

SENECA TOWNSHIP
Regular Monthly Minutes
November 11, 2008

The regular monthly meeting of the Seneca Township Board of Trustees was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Supervisor Ersel Schuster at the Seneca Township Building located at 16506 Garden Valley Road, Woodstock, Illinois.

Township Officials in Attendance: Supervisor Ersel Schuster, Trustees Rosemary Bartman, Susan Mathews, Thomas Dahlfors, and Michael O’Leary, Road Commissioner Robert Helfers, Assessor Donald Andrews, and Clerk Dawn Seemann. Absent Officials: None.

Guests in Attendance: Kathy Biron, Elizabeth Lascaro, Scott Swanson, Peggy Sue Brasile.

Public Speaking: Kathy Biron stated her husband sent an email to someone on the township board and received one back regarding the speed limit signs by her home on Pleasant Valley Road. She stated that she would like to see the speed limit signs in front and around her home be a consistent 30 mph. She feels the cars speed down that road and fears someone will be killed, as was the case approximately ten years ago. In addition, Mrs. Biron also suggested the possibility of speed bumps. She asked what the next step is to take to see something done to lower the speed limit on Pleasant Valley Road?

- Elizabeth Lascaro, who also lives on Pleasant Valley Road, stated that last fall she called the sheriff because the grain trucks were “constantly flying through.” She said the sheriff told her that “where the warning signs are is where the speed limit should start.” In addition, she stated that he told her the signs were illegal because “it is illegal to go from 30 to 50 mph. It has to go in 10 mph increments.” The sheriff told her to talk to her township.

- Peggy Sue Brasile stated that she has always just wanted to come to a meeting.

Minutes: Bartman motioned to approve the October 14, 2008 regular monthly minutes as presented. Second by Dahlfors.

- O’Leary received an email from Sue Mathews stating she felt there wasn’t enough information in the October minutes and he would like to note that for the record.

- Mathews amended the minutes regarding page 6 near the top. She stated she would like to add the comment “Schuster always asks if there are any questions, comments or corrections after the second on a motion prior to voting.” As well as, “hearing none, the voting took place.” She feels there was a lot of discussion in that area and thinks we should make it clear that everyone had the chance to say what they needed to say.

- Mathews motioned to approve minutes as amended. Second by O’Leary.

- Helfers asked if everyone heard the minutes on the tape since they voted? He stated he went to Ersel’s house the day after our meeting and approached her with the Township Officials Laws and Duties Handbook showing her page 126 that states that she cannot take 50% or any percent of the salary from the road district to pay the road commissioner’s salary without the road commissioner’s approval. He asked the board if they saw that section in the handbook and understand what he is talking about so they know what the statute says? The board acknowledged they did. Mathews then stated that that was the reason she wanted her comments added to the minutes to make it clear because there was so much discussion, and due to the letter she received from Helfers, realized it was important to stress that the issue was discussed and

everyone was given the opportunity at that time to say what they needed. Helpers said he did state his opinion at that time. Mathews then told Helpers that when they voted on how it was going to be handled including the split (of the road commissioner's salary between the Town Board and the Road District funds) he didn't say anything. At that point, Helpers asked to listen to that portion of the tape. Clerk Seemann played the tape for the board to review. Upon conclusion of listening to the tape, Seemann informed the board that whatever it is they wanted added to the minutes would be added. Again, Mathews reiterated that Helpers had the opportunity to talk then, which is why she didn't understand why they all got his letter. Helpers stated it was because when he approached Ersel the next day with the statute as he had mentioned, and she told him, "It's a done deal. End of discussion." He then left her house and did some research. He read the TOI Laws & Duties Handbook and made some phone calls. He stated that the people he contacted said there was no way the board or the Supervisor could take a portion of the Highway Commissioner's salary out of the road district funds without his approval, which "you never had and Ersel never had. On the agenda that evening there was no mention of a different source of funding for the Highway Commissioner's salaries. All it said was setting salaries for fiscal year 2009-2013. No mention of securing other funding than what we have had for the last fifty-three years to pay the Highway Commissioner's salary. I had no knowledge. You talk about being ambushed." He added that the board will never have his permission during the rest of his time in office.

- Mathews told Helpers that the last thing he said about the issue was, "If you want less services then so-be-it." Helpers asked what that had to do with his salary? Mathews stated that was said after they talked about splitting the salary. Helpers then said, "If you take \$28,000 out of my funds – that's a lot of money."

- Dahlfors talked about his thoughts about how he questions what the job is of a Trustee. He feels he hasn't helped the people of Seneca the way he'd like to. He feels he has no say as to what the Road Commissioner or Supervisor does. He stated that he doesn't know how the next Road Commissioner will ever be able to follow Helpers because he had done an "excellent job." Then added that he would like to give the next Road Commissioner the tools he needs to do a good job. He told Helpers that if he were to be there another four years he would have no choice but to go for a levy for more money due to issues like the salt situation, and blacktop costs.

- Bartman stated that is the reason we shouldn't take another \$28,000 out of the road budget because of the fact that we are "beating our roads to death because of the detour."

- Schuster stated the splitting of the salary between the two funds was just a suggestion. In addition, she stated that at this point due to rising costs, there is no choice but to levy for more money and that this would be the time to do it.

- Helpers said he would not black border this year. He stated that "the highway district funds will be more than sufficient for the upcoming year of operation and additional blacktopping..." He stated his "budget will be financially sound for anything the future road commissioner wants to do, within reason, that Seneca Township has done in the past."

- Following much more discussion regarding this issue, Schuster stated, "We set the salaries in October. That is done. Whether that money actually comes out of the road district or the town fund, we can make that decision down the road."

- Helpers stated for the record that he "wants clarification in the very near future what the Road District is responsible for with regards to future building projects." Schuster said they could talk about it later. Helpers asked her to set a time. A meeting will be set between Helpers, Schuster, TOI and an attorney at a later date.

- Motion for the amendments to the minutes passed.

Audit of Current Bills:

Road District – Dahlfors motioned to approve the Road District bills for payment for the period of October 15, 2008 through November 11, 2008 in the amount of \$135, 831.62. Second by O’Leary. Voting yes: Bartman, Mathews, Dahlfors, O’Leary, Schuster. Voting no: None. Motion passed.

Town Fund – O’Leary motioned to approve the Town Fund bills for payment for the period of October 15, 2008 through November 11, 2008 in the amount of \$179,079.63. Second by Dahlfors. Voting yes: Bartman, Mathews, Dahlfors, O’Leary, Schuster. Voting no: None. Motion passed.

- Schuster stated the attorney sent a letter that is going to go with the bill questioning the expenditure of the driveway amount billed to us.

Treasurer’s Report: October 1, 2008 through October 31, 2008, as listed below:

Illinois Fund – Mathews motioned to approve the Treasurer’s Report for the Illinois Fund for the period of October 1, 2008 through October 31, 2008. Second by Dahlfors. Motion passed.

Illinois Fund	Prev. Bal.	Trans/Prime	Expenses	Income	Ending Bal.
General Assistance	\$26,166.04	0	0	\$55.60	\$26,221.64
Town Fund	\$163,907.56	0	\$72,475.68	\$3,033.59	\$94,465.47
Road & Bridge	\$173,028.45	0	\$6,901.77	\$3,453.60	\$169,580.28
Permanent Hard Road	\$186,873.43	0	\$395.00	\$1,789.20	\$188,267.63
Building & Equipment	\$56,609.12	0	\$7,500.00	\$461.10	\$49,570.22

Prime Fund – Bartman motioned to approve the Treasurer’s Report for the Prime Fund for the period of October 1, 2008 through October 31, 2008. Second by Dahlfors. Motion passed.

Prime Fund	Prev. Bal.	Trans/Funds	Expenses	Interest Income	Ending Bal.
General Assistance	\$75,968.55	0	0	\$87.84	\$76,056.39
Town Fund	\$267,589.93	0	0	\$309.41	\$267,899.34
Road & Bridge	\$122,813.42	0	0	\$142.01	\$122,955.43

General Assistance Report: Schuster stated she had two more applications taken out this month. At this point, neither has qualified for assistance.

Clerk’s Report: Seemann informed the board and guests in attendance that the petitions for the Consolidated Election in April 2009 are now available. If anyone is interested in picking one up they should contact her.

Road Commissioner’s Report: Helfers addressed the speed limit sign issue that was mentioned in the Public Speaking portion of the meeting. He stated he cannot at the township level do anything about it without going to the county engineer in Woodstock. The engineer determines what the speed limit could be lowered to, and the placement of the signs. He added that ten years ago when a former township trustee had inquired about the speed limit, it took one year from the time the trustee brought the petition to Helfers and he took it to the county and received the authorization, and finally the county engineer placed the signs. Helfers feels the speed bumps will never happen. The speed limit at the location being discussed goes from 55 mph, which is any of our roads that are not signed, then goes down to 30 mph. He stated that

according to what the county engineer did with the placement of the signs is correct, however, he added that he will call County Engineer Bradley Cousin to check that and get back to him in writing with their response. He will try to have this information by the next township meeting in December. Helpers said there are statutes provided by the state of Illinois that must be met. He said that is all he could do at this time. Trustee Mathews stated that even if they lower the speed limit, it's the enforcement that is the problem.

- Helpers and his crew are working on getting their snowplow equipment ready for the winter.
- The dome on the salt shed is on. Salt is being stored in the shed.

Assessor's Report: Assessor Andrews stated that the schooling he attended on Geological SI was very informative and interesting. He feels eventually it will make the job a lot easier for the assessor. This is information the township could use in the future.

- Andrews informed the board that he received approximately 25 tax assessment appeals. The norm is about 10-12 appeals. He explained that the properties are assessed on the value it is as of January 1st of each year.
- This year there have been approximately 50 houses sold in Seneca Township. In 2006 there were approximately 150.

Planning Commission: Information/review/action

A. Commission Activity Report – Committee reviewed/action on pending petitions:

No petitions were heard. The commission did not meet this month.

B. Zoning petitions for consideration, review and/or action by the town board:

- i. **Merryman Petition** – The court date has been moved to early December, and it now becomes a hearing in front of Judge MacIntyre. Schuster informed the board that there may not be an opportunity, as they originally thought, for us to make any additional comments. Our attorney has been given a heads up on this and will be available if necessary.

C. Zoning Petitions – status:

- i. **Petition #08-58 – Teresa Krafcisin – 14606 W. South St., Woodstock:** This petition is on the county board agenda for December 16, 2008. Schuster hasn't seen any documents at this point. The ZBA approved the petition.
- ii. **Petition #08-55 – Wilbur & Clifford Kamholtz – 19208 River Rd., Marengo – A1 to A2:** This petition will be on the December 16th agenda.
- iii. **Petition #08-13 – John & Kristine Benoit – A1 to A1C – Commercial Kennel:** This petition has been withdrawn. The board questions whether he is still operating? The ZBA vote was 6/0 against the petition.
- iv. **Petition #08-38 – Susan M. Singleton – Request for a variance:** The county board approved the variance.
- v. **Petition #08-30 – Steven & Susan Schmieding – Request for a variance:** The ZBA passed the A2 with a vote of 7/0, and the CUP was approved with a vote of 5/2. At this point, an ordinance has not been seen at the courthouse.
- vi. **Petition #08-51 – Michael & Cynthia Winters – Request for a variance:** No information to date.

Old Business: Information/review/action

A. Building Project - update: For the board's information, Schuster composed a recap of the costs of everything that has been done to date. Each expenditure is listed separately.

- Mathews feels the architect should "eat" some of the cost of the re-bid work because "architects know what it costs to build buildings."

New Business: Information/review/action

A. Levies – placed on review:

Town Fund - Schuster gave draft copies of the proposed Town Levy for 2008 tax year collectable in 2009 to the board. Dahlfors motioned to place the Town Levy on display to be reviewed and approved at the December meeting. Second by Bartman. Motion passed.

Road District – Helpers gave draft copies of the proposed Road District Levy for the 2008 tax year collectable in 2009 to the board. Dahlfors motioned to place the Road District Levy on display to be reviewed and approved at the December meeting. Second by Bartman. Motion passed.

B. Legislation – TOI Perspective: Dahlfors wondered how we would get pictures in the magazine? Schuster told him that when the building is complete we could send those pictures in.

C. City of Woodstock – Letter: Schuster informed the board that the letter they had asked her to send to the City of Woodstock last month, relating to the unintended consequences of the actions of the City of Woodstock where they continue to develop out into the water-sensitive areas, was not sent because she did not get a response from the entire board. She gave the board another copy of the letter and stated she will wait for all the board members to respond before sending it out.

- Following discussion of the letter, the board approved the letter. Schuster will send the letter.

Other: Information/review/action

- The FOIA request was fulfilled for Sheet Metal Workers
- TOI Legislative Proposal Suggestions – Schuster felt the issue of township roads receiving funding for the repair of roads being used to divert traffic during construction should be addressed. The board agreed. Schuster will send this concern to our legislators with Helpers named as the contact person.

- The Township Supervisors were upset because the county had suggested that during the 2030 land use planning process that the townships and municipalities would be invited to be a part of the discussions. We were invited in once and presented our land use plans to the commission and haven't been invited back since. The Supervisors drafted a letter from the townships asking that we still be able to represent the townships in some of this planning process. The letter will go out this week.

- Schuster attended a seminar for the State of Illinois Surplus Supply Program. She stated this could be a possible avenue to get furnishings for the office addition. A proposed Resolution for Participation in the State of Illinois Federal Surplus Property Program was given to the board. This issue is tabled until the December meeting.

- Schuster informed the board that the county is now involved in a program under the Community Development Block Grant - The National Stabilization Program. This is part of that

bailout money. They will have in excess of three million dollars that they will be able to dole out to eligible individuals. See Schuster for additional information.

- A copy of the letter that was sent with the check to Excavating Concepts from the attorney was given to the board for their records.

- The township website is partially “crashed.” Schuster stated that the website we currently have is very difficult to maneuver and get things added to. She has looked into getting a new website for the township. She mentioned that TOI has a program where they develop your website for you at a reasonable cost and they are supposed to be easy to take care of. She feels there should be at least a couple of us that know how to work with the website. She will call TOI and get some information on this so we’ll have it at our next meeting.

- Guest Peggy Sue Brasile informed the board that she knows someone from her church that may be able to help us. She will give him Seemann’s phone number and he will contact her.

- Helpers would like to draft an article for Seemann to put in the newspaper stating that the roads in Seneca Township are not going to be what they have experienced in the past due to the salt situation. He stated that some of the other townships have already done this. He stated the Highway Commissioner’s are going to draft a blanket letter at their next meeting intended for all the townships to use.

- It was again decided that it is not necessary at this time to send out a newsletter.

Public Speaking: None.

Motion to Adjourn: At 9:15 p.m. Dahlfors motioned to adjourn tonight’s monthly meeting. Second by Bartman. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Seemann
Township Clerk