**MAPLE GROVE TOWNSHIP**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**September 11, 2023 - 6:00 PM**

1. **Call to Order.** The Maple Grove Township Board was called to order. Roll call was taken with the following members present Supervisor H. Wayne Beldo, Clerk Fran Beldo, Treasurer Karen Roy, Trustees Joe Barnett, Gary Bowling, Fire Chief, Jason Vess.
2. **Changes or Corrections to Agenda. None.**
3. **Call to the Public.** – **Sharon Zakrajsek Great Lakes Assessing**: Spoke regarding the Pivot Point Project. She stated that this new program downloads parcels that we are going out to look at into the cloud and then works together with our BS&A program. We can then go out to properties and take pictures with an iPad, make field notes, then load it back to the cloud, and download it to each individual parcel. It also has maps downloaded on it. We can see exactly what parcel we are going to. This eliminates the three-ring binder. This new program brings us into the 21st century. Other townships that now use it are Manistee, Filer, and Onekama. The cost per year is $887.60. Sharon has already been trained, and the iPad has already been purchased. The effective date would be October 1st, 2023. Motion was made by Karen to accept the Pivot Point Program as presented, and support was made by Gary. AIF/AYE. Motion carried. Wayne also mentioned that our Assessing Program went through a recent audit and received 100% through the State of Michigan. Wayne stated that we work with a great assessing company, and he also attributes the BOR and the Township board for their working with Sharon. A big thank you too all. **Richard Schmidt:** “I am not here tonight as a County Commissioner Representative on the issue that is coming before you, I want answers and I want them in the minutes regarding what is being talked”. **Alberta Mardlin**: I want to know why we can’t pave Potter Road by the racetrack when we can pave the other end of Potter Road near Big Four that had perfectly smooth pavement and it was re-done. Was it done with grants, did our tax-payer monies pay for this? Where did the money come from? **Wayne replied**, the other end of Potter Road was originally done some years ago. We have re-done other parts of the township where there was pavement, it came to a period of time when we were going to start to lose pavement if we didn’t do some repairs on it. Chipping and sealing and wedging were done on Potter Road so it would not go back to gravel. That happened this year. **Alberta** made the comment that it looked nice and smooth. Wayne replied that if you looked at it closely, and if we didn’t do repairs soon, we were going to start to lose it and it would be irreparable, and the County Road Commission wouldn’t go back on it without completely repairing it at the cost of $395,000 per mile. **Wayne** stated that we did not pay anything near that amount to save that pavement. **Alberta** then asked if it was taxpayer money used to repair the road. **Wayne** stated we do not receive any funding for roads. The county does, the State of Michigan does, the Villages do, but the townships do not receive money for road repair. We take it out of our general fund, we set aside money every year for our roads that have blacktops on them. We don’t want to lose them, because of the cost per mile. We must work within our means. Right now, we are faced with a township road that is also in Bear Lake township where Big Four road is going to go to pieces, and that is one we know that we are going to have to do something with soon. We as a township board, we would have to pay if we were to do Potter Road, or Berg Road, or Puustinen Road, we would have to pay 50% of the $400,000 cost per mile. We would be looking at $200,000 per mile of any road to blacktop. Big Four road that is in danger of falling apart, we can do that because it is a township line, and we share it with Bear Lake. We will only wind up paying 15% of the cost per mile to get the blacktop repaired. Our priority is Big Four road. We have tried millages, and they don’t work. **Wayne** stated that he will be talking with the township board about a proposal to the county to see if we can’t get some work done on Big Four Road. That is our priority and emphasis. We always have the ability to have a special assessment district where people along a road would share equally with the cost of rebuilding the road, and that could be done. Not many people want to do that. **Alberta asked the question** can we revisit showing you how to get that paid that would not cost the township money? If you remember, I brought you letters that every business that was in town signed stating that the racetrack brings revenue to each business all winter and that’s when they need the revenue. **Wayne** replied that it would have to come to a millage vote, and he has never seen a millage for roads pass. They have always been soundly defeated. People think we get money for roads, and we do not. So, we must pick and choose what we do. I also know that the dragstrip brings in money to the community. Unfortunately, it does not break down into dollars we can use to fix that road. We cannot ignore fixing Big Four road. It is cheaper for us, and it is a heavily traveled road, and our money would go further. This is what I am faced with, and the township board based on the recommendations. I would like all the roads paved, but then again, every 8 to 10 years we would have to spend $50,000 to $80,000 per mile to keep it in good condition. **Alberta** replied that she understands that the Road Commission has been great about coming out and grading Potter Road. When people come in with their rigs, and they want to go out for breakfast, or get supplies, they have to go back out that same road. If it was smoother, they would not have a problem coming back in. Wayne stated that he understands that, and if we could snap our fingers and pave that road, we would do it. We are going to struggle to get Big Four road that has more traffic and has more of an effect on the community. **Comment** from the audience wondering if there is some sort of grant out there that could be applied for. **Wayne** replied that he thought that the county had some access to ARPA funds that they have not used yet. He has been waiting for the County Road Commission to request some of those funds.  **Fran** commented that at last month’s MTA meeting Jeff Dontz said that the ARPA money that they have they are keeping. They will not distribute any monies. Richard Schmidt replied that you know how you got your ARPA money. Ask Cleon Township how you got you guys got your money. Wayne replied to Richard, “I will tell you any money we got, there is still money available. That’s the only thing I said, that was one option. Richard replied don’t say that ARPA did not want to give you anything. Cleon Township wanted a fire department. I told them your chances of getting anything were slim to none. They sent postcards, I told them you don’t have to do that, just watch how it plays out. Wayne replied I just said that because they do have the funds, and I do believe that there are things that have a higher priority. That’s why I said that. I don’t want to get into a debate on whether the money we got was appropriate or not. We don’t have the time to spend discussing this. **A member** of the audience asked me to speak. He said that he would like to just back up what Alberta had to say. We did bring in a couple of petitions. One was to all businesses in town, and another was the surrounding residences within about a mile radiance of Potter Road where the racetrack is. There were 60 in one and 20 on another with signatures. This was in about 2002, at that time Jerry Peterson was ahead of the Road Commission. He did a study on what it would take to pave from Healy Lake Road just down to the gates and entrance of the Dragway. The study he came up with was about $20,000 of a cost to the Township which my dad offered $10,000. He offered to pay half of this. Since 2002 we have seen McMartin road get paved, Horseshoe Creek get paved, McClellan Road, and more on Potter Road. We are wondering if they got more signatures than us, were people offering half that money to get those roads paved? My dad offered a pretty good amount of money. You did say that it makes a difference if people offer to pay money. **Wayne** replied that he did not remember the amount of the cost per mile at that time. It has gone up considerably. Now our share would be $200,000. **A question** was asked by the audience what was the length from Healy Lake Road to the entrance of the Dragway? It is about ½ mile. Wayne replied that I know you have the names on the petition, but they don’t back it up by voting for a millage or a special assessment district. A question was asked from the audience was there a millage for McMartin Road, McClellan Road, and Potter? Wayne replied at the time Jouppi Road was done, and some of what was left over went on to McMartin road to go up to the top of the hill. It went further than that not to my wishes. McClellan road was serving a subdivision. That was why the township board did that. We would like to have a road millage, and then we would put money into different roads every year. People will sign petitions, but it does not equate into votes for roads. A member of the audience said that they would like to get put on a list for whatever next is available and look to the Village to obtain grants. He then went on to say that it feels like we have been snubbed. It’s been over 20 years that we have been working on this. Wayne replied that he will look and try to talk to someone to see if some of the ARPA funds could be used for that, and I will talk to the Road Commission about it. I’ll see what can be done short of a special assessment district, which you can take care of however much you wanted with all the people along the road paying their share of however much road frontage they have to get the road done. That could happen, and I would like to look into that to get back to you to see what it would cost and see if the Township might have any funds at all to put toward that. This is what I myself offer unless the Township Board has any different ideas. A question was asked from the audience when it’s been on the millage before was it just a general road improvement millage or was it detailed on what roads would be improved? **Wayne** replied that it would be a millage that would go for a period of 4 years and could be renewed where it would go into a road fund where we would work on roads according on how bad they are and what they need to have done. That way we could talk to the county about getting one road done every couple of years. Making a payment this year and making a payment next year. They usually go along with us on that, and we can get some of the improvements made. We have to get that millage in place because we do not receive any money. **Wayne** also said that it really amazes me that everyone else in local government gets money for roads the townships. The question continued from the audience that perhaps if the millage is just a general fund that doesn’t dictate which roads would be taken care of, why we would have distrust when we’ve seen cornfields get paved but not local popular places. Wayne replied that there are reasons for what we did in the places that we’ve paved. The one place that didn’t go the way I personally wanted it to, or the Township Board, was past the top of the hill on McMartin Road. That was done not to our knowledge, and after the fact we have heard about it for a long time. If we got a general road millage, and if you have as many people as there are here tonight talking about a road, it might very well sway the Township Board to spend some of that money on that road. Then we would have a basis of saying we have the road, we have the money, maybe it would make sense to do that road based on what we’ve all been talking about. **Comment and question from the** audience asking if it is a county-maintained road. **Wayne** replied that the county does maintain the road. Reply from the audience, stating that it seems it would be more efficient for them to have it paved than to be grading it all of the time. Wayne replied that they will not do that without our 50% participation. On a road that’s a major road, (Big Four Road), then it is 30%, and when you have another township on the other side of the road, it’s 15 %. So, it makes sense for us to spend some money so that we don’t have to get 1 or 2 miles of that road done. The township board could talk about putting another millage on the ballot, but it costs us to do that as well. **Fran** commented that even though you vote the millage in, it doesn’t hit the property taxes until the following year. **Wayne** added that at least we have something to bank on, and then we could talk about doing something. I know that it’s not the answer that any of you wanted to hear. **Comment from the audience,** originally it was only supposed to be paved by the creek, and for some reason it went all the way to Bond’s house. **Wayne replied,** “We wanted to get to the top of the hill, but because of on 11 Mile they did the bridge, and they only did the pavement right at the bridge and then both ways got pounded and that is a bad road too. We should have at that point we should have at least gotten pavement out to Big Four road. We didn’t do that, and we lost that pavement along the bridge on 11 Mile Rd. We didn’t want to do that on the bridge on Potter Road. That is why we did that. Wayne continued stating there are good reasons for it, and for the things we have done. The board is very thoughtful about what they do. Not 1 board member would tell you that Potter Road by the dragstrip is not an important road. It’s just that I tried to tell our commissioner that there are roads that are in worse shape and have a greater detriment to the community by keeping them in poor shape. There must be a priority, and I think right now our priority is Big Four Road. Unless we were to get something to start banking on money to repair roads every year. It’s not something that we can worry about right now, because we’re just trying to figure out how when the county comes knocking on our door and wants to repair Big Four Road, how we will pay for that. **Richard Schmidt asked** if the board ever thought about writing grants? **Wayne replied** that he does write grants, and I write as many as I can. **Richard Schmidt** **replied** to Wayne, why didn’t you write the grant that when I went to you and told you who to see, who would help you with a grant to do Potter Road, and by the school? Richard then continued to Wayne and do know what your reply to the group that was standing there? You said that was too much paperwork. That’s why I’m a little upset. When I asked you what’s going on about it. **Wayne replied**, “You came to my office door and acted the same way. Two elected officials that had the kind of exchange that you and I had simply because you came in with a chip on your shoulder. And I will tell you something right now, I have not decided if I’m going to run for this job again or yours. **Richard commented,** you can run for mine, go for it, and we’ll see how that works out for you. **Richard continued** **by saying to Wayne** you have got to start doing your job. You have been here a half a century, and you still have not gotten that road done. And I have told you how to get the money. I even told you who would fill out the forms for you. And you said it was too much paperwork. Wayne replied okay, my bad. Wayne then asked the audience if anyone had anything else to say. A question from the audience, specifically for Potter Road, what would it take to have a millage just for that road, for the township to vote on it? **Wayne replied**, the township I don’t think would pass a millage just to pave Potter Road. I think it would have to be a special assessment district for just that area. When the township residence and businesses are voting for a millage, overall, they aren’t happy to see it targeted for one spot. I can tell you that there are people along other roads that if they saw that, they would not vote for it. And if they did, and you round up doing that road, then they would be in here wanting us to do their road. It would be a tough sell. If we got a general millage, you would have to trust that the township board to do the right thing and go for the roads that would get the most bang for the buck. Once we get past Big Four Road, then all the roads come on the radar screen. But right now, we know that at some point we are going to have to answer the question from the county we’d like to do the road. The county probably won’t come to us until we make a proposal. We may have to do that before we lose that road. **Comment from the audience,** so correct me if I’m wrong, on what you said. From my understanding you said that other people might want their road paved as well. You keep steering toward a general millage. Isn’t that what voting is for? **Wayne replied yes**, but I don’t know whether it serves a purpose for the township board to say we are going to run a millage, Wayne asked Fran how much it would cost to run a millage? Fran replied if we get it on an election type ballot, we wouldn’t have to pay. Wayne added, we could run a millage, but if it failed, then we would be back where we started from. Q**uestion** **from the audience,** what would be the cost to do a special millage? **Fran replied** it would be a special election. **Richard Schmidt replied** you would want to do it when the schools have their elections. **Fran replied** that you can add it to the August election next year. **Reply from the audience,** the thing you are not seeing is that there are a lot of residences in Maple Grove Township that frequent the racetrack and frequently drive that road, frequently haul their equipment, their trailers, their race cars down that road, and they would vote for it even if they don’t live on the road. **Fran commented** that also you are asking that if the millage passes and we have money Potter Road should be done first before Big Four or any of the other roads. Reply from the audience, no I’m not suggesting it be done before Big Four. I think what we are asking is that we get a special millage/assessment to pave Potter Road. Another audience member replied that even if it takes 5 years to get the money, we just want the opportunity to put it on the ballot to get it out to the township to ask if we should or should not do this. Another comment from the audience that we should have done this in 2002 when we started this. **Wayne replied** it is not the whole township that would be paying for that. A special assessment is for the people along the road. **The audience member replied**, “We all know that there’s not enough income and property value along that section of Potter Road to support it being paid.  **Comment from the audience**, so it would be just the people that live over there for the special assessment. **Wayne replied** that if we ran a millage for 4 years for 1 millage, and the first road that would be repaired would be Potter Road, and then it would become a general millage, if we can do that wording, then the township board could consider that. We still have time to talk about it at our next meeting. **Wayne continued saying** what he would like to do is see what wording we can prepare, and we will get it to you, and you can get it to everyone else, and see if that is something that would suffice. The idea is if the millage went through, we would target that road first and then in the subsequent years we would then go on to other roads and other projects. So, you wouldn’t necessarily have it be a special assessment, and the people in the Maple Grove Township wouldn’t be just supporting that road. **A question from the audience** asked why not? **Wayne replied** that you can run it that way, but it might work. **Comment from the audience**, if the people of Maple Grove Township speak and say on average all the votes are a no then we will understand. The problem that I’m gathering from Brian and Rebecca is that there has not been a vote on it. That is all they are asking for is just a vote to ask all the residents of Maple Grove over the course of 4 years will you pave Potter Road from here to here. Wayne asked a question to the board what they thought. **Joe Barnett commented** to Brian Ledford that he remembers when you ran that petition in 2002, and I signed it. But keep in mind that the 4 of us were not on that board at that time. Now, this deal that came up with doing the west end of Potter Road just recently, your end of the road wasn’t given to us as an option. We didn’t even talk about it. It was not brought up at the meeting I was at. We didn’t vote to do your end of Potter Road. That wasn’t this board that did that. **Brian replied,** “Okay”. **Joe continued** saying we thought about doing the road we had in place to save it. That is the way it was presented to us. We did not vote you guys down. That is all I have to say about this issue. **Question from the audience,** was the 2002 even remembered? **Joe Barnett commented** that he remembered it because he signed it. It does make sense now. **Comment from the** **audience,** there is a lot of traffic down that road now than there was in 2002. Discussion from the audience of the traffic now versus 2002, and that it would be beneficial to get that road paved. **Gary Bowling** added to what Wayne said, that if we do this a certain way, then Potter Road benefits first off, and that gets done, and then other roads in the township can benefit from that in the subsequent years. He also added that we don’t get any money and we pull it from the general fund, which is there for us, if we do it in tiers, where we put in for a special or a road millage, the first project we will work on is Potter Road. When that’s done, and we continue to pull the millage money in, now we can look at other roads. We could also look at Potter and Jouppi down the rest of the way so traffic can come in that way. Or maybe finish Jouppi. **A question from the audience** asked the board if they could give an estimate on how much money would be brought in by this millage. **Karen replied** that 1 mill is about $70,000. **Joe Barnet addressed the audience** and said to put it up for a vote. Let the people speak. **Wayne replied** that we will come back with wording next month for the millage. The board agreed. **Brian Ledford commented** that we should not have dropped the ball in 2002. **Gary Bowling added** that the board appreciates everyone’s input. It is a public meeting. And you are welcome to speak and have a good professional discussion. Gary thanked everyone. **Richard** **Schmidt asked** who the township’s audit firm is. **Wayne said** it is the State of Michigan. **Richard then replied** that is a red flag having the state do your auditing. **Wayne replied** that the State of Michigan does the audit all the time and does a great job. **Wayne asked** Richard Schmidt who does county audit. **He replied** that it is a private firm. It’s not the state. The only time the state gets involved in audits is when there is a red flag somewhere. **Wayne replied** that is not true. And do not tell these people that we are doing something that has a red flag. **Richard replied** that he wants this township audited. **Wayne** **commented** to Richard that he will be telling his other constituents how you behaved. **A comment from** the audience stated that they would like ditching along Potter Road also. Wayne agreed. Wayne apologized to the audience.
4. **Consent Agenda.** The Consent Agenda consists of minutes for August 14th, 2023, to be completed. Approval of bills for August 8th, through 9/30/2023 - General Fund $5,472.84; Fire Department $3,949.90; Cemetery $1,655.63; Transfer Station $4,075.63. MGT Community Center $2,322.25; Payroll $9,771,35. Gross Pay YTD $88,515.72. Financial Statement - Attached. Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Motioned by Joe, Supported by Karen, any discussion? AIF AYE. Motion carried.
5. **Fire Department Report –** New hire application. Aaron Kirksey. He is 32 years old and works at the jail in the kitchen. Fran is still waiting for paperwork from a couple of applicants. Now the total for the fire department is 25, and maybe 10 are active. Wayne made the motion to hire Aaron Kirksey. Support by Gary. AIF/AYE. Motion carried.
6. **Old Business-**
7. **Siren –** nothing to be done at this time**.**
8. **Old Township Hall –** They are putting a water meter in there. Wayne is also getting new locks put on because the keys have been lost. That was the only key, and so now we will have a spare.
9. **New Business-**
10. **Approval of Final Millage Rates –** Motion to approve the final Millage Resolution made by Gary, supported by Joe. AIF/AYE. Motion carried.
11. **Michigan Class –** Karen reported that they would like to invest some monies in the new fund. It pays a higher rate of interest, and the money stays liquid. A presentation was given at the last MTA meeting. Motion made by Gary for Karen to determine which funds and what amounts to invest to present it at our next meeting. Support made by Joe. AIF/AYE, motion carried.
12. **Cemetery-Reclaiming Gravesites-**Fran reported that there are a couple of townships in the state that have cemetery plots that are vacant (meaning no interment and/or not a marker or a monument**).** The townships are going to start reclaiming them. Dave Beldo stated that they don’t own the land or the dirt, they own the right to be buried there. Gary Bowling asked if we have to put something in the paper regarding vacant lots and asking the public to claim them or who owns them? Wayne asked if we could offer the going rate to buy the sites back? Fran just wanted to bring it up to the board. This is something that could come up, and it’s something we need to think about.
13. **Early Voting (9 days) –** Wayne reported that he was very proud to announce that Maple Grove Township is one of the regional voting sites. Fran reported that for 9 days people can come in this township office from 8:30 to 4:30 to vote. That is from a Saturday to Sunday before the election. This is only for the federal elections. This will be in February or March of 2024, and November. We are the 3rd site. It will be the city of Manistee, Manistee Township, and Maple Grove Township. The townships that are coming to us are Cleon, Pleasanton, Bear Lake, Springdale, Brown, Dickson, and Norman Township. The people that live in these townships can come here to vote 9 days before the election. Fran stated she doesn’t think there will be a lot of people, they do have the option to vote absentee. This is just another tool for voters to use. Fran also said that we will be getting a special tabulator, a computer, and an on-demand ballot machine. So, if you come in and you are from Cleon Township, the person that usually hands out the ballot will have the printer and the monitor to click on to say I want a ballot from Cleon Township. It will print out a ballot and you vote and put it in the tabulator. Gary asked if we should get a sign that says early voting available at these townships. The only hours Fran is concerned about are Sundays. The hours might be 1 to 9:00. The contract will be between the county and us. We will be reimbursed about 80%. We won’t pay for the tabulator and printer.
14. **Correspondence – None**
15. **Adjournment- Motion to adjourn at 7:12 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Frances J. Beldo

Maple Grove Township Clerk