

APPROVED

August 28, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Supervisor Julian called the special meeting of the Kasson Township Board to order at 10:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Members Present: Greg Julian – Supervisor, Julia Carter – Treasurer, Dana Boomer – Clerk, Roger Noonan – Trustee, Tad Carter - Trustee

Member(s) Absent: None

Staff Present: Committee Member Fire Chief Andy Doornbos

AGENDA – J. Carter moved, Noonan seconded to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor, motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC – Rick Royston – He is a resident of Cleveland Township, and was the fire board representative from Cleveland Township for five years. He has a concern about the integrity of the four township agreement. The potential decision by this board has a potential to affect the four township agreement. He thinks the fire board should have been here, as they have input on this discussion. He has spoken with Chris Comeaux and Tim Stein and they feel that a fire board committee should be formed. He feels that the cost of fire protection will double with the building of a new fire station, and that adequate fire protection can be conducted through mutual aid.

Chris Hauke – Fire service is to protect life and property. The two most vulnerable areas are the M-72 corridor and the Burdickville corridor with the school and nursing home. She would be interested in knowing response times to these areas, and knowing whether there is opportunity for better coverage from Benzie County for the M-72 corridor.

SPECIAL BUSINESS

Ray Kendra from Environment Architects was present, and covered the history of the process and the steps to move forward. He has provided the township board with a programming document that covers many of the questions that would need to be addressed for the design phase. This process covers the initial renderings and design process, and can then be expanded to include the construction design and construction bid process.

Julian asked about the timeline for the process in the current contract. Kendra stated that they would be able to start with the pre-design process anytime, with some of the information being received today. The timeline for the design process is based on when construction would begin. Before the bid process is done, the township must have the funding source identified. There is no construction timeframe set at this point, it is more of an exploratory process at this point. The site is one of the biggest issues to look at, to understand whether there is terrain or other issues to look at. The more level the property, the better. The board and Kendra briefly discussed the process and timeline, and whether a committee would be needed.

Boomer moved to approve and sign the contract with Environment Architects. Noonan seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

The contract was signed, and the discussion continued. Kendra distributed copies of the programming outline, and summarized that outline. The committee and Kendra discussed the process for moving forward.

A member of the public asked whether the issue with the interlocal agreement should be resolved first. The financing is another issue. Julian responded that the financing is going to be a major portion of this. There are a number of options for funding, that would need to be explored after the initial design process. Chris Logan stated that he spent 31 years with the fire department, and has gone through three fire station design processes and two construction processes. He is now living in this community and wants to make sure things are done correctly.

Chris Hauke – She has gone through two design processes for libraries, and you need to have the design before you can go after funding.

Boomer stated that a service area assessment has been conducted – this will be posted online and can be emailed to anyone who is interested. Budget numbers for the operation of a new station are being developed – as the department is not currently asking for additional staff to be hired, the additional operations budget will be primarily for building operations. The topic has been being discussed at fire board meetings, and they have been made aware that Kasson Township has been considering a design firm for conceptual renderings and funding exploration.

Don Drabik – Some sort of drawing needs to be developed so that everyone can be having the same discussion.

Kendra stated that once initial designs are developed, there is a need for community input. This is the very beginning of the process. There is going to be many items for development. The board discussed how to go about starting the process for the initial conceptual designs, and whether Kendra should initially work with the fire chief on the needs for the building or whether there should be a community committee.

Mike Lanham – He thinks that having fire department staff start the process with the architect would be good. When the group comes back together in late September, it would be good to open the meeting up to the fire board and other three townships. It used to be that the western side of Kasson was covered by Empire Fire Department, but when Glen Lake Fire Department was formed it moved to Cedar.

Bill Roush – Looking at the last year, the number of runs from one station is excessive. Splitting this between two stations would allow for better response times and better community response.

A community member asked about the location. How is the property going to be paid for? Julian stated that location has been being researched over the last couple of years with Cleveland Township. Once Cleveland Township stepped away, options were opened. Two general locations are being discussed – on M-72 and on Burdickville Road. Additional research is needed on locations. There is an offer on the table for a donation of land on M-72 at Maple City Road from the Noonan family.

A tentative next meeting was set for September 25 at 6 p.m., subject to schedule changes. It was determined that Kendra will initially work with the fire chief on the needs for a new station. This list will be brought back to the board and community at the late September meeting for discussion and review, before any conceptual renderings are started.

The board began a discussion of the location. Julian would like to see additional outreach done to surrounding communities. The board discussed the history of the search for a location.

Noonan moved to approve the property offered at Maple City Road and M-72. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Boomer stated that she is leaning towards the M-72 location, due to the information received in the service area assessment and letter from the fire chief. M-72 is where there is the most need for better response times, where there are the most critical incidents, where the most development is happening, and where the majority of the commercial and industrial expansion is happening. This is also an area where there is little to no ability to increase service with mutual aid agreements, as response times cannot be substantially decreased due to the distance from all regional stations. However, the design process can start with the concept of a relatively flat five acre piece of property.

Julian would like the fire board to look at location letter sent by Fire Chief. He has been told that we need better coverage on the western side of the service area for 14 years, and so this process needs to continue. He wants to work with the Fire Chief on the options for reaching out to other townships/jurisdictions. The board agreed that reaching out to other townships and jurisdictions is appropriate. There is the possibility for agreements for staffing or coverage, depending on when and where a new station is built. Julian thinks there may be the possibility for sharing costs for the station as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Don Drabik – The importance of the location is what really needs to be focused on. He had a friend that lives on the western side of Kasson Township who had a house fire a number of years ago, and it took almost 20 minutes for the fire department to get there. This will be a benefit to the township to have a station on this side of the service area.

Mike Lanham – If the other townships are not interested in participation in the construction, Kasson should move ahead alone.

Chris Hauke – Having the preliminary design drawings will be a big help to reach out to the townships.

Rick Royston – As a Cleveland Township resident, thank you for including the fire board and others in this discussion. As a resident of the service area, his costs are going to go up regardless of whether

Cleveland Township participates in building the station. He wants to make sure that all of the options have been explored before the financial commitment is made to build a new station, which he thinks may result in the demise of the four township agreement.

BOARD COMMENT: Noonan states that the location on M-72 is in a commercial area, with no residents around. Building in a commercial area will have substantially less pushback. Boomer agreed – when there was a brief discussion of having a station in or near Myles Kimmerly Park, there were numerous nearby residents providing pushback immediately.

Julian thanked everyone for attending.

Motion by J. Carter to adjourn, second by T. Carter/**PASSED 5-0**. Meeting adjourned at 11:29 AM.

Submitted by:
Dana Boomer, Clerk