

## Supervisor's Report June 2022

**Fire Millages** Our top goal for this summer needs to be passage of the fire millages. I find that most people understand and support the increase when I explain that the previous millage rate supported a starting wage of \$15.50 per hour for paramedic/firefighters. The millage increase is necessary to support competitive wages and to recruit the talent that our fire and rescue department needs. I have reserved the Munnecke Room on Wednesday, June 22nd at 7 pm for an informational meeting about the millages. Chief Besson and I will prepare a presentation and take questions. Clint is working on a page of bullet points. Please be there if you are able.

**Sidewalks** The sidewalk project is nearly completed, and almost uniformly well received. The handicap ramp at the corner of Grand and River had to be reworked slightly to move it away from the existing rock wall. The railing for that ramp is being built by Wheelock's in Traverse City. The project manager did not order the railing until the ramp was redesigned and built, to ensure that it would fit.

There is one section of sidewalk unfinished at the corner of Second Street and Pearl. We were asked to hold off on that because the Road Commission is going to be doing some work there to capture stormwater and address the tendency for cars to slide through that intersection when the ice builds up. The corner of Grand and Pearl was not completed according to the engineer's specifications. I'm waiting to see how that will be resolved. We worked with the folks at the Lutheran Church to find a way to keep the water on the road instead of going down the sidewalk, where it then pours over their staircase, freezes, and is a hazard to people going to church.

The stormwater remediation at NJs works wonderfully. I was not so happy with the work at the old Provemont Bank, but it is an improvement nonetheless. We worked with the folks on Meinrad Street to preserve more of the old sidewalk, saving both the residents' and the township's money.

One problem that surfaced with the sidewalk work is the tendency for people in the platted villages to claim the road right of way, often by putting underground sprinkler systems well outside of their actual yards. When we start our next phase of sidewalk work we should notify property owners so that they can get their systems reconfigured before the work begins.

I was notified by Gosling Czubak engineer Martin Graf that he is sending on a recommendation to pay the bulk of the money that we owe Elmer's for the sidewalk work. We will not be able to add this to our June 13 agenda, since Mariann will not be there. If we want to use APRA funds to fund this work, we will need to formalize that decision as well. I will have to call a special meeting for those items.

The white coating on the new concrete is a curing compound that keeps the concrete from drying out too fast. This helps it to cure properly. It will wear away with time.

**Fireworks** I have forwarded to each of you the email chain from Peter Miller about the Stevenson's request for a commercial fireworks permit. Leland Township has declined to issue commercial fireworks permits since 2007, on the logic that if we allowed one we would have to allow many, and residents have let us know that they would not appreciate a fireworks display every weekend. I did investigate the nuts and bolts of how to issue a commercial fireworks permit, and went over the state mandated application with Paul Olson, our insurance agent. He recommended that we require \$10 million of insurance coverage, with the township named as additionally insured. After that, Peter withdrew the request to be on our agenda, but I still had a talk with the State Fire Marshal, Mick Dingman, aiming to track down the difference between Consumer and professional grade fireworks. It turns out that this is not an easy thing to do, but Mr. Dingman offered to look at photos of the components of any proposed display and advise the fire department should anything seem amiss.

**Lifeguards** I also discussed with Paul Olson the question of lifeguards and liability. He does not think that hiring lifeguards is a liability, even if the lifeguard might not do everything perfectly. He does think that it's important to post signs that make it clear whether or not a lifeguard is on duty.

Nevertheless, [recruiting lifeguards is difficult](#). Our hesitation at last month's meeting led our promising candidate to pursue other options. I would like to see us resolve to fund that position in future years, recognizing that the goal is to have stellar lifeguards, not just hire whoever we can get. While our opportunity to hire a guard for this year has slipped away, I would appreciate a serious discussion as to whether this is a goal for 2023.

**Clay Cliffs** We have two issues of note at Clay Cliffs this month. The first is complaints that were received by the Conservancy over the past few summers from people who live on the lake near Clay Cliffs and users of the park. People have been anchoring boats off of the property and partying with loud music, volleyball games, and apparent under age drinking. We have been working with the sheriff's department about the situation, and I have made some phone calls to individuals. The Conservancy will be erecting signs on the waterfront advising of the designation of Clay Cliffs as a quiet area and of the township's nuisance ordinance.

The second Clay Cliffs project is moving the observation platform back from the edge of the cliff in response to the erosion from the high water levels of the last two years. The Conservancy has been working with the engineer planning the project, and had hired the construction company that originally built the platform. Tim Cypher and I have been helping them through the permitting process. This work should be accomplished later this month with minimum disruption to users of the park.

We will need to be thinking about putting a version of the extra voted millage in front of the voters in November. Clint has argued that since November looks to be a particularly contentious election on the national and state level, we should avoid November and try to pass a millage next May. Skipping November would mean that we would go another year on skeleton funding and without adding anything to the capital improvement fund.

It is my opinion that local politics is an opportunity to counter some of the polarization that has gripped national politics. At the local level, we have usually been able to build consensus across party lines for the purpose of accomplishing things like fire and rescue, park maintenance, roads and sidewalks. Just because it might be harder to create this consensus given the national climate, we are not excused from the duty to try. Deferred maintenance is always more expensive down the road, even more so in inflationary times.

Perhaps our hardest job as township officials is to determine the right balance between the services that our constituents want and the taxes that they are willing to pay. Figuring this out requires education and dialogue.

**Asset Management** I continue to work on the Asset Management Champion class, which will conclude this month. This week I completed a module about incorporating risk management into the decision making process. [Here is a short video illustrating the concept.](#) In the video, the team has to choose between funding a safety concern, a scheduled maintenance expenditure, and an efficiency upgrade. Deferring the safety issue had a potential future cost should someone be hurt as a result. I was reminded of our conversations about Hancock Field. We have hesitated to commit to repairs and maintenance on the baseball field and grandstand because we are not sure if there is a future need for a baseball field. This focus on the future use and our public's preferences has overshadowed concerns about the safety and condition of the grandstand itself. It does need upkeep, especially paint, but perhaps the actual design of the grandstand is outdated and not safe by today's standards. Should we be looking at that part of Hancock more proactively? Are there other safety issues that we may be overlooking?

As an exercise in this course, I was asked: "Does your organization have the right rates / tax revenue coming in to be sustainable into the future?" This was easy to answer. Leland Township did not have enough money coming in to match the level of service that our constituents expect, even before the loss of our operating millage, which enabled us to put \$50,000 a year in the Capital Improvement Fund. For many years, the township prioritized capital spending and low taxes. When governments do this, they underspend on maintenance and service levels deteriorate sooner than anticipated. We are not alone in this, as everyone likes to fund and build new things, while maintenance is rather boring. Many of our assets were built at the same time and are now reaching the point of requiring major maintenance or replacement.

**ARPA** After way too much time and frustration, I was able to complete our first required report to the US Department of Treasury on our use of the SLFRF funds that were distributed to us under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). I reported that we had not yet allocated those funds. As I mentioned under sidewalks, if we want to use these funds for sidewalks, we should pass a motion or resolution to that effect.

The second tranche of the ARPA funds will be distributed within 30 days.

**Sunset Shores** My main frustration! This project is still in the permitting phase with EGLE. We thought that it was close to being approved, but more information was requested and provided. Our engineer, Scott Joswiak, has asked Elmers for updated soft cost projections on the project, which indicate that inflation has upped the cost of the project about 5%. Since much of the pipe laying will take place via directional drilling, much of the work can be completed through the winter.

After looking the Borre purchase agreement over, I find that Mr. Borden was correct in his public comment at the end of last month's meeting. The cost of the Borre property (2.5 acres) was a per acre cost, not the total cost, so we will need to make an adjustment before we complete the purchase. We will be reimbursed after the bond is sold, so this will be a short term expenditure.

**Township Insights** I was interviewed by Jenn Fiedler of the MTA for an upcoming issue of the Township Insights. They were attracted by the recent Historic Preservation Award that was received by the Fishtown project. We will see how that comes out.

This time of year there is a lot of correspondence, so I have tried to pass most of it along. I apologize for so many emails, and for any typos in this report. I hope that everyone gets out and admires our sidewalks.

Susan Och