.

FF Bill Malone brought up the idea of soft vs hard billing. He said that even if it is hard billing, after 3 attempts it is written off and that the Twp does not have anything in place to deal with collections.

N Cuckler said you cannot put a price on a person's life. He discussed his wages, stating that he is not paid much, and would have liked to have had the \$3/hour raise that was discussed but everyone felt like the 3<sup>rd</sup> position was the right way to go. He shared that they are forced to pick up shifts for other fire departments to make more money since they are 24 on, 48 off. He said he was in favor of the agreement with Twin Twp.

Huntington Twp is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populated township, but the least amount of businesses paying taxes.

Oyer explained that the night MS Miner's mom passed away that Huntington Twp had a crew available with a paramedic, but that the severity of the call was not communicated by dispatch. We were in level 3 snow emergency in Ross County.

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Miner said that she could not say that her mom would have lived if someone had responded more rapidly, but that she is attending other township meetings to tell her story.

Oyer said that with cardiac arrest, if you are not there with help in 7 minutes the chance of life goes down.

Clark shared that he had had 3 heart attacks, and he thinks it is more like 6 minutes.

Malone said we rarely refuse to take a call in another township, and that currently we do not charge Scioto or Bainbridge for mutual aid.

Hopkins said that he hated for us to go outside the Twp, and that L Cuckler could verify that, which is why we dropped out of the county-wide agreement.

Resident Jordan Wheeler said the new agreement is not mutual aid, and we should not call it that since Twin cannot provide mutual aid back to our Twp. He asked about the 3<sup>rd</sup> person left at the station, and if that person can respond to another call. Yes, that person could, but we cannot transport with just one person in our squad. We would send #3 which has a Lucas device and call for more help. He asked what the liability might be for us if we are coving in another township. He asked if Twin had run the agreement past the prosecutor. Snyder said that she did not know if they had.

Someone asked about adding a clause that we had the right to refuse the aid if necessary. It was stated that our insurance covers us and our equipment no matter where we are.

3 clauses recommended to add:

- 1) 3-month review
- 2) Right to refuse
- 3) Charge \$100 if rescue vehicle responds and not a squad

Concern was expressed about #3, and about asking for higher reimbursement rates that we may be cut out entirely. The goal should be to break even, not profit.

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins, to table a decision on the agreement until after discussing the agreement with the RC prosecutor Jeff Marks, and to set a special meeting for 6:00PM at the fire house on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. Snyder will place the public notices. The only topic for the meeting is the Twin Twp mutual aid agreement.

|       |               |     |
|-------|---------------|-----|
| Vote: | John Cottrill | Yes |
|       | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |

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General items under discussion:

- January 2023 Run Statistics: 84 calls of which 77 were EMS and we answered all of them. 7 were fire-related. We gave 30 mutual aids and received 5.

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, second by John Cottrill to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 P.M.

|       |               |     |
|-------|---------------|-----|
| Vote: | Gary Hopkins  | Yes |
|       | John Cottrill | Yes |

ATTESTED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fiscal Officer