

**KEELER TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE CLERK
64151 TERRITORIAL RD. W.
HARTFORD, MI 49057**

MINUTES OF THE TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024

The Keeler Township Board Meeting called to order by Supervisor, Don Blackmond at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll call of members present Trustee Matt Sexton, Treasurer Sharon Clupper, Supervisor Don Blackmond, Trustee Jerry Morin, and Clerk Angie Sexton. Five members were present constituting a quorum.

Jerry Morin moved to approve the agenda as presented. Matthew Sexton seconded, and all were in favor.

Public comment opened at 7:01 p.m. Carl Davis let the board know that the Transfer Site signs will need changed to show the days that the site will be open for the season. Clerk Sexton suggested that in the future the signs just say that the site will be open the first Saturday in April and last Saturday in October. That way they will not need to change every year. Carl Davis then pointed out a spelling error in the February minutes. Upon hearing no other public comments, the floor closed at 7:03 p.m.,

Matthew Sexton moved to approve the February 6, 2024; regular meeting minutes with the correction of "Blackman" to "Blackmond". Jerry Morin seconded, and all were in favor.

Guest of Board:

Tina Leary, Van Buren County Commissioner went over happenings in the county. Veteran Services has a new initiative called A.L.I.V.E. (Adult Living Initiative for Veteran's Engagement) is going into nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Van Buren and Allegan County and meeting with veteran's and/or their spouses and going over services available to them. They will also make home visits for those unable to leave their home. Supervisor Don Blackmond also let the guests know that disabled veteran homeowners living within the township can apply with the Township Assessor to get a property tax exemption. Tina Leary also said that Veteran Services dental clinic in Lawrence saw 19 patients in December and 19 in January. It unfortunately does take several months to get an appointment to be seen.

Rick Boze, Van Buren County Road Commission. The great weather is still allowing the county to cut trees, boom mowing, ditching and get a jump on other projects, while saving money on gas and overtime. The roof work is about to begin on the Lawrence salt barn and Bloomingdale barn soon. The county is considering a county-wide ORV ordinance that townships will be able to opt out on if they choose. The ORV's would be restricted from use on all county roads but then it was suggested that the restrictions be by traffic count. Therefore they would not be allowed on CR 687, CR 681, and CR 690. They are not allowed on any state roads. Residents can notify the road commission of any potholes on SeeClickFix. Rick Boze is now the new Chairperson of the Van Buren County Commission.

Sheriff's Deputy John Horton was present to go over the February reports. There were sixty-six calls for service: thirty-five traffic stops, three assaults, six alarms, one truancy issue, one blight issue, two reports of threats, two EMS assist calls, four general assists, two domestic assaults, one civil dispute, two animal problems, one trespass, one welfare check, two cases of fraud, one vehicle fire, one theft and one disorderly. There is an uptick in Facebook and banking account scams but, other than that things are going well in the township. Deputy Horton doesn't have a preference one way or the other on a ORV ordinance.

Fire reports:

Sister Lakes Fire Department had eight calls total for the month with an average response time of 10:14 and ten responders per call. There were two calls in Keeler Township. One taking place on February 26, 2024, for a vehicle fire and one on February 11 for a fire alarm. No update on the status of the new station.

Keeler Township Fire Department & Rescue, Rich Hutchinson spoke on behalf of the fire department. The department had a total of eleven calls for February. Eight fire calls, one aid to Marcellus with the tanker for a large commercial fire, one standby for Decatur, one severe weather standby, one gas leak and three EMS calls. The department's medical training for the month consisted of continuing education for trauma assessment. Fire training consisted of firefighter down training. Charles Concrete completed the repairs to the floor drains. They did a wonderful job. The department will get quotes to get the bay floors epoxied next. The building hot water heater has an issue and Chief Bogart is going to see if he can repair it. There are five more bottles to be SCBA evaluated and then that will complete this cycle of testing. The fire department is now under the Van Buren County Medical Board control, and they have received their license renewal. The department has one probationary officer that has not responded to any calls or attended any meetings for an extended amount of time. They will ask this member to step down, return the department's property and would like the board to remove them from the roster. The board will investigate the matter and address it at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Treasurer's report- The beginning balance in the general fund for the month was \$308,415.28, deposits of \$104,821.87, interest of \$61.98, bills paid for \$43,259.24 and an ending balance of \$370,039.89. Jerry Morin moved to pay all bills and claims as presented. Matthew Sexton seconded, and a roll call vote taken of Blackmond- support, Morin- support, A. Sexton- support, Clupper- support, M. Sexton- support. All were in favor. Treasurer Clupper investigated bank CD rates to transfer the ARPA funds into. She found that Sturgis Bank in St. Joseph, Michigan is offering 5% interest for a 7-month Certificate of Deposit. This rate is higher than what the township was able to obtain for the last CD transfers. Don Blackmond moved to approve Sturgis Bank for the CD with the Treasurer Sharon Clupper and Clerk Angie Sexton as signatories on the 7-month Certificate of Deposit. Jerry Morin seconded, and a roll call vote of Clupper- support, M. Sexton- support, Morin- support, Blackmond- support, and A. Sexton- support. Motion carried.

Zoning Administrator Allyn Anthony had three building permits issued in February for two houses and a garage. There was a shipping container brought on to a property and the residents will construct a structure over it to bring it into compliance. There is property on M-152 that will be scheduled to come before the Planning Commission seeking to rezone a property from R-1 Residential to Commercial. The properties on all 3 other corners are already zoned Commercial. The fee rate for site plan review for a in home business is currently \$1,100. Allyn Anthony would like the fee to be lowered to just cover the amount of fees to pay the Planning Commission members for a meeting and no escrow held as nothing needs to be noticed for this type of site plan review. \$700 should cover all costs associated with holding a Planning Commission meeting for a site plan review for a in home business. Jerry Morin motioned to set the in home business application fee to \$700 with no escrow. Matthew Sexton seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Morin- support, M. Sexton- support, Clupper- support, Blackmond- support, A. Sexton- support. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Trustee Jerry Morin reported that the Planning Commission did not meet in February. They will continue reviewing the townships' current zoning ordinances at the next meeting.

Trustee Matt Sexton reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals did not have a meeting as there was nothing before the board.

Quarterly Supervisor Meeting Update- Keeler is considered "North Keeler" for the ROBIN Grant and work is expected to be completed in quarter 3 of 2025. This is an advancement from the earlier projection of completion in the fourth quarter of 2025. The public can view updates and information for the project on the Van Buren County website by selecting the "Broadband" tab and navigating around there. Townships will be able to opt in or out of the proposed county-wide ORV ordinance. The Van Buren County Commissioners are seeking input from townships on limitations, restrictions, and general thoughts on the ordinance. Van Buren County Sheriff Abbott is in support of the ordinance. The ordinance would provide immunity from liability for all governmental entities. This ordinance would not be for golf carts. The attorneys for the Michigan Township Association held a presentation for Renewable Energy. Citizens for Local Choice are holding a townhall meeting on April 15, 2024, at the Lawrence Conference Center to discuss opposition to renewable energy. Market Van Buren presented updates on grant money available for the area. Van Buren County Road Commission is considering seeking a secondary .75-1.50 county road mileage for road repairs. The VBCRC's Annual Report is on their website.

Old business.

Inventory & Maintenance Policy- Supervisor Blackmond met with the township Attorney for a couple parcels on the list.

Supervisor Don Blackmond completed his road tour with the VBCRC to get an idea of what is needed to complete a 5-year road plan for Keeler Township.

The VBCRC also looked at the Victory to West drainage issues. The elevations have been completed by VBCRC, and they have some confusion about which way the drains run, and they will investigate the issue further. The township is awaiting a letter from the VBCRC regarding the Lakeshore Drive drainage issue. VBCRC believes that the drain is functioning as intended to and there is not much more that can be addressed with it, due to the size of the road right of way. It is a maintenance issue and debris will need removed periodically by the property owners or reported to SeeClickFix.

The township previously agreed to sealcoat and fog seal 95th Ave. from CR 690 to M 152 for the cost of \$29,523.78. The Woodlawn Subdivision on the South side of Big Crooked Lake, off 95th Ave., road has not had any maintenance since the sewers were installed. The road currently has a Paser rating of two and has begun to deteriorate. Supervisor Blackmond requested a quote from VBCRC to have the road receive trap rock, seal coat, and fog seal while the county does the road work on 95th. The quote for project #497-3801 for trap rock and seal coating was \$47,097.20. Jerry Morin motioned to approve project #497-3801 for trap rock and seal coating in the amount of \$47,097.20. Matthew Sexton seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Sharon Clupper- support, Jerry Morin- support, Matthew Sexton- support, Angie Sexton- support, Don Blackmond- support. Motion carried.

Contract gravel- Quote for contact gravel for 3,000 tons of gravel for the townships dirt roads was \$44,130. Jerry Morin moved to approve project #497-3875 for contract gravel in the amount of \$44,130. Matthew Sexton seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Don Blackmond- support, Jerry Morin- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Matthew Sexton- support, Angie Sexton- support. Motion carried.

Boom Mowing-The township schedules an additional \$6,000 in boom mowing on top of what VBCRC schedules for the year. Sharon Clupper moved to approve project #497-3872 for boom mowing in the amount of \$6,000. Jerry Morin seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Angie Sexton- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Jerry Morin- support, Don Blackmond- support, Matthew Sexton- support. Motion carried.

Dust Control- Two proposals for dust control were presented. One proposal was for \$28,237.80 for two applications of SWMI Dust Control for all the dirt roads in Keeler Township with the option for residents to purchase 2 bags of dust control for their own application. SWMI dust control is oil well brine. The other quote of \$78,669.52 for two applications of Greats Lakes Chloride. It is sodium chloride in liquid form. It is

supposed to be better for the environment and better for keeping the dust down and maintaining the roads. Due to the cost difference the board discussed trying the Great Lakes Chloride next year. Jerry Morin moved to approve project #497-3874 for two applications of SWMI Brine in the amount of \$28,237.80. Matthew Sexton seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Don Blackmond- support, Jerry Morin- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Matthew Sexton- support, Angie Sexton- support. Motion carried.

ARPA Funding and Project Use- Midwest Energy Communications Agreement of Provision of Broadband Services between MEC and Keeler Township signed. Installation work is estimated to be completed by the end of 2025.

New Business

The fire lane on the east end of Magician Lake has formed large potholes from erosion. The lane is on the verge of not being accessible to plow. Supervisor Blackmond will reach out to some vendors to acquire quotes for crushed concrete.

Keeler Township Cemetery- The township has received some complaints on the cemetery. There are more potholes that have formed in the cemetery drives and Supervisor Blackmond will acquire quotes to fix the potholes from contractors. There was a question on the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund and if money received for lots goes into that account. The money received for the sale of plots in the past has not gone into the fund. The fund was set up years ago by a group of people for the care of the cemetery and has dwindled since. There isn't enough revenue generated on its own to fund the cemetery. Jerry Morin moved to have all future proceeds from the sale of cemetery plots to go into the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund and general operating expenses for the care of the Cemetery will be paid for out of the General Fund. Sharon Clupper seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Angie Sexton- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Jerry Morin- support, Matthew Sexton- support. A complaint was received about trash at the cemetery. The township does not employ a maintenance or grounds keeper so there is not someone on staff to clean the cemetery. It may be time for the township to possibly create a position to hire a person to do grounds and maintenance or hire contracted service to do the work needed. This position may be something that the township could consider if a future mileage is acquired. Several options were suggested for additional maintenance and clean up of the cemetery. Clerk Sexton is going to reach out to contracted services to get quotes for additional trash clean up. Some trees and shrubs have been planted at the cemetery by families and they have become overgrown and add to the cemetery maintenance costs. The cemetery rules do not allow for personal plantings of trees. The cemetery policy allows for certain decorations to be placed on a gravesite but, need to be removed when they deteriorate. The board went over the current Cemetery rules. Sharon Clupper moved to revise Rule #4 to omit "Township Clerk". Jerry Morin seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried. Clerk Sexton suggested having a sign stating the cemetery rules placed at a central location within the cemetery. The board agreed that was a good idea and to get a quote.

Corridor Improvement Authority has requested to amend the 2009 ordinance adopting the Sister Lakes Corridor Improvement Authority Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan to include the language that is in the statute that establishes Corridor Improvement Authorities so that they may be able to include a park and playground to their plans. The current adopted plan does not allow for the building of a park or playground and the CIA would like to add one along with a pavillion at the trail head. Angie Sexton moved to set a hearing for an amendment to the Sister Lakes Corridor Improvement Authority Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan to be held at 6:00 p.m. on April 2, 2024. Sharon Clupper seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Don Blackmond- support, Jerry Morin- support, Angie Sexton- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Matthew Sexton- support. Motion carried.

Website- The township board has looked into costs to revise and update the township website. The board would like to make the website more user friendly for visitors and board members to make changes easily. Shumaker Technology Group met with Trustee Sexton and the proposal was \$1,750.00 to completely overhaul the township website and move it to a .gov site. For \$500 Shumaker will teach the board how to use the website, for \$800 they will make any revisions and we will still have control to make adjustments as well. For an addition \$400, Shumaker will take aerial photos of the township for the website. They believe that they can have the new website in 6-8 weeks. A previous proposal from another company was substantially higher and not user friendly. Jerry Morin moved that the board approve the proposal from Shumaker Technology Group in the amount of \$1,750.00, with the \$400.00 add on for aerial drone photography and the \$800.00 option to be fully managed for the year. Matthew Sexton seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Jerry Morin- support, Matthew Sexton- support, Sharon Clupper- support, Don Blackmond- support, Angie Sexton- support. Motion carried.

Quickbooks- The board previously approved the clerk to move from QuickBooks Desktop to QuickBooks Online. Unfortunately, after the clerk made that switch, the clerk found that QuickBooks Online was not able to complete the Township tasks needed for our record keeping. QuickBooks recommended returning to QuickBooks Desktop. The Township clerk returned to QuickBooks Desktop and spoke with Brandon Lubbert from Helping Hands Accounting and Brandon was able to add the Township under his Accountant QuickBooks Payroll subscription for \$250.00 a year. A savings of \$300+ a year to the township.

Magician Woods Park Permission-There was ground contamination sometime when the Blue Fin Marina was present at that location in the past. The State of Michigan would like to drill shallow wells and install monitoring equipment at the park location to do testing over the next year. The Magician Woods Park is next to the Blue Fin property and part of the Magician Woods Subdivision and dedicated to the use of the public. The state would like permission to run the testing, but the park technically is not owned by anyone and therefore the township does not have that permission to grant. Jerry Morin moved to authorize Supervisor Don Blackmond to respond on behalf of the township for the request to testing at the Magician Woods Park that the township does not own the property and has no objection to testing and consents to the extent that the township has any authority to do so. Sharon Clupper seconded. All were in favor.

Insurance Renewal- Supervisor Blackmond would like to review the township insurance renewal at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

The township has a special budget workshop on March 6, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. spDon Blackmond moved to hold a special meeting and public hearing to approve the budget on March 26 at 6:00 p.m. Jerry Morin seconded. All were in favor.

The floor for Public Comment opened at 10:13 p.m. Hearing no public comments, the floor closed at 10:13 p.m.

Correspondence: Clerk Sexton received an email requesting to rent the township hall. She informed them that the hall is not available to rent. The township tax assessments went out and the township's properties taxable value went up by 5%. Anyone that feels that a mistake was made on their assessment or would like to protest their taxes, may attend a Board of Review meeting held on March 11, 2024, from 2-5, 6-9 and March 12, 2024, from 9-12, 1-4 at the township hall.

Motion by Matt Sexton to adjourn and seconded by Jerry Morin. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Submitted by,

Angie Sexton, Clerk
March 13, 2024