

HUNTINGTON TOWNSHIP SPECIAL MEETING  
MAY 27, 2022

President Gary Hopkins called the May 27, 2022 special meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. at the Township Garage.

Roll Call:	Gary Hopkins	Present
	Larry Kellough	Present
	John Cottrill	Present

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins to approve the May 24, 2022 special meeting minutes.

Vote:	John Cottrill	Yes
	Gary Hopkins	Yes
	Larry Kellough	Yes

Trustee John Cottrill opened the meeting by reading a statement on behalf of the Board, a copy is attached to these minutes.

32 people were present at the meeting in addition to the Board; 10 from the community and 22 from the Fire Department. A sign up sheet was provided for those who would like to address the Board; each person would be given 2 minutes a speak.

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, second by Larry Kellough to rescind the 40 hour work week schedule approved at the May 24, 2022 special meeting.

Vote:	Gary Hopkins	Yes
	Larry Kellough	Yes
	John Cottrill	Yes

President Hopkins discussed a new schedule under consideration that would leave the full-time schedule at 106 hours regular pay, and 6 hours of OT as it has been since beginning. The changes would be 1) no overtime for the full-time employees and 2) a two person crew, not three. The second person on shift would be from the part-time employee pool. A full-time employee may not fill the part-time shift.

If no one from the part-time crew takes a shift, and the spot is left vacant, then the full-time person on shift will contact someone to help either internally or mutual aid.

It was noted that this is “not just a Huntington Township problem, but all over the nation there is a shortage of EMTs”.

Hopkins noted that he and Trustee Cottrill had “talked over 6 hours to crews at the fire house about a solution that would not break the bank.”

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**Summary of comments from those in attendance and the Board**

Former Chief Larry Cuckler – said that we would be “relying on other townships who cannot staff their own crews”.

Employee Robin Pollock – stated that it takes “7 minutes to get there before someone has brain damage”.

Employee Eric Grimm - discussed that it “takes time to get to the township”.

FO Snyder asked repeatedly for names, and if each person speaking had signed up to address the Board.

Employee Rafe Britton and Employee TJ Oyer – asked if we could discuss it back and forth calmly and rationally without a need to sign the form and speak for two minutes?

Britton stated that it was a money problem for people not on duty, giving the example that part-time people at Green Township earn \$4 more an hour than ours.

FO Snyder stated that Huntington Twp employees are not the lowest paid in Ross County and shared that she had made a public records request of certain fiscal officers in Ross County as to their current wage structure. She had one response so far from Scioto Twp. Scioto pays \$90 for a 6-hour shift which is \$60 from their fire fund and \$30 from ARPA funding. That equates to \$10 hours from the fire fund and \$5 from ARPA for a total of \$15 an hour. She asked the question of those in attendance “When ARPA runs out what then? We are in a wage war with townships around us, and it will have to stop.”

Britton stated that he has worked in Ross County for “30 years, one of first hired with Union and Green” and he also works for “Hamilton Township in Franklin County currently making \$20/hour”. He agreed that other departments are trying to take other people’s employees, stating that he worked “for 4 different stations”. He said that “Our full-time employees want to be here in Huntington Township. If they would quit, we would be hard pressed to replace them”. Trustee Hopkins agreed with that comment.

It was suggested that we needed a committee to see what we can do to solve this problem. It is a people and money problem.

FO Snyder reminded those in attendance that for the full-time crew the township must pay \$.24 of every \$1 for the employer contribution to Ohio Police & Fire retirement fund. She also informed those in attendance that the fire fund only has \$20,450 in it right now. Over the first 10 pays of this year, the average payroll cost is \$13. Second half property taxes will not arrive until late August, which means EMS collections are just about all we have to cover costs of the FD. With Board approval she has transferred money from the General Fund to the Fire Fund, paid the property and liability insurance premium out of the General Fund, and covered more than \$15,000 of Fire Department operation expenses out of the ARPA money this year. She reinforced that the problem is financial. Payroll costs in 2021 totaled just over \$301,000 and after employer taxes and retirement contributions it was \$345,000. She said “I wish we could pay everyone \$20, \$25 an hour, why wouldn’t we? But how can this township pay for that unless we come to the voters and ask for more money through a levy?”. She reinforced that the Board is not mad at anyone, or upset, and that she is “so proud of what we have done here in Huntington Township ... I love seeing our

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squad go out . . . my heart is just like thank you Lord! Thank you for the people who are doing this . . . but it does come down to money.”.

Employee Cassie Noble stated that Green Township has a much better tax base than Huntington Township. She stated that “they have a day crew levy (Cassie) and 60% of their real estate and property taxes comes from business in the township”. It was noted that Huntington Township has no such base, and all taxes are levied upon our residents.

Oyer talked mutual aid with Twin Township, and stated that to this point in the month “we had made 8 runs to Twin worth \$2500”. FO Snyder shared that our first went to Twin for March and April for \$2,850 and payment had been received.

Employee Nate Cuckler stated that “full time employees cannot be paid OT”, and said that the “biggest issue would be night time coverage”. He asked if we could “get one more full time person to help with coverage”.

Snyder reminded him that any full-time employee would received OP&F retirement and the township would be burdened with that expense.

Nate Cuckler stated that firefighters received “OP&F because we will retire after 25 years and not work longer” due to the physical and emotional toll. Snyder stated the she fully believes our full time EMTs deserve those retirement contribution levels.

Cuckler is concerned what happens when the full-time person is the only one on shift and our squad is called out on mutual aid – we would need someone to cover.

Oyer brought up the FD SOP which states that “the full-time guys are mandated to stay if no one shows up; we have to remove that mandate in new way of our schedule”. He also discussed the difference in insurance billings regarding BLS and ALS. “We cannot recoup more than BLS when we have EMT-Bs Advanced ALS rates are for when paramedics are responding.”

Trustee Cottrill acknowledged that “we need to talk to you guys every day. Stop at the firehouse, talk, discuss” He asked if TJ could “step up and work with the Board. Be the captain because you have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Bring us to the table.”

Snyder stated that “our township is not a federal government; we cannot operate in a deficit”

N Cuckler said that they have gone without raises for several years as a concession. Snyder took issue with that, saying “that is not true Nate. Raises between 2-3% have been given to everyone every year. In 2022 the raise was 2%.”

Hopkins again addressed the idea of a committee and asked TJ Oyer “to head up a committee . . . who is billing to serve on committee?” He also said that “ the new full-time crew schedule is not permanent . . . we will talk again after receiving the second half taxes”.

The discussion then turned to tax levies and what the township should do this fall. FO Snyder discussed the 3 levies currently in place for Fire & EMS: a 1.5 mill permanent levy; a 1 mill levy; and a 2 mill levy. She said that “the Board has already approved a resolution requesting the auditor’s certification of replacing the existing 2 mill levy. The certification has been received and

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the next step is for the Board to pass a motion to proceed”. But how shall we proceed? As planned or with a new, fourth levy?

Employee Logan Warren addressed the Board “On the nights where we have only one fi;-time person on shift and another department needs an EMT . . . do we let our person go? Or not?”.

Oyer said it is a “double edged sword with Scioto because they are struggling to fill their shifts currently” and he asked “Could we share resources with Scioto?”.

The discussion returned to the committee, and agreement was reached that it should be comprised of members of the Board, the community, and the fire departments.

Oyer brought up EMS billing, distinguishing between soft billing and hard billing, stating what our historical collections have been.

Snyder corrected his statements sharing that in 2021 we collected a record amount of \$220,784.85 and also gave the current ytd 2022 collections of \$62,409.35 through May 12, 2022.

The motion for a new schedule was again discussed where full time employees would be paid 106 regular hours and 6 OT hours every pay – on 24 and off 48 – and that we needed to rescind the SOP section mandating that they to stay. In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person would be from the part-time crew. Cuckler asked “how will we cover vacation/sick/comp time off?”

Oyer and Cuckler shared that a “blind survey was given to our employees. 14 have sent them back. Some issues with pay, some other small issues – comment that we would get more time from part-timers if we would supplement with ARPA money”.

There was concern about if the Board would indeed pay the next premium pay for 2021 worked hours. Snyder discussed how the premium pay works, and that one person cannot earn more than \$25,000 total in premium pay from ARPA. She also said that she had already calculated the premium pay by employee and provided that list to Chief Cuckler three months ago.

Oyer asked Snyder if she could add a comment on the paystubs stating how much the next premium pay for 2021 hours would be on the next two pays. Snyder said she would see what she could do to make that happen.

Resident Bret Clark addressed the Board: He shared that he had suffered 3 heart attacks and the EMTS were there every time, and he sure hopes the squad would be headed his way if he needs it again. He said that he appreciates those willing to work under the budgetary constraints. He worked 14 years as a volunteer for our Fire Department with no pay. He thanked the Board for trying to keep the doors open.

Larry Cuckler asked for a clarification: . . . “if there is no OT for FT people, what do we do during scheduled time off? What do we do? No part time people, no overtime for full-time crew. Currently they are mandated – for sick or vacation or comp time. If taking off one position, if we mandate one guy over that is full-time it is time and a half + OPF.” He believes those times will be few and far between. But that we need temporary decision for staffing

Cassie Noble: Stated that she takes off to cover nights for us. She has a full time job. She does it because the full-time crew need to be home.

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Robin Snyder asked if we could put more flexibility in the part-time scheduling. Rather than 12 hour shifts, could we make them 6 hour shifts, or 4 or 2. She asked Cassie Noble if she thought that would work. Noble thought that any flexibility would help.

It was suggested that we not mandate FT overtime, but offer the OT with flexibility. RP said that you never know what will happen, we could end up with one person on, or a minimum of two, but what happens if there is a house fire. Snyder replied that we always have fire-fighters show up to fight fires, and TJ Oyer said that we have mutual aid for fires with other townships.

Bruce Pauley asked if the 3 full-time people would still receive double time for the 3 holidays between now and September. The Board answered yes.

Eric Grimm asked about the 3 tax levies and stated that we must not have much that comes in on them since because we are low on funds.

Resident Barry Haubeil shared his view that the only solution was to ask for more money, that it was the only recourse to put on more tax levies.

Gary Hopkins mentioned the Safer grant that is good for 3 years, but we were turned down and waiting to hear in July if we will be awarded the grant again. Snyder said that the last SAFER grant provided \$165,000 in funding.

There was discussion about the big levy that was soundly defeated, and how we had to go back for something smaller. We put on a two year 1.5 mill levy that passed and we put three people on 12 hours a day. 2 on Saturday. Then Sunday, and Saturday night.

Someone stated that what makes the difference at Huntington Township was the people you work with, the runs, and that Rafe works here because he said we get good runs, and now he likes working here.

John Cottrill said "We have good people".

Nate Cuckler mentioned the people in attendance who work other places, but still come to work for us.

Gary Hopkins shared that the township means a lot to him, he loves it. He pointed to Eric Price and said "that guy right there saved the life of my granddaughter". Hopkins is not against our fire department and manning it 24/7, he wants to keep them, he wants to pay much more, and "will do all we can do to keep the doors open".

**Motion** by Gary Hopkins, second by Larry Kellough to approved this schedule: The full-time crew will continue to work 24 hours on and 48 hours, paid 106 hours straight time and 6 hours of overtime as base pay. If another full-time employee is off work for any reason, the overtime will be offered to the other two full-time employees first in any amount they can give us for a minimum staffing of one full-time employee. Part-time employees will fill the other 24 hours as available in increments of 2, 4, 6, 12, or 24 hours and can also fill a full-time employee shift if the other 2 do not pick it up. A full-time employee may not work a part-time shift. This schedule is effective until 2<sup>nd</sup> half property taxes are received and the Fire Fund will be reviewed at that time. It is now a two-person crew 24/7 manning the Fire Station.

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Vote:	Gary Hopkins	Yes
	Larry Kellough	Yes
	John Cottrill	Yes

**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Gary Hopkins to approve the creation of a committee chaired by TJ Oyer, comprised of 3 community members - Becky McCorter, Alice and Phil Kellough, one part-time and one full-time employee, and Gary Hopkins and John Cottrill.

When Alice Kellough was asked if she would service, she said yes, I served on the interview committee for the three full-time employees, and my father-in-law's name is on this building.

Vote:	John Cottrill	Yes
	Gary Hopkins	Yes
	Larry Kellough	Yes

John Cottrill asked those in attendance not to "believe everything you hear on social media about the trustees. We work our butts off and this will be Larry Kellough and Gary Hopkins's last terms. Larry Kellough was a 29 year employee, 8 years trustee". Then Cottrill looked over at the media person and said : "Media – tell the truth."

TJ Oyer asked that when the ARPA funds are received, "if a full-time person has gone part-time will they still get their bonus? If the answer is yes, it **MUST BE IN MINUTES**". The Board assured everyone that as long as the person is still employed with the Township premium pay will be paid.

Nate Cuckler made the comment that if he felt that even if someone "left the department to take another job, say in Michigan", that they should still get the premium pay. There was not agreement with that statement.

Snyder provided copies of the Board's prior commitment to pay ARPA premium pay, and also committed to putting the amount of the 2021 premium pay on pay stubs for the next two pays.

The 4<sup>th</sup> item on the agenda regarding part-time employees who have worked less than 60 hours over 5 months was tabled.

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**Motion** by John Cottrill, second by Larry Kellough to adjourn the meeting at 4:23 P.M.

Vote:	John Cottrill	Yes
	Larry Kellough	Yes
	Gary Hopkins	Yes

ATTESTED:

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President

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

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